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## **The Role of Religion in Chinese Subethnicity: Christian Communities of Papua New Guinean Chinese in Australia**

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The aim of this paper is to consider the relationship between subethnicity and religion among Chinese in Australia using the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Chinese population in Australia as a case study. By looking at their Christian communities in Australia, the paper analyzes the characteristics of Chinese subethnicity. Australia has had a Chinese community since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the Australian government abandoned its White Australian Policy and adopted multiculturalism after World War II, the number of Chinese newly arriving in Australia has increased. These Chinese newcomers have come from various countries such as Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, East Timor, Vietnam, and the People's Republic of China. PNG Chinese are included among these Chinese arrivals in Australia. Chinese immigration to PNG began in the colonial period with New Guinea Island. Germany occupied the northeastern part of New Guinea and introduced Chinese immigrants as colonial laborers. German New Guinea was taken over by the Australian army at the beginning of World War I. After World War II, the Australian government allowed the Chinese in Papua and New Guinea to acquire Australian citizenship. PNG Chinese subsequently began to send their children to Australia for higher education, and PNG Chinese have used English as their common language. Before the independence of PNG in 1975, the PNG Chinese started migrating to Australia. They established Christian associations in Sydney and Brisbane. The PNG Chinese have interacted with Chinese people from other countries through these associations. Because of the differences in their languages and religions, however, the Christian associations of the PNG Chinese cannot include all of the Chinese subethnic groups. Their subethnic particularity can be seen in the PNG Chinese associations.

*Keywords: Chinese, Papua New Guinea, Australia, subethnicity, Christianity, migration, settlement*

### **1. Introduction**

It is often noted that the Chinese culture and people are not homogeneous and that there is a great deal of regional and linguistic multiplicity among them. The south of China in particular is notorious for its diversity of dialects. These dialects are almost

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different languages, and speakers of one dialect often cannot understand other dialects without studying them. These local variations generate both unity and diversity among the Chinese people. While the Chinese have—or consider themselves to have—a common identity and culture as a whole, they also include many particularities within that unity. Therefore, neither the unity nor the diversity of the Chinese can be devalued if one wishes to understand the nature of Chinese ethnicity.

Chinese communities outside of mainland China also exhibit this combination of unity and diversity. Most overseas Chinese and their ancestors come from the southern part of China, with all its linguistic and cultural diversity. Most ethnic Chinese communities in Asia-Pacific countries consist of subgroups who are descendants of migrants from the southern parts of China: Guangdong, Fujian, Hainan, Chaozhou, Fuzhou, Hakka, etc. Although these subgroups have their own dialects and cultures, they also maintain their identity as Chinese people. Thus it is often pointed out that ethnic Chinese communities have a segmentary structure (Crissman, 1967; Guldin, 1997). At the high segmentary level they identify themselves with the Chinese people as a whole and value their commonality. On the other hand, they also emphasize their local peculiarities and distinguish themselves from one another at the lower segmentary level. These strata of Chinese ethnicity can be seen as the result of the geographical, linguistic, and cultural diversity among the Chinese.

Besides these plural localities and dialects, Chinese migration and settlement are also factors that diversify the Chinese overseas. A notable feature of contemporary Chinese migration is remigration (Wang, 1991: 8–10). It is often observed that some Chinese migrate to a particular area to reside, then emigrate to another area. These remigration patterns influence not only the lifestyles of Chinese migrants but also their identities. When Chinese migrants from the same area emigrate to several countries and settle in those countries for several generations, these migrants may acquire different cultures and identities.

This diversification becomes distinctive when the variously localized Chinese remigrate and meet each other in new destinations. In this situation, the migrants may see themselves as ‘same Chinese’ as well as ‘different Chinese’ by simultaneously recognizing the unity and diversity of their socio-cultural backgrounds (Guldin, 1997; Luk, 2001).<sup>1</sup> Like geography and language in mainland China, migration is the crucial factor in creating diversity among Chinese abroad (Tan, 2004). Although the Chinese diaspora stretches all over the world and the Chinese are perceived to have a transnational network, they should not be seen as a

<sup>1</sup> Chinese overseas do not necessarily refer to some Chinese as the ‘same’ and to some as ‘different’. However Chinese in Papua New Guinea often do distinguish one subgroup from another. Thus, the local born Chinese call the newcomers ‘Asian Chinese’, while the newcomers use a Mandarin word *bendi huaren* (本地华人, local Chinese) to refer to the old-timers.

homogeneous people despite sharing some aspects of ethnic identity (Ang, 2001).

The segmentary structure of unity and diversity among Chinese subgroups is often described and analyzed with the term 'subethnicity', while subgroups are described as 'subethnic groups'.<sup>2</sup> The segmentary structures of Chinese identities also stratify Chinese ethnicity. As subgroups have different socio-cultural and linguistic peculiarities, the nature of Chinese ethnicity is revealed to have a hierarchical and pluralistic nature rather than a homogeneous one. By considering subethnicity, researchers can grasp the relationship between the unity and the diversity of Chinese ethnic identity (Salaff, 2005). Studies that consider Chinese subethnicity have been done in mainland China (e.g. Moser, 1989; Honig, 1992), Taiwan (e.g. Lamley, 1981), the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (e.g. Segawa, 1993; Guldin, 1997; Lin, 2002), and ethnic Chinese communities (e.g. Hamilton, 1977; Strauch, 1981; Luk, 2001). In the context of Chinese ethnic studies, the term 'subethnicity' tends to indicate local and dialect groups among ethnic Chinese communities. Subethnicities among ethnic Chinese overseas tend to correspond to geographical and linguistic varieties in Southeast China.<sup>3</sup> Academic studies of subethnicities among overseas Chinese often research regional associations (同乡会馆) because the local and dialectical diversity they engender strongly influence the structure of Chinese ethnicity (Li, 1970; Mak, 1985; Cheng, 1985, 1995; Wickberg, 1994; Sinn, 1998; Liu, 1998).

Although the place of origin and the dialect spoken in China are important for understanding the segmentary structure of Chinese ethnicity, this paper will focus on the role of religious beliefs in understanding subethnic dynamism among ethnic Chinese. Religion is regarded as a basic element in many ethnicities and identities.<sup>4</sup> The role of religion in ethnicity is no less significant to the Chinese. Some scholars who research ethnic Chinese have pointed out that religion influences the identities of Chinese communities and reflects the social strata of the Chinese people (Clammer, 1993; Nagata, 1995). When we try to understand the relationships among subgroups in ethnic Chinese communities, religious beliefs and practices must be taken into account, just as geography and language

<sup>2</sup> The term 'subethnicity' and 'subethnic group' are used, not only in anthropological Chinese studies but also in sociological studies, to describe the situation of particular ethnic groups which include several subgroups among them. In these studies, certain factors such as locality, language, descent, and religion are often analyzed as factors that determine ethnicity [e.g. Der-Martirosian, *et al.*, 1993; Kurien, 2002].

<sup>3</sup> Subethnicity is equivalent to the Chinese word *minxi* (民系). Wang and Segawa pointed that the places of origin in Mainland China (籍贯地) have crucial significance for the ethnicity of Chinese overseas, even several generations after they leave China. Their places of origin have been the base of their identities and form the boundaries of ethnicity (Wang and Segawa, 1984; Segawa, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> As Isajiw (1974) suggested, religion is one of the major attributes in defining the notion of ethnicity.

are.

This paper will discuss the dynamic nature of Chinese subethnicity by analyzing the relationship between religion and subgroups in Chinese communities in Australia. Chinese in contemporary Australia come from several countries in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. These immigrants have established communities in Australia, and their number is increasing. They all exhibit a common identity as 'same Chinese' along with an awareness of their identities as 'different Chinese'. Those who migrated from Papua New Guinea have been chosen as a case study of relations between Christian activities and subethnicity.<sup>5</sup> Chinese in Papua New Guinea immigrated to Australia relatively early on and have interacted with other ethnic Chinese in various social spheres. Consideration of their community and religious practices will highlight the segmentary structure of Chinese subethnicity.

## 2. The Chinese Immigration and Communities in Australia

At the moment there are approximately 300,000 ethnic Chinese in an Australian total population of approximately 20,000,000. As mentioned, the contemporary Chinese population in Australia includes several Chinese groups of various backgrounds, who have migrated from a number of Asia-Pacific countries and created a diverse internal structure within the Chinese communities.

The Chinese community in Australia dates back to the middle of the 19th century, when Chinese pioneers arrived during that continent's gold rush. In 1851 gold was found in New South Wales, as well as elsewhere in Australia. Chinese laborers arrived to work in the mines.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were about 30,000 Chinese in Australia. The earliest Chinese in Australia came mostly from the Siyi (四邑) area of Guangdong (Ho and Coughlan, 1997: 120). In 1901, six colonies in Australia formed a federation, and its government passed the Immigration Restriction Act. Under the subsequent White Australia Policy the number of Chinese arriving in Australia decreased drastically.

The next wave of Chinese immigration to Australia began in the 1970s, after the

<sup>5</sup> This paper is based on the research the author conducted in Papua New Guinea and Australia. The main material for this paper was collected during several fieldwork trips I conducted in Sydney and Brisbane in the years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2008, through interviews with the members of Papua New Guinean Chinese communities as well as participant observation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Chinese friends in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

<sup>6</sup> During the 19th century Chinese migrants were also attracted by the California Gold Rush. In Chinese, they called California 'Old Gold Mountain' and Australia 'New Gold Mountain'.

government abandoned its White Australia Policy and adopted a policy of multiculturalism. One group of early arrivals in postwar Australia was comprised of Indochinese refugees, especially Vietnamese. During the 1970s Australia, like neighboring ASEAN countries, accepted refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, which had been damaged by the Indochina War. There were considerable numbers of ethnic Chinese among these Indochinese refugees (Coughlan, 1992: 75), who established communities in many parts of Australia, such as in the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta.

Besides those from Indochina, other Chinese have immigrated to Australia: from East and Southeast Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and East Timor, beginning in the 1980s, and from the People's Republic of China beginning in the 1990s (Ho and Coughlan, 1997: 122–123). These newcomers differ in several ways from 19<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese immigrants to Australia. Though most of the earlier Chinese immigrants were manual laborers, the newcomers are educated, highly skilled, and entered many business and investment fields in Australia. There is now a large Chinese middle-class in Australia (Wu, 2003). These Chinese also bring their families from their countries of origin and reunite with them in Australia. They have established communities in many Australian cities and towns, but unlike the earlier immigrants, most of the newcomers prefer to live in suburbs like other Australians rather than in Chinatowns (Ho and Coughlan, 1997: 133).

Like the newcomers from East and Southeast Asian countries, the new arrivals from mainland China differ from the earlier settlers. Although most Chinese came from the Siyi area of Guangdong in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more recent emigrants from mainland China come not only from Guangdong but also Beijing, Shanghai, Fujian, and elsewhere. In addition to immigrants who work or do business in Australia, there are many Chinese students in Australian universities, some of whom choose to stay in Australia rather than return to China after they graduate. The number of such Chinese has increased since the Tian'anmen Incident (Wu, 2003: 375). The Chinese residents of Australia speak a number of different languages. Apart from English, the most common languages are Cantonese for those from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia and Mandarin for the newcomers from mainland China. Some of the old-timers who speak Cantonese can therefore communicate with other Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong, Southeast Asian countries and Guangdong Province. Opportunities to learn Mandarin are scarce, and so most old-timers tend to speak either in English or Cantonese. The differences among their native languages make it necessary for some Chinese people to communicate with each other in English.

Papua New Guinean Chinese are among these newcomers to postwar Australia. They

began migrating to Australia in the early 1970s, and their route there was an unusual one. They first migrated to New Guinea, a former Australian colony, and then remigrated to Australia after spending several generations in New Guinea. The Papua New Guinean Chinese interact with other Chinese in the course of their daily lives in Australia.

### 3. The Chinese Arrival from Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea has a history of being colonized by Britain, Germany, and Australia. The Chinese community in Papua New Guinea began with the history of colonization in this area.<sup>7</sup> The Netherlands occupied the western part of the island of New Guinea in 1828, and Germany and Britain respectively declared possession of the northeast and southeast part of the island. Germany brought the Chinese as colonial laborers to develop the economy of their colony (Biskup, 1970: 86). Under German governance, Chinese laborers came first from Singapore and Sumatra and then, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from the Siyi area of Guangdong. These Chinese worked as plantation workers, carpenters, mechanics, artisans, small-scale merchants, and so forth, establishing communities in the cities and towns of German New Guinea: Rabaul, Kokopo, Kavieng, Namatanai, Madang. The Chinese communities and activities were confined to the northeastern part of New Guinea because that was the area colonized by Germany.

German New Guinea was taken over by the Australian military and put under military governance after the outbreak of World War I. After 1920 the area was governed by Australia under a Mandate of the League of Nations. Australia applied its White Australia Policy to New Guinea as well, restricting Chinese immigration to the region. Chinese who were already residents could not move into Papua, another Australian colony in the southeast part of New Guinea, or into Australia. Nor were they allowed to bring family members from China to New Guinea (Cahill, 1996).<sup>8</sup>

Among the social and cultural adaptations of the Chinese in New Guinea was

<sup>7</sup> The Papua New Guinean Chinese do not call themselves as 'ethnic Chinese' or *huaren* (华人) in Chinese. In Cantonese they call themselves *tongyan* (唐人), and in English, Niugini Chinese and Papua New Guinea-born Chinese.

<sup>8</sup> In the colonial period most of the Chinese were single male laborers, so their sex ratio was skewed toward males. The restrictions imposed during Australian colonial rule on the arrival of Chinese into New Guinea also maintained this imbalance. The shortage of Chinese women led some of the Chinese males to marry local women. After World War II the sexual imbalance gradually lessened but intermarriage with local people and Australians still existed. Intermarriage is also a prominent trend among the Catholics and the Methodists. After migrating to Australia, some of the Chinese, especially the younger ones, began marrying Chinese of other subethnicities as well as Australians.

conversion to Christianity. They had been influenced by missionaries and sent their children to missionary schools, and under German and Australian colonial rule, most of them became Christian (Wu, 1982: 118), usually either Catholic or Methodist, like the German and Australian colonizers. Another reason for this conversion is that the Chinese in New Guinea did not have proper Chinese temples and shrines. These two factors, education by Christian missionaries and the lack of institutionalized Chinese religion, thus led to widespread conversion to Christianity.

During the Pacific War, Japanese attacked New Guinea and fought against the Allied Forces there, and New Guinea became a battlefield. Some parts of New Guinea were occupied by the Japanese military, and the Chinese who resided in those areas were put under the control of the Japanese army. After the end of World War II, the Chinese in New Guinea could not be protected by the Australian government because they were not Australian citizens. However, the Australian government allowed the Chinese in New Guinea to acquire passports in the late 1950s (Wu, 1982: 84; Inglis, 1997: 323), and most of the Chinese in New Guinea and Papua became Australian citizens at that time.

This closer relationship to Australia changed the educational orientation of the New Guinea Chinese. Before the war, New Guinea Chinese used to send their children to Hong Kong and China to be educated. The postwar political and social disorder in mainland China made this more difficult, and the New Guinea Chinese began sending their children to Australia for higher education. Because they now had Australian passports, there were no legal obstacles to their visiting and staying in Australia. As a result, the New Guinean Chinese tended to speak English as their common language and became familiar with the Australian way of life. Their orientation gradually turned from China to Australia.

The independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975 had a crucial impact on the Chinese, who had to decide whether to maintain Australian citizenship or naturalize as Papua New Guinea citizens. Many were fearful about their status as an ethnic minority in a newly independent country; this was a time when Asian minorities—ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, Indians in East African nations—were being persecuted by the majority in newly independent nations. In addition, traditional native landowners in PNG began ordering the Chinese to return the land they had rented or used during the colonial period, which further annoyed the latter. Therefore the Chinese began migrating to Australia even before independence took effect (Wu, 1998: 213). Before independence, the Chinese population in New Guinea was estimated at about 3,000, but almost 90% of that population migrated to Australia, where their communities are now much larger than the ones in Papua New Guinea.



Most of the Papua New Guinea Chinese migrated to the Australian cities on the east coast, especially Sydney and Brisbane. Except for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century pioneers, the Papua New Guinea Chinese were one of the earliest Chinese groups to immigrate to Australia. Other Chinese from Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the PRC, and elsewhere began arriving and establishing communities in Australia only after the Papua New Guinea Chinese had come. The multiculturalism promoted by the Australian government has been important to the Papua New Guinea Chinese in Australia. Ethnic conditions in Australian cities are different from those in Papua New Guinea cities. Although the PNG cities exhibit cultural and linguistic diversity, the majority of city dwellers are local Melanesians. The population of Australian cities, by contrast, consists of White Australians and of ethnic minorities who arrived after the government abandoned its White Australia Policy. The new policy of multiculturalism encourages minority populations to maintain their way of life and ethnic identities. This was already in place when the Papua New Guinea Chinese came to live in Australia.

Once the Papua New Guinea Chinese settled in Australia, they inevitably mixed with other Australians, including Chinese from other countries. The Papua New Guinea Chinese do not live in traditional Chinatowns in the big cities; they prefer to live in the suburbs. In Sydney they tend to live in North Sydney, and in Brisbane they prefer to live in the southern suburbs, especially Sunny Bank Hills. When they lived in New Guinea cities, like Rabaul and Kavieng, they were concentrated in particular areas, especially Chinatowns, but in Australian cities they spread to the large suburbs. Thus residential patterns changed after they settled in Australia.

The social and economic status of the Papua New Guinea Chinese also influences their lifestyle in Australia. Even before they remigrated to Australia, they had established businesses and assets in PNG. The first generation was mostly colonial laborers working as plantation workers, carpenters or mechanics. After World War II many moved upward. Some found employment as office workers in the Australian colonial administration or in Australian companies. Many more started their own businesses in wholesale trade, opened retail shops, or established copra plantations. The postwar generations of Chinese in Australia received higher education and were largely influenced by Australian middle-class culture. After arrival they did not need to live in Chinatown because they already had sufficient knowledge of Australian society to live in it not as members of a diaspora but rather as fully competent citizens. This background distinguishes the Papua New Guinea Chinese from the Chinese newcomers in contemporary Australia.

As discussed above, the latter share the same ethnicity while maintaining their

subethnicities, not all of which are regional in origin. Other factors that determine subethnicity including spoken language, lifestyle, migration experience, and religion. The remainder of this paper will examine the role of religious organizations and practices in marking subethnicity in contemporary Australian Chinese communities.

#### 4. The Papua New Guinea Chinese Communities and Religion in Australia

##### 4.1 Relationships among Australian Chinese

As I mentioned above, the Papua New Guinea Chinese and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese migrants to Australia came from the same Siyi region of Guangdong. They could both be categorized as Cantonese in terms of their language and region.

There are Chinese regional associations in contemporary Australia. The Sydney Sze Yup Association, Aozhou xueli tongxianhui (澳洲雪梨四邑同乡会), is one regional association of Cantonese in Sydney. The Sydney Sze Yup Association was originally established in 1889 in Sydney as Siyi huiguan (四邑会馆). In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the people from Siyi resided in Sydney and organized a few regional associations and temples. Kwan Ti temple, Guanshengdimiao (关圣帝庙), was also called Siyi temple, Siyimiao (四邑庙), and it became the religious and social center for the Siyi people in Sydney. In 1994, the Siyi association was renamed Xueli siyi tongxianghui. The association offers its members activities and a place to socialize, and it maintains Kwan Ti temple. The staff of the temple practice periodic religious rites on special days like Chinese New Year (春节), Qingming jie (清明节), and Zhongqiu jie (中秋节), and they also conduct ancestral worship activities.

The Papua New Guinea Chinese are mainly from Siyi, and their descendents can become members of the Sydney Sze Yup Association and Kwan Ti temple.<sup>9</sup> But the participation of the Papua New Guinea Chinese in these associations is limited; in fact few are members. Sze Yup association is a typical Chinese regional association (tongxianghuiguan 同乡会馆) whose main activity is to provide mutual help among its members. Such regional associations exist in Chinese communities in many countries, and

<sup>9</sup> The Sydney Sze Yup Association is composed of Australian Chinese old-timers and newer Chinese immigrants, especially from Hong Kong and Guangdong. The language used here is Cantonese, and those newcomers who can speak this language can join. Many elder members are from Hong Kong and Guangdong, most of them having followed their children who immigrated to Australia. These elderly members in most cases are not very proficient in English and are not as used to the Australian way of life as their children are. These kinds of Chinese regional associations provide them with important opportunities to socialize with one another.

their purpose is to assist migrants of similar origin. But the Papua New Guinea Chinese in contemporary Australia are no longer newly arriving immigrants. As mentioned above, most of them already had Australian passports and had become used to the Australian way of life when they were still in Papua New Guinea. Many of them studied in Australian schools and can speak English fluently. That means they have no difficulties living in Australia and no need for the assistance that regional associations offer to new immigrants. For the Papua New Guinea Chinese, Australia is not an unfamiliar country. They knew it well even before arriving.

In addition to social backgrounds, religious beliefs also differentiate Papua New Guinean Chinese communities. As they are Christians, they need not participate in the Kwan Ti Temple's activities. The Kwan Ti Temple's main god is Kwan Ti, and some Taoist and Buddhist deities are also enshrined. The traditional Chinese religion has polytheistic and syncretic characteristics that set it apart from the Christian beliefs and practices to which the Papua New Guinea Chinese are committed. Although the Chinese regional origins are the same for the Papua New Guinea Chinese, the members of Kwan Ti temple, and the Sydney Sze Yup Association, religious differences separate these social and communal spheres. Basic regional ties are not sufficient to bind these Chinese together. For the Papua New Guinea Chinese, their regional origin in the mother country is not important enough to motivate them to cooperate with others of similar origins. Religious beliefs and practices have more significance in setting the internal boundaries among them.<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.2 Christian Associations of Papua New Guinea Chinese

Instead of participating in the other Chinese associations, Papua New Guinea Chinese have established their own associations and community activities. The PNG Chinese Catholic Association (PNGCCA) can serve as a case study to examine their communities and relationships with other peoples.

<sup>10</sup> Although the Papua New Guinea Chinese do not participate in these traditional Chinese religious activities and do not generally join Chinese regional associations, some of the Papua New Guinea Chinese take part in Chinese associations of quite different kinds. A good example of this is the Chinese Youth League in Sydney—a cultural association of Australian Chinese, often joined by the younger generations of Papua New Guinea Chinese. In a hall of the Chinese Youth League, young Chinese learn and practice Chinese martial arts, the lion dance, the dragon boat race, Chinese dances and so on. As English is spoken in the Chinese Youth League and its membership is not confined to any particular Chinese subgroups, the Papua New Guinea Chinese can join and participate in their activities. They also participate in other Chinese cultural associations advancing Chinese culture and sports. As long as there are no religious or linguistic obstacles, the Papua New Guinea Chinese readily join Chinese associations owned by other Chinese subgroups or communities.

The PNGCCA is a Christian association organized in 1980 by Papua New Guinea Chinese who lived in the North Sydney area. One member explained that the reason for establishing the association was to provide opportunities and places to get together for local Papua New Guinea Chinese. In New Guinea cities, their residential patterns converged more on particular city areas. Rabaul in particular had a Chinatown and the biggest Chinese community. Those who lived in Rabaul's Chinatown maintained a close-knit network. But after they moved to Australia and scattered throughout the Sydney suburbs, they found it more difficult to visit one another. So they established PNGCCA and organized periodic Christian activities to provide opportunities to meet.

Although PNGCCA is a Catholic association, it does not have any restrictions on membership. Its members live not only in Sydney but also in Brisbane and other Australian cities, as well as in Papua New Guinea. The main activities of PNGCCA are related to Christianity and socializing among the members. The Association regularly holds Mass and rosary recitations. Mass is held on the first Saturday of every month at a church in Saint Leonards, a suburb of North Sydney. The priest who conducts the Mass is Australian, but except for a few Hong Kong spouses, almost all participants are Papua New Guinea Chinese. After the Mass there is a conversation and meal in the adjacent hall. The participants often cook and bring foods of Papua New Guinea. In addition to Mass, PNGCCA holds a recitation of the rosary on the first Friday of every month at each member's house in turn. Families who take charge of the rosary tidy their rooms and prepare for the recitations by setting up tables, chairs, Bibles, musical instruments, and statues of the Virgin Mary. While the Mass and rosary are monthly activities, the Christmas party is an annual event attended by a larger number. One attendee mentioned that the PNGCCA Christmas party is their most important annual event, where they can meet many others who are hard to visit the rest of the year.

In addition to these Christian activities, PNGCCA organizes other activities for the members. Every few months there are events such as parties, sports competitions, hikes, and tours. The staff of PNGCCA often organizes group tours to places in Australia and overseas to New Zealand, Vanuatu, Vietnam, and China. These tours last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. Anyone can join them, but the Papua New Guinea Chinese are virtually the only participants. Although PNGCCA is a Catholic association,<sup>11</sup> its activities are not confined to religion, and it has multiple functions to enable members to meet and

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<sup>11</sup> The main religious affiliations of the Papua New Guinea Chinese are Catholic and Methodist. While the Catholics have their own associations, the Methodists do not. In the colonial period, the Catholics and Methodists tended to diverge at the community level, but today many Methodists also join the Catholic association.

maintain contact.

PNGCCA members also try to maintain ties and share information by publishing newsletters. Kundu News<sup>12</sup> is PNGCCA's official newsletter, sent to members living in both Australia and Papua New Guinea,<sup>13</sup> including Papua New Guinea Chinese who are not Catholic. Kundu News covers various topics, but most articles relate to births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths of the members and their families in Australia and Papua New Guinea. These articles keep the Papua New Guinea Chinese informed about the lives of other members of their widely dispersed community.

PNGCCA activities thus enable its members to maintain communal ties that were forged when they lived in New Guinea. PNGCCA is similar in nature to traditional Chinese regional associations, although it is a religious association. Its membership is not restricted to Chinese from Papua New Guinea, but is open to anyone. It is not exclusive to any region. In practice, however, apart from spouses of the Papua New Guinea Chinese, few other Chinese join PNGCCA. In effect, PNGCCA acts as an association based on both religion and regional origin.

#### 4.3 Christian Associations for Papua New Guinea Chinese and Other Chinese

While PNGCCA's members are almost all Papua New Guinea Chinese, there are other associations whose membership includes both Papua New Guinean Chinese and other Chinese. The Chinese Catholic Community in Brisbane (布里斯本华人天主教会) is a case in point.

The Chinese Catholic Community (CCC) was established in Brisbane in 1980 as the Chinese from Papua New Guinea increased in number. In 1985 the members of CCC invited a Papua New Guinea Chinese priest to join them. In the beginning, CCC members gathered at members' houses for prayer and rented a church for Mass.

The CCC has its own hall for prayer and social activities. In 1998 its members began to organize dance parties, dinner shows, and variety shows to raise funds in order to build their own hall. The donations came from Sydney and Papua New Guinea, as well as Brisbane. The members finally raised enough money to build Sacred Heart Centre (圣心会堂) in a suburb of Brisbane. Since then, the members have held prayer meetings and activities in this hall, where they also hold fundraising events for their members and their relatives who find themselves in need. Some of the donations go to Papua New Guinea.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Kundu is the name in Melanesian Pidgin (Tok Pisin) for a typical New Guinea drum.

<sup>13</sup> According to the editor, Kundu News has about 600 subscribers, but the number of actual readers is higher because other family members also read it.

In the early days, most CCC members were Papua New Guinea Chinese. But today its membership is quite diverse, with Chinese from Hong Kong, Taiwan, the PRC, Malaysia, Singapore, and Fiji participating regularly in its activities.

Evidence of its heterogeneity can be seen in the languages spoken at CCC events. In the beginning, English was used as the common language. Papua New Guinea Chinese are educated in English, both in Papua New Guinea and in Australia, and English is the language spoken in their churches in both countries. Moreover, the younger people are no longer skilled in Cantonese because they had no chance to study it properly in Papua New Guinea. Although their Chinese roots trace back to Guangdong, their main language has changed from Cantonese to English. However, the Chinese membership has broadened, the CCC has held a Cantonese Mass since 1989 and a Mandarin Mass since 1994. While the Papua New Guinea Chinese use English as their medium for worship, the Hong Kong people speak Cantonese, and Taiwanese and Southeast Asian Chinese prefer Mandarin. Sacred Heart Hall now hosts in turn an English, Cantonese, and Mandarin Mass each Sunday.

In addition to Mass, the CCC organizes rosary recitations, which draw fewer participants than the Mass. These rosary sessions are held every Monday in all three languages, in individual member homes in rotation. Normally about 50 to 60 Chinese attend, most of them elderly. The host family provides one room for the gathering. The participants bring chairs, Bibles, hymnals, electric organs, and statues of the Virgin Mary owned by the CCC. The chairs are set for prayer and the statue is placed in front of the participants during the saying of the rosary. Usually one Papua New Guinea Chinese pastor leads the rosary. Afterwards the participants eat together. Some participants, especially the women, bring dishes they have cooked, and it is quite common to see foods of Papua New Guinea, such as *saksak* (sago starch), tapioca, and *kaukau* (local sweet potato). Though their houses are scattered throughout the Brisbane suburbs, the PNG Chinese meet regularly to recite the rosary.

The multilingual structure of the CCC and its events reflect the diversity of its members. Catholicism as a common belief attracts the CCC members, but their differing regional and linguistic backgrounds—their subethnicities—have led to three subgroupings in these events.<sup>15</sup> Although the homeland of the Papua New Guinea Chinese in China is Guangdong, only a few of them attend the Cantonese Mass and rosary regularly. The

<sup>14</sup> When I visited this hall in 2002, the members organized a fundraising party to raise money for one Papua New Guinean Chinese spouse living in Port Moresby. Even after they are settled in Australia, they still maintain kinship and communal ties with their members in Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea Chinese do not tend to join the activities of the Mandarin speakers, and vice versa. One should not assume that these Chinese are antagonistic toward one another. Their relationship is quite good, and on special occasions like Christmas or larger ceremonies they gather and pray together. At such events they are not separated. However, the division of CCC activities according to language recognizes the subethnicities of Chinese Catholic believers and the status of Papua New Guinea Chinese in contemporary Brisbane.

### 5. Conclusion

Differing regional roots in China are not the only factor affecting the diversity of Chinese residents in contemporary Australia. Geography, language, and religion also influence the congregation and segregation of subgroups. Ethnicity and subethnicity among the Chinese in Australia are also characterized by a dynamism of affiliation and separation. Religious beliefs and practices are an important additional factor in determining their subethnicities, beyond the more widely recognized factors of geographical origin and language. These multiple factors create far more dynamic relationships among subgroups than the segmentary and hierarchical structures assumed by previous studies. This dynamic subethnicity is especially clear in the case of the Papua New Guinea Chinese.

As shown above, the Papua New Guinea Chinese do not define their lives or communities only on the basis of geographical origin. They interact with other Chinese and non-Chinese people through multiple relationships, including religious activities. Such relationships are also observed in Sydney's Sze Yup Association, where people with shared roots in the Siyi area do not necessarily cooperate with each other. Differences in religious beliefs restrict interaction and organization in particular associations. Shared origins in China are not crucial for their community lives.

Language, in contrast, is a crucial factor in the construction of Chinese communities in

<sup>15</sup> Although this article does not deal with the relationship between the Chinese who were born in Papua New Guinea and those born in Australia, the two groups have much in common. Like the Papua New Guinea Chinese, most of the Australian Chinese are Christians by faith and speak English as their common language. Besides, the younger generations of the Papua New Guinea Chinese are gradually becoming Australian Chinese themselves. The Papua New Guinea Chinese are sometimes called "PNGBC" ("Papua New Guinea Born Chinese"). Australian Born Chinese are similarly called "ABC". Because most Papua New Guinea Chinese now live in Australia, the children of the Papua New Guinea Chinese in Australia are also born in Australia. After remigration and settlement, the offspring of PNGBC are thus becoming ABC. Moreover, because their younger members do not tend to participate in religious activities, the subethnicity of the two groups is also merging in this respect.

Australia. Many scholars have recognized language as a marker of converging and diverging Chinese subethnicity. But most have tended to research dialects spoken on mainland China, often analyzing subethnicity in the communities of Chinese overseas as parallel to the segmentary structure of Chinese ethnicity back in the Chinese homeland. However, English is more important than Chinese dialects in the community life of Papua New Guinea Chinese in contemporary Australia. Although older generations still speak Cantonese, most community members use English as their daily language. Their ability to speak Cantonese helped them to communicate with other Cantonese speakers in Australia, and that enabled them to organize the Chinese Catholic Community (CCC) in Brisbane. In the beginning, the CCC was established by Papua New Guinea Chinese for their Christian activities, but then it gradually came to include other Chinese as well. Some speakers of English and Cantonese, such as immigrants from Hong Kong, began to join the CCC, and their friends and acquaintances followed them. The numbers of these Chinese from elsewhere rose because of a shared language.

Nevertheless, speakers of the same language do not necessarily cooperate with each other or establish shared communities. Language is important, but not an overriding factor in constructing Chinese community and subethnic identity. Religion also unites and divides them. Their subethnicity arises out of several entangled factors, including language, regional origins, route of migration, and religion. No single factor overrides the others.

It is obvious that common origins in China no longer have great importance for Papua New Guinea Chinese. Most of them have refrained from joining Sydney's Sze Yup Association, despite their common regional origins with the Siyi Chinese who founded the association. In other spheres as well, interactions are limited between the Siyi Chinese and the Papua New Guinea Chinese in Australia. They do not oppose each other, and members of the two groups do maintain personal relationships but few Papua New Guinea Chinese join the Siyi Chinese association. The main reason is religion. While the association provides a temple and traditional Chinese religious activities, most Papua New Guinea Chinese are Christian, and are not interested in the religious activities of the association. The subethnic identity of the Papua New Guinea Chinese is based more on their religion than on shared geographical origin.

The subethnicity of the Papua New Guinea Chinese is also seen in the PNG Chinese Catholic Association (PNGCCA), which exemplifies the Papua New Guinea Chinese in terms of regional origin, language, and religion. The PNGCCA is not only a religious association but also a local community of immigrants. Although its members are pious Christians, PNGCCA activities are not limited to religion. Because the PNGCCA is



primarily a Christian association, there are no linguistic or regional restrictions on its membership. However, few other Chinese join. The PNGCCA provides opportunities for Papua New Guinea Chinese in Australia to get together and socialize. Members of PNGCCA share a common geographical origin—Papua New Guinea—and memorialize their lives there. In this respect, the PNGCCA is more of a regional association than a religious community.

Faith in Christianity and roots in Papua New Guinea sustain community ties and identity among Papua New Guinea Chinese in Australia. After migrating to Australia, they settled in cities and then spread out to the suburbs. It is difficult for them to meet frequently because they live in widely dispersed city suburbs. The PNGCCA plays a role in maintaining community ties by offering religious and social activities for its members, and thus reflects the subethnicity of the PNG Chinese in contemporary Australian cities.

The CCC in Brisbane has similarities and differences with the PNGCCA. Both are Christian associations that were established by Papua New Guinea Chinese immigrants in Australia. Both are religious in origin, but also sponsor secular activities for their members. Both thus serve multiple functions and offers opportunities and meeting places for Papua New Guinea Chinese in Australia. But the CCC membership also includes other Chinese Catholics and offers Mass and rosary recitations in three languages. While the PNGCCA's members are virtually all Papua New Guinea Chinese, the CCC's membership is more open to all Chinese Catholics in Brisbane and surrounding areas.

Religion is more significant than regional roots in China for the Papua New Guinea Chinese in contemporary Australia.<sup>16</sup> As noted, they tend not to join the regional Sze Yup Association in Sydney, despite their shared place of origin in China. However, they do congregate with other Chinese who share a common religion.

Nevertheless, other affiliations can intrude in the religious community's activities. Some CCC activities are divided according to the language preferences of its members. This does not mean that the language groups always meet separately. The Papua New Guinea Chinese have good relationships with other members, and vice versa. But the Mass and rosary recitations are conducted in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. Religion can thus unite as well as divide people across subethnic boundaries.

Religion is often regarded as a marker of ethnicity and an attribute of particular ethnic

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<sup>16</sup> Although the Papua New Guinea Chinese participate in religious activities of Christian associations, there are denominational differences among them, some being followers of the Catholic and some of the Methodist Churches. During the colonial period in New Guinea the Catholics and Methodists sometimes confronted each other. However, nowadays there are no serious conflicts or opposition between them.

groups. However, it is also a factor in molding subgroups within ethnicities. Religion can thus be considered a critical factor in determining subethnicity.

Along with regional origins and language, religion plays an important role in the lives of Papua New Guinea Chinese and in their interactions with other Chinese in contemporary Australia. Inasmuch as they converted to Christianity after they immigrated to New Guinea, their residence there has crucially influenced their community life and relationships with other Chinese in Australia. The subethnicity of the Papua New Guinea Chinese thus derives not so much from their place of origin in China but from their experiences in New Guinea.<sup>17</sup> Their subethnicity should not be seen as based on a nested hierarchy of ordered criteria (cf. Cohen, 1978). It derives from multiple factors, including language and the experience of migration and settlement. Religion is merely one of these critical factors. For the Papua New Guinea Chinese, embracing Christianity does not mean the loss of their Chinese ethnic identity. The Christian faith reveals them and their identity to be peculiar only in comparison with other ethnic Chinese in Australia. It does not, however, lead them to abandon their identity as Chinese people. Thus, membership in the Christian associations established by the Papua New Guinea Chinese is not limited to PNG Chinese; other Chinese are readily welcomed. For the Papua New Guinea Chinese, religion is not only a faith but also a basis for community and subethnicity. The religious community of Papua New Guinea Chinese in contemporary Australia shows the ethnic commonality of Chinese as a whole, and also the subethnic differences among them.

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<sup>17</sup> It is often observed that the place of last residence becomes more important to migrants' identities than the ancestral homeland, especially after the second or third generation. The same is true for Chinese who remigrated to other areas, such as Canada and India (e.g. Oxfeld, 1993; Luk, 2001).

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