



Confucianism and the Political Economy of Papua New Guinea

Betty Wakia

Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan

Corresponding Author: Betty Wakia bwakia@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Through an examination of the enormous impact that Confucianism has had on the political economy of PNG, this research delves into the dynamic relationship that exists between cultural values and the consequences that these values have for economic growth and governance. This study provides insight into the cultural forces that are creating PNG's socioeconomic landscape by exploring the deep linkages that exist between Confucian ideals and PNG's circumstances. The study's findings indicate that the impact of Confucianism is limited and indirect. Despite some similarities in moral principles and respect for authority, PNG's historical, cultural, and geographical circumstances significantly differ from those of Confucian-inspired cultures. Indigenous cultures, the history of colonialism, and democratic values all play a role in shaping the economic growth of PNG. There are many different elements that contribute to the creation of distinctive approaches to economic governance and development. These aspects include global markets, resources, investments, and traditions. The cultural and historical settings of PNG act as a mediator between the Confucian principles and their indirect effect. The foundation of democracy, markets, and pluralism distinguishes the economic institutions of PNG from models inspired by Confucianism. It is essential to acknowledge PNG's unique political economy in order to develop specialised measures that address issues and capitalise on strengths. The purpose of this study is to provide useful insights into the transformational potential of cultural influences on the political economy of PNG by conducting a complete examination of Confucian doctrines and their possible relevance in the country. Once again, policymakers must use cultural factors to align tactics with PNG's specific requirements and goals

INTRODUCTION

PNG, as a country that is both culturally diverse and historically rich, struggles with the problem of achieving sustainable economic growth and effective government. Academics and policymakers are working towards a better understanding of the complex processes that influence PNG's political economy, and the role of cultural influences is becoming more critical. This research thoroughly investigates the potential influence of Confucianism, an ancient Chinese philosophical and ethical philosophy, on the socioeconomic landscape of PNG. Confucianism, which places an emphasis on moral ideals, social harmony, and hierarchical connections, is able to transcend geographical borders, exerting its influence on countries that are not located in East Asia and leaving a permanent mark on cultural norms, values, and institutions (Ohere, 2021).

This study aims to determine the degree to which Confucian principles have influenced the country's economic development and governance practices through an analysis of the relationship between Confucianism and PNG's political economy. While attempting to achieve sustainable development, PNG faces a number of obstacles, including but not limited to corruption, political instability, infrastructure shortages, and socioeconomic disparities. In order to achieve inclusive growth and effective governance, PNG has to adopt new ideas and creative ways. Understanding the cultural foundations of PNG's political economy provides an opportunity to make use of the country's cultural legacy in order to overcome these difficulties. The purpose of this research is to uncover potential routes for harnessing cultural influences in order to create economic development, better governance practices, and promote social cohesion. This will be accomplished by conducting an analysis of the compatibility between Confucian principles and Papua New Guinean cultural norms. It is possible for policymakers to establish policies that resonate with the cultural legacy of PNG for the purpose of fostering inclusive development if they recognise and comprehend the potential role that Confucianism may play within the specific cultural context of PNG.

Confucianism, an ancient Chinese philosophical and ethical philosophy, has attracted academic attention due to the tremendous influence it has had on civilisations and the socio-economic patterns that they have established. The purpose of this study is to investigate the complex link that exists between Confucianism and the political economy of PNG, with the intention of shining light on the cultural variables that influence economic growth and governance. In recent decades, PNG, a populous country in the Pacific, has seen tremendous economic development as well as political upheavals. Despite this, the understudied element of cultural dynamics, which includes the impact of Confucian principles, continues to be an essential component in understanding PNG's political economy. Breaking down and examining these cultural impacts on economic growth and governance can provide significant insights into the processes that contribute to the nation's accomplishments and problems. Confucianism, which encompasses ethical principles, social hierarchies, and family duties, has always placed an emphasis on harmony, social order, and

moral rectitude (Gonondo, 2021). These ideas can strongly influence a country's political and economic environment, significantly impacting government structures, corporate practices, and social cohesion.

Through an investigation of the prevalence and effect of Confucian ideals in PNG, we might get a more profound comprehension of the methods by which cultural variables determine economic policies, institutional frameworks, and social norms. By conducting this study, the research seeks to contribute to the larger scholarly conversation on the cultural factors that influence economic growth and governance. Despite extensive research on the impact of cultural influences on economic outcomes across various contexts, the specific role of Confucianism in PNG's political economy remains largely unexplored.

PNG, the most populated nation in Asia Pacific and a prominent economic participant, has seen extraordinary development and several political transformations throughout its history. The political economy of PNG, which is characterised by a religious, ethnic, and cultural variety, is a contributor to the complex sociopolitical processes that exist in the country. Investigating the impact of Confucianism in this context may provide insight into the cultural factors that shape economic policies, institutional frameworks, and governance practices. There is a lack of depth in understanding non-Western civilisations because existing research on cultural determinants has mostly concentrated on Western traditions and ideals (Dasi, 2019). Therefore, bridging this knowledge gap is the process of investigating Confucianism in the context of PNG's political economy. Given that PNG has goals of achieving sustainable development and effective governance, it is important for policymakers, researchers, and development practitioners to understand how Confucian values interact with the context of PNG. This understanding helps to facilitate inclusive development, social cohesion, and effective governance in PNG and other countries with a diverse cultural landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose of the Study

A considerable body of study has been undertaken about the issue of how cultural elements impact economic growth and governance. However, the unique setting of PNG still largely shapes our understanding of the function of Confucianism and its cultural impacts on the country's political economy. This research aims to address the knowledge gap by examining the cultural elements that affect economic development and governance in PNG, specifically focusing on the potential impact of Confucian principles. Despite the enormous economic progress and political upheavals that have taken place in PNG, there is a lack of understanding of the complicated interaction of cultural dynamics and the consequences that these dynamics have for economic development and governance. The political economy of PNG is a reflection of the country's unique cultural environment, which is moulded by a collection of different ethnic groups, religious beliefs, and traditions.

It's possible that the existence and influence of Confucian ideas, which stress order, harmony, and morality, could have major effects on the economic policies, institutional frameworks, and ways of running the government in this area. For a variety of reasons, it is necessary to understand the effect that Confucianism has had on PNG's political economy. To start, it fosters a more profound comprehension of the cultural elements that contribute to the formation of economic development, social standards, and governance practices in PNG. Second, it gives insight on the interplay between Confucian principles and the complex cultural fabric of PNG, which contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural influences emerge in situations that are not Western. Third, it provides valuable insights that policymakers, scholars, and practitioners can use to promote sustainable development and effective governance in PNG. By addressing these gaps, we might improve our knowledge of the complex interactions that exist between culture, economy, and governance, which may have the potential to generate practical consequences for policymakers and development practitioners in PNG and beyond.

METHODOLOGY

Confucianism's Influence on Papua New Guinea

It was after the arrival of Chinese from mainland China that the influence of Confucianism began to spread across PNG. They arrived in New Guinea in 1884, shortly after Germany had colonised the northeastern region of New Guinea Island. The majority of Chinese people who arrived during this time period were indentured labourers, with the majority coming from Singapore and Sumatra (Biskup, 1970). Uncertainty surrounds the early history of Chinese immigration in the South Pacific. This is because of poor documentation. Since they were mostly merchants, Chinese pioneers in this region may have collected marine items and traded sandalwood. Nevertheless, they did not often settle in the South Pacific region. When the Western colonisation of the South Pacific region began, Chinese people were already working in a variety of vocations, including those of plantation workers, merchants, and craftsmen. This coincided with the onset of Chinese settlements in the region. A similar phenomenon, the migration of Chinese people to New Guinea, began during the time of colonial rule. Chinese merchants may have travelled to New Guinea Island prior to the arrival of Europeans in order to engage in the practice of hunting birds of paradise for the purpose of gaining a profit. However, these early Chinese immigrants did not remain for an extended period of time and did not initially create a permanent community. According to Wu (1982), Willmott (1995), and Pan (1998), the beginning of Chinese colonisation in New Guinea followed the same pattern as in the other nations in Oceania.

Commencing in 1898, when the German colonial authorities assumed control from the Neuguinea Kompagnie, they promoted unrestricted Chinese immigration rather than forced labour. There were Chinese labourers employed in a variety of occupations, including carpentry, shipbuilding, engineering, tailoring, shop-keeping, and plantation management. In places like Lae, Rabaul, Madang, Kokopo, Kavieng and Lae, some of them started to build villages and

established themselves as permanent residents. When Rabaul became the capital of German New Guinea in 1910, a significant number of Chinese immigrants settled there. In 1890, it was believed that there were about 200 Chinese living in the New Guinea region. By 1913, the Chinese population had increased to a total of 1,427 people (Cahill, 1996). According to Cahill (1996) and Willis (1974: 93), China-towns were established in Rabaul and Lae by Chinese immigrants at a period when specific places restricted the residence of Chinese people. During that time, not only did Chinese people come from Singapore and Sumatra, but they also came from Hong Kong and the mainland of China. The Chinese individuals who came were originated from certain regions within Guangdong province, such as Siyi and Huiyang. The word "Siyi" literally translates to "four places" (see Yap in Cantonese). Xinhui, Taishan, Kaiping, and Enping were the four places that make up the Siyi county administrative region. These places have been responsible for the migration of Chinese people to a variety of nations outside of China since the 19th century (Mei and Zhang, 2001). There were also some Hakka people living in the Chinese community of PNG, the majority of whom were from the Huiyang region in Guangdong (Wu, 1982: 11). These Hakka people live alongside the Cantonese people. In the past, Cantonese or Hakka were the languages that made up their common language. The Chinese community underwent a transformation during this era of German New Guinea colonisation, transitioning from a society of transitory immigrants to one of permanent inhabitants. This shift occurred precisely within this time period.

Chin (2008) identifies two distinct groups of Chinese immigrants to PNG: the old Chinese and the new Chinese. The term "old Chinese" refers to the Chinese people who were born in PNG and had lived there for a number of generations prior to the country's independence. The city of Rabaul, located in the province of East New Britain, served as their spiritual "home." The vast majority of them were comprised of Christians, and the language that they spoke most often was English. The employment of dialects was uncommon even among the members of the group. They sent their children to Australia to pursue their education, and many of those children eventually became Australian citizens 10 years after the country's independence. In order for their enterprises to be considered "national," it is necessary for at least one member of the family to be a citizen of PNG. They took tremendous delight in maintaining long-term connections with natives and playing a significant role in community affairs (such as fundraising for charitable organisations and religious activities, among other things). Additionally, they built tight relationships with PNG politicians, who typically saw them as part of PNG society and continue to do so.

On the other hand, two primary groups comprised the new Chinese: Southeast Asians, which encompassed the majority of Singaporeans, Indonesians, Malaysian Chinese, and Northeast Asians, which included the majority of mainland Chinese and a minor number of Taiwanese and Koreans. The Malaysian Chinese, with Rimbunan Hijau (RH) serving as their flag-bearer, were without a doubt the most influential of the new Chinese ethnic group. In

almost all of PNG's logging and timber-related enterprises, RH was the dominant player. RH also started diversifying into non-timber businesses in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The most notable of these businesses was *The National*, which is an English daily newspaper and the largest newspaper in the nation. Chinese immigrants from Malaysia and Indonesia controlled both the wholesalers and the retail network.

The mainland Chinese did not have a significant presence in the late 1990s. Despite the fact that they had begun to arrive in PNG, their numbers were still relatively low, and they maintained a low profile. As a result of the establishment of activities by Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE) in the 2000s, a large number of people started coming. During that period, a significant influx of small mainland Chinese merchants began to arrive, flooding the market with low-cost Chinese items. This phenomenon was observed throughout the relevant era. The mainland Chinese were the most prolific group to establish illicit companies in the "reserved" business sector, such as kai bars. A significant number of these small merchants were from mainland China and were considered to be members of the lowest socio-economic strata. Due to the fact that they were already running an unlawful reserved company, it is more probable that they would pay bribes and use other illegal techniques.

The PNG Chinese community, including both 'old' and 'new' members, was the primary benefactor of the divestiture of white-owned enterprises after independence and the significant depreciation of the kina in the 1990s. RH was the preeminent political figure among the 'new' Chinese. They successfully reached the uppermost levels of the PNG government and influenced the selection of cabinet ministers, mostly via *guanxi*, bribery, and inducements (see Barnett, 1989; Gabriel & Wood, 2015). They successfully safeguarded their commercial interests because of the substantial influence they had over several PNG politicians. The integration of politics and business was not novel to RH, since the *Tiong* family, proprietors of RH, had engaged in this practice for decades in their native Sarawak, Malaysia. Family members served as Malaysian parliamentarians and senators for years (Chin, 2006). The 'new' Chinese have emerged as the biggest investors outside of the oil and gas industries. In their absence, the PNG economy would have severely restricted investment outside the oil and gas industries. The majority of the 'old' Chinese born in PNG do not see a future in the country. The unstable political climate, law enforcement challenges, depreciation of the kina, and the younger generation's hesitance to assume control of family enterprises have led many to see PNG as a means to generate income to support their families in Australia. The Chinese from PNG and Southeast Asia often dislike mainland Chinese people. They see them as competitors; more critically, they view the mainland Chinese as undermining the long-standing amicable social networks and bonds of the 'PNG Chinese national' community. In my perspective, the elderly Chinese adhere to the fundamental tenets of Confucianism and exert influence on local communities. They honour the native customs and traditions and live harmoniously with the local communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Frameworks: Confucianism and Papua New Guinea Economy

This aspect of the study looks at the institutional frameworks that are responsible for influencing the political economy of PNG. These frameworks include legal systems, government policies, regulatory agencies, and economic institutions. The investigation explores the interactions between Confucian cultural influences and these institutions, assessing their alignment with Confucian principles and identifying potential implications for economic growth and governance. A comprehensive framework incorporates numerous variables, such as cultural values, economic indicators, institutional frameworks, and governance structures, in order to explore the cultural impacts of Confucianism on PNG's economic growth and governance. The following are the components that make up the proposed framework:

Economy Development Indicators in Papua New Guinea: How Confucianism Relates?

This aspect focuses on economic development indicators to examine the success PNG has achieved. Among the most important measures are the gross domestic product (GDP), the rates of poverty and income inequality, the levels of employment, and the contributions made by various sectors. By examining these measures, it is possible to identify potential relationships between Confucianism's cultural impacts and the consequences of economic growth. The fact that Confucianism is not indigenous to PNG is an essential point to keep in mind. Past contacts and cross-cultural exchanges have most likely impacted any potential relationships, making them indirect. The following are some general characteristics that are relevant to both Confucianism and PNG culture:

- ***Discipline and Work Ethic:*** Both countries have a common emphasis on the need of persistence, discipline, and hard work.
- ***Education:*** Both countries place a high emphasis on education as a means of enhancing both their own personal lives and the lives of others.
- ***Respect for Authority and Social Harmony:*** Both China and PNG emphasise the need of keeping society harmonious and respecting those in positions of power.
- ***Long-Term Perspective:*** Both countries support investing in education and institutions that will be there for a while, which is great for the long-term benefits.

Although these components may potentially intersect, PNG's economic growth is shaped by several variables outside Confucianism, including historical, political, social, geographical features, and global economic influences.

Moreover, considerable gaps exist between the impacts of Confucian culture and the economic growth results in PNG, stemming from historical, cultural, and institutional variances. These discrepancies encompass:

- ***Historical and Cultural Context:*** Confucianism developed in East Asia, while PNG's cultural context is shaped by Melanesian traditions, colonial influences, and regional diversity.

- **Governance and Institutional Factors:** *The historical emphasis on hierarchical social order that is characteristic of Confucianism stands in stark contrast to the complex governance trajectory of PNG, which has been shaped by colonial power, ethnic diversity, and democratic government.*
- **Economic Structures and Systems:** *PNG's economic structures are determined by variables like colonial heritage, resource reliance, and market-orientated reforms, while cultures that are inspired by Confucianism often follow a state-led type of capitalism.*

Cultural Values and Beliefs: Confucian Elements in Papua New Guinea

This component investigates the Confucian ideals and beliefs that are prevalent in PNG society. This process includes an examination of the cultural practices, norms, and ethical principles influenced by Confucianism. This study encompasses themes such as social order, hierarchy, harmony, filial piety, and moral responsibility. A number of potential Confucian influences in PNG society are investigated, including respect for elders, an emphasis on education and meritocracy, ethical conduct and virtues, public service delivery, ancestral worship, moral leadership, a focus on social harmony and stability, respect for authority and hierarchy.

It is important to note that Confucianism is not indigenous to PNG. While it is essential to approach this research with care, it is also important to acknowledge that the effect of Confucianism on PNG's cultural practices is most likely indirect. Historical encounters and cultural diffusion are likely to mediate this influence, rather than the direct acceptance of Confucian principles. There are many different origins for PNG's cultural practices. These origins include indigenous Melanesian traditions, religious beliefs, and foreign influences from a variety of sources.

Comparative Analysis Between Confucian Theory and Papua New Guinean Practices

In order to uncover parallels, contrasts, and possible insights into the cultural impacts of Confucianism on the economic development and governance of PNG, this component intends to undertake a comparative study of countries or regions that have been influenced by Confucianism, such as China or South Korea. Even if Confucianism may have some indirect effects on PNG's economic development and administration, it is critical to recognise the varied cultural and historical settings of both East Asia and PNG. PNG's cultural traditions encompass a wide variety of religious beliefs, each of which is unique to the country. This category encompasses various religions, including Christianity, Islam, and indigenous Melanesian beliefs. On the other side, Confucianism is primarily a philosophical and ethical framework, and it does not include any religious institutions or practices. The cultural traditions, values, and ethical ideals of PNG are unique from those of Confucianism. People there practice a vast range of religious beliefs.

There is a strong focus on social obligations and hierarchical links in Confucianism, which places the community above the individual. Traditional practices of PNG usually exhibit a heightened feeling of uniqueness, despite the fact that they place an emphasis on community and social relationships. PNG's culture emphasises human initiative and liberty, acknowledging and

celebrating the accomplishments and aspirations of individuals. Papua New Guinean cultural practices incorporate a variety of gender roles and expectations, shaped by both indigenous traditions and external influences. Papua New Guinean civilisations may display a higher degree of gender equality and different gender roles compared to Confucian-influenced civilisations. On the other hand, Confucianism recognises the presence of traditional gender norms from a historical perspective. Confucianism places a tremendous value on the family as the cornerstone of society, emphasising filial piety and hierarchical connections. In PNG, people highly value the nuclear family, but the shape and dynamics of these families vary among different ethnic groups. These families may include extended family systems and community ties that go beyond the nuclear unit.

Local customs, religions, and traditions all have an impact on the many rituals and ceremonies that are a part of Papua New Guinean cultural practices. Confucianism, like Buddhism, places a strong emphasis on rituals; nevertheless, the forms and substance of these rituals are very different. Every ethnic group in PNG has its own unique set of historical traditions, religious practices, and indigenous beliefs that form the basis of its ceremonies. A number of variables, such as indigenous Melanesian traditions, religious beliefs, colonial influences, and regional variation, all contribute to the formation of Papua New Guinean cultural practices. It is essential to acknowledge this reality. Understanding the distinctive qualities and differences that distinguish Papua New Guinean culture from Confucianism is vital, despite the fact that there may be some coincidental connections or influences between the two schools of thought.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the impact of Confucianism on PNG's political economy, particularly economic growth and governance, is limited and indirect. Confucianism, an ancient Chinese philosophical and ethical framework, has significantly influenced East Asian nations; however, its direct effect on Papua New Guinean culture and institutions has been negligible. Although there are some general parallels, including a focus on moral principles and respect for authority, the historical, cultural, institutional, and geographical settings of PNG vary markedly from those of Confucian-influenced cultures. PNG's indigenous cultures, colonial past, and current democratic ideals primarily influence its economic growth and government. The nation's varied cultural and historical influences have led to distinctive methods in economic growth and governance, reflecting the intricate interaction of variables unique to PNG. These include indigenous traditions, regional dynamics, natural resource abundance, foreign investments, and global market influences. Although Confucian principles of ethical leadership, reverence for authority, and education may partially resonate within Papua New Guinean culture, their influence is indirect and influenced by PNG's unique cultural and historical contexts. Unlike the state-driven models often associated with Confucian-influenced economies, PNG's economic institutions and governance frameworks are based on democratic ideals, market forces, and a pluralistic

society. Understanding and appreciating PNG's unique political economy, as well as the many forces influencing its economic growth and governance, is critical. By acknowledging the distinct cultural impacts on PNG's political economy, officials and researchers can formulate context-specific strategies that successfully tackle the nation's issues and use its strengths.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the recognition that Confucianism has little direct impact on the political economy of PNG, the following recommendations aim to foster sustainable economic growth and enhance governance efficacy. PNG is a culturally heterogeneous country influenced by several factors that shape its political economy. It is essential to recognise and accept this variation in economic and governance strategies. By appreciating and integrating many cultural viewpoints, PNG can promote inclusion and use the capabilities of various groups to stimulate economic development and enhance governance. Although not explicitly linked to Confucianism, the promotion of ethical behaviour and integrity in economic and governance systems is essential. Establish and strengthen robust ethical frameworks, codes of conduct, and anti-corruption initiatives to promote accountability and openness. Advocate for principles such as integrity, equity, and social accountability across all strata of society.

Education is essential for economic growth and governance. Enhance access to high-quality education and skills training programs to equip Papua New Guineans with the knowledge and competencies essential for sustained economic development. Allocate resources to educational institutions, vocational training, and ongoing learning opportunities to cultivate a proficient and versatile workforce. Establish resilient institutions capable of successfully regulating economic activity, enforcing laws, and delivering efficient public services. Fortify governance frameworks, augment capacity-building initiatives, and institute explicit accountability procedures to uphold the rule of law, foster transparency, and facilitate efficient public service delivery. Promote cooperation among the governmental sector, corporate sector, civil society organisations, and international stakeholders. Encourage discussions, information sharing, and teamwork to leverage diverse knowledge, resources, and experiences. Through the cultivation of partnerships, PNG may use best practices, innovation, and investment to promote sustainable economic growth and enhance governance standards.

PNG may advocate for policies that emphasise equitable economic development, poverty alleviation, and the mitigation of inequality. Mitigate socioeconomic inequities by implementing targeted interventions, improving access to essential services, and creating opportunities for marginalised populations. By guaranteeing that the advantages of economic growth are accessible to all societal sectors, PNG may promote social cohesion and stability. The political economy of PNG is dynamic and always developing. Foster a culture of learning, flexibility, and data-driven decision-making. Consistently assess policies and their effects, collect data, and do research to guide informed policy decisions and enhance governance processes.

FURTHER STUDY

Every research is subject to limitations; thus, you can explain them here and briefly provide suggestions to further investigations. Confucianism and The Political Economy of Papua New Guinea.

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