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## What was colonial in extending Australian citizenship to New Guinea Chinese?

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Standard histories of the dismantling of White Australia policies can imply New Guinea Chinese had, at best, a minor role in such processes. While this may be true, these histories tend to assume that policies flow from the centre to the colony and that nothing much came from the periphery with the result that what gets written is largely Eurocentric (Thomas, 1994, p. 106; Anderson, 1998). Such histories are sometimes confined to, and conflated with, the values of a single nation-state, as when Tavan noted, perhaps somewhat over-enthusiastically, that the dismantling of the White Australia policies was ‘largely a pragmatic response by political leaders to the changing circumstances in which Australia found itself and to the *changing values of Australian society*’ (2005, p. 238, italics in original).<sup>1</sup>

Responding to this kind of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), we argue New Guinea Chinese should be made more central to the history of the White Australia policy. We do so by examining the granting, in 1957, of conditional Australian citizenship to Chinese residents in both Australia and New Guinea. In this chapter we merely point toward

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1 Along with Tavan’s work there is a vast range of scholarship on the history of the White Australia policy (Jones, 2005; Jordan, 2006, 2018; Mann, 2012; Meaney, 1995).

something less Eurocentric than ‘Australian values’ as the central analytic. While we do not adopt a Chinese or Asian approach to policy history, we build on earlier attempts to rethink the history of Australian immigration from a trans-national perspective, from outside Australia (Lake & Reynolds, 2008; Lake, 2010) and, in this case, include perspectives of Chinese and other actors who lived in New Guinea. Policy reform of Asian immigration was more than something internal to the Australian government and its colonial rule. At times it involved different, perhaps barely recorded, perspectives to those promoted by the Australian government, its archives and some Australian histories of the White Australia policy.

One response is to highlight the agency of New Guinea and other Chinese in overturning Australian policies. King (2002, 2005) made a useful start to such a project by considering how some 330 New Guinea Chinese war refugees in Australia were, in the early 1950s, granted permanent residency in Australia. King presents these refugees as productive actors in the creation of a significant breach in the White Australia policy. This shift occurred in the face of the Australian government campaign to forcibly repatriate the New Guinea Chinese and other non-European refugees, which culminated in the passing of the *War-time Refugee Removals Act 1949*. However, High Court cases, wide public support and a change of government prevented the Removals Act from being implemented (Neumann, 2006; Brawley, 2014). King’s account of the New Guinea Chinese refugees’ agency shows how it was enabled by complex networks of actors, institutions and social relations. What is also clear from his account is that openings into a distinctly New Guinea Chinese perspective on reforms of Australian immigration policy are limited and constrained by the available archival data.

Rather than just promote Chinese agency (and constraining structures) as the key analytic of our narrative, this chapter positions arguments about Chinese citizenship in the tensions, overlaps and contradictions between the racialised ordering of New Guinea Chinese (and other Asians) and certain strands of post-World War II (WWII) liberal anti-racism. Such tensions helped generate policy reforms concerning Chinese citizenship in both New Guinea and Australia. These reforms developed from within emerging configurations of global mid-twentieth century liberalism that were arguably ‘more equitable than any version of liberalism that came before or after it’ (Stewart, 2020, n.p.). This liberal order provided a language and global structures, such as the UN, for imagining and creating citizens who were not restrictively defined by racial difference, biology or culture. Versions of this new political subject were found throughout the British Empire—

such discourses circulated throughout the colonies, from ‘legislative council chambers and Colonial Office memoranda to youth clubs and debating societies’—including New Guinea (Kumarasingham, 2018, p. 815).

While such global flows of various liberal ideas and practices were important in constituting possibilities of reform, it was Paul Hasluck, the Minister of Territories from 1951 to 1963, who initiated a unique set of policies in regard to the Chinese in Papua and New Guinea. In this chapter, we aim to extend MacWilliam’s (2019) and Wright’s (2002) analysis of Hasluck’s liberalism in reference to land issues in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to his reforms of New Guinea Chinese citizenship and immigration. Hasluck’s policies rested on two underlying assumptions: first, the New Guinea Chinese, like the Chinese in the Australian settler state, were disposable (De Genova & Roy, 2020) and should be removed from New Guinea so that Papua New Guinean interests could be protected. The aim was to de-racialise the colony by removing the Chinese from New Guinea to Australia. The second assumption involved the post-WWII attempts to shift the economy of Papua and New Guinea from one centred on the white plantation (Lewis, 1996) towards an economy centred on an indigenous land-owning farmer who engaged in cash crop production (MacWilliam, 2019). The colonial government sought to protect its native subjects from the consequences of the Chinese presence in New Guinea and justified such protectionism by deploying liberal arguments for Chinese access to Australian citizenship and permanent residence in Australia. The Chinese, long portrayed as destabilising internal others, were redefined as suitable subjects for removal from pre- and post-Independence PNG. We highlight how the transformations of Chinese into Australian citizens involved reproducing certain racial and cultural distinctions and exclusions and highlighted the fundamental ‘disposability’ (De Genova & Roy, 2020) of the Chinese in liberal policy of the time. However, the policy of granting rights to citizenship and permanent residence in Australia failed to clear PNG of all the New Guinea Chinese, many of whom relocated to and colonised Port Moresby and other urban centres in PNG.

We develop these points by first outlining aspects of the racial ordering of Chinese in New Guinea and Papua and then present Paul Hasluck’s ideas concerning PNG development, race and the New Guinea Chinese as potential citizens of Australia. We then consider a report (Thomson, 1952), commissioned by Hasluck, on the social conditions of people of ‘mixed blood’ in Papua and New Guinea as a case study on how Australian citizenship was conditional on the capacity of potential citizens to ‘assimilate’

to European society. We highlight how liberal reforms of social categories and naming practices attempted to eliminate the use of ethno-racial terms in a manner that paralleled the development of social policies promoting the removal of all 'Chinese' and 'Asians' from pre-Independent PNG via offers of Australian citizenship.<sup>2</sup> The semantic simplification of social categories used in PNG was an attempted epistemic equivalent to removing the Chinese and Asians from PNG.

Another element in our account of similar liberal policy interventions concerns a New Guinea Chinese high school student, Brian Cheung, who wrote to Hasluck to argue for the abolition of Rabaul's Chinatown and its replacement with a new de-racialised urban settlement and greater citizenship rights for the Chinese residents. The student's arguments relied on the work of Simon (Simon & Hubback, 1935; Ku, 2018; Olechnowicz, 2000) an influential British liberal educationalist and practitioner of new forms of urban planning for the improvement of the working class. We argue this urban emphasis of Cheung prefigured how some New Guinea Chinese effectively reworked the government's intentions concerning Australian citizenship by largely settling in urban centres in both Australia and PNG. This material suggests what is needed is a revaluation of the role of the Chinese in urban processes of colonial and post-colonial state formation.

## Racial regulation of New Guinea Chinese

The White Australia policy as it applied to Chinese in Papua and New Guinea was more emphatically enacted in Papua than in New Guinea. Papua was, since 1906, a possession of Australia and the indigenous population were considered British subjects. As Papua was part of Australia, Australian laws and ordinances such as the *Immigration Restriction Regulations Ordinance* of 1907 were used to prevent any Chinese and other Asians from residing in Papua. By 1955, there were apparently only four Chinese in all of Papua (Cahill, 2012, p. 268).

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2 For an outline of Australian debates, especially between Elkin and Hasluck, concerning the biological, cultural and social relations of assimilation see Moran (2005).

In contrast, New Guinea was not part of Australia and the indigenous population were not British subjects, nor after 1948 understood to be Australian citizens. New Guinea was, after World War I (WWI), a Trust Territory mandated by the League of Nations and then, after WWII, by the United Nations.

In the period of German rule of New Guinea many Chinese and other Asians were classified as ‘non-indigenous natives’, but in 1922 the Australian administration, in accordance with assumptions about Asians operating in Australia’s immigration policies, redefined them in more exclusionary terms as ‘permanent alien residents’. In the inter-war years the fundamental aim of the Australian colonial administration in reference to the Chinese was to suppress any expansion of the Chinese economy and population in New Guinea. Taking Rabaul town as the site where colonial government power and infrastructure were most fully implemented, Chinese life in New Guinea was defined primarily as within an urban enclave linked to systematic exclusions from an economy and social order largely defined by white plantations and a governing bureaucracy (Wu, 1982; Cahill, 2012; Wolfers, 1975).

Chinese seeking entry to New Guinea, like those seeking entry to Australia, were obliged to carry an alien registration card; to undertake a dictation test or secure a renewable certificate exempting the bearer from the dictation test; and to secure temporary entry permits (Jones, 2005, pp. 39–47). Permits were also required for any New Guinea Chinese resident in New Guinea who wished to visit their homeland. Entry of family members and spouses to New Guinea was strongly regulated with many applications for kin and wives to enter PNG being rejected or excessively delayed (Wu, 1982, p. 164). As one member of New Guinea’s Legislative Council noted, the Australian administration’s attempts to apply the White Australia policy in New Guinea had the effect that by the 1930s, the Asian community appeared to have been ‘legislated almost out of existence’ (Wolfers, 1975, p. 102).

However, many New Guinea Chinese were citizens of China and actively engaged with the New Guinea Kuomintang after it was founded in 1924. After 1945 the Rabaul community regularly sent delegates to Taiwan to attend National government meetings. Wu reports that when he arrived in Rabaul in 1971 *ching-fu* ‘our government’ was often used to mean the Nationalist Government in Taiwan rather than the Australian administration (Wu, 1982, p. 107). The New Guinea Chinese status as Chinese nationals

ensured that political relations mediated through the Chinese Nationalist government were important in generating some reforms to the colonial administration's anti-Asian immigration policies.<sup>3</sup> In 1931, the Chinese Consul General, then located in Sydney, wrote to the Prime Minister's Department noting that certain types of Chinese were exempt from being fingerprinted when they arrived in Australia. He asked that the same exemptions be applied to Chinese entering New Guinea. In response, the Prime Minister's secretary indicated that certain kinds of Chinese entering New Guinea would be exempt from fingerprinting; this included those 'Chinese of superior standing who were known to the Customs authorities', 'Chinese visitors to New Guinea of superior standing', or those who could furnish two photographs 'in lieu of fingerprints' (The Secretary, Prime Minister's Department Letter to Acting Consul General China 18/12/31 NAA: A981, NEW G 46:4). Such material suggests that the Chinese community in New Guinea was not simply subject to the sovereign power of the Australian state but was, at times, able to effectively position itself within the albeit limited power and overlapping sovereignty of the Chinese state. A more complete history of Chinese in New Guinea would take greater account of Chinese sovereignty over its citizens. Here we merely point to the entanglement of Chinese, Australian and the United Nations claims to sovereignty in New Guinea. New Guinea and, perhaps especially, Rabaul, were sites where multiple, if unequal, sovereignties were enacted.

In WWII, Australian policies regarding Chinese in New Guinea coalesced into a statement of colonial neglect, structural marginality and exclusion when the Australian administration failed to organise an evacuation of Chinese residents in Rabaul. Those left in Rabaul were placed in camps by the Japanese and subject to harsh and often violent treatment (Nelson, 2010, 2008). Moreover, Wu noted that, in the decade after WWII, the Chinese in New Guinea received no better treatment than before the war: 'racial segregation was pronounced and the Chinese were still disliked by Europeans' and all Chinese visitors to New Guinea were treated as 'potential' illegal immigrants (Wu, 1982, p. 43, 46).

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3 In this paper all references to the Chinese government are to the Nationalist government, located in Taiwan, that was recognised by Australia up until 1972.

## Questions of citizenship and Hasluck's liberalism

By the late 1940s, racial discrimination in Australia's immigration policies and in the UN Trust Territory of New Guinea had become a 'sensitive issue' for the Australian government. After the war, New Guinea Chinese could leverage the UN's influence to make demands for reform of racial discrimination and for Australia citizenship. Concerns about racial discrimination against Chinese in New Guinea were raised by the Nationalist Government delegate on the Trusteeship Council at the UN meetings in November and December 1946. The New Guinea Chinese Union started to directly petition the UN Trusteeship Council, requesting, among other things, Australian citizenship, permanent residence in New Guinea, and access to land. The petitioners also argued they should have the same rights to permanent residence as enjoyed by Chinese in other countries such as New Zealand and Canada (NAA: A452, 1956/993 PART 1:81).

The Australian government responded to such demands in 1951 by making all persons born in New Guinea, who were not British subjects, Australian Protected Persons.<sup>4</sup> Such persons were entitled to vote and stand for election in the Legislative Council in PNG, to travel on an Australian passport and to receive 'all the protection and assistance normally given to Australians while travelling' (Cahill, 2012, p. 246). However, in practice, they were prohibited from entering Papua and were highly restricted in travelling to Australia. In addition, as Rowley noted, an 'Asian Australian Protected Person' had limited opportunities to acquire freehold property or leases over property (1956, p. 7). The administrative practices that resulted in such discrimination were usually justified, first by the Germans and then by the Australians, on the grounds that Asians were not permanent residents of New Guinea (Rowley, 1956, p. 7).<sup>5</sup>

It was in this context that Paul Hasluck became the Minister for Territories. MacWilliam (2019, p. 84) argues Hasluck's policies in PNG often involved a liberal developmentalism that was anti-conservative, paternalistic and

<sup>4</sup> Taylor and Boyd (2022) provide a detailed analysis of the concept of 'protected person' as it applied to people from PNG.

<sup>5</sup> A *Pacific Island Monthly* (PIM) (July 1, 1957, p. 22, 28) reporter noted how the offer of citizenship to New Guinea Chinese meant that they would be eligible to enter both Australia and the Australian Territory of Papua as permanent residents. PIM noted a concern among people that the movement of Chinese into Papua might mean 'saying goodbye' to European businesses in that part of Australia.

actively protectionist. Hasluck stressed colonial rule in Papua and New Guinea was justified because the underlying paternalism, ‘in its true nature’, was good. It was necessary for the colonial government to exercise guardianship over people threatened with disruption to their existing modes of living by an otherwise exploitative mode of development (McWilliam, 2019, p. 86).<sup>6</sup> Hasluck argued:

We have to contemplate in the long term the problems that may be set up by the early creation of a landless, urban proletariat ... We have to be careful that they do not lose their social anchorage in the village before we can be sure that they find an equally safe social anchorage ... as wage-earners in the town. (Cited in Wright, 2002, p. 62)

Hasluck’s use of state power to direct development to avoid creating such a future came under attack from sections of the PNG expatriate community. The *Pacific Islands Monthly* observed that the Minister ‘may be nominally a Tory; but his record up to date ... suggests that he is mostly a Socialist planner’ (Wright, 2002, p. 62).<sup>7</sup> Hasluck’s use of class analysis may have given some support to this polemic.

For Hasluck, the aim of development in PNG was the creation of a ‘community’ of small property owners, or ‘capitalism without a proletariat’ (Wright, 2002, p. 65). Hasluck’s defence of small property ownership reflected an agrarian bias combined with liberalism’s defence of private property. He was open to a limited commodification of land, but in a form that sought to prevent indigenous landlessness. His defence of local interests in land was often explicitly liberal and exclusionary of any Chinese or Asian interests:

(T)he liberal respect of property [...] is a respect for small property no less than a respect for a large property and [...] I assert that the private enterprise of every native villager is just as sacred to liberalism as is the private enterprise of any European. (Hasluck cited in McWilliam, 2019, p. 95)

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6 Such arguments about future disruption were often deployed as a justification of colonial government in New Guinea (Commonwealth of Australia, 1920) and date back to Mill’s argument that British colonialism involved a trustee relationship (Bell, 2010).

7 This kind of claim was echoed in Hayek’s accusation that J. S. Mill’s arguments for colonial trusteeship exercised through state power helped develop socialism (MacWilliam, 2019, pp. 86–7).



## **Sociological liberalism via Thomson and C. D. Rowley**

In 1951, Hasluck established an inquiry that focused on the position of what were termed 'half-caste' residents in Papua and New Guinea. The Senior Social Welfare Officer of the PNG Education Department, Thomson was asked to undertake a survey and report his findings to the Executive Council of PNG. Thomson recommended that people of what he termed 'mixed blood' 'become increasingly assimilated and given Australian citizenship'. He recommended that the granting of citizenship to mixed bloods be conditional—it was to 'be a reward for effort and that such citizenship be granted on social status and not racial origins' (1951–52, p. 80).

This finding echoed Hasluck's wish 'to reduce the non-indigenous population to one immigrant group. This meant that the mixed-race people should be given the chance to identify themselves either with the Europeans or with the indigenes and to be received into whichever ever group they chose' (1976, p. 31). According to Hasluck, Papuan New Guineans' rejection of 'mixed race' persons meant that such persons 'would have to be accorded the same position in law and in social relationships as the Europeans' (Hasluck, 1976, p. 31).

As for the Chinese, he 'saw at once that the only way open was to give them full Australian citizenship, with the right of permanent residence in Australia and to give every possible encouragement to all of them to identify themselves with Australians as part of a single immigrant community' (Hasluck, 1976, p. 31). Citing the examples of racial issues in Fiji and East Africa, Hasluck was cautious about introducing further Asian labour into Papua and New Guinea:

... my uppermost concern was to keep the population as uncomplicated as possible against the day when the indigenous people would make their own decisions on the composition of their country's population. This seemed to be as necessary as the parallel policy of checking the alienation of land from indigenous possession and occupation. (Hasluck, 1976, p. 31)

For Hasluck, control of the racial composition of PNG's population and ownership of the land was equivalent to control of the processes of development and class formation.

In developing his analysis, Thomson deployed a somewhat different mode analysis to that of Hasluck. Thomson relied more explicitly on anthropologists operating in the emerging field of race relations such as Felix Keesing (Paisley, 2015) and Sydney Collins (1951, 1952; Clapson, 2006, p. 259; Mills, 2008, pp. 129–147; Banton, 1973). Rather than focus on biological theories of race, Thomson argued race was a social process and it was therefore more important to end European discrimination against ‘mixed bloods’ and overcome ‘the belief in the superiority of the people who dominate those of mixed blood’ (Thomson, 1952, p. 11). For Thomson, mixed bloods were potential Australian citizens who could be brought ‘into a more favourable position in society’ (Thomson, 1952, p. 7) when discrimination by Europeans ended.

Like Hasluck (1988), Thomson thought speeding up the assimilation of mixed bloods into the European population should involve simplifying and eventually abandoning racial categories. Here the central assumption was that getting rid of both the categories and socialities of racially and culturally hybrid groups, along with those of the Chinese and Asians, was consistent with promoting the long-term welfare of PNG nationals (Van Krieken, 2004, p. 142). According to Hasluck, in PNG (and in Australia) there should be just ‘one immigrant group alongside one indigenous group’ (Hasluck, cited in Goddard, 2017, p. 139). Perhaps in response to such an argument, Thomson replaced the term ‘half-caste’ with ‘mixed blood’ because, in his view, the latter term avoided the possibility of ‘considering the group as a homogenous entity’ (Thomson, 1952, p. 4).<sup>8</sup> He argued racial discrimination would be reduced by de-emphasising the use of particular group names because such naming practices tended ‘to set groups apart’ (ibid.).<sup>9</sup> All social groups needed to be treated ‘as a number of individuals rather than as a group with common origins, common standards of living and an entitlement to a common name. They have their own names as individuals which should serve all purposes apart from the occasional need for giving group references’ (Thomson, 1952, p. 4). Given Thomson’s liberal emphasis on the individual, there was no need for group

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8 Current interest in critiquing the unqualified deployment of the term ‘Chinese’ as promoting racialised and essentialising understandings of the distinction between Chinese and non-Chinese (Ang, 2014) replicates some of these liberal concerns with the power of racial and ethnic categories (see also Gilroy, 2001).

9 Developing such ideas in 1953, Hasluck drafted an ordinance declaring all Northern Territory Aborigines as ‘wards’. Identity group names such as ‘Aborigine’ had no role in their transition toward citizenship in a civilised state (McGregor, 1999, p. 244).

names—as potential Australians, they were to be detached from communal ties and be reconstructed as universal and interchangeable citizen isolates (Rowse, cited in Van Krieken, 2004, p. 145).

Reflecting these ideas, Thomson also recommended that ‘individual applications for Australian citizenship be encouraged’ from those with mixed blood, but not on a group basis:

There can be no thought of giving Australian citizenship to the mixed-blood because he is of two or more racial origins. Because the group as a whole are subject to undue social stresses is reason enough for careful consideration of their claims. This does not call for a sentimental approach ... (Thomson, 1952, p. 26)

Thomson was rather quick to emphasise that the mixed blood communities themselves did not think Australian citizenship should automatically be extended to all ‘mixed blood’ in Papua and New Guinea. He explained:

At a meeting of the Rabaul group, I was surprised to find that there was a quick appreciation of the necessity for citizenship to be earned. The fact that birth in Australia confers citizenship without the necessity for moral and social qualifications is accepted as the good fortune of Australians. (Thomson, 1952, p. 25)

Thomson also noted a number of the submissions he received argued citizenship should be only granted to those mixed bloods who had attained ‘the living standard of the average white man by energetic work, good behaviour, cleanliness in housing and clothing’ (1952, p. 23).

Thomson recommended applicants for naturalisation should provide sufficient evidence of ‘moral worth’ to a naturalisation board that could be set up to evaluate applications and the recommendations of the District Commissioner and others (1952, p. 27).<sup>10</sup> Thomson, in contrast to this

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<sup>10</sup> Thomson noted that two cases ‘at present being considered will indicate the probability of success’ (Thomson, 1952, p. 27). Both applicants were plantation owners from the Kokopo ‘mixed blood group’ and were ‘to all intents and purposes treated as Europeans’ (Thomson, 1952, pp. 23–4) such as being accepted as members of the European-dominated Kokopo club. There is perhaps another history of citizenship yet to be fully described. Such a history might require a more detailed look at Rowley’s argument that ‘the Commonwealth Nationality and Citizenship Act, Section 15 specifically recognises residence in New Guinea ... as qualifying a Protected Person to have his application for British Subject and Australian Citizen status considered (Rowley, 1956, p. 8). Rowley suggested ‘there are obvious advantages to be gained from making available to Protected Persons on application the status which all persons born in Papua are automatically accorded’ (Rowley, 1956, p. 8).

conditional extension of citizenship to mixed-blood people, did recommend an automatic extension of Australian citizenship to all Eurasians in Papua and New Guinea.

By way of contrast the Chinese, while not part of Thomson's terms of reference, emerged in one point in his report something like a threat to the white European colonial order. Such Chinese were said to be competing with Europeans for the loyalty of the Chinese 'mixed blood' group:

In New Ireland it is reported that the Chinese are making overtures to the mixed blood group. It is not unreasonable to expect that, unless the mixed blood group find certain of their needs met by the European society, they will think more favourably of the Chinese community. We must consider this situation a direct challenge and ... realise the advantages accruing from the mixed-blood group's desire to be as Europeans. We have, in fact, an incentive which needs only evidence of sincerity on our part to bring the mixed-blood group into a more favourable position in society. (Thomson, 1952, p. 7)

However, it was not until 1962, while Hasluck was still the Minister of Territories, that the 'mixed-blood' group became formally entitled to apply for Australian citizenship.

Such a move found further justification in Rowley's (1956) advice to Hasluck and the administration of Papua and New Guinea on how to de-racialise policy concerning the status of Alien Asians. Rowley thought that rights to movement and property needed to be based on legal and not racial categories. Indeed, he wanted to revise all legislation by deleting racial categories and replacing them with non-racial categories so that there could be no racial discrimination 'in administrative practice, or in the law, between the rights of Australian Protected Persons and British Subjects and Australian Citizens' (Rowley, 1956, p. 12). This recommendation, if implemented, would have gone a long way towards realising Hasluck's dream of there being only two types of person in PNG that Rowley, in his report, called 'villagers' and 'Australian citizens'.

## Manchester liberalism and Chinese citizenship

Rowley's plans for complete de-racialisation of laws regarding Asians in New Guinea had been preceded by limited reforms in reference to the education of their children. During the 1930s, some Chinese children were sent to Australia for their education.<sup>11</sup> The Methodist Church in Rabaul played a role in organising some of these trips. In 1947, the Australian government resumed this pre-war practice of allowing Chinese students from New Guinea to enter Australia for educational purpose (NAA Series A518 BG /182/1).<sup>12</sup> In 1946, officials recommended several Chinese students from New Guinea be permitted to enter Australia with a two-year exemption under the Immigration Act providing they had secured guarantees about their maintenance.

Officials in Canberra and in New Guinea provided a number of other reasons for supporting Chinese students from New Guinea. They argued if the 'children of Asiatic residents of the Territory' were not permitted to come to Australia for educational purposes, then such a policy would provide 'a basis of criticism from Asiatic countries, in UNO [Organisation of the United Nations] and on the Trusteeship Council, on the grounds of racial discrimination' (NAA Series A518 BG 182/1:17). Suggestive of such pressures, a bureaucrat noted in 1947 that the Chinese Vice Consul in Sydney, Mr. Lui, in a visit to Rabaul, made representations to the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit on behalf of New Guinea Chinese who sought permission either for themselves or members of their families to enter Australia.

One effect of this policy was that some Chinese students who came to Australia made further demands on the Australian government. Brian Cheung wrote to Hasluck in October 1953 on Barker College letterhead suggesting a degree of support from the college itself. Cheung argued the main problem in the Territory:

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11 Servants, mainly from Papua and New Guinea, were also important early destabilisers of the White Australia policy (Davies, 2019).

12 Kuo and Fitzgerald (2016) outline how 400 students from China were granted visas to enter Australia between 1920 and 1925 through a significant Chinese government representative.

... is the strong existence of the 'Racial Barrier'. I feel that the New Guinea Government as well as every citizen should do something about this matter. The fundamental quality a citizen of democracy must have is a deep concern for the good life of his fellow man. He must have a sense of social responsibility and the general interests of his people in the common good: to do his full share in the working for the community. (NAA: M332, 51:3)

Cheung argued that Rabaul township was racially structured and that the Chinese and Malay residential areas were 'in ... revolting conditions compared with the European residential area'.<sup>13</sup> In 1955, the Rabaul Chinese quarter was described by the *Pacific Island Monthly* as a 'derelict shantytown' (Wu, 1982, p. 43).

Cheung was also referencing a longer history of racial segregation in Rabaul that was evident in the work of the Department of Public Health's Director, Dr. Cilento. In 1925, Cilento indicated that in Rabaul the 'demands of hygiene, racial inclination, and variations in the standards of living, all emphasise the desirability of ... subdivision, and the Department of Public Health has endeavoured to continue and develop this policy of racial segregation' (New Guinea Annual Report, 1925/1926, p. 73). Dr. Cilento authorised the removal of nine temporary Chinese residences from the general town area as they 'represented a continual menace to ... the neighbouring European buildings ... [because] several cases of bacillary dysentery had been definitely traced to them' (New Guinea Annual Report, 1925/1926, p. 73). The resulting evictions and demolitions emphasised the vulnerability of the Chinese to the colonial state's power to create racialised urban landscapes and ghettos.

Cheung's discussion of the conditions in Rabaul's Chinatown highlighted how this urban carceral ordering, rather than the plantation, was a crucial feature of Chinese life in colonial New Guinea (Wu, 1982, pp. 42–3). Cheung's emphasis on the living conditions in Chinatown suggests the salience in histories of New Guinea concerning the patrol, the plantation

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13 Similar descriptions are provided in a 1953 survey of some 237 Chinese and Asiatic houses at Matupit Farm at Rabaul on land to be acquired by the government. The surveyor noted that most of the buildings 'can only be classed as hovels—their usual design being second-hand galvanised iron crudely fastened to bush timber frames. The flooring material is invariably earth; this being covered with seromat strips in the more elaborate establishments. There are over 1000 Asiatics living in the area—an area which might be able to house one third this number ... If we now prevent the higher class Chinese living in the European residential areas, we must further aggravate this position' (R. G. Matheson. Staff Surveyor Matupit Farm, typescript report, 6 August 1953. Fryer Library UQFL 387 Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Box 40 Folder 14).

and associated forms of controlled labour needs to be supplemented by accounts of the urban settlement and infrastructure of the colonial state and forms of racialised power developed in towns like Rabaul, Kavieng, Madang and Lae.

Cheung called for the removal of the Chinese enclave in Rabaul.<sup>14</sup> He argued there was a strong feeling of racial discrimination among the Chinese living in Rabaul that created a sense of ‘hatred’, which could only be destroyed when the government built a residential area where ‘all people could live together closely’. In developing his arguments, Cheung cited Sir Earnest Simon’s *Education for Citizenship in Secondary Schools* where Simon argued that it was public opinion that had forced all recent democratic governments to intervene and improve the standard of housing found in slums. Cheung stated that while he wished to make ‘no comment’ on whether such an argument applied to New Guinea conditions:

I am very sure that the Government could improve the residential areas of these people had the Government thought of doing so. It is better still to set aside one central residential area which the Government had suggested three or four years ago, but nothing had been done. (NAA: M332, 51:4)

Simon was a former member of the British Liberal Party and, in the 1920s, he played a crucial role in creating the Wythenshaw estate, near Manchester, as a model town full of democratic citizens. Simon hoped to reform British class inequalities by designing a new town that would facilitate the poor’s self-improvement. By the late 1930s, Simon regarded this reform as a failure partly because most of the residents were working class and as such were not really suitable as leaders of a model democratic community (Olechnowicz, 2000).

Simon also established an Association for Education in Citizenship in 1934. The object of the Association was to advance ‘training in the moral qualities necessary for the freedom, tolerance, truth, justice, kindness, public service, the co-operative habit and equality’ (Simon, cited in Olechnowicz, 2000, p. 19). The training was aimed at encouraging ‘clear and logical thinking’, especially among secondary school pupils. Rational and moral perfectibility could be induced through education. His more political aim was to use schools as a means of strengthening liberal democracy in the

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<sup>14</sup> See K. Anderson (2018) for a more recent attempt to deconstruct the ‘enclave framing’ of Chinatowns. Cheung’s intervention is a robustly practical and abolitionist approach to the same problem.

face of communist and fascist totalitarianism. For Simon, democracy was fundamentally about the freedom of the individual democratic citizen (Ku, 2018, p. 501). For such citizens of democracy to emerge it was essential that 'every child should be given a fair chance of growing up sound in mind and body, and making the best of its natural faculties' (Simon & Hubback, 1935, p. 15).

In his letter, Cheung approvingly echoed the elements of character that Simon thought were essential to any democratic citizen. Cheung repeated a key liberal idea that all people, given the right social conditions, were perfectible. Cheung thought the currently racially subordinated Chinese in New Guinea could, if given a 'fair chance', become model democratic citizens:

The fundamental quality a citizen of democracy must have is a deep concern for the good life of his fellow man. He must have a sense of social responsibility and the general interests of his people in the common good: to do his full share in the working for the community ... (NAA: M332, 51:3–4)

As Cheung suggests, the possibility of such a liberal democratic active citizenship existing for Chinese in New Guinea was severely limited by the persistence of racial barriers. Hasluck replied to Cheung's demands with a polite, if opaque, reference to current policy:

In order that you may be more fully informed of the policy of the Government towards the Chinese residents of the Territory of Papua and New Guinea I am enclosing herewith a copy of a press statement which I recently made on the subject. (NAA: M332, 51:1 of 4)

## Conditional citizenship achieved

Despite this response from Hasluck, similar appeals for Chinese citizenship gained support from a wide range of often surprising sources. In 1954, Arthur Calwell visited Rabaul and argued all New Guinea Chinese should be granted entry to Australia and that they should be naturalised. He said he regarded them as Australian citizens and pressured the Menzies government for naturalisation. He also impressed the Chinese community by speaking to them in Mandarin, even though his speech had to be translated into Cantonese (Cahill 2012, p. 252). In March 1954, *The South Pacific Post* wrote an editorial suggesting the government's next move 'toward progress



and enlightenment must assuredly be the granting of full citizenship rights to the Territory Chinese' (cited in Cahill, 2012, p. 252). The possibility of Chinese becoming Australian citizens was raised in PNG's Legislative Council in 1955 and attempts were made to establish a select committee to investigate, recommending to the Australian government 'that Asian and mixed race of the Territory be granted Australian citizenship' (Cahill, 2012, p. 252). The motion was defeated largely because it might embarrass the Australian government and 'create a precedent' (Cahill, 2012, pp. 252–3).

Support for extending citizenship to the Chinese in PNG continued to grow within government circles. The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation strongly supported the policy shift, arguing that since only a small number of Chinese were involved, they would be 'absorbed' in the larger Australian population without undue difficulty. If they were left with their current status then there was some risk that they might eventually become easy prey for the advances of Communist China (NAA: A452, 1956/993 PART 1).

In September 1956, Hasluck decided that the Chinese in New Guinea should be granted citizenship and asked that a cabinet submission outlining such a recommendation be drafted in his name and that of Harold Holt, then Immigration Minister (NAA: A452, 1956/993 PART 1:132). In June 1957, cabinet made a decision to offer 'Asian residents' of PNG the chance to become naturalised Australian citizens. In August 1957, the Australian dictation test was abolished and Asians, and other non-Europeans in Australia, who had 'taken part in normal Australian life' could apply for naturalisation after fifteen years of living in Australia (Jordan, 2006, p. 236). Over the next eight years, several thousand Asians living in Australia did become citizens (Jordan, 2006, p. 237).

The New Guinea policies regarding naturalisation defined suitable applicants as 'Asians' a term which included persons of mixed European and Asian descent (Administrator Territory of Papua and New Guinea 9 September 1957, NAA: A452, 1956/993 PART 1:12), but not persons of mixed indigenous and Asian descent. Once naturalised such Asians could go to Australia under the same conditions as other Australians and stay there without restrictions on their movement or length of stay (Cahill, 2012, p. 255).

In an attempt to dampen opposition in Australia to the offer of citizenship to New Guinea Chinese, Hasluck stressed that only a particular kind of Asian would be eligible. They would in effect be European Asians:

Those who will be affected by the decision are people living wholly in the European manner alongside, or integrated with the European community. They have no home except the Territory, and in all the implications of the term they can be regarded as good citizens. They have English education, are of Christian religion, and in every way are fitted by cultural and general social background to live on equal terms with other Australian citizens. (Hansard, 1957)<sup>15</sup>

On another occasion, Hasluck stressed ‘that the established policy regarding the entry into the Territory of persons of non-European race has not been relaxed in any way’ (Hasluck to Australian Natives Association 25/7/57, NAA: A452, 1956/993 PART 1:22). None of the reforms reduced the Commonwealth’s power to exclude non-Europeans from Australia or New Guinea.

By 1958, sixty-four ‘Asians’ had participated in a naturalisation ceremony in the Rabaul District Court and the following year, 313 naturalisation certificates were issued (Cahill, 2012, p. 256). By 1963 of the 1,300 New Guinea Chinese who had applied, around 1,100 were naturalised (Wu, 1982, pp. 48–9). Those rejected were mainly older people who could not speak English. By 1966, there were only 282 Chinese in New Guinea who had Chinese nationality.

At the start of 1957 there were 2,448 Chinese in New Guinea (Wu, 1982, pp. 8–9). However, a 1966 census indicated there were roughly the same number—2,455—in the whole of PNG (Wu, 1982, Appendix 1). Wu argues the granting of Australia citizenship allowed the Chinese residential access to Papua with many New Guinea Chinese moving into Port Moresby while others moved to Australia. This movement into Papua co-occurred with the ‘large scale migration’ of the 1950s by the Rabaul Chinese into other towns in New Guinea such as Lae, Madang and Wewak (Wu, 1982, p. 42). Most of these movements involved establishing retail and wholesale business (Wu, 1982, p. 88; Ichikawa, 2006). Some Chinese who had initially moved to Australia started to routinely move between Australia and PNG. These various movements sedimented the Chinese position in PNG’s emerging retail sector in a way that Hasluck hoped

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15 See: [historichansard.net/hofreps/1957/19570918\\_reps\\_22\\_hor16/#subdebate-20-0-s0](http://historichansard.net/hofreps/1957/19570918_reps_22_hor16/#subdebate-20-0-s0).

would not occur. Rather than resulting in the removal and assimilation of the New Guinea Chinese into Australia, what emerged from Australian citizenship was a persisting Chinese emplacement in a complex set of racial, ethno-national and class distinctions in PNG that often involved blurring and differentiation of distinctions between migrant and citizen and between home, place of origin, place of return and place of citizenship.

Such possibilities influenced Brian Cheung's life. After graduating from Barker College in 1954, he returned to Rabaul and in 1961 became a director of Kwong Chong Bros Pty Ltd. He successfully expanded the business in Rabaul and after opening an outlet in Port Moresby he moved there in 1972, where he remained until his retirement in 1983 (*The Barker*, 2019, p. 67), when he moved to Australia. Brian's sons, one nephew and two granddaughters have gone on to attend Barker College (*ibid.*).

## Concluding thoughts

The chapter is partly a response to the idea that changes to Australia immigration policies, and policies concerning New Guinea Chinese, could only reflect then hegemonic Australian values. We called for greater attention to New Guinea Chinese voices and examples of political activism and we located some of the possibilities for such a voice within then influential strands of liberalism that were global rather than just Australian.

It is arguable this could simply shift the emphasis from one form of the colonial power to another, involving a hegemonic white liberal post-war settlement and Hasluckian assimilationism understood as a project of decolonisation involving the racial and ethnic cleansing of PNG. Such an argument tends to ignore the context specific complexities and contradictions of what various strands of liberalism have facilitated, or denied, to New Guinea Chinese. Moreover, the focus of this paper on trans-national flows of liberal ideas tends to undercut any easy writing of histories just from the position of a single nation (Tavan's Australia) or from a single colonial enclave (Cheung's Chinatown in Rabaul).

We have pointed to some possibilities of rewriting PNG policy history from more of a New Guinea Chinese perspective. Cheung's letter outlined several liberal arguments for a de-racialised urban polity and opened up a model of development in PNG that was different to Hasluck's promotion of a future defined by an indigenous group of land-owning farmers and some

helpful Europeans. Urbanisation has been given a relatively minor role in PNG histories and this has tended to amplify the absence of Chinese from PNG's history. Cheung's arguments, and his own life, invite us to rethink the role of urban Chinese in the development of PNG generally.

Finally, reading colonial policy 'against the grain', as did Brian Cheung and his father, we argued the post-citizenship movement of the Chinese out of Rabaul into both urban PNG and Australia was a practical political response to policies that promoted their removal from PNG. This response, which has yet to be fully documented, effectively transformed government policies into practices that ensured the Chinese created a better life more on their own terms than was previously thought possible by the colonial state.

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