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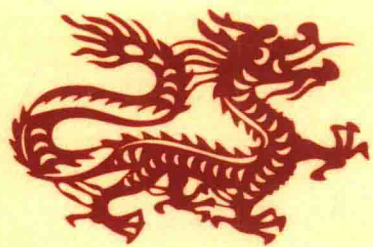
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MAKING CHINESE AUSTRALIA

*Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of
Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892-1912*



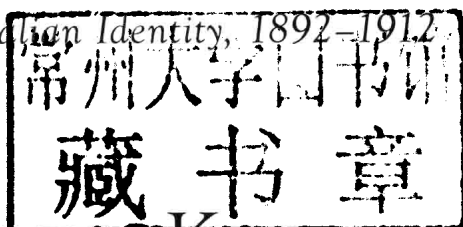
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MAKING CHINESE AUSTRALIA

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Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892-1912*



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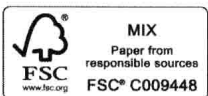
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MAKING CHINESE AUSTRALIA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Mei-fen Kuo left her native Taiwan in 2003 to undertake a PhD thesis in Australia. In 2008, she was awarded a PhD degree by La Trobe University, and in 2009 she won an internationally competitive Australian Endeavour Award. From late 2010 to September 2013 she was an Australian Post-doctoral Fellow in the School of Social Science at La Trobe University. There she worked with Professor Judith Brett and Dr James Leibold on 'Unlocking Australia's Chinese Archives: The Political and Social Experience of the Chinese Australian Community, 1909 to 1939', a three-year Linkage grant project supported by the Australian Research Council. She is currently a Research Fellow in the Asia-Pacific Centre for Social Investment and Philanthropy at Swinburne University of Technology, where she is working on an ARC-funded project with Professor John Fitzgerald, entitled 'Asia-Pacific Philanthropies: Transnational Networks, Anti-colonial Nationalism, and the Emergence of Modern Chinese Philanthropy, 1850–1949'.

In *Making Chinese Australia*, Mei-fen has made a significant contribution to research on Australian history through her pioneering study of Chinese Australians from a diasporic perspective; her bilingual research skills have allowed her to make full use of detailed but rarely consulted primary sources that are only available in Chinese. Her research adds much depth to knowledge of the Chinese-Australian urban elite in a transnational setting, and forges a dialogue between international and diasporic Chinese studies. Professor Adam McKeown wrote of her work: "I can only think of two or three other social histories of Chinese anywhere in the world that have captured this period with an equal appreciation of the social fluidity, rapid changes and shifting discourse".

ROMANISATION OF CHINESE TERMS

This thesis makes extensive use of Chinese-language newspapers and manuscripts. Where contemporary English-language transliterations are available for the names of people, newspapers and organisations, I have used the names that were in common usage at the time. In many cases Chinese terms lack contemporary English equivalents. In these cases, names are rendered in English by Mandarin pronunciations written in italicised pinyin spelling. English translations (in addition to transliterations) are supplied on first mention for the names of institutions and used thereafter throughout the text. Further, where pinyin spelling is used for personal names, I follow the customary Chinese sequence of surname followed by given name. Where more than one name was in common this is indicated on first citation. In addition, I keep the same Chinese characters of secondary sources as the authors used either traditional or simplified Chinese.

LUNAR AND SOLAR CALENDARS

Some sources consulted, including the Records of the New South Wales Chinese Empire Reform Association and New South Wales Chinese Chamber of Commerce (Noel Butlin Archives, ANU), *The Chinese Times*, Diplomatic Archives of the Institute of Modern History (Academia Sinica, Taipei) and the Archives of the Chinese Consul-General in Melbourne (1908 to 1911), are dated by the lunar calendar. In the case of *The Chinese Times* I have changed dates to equivalents on the solar calendar. For the other sources I have retained the lunar dating system.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---|
| ACCG | Archives of Chinese Consul-General (Melbourne) |
| CAH | <i>Chinese Australian Herald</i> |
| CEDT | Certificate of Exemption from Dictation Test |
| CERA | NSW Chinese Empire Reform Association |
| CMDA | Chinese Merchants' Defence Association |
| CT | <i>Chinese Times</i> |
| DT | <i>Daily Telegraph</i> |
| EA | Enlightenment Association (Melbourne) |
| EN | <i>Evening News</i> |
| KMT | Kuo Min Tang (Chinese Nationalist Party) |
| LYT | Lin Yik Tong |
| NCEA | New Citizen Enlightenment Association (Melbourne) |
| SMH | <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> |
| TWN | <i>Tung Wah News</i> |
| TWT | <i>Tung Wah Times</i> |

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As indicated by its title—*Making Chinese Australia*—this book documents and discusses the historical processes by which Chinese immigrants came to participate in Australian life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and situate themselves in the history of Australia.¹ Chinese Australians were made, not born. Further, because of the way that people interpret their past, present, and future prospects to give continuity and meaning to their lives, this book views historical awareness, which helps shape communities and identities, as an important element in the making of Chinese Australia. The book argues that the period from the late 1890s through the early 1900s was a critical period in the shaping of Chinese communities and identities in distinctive ways in a variety of local, national and transnational contexts.

There are many ways to tell stories about Chinese Australians and their social, cultural, economic and political experiences and activities. This book primarily focuses on Chinese immigrants in Australia between 1892 and 1912: who they were, what they were talking about, their feelings of belonging or otherwise, what they lost, and the ambitions and dreams they had, some fulfilled, others not.

The voices of Chinese Australians in their own print publications are chosen in this book as best exemplifying the thinking about self, ethnicity, class, gender, society and nation through which Chinese Australians made sense of their need to make Australia home and at the same time help to build the Republic of China. My aim is for readers to appreciate the richness of Chinese immigrant writing in Australian history and to better illustrate how these people believed they were taking part in a revolutionary movement towards a modern world.

I began this project as a dissertation a long time ago, with a vague idea of my topic. My study, under Professor Chuang Shang-wu's guidance in the History Department at Fu-Jen University in Taiwan, focused on cultural nationalism in the late 19th century and early 20th century. I had received training to develop research into Western History so as to facilitate the flow of culture between East and West. Specifically, my passion was modern

1 The sense of 'making' is adopted from EP Thompson (1968).

Irish history and diasporic identity. Later I arrived in Melbourne to study in the School of Social Sciences at La Trobe University. I am deeply grateful for Professor John Fitzgerald's commitment to this project. At the outset I had no idea about Chinese immigrants in Australian history. Over the years, he has shown an unfailing enthusiasm which has enabled me to tell the stories which I could only imagine when starting out. His guidance importantly helped me refine my historiographical approach and step through some of the major issues and themes of the book.

While studying in Asian Studies at La Trobe University, I was surrounded by a wonderful group of fellow students and colleagues, each of whom richly contributed to my intellectual life. I am especially grateful to Sophie Couchman, Amanda Rasmussen and the late Kevin Wong Hoy.

From the beginning of this project, I had been fortunate to receive financial support from the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation, which enabled me to stay and study in Australia. An Australian Endeavour Award and Australian Research Council linkage grant supported my postdoctoral research. I gratefully acknowledge this support that was critical in enabling me to complete this book.

I am also grateful to have worked in the School of Social Science at La Trobe University as a postdoctoral fellow. The School has not only been an institutional but an intellectual home. For making it possible for me to finish this book, my heartfelt gratitude goes to Professor Judith Brett, James Leibold and Tesbin Tchen, ideal collaborators in an ARC funded study. Their indispensable support helped me to revise the dissertation into a book, and I especially appreciate their feedback and advice.

I am grateful also to a number of friends and colleagues at other institutions for their feedback and help over the years. My thanks go especially to Professor Ann Curthoys, Adam McKeown and Chi-Kong Lai who made valuable comments on and criticism of drafts of the book. In addition, I would like to thank Professor Mark Finnane, Pauline Rule, Kate Bagnall, Keir Reeves, Paul Macgregor, Barbara Nichol and Professor Marilyn Lake for their help and encouragement.

For help with archival materials I wish to thank the Chinese Nationalist Party of Australasia in Sydney and Melbourne. Particularly I owe heartfelt thanks to Eugene Seeto, Bruce Sun-you Lew and William (Bill) Lau who generously provided opportunities for me to access the records of their organisations and others relating to the broader Chinese-Australian community. They gave me a great deal of knowledge about the communities I was researching and writing about.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am also enormously grateful to the late Dr Henry Chan, Marina Mar, Irene Mavis Mortensen, Elizabeth Kao, John Yen, Ducman Allen Yip, Gordon Mar, Albert Mar, Mary Mar, Wai Wang, Victor Bien, Dennis Wing Leong Chan, Winsome Dong, Michael and Vicki Harrison, James Hayes, Kaylin Simpson Lee, Susan Carter, Lindsay W. Wing, Tony Wing, Hamilton Chan, Maurice and Eunice Leong, Arthur Gar Lock Chang, Mabel Wang, Norma King Koi, Jeanette Mar, Harry and Connie Fay, Daphne Lowe Kelley, Man-Yee Leanfore, Leanne Tam, and Eric Yee: it was my good fortune that through these people I was able to access rich family collections and inspiring stories that fed into the book.

I also acknowledge the help of staff and researchers of the Tung Wah Museum (Hong Kong), the History Department of Hong Kong University, the Hong Kong Public Records Office, the Shanghai Municipal Archives, the National Archives of Australia, the National Library of Australia, the Mitchell Library of the State Library of New South Wales, the State Library of Victoria, the State Records Office of New South Wales, the City of Sydney Archives, the Gold Dragon Museum (Bendigo), the Wing Hing Long Museum (Tingha), the Chinese Museum (Melbourne), the City of Moorabbin Historical Society, the Archives of the New South Wales Presbyterian Church, the Archives and Church records of the Victorian Presbyterian Church, the University of Ballarat Art Historical Collections, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Melbourne, the Institute of Modern History at Academia Sinica, Academia Historica and the KMT Archives in Taipei.

Some parts of the book were written when I visited the Institute of Modern History (IMH) of Academia Sinica in Taipei, which provided the facilities and opportunity for me to write and complete the book. My thanks go especially to institute director Huang Ko-wu for making the IMH such a good place for research, as well as to the many colleagues whose warmth and generosity so greatly enhanced my Taipei sojourn, especially Professor Chang Li and Lien Ling-ling.

Particular thanks are due to Dr Xu Yuzeng and his family for all of the laughter and the listening over the years. Since arriving in Melbourne I have been overwhelmed by their generosity. Their warm support has helped me through difficult moments, for which I shall be forever grateful.

Also I would like to thank my friends in Australia and Taiwan for their unfailing support. I cannot name them all but I want to thank especially Elisa Hsu, who showed iron will in keeping me in good humour in 2005 and beyond. Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Luisa and Enrico

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Chapter 1

SOCIAL IDENTITY, DIASPORA, AND THE WRITING OF CHINESE-AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

In the 1890s and early 1900s the Chinese-Australian community underwent a significant transformation. First, in the wake of the gold rush and mining boom of the mid-19th century, the largely male Chinese population declined from 38,077 in 1891, to 33,165 in 1901, and to 25,772 in 1911 (Official Year Book of New South Wales 1921:66). Of greater significance was the rate of mobility among Chinese immigrants to Australia (Fitzgerald 2007:51–54). As Sydney developed into an international trading centre by the late 19th century, it became a hub for mobile Chinese traders and labourers. Michael Williams (1998:85–86) argues that Chinese Australians in Sydney had by this time established identifiable patterns of business and social networking that linked up with communities in Hong Kong and home villages in South China. Thirdly, Chinese settlement tended to be concentrated in urban areas, giving the Chinese-Australian identity a distinctively modern urban inflection by the end of the 1890s. Between 1881 and 1901, the concentration of Chinese in major Australian cities increased between twofold and threefold, and 50 years later, in 1947, 90% of all Chinese Australians were living in urban centres (Jones 2005:17), especially in the capital cities of each state, such as Sydney and Melbourne (Yong 1977:4–6).

Sydney was not merely a hub for Chinese mobility; it was also a centre of community mobilisation and identity formation from the late 19th century. With their greater concentration in that city, Sydney Chinese established the first Chinese national newspapers, the first modern commercial associations and the earliest political societies during the late 1890s and early 1900s. Their associations and commercial sites had a visible impact on Sydney's urban landscape (Lalich 2006:171–173). The process of forming a Sydney Chinese community encouraged Chinese Australians to participate more fully in national public life in the 20th century.

The increasing visibility of Chinese residents in urban centres had the effect of strengthening racial and cultural distinctions between Chinese and European Australians. The anti-Chinese movement of the late 1880s had led to the passing of legislation that limited Chinese immigration to Australia and fostered an image of Australia as an exclusively white community during the 1890s (Irving 1997:101; Markus 1979:258). The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 imposed further limitations by introducing a dictation test to screen non-European applicants for entry to Australia and by imposing an extensive system of Certificates of Domicile and Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (hereafter CEDT), which protected and proscribed the rights of travel and residency of the Chinese who were resident in Australia at that time. Many thousands of Chinese were given permission to leave and return to Australia in the first decade of the 20th century (Jones 2005:19). Further legislation enacted in 1903 closed the door to citizenship for Chinese Australians. This pattern of systemic discrimination isolated many Chinese Australians, who were for the most part males without family members in Australia, codifying them as the 'other' in relation to British and European Australians (Williams 2004:36–37).

It is tempting to classify visible patterns of association among Chinese Australians, including the establishment of newspapers and the formation of public associations, during this period, as the response of a particular ethnic community to the hostility of white Australian society. Walter Lalich (2006:171), for example, claims that the establishment of Chinese communal places in Sydney was largely a reflection of Chinese Australians' growing awareness of their ethnic identity, but this interpretation fails to capture the full picture. The growth of benevolent associations, commercial clubs, civil societies, mutual protection associations, occupational unions, lodges of the Chinese Masonic Society and congregations of Chinese Christian churches reflected not just a growing sense of ethnic identity but also extensive patterns of networking and leadership within a community that was undergoing rapid change. Communities of Chinese in urban Australia carved out social and institutional histories of their own in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that were not exclusively related to ethnic identity. Jane Lydon (1999:129) supports the argument that race is not an essential element in understanding the identity of Chinese Australians.

This view is apparent also in the observations of Australian commentators of the day, some of whom pointed to the cosmopolitan character and spirit of enterprise that characterised Chinese-Australian associational life. In 1894, for example, George Ernest ('China') Morrison (1895:222) described the

Cantonese as the ‘Catalans of China’ in recognition of their secular spirit and wide ambition in settling throughout the world, including Australia where they made up the majority of the Chinese-Australian population.¹ Similarly, in the 1930s, Australian journalist John HC Sleeman (1933:138–140) showed a clear appreciation of the curiosity, adventurousness and open-mindedness of Chinese Australians and emphasised the outgoing ‘ocean spirit’ revealed in the legends Chinese Australians told about themselves. These observers identified Chinese Australians more by their ambition and enterprise than by their awareness as a particular ethnic community.

White Australia mythology, nevertheless, largely framed Chinese as a timeless ethnic group among the ‘others’ of monocultural Australian ideology (Fitzgerald 2007:23). As JW Cushman (1984:102) pointed out in the 1980s, the ‘wider historiographical possibilities’ of Chinese dreams, ambitions, and perspectives have played little part in the recorded history of white Australia. Graeme Davison (1985:101–102) questions Geoffrey Blainey’s interpretations of history, which make simple propositions about race relations and cultural difference in Australian nationalism. The influence of historians, journalists, novelists and illustrators on public opinion created racial stereotypes of Chinese immigrants who were powerless against the popular demand for their exclusion (Davison 1985:108–110). In his more recent study, John Fitzgerald (2007:28) observes that Australian historical writings which are based on questionable assumptions about ‘timeless’ Chinese values consistently explain Chinese exclusion under the White Australia policy as the result of a fundamental clash of values between Chinese and European Australians.

Contemporary scholars have sought to recover Chinese voices with a view to adding new stories and inflections to Chinese-Australian history and to the archive of Australian history generally. The historiography of Chinese immigrants in Australia has not been immune from the larger reworking of non-British aspects of Australian history. This reworking has undermined essentialist claims about Chinese values and has been restoring to Chinese Australians an historical character that overrides essentialist characterisations of earlier scholars (Curthoys 2001:16–17; Ang 1998). An emerging research community is locating its work within different contexts for a better understanding of Chinese community in Australian history (Reeves & Mountford 2011).

1 Early Chinese immigrants to Australia were predominantly Cantonese-speaking male villagers, most from the Guangdong-province districts of Toishan, Sunwui, Hoiping and Yanping with others from nearer Guangzhou.

The advent of diaspora perspectives in Australian history has offered further insights into the historical significance of Chinese community experience (McKeown 1999:331). References are to be found to the Chinese diaspora in studies dating from the 1960s (Kuah-Pearce & Hu-Dehart 2006:1). The wider concept of diaspora that has come to characterise studies over the last decade refers to a broader 'multiplicity, fluidity, wildness, hybridity and dislocations of modernity' as a possible point of entry into Chinese-Australian historical studies (McKeown 1999:308). This diasporic perspective has also begun to exert a considerable influence in discussions of Australian identity and history. As Ann Curthoys (2001:21) argues, 'Australian identity and history are themselves fractured between a homeland and a new home'; Australian identity broadly conceived has been shaped by 'multiple loyalties, collective memoirs, a sense of belonging and intricacies of identity' among all of its constituent immigrant communities.

At the same time, however, the diaspora perspective compels historians to look beyond the national frames of reference of host nations to appreciate the significance of diaspora nationalisms among dispersed communities. Adam McKeown (1999:322, 326) argues that historians need to take account of the global rise of nationalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and understand diasporic groups as self-conscious exiles and members of dispersed communities as well as members of their host societies. Chinese-Australian community history clearly calls for attention to the many facets of the historical background that shaped its Chinese diasporic communities, including their sense of themselves as part of a distinctive diaspora in addition to a distinct ethnic group.

This book focuses on the historical processes and diasporic perspectives which shaped Chinese identity and community in late 19th century and early 20th century Australia. Although it draws heavily on Chinese-language sources, it pays relatively little attention to essentialist linguistic and ethnic definitions of identity. Chinese Australians were subject to the same general processes of urbanisation, cosmopolitanism and nationalism that inflected patterns of community behaviour and elite conduct among different ethnic communities in the expanding urban settlements of late colonial and Federation Australia. These forces similarly enhanced the role of community leadership and the importance of newspapers, civic associations and business networks across different ethnic communities. These general processes in turn framed the particular identities of the Chinese-Australian community over time.

To highlight the intricate relationship among elite leadership, urbanisation, community formation and nationalism, this book commences with

a review of an especially bitter conflict that split the Sydney Chinese community in 1892 and ends two decades later with the establishment of the earliest political alliance between Chinese-Australian elites in Sydney and Melbourne in order to support building the Republic of China.

Unlocking Chinese-Australian voices in White Australia

Newspapers have an important role to play in understanding Chinese-Australian history—mundanely through the historical archives they supply, and more profoundly through the windows they offer on community formation and everyday historical awareness via the agency of print culture. Greg Dening (1996:41) argues that ‘the past is ordered in itself in such a way that we can make a narrative of it.’ Chinese-Australian communities derived coherence, continuity and a sense of ‘community spirit’ (Yong 1977:224) from their participation in shared historical narratives of belonging and becoming, elaborated through the Chinese-language press. The local Chinese press offers a rich resource for exploring the making of Chinese Australia through reflections on the desires, demands and activities of its constituent communities.

Newspapers were not merely ‘reflections’ of Chinese community spirit, as some have suggested, but were active agents in the shaping of urban elites and community leadership for the Chinese community from the late 19th century. This is nowhere more apparent than in the complex relationships and occasional conflicts that arose among local Chinese newspapers and civic associations in the 1890s and early 1900s and the transnational connections established by these Chinese newspapers with other Chinese newspapers and associations outside Australia. Consequently, Australian Chinese-language newspapers provide an important source for the study of local elite formation and transnational networking and of associated narratives of belonging in the wider Chinese diasporic community.

The *Chinese Advertiser* (later *English and Chinese Advertiser*, 英唐招帖 *Ying-tangzhaotie*), established on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s, was the earliest bilingual Chinese-English language newspaper in Australia. It was short-lived.² On 20 September 1883, one Hong Kong newspaper, the *Daily Press* (孖刺西報 *Zilaxibao*), remarked that Chinese merchants in Australia had attempted to publish a bilingual newspaper in Sydney, Melbourne or

2 The *Chinese Advertiser* was published by Robert Bell in Ballarat from 1856 to c.1858. It was published every Saturday and had a circulation of 400 copies. Its primary aim was to carry advertisements and inform the Chinese community in the goldfields about government regulations.

Brisbane.³ The first Chinese-language newspaper with a national Australian circulation, the *Chinese Australian Herald* (廣益華報 *Guangyi huabao*, 1894–1923, hereafter *CAH*) was launched in Sydney in 1894. The second, the *Tung Wah News* (東華新報 *Donghua xinbao*, 1898–1902, hereafter *TWN*) commenced publication in 1898, also in Sydney and continued as the *Tung Wah Times* (東華報 *Donghuabao*, 1902–1936, hereafter *TWT*). The third was *Chinese Republic News* (民國報 *Minguo bao*, 1913–1937). In Melbourne, the first comparable newspaper to appear, the *Chinese Times* (愛國報 *Aiguobao*, 1902–1905, 警東新報 *Jingdongxinbao*, 1905–1914, 平報 *Pingbao*, 1917, 民報 *Minbao*, 1919–1922, hereafter *CT*), later moved to Sydney where it continued to be published until 1949. These newspapers have been a major resource in researching the history of Chinese community formation presented in this book.

At this point it should be noted that the Chinese press was the largest foreign-language press in Sydney in the late 19th century. (German newspapers made up the largest foreign-press group in Australia as a whole, because of the growth of the German immigrant population during the last decades of the 19th century, chiefly in South Australia, Queensland and Melbourne, but less so in Sydney (Gilson & Zubrzycki 1967:10–13).) The Chinese press was also the only foreign-language press in Sydney to publish without interruption over three decades from the 1890s to the 1920s and no foreign-language newspapers of any stamp could match the record of continuous circulation of Chinese-language newspapers in Sydney from the 1890s into the 1950s (Gilson 1962:209; Jones 2005:1–2).⁴

As I have noted, these newspapers not only reported on community events but were also significant agents in their own right in the shaping of communities and patterns of urban leadership. In Australia, the Chinese

3 See also Hong Kong Public Records Office, Carl Smith Collection, card no. 174485.

4 During the 1920s and 1930s, there were six Chinese language newspapers circulated in Sydney. However, no archive holds a complete set of publications of the *Chinese Times* (in Sydney), *Chinese World's News* and *Chinese Weekly Press* during the 1920s and 1930s. Copies of these three newspapers and information about them are rare. The State records of NSW have registration information about the *Chinese Times* and *Chinese World's News*. See State records of NSW, item title: Chinese Times Ltd., Packet no. 7978 in 17/5530 and item: Chinese Masonic Newspaper Co. Ltd. Packet no. 8021 in 17/5531. The National Archives of Australia also has a collection of material related to the *Chinese Times*, *Chinese World's News* and *Chinese Weekly Press*. The archives of the Chinese Consul-General in Melbourne contain some letters and documents from the *Chinese Times*, *Chinese World's News* and *Chinese Weekly Press* related to their early issues. See Correspondence of Chinese Consul-General (hereafter ACCG), Melbourne, archives files no. 522-122, 522-138, 522-228, 522-229, 522-236, 522-274.