

# Harvest of Endurance: A History of the Chinese in Australia 1788–1988

Mo Yimei (text), Mo Xiangyi (artist) *Harvest of Endurance: a History of the Chinese in Australia 1788-1988* Sydney, Australia-China Friendship Society, 1988.

## Text by Mo Yimei

accompanying a 50-metre scroll painted in gongbi style **by Mo Xiangyi**, tracing Chinese Australians engaged in agriculture, mining, construction, commerce, and in social, political, and religious activities.

## **Chinese activities in the early period**

No one knows precisely when the first Chinese arrived in Australia. There were certainly some within the first 50 years of the colony and the 'Australian People' records at least 18 Chinese settlers before 1848. Two of the earliest known were domestic servants of Rev John Dunmore Lang in the 1820s. Before the goldrush swelled their numbers, most Chinese were brought over as servants, artisans or general labourers, and were welcomed in heavily under-populated Australia. Representations to bring over more Chinese were made to the British government and the first group of cheap indentured labourers arrived in October 1848 from Xiamen (Amoy), in China's south-eastern province of Fujian. There were 120 of them, 100 adults and 20 boys, and they were soon followed by others. Most of the Chinese were from the densely populated See Yup (four counties) region in Guangdong province. They included both indentured or contracted labourers and free emigrants. The greatest number of arrivals in any one year was 12,396 in 1856.

Many, of course, did not stay but simply fulfilled their contracts and returned home. At its height in 1861, the Chinese component of

Australia's population was 3.3%.

In the early days, the Chinese worked at all kinds of jobs: shepherds, farmers, hawkers, shopkeepers, cooks, artisans, boatmen, fishermen, and general labourers. Their major contribution, however, was in opening up the country. Using sweat and muscle, they cleared the bush and readied it for the farmer. They had traditional skills at managing water and land. They dug wells and irrigation ditches, introduced vegetables, fruits and crops, and turned desert areas into gardens of plenty.

During the days of the goldrush period, some mining towns like Ballarat used Chinese as the second language of commerce. The town was practically bilingual, with everything from street signs to newspapers in both languages. Around the nation, Chinese stores and restaurants, laundries and furniture makers contributed to Australia's development.

## **Chinese miners**

The discovery of mineral resources in different parts of Australia attracted a large number of Chinese labourers. In the years between about 1850 and 1870, the overwhelming majority of them worked on such goldfields in the eastern part of Australia, as Ararat, Ballarat, Beechworth, Bendigo, Castlemaine and Maldon in Victoria, and Armidale, Bathurst, Binalong, Braidwood and Burrangong in New South Wales. Around the 1870s, Chinese miners shifted to such areas as Cooktown in Queensland, Pine Creek in the Northern Territory, and the north-east of Tasmania, where new mineral sources, such as gold, tin, copper and wolfram were discovered.

Mr Lester Holland, President of the Young History Society, New South Wales, has given the following description about how the Chinese

miners worked there in the mid 19th century:

The Chinese miners were enticed to Young in gangs of up to 200 young men by promises of rich reward for working the goldfields. Enterprising entrepreneurs in Sydney and Melbourne would pay the fares to ship them out from Southern China. In return, the Chinese would be given their 'keep' and a small percentage of what they found until such time as the cost of bringing them to Australia had been recouped.

The unsuspecting men would land in Sydney and Melbourne and walk to the goldfields. Once they reached such places as Young or Ballarat, the entrepreneur would arrange for up to 150 of them to be responsible for finding or growing food, and for the construction of dams, water races, puddling mills and other mining equipment such as sluice boxes and crushers. The remaining fifty workers would be involved with the actual 'winning' of the gold-bearing clay and dirt.

As the surface alluvial gold was soon exhausted, the chances of the men repaying their fares was very slight, with most being left to fend for themselves when the gold ran out.

At Young today a puddling mill has been rebuilt at Blackguard Gully the site of the first of the two Lambing Flat riots. The mill is a wood-lined circular trough in which gold-bearing clay, small rocks and dirt were placed. Water was then allowed into the trough until all the clay and dirt was covered. A horse was then yoked to the cross-bars from which were attached ropes to pull small circular logs. The horse would move around the outside of the trough, pulling the logs inside and so breaking up the clay and dirt.

At the lower side of the trough, a gate would be opened and the muddy water and now gold-bearing mud and gravel would be shovelled into a 'long tom'. This was a wooden trough of around three metres in length, with wooden slats across the bottom. Between each slat would be attached sheepskins or blankets. The gold-bearing mud would pass down the 'long tom' and the gold, being heavier than the clay and muddy water, would sink and be caught by the pieces of skins or blankets at the bottom.

After one or two days, the strips of skins or blankets would be detached and burnt. The ashes would then be carefully collected and placed in gold pans for final 'panning' and the recovery of almost pure gold.

Because the Chinese were better organised and, unlike the other miners on the field, brought the water to 'pay dirt', they were able to extract more gold from a given area. This, coupled with their different clothing, customs and eating habits, led to envy and many false rumours of successes. Stories circulated of the Chinese smoking opium, gambling with gold dust and stealing women for prostitution. Eventually, envy and these false rumours led to hate and ultimately to the riots, in which the predominantly English born miners attempted to drive the Chinese from the goldfields.

## **Anti-Chinese violence**

The Lambing Flat riot of June 1861 was one of the most horrific explosions of racial violence in Australian history.

Most of the Chinese immigrants were uneducated, yet they were generally acknowledged as being peaceful, honest, sober, industrious and kind. But their different language, appearance and manners made them an easy target for frustration. Also, their habit of sending gold back to their families in China was a constant reminder that their's was a temporary presence. Abused and misunderstood, the Chinese only banded together more closely. This reinforced the fears of European settlers of being swamped and, in 1855, the Victorian government imposed legal restrictions on the number of Chinese immigrants.

The Australian diggers who were in close competition with the Chinese took revenge in 1857 against what they saw as the 'Mongolian and Tartar hordes of Asia', destroying a Chinese camp at Rocky River in Victoria. Also in that year, the Victorian government began to tax Chinese, first for residence, and later for entry to the State by land or sea.

Then came Lambing Flat. European diggers had attacked the Chinese camps in central New

South Wales several times between December 1860 and June 1861. They had burned tents and destroyed provisions. Some of the Chinese miners had been driven off. On 30 June 1861, men began to gather with bludgeons and pick-handles. The cry was 'No Chinese' and a local band played at their head as they marched on Lambing Flat. The tiny handful of police quickly abandoned any attempt to control the throng as it swelled to more than 2000.

Forewarned, the Chinese diggers headed for the goldfields. Their empty camp was torn apart but tents and supplies were not enough. Some Europeans on horseback managed to round up a thousand or more Chinese like cattle and the mob went to work with appalling hatred. Showing no resistance, the Chinese were mercilessly beaten and whipped, and all their possessions piled into huge bonfires. The shame of Lambing Flat was such that the name was soon changed to Young in honour of the Governor of New South Wales. However, the Chinese were also blamed. The government was moved by public opinion to follow the Victorian example and in November 1861 took steps to restrict the numbers of the Chinese in the State.

The Chinese had paid the price for their industry, but as the gold in New South Wales petered out, and new deposits were found in Queensland, a similar story unfolded.

### ***Australian refuge for Chinese miners***

Not all the Australians of European origin treated Chinese in this manner. Even in those dark days, there existed understanding and sympathy. Immediately after the anti-Chinese violence in Lambing Flat, with passions still running high, Mr James Roberts gave refuge on his property to 1200 Chinese from Lambing Flat for up to six weeks.

## ***Homesickness, gambling and bananas***

### **Part I**

The Chinese were a long way from home. Virtually no wives accompanied their husbands, whose sole priority was to make enough money to support their families once they returned to China. The distance from their families not only led to sadness and depression among the Chinese, but also gave rise to European suspicion of the all-male community. The only recourse was to work even harder, or pass the free hours gazing out to sea, perhaps with a soothing pipe or two. Men everywhere seem to have countered boredom with gambling and the Chinese were no exception, taking great delight in an enthusiastic game of Mah-jong.

### **Part II**

In the early years of the twentieth century, Chinese greengrocers and fruiterers had done well, especially in the wholesale and retail banana trade. They pioneered the banana industry of north Queensland, which was particularly strong in the Cairns-Townsville area. The bananas were then transported to the more populous regions and so began a vigorous trade with the southern cities from the 1890s. Some of the largest fruit companies in Sydney, such as the Wing Sang and Wing On, were formed at this time, and the Chinese fruiterer, Geraldton (named after its base in Queensland, later known as Innisfail), had outlets in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

While the number of Chinese fruiterers in both New South Wales and Victoria in 1901 was just 531, the lucrative banana trade brought prosperity to the Chinese Communities of Sydney and Melbourne. After 1901, some Chinese in Sydney developed banana plantations in Fiji and the Song On Tiy company, founded by the Wing Sang, Wing On and Wing Tiy stores, soon had 350 acres in Fiji growing bananas. Some 10,000 bunches were shipped fortnightly to Sydney.

Chinese traders held over half of the banana

trade in both Sydney and Melbourne in the 1900s, and also distributed the fruit to country towns. Competition between Chinese growers and traders was keen, but with the average price for a bunch of Queensland bananas in 1899 at two shillings, rewards were high. The Wing Sang are said to have netted £36,000 sterling annually just from the Queensland banana trade. The success of the Chinese later stimulated increased Australian cultivation in northern Queensland, but the Chinese remained dominant until the First World War.

## **Market gardening, odd jobs and shearers' cooks**

### **Part I**

After the goldrush subsided, Chinese miners in Victoria and New South Wales began to move into the towns and cities in the 1870s. The three most common occupations they found were market gardening, cabinet making, and laundering. There was little competition in the market gardening trade from European Australians and the Chinese had native skills at growing vegetables. They ran their market gardens on a cooperative basis, helping each other in the various tasks of tilling, planting, watering, weeding, harvesting and packing. They also worked closely with urban Chinese storekeepers and greengrocers who would often help with credit or financial support. From 1901 to 1921, the annual value of market garden produce in Victoria averaged £300,000 sterling, and roughly half of this sum went to Chinese gardeners, hawkers, and greengrocers. In the 1900s, 30% of all Chinese in New South Wales and Victoria were engaged in market gardening. They sold cheap, fresh vegetables at Melbourne's Easter and Victoria markets, and Sydney's Belmore Market, and were a welcome sight to Australian housewives as they travelled the country towns.

### **Part II**

Those who did not find work as market gardeners, cabinet makers, or launderers, had to look for odd jobs. Those who could play Chinese musical instruments earned a little money by playing in the towns. Others sold

herbs or fruit, or set up small repair stalls. Some worked as baby-sitters for Europeans. The less fortunate were forced to beg.

### **Part III**

Both before and after the goldrushes, Chinese cooks found employment with shearing teams.

## **Laundries, cabinet makers and retailers**

### **Part I**

The Chinese laundry trade in Australia really began in Melbourne during the depression of the 1890s. Unemployed cabinet makers in the city turned to the laundry industry as a means of survival. By 1895, nearly every suburb had a Chinese laundry. Complaints about Chinese competition forced many to move to Sydney where regulations were easier. However, business was never as brisk as in Melbourne because of the lack of Australian customers. In 1913, 31% of laundry workers in Victoria were Chinese but in New South Wales the figure remained less than 5%.

### **Part II**

Competition between Chinese and Europeans in Australia was fierce in the cabinet making industry. Chinese had earlier built boxes on a small scale to send gold back to China. The economic boom of the 1880s stimulated demand and many Chinese now began large-scale production of the cheaper wares: plain chairs, washstands, dressing tables, and chests of drawers. At its peak in 1912, the number of Chinese working in the Victorian cabinet making trade reached 818. Europeans numbered 2024. The 175 Chinese furniture firms in Melbourne were concentrated in Lonsdale, Little Lonsdale, and Exhibition Streets. After the 1890s depression, European manufacturers were forced to move into the cheaper wares, but customers in cities and country towns continued to welcome the Chinese products.

### **Part III**

In Braidwood, the Nomchong Store has served the local community for the past 100 years.

Chee Dock Nomchong (1854-1941) arrived in Australia in 1877 to help with his brother's shop in the Mongarlowe goldfield. For six months, he studied English at night school and in 1882 took Australian citizenship. In 1884, he set up his own store in Braidwood. Surviving heavy losses in the 1890s depression, he built up the business through skin-buying, fruit and confectionary, and gradually expanded it into a general store. He traded in hay and eucalyptus oil, and his horses carried goods between Braidwood, Tarago and Nelligen, where he kept a large warehouse. Local residents considered that his services brought a slice of city life to Braidwood. He became a devout Catholic and loyal member of the parish. His obituary in 1941 praised him as a 'good citizen in every way, always assisting liberally any movement for the town's welfare'. Chee Dock's 15 children carried on and expanded his effort and in 1977 the Braidwood Historical Society celebrated the family's centenary in the town.

#### Part IV

Educated at Wangaratta High School, William Ah Ket (1876-1936) became one of Melbourne's finest lawyers and an outstanding spokesman for Chinese people against restrictive and discriminatory legislation during the first 30 years of the twentieth century. He was, for a period, Acting Consul for China.

### **Chinese monarchist and anti-opium movements**

#### Part I

After the failed One Hundred Days Reform of 1898, Chinese politics split into two main streams. The monarchists were led by Kang Youwei (Kang Yu-wei) who wished to restore real power to the Emperor Kuang Hsu and reduce the influence of the Empress Dowager. The revolutionaries were led by Dr Sun Yat-sen. In 1899 Kang Yu-wei wrote to Quong Tart, a prominent Chinese leader in Sydney to seek support for his movement. In response, the NSW Chinese Empire Reform Association was founded in January 1900 by Chinese merchants in Sydney. It was headed by Thomas Yee Hing, Ping Nam, Gilbert Quoy, and C. Leanfore. Sun

Yat-sen first founded the Hsing Chung Hui (Society for the Revival of China) in Honolulu in 1895 and travelled abroad to seek political sympathy and financial support for his nationalist movement. However, his republican ideologies did not reach Australia until 1908, and so the Chinese monarchist movement in Australia went unchallenged for the first eight years of the century. Tung Wah News run by Thomas Yee Wing was an organ of the Sydney monarchists spreading its message among the Chinese all over Australia and New Zealand.

A great event for the Chinese monarchists in Australia was the visit of Liang Qichao (Liang Chi-chao), one of the leading figures of the movement. He came from Penang to Perth in November 1900 and spent six months travelling extensively through Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Wherever he went he held meetings and gave lectures on reform and the restoration of Emperor Kuang Hsu. He was warmly welcomed and some of his meetings were presided over by Australian officials. During his stay in Melbourne, he wrote a couplet on a scroll for his See Yup countrymen in Melbourne. After he left, the reform associations in these four states gave lectures on the topic once a month and, every year, celebrated Emperor Kuang Hsu's birthday until his death in 1908.

The Chinese in Australia showed their support for reform in other ways - a Queue-Cutting Society was organised in Melbourne to express their anti-Empress Dowager sentiment. Its members cut their pigtails, the symbol of old China, and started dressing in the Western style.

In the early days, the Chinese government showed little concern for overseas Chinese. The first consulate in Australia was not opened until 1909. One Consul-General after another investigated the problems of Chinese in Australia and urged the Australian government to remove the restriction on immigration, but to little effect.

#### Part II

During the goldrushes, the opium smoking

habit was prevalent among Chinese immigrants. In the years 1871-1905, the quantity of opium imported varied from a minimum of 5,000 kg a year to a maximum of 17,000 kg in New South Wales, and from 2,700 to 18,200 in Victoria. Many Chinese were poverty stricken due to opium smoking and gambling. To get rid of this harmful habit, an extensive anti-opium crusade took place at the turn of the century in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Chinese newspapers urged the cessation of opium smoking, and a number of anti-opium societies were established. Members gave lectures on why opium smoking should be stopped and collected funds to purchase medication for those who wanted to escape the habit. In Sydney, Quong Tart was the first to raise opposition to the drug and the trade. As early as 1883, he launched an anti-opium crusade which culminated in a petition with 4000 signatures being submitted to the Executive Council of New South Wales. He also spoke in the Town Hall before an audience of both Chinese and Australians to win support for the cause.

## ***Response to Chinese Revolution of 1911***

### **Part I**

The influence of the Chinese republican movement was first brought to Australia in 1908 by two devotees, Lew Goot-chee and Wong Yue-kung, who came to Melbourne to co-edit the Chinese Times. To stimulate Chinese national feelings, they gave Sunday lectures on modern Chinese history, condemning the Manchu conquest of China and spreading the ideas of freedom and democracy. In October 1910, they organised a lecture group to popularise Sun Yat-sen's political doctrines. This emerged in January 1911 as the Young China League, an overtly republican organisation, with Wong and Lew as its president and secretary respectively. In the same year, the New South Wales Young China League was also formed, headed by J.A. Chuey.

At the time of the Chinese Revolution of 1911, the Young China League in Australia had three

main tasks: firstly, using the Chinese Times, it took a political stand against the conservative viewpoint spread by the Tung Wah Times; secondly, it raised funds to support Sun Yat-sen's political movement (in the National Patriotic Fund campaign between June 1912 and July 1913, the Chinese in Australia and the South Pacific contributed £26,000 to China's central government); thirdly, it united with Yee Hing, an earlier anti-Manchu secret society, later known as the Chinese Masonic Society, to support Sun Yat-sen's revolution. Devoted Yee Hing leaders, such as Moy Sing and J.A. Chuey in New South Wales, and Lee Yuan Sam in Victoria, successfully led Yee Hing members to play a part in the revolutionary movement. Contributions also came from other states. In 1911, £12,000 were collected among Chinese in Western Australia for the Revolutionary Army in China.

### **Part II**

The year 1912 was an extraordinary year for Australian Chinese. William Liu, a young Australian born staff member of the Chinese Consulate-General pulled down for the last time the Manchu Dragon Flag, and hoisted the twelve-pointed star republican flag. Mass celebrations were held to mark the great occasion. Millions of fireworks were set off in cities, towns and countryside throughout the nation to celebrate the victory of the Chinese Revolution at the end of 1911. The conservatives, however, regretted the end of the Manchu regime and voiced their dissatisfaction. In February 1912, they organised a Dragon Flag parade in Sydney to demonstrate against the Revolution and express their support for the old imperial dynasty.

## ***The healing herbalist and social life***

### **Part I**

The value of Chinese traditional medicine was extolled by travelling herbalists. Kwong Sue Duk (1853-1929), known throughout Australia as the Russell Street healing herbalist, was born in Canton and came first to Palmerston (later renamed Darwin) in the early 1880s. As a

sideline, he ran a tailor shop and was the first Chinese trader in the city, but his main occupation was Chinese herbal medicine. He later settled in Melbourne and, from there, took his skills across the country, often travelling by horse and boat. He frequently returned to China to replenish his supplies of herbal remedies. His kindness and consideration - treating the poor free of charge and providing little packets of sultanas to counter the bitter taste of the medicine - made him popular in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria with both Chinese and Australians. He treated the needy in towns, cities, and countryside, and throughout the goldfields, for fevers, arthritis, muscle strain, cholera, typhoid and other ailments.

### **Part II**

From the goldrush days, there was growing anti-Chinese feeling. This spread from state to state, and, in 1901, the nation adopted the White Australia Policy. Hopeful immigrants were forced to take a dictation test in any European language. Most Chinese were common labourers with little education and had no chance of success. Those who were already in the country and the few who passed the test were subject to official discrimination and their economic activities restricted. Far from home and family, and without the passage back to China, many fell into depression and even madness.

### **Part III**

Despite everything, Chinese culture survived. On special occasions, the people would come together to stage traditional operas, and take part in festivals with their colourful dragon and lion dances. The community took care of each member and would send the remains of the dead back to their families in China. Scenes of Chinese flying kites and playing chess still live on in the memories of locals in Robe, South Australia, where the Chinese first landed before walking to the distant goldfields.

In Australia, as elsewhere in the world, Chinese treasured education. In the second half of the 19th century, some well-established families in Victoria and New South Wales sent their sons to

Australian schools. In the 1870s and 1880s many churches set up English language classes for the Chinese immigrants and their children. Australian born Chinese were generally reported to have done well at schools and universities. James Cheong took the highest prize at Trinity College, Melbourne, and William Ah Ket graduated from the law faculty of Melbourne University in 1902. He was the sole Chinese solicitor and barrister in Victoria for the first three decades of the century. On the other hand, there were Chinese who valued traditional Chinese education more. Some makeshift schools, sometimes in the open air, passed on the basics of Chinese learning to children and adults alike. A small number of Chinese schools existed, but did not last long, because parents commonly considered English more useful. Some who could afford it sent their sons to China to receive primary education.

## **Religion**

Religion was, and is, a central part of life to many Chinese in Australia. As early as the goldrush period, a small number of Chinese immigrants were converted to Christianity. In the period between about 1850 and 1920, there were Chinese who attended church services in Methodist, Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches.

The majority of the Chinese before the Second World War, however, tended to go to joss-houses or Chinese temples. There, to gods such as Guan Di (the symbol of loyalty), Guan Yin (Goddess of Mercy), or Cai Shen (God of Wealth), they prayed for fortune, health and safety for themselves and their families.

## **Railways, trades, commerce, farming and river boats**

### **Part I**

The hot climate of Queensland and the Northern Territory was originally considered unsuitable for white European settlers. The development of mines and the laying of railways depended heavily on Chinese labour. The first 200 labourers were brought over to Port

Darwin, then known as Palmerston, in 1874 and sent to work in the mines. The success of the scheme led to more shipments and these increased after the discoveries of gold in the nearby Pine Creek area. By 1886, the Chinese in the Port Darwin area numbered approximately 4000.

Mining inevitably depended on rail transportation and, here too, it was the Chinese who provided the labour laying track for the Darwin-Pine Creek line. The railway was begun in 1887 and more labourers were brought over from Hong Kong. Working 10 to 12 hours a day, they finally completed the line in 1889. Only then did the South Australian government begin restrictions on Chinese immigration. The result was merely to stem production and many struggling mines and other leases were abandoned when Chinese labour could not be found.

#### **Part II**

The Chinese in Darwin contributed greatly to the early development of the Northern Territory. They were not simply miners or rail coolies. Living in thatched bark or timber huts, they worked as carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, cabinet-makers, boiler makers and fitters in the local construction industry. Some played a major role in private enterprise in pre-war Darwin. Up to 1942, most of the stores around Cavenagh Street were owned by Chinese. Some of them fished, carried goods, or farmed the land. They successfully introduced traditional ways of growing rice and raising pigs, and supplied cheap, fresh fruit and vegetables to local markets.

John Egge was a pioneer of river navigation and trade along the Murray River from the 1860s to 1890s. In 1857 he married Mary Perring at the Church of England, in Port Eliot, SA. They had 11 children.

## ***Mango lady, shipping director and Senator***

#### **Part I**

Up to the early part of the 20th century few Chinese women were allowed by the government to enter Australia. There were remarkable exceptions. Mrs Lum Loy came to Darwin in about 1897 as the adopted daughter of a Chinese businessman. Her husband died when she was in her early twenties, and she was left to fend for herself and her little daughter. In the 1920s, she rented 10 acres of land and single-handedly converted it into a mango orchard. By constant hard work she managed not only to survive but to expand her scale of operation, and later opened a chicken farm. During the Second World War she was evacuated to Adelaide. Afterwards, she returned to Darwin and rebuilt her life. Her hard work and constant good humour won her great popularity and respect. She lived and worked in Darwin, until her death in 1980 at the age of 98, and locals still remember 'the mango lady' with a sugar bag full of produce draped over her shoulder.

#### **Part II**

Some Chinese made economic contributions on a larger scale. During the First World War, both German and British shipping was redirected to Europe, leaving only two Japanese lines operating on the Hong Kong-Australia route. When the Japanese raised their prices, Chinese merchants in Sydney began to consider the establishment of their own shipping company. In 1917, three young Chinese, Yee Wing, William Liu, and William Gockson proposed to establish the China-Australia Mail Steamship Line and so benefit both Chinese and Australian import-export businesses. Chinese merchants in Sydney and elsewhere responded enthusiastically. They had bought two ships, but the Australian government then requisitioned them for war service and the new line was badly hit. After the war, they went straight back to business but were hard-pressed to compete with the Japanese and newly returned British. William Liu, an Australian born Chinese of

mixed parentage, was the first managing director of the Steamship Line.

### Part III

Others entered politics. Thomas Jerome Kingston Bakhup was the first Chinese Member of the Senate (1913, 1914, 1917, 1922). He was born in Ballarat, Victoria, in 1886 of a Chinese storekeeper father and European mother. Through self-education, he became the Chinese interpreter for east coast settlers at the age of 16. Later he worked for many years as a tin miner before entering politics. In 1909, he was elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly and held various important positions until his death in 1923. He was one of only two non-Europeans to take a seat in the Australian Senate to this day.

## **Support for China's anti-Japanese War**

### Part I

While settling in Australia, a majority of the Chinese immigrants still concerned themselves with the destiny of their remote fatherland. This was specially so in China's anti-Japanese War (1937-1945). At this crucial moment, they combined their efforts to help save the country. The Chinese Youth Dramatic Association was formed in 1939 with the goal of raising funds to support the war of resistance. In 1940, this association was joined by Chinese seamen who were stranded in Australia as a result of the Second World War. They erected a stage and frequently put on Chinese traditional operas. The association changed its name in June 1944 to the Chinese Youth league, and this has been maintained to the present day. In the same year, the League responded to Madame Sun Yat-sen's call for aid to the anti-Japanese guerrillas in China and sent money, winter clothes, and medicine which they had collected to Dr Bethune's Intentional Peace Hospital in Yen-an, the base of the Chinese Communist Party.

### Part II

At the height of the anti-Japanese War, Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), President of the Republic of China, wrote an open letter to the

Chinese in Australia urging them to give strong support. On 9 May 1939, Madame Jiang Jieshi broadcast a speech to the Chinese in Australia, condemning the cruelty of the Japanese invaders and calling on Chinese in Australia to fight alongside their countrymen to save the nation. Chinese in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere immediately responded. Associations consisting of people of all ages and from all walks of life were formed. They explained the war situation in China, protested Japanese invasion, and tried every means to collect money and materials for the Chinese government. The Annual Dragon Dance Ball in Sydney was one of the major activities to raise support for the cause.

## **Serving in the Second World War**

Besides contributing to the construction of the nation, Chinese also served Australia in the Second World War. Australians of Chinese origin, both men and women, enlisted willingly and served Australia and the Allies with distinction. It is estimated that there were probably more Chinese serving in the Australian forces than any other minority group in Australia. Although Chinese applicants were still to some extent discriminated against, prominent examples can still be found in the forces. A Mr See was the first Australian of Chinese origin to enter the Royal Australian Air Force and later served as bombing leader in bombers over Europe in Sunderland 'Flying Boats' and in long range aircraft over the Atlantic. Roy Goone, an Australian of Chinese origin, became a squadron leader commanding the 83rd Squadron in the Royal Australian Air Force in 1943. Enlisting with the Royal Australian Navy, D.G.(Bo) Liu was appointed Captain's secretary and later recommended to the naval officers' course. Reginald Charles Long in artillery was entered in the LHQ. Preselection board for officers and qualified for entry to officers' school. Samuel Tongway worked as an instructor. Meals served in many a mess were prepared by Chinese cooks. In 1944, in preparation for the decisive battles towards the end of the war, the American military base in Brisbane had an urgent demand for labour to build landing barges, and it was

170 Chinese from Sydney who headed for Brisbane to meet the need.

Chinese women also served in the army. Phillis Anguey was a senior sister in the RAAF, nursing service from 1940 to 1945, and Eunice Chinn worked in the Australian Army Signal Corps.

## ***Celebrating New China, participation of Peace Conference***

### **Part I**

In October 1949, the Revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party gained control of China and opened a new era in the nation's history. Some Chinese associations in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere celebrated this great victory. It was the Chinese Youth League in Sydney which first raised the five-star red flag (the national flag of the People's Republic of China) in Australia.

### **Part II**

In the early 1950s, the Menzies Government co-operated with the British in suppressing the communist insurgency in Malaya. To protest this, a grand Australian Peace Congress was held from April 16-19, 1950 in Melbourne. Dr Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury, came from England to participate. In the Congress, Arthur Locke Chang spoke as the representative of the Chinese Seamen's Union in support of peaceful co-existence and his speech was given a great ovation. He later advocated diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China, and worked towards improving the image of the People's Republic of China among Chinese in Sydney as well as being a founding member of the Australia-China Friendship Society.

## ***Chinese Olympic Team and Olympic hero***

### **Part I**

The Chinese delegation from Taiwan took part in the 16th Olympiad in Melbourne in 1956. The Chinese community in Melbourne provided a warm welcome when the team arrived.

### **Part II**

'An Olympic hero who did not compete' emerged during the Olympic Games in Melbourne. Born in Melbourne of Chinese parents in 1939, 17 year old apprentice carpenter John Wing was deeply troubled by the international tensions of 1956 (e.g. in Hungary and the Suez Canal). He wanted the Olympics to be free of bitterness and distrust and wrote a letter suggesting that all competitors march together at the closing ceremony rather than behind their national flags to demonstrate, through sport, an idea of international togetherness. The idea was accepted, but Wing did not attend and, when the organisers sought to recognise him, he could not be located. Sometime later he was found and his contribution recognised when he was presented with a medal. His idea was continued in later Olympics. John Wing has lived in London since 1969 but was brought to Australia in 1986 to be honoured at the opening of the Australian Institute of Sport.

## ***Post-War Influxes, abolition of the White Australia Policy, Uncle Bill, and diplomatic relations***

### **Part I**

After the Second World War, the Australian Government realised the need for establishing close relationships with neighbouring countries, particularly among members of the Commonwealth. A policy of 'Opening the Door' was adopted. Under the Colombo Plan, scholarships were offered by the Australian government, and the 1950s and the 1960s witnessed a large number of students coming from Singapore and Malaya. Many of these were of Chinese origin. At the same time, private students of Chinese origin from Malaysia, Hong Kong and elsewhere also had access to tertiary education in Australia. These students were obliged to leave the country after finishing their study. Many of them, however, returned to Australia as immigrants in the 1970s.

### **Part II**

Since the 1960s, and especially in the 1970s,

Chinese immigrants have arrived in increasing numbers. From Timor, Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong, Singapore, the People's Republic of China, Malaysia and Indo-China, they have come to build a new life in Australia.

### Part III

The year 1973 marked a milestone in the history of the Australian Chinese. The 'White Australia' Policy, which had lasted for more than 70 years, was at last abolished by the Whitlam Government. Al Grassby was the Minister for Immigration. The demise of the 'great white wall' was a victory for the Chinese community which had struggled against the discriminatory policy since the late nineteenth century. In this struggle, William Liu (1893-1984), an Australian born Chinese of Chinese-European parentage, was an outstanding figure.

He was passionate both about the land where he was born and the land of his ancestors. As a successful businessman, working in many fields, and heavily involved in social activities, he contributed greatly to Australian society and to the Chinese community. Among his many achievements, he devoted most of his life to building a bridge between the two peoples. The Chinese in Sydney addressed him respectfully as 'Uncle Bill'. He was awarded the OBE by the Queen in 1982 for his 'outstanding contribution to the friendship between the Australians and the Chinese'. He was also highly praised by Zhao Ziyang, then Premier of China, for his 'contribution over a long period of time to the promotion of understanding between the two peoples.'

### Part IV

On 21 December 1972, diplomatic relations between Australia and the People's Republic of China were established. Prime Minister Whitlam had set this goal as the first decision to be implemented after his Government was elected on 2 December. This marked a most important milestone in the history of the relationship between the two countries. In cities and towns, all kinds of activities were organised to celebrate this great event. In February 1973, 600 Australian Chinese attended a grand

banquet in Sydney to bid farewell to Dr Stephen FitzGerald, the first Australian ambassador to the People's Republic of China. In May of that year, a warm welcome was given by the Chinese in Sydney and Melbourne to His Excellency Wang Guoquan, the first Chinese ambassador to Australia. This new relationship was not only of mutual benefit but it also helped Australians of other ethnic origins to understand China, Chinese culture and the Australian Chinese.

### ***Rising to the top, entering the professions***

Great changes have taken place in the Chinese community. David Wang, the late Melbourne Councillor estimated in 1978 that, 'nearly every Chinese family in Australia today has at least one member who has graduated from or is still attending a university'. More and more young people have shifted from the traditional occupations of running restaurants, engaging in market gardening, etc, to the professions such as teaching, medicine, accountancy, science, and engineering. In many fields, outstanding figures are emerging from among the Chinese.

When Alec Fong Lim was elected Lord Mayor of Darwin in 1984, he was the first ethnic Chinese to attain that position (Harry Chan had earlier risen to the position of Mayor). He is a Member of the Order of Australia and a Member of the Australian Bicentenary Authority (NT division). Harry Chan rose to the position of President of the Legislative Council of the Northern Territory and then Mayor of Darwin from 1966 to 1969. He was the first Chinese in Australia to hold such positions.

Endorsed by the NSW Liberal Party, Helen Sham was the first Australian Chinese to win a seat in the Legislative Council of New South Wales in the 1988 state election. Claudia Cream was the only Chinese lawyer in South Australia when admitted to the Supreme Court of the State in the early 1980s.

Father Paschal Chang, Chaplain of the Catholic

Asiana Centre, New South Wales, and the late Reverend Philip Sik Kee Fong, Minister of the Chinese Presbyterian Church of Sydney, exemplify the best aspects of dedicated pastoral care to the community over many years.

Dr Victor P. Chang in St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney is a world-known cardiothoracic surgeon, currently holding the position of chairman of the National Cardiac Transplantation Unit. He was honoured with the Advance Australia Award in 1985 and AC (Companion of the Order of Australia) in 1986.

Professor Christopher Chen, a world pioneer in in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), worked in Adelaide between 1978 and 1987 before taking up an appointment in Singapore. In 1982 he succeeded in producing the first IVF pregnancy in South Australia and, a year later, made history by presiding over the birth of the world's first IVF triplets.

Professor Wang Gungwu, former Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University and Chairman of the Australia-China Council, accepted the post of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong in 1986. He has made a distinctive contribution to Asian studies in Australia.

Patrick G. Pak-poy, a civil engineer with postgraduate training in planning and engineering, founded an Australian based international consulting group in 1965 and managed major projects in the Asian-Pacific region. He also served as an adviser to the Federal and State Governments on matters of economic development, trade and tourism.

Dr C. S. Li, a rice entomologist in Darwin, discovered and found out how to control a new rice parasite in 1965. His discovery has been recognised as a contribution of world significance. George Lau (1913-1986) ran a winery at Southern Vales, SA, which produced two million bottles a year and was the eighth biggest in Australia. He was known as the Duke of Wigs and then the King of Wine.

Helen Quach (Kuo Mei-Chen) of Sydney, won the first prize in the New York Dimitri Mitropoulos International Competition for Conductors in 1969 and has conducted with distinction in the USA, Italy, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines as well as in Australia.

There have been many Australian Chinese who have succeeded in business and, at the same time, worked voluntarily for the benefit of the Chinese community and the promotion of mutual understanding between Chinese and European Australians. Mr King Fong in Sydney is just one example.

## ***Towards a future of Multiculturalism***

In the year when Australia celebrates its bicentenary, the ethnic Chinese population is estimated at more than 200,000, with greatly diverse geographical, linguistic, political and cultural backgrounds. The majority live in the capital cities, with more than half living in Sydney, where they form part of a multicultural society of equanimity unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

The Australian Chinese have proved to be a valuable resource for Australian development. One of their major characteristics is a high level of literacy. In 1981, 42% of the Chinese aged 15 years and over who had immigrated from Malaysia, had some qualifications (compared with 24% of all Australians). Of these, 64% held college diplomas and university degrees. Apart from well-educated professionals, there is a large group of experienced merchants and businessmen who immigrated from Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong and elsewhere. Their good knowledge of, and close contact with, overseas markets help develop Australia's foreign trade.

Not only this, the Chinese cultural impact has also been felt upon many aspects of Australian life. Traditional activities, dragon and lion dances, painting and calligraphy, have added colour to Australian culture, and Chinese

cooking is popular nationwide. Taijiquan (Tai-chi) and dragon boat racing have found enthusiasts among both local Chinese and Australians.

With the rest of the nation, the Chinese community is looking forward to a future of cultural blending and harmony. In the process of assimilation into the Australian culture, they are at the same time ensuring the continuity of tradition, emphasising education, unity, industriousness, frugality, respect for the old, caring for the young, and helping new immigrants to join in the continuing Australian saga.

**You can view the hand-painted scroll which accompanies this text on Disc B (CULTURE) in this CD-Rom package.**