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Archives as artefacts of knowledge: A Sepik philosopher and a Chinese trader in Papua New Guinea

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Introduction

The archive produced by officers of the Australian Administration in Papua New Guinea (including not only patrol reports, field diaries and other written records, but also photographs, and material culture collections) has much to contribute to our understanding of the colonial state and its legacy in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In this chapter, we approach this archive as an artefact of knowledge, focusing on the collection made by former government officer Laurie Bragge.

Laurie Bragge was sent to the Sepik area of PNG as a patrol officer in 1964. After he served at various patrol posts in the area, the Australian colonial administration appointed him Assistant District Commissioner of the Ambunti district, East Sepik Province in 1970.[1] The appointment included responsibility for maintaining peace, order and good governance among

1 In the Sepik area, Bragge was first put in charge of the Green River Patrol Post, then the Imonda Patrol Post before a stint in the Amanab subdistrict followed by a posting to Telefomin.

tens of thousands of speakers of over 50 indigenous languages, spread over thousands of square miles of the middle and upper reaches of the Sepik River, as well as any expatriates living in the area—including Chinese. At that time, Sepik people referred to government officers like Bragge as *kiaps*, or sometimes just as *gavman*—the government, in Tok Pisin. The Chinese were termed *kongkong*, while Europeans were referred to as *waitskin* (Mihalic, 1989 [1971]).

We consider the question of race relations during the colonial era by focusing on two characters who feature in the Bragge archive, especially his five-volume manuscript on the history of the Sepik region—a Chinese trader named Chu Leong and a Sepik man named Kolion, a widely respected Sawos elder from Nogosop Village in the East Sepik. Chu Leong and Kolion would have crossed paths during their lifetimes, as Chu Leong traded for sago with Sawos people (Bragge, personal communication, April 14, 2021). Certainly, Kolion would have known Chu Leong, by reputation at least.

Bragge's papers include an account of his meeting with Kolion, a description and photograph of the man and a transcript of an interview that he did with him in 1973. However, references by Bragge to Chu Leong's life and activities in the Sepik are based entirely on secondary sources. According to Bragge, he was on patrol in the Sawos area of the Sepik when he heard of Chu Leong's death in December 1966 (Bragge, personal communication, April 14, 2021). Bragge never met Chu Leong himself and, even if he had, he is unlikely to have interviewed him, as he did Kolion. Australian government officers were instructed to conduct patrols and area studies specifically focusing on the indigenous people, including their social and cultural practices, economic and political activities, land tenure and migration histories as well as demography. They were also instructed to report on the 'business activities' of non-indigenous people in these areas (Australia. Territory of Papua New Guinea. Department of Native Affairs, 1966).[2] As Bragge notes,

2 The Departmental Standing Instructions (Australia. Territory of Papua New Guinea. Department of Native Affairs, 1966, Volume 1, p. 162) includes under the heading 'Non-Indigenes' instructions to 'List all plantations, factories and commercial establishments owned and operated by non-indigenous persons in the area being surveyed'. We assume that the category 'non-indigenes' included Chinese, but they were not singled out as a racial category. Perhaps this reflects the liberal agenda of the Australian Minister of Territories (1951–1963), Paul Hasluck, and others as discussed by Wood and Backhaus (in Chapter 3 of this volume), which was to reduce the population of PNG to two categories, by giving the Chinese in PNG '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' in PNG (Hasluck, 1976, p. 31).

> The Chinese were a fact of life but were ignored basically … On our patrols, each census division occasionally required an area study and the Standing Instruction book has got the headings laid out … I have no memory of any requirement to write about the Chinese … We were supposed to find out everything possible about the indigenous population of that census division … There definitely was a heading for Europeans. There was not a heading for Chinese; definitely not from my memory … There is a whole chapter on area studies, telling us what headings we needed to write under. I'm sure there was nothing about Chinese. (personal communication, April 14, 2021)

Thus, while the Sepik elder Kolion has a voice that is discoverable in the archive, albeit only via a transcript of an interview that Bragge did with him, Chu Leong is unfortunately knowable to us only through the little that Bragge was subsequently able to glean from other sources about him while doing post-retirement research for his manuscript entitled *History of the Sepik Region, PNG* (Bragge, 2018 a–e; hereafter referred to as Bragg's Sepik history). The Chinese were largely rendered invisible in the reports of Australian government officers, patrol officers or *kiaps* by colonial administrative reporting requirements (see also Wood & Backhaus, this volume).

Bragge's observations of Chu Leong and Kolion in his Sepik history (Bragge, 2018 a–e), highlight how different kinds of histories were constructed around the figure of the Chinese migrant and the Sepik elder in the reports of colonial agents. These differences continue to define forms of inclusion and exclusion that influence how 'we'—Australian academics, Papua New Guineans, those of Sepik heritage and Chinese—now write or otherwise record histories of PNG. What is discoverable in archives inevitably frames how histories of origin, migration, race and governance are represented, understood, forgotten and remembered today.

Archives as artefacts of knowledge

Stimulated by Riles's (2006) approach in her edited volume *Documents: Artifacts of Modern Knowledge* and Strathern's (1990) extension of the concept of artefact to performance and to event, we argue that treating archival collections as artefacts draws attention to the material conditions of the creation of these collections in the on-the-ground, embodied encounters between colonial state agents and the subjects of colonial governance.

For example, in the encounter between Bragge and Kolion, the exchange was initiated by Kolion, who specifically came to see the government officer to offer his testimony. By recording and transcribing Kolion's oral narrative, Bragge inevitably became an agent in transporting it beyond the bounds of the Sepik community (see Johnson, 2008, p. 110).

We see the colonial documents—texts, photographs, audio-visual recordings and so on, not just as technocratic artefacts of colonial bureaucratic state practice, but also as co-created products of performative encounters between government officials and the people they were sent to govern. They are materialised enactments of 'the tensions and discontinuities of empire' (Edmonds, 2006, p. 84).

Yet, if Bragge's archive is an artefact of knowledge, then we must also consider the limitations of that knowledge. In other words, what might be missing from the archive? What performances and events are not materialised in the archive? What does this absence tell us about race and governance in the colonial period? While Bragge included an account of the Chinese in his Sepik history and referred to their activities and to colonial government policies and practices regarding them (see especially Bragge, 2018b, Ch 9 'The arrival of the Chinese and introducing Chu Leong' and Bragge, 2018e), his material is much richer in detail about Sepik people. The colonial era archives produced by government officers, as artefacts of racialised governance, have long framed understandings of PNG history and culture, which are dominated by stories about Papua New Guineans in reference to Europeans, leaving little or no space for Chinese stories. Interestingly, what is discoverable about the Chinese presence in PNG is by virtue of the fact of their very absence in the archive.

Kolion's story: Origins, migration and the circulation of wealth

Bragge interviewed Kolion, a Sawos elder of the Niaui moiety, on February 21, 1973, in the rest house where he was staying during his two-day patrol visit to Nogosop Village, which, according to Bragge (2018d, p. 730), is regarded by Iatmul and Sawos people to be very near to their legendary place of creation. Although Bragge recorded Kolion's story as part of his duties as a patrol officer, it is not just another one of the many 'artefacts of bureaucratic labor duly performed, artifices of a colonial state declared to be in efficient operation', as Stoler (2009, p. 2) puts it. Kolion's story is much

more than this. Kolion sought Bragge out himself. He came to the rest house in the evening specifically to offer his testimony and Bragge recorded it beyond the call of his duties, driven by a deep scholarly interest in the history and culture of the people among whom he had been placed to work.

Bragge later transcribed Kolion's testimony, subsequently including the whole transcript in his official patrol report (Bragge, 1972–73; in Appendix A 'Anthropological Notes') and again, over 40 years later, in his Sepik history (Bragge, 2018a). As Bragge notes, Kolion's 'statement is a fascinating blend of traditional religious belief as influenced by the impact of Christian teachings, including the adaptation of Jesus and the Sawos cult hero Mai'imp …' (2018a, p. 730). At the same time, Kolion's story encourages reflection on the different historicities and values that might be discoverable in the archive, including Sepik understandings about the origins and nature of Europeans and Chinese and their activities in PNG.

In the following extract from Bragge's transcript of his interview with Kolion (who is referred to by Bragge as 'a Sepik philosopher'), Kolion expresses a particular understanding of 'sameness' and 'otherness' (identity and difference).

> Now what about this ground? You are a white-man and I am a black-man. Now what about this ground? It is the same (as us). There is white ground and there is black ground …
>
> I am black and you are white. When I was born and I lay on my mother's lap, I was the same as you. I stood on this (black) ground and I became a black-man. It works the same with white ground, or red ground or yellow ground. Who changed it? Are you the big brother and I am the small brother? Our skin colour follows the colour of the earth we break. (Kolion in Bragge, 2018d, pp. 731–32)

Here Kolion is at pains to claim identity with Bragge ('I was the same as you'). This is an example of a well-recorded tendency in PNG to treat 'white people' as 'lost kin' (Burridge, 1969; Connolly & Anderson, 1987; Bell, 2016; Bashkow, 2006; Lattas, 2010). Bell (2016), for example, discusses such a claim by an elder named Ivia, in Baimuru (Gulf Province) in 2001. As Bell (2016, p. 28) writes:

> Through this shared cosmological beginning, Ivia sought to establish a moral relationship with me, as a representative white person. Ivia's story is of a genre, called 'cargo talk'. Possessing affinities to the Tok Pisin formulations of *kago* in terms of its metaphoric and relational aspects, cargo talk is a mode of critique (Robbins, 2004)

> and a means by which to express hope (Crapanzano, 2004). It is a means by which speakers seek to elicit and reconfigure relations to transform their social, political and economic realities … As a performance of history, cargo talk helps enact the realities it purports to see by revealing the hidden potentialities in its subjects.

Yet, Kolion was not just conveying his ontological identity with Bragge that night in the guest house. He was also conveying his difference from Bragge, that is, not only the fact of their sameness but also the origin of their otherness, but not in the western sense of racial otherness where skin colour is a criterion in a quasi-scientific system of social classification based on human biology. While Kolion distinguishes between 'black-man' and 'white-man', these terms do not carry the same racialist meaning that they have in the West. Rather, skin colour, according to Kolion, is a product of the ground (land/earth). 'Was your ancestor a white woman and mine a black woman? No! It was the white ground and black ground' (Kolion in Bragge, 2018d, pp. 730–736). By extension, while he does not specifically mention Chinese, he notes that red ground gives rise to red-skinned people and yellow ground to yellow-skinned people. Skin colour is a loaded visual signifier of something Sepik people value above all else—place (*ples* in Tok Pisin)—that is, clan-based ground or land. In turn, *ples*—the ground itself—is imbued with something else that is highly valued—knowledge:

> The sago grows on this ground. The mother of the ground will not go far away; she stays at the base of the sago. We men are different, we get up and walk around, but she stays. You [white-men] went away and now you have come back. I stayed here and now you have come to see me and to teach me. You have books to hold your knowledge. We keep it in here [stomach indicated—popularly believed to be the mind; the repository of knowledge]. I cannot write like you can and I cannot read. I remember it all and I store it in here. My book is filled [again stomach indicated].
>
> Mai'imp [ancestral being] died and through his death knowledge was hidden from us black people … The knowledge is hidden and we do not know it … Our mother's vagina was closed against us and we obtained no further knowledge from her …
>
> We had no way to get knowledge, and then you white-men came back and you had books with knowledge and you gave more knowledge to us … You teach us but you do not give us all the secrets … Look at yourself and look at us. We are the same. Five fingers … Our difference is in our knowledge. Some knowledge is hidden from us. (Kolion in Bragge, 2018d, pp. 730–36)

Knowledge is seen as something that confers power and that can be taken away (or stolen), hidden and kept secret. In Kolion's worldview, differences between peoples of the Sepik and the various outsiders that entered their world—Germans, British, Australians and Chinese, Japanese and others—like gender differences, were founded on the assertion and enactment of the ownership of knowledge (or the material representations thereof; that is, the valuables or 'cargo' that these outsiders had brought with them). The nature of the relationship between the 'white-man' and the 'black-man' is like that of the relationship between Sepik men and women. In the cosmogonic past, as Kolion related, men appropriated from women the sacred images (objects) of knowledge that conferred to women their power and dominance. He referred to women as having been the 'big brother' (that is, as being dominant) while men were the 'small brother' until their roles were reversed. After the men took the sacred objects from the women, they hid them from the women. They kept the knowledge secret from women, thus securing the dominance of men over women. Similarly, according to this cosmology, when the white ground split away from the black ground, the 'white-man' took knowledge away and now keeps this knowledge hidden from the 'black-man', perhaps generating a masculinity crisis for Sepik men. 'Are you the big brother and I am the small brother?' Kolion rhetorically asks of Bragge (Kolion in Bragge, 2018d, pp. 730–36).

In his discussion with Bragge, Kolion used the Tok Pisin term *save*, referring to knowledge, understanding and wisdom (Mihalic, 1989 [1971]). Interconnecting with the views of the authors, Kolion sees different skins—that is, different peoples—as producing knowledge according to their own historicities, or 'modes of temporal being and awareness' (Ballard, 2014, p. 103). Bragge's patrol reports and his Sepik history reveal differences between the historicities of Sepik peoples and the agents of the colonial state, according to their different cosmological and ontological frames of reference, but reveal little about the historicity of Chinese in the Sepik.

In his Sepik history, Bragge draws heavily on Sepik people's stories, in which the ground/land/earth itself is thought of as knowledge, heritage and skin/body. The concept of the transformation of the ancestral body is seen in the story of Mai'imp, as told to Bragge by Kolion that evening in Nogosop Village. Mai'imp was a powerful being who would provide an abundance of fish to women in exchange for intercourse with them at his market. When their husbands discovered this, they devised a plan to kill Mai'imp. They decided to carve two wooden images and bury them in the earth, the source of ancestral power. Kolion continues,

> Mai'imp came up to the market and stepped over the two buried images. The images got up and fought him and Mai'imp fell down … dead … The Mai'imp's bung [market] was an Old Testament law and the sago bung is of the New Testament. Now we are people of the New Testament. The people of the Old Testament are once again in the ground … This is the New Testament as we do it now. Before there were no enemies, no death, no poison and no sorcery, but now in the New Testament we have all these things and we follow all these fashions [ways]. Do you understand what I am saying? Now it is his [Mai'imp's] body we eat. It is like this 'now you eat my body' and his blood became the fish and all the things edible in the water … Are you still with me? Now we eat sago and we eat fish. We call his blood in our language 'Kami' and his body we call 'Nau'. Nau is the word for the sago which we eat. (Kolion in Bragge, 2018d, pp. 730–36)

'The Christians nearly got it right', says Kolion after telling the story of Mai'imp, clearly associating him with Jesus Christ and the Catholic ritual transformation and consumption of Christ's body and blood. The knowledge that each party, the 'white-man' and the 'black-man', has is only partial, according to Kolion. For each to be complete in their knowledge, exchanges between the two brothers are required. At the time, Bragge understood Kolion's words as 'cargo cult talk' (personal communication, April 14, 2021). Bragge took Kolion to mean that Bragge, like other Europeans, knew the secret of how to get the material goods they had brought with them but had a vested interest in not sharing that secret and, therefore, was hiding access to it from his 'small brother'.

One of Bragge's tasks during the 1972 patrol when he stayed overnight in Kolion's village was to inform and educate Sepik people about the coming of PNG Independence. In his report following this patrol, Bragge writes that one of the main fears among Sepik people was that the Australians would leave without first sharing the knowledge they had been keeping from them (Bragge, 1972–1973). Regarding Sepik views on the Chinese, Bragge reminisces (personal communication, April 14, 2021):

> The only thing contentious … which I didn't follow up … was that in cargo cult terms they said that the cargo would be in the Chinese stores at Independence … It was just something I heard before Independence … picked up from a patrol somewhere. I think the common theme from cargo cult belief is that the ancestors made this cargo for you and that it has been sidetracked from you by the Europeans and that it was held in the Chinese stores …

Chinese in the Sepik: The story of Chu Leong

Apart from noting that, like 'white people', there were also 'red' and 'yellow' people, based on the colour of the 'ground' from which they hailed, Kolion did not specifically focus on the Chinese in his account to Bragge, who he classed as a 'white-man'. Would Kolion have asked the same question of the Chinese trader Chu Leong as he asked of Bragge? 'Are you the big brother and I the small brother?' Would he have included the Chinese traders or Japanese soldiers, who were in the Sepik during World War II, in the category of 'big brothers' who had appropriated knowledge in the cosmogonic past and kept it secret from the 'black' man? Kolion certainly had encountered at least one Chinese trader who was active in the Sepik area—Chu Leong—but did not mention him in his interview with Bragge. Some Australian government officers in PNG, however, thought that Papua New Guineans did not distinguish Chinese from the 'white-man'. Bragge (2018d, p. 8) quotes Robert Melrose, an Australian government officer working in New Guinea between 1921 and 1949, as writing that 'Wild natives are incapable of distinguishing between Europeans and Asiatics for they group them all as Whiteman.'

So, what is discoverable in the archive about Chu Leong and other Chinese in the Sepik? The following account has been gleaned from Bragge's account in his Sepik history, which is based on secondary sources, and on written and oral history accounts by Chu Leong's daughter, Anna Chu, as well as research conducted and shared with her by Dr. Adam Lui, compiled while researching his own family history in the Sepik.

Born in 1888, Chu Sai Leong originally came from Canton (Pak Kong Village, Hoi Peng County, Kwang Tung Province) to New Guinea in 1913 under the German administration. He was already a married man with a son, but his wife and child remained behind in China. In 1930, Chu Leong moved to Marienberg, a Catholic Mission settlement and patrol post on the Sepik River. It was here that J. K. McCarthy (1905–1976), then a patrol officer for the Australian administration posted to the Sepik, met him in 1930 (Chu, 2008). McCarthy remembered that 'The establishment of Chu Leong's store on the Sepik was welcomed by the small community [of Australian government officers, European missionaries and entrepreneurs] on the river' (McCarthy, 1972, p. 26). McCarthy also noted that Chu Leong was 'one of the first of my many Chinese friends'

(1972, p. 26). The key point that McCarthy made in his article eulogising Chu Leong was that the Chinese had, in general, been overlooked in PNG history. Reflecting on the increasing number of books written about PNG, McCarthy (1972, p. 26) wrote:

> The indigenous people and the Europeans play a great part in these books, but one race is seldom mentioned. I refer to the Chinese who are—and have been for the past 80 years—part of New Guinea's expatriate population. With the courage and diligence of their race, these folk from Canton are among the pioneers of the Territory, and they should be given the recognition they deserve.

After arriving in Marienberg, Chu Sai Leong married a Sepik woman—Elekama of Kiwim village in the Banaro area on the Keram River, a tributary of the Sepik (Chu, 2008). His first child to Elekama was born in 1936, followed by seven more children (Chu, 2008). When the Australian administration moved its post at Marienberg up the Sepik River to Angoram in 1933, Chu Leong relocated his trade store and settled there. Establishing his store at Angoram was not only a good business venture for him, but also felicitously contributed to the growth of the new government station. Whether other Chinese traders were foundational in the early establishment of townships across New Guinea warrants further research (see also Wood & Backhaus, this volume). Certainly, Australian government officers all over the Territory relied on the Chinese storekeepers for provisions. Bragge notes that he had accounts at such stores, and that Chu Leong was the sole Chinese person living in Angoram and plying his trade along the river; most Chinese appear to have preferred to set up businesses in already established urban areas. Other Chinese who ventured into the Sepik area settled in the coastal town of Wewak. Bragge mentions a few Chinese families who had settled in Wewak before World War II. These included the Chow family, the Ning Hee family, the Seeto Nam family and the Tang Mow family (Bragge, 2018c, Ch. 23, p. 80, notes of Adam Liu).

According to Cahill (2012, p. 211), the Australian administration denied an application by a Chinese storekeeper in Wewak to bring Chinese shop assistants from China in 1948. The storekeeper was told he should employ assistants from within the existing PNG Chinese community but was unable to do so as most were resident in Rabaul and unwilling to settle in areas where there were fewer 'social amenities', especially so soon after World War II.

Australian policies regarding Chinese were inconsistently applied on the ground in PNG during the war. For example, Bragge (2018c, Ch. 23) provides a detailed account of the fate of the Sepik Chinese during World War II. While Chinese in Rabaul were never evacuated and ended up at the mercy of the Japanese military, most of those in the Sepik were flown to Australia in 1943. Unfortunately, three Chinese families missed joining the evacuation from the Sepik. According to Adam Lui (cited in Bragge, 2018c, p. 80) the three families from Wewak were the Ning Hee family, the Seeto Nam family and the Tang Mow family. Of these, only the Tang Mow family remained in PNG for the duration of the war. The other two families eventually made it to Australia. According to Bragge (personal communication, April 14, 2021):

> In 1942, the European women and children were evacuated. The Chinese then came and said, "What about us?" And there was no instruction for them … The administration didn't want them or need them. They were something the Australian government had inherited without the wish to do so from the German New Guinea period … The Chinese were originally all left behind. Then as the Japanese started to approach the Sepik the administration officers who were there, Bates in particular, rounded up the Chinese and walked them out through the Ramu into the highlands to Bena Bena and at Bena Bena they were loaded on to planes and taken to Australia.

The Australian officers who led the evacuation of the Chinese in December 1942 were Captain C. D. Bates, former District Officer at Maprik, Captain T. G. Aitchison, former Assistant District Officer at Wewak, Captain J. S. Milligan, former patrol officer at Aitape, and Wireless Operator Kevin Minogue. However, the arduous journey would not have been possible without the assistance of hundreds of Sepik carriers and other Papua New Guineans along the way. Bragge's archive includes an interview he did with a Sepik man, Nonguru Kemerabi of Japandai, who provides details of what he and others did to assist in the evacuation:

> … we doubled big canoes and evacuated all the Chinese from Wewak. We took them down river as far as Kambaramba where we left the double canoes. We took single canoes then to move the Chinese through the Grass country and into the Ramu River system … (Bragge, 2018c, p. 77)

The journey took six weeks. Among the group evacuated was Chu Leong, although he did not join the group until later. From Bena Bena, he and the other Chinese were flown to Port Moresby and then to Australia.[3]

> He wasn't in Wewak when they rounded the rest up. They found him along the way … One story I got about him in that regard was that one of the Chinese women was very pregnant, so walking to Bena Bena was not a very nice option for her. So Chu Leong got her and took her to his village in the Keram River area and stayed with her until the baby was born; and the baby was left with the women in that village and then he walked with her to follow up the patrol to Bena Bena; and, after the war the child was collected by the Chinese. That's the story I got. I can't remember where I got it from, but [caring for the pregnant woman] is typical [of the man] that Chu Leong was. (Bragge, personal communication, April 14, 2021)

Whatever the truth of this story, before he joined the Chinese being evacuated, Chu Leong took his Sepik wife and children to live with her family in Kiwim village, instructing them to paint the children with black ash and to shave their heads so the Japanese would not know they were 'mixed race Chinese' (Chu, 2008, p. 13). Chu Leong was in his sixties. He spent the rest of his war years in Australia as a refugee (McCarthy, 1972, p. 26). McCarthy recalls Chu Leong telling him stories about how hard he worked in Australia. Eventually, he 'was considered unsuitable for war work and was out of a job' (McCarthy, 1972, p. 26). Chu Leong said, 'I was all right … The pay was high and I had saved my money, for I lived cheaply. I had met some Chinese in Australia, but I had to work … I cooked Chinese food and there were thousands of American soldiers and sailors with plenty of money to pay for it. I could work as hard as I liked and there was no bloody foreman [referring to Australian war factories management] to stop me' (McCarthy, 1972, p. 26).

After the war, while many PNG Chinese sought to become Australian citizens and remain in Australia, Chu Leong returned to his family in the Sepik. Chu Leong first re-established his trade store in Angoram and then sent a policeman to bring his wife and children back to him from her village.

3 According to the Commonwealth of Australia Form of Application for Registration (For Aliens Entering Australia in Overseas Vessel on or Aircraft), Chu Leong (spelled Chew Leong on the form), born on 21 August 1889, arrived in Australia by army plane from New Guinea and landed at Brisbane on 11 November 1943. He first lived in Brisbane and later moved to Sydney.

He repaired his boat, the *Winon*, and continued with his trading, including suppling the trade stores along the Sepik River that he had encouraged Sepik people to set up.

Along the Sepik, Chu Sai Leong carried sago, artefacts and crocodile skins for other expatriate traders. His daughter, Anna Chu, recollects that 'he also traded for snake and crocodile gall and smoked cassowary feet which were sent off to his son from his first wife in Hong Kong' (Chu, 2008, p. 17). He travelled to Hong Kong in 1960 and again in 1962 to visit his son from his first wife and make business connections. While Chu Leong appeared to operate as a lone wolf along the Sepik River, he was clearly linked into a wider Chinese community both in PNG and overseas. He was a registered member of the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT) in PNG and had business arrangements with other Chinese in the Sepik. Anna Chu (2008, p. 43) writes that within a week of his burial at Angoram, 'a Chinese representative from Madang arrived in a chartered aircraft to take away whatever money we had in the shop'. Chu Leong's wife and children were told to sell whatever goods were left in the shop and then close it. They eventually received a 'small portion' of his estate, but not until 1984. 'I think most of his estate went to his son from his first wife in Hong Kong who had moved there from Canton' (Chu, 2008, p. 43).

While Chu Leong's was the sole Chinese store in Angoram, other Chinese were active along the Aitape/Sepik coast and inland areas during and after German times, 'recruiting labour and hunting birds of paradise' (Bragge, 2018b, p. 333), but little is known of them. Their voices remain silent in the colonial archive 'as they tended to leave, neither reports on what they did, nor maps where they did it' (Bragge, 2018b, p. 333).

Kiaps such as Bragge were instructed by the Australian administration to write detailed 'area reports' based on their patrols. These were focused almost entirely on the indigenous population. A brief section in reports was devoted to non-indigenous people active in the area patrolled, but this was generally interpreted as meaning 'Europeans'. In Papua there simply were very few Asians and Chinese to be reported on because they were not allowed to live in that Australian territory. When Chinese activity in an area is noted, little was recorded about their lives, politics and worldviews. The relative absence of Chinese voices in patrol reports reflects the dualistic racialised political order of the colonial regime of the time (Wolfers, 1975). Yet, as we have shown in this paper, by reading them ethnographically 'along the archival grain' (Stoler, 2009), much can be gleaned from patrol reports

that will assist us to understand how Chinese relations with the colonial state were expressed. Further research will enable us to explore how such colonial legacies continue to impact on Chinese relations with the post-independent nation-state of PNG, as described in several other chapters in this volume.

Discussion and conclusion: Knowledge, memory and history as image

We have focused in this chapter on the lives of two individuals who feature in an archive produced by a particular government officer, L. W. Bragge, serving the Australian colonial administration in PNG during the 1960s and early 1970s, just before Independence. There is a stark contrast between what is discoverable about Sepik and Chinese in the Bragge archive and in the five-volume history of the Sepik region that he produced from this archive—*History of the Sepik Region, PNG*. While Bragge made a great effort to include an account of the Chinese in his manuscript, there is little about their lives in the colonial archive that he was able to draw on, in comparison to the richness of material he had himself collected on Sepik people.

We have highlighted narratives created and directly shared by Kolion and other Sepik elders with Bragge that reveal Sepik understandings of origins, migrations and their relations with various colonial agents—Germans, Japanese, Australians. We have also focused on the comparatively little that Bragge was able to recount about the Chinese in the Sepik, particularly Chu Sai Leong. Kolion and Chu Leong's lives intersected in the Sepik. A unifying theme in their stories is one of migration; in Kolion's case, an original migration that separated the 'white-man' from the 'black-man', the big brother from the small brother, and in Chu Leong's case, an individual lifetime from Canton to PNG, to Australia and back, and continuous movement along the Sepik River where he made his home. What Kolion and Chu Leong may have thought of one another is not on record. In Bragge's view, Chu Leong was not classed by Sepik people as a 'white-man':

> I think he was just regarded as a one off. He certainly would not have been seen as European; and Europeans had some good reputations and some bad reputations, especially in the labour trade. He definitely would have been regarded as better than the *bad* Europeans. (Bragge, personal communication, April 14, 2021)

Encounters with strangers are understood as *effects* in the Melanesian context, according to Strathern (2013, p. 170). People construct images not only about the past but also about the present and future effects of encounters they have experienced, and these images are told in the form of what Foucault (1977) has termed 'effective histories'. Bell (2016) argues that the strategic telling of such 'effective histories' is intended to materialise 'utopian desires', which we argue is likely the case for any history, whether Melanesian or otherwise. As Bell (2016) puts it, in relation to the PNG context, such narratives:

> … shed light on people's creative capacities when faced by the extreme pressures … [of] uneven development … Those who seek to enact effective histories … tell narratives that claim intimate connections with the outside world (i.e., white foreigners are kin), and which confound distinctions imposed on them by outsiders. Doing so, they work to create space for other narratives to emerge, narratives that they hope can be used to readdress the current state of their own disenfranchisement. The acknowledgement of these intersections are one way individuals seek to create the grounds for the recognition of their moral equivalence.

Kolion's account as told to Bragge is an artefact that itself contains artefacts—images of past, present and future. His effective history provides evidence for Strathern's (2013, p. 169) point that such 'images are reflected self-knowledge' in that they are a means for people 'to construct knowledge about themselves and their relations with others'.

The narratives of the Sepik elders recorded by Bragge have become archival artefacts—materialised images of events and their effects. As such, they are potential agents for new aspirations and actions yet to come. The archive invites engagement with Sepik historicities and alternative accounts of colonial state governance, race, gender and development. As artefacts, the transcribed narratives of the Sepik elders not only hold histories but also carry memories, and if memory is 'the womb of history' (as Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 95–6 writes), then it carries not only the past, but also the present, and the future.

In contrast, the voices of Chinese migrants to PNG are relatively absent in the archive. They are knowable only through the accounts of others. For all we know, like Kolion, Chu Leong may also have been a philosopher of a kind, but what he may have thought or understood, his reflections on the origins of the world he found himself in, or his own migration experiences and journey through life is not readily discoverable, at least not directly.

Nevertheless, we argue that there is value in reading 'along the archival grain' for representations of the Chinese, as even the relative paucity of accounts in these 'artefacts of colonial knowledge' can be revealing. Adding Chinese stories is vital for the creation of 'effective histories' of PNG.

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