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THE CHINESE IN VICTORIA:
A Longterm Survey

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Abbreviations

ANU  Australian National University
MUP  Melbourne University Press
OUP  Oxford University Press
SLV  State Library of Victoria
SMH  Sydney Morning Herald
V&P, L.A.  Victoria, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly
V&P, L.C.  Victoria, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council
VPP  Victorian Parliamentary Papers
VPRO  Victorian Public Records Office
VPRS  Victorian Public Records Series

Note on Transliteration

Generally, the pinyin (Mandarin) system of romanisation has been used, but for the sake of clarity and flavour, I have taken the liberty to retain many forms of the Cantonese transliteration in the names of people, places and expressions.
A man may be ever so accurately informed as to the dates, the hours, the weather, the gestures, the type of speech, the very words, the soil, the colour, that between them all would seem to build up a particular event. But if he be not seized of the mind which lay behind all that was human in the business, then no synthesis of his detailed knowledge is possible. He cannot give to the various actions which he knows their due order and proportion; he knows not what to omit, nor what to enlarge upon among so many, or rather a number potentially infinite of, facts; and his picture will not be (as some would put it) distorted: it will be false. He will not be able to use history for its end, which is the establishment of Truth. All that he establishes by his action, and all that he confirms and makes stronger, is Untruth. And so far as Truth is concerned it would be far better that a man should be possessed of no history than that he should be possessed of history ill-stated as to its prime factor, which is human motive.

Hillaire Belloc

INTRODUCTION

Prior to World War Two, the Chinese were the only notable group of immigrants who failed to assimilate into the predominantly white society of Australia. Their numbers declined uninterruptedly from a high of over 40,000 in the late 1850s to 25,000 in 1911 and to a mere 14,000 in 1933. At the time of the gold rushes when the Chinese comprised more than 3 percent of Australia's population, exaggerated fears arose about the possible submersion of the white race. In contrast, less than ninety years later, the number of Chinese in Australian society was so negligible (less than 0.05 percent) that they were not counted as a separate group in official statistics and records.

The male-dominated Chinese population was not significantly balanced by either the entry of more Chinese women or intermarriage with local Australian women. The community lived for most part in isolation, mixing and trading almost exclusively amongst themselves. After thirty years in Australia, an inconsiderable number of Chinese had hardly moved out of their own traditions, as they were completely shut off from the social activities and economic and political developments of the community at large. The primary occupations of the Chinese were anchored in the low-skill, self-sufficient, technologically unsophisticated industries like market-gardening and furniture-making.

The orthodox explanation of the marginalised and stunted development of the
Chinese in Australia is attributed to the racially discriminatory influences of the White Australia Policy. Stringent immigration entry controls were the major cause for the rapid population decline. The restricted entry for Chinese women continued its immense sexual imbalance and hampered opportunities for the immigrant community to reproduce. Anti-Chinese legislation greatly limited the occupational choices of the immigrants and even in areas where there were no official discriminatory controls, owing to the mark of inferiority forced upon them, the Chinese were deprived of the opportunity to realise European standards of achievements. Their withdrawal into non-competitive employment and a retreat back into their own traditions and members for support were inevitable reactions to external forces of inequality and oppression.

This thesis proposes that the 'White Australia Policy' or the 'discriminatory' explanation of Chinese migration and settlement in Australia is insufficient. This is an inadequate explanation as it does not consider the immigrants' culture, character or history which played a dominant part in shaping the economic, social and political values and the choices of the immigrants in their new society. In this thesis I have argued that Chinese migration to Victoria, their settlement and eventual decline from the 1850s was almost exclusively conditioned by the force of Chinese culture in the broadest sense. These self-encapsulating values, shaped by 3000 years of enclosed and struggling existence and largely unmodified by the new environment, enabled the Chinese in Australia to isolate themselves from most external influences. By their own system of kinship networks, mutual help, self-government, extreme frugality, ambition to return home and an inherent belief in the superiority of their own race and culture, the Chinese were able to rise above, and often proudly ignored, the racial prejudice and discrimination meted out against them.
For upward of half a century their implanted institutions and values protected and sustained their 'extra-territorial' culture and livelihood. At the same time however, by standing apart from their host society and withdrawing into their own world for support and protection, their enclosed viewpoint made them out of touch with the rapidly changing world of Australia. Behind its seeming stability and immutability, the Chinese world in Australia screened a dangerous fragility and self-dictating erosion which laid the seeds for its decline and almost total collapse.

More specifically, this thesis will argue that the unique, detached, 'unamalgamable' qualities which characterised the immigrant Chinese were a direct consequence of the pull of traditional Confucian values. The male-dominated population, the commuting system and the sustained contraction of the size of the community were expressive of a deep commitment on the part of the immigrants to return to their family and homeland. The purpose of the journey to Australia was to make money for a better life on their return home. Because they did not come for the purpose of breaking free of traditional constraints and merging with their new society, the ideas of white Australians were of little concern to them. Rarely did the Chinese direct their actions against white racism or demand more political attention and social assistance.

The narrow range of occupations (namely, alluvial mining, market-gardening, furniture-making, small-scale retailing and domestic service) beyond whose confines the Chinese rarely trespassed, were justifiably chosen for their small capital outlays, easy liquidity access for regular remittances and the ability to use family and related members as its work force. In some tasks they were attractive to the Chinese as they converged
with traditional forms of economic life practised in their homeland. For instance, the popularity of market-gardening rested partly on the cheapness of its capital outlay and partly because it suited the rural background of many of the peasant immigrants. The Victorian Chinese engaged in market-gardening pursued a method of labour-intensive, resource-efficient, small-scale agriculture which has dominated farming in China until very recent years.

In their living arrangements the majority of Chinese lived in cramped, squalid, make-shift quarters which often provoked the abhorrence and disgust of local Australians. That they bore these appalling conditions was largely due to the general understanding that their home in Australia was only temporary and it would be wasteful and fruitless to invest in a home which would not belong to them in the end.

The lack of local Chinese women, the inability to reproduce itself, sustain sufficient numbers and a dynamic kinship network was a basic cause for the eventual decline of the Chinese community in Victoria. Due to a long history of little protection from their own government, the Chinese have learnt to rely on their own skills and mobility for support and survival. For thousands of years the Family has been the cornerstone to Chinese economic and political advance. And the essence of their group organisation and development has depended on a 'network of relationships'. The minor role of women to the Chinese community in Victoria prior to the Second World War was a fundamental factor for the group's stagnation and eventual decline. Yet other factors beyond a demographic breakdown should be considered. Many immigrants were inflexible in their attitudes to diversify its social and business associates and to keep
 abreast of technological developments in times of rapid change. This rigidity in outlook was critical in causing severe stagnation in certain promising industries which for many years were monopolised by the Chinese. In contrast, those Chinese who proved successful in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong rarely clung to one monolithic identity. They often took positive steps to align themselves with local elements through marriage or political service. In the process of which, political patronage was secured for the family business as well as a large pool of local labour and expertise. It was not political freedom which brought wealth to many Chinese in Southeast Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but a flexible attitude to new opportunities and a willingness to incorporate new (and often complementary) local knowledge, personnel and developments with their traditional lineage practices.

Yet the rigidity of outlook of the Chinese immigrants in Victoria must also be understood in the context of the exceptional political situation in their homeland and the totally unfamiliar landscape of Australia. The build-up to the Republican Revolution of 1911 heightened national consciousness, revived hope for a war-torn country, pride in the Chinese culture and weakened the resolve of the overseas Chinese from making more positive attempts to assimilate in their new home. At the same time, Australia's rapid transition from a pastoral to a scientific-industrially-based society made the already unfamiliar world of White Australia even more remote to the Chinese, more incomprehensible, more insecure and less connected in almost every way from the stable, organic, pre-industrial Chinese world of their past lives. In contrast, Southeast Asian societies began on more diverse roots of multi-culturalism; a mixture of many elements of the Chinese culture as well as characteristics from the local regions were fused
together. Throughout its history, the Chinese community in Southeast Asia had been able to retain a continuing association of their traditional kinship and native civilisation.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part One is headed by a fairly broad historiographic review into past works on the Chinese in Australia. This is followed by a brief introduction to the historical and cultural background of the immigrants and the character of their migration. An examination of the passive and proudly indifferent responses of the Chinese to Victorian anti-Chinese legislation concludes this section. The stress of this final chapter is on the overall lack of influence of the White Australian Policy on the behaviour of the Chinese. Part Two examines the sojourning sentiments of the Chinese and how they affected the sex and age distribution of the population, their choice and method of work, their accommodation and quality of life.

Part Three begins by contrasting the impact of science and technology on Australia and China and the focus will be on China's peripheral position in the industrial world. The insecurity of the Chinese in the industrialising environment of Australia will be considered. This will be contrasted by the more accommodating cultural milieu of Southeast Asia and the important thread of Chinese culture and traditions throughout the region's history. The importance of the 'modified' or 'mixed' version of the family business in assisting the rise of the Chinese in the Southeast Asian region will be discussed.

The final part of the thesis will suggest that the decline of the Victorian Chinese in the four occupations of alluvial mining, furniture-making, market-gardening and laundering
was significantly affected by an inflexible attitude to technology. It is argued that the Chinese did not apply science and advanced equipment when it was prudent to do so. The conclusion will summarise the main argument and suggest its relevance for the modern overseas Chinese communities.
PART I

The Un alarming 'Great White Walls'
Historiography

Prior to the 1950s there was little research into the Chinese in Australia. Accounts of the Chinese were included as minor sections in more major works. As early as 1829, Edward Gibbon Wakefield in the postscript to his A Letter From Sydney proposed a system of colonisation based on Chinese labour. Wakefield argued that due to 'the pressure of people upon their territory' the Chinese would be greatly disposed to emigrate. By their industry and dexterity, the enormous wilderness of Australia would be converted into a fruitful garden in the course of a century.¹ Wakefield’s proposal was based almost exclusively on the progress exhibited by the Chinese in Southeast Asia (namely, Batavia, Java, Siam and Singapore) whose settlements had obtained, in some cases, up to 200 years of history. However, the powerful imagination of the author was not appreciated in his time as Wakefield’s plan of large-scale Chinese migration to Australia was not taken seriously by the policy-makers or the general public.

In 1904, three-quarters of a century after the first publication of A Letter From Sydney in the Morning Chronicle, Henry Gyles Turner devoted a complete chapter to the ‘alien’ Chinese people in his History of the Colony of Victoria from the gold rush until Federation. The chapter was basically an introduction to the large-scale migration of the

¹Edward Gibbon Wakefield, A Letter From Sydney and Other Writings, Dent, Dutton, New York, London, 1829, p.92
Chinese to the goldfields. The characteristics of the immigrants were described, the conflicts between the Chinese and the Europeans were noted and the main reasons for restrictive legislation imposed against them were listed. T.A. Coghlan in the third volume of his *Labour and Industry in Australia* (1918) described the range of occupations - market-gardening, furniture-making, commerce, domestic service - into which the Chinese had diversified by the 1870s and 1880s. He also devoted many pages to examining complaints about their 'unfair' economic competition and the industrial action taken against them by Europeans. Coghlan concluded that the objections to the Chinese was 'less due to his alleged vices than to his virtues' and fear of what may occur 'under conditions of open door.' In writing the book, Coghlan drew upon his many years of first-hand experience as a Government Statistician. Though the book lacked empirical evidence, it was compensated by the writer's powerful imagination and a genuine interest in his subject.

J. Lyng's *Non-Britishers in Australia* (1927), provides a concise but comprehensive history of the Chinese in a chapter headed 'The Yellow Race.' Lyng traced the Chinese in Australia from before the discovery of gold to the Chinese community in his day in the 1920s. The first clashes between the Europeans and the Chinese were described and the general objections to the Chinese, being connected mainly with their lack of interest in permanent settlement were stressed. The Chinese brought few womenfolk with them, disproportion between the sexes persisted and 'their quarters, decennium after decennium remained squalid'. The author also noted that the changing opportunities and advancing technology of the twentieth century had driven many Chinese out of the furniture trade.

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and market-gardening; industries which were in a large measure monopolised by them in the nineteenth century. Their ‘utterly conservative’ methods are alleged to have contributed to their economic decline.

The first major attempt to systematically examine Chinese Immigration can be found in Myra Willard’s work, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920* (1923). Fluently written and based upon a close reading of parliamentary debates, Willard concluded that, ‘the fundamental reason for the adoption of the White Australian Policy is the preservation of a British-Australian nationality.’ The chief objection to the Chinese was because they remained, after fifty years, alien in ideas and habits. To the policymakers, Chinese culture was not argued to be inferior in itself but too antithetical to the widely held British ideas of culture and progress which all colonies were committed to preserve by the late 1880s. The Chinese failed to grasp the basic issues of civil and industrial democracy and for this reason they were believed to be an enormous drawback to the development of Australia.

Charles Daley’s article, ‘The Chinese in Victoria’ published in *The Victorian Historical Magazine* in February 1931 is a very interesting report on early Chinese social and economic life. The author brought to our attention the special ‘group values’ of the immigrants: their mutual support, solidarity and extreme patience in face of adversity. Drawing heavily on contemporary memoirs, Daley arrived at the conclusion that any antagonism shown the Chinese laid in ‘envy of their success’ and fear of increase in their

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numbers.  

From the 1950s onwards, academic studies dominated the literature on the Chinese in Australia. This monopoly was unbroken until the 1980s when independent historians and free-lance writers began entering the field in greater numbers. Ian R. Cathie’s B.A. Honours thesis on ‘Anti-Chinese legislation in Victoria, 1855-1865’ (1954) was one of the first of many academic studies to probe the European reactions to Chinese migration. According to Cathie, the grievances of the diggers were often in opposition to the commercial interests in the colony. The Chinese were resented by the diggers because ‘they never exerted themselves to dig holes requisite for reaching the gold deposits’; they never bought land and settled down but took everything they made back to China. The commercial class however, was mostly in favour of the Chinese and it was they who initiated many of the petitions against the 1855 Immigration Restriction Act. Curiously, in spite of his mass of evidence stressing social considerations, Cathie claimed that agitation was ‘rooted in the economic background of depression’ and the ‘hard conditions on the goldfields’. The conclusions of Geoffrey A. Oddie’s 1959 Master of Arts thesis on ‘The Chinese in Victoria, 1870 to 1890’ mirrored and complemented Cathie’s. Antagonism to the immigrants was based mainly on economic grievances and the trade unions formed the hard core of agitation. Yet Oddie was not ignorant of the fact that many workers by the late 1880s were still unorganised and fear of competition rather than real competition often


A.T. Yarwood's *Asian Migration to Australia* (1964) is an administrative history of the Immigration Restriction Act, or what was more commonly known as the White Australia Policy of 1901. Covering a thirty-year period, the author aimed to show that 'the Act itself and its administration were subject to pressures which brought about important modifications.' One of the two major themes pursued in the study suggested that administrators often turned to public debate for guidance, and not in a few cases, being moved by the 'deep-rooted traditions of fair-play, humanity and justice' were susceptible to the claims of individuals. This attitude proved especially true with respect to treatment of the Chinese, as evidenced by the huge grassroots support for the case of Geelong merchant, Poon Gooey and his wife. 'As individuals', Yarwood noted, 'the Chinese not infrequently won the respect and support of the Australian community but as a race they continued to suffer because of the deteriorating status of the homeland.' The second theme highlighted was the continual easing of conditions for temporary entry for non-Europeans. Yet the author discovered that the Chinese took little advantage of the special passport agreement concluded in 1905. Finally, the size of the resident group, the occupational interests of their members, the diplomatic strength and fidelity of the country of origin were found to be the main variants upon which treatment of the Asian minorities varied. The Chinese were treated most severely of all groups and this was attributed in a

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7A.T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia*, MUP, Melbourne, 1964, p.1

8Ibid, p.104
large part to the lack of interest shown by the Chinese Government showed in their subjects abroad.

Three years after the publication of Yarwood's work, a book released with the simple title, *The Chinese in Australia* (1967) by Arthur E. Huck sought to outline, 'as accurately as possible the characteristics of the modern Chinese communities.' Relying heavily on surveys and interviews conducted in and around 1964, Huck came up with a number of unresolved conclusions. He discovered three main streams in a population on the move: a) the old, pre-war, male-dominated population b) the new wave of war-time and post-war arrivals and c) a large, increasing, ever-changing body of students, mainly from Hong Kong. The Cantonese dominated all groups but within each group there was a wide variation in social characteristics and in the standard of education. Politically, it was found that the Chinese were more conservative voters than their neighbours or that they were simply detached from politics, being distrustful of any political system. The political activities of Chinese students were rarely overt and covert activities were highly limited. Most students surveyed said they had very little contact with Australian-born Chinese and even if their social life was extensive, they rarely married Australians. Huck believed that the Chinese had the same capability to assimilate as all other races but the greater question concerned was whether they would or they should, given the strong traditional sense of their superiority and the rapidly changing Australian society where 'no-one is quite sure what constitutes its essential characteristics'. For students who must return home, the difficulties of readjustments should be considered. Many anthropological issues were beyond the scope of the work, for example, the structure of the Chinese

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family in the Australian setting, the relationship between generations, the upbringing of the children and the process of political socialisation.

At this junction, I will briefly mention Humphrey McQueen's *A New Britannia* (1970) which strictly speaking, is not a study of the Chinese but a study of the origins of racist ideas in Australia. For our interest and purposes, McQueen's conclusions deserve our attention as they echo the conclusions of both Willard and Yarwood. The author wrote, 'White Australia became much more than a program of restrictive immigration based on the fears of economic competition or inter-marriage.'\(^{10}\) Above all, it was 'a doctrine full of affirmative values, offering much more than a negative rejection of other peoples.' To McQueen, the significant and ironic tenet of White Australian racism was that 'race' contained characteristics not found in individual members of the race.

*The Great White Walls Are Built* (1974) by Charles A. Price tells the story of the Chinese through the eyes of a race relations specialist. The book focused on the White Australia Policy with an underlying aim to show that 'some countries are more racist than others' and 'countries with consistently severe restrictions on immigration, such as Australia, have fewer race problems than countries with long periods of free immigration.'\(^{11}\) The final confrontation of the 1880s was largely a result of working class clamour against cheap labour. It was not certain that Chinese competition was real, (for many Chinese traded exclusively for the Chinese themselves) and many politicians

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\(^{10}\)Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1970, p.269

\(^{11}\)Charles A. Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1974, pp.ix,x
were reluctant to accept the arguments of the workers. Nevertheless, the anti-Chinese line was finally triumphant though the amount of discrimination in Australia was slight. Humanitarian forces which defended the Chinese in the 1860s and 70s were ignored by 1888. Price claimed that the main point at issue should not concern the volume of discrimination but the widespread rejection of the values of basic human similarity and equality. After fifty years of contact the young, white societies of the Pacific had decided that the Chinese were unassimilable and basic anger arose over their refusal to change their ways. Price's perceptive insight into the strength of traditional Confucian values and the pull of family loyalties were unfortunately inadequately developed. These ideas were introduced only in the final pages of the conclusion which does little justice to the complexity of the subject.

The first major study of the Chinese by a Chinese appeared a year after the publication of Price's work. In Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia (1975), the author, C. Y. Choi, purported to show that, 'the pattern of Chinese migration and settlement has been vitally influenced by Australian immigration restrictions.' A very long period of time was chosen for the study with a concentration on migration in the first period 1861 to 1901 and a focus on settlement and suburbanisation in the second period 1947 to 1966. The method of investigation was based on a systematic census-by-census analysis and stress was given to demographic changes. In spite of several interesting and detailed chapters proposing a plethora of political and cultural forces which affected the volume and character of Chinese migration, Choi concluded that discriminatory

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12C. Y. Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1975, p.xi
immigration policies were the crucial determinant. When immigration restrictions were eased after the Second World War, the sex imbalance was gradually redressed and the Chinese began to settle permanently. The immigrants moved away from Chinatown and purchased properties in metropolitan Melbourne. The author suggested that the Chinese in Australia were moving without regression along Park’s cycle of relations which described the process of assimilation to follow the route of ‘contact’ to ‘competition’ to ‘conflict’ to ‘accommodation’ and finally to ‘assimilation’. According to Choi, the Chinese in the 1960s had reached the ‘accommodation’ stage. However, this inference is doubtful in light of Huck’s study of the Chinese which do not provide us with such clear-cut results. The psychological aspects of assimilation were not dealt with in Choi’s work.

C. F. Yong’s, The New Gold Mountain, was the second major work by a Chinese, published in 1977. It sought to explain why ‘the Chinese communities in New South Wales and Victoria, in the years 1901 to 1921, thrrove in the Australian environment where their position as a minority was vulnerable.’13 In more precise terms, Yong aimed to explain why the Chinese population in Sydney and Melbourne remained stable and exhibited healthy signs of activity, growth and assimilation. There was a boom in the cabinet-making and furniture trades and Chinese merchants on the whole prospered. Older traditional religious influences like Buddhism and Confucianism were less popular. Political activities were more pronounced. Stronger leadership, more sophisticated organisation and a more intimate co-operation between immigrant Chinese and the young Australian-born Chinese were argued to be decisive factors. The unprecedented upsurge of national feeling gave way to more active involvement in politics. For the first time, the

13C. F. Yong, The New Gold Mountain, Raphael, Richmond, 1077, p.8
Chinese in Australia emerged from their long passivity and isolation. They united to campaign against anti-Chinese legislation, lobbied for the establishment of a Chinese Consul-General and set up the first Australia-China Mail Shipping Line. A proliferation in the number of Chinese newspapers made the disparate Chinese more aware of their common interests. However, Yong appeared to have presented us with a picture of a declining rather than a thriving and integrating community. The greater part of The New Gold Mountain, was dominated by the facts of declining numbers, political factionalism, district rivalries and social conservatism. Hence it was possible for the author to conclude, 'many immigrant Chinese still had strong ties with China and had not made any significant efforts to make "assimilation" easier.' All in all, Yong’s work is a stimulating study and many prominent Chinese individuals were introduced. But disappointingly, the work continued to present the Chinese from the viewpoint of ‘White Australia’.

Contrary to its aggressive title, Andrew Markus’ Fear and Hatred (1979) is quite a mild and reasoned work which compared the attitudes of white Australians and Californians to non-European immigrants, in particular the Chinese. Markus’ sources were derived mainly from contemporary magazines, newspapers and advertisements for it was the author’s hope to grasp ‘the reality of day-to-day experience.’ It was proposed that the anti-Chinese debate originated from fear of a revival in the eighteenth century convict labour transportation. The strength of racism and the idea of white superiority were not real issues in the debate. From the early days of the gold rush, the Chinese were looked upon as a civilised people who had their own set of elevating ideals but these clashed with the ‘New World’ standards. Unlike the Aboriginals, they were not placed outside the pale

14 Andrew Markus, Fear and Hatred, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, p.xix
of humanity: the Chinese were able to use the courts, become naturalised and purchase property. The anti-Chinese league was described to be a most apathetic one. Time and time again, it ‘lost momentum’, ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘direction. 15 A more technical issue discussed in the book was that the Chinese problem in Northern Australia differed to that in the South. In the North, debate arose over the viability of a adopting a ‘dominant’ system of race relations (i.e. a system of benevolent despotism based on patriarchal traditions) in the industries of the tropics like sugar and tobacco. In the South, concern arose over the Chinese creating a ‘competitive’ (i.e. an exploitative) system of race relations as they entered an increasingly industrialised society. According to Markus, California experienced a classic development of the ‘competitive’ system as the Chinese came to form a significant minority of the workforce but this was not the case in Australia. The more dramatic Californian experiences were often used by the media to arouse in Australians an exaggerated sense of ‘unfair’ Chinese competition.

The decade of the 1980s spawned a new wave of literature on the Chinese in Australia. This was partly a positive response to the official introduction of multiculturalism or cultural pluralism in Australia by the Whitlam Government in the mid-1970s. These new writers, embracing the ideas of the new cultures, attempted to assert the dignity of minority values and overturn the orthodox notion that the Chinese were victims of white discrimination. Whilst the literature of the 1950s to the late 1970s tended to emphasise the reactions of European Australians to the Chinese, studies produced since the eighties have tended to move contrariwise to focus upon the actions of the Chinese. Jean Gittins' The Diggers From China (1981) is a vivid, clearly-written and colourful

15Ibid, pp.136, 148, 161
account of the Chinese on the goldfields. In this sensitive and picturesque narrative of the early Chinese we learn of the immigrants' preparation for the long voyage and the enormous cultural baggage which they carried across the ocean. For the Chinese did not merely bring their physical selves but an entire worldview at odds with the West. The immigrants had their own way for doing everything from determining one's age, to preparing food to farming the land. They had their own language based on characters rather than on an alphabet so it required memorisation rather than tonal recognition for mastery. But the most interesting feature was the Chinese' ingrained sense of 'fatalism'. The persecution and victimisation which they experienced in their wider white community was believed to be predestined by the gods. There was nothing they could do to improve their situation because their maltreatment was at the hands of barbarians, a people without culture and who were naturally 'inferior' to the Chinese. Finally, considering the wide differences in lifestyles and thought between the Orientals and Occidentals at that time, Gittins concluded that it was 'impossible for east and west to live harmoniously.'

In the same year as the publication of Gittin's book, Gloria Davies, a Chinese, (her name is deceptive) submitted her B. A. Honours thesis on 'Liang Qichao and the Chinese in Australia'. Liang Qichao, one of the leaders of the failed One Hundred Days Reform Movement of 1898, visited Australia from October 1900 to May 1901. His chief motive was to raise money for his underground Reform Program in politics, law, commerce and education. He aimed to introduce democratic rights in China, modernise education, industrialise commerce and raise national consciousness. Davies attempted to assess the success of his campaign and the reactions of the Chinese to his Reformist Cause. The

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16Jean Gittins, The Diggers From China, Quartet, Melbourne, 1981, p.111
conclusion arrived at was that Liang suffered from acute disappointment and deep regret: ‘[He] did not expect the Melbourne branch [of the Reform Movement] to disperse just like the wind and clouds immediately after [his] departure.’ Liang had to sadly accept that he was welcomed by the Melbourne Chinese ‘only because of [his] county/dialect affiliations...there was no real enthusiasm for his Reformist Cause.’ A major riot which occurred in the main joss-house in Ballarat over contributions to Liang’s Reform Movement was indicative of the immigrants’ lack of readiness to receive and support Western-style changes and institutions. Liang expected to raise at least £50,000 from the Chinese in Australia. His final promise by the Chinese in Sydney and Melbourne was a mere £380 and of this amount, only £210 was actually paid him.

In the introductory to her book, Colonial Casualties (1984), Kathryn Cronin claimed that the interests of the Chinese have been overlooked in Australian history. ‘There has been little discussion of the form and development of the Chinese community, their ideas and attitudes, their efforts to combat white racism and the impact of racial hostility upon individual Chinese and their society.’ In spite of its diverse aims, the achievements of Colonial Casualties are much more limited. The impact of white racism on the Chinese overshadowed other issues. In particular, Cronin was preoccupied with the influence of late nineteenth century racial theories and Social Darwinism in validating Australian racist perceptions and policies. Yet in her attempt to dissect ‘the panic and hatred of colonial voices and the bitterness, disillusionment and anger of the Chinese

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17Gloria Davies, ‘Liang Qichao and the Chinese in Australia’, B.A. Honours, 1981, East Asian Department, University of Melbourne, p.115

18Kathryn Cronin, Colonial Casualties, MUP, Melbourne, 1982, p.1
reply’, Cronin’s final conclusion revealed few new ideas on Chinese migration and settlement and failed to relocate the experience of the Chinese within their own culture. A great deal of the book covered old ground. Half the book was devoted to the events and debates which led up to the 1855 Immigration Restriction Act and circumstances which gave rise to its final repeal. The only new inclusion was that the anti-Chinese movement endured into the 1860s and 70s in spite of the generally accepted belief that colonial anti-Chinese feeling had ebbed in intensity at that time. ‘The anti-Chinese movement’, wrote Cronin, ‘was sustained through the manipulation of a potent symbol - the image of Chinese as physical and moral lepers.’

Cathie May’s PhD thesis, called ‘Topsawyers’ on the Chinese in Cairns, was published by James Cook University for the ‘Studies in North Queensland Series’ in the same year Colonial Casualties was released. Based on a mixture of oral and written histories, the dissertation quite successfully portrayed a regional Chinese community in a full and rounded fashion. In an attempt to reverse the accepted image of the early Chinese as victims of the white race, the author focused upon the accomplishments of the Chinese in pioneering Cairns and their indispensable role in the early development of North Queensland. The period 1876 to 1920 saw a gradual transition in the Cairns economy from a dependence on Chinese-grown products to the European-dominated sugar industry. May contended that the sojourning ideals of the overseas Chinese were of fundamental importance in shaping their lifestyle. As they had no aim to set up permanent homes or invest in Australia, they developed self-sufficient communities ‘little affected by the life-style of the dominant group.’ It was argued that the immigrants lost

19 Ibid, p.130
their competitive edge in a number of industries because of their failure to move into advanced technology. But strangely, akin to the conclusions of earlier writers like Coghlan, Daley, Cathie and Oddie, ‘Topsawyers’ claimed that active hostility to the Chinese was essentially a product of economic rather than cultural reasons.

David Horsfall’s *March To Big Gold Mountain* (1985) had a simple motive - ‘to trace the golden horde from their home in Kwangtung to Australia.’ But the product was far grander than what the author professed. To me, it is one of the more informed books on the early Chinese in Australia. The author tried to show that a great deal of the hostility and misunderstandings between the Chinese and the Europeans were often a result of ignorance. Horsfall saw a need to make constant references to Chinese history and culture (eg. chapters 6 and 8) and these proved evocative as they touched on a number of themes that are currently matters of great debate amongst sinologists. Unfortunately, the work dealt merely with some five to seven years of contact between the Chinese and Europeans, a too short a time span to bring to light any substantial conclusions.

The final works I have included in this review of literature are the writings of Morag Loh. Morag Loh is a pioneer of oral history in Australia and all her works on the Chinese are based on individual Chinese and Chinese families. Her *Sojourners and Settlers* (1985) is a concise introductory booklet to the activities and hardships of the Chinese in Australia in the long period 1848 to 1985. *Survival and Celebration* (1986), edited with Christine Ramsey, was based on a photographic exhibition and seminar series in ‘homage to women past and present, linked to the Chinese community in Australia.’

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One of the general conclusions from the seminar was that most Chinese women had a better quality of life in Australia than in China; they had more freedom and self-control in spite of experiences of bigotry and taunts. But nevertheless, there was a deep concern over the lack of involvement by the present Chinese women in the wider political structure. Many were aware that as individuals, Chinese women were generally highly qualified but at the same time, they were unwilling to speak for their own community, preferring rather to maintain a low profile. One speaker traced the problem to the education of the Chinese and their lack of freedom of expression and independent analysis. Loh's most recent book, Dinky-Di (1989) examined the contributions of immigrant Chinese and Australian-born Chinese to Australia's defence force and war efforts in the period 1899 to 1988. Yet the individuals presented appeared more to be the unusual rather than usual representatives of a largely non-militant community bent on returning home.

The not inconsiderable literature on the Chinese in Australia can be divided into two broad categories. The first concentrated on the issues of Chinese migration, anti-Chinese legislation and the development of the White Australian Policy. The second category of literature have been framed in terms of Chinese settlement: their livelihood, occupations, economic life, social organisations, religion and politics. In short, we have one group of literature looking at the coming of the Chinese to Australia in contradistinction to another emphasising the lives of the Chinese in Australia. Certainly a number of works touched on both viewpoints and cannot be strictly categorised into one or the other, but for the purpose of clarity, this simple division is useful.

21Ibid, p.36
The methodology of the first group of literature tended to be more technical and austere in style and are characteristic of the works produced in the 1960s and 70s. Analysis was largely supported by censuses, parliamentary debates, statistical bulletins, official reports and statutes etcetera. Though as a group (Cathie, Oddie, Yarwood, Price, Choi, Yong, Markus, Cronin) they have shed significant light on European attitudes, there was limited attempt to understand the point of view of the Chinese. Since the 80s, many works have moved away from the preoccupation with explaining the formation of the White Australia Policy by turning toward 'what the Chinese thought.' In their recreation of the past, these 'revisionist' writers have put themselves in a more historic situation and attempted to recount the story of the Chinese with a greater understanding and respect for their culture and history.

However, a general problem which has affected much of the research performed in the more recent era is a too restricted time span and a lack of scale and vision. Most of the research stopped short of the twentieth century. Both the works of Gittins and Horsfall only covered the first five to ten years of the Chinese on the goldfields; Cronin focused on the period of the late 1850s to the 70s; Davies looked basically at one year, 1900. Though all of Loh's works covered a time span of well over a century, they contained little depth of analysis and the range of people interviewed were circumscribed by their ability to converse in English. The work of May is the only notable exception but the community under her investigation inhabited a particularly narrow geographical area. The most disturbing feature, however, is that virtually none of the authors have speculated further from their conclusions. Both Gittins and Horsfall, by showing that the Chinese brought with them a very different set of ideas, did not delve further into the significance
of feudal Confucian culture on the overseas Chinese. Davies, in revealing that the Australian Chinese failed to subscribe to Australian democratic values did not go on to explain some possible historical or cultural reasons for this attitude. May, by telling us that the Chinese were sojourners did not dig beneath this fact to tell us something of the philosophy and political history behind this phenomenon. Why did the Chinese remain as sojourners for so many years? Was this transient attitude modified by other overseas Chinese communities, for example those in Southeast Asia? In addition, time and time again May remarked upon the primitive technology used by the Chinese but there was no real attempt to link this observation into the larger cultural realm of the immigrants' and to bring to light the implications of this culture for the future of its people in the midst of a rapidly changing world. All in all, the literature since the eighties tended to be circumscribed by a kind of 'provincialism' and something of the 'big picture' that would give the Australian Chinese experience more international significance is missing.

My thesis sympathies with the trend of investigation exhibited since the 1980s. It believes in the need to express the views, the experiences, the visions and prejudices of the Chinese community. If the historian simply takes the people of a society as the objects of policies and the focus of problems, then he or she will deny these people the right to enact their own history. Much of the story of the early Chinese in Australia can be understood only in terms of their active response to new challenges and opportunities. But unlike previous studies of this genre, this thesis has allied itself with a much longer time span. It does not merely consider the Chinese in the first fifty years of contact with European-Australians but also the forty years after the passing of the 'White Australia Policy.' By focusing on too short a time period, we often miss deep social, cultural and
psychological patterns which require the passing of many years to convincingly accentuate themselves. Nevertheless, my main disappointment with past studies on the Chinese concerns a lack of initiative to bring together and synthesise the two streams of literature on the Chinese. Hitherto much of the literature on the Chinese in Australia do not tend to complement each other. In this thesis I have tried to combine both the 'discriminatory' and the 'empathetic' views by showing the lack of significance of the White Australia Policy for the Chinese and the importance of the cultural values of the immigrants in influencing their settlement and eventual decline in Victoria. Finally, I have tried to enlarge the Australian Chinese experience by contrasting their activities with those of their compatriots in Southeast Asia. It is only by seeing how other overseas Chinese communities have responded to challenges and new opportunities in their adopted homes that we can comment with deeper insight into the Chinese in Australia.
The Chinese Scene

Until the mid nineteenth century, Chinese civilisation was fundamentally self-contained. China proper was endowed with extensive areas of fertile land, forests and coal deposits. The diversity of her climate made possible the production of almost every kind of food. In the north, the cold, dry, monsoon of winter made the farming season short. The staple grains were wheat and millet. In the south, the heat and rain of the summer monsoon encouraged a luxuriant growth. Forests flourished. This was the home of wet-rice agriculture with a year long growing season that allowed double-cropping. Besides the production of rice, other vegetables and fruits cultivated include the sweet-potato, broad beans, soya bean, sugar cane, oranges, pineapples, lychees, olives, figs, cotton and tobacco.

From a very early point in history, the soils of China have shown themselves to be extremely productive. The sediment that blankets many of the northern regions of China proper consists principally of the valleys of two great rivers, the Huanghe (Yellow River) and the Yangtze, and a minor river, the Xijiang. Its area is over 1 million square miles or about two-fifths of Western Europe. There are eighteen provinces in China proper.

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is the loess. Wind-borne from the Mongolian desert, it is an extremely fine powder that is easily cultivated. On the other hand, the soils of the South are acidic or pedalfer. Though much of the richer surface soil has been denuded by heavy leaching, it can become highly productive with adequate fertilisation. The alluvial soils of the Pearl delta have been some of the most productive of China. Due to a favourable natural endowment which included a plentiful supply of navigable rivers, arable farmland and a great variation in climate, it was possible for China, from the earliest days of her history, to have the good fortune to be almost wholly self-sufficient.

A consequence of this high degree of economic self-sufficiency was that the people of China were able to live with minimal contract with the rest of the world for a great many centuries. With little need to search for raw materials or to trade, the Chinese developed relatively little interest in the wider world. Even in terms of territorial and political aggrandisement, they proved remarkably passive. While it is true that for millennia China had contested her borders with neighbouring dependencies, the Chinese however, were almost always at the receiving end of invasions. An intriguing feature was that regardless of whether the foreign invaders were victorious or vanquished, they were all absorbed into the Chinese culture. Both the Mongol and the Manchu invaders

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who succeeded in seizing the Chinese throne, (in the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries respectively) readily adapted to Chinese ways and came to rely heavily upon Chinese culture for inspiration.

The unchallenged culture of China contributed to the kingdom's sense of worldly superiority and the dread of anything alien. Until at least the sixteenth century, the standard of living in China was comparable to any of the leading nations in Europe: Chinese civilisation was sophisticated, her scientific inventions ingenious, her artistic and literary accomplishments renown, her identity exacting. Indeed, the Chinese were justified in believing themselves a special people. To those who are only acquainted with the weaknesses of modern China - political terror and tyranny, administrative inefficiency, economic chaos and social discontent, the aforementioned may seem a peculiar assertion. But it is not untrue. Due to the overwhelming emphasis on the stagnation and atrocities of Communist China, we often forget that pride and self-esteem were conspicuous features of early Chinese history. Nevertheless, the impact of the decline of the Qing Dynasty on modern Chinese history should also be properly understood. The massive Chinese emigration of the nineteenth century was linked to the unique nature of the Manchu conquest in 1644.

The Manchus, unlike invaders of previous centuries, never relaxed the barrier between conquerors and the subjects. Organised into eight corps, known as the eight

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6 Appendix 1
banners, the Manchus were distributed throughout China in strict military fashion. They were forbidden by law to hold any occupation other than military or civil service to the State. The court at Beijing was wholly Manchu and the bannermen held a grossly disproportionate share of all the higher offices in the bureaucracy. In the provinces, where a Chinese was the holder of a major post, it was customary to place a Manchu of equal rank by his side as a measure of restraint. At the same time, being barbarian conquerors and for fear of being despised by the Han aristocracy as uncivilised philistines, the small alien ruling elite gave uncritical support to orthodox Chinese thought and methods. Trained to acquire a pedantic knowledge of the classics and forbidden by law to engage in commerce, the leaders of the Manchu Court trivialised materialism. Practical problems were deemed unworthy of a scholar's attention and commerce was looked upon with a snobbish disdain. Moreover, the Manchus shut themselves off to anything that was not strictly 'traditional' and of the status quo. They showed little interest in the interplay of ideas or varieties of Chinese thought. This rigidity of outlook they attempted to enforce on the wider society. From as early as the rule of Emperor Ch'ien Lung (1736-1795), the people of China were forbidden to distinguish between the Manchus and Han. Historical works were totally re-written and everything concerning the foreign usurpation of China (ie. the change of dynasties from the Sung (Han) to the Yuan (Mongol), and the Ming (Han) to the Qing (Manchu) were deleted. Literature was censored and thousands of works supporting 'free-thought' were put to flames. It was compulsory for all Chinese to wear pigtails as a sign of submission to the Manchus and intermarriage between the two

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8The Chinese people are mainly of the Han race.
peoples was forbidden.9

Underground movements emerged in opposition to Manchu rule. The most well-known one was the Triad secret society and its offshoots - the Heaven and Earth, the Three Harmonies, the Red Gang and the Green Gang.10 Politically, these clandestine associations lobbied for racial pro-nationalism and their slogan, 'fan-qing-fu-ming' (Overthrow the Qing and Restore the Ming) vigorously expressed this.11 From the eighteenth century, secret societies were officially banned and the agitators persecuted. Many in opposition to the government fled south and the province of Guangdong became the chief refuge of political exiles. Throughout its mandate, the Qing Court remained indifferent to its Chinese subjects and came to despise the Cantonese. A ruling in 1757 confined all foreign trade to Canton. Cantonese who were in contact with Westerners were viewed with suspicion. In order to minimise Western influences in Canton, European traders were forbidden to learn Chinese, enter the city or employ Chinese as servants.12 Though Manchu policy decreed emigration illegal, thousands of Chinese disregarded it and fled abroad. Over ninety percent of all nineteenth century overseas Chinese to Southeast Asia, the United States, the West Indies, Australia and New Zealand


10Jean Chesneaux, 'Secret Societies in China's Historical Evolution', from Popular Movements, ibid., pp.2, 5

11Immanuel C. Y. Hstü, op.cit., pp.8-9; The Ming dynasty had enjoyed a certain popularity in the memory of the Chinese people because it came to power when a large popular rebellion succeeded in throwing off the Mongol yoke in 1368.

12C. P. Fitzgerald, op.cit., p.558; Immanuel C. Y. Hstü, op.cit., pp.139-142
originated almost exclusively from Guangdong and its neighbouring province, Fujian.\(^{13}\)

In the course of the nineteenth century, in order to meet the growing demands and rising prosperity of her industrialising population, Britain was most anxious to gain a larger share of Chinese trade and more favourable trade conditions. But Britain was dismayed to find the Chinese had no wish to purchase British goods. Opium was exported to offset Britain's adverse Balance of Trade. Chinese anger arose over the drain on the country's wealth to pay for the drug import. The Manchu Government refused to enter into diplomatic negotiations with Britain.\(^{14}\) Desperate over the failure of diplomacy, British resorted to arms which finally forced China to open her doors.

China's humiliating defeat in the Opium Wars (1839-1842; 1856-1858) forced the Manchu Court to abandon her isolationist policy. The Treaty of Nanking (1842) ceded Hong Kong to Britain and the five ports, Canton, Amoy, Fuzhou, Ningpo and Shanghai were opened to foreign trade and residence. The custom duties on imports were fixed by agreement with the foreign governments. Foreign ships were permitted to travel the chief waterways of China and Chinese Christians put under the protection of foreign powers.\(^{15}\) Because China was forced to consent to conditions which made her less than the equal of Britain, the Treaty of Nanking came to be known as the 'Unequal Treaty'. In the course of the 1850s, backed by the force of arms like Britain, these unequal advantages were


\(^{14}\)Immanuel C. Y. Hsi, *op.cit.*, pp.150-1

\(^{15}\)Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A Short History of Modern China*, *op.cit.*, pp.63-4; John Merson, *The Roads to Xanadu*, *op.cit.*, p.199
extended to Japan, France, the United States, Russia and Germany.16

Meanwhile, within China, social discontent grew widespread and political strife mounted. The Taiping rebellion brought fourteen years of civil war (1850-1864) destruction to a large part of the country. At the height of its power, the Taiping armies extended their authority over the whole of the Lower Yangtze provinces as well as the central provinces of Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan and Honan.17 Further disaster was to follow. The Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) was launched at a moment of near collapse of the Chinese Empire. Scarcely had China yielded to the Japanese when the Western powers of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States made an unscrupulous scramble for Chinese territory. In the words of one European, 'China was ready to be carved up like a melon'.18 In 1899 another internal rebellion, led by redundant boatmen who called themselves the Boxers, erupted. The advent of the steam boat and the opening up of coastal trade in Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang and Jiangsu and along the Yangtze and its tributaries, had almost completely destroyed the former junk trade through the Grand Canal. Thousands of sailors and boatmen thrown out of work turned to banditry and luddite smashing.19 Thus China entered the twentieth century in a melancholic state of combined foreign occupation and internal strife.

16Kenneth Scott Latourette, ibid., pp.60-7; John Merson, ibid; Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, op.cit., pp.313-331


18John Merson, The Roads to Xanadu, loc.cit.

19Jean Chesneaux, op.cit., pp.9-10

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The Rookeries of Emigration

It was the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian that economic problems were pressing in the nineteenth century. Apart from the pressures of war indemnities, these provinces experienced a formidable population explosion which put enormous pressure on the supply of land. In the period 1750-1860, the population of Guangdong more than doubled from 14 million to 30 million. This meant an average land density of 400 persons per square mou. In districts like Zhongshan and Toishan, density pressures reached 3,000 and 1,000 persons respectively. The scarcity of land was aggravated by large families and the custom of equal partition of property among heirs, like morcellement in France. The forces of population rapidly outstripped food supply. Shortages in raw materials grew severe. Even in the fertile double-cropping areas of Guangdong and Guangxi, with its better marketing facilities and less diversified farming, only two-thirds of the food supply could be produced locally. Malnutrition became widespread. Banditry increased. Poverty was an important economic reason for the movement of millions of Southern Chinese across the Pacific.

The main source of Chinese migration to Victoria comprised of the See Yap (Four Districts) and the Sam Yap (Three Districts) Cantonese. They lived in a narrow farming

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20 The reparations from China formed 15 percent of Japan’s GNP in 1895. See John Merson, The Roads to Xanadu, op.cit.

21 mou = one sixth acre; C. Y. Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, University Press, Sydney, 1975, pp.5-7


23 John Lossing Buck, Land Utilization in China, op.cit., pp.400-401
area about 100 miles southwest of Canton city. The Four Districts included Toishan, Sunhui, Haiping and Yanping, and the immigrants from these places dominated those from the Three Districts which comprised of Nanhai, Punyi and Shunte. Over ninety percent of the immigrants to Australia were from Toishan and Sunhui in the Four Districts.

A large proportion of the immigrants to Australia belonged to the very poor and uneducated classes, in contradistinction to the high proportion of merchants and intellectuals who settled in Southeast Asia. Mr. Foster, the European protectorate of the Chinese camp at Ballarat said it was disappointing that the Chinese who came into the colony were those who were not of the highest class, for they were too poor to pay even the £10 residence tax. In 1888 another Parliamentarian described the Chinese as 'outcasts'. In a letter to his friend in Guangzhou, a Chinese Mandarin in Victoria wrote, 'I can understand the discourtesy paid to those of our country living here. They are, excepting a few merchants, of low class and illiterate. All in the eighteen provinces are judged to be the same and no better; therefore they are not respected.'

Estimates of the number of Chinese abroad vary greatly, partly because the Chinese

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24 Appendices 2 and 3

25 C. Y. Choi, op.cit., pp.79-80


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were always on the move and partly because no accurate census was taken prior to World War Two. Geographer Réclus calculated in 1880 just less than 3 million Chinese abroad. Another estimate, by Professor F. Wells Williams, put the total number of overseas Chinese at just under 4 million in 1900; the greater part being residents of Southeast Asia.\(^{30}\) A conservative estimate of the overseas Chinese in 1919 was around eight to nine million. All these figures underestimated the number of overseas Chinese but it was clear that the Chinese in Australia were never a very significant proportion of the total overseas Chinese population. Even in the heydays of gold, the Chinese in Australia probably just reached one percent of the total number of overseas Chinese. Distance was one deterrence. It was possible to reach Thailand and Vietnam by land, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore in junks.\(^{31}\) But the journey to Australia was of a different order of magnitude. The steam vessel was required. Geoffrey Blainey argued that if it were not for the fact that the Cantonese immigrants provided a profitable alternative cargo to tea, the scarcity of ocean going ships on this route would have reduced even further the Chinese population in Australia.\(^{32}\)

The earliest recorded Chinese arrivals to Australia were in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Those who found their way to Australia were mainly engaged as shepherds, shearers, hutkeepers and menials. In most cases they proved amenable to their employers. In the 1820s numbers of Chinese carpenters were imported. John Dunmore


\(^{31}\)H. F. McNair, *ibid.*, p.32

Lang employed a few of them to make some articles of household furniture. By the 1830s, several hundreds Chinese had come to Australia as coolies and their numbers increased after the termination of convict labour in the late 1840. By this time many Chinese were branching out into self-employment, operating stores, restaurants and traditional market-gardens. When the goldrush began, there were probably not more the 2,000 Chinese in the eastern colonies of Australia.

The Chinese arrived on the goldfields in large numbers only from the late 1854. Between 1855 and 1859 at least 35,000 entered the colony of Victoria. It is from the period of the gold rushes that the story of the Chinese in Australia has attracted most attention from historians.

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Endure the 'Barbarians'

The events that led to the 1854 Gold Fields Commission of Inquiry into the Chinese and its subsequent recommendation for 'an immediate check to the influx of the Chinese into Victoria'\(^1\) have been widely documented in both the literature on the gold rushes and that on the early Chinese. There were four basic objections to the Chinese. Firstly, the Chinese diggers rendered themselves odious to the European diggers by dirtying the waterholes with tailings and sludge. Water set aside for washing gold and domestic purposes was thus ruined and wasted.\(^2\) Secondly, the Chinese blackened the sanctity of the Sabbath by working and carrying loads on that day.\(^3\) Thirdly, insecure people were driven to the apprehension that the entire area of the colony might be swamped by millions of heathen Chinese, 'as countless as the locusts of Egypt.'\(^4\) Fourthly, the most objectionable feature of the Chinese was that they extracted wealth from Australia for their own exclusive benefit. The Chinese digger reaped but never sowed; he merely followed in the heels of others, washing and cleaning up after everyone. He did not exert himself

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\(^2\)Ibid, Q4447, 4448; A Graham, Early Creswick, Arbuckle and Waddell, Melbourne, 1942, pp.193-4; Age 28 April 1855, Letter to the Editor.

\(^3\)Hansard, 1856-7, vol.1, pp.87, 270; Age 28 April 1855, p.4

\(^4\)Age, 13 April; Gold Fields Commission of Inquiry, op.cit, Q3085, 4457, 5994-5; Hansard, 1856-7, vol.1, pp.266, 269
to sink holes, buy land or settle down.\textsuperscript{5}

In 1855 the government acted upon the suggestion of the Royal Commission and prepared 'An Act to make Provisions for Certain Immigrants'. As a result of which, the agent of any vessel was compelled to pay a capitation tax for every Chinese passenger landed in Victoria and a tonnage restriction of one Chinese passenger for every 10 tons of the ship's burden was imposed.\textsuperscript{6} In order to ease social tension, a system of segregating the Chinese into special compounds, following the practices of colonial governments in Java and Singapore, was introduced vis-à-vis the Restrictive Bill. These measures applied to the goldfields of Ballarat, Castlemaine, Maryborough, Avoca, Ararat and Beechworth. Within each of these specifically designated areas, a European protectorate was appointed with a Chinese 'headman' attached as a paid interpreter and mediator. A tax of £1 was levied from each Chinese to pay the expenses of the protectorates.\textsuperscript{7}

Both the positive and negative responses of European Australians to the Immigration Restrictive Bill have also been well-documented. The moderate views of Governor Hotham, some members of Parliament, the merchants and the police,\textsuperscript{8} and the

\textsuperscript{5}Ian R. Cathie, \textit{Anti-Chinese Legislation in Victoria, 1855-1865}, B.A. Honours (History) 1954, University of Melbourne, pp.5-7

\textsuperscript{6}\textit{Age}, 24 May 1855

\textsuperscript{7}Kathryn Cronin, \textit{Colonial Casualties}, MUP, Melbourne, 1982, pp.82-3. Some unscrupulous headmen like James O'Coy took advantage of their position and charged extra taxes from their own people.

more radical views of dissatisfied diggers have formed the subject of countless studies\(^9\).

In contrast, very little is known of the feelings and responses of the Chinese in this matter. What did the Chinese think about the poll-tax and the segregation imposed against them? What were their efforts to combat white racism? Understandably the Chinese left few written documents with them so it was not always easy to ascertain their views. Nevertheless, their unusually passive and silent responses over a long period of seventy years lead us to infer that the immigrants held a very different philosophy on the issue of discrimination and inequality. This chapter attempts to show that the White Australia Policy was not as alarming and terrible to the early Chinese as what post-World War II historians have tended to assume. In fact, it is an attempt to challenge the entrenched assumption that discriminatory legislation imposed against the Chinese was a distressing and significant factor that shaped their lives and attitudes in Australia.

The first major response of the Chinese to the Restrictive Immigration Act of 1855 was a determined opposition in the form of blatant circumvention of the new law. Scarcely had the Act been in operation for eighteen months when ships carrying the Chinese avoided the poll-tax by anchoring at Port Robe in Guichen, South Australia. Before the end of 1856, thousands of Chinese had disembarked at Robe.\(^10\) Whereupon these determined gold-seekers walked hundreds of kilometres to the Victorian gold-fields. David Horsfall calculated that a journey by foot to the Victorian goldfields from South

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\(^10\)Geoffrey Serle,*ibid*, p.325; Myra Willard, *ibid*, p.23
Australia would cost about £7 so each passenger could still save £3. Undeterred the Chinese walked some 32 kilometres a day, carrying all their personal belongings, tents and equipment with them. They stopped three times a day for a mid-morning break, lunch and an afternoon rest.

The unbelievable calm and self-effacement with which the Chinese responded to discriminatory legislation made a deep impact on a Victorian Police Officer. John Sadlier in his memoirs recalled meeting in Hamilton about one hundred Chinese who were en route to Ballarat or Bendigo. When the poll-tax was demanded from them there was an immediate loud and unanimous rely of ‘No savee’. They were arrested and put in Portland jail for two months. During the term of their imprisonment they transformed the wilderness of a public reserve into a flourishing garden. Sadlier found their behaviour exemplary. ‘They never repined, never lost patience, nor did they ever give a moment’s trouble.’ When their sentence expired, they departed in an orderly fashion, ‘placid and uncomplaining’, as if no wrong had been done to them.

With regards to their enforced segregation, what were the responses of the Chinese? Segregation did not appear to dismay the Chinese. Life with its everyday concerns ran its regular course, independent and heedless of white hegemony. Moreover, rigid separation and minimal interaction with the Europeans was a relief to many of the Chinese diggers who regarded the Europeans as barbarians (‘gueilows’ or ‘low jaans’);

11David Horsfall, March to Big Gold Mountain, Red Rooster, Ascot Vale, 1985, p.1

12John Sadleir, Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer, Penguin Colonial Facsimile, Harmondsworth (1913), p.113
they had 'long noses', no sense of personal cleanliness, possessed offensive body odours, had none of the refinements in Chinese gastronomy and knew nothing about the ancient sense of filial piety.\textsuperscript{13} Above all, the meaning of 'barbarians' meant that the views of Europeans were not considered to be of importance to the Chinese immigrants. Virtually all Chinese grievances were submitted to their 'headman' or district associations. The See Yap authorities counselled 'quiet and orderly conduct' and 'for political reasons, to practise forbearance and patient suffering in cases where they may consider themselves to be imposed upon by Europeans.'\textsuperscript{14} But given the Chinese aversion to putting themselves in a position of prominence or to 'lose face', the number of individual grievances would not have been large and the advice of their leaders taken heed of.

Many Chinese retained a traditional hatred of litigation and an aversion to involvement in court cases. Police investigating Chinese crimes were astonished to find Chinese witnesses so uncooperative.\textsuperscript{15} But May's research on the Chinese and the Australian legal system showed that many individual Chinese, especially merchants, were not slow to take advantage of the British legal system.\textsuperscript{16} However, the courts were more


\textsuperscript{14}Kathryn Cronin, \textit{ibid}, p.35; Carole Wood, \textit{ibid}, pp.58, 63; Gwen Kinkead, 'A Reporter At Large' (Chinatown I & II), The New Yorker, 10 June 1991, pp.74, 79; 17 June 1991, part II, p.56


\textsuperscript{16}Cathie May, Topsawyers, James Cook University Press, Townsville, 1984, p.213

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often resorted to for the purposes of 'vindictive and malicious litigation' rather than for reasons of justice. Not an inconsiderable number of charges were fabricated against old personal enemies or debtors. Ruining the defendant's reputation and revenging personal enemies (often Chinese), formed the general motives for seeking litigation.

Before long, the system of segregation proved impossible to enforce as the Chinese showed themselves to be remarkably mobile whenever a quick profit could be made. At the slightest rumour of a new lead, the camps of the Chinese were abandoned and only their rubbish and debris remained.

In response to the violent Buckland riot in July 1857, Governor Haines introduced a Chinese Residence Restriction Bill in the hope that it may check the number of Chinese entering Victoria. Every male Chinese was compelled to pay £6 per annum to obtain a licence to reside in Victoria. This time some Chinese acted more promptly in speaking up for their community. As the Bill was being prepared, Dr. Embling presented to the House a petition from certain Chinese residents in Victoria protesting against the proposed new tax. A fortnight later Mr. Sitwell presented to members of the House another petition, signed by several storekeepers residing at Castlemaine, which likewise remonstrated against the increased taxation against the Chinese. However neither of

17Ibid, pp.214, 218; Kathryn Cronin, op.cit, p.36
18Ibid, p.91
19Hansard, 1856-7, vol.ii, p.1019
20Ibid, p.1030
21Ibid, p.1080
these petitions, initiated by a minority of the more politically conscious and educated members of the Chinese community, had any effect on the final Bill.

Only two major Chinese protests occurred in the wake of the new laws. In May 1859 over 700 Chinese marched from Ironbark to Bendigo to rescue a dozen Chinese imprisoned for their failure to pay the tax. After scuffles and a brief pandemonium, the prisoners were recaptured by the police but many Chinese refused to return to their camps and staged a sit-down protest. Two weeks later, a group of Chinese diggers, 3000 strong, assembled at Castlemaine and marched from Lyttleton Street to the main Camp to seek an interview with the Resident Warden. The numbers of the procession were swelled by Europeans from the township and the adjoining diggings. The petition carried by the Chinese brought to light that the treaties between Britain and the Chinese Empire, signed upon a recognition of mutual obligations, had been violated. However, it added, if a residence tax must exist in the colony of Victoria, the Chinese would submit if the tax were reduced to £2 per annum. It was argued this would be productive of a much larger income. Other isolated cases of Chinese protests included a suspension of business relations with European gold-buyers and sellers and the local omnibus.

However, none of these protest movements, which were unsustained and disparate, commanded the serious attention of the Government. The abolition of the Chinese Residence Tax did not occur until 1862, almost three years after the major protests and petitions. In fact, the major initiatives for the final repeal came from European merchants

22Argus, 26 May 1859, p.6
23Ibid
and politicians rather than from the Chinese. It was the visible decline in the number of Chinese rather than Chinese agitation which led to the abolition of restrictive measures imposed against them.

Interestingly, akin to the outcome in 1855, the nature of Chinese protest against the 1859 residence tax came in the form of evasion. Mobility was the chief weapon used by the immigrant Chinese to combat white racism. Wherever the Chinese met with opposition they moved away. In 1858 over 9000 Chinese were estimated to have crossed the Murray border to Victoria in order to avoid the residence tax. Due to the absence of any compulsory clause in the Act, it was not possible to fine all evaders and within months of operation, the policy was rendered totally ineffective. The total sum raised from the residence tax within 16 months of its operation was a paltry £2363. At the end of 1859, 947 Chinese had been fined and another 313 imprisoned for short periods in the Ovens district. A vexed parliamentarian complained that the discriminatory taxes 'had not prevented a single [Chinese] embarking for Australia...we got the Chinese and lost the revenue.'

From the 1870s, any possible threat posed by the Chinese on the Victorian goldfields proved fallacious. Their numbers were falling swiftly and they rarely moved outside of their own community to compete with white workers. The Chinese immigrants, as a whole, were independent, labour-intensive, alluvial miners while the white diggers

24 Geoffrey Serle, *op.cit*, p.330
25 Carole Woods, *op.cit*, p.66
26 Kathryn Cronin, *op.cit*, p.94
had moved on to take on wage labour and more sophisticated machinery.

However, the presence of the Chinese was felt negatively in the furniture-making industry as they began to compete successfully with the Europeans in chair and cabinet-making. By the mid-1880s, one quarter of the cabinet trade was estimated to be in Chinese hands. Resentment over their success led to clamour against their 'unfair' work practices. The Factories and Shops Act of 1896 attempted to arrest Chinese competition by appointing an all-white Furniture Board to determine the minimum rates and the maximum hours of opening. A minimum wage was fixed at 7s 6d per eight-hour day and no person was to work in any furniture workshop except between the hours 7:30am and 5:30pm on Mondays to Fridays and 7:30am and 2:00pm on Saturdays. The Factory Act discriminated against the Chinese in its definition of a factory. One Chinese working in a workshop made a factory but four Europeans were required before they made a factory.

The Chinese considered these new laws to be a harassment and eluded them. Most immigrants were so desperate to save and they had endured so many hardships at home that even if the wages were below standard, they were willing to accept them to build up economic freedom for the first time in their lives. A system of piece-rates was introduced to counteract the wage regulations and many disregarded the stipulated hours by working

in a back room late at night. Most Inspectors doubted the reliability of the statistics of
the minimum wage paid supplied by the Chinese. But the Department was powerless.
'What can be done', pronounced one senior Inspector, raising his hands in defeat,

with men who greet you with a bland smile, and maintain, without
hesitation or doubt, that is law is fully complied with, when you are morally
equally certain that the law is broken every day and hour in the factory?
They are seldom rude, an unfailing politeness and courtesy marks all their
utterances; but with the view of obtaining information an officer might just
as well question the furniture they make.

With the exception of odd campaigns by more prominent Chinese individuals like
barrister William Ah Ket, architect M. H. Ah Mouy and Chinese sympathiser J. L.
Clarke, there was very little effort by the Chinese masses to redress the unfair clauses.
It was not until a Chinese Employment Act (which compelled the Chinese furniture
workers to pay a licence fee of 2 shillings and sixpence and forbid employers to house
employees) was proposed in 1906, that the furniture workers themselves were incited to
take group action. Even then, there was a delay of three years before the Chinese

\text{Elite in Victoria 1870-1890', Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand, vol.IX,}
\text{November 1961-May 1963, p.66}

\[29\text{Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, Workrooms and Shops, VPP, 1899-1900,}
\text{op.cit., pp.1372-3}

\text{Waddell and Fawckner, Melbourne, 1906; C. F. Yong, The New Gold Mountain, Raphael}
\text{Arts, Richmond, 1977, p.69}
Furniture Trade Association was finally formed in 1909. What the association aimed to do was obscure and it was not clear to what extent employers and employees co-operated.\(^{31}\)

In their final report (1888) on the treatment of the overseas Chinese, Commissioners General Wang Zhongle and Prefect-designate Yu Qing said comparatively little about the Chinese in Australia. Their main concern was the unfair treatment suffered by the Chinese in Southeast Asia. According to the Commissioners, the Chinese in Manila and the Dutch possessions suffered the harshest and the most oppressive treatments. Every religious festival, public ceremony, popular amusement and individual industry of the Chinese were subject to taxation, including wearing their hair in a plait. The only complaint raised against the treatment of the Chinese in Australia was the poll-tax (recommenced in April 1882 and raised to £10\(^{32}\)) as it gave rise to ‘an invidious distinction between the Chinese and other foreigners.’ The Commissioners requested the British government to institute an inquiry into the nature of these exceptional laws.\(^{33}\) Yet the request was merely a routine formality and typified the attitude of the imperial government which made no real effort to protect the interests of its nationals abroad.

Four years after the recommencement of the Chinese Influx Restriction Bill, a


\(^{32}\)Hansard, 1881, vol.37, p.79

fraudulent naturalisation paper racket was discovered. Naturalisation papers used by Chinese who had entered Australia were resold in Hong Kong for a high price. In spite of the heated public outcry over the evasion, the Chinese were not deterred from continuing to bend the rules. False entry papers were used by the Chinese well into the twentieth century. A campaign by the Kong Chew Society in 1888 did influence the reduction of the fine for offenders of the Immigration Restriction Law (from £500 to £100), but it had no effect in repealing the law. A public address by Rev. Cheok Hong Cheong in the same year remonstrated against the discriminatory Influx Restriction Law, describing it to be 'stained and tortured to oppress the Chinese.' But the interesting point in Cheong's speech was his defensive stance on the Chinese immigration question. He repeatedly emphasised the weak disposition on the part of the Chinese to emigrate to Australia. 'We...do not hesitate to confidently affirm', said Cheong, 'were the ports open and free, the Chinese population of Australia would always remain an insignificant portion of the whole.' 'Despite of the attraction of gold and the close proximity of China, there has not been at any time in the colonies of Australia, a larger number of Chinese immigrants than 60,000 compared to the millions in Southeast Asia.' Cheong drew attention to the mild Chinese character and its lack of attraction to confrontation and war. Apart from these two isolated cases of remonstrance, the Chinese masses were unusually silent on the subject of discrimination.

34 Geoffrey Serle, The Rush To Be Rich, MUP, Melbourne, 1971, p.297; Argus, 15 March 1912
37 Ibid, pp.15, 25

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Gloria Davies' study on the political attitudes of the Chinese in Australia at the turn of the century revealed that most immigrant Chinese did not believe that their status could be bettered by changing Australian attitudes and redressing Australian discriminatory laws. The Chinese immigrants traced their sufferings to the neglect of Chinese authorities at home. In a welcome speech to political reformer, Liang Qichao, in November 1900, an overseas Chinese spokesman described members of the Manchu court as 'fierce wolves' who had seized authority and 'tigers and leopards' who had assumed power. 'Envious of us Han Chinese, [Empress Dowager CiXi and her coterie] victimised our Chinese race, oppressed our upright men and assassinated our loyal ministers, making China's once bright future unclear, making its brilliance revert to darkness...'

When Liang wrote home explaining the lowly conditions of the overseas Chinese, including the Chinese in Australia, he agreed that the crux of the blamed laid with the corrupt and heartless imperial Qing Court.

Whether it be in the form of taxes, prohibitions or imprisonment, their [the overseas Chinese] heads are bowed, their hearts depressed. Suffering in silence, they have no choice but to become inferior people in ten thousand countries. Moreover, my fellow countrymen often regret about and hold hatred towards the evil officials and the corrupt imperial regime.

Until the image of he Chinese government is raised, the majority of overseas

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39Ibid. p.130
Chinese believed that they could do nothing to raise themselves in other people's favour and the White Australia Policy was not a cause but a symptom of the deteriorating state of their home government and homeland.

Yarwood's research has confirmed the idea that shame and frustration over the indifferent attitude of their home government to the conditions of its nationals abroad, have rendered the Chinese in Australia passive to agitation and outcry. The disaster of the passport agreement made for Chinese subjects in Hong Kong highlighted the totally unreliable and unprofessional nature of Chinese administration. It was discovered that in the first year of the arrangements (1905), no Chinese took advantage of the special exemption. In the next eight years, only forty Chinese entered Australia. Yarwood explained,

The reason for the small numbers was partly that the passports were issued not in Australia where the demand was felt and could have been acted upon but, but in China. More importantly, the concession was so abused as to cause the imposition of additional conditions virtually of a prohibitive nature. From the beginning the Chinese officials issued passports outside the classes (merchants, students, officials) covered by the agreement, in return, it was alleged for bribes.40

In the first twenty years of the twentieth century, the Chinese community appeared more united and active in campaigning against discriminatory legislation. In 1904 a

40 A. T. Yarwood, Asian Migration to Australia, MUP, Melbourne, 1964, p.108
Chinese National Alliance was formed to counter the Chinese Employment Bill and it worked toward the establishment of a Chinese Consulate-General. The New South Wales and Melbourne Chambers of Commerce were established in 1912 and 1913 respectively. They provided primary financial support and entrepreneurial direction to the first China-Australia Mail Steamship Line. But this spirit of unity and involvement was short-lived and weakened by internal factions. In the end, there was little real improvement in conditions for the overseas Chinese in Australia.\(^{41}\)

In a survey of voting patterns conducted in 1964 in two contrasting areas in Melbourne labelled as 'Kew' and 'Fitzroy',\(^{42}\) it was revealed that the Chinese in the first area were more conservative voters than their neighbours and in the second area, they were almost wholly detached from politics.\(^{43}\) The constituents of the 'Kew' Chinese were mainly Australian-born, educated, with at least a high-school qualification and many were in independent businesses or in the professions. The Chinese surveyed in 'Fitzroy' comprised largely of old, single men who dwelt alone in a room in an industrial street. Their command of English was poor or non-existent and many were engaged in fruit and vegetable trading. The single Chinese males of 'Fitzroy' provided the largest number of 'Don't know' responses for names of State members and the policies of different parties. When asked about their opinions on politicians, the replies were apathetic, cautious or indifferent. For example, one older man's reply was, 'hard to discuss them...'

\(^{41}\)C. F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountains*, Raphael Arts, Richmond, 1977, pp.221-228

\(^{42}\) 'Kew' included the suburbs of Kew, Hawthorn and Balwyn and 'Fitzroy' included the suburbs of Fitzroy, Richmond and Melbourne.

(Menzies?) 'good man'.
(Calwell?) 'good man'.
(Bolt? Victoria's Premier?) 'all good, everyone good you know'.

Another old man's response through his interpreter-son was he would vote for whatever party was in power. And another person replied, 'I'm in business, it's too deep for me'.

The findings of the survey tended to confirm that the natural inclination of the immigrant Chinese was to 'play it safe' in politics. The chief surveyor surmised that their oppressive background had largely contributed to the moulding of the apathetic Chinese political character. 'The past life of the immigrants had probably given them not much reason to trust any political system.' The situation of the overseas Chinese in America was similar. When an 82 year-old Chinese woman was asked in 1991 about her pre-World War II political experiences in New York's Chinatown, she said she never dared to express her likes or dislikes. 'We never rebelled. Chinese are taught to hide their feelings, respect their elders.' Chinese journalist Peter Lee explained, 'It's in the Chinese culture to be careful of what you say, not to humiliate someone in public, to avoid confrontation.' New York's Chinatown today compose of over 200,000 Chinese, 150,000 of whom live in the city and 50,000 in the outer boroughs. Eighty percent are first generation Chinese and most are not interested in politics. Only 8000 are registered

44Ibid, p.31
45Ibid, p.33
46Gwen Kinkead, 'A Reporter At Large' (Chinatown I), The New Yorker, June 10 1991, p.81
voters and a quarter of which voted in the last mayoral election. Like the Chinese who first arrived in Australia, their political tradition is for tranquillity, not reform. 47

Conclusions
The task of restricting the immigrant Chinese did not prove easy to the European Australians. The White Australia Policy triumphed politically but not socially. Rather than deterrence, the discriminatory laws prompted widespread circumvention. Rather than infuriating and offending the Chinese to positive legal action, the immigrant Chinese preferred to silently and proudly bear with their secondary citizen status. The few isolated campaigns which occurred were usually initiated by the more enlightened, Westernised merchants who often received goodwill and gratitude, but rarely political support from the general masses. The Chinese were not emotive about discrimination, but neither were they insensitive to it. Nurtured in a culture which discouraged the externalisation of the self, the idea of laying bare personal anger and frustrations to the vast public was repugnant to most Chinese. Centuries of terror and atrocities at home and an authoritarian government either brutal or indifferent to its Han subjects have taught the new immigrants to keep their heads down and their mouths shut. Hence this has rendered the Chinese more enduring of oppressive treatment and discrimination than any other immigrant group in Australia. But European Australians often took this silence and power of endurance as a sign of submission or repression. Moreover, the low opinion which the Chinese cast on their host society led them to the conclusion that whatever injustice they suffered was merely at the hands of barbarians whose views were not matters of their concern.

47 Ibid, part II, 17 June 1991, pp.64, 68
All in all, discriminatory legislation and racial prejudice were neither new nor alarming experiences to the immigrant Chinese, accustomed to a long history of oppressive treatment in their homeland. The fact that the sentiments and the operation of the White Australia Policy can now strike us as repulsive should not blind us to how they were viewed by the early Chinese to Australia. The Chinese did not bring with them a tradition of democracy and free speech. Their purpose in coming to Australia was not for breaking free of isolation and the constraints of their tradition to merge with the ways of their new society. On the contrary, one of their primary aims was to make sufficient money to fulfil and further their traditional filial duties; in short, to resist acculturation. Many studies on the Chinese, by stressing the force of the White Australia Policy and anti-Chinese legislation, have generally misunderstood the essence of Chinese culture and the development and decline of the overseas Chinese. It seems we should begin by asking not why were the Chinese not equal to the European Australians, but why did the Chinese put so little concern on their community? From what institution, unique to their culture, was their political security derived? And how has this institution affected their view of progress, their economic development and manner of living?
The Family

The primary goal which drew hordes of Chinese to the Californian and Victorian goldfields in the mid-nineteenth century was the fulfilment of group duty rather than the pursuit of individual success. Gold was a means to fulfil the social responsibilities of filial piety: to pay homage to one’s ancestors, glorify the lineage and elevate the status of the family. After amassing a quick fortune on the goldfields, every Chinese immigrant desired to return home ‘to do their family proud’.\footnote{1}{Return home with wealth and respect} A successful digger, on his return home, would demonstrate his filial respect by constructing magnificent lineage temples, establishing local schools and purchasing land for the family trust. After providing all bodily and spiritual needs for his kith and kin, both past and present, the returned-immigrant could then confidently retire and be worthy to eat meat and wear silk.\footnote{2}{Prior to the rise of Communist China, most of village high schools in Meixian, Guangdong were founded and financed by wealthy overseas Chinese. Returned Chinese often brought up to ten acres of ritual land. The father of George Win Yin Chun Tie (1897-1963), after making his fortune on the goldfields of Palmer and Charters Towers in North Queensland in the 1870s, brought 80 mou of land and 8 houses in Canton for his eight sons. George was the first of his sons. It was the custom in China to reserve silk and meat for the privileged and the aged. Charles Price, The Great White Walls are Built, ANU Press, Canberra, 1974, p.59; M.R. Coolidge, Chinese Immigration, Ch’eng Wen, Taipei, 1968.}

The family, as the only solid institution in pre-modern China, was the focus of everybody’s first loyalty. To provide one’s family with wealth and power to defy the
vicissitudes of time, was an obligation cultivated early in every Chinese of whatever class
or walk of life. As early as 400B.C. Confucius proposed that the first lesson of ethical
behaviour began in the family. Four of his five cardinal relationships centred around the
family. The father owed to his wife and son his best effort in promoting their bodily
welfare. The child owed to one’s parents obedience. Siblings owed to each other respect
and support. The Confucian family philosophy came to be deeply embedded in Chinese
culture and formed the basis of Chinese politics. The Chinese word for ‘country’
comprises of the two characters ‘nation’ and ‘family’ (国 家). ‘When the family is
orderly, then the state is peaceful.’ ‘Put the family in order and rule the state in peace.’
One hundred and fifty years after the death of Confucius, Mencius, the leading
philosopher of his day, continued to expound upon the ideas of Confucius. Mencius
instructed that the virtuous man always had his family in mind. In his youth he laboured
diligently on the land to ensure that there were sufficient crops and livestock. So that the
many mouths under his care would not go hungry in times of disaster. He ensured a
proper education for his children and a good retirement for his parents. So that when his
head turned grey he would be spared from carrying loads, could afford to eat well and should have no regrets over work left undone.⁷

So profound was the respect accorded to one’s parents in China that it acted as a constraint on personal mobility. A filial son did not seek adventure for its own sake. A person of good character did not forsake his parents. ‘While your parents are alive, you should not go too far afield in your travels. If you do, your guardians should always know your whereabouts.’⁸ An unannounced, aimless journey was a total breach of ethical manners in traditional Chinese custom. Numerous popular sayings reminded the traveller of his obligation to return home.

*Being away from home one li is not as good as being at home.*⁹

*At home there is peace and order, troubles outside lurk round every corner.*

*Home lies at the heart of one’s thoughts.*

*When the season of ripeness descends, it is time to return home.*¹⁰

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⁹One li equals ½ km.

¹⁰在家日好，出外朝朝难；乡土观念；落叶归根

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A Chinese residing in Victoria at the turn of this century compared the difference in regards to filial piety between the Chinese and those in the 'land of the New Gold Mountain' to the difference between light and darkness, or the difference 'between the summit of the highest peak in Tibet and the lowest depth of the ocean. With us filial piety is sensibility and awe, with them it is independence and indifference.'11 In a similar vein, in his letter to Rev. A. W. Cresswell dated 14th June 1909, Rev. Cheok Hong Cheong discussed at length the strictness with which a Chinese must observe his filial duties. ‘Among the Chinese’, wrote Cheong,

the son has to honour his parents not only with his substance but also with his personal service eg. if a servant brings in a cup of tea to refresh his father or mother, it is the proper filial thing for the son to take the cup from the servant and to hand it personally to his parent. Moreover his means and belonging and indeed his whole presence is at the disposal of his sire - the only limitations are the limitations of righteousness and humanity.12

The Chinese who came to Victoria in the mid-nineteenth century were not adventurers or aimless wanderers careless of consequences. They were sojourners held together by a single, passionate mission: To fulfil their filial duties and return home. Very few Chinese contemplated desertion of their native homeland. ‘They are great lovers of their country’, wrote Reverend William Young in his Report on the Chinese Population in


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Victoria, presented to Parliament in 1868.¹³ ‘The majority in this colony are looking forward with hope to that happy consummation, the return to their fatherland, and are content to toil here, amid many difficulties and privation, until they can lay a sufficient sum wherewith to carry out their heart’s desire.’ And certainly, only a rare few opted for permanent settlement in Australia. To the Chinese, filial piety and duty to their parents were tantamount to an iron-law.

**Sex Imbalance**

The striking feature of the Chinese population in Victoria was its abnormally high masculinity. Almost all of the Chinese immigrants to Victoria were men. It had been suggested that the departure of women from China was forbidden by lineage councils as insufficient numbers jeopardised property rights.¹⁴ Some argued that the dangers of abduction and the arduousness of the journey to Australia deterred most women from leaving China.¹⁵ Whatever the reasons purported, the lack of desire to settle was certainly an important cause of the immense sexual imbalance within the Chinese communities for almost one hundred years.

¹³*Report on the Chinese Population in Victoria*, VPP, 1868, no.35


¹⁵One Parliamentarian even suggested that the Chinese women did not come because they had such very small feet they could not travel on the colonial roads. (This suggestion would not have applied to the peasant Chinese immigrants as feet-binding was eminently a custom of the rich rather than of the poor. No labour could be spared in poor households.) *Hansard*, 1856-7, vol.ii, p.1246 see Michie; Charles Price, *op.cit.*, p.56; Morag Loh and Judith Wintemitz (eds.), *Dinky-Di*, AGPS Press, Canberra, 1989, p.6; M.R. Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration*, Ch’eng Wen Publishing Company, Taipei, 1968, p.392.
Long before the passing of the White Australia Policy, the Chinese made very few attempts to normalise the balance between the sexes. Sir J. Lorimer in 1888 considered it remarkable that the Chinese had never sought an amendment of the Victorian law to obtain an exemption in favour of women and children.¹⁶ A.T. Yarwood in his *Asian Migration*, was surprised to find that the Chinese made so little use of the exemptions granted for wives. In eight years of operation of the special passport agreement concluded with Hong Kong, only forty Chinese took advantage of it.¹⁷

In 1861, of the 24,732 Chinese in Victoria only eight were women. Over the next thirty years, the proportion of women rose but this resulted largely from a fall in the male populace from 24,724 to 8,355. By 1933 Chinese women only comprised of a quarter of the total population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>&lt; 2000</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>&lt; 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>24,724</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>17,795</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>11,869</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>11,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>8355</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>8489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>6236</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>6347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>4491</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>4707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>2895</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>3138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>2248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Victorian Censuses 1861-1901; Commonwealth Censuses 1911-1933*

¹⁶Hansard, 1888, vol.59, p.2526

It is difficult to ascertain the precise conjugal condition of the Chinese in the nineteenth century. Since all Chinese without wives in Australia were reported 'never married', the proportion of single Chinese men was extremely high - 99 percent in 1871, 95 percent in 1881 and 1891. After Federation, there was no separate count of the conjugal condition of the Chinese in each state, only for all Chinese in Australia.

Nonetheless, while the censuses may have undercounted married Chinese men, it is clear that the majority of Chinese men in Victoria, whether married or not, led 'lives of single blessedness or grass-widowhood'. Only a rare few entered the forward-looking stage of family life in the new country. Mixed marriages between Chinese and Europeans were very uncommon. There were only 50 mixed marriages in the period 1855-1859, and 250 in the longer period 1866-1880. The pressures of social ostracism, racism and fear deterred all but the most head-strong from uniting with another of a different race and culture. Charles Dilke recalled a woman in a baker's shop near Sandhurst shuddering when she told him of one or two recent marriages between Irish 'Biddies' and some of the wealthiest Chinese. European women married to Chinese men were often beaten, deserted by their family and made outcasts. In an extreme case, Sarah Chapman was charged with vagrancy in 1873 and sent to reformatory for two years for living with a Chinese man.


19Morag Loh and Christine Ramsey, *Survival and Celebration*, Melbourne, 1986, p.3; *Victorian Yearbook* 1880-1


21Morag Loh and Christine Ramsey, *op.cit.*, p.83
European Australians, however, were not the only people who objected to mixed marriages. The Chinese themselves had prejudices of their own toward foreigners. Mixed marriages with white ‘barbarians’ meant ‘losing face’ and bring shame on one family. In the minds of many Chinese, Europeans were altogether inferior to those of their own sort.\(^\text{22}\) they were uncouth, drunkards with offensive odours, spoke gibberish, valued brute strength and cooked like savages. The small number of individual Chinese who took European wives in their stride like Lowe Kong Meng and Dr. James Lamsey owed their broadmindedness to exceptional cosmopolitan backgrounds. Lowe was born a British subject at St. James Island, Penang. At 16 he left for Mauritius to perfect his English and French and to establish himself in trade. Four years later, Lowe was travelling regularly between Mauritius, Calcutta, Singapore and Australia.\(^\text{23}\) Lamsey was educated at King College, Canton and worked for a period in San Francisco before coming to Australia. He opened medical practices at Beechworth and Heathcote then settled in Bendigo. In 1869 he married a Scottish woman.\(^\text{24}\)

In contrast, for the masses of Chinese, the trip to the Australian goldfields was their first journey away from home. Though Canton and its vicinity had been dubbed ‘the most progress part of China’, due to the confinement of foreign influences in this region,


\(^{23}\)Australian Dictionary of Biography, V:106; Kathryn Cronin, Colonial Casualties, MUP, Melbourne, 1982, pp.27-8; Argus, 24 October 1888

\(^{24}\)David Horsfall, March to Big Gold Mountain, Red Rooster, Ascot Vale, 1985, pp.168-9
most of the locals did not have a continuous or close contact with foreign cultures or lifestyles. The Chinese and Westerners lived in segregated areas, few people became bilingual and even fewer managed to sympathise with the divergent customs of the two cultures. To the great majority of the Chinese immigrants, the village was the only reference point from which all things and ideas were measured and judged.

**Skewed Age Distribution**

The barrier to entrance into Chinese family life in Victoria was not merely a result of a conspicuous shortage of women. A marked discrepancy in the age distribution of Chinese men and women was a further barrier to fecundity. The Chinese women in Victoria were much younger than their male counterparts. In 1911, more than half of the Chinese males had reached their early prime (35-54 years) whereas over half of the females were still very young, most were 14 years or under. By 1933, the male community had aged further with over half falling in the 45-64 age group. Meanwhile, half of the women were still under fifty years of age, more than a third of which were teenagers and youngsters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2</th>
<th>The Ages of the Chinese in Victoria, 1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Groups</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-34</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>2315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-74</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-94</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 over</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified Adults</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Commonwealth Census 1911*
Table 4.3  
\(\text{Ages of the Chinese in Australia, 1933}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>under 15</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-44</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>4940</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 over</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9311</td>
<td>1535</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1933

A Melbourne City Council town clerk reporting on the Chinese quarter of Little Bourke Street in the 1880s remarked that very few children were among the Chinese as only small families had sprung up in late years.\(^{25}\) Fifty years later, the number of Chinese born in Australia continued to be small. Chinese women had virtually the smallest number of dependent children (1.58) of 45 ethnic groups resident in Australia.\(^{26}\)

Table 4.4  
Foreign-born percentage amongst the Chinese in Australia, 1911-1933

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>96.23</td>
<td>29.52</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>93.00</td>
<td>20.94</td>
<td>88.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>82.99</td>
<td>14.27</td>
<td>73.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Censuses, 1911, 1921, 1933

Just as the next generation of locally born Chinese failed to make their mark in Australia, the older Chinese disliked leaving their ashes in a remote place from home.

\(^{25}\)Health, Town Clerk Files, Melbourne City Council Records, VPRS 3181/370, no.803

\(^{26}\)Commonwealth Census of Australia, 1933
True to their filial pride, a great many Chinese returned to China to spend their last days in the bosom of their family and friends. The great exodus of Chinese males from Australia took place in the period 1911-1921 were dominated by those persons of 45 years and over. Nearly two thirds of those departing were 60 years and above. A similar trend was evident in the period 1921-1933. Exit was again dominated by the older Chinese. The figures in Table 4.5 tend to confirm the immigrants' great sense of filial piety and ardent patriotism. If the Chinese did not manage to return home then the custom was to send the remains of their bones back to their home village. The relatives of Ah Hit (who died at Yarrawongee in 1900), made an application to have his body exhumed. When permission was granted in 1911, the bones were given to the charge of Ah Hit’s brother who carefully sorted them out, even to the fingernails, before they were wrapped in calico and placed in tin boxes for reburial in China.27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-groups</th>
<th>1911-21</th>
<th>1921-33</th>
<th>1933-47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>-30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>+22</td>
<td>+47</td>
<td>+60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>+180</td>
<td>+157</td>
<td>+273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>+274</td>
<td>+162</td>
<td>+319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>+54</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>-139</td>
<td>-109</td>
<td>+185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>-197</td>
<td>-160</td>
<td>+102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>-467</td>
<td>-135</td>
<td>+72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>-489</td>
<td>-308</td>
<td>+17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>-436</td>
<td>-452</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>-705</td>
<td>-616</td>
<td>-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>-491</td>
<td>-820</td>
<td>-319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74</td>
<td>-553</td>
<td>-660</td>
<td>-458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27Argus. 5 January 1911; 2 August 1933.
Because of the impact of the Second World War, the absolute numbers of Chinese departing Australia dropped significantly in the period 1933-47. Japan's full-scale invasion of China shattered any hope of an immediate return home. Only from after the 1940s did a notable number of Chinese began to settle permanently in Australia.

Most historians who have explored the subject of Chinese migration to Australia have placed great weight on the nineteenth century anti-Chinese entry controls and the White Australia Policy of 1901. These discriminatory controls were argued to be crucial in reducing the size of the Chinese community. This chapter has attempted to show that the growth of the Chinese population was not primarily stifled by the machinery of restrictive law. Demographic problems within the community were evident long before 1901 and persisted unabated until the 1940's. Had there been no White Australia Policy, the contraction of the Chinese community would have occurred regardless. From the beginning the Chinese in Victoria were in control of their own demography, social make-up and development. Their stagnation and near collapse were driven by a deep-seated anxiety to fulfil filial duties, win 'face' and secure for their families economic freedom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>75-79</th>
<th>80-84</th>
<th>85+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-166</td>
<td>-128</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-3274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-338</td>
<td>-83</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-382</td>
<td>-125</td>
<td>-22</td>
<td>-39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sojourning commitment of the original Chinese diggers was not modified when gold petered out and more regular employment was found. Unlike the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Chinese to Victoria did not settle. Chinese settlement in Southeast Asia began as early as the thirteenth century and grew steadily. By the fifteenth century many resident centres, like Malacca, had acquired conspicuous Chinese features. Beckoned by the regions export boom, tens of millions of Chinese travelled back and forth in the nineteenth century. After 1870, millions of Chinese had settled permanently in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore; many of whom freely married local women and adopted local customs and languages without losing a substantial part of their own culture.28 In this vein the Chinese family was able to burgeon in Southeast Asia. Marriage was often a vital tool that helped to bring political security to the family and ensured a local pool of potential allies.29 In contrast, the lack of interest in permanent settlement, and the lack of desire to modify classical Chinese kinship patterns to accommodate more local elements in the traditional framework, put enormous pressure on the frail Chinese lineage network existent in Australia. Confronted with an ever-declining pool of patrilineal kin upon whom the immigrants could depend for financial and social strength, it remains remarkable how so many single, isolated Chinese still managed to live and maintain remittances for not an inconsiderable number of years.


Emigration from China

The Chinese to Victoria were unassisted passengers who had to find the boat fare from China to Australia of around £6 to £8.¹ Dr. C. F. Yong estimated that only one third of the Chinese immigrants to Victoria in 1857 could afford to pay their own way from personal savings. The rest, being poor peasants, farmers, artisans, hawkers, porters, rickshaw-pullers, deckhands and petty traders, had to borrow heavily from relatives, friends, scholars and the wealthier merchants to make the trip to Australia.² Some were only able to borrow by tying themselves under a contract. Under this system, the immigrant was forced to work under his creditors in Australia for a fixed period before he was free to choose his own employment.³ Many Chinese not under contract still had to make regular debt repayments. Since loans were often advanced at a high rate of interest, hundreds of wives, children and relatives acted as guarantors.⁴ Only after complete repayment of the principle and interest could the emigrant

⁴Michael Cannon, loc.cit.
begin to save and send remittances back to China.

The double financial obligation to repay debts and to remit money home put enormous pressure on the Chinese to lead a life of thrift and industry in their new society. The curse of indebtedness in rural China had taught many immigrants the value of self-reliance and frugality. Since there was no distinction in traditional China between a debt which had to be met and credit which would enable one to be more productive, the time given for the repayment of any loan was always limited and demanding. The authorities of the See Yap Society of Ballarat were strict in their attitude toward the settlement of debts.

Rule 16: In the matter of receiving credit, borrowing money and repaying what the capitalist in China has advanced any member, all our countrymen must be careful to observe good faith. They must not repudiate any obligation. Any person so doing shall have his name posted up in the club-house, and he shall be compelled to in full the sum he owes; after that he may be permitted to take his passage on board ship and return to China. In this way imposition will be suppressed and fair dealing enforced.

The high degree of indebtedness of the Chinese immigrants was an important factor which influenced their choice of occupations in Australia.

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7Report on the Condition of the Chinese in Victoria, by Rev. W. Young, VPP, 1868, 35
Callings and Occupations

Prior to World War II the Chinese in Victoria generally did not pose any serious economic threat to the Europeans. Firstly, their numbers were too small. Secondly, the immigrants saw little need to move outside of their traditions. Many made their livelihood in occupations that drew on labour-intensive, pre-industrial skills and moved into niches which Europeans failed to enter. Many Chinese continued to wash for gold in the 1860s, when alluvial was well on its decline. But it was for gold that the Chinese came and many did not relinquish mining for almost their entire sojourn. Victoria was dubbed in Cantonese ‘Sun Gum San’ or ‘The New Gold Mountain’, in contradistinction to ‘Gow Gum San’ or ‘The Old Gold Mountain’, which was the name California had come to be known.

Over 80 percent of all Chinese in Victoria were gold diggers in 1861. In the next ten years, three quarters of the total population was still engaged in mining, mainly as alluvial miners. Only five out of 13,840 diggers in 1861 and 112 of 13,374 diggers in 1871 were deep-hole quartz miners. Working old ground, painstakingly panning through the tailings of hastily-turned areas and searching rivers and streams for tiny pieces of unwashed gold absorbed the specialist attention of the Chinese. In the early days of fossicking, the Chinese were noted to use only the tub and cradle, rejecting even the simple puddling machine. From 1860s more sophisticated paddocking operations were carried out by the Chinese but still they did not use engines.

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9 Weston Bate, Lucky City, MUP, Melbourne, 1977, p.79-80
During the 1880s, as Melbourne was re-built on a massive scale, half of the Chinese had relinquished mining for employment in the cities. The huge population which resulted from gold\textsuperscript{10} and the quick money to be made from feeding them encouraged movement into intensive vegetable farming.\textsuperscript{11} About 150 Chinese tried their hands at harvesting and half as many at sheepshearing. In the 1870s there was a tobacco manufactory at Yackandandah run by the Chinese.\textsuperscript{12} Some immigrants cleared shrubbery to increase the stock-carrying capacity of the land.\textsuperscript{13} The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in 1881 seventy Chinese ringbarking on a single run near Albury.\textsuperscript{14} One of the largest group of Chinese ringbarkers was Jimmy Ah Kew’s gang of 500 who worked for long hours at low rates in the Riverina.\textsuperscript{15}

But it was market-gardening which offered the greatest employment to the Chinese. Traditional market gardens were located at Brighton, Buninyong, Hawthorn, Kew, Brunswick, Oakleigh and Mornington.\textsuperscript{16} The agricultural experience of the immigrants coupled with the vast opportunities for lucrative gains prompted entrance into this field. Over 2,200 Chinese males were intensive cultivators in 1881.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10}In 1860 the population of Victoria was raised from 75,000 to 538,000. Edwin Shann, *An Economic History of Australia*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1930, p.212
\item \textsuperscript{11}J. A. Patterson, *The Goldfields of Victoria in 1862*, Wilson and Mackinnon, Melbourne, 1863, p.132; Appendices 4 and 5
\item \textsuperscript{12}Carole Wood, *Beechworth*, Hargreen Publishing House, North Melbourne, p.67
\item \textsuperscript{13}G. L. Buxton, *The Riverina 1861-1891*, MUP, Melbourne, 1967, pp.194, 206, 248
\item \textsuperscript{14}*SMH*, June 11 1881
\item \textsuperscript{15}C. F. Yong, *op.cit.*, p.40; *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 26 March, 2 April 1891
\item \textsuperscript{16}Statistical Registers of Victoria, ‘Agricultural Statistics - Summary of Corporate Towns and Shires’, 1869 -1915.
\end{itemize}
Commerce was also to achieve increasing significance during this period. In Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, Main Road Ballarat East and Bridge Street, Bendigo, small Chinese retailers, grocers and import/exporters mushroomed. Visually, in these small, family establishments, a mélange of Chinese and western goods fought for attention in the display windows and stacking selves. John Steinbeck described his local Chinese store to be at once a pandemonium and a miracle. ‘Within its four walls a person needed everything to live and be happy.’ But in practical terms, the Chinese merchants were much less cosmopolitan. Relatives and close family friends served in the store and provided all the capital needed to begin. The principal clientele were the Chinese. Thus the small store was crammed with Chinese pickles, herbs, hoysin, oyster and blackbean sauces, ginger in sugar syrup, bronze idols, scented fans, lacquered trays, woks, Chinese meat choppers, chopsticks, Chinese ink, brush, rice paper, ceremonial incense sticks, hell banknotes, New Year red packets, firecracker, Chinese slippers and silk handkerchiefs. At Ah Shing store at Golden Point, Ballarat, the total value of Chinese goods was worth four times the value of European goods.

From the late nineteenth century, storekeepers and merchants exercised an increasingly important political and leadership role in the affairs of the Chinese community. Being on the whole educated, bilingual and more articulate, they distinguished themselves from the masses.

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17VPRO, Defunct Business Firms Records, 1890-1922, VPRS 933; Sands and McDougall, Melbourne Directories, Little Bourke Street, 1880-1889

18John Steinbeck, Cannery Row, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1945, chapter 2

19VPRO, Probate Record no. 139.234, 28 P3 unit 538; date of death 7.4.1915

20Appendix 5a
of the illiterate Chinese labourers and gardeners.\textsuperscript{21} When merchant and spokesman, Lowe Kong Meng, died at his Malvern home on October 22, 1888, the entire Chinese community mourned his loss.\textsuperscript{22} On the day of funeral, the hearse which contained Lowe's remains was preceded by four mourning coaches. About 100 vehicles followed the hearse. The \textit{Argus} reported,

the principal streets along the route were lined with spectators, among whom the fellow countrymen of the deceased were present in large numbers, dressed for the most part in their national costumes... Though Kong Meng always prided himself on being a British subject by birth, the Chinese in Melbourne were accustomed to regard him as their leader in all matters concerning their welfare as colonists.\textsuperscript{23}

In the early 1890s, furniture and cabinet-making became popular amongst the Chinese. Punch Lane, Harwood Place, Market Lane, Princess Lane, Crossley Street and Commercial Lane, all off Little Bourke Street, formed Melbourne's leading furniture-making centre. Woodworkers of all nationalities crowded into these tiny lanes. The Chinese devoted themselves to the cheaper line of wood-working activity. Graeme Davison wrote, 'the Chinese [cabinetmakers] constituted a separate market from the rest of the trade, marked off


\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Argus}, 24 October 1888; \textit{Mount Alexander Mail}, 5 May 1888

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid}
by their disregard for European standards of wages, hours, conditions and prices.\textsuperscript{24} A further characteristic reinforced the separateness of the Chinese. The turnover rate was exceptionally brisk. Many cabinet-making businesses operated for one year only. For example, Gee Shing spent 1892 at 48 Prince’s Lane; Goon Lee and Ah Bow each opened a cabinet-making business at 27 Harwood Lane for around twelve months; Chee Wah appeared at 16 Market Lane in 1894 then disappeared. New to Harwood Place for a brief year in 1897 were cabinet-makers Yow Yong and Ah Leek. 1898 and 1899 saw a frenzy entrance and exit of Chinese woodworkers. Ah Kee, Sun Gin Sing, Ah Ding and Tye Hing of 20, 26, 27 and 30 Princess Lane respectively all made their debut and departure within 1898. Gop Hoy and Tan Dot flew in and out of Princess Lane. In the period 1890-1899, over two dozen Chinese cabinet-makers made no more than a twelve-months appearance in Little Bourke Street.

The Chinese were among the first to enter the banana industry in North Queensland in the 1880s. In the next ten years the Cairns and Innisfail industry had been linked to virtually all major capital cities in Australia. Melbourne and Sydney became two of the most important wholesale and retail centres.\textsuperscript{25} Several Chinese banana stores which commenced business in this period proved long-lasting. Sun Kwong, Sing War, Yee Chung and the Mow Yick brothers all traded successfully in Little Bourke Street for well over fifteen years. Yet these traders were more honoured in the breach than in the rule. Many more banana dealers

\textsuperscript{24}Graeme Davison, \textit{The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne}, MUP, Melbourne, 1978, pp.46, 153

and fruiterers ceased trading within the short period of one to five years.\textsuperscript{26}

Apart from commerce, the drift to urban centres brought numerous Chinese into domestic employment. Some managed hotels and lodging houses. But the most popular form of domestic work was as cooks, servants, porters and launderers in private households. New South Wales statistician, Timothy Coghlan, in 1891 estimated that half the cooks in Australian country hotels were Chinese and one quarter of the Chinese cooks were employed in private homes.\textsuperscript{27} Eight years earlier, when Edmond Marin la Mesléé was travelling with the French consul, M. le comte de Castelnau, he gave a rapturous report of the meal provided by the Chinese cook at Fry’s Hotel in Gundagai.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid; One year 1891 Hang Wah, Hugh Alley; 1892 Hang Gee, Williams Lane; 1893 Lee How, Stephen Street; 1894 Sing On Chan & Co., 88 Stephen Street; 1894 Jean Lee, 149 Healy Lane; 1895 Sing War, 94 Little Bourke Street North; 1898 Tang Wah Sing 191 Little Bourke Street South; 1902 Wing Lee, 137 Little Bourke Street; 1909 F. Mow, 117 Little Bourke Street South; 1926 R.A. Wing and Co., 238 Little Bourke Street, Hook Yick, 215 Little Bourke Street South. Two years 1890-1 My Kee, Hugh Alley; 1892-3 Yee Sang, 2 Latrobe Place; 1907-8 Kwong Yick Loong, 117 Little Bourke Street South; 1912-3 Wing Mow & Hoong Chong, 112-114 Little Bourke Street North; 1915-6 On Kee and Co., 11 Coverid Place; 1924-5 Kwong Yee Foong, 156 Little Bourke Street North; 1925-6 R.A. Wing & Co., 238 Little Bourke Street North; 1931 Hook Yick & Co., 121 Little Bourke Street South; Three years 1891-3 H. Cheong, 64 Greville Place; 1892-4 Sun Yee Lee, 68 Greville Place; 1906-8 Kwong Yie Foong, 128-130 Little Bourke Street North; 1907-9 Kwong Hoong Wah, Williams Lane; 1907-9 Sun Hoong Lee, 115 Little Bourke Street South; 1914-6 Yee Chong & Co., 112-114 Little Bourke Street North; 1929-31 Leong Hong Cheong, 206 Little Bourke Street North; 1929-31 Wing Hie & Co., 137 Little Bourke Street South; 1929-31 Lin Lee, 173 Little Bourke Street South; Four years 1911-4 Chung Hing, 183-5 Little Bourke Street South; 1913-6 Dan and Jen lee, 135 Little Bourke Street South; 1928-31 Sang Goon & Co., 133 Little Bourke Street South; 1929-32 Quan Hong, 139 Little Bourke Street South; Five years 1915-9 Mow Sing, 139 Little Bourke Street; 1918-22 Low Chee & Co., 102-106 Little Bourke Street North; 1924-8 Toy Yeuck, 139 Little Bourke Street South; 1927-31 Yee Tong, 120 Little Bourke Street North. See Sands and McDougall, Melbourne Directories.

\textsuperscript{27}Timothy A. Coghlan, \textit{Labour and Industry in Australia}, vol.II, \textit{op.cit.}, p.1332

\textsuperscript{28}Edmond Marin La Mesléé, \textit{L’Australia Nouvelle}, E. Plon, Paris 1883, p.62
By the time of Federation, market-gardening had clearly surpassed the popularity of all other occupations amongst Chinese breadwinners. The number of Chinese miners in the first decade of the new century had declined to a minor proportion of the total population. Meanwhile, forty percent of all Chinese males worked as farmers or market-gardeners. The immigrants proved competitive as small-scale agriculturalists until World War One. In 1901 they controlled one third of the entire market-gardening industry in Victoria. This proportion was only to decline slightly by 1911.

The Attraction of Market-gardening

Market-gardening required little capital to set up and within months of operation, a steady flow of income could be generated. Unlike the demands of pastoralism and wheat farming, gardening did not require a large capital outlay. There were no animals or machines to purchase, land to fence, wells to sink or buildings to construct.\(^{29}\) The income of sheep and wheat farming arrived lump-sum yearly or spasmodically, so one was forced to live to a large extent on credit.\(^{30}\) With market-gardening the receipts were more evenly spread out through the year. This was more convenient to the Chinese obliged to make debt repayments and remittances.

In the introduction to the report of *The Royal Commission on Chinese Gambling*, it was noted that the extreme thrift and industry of the Chinese market-gardeners allowed them

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\(^{29}\) Lynette J. Peel, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880*, MUP, Melbourne, 1974, p.109

\(^{30}\) A. J. and J. J. McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, MUP & OUP, Melbourne, 1944, pp.60-1
to cart the first vegetables to the market in less than six months. ‘Almost from the outset’, reported the Commission,

the enterprise becomes a source of renumeration, and it is no common thing for each partner, after paying expenses, to put by £50 to £60 a year as his share of the profits. That, however, is a result of more than ordinary skill and reasonable industry. It is due to extreme frugality and unremitting toil. With the exception of an extra hour or two for rest on a Saturday afternoon, and a fairly well observed holiday on Sundays, the whole of their waking moments appear to be occupied with work in their gardens.\textsuperscript{31}

As market-gardening was highly labour-intensive, only about one to two acres of land per person was required. It was the custom of the Chinese to organise themselves into syndicates for cultivation. The bulk of the land used for market-gardening was leased out on short terms. All of the low-lying land at Rushcutters' Bay used by the Chinese gardeners were rented for only a few years at a low rate. Ah Junk's allotment of 1 acre 1 rood and 7 perches was leased in the 1890s for £10 8s per annum. Another garden allotment of 2 acres 3 roods 3 perches was rented out at £23 10s per annum.\textsuperscript{32} In the 1920s, Wor Chen and his four partners leased 25 acres at Tucker Road, Bentleigh from Mr. Garfield at £7 per week.\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{33}David Chen, Wor Chen’s son, 78 years and retired when interviewed on December 8 1990, 450 Victoria Street, North Melbourne. David’s son is the proprietor of Red Lantern Restaurant, Little Bourke Street.
The custom of applying natural fertilisers made market-gardening less cost-efficient. Hand-mixed manures were the chief source of fertilisation. Human excrement and urine fermented in stone jars were carefully mixed with guano and the ashes from grass, stalks and bark. Only a few hand implements were required to begin operation - spade, shovel, pick, fork, pronged hoe, knife, rake, watering cans, stone urns, a wheelbarrow, cart and horse. Probate records detailing the wealth-holding of deceased Chinese gardeners revealed a paltry amount of total wealth held in plant, tools or implements. Of eleven Chinese market-gardeners who died in Victoria between 1900 and 1918, the average value of wealth at death was just over £8.

Whilst the amount of wealth left by Chinese market-gardeners in a fixed capital form was insubstantial, their wealth holding in liquid assets was more substantial. Bank deposits were the most common form of wealth holding, particularly for gardeners with family members in China. Of 58 Chinese market-gardeners who died in Victoria between 1900 and 1937, over one third left a substantial part of their wealth in liquid form. For example, Ah Goon, survived by a wife and son in Canton, had accumulated £944.2.10 in the State Savings

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34 Eric Rolls, 'The Farming of a New Planet', Island magazine, issue 42, Autumn, 1990, p.25


36 VPRO, Probate Records nos. 79.745, series 28P2 (Ah Chock); 77.255, 28P2 (Ah Coon); 94.595, 28P2 (Ah John); 139.235, 28P3 (Ah Sing); 146.902, 28P3 (Ah Chaw); 134.916, 28P3 (Ah Hoy); 127.135, 28P3 (Ah Ching); 104.139, 28P3 (Ah Tie); 156.440, 28P3 (Ah Bing); 156.846, 28P3 (Ah Wing); 190.305, 28P3 (Ah Buck).

37 Appendix 6
Bank at Warrnambool.\textsuperscript{38} The entire wealth of Jimmy Ah Chew was a deposit of £222.14.5. which he bequeathed to his wife and three daughters in Canton.\textsuperscript{39} The probate of Ah Chee of Heyfield showed that he had on his death in April 1915, £100 in his bank account and a fixed deposit of £200. About four-fifth of the estate of Ah Shing of Wunghnu consisted of money on fixed deposit of around £140 which he willed to be divided between his wife, Ah Yip and his brother, Ah Ping, both of Sunhui, Canton. Two thirds of the wealth of Ah Hoe of Shepparton was in the form of a deposit of £130 at the State Savings Bank. Ah Gow, over 40 years resident in Maldon, left £10 money in the house, £20 as a fixed deposit in the Bank of NSW, Maldon and £94.4.10 as money in the savings bank. In spite of the small sample, the result is nonetheless suggestive that the savings of the Chinese were not spent on investment goods in Australia but largely remitted to China to repay debts and to assist with the housekeeping of their families and friends.

Both the censuses of 1921 and 1933 failed to take listings of the particulars of Chinese professions. Thus specific figures on Chinese occupations in this period cannot be ascertained. Only the grade of occupation was recorded. Perhaps the small size of the community (Victoria: 1921 3,138; 1933 2,248) did not justify the time and money for a detailed survey. But it would be reasonable to expect little change in the occupation breakdown. And in view of the aging population, a decline in the number of Chinese miners and market-gardeners could also be plausibly assumed.

It has been argued that the Chinese 'were always pushed to up occupations where they

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{38}Ibid, no. 214.810, d.1.7.1927

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid, no.283.644 28 P3 unit 2892, d.12.9.1936
\end{footnotesize}

73
would not compete with Europeans\textsuperscript{40} or that they were squeezed out of the best employment through harsh discrimination and assumed inferiority\textsuperscript{41}. But these proposals appear to be too extreme. Professor K. H. Bailey in his research on 'The Legal Position of Foreigners in Australia' has argued that very few vocational disabilities were imposed on foreigners in Australia in the first forty years after the adoption of the White Australia Policy. By United Nations standards Australia was relatively liberal in accepting workers with foreign training. In both the ordinary and liberal professions, foreigners were admitted on the same terms as nationals. The Dental Section of the Medical Act expressly deliberated that 'A person resident in Victoria shall not be disqualified from being registered by reason that he is not a British subject.'\textsuperscript{42} Foreign qualifications were recognised by the Board to furnish sufficient requisite knowledge and skill. In his Non-Britishers in Australia (1927), J. Lyng found the Chinese existing in all the higher professions. Though their number was small, it was not out of proportion to the number of Chinese residents. Arthur Huck, writing on the characteristics of the Chinese in Australia forty years later, concluded that the Chinese suffered very little from legal work discrimination. Though it suffered from discretionary prejudice, the Chinese community in Australia was not oppressed.\textsuperscript{43}

In summary, after easily accessible alluvial gold supplies ran low, the Chinese

\textsuperscript{40}Morag Loh, Sojourners and Settlers, op.cit., p.7

\textsuperscript{41}Rod Fisher, 'Roots of Racism: The Chinese Experience in Early Brisbane, 1848-1860', Labour History, no.50, Nov.1990


\textsuperscript{43}Arthur Huck, The Assimilation of the Chinese in Australia, Longmans, Australia, 1967, pp.5, 6
immigrants moved into occupations which required little capital outlay and where success could be achieved from hardwork, frugality, patience and family labour. The employment sought by the Chinese were chosen for their facility for constant liquidity and the ability to pay off debts. Generally the Chinese were after a quick profit and few had longterm developments in view. Hence their work rarely moved beyond the small, labour-intensive unit to effect economies of scale. While the rewards were potentially rich for those with sufficient capital, say, to sink deep shafts and buy steam-engines for pumping and winding, the sojourner-Chinese were not prepared to wait this long for their earnings.

In short, a fundamental weakness of Chinese economic development in Victoria was the limited access to finance. Given the number of single Chinese individuals and the high degree of mistrust between different dialect groups, the crucial kinship base for traditional shared economic activities was absent. Jennifer Cushman has argued that while a network of associations formed Chinese wealth, it was the Family Trust which sustained this wealth. ‘The Family Trust’, explained Cushman, ‘was a deliberate attempt to ensure the perpetuation of the family in a viable form.’ In her extensive studies on the Chinese Khaw family in Thailand, Cushman discovered that the Koe Guan Trust (家庭信託), set up by Khaw Soo Cheang (呂家添) in 1905 was the cornerstone of Khaw kinship organisation. Sixteen shares from the residence of Khaw Soo Cheang’s estate (amounting to $320,000 in 1905) were reserved for the Family Trust after the division of his properties. These shares were


invested and the proceeds used for sacrificial ceremonies for Soo Cheang's wives, their sons and family: this included the payment of marriage gifts and funeral expenses of all descendants of the Khaw surname and the provision of a yearly income to the male descendants in each of the six branches headed by Soo Cheang's sons. The Koe Guan Trust was argued to be crucial in preserving the identity of the Khaw family, especially for those members who had intermarried with local Thai.⁴⁶

The 'Family Trust' strategy was not popular amongst the Chinese in Victoria. Most Chinese did not leave sufficient wealth to begin a Trust and for those Chinese who left wealth at their death, it was usually bequeathed to individual relations (often a nephew) or close friends in Victoria, or to family members back in Canton, China.⁴⁷ There was no manifest trend in the community to concentrate collective wealth in the family lineage. Even the wealthier Chinese failed to form the habit of devising a trust system to maintain wealth in the lineage. Chee How Ah Mouy's £6392-4-1 fortune, which included four houses in Middle Park and almost 2000 shares in mining and oil companies (Electrolytic Zinc co. of Australasia Ltd.; Amalgamated Zinc; Taranki Oil Fields; Peninsular Tin; Chang Phra Tin⁴⁸) dissipated as it was shared out amongst individual family members (a brother, sister and two nephews). The fact that Ah Mouy did not have heirs may account for the lack of interest in forming a Family Trust. Merchant Ah You (d.17.9.1936) of Little Bourke Street bequeathed his entire fortune which included seven pieces of real estate in Prahran East and Preston to his wife. There was no specific instruction that they must be kept within the family. It is not clear if

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⁴⁶Ibid, p.45
⁴⁷VPRO, Probate Records, VPRS 28/P2, 28/P3, 1887-1947
⁴⁸VPRO, Probate Record no.217.44(1793)
they had any children. 49 Ah Chow of Koroit, a livery stable proprietor (d. 9.88.1904) was one of the few Chinese who gave detailed instructions to the manner in which his wealth was to be divided amongst members of his family. He willed that his six daughters each receive £50 on attaining the age of 23 or at their marriage, whichever came first, and on his wife’s death, the property was to be divided equally amongst his two sons. There were strict instructions as to how the income from the trust estate (£3107-17-9) was to be invested, ‘in any bank or upon first mortgage of freehold securities in Victoria or in any debentures of a municipal corporation in Victoria.’ But there was no specification that his sons must keep the trust estate within the Chow family lineage. 50

**The Manner of Living**

The pressure to save was also reflected in the spartan and often dilapidated nature of the abode of the Chinese immigrants. On the goldfields, the Chinese diggers contented themselves with a small tent of calico with a verandah of gum saplings. The air which surrounded their dwellings was described by one contemporary to be thick with ‘the fumes of opium, the odour of burned fat and the miasma arising from decayed vegetable matter.’ 51 Europeans diggers at the Guildford camp were staggered by ‘the strange contempt the Chinese seemed to entertain for domestic comfort or privacy.’ 52 Unlike the average prospector to

49VPRO, Probate Record no.287.756 (2957).

50VPRO, Probate Record no.92.287 (28/P2 unit 6988)

51Ovens and Murray Advertiser, 23, 26 May, 15 June, 8 July 1857; Constitution and Ovens Mining Intelligencer, 11 November 1856

52J. A. Patterson, op. cit., pp. 133, 135
Australia, the Chinese did not buy land, settle down, build comfortable homes, erect churches, chapels and schools. Thus they were criticised for taking everything away with them and giving nothing back in return. They 'reaped without sowing and fell without planting'.

Those who sympathised with the Chinese also raised their eyebrows in astonishment whenever they crossed the threshold of Chinese homes. 'Although the reputation of the Chinese is of the highest class', said one observer,

their premises, however, are not of the Grecian temple order. They do not obtrude themselves, and when they are sought out, the surprise of the stranger is natural when he is informed that cheques of five figures are not infrequently honoured by the bankers to the signature of the owners of the small and dingy, and only-to-Chinese attractive premises he sees before him.

By the end of the 1880s, Melbourne’s ‘Chinatown’ had emerged. The Chinese had consolidated themselves into a fairly compact cluster between the Spring and Russell Street section of Little Bourke Street. To many Europeans, the coming together of the Chinese into the tiny, unhealthy lanes was a bad omen. Little Bourke Street in the 1880s and 1890s had everything which was the antithesis of progress: slum-looking buildings, dark, obscure alleys, broken pavements, dirty drains and foul odours. Critics of the area were not only disgusted by its run-down and overcrowded state, but also condemned the ‘immoral’ activities that

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53 Age, 27 June 1857, p.6
54 J.A. Patterson, op.cit., p.132
flourished. Little Bourke Street in the nineteenth century was the home of gambling and opium dens, brothels, vagabonds and outcasts. The memorandum sent to the Secretary of the State by Premier, Duncan Gillies in 1888, concluded that amalgamation between the Chinese and the Europeans was not desirable. The report claimed that the Chinese had no intention of settling permanently in the country nor any desire to blend with the people they have come amongst. They stood apart; lived in the most wretched hovels and upon the scantiest fare. Their settlements endangered the public morals because they attracted 'the more vicious members of the European community of both sexes.'

A Melbourne City Council Inspector issued a report in the 1880s claiming that the statements made in various quarters respecting the 'dirtiness', 'overcrowding' and 'consequent sickness' of the Chinese quarter, Little Bourke Street and the various lanes and alleys branching off it were 'very much exaggerated.' But he admitted that much of the accommodation of the Chinese was far from desirable. There many cases of poor ventilation, bad drainage and rotten construction. Another inspector who made a separate report at about the same time stressed the lack of safety measures. Most of the homes were so overcrowded that the great majority of the occupants would likely be unable to be saved if a fire were to arise. The practice of roofing over the yard to provide accommodation for cooking for all persons in the building was noted to be 'a most pernicious one', as it prevented proper ventilation.

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55 *Age*, 10, 15 May 1880; 3 September 1885; 15 June 1887; 1 July 1893; 23 August 1893

56 *Age*, 17 April 1888

57 VPRO, Health, Town clerks files, Melbourne City Council Records, VPRS 3181/370, nos.798, 803
Many of the dwellings at the top end of little Bourke Celestial Alley, Heffernan Lane, William Lane and Hughes Alley were shanties built of old zinc cases, palings and wood, and all in very bad repair. 'Some were utterly unfit to live in and ought to be pulled down.' The drainage was extremely poor and the floor and walls of buildings were often sodden with rainwater. Houses built below the street level had stagnant water collecting under the floor. Tenants in these localities were warned of the serious consequences that may arise if an infectious disease were to break out among them. The kitchen at no.63 Little Bourke Street was built of rotten wood and scraps of old iron and zinc. The covering of the yard of 65 Little Bourke Street was heaped with rubbish of all kinds, foul-smelling and unwholesome.

In the opinion of Rev. Cheok Hong Cheong, some measure of responsibility for the squalor of Melbourne's Chinatown rested with the Europeans. For instance, none of the three most abominable houses inspected in Celestial Lane were owned by the Chinese. The worst dwellings of Little Bourke Street were owned by W. Alick Short and Mrs. Fernessy who were more concerned with their profit than with the comfort of their tenants. But the Chinese too were partly to blame. They never spoke out, they acquiesced in silence so were short-changed. But basically, the important point is that it was also a matter of profit to the Chinese immigrants to live humbly and miserly. By paying as little rent as possible, they could double their savings and halve the duration of their sojourn in Australia.

59VPRO, Melbourne City Council, Health Committee Minutes, VPRS 4038/4, 18 August 1884, p.389
60C.H. Cheong, 'A Chinese Appeal to the Victorian Public', Letterbook 5, Manuscripts Collection, SLV

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conspicuous absence of luxury was a choice of the Chinese because they were aware that their privation was only temporary; a short term pain at the end of which was material security for virtually the rest of their lives.

Overcrowding in the homes of the Chinese persisted into the twentieth century. It was estimated in 1913 that there were about 80 to 100 places in central Melbourne which practised subletting. This meant the owner of two or three houses would lease the lot to one person, usually a European, who then sub-letted each house to a Chinese. The Chinese would divide the house into a number of smaller tenements and rent them out to other Chinese for about 2 shillings a week. ‘If there is a room like this one’, explained a constable, ‘a Chinaman will cut it up into sections and board them off, making rooms inside a room. There is no ventilation and no light, except what light is brought in, and these places are seldom cleaned out; they cannot be cleaned out.’61 These cabin-like rooms were so small that there was usually just enough room for a bed and a few personal belongings. Sometimes a bunk bed would be put in and two people would share it. It was certainly a terrible way to live. But for the immigrants who endured such caged-in, threadbare lives, it meant in many cases, the ability to save between sixty to eighty percent of their earnings.62

By the 1920s, there was still no essential change in the accommodation of the Chinese. In June 1923, several houses occupied by Chinese immigrants in Prahran Grove and its adjacent streets in Elsternwick were condemned by Council Medical Officer Dr. Reid. Prior

61 ‘Progress Report from the Joint Select Committee upon the Housing of the People in the Metropolis’, VPP, 1913, vol.I, p.857, Evidence Q303-305, 320


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to the condemnation, several ratepayers had complained that 26 Chinese lived in one house and 18 in two other houses, each of which contained four rooms. Before the health inspection, several of the Chinese occupants were told to clear the decomposing vegetable matter and refuse heaped up in the yard. But no heed was taken.  

After the Second World War many Chinese continued to live austerely. Sydney Chinese lawyer, Irene Moss, recalled her first home in Sydney’s Chinatown in the early 1950s to be half run-down and very unhygienic; cockroaches ran everywhere, the plywood partitions in the rooms never reached the ceiling, the bathtub was rusted, the couch threadbare and a single light bulb hung from the ceiling. She and her three sisters were squeezed into one room, her brother had a room to himself and the top floor was sub-letted to several old Chinese men.  

Until the rise of Communist China and general hostility to the new regime, almost all overseas Chinese in Australia were strongly motivated to return home. In the period 1860-1899 not more than five Chinese bought property in Little Bourke Street. In 1862, of the forty-two pieces of property occupied by Chinese in Little Bourke Street, only four belonged to the Chinese. All were owned by the same person, merchant Lowe Kong Mong, the wealthiest and one of the most westernised Chinese in his day. Kong Meng opened two fancy goods and groceries import stores at 57 and 71 Little Bourke Street and leased his other two pieces property to Chinese storekeepers. Twenty-one other Europeans owned the balance.

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63 Argus, 28 June 1923, p.6

64 Irene Moss, ‘Chinese or Australia? Growing Up in a Bicultural Twilight Zone from the 1950s’, Survival and Celebration, edited by Morag Loh and Christine Ramsey, op.cit., pp.13, 14

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of the tenements occupied by the Chinese.\textsuperscript{65}

By 1880 Lowe Kong Keng continued to be the only individual Chinese owner-occupier in Little Bourke Street. The other property owners were the Kong Chew Society and the Chinese Mission Church. The Kong Chew Society was one of the oldest Chinese societies in Melbourne, founded in 1868 as a society for conciliation and arbitration. The rents collected formed a major source of its funds. The other important source of finance was the membership fee of £1.\textsuperscript{66} In the 1880s the Kong Chew Society purchased no.49 Little Bourke Street which it leased to Hang Hi, who had been trading in Melbourne since 1869. The other purchases included a brick hall and three three-roomed brick houses in Tattersalls Lane, used for functions and as office space.

After his death in October 1888, Lowe Kong Meng's properties in Chinatown were managed by his executors. They included three spacious brick shops at 77 and 242-244 Little Bourke Street, the Chinese Club House at no. 200, a vacant block of land, three unoccupied three-roomed brick and wood dwellings at Celestial Avenue and two houses (6 rooms and 4 rooms respectively) at 205 and 210 Little Bourke Street. The unoccupied dwellings were rented to the Chinese. Kong Meng and Co. store contracted to one building at 77 Little Bourke Street.\textsuperscript{67}

Three new Chinese rate-payers appeared at Little Bourke Street in 1890. Ben Lee of

\textsuperscript{65} VPRO, Melbourne City Council Rate Book, Ward of Gipps, 1862

\textsuperscript{66} C. F. Yong, \textit{The New Gold Mountain}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.191

\textsuperscript{67} D. Pike (ed.), \textit{Australian Dictionary of Biography}, MUP, Melbourne, vol.5. p.106
Lee’s Place, Ah Mouy of 195 Little Bourke Street and Sun Kum Lee of 114 Little Bourke Street. But only Ben Lee was an owner-occupier. Both Ah Mouy and Sun bought their property for investment. Ah Mouy rented his four-roomed brick shop to Sun Hi Hing. Sun Hang Loon leased from Sun Kum Lee a brick shop (25x84) of four floors.

By 1910 Chinese property-owners in Little Bourke Street were still confined to group-associations and investors - the Kong Chew Society, the See Yap Society, the Chinese Church Mission, Ah Lee, Houg Nam and Gee Chew. None of the last three individuals were owner-occupiers. It was not until the 1920s that we see for the first time a slight burgeoning in individual ownership and settlement. Chin Wah Moon bought nos.131 to 135 Little Bourke Street, Sun Kong Sing lived and traded at 209 Little Bourke Street, 220 Little Bourke Street was the private home of Sun Nam Hie, Chin Ken bought the adjacent houses at nos.214 and 216. Quong Mee Loong obtained 18 Celestial Avenue, Chung Kee 16 Celestial Avenue, Ning Yang Soe, shops 208 and 210, Nan Poon Shom a house at 200 Little Bourke Street, Chin Kaw a brick store at 14/18 Heffernan Lane, Sue Gay a furniture factory at 22 Punch’s Lane and Harry Louey Pang had put his name to a large brick store and basement at 172-6 Little Bourke Street.

By the 1930s, three-quarters of the landlords of Chinatown continued to be non-Chinese with names like E. M. Stokes, Hubert Raphael, George Tallis, Elizabeth Ball, Lucy Wood, Robert Stirling, J. R. Murphy’s Trust, Benjamin Natham, W. S. Bates, Charlotte and William McDonald and Samuel Peacock.
Conclusions

The debt and social obligations of the Chinese immigrants to Victoria deeply influenced the restrictive pattern of their occupations and the makeshift and dilapidated nature of their homes. Their earnest and seemingly fanatical ambition 'to do their family proud', gave them an endurance for struggle and privation that was peculiar to themselves. Unlike other early fossickers who assimilated and settled permanently soon after the decline of gold, the Chinese in Australia never accepted naturalisation; *Once a Chinese, always a Chinese.* While the Chinese in Southeast Asia were also proud of their Chinese citizenship and their culture and often called themselves 'sojourners', few of them were prepared to return to China. By the 1930s most of the Chinese in Southeast Asia identified far more closely with their new semi-Chinese homes in Bangkok, Ipoh, Malacca and Singapore than with their native villages in Guangzhou. 68 The Chinese to Australia likewise did not expect their new country to be a permanent home. But in contrast to their compatriots in Southeast Asia, their transient expectation remained unmodified for the greater part of a century.

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PART III

The Pre-Industrial Patriots
Preamble

Radical changes in the structure of the Australian economy occurred after the 1850s. Immediately prior to the gold rush there were probably no more than about 600 people in Victoria engaged in factory industry. In a country as spacious as Australia, and a population as small and as scattered, there were few incentives to develop manufactures. With the exception of shipping, pastoralism and long distant transport, industrial technology was slow to affect most sectors of the economy. The discovery of gold in the 1850s ushered in a new era of economic change and development. Within forty years of the first stampede to the goldfields, Victoria had become practically self-sufficient over a wide range of manufactures. In the course of the early twentieth century, the imports of more sophisticated products were gradually replaced by local production. World War I accelerated the propulsion of the Australian economy toward industrial maturity.

The argument in the final two chapters proposes that the Chinese played little part in the shift of the Australian economy towards manufacturing maturity. Their attitudes to industrialism were conservative. In Victoria, they lived and worked in a manner similar to habits bred in their homeland. Many writers have remarked on a marked difference in
work technique between the Chinese and the wider community but there has been no systematic explanation for the technological isolation of the Chinese immigrants. Their gradual regression in various occupations remains a mystery. Why did the Chinese in Victoria, from the twentieth century onwards, begin to lose their pre-eminent position in industries like furniture-making and market-gardening? Why was this fate avoided in specialised sections of domestic service? In contrast, how were the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia able to achieve their commercially dominant position? This final part of the thesis attempts to answer these questions and to bring to bear some of the important cultural factors responsible for the vulnerability of the immigrant Chinese in those industries where technology changed.

**Industrialisation in Australia**

Prior to the decade of gold, the basic technique of production in the Australian colonies entailed exploiting the abundant natural resources. Australia's long term growth was sustained by her exports of wool, wheat, meat and minerals to Britain, then the industrial sector of the world, from whom she obtained manufactured goods and supplies of labour and capital to further the extraction of her natural resources. The influx of diggers increased Victoria's population tremendously. It rose from 75,000 to 538,000 in 1860. With an enlarged market, the production of manufactured items, hitherto deemed

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impractical, could now be pursued.

In the period 1851 to 1865, machinery and steam power were introduced to various kinds of production like sugar-refining, scrap-iron rolling, construction, the manufacture of sulphuric acid and the distillation of eucalyptus oil.\(^3\) The 1870s saw a deliberate attempt by the Government to encourage the local replacement of clothing and footwear imports. Factories mushroomed. From 1870 to 1899, total employment in Victorian manufactories had increased from 18,599 to 59,181.\(^4\) By the end of the 1880s Melbourne had blossomed into a veritable industrial metropolis; it was served by some of the most elegant public buildings, fashionable shops, wide thoroughfares, spreading parks and up-to-date conveniences and amenities. Eight gas companies were already serving Melbourne, a wide network of public transport was connected and basic electricity and telephone services were available.\(^5\)

The unprecedented and stable rate of industrial expansion over the thirty years after 1860 has led economic historians like N. G. Butlin, to argue that manufacturing outpaced pastoralism in its contribution to Australia's GNP.\(^6\) However, though the number of factories proliferated, they remained small and unsophisticated. The extent to which

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mechanical power had become diffuse was not even. Flour mills in Victoria at the end of 1890 had only on average 4 horse power per worker; in the saw mills and chemical works, horse power per worker averaged 0.5 and in the clothing industry, it merely averaged 0.04 per hand. Work remained overwhelmingly physical; most breadwinners worked with their sleeves rolled up; their livelihood was maintained by the sweat of their brows and skill acquired on the job.

Industrial maturity in Australia was reached in the period of the First World War. The restriction in the quantity of imports had a profound influence on the subsequent pace and complexity of industrial development. The war cut off an import trade equivalent to about one-eighth of the value of Australian production. Overseas shipping fell by a total of 5 million tons in the four years from 1913. This opened up a huge market in domestic production, especially in areas like jam and fruit preservation, biscuits and confectionary, beer and cider, tiles, pottery, sanitary wares, motor vehicle bodies and lead, copper and zinc refining. Factory employment in Victoria rose by nearly sixty thousand during the war. From June 1914 to 1916, the number of factories established to supply equipment to the armed forces tripled. The general policy from 1917 was to increase employment opportunities at home and to encourage the industries of Australia. The wartime prohibition on luxury imports was extended till May 1920. By that time, local

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7G. J. R. Linge, op.cit., p.272
9Ibid, pp.217, 218, 220
10Ibid, pp.214, 221
manufacturing had effectively diversified. Manufacturing passed rural output in terms of total value for the first time in the early 1920s.

**Industrialisation and the Reactions of the Chinese**

In the twenty-year period following the Republican Revolution (1911-1930), reconstruction in the Chinese economy was speedy but limited. Railways were built, roads were paved, cotton mills were established and domestic electricity introduced. Yet on the whole, these modern facilities were limited to the foreign concessions and the vicinity of the treaty ports. By early 1930, the industrial revolution in China had hardly begun. The six provinces of Jiangsu, Liaoning, Hubei, Guangdong, Shandong and Hebei, (which comprised of 36 percent of China's total population and only 10 percent of the total area of China), accounted for over 90 percent of China's total foreign trade in cotton spun yarn and silk, almost 90 percent of her electricity power capacity, over 60 percent of coal and iron ore output, over half of all her railways and over 40 percent of her motorways.\(^{11}\) The industrial benefits accruing to the larger populace had not been unleashed.

The Chinese immigrants arriving in Victoria up to the 1940s were an agrarian people *par excellence*. What is meant by this is that not only was agriculture the basis of the wealth of their homeland for over six millennia,\(^{12}\) or that the position of farmers in

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their social hierarchy was high. The significance above all was that the immigrants came from a society with deeply entrenched values and a philosophy which was not easy to alter. In the present-day world of electric lights, central heating, motor cars and computer technology, it would be difficult for us to imagine a world where nature, its seasons and the cycles governed the pattern of life; the hours of waking, the work to be done, the kinds of food to be consumed, the amount of leisure available; a world whose intellectual and spiritual pursuits were moulded and compromised by the cyclical, untiring process of birth, life, death and decay. But this was the world of the Chinese immigrants.

The ancient Chinese Taoists held that everything had a certain manner of behaving which was natural to it, and one should 'go along with the grain of nature, conform to its peculiarities and not cut across it.' Harmony or Balance was the key word of traditional Chinese culture and civilisation. Whether this harmony was the Confucian attitude of man in society or the Taoist outlook of man in nature, both were grounded in the same cosmological sub-stratum. People living in the pre-industrial phase of history had little choice but to adapt themselves to the natural environment in which they found themselves. For millennia, the majority of Chinese have lived on the edge of poverty. Floods, droughts, internal strife and demographic pressures have all played a part in the country's distress. Life was a precarious existence, see-sawing between subsistence and

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13 Traditional Chinese society was divided into four classes, headed by the gentry/scholars, then the farmers, then the artisans and finally the merchants.

When the Chinese arrived in Australia, they found themselves in a society whose aims and achievements were radically different from what was prized in their own. Modern scientific inventions and discoveries, mastery of the air and sea, the use of steam and electricity, had in many ways counteracted Australia’s isolation from Europe. Hence one of the greatest ideological disarrangements which confronted the new immigrants was how to adjust their ancient cyclical cosmology to the new European world view of linear evolutionary advance. The scientific and industrial transformations in the West were accompanied by alterations in human personality and philosophy. Economic advance depended on the application of science and advanced technology. Economies of scale were in the ascendancy. The average Chinese labourer was at a disadvantage in this respect because his world view did not dovetail with the new scientific philosophy arising in the West. He remained the small farmer preoccupied with immediate concerns. Accustomed to interminable years of hardships on the land, his aim was often to avoid debt rather than to make a profit.

But the conservatism of the Chinese should not be dismissed as mere ignorance. The Chinese have not been a backward people. The technological creativity of the Chinese people has deep historical roots reaching back many thousands of years. What is not often understood about the pre-World War II immigrants from China was that these people brought with them a naturalistic mode of thought. Above all, morality was not

regarded as a question of time and place but a fixed thing. This manner of thinking stood in opposition to the historical trend of ideas in the West, which was shifting from a tradition-bound technics to an experimental mode.16

The antithetical philosophies of China and the West was a subject of frequent discussion in Hwuy-ung’s letters to his friend, Tseng Ching, a scholar of Guangdong. Hwuy-ung escaped to Melbourne in 1899 after taking part in the failed One Hundred Day Reform Movement in Beijing.17 He spent the next ten years of his life observing the life and manners of Victorians. The opinions in his many long letters to friends were perceptive and witty but often, they were also full of cynicism of Western modernity. The following are some excerpts on the subject:

Among the Western nations there is continual change, not in a few things,


17Kang Youwei, a radical teacher and reformer with whom the Emperor Kuangxu (1875-1908) came to sympathise, sought large-scale national reforms in 1898. Kang, like many patriotic Han Chinese in his days, was infuriated with the corrupt and incompetent Manchu Court. Adamant that China’s ill could not be cured and her status elevated unless an overhaul of the entire Chinese administration system occurred, Kang succeeded in persuading the Emperor to support his Reformist Cause. For just over 100 days over fifty reforms were issued in rapid succession from June 11th to September 20th 1898 in education, government, administration and industry. The advance to modernity was unfortunately checked by the powerful and unscrupulous Empress Dowager, Cixi. Her coup d’état on September 21st put an end to all reforms. The emperor was put under detention on a small island in the Imperial Garden, west of the Palace. Six of the main reformers were executed without trial and 22 government officials sympathetic to the reform movement were imprisoned, banished or stripped of property. All reform documents were rescinded except the building of Peking University and the establishment of some local schools. See Immanuel C. Hstl, The Rise of Modern China, OUP, Hong Kong, 1970, pp. 361-380
but in ten thousand things. This is called progress. They say we are stationary and not advance because we not have these changes. With extremes, there is what good? (April 5 1901, p.83)\textsuperscript{18}

[The Europeans'] whole energy is centred in the manufacture of different kinds of machines; steam vessels and locomotives to bring rapid returns of profit, and guns and rifles to slay their fellowmen....Prosperity is wealth to the foreigners; moderation in his desires to the Chinese. Material power is might to the foreigner; to live and let live is might to the Chinese. (March 13 1900, p.48)

The dwellers in this city are more precise than we are. They are observant of exact time fixed for their buying-selling duties, and for meeting each other. When hour and place are decided they not fail in abiding by them....The reason for this exactitude is that the day's work is all planned out with schemes for making money. Their doctrine is 'Time is money'; so if they lose time, they lose money....We, as a nation, have had unbroken existence recorded for five millennia. Time with us has been regarded little value. We have not been in hurry, not having to outstrip other nations. So have we become like sleeping bears in ice's winter. (Letter XVIII, undated, pp.116-117)

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\textsuperscript{18}Hwuy-ung, \textit{A Chinaman's Opinion of Us and of His Own Country}, Chatto and Windus, London, 1927
Generally, the Chinese who arrived in Victoria prior to World War II lacked sufficient knowledge of other countries and other people to adequately prepare them for integration into a modern society. Most of the nineteenth century arrivals had never been exposed to modern education. Those Chinese who had a smattering of book learning prior to their departure were trained to rote learn the Five Classics, read ancient Chinese history or perfect their poetry and calligraphy. Independent analysis and criticism were never encouraged. Modern science was ignored or parodied. Chinese books on mathematics, logic, chemistry, medicine, astrology and geology had long been mixed up with divination, superstition and magic. Though modern education began around 1900, it did not operate effectively until the 1920s. John Lossing Buck's extensive field work in China revealed that in the 1930s as many as a half of all males over the age of seven in South China have had no schooling and 97.3 percent of all females were illiterate. Ironically, the girls sent to school were usually schooled in the 'less respected' modern curriculum of mathematics and science while the boys were invariably trained to master literature and to prepare themselves for an official post.

Very few among the first-generation Chinese in Australia surmounted the difficulties of defective teaching and the lack of opportunities to acquire a sound mastery of the English language. For most Chinese, once they had arrived in Australia, they spent almost all of their time working and mixing only with their own people. Not an inconsiderable number of Chinese had never had a conversation with a white person after

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20John Lossing Buck, op.cit., p.373
twenty years of residence in Australia. Many were so busy saving for their future that they had no time to learn English and assimilate. Tong You lived in Australia for 45 years and yet was unable to speak English. Ah Yip required an interpreter at court after twelve years in the country.\(^{21}\) In addition, the popular custom among the wealthier Chinese was to send their children back to China for a period of education. Born in Deniliquin, Charlie Loie Chun was taken back to China at an early age. When he returned to Australia as a teenager, he failed the dictation test.\(^{22}\)

Moreover, the Chinese sojourners in Australia were far from indifferent spectators to the political developments in their homeland. The intimate involvement of the secret societies with reforms in China was another factor that retarded acculturation. As early as the 1850s, several clandestine Cantonese groups like the Red Turbans and the Ghee Hing Society were actively engaged in anti-Manchu activities.\(^{23}\) In the course of the late nineteenth century, many immigrant Chinese were in touch with the internal rebellions. In the 1890s a large group of Chinese from Melbourne and Ballarat supported the visit of a leading reformer to Australia.\(^{24}\) At the turn of this century, the Bendigo Triad society played a major part in organising financial support for the Canton uprising against the Manchus in late March 1911. After its tragic failure, the Bendigo Triad and other Chinese in Australia contributed to the construction of a magnificent, giant tomb dedicated to the

\(^{21}\)Argus, 16 June 1910, p.4

\(^{22}\)Argus, 17 April 1912, p.12; 4 October 1934

\(^{23}\)Kathryn Cronin, Colonial Casualties, MUP, Melbourne, 1982, pp.32-4

\(^{24}\)Gloria Davies, Liang Qichao and the Chinese in Australia, B.A. Honours Thesis, 1981, Dept. of Asian Languages, University of Melbourne, pp. 159, 170-1
After the overthrow of the Qing Court in 1911, patriotic fervour reached a high pitch. When the Chinese Republic was declared, Lee Chong, a long time resident of Victoria and married to a European, hung the Chinese national flag in front of his laundry in Swan Street, Burnley. The Young China League of Melbourne held a major door-to-door fund-raising campaign throughout Melbourne and Geelong and raised over £3200. To assist the financial burden of the new Guangdong provincial government and to contribute to the great task of national reconstruction, the Chinese of Australasia and the South Pacific contributed a generous sum of £26,000 during the National Patriotic Fund-Raising Campaign of June 1912 to July 1913. The Argus of November 1912 reported that the Republican Government had made a determined move to induce all Chinese abroad to return and settle down in their own native land. It expected that merchants of many Southeast Asian ports would heed the call and return to lend China a helping hand.

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26 *Argus*, 22 April 1912, p.9


28 *Chinese Times*, 12 July 1913

29 *Argus*, 15 November 1912, p.11
When the Versailles Peace Conference decided that the German concessions of Shandong and Qingdao would be transferred to Japan rather than be returned to China, the Chinese merchants of Melbourne and Sydney instituted a boycott of Japanese goods. Chinese dockhands refused to unload cargoes from Japanese merchants, the delivery of Japanese goods was refused and the editors of the leading Chinese newspaper in Melbourne, the Chinese Times, urged all overseas Chinese to stop buying Japanese goods. After the Nationalist Guomindang Government gained power in 1927 under Chiang Kai-Shek, the Chinese abroad became more actively engaged in the reconstruction of China. The new government looked to the overseas Chinese to play a major role in the development of domestic industry and commerce. Motivated by patriotic sentiments, not a few overseas Chinese in Australia responded to the call to return home.

In many ways the very different culture which confronted the Chinese and the lack of interest which they showed for their new home made assimilation very difficult. In Southeast Asia, the problem of adjustment was totally different for the Chinese arrivals. From the beginning, the Chinese found in Southeast Asia a way of life not too dissimilar to their own. The importance of Chinese values in the development of Southeast Asian culture rendered the Chinese immigrants highly valued in their new homes.

30 Argus, 5 May 1919; Age 5 May 1919

31 Chinese Times, 20 December 1919; Argus, 16 May 1919

32 Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, op.cit., pp.565-569
Southeast Asia: A Mixed Culture With A Chinese Thread

Throughout its history, Southeast Asia has had a long association with the indigenous cultural traditions of China and India. The needs and values of the Burmese, Cambodians, Indonesians, Thai and Malaysians all contain aspects of Chinese and Indian ideas. Indian influences had been absorbed into much of Southeast Asia’s artistic, religious and architectural life, while Chinese influences have dominated the linguistic, gastronomic and social fabric of the region. Racially there is not one country in the entire region which can be described as homogeneous.\(^{33}\) But in general terms, the presence of Chinese power has been a factor of the greatest commercial significance in Southeast Asia. Due to its locality on the ancient East-West trade route, Southeast Asia owed a great historical debt to China’s important early trade relationships with her tribute ‘countries’ like Sumatra and Java.\(^{34}\) It was from the Chinese that we first learnt about the countries of Southeast Asia, a region which the Chinese for a long time called ‘the South Seas’.\(^{35}\)

The earliest sizeable contingent of Chinese to Southeast Asia were merchants. A large, transient, trading Chinese community in Angkor, then the capital of Cambodia, was reported by the Chinese embassy in 1295 A.D. Some of the traders settled and married Cambodian women.\(^{36}\) Between 1405 and 1433 A.D. Admiral Cheng Ho, commissioned by the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty, led a large-scale maritime expedition to the


\(^{34}\) Ibid, p.29

\(^{35}\) Ibid, p.25

Indonesian Islands, Malaysia, Vietnam, Burma and the Philippines. A considerable shore establishment grew up in Malacca and a temple was dedicated to Cheng Ho. (It is the oldest temple in Malaysia today.)\footnote{Jean Gittins, \textit{The Diggers From China}, Quartet, Melbourne, 1981, pp.1-7; Geoffrey Blainey, \textit{The Triumph of the Nomads}, Sun, Melbourne, 1975, pp.243-245.} By the late 15th century the settlement contained many communities of Chinese, Arabs, Indians of different regions, Indonesians and Persians. The Baba Chinese were described to live in a special world that was ‘half Chinese half Malay.’\footnote{Milton Osborne, \textit{op.cit.}, p.91} In the Philippines, the small Chinese trading community became an essential part of the population of Manila where they dominated business and finance.

By the late 17th century, the main body of Chinese in Southeast Asia were \textit{merchants}, in contradistinction to the \textit{single labourers} who entered in the mid-nineteenth century. Many Chinese businessmen were well-established and had acquired a long knowledge of local trade and cultural affairs.\footnote{C. P. Fitzgerald, \textit{op.cit.}, p.15; J. Steinberg (ed.), \textit{In Search of Southeast Asia}, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1971, 1987, p.216} They became the dominant group in retail trade, transport, industry, manufacturing and processing, lumber, skilled professions and banking. Some of the new single Chinese also made money and eventually sent for their families. But before becoming rich, not an inconsiderable number of the immigrants had to endure hard conditions as market-gardeners, miners, railway workers and kitchenhands, or they served the commercial class as labourers, accountants and clerks. Generally they moved into tasks which the local Southeast Asians were unwilling to fill. Though the Chinese proved to be more skilful cultivators than the natives, they found little opportunity for independent farming as the allotment of land favoured followers of the...
local noblemen and chieftains. As a result, a gradual exodus to other occupations (like tin-mining, sugar and rice refining, shipping, trading and shopkeeping) which were not so restricted by local customs and law took place.\(^{40}\)

How the Chinese in Southeast Asia managed to succeed will form the concern of the next section. My point in this section is that, in view of the general similarity of culture, it would have been easier for the Chinese to adjust to conditions in Southeast Asia than in a totally unfamiliar landscape like Australia. The adjustment for the Chinese in Southeast Asia was made easier because the circumstances of their new home required little change in their traditional practices and economic values. Small-scale, labour-intensive, individual production was a natural extension of the prevailing industrial pattern in their homeland. In contrast, the culture which confronted the immigrant Chinese to Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was becoming increasingly technical. There was a rapid and widespread movement toward large-scale, capital-intensive, company-owned production. It would have been difficult for the Chinese to make good this vastly different cultural milieu. In addition, without the support of numbers and a sufficiently long history of the country, an unflinchingly conservative response to new and novel ways was not incongruous to the natural fears of uncertainty and insecurity. The redundancy of traditional values in mainstream Australian developments were largely responsible for the marginalisation of the Chinese immigrants whereas in Southeast Asia, where the situation was the reverse, they became important harbingers of the region’s cultural and economic transformations.

\(^{40}\text{Ibid, p.30; Brian Harrison, South-East Asia, Macmillan, London, 1954, p.221}\)
The Family-Business

The Chinese have been vital for the economic transformation of Southeast Asia. They have been the major participants and investors in the economic life of Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia. Since the mid-nineteenth century they have gained a direct share in the general economic prosperity of the region. Though it is acknowledged the 'rags-to-riches' story is not universal, the Chinese talent for acquiring wealth has nevertheless formed the subject of important speculation and research.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, it was common to argue that the Chinese in Southeast Asia reached their position of pre-eminence because the colonial government favoured them at the expense of the indigenous people. When the Dutch, British and French authorities arrived in the region, they discovered that Chinese capital and entrepreneurship dominated all the most important industries of the region. As a manager of concerns both small and large, they were unrivalled by the Indonesians, the Malays and the Thais. The Chinese were in control of the tin mines and the pineapple and pepper industries in Indonesia; tobacco plantations in Malaysia, rice and sugar refineries and foreign trade in Thailand and marketing and processing in Cambodia and Vietnam. Given their long and intimate knowledge of local trade and their ability to find export goods and converse in several languages (Chinese dialects, the local language and a little

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English), the Chinese proved indispensable as "middlemen" to the European administrators who were eager to advance their interests in a foreign land. To this end, the colonial governments zealously fostered Chinese development by granting them tax concessions, privileged partnerships and special profit shares.43

Since the late 1970s, the literature on the Chinese in Southeast Asia have tended to concede that European colonial activities were not that important in shaping the course of Chinese history in the region. The Europeans in Southeast Asia were but one group of many who sought to advance their position. Local life in many places like Java was virtually unchanged after nearly 200 years of Dutch rule.44 Moreover, it had been argued that the colonists as a group were often highly ill-informed about the societies in which they worked and their policies in many cases were far from efficacious. In addition, it cannot be alleged that the colonial government had favoured the Chinese at the expense of the indigenous people. In Malaysia, political offices and posts were reserved only for the Malays. As late as 1955 the majority of Chinese were deprived of the vote.45 In Thailand, the local government charged a poll-tax on the Chinese but this did not discourage many from entering the country. In many ways, the Chinese had always contributed more than their share of public goods and services. For example, hospitals built and maintained by them were opened to the public and as already mentioned in the


44Milton Osborne, *op.cit.*, p.59; D.J.M., Tate, *op.cit.*, pp.151, 157

earlier chapter three, the Chinese were unfairly taxed for their industry and leisure.

What more recent writers have attempted to argue is that Chinese success in Southeast Asia was largely attributed to certain "Chinese' characteristics. On the eve of Southeast Asia's entrance to the world economy, most peasants in Southeast Asia were deeply entrenched in a subsistence way of life. They were willing to respond to export incentives inside the village but few would accept wage labour outside. As wealth did not lead to prestige, the indigenous merchants took little interest in the export industries. In face of the limited economic mobility presented by the Southeast Asians, the Chinese found an open frontier of opportunity awaiting them. And as the immigrants came from the region of South China where wealth was more seriously pursued than anywhere else in the country, and their social duty compelled them to aim for pecuniary success, they came to play an appreciable part in the economic transformation of Southeast Asia.

Above all, the power of organisation based around kinship networks and speech-group associations have been emphasised as a significant factor in assisting the striking success of the immigrant Chinese. These connections gave the immigrants access to a large pool of financial resources and practical skills. In short, Chinese economic success was argued to be attributed to the 'Family Business', the method of transaction which has dominated the Chinese commercial scene since imperial times.

At least as far back as the twelfth century, the family, the clan or the village, was
the characteristic unit of Chinese business. Lineage ties and personal character were the chief determinants of labour and sources of loans. Credit was regarded by the Chinese as the trust by one party for an eventual return after a certain lapse of time. In this vein, almost all business transactions were carried out on the basis of 'friendship before trade.' The managers of firms were typically the relatives of the owners, or natives of the same subprefecture. Contrary to the British tradition, contracts and formal law were not pre-requisites for economic life. As Eric Jones explained, 'Businesses can manage to operate without much in the way of law at all as long as co-operative moral standards prevail...the ability to borrow, buy and sell on a basis of impersonal relations are the best conditions for cost-reductions of transaction costs.' Since access to financial resources relied heavily on the number of family and related members, women by no means contributed a small role in the business strategy. Marriages sealed financial alliances and ensured that the prosperity of a business was sustained and developed.

The lack of family life was a major social disadvantage which threatened the viability of a flourishing Chinese economic life in Victoria. Whereas their compatriot-entrepreneurs in Southeast could draw upon a broad network of kith and kin for financial support, the Chinese in Victoria could only 'go alone' in business. According to the Defunct Business Firms Records, single ownerships and partnerships of two constituted

46K. S. Latourette, The Chinese, op.cit., p.597; Lloyd E. Eastman, Family, Fields and Ancestors, OUP, Oxford, 1988, p.113

47Francis, K. L. Hsi, op.cit., pp.280, 283-4

48E. L. Jones, 'The Real Question about China: Why was the Song economic achievement not repeated?', Australian Economic History Review, vol.XXX, no.2, September 1990, p.20
virtually three-quarters of the 211 Chinese businesses in operation in Victoria in the period 1893 to 1922. Meanwhile, businesses with five or more people in partnership made up only 4 percent of the total.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership Status</th>
<th>Number of Businesses</th>
<th>Percentage of Total %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership of 2</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>6+</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: VPRO, VPRS 933, Defunct Business Firms Records Office, Laverton

Those businesses which operated on a larger ownership basis usually involved market-gardening. Ah Toey had a market-gardening business at Yarrawonga with seven shareholders. Toong Mow's at Bridgewater-on-Loddon was another syndicate, funded by eight partners. Even the smallest market-gardening businesses had at least four partners.

49 VPRO, Defunct Business Records 933, no.5381, registered 18.4.1895
50 VPRO, Defunct Business Records, no.8325, registered 5.4.1899
like George Lee Chow's at Yarrawonga, Sim Boo Shing’s at East Brighton and See Wah’s at Shathuldsaye near Bendigo.

Though it was never recorded in what year these businesses were actually abandoned, it appears that businesses with more partners tended to have a greater capacity to survive longer periods of time. Sun Yee Lee and Co. Ltd. (1906) of Little Bourke Street, with six partners, operated for 21 years. Yin Bun Low’s restaurant at Little Bourke Street began in 1900 with 5 shareholders. By 1929 four of the original members had retired and they were replaced by seven new members. In 1935, six of the shareholders were replaced and the number of partners increased to 9 in 1944, to 11 in 1947 and 13 in 1951.\(^{51}\) The survival of some small businesses was also ensured as long as aging members were replaced. But once the link in the family chain was broken, the business collapsed.

Refining upon this argument, Jennifer Cushman has argued that the principle strengths of the Chinese entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia was not merely a simple matter of trusting your ‘blood-ties’ and distrusting strangers. From her extensive research into the highly success Khaw family in Thailand, Cushman has contended that the importance of ‘friendship’ in Chinese business was far from a passive matter. It involved taking positive steps to align the family through marriage or service to the government to reinforce political patronage. Khaw Sim Bee (unittest), the son of Khaw Soo Cheang (1797-1882) who founded the Sino-Thai Mining Dynasty in Siam, rose to the governorship

\(^{51}\)VPRO, Defunct Business Firms Records, series 933, no.9225

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of Ranong. Through his position as High Commissioner of Monthon Phuket, he became a central figure in the modernisation of the tin regions and was a major personality behind the advancement of the business interests of his family. In addition, two of Khaw Soo Cheang’s other sons married second wives from two influential tax-monopolist families (na Nakhon and na Takuathung) from Penang and this enabled the Khaw family to extend its political and economic base from Ranong. Marriages to these families led to access to the opium revenue monopolies in the states of Takuapa and Takuathung as well as a reinforcement in the main areas of interdependence in mining, shipping, foundry, plantation and milling.

Not being members of the new entrepreneur, educated, up-to-date with the realities of the contemporary world and less bound by traditional restraints, most of the Chinese immigrants in Victoria could not build a viable political patronage for their family business. The notable exception was the highly successful Guo family, founders of the Wing On Department Store Empire in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The Guo Family, originally from Zhongshan, Guangzhou, began its fortune in a modest fruit store in Sydney in 1897 with a capital of £1400. The mainstay of the business consisted of a banana trade with Fiji and Queensland and a small import/export business with Hong Kong. Due to the

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52 Khaw was one of the ‘experienced men in business’ employed by the Thai Government in its endeavour to keep the Malay States closed to foreign enterprise.


55 Appendix 7
inability to raise sufficient capital in Australia to begin a department store, the family business was transferred to Hong Kong. In 1907, $160,000 was raised mainly from members of the Guo family and other overseas Chinese shareholders to begin the second department store in Hong Kong. 56

In 1919 Wing On and Co. Ltd. opened further shops in Shanghai’s Nanjing Road. 57 The extension was stimulated by the vigour of nationalism and modernisation in China and the Guo family’s close political alliance with the Cantonese clique of the nationalist Guomindang Government in China. 58 The two Guo brothers who founded Wing On, Guo Le (known as Philip Gock Chin) and Guo Quan (James Gock Lock), had long been associated with Republican leader, Dr. Sun Yat-sen and his family. Both the Suns and the Guos originated from the same county (Zhongshan) in Guangzhou. 59 Guo Le became a financial adviser to the revolutionary Government of Canton in 1923 and through his influential position secured political security and commercial advantages for the Wing On textile mills in Shanghai. 60 Guo Biao, (or William Gockson), a cousin of the Guo brothers and a member of the Revolutionary Alliance, Tongmenghui, (created by Sun Yatsen) was Director of the Shanghai Wing On Department stores for ten years.


57 Marie-Claire Bergère, ibid, p.102


59 Marie-Claire Bergère, op.cit., pp.146, 160

60 Ibid
(1920-30) and the Director of the Wing On Shanghai Mint (1929-31). Guo Dihui, a nephew of Guo Le and Guo Quan became assistant Director then Director of the Wing On Cotton Mills (1926-39, 1946-9). Later, he was appointed as the Shanghai Deputy to the First Popular National Assembly (PNA) in 1954, was the Guangdong deputy to the PNAs in 1958, 1964 and 1978. He rose to become the Vice-Governor of Guangdong province in 1979.61

As we can see, the family system afforded the Chinese real opportunities to adapt to the modern economic environment without breaking with sacred, social traditions. Yet up until World War Two, the low level of education of the immigrants, their traditional conservatism, the lack of family members and their lack of touch with the circle which conferred success, made it virtually impossible for the Chinese in Victoria to generate the fundamental human links and make good in local industry or commerce. Finally, in the next chapter I would like to suggest that a further problem which disadvantaged a more successful economic development amongst Chinese involved an inertia to acquire advanced technology.

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61 Appendix 7
Preamble: Occupations in Transformation

From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, far-reaching changes occurred in the mining, furniture-making and market-gardening industries. Mechanisation became increasingly common. The rising costs of capital equipment led to company formation and the triumph of economies of scale. In mining the Chinese did not move into the era of quartz after the rapid exhaustion of surface alluvial gold. They continued to work individually or in small partnerships over tailings. Following World War I steam and electricity were widely introduced into the furniture-making industry and large furniture warehouses began to emerge, but the Chinese likewise were not active participants in the transition to advanced technology. They stayed with their hand tools and small workshops. In market-gardening there was once again no move on the part of the immigrants to apply science to large acreages for better and larger yields. Chinese hand laundries failed to compete after the Second World War when dry cleaning was widely introduced.

In this final chapter I would like to suggest that one of the essential problems which hampered the rise of the Chinese in Victoria to a position of economic dominance concerned a lack of positive steps taken to acquire up-to-date technology, and a reluctance on the part of the immigrants to acknowledge the backwardness of traditional techniques in the industrialising age. But in the attempt to introduce this argument, I have
unfortunately encountered a number of difficulties with incomplete contemporary evidence. Even with official records like the censuses, statistical bulletins and yearbooks, they contain many structural inconsistencies which hamper systematic analysis. In the nineteenth century, Chinese activities were included as a separate category in the censuses and yearbooks. But data on their employment of machinery was piecemeal and these were largely confined to mining. From Federation up until World War II, any mention of the Chinese in official reports and statistics were confined to basic demographic numbers and broad classes of occupations. No figures were collated on their movement into modern technological methods. As it has not been easy supplying complete quantitative evidence to illustrate my points, I have drawn heavily upon contemporary impressions and remarks to fill the gaps. Had more quantitative data been included, the details of the argument would probably be altered, but not the substance of the picture. Moreover, this final proposal is quite introductory in nature as one of its aims is to inspire further exploration in this field (which hitherto has been neglected) rather than furnish a definitive account of the findings.

i) Mining

From the onset, gold mining technology was closely tied to the mainstream of industrial development. The boundless promise of gold propelled volatility, ingenuity and technological innovations of ambitious magnitudes.

Prior to 1854, when the first dazzling rewards had still not been exhausted, mining in Victoria was confined to the surface or to shallow sinking. The methods of work
varied little: mining was intensely physical, simple and inefficient. At first only the surface gravel, found immediately below a scanty top soil on the slopes of hills, was washed. Those who ventured a few feet deeper sunk round, oval or square shafts of 3 to 10 feet in depth. Any deeper kind of sinking was thought to be mere adventurous curiosity and did not command general imitation. It was common practice for miners to form themselves into small parties of three or upwards but seldom exceeding six. Between them they cooperated on equal terms in the various duties of minding the tent, excavating, transporting and washing.

From around the mid 1850s surface alluvial gold became scarcer on the older fields. Large quantities of gold could no longer be obtained with the aid of simple mechanical appliances. The practice of superficial digging and surface washing was gradually being abandoned by all except the Chinese. At the time of the Eureka revolt, most miners in Ballarat were working on alluvial leads as deep as 180 feet; with some sinking extending to nearly 200 feet. Improvements in mechanical appliances enabled deeper sinking. The whim conducted far more effectively the work done with the primitive windlass. The puddling machine, with the aid of horse power and large-scale apparatus, was stirring up much more of the gold-bearing gravel than the hand-worked

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2William Westgarth, ibid, p.185


puddling tub. In addition, it permitted virtually all of the old and deserted ground to be reworked. The Californian pump, built upon a conveyor belt design, was installed adjacent to the puddling machine to supply water. The main disadvantage of the puddling machine was its reliance on a good water supply. Hence they could only be used the whole-year round in the Ovens valley.

As sinking deepened, the influx of water became a problem. Increasingly the steam engine worked out many of the pumping difficulties encountered by manual labour. Forty-four steam engines and eighty-three quartz-crushing machines were in operation as early as 1855. The Royal Commission proclaimed that 'the arm of machinery, so powerful in other branches of industry for the progress of society, will equally avail to the miner. The greatest promise appears at present to rest with the quartz rock.' Before the 1860s the era of quartz had already begun. Quartz raising and crushing were superseding the primitive systems of the past. When Westgarth compared the art of mining in the early 1850s with its condition in 1857, he was struck by 'the business-like knowledge and decision with which miners spoke of their avocation, and the methodical and imperturbable manner in which they encountered its uncertain results.'

By the 1860s most mines were descending to depths of 300 to 500 feet through the solid 

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6 William Westgarth, op.cit., p.172


8 William Westgarth, op.cit., p.204; The Bendigo Independent, 24 September 1857
masses of rock. From zero stamp-heads crushing in 1862, there were 643 in operation in alluvial ground in 1868 and 5,997 in quartz.

When the Chinese began arriving at the Victorian goldfields in large numbers in 1854, the balance had already begun to shift towards quartz mining and its reliance on machinery. In the first few years the new immigrants were reluctant to use up-to-date techniques, even though it was daily becoming more apparent that deep sinking was considerably more profitable than the old mode of shallow sinking and surfacing. But the Chinese were contented with their small and regular earnings acquired under the rudest mode of mining. They reworked old grounds abandoned by European diggers at Ballarat, Creswick’s Creek, Beechworth, Ararat, Campbell’s Creek, Guildford, Dunolly and Bendigo. The Chinese drew together and introduced the system of paddocking. The superincumbent soil was stripped, the wash-dirt taken out bodily and re-worked in the tub and cradle. ‘They seemed to be always busy’, remarked one observer, ‘but in an inefficient and unsystematic manner.’ They fossicked about in the refuse of the washed dirt where ‘a European could not earn salt to his soup.’

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9J.A. Patterson, The Gold Fields of Victoria in 1862, Wilson and Mackinnon, Melbourne, 1863, p.174; Thomas McCombie, Australian Sketches, second series, Dwight, Melbourne, 1866, p.189

10R. Brough Smyth, op.cit., p.517

11Weston Bate, op.cit., p.79; Geoffrey Blainey, The Rush That Never Ended, MUP, Melbourne, 1969, p.88

12J.A. Patterson, op.cit., p.133

13William Westgarth, op.cit., p.203

14Ibid, p.136
Being adverse to the expense, the delay and the uncertainty associated with deep sinking, the Chinese were rarely fond of a quartz claim or a 'stone hole' as they called it. It was estimated that the average cost of a steam plant was around one to two thousand pounds,\textsuperscript{15} and the labour required to sink a shaft lasted over 12 months during which time the propriety received no return for their labour and capital. For example, the Great Extended Company of 80 shareholders established in September 1856, had to spend £120,000 on wages and other items before gold was obtained.\textsuperscript{16}

In contrast, the method of mining popular amongst the Chinese was cheap and labour-intensive; one must work through the leavings with time-honoured patience, bent-back and plodding steps, never looking to science to relieve one burden. The following was how one observer described the conservative method of the Chinese:

[the Chinese] can dig an earth hole with any man, and in a paddock or at a pump he has patience beyond that of ordinary mortals; but quartz is a material hard to knock out, and troublesome to deal with afterwards. [The Chinese], therefore, has scarcely intruded on that domain, his only attempt, so far, having been on Hiscock's diggings, where the "Kienvooqua Company" has struck boldly into the auriferous stone, though [the Chinese] has variously estimated the depth he has there attained at "ten feet" and "one hundred weight."\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ballarat Star}, 23 March 1860; Thomas McCombie, \textit{op.cit.}, p.189

\textsuperscript{16}J. A. Patterson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.178

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Tbid.}, pp.135-6
But the Chinese were more skilful and competitive than what was commonly assumed. Victoria’s Secretary of Mines, R. Brough Smyth, vouched that ‘a good deal of ingenuity and much neat turning of the wrist’ were required in panning. He claimed the Chinese to be good miners in shallow ground. ‘A Chinaman will stand for hours up to the middle in water scooping gravel from the beds of the streams, while his partners wash the stuff in cradles or boxes on the bank.’ The Examiner of September 1858 reported the Chinese obtaining one fifth of the entire Victorian gold product. When Charles Wentworth Dilke visited the Victorian goldfields in the late 1860s, he marvelled at the unpretentious skills of the Chinese diggers at Castlemaine and Sandhurst.

....they do what they please. I saw hundreds of them washing quietly and quickly in the old Bendigo Creek, finding an ample living in the leavings of the whites. So successful have they been that a few Europeans have lately been taking to their plan, and an old Frenchman who died here lately, and who, from his working persistently in worn-out fields, had always been thought to be a harmless idiot, left behind him twenty thousand pounds, obtained by working in company with the Chinese.

Others confirmed what Dilke had seen. Though the Chinese ‘picked up the crumbs left by

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19 Examiner, 25 September 1858, p.8; Ballarat Star, 22 February 1860, p.2

20 At one time he was considered to be a likely successor to Gladstone’s ruling Liberal Party.

21 Charles Dilke, Greater Britain, Methuen Haynes, Melbourne, (1868), 1985, p.100
their more ambitious Christian brethren', they nonetheless did remarkably well. 'For instance', said Kerr, 'a party of six Chinamen purchased a claim from some Europeans, who did not think it worth their while to continue the mine. They paid £45 as purchase money, and during nine months obtained nearly £1,800 from the despised claim, with a prospect of a further continuance.'

The Chinese were after a quick profit. By making small concessions in the adoption of simple machines, they were able to hold on profitably in the short term. For example, the Chinese made extensive use of the simple puddling machines right up to the teens of the twentieth century. Puddling machines were estimated to be five times as efficient as the old mode of hand washing but they cost only £75. Around 12 ounces of gold per day could be obtained with the usual party of four men per machine or about 37s per day per worker. Until the mid 1860s, puddling machines continued to prove profitable and some Chinese used them to undertake sizeable operations. Ah Sing and You Quock each applied for a permit in 1867 to divert 1,000,000 gallons of water a day from the Woolshed Creek to satisfy their mining endeavours.

From the 1870s individual mining became a marginal contribution to the

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24R. Brough Smyth, loc.cit.

production of gold as the force of economies of scale triumphed.\textsuperscript{26} Mine fields clanged with noise and steamy energy as sophisticated windlasses, gigantic batteries, beam pumps, boilers and mullock hills now dominated the scenery. The \textit{Victorian Yearbook} of 1874 reported the following: 'Gold-mining in Victoria, instead of being as formerly practised by the individual miner, is now almost entirely in the hands of companies.'\textsuperscript{27} The Chinese, however, stood apart from the sweeping tide of industrial change.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Alluvial Miner & & Quartz Miner \\
\hline
1877 & 47 & 8 & 0 & 139 & 12 & 0 \\
1878 & 47 & 3 & 6 & 138 & 7 & 7 \\
1879 & 48 & 10 & 1 & 118 & 8 & 7 \\
1880 & 49 & 14 & 2 & 129 & 11 & 7 \\
1881 & 62 & 0 & 9 & 141 & 19 & 2 \\
1882 & 68 & 14 & 1 & 131 & 19 & 5 \\
1883 & 66 & 4 & 4 & 132 & 13 & 2 \\
1884 & 76 & 4 & 2 & 144 & 9 & 10 \\
1885 & 75 & 17 & 2 & 148 & 19 & 11 \\
1886 & 72 & 11 & 2 & 144 & 13 & 11 \\
1887 & 68 & 5 & 4 & 125 & 12 & 0 \\
1888 & 76 & 17 & 7 & 121 & 8 & 11 \\
1889 & 78 & 13 & 11 & 124 & 11 & 7 \\
1890 & 74 & 10 & 10 & 120 & 18 & 6 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Value of Gold per Alluvial and Quartz Miner, 1877-1890}
\end{table}

\textit{Source: Victorian Yearbook, 1890, p.358}

\textsuperscript{26}Weston Bate, \textit{op.cit.}, p.195

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Victorian Yearbook}, 1874, paragraph 439, p.170
From the 1880s a shift amongst European miners in favour of quartz mining had begun. In late 1881 the number of alluvial miners continued to exceed the number of quartz miners but in the course of the next ten years, the proportion of quartz miners dominated. By the twentieth century, the number of quartz miners exceeded alluvial miners by almost 1,500. But no such transition was evident amongst the Chinese. Alluvial miners dominated their community well into the twentieth century. The proportion of quartz miners amongst the Chinese never surpassed ten percent.

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**Table 7i.2 Chinese and Non-Chinese Male Miners in Victoria, 1871-1901**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alluvial a)</th>
<th>Quartz b)</th>
<th>Defined a) + b)</th>
<th>Undefined c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Chinese 1871</td>
<td>26,916</td>
<td>9,408</td>
<td>36,324</td>
<td>16,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>12,035</td>
<td>9,270</td>
<td>21,305</td>
<td>13,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>5,098</td>
<td>6,847</td>
<td>11,945</td>
<td>7,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>9,068</td>
<td>10,522</td>
<td>19,590</td>
<td>2,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese   1871</td>
<td>9,669</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>9,781</td>
<td>3,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>4,476</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>4,577</td>
<td>2,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1,364</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1,498</td>
<td>694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Victorian Censuses 1871, 1881, 1891 and Commonwealth Census 1901 under 'Occupations'.*

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The technical breakthrough which finally destroyed the viability of manual labour on the goldfields was the success achieved in dissolving gold from telluride with bromo-
cyanide in 1899. This enabled a virtual re-working of all the old fields whose millions of grains of gold had hitherto eluded the cruder appliances. The diamond drill, rock drill and high explosives, all sparingly used in the Victorian mines in the 1870s, were used freely at the end of the century. The Chinese diggers who persisted with home-contrived puddles and sluice boxes were effectively using mid-nineteenth century technical ingenuity to compete against the sophisticated, powerful, science-based technology of the twentieth century. Now that thousands of tons of golden gravel were pumped up by suction dredges, it was virtually impossible to make the Chinese labour-intensive method of gold extraction pay. In the fourteen years from 1900, over £5 million of gold was dredged in Victoria and New South Wales.

After a brief lapse in the 1920s, gold mining was revived again in the 1930s. The higher price of gold in the depression revitalised capital investment in the industry. From 1930 to 1934, the number of new mines registered in Victoria rose from 28 to 160. Old fields throbbed to the pulse of life once more, restored by flotation, diesel power stations, electric pumps and new scientific ways of prospecting. At Woods Point and Gaffney’s Creek, deeper reefs were discovered at the old Morning Star Mine and at mine A1. In an era of world metallurgy and giant mining, individual prospectors who attempted to find lodes without the aid of capital and machines obtained few rewards for their courage.

29Ibid, p.255
30Ibid, pp.311, 317
31Ibid, pp.291, 312
The reluctance of the Chinese to adapt to new ways of mining condemned them to an increasingly marginal position in the gold industry. Up to ninety percent of all Chinese miners in Victoria throughout the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries worked in alluvial fields. There were no Chinese engineers on the Bendigo goldfields. It cannot be held that the Chinese were forced to trudge the dead-end of mining because the all-white mining boards conspired against them. No discriminatory legislation had been passed to prevent the from Chinese raising capital or work for wages in European companies. Rather, a desire for quick gain, insufficient exposure to modern education, and a lack of touch with developments in the contemporary world kept the Chinese on the periphery of the mining industry.

A recognition of the superiority of Western technology and the importance of adapting technology to serve the needs of markets were argued by a number of historians to be important causes for the striking economic success of the Chinese in Southeast Asia since the late nineteenth century. For instance, throughout much of the nineteenth century, tin-mining in South Siam was a monopoly of the Chinese. It was characterised by small units of labour-intensive production organised in partnerships or small companies. Yet by the end of the century, Chinese miners unwilling to or were unable to accommodate more advanced technical changes and heavy equipment like steam pumps and dredges, were

32Table 7i.2; Hansard, 1856-7, vol.ix, p.749
33Andrew Markus, Fear and Hatred, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, p.101
driven out of business when heavily capitalised European firms entered the tin industry.\textsuperscript{35}

According to Skinner, the Chinese in Thailand who were successful in the rice-milling industry were often quick to learn modern technical methods, set up steam mills and hired Western (later Cantonese) engineers to run them.\textsuperscript{36} The first steam rice mill was built by an American company in 1858. By 1870, the more long-sighted Chinese began setting up steam mills of their own and had entered into arrangement with freight and insurance. In 1879 the number of Chinese steam rice mills had surpassed the number of European mills. When electric lights were introduced, the larger Chinese mills took immediate advantage of them to operate day and night shifts. Western competitors who failed to keep up were driven out of business. In 1890, the Chinese pioneered a process for producing clean, white rice as opposed to the coarser cargo rice and invented a complete set of rice-milling equipment.\textsuperscript{37}

Jennifer Cushman confirmed these views in her research into the rise of the Chinese Khaw family in Thailand. She has argued that the Khaw Group’s dominance of the tin-mining industry of Thailand was to a large measure attributed to Khaw Sim Bee acknowledging the backwardness of Siam’s mining industry. Through his high political position he persuaded the Thai Government to support upgrading of the industry which included improving communication facilities in the mining areas (by excavating a channel

\textsuperscript{35}J. Steinberg (ed.), In Search of Southeast Asia, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1971, 1987, p.218


\textsuperscript{37}Ibid, pp.104-105
and dock to expand shipping services to carry extra ore) and transforming Phuket from a ‘rotten and unhealthy...collection of Chinese huts and hovels’ to a place ‘with attractions for capital and enterprise’.

Modern extraction methods were widely introduced by the Khaw Group. Their Tongkah Harbour Tin Dredging Company was the first to introduce bucket dredging to Phuket in 1906. In 1908, ore was recovered on a regular basis and by 1911, five dredges were operating in the harbour and over £30,000 had been paid out in dividends. In 1910 Tongkah Harbour Company was the only company employing dredges and their extraction accounted for over one quarter of Siam’s tin output. Eight years later, the company was responsible for half of Siam’s output.

Table 7i.3 Tin Extraction By Dredging over other Methods, Siam 1910-1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dredging Tons</th>
<th>Other Tons</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>2,140</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td>6,750</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>2,430</td>
<td>6,590</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>2,890</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>3,440</td>
<td>8,700</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>4,140</td>
<td>9,150</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>4,110</td>
<td>8,830</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Vis-à-vis the introduction of dredging, the Khaw Group invested heavily in a large...
up-to-date smelting plant (the large number of blast furnaces then in operation were small, traditional back-yard contraptions) with four reverberating furnaces, electrically driven equipment and a laboratory for testing samples. In 1908 the Khaw group (Eastern Shipping Co.) smelted 11,4000 tons of ore and unrefined tin or 18 percent of the tin shipped from the Straits. By 1910 their share had increased to 29%.40

Finally, it has been suggested that the Khaw Group's and other Southeast Asian Chinese's movement into new technology was a response to particular situational conditions. The most important being the entry of Southeast Asia into the world economy in the late nineteenth century as an exporter of raw material. The growing and increasingly prosperous populations of industrialising Europe demanded more coffee, sugar and tea for consumption, more tin for canning and more rubber for motor vehicles.41 With the arrival of the steamship, a flood of imports and the introduction of Western capital and large-scale commercial efficiency, the Chinese in traditional commercial reserves were challenged to seek new, competitive methods of production.42 In Victoria, in the absence of any permanent interest in the development of their new home, the Chinese did not experience the same pressure to defend their enterprises.

40Ibid, pp. 74-5


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ii) Furniture-making

The first foray of the Chinese into the woodworking industry was making boxes to send gold back home to China. Simple boxes of 8 or 9 inches square with auger holes on each side were assembled together without the want of much skill. As gold declined, more Chinese turned to carpentry in their quest for employment. In the early 1860s about 300 Chinese worked as self-employed carpenters. They began by making plain cedar-bottomed chairs then gradually diversified to make washstands, toilet tables and ordinary bedroom furniture. Their goods were sold by hawkers throughout the suburbs of Melbourne.

By the 1870s, cabinet-making was increasingly becoming a specialist bent of the Chinese. But their products remained crude as the arts of dovetailing and morticing were virtually unknown. Glue and nails were widely used. Technical improvements occurred in the late 1870s and early 1880s after the Chinese had learnt from the Europeans fundamental skills in planing, turning and polishing. By the mid 1880s the Chinese were notes to produced a far superior class of furniture and supplying many European firms. There were over sixty Chinese carpentry and cabinet-making firms in Melbourne. Ye

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2Ibid; Andrew Markus, 'Divided We Fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900', Labour History, no.26 May 1974, p.1; Argus, 16 April 1880, p.6
Hing, Quong Ack and Co. was one of the largest Chinese cabinet makers at Little Bourke Street. Between 1883 to 1885 its factory extended over three allotments. Ye Quing's three-storey factory at Crossley Lane held over £500 worth of furniture and employed some twenty workers. Mr. Newbell claimed that Chinese competition had reduced his furniture receipts by almost a half (From £1100 to £600) in six months.

An Inspector of Factories in 1893 said it required a skilled eye to distinguish Chinese furniture from European furniture. He could not think of any class of people better imitators than the Chinese. 'After they see an article they can copy it with great exactness.' Some of the most splendid sideboards made by the Chinese fetched prices as high as £25. An anti-Chinese league led by the woodworkers was established in April 1880 in protest against a contract issued without a provision to prevent a Chinese tender for 500 dozen chairs for the Exhibition Buildings. As both the Chinese and Europeans carpenters were straddling similar levels of industrial efficiency and neither side had access to a superior technology, race became an issue in the conflict for control of the market place.

In the thirty years prior to World War I, there was little mechanisation in the

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3 Sands and MacDougall, Melbourne Directories, 1883-1885
5 Argus, 16 April 1880, p.6
7 Ibid, Report of the Inquiry Board, paragraph 11
8 Argus, 16 April 1880; 6 May 1880

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furniture industry. Of the fifty-nine European furniture factories, forty-eight, or over eighty percent of them were without power in 1881. Only a small minority had begun to use steam-turned lathes. Work was dominated by the power of muscles, skill and application. The percentage of factories not using power was high at 61 percent in 1911. The basic tools of the trade consisted of a saw, a chisel and a plane.9 The situation of sawmilling in Thailand was similar. Prior to the 1880s, teak and other heavy construction timbers used primarily for domestic construction and shipping were sawed solely by hand in Chinese sheds. When Europeans entered the industry in 1883 they built steam mills in Bangkok to saw the logs floated down the Jaophraya River. But due to the large expense involved in setting up steam saw mills, few were built. By 1908 there were only a total of ten, seven European-owned and three-Chinese owned.10

In the absence of large-scale mechanisation, the ingredients for success in the furniture trade depended heavily on ingenuity, competitive wages and long hours of work. In this respect, the Chinese worker had an advantage over the white worker because he worked longer hours, sometimes up to fourteen hours, had no commitments to immediate family life and was able to live very frugally. It was the practice for most Chinese to rent a small room in the workshop for no more than 4/- a week.11 Their competitiveness enabled the Chinese came to capture from between one third to over a half of the entire furniture trade in Victoria in the 1890s. The cabinetmaking industry was practically a

9Age, 10 May 1880, p.3

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Chinese monopoly.

Table 7ii.3  Furniture-making in Victoria, 1881-1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of power used</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of manufactories</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive of Chinese using</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steam</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistical Register of Victoria, 1881-1911

Under these circumstances, European furniture manufacturers took action to protect their market share. Anger arose over the 'sweat labour' provided by the Chinese. They were widely believed to be undercutting wages and driving down the Australian standard of living. It was decided that if the Chinese were compelled by law to pay the same level of wages and maintain the same hours of work as the Europeans, the immigrants would soon be driven out of the industry. Legislation was expected to work the miracle.
### Table 7ii.4

**Return of Furniture Factories, Number and Percentages of Workers 1889-1900**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of hands</th>
<th>No. of factrs.</th>
<th>As % of total hands</th>
<th>No. of hands</th>
<th>No. of factrs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1526</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1121</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1340</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1015</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1223</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1239</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories, Workrooms and Shops, *VPP, 1899-1900*

The Factories and Shops Act of 1896 attempted to arrest Chinese competition by appointing an all-white Furniture Board to determine the minimum rates and the working hours in all branches of the furniture industry. The determination came into force on 19th April 1897 with the minimum wage fixed at 7s 6d per eight hour day. This was

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raised to 8s per day in 1898. The Factory Act discriminated against the Chinese in its definition of a factory. One Chinaman working in a workshop made a factory whereas the minimum number of Europeans defined as comprising a factory was four. No person was to work in any furniture workshop except between the hours 7:30am and 5:30pm Monday to Friday and 7:30am and 2:00pm on Saturday. All goods had to be clearly marked with the name of the maker so a distinction could be made between European and Chinese products.

Despite its adverse intents toward the immigrants, the Act failed dismally to destroy Chinese competition. Three years after its introduction, the Chinese remained formidable. Inspector Ellis reporting in the late 1890s said that, "The European cabinetmakers complain bitterly of the dullness of trade and state their inability to compete with the Chinese. The determination of the Furniture Board has not, I feel sure, improved the position of the European manufacturer, whilst the Chinese as a body have benefited by it." Another Inspector reported that many complaints were made with reference to severe Chinese competition in this trade, and it was generally accepted that the Chinese had a monopoly of the cheaper class of work.

The Factory Act failed because the Chinese counteracted the wage regulations with

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14Ibid, pp.1373-4

15Ibid
a system of piece-rates.\textsuperscript{16} Many Chinese preferred this system as it gave them greater flexibility and for some, it meant the ability to take on other jobs. Some furniture-makers had shares in market-gardens, others were partners in grocery businesses.\textsuperscript{17} The employers pursued this method not because they were exploiting their workforce but because the workers often demanded it. The basis was that piece rate benefited the efficient worker whereas a minimum wage could only be attractive to the slow worker.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, in the absence of social welfare and the Old Age Pension in China, it was customary for the stronger workers to help and feed the weaker, older workers. The retired Chinese people had always depended on the income and support of the younger members of the family for survival. Until recent times, Chinese parents expected at least one of their children to stay at home and look after them. Hence the minimum wage, based on a matrix of social equality, was totally meaningless to the Chinese immigrants, as it undermined the very essence of traditional Chinese hierarchy.\textsuperscript{19} Those writing in the nineteenth century, such as Pember Reeves, who denounced the obstinate stupidity of the immigrants `conniving against their own oppression',\textsuperscript{20} did not understand Chinese culture.

Secondly, despite efforts by the furniture unionists `to educate the public' on how


\textsuperscript{17}VPRO, Defunct Business Firms Records, VPRS 933, 1899-1922


\textsuperscript{19}Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories, \textit{op.cit.}, \textit{VPP} 1907, loc.cit., from Mr. Bishop; \textit{Age}, 10 May 1880, p.3; \textit{Argus}, 28 July 1932

\textsuperscript{20}W. Pember Reeves, \textit{op.cit.}, p.61
to distinguish the 'genuine article' from the Chinese article, 'pocketism' overruled all efforts in arousing greater patriotism. ²¹ When a working person set out to purchase furniture he did not concern himself much as to who manufactured the article as long as the price suited his pocket. Moreover, many Chinese manufacturers benefited from the stamping clause. The appearance of name and address on each article enabled the purchaser to go directly to the Chinese and this saved the furniture dealer from coming in for a share of the profits. ²² In reality, the stamping clause proved more distasteful to Europeans than to the Chinese. Many more Europeans complained about its invasion of privacy than the Chinese. ²³

Discontented with the ineffectiveness of the Factories and Shops Act, European competitors made further efforts to eliminate Chinese rivalry. In 1906 a bill proposed by Samuel Gillott and Mr. Murray, called the Chinese Employment Act, set out to introduce licensing provisions for each Chinese furniture worker for a fee of two shillings and sixpence and Chinese employers were forbidden to keep as boarders or lodgers Chinese persons employed by them in any factory or workroom. ²⁴ But the Bill was never passed. Had it been accepted it would not have succeeded in driving the Chinese elsewhere. As the licence would have been widely evaded, the accommodation regulation ignored and the entire legislation would have been rendered defective, as the way all laws calculated to

²¹ Andrew Markus, 'Divided We Fall', Labour History, op.cit., p.5


control the immigrants were doomed. In the first ten years of the twentieth century, Europeans employing some of the best cabinetmakers and machinery struggled to show a profit.  

But the dominance of the Chinese in the furniture trade was not to last. There were 156 Chinese factories employing 699 Chinese workers in 1914. In the next year, the number of workers had fallen by more than a half and the number of factories by nearly a third. At the end of the war, the percentage of Chinese furniture-makers to the total wood-working population stood at 14 percent, whereas in their heyday, over half of the market belonged to them. In 1925 of the 3,053 furniture-makers in Victoria, only 298 were Chinese. By 1930 the Chinese constituted a negligible 2 percent of the entire market.

World War I was the major short term cause of the demise of the Chinese furniture-makers. The war brought panic and unsettlement to many of the Chinese sojourners. Many put forward their plans to returned home early and this put enormous pressure on competitive wages. Neither the 1896 Factories and Shops Act nor the 1906 Licensing Bill were deeply detrimental to the Chinese furniture industry. The fundamental issue conducive to the immigrants' eventual decline was technology. In the same way the Chinese miners fell behind in their industry, the Chinese woodworkers did not sufficiently advance with the times by seizing hold of the latest improvements. Inspector Bishop remarked that many of the Chinese furniture workshops admitted around the 1910s of having difficulties keeping up with 'the better article' manufactured by those 'who strive to

25Ibid, YPP, 1909, no.20, vol.2 part 1, p.273

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keep well abreast of the times and are always to the fore with the latest and the most fashionable designs.\textsuperscript{26} From around World War I furniture-makers were investing in more sophisticated equipment and advanced technology. J. Lyng observed that since 1911, the Chinese in the furniture trade had suffered notable decline. Most of the European furniture businesses had established large factories with own up-to-date, time-saving machinery and the individual Chinese craftsmen were unable to compete with them.\textsuperscript{27}

The critical transition was the introduction of electric power tools. Manually powered furniture manufactories dropped tremendously from 61 percent in 1911 to 12 percent in 1921 and a mere 4 percent in 1933. The hothouse atmosphere of World War I stimulated the growth of manufacturing.\textsuperscript{28}

As mechanisation brought with it standardisation and mass production, the small-sized furniture workshop became obsolete. Spacious factories sprung up. It was common to find modern furniture manufacturers opening up huge outlets, each extending from between three to five adjacent allotments. Maple's Furniture Proprietary Limited was situated at 256 to 264 Clarendon Street, South Melbourne, 122-126 Swan Street, Richmond and 181-191 Chapel Street, Prahran.\textsuperscript{29} Ackman's had a large, open showroom at 242-255 Smith Street, Fitzroy. The Richmond Furnishing Company was headquartered


\textsuperscript{27}J. Lyng, \textit{Non-Britishers in Australia}, MUP, Melbourne, 1927, p.166-7

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Statistical Register of Victoria}, 1911, 1921, 1933

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Argus}, 16 September 1916, p.9
at 116-120 Swan Street. Tye and Co. was the only notable Chinese owned furniture emporium which kept abreast of economies of scale. This company had five large showrooms in Melbourne, Prahran, Richmond, Fitzroy and Brunswick.

One of the chief advantages of buying from the Europeans, besides a large quantity and choice, was the ability to pay by credit. From the 1920s, home buyers had increasing opportunities to buy furniture as well as the vast, new generation of electric consumer durables like electric lights, irons, kettle, fans, toasters, cookers and such, on hire and lay-by terms. Lounge suites, wardrobes, dining tables and chairs now could be had for a small deposit. The following advertisements, representing many of its kind, gave European furniture-makers a decisive edge in the business.

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30 Argus, 2 October, 6 November 1918
The Lay-Buy system - Yes, it is very easily explained. You will be wanting furniture in a little while? Very well, you come along to our store, select what you require at lowest cash price, pay 2 shillings in the £1 down, and arrange to settle the balance in instalments...weekly or monthly. The amount of these is left to yourself. We lay-by the goods until required.

...The suite marked £15 today may be £17/10 next week, prices are rising in all Lines. What a fine investment to buy now on the LAY-BY system. Its a sure profit.
Richmond Furnishing Co.

116-120 Swan Street

A "GLORY BOX" OF FURNITURE

You...all of you, Young and Old...know what a "Glory Box" means. But one of furniture! That is certainly a novelty, and well worth your attention.

IT MEANS SHORTLY

That if you are to be married in a few months time - or if you will require furniture in the near future, and haven't the ready money - you can obtain it at Bedrock Cash Prices, and pay for it in advance by Weekly or Monthly Instalments that you can afford - you fix these yourself. All the cash to be found is 2/ in the £1 of the total value.

This is

THE FAMOUS NEW SYSTEM,

THE LAY-BY

To buy Furniture on the Lay-By System Means Making Money. By the time it is paid for it will be worth considerably more - prices advance almost daily etc...

32 *Argus*, 6 November 1918, p.13
The Chinese did not offer credit freely. If they did, it was usually given to the Chinese rather than to Europeans. Ballarat storekeeper, Ah Shing had debts due to him from sixty-seven Chinese and two Europeans. The Chinese were preferred debtors because they were people "of their sort", people "in the clan". If the debts were doomed to be bad then it was better to be cheated by "someone you know." Launderer Ah New of Carlton had bad debts totally £91 from Kee Hin, Gin Kew, Kee Ten and Jew Leong. Merchant Ah On of Little Bourke Street accumulated £222.5.6 worth of bad debts, mostly from Chinese. Those immigrants who loaned freely to Europeans were usually naturalized citizens who had settled many years in Australia, like Mildura storekeeper Archie Ah Gee who had debts due to him from thirty-six Europeans. After living almost thirty years in Australia, dairyman Ah Chan at his death had debts due to him from ninety-nine individuals, sixty-six of whom were Europeans.

But generally, most Chinese immigrants were not in favour of giving credit as they were after a quick profit and "ready cash". The lay-by method of payment was not acceptable. Few Chinese were willing to wait months or years for the collection of debts, when the anxiety of an early reunion with their family stood foremost in their ultimate attainment.

All in all, the small Chinese craftsmen were unable to compete as the industry

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33VPRO, Probate Record no.150.226 (28/P3 unit 713), Ah Kee; 139.234 (28/P3 unit 538), Ah Shing; 386.356 (4465), Ah Hay.

34China, Time-Life Books, Amsterdam, 1984, p.149; VPRO, Probate Record no. 262.967

35VPRO, Probate Record no. 116.215 (28/p3 unit 137)
underwent its metamorphosis in the teens of the twentieth century. In the beginning, long
hours, frugal living and piece-rates enabled the immigrants to compete successfully against
the Europeans. From after World War I however, the Chinese were squeezed out as large
factories, equipped with modern, advanced machinery entered the industry. Circumscribed
by tradition and a lack of capital, the small, labour-intensive Chinese woodworkers were
unable to keep up and these were the main reasons for their eventual decline.
iii) Market-gardening

Almost from the first moment the Chinese diggers stepped on to Australian soil, their
talent for intensive cultivation attracted widespread attention. In his memoirs, a Victorian
police officer recalled how a group of Chinese detained at Portland gaol had miraculously
transformed the wilderness of the public reserve into a flourishing garden.¹ French miner
Antoine Fauchery prognosticated in 1856 an important place to be reserved for the
Chinese as cultivators in the colony.² Before the passing of a decade, a report in the
Inglewood Advertiser appeared to confirm Fauchery’s predictions.

The few acres of ground under cultivation by the Chinese on the banks of
the Loddon is but a fair sample of the many acres under the care of other
Chinese all over Victoria. There is scarcely a town but is now well supplied
with all kinds of household vegetables by the Celestial gardeners.³

J. A. Patterson was no less impressed by the works of the Chinese market-

¹John Sadleir, Recollections of a Victoria Police Officer, Penguin Colonial Facsimile,
Harmondsworth, (1913), 1973, p.114

²Antoine Fauchery, Letters from a Miner in Australia, Georgian House, Melbourne,
1857, p.104

³Inglewood Advertiser 9 December 1863
gardeners in Castlemaine, Sandhurst and Ballarat. 'Set a Chinese gardener down on a bit of soil, however small', said the admiring observer, 'and give him a supply of water, and he will force the earth to give up its fruits in season and out of season.' New South Wales statistician Timothy Coghlan claimed that the Chinese had an effective monopoly of the market-gardening industry in the 1870s. 'Seventy-five percent of the whole of the vegetables of the country are being grown by Chinese.' Housewives in the countryside welcomed the Chinese market-gardeners because they made available for the first time well-grown green vegetables to those who did not live close to the main city markets. When she first arrived in rural Victoria, Ada Cambridge pronounced that,

with a poultry yard and a cow, and John Chinaman's vegetables, even a poor parson could live like a prince. Two or three times a week, regular as clockwork, "John" came to the back door with his loaded baskets of the vegetables in season, fresh and good, various and cheap...You will hardly find a private kitchen garden except on the isolated stations, where the gardener is nearly always a Chinaman. Every little township depends for the food it can least afford to do without, on the industry of this man...  

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Journalist E. M. Clowes marvelled at the Chinese's ingenuity in wringing such abundance from the land and above all, his unswerving dedication to his toil. 'The Chinaman is the most careful and thrifty, the most loving gardener in the world. He seems as if his little plot of land grows to be to him oasis child - no matter how small it is.' Clowes was told by the principal of a Melbourne horticultural college he would give anything to have a Chinaman to teach his boys vegetable growing.

From the late nineteenth century, market gardening was the industry which afforded the Chinese most employment. In 1891, 2,658 or over thirty percent of all Chinese males in Victoria were gardeners. A decade later, the market-gardening population to the total immigrant population had risen to over forty percent. Since the majority of the Chinese were of rural background, the popularity of gardening was not surprising. Until very recent years, at least three-quarters of China's breadwinners obtained their livelihood directly from the soil. More strikingly, for at least 2,000 years, Chinese farmers have tilled the same fields with very little change in method. The continuous agricultural tradition of the Chinese stretched back unbroken to before the Han dynasty (BC.206 - AD.221).

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8 Ibid, p.198


Traditional Chinese crop yields gave returns of twenty to thirty times the amount of seed-grain sown, whereas in medieval Europe, returns of three or four times were the average. As the population increased, Chinese farmers intensified production by using more labour-intensive techniques such as transplanting, meticulous weeding, heavy manuring and double-cropping. By the eighteenth century, farmers in the Pearl delta area...
of Guangzhou habitually grew three crops a year; two of rice and one of oil seed, turmeric, indigo, peanuts, rapeseed, tobacco, opium or soybean. The striking feature of traditional southern Chinese farming was that while the economic relations within this mode of production remained small and limited, they were sufficiently integrated to sustain significant increases in agricultural productivity and rapid economic diversification.

The small, family holding was the characteristic unit of management. Each farm was around two and a half acres and the land was fragmented into several half acre parcels, sometimes separated up to half a mile from each other. Surprisingly, the inconvenience of moving from field to field was not considered a serious hindrance to rising productivity. Cultivation relied heavily on human power and the machinery used was crude and simple. It was only in the late nineteenth century that the traditional mode of farming, with its reliance on the intensive application of human labour could no longer respond to the demands of a rising population.

For at least forty years, the Chinese growers in Victoria held the initiative in market-gardening. They used a range of traditional techniques widely and effectively applied in their homeland.


15John Lossing Buck, ibid., pp.l81, 183

The very earliest development of market-gardening outside Melbourne was along the coastal regions of Brighton, Moorabbin and Cheltenham and the inland areas of Bentleigh, Keysborough, Dandenong, Lyndhurst and Cranbourne. The first European settlers thought the soil around Melbourne poor and useless. Nothing of value could really be produced. In the late 1840s the virtues of the sand belt was realised. But large numbers of growers, including the Chinese, did not move into the district until the 1850s and 1860s. In 1865 there were 1,000 growers in the Moorabbin Road District of whom 400 were market gardeners.

In the nineteenth century there was no direct association between agricultural development and the systematic application of scientific knowledge. Little was known about Australian soils except for the widespread evidence of phosphate deficiency. And virtually nothing was known about the methods of intensive agriculture. One writer giving advice on the sort of immigrants needed in Australia vouched that skilled agriculturalists and sober and steady workers would have no need ‘to fear a lengthened want of employment: and for many such there is yet ample room.’ And certainly, the Chinese were the only notable group of skilled agriculturalists. In a prize-winning essay on

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18 Lynette J. Peel, Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835-1880, MUP, Melbourne, 1974, pp.7, 10, 45


20 J. H. Kerr, Glimpses of Life in Victoria, Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, p.335
'Agriculture in Victoria' (1860), the only issue of importance raised by the author was manuring.21 The advice to recycle human and animal waste matter was merely spelling out an ancient practice of the Chinese growers. One of the concluding recommendations of the 1894 Royal Commission on Vegetable Products identified the need to impress 'upon the minds of our farmers by object lessons, practical explanations by experts and otherwise, the enormous importance of a rotation of crops, the benefit of irrigation the importance of maintaining the fertility of the soil and the desirability of cultivating different crops, so as "not to carry their eggs in one basket."'22 But none of these suggestions were new to the Chinese. Guangdong farmers had long ago understood the importance of growing a wide variety of crops or 'changing seed', so they called it, as immunity against natural disaster. An old saying from Kukong, Guangdong goes: Changing the seed is the most important in farming; Deep ploughing but shallow planting.23 For similar insurance measures, farm land was fragmented and dispersed.

As late as 1905 there was no quantum leap in agricultural knowledge. The kinds of advice extended to market-gardeners through the pages of the Agricultural Journal of Victoria continued to be based largely on intuition and trial and error. For instance, it advised frequent hoeing to save watering and deep working and heavy manuring of the soil after harvesting in order to better prepare the soil for the reception of the next crop.24

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22 Royal Commission on Vegetable Products, VPP, 1894, vol.1, no.C.5

23 John Lossing Buck, op.cit., p.242

There was no promotion of scientific research for bigger and better yields until 1909, when experimental fieldwork began in a Government sponsored market garden near Cheltenham railway station. The following year *The Victorian Yearbook* reported enthusiastically upon the work underway:

In the experimental market garden at Cheltenham vegetables of every description are being grown for market, under the supervision of a practical market-gardener. Manure tests of every description are being made and the results tabulated. Vegetable diseases and insect pests injurious to crops are also being investigated. It is intended to make the experimental garden the demonstration ground for new varieties of seeds of all kinds. Carried out upon such common-sense lines, and based upon commercial success only, the results will, in a year or two, offer much useful information to the suburban vegetable grower. 25

According to a report from the Agricultural Superintendent in the following year (1911), the progress of science in agriculture was obvious. It said:

Vegetables are now being grown on this farm under manurial conditions unheard of a few years ago. Stable manure has been, and still is, the most satisfactory fertiliser used by the market gardeners along the coast from Brighton to Mordialloc; but, as will be observed from the tabulated returns published below, artificial fertilisers have given marked returns in many instances...The real value of this farm lies in its monetary returns as everything grown is marketed at a profit...a well tilled garden yields from ten to twenty times better returns when compared with general farm crops grown on the same area of land. Very few people fully realise the wonderful progress that has been made in the various branches of market-gardening...There are pests that require continuous attention and care to combat. Without this the business of market-gardening cannot be successfully carried on, and the wide-awake, aggressive and progressive growers who wage war against pests are likely to grow more and better

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vegetables and make a financial success of the business.\textsuperscript{26}

The Chinese market-gardeners did not apply scientific or technical knowledge to further their output. They were successful because of ingenuity and hardwork, and they filled a gap in agriculture. But as the wider community of growers began to use science and technology, the traditional skills of the immigrants became less reliable and profitable. Chinese incursions into experimental farming were exceptional and were only undertaken by merchants with sufficient time and capital. The rare experimental ventures undertaken were connected with tobacco-growing and sugar refining in North Queensland. Sam Sing's lengthy tobacco experiments were finally defeated by the cane grub in 1908.\textsuperscript{27} The installation of a vacuum plant at the Hop Wah Sugar Plantation in Cairns gave the company a superior class of sugar. But in the absence of a continual up-dating of 'primitive processing machinery' and investment in 'insufficient machinery', the company was forced into liquidation in 1885.\textsuperscript{28} Government Interpreter, Charles P. Hodges, reported in 1895 that the Chinese at Albury had been beaten clean out of market-gardening by a Mr. Plumber who irrigated a 40 acre block on the Murray with a turbine. By using modern machinery he grew larger and better vegetables at lower prices and practically supplied the district, which for a long time was entirely dependent on the Chinese for vegetables.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} J. M. B., Conner, 'Vegetable Gardens and Fodder Crops on the Government Experimental Farm, Cheltenham', \textit{Agricultural Journal of Victoria}, 10 May 1911, p.318
\item \textsuperscript{27} Cathie May, \textit{Topsawyers}, James Cook University Press, Townsville, 1984, p.21
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p.43
\item \textsuperscript{29} Factory Act Inquiry Board, Minutes, VPP, 1895-6, vol.3, no.44, Q6335
\end{itemize}

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In a similar vein, Mr. Jim Hyman, a long time grower and dealer in fruit and vegetables, attributed the downfall of the Chinese in Queensland banana industry to a certain scientific ineptitude. 'Bananas', he said, 'were first grown in Queensland, starting shortly after settlement took place. Production commenced in the Brisbane area, and gradually spread northwards to Cairns, Innisfail and the Tully River area. The Cairns production was mainly in the hands of the Chinese growers, and they were very successful until pests and diseases eventually wiped out the area. The reasons most widely quoted for the decline of the banana industry included floods and cyclones (1906), shipping difficulties, fruitfly regulations and the 'colour and gum' disease. But it seems that the aging Chinese population and their insulated background were also important, as the growers were culturally ill-equipped to deal with the problems which beset the industry after 1898; problems which were mainly connected with communication and the professionalisation of the industry. Language barriers insulated the Chinese from newspapers, social trends and the views of the Fruit Inspectors. The Chinese failed to realise the importance of complying with official guidelines. If they found the regulations too expensive or cumbersome, the attitude of the Chinese was to disregard it. Inspectors found it impossible to break the growers of their short-sighted and careless habits to rush green fruit onto the market in order to take advantage of high prices. Quong Mow Yuen was the only Chinese who made systematic attempts to upgrade the quality of Cairns bananas.

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31Cathie May, op.cit., pp.24, 26, 27

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A lack of scientific application and a failure to meet professional standards were not wholly responsible for the demise of the Chinese in market-gardening. Growers were also confronted with the commercialisation of the vegetable growing industry from around 1910. As ordinary vegetables, once wholly supplied by the Chinese, became more widely available from prepared seed packets and seedlings, growers began to 'market' their products. Positive steps were taken to draw in customers. As early as 1904 Sam Brundrett published a catalogue listing the variety of roses available from his Essendon nursery in Moonee Ponds Creek Road.

My stock of roses this season is very large, numbers are extensive, the plants are vigorous and clean. My prices are not the lowest but the plants are the best and I am confident that both will give satisfaction.32

The release of the popular and up-market Home and Garden magazine around 1911 encouraged many more growers to up-grade and advertise their products.33

Indeed, the direction of vegetable growing changed dramatically from the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Agriculture became more business-like and this was the main challenge to traditional Chinese growers.34 Farmers in the twentieth century faced new problems in technology, marketing and management. During the First

32 "Growing Up in the Nursery', The Age, Saturday Extra, 27 March 1993, p.15
33 Home and Garden, 1 July 1912, p.ii; 9 August 1911, p.v; 9 October 1911, p.vii
World War and throughout the 1920s, the economic pressures of rising production costs, barriers to overseas trade and uncertainty over Australia's capacity for sustained increases in primary production, aroused an interest to use science to ensure a viable productive capacity.\textsuperscript{35} It became clear that the long term survival of the pastoral and agricultural industries depended on an increased knowledge in a host of issues relating to soil types, genetics, plant and animal diseases. The acquisition of such knowledge required a huge capital investment and a large body of workers co-operating on many different facets of research.

It was in these circumstances that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research was created in 1926 with an aim to promote scientific research for the benefit of primary and secondary industries and at the same time, to encourage the pursuit of 'pure' scientific research.\textsuperscript{36} During the first twenty years of the Council's history, the emphasis was on applied work and the Council's ability to provide quick results was primal to the growing public recognition and support of its work.

At the end of the First World War, government sponsored irrigation schemes were laid down in Werribee and Narre Warren and the first vegetables were grown there in the early 1920s. The first growers attracted to these newly opened frontiers included many of the new immigrants from Italy and Greece, amongst whom were Domenico Favero and


\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid}, pp.1,38
Matteo Gazozola who became extremely successful in the wholesale vegetable industry.\textsuperscript{37} Spurred on by more land and an adequate supply of water, Sam Brundrett’s nursery also moved from Essendon to Narre Warren.\textsuperscript{38} Around the same time, the four Garfield brothers moved from Bentleigh to Werribee. They were the first to succeed in growing a wide range of vegetables on a commercial scale.

But the Chinese were less venturesome. They sought fortunes within familiar confines. In 1928 War Chen sold his one-third share of a market garden at Oakleigh and started his own business at Bentleigh. He rented 25 acres at Tucker Road from one of the Garfield brothers at £7 a week and employed four other Chinese from his home district, Sunhui, in Guangdong province. Together they grew an assortment of vegetables which they sold at the Victoria Market three times a week. The mainstays were cauliflower, cabbage, potatoes, radishes, spring onions, parsnips and tomatoes. Weeds was the main challenge to the business. War Chen’s son, David, now 80 years old and living in North Melbourne, recalled having spent many afternoons after school killing the recalcitrant weeds. During the Depression the Chens had difficulties making ends meet. The garden was finally sold in 1936. A milk bar in Victoria Street, Collingwood was purchased in the same year. This line of business proved much more successful. The original shop expanded to cover two adjacent premises and ran for fourteen years before it was sold in 1950. In 1952 David embarked on a grocery and import/export business under the name Wing Ying Cheung Co. Limited with six other Chinese from Sunhui County. This

\textsuperscript{37}Colin E. Cole (ed.), \textit{op.cit.}, p.135 and Introduction

\textsuperscript{38}`Growing Up in the Nursery’, \textit{The Age, op.cit.}
business operated in Little Bourke Street for 21 years.\footnote{All information on the Chen’s was obtained from an interview with David Chen on December 8th 1990 at his home in Victoria Street, North Melbourne. David’s eldest son is the proprietor of Red Lantern Restaurant, Little Bourke Street}

A report from the Department of Agriculture published in 1920 noted that the traditional, conservative Chinese market gardeners in Victoria had little ability to compete with European growers.

The bulk of the home-grown vegetables offered for sale in Sydney is raised by Chinamen, while in Victoria, the Celestial has long ago been almost forced out of the business by the white grower. Contrary to public opinion, vegetable growing does not demand such long hours as the industrious Mongolians suggests. Like any other business it requires the common-sense application of up-to-date methods, an intelligent recognition of the principles underlying the control of contrary elements (pests and diseases), a capacity to apply energy in the right direction, and sufficient ability to run the place on commercial lines.\footnote{A. J. Pinn and R. N. Makin, Vegetable Growing in New South Wales, Department of Agriculture, 1920, Preface}

The report then proceeded to ensure readers that the small plot size of one-man-per-acre used by the Chinese was obsolete. "Indeed, larger areas are usually more profitably worked if the crops are grown on a less intensive system so as to allow of horse
cultivation." Historian J. Lyng arrived at a similar predicament for the Chinese market-gardeners:

Once they produced most of the vegetables consumed in the cities and townships of Australia, but in spite of their marvellous thrift they are unable to hold their own with Europeans, who possess bigger areas and employ up-to-date implements. So the Chinese, by nature small holders and utterly conservative in their methods, give up gardening and switch over to business, for which their natural politeness and integrity make them eminently suited. 42

In summary, the Chinese in Victoria held the initiative in market-gardening for much of the nineteenth century. The immigrants were able to succeed as they brought with them the best in traditional farming technique. In the period where there was no direct association between agriculture and the application of science, the Chinese were vastly rewarded for their ingenuity, industry and thrift. But market-gardening did not exist in a vacuum. Like mining and furniture-making, its technology was subject to the changing needs of the market. By recreating peasant life in south China and remaining tied to a technology which could only effectively serve the needs of an enclosed, pre-industrial society, the Chinese rapidly lost their share of the green vegetable market as agriculture became more business-like in the twentieth century. An aging immigrant population, a lack of finance and a lack of exposure to consumer demands were the main drawback to occupational assimilation.

41Ibid. p.10
42J. Lyng, op.cit., p.167
iv) Domestic Service

While the Chinese strongholds in mining, furniture-making and market-gardening dissipated, as they were subjected to the powerful challenge of new technologies, the number of Chinese in specialised sections of the service industries remained relatively stable. In the period 1880 to 1911, the number of Chinese in Victoria engaged as private servants, cooks, restaurant keepers, barbers and launderers rose slowly but steadily from around 300 over 520.¹

Many Chinese began in private households as wage-earning cooks and housekeepers. But once sufficient money and experience had been acquired, they stepped out on their own. It was always the aim of the immigrants to be self-employed. In the course of the twentieth century many old, decrepit furniture workshops in Little Bourke Street and its branching lanes were gradually replaced by cookshops, cafes and restaurants. Chinese laundries mushroomed in the inner-city suburbs of Carlton, Fitzroy, Prahran and Richmond.

The demand for Chinese domestic servants rose during the prosperity of the 1870s and 1880s. Those who employed the Chinese often spoke highly of their untiring ¹Victoria Census, 1861-1901; Commonwealth Census, 1911
industry, reliability and efficiency. In the 1870s J. H. Kerr employed two Chinese waiters who had been imported by a friend, and wrote of them in very eulogistic terms:

The wages they asked for were far below those commonly current, and they turned out far superior to the class of servants usually to be had in the colony, and acquitted themselves skilfully in the several capacities of cook and waiter. They were scrupulously clean in their habits and attire, and when I first saw them were dressed in flowing garments of Chinese silk, with gold-edged caps...I may here add I had never cause to regret engaging these men, who served me faithfully for some eighteen months...having carefully saved their wages, returned to their wives in China with what to them was no doubt a competence.²

A writer to the Australian of July 1887 vouched that as cook, shepherd or gardener, the Chinese was unbeatable. ‘He is sober, patient, industrious and most reliable.’³ In California there was similar praise of the Chinese as household employees. ‘Our Chinese cook’, remarked one employer with flowing enthusiasm, ‘is an admirable servant, invariably respectful, and does his work beautifully; he has the self-respect to fill every requirement of respectful and obedient behaviour that the occasion calls for.’⁴ Due to

²J. H. Kerr, Glimpses of Life in Victoria, Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1872, p.169; An experienced cook commanded wages from between £500 to £700 per annum in the 1860s-70s.


⁴Lucy Maynard Salmon, Domestic Service, Macmillan, New York, 1897, p.176
their greater skill, Chinese cooks in San Francisco commanded the highest wages of all
Asiatics. Coolidge remarked that only the well-to-do Californians could afford a Chinese
cook. The Glendinnings in Henry Handel Richardson's The Fortunes of Richard
Mahoney typified an exclusive pioneer family in Victoria, sufficiently prosperous to
engage a Chinese manservant.

It was largely owing to their respect for hierarchy and service to those of a 'higher
station' that the Chinese were highly sought after as servants. Englishman Richard
Twopeny was staggered by the dearth of local Australians willing to be servants and
cooks. According to Twopeny, the local people found domestic life exceeding dull and
restricting, and nannying was looked upon as derogatory. Most women turned up their
noses at the high wages offered them, preferring rather to work for lower wages and
shorter hours in a factory. There was a general disgust amongst white Australians for the
'dominant, patronising system' of race relations encouraged in domestic service.
Household labour was looked upon as menial work and beneath the dignity of decent

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5Average Monthly Wages for Cooks, San Francisco

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<td>Filipinos</td>
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From E. G. Mears, Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast, Institute of Pacific
Relations, New York, 1927, p.313

6M. R. Coolidge, Chinese Immigration, Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., Taipei, 1968,
p.386; see also D. H. Lawrence's Kangaroo, William Heinemann, 1923, p.116

7Henry Handel Richardson, The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney, Angus and Robertson,
Sydney, 1917, Book I, p.174

8Richard Twopeny, Town Life in Australia, 1883, Penguin Facsimile, pp.50, 53, 54;
Miles Franklin, My Brilliant Career, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1901, p.25

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Australian workers.  

One of the most objectionable features of domestic service was the long hours under which the servant was at the beck and call of his or her mistress and master. Domestic work failed to match the improving conditions of industrial occupations. The worker must be on his or her feet twenty-four hours a day performing this or that for the head of household whenever it was expected. Indeed, 'What sort of life is domestic service?', bemoaned a former employee, '[when the servant] is wanted at 6am, or before, and keeps busy all day till bed time at 10 or 11pm.'

European Australians believed that domestic service robbed them of their independence. In contrast, the Chinese immigrants were taught that deference to authority was an essential part of civil etiquette. Three of Confucius' Five Cardinal Relationships advocated submission and obedience. When the Chinese Consul-General, Mr. Yung Liang Hwang spoke at a special dinner in Melbourne, he said that the feelings of respect for the aged, those with authority, enlightenment and education, were born in every Chinese, whether lowly or aristocrat. But besides a certain cultural aptitude for service to others,

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9 *Argus*, December 16 1882, p.4; 17 October 1888, p.15; Henry Handel Richardson, *op.cit.*, pp.392-5; D.H. Lawrence's *Kangaroo*, *op.cit.*, p.67, Said William James to Harriet, 'This place is meant for all one dead-level sort of people....We want the new-fashioned sort of people who are all dead-level, as good as one another.'; Andrew Markus, *Fear and Hatred*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp.245, 247

10 *Argus*, 17 October 1888; *Australian*, 4 March 1882, p.263; *Garden and Field*, January 1888, p.101; Royal Commission on Shop Employees, *VPP*, 1883, vol.2, no.16, Q1603 from John Parry.

11 *Argus*, 9 September 1911, p.9
the desperate poverty of many of the immigrants impelled them to take on any work available, however lowly. The Chinese were so determined to save and return home that they had no time to worry about whether the work they chose carried a stigma or not.

Cooking

The culinary preoccupations of the Chinese immigrants were observed as early as the days of the gold rush. Everyday the Chinese miners sat down to at least one good meal of salt fish, pickled vegetables and rice. Fauchery reported to his friends in Paris that the Chinese must have a fowl or a chicken on Sunday, whatever the price of the poultry may be, and this sometimes amounted to 20 or even 25 franc per head. John Alloo's restaurant at Ballarat was an instant success. It never seemed to close. The sign hung outside was painted boldly with 'Soup always ready'.

Inspectors to Chinese market-gardens and furniture workshops not infrequently mentioned in their reports the elaborate meal preparations undertaken by the Chinese. Journalist E. M. Clowes was deeply impressed by the wonderful sense of touch of the Chinese cooks in the eating-houses in Little Bourke Street: 'What amazing deftness possessed these stout high-priests, Buddhas of gastronomy, when they used the most

12 Antoine Fauchery, Letters From a Miner in Australia, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1857, p.104

monstrous of knives to slice the infinitesimal shreds of pastry for garnishing soup."14 In 1911 in his speech presented at a dinner to celebrate the opening of the new table d'hôte dining room at Cafe Canton, Sir Henry Weldon claimed that 'all would agree that Chinese cooking had a wonderful savour and the food was well cooked.' When the American fleet arrived, the sailors asked Mr. H. G. de Gruchy if Melbourne had a Chinese restaurant as they considered it to be the adjunct of any big city.15

Of the various Chinese cafes which appeared along Little Bourke Street at the turn of the century, Yin Bun Low and Co. was the largest. It opened in October 1899 at no. 202 Little Bourke Street.16 The five original partners were related, at least by blood or county-ties. In 1919 the old Sam Yap club house next door was purchased, renovated and connected to the existing restaurant. Ten years later, in January 1929, four of the original members retired and seven new members replaced them, at least four of whom belonged to the same family. In April 1935 six of the seven members retired and they were replaced by six others. In 1951 the business was officially declared defunct.17

Although the majority of Chinese restaurants were likewise family affairs, they did not share in the magnitude of Yin Bun Low and Co.'s Oriental Cafe. The greater part

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15Argus, 9 September 1911, p.19

16There is some confusion with the exact location. The Defunct Business Company Record states 201 Little Bourke Street but Sands and MacDougall gives no.200.

17Sands and McDougall, Melbourne Directories, 1908-1929; VPRO, Defunct Business Records, VPRS 933, no.9225
were either single proprietorship or partnerships of two (father-son, cousin-cousin or uncle-nephew combinations were common), like Wing Shing's small cafe at Heffernan's Lane and Yee Sam's cookshop at Bridge Street, Bendigo. Few restaurants were artistically decorated and the food elegantly served but this meant more savings if overhead costs could be kept to a minimum. The hours of work were long and the profits to be reaped small but steady.

Quong Tart's four tea and scones rooms in George Street, Sydney were exceptional in the Chinese line of restaurants. From the beginning he chose to cater for Europeans rather than the Chinese. He spent an enormous amount of money in decorations and installing amenities for his clients. Toilets were plentifully supplied, a restroom with free paper and pen established and the dining rooms were tastefully decorated with ferns and fountains. His European wife wrote, 'It was his genius for arrangement which contributed so largely toward the success of his business enterprise.' Yet it seems Quong Tart's permanent interest in Australia was in a large measure responsible for his generous business investments and the financial and social success which he reaped.

Laundries

Chinese laundries developed much later than Chinese eating houses. The skill of laundering was first acquired on the goldfields. The shortage of women forced Chinese men were to learn to wash and mend their own garments. But the Chinese did not open

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18Margaret Tart (ed.), The Life of Quong Tart, W. M. MacLardy, Ben Franklin, Sydney, 1911, pp.20-21

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commercial laundries until the 1890s. Before then, most people washed at home and washerwomen could be employed at reasonable wages.\textsuperscript{19} The expense of a growing family often induced married women to take up this job.\textsuperscript{20} Some Chinese also took up loads for private families. After several years of experience and a little saving of their own, the Chinese began to strike out on their own. The estimated cost of opening a laundry was around $1000. If a prospective laundrykeeper did not have that amount to begin with, Chinese shopkeepers were willing to loan up to a quarter of the initial capital outlay at 5 to 6 percent interest. The rest of the capital one had to borrow from relatives.\textsuperscript{21}

In 1895 there were 54 Chinese laundries in Melbourne, this meant 29 percent of all laundries in Melbourne were run by the Chinese.\textsuperscript{22} Complaints about 'unfair Chinese competition' similar to those directed at the furniture-makers led to an extension of the Factory and Shops Act to the laundry trade in 1899. However, this piece of legislation did nothing to arrest Chinese competition. The Chinese ran one third of Melbourne's laundries in 1909, two-fifths on the eve of the war and one half in 1924. After the war, Chinese laundries spread to many corners of Melbourne, as far east as Canterbury and as far west as Essendon.

\textsuperscript{19}Richard Twopeny, \textit{op.cit.}, p.56


\textsuperscript{21}Gwen Kinkead, 'A Reporter At Large', Part I, \textit{The New Yorker}, 10 June 1991, p.81

\textsuperscript{22}Sands and McDougall, \textit{Melbourne Directories}, 1895, Index to Trades, \textit{op.cit.}
Chinese laundries made little use of steam or electric power. This was no great disability before and around the turn of the century when handwashing was the norm. But however excellent the service and diligent the workmanship, these manual skills could not be relied upon to maintain a competitive edge in an industry whose technology moved with the times. As early as 1902 Lawrence's Dryers and Cleaners of Bendigo and Northcote had imported at a considerable cost, the latest and most up-to-date English and Continental appliances and machinery so that garments made from the most delicate material like velvet, silk, satin, lace and the like could be professionally cleaned.23 Likewise in Smith's laundry at Mildura, modern machinery was installed as the work increased and the business expanded. By the mid 1930s it was the principle laundry in the district and hotel laundry was a feature of the establishment.24

Against these changes, the small, family, manual Chinese laundries became less competitive. From the 1930s there was an exodus of Chinese laundries from inner Melbourne. The regional centres of Ararat, Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Bendigo, Colac, Echuca, Geelong, Hamilton, Horsham, Kyneton, Mildura, Shepparton and Warrnambool gained most of the Chinese trade.

During the World War II, dry cleaning was rapidly popularised. Sands and MacDougall listed only one dry cleaner in 1939 and that was John Robertson of Richmond. Two years later its list contained over one hundred, including Brown Pty. Limited of Collingwood and Gouge Pty. Limited of Middle Brighton. Today Brown

23Bendigo and District in 1902, Periodical Publishing Co., p.98
24John Allan, Victorian Centenary Book, Tavistock, Melbourne, p.208
Gouge Pty. Limited has shops spread over twenty suburbs in Melbourne.

After the war, with the rise of smaller family households and an expansion in the ownership of appliances like washing machines and electric irons, general household laundry became a basic part of the unpaid, unskilled family economy. The survival of commercial laundries depended on providing special bulk washing services for hotels and restaurants or specialising in dry cleaning. The Chinese laundries did not move into either dry cleaning or wholesale cleaning. They remained basically small, handwashing businesses. Fewer than a handful of them survived in Melbourne at the end of the war, compared to over one hundred in its halcyon days of the 1910s and 20s.

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25 Kereen Reiger, Family Economy, McPhee Gribble, South Yarra, 1991, p.47
CONCLUSIONS

The first eighty years of contact between the Chinese and the Australians was characterised by a deliberate attempt on the part of the Chinese to isolate themselves. By persevering with their traditional culture and institutions, the overseas Chinese lived much of lives out of touch with their host society. Nineteenth century China was perhaps more alive in twentieth century Australian Chinese communities than it was in the contemporary villages of Southern China.

The aim of Chinese migration to Australia was to fulfil Confucian duties and attain economic freedom for their families back home in Guangzhou. Reinforced by experiences of extreme hardship and terror at home, the overseas Chinese were able to endure sacrifices not required of European Australians. As the Family, rather than democratic law, formed the basis of their political security, the Chinese did not direct their actions against white racism. In addition, the exclusiveness with which the Chinese regarded all outsiders for centuries meant that the opinions of European 'barbarians' were of no concern to them. Anti-Chinese legislation were largely ignored by the immigrants. None of the nineteenth century immigration restrictions were effective in curtailing Chinese entry. The 1855 Immigration Restriction Act was useless in preventing tens of thousands of Chinese entering Victoria in the next four years. The Chinese regarded the discriminatory laws as a harassment rather than as a moral affront. Hence they took to
evading all restrictions whenever possible. The industrial laws, calculated to drive the Chinese furniture makers elsewhere, also proved defective. The Factories and Shops Act of 1896 had no substantial effect on the Chinese. They counteracted minimum wages by a system of piece-rates and disregarded the regulated hours of opening.

Many years prior to the 1901 Federal Immigration Restriction Act or the White Australia Policy, the Chinese community in Victoria was experiencing demographic stagnation. The community was in obvious decline from as early as the 1860s. The numbers of Chinese in Victoria peaked at around 40,000 in the late 1850s. By 1861, one third had returned home. The census count of 1871 returned 17,826 Chinese in the colony, 11,595 in 1881, 8489 in 1891 and just over 6000 by the time of Federation. The diminution in numbers persisted into the twentieth century. The Victorian Chinese community of nearly 5000 in 1911 had more than halved by 1933. Above all, the striking feature of the Chinese community prior to World War I was the immense sex imbalance. In 1861, of the 24,732 Chinese in Victoria, there were only 8 women. There was no substantial readjustment throughout the nineteenth century nor in the twentieth. The number of Chinese women increased to 90 in 1881, 134 in 1891 and 216 in 1911. There were 294 Chinese women in 1933 compared to 1954 Chinese men. That the community remained predominantly male was not a consequence of discriminatory legislation which restricted the entry of Chinese from 1855 and effected to ban much of it from 1901, but the absence of interest on the part of the immigrants to settle permanently in Australia. The Chinese did not bring women with them because they were staunch sojourners and great patriots. Those who married returned to China to marry Chinese women. Almost all of the immigrants yearned to return home to retire. Nearly two-thirds of the Chinese
departing Australia in the period 1911 to 1933 were sixty years or over. If they died in Australia, their bones were sent back home to their native village in Guangzhou for reburial.

That the Chinese did not intend to stay in Australia was also evident in their insubstantial investments of long term capital. None of their occupations involved laying down large amounts of fixed capital. The popularity of market-gardening, furniture-making, laundries and shopkeeping were chosen for their cheapness. The staunch duties of the immigrants to supply their family members back home with regular remittances and to repay all debts, demanded that wealth should not be tied up. The Probate Records revealed that a great many Chinese who died in Victoria had a substantial amount of their wealth accumulated in a liquid form. And this figure would probably be much larger had the wealth of those Chinese who had departed Victoria been included.

The sordid and overcrowded accommodation endured by the Chinese were likewise expressive of their transient visit and obsession to save. Unlike other immigrants in Victoria, few Chinese bought land and settled down. The decrepit and abominable nature of their homes in the nineteenth century persisted into the twentieth century. Until the rise of Communist China, only a minority of overseas Chinese were homebuyers. In the nineteenth century, only one Chinese individual purchased property in Little Bourke Street. In the twentieth century, the number of owner-occupiers did not surpass a dozen.

The lack of family life and the shortage of women were the main contributing factors to the collapse of the Chinese community in Victoria. As the ability to raise finance was linked directly to the ‘network of kinships’, the single, detached men who
formed Victoria’s Chinese population were incapable of creating large businesses. Nine-tenths of the Chinese businesses in operation in the period 1893 to 1922 were owned by single proprietors or small partnerships. In addition, without sufficient education and a lack of connections with those in positions of power, the immigrant-family business had little opportunity to secure political patronage in Australia. After the rise of the nationalist Guomindang government in China, spurred on by patriotism and special political privileges, some overseas Chinese returned home to assist with reconstruction and modernisation. This furthered the depletion of Chinese wealth in Australia.

In contrast, the Chinese in Southeast Asia were mainly settlers. Assisted by a long history of Chinese association in the region, the overseas Chinese could effectively use their kinship networks to adapt to the modern economic environment. It was not political freedom which gave the Chinese in Southeast Asia commercial success, but an accommodating cultural milieu and a flexible and dynamic attitude on the part of the immigrants to include more local and contemporary elements into the traditional family business strategy.

In Victoria, the make-up of the Chinese was far from dynamic and open-minded. The immigrants were composed of an aging population of old men, attached to set ways. As the impact of science and technology encroached in the course of the twentieth century, their utterly conservative methods of work rendered them totally uncompetitive and finally redundant. With neither the foresight, the cultural preparedness or educational training to move into advanced technology, or a real interest to invest in their host society, the Chinese found themselves gaining a declining share in the growing prosperity of
Australian mining, manufacturing and agriculture. They were squeezed out of furniture-making after the widespread application of steam and electricity and by disregarding the application of science to agriculture, the Chinese were gradually driven out of the market-gardening industry.

It was due to the resilience of their cultural values and the collapse of the family structure in their new home that the Chinese community in Victoria stagnated and eventually declined prior to the Second World War. Past arguments which have stressed the White Australia Policy and the factor of racial discrimination were largely misled in their interpretation of the story of the Chinese in Australia. This thesis does not disregard the factor of discrimination. Rather, it has argued that racial discrimination did not crucially affect the behaviour of the immigrant Chinese. The Chinese transplanted onto their new home a totally self-contained, walled-in society within which they functioned, virtually oblivious of white hegemony for almost a century.

The Chinese situation in Australia began to change after the 1940s. A new wave of young, partly-Westernised students from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore began to arrive. At the same time, an increasing proportion of Australian-born Chinese were making a visible entrance into selected areas of the professional and technical world. Most of the new immigrants were products of the modern education system. Fluent in English and familiar with Western attitudes, many of this new generation had little in common with the world of their parents and even less with the world of mainland China. Yet acculturation amongst them is not thorough. Studies of the post World War Two immigrant Chinese in Australia suggest an incomplete emancipation from the traditional
past and a tendency to yield to political self-submission.¹

With a continuing emphasis on multi-culturalism and the loosening up of Chinese immigration policies in the wake of China's Open Door Policy, assimilation problems are likely to persist for the Chinese to Australia. Unless the basic Confucian family institution is dismantled or substantially modified by the Chinese in mainland China, or the overseas Chinese community, any study on the Chinese which ignores the Confucian tradition can only be based on a basic misconception of Chinese culture. Until the Chinese in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and in all other places in the world, including America and Australia, have democracy and believe in democracy, it would hardly be fruitful to examine the Chinese from the basis of racial discrimination and social oppression. This is not to suggest that the Chinese should not aim for democracy and equal rights but it is also important we should not confuse the ideals of the society which produced us, with the ideals of the society which we seek to understand and interpret; especially when it concerns a society whose values reflect a totally different matrix of thinking to what we were brought up to endear.

Though this thesis concludes in the period of the 1940s, its argument is not time specific. Much of it has contemporary relevance. The institutional resilience of Confucianism remains alive today. Not only does it affect a billion people in China, but hundreds of millions of overseas Chinese round the world. The greatest pre-Liberation

modern Chinese literature have been largely preoccupied with the living force of feudal Chinese culture in the modern age. Lu Xun's A Madman's Diary (1918), exposed to us a haunting vision of the stranglehold of Confucian tradition on 4000 years of Chinese history. His more famous work, The True Story of Ah Q (1929), presented to us a more despairing vision of China's cultural crisis; there was no road to lead China out of her isolation and self-destruction. Till today, the individual in China is only really identified by reference to the greater human context of his time. Within the Chinese vision, the self is subjected to the dictates of established morality and propriety. Moreover, these conventions which govern social hierarchy and action are believed to be ideally suited to human nature, are immortal, indestructible and represent the pinnacle of world civilisation. In this manner, sinologists, historians and writers are amazed, shocked and saddened by the impassivity which so many Chinese can accept the decay of their civilisation, and their indifference to meet the demands of the changing modern world.

It seems many of the Chinese in Southeast Asia may have found a way to channel their past traditions to meet the onslaught of modernization. How exactly they have been able to achieve this remains a question of great debate. As I have suggested in this thesis, their achievements were partly circumstantial, partly miraculous and partly due to active accommodation and change. That the early Chinese in Australia did not meet with these

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standards is perhaps less a cause for surprise than what we would like to presume. ‘Stagnation’ and ‘stability’ are more typical qualities in the Chinese tradition than ‘change’ and ‘progress’. The more intriguing question of whether or not the overseas Chinese in Australia and in the other more recently settled regions of the world like America, Canada and New Zealand, were more traditional than the Chinese in Southeast Asia would make a very stimulating topic for future research. And if so, was this traditionalism a feature of the nineteenth century Chinese immigrants? Or a reaction to Western culture, or an intrinsic feature of Chinese culture?

This thesis was an attempt to move research on the Chinese in Australia onto a new line of inquiry. It drew emphasis away from the narrow and often dead-end confines of white racism to the more dynamic reaches of Chinese culture and comparisons with some areas of developments in other overseas Chinese communities. The wealth of material to be explored in this direction is vast, if there is a willingness to abandon the guilty impulse to ‘help’ the Chinese rather than to first understand them.
## APPENDIX 1: Chronology of Chinese Dynasties and Governments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynasty</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xia Dynasty</td>
<td>c.21st century - 16th century BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang Dynasty</td>
<td>c.16th century - 1066 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Dynasty</td>
<td>c.1066 - 221 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qin Dynasty</td>
<td>221 - 206 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han Dynasty</td>
<td>206 BC - 220 AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Kingdoms Period</td>
<td>220 - 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Jin Dynasty</td>
<td>265 - 316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Dynasty and Sixteen States</td>
<td>317 - 439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern and Northern Dynasties</td>
<td>386 - 581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sui Dynasty</td>
<td>581 - 618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tang Dynasty</td>
<td>618 - 907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms Period</td>
<td>907 - 960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song Dynasty</td>
<td>960 - 1279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty</td>
<td>1279 - 1368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming Dynasty</td>
<td>1368 - 1644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qing (Manchu) Dynasty</td>
<td>1644 - 1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican Revolution</td>
<td>October 10th 1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjing (Nationalist Guomindang) Decade</td>
<td>1928-1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist China</td>
<td>October 1st 1949 -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: CHINA AND THE LOCATION OF EMIGRANT AREA
Source: Eric Rolls, Sojourners: The Epic Story of China's Centuries-Old Relationship with Australia. Queensland University Press, St. Lucia, 1992, title page
APPENDIX 3: LOCATION OF EMIGRANT-AREA.

The native places of practically all overseas Cantonese are in the delta area enclosed by the dashed line.
### APPENDIX 4: OCCUPATIONS OF CHINESE MALES IN VICTORIA, 1861-1911*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1861</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>1356</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>1268</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and Communication</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>1442</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Producers</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>1498</td>
<td>2234</td>
<td>2658</td>
<td>2537</td>
<td>1635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>21,161</td>
<td>13,374</td>
<td>6603</td>
<td>2192</td>
<td>1296</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24,724</td>
<td>17,795</td>
<td>11,869</td>
<td>8355</td>
<td>6236</td>
<td>4491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Official Victorian and Commonwealth Census figures. No figures for the years 1921 and 1933.
# APPENDIX 5: PERCENTAGES: OCCUPATIONS OF CHINESE MALES IN VICTORIA, 1861-1911*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>Transport and Communication</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
<th>Primary Producer</th>
<th>Mining</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
<th>Not Stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>85.59</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td>75.16</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>18.82</td>
<td>55.63</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>31.81</td>
<td>26.24</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>12.89</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>13.71</td>
<td>40.10</td>
<td>20.78</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>11.78</td>
<td>13.45</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>21.04</td>
<td>36.41</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: As for Appendix 4*
**APPENDIX 6: Chinese with at least half of their wealth-holding at death in the form of cash or deposits, 1871-1918** (Source: Probate Records, VPRO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date at death</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Value of assets in cash</th>
<th>Total Value of Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27.2.1871</td>
<td>Ah My</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Fryerstown</td>
<td>£ 40. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 40. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.7.1872</td>
<td>Ah Chung</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Stanley</td>
<td>£ 49. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 50. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.10.1873</td>
<td>Ah Ching</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Haddon</td>
<td>£ 120. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 141.10. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.11.1873</td>
<td>Ah Kin How</td>
<td>store-keeper</td>
<td>Percydale</td>
<td>£ 340. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 460.03. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.7.1875</td>
<td>Ah Sing</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Creswick</td>
<td>£ 20. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 23. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.4.1877</td>
<td>Ah Gee</td>
<td>market-gardener</td>
<td>Maldon</td>
<td>£ 40. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 70. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1881</td>
<td>Ah Wing</td>
<td>hawker</td>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>£ 15. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 16.15. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.7.1882</td>
<td>Ah Kem</td>
<td>hawker</td>
<td>Minyip</td>
<td>£ 24. 3. 6</td>
<td>£ 57. 3. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.11.1882</td>
<td>Mary A.</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>£ 305. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 305. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9.1884</td>
<td>Ah Pee</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Bairnsdale</td>
<td>£ 17.12. 0</td>
<td>£ 19.12. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.11.1884</td>
<td>Ah Lin</td>
<td>market-gardener</td>
<td>Yarrawonga</td>
<td>£ 73. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 121.18. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.12.1884</td>
<td>Ah How,</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>Beechworth</td>
<td>£ 21.11. 9</td>
<td>£ 21.11. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mary C.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.1.1885</td>
<td>Ah Leck</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Horsham</td>
<td>£ 47.14. 0</td>
<td>£ 47.14. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.1885</td>
<td>Ah Ben</td>
<td>shepherd</td>
<td>Tyrrell</td>
<td>£ 15. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 24.13. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.12.1888</td>
<td>Ah Fong</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>New Bendigo</td>
<td>£ 150. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 164. 7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.1891</td>
<td>Hoi Gaip</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Rushworth</td>
<td>£ 30. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 30. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.4.1890</td>
<td>Hen Sin</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Creswick</td>
<td>£ 130. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 130. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.8.1891</td>
<td>Sim Sin</td>
<td>herbalist</td>
<td>East Melb.</td>
<td>£ 124. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 124. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.2.1891</td>
<td>Ah Hock</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Bealiba</td>
<td>£ 199. 6. 0</td>
<td>£ 199. 6. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.4.1900</td>
<td>Ah Mouy</td>
<td>customs agent</td>
<td>Sth. Melb.</td>
<td>£ 18. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 18. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9.1900</td>
<td>Ah Shing</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Wunghnu</td>
<td>£ 140. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 183. 6. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3.1901</td>
<td>Ah Toy</td>
<td>bootmaker</td>
<td>Broadford</td>
<td>£ 12. 0. 6</td>
<td>£ 18. 3. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.8.1901</td>
<td>Ah Goon</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Deniliquin</td>
<td>£ 25. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 25. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.4.1901</td>
<td>Ah Wah</td>
<td>hawker</td>
<td>St.Arnaud</td>
<td>£ 51.10. 0</td>
<td>£ 56. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.9.1902</td>
<td>Ah Foon</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Dunolly</td>
<td>£ 34. 3. 0</td>
<td>£ 34. 3. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.1903</td>
<td>Ah Why</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td>Sth. Melb.</td>
<td>£ 270.18.11</td>
<td>£ 291.13.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.4.1905</td>
<td>Ah Quong</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>£ 14. 0. 6</td>
<td>£ 14.15. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12.1905</td>
<td>Ah Soon</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Creswick</td>
<td>£ 300. 0. 6</td>
<td>£ 300. 2. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1.1908</td>
<td>Ah May</td>
<td>miner</td>
<td>Bendigo</td>
<td>£ 30. 0. 0</td>
<td>£ 58. 0. 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.11.1910</td>
<td>Ah Chan</td>
<td>dairymen</td>
<td>Bendigo</td>
<td>£ 1605.22.17</td>
<td>£ 2915. 4. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.1.1911</td>
<td>Ah One</td>
<td>tobacoo-grower</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>£ 21. 8. 6</td>
<td>£ 21. 8.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Age 1</td>
<td>Age 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1911</td>
<td>Ah Tie</td>
<td>hawker</td>
<td>Beechworth</td>
<td>116.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.10.1911</td>
<td>Ah Gow</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Maldon</td>
<td>124.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.6.1913</td>
<td>Ah Choon</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Minyip</td>
<td>48. 5</td>
<td>11. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.11.1913</td>
<td>Ah Him</td>
<td>hawker</td>
<td>Harrow</td>
<td>163. 6</td>
<td>17.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.8.1914</td>
<td>Ah Hoy</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Mitta Mitta</td>
<td>45.15</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.3.1915</td>
<td>Ah Quin</td>
<td>wife</td>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>473. 18</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.4.1915</td>
<td>Ah Chee</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Heyfield</td>
<td>302. 19</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.11.1915</td>
<td>Ah Wun</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Echuca</td>
<td>43.16</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3.1916</td>
<td>Ah Loo</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Warr’nabeal</td>
<td>305. 0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.12.1916</td>
<td>Ah Lung</td>
<td>labourer</td>
<td>Belmont</td>
<td>21.10</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.4.1917</td>
<td>Ah Him</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Warr’nabeal</td>
<td>20.10</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.7.1917</td>
<td>Ah Ee</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Mansfield</td>
<td>4. 6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3.1918</td>
<td>Ah Hoy</td>
<td>cook</td>
<td>Harrow</td>
<td>42. 5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3.1918</td>
<td>Ah Man</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>Cann River</td>
<td>257. 16</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.1.1918</td>
<td>Ah Wing</td>
<td>gardener</td>
<td>Cohuna</td>
<td>180. 1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 7

GUO FAMILY TREE

Guo Binghui
(7-1892)
Merchant in
Australia,
(1882-92)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guo Le</th>
<th>Guo Quan</th>
<th>Guo Kui</th>
<th>Guo</th>
<th>Guo Shun</th>
<th>Guo Biao</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(James Gocklock)</td>
<td>(Phillip Gockchin)</td>
<td>(7-c.1920)</td>
<td>Huo</td>
<td>Director of Wing On</td>
<td>(1866-1938)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1874-1965)</td>
<td>(1878-1966)</td>
<td>Director of Shanghai Wing On department stores.</td>
<td>commercial</td>
<td>commercial</td>
<td>Director, Shanghai Wing On Dept.stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President and</td>
<td>Director of</td>
<td>(c.1916)</td>
<td>businesses,</td>
<td>businesses,</td>
<td>(1920-1930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director General of</td>
<td>Hong Kong Wing On</td>
<td></td>
<td>Australia,</td>
<td>Australia,</td>
<td>Director of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Wing On Group</td>
<td>banks and shops</td>
<td></td>
<td>(c.1916)</td>
<td>(c.1916)</td>
<td>Shanghai Mint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1907-38)</td>
<td>(c.1916)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1929-1931</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guo Linshuang
Director of Wing On Cotton Mills
(c.1946-9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guo Dihuo</th>
<th>Guo Le</th>
<th>Guo Guo Guo Guo Linbi Linbao Linxiang Linshan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1898 -?)</td>
<td>Assistant director, then director of Wing On Cotton Mills</td>
<td>(c.1926-39 &amp; 1946-9), Shanghai Deputy in the First Popular National Assembly (PNA) 1954, Guangdong deputy in the second PNA 1958, the third PNA 1964, the fifth PNA 1978, vice-governor of Guangdong province, 1979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chou, Bon-Wai

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