

# An Examination of the Reforms Implemented by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in Australia during the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Underlying Motivations and Lasting Effects.

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## Abstract:

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the intellectual currents of Scottish Enlightenment significantly infiltrated New South Wales. Macquarie instigated reforms that had a direct bearing on the economic, ideological, and cultural landscape of New South Wales. The ideological framework established by these reforms continues to exert influence on contemporary Australian political culture. Employing a methodology that synthesizes and analyzes secondary qualitative data, this article elucidates the formation and evolution of the Australian economy in conjunction with British foreign trade and Enlightenment philosophical discourse of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, aiming to reconstruct the contextual backdrop that led to the inevitable emergence of Macquarie's reforms and their ramifications. The article assesses the legacy of the reforms on Australian economy, ideology, culture to critically evaluate their contributions and significance. Building upon this foundation, the article draws parallels with certain reforms enacted in Asia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to elucidate some distinctive characteristics inherent in the reforms instituted by Macquarie.

**Keywords:** *Australia, Enlightenment, Lachlan Macquarie, New South Wales*

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## Introduction

The 19<sup>th</sup> century can be regarded as a pivotal historical epoch for the world at large and Australia in specific, marked by unprecedented East-West interactions and an emergent necessity for social reforms aimed at sustainably preserving the status of the ruling and upper classes across numerous nations and territories within the Asia-Pacific region. Lachlan Macquarie's contributions to various sectors were notably substantial. The economic and ideological reforms introduced by Lachlan Macquarie are of particular historical significance, as they not only imparted valuable lessons for the capitalist economy in navigating crises and effectively inheriting the advancements of humanity's scientific and technological revolution but also indelibly influenced the economic and political philosophy of the Enlightenment. This ideology is regarded as the intellectual foundation for multiple generations of Australian leaders and heads of state, spanning from Bligh and Macquarie to Menzies and Whitlam. Thus, the context surrounding the reforms initiated, led, and executed by Governor Macquarie will serve to elucidate the socio-economic transformations that constitute a vital premise for the penetration and dissemination of Enlightenment ideology within Australia. Furthermore, numerous scholars contend that Lachlan Macquarie was unable to transcend the limitations imposed by his predecessors, who were predominantly military generals, thereby unable to alter this prevailing fate and ultimately compelled to lay the final stone that concluded the golden age of governors wielding quasi-monarchical powers in New South Wales. The policies enacted by Lachlan Macquarie have been characterized as dictatorial, arbitrary, autocratic, and tyrannical, leading merely to an exacerbation of the crises afflicting the illiberal regime, escalating the political turmoil to its zenith, and consequently necessitating a transition to a civil colonial period wherein the authority of civil governors was progressively constrained and the organizational structure of the power apparatus that preceded the Australian federal state began to take a more defined shape. (Scott Earnest, 1916) Nevertheless, this article will engage in a thorough analysis of the characteristics and impacts of the reforms initiated and directed by Governor Lachlan Macquarie to reaffirm the significance of these reforms within a more objective and comprehensive framework of Australia's pre-modern cultural history.

## Literature Review

Manning Clark (1995) employed biographical research methodologies alongside micro-analysis, incorporating economic, financial, and demographic data to elucidate and critically assess the various social transformations that occurred during the nascent stages of the transition from a penal colony to a civil colony, and subsequently to a wholly liberal society devoid of a pronounced bourgeois revolution. For Scott Earnest (1916),

Lachlan Macquarie was perceived as the final valiant general to assume the gubernatorial role in New South Wales. Concurrently, Scott Earnest (1916) meticulously reconstructed Lachlan Macquarie's strained interactions with the officers of the Rum Corps as well as the upper-class conservatives within New South Wales society, aiming to exemplify that an authoritarian and despotic epoch was invariably succeeded by a more liberal alternative. In a related vein, John Gascoigne (2002) investigated the ramifications of Enlightenment philosophy on the evolution of Australian science and technology, as well as social identity, framed within the political and religious contexts of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Australia. Consequently, the foremost and most significant impact of Enlightenment philosophy on Australia was manifested in agriculture and free trade, which subsequently permeated educational policy regarding indigenous communities, military power regulation, and ethnic policies in relation to indigenous populations, articulated through efforts to reclaim land traditionally held by Aboriginal peoples, in addition to the atrocities and war crimes that are occasionally misconstrued in contemporary discourse as mass murder or genocide. Macintyre Stuart (1999) contextualizes the governorship of New South Wales within a continuous timeline extending from 1793 to 1821, designating this era as the "coercive" period. A notable parallel between the works of John Gascoigne (2002) and Macintyre Stuart (1999) is that both contend that the profound origins of numerous developments in Australia during the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be traced back to historical precedents. Nonetheless, John Gascoigne (2002) concentrates exclusively on the aspect highlighting the influence of the Enlightenment philosophical period, whereas Macintyre Stuart (1999) encompasses a broader spectrum, addressing economic, political, cultural, and social dimensions. Furthermore, while both Scott Earnest (1916) and Macintyre Stuart (1999) appear to regard the Macquarie governorship as a protracted extension of a lineage of governors characterized by dictatorial, autocratic, despotic, and authoritarian traits-culminating in the cessation of this illiberal historical epoch in the colony of New South Wales-John Gascoigne (2002) presents a markedly more liberal democratic portrayal of the Macquarie era, one that is substantially influenced by Enlightenment philosophy, thereby contributing to the advancement of Australian society in sustaining and evolving the legacies of this Enlightenment philosophical tradition from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nearly all authors characterize Macquarie as a governor with a military background, embodying dictatorial, autocratic, despotic, and authoritarian tendencies akin to those of his predecessors, focusing primarily on the economic, cultural, and social landscape of New South Wales during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although these authors establish connections with contemporary England and America, there is a conspicuous absence of content that rigorously investigates the socio-economic and cultural landscape as achievements resulting from the reforms instituted by Lachlan Macquarie in Australia during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Methodology

The historical methodology elucidates the process of reform implemented by Macquarie within the framework of Australian social evolution, meticulously examining the origins, motivations, intrinsic nature, content, and societal value of Macquarie's reforms, all within the contextual backdrop of Australian society during the early half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through a detailed reconstruction of the reform process and its contextual environment as executed by Macquarie, this study aims to discern the underlying principles governing reforms, as well as the contextual factors and dynamics of Australian societal movements, thereby facilitating the integration of Australian cultural history with various events and phenomena characterized by causal relationships and reciprocal dialectical influences.

The logical methodology will be employed to rigorously analyze and synthesize the reform's content, its foundational premises, and the specifics of Macquarie's reforms from 1810 to 1821, considering the comprehensive interrelations among these elements, as well as the events exerting influence on the reforms within a dialectical framework of close interaction. This approach will position Macquarie's reforms within a system of dialectical relationships, correlating them with contemporary global reforms, thereby elucidating the content of Macquarie's reforms from 1810 to 1821 with utmost accuracy, completeness, objectivity, and coherence, while also extracting the underlying dynamics of societal evolution prior to social reforms.

The historical and logical methodologies function in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner, thereby enabling this research to undertake a holistic overview, generalization, comprehensiveness, and systematic examination of a significant historical epoch, serving as a pivotal juncture preceding a more robust transitional phase that progresses toward the maturation of the conditions conducive to the establishment of the Australian federal state. The amalgamation of the historical and logical methodologies positions Macquarie's reforms not merely as isolated, independent occurrences within the narrative of Australia's formation and development, but rather as a seminal milestone that foreshadows and catalyzes a significant trajectory throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Australian history, viewed comprehensively through the lenses of economic, political, socio-cultural dimensions.

## Results and Discussion

### *The Australian social context before Governor Lachlan Macquarie's reforms*

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a pronounced scientific and technological revolution emerged in England, resulting in a substantial escalation in the demand for raw materials necessary

for the woolen textile industry. Through a succession of inventions and innovations in the domains of energy, mechanics, and metallurgy, this scientific and technological revolution in England engendered a level of productive forces that surpassed the cumulative productive capabilities of all prior generations. (Marx - Engels, 1995: 603) This phenomenon constitutes the economic foundation of the capitalist mode of production and serves as a pivotal source of strength for Western colonial endeavors (Nguyen Tien Dung, 2020: 65). The English bourgeois revolution effectively dismantled barriers to capitalist production, thereby facilitating the robust development of the capitalist economy. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, England annexed Ireland and Gibraltar, exerted control over the trade route linking the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, and persistently expanded its colonial territories. The accelerated pace of the Industrial Revolution marked a critical juncture in the evolution of production. A series of significant inventions emerged in rapid succession, fundamentally transforming the global landscape. The protracted Anglo-French War, lasting a quarter of a century, further solidified England's dominance. (Đặng Hồ Xuân Hương, 2017: 14-16)

The bourgeois class in England opposed the French bourgeois revolution, motivated by a desire to eliminate potential market competition, coupled with a reluctance to rely on Prussia and Austria in light of France's occupation of strategically vital regions for England, including Belgium and the Netherlands. Despite the rapid advancement of industry and commerce, the relentless rise in expenditures associated with the prolonged conflict inevitably fostered a propensity to incur debt, increase taxation, and engage in diplomatic negotiations with France to facilitate the expansion of the mainland European market. The geopolitical landscape in Europe was characterized by intense dynamism due to the triumph of the French bourgeois revolution and the ramifications of a continuous state of warfare, centering on the conflict between capitalist England and the monarchies of continental Europe, in conjunction with revolutionary France. Consequently, in the aftermath of the disintegration of Napoleon Bonaparte's empire, there ensued a frenzied assault by reactionary aristocratic forces in each feudal state as well as throughout Europe. (Vũ Dương Ninh, 2017: 27-42) In this milieu, the colonial administration concentrated its efforts on the exploitation of grasslands to facilitate livestock farming and wool production in Australia, utilizing convict labor to generate material wealth for both the colonial populace and the governmental apparatus. (Trịnh Thị Định, 2006: 28)

The officers established a monopoly over the sale of goods acquired from ship captains, with profits soaring to one thousand percent. Among the officers in the New South Wales Corps, John McArthur distinguished himself as an individual of exceptional talent and ambition, characterized by numerous innovative ideas and an unwavering desire to eliminate any obstacles in his path; he was a forerunner in recognizing the potential to exploit the natural resources and convict labor of New South Wales in alignment with the

economic interests of Britain. (Scott Ernest, 1916) The white settlers, who hailed from the affluent upper echelons of colonial society, began to advocate for the autonomy to expand their export activities. As one of the most influential and assertive officers in New South Wales, McArthur owned and managed the largest sheep herds and agricultural estates, profiting from the procurement of liquor from passing vessels and reselling it at inflated prices; as a result, he wielded significant influence and soon exceeded his designated role as the administrator of the prison system. (Garry Disher, 1987)

Through his dual capacity as a colonial administrator and a private merchant, a bifurcated economic system rapidly materialized: a public sector encompassing government-operated agricultural enterprises and convict labor, alongside various workers engaged in infrastructural endeavors; and a private sector comprising traders and agriculturalists who reaped the benefits of governmental support. Both sectors exhibited a reciprocal dependency, intricately tied to the British administration. Governors, who were anticipated to uphold governmental expectations, found themselves seduced by the prospects of delegating convicts to officials upon whom they relied for the distribution of labor and land resources. The public sector underwent a process of privatization, thus facilitating cronyism and fostering a cadre of affluent associates. (Macintyre Stuart, 1999) Nevertheless, the monopoly held by the officials faced opposition from the advent of free traders operating on behalf of Britain and India.

In 1806, Lord petitioned Governor Bligh, seeking authorization to dispatch a vessel “to the Fiji Islands for the purpose of transporting sandalwood to China.” While Lord implored Bligh to elucidate the cargo specifics and the conditions of return, the Governor scarcely endorsed such an egregious breach of monopoly privileges. A myriad of factors coalesced to obstruct the merchants’ aspirations and hinder the developmental trajectory of the New South Wales economy. Constraints on the expansion of private maritime endeavors, local import tariffs, a dearth of diverse commodities, and a failure to identify suitable exports significantly impeded progress. Warehouses became inundated with superfluous merchandise, while enterprises within New South Wales grappled with mounting creditor payment demands. Numerous businesses approached the brink of collapse, incapacitated in their ability to honor contractual obligations. (Mountford, Benjamin, 2016)

Notwithstanding the formidable disposition, directives, and regulations imposed by the subsequent governor, P. G. King, the equilibrium of political and social authority remained disproportionately favorable to the officers. The discord between Governor King and the officers culminated in a confrontation involving Macarthur and an individual tasked with executing the governor’s directives. Macarthur leveraged the pretext of retirement to devote time to the advancement of ovine husbandry within Australia. The discord

between the New South Wales Army Corps and Governor Bligh escalated, culminating in a rebellion facilitated by Macarthur. (Đỗ Đức Thịnh & Kiều Minh Thạch, 2009)

From the aforementioned economic-political-socio-cultural framework, it is evident that, fundamentally, the Australian society during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century embodied the nascent elements of a capitalist socio-economic paradigm characterized by the establishment of a marketplace conducive to the free exchange of goods, influenced by military officers who commanded the primary economic resources, in conjunction with the emergence of various social strata including convict laborers, free immigrants, military personnel, and cattle station workers. The clashes and competing interests among military officers and governors, between free immigrants of English descent and those of Irish origin, and between Enlightenment ideologies and religious doctrines such as Protestantism, can be regarded as pivotal precursors for the British capitalist administration to effectuate a more profound transformation of the colony in Australia, transitioning from a penal settlement to a civil colony, and evolving from a self-sufficient economy towards the gradual establishment of a robust and thriving capitalist economic system.

The trajectory leading to the reforms instituted by Governor Lachlan Macquarie aligns impeccably with the overarching historical law governing all social reforms, both throughout history at large and within the specific context of modern world history. The genesis of Governor Lachlan Macquarie's reforms can be understood as an intellectual assimilation of the philosophical tenets of the Scottish Enlightenment, which served to mediate the discord between the governor and the London authorities, as well as the military and the white settler landlord class in New South Wales. This class had adopted an advanced capitalist mode of production and had experienced a significant augmentation of economic power, largely attributable to their adeptness in capitalizing on the exigencies posed by the need to advance England's capitalist economy in the wake of the Anglo-French War. In a parallel fashion, the reforms initiated in Japan emerged subsequent to the incorporation of new ideological currents from China and the United States to ameliorate economic crises precipitated by the advent of novel, more progressive modes of production, productive forces, and production relations within society. Similarly, the reformist adaptations in England during the 19<sup>th</sup> century manifested in the aftermath of colonial conflicts among imperialist nations, influenced by the infiltration of Marxist ideology, as well as the rise and consolidation of the proletariat which heralded the development of new production relations. The reform movements in Southeast Asia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century also materialized following a period characterized by vigorous cultural and civilizational interactions with the West, which engendered new ideological paradigms and social classes, thereby instigating transformations in production relations and altering the configuration of productive forces within societies grappling with crises. The reformative initiatives in Korea toward the close

of the 19<sup>th</sup> century similarly originated from the necessity of confronting the encroachment of Western imperialism, catalyzed by the influx of Western bourgeois democratic ideology.

*Some features of the reforms carried out by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in Australia in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

Australia represents a unique geopolitical entity, as it encompasses an entire continent while remaining largely insulated from the cultural and civilizational advancements characteristic of humanity until the British colonialists asserted sovereignty over this land in 1788. The notable absence of both a slave-owning state and an absolute monarchy in Australia at the time of British colonial settlement constitutes an exceptional phenomenon that is seldom observed elsewhere across the globe. The existence and evolution of the indigenous populace, albeit at a comparatively rudimentary level of socio-economic production, nevertheless engendered considerable strain in relations with the British colonial administration. In the course of implementing reforms, Governor Lachlan Macquarie inevitably faced various forms of dissent and resistance from the indigenous communities. Illustrative instances of this resistance include the series of uprisings that transpired in the Cowpastures, Airs, and Appin districts, located in the southwestern region of Sydney, during April 1816. However, irrespective of the nature or magnitude of these resistances, they lacked the robustness and complexity, as well as the prolonged duration typical of the national liberation movements encountered in colonial nations that had previously endured absolute monarchy prior to the arrival of colonial powers. Regarding the forces implicated in the process of reform, it is evident that Vietnam experienced reforms enacted by the French Governor-General Paul Doumer aimed at reinforcing the French colonial authority in Indochina during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; however, following the successful culmination of the August Revolution in 1945, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam emerged, wherein the individuals regarded as the national leadership class exhibited no inclination to uphold the French cultural legacy with the same degree of unwavering fidelity as observed in the Australian context. The reforms implemented by Governor Lachlan Macquarie also served as the foundational basis and catalyst for the Charter movement, which sought to establish the Australian federal state and ultimately culminated in the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. Nevertheless, the members of the Australian state leadership class, subsequent to the establishment of the federation, persistently aimed to preserve the cultural heritage rooted in the Enlightenment era, along with other Anglo-Saxon nationalist cultural traditions, throughout the trajectory of national development. This distinct characteristic arose from the severe natural conditions characteristic of the world's driest inhabited continent, compelling Australia to rely on Western capitalist powers for both security and economic sustenance. The apprehension regarding neighboring Asian nations, stemming from the cultural divergences between Australia and these nations,



prompted Australia to “sell itself” and seek reliance on major countries sharing analogous mainstream cultural frameworks and historical affiliations, such as England and the United States. Consequently, the enduring aspiration of the upper echelons of Australian society to sustain the British cultural heritage, even in the aftermath of the federation’s establishment, was an inevitable outcome and served to delineate the variance between the reforms orchestrated by Governor Lachlan Macquarie and those implemented by other governors-general in disparate colonial territories during the same epoch of pre-modern global history.

To safeguard the interests of the societal elite, the upper class assimilated the principles of economic liberalism derived from Scottish thought, acknowledged the particular significance of political and intellectual prisoners from England and Ireland, and endeavored to establish the Native Academy system in Blacktown and Parramatta, with the objective of educating and assimilating the indigenous populace to adhere to the “civilized” lifestyle characteristic of Anglo-Saxon culture. The accommodation among social classes was also evidenced by Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s endorsement of free settlement policies, his advocacy for land grants to immigrants, his assembly of white native merchants and prominent Sydney elites to inaugurate the first colonial bank, and his adaptable recruitment of emancipated convicts into various governmental roles, all in pursuit of his ambitious vision while concurrently ensuring fiscal prudence for the government. Although the reforms enacted by Governor Lachlan Macquarie were a natural progression, arising in the aftermath of the Anglo-French War and the British Industrial Revolution, Australia did not merely serve as a replica or diminutive version of British society; rather, it encompassed a multitude of social elements, including a substantial population of convicts and impoverished individuals, alongside various immigrants, land-seeking middle-class settlers, and intrepid gold miners. Colonial fragmentation was not created in a moment but by a long process of immigration. And although fragmentation soon takes on a life of its own, it remains within the orbit of its creator and is susceptible to constant influence. (Rickard John, 2017)

### *Some effects of the reforms carried out by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in Australia in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

To the present day, the aspiration to preserve the British cultural heritage remains an intrinsic characteristic of conservatives within Australia. (Melleuish Greg, 2015) A notable manifestation of the political and cultural dimensions of conservative ideology in Australia is exemplified by Tony Abbott’s decision to confer knighthood upon Prince Philip. (Safi, 2015)

Additional manifestations encompass both the conscious and unconscious adherence to Anglo-Saxon standards within the realms of film and print media, (Narelle Miragliotta &

Wayne Errington & Nicholas Barry, 2013: 121) Prime Minister Tony Abbott's endorsement of a vote opposing marriage equality and same-sex marriage during the 2017 referendum, justified by a commitment to uphold traditional British cultural values, (Karp, 2017) and John Howard's assertion that the life and example of Jesus Christ have endowed Australians with the most substantial impetus for benevolence within the community. (Johnson, 2007: 199)

Prime Minister Scott Morrison commenced his victory address on Saturday with the declaration, "always believe in miracles." This assertion was devoid of hyperbole. Morrison appears to have articulated his conviction that divine intervention played an active role in the political process that culminated in his electoral success. The Pentecostal Christian faith of Morrison is fundamental to his conceptualization of political existence.

In his inaugural address to Congress in 2008, he characterized Hillsong Pentecostal Church leader Brian Houston as his mentor and as an embodiment of the immutable truths and principles inherent in the Christian faith. Morrison's Horizon Church is situated within the broader Pentecostal movement that originated in the United States during the early 20th century. Miracles constitute a pivotal element of Pentecostalism. As a religious movement, it perceives itself as replicating the divine gifts experienced by the earliest practitioners of Christianity. Miracles, alongside the gospel, persist as central attributes of contemporary Pentecostal Christianity. According to the doctrines of Pentecostal Christianity, Jesus is the sole pathway to salvation. Only those redeemed through Jesus (individuals who have undergone spiritual rebirth through inherent faith within the Pentecostal Christian community) possess any prospect of attaining eternal life in heaven. Theoretically, Prime Minister Scott Morrison's faith embodies a pessimistic outlook regarding the individual's communion with God. Consequently, faith is oriented upwards towards God in both the present and the eternal realm. As a result, the implications of Pentecostal Christian beliefs for societal issues are minimal. Thus, it would be unreasonable to anticipate progressive perspectives from a Pentecostal figure such as Morrison on matters such as abortion, feminism, LGBT rights, immigration, environmental concerns, same-sex marriage, among others. Morrison appears to regard himself as divinely appointed to guide all Australians toward an understanding of the promised land. According to Pentecostal theology, the entirety of history exists under the dominion of God. This understanding elucidates why Scott Morrison may exhibit limited concern regarding further measures aimed at mitigating carbon emissions to address environmental degradation stemming from climate change. If an apocalyptic scenario precipitated by climate change is perceived as part of God's overarching plan, there is little that can or ought to be done about it. (David Hardaker, 2021)

## **Conclusion**

In general, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of East-West cultural exchange under a stronger intensity than ever before. Reforms in colonial countries had to take place in three pillars: economic - political - socio-cultural (with the focus on educational reform) to achieve the goal of consolidating the position of the ruling class more and more firmly, the economic - social strength of the colony increasingly strong, thereby being able to cope with and overcome the social crisis caused by colonialism and imperialism in the expansion process. While in other colonial countries that had experienced absolute monarchy before colonialism established a colonial governing apparatus, organized, systematic uprisings with progressive ideas aimed at protecting the national cultural heritage often occurred continuously, causing many obstacles to the implementation of the cultural assimilation policy; In Australia, the indigenous community had not yet formed a state before the British colonial government established its governing apparatus, so the indigenous people in Australia were not yet mature enough to fight voluntarily and carry out similar organized and systematic uprisings to protect the traditional cultural heritage of the Australian indigenous people. Therefore, the process of cultural assimilation in New South Wales, which began in the first half of the 19th century, took place with greater intensity than any other colony in the British colonial system, and its consequences were therefore compared by many researchers to the consequences of a wave of genocide of an entire community and nation.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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