

7.6.3. INTRUSIVE LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH: CHINESE

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7.6.3.1. THE MIGRATION OF CHINESE TO NEW GUINEA AND ITS SETTLEMENT HISTORY

Before the beginning of a large-scale immigration of Chinese to New Guinea at the end of last century, a small number of Chinese had already been active in the Bismarck Archipelago and the Sepik valley of the New Guinea mainland. How these Chinese arrived in New Guinea is not known; some of them might have accompanied Malay bird-of-paradise hunters and so visited the Sepik River valley long before the Germans claimed New Guinea in 1884. In any case, Chinese traders had apparently established contact with the islands off Aitape before the German New Guinea Company was established there. At the end of last century one man had established a shipyard as well as other business interests on Matupi Island off New Britain. There were also a few dozen pioneers active in the New Guinea coastal areas and among islanders of the Bismarck Archipelago, purchasing copra and trading with natives. By about 1900 several had built up contact with the inland Sepik villages where they introduced trade goods and new things to the indigenes: steel, several kinds of fruit and vegetables, rice, firearms, and 'Chinese Pidgin'. These traders apparently encouraged the indigenes to leave their home villages to work for the Europeans and they also promoted coconut production by the islanders. The early Chinese pioneers seem to have come from South-East Asia, especially Singapore, whence also the later influx of Chinese migrants to New Guinea came.¹

The arrival of a large number of Chinese in New Guinea at the end of the last century was closely related to economic development there under the German colonial administration. The arrival of the first wave of Chinese was associated with the indentured labour system introduced by

the German colonists. During the period from 1889 to 1901 - when the German New Guinea Company on Kaiser Wilhelmsland (now the New Guinea mainland) was experimenting with coconut and tobacco plantations - hundreds of indentured Chinese labourers were brought in each year, first from Singapore and Sumatra, and later from Hong Kong and China, to work as plantation labourers in the present-day Madang and Finschhafen areas. Most labourers who survived the contracted period were repatriated, and less than 100 Chinese remained on the mainland in 1909.

A second wave of Chinese migration to New Guinea started at the turn of this century centred on New Britain, the administrative centre of the German South Sea colony. A large scale immigration of free Chinese tradesmen was initiated and promoted by the German colonial administration in New Guinea. These immigrants became the ancestors of the present Chinese population in Papua New Guinea. In 1903 a small number of Chinese were first recruited in Singapore. More came in succeeding years, and they were later joined in New Guinea by their brothers and cousins from villages in China. By 1907 a Chinatown had been built in Rabaul, while on the eve of the first World War in 1914, around 1,400 Chinese had settled in New Guinea, among them about 1,000 living in and around Rabaul.

Chinese immigration to New Guinea came to a halt following the take-over of New Guinea by the Australians. Despite all kinds of restrictions placed on them during the Australian Mandate, not only did the Chinese become indispensable in the Territory as artisans but also they built up the trade store business.

It was not until 1958, when the Chinese were granted the right to apply for Australian citizenship, that they were allowed to migrate to Papua. The ensuing 10-15 years saw the migration of Chinese from New Britain and New Ireland to Port Moresby and to the New Guinea Highlands and other ports to set up commercial enterprises. Owing to environmental as well as cultural factors the Chinese population in Papua New Guinea has changed from an artisan-dominated population to one that is characterised by the domination of traders and storekeepers.

The 1971 census listed 2,760 Chinese in Papua New Guinea; among them the majority lived in urban centres as follows:

Port Moresby	618
Lae	408
Rabaul	889
Wewak	100
Madang	129
Mount Hagen	46
Goroka	36
Kieta-Arawa-Panguna	55
<u>Total in towns</u>	<u>2,281</u>

There were an additional 500 to 600 Chinese of mixed descent, born of a Chinese parent and an indigenous or a European parent.

7.6.3.2. DIVERSIFICATION OF CHINESE LANGUAGES IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Papua New Guinea Chinese came originally from the Kwangtung province in China. When I was conducting my anthropological fieldwork, the 'Tsu-Chi' or ancestral home town of the Chinese in Rabaul and Kavieng had been surveyed in 1971.² Among the 787 Chinese I surveyed 70.1% were See Yap Cantonese who came mainly from the first two districts of the four districts - K'aiping, T'aishan, Enping, and Shinhui. Other Cantonese who came from Wu Wan, or the five districts surrounding the Kwangchou city - Sanshui, Nanhai, Panyu, Shunteh and Tungwan, as well as those who came from Hainan Island formed 12.8% of the sampled population. The Hakka people who predominantly came from the Huiyang district accounted for 11.9% of the surveyed population. The other 5.2% were mainly recent arrivals from Hong Kong, Singapore, and elsewhere.

Four dialects therefore may be distinguished among the Chinese in Papua New Guinea, namely:

1. The See Yap Cantonese dialect - spoken by the See Yap people.
2. The Standard or Capital (Kwangchou) Cantonese dialect - spoken by the Wu Wan people.
3. The Hainan dialect - spoken by the Hainan Islanders.
4. The Hakka dialect - spoken by the Huiyang Hakka people.

Cantonese, Hainanese, and Hakka can be considered different languages as they cannot be mutually understood by their respective speakers. However, differences between See Yap Cantonese and Standard Cantonese pose a problem as to whether they are dialectical variations or language differences, for again it is sometimes found that the speaker of one of these has difficulty in communicating with a speaker of the other. Although both languages have basically the same grammatical

structure, as have the other Chinese dialects, the differences between them are phonological as well as lexical.

In Papua New Guinea today, regardless of their mother tongue, the Chinese speak either the See Yap dialect or Standard Cantonese, or both. All the Hakka and Hainanese speakers have been converted to the 'Cantonese language'. The See Yap dialect is the most popular because the See Yap people dominate in number, though Standard Cantonese has become the lingua franca within the Chinese community since it was used as a teaching medium in the Chinese schools before World War II and immediately after. Because of this, most of the middle-aged Chinese today can speak Standard Cantonese. Furthermore, it is necessary to speak it when they discuss business with the international businessmen who come from Hong Kong and Singapore, or when the Papua New Guinea Chinese visit Hong Kong for vacations. However the post-war generation, those below the age of 30, did not have the chance of learning Standard Cantonese in schools, and they therefore cannot speak it well.

Geographical isolation as well as the lack of contact with China are factors which have affected the Cantonese spoken by the Chinese in Papua New Guinea. This change or diversification of the Chinese language has been further reinforced by the fact that Chinese have had to speak Melanesian Pidgin with other people, and the Chinese children have received their education in English. Modifications in their spoken Cantonese, which sound most peculiar to a Cantonese-speaker in China, have occurred. The first modification is characterised by the use of borrowed words from Pidgin and English, especially among those young adults whose Chinese vocabulary is limited. The Pidgin words most frequently heard in a conversation between Chinese are *sank* ('thank'), *orai* ('all right'), *no gat* ('no'), *no gud* ('bad, useless'), *tru* ('indeed'), *pinis* ('finished, accomplished'), *na ting* ('worthless'), *dola* ('dollar'), *shiling* ('shilling'), *maski* ('who cares'), etc.

The second modification is a change in the meanings of Cantonese words. The following are examples in Standard Cantonese:

Lexicon	Original Meaning	Meaning in PNG Usage
/fo tsoŋ/	'warehouse'	'shops, stores'
/haŋ kai/	'going downtown, or window shopping'	'travel, vacation and holiday trips'
/si hau/	'time'	'political situation'

The third modification is the introduction of a mixture of some See Yap words in spoken Standard Cantonese. For instance: some people use *ei* for *pei* ('to give'); some say *t'ing* instead of *dang* ('to wait'); and *fong* for *hong* ('red').

The fourth modification is that the Chinese no longer use the language of courtesy, such as honorifics. Most of the Chinese appeared to be very rude to a well-educated Chinese from Hong Kong or Singapore, because they could not understand words of respect. I was told that the following conversation between a visiting Chinese and a Papua New Guinea Chinese had occurred:

- (Visitor) Q: 'May I have your honorable surname?' (Nie kwai siŋ?).
 A: 'Honorable is not my surname; my surname is so and so...' (ŋo mhai siŋ 'kwai' ga!).
- (Visitor) Q: 'Is your respectable elder (father) home?' (liŋ tsun hai ʔoʔ kei ma?).
 A: 'We don't have a respectable elder in our house (i.e. we don't have a father)'. (ŋo-te ʔoʔ kei mo liŋ tsun ga!)

One young Papua New Guinea Chinese who had returned from a trip to Hong Kong was said to have commented on the Hong Kong Chinese that 'they don't know how to speak proper Chinese', as the Hong Kong people said things to him he could not understand. After all, the Papua New Guinea Chinese themselves have gradually discovered these modifications, hence they self-consciously call their own Cantonese 'the New Guinea Chinese', and admit that 'We speak funny kind of Chinese'.

7.6.3.3. THE CHINESE LANGUAGE INFLUENCED BY ENGLISH, PIDGIN, AND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

In Papua New Guinea every Chinese child learns to speak at least three languages at the same time; one or the other of the Chinese dialects, Pidgin, and English. Many children in fact master Pidgin first before they can speak either Chinese or English. This is mainly because many of the Chinese are engaged in trade store business and the adults, especially women, have more opportunity to speak Pidgin with their customers in their daily life. It is also because the Chinese hire indigenous girls or men as nurse-maids or housekeepers and they usually look after young children. Pidgin in many cases is most frequently spoken by Chinese children below school age. I have heard Chinese parents speak Pidgin with their children, and also parents speak Chinese to a child who replies in Pidgin.

When Chinese children begin to learn English at school they show strong evidence of being influenced by Pidgin. The amount of influence was more noticeable during the pre-war period, when Chinese school children spent only half their time learning English, and the other half

learning Chinese. The following composition entitled 'A Motor Car', written by a Chinese school boy, is an example:

The motor car it got four wheels. In front it got the steer inside he very nice. I speak to Mumma and Papa. 'Mumma and Papa I drive you to Kokopo'. I drive him fast up the hill the tyre he break. I say, 'Mumma and Papa I sorry wait I chonk on new tyre'. (Frederick 1930).

Owing to long-term contact and necessity imposed by business dealings many Chinese can also speak a little of the indigenous language of their locality. Chinese storekeepers, many of them women, can at least say numerical words in the indigenous language. This is especially so in the Rabaul area where the Chinese speak some Tolai, and on New Ireland where the Chinese speak some of the local languages. Mixed marriages between Chinese and indigenes also account for the fact that the children of these marriages speak both a Chinese dialect and an indigenous language. What interested me most was the phenomenon that several mixed-descent Chinese spoke better Standard Cantonese than many of the 'pure' Chinese born in Papua New Guinea. I discovered that many of the mixed-blood Chinese were sent back to China to receive their education and thus have been given the opportunity to master perfect Standard Cantonese.

7.6.3.4. CHINESE LANGUAGE INFLUENCE ON THE LOCAL SCENE

Although 'Chinese Pidgin' has been known in New Guinea since the 1880s, the influence of the Chinese language itself on the local language is limited. Interviews with old Chinese immigrants who arrived in New Guinea at the turn of this century revealed that many pioneers were assigned by the Germans to teach the newly recruited New Guinean plantation labourers to speak 'Pidgin'. It is assumed that the Pidgin initially taught by the Chinese was 'Chinese Pidgin' which, according to those interviewed, the Germans were unable to master. Many Chinese words have been adopted by speakers of indigenous languages or regional Pidgin, over and above those words picked up by indigenous employees of the Chinese who work in their homes or trade stores. One day in a Rabaul street I was surprised to hear an indigenous newspaper pedlar asking me in Standard Cantonese: 'Mr, do you want a newspaper?' (Sin san, mai po-chi ma?).

The most frequently heard Chinese words are names of vegetables on sale at the Rabaul market. The indigenous people, in Rabaul predominantly Tolai, either use the Chinese names to refer to them, or have adopted Chinese names in Pidgin. The following is a list of these vegetables whose Chinese or Pidgin names are known to the local people in New Britain and New Ireland:³

Chinese Names	Pidgin Names	English Names
Choi Sum	Toi Tum	' <i>Chinese cabbage</i> '
Kai Choi	Kai Toi	' <i>Chinese mustard</i> '
Kai Lum	Kai Lun	' <i>Chinese broccoli</i> '
Lau Pak	Lau Pak	' <i>Turnip</i> '
Ong Choi	Kangkung (Kango)	' <i>Chinese watercress</i> '
Pak Choi	Pak Toi	' <i>Chinese cabbage</i> '
Sung Choi	Sala, Lesis	' <i>Lettuce</i> '
... Tao	Tao	' <i>Beans of several kinds</i> '
See Kua	Sika	' <i>A kind of squash</i> '
Tung Kua	Tung Ka	' <i>"Winter" melon</i> '
Wu Tau	Taro bilong Saina	' <i>Taro</i> '
Yin Sai	Min Tai	' <i>Chinese celery</i> '

I found that many Tolai, although they grow Chinese vegetables and sell them in the market, do not know how to keep seeds. They have to go to certain Chinese stores in Rabaul to buy seeds, which are imported from Hong Kong. Seeds are referred to in Pidgin as *pikinini bilong sayu* or *pur pur* (Pidgin as well as Tolai). The Tolai vegetable-growers are familiar with the Chinese names, and when they purchase seeds in Chinese stores they ask for specific seeds; for instance, they may ask for *pikinini bilong lau pak* = '*turnip seeds*'. These Chinese vegetable names have been incorporated into the Tolai as well as Pidgin languages.

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N O T E S

1. In this chapter I provide only a summary of the history of Chinese migration to New Guinea. A detailed discussion of this subject can be found in an article of mine (1970) and in my dissertation (1974).
2. The fieldwork was sponsored by the Australian National University and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.
3. I am grateful to Mr Francis P. Cheung for his assistance in collecting these names of vegetables of Chinese origin.

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PART 7.7.

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

