Citizens at the End of Empire: Navigating Loyalty and Citizenship in Late Colonial Singapore

John Solomon*

The disintegration of the British Empire in Asia and the emergence of new nation-states marked a period of significant upheaval for communities whose identities and mobilities were fundamentally reconstituted by a new system of borders, citizenships, and nationalities. In this article, I seek to explore a social history of early citizenship in Singapore by examining how citizenship was understood and conceived by varied segments of society during its final years as a colony. Focusing on ethnic groups considered non-indigenous, I examine the decisions made by communities and individuals with regard to Singapore citizenship, studying the period between 1957 and 1963. During this time the meaning and significance of Singapore citizenship underwent dramatic shifts, and various forms of dual citizenship were phased out in the context of political plans for Singapore's future. I argue that individuals' decisions about citizenship reveal how they understood their own futures after colonialism, within the region, commonwealth, and nation. The citizen-subjectivities of individuals and communities often did not align with what emerged as an official discourse of exclusive loyalty and belonging. Early experiences of citizenship were instead shaped by intersections of race, class, and complex transnational identities, as well as pragmatic assessments and emotional decision making. These did not simply mirror state-driven processes but instead represented important aspects of the complex social history of decolonization in Singapore and the early transition of its inhabitants from a colonial society to a national citizenry.

Keywords: Singapore, dual citizenship, decolonization, social history, empire and mobilities

Introduction

The twenty years following the conclusion of World War II was a period of tremendous social change as British colonial territories in Southeast Asia underwent political reconstitution and decolonization.[1] A new regime of borders, and travel and residency

* Trinity College, University of Melbourne, 100 Royal Parade, Parkville, Victoria 3052, Australia
 e-mail: john.pr.solomon@gmail.com
 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5686-0187
 1) Robert Cribb and Li Narangoa have referred to the breaking up of empires as "the most profound geopolitical phenomenon of the twentieth century" (Cribb and Li 2004, 164).

restrictions, emerged alongside new nationality and citizenship laws that became increasingly based on the principle of exclusivity, meaning that individuals were for the most part eventually unable to exercise nationality and citizenship rights in more than one sovereign territory. During this period, individuals and communities often had to make decisions that would have significant ramifications for their future. Although Singapore would eventually become a sovereign nation-state in 1965, after Singapore citizenship was introduced in 1957 and made available to a broad range of residents, this was far from an obvious outcome. Singapore's citizenship was at this time not associated with a sovereign Singaporean state, nor was it accompanied by a corresponding internationally recognized Singaporean nationality status, or even an accompanying passport. Instead, Singapore "citizenship" as a legal status developed in the context of its implications for other overlapping forms of nationality and citizenship and Singapore's potential future. It therefore has to be understood in terms of Singapore's evolving relationships with Britain, Malaya/Malaysia, the Commonwealth, and the wider region. Reactions to citizenship drives during Singapore's final days as a British dependency therefore provide a useful lens to understand how people made sense of and adapted to the new system of borders and legal regimes accompanying decolonization, and how they envisioned their futures, and the nature of states, at a time of significant change.

Despite the complicated relationship of citizenship with other statuses, and the fact that political leaders and policy makers understood that nation building would be a lengthy process, leaders and policy makers largely couched the acquisition of Singapore citizenship in the language and performativity of existing loyalty and allegiance. For many individuals, however, the decision to adopt Singapore citizenship was based not on any significant sense of loyalty but instead on a wide range of factors that demonstrated how different individuals, ethnic communities, and class groups experienced decolonization in Singapore, and the effects of postcolonial state construction in the wider region.

This article seeks to uncover how ordinary individuals understood citizenship by examining their diverse responses to citizenship proposals and legislation. I first outline why Singapore citizenship came to be framed within a discourse of exclusive loyalty and allegiance by British authorities, local political actors, and community leaders amid the progressive tightening of exclusivity requirements. I then utilize oral history interviews and other archival sources to trace a range of perspectives "from below" that shed light on individual citizenship decisions that arose as a response to the political and legal changes that were occurring. I argue that the choice to become a citizen, or conversely to reject Singapore citizenship, was influenced by one's access to information, class, existing "national" loyalties and transnational ties, grassroots leadership and intercommunal dynamics, as well as pragmatic considerations regarding access to rights and

resources. More broadly, I argue that the responses of ordinary individuals and groups to Singapore's early mass citizenship drives offer new perspectives on its early postcolonial history of citizenship. This article focuses on non-Malay communities in Singapore, in particular the Chinese and Indian communities, whose loyalties were questioned in the context of their ethnic affiliation to overseas nation-states.[2]

The issue of citizenship in Singapore's national history has been studied by scholars largely as a constitutional and political issue rather than a sociohistorical one. Albert Lau's work on Malayan Union citizenship has analyzed in detail the debates and considerations behind citizenship proposals, taking into account the role played by both the British authorities and various local political leaders (Lau 1989, 216–243). In his expansive study on postwar Malaya, Tim Harper has examined the broad social, cultural, and political context against which citizenship legislation was enacted. Harper's chapter on citizenship utilizes a top-down approach surveying political negotiations between various segments of Malayan society (Harper 1999, 308–356). More recently, Sunil Amrith's (2011) historical study of migrations and diasporas has examined the issue of citizenship in Asia from the perspective of the large-scale movements and mobilities of ethnic communities. It considers not only international migration but also the massive internal migration that occurred in Asian states in the latter half of the twentieth century (Amrith 2011, 120–150).

These studies have done much to advance our understanding of citizenship as a phenomenon of the politics of decolonization, diasporas, international relations, and modern statecraft. However, there has been far less scholarly attention on how ordinary individuals historically understood and responded to citizenship and nationality legislation, and borders and restrictions on mobility. One historian who has examined the emergence of a citizen-subjectivity in late colonial and early postcolonial Singapore is Loh Kah Seng. Loh's *Squatters into Citizens* (2013) has examined, among other things,

---

2) Recent Singapore history scholarship and commentaries have re-examined the important and often neglected implications of Malay perspectives in the historiography of the island as part of a broader postcolonial critique. For example, see Sadasivan (2020, 663–678). See also Barr (2021, 1–19). The issue of "Malay" indigeneity within the region and Singapore certainly played a complex role in the question of citizenship. Scholars have explored how this issue played out in the political realm. Albert Lau (1989, 216–243) has examined the responses of the Malay political elite to decolonization and citizenship in Malaya and Singapore. For a discussion on the activities of various anticolonial Malay radicals from different backgrounds from the 1930s leading up to decolonization in the postwar period, see Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (2015). More scholarly attention deserves to be paid to the reactions of ordinary members of the Malay community to multiethnic citizenship and notions of territorial belonging. This, however, goes beyond the focus and scope of this paper. The importance of these complex and diverse perspectives will be discussed further in the conclusion.

the housing and resettlement policies of the People's Action Party government and the fashioning of a social compact between citizens and the state, a process that was not devoid of resistance, bottom-up agency, dialogic interaction, and a considerable diversity of experience. Using extensive oral interviews and archival research to analyze histories and social memories of resettlement into public flats, Loh complicates the notion of a "shared history" propagated by developmentalist national narratives about Singapore's housing policies and their impact. Despite much recent scholarship that similarly challenges the singular narratives associated with the "Singapore Story," or Singapore's state-sanctioned national history, the emergence of the Singapore citizen as a historical subject in public history and state commemoration is still largely tied to the broader political periodization of the nation-state and top-down, state-led efforts at nation building. It is projected as a linear collective experience and is still understudied.

Michael Shapiro highlights that a state's aspirations to becoming a "nation-state" entail the "management of historical narratives as well as territorial space." States attempt to "impose coherence on what is actually a series of fragmentary and arbitrary conditions of historical assemblage" (Shapiro 2000, 80). Shapiro also highlights the multiple temporalities that exist within conceptions of citizenship. Citizen-subjects are "temporally-disjunctive" (Shapiro 2000, 79) despite attempts to code citizenship in terms of shared cultural backgrounds or—when applied to the case of Singapore—shared and coherent historical trajectories, events, experiences, and discourses. An examination of the diverse experiences with regard to citizenship discourse and legislation will help us to better understand the complex experiences of individuals during decolonization and nuance our understanding of nation-state formation.

The lack of scholarly attention on the social history of citizenship is not due to a dearth of sources. A number of archives across the region contain documents that discuss in great detail issues of immigration and citizenship. These diplomatic dispatches and parliamentary and Colonial Office records reveal the importance placed on such issues not only by Asian leaders but also by the British administration in Malaya and Singapore. This was despite the fact that it had to contend also with postwar reconstruction, housing, education, mass unemployment, and a Communist insurgency, among other urgent issues. The documents often discuss cases involving particular individuals and groups and tend to provide fragmentary glimpses into their lives. When read against the grain, they reveal information about how ordinary people from various strata of society were impacted by citizenship and how they exercised agency and responded to, circumvented, and often transgressed the intentions and goals of governments and state bureaucracies.

The Oral History Centre of the National Archives of Singapore contains a large number of recorded interviews about citizenship that also provide a rich and more direct

means of understanding how the lives of individuals and communities intersected with the formation of nation-states during decolonization in the region.[3] Within this series, Singapore citizenship emerges as a common topic for interview questions, and interviewers probe the personal reasons and emotions of individuals who adopted Singapore citizenship before and soon after independence in 1965. A significant number of these interviews, however, are framed with a predominant emphasis on the political history of Singapore. A more recent series, *New Citizens*, was started in 2010 and currently features 111 interviews that "capture the motivations and experiences of different groups of immigrants who have chosen to make Singapore home since 1965" alongside those of "policy makers and civil servants involved in national integration programmes," demonstrating the center's attempts to capture the experiences of "newer" migrants amid a rapidly diversifying population. This suggests an official recognition that creating such archival resources is important and necessary for broadening sociohistorical migration narratives in the future.[4] The interviews not only offer access to immigrants' perspectives but also raise interesting questions about the structuring of individual and social memory, and the relationship between particular forms of social memory and archival priorities in national institutions.

Unlike the interviews in the newer series, the older interviews do not primarily focus on citizenship but instead feature recollections that are part of an effort to piece together a larger biographical narrative of individuals. These recollections vary in detail and length, demonstrating the different levels of importance that various individuals ascribed to citizenship acquisition in their own life narratives. The ways that citizenship is remembered and recounted, sometimes inaccurately, also suggest how these memories have been molded and shaped within life narratives. They often speak to the importance of individual subjectivity and the "awkward individual lives" which form the basis of the "grand patterns of history" (Thomson 2000, 12).

During the postwar period, Britain—after initial intentions to retain its empire (White 2017, 217)—soon found itself undertaking the long and protracted process of imperial retreat. It began to dismantle its global empire in selective phases and attempted to execute plans to advance its economic and security interests, preserve its prewar influence and prestige, and secure goodwill from its former imperial constituents within

---

3) These interviews appear predominantly in a select number of special series among the center's 61 projects. These include the three-part *Communities of Singapore* series, featuring 356 interviews conducted by the center during the 1980s and 1990s that capture the experiences of minority communities in Singapore, focusing on the experiences of "the early life, customs, traditions, religion, institutions and social relations of early immigrants and inhabitants of Singapore" (*Communities of Singapore* [Part 2], National Archives of Singapore).

4) *New Citizens*, National Archives of Singapore.

a newly emerging international order of sovereign nation-states. These efforts would also soon be colored by the politics of the Cold War.[5] Against this backdrop of strategic concerns and the rising tide of independence movements, Britain began actively supporting and even fostering efforts at specific forms of nation-building within many of its former colonies (Stockwell 2005, 196). State construction was seen as the most viable model for achieving strategic and ideological objectives by the British Labour government after the war. It was also the end-goal of major nationalist and anticolonial forces in Singapore and largely seen as the logical outcome and aim of decolonization.

In many other parts of Asia, global war, decolonization, and their aftermaths not only resulted in ruptures to pre-established patterns of movement and settlement under empire but also signaled new forms of voluntary and involuntary migration of forced labor, refugees, and other displaced populations.[6] In the case of India, Pakistan, and China, massive displacement occurred after the war, in the horrendous violence of partition and the conflict between the Chinese Communists and nationalists. For many overseas diasporic communities, including those in Singapore, external "homelands" were now radically reshaped into vastly different political entities from the lands that they or their forebears had initially left. Many were confronted with decisions about whether to return home, or to attempt long-term settlement in their places of residence overseas.

During this period, nationalist leaders in both Singapore and Malaya attempted to create social, political, and economic frameworks for their newly emerging independent nation-states. One pressing issue of nation-building was citizenship. The issuing of citizenship signified "the institutionalisation of the nation state" itself (Torpey 2009, 4–20).[7] The establishment of the legal, political, and social basis for citizenship would effectively create national polities and communities and secure national boundaries by differentiating citizens from non-citizens.

However, in the immediate postwar world the nature of the nation-state was subject to competing visions. Southeast Asia's emerging polities were largely plural and multi-ethnic with complex configurations and settlement histories. In Malaya and Singapore, this societal complexity gave rise to tensions between civic and subscriptive notions of citizenship on the one hand, and ethno-nationalist and nativist ones on the other. This tension shaped the politics of citizenship questions in both Malaya and Singapore. Given

---

5) For a concise and informative account of the geopolitical pressures that led to Britain's rapid postwar decolonization, see Levine (2013, 206–264).

6) Amrith's (2011, 90) work shows that these changes first occurred during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

7) This was a process that began in Europe in the nineteenth century and later extended throughout a modern global system prefigured by European dominance in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

the diversity of settled populations across the decolonizing world, questions remained about exactly who would qualify for citizenship. Would new citizens in emerging sovereign states be allowed to enjoy rights and privileges in more than one territory? Were states to be smaller units or large federal associations, and if the latter, how were political rights and mobilities to be distributed? What would multinational associations like the Commonwealth of Nations mean in a post-imperial world? What would supranational citizenship within such a grouping actually entail for individuals?

Although many nationalists in Asia viewed anticolonial struggle as the process of actualizing delineated national communities, there remained a diversity of views about the ideal governmental architecture of future states, how the movement of individuals across boundaries was to be regulated, and the precise definitions of citizenship.[8] Frederick Cooper (2014) has highlighted, using the case of African support for a supranational French Union, that we need to reconsider understanding the global history of decolonization as being characterized by an unproblematic transition from empire to nation-state in the form that we know today.

When Singapore first introduced citizenship in 1957, it was not yet a state, nor was its future path to independent statehood clear. As a colonial dependency at the time, it faced a number of possible futures: as a sovereign independent state, as a British self-governing territory for a longer period of time, or as an incorporated part of a federal Malayan state of various potential political and geographic permutations. Because the principle of dual citizenship was progressively rejected by many emerging state leaders, this period brought to the fore pressing questions and decisions about "citizenship" in Singapore. For many individuals who had enjoyed varying degrees of free movement along transnational migratory networks across Asia, the establishment in the region of frameworks of citizenship had the potential to enact a marked shift in the way they led their lives, their transnational cultural and political connections with countries like China and India, and their sense of identity and belonging.[9]

---

8) Zaib un Nisa Aziz highlights how nationalists in India and Egypt conceived of their anticolonial movements as being driven by distinct and particular nationalisms rather than as part of a cohesive supranational struggle. Their beliefs, he argues, mirrored a European teleological view of the nation-state as a higher stage in the evolution of human society (Aziz 2017, 409).

9) Adam McKeown (2011, 52) has discussed how the diversity of imperial regimes had different effects on migration and how, for example, the French Empire was much less conducive to intra-imperial mobility than was the British Empire.

Singapore Citizenship and Singapore's Political Future

In 1957, after significant lobbying by a wide range of interest groups and community representatives in Singapore, and the efforts of David Marshall, Singapore's first chief minister, Singapore's legislative assembly passed the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance. Previously only a relatively small number of Singapore's residents—those who were British subjects, could meet the language requirements, and could afford to pay the exorbitant registration fees—were granted citizenship rights in Singapore as Citizens of the United Kingdom and the Colonies (CUKCs).[10] The introduction of a Singapore citizenship marked a significant milestone in the island's history because it opened the doors to mass citizenship registration, paving the way for a significant proportion of Singapore's residents to acquire a legal status that would grant them political and residency rights, new social responsibilities, and access to the future public resources of the state in terms of housing, jobs, social welfare benefits, and schools.[11]

The new liberal provisions that comprised the ordinance significantly widened the latitude of eligibility for citizenship from what had been previously proposed and practiced.[12] With the ordinance of 1957, those who had been born in Singapore received citizenship immediately upon application. Those born or naturalized in the Federation of Malaya or in other British territories were allowed to register after two years' residence. Citizens of Commonwealth countries like India initially had an eight-year qualifying period.[13] Crucially, those born in China—comprising a significant proportion of

---

10) These rights included the right to vote in local legislative assembly elections and to hold political office.

11) Although these benefits of citizenship were widely spoken about in political and public discourse, in the 1950s there was no clear delineation between the rights of citizens and non-citizens. In 1961 Lee Kuan Yew, then Singapore's chief minister, spoke of the urgent need to sharpen distinctions and enforce immigration rules so as to "protect the rights of citizens" from being lost to "new people" who came from other countries (Text of Broadcast by the Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, over Radio Singapore in the *National Day Celebrations* Series on Friday, June 2, 1961, at 7.10pm, National Archives of Singapore). In the lead-up to political union with Malaysia in 1963, Lee listed the special rights of Singapore citizens as: priority in public housing flats, entry into schools, social welfare relief, unemployment and sickness benefits, and jobs in the Singapore state civil service. In making a case for the retention of a Singapore state citizenship after union with Malaysia, he argued that these rights as well as new industrial jobs needed to be protected against the entry of large numbers of Malaysian Federal citizens into Singapore after the merger (Radio Singapore Press Release, DO 169/250, National Archives of Singapore).

12)   Not only were the requirements for citizenship significantly lowered, other barriers such as an expensive $100 fee for United Kingdom and the Colonies citizenship, a source of much public criticism, was also scrapped (As I Was Saying, *Straits Times*, October 14, 1950, p. 6).

13) The eight-year residency requirement was a cause of much concern to members of the Indian community who did not meet the threshold (FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666, National Archives UK, p. 170).

Singapore's residents—were allowed to apply if they had been in Singapore prior to the Japanese occupation or if they could prove ten years' residence. This opened the pathway for hundreds of thousands of China-born Chinese who had previously been ineligible for registration and naturalization in older citizenship proposals and legislation.[14] Previous restrictive language requirements centering on Malay or English competency were also dropped. This new law paved the way for the expansion of suffrage and the creation of a democratic polity and a representative state, crucial steps toward political decolonization and autonomy.[15]

The 1957 ordinance was accompanied by a massive public campaign, dubbed Operation Franchise, organized by the Lim Yew Hock government and the British authorities in order to promote citizenship registration.[16] Within the first three months of the start of the campaign, hundreds of thousands of residents had applied at registration points across the island. Colonial Office records reveal that during the registration period, on account of overwhelming public demand, the chief registrar of citizens made provisions for an initial round of three hundred thousand registrations, over three times the initial planning estimate.[17]

In 2017 the *Straits Times*, Singapore's main national English newspaper, carried a commemorative feature celebrating sixty years of Singapore citizenship. The article celebrated the ordinance and the subsequent mass registrations as the birth of a national citizenry. Framing the exercise as a demonstration of latent loyalty and nationalism, the article described how the long queues "did little to quell . . . [the] eagerness" of applicants, some of whom had "waited decades" and were now ready, in the words of an assembleyman at the time, to "shape the destiny of the country."[18]

However, a recurring theme in oral history interviews about this period is the ambivalence of a large segment of applicants regarding citizenship, often remembered

---

14) In comparison with the requirements for citizenship in the Malayan Federation, the threshold for citizenship in Singapore in 1957 was very low. This complicated the possibility of Singapore's potential merger with Malaya, as Singapore was seen as a back door for large numbers of individuals who would become Federal citizens through the merger but would not have ordinarily qualified. This led to the proposal of special conditions for Singapore's inclusion that aimed at keeping Federal political players out of Singapore politics, and for keeping Singaporean political participation out of the Federal government in any merger (Low 2017, 12–14).

15) Residents in Singapore had to ascertain whether they qualified. Those who did had to decide whether they wanted to register; they had to ascertain what the benefits of citizenship were and what their prospects would be like as non-citizens. They also had to determine what accepting citizenship would mean for their other nationality statuses.

16) FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666.

17) FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666, pp. 169–170.

18) 60 Years of the Singapore Citizenship: From Hawkers to Millionaires, They All Queued Up, *Straits Times*, October 8, 2017.

together with the lack of fanfare that accompanied registrations. In order to accommodate as many people as possible, the registration process was vastly simplified and stream-lined, so much so that John Leslie Michael Gorrie, the private secretary to the colonial secretary, who facilitated the process, remembered being "appalled" at having to simply hand over citizenship certificates across a table without solemnity or ceremony.[19] Christabelle Alvis, a young British trainee teacher, remembers the process she under-went when registering for Singapore citizenship with her colleagues:

> We went there and we raised our hands and followed exactly what they told us to say and the next minute, we got the certificate. We became citizens. . . . We thought it was a huge joke. . . . There was no seriousness at all about it.[20]

Despite recollections of the speed, unceremonious nature, or even levity of the proceedings, one formal aspect of the proceedings was the requirement for all applicants to swear their allegiance to Singapore and the British crown by performatively raising their hands, a consequence of Singapore's continued status at the time as a British dependency. This status, along with conflicting ideas about Singapore's anticipated political future, meant that the notion of territorial loyalty was a contested concept in the 1950s.

In 1957 there were some sixty thousand individuals in Singapore who had previously registered as CUKCs after naturalization laws were introduced in 1946. Many of them were unhappy with Marshall's calls to introduce a separate Singapore citizenship and to lower the threshold for acquiring the status. According to A. R. Lazarous, the MP for Farrer Park who represented these individuals in Singapore's legislative assembly, there was a widespread feeling of frustration because many felt that they had already demon-strated their loyalty to Singapore by choosing British naturalization as CUKCs.[21] Since Singapore was still a British dependency, Singapore citizens became British subjects by virtue of provisions in the British Nationality Act. This effectively gave Singapore citizens similar rights to CUKCs. To many CUKCs in Singapore, loyalty to Singapore was based upon its connection to Britain and its place within the empire or the Commonwealth. The value of Singapore citizenship lay also in its link to British legal status and protection. Even if it was obvious that Singapore's political system was headed on a path to decolonization and political autonomy in some form, unhappiness at calls for a separate Singapore citizenship in 1957 suggest that not everyone viewed decolonization

---

19) Gorrie, John Leslie Michael, Accession No. 001309, Reel/Disc 1/8, National Archives of Singapore.

20) Alvis, Christabelle, Accession No. 002828, Reel/Disc 8/80, National Archives of Singapore.

21) *Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates: Second Session of the First Legislative Assembly*, 1st ser., Vol. 4, col. 2641 (1957).

in absolute terms. Many expected and even desired the transjurisdictional status of individuals to continue with parts of the former empire and in terms of their legal relationship with Britain. A city councillor and leader of the Straits Chinese community in Singapore, Yap Pheng Geck, for example, argued that Malayan independence or Singapore citizenship would not affect Straits Chinese loyalty to the British queen, because of membership in the Commonwealth.[22]

On the other hand, Marshall's colleagues in the Labour Front party, who would later push for *merdeka* or full independence, saw Singapore citizenship as a means to carve a new political community in a future decolonized state. They appealed to a sense of Singaporean community and society. They argued that it was dangerous to assume that those who were loyal to Britain and the empire were also loyal to Singapore. They highlighted this distinction by stating that many had demonstrated their loyalty to Singapore through their civic participation but were not necessarily loyal to Britain.

Beyond the issue of Singapore's existing connections to Britain, it was also not clear what Singapore citizenship and the demands of loyalty meant in the context of the Federation of Malaya, which had been granted independence in August 1957 and which many in Singapore expected to eventually join in a political union. Reflecting on these sorts of questions, Marshall's successor as chief minister, Lim Yew Hock, articulated what loyalty to Singapore and a "Malayan identity" meant to him, reconciling the distinctions between the two in an appeal to federalism:

> I am a Malayan, but I am as Singaporean as were my parents before me, and my loyalty to Malaya, of which we are a part in heart and of which we hope to be a part in political reality, is through my loyalty to Singapore.[23]

Lau (2003, 196) has argued that a specifically Singaporean orientation, as opposed to the Malayan one that had been the focus of postwar nationalists, began to emerge in 1955

---

22) Leaders Turn on Heah, *Straits Times*, February 18, 1956, p. 8.
23) Speech by the Chief Minister, Mr. Lim Yew Hock, at the British European Association Dinner at the Sea View Hotel, at 9.30pm, on Friday, July 26, 1957, National Archives of Singapore. The simplicity of Lim's statement belied the complexity that was involved in working out what Singapore citizenship would mean after Singapore joined the Malaysian Federation; Singapore citizens would also simultaneously become Malaysian Federal citizens in 1963 by the operation of law. Some political leaders, such as Marshall, advocated doing away entirely with a unique Singapore citizenship, in order to avoid the possibility of Singaporeans becoming second-class citizens with political disabilities within the Federation. Lee, on the other hand, argued for the retention of Singapore citizenship for, among many reasons, the fact that doing away with Singapore citizenship after a protracted public campaign of promoting its importance would have been deeply confusing for the public. These political debates are outside the scope of this article (Radio Singapore Press Release, DO 169/250, National Archives of Singapore).

after Malayan ambivalence about a potential merger.[24] Although citizenship came to be largely framed within territorialized concepts of political statehood that were complicated by questions about Singapore's political future and possible inclusion in a federal state, citizenship was also understood in reference to deterritorialized understandings of loyalty to empire and post-imperial links to Britain.

Apart from the fact that Singapore citizenship was linked to different potential political configurations, the notion of citizenship itself was contested. In the subsequent sections of this article I will trace how citizenship came to be framed within a discourse of loyalty and allegiance by political and community leaders. Using oral history, I will then look beneath the official discourse to shed light on the reasons and considerations that informed citizenship decisions made by individuals.

Singapore Citizenship: Allegiance and Loyalty

The idea of citizenship articulated and promoted by both the late colonial British authorities and the local political establishment in Singapore was that of a status conferring rights to individuals but also duties and social responsibilities that required allegiance and loyalty from citizen-subjects. This civic concept of citizenship was certainly not a new one, but the heightened administrative emphasis on declaring, performing, and ascertaining loyalty in Malaya and Singapore was a direct consequence of the particular racial dynamics and diasporic politics in these territories. The issue of citizenship in Singapore was closely linked to that of citizenship in Malaya, where racial considerations figured prominently, particularly in questions about the suitability of the large Indian and Chinese communities for citizenship.

The British government attempted to impose a liberal and expansive citizenship regime after World War II in 1946, under the briefly constituted Malayan Union. This proposal would have granted birthright citizenship (*jus soli*) to a large number of non-Malay residents of Malaya, in an effort to foster a multiracial Malayan national consciousness in recognition of the plural society that Malaya had become (Sopiee 1974, 18; Cheah 1978, 99; Harper 1999).[25] These plans were scrapped after vociferous opposition from Malay nationalists and the traditional Malay aristocracy, who were unwilling to relinquish

---

24) Quah Sy Ren (2015, 96–112) has discussed the Malayan consciousness that emerged among Chinese intellectuals in Singapore.

25) According to M. R. Stenson, the creation of the Malayan Union thus signifies a final acknowledgment on the part of the colonial authorities that Malaya was no longer constituted of separate ethnic communities but had become a fundamentally multiracial society (M. R. Stenson, cited in Lau 1989, 216).

political power and felt that indigenous Malays would become politically and economically marginalized in a multiracial Malayan state economically dominated by non-Malays.[26]

Including the population of Singapore, in Malaya the Chinese and Indian communities together outnumbered the Malay community. As Lau points out, while Malays comprised 53.8 percent of the population of Malaya in 1911, by 1941 they comprised only 41 percent, with Chinese migrants comprising 43 percent and Indian migrants 14 percent (Lau 1989, 217).[27] In the eyes of Malay political elites, Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947, as well as the Chinese Communist Party's consolidation of power in mainland China in 1949 and the Communist Party of Malaya's political ambitions, strengthened the view that large populations of Indians and Chinese in Malaya constituted a potential fifth column for large foreign powers that would potentially exercise influence over their "nationals" and threaten the sovereignty of the future Malayan state.

Adding to this perception was that the Qing government in China had introduced legislation in 1909 holding that every individual with Chinese parentage was a Chinese citizen regardless of their place of birth, on the principle of *jus sanguinus*, or hereditary rights.[28] This fundamental principle stayed in place even as the nation-state moved through the republican era, and through the separate ROC and PRC governments.[29]

After Indian independence, Malay elites in Malaya were wary of what they feared would be the active influence of India over Indians in Malaya, a fear shared by British

---

26) The "Malay" community in Singapore was at this time highly heterogeneous and included many recent arrivals from the Dutch East Indies.

27) The non-Malay population also comprised various layers of communities who had lived in Malaya for varied lengths of time and had differing orientations toward Malaya. Some syncretic communities, such as the Chinese and Indian Peranakans, had centuries-long precolonial links to Malaya. Straits Chinese and Indians similarly had emerged as distinct communities with strong ties to Malaya. Other communities were made up of a mixture of migrants who had been in Malaya and Singapore for varied lengths of time: some long domiciled, others much more recent. In the case of the Indian community, these layered migrations produced tensions over questions of leadership, representation, and the appropriate level of cultural and political connection with India. And these tensions manifested themselves in the associational life of places like Singapore as early as the late 1930s. By the end of the war many children of migrants had been born in Singapore in Malaya, when population increases were for the first time weighted toward births rather than migration.

28) Shao Dan (2009, 4–28) has written about the origins and implications of the principle of *jus sanguinis* and its implications in China across different periods of modern history. Carine Pina-Guerassimoff and Eric Guerassimoff (2007, 245–264) have also discussed in detail the Chinese state's evolving policies on overseas Chinese during the twentieth century.

29) Lau, discussing the Chinese Nationality Law of 1929, which claimed all persons of Chinese race as Chinese subjects, argued that it was in principle possible for a Chinese person to "denationalise" and renounce their status. However, in practice this was made almost impossible due to obstacles put in place by the Chinese government (Lau 1989, 217). British Colonial Office officials also raised this issue when discussing the problems involved in creating a Malayan Union citizenship (Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, CO 537/1542, 25, National Archives UK).

officials. In 1946 a working committee established to examine the question of citizenship in Malaya had concluded that while there were many Indians who identified with and expressed loyalty toward Malaya, there were nonetheless "a great number who, as is also the case with other communities, have not identified themselves with the country to the extent of substantiating a claim for equal political rights with the people of the country."[30]

It was in this context that the notion of civic citizenship became important as communities had to demonstrate and perform loyalty in order to acquire various forms of social and political capital and justify claims to citizenship. For certain communities in Singapore, loyalty and the civic responsibility associated with political citizenship were not unfamiliar concepts. As Chua Ai Lin has argued, the concept of "imperial citizenship" as a status conferring specific rights and signaling civic and democratic participation had already emerged as early as the interwar period in anglophone communities in the Straits Settlements (Chua 2008, 22).[31] Public expressions and performative displays of loyalty became a means by which communities demonstrated and performed their imperial citizenship as a means of laying claim to political and representative rights and social capital. During the interwar period, beyond vocal expressions of imperial loyalty, various communities—such as the Ceylon Tamils and Straits Chinese—also contributed money, participated in imperial celebrations, and volunteered for military service in order to demonstrate and perform their claims to citizenship (Chua 2008, 26).

The Straits Chinese community, comprising multigenerational families born in British colonies, enjoyed the legal status of British subjects and had long ties with the region. Also known informally as the "King's Chinese," the Straits Chinese had long held strong emotional ties to the British Empire. Although the community's attitudes and strategies would change, during early discussions pertaining to Singapore citizenship the Straits Chinese attempted to distinguish themselves from other Chinese communities by positioning themselves as more deserving of the privilege of citizenship through their civic-mindedness and proper understanding of responsible citizenship. In the early 1950s a section of the Singapore Straits Chinese British Association criticized the foreign-born Chinese push for citizenship as being an opportunistic move for security rather than being demonstrative of a commitment to Malaya or Singapore: "We are sick to death of

---

30) Constitutional Proposals for Malaya, p. 112, COL 108/21/J, British Library.
31) Unlike postcolonial state citizenship, imperial citizenship was a fundamentally transnational concept. It conveyed the relationship of an individual to the British sovereign rather than to a territory, colony, state, or nation. In practice, however, imperial citizenship was, according to Sai Siew-Min (2013, 53), a "vague and unsatisfactory notion" because white dominions failed to regard non-Europeans in dependent territories as fellow citizens. Nonetheless, it was utilized in dependent territories as a basis for civil liberties and political rights.

those alien Chinese who cause all the trouble in this land and who will, if left unchecked, wreck the future of all Straits Chinese."[32]

Such sentiments are illustrative of the kinds of tensions and complex relationships that played out over the issue of citizenship rights and belonging, between various kinds of settled and immigrant communities that found themselves situated together within larger "racial" collectives in political calculations about the ethnic configuration of the future state.[33] Paying respects to the 57-year-old Singapore Straits Chinese British Association in 1957, Singapore Governor Sir Robert Black emphasized the civic concept of citizenship when he praised the Straits Chinese for their sacrifices during the war and for "their ready acceptance of the burdens which a community must impose upon its citizens." He predicted that they would bring a "continuity and a tradition of loyalty and of responsibility" that would help to ensure that citizenship became a meaningful basis for the establishment of the franchise and a national community.[34]

Just as expressions of loyalty had produced various forms of social and political capital for communities in an imperial context, as far as Singapore citizenship was concerned they were also utilized by Chinese and Indian communities in particular to deflect criticism about the basis of their claims to citizenship. Many of these fears were not unwarranted. Strong undercurrents of Indian and Chinese nationalism, first becoming significant during the interwar period, remained among the Indians and Chinese in both Singapore and Malaya; and emotional attachment to the overseas homelands became a consideration that made many reluctant to adopt not only Singapore citizenship but, earlier, Malayan citizenship and CUKC.

British Chinese Affairs officers who tried to account for the initial lack of enthusiasm for CUKC proposals among the broader Chinese community in Singapore in 1948 were of the opinion that this was due to the feeling among many Chinese that adopting a new citizenship entailed the adoption of a new "nationality" and hence meant the renunciation

---

32) A Straits Chinese, *Straits Times*, October 12, 1950, p. 6. A segment of the Indian community was also of the opinion that Marshall had made a mistake by expanding Singapore citizenship and granting rights that were previously enjoyed disproportionately by the Indian community more widely, thus diluting their political influence in society (Singh, Mohinder, Accession No. 00546/65, Reel 60, National Archives of Singapore).

33) Another example of this was the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, generally made up of longer-settled Chinese residents in Singapore, lobbying for restrictive citizenship criteria in the early 1950s in an attempt to limit the political rights of Chinese union leaders who were gaining social prominence among postwar Chinese labor (Duncanson, Dennis J. [Dr.], Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3, National Archives of Singapore).

34) Speech by H.E. the Governor, Sir Robert Black, at the Straits Chinese British Association Dinner, at the Victoria Memorial Hall, at 8.15pm, on Friday, November 8, 1957, National Archives of Singapore.

of their "Chineseness" or ethnic identity.[35]   Many preferred the creation of a localized and very limited municipal citizenship in Singapore modeled on municipal citizenship of Chinese treaty ports, particularly one that would not have a perceived impact on their Chinese nationality. According to Dennis Duncanson, a Chinese Affairs officer:

> The Chinese-speaking people had very little English. Some of them who had none at all, who were faced with the prospect of taking out British papers, said, Well I will be divesting myself of my Chineseness if I do this, and I don't want to do it. And I don't see how it is relevant to Singapore. After all Singapore is really a Chinese city. And if I am going to exercise the citizenship rights the whole thing should be focused locally.[36]

Rajabali Jumabhoy, a prominent Indian community leader in Singapore and the first president of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce, similarly remembered the great difficulty he had in initially persuading Indian community members to take up British nationality through CUKC status in order to gain political rights and the franchise in the colony.[37] He attributed this to the strength of feeling that they had for India.[38] Many in the Indian community in Singapore had during the interwar period rallied to the cause of Indian nationalism. During the Japanese occupation, only a few years prior to CUKC status being offered, the wider Indian community in Singapore and Malaya had been mobilized in a sweeping anticolonial Indian nationalist effort under Subhas Chandra Bose (Rai 2014, 239–279).

Interviews conducted with Indians employed in the Port of Singapore Authority as part of an academic exercise in 1966, only nine years after the ordinance, provide additional interesting insights into how some segments of the Indian community deliberated over the issue of Singapore citizenship in the late 1950s and early 1960s. According to the interviewer, the decision to register for citizenship was taken by most after careful deliberation, and "the men weighed the pros and cons quite seriously, because, to an Indian, the motherland was not to be so easily cast aside for the mere sake of amassing a fortune in an alien country" (Dharan 1966, 73).

One interviewee recalled that his parents were branded "traitors" by their community in India for failing to buy land in India, thus signaling their intention to remain in Singapore (Dharan 1966, 76). Such considerations cited by the respondents shed light on the role of national identity in translocal families and communities, and notions of guilt and shame in migration and citizenship decisions, or what Selvaraj Velayutham and Amanda Wise, in a different and more contemporary context, termed the "moral econ-

---

35) Duncanson, Dennis J. (Dr.), Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3.
36) Duncanson, Dennis J. (Dr.), Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3.
37) Jumabhoy, Rajabali, Accession No. 000074, Reel/Disc 21/37, National Archives of Singapore.
38) According to Jumabhoy, the majority eventually applied for CUKC status.

omy" governing life decisions, choices, and practices among translocal communities and families (Velayutham and Wise 2005, 27–47).

Given the strong emotional attachment of large sections of the community to overseas homelands and their perceived "unworthiness" or unsuitability for citizenship, prospective citizens from these sizable minority communities in Malaya had to demonstrate that they were adequately loyal and culturally assimilable or "Malayanized." The British high commissioner in Malaya, Donald MacGillivray, wrote to the secretary of state for the colonies describing Malayan Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's opinion of the Chinese in Singapore and their claims to citizenship in 1956, explaining why he did not want to accept Singapore into Malaya in the future:

> The Chief Minister's feelings about the Chinese in Singapore are the same. He considers them to be insincere. He does not think that an extension of citizenship will help to build up a loyalty to Malaya among the Chinese; they will remain China-minded. He thinks it wrong to grant citizenship to such people.[39]

Given the political pressure facing non-Malay communities in Malaya and Singapore, the language of loyalty became the political currency by which communities demonstrated that they were worthy of inclusion into the national body. A year earlier, in 1955, at a dinner event hosted in honor of the Tunku, Indian Commissioner R. K. Tandon declared:

> Your Indian subjects . . . Mr Chief Minister . . . will forever give their toil and tears, their esteem and affection to Malaya. For them there is no other land but Malaya; the soil of this country is sacred to them; their Ganges and Jumna, Krishna and Cauvery lie in this land; their places of pilgrimage are no more Amarnath or Kailashnath, Rameswaram or Tirupathi but the holy places of Malaya. These descendants of the Indian pilgrim fathers are at one with Malaya and will forever give you their true and unstinted allegiance.[40]

Tandon's declaration as a representative of India reflected what came to be the official position of the Indian government. This was to encourage Indians settled overseas to identify with and acquire the citizenship of their adopted homes in order to secure their rights as minorities.[41] This position was adopted also by other foreign governments,

---

39) Chinese Attitude to Citizenship Policy in Malaya, CO1020/258, National Archives of Singapore.
40) This Is Your Land—Tandon Tells Malayan Indians, *Indian Daily Mail*, October 10, 1955.
41) India's Attitude to Her Overseas Nationals: Indians Abroad Must Make Their Choice, *Straits Times*, April 20, 1956, p. 8. British government officers continued to be wary of Indian influence. The British high commissioner in New Delhi commented on the wide divergence between official statements and practice on the ground. He noted in particular the tendency of Indian government representatives to exercise influence in local Indian associational life in British territories, going beyond their official remit, which was limited to cultural affairs and the interests of potential Indian citizens (Policy of the Government of India towards Indians Resident Overseas, p. 1a, FCO141/14404, National Archives UK).

including those of Ceylon and Indonesia.[42] Although Tandon was a representative of the Indian government, his speech was typical of the kind of highly effusive and hyperbolic language used by community leaders in Malaya in public events and newspaper editorials to demonstrate loyalty.

In the case of leaders of non-Malay communities in Singapore that saw a permanent future on the island, they too had to demonstrate and perform loyalty and a localized identity orientation as a means of signaling their worthiness for citizenship in the lead-up to the implementation of Singapore citizenship. Community leaders who had gained a sense of where the political winds were blowing were quick to channel their efforts into persuading as many of their constituents as possible to register for citizenship, in order to shore up the ethnic representation of their communities in a future democratic society.[43] Subramaniam Manickar Vasagar, a city councillor and a member of the Progressive Party, remembered the efforts of political party members and councillors to encourage community registrations in order to increase the size of their electoral bases. Although most of the prominent parties of the time in Singapore were multiracial, grassroots efforts at canvassing were still conducted along ethnic lines. Vasagar recalled his efforts within the Indian community and how, despite resistance from certain quarters, he "managed to convince quite a lot of people."[44]

Such local political and community leaders who were eager to strengthen the political and social position of their communities were the first to adopt the language of loyalty, allegiance, and belonging in their efforts to convince as many members of their communities as possible to take up citizenship. In many cases, grassroots organizations were among the first to attempt to trigger a shift in the identity orientations of their constituents as well. From the early 1950s until the ordinance in 1957, a range of civil societies and ethnic organizations and associations began using the language of loyalty and belonging to mobilize communities toward future citizenship in both the Federation and in Singapore. For example, the Tamils Reform Association (TRA), formed in Singapore in the 1930s, and the Singapore Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (SDMK; Dravidian Progress Association), another Tamil social reform organization that set up a branch in Singapore in the postwar period, both embarked on spirited campaigns to encourage Tamil residents

---

42) Ceylonese Told: Be Citizens, *Straits Times*, November 18, 1957, p. 5; Citizens: Indonesia Doesn't Object, *Straits Times*, November 19, 1957, p. 4.

43) The Malay press also highlighted Malay concerns about *bangsa asing* (non-Malay communities) winning electoral representation as a result of new citizenships (Kera'ayatan Singapura jadi soal: Fikiran Orang Ramai, *Berita Harian*, November 19, 1957, p. 4).

44) Vasagar mentioned that he found it much more difficult to convince the laboring classes to adopt citizenship (Vasagar, Subramaniam Manickar, Accession No. 001301, Reel/Disc 7/18, National Archives of Singapore).

to register for citizenship. Like many ethnic organizations of the time that promoted citizenship for their communities at the community level, TRA and SDMK members ran an oath-taking and registration booth on their premises as well as engaging in a door-to-door registration drive.[45] During this period, members of both the TRA and SDMK, organizations which were heavily influenced by Dravidian social movements and politics in Tamil Nadu, consciously framed citizenship in the idiom of loyalty and belonging.[46] Palanivelu Natesan, an employee of Radio Singapore, registered for Singapore citizenship at the headquarters of the TRA upon the encouragement of its leader G. Sarangapany.[47] Palanivelu recalls that after his registration he began referring to himself as a "Singapore Indian" and began publishing poems and broadcasting songs in the 1950s to promote Singapore citizenship.[48] Others in the SDMK began to use their outreach efforts to encourage Indians in Singapore to begin to adopt a Singaporeanized or Malayanized outlook.

Exploring Reasons for Citizenship Decisions: Dual Citizenship and Mobilities

When the subject of citizenship was first floated in Malaya and Singapore, many non-Malay communities requested dual citizenship provisions, rejecting an association between citizenship and territorial exclusivity, envisioning a much more fluid and trans-boundary future for their communities. Consultations held with representatives and leaders from the Indian community in Malaya in 1946 revealed that Indians had a limited understanding of the somewhat ambiguous concept of citizenship of the Malayan Union and what it entailed. Representatives of various Indian associations, including the Central Indian Association of Malaya, were anxious to know whether dual citizenship would be allowed and requested that this provision be granted to non-Malays.[49]

R. Somasundram, a community representative who attended the consultations, expressed his frustration and confusion at the rapidly changing regional circumstances that Malayan Union citizenship proposals seemed to suggest, and their impact on mobilities:

---

45) Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13, National Archives of Singapore; Kannusamy s/o Pakirisamy, Accession No. 000081, Reel/Disc 27/28, National Archives of Singapore. There was a substantial demand for Singapore citizenship registration forms from a range of voluntary organizations before the ordinance (*Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates: Second Session of the First Legislative Assembly*, 1st ser., Vol. 4, col. 2808, 1957).

46) Malayan Tamils Pledge Loyalty to Malaya, *Indian Daily Mail*, October 10, 1955.

47) Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13.

48) Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13.

49) Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, 167, CO 537/1542.

> The Tamils should be given all facilities to settle down in Malaya. They should not be asked to renounce their rights as British subjects. They should not be asked to renounce their rights in Ceylon or India. Why should there be any restriction of movement within the Empire?[50]

Throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, many communities made known their preference for forms of dual citizenship in Malaya and Singapore and jurisdictional overlaps that would increase their freedom of movement and maximize their opportunities in multiple territories. They were not alone in lobbying for dual citizenship: the British authorities pushed national governments-in-waiting for dual citizenship provisions in order to strengthen the prestige and influence of the Commonwealth of Nations among former colonial subjects. Local political leadership in Singapore and Malaya, however, regarded dual citizenship as being politically untenable and joined the "strenuous opposition" to it that emerged among Commonwealth governments.[51]

In May 1960, a speech given by Singapore Minister for Home Affairs Ong Pang Boon at the second reading of a bill to amend the requirements for Singapore citizenship spelled out the government's plan to tighten citizenship restrictions. It reflected the new thinking within the PAP government, which had won the reins of full internal self-government the year prior. Previously supportive of a liberal approach to citizenship, the government now embarked on a policy to restrict access to citizenship, rescind citizenships awarded erroneously, and clamp down significantly on what it viewed as conflicting allegiances arising from overlapping statuses that impeded assimilation. Dual citizenship became a key target of this approach in policy:[52]

> The introduction of the citizenship law in 1957 has undoubtedly given many of the immigrant population a stake in the country, and to date more than 400,000 people have obtained Singapore citizenship. Nevertheless, it would be foolish for us if we think that all these 400,000 new citizens have identified themselves completely with the political aspirations of the people of this country. A large number of new citizens have taken advantage of the very liberal citizenship law to obtain citizenship for the sake of convenience in order to enjoy rights and privileges of citizenship, such as employment, public assistance and other social services, with little obligation on their part. However, this position cannot be maintained for an indefinite period of time, particularly at this critical stage of nation building. The continued increase in the number of unassimilated new citizens, whose loyalty lies elsewhere or who have not shown by words or actions to be likely to identify themselves with the destiny of the country, cannot be tolerated. **The possession of dual citizenship, the ease with which a citizen of the U.K. and Colonies and those born in the Federation**

---

50) Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, 167, CO 537/1542.

51) Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, 167, CO 537/1542; Citizenship Riddles, *Straits Times*, May 3, 1957, p. 6.

52) One characteristic of the period between 1945 and 1965 was the legislative progression in Malaya and Singapore toward the creation and enforcement of a single exclusive nationality as a marker of undivided loyalty and political integrity and sovereignty (Low 2017).

can obtain citizenship must cease, particularly at this time when the Government is also facing the terrible problem of finding employment for its large number of unemployed citizens. The purpose of this Bill, therefore, is to confine citizenship rights to those who have demonstrated their undivided loyalty to the State and intention to reside here permanently, and to debar those who seek to obtain citizenship for reasons of convenience or expediency thereby hoping to enjoy the best of two worlds.[53]

However, when Singapore citizenship was first introduced a few years prior, certain kinds of dual status were initially allowed. Nationals of Commonwealth countries could also for a continued period of time hold Singapore citizenship along with an external citizenship, depending on nationality laws in their countries. On the basis of reciprocity, for example, Indian citizens were allowed to hold dual citizenship with Singapore until 1960, when that provision was ended as part of state efforts to end forms of dual citizenship. Certain classes of citizens were also previously granted special status in Singapore. In 1957, while Federal Malayan citizens and CUKCs could take an "oath of Allegiance and Loyalty," all other foreign nationals had to undertake the additional step involved in an oath of "Renunciation, Allegiance and Loyalty." The proposed amendments to the 1960 bill were aimed at ending the special status of Federal citizens and CUKCs who previously had access to rights in these overlapping but delineated jurisdictions. In practical terms, however, individuals were still allowed to maintain their British nationality alongside Singapore citizenship, and the British government actively encouraged its nationals in Singapore to apply for Singapore citizenship in order to secure their position on the island and strengthen British influence in Singaporean society.

In 1963, dual nationality effectively came to an end in Singapore when Singapore joined Malaysia. All Singapore citizens automatically became also citizens and nationals of the newly created Federation of Malaysia. Fearing a wave of applications for entry into the UK from non-European British CUKCs, the British authorities issued diplomatic instructions to discourage public discussion of these implications in Singapore. As a result, many CUKCs who had taken up Singapore citizenship with the intention of retaining British nationality suddenly found themselves stripped of this status. This varied group included a small number of continental European refugees from World War II as well as Eurasians of British ancestry.[54]

---

53) Singapore Citizenship Amendment Bill, 16-05-1960, 844.
54) Minister's Case: Nationality, HO213/1612, National Archives UK. When it came to the entry of CUKCs and Commonwealth citizens into the UK, British officials were caught between contradictory policy priorities: on the one hand, the UK promoting freedom of movement, dual citizenship, and Commonwealth citizenship to strengthen its influence over the Commonwealth for economic and other reasons; and on the other, British policy makers trying their best to limit and discourage non-European immigration into the UK on racial grounds. These issues lie beyond the scope of this article but have been discussed in some detail in Bivins (2007, 263–289).

This episode is illustrative not only of the ways in which people attempted to use citizenship to secure favorable opportunities but also of the anxieties that accompanied a rapidly changing legislative framework, and how individuals who had difficulties keeping abreast of legislative implications found themselves deprived of citizenship. Newspapers at the time made frequent mention of large groups of individuals who found themselves facing difficulties acquiring or retaining citizenship owing to frequently changing legislative requirements.[55]

For many, particularly those with transnational family networks, apprehension about citizenship stemmed from considerable confusion about what the adoption of Singapore citizenship would mean for their ability to travel back to their countries of origin. This diverse group included Malay Federal Malayan citizens who were unclear of the implications of Singapore citizenship on their rights in Federal Malaya.[56]

Indians, too, were unsure about the implications of their citizenship on travel to India. For example, K. P. Murthi, who was a volunteer with a Tamil cultural reformist society and took part in door-to-door campaigns to encourage Indians to become Singapore citizens, recalls that some "were afraid that if they take the citizenship, they cannot go back [to India]."[57] This fear features as a recurring theme in several oral history interviews, indicating that the implications of citizenship on travel rights were not clearly understood. Individuals had to keep abreast not only of complex policy developments in Singapore but of corresponding discussions in places like India. Sarah Ansari (2013, 285–312) highlights that during this period, independence in the shrinking British Empire could sometimes occur over a short period of time, but the wrapping up of the legal legacies of empire took years because new legal statuses and citizenship rights had to be harmonized with other states to avoid overlapping or conflicting jurisdictions.

The general implications of Singapore citizenship on travel and residency rights in multiple territories were poorly understood in the lead-up to the Singapore Citizenship Ordinance. In 1957, a few months prior to Malayan independence, a newspaper editorial commented about the lack of awareness of these issues even among ethnic community leaders in Singapore and the Federation:

> It is questionable how closely the leaders of the domiciled communities have followed, or even understood, these aspects of the citizenship problem . . . The danger is that in both territories the

---

55) These included, for example, thirty thousand CUKCs resident in Singapore who did not meet the two-year requirement for Singapore citizenship, as well as five thousand stateless individuals who could produce birth certificates to prove their birth in Singapore for citizenship (Rang keraayatan: Sungutan baharu bagi 30,000, *Berita Harian*, September 16, 1957, p. 5).

56) Kera'ayan: Penjelasan lanjut, *Berita Harian*, October 17, 1959, p. 5.

57) Murthi, K.P., Accession No. 000849, Reel/Disc 2/2, National Archives of Singapore.

more intricate part of the citizenship puzzle will have been settled before those most affected by the changes have learned what it is all about.[58]

Basic information about the qualifications for citizenship was conveyed to individuals through the printing and dissemination of thousands of leaflets in English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil.[59] However, for the average individual more complex information was harder to come by. Some newspapers, such as the *Nanyang Siang Pau* (Nanyang Business Daily), contained editorials that sought to answer more detailed questions about the particular benefits of citizenship, and the status of the spouses of citizens, or whether multiple wives of a single citizen husband were eligible for citizenship. The paper also featured question-and-answer-style columns that answered specific questions from readers about the implications of Singapore citizenship on their ability to travel and live in Federal Malaya, for example.[60]

Despite such public information efforts on the part of the government and press, public confusion persisted and continued after the PAP government came to power and proceeded to tighten and phase out dual citizenship. As a result, many communities relied on rumor and often inaccurate information from community members to ascertain the implications of citizenship. Further compounding the confusion was that the specificities of the options for non-citizen residents, in terms of long-term visas, work permits, and employment passes (issued in 1959), took a number of years to be determined in legislation amid a politically unstable period. In this climate many came to view the acquisition of Singapore citizenship as a form of temporary security.

For many Europeans, the 1950s and 1960s were an unsettling time in Singapore, which was caught up in the anticolonial fervor that gripped most of the region. Vernon Bartlett, a veteran *Straits Times* journalist, noted, in the words of another foreign correspondent in 1960, "the anti-white racialism that is so unpleasant is a feature of Singapore."[61] Another journalist writing for a London publication compared anti-European sentiment in Singapore with anti-Chinese sentiment in the Federation, going so far as to also compare it with the racism of South African apartheid.[62] On account of the Europeans' association with the colonial regime, their future in Singapore was precarious and uncertain. In public discourse in the 1950s, once again the loyalty of Europeans was linked to

58) Murthi, K.P., Accession No. 000849, Reel/Disc 2/2.
59) Operation Franchise to Begin, *Straits Times*, August 12, 1957, p. 2.
60) *Nanyang Siang Pau*, November 7, 1957, p. 6.
61) Colour Bar in Reverse, *Eastern World Asian Monthly* 14(6) (June 1960), A1838 ITEM 3024/1/4: Singapore-Migration and Citizenship, National Archives of Singapore.
62) Colour Bar in Reverse, *Eastern World Asian Monthly* 14(6) (June 1960), A1838 ITEM 3024/1/4: Singapore-Migration and Citizenship.

expressions of loyalty to Malaya and the adoption of local citizenship. John Laycock, a Singapore legislative councillor and Lee Kuan Yew's onetime employer, argued that domiciled Europeans had a place in local politics as long as they identified with the local-born, avoided politically organizing as Europeans, and adopted local citizenship to demonstrate their commitment.[63]

A lawyer and later president of the Law Society in independent Singapore, Graham Starforth Hill, was sent to the island in 1953 by the Colonial Office to take up a position in the Attorney General's Chambers. There, he was told by the attorney general to forget any ambitions of career progression in the civil service that he might have had because the British were to be "kicked out" in a couple of years.[64] He later received an offer of employment from Dentons Rodyk, Singapore's oldest legal firm. This was a time when, he later recalled, there existed a climate of anti-Western sentiment among local political leaders. For example, the PAP's Labour and Law Minister Kenneth Byrne spoke of "sweeping all the Europeans into the sea" as part of the policy of "Malayanisation" to replace Europeans with Asians within public and private sector leadership and appointments (Cheong 2011, 114). Like many other Europeans and Indian civil servants, Hill viewed his British citizenship as an "insurance policy." He adopted Singapore citizenship because he was afraid that he would lose his employment.[65]

Many interviewees recalled that the decision to adopt citizenship was shaped by pragmatic concerns, including not only employment but also access to education and housing and welfare benefits. Lu Tian Lee, a rickshaw puller who arrived in Singapore in 1935, when he was in his twenties, recalled the rumors about state welfare provisions which influenced his decision to become a citizen, and his continued emotional connection to China after his decision:

> I heard people say this—the government also mentioned it—that if you couldn't work anymore, you could get some financial help from the state. If you weren't a citizen, you couldn't do this. Everyone said this at the time, that you have to get citizenship rights or when you die you couldn't have a funeral and a place to be buried [*laughs*] . . . I live here, so I did it. But I still had China in my heart [*laughs*]. Whatever special events happened in China, whether it was Buddha's birthday, or any other date, I remembered it in my heart.[66]

Decisions about citizenship were also in some cases shaped by social class and economic circumstance, the ability to access and navigate administrative processes, and strategic

---

63) Europeans in Local Politics? Yes, but . . ., *Straits Times*, January 22, 1955, p. 7.
64) Hill, Graham Starforth, Accession No. E000054, Reel/Disc 04/09, National Archives of Singapore.
65) Hill, Graham Starforth, Accession No. E000054, Reel/Disc 04/09. Hill adopted citizenship in 1955.
66) Lu Tian Lee, Accession No. 000669, Reel/Disc 15/16, National Archives of Singapore (translated from Hokkien).

considerations for transnational family members. Citizenship acquisition was seen as a means of expanding opportunities for a new citizen's overseas family members, but not all were willing or able to bring their families over. Lu also recalled the pressure at various times to bring his family over to Singapore and his decision against doing so:

> I didn't have the ability/know-how to think too much about this; I was also just tired/weary. My son did suggest I apply for him to come over, but I said "you think it's so easy to do these applications?" You have to know people; you have to have money. You have to spend a huge amount of money back home, and whether you will earn anything over here, I don't know. I thought, that I've lived to this age is my own life's burden. I've had to slog like a cow or a horse. Whether my kids are good or bad, let them stay in the village to farm. That would give me more peace of mind . . . As a rickshaw puller, I couldn't even look after myself. If my family came, what would I do? You need to have a sum of money to even start, and then to add on what it would take to raise a family—I could faint. But my relatives and friends kept saying, everyone is going over. You won't help us to do this? . . . In 1954 or 1955, my son was only 5 or 6 years old. In the end, I needed my relatives to help raise him. I was away and couldn't even look after myself.[67]

Another individual, an Indian male interviewed in the 1960s, made his way to Singapore to recover after his experiences as a forced laborer on the Thai-Burma railway during the Japanese occupation. This individual decided to remain in Singapore because to have returned to India without wealth would have brought him shame. This highlights how the option to return to overseas homelands was not only complicated by conflict but for many also shaped by societal and familial expectations about the economic status of overseas returnees (Dharan 1966, 75).

In her review of the development of approaches to citizenship, Catherine Cottrell Studemeyer attests to the continued usefulness of the concept of "flexible citizenship" in understanding transnational movements and identities, governmentality, and citizenship (Studemeyer 2015, 565–576).[68] Yet, she argues that in order to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals negotiate and navigate citizenship, it is important to expand beyond the early focus of studies of "flexible citizenship" on the accumulation of capital and power, to take into account the individual pursuit of "less tangible, less quantifiable life goals relating to lifestyle, identity, and everyday practices" (Studemeyer 2015, 565).

For some in the Chinese community, citizenship decisions were made also in the context of their fear of deportation during the ongoing anti-Communist Emergency. This was certainly the opinion of some sections of the colonial authorities. British security officers in the Special Branch, for example, suggested that the wholesale embrace of

---

67) Lu Tian Lee, Accession No. 000669, Reel/Disc 15/16.
68) Ong Aihwa, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

citizenship by certain sections of the Chinese community had little to do with loyalty and patriotism. They believed, rather, that "large numbers of alien Chinese" "who would otherwise have had little interest in becoming Singapore citizens" were now feeling "impelled" to accept citizenship as a "form of insurance" against the colonial authority's practice of detaining and banishing suspected "subversives" and Communists from the Chinese community.[69] The vast majority of banishments during the final days of decolonization occurred with "alien Chinese" who had not acquired citizenship of Singapore and were not otherwise British subjects.[70] With Singapore being a British dependency, the Singapore authorities had unique sweeping powers to banish non-citizens whose presence was not conducive to a vaguely defined "public good" under the Undesirable Persons Ordinance. The Singapore authorities used these powers liberally in the late 1950s and early 1960s, being limited in their efforts only by the reluctance of the People's Republic of China to receive large numbers of political exiles and deported criminals.[71]

The issue caught the attention of Britain's Colonial Office, which sounded caution over Britain's legal obligation to admit into the United Kingdom non-citizen banishees from Singapore who held British subjecthood.[72] Diplomatic cables from London to high commission staff in Singapore exchanged the details of individual cases to discuss the implications of novel situations that had arisen as a result of banishments from the island. One such document that was shared with the UK high commissioners in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur was a letter from a 71-year-old Singapore citizen, Sim Swee Keng, who pleaded with the superintendent of Seramban Prison for the release of his son. His son was scheduled for banishment to China in March 1963. Sim, who suggested that he and his elderly wife needed their son to take care of them in their old age, highlighted that his son, who had been born in Singapore in 1940, had no relatives or connection to China. Sim used his own Singapore citizenship as a basis for appeal, highlighting his citizenship certificate number: 220499.[73]

Citizenship, however, did not afford complete protection to individuals during this

---

69) FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666, pp. 169–170.

70) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020), National Archives of Singapore.

71) The total numbers of banished people were limited by fear of negative reaction from the Communist Chinese government, which had no diplomatic relations with Singapore or the Federation at this time. The Singapore and Federation governments at various times sought British assistance to facilitate banishments to China via Hong Kong and held negotiations in 1958 to coordinate their banishments through unofficial negotiations with a Canton-based shipping company. Both governments also sought to block Chinese refugees fleeing Communist China and Indonesia (Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 [C-200220-021/VO-PV/020]).

72) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).

73) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).

period because it was not conceived as an inalienable status for certain classes of citizens, but rather as a status that could be withdrawn as a form of punitive sanction, and also as a means of weeding out politically and socially undesirable elements during the early formation of Singapore's citizenry.[74] Those who had acquired citizenship through naturalization rather than automatically or through registration, by virtue of being born in Singapore or to citizens of Singapore, were therefore liable to having their citizenships revoked for criminal or subversive activity.[75] All Singapore citizens prior to 1963 also enjoyed British subjecthood under provisions in the British Nationality Act, as well as Commonwealth citizenship with certain rights within member states. For many, losing Singapore citizenship meant potentially losing all statuses and their attendant protections simultaneously, significantly raising the personal costs for individuals engaging in political activity deemed subversive.[76] Despite criticisms of the policy, the legal denial or reversal of acquired citizenship provided a means by which the Singaporean and Malaysian governments sought to impose political control over the population and justify policies like banishment by placing individuals outside the new regime of rights.

Conclusion

The political construction and promotion of citizenship was tied to a discourse of "loyalty" to bounded nation-states in the postwar period by Britain and the governments of newly emerging states. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, individuals had a range of complex reasons for their own personal choices about citizenship acquisition. Singapore presents a unique case study given its large immigrant and settler populations with a spectrum of external orientations, and the complex politics of indigeneity that shaped relations between communities. In this regard Singapore also presents an interesting point of comparison with other works of scholarship exploring the history of citizenship and decolonization in Southeast Asia that deal with themes like minorities, assimilation, nation-building, and indigeneity.[77]

---

74) Individuals like Lord Selkirk questioned the right of the Singapore authorities to deprive individuals of Singapore citizenship. The Colonial Office concluded that Singapore was following the normal practice of sovereign states by exercising the right to revoke "acquired statuses" (Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 [C-200220-021/VO-PV/020]).

75) An individual could also lose their Singapore citizenship for utilizing the rights of citizenship of a foreign state, or for residing overseas for a long, continuous stretch of time (Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 [C-200220-021/VO-PV/020]).

76) Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).

77) For a recently published study that explores the experiences of Indonesia's Chinese population in the 1960s in the context of Sino-Indonesian relations, see Zhou (2019).

Archival sources reveal that individuals responded to the reshaping of the post-imperial world with varied strategies to mitigate uncertainties, maximize opportunities, maintain familial connections, or express and perform their identities and loyalties. When examined closely, these overlooked quotidian responses and reactions reveal an initial preference within many communities for forms of dual citizenship or overlapping rights in multiple jurisdictions, a preference for continued post-imperial connections with Britain among former anglophone communities, or conversely an aversion to vestiges of British nationality among anticolonialists and those influenced by Chinese and Indian nationalist sentiment. This suggests that attitudes to Britain, and emotional connections with external ancestral countries, were complicating factors during decolonization that led to a diversity of experiences. The ways in which individuals navigated the legal development of citizenship requirements were shaped also by social class and community networks. Individuals had to navigate the system while Singapore moved from a liberal citizenship regime aimed at enfranchising the population and granting democratic legitimacy to the Singapore government, to an increasingly restrictive and selective regime designed to weed out "undesirables" and those with divided loyalties.

Since its emergence in the 1990s, the field of citizenship studies has expanded its scope exponentially in response to shifts in conceptions of the citizenship-subject enacted by globalization and social movements dedicated to minority rights (Isin and Turner 2002, 1–10). Recent decades have seen a marked increase in scholarly investigations of citizenship within the contemporary global order, particularly in the areas of geography, anthropology, and sociology.[78] Influenced by the changes wrought to migration practices by the global ascendance of neoliberal capitalist regimes, much recent scholarship has also adopted approaches that facilitate a better understanding of citizenships negotiated within dynamic transnational spaces.[79]

This turn in citizenship scholarship has been pivotal in challenging the traditional conceptualization of citizenship as a linear and static, largely juridical relationship between the individual and the state. Within the previous model of understanding, citizenship was understood as a "thing-like" object granted to an abstract, by and large passive subject whose actions were circumscribed by notions of loyalty and patriotism (Stasiulis and Bakan 1997, 113). Recent scholarship on citizenship, however, understands citizenship as a dynamic, albeit uneven, relationship of power between individuals and communities on the one hand, and nation-states or colonial powers on the other. This marks an important shift in paradigm insofar as this approach insists upon viewing the individual

---

78) For geographical approaches to citizenship, see Barnett and Low (2004). For a sociological approach to citizenship, see Soysal (2012, 383–393), also Ho (2009, 788–804).

79) See, for example, Faist (2000, 189–222).

as an active and agentive subject whose relationship to the nation-state is mediated by their lived experience. Individuals are therefore understood as subjects capable of deploying a range of strategies to respond to attempts by the state to substantiate, surveil, and regulate the identities of its citizens (Torpey 1999). Koh Sin Yee has highlighted how scholars dealing with contemporary migration have become interested in understanding the way in which citizenship is "experienced, understood, enacted and contested" as a bottom-up experience among individuals (Koh 2015, 3–27). Similarly, this paper has sought to combine an examination of the context behind the development of a legal architecture of citizenship and its accompanying discursive vernacular, with a study of how ordinary people understood these changes.

The indigeneity of the various sub-ethnic groups in Singapore considered "Malay" was accepted across a broad political spectrum during the 1950s and 1960s, and the implications of indigeneity on the citizenship claims of other communities have been explored to some degree in this paper. Given the focus of this paper on nonindigenous communities, the perspectives of non-elite Malays on the issues of citizenship during decolonization have not been examined in detail. Yet these perspectives remain crucial to a full understanding of the social history of the period, and such a study should perhaps be taken up by scholars of Malay identity more competent in Malay vernacular sources both oral and written.

By no means did the positionality of the Malays in Singapore as an indigenous community translate to a simplified or homogeneous community response to concepts like citizenship and nationality and their corresponding legal manifestations. Several scholars have already detailed the rich, complex, and varied responses of Malay political parties and groups to questions of identity, citizenship, nationality, and relations with other racial groups in Singapore. From the Malay Nationalist Party's articulation of an expansive Melayu Raya encompassing Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia as a single political unit, to Malay participation in an anti-*merdeka* movement favoring continued British rule in Singapore, Malay politics were shaped not just by differences in political ideology and social class but by differences in notions of territory, history, religion, and ethnicity.[80]

Beyond examining newspaper circulation figures, crowds at rallies and political events, and voting patterns, it is sometimes difficult to determine how ideological differences were received, understood, and perhaps influenced by non-elite Malay communities, particularly those not directly involved in unions or political organizations in their day-to-day lives. Although this paper has tried to briefly touch on some of these

---

80) For a survey of the evolution of Malay politics in Singapore, see Abdullah (2006, 316, 340).

perspectives using oral history, a dedicated study using more extensive oral history research, newspaper analysis, and further archival records can shed more light on this issue. Humairah Zainal and Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir (2021, 2–6) have highlighted how scholarship on Malays in the last ten years continues to be delineated along national lines with no concerted attempts at comparative or transnational approaches. Given the historically porous and complex nature of Malay identities and the territorial ambiguities that accompanied the political articulation of Malay indigeneity, it may be worth adopting such an approach in order to understand the social history of Malay attitudes to the emergence of citizenship regimes in the region.

Additionally, despite the importance of existing oral history records to understanding the sentiments of the other communities featured in this study, these tend to privilege the perspectives of those who held prominent civil appointments, and other educated elites. In this regard, further oral history interviews with individuals will help complement archival and newspaper sources in facilitating further insights into experiences "from below" and improving our understanding of the period.

Despite this scope for further work, this paper has suggested that reevaluating archival records and examining oral history to understand the choices and circumstances of ordinary individuals has the potential to shed light on an under-explored aspect of individuals' lived experiences during decolonization in Malaya. It has argued that the emergence of citizenship at the end of empire should not be understood only as a legal framework or as an institutional feature of state-building, but as a complex negotiation between communities, individuals, and states and represents an important part of the social history of decolonization in Singapore and the region.

References

Primary Sources

Newspapers and Websites
Berita Harian
Rang keraayatan: Sungutan baharu bagi 30,000 [Citizenship bill: new complaints for 30,000]. *Berita Harian* [Daily News], September 16, 1957, p. 5.
Kera'ayatan Singapura jadi soal: Fikiran Orang Ramai [Singapore citizenship comes into question: majority opinion]. *Berita Harian* [Daily News], November 19, 1957, p. 4.
Kera'ayatan: Penjelasan lanjut [Citizenship: a further explanation]. *Berita Harian* [Daily News], October

17, 1959, p. 5.

Indian Daily Mail
Malayan Tamils Pledge Loyalty to Malaya. *Indian Daily Mail*, October 10, 1955, p. 1.
This Is Your Land—Tandon Tells Malayan Indians. *Indian Daily Mail*, October 10, 1955, p. 1.

Nanyang Siang Pau
Nanyang Siang Pau [Nanyang Business Daily]. November 7, 1957, p. 6.

Straits Times
A Straits Chinese. *Straits Times*, October 12, 1950, p. 6.
As I Was Saying. *Straits Times*, October 14, 1950, p. 6.
Europeans in Local Politics? Yes, but . . . *Straits Times*, January 22, 1955, p. 7.
Leaders Turn on Heah. *Straits Times*, February 18, 1956, p. 8.
India's Attitude to Her Overseas Nationals: Indians Abroad Must Make Their Choice. *Straits Times*, April 20, 1956, p. 8.
Citizenship Riddles. *Straits Times*, May 3, 1957, p. 6.
Operation Franchise to Begin. *Straits Times*, August 12, 1957, p. 2.
Ceylonese Told: Be Citizens. *Straits Times*, November 18, 1957, p. 5.
Citizens: Indonesia Doesn't Object. *Straits Times*, November 19, 1957, p. 4.
60 Years of the Singapore Citizenship: From Hawkers to Millionaires, They All Queued Up. *Straits Times*, October 8, 2017. https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/60-years-of-the-singapore-citizen-ship-from-hawkers-to-millionaires-they-all-queued-up, accessed July 3, 2019.

Hansards
Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates: Second Session of the First Legislative Assembly, 1st ser., Vol. 4, col. 2641. 1957. https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=039_19571016_S0004_T0007, accessed April 14, 2021.
Singapore Legislative Assembly Debates: Second Session of the First Legislative Assembly, 1st ser., Vol. 4, col. 2808. 1957. https://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/topic?reportid=008_19571204_S0007_T0023, accessed April 15, 2021.

National Archives of Singapore
Alvis, Christabelle, Accession No. 002828, Reel/Disc 8/80.
Banishment of Prisoners to Other Countries, FO 1091/114 (C-200220-021/VO-PV/020).
Chinese Attitude to Citizenship Policy in Malaya, CO1020/258.
Colour Bar in Reverse, *Eastern World Asian Monthly* 14(6) (June 1960), A1838 ITEM 3024/1/4: Singa-pore-Migration and Citizenship.
Communities of Singapore (Part 2). https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/oral_history_interviews/browse-project-interviewee/65, accessed July 3, 2019.
Duncanson, Dennis J. (Dr.), Accession No. 000642, Reel/Disc 3.
Gorrie, John Leslie Michael, Accession No. 001309, Reel/Disc 1/8.
Hill, Graham Starforth, Accession No. E000054, Reel/Disc 04/09.
Jumabhoy, Rajabali, Accession No. 000074, Reel/Disc 21/37
Kannusamy s/o Pakirisamy, Accession No. 000081, Reel/Disc 27/28.
Lu Tian Lee, Accession No. 000669, Reel/Disc 15/16 (translated from Hokkien).
Murthi, K.P., Accession No. 000849, Reel/Disc 2/2.

New Citizens. https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/oral_history_interviews/browse-project-inter-
viewee/129, accessed May 10, 2021.

Palanivelu, Natesan, Accession No. 000588, Reel/Disc 13/13.

Radio Singapore Press Release, DO 169/250.

Singapore Citizenship Amendment Bill, 16-05-1960, 844.

Singh, Mohinder. Accession No. 00546/65, Reel 60.

Speech by H.E. the Governor, Sir Robert Black, at the Straits Chinese British Association Dinner, at
the Victoria Memorial Hall, at 8.15pm, on Friday, November 8, 1957.

Speech by the Chief Minister, Mr. Lim Yew Hock, at the British European Association Dinner at the
Sea View Hotel, at 9.30pm, on Friday, July 26, 1957.

Text of Broadcast by the Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, over Radio Singapore in the *National Day
Celebrations* Series on Friday, June 2, 1961, at 7.10pm.

Vasagar, Subramaniam Manickar, Accession No. 001301, Reel/Disc 7/18.

National Archives UK

Creation of Malayan Citizenship, 1946, CO 537/1542, 25.

FED 120/21/02 CO1030/666.

Minister's Case: Nationality, HO213/1612.

Policy of the Government of India towards Indians Resident Overseas, FCO141/14404.

British Library

Constitutional Proposals for Malaya, COL 108/21/J.

Secondary Sources

Abdullah, Elinah. 2006. The Political Activities of the Singapore Malays, 1945–1959. In *Malays/Muslims
in Singapore: Selected Readings in History, 1819–1965*, edited by Khoo Kay Kim, Elinah Abdullah,
and Wan Meng Hao, pp. 315–354. Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications.

Amrith, Sunil. 2011. *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511976346.

Ansari, Sarah. 2013. Subjects or Citizens? India, Pakistan and the 1948 British Nationality Act. *Journal
of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41(2): 285–312. https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2013.768
094.

Aziz, Zaib un Nisa. 2017. Passages from India: Indian Anti-colonial Activism in Exile, 1905–20. *His-
torical Research* 90(248): 404–421. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2281.12175.

Barnett, Clive and Low, Murray, eds. 2004. *Spaces of Democracy: Geographical Perspectives on Citizen-
ship, Participation and Representation*. London: Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/
9781446216309.

Barr, Michael D. 2021. Singapore Comes to Terms with Its Malay Past: The Politics of Crafting a
National History. *Asian Studies Review* 1(19). https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2021.1972934.

Bivins, Roberta. 2007. "The People Have No More Love Left for the Commonwealth": Media, Migra-
tion and Identity in the 1961–62 British Smallpox Outbreak. *Immigrants and Minorities* 25(3):
263–289. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619280802407376.

Cheah Boon Kheng. 1978. Malayan Chinese and the Citizenship Issue, 1945–48. *Review of Indonesian
and Malaysian Affairs* 12(2): 95–122.

Cheong Suk-Wai. 2011. *Rodyk: 150 Years*. Singapore: Straits Times Press.

Chua Ai Lin. 2008. Imperial Subjects, Straits Citizens: Anglophone Asians and the Struggle for Political Rights in Inter-war Singapore. In *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-war Singapore*, edited by Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki, pp. 16–36. Singapore: NUS Press.

Cooper, Frederick. 2014. *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cribb, Robert and Li Narangoa. 2004. Orphans of Empire: Divided Peoples, Dilemmas of Identity, and Old Imperial Borders in East and Southeast Asia. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46(1): 164–187. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417504000088.

Dharan, Santha. 1966. Citizenship and Its Implications for Singapore Indians. Academic Exercise, Department of Applied Social Studies, University of Singapore.

Faist, Thomas. 2000. Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23(2): 189–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700329024.

Harper, Tim. 1999. *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511585517.

Ho Lynn Ee Elaine. 2009. Constituting Citizenship through the Emotions: Singaporean Transmigrants in London. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99(4): 788–804. https://doi.org/10.1080/00045600903102857.

Humairah Zainal and Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir. 2021. *The Primordial Modernity of Malay Nationality: Contemporary Identity in Malaysia and Singapore*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003198215.

Isin, Engin F. and Turner, Bryan S. 2002. Citizenship Studies: An Introduction. In *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, edited by Engin F. Isin and Bryan S. Turner, pp. 1–10. London: Sage Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608276.

Koh Sin Yee. 2015. Temporalities of Citizenship: Malaysian-Chinese Skilled Migrants in Singapore and Returnees to Malaysia. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 24(1): 3–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196814565158.

Lau, Albert. 2003. "Nationalism" in the Decolonization of Singapore. In *The Transformation of Southeast Asia*, edited by Marc Frey, Ronald W. Pruessen, and Tan Tai Yong, pp. 180–196. New York: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315698908.

―――. 1989. Malayan Union Citizenship: Constitutional Change and Controversy in Malaya, 1942–48. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 20(2): 216–243. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20071081.

Levine, Phillipa. 2013. *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*. London: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315833101.

Loh Kah Seng. 2013. *Squatters into Citizens: The 1961 Bukit Ho Swee Fire and the Making of Modern Singapore*. Singapore: Asian Studies Association of Australia.

Low Choo Chin. 2017. *Report on Citizenship Law: Malaysia and Singapore*. Fiesole: GlobalCit.

McKeown, Adam. 2011. A World Made Many: Integration and Segregation in Global Migration, 1840–1940. In *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s*, edited by Donna R. Gabaccía and Dirk Hoerder, pp. 42–64. Leiden: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004193161.i-552.15.

Ong Aihwa. 1999. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Pina-Guerassimoff, Carine and Guerassimoff, Eric. 2007. The "Overseas Chinese": The State and Emigration from the 1890s through the 1990s. In *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation*, edited by Nancy L. Green and François Weil, pp. 245–264. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Quah Sy Ren. 2015. Imagining Malaya, Practising Multiculturalism: The Malayan Consciousness of Singapore Chinese Intellectuals in the 1950s. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16(1): 96–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2015.1009680.

Rai, Rajesh. 2014. *Indians in Singapore, 1819–1945: Diaspora in the Colonial Port City*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sadasivan, Viswa. 2020. Accidental Assimilation—A Malay Dilemma? A Discursive Reflection on the Malays as the Indigenes of Singapore. In *Beyond Bicentennial: Perspectives on Malays*, edited by Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Wan Hussin Zoohri, and Norshahril Saat, pp. 663–678. Singapore: World Scientific. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789811212512_0038.

Sai Siew-Min. 2013. Educating Multicultural Citizens: Colonial Nationalism, Imperial Citizenship and Education in Late Colonial Singapore. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 44(1): 49–73. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463412000616.

Shao Dan. 2009. Chinese by Definition: Nationality Law, *Jus Sanguinis*, and State Succession, 1909–1980. *Twentieth-Century China* 35(1): 4–28. https://doi.org/10.1353/tcc.0.0019.

Shapiro, Michael J. 2000. National Times and Other Times: Re-thinking Citizenship. *Cultural Studies* 14(1): 79–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/095023800334995.

Sopiee, Mohamed Noordin. 1974. *From Malayan Union to Singapore Separation: Political Unification in the Malaysia Region 1945–65*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya.

Soysal, Yasemin Nuhoğlu. 2012. Post-National Citizenship: Rights and Obligations of Individuality. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, edited by Edwin Amenta, Kate Nash, and Alan Scott, pp. 383–393. Malden: Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444355093.ch34.

Stasiulis, Daiva and Bakan, Abigail B. 1997. Negotiating Citizenship: The Case of Foreign Workers in Canada. In *Citizenship: Pushing the Boundaries*, edited by Helen Crowley, Gail Lewis, Pnina Werbner, and Nira Yuval-Davis. *Feminist Review* 57(1): 112–139. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203985090.

Stockwell, Tony. 2005. Forging Malaysia and Singapore: Colonialism, Decolonization and Nation-Building. In *Nation Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories*, edited by Wang Gungwu, pp. 191-220. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812305503-010.

Studemeyer, Catherine Cottrell. 2015. Geographies of Flexible Citizenship. *Geography Compass* 9(10): 565–576. https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12247.

Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied. 2015. *Radicals: Resistance and Protest in Colonial Malaya*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Thomson, Paul. 2000. *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Torpey, John. 2009. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511520990.

————. 1999. *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Velayutham, Selvaraj and Wise, Amanda. 2005. Moral Economies of a Translocal Village: Obligation and Shame among South Indian Transnational Migrants. *Global Networks* 5(1): 27–47. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00106.x.

White, Nicholas J. 2017. The Settlement of Decolonization and Post-Colonial Economic Development: Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore Compared. *Bijdragen tot de Taal -, Land-en Volkenkunde* 173(2/3): 208–241. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26281591.

Zhou Taomo. 2019. *Migration in the Time of Revolution: China, Indonesia, and the Cold War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9781501739934.001.0001.