

澳洲華人
歷史協會

CHINESE AUSTRALIAN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY inc

NEWSLETTER

- March 2019 -

The latest news and updates from CAHS



In this issue...

- From the President
- From the Editor
- Your Contribution
- Upcoming Events
- Chinese Australia's First Novel: "The Poison of Polygamy"
- Memories of Dad: Charlie Liu (1916 - 1966)
- The Splayed Eagle
- What price Chinese ephemera; what value your memorabilia?
- Membership

From the President



I hope your year started well and on a positive note. As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Chinese Australian Historical Society (CAHS) has a new committee and we made a good start with our Chinese New Year events for the Year of the Earth Pig. In addition to our Sydney Lunar Festival associated events, there were many other events and festive activities and dinners to attend. We are now planning and developing our activities for the remainder of the year.

One of my wishes is to ensure that the history of the Chinese in Australia is documented and recorded by academics and community members. This is especially critical as many of the descendants of the early Chinese, who still have some links to the past, are now getting on in years. Only recently, an elderly gentleman I met at a New Year dinner, was telling me about how his grandfather was one of those who came to Victoria during the Gold Rush but was wise enough to set himself up as a cook and made his gold that way.

February 2 was a busy day for CAHS members and friends who took part in King Fong's Chinatown walking tour and yum cha lunch, attended Ely Finch's talk on *The Poison of Polygamy*, which was then followed by a Chinese Heritage Association of Australia event, Marilyn Dooley on *The Yin and Yang of the Pig*. I was very pleased to see so many members and friends who joined King's Chinatown walking tour and lunch and then came on to hear Ely's presentation.

I would like to thank Peter Hack for taking on the role of newsletter editor and to all those who have contributed to this edition. We look forward to seeing you and your friends at our upcoming events.

Daphne Lowe Kelley
lowekelley@bigpond.com

From the Editor

I am the new editor of the Newsletter. I am not Chinese and, as far as I know, I am not related to anyone Chinese. But I do have a deep interest in modern Chinese history and the history of Chinese-Australians. I like spending time in galleries, museums, libraries and archives - here in Australia and overseas. When I am in Canberra, I have usually pre-ordered something to look at in the National Library or the National Archives. I actually travel with a separate wallet that contains all my membership and reader cards that give me access to collections and reading rooms - that includes the State Libraries in NSW and Victoria, the National Library in Canberra and Shanghai Library as well as the National Archives, the State Archives in NSW and the Shanghai Archives.

A favourite holiday activity is a visit to the Bibliotheca Zikawei (Xujiahui) to browse the Shanghai newspapers from the 1920s and 30s. The Bibliotheca at Xujiahui was established by Jesuits in the 1840s after the First Opium War and one of the great benefits of this library is that one of the best Shanghainese restaurants in the city is located across the road in what used to be the convent. Some of my Chinese-Australian friends have been quite surprised to find that I have newspaper articles on my laptop about family events like weddings or funerals in 1930s Shanghai which they are eager to email to relatives overseas!

Let me tell you about a relative of mine. Barbara Ellen West was born on 23 September 1877, the sixth of nine children born to John Ferguson, proprietor of *The Cumberland Times*, and Catherine West. Barbara was the smartest of the nine children. On 17 July 1890, the Sydney newspapers published the names of all the girls who had passed the examination for admission to the Public High School for Girls in Sydney. Barbara started the following week at Crown Street Public School where she won a number of prizes. This was at a time when many girls only completed a few years at primary school. Barbara was later employed as a teacher at the school of Christ Church St. Laurence from 1902 to 1912.

Located in the Haymarket, the school of Christ Church St. Laurence had many Chinese students including William Lee, the first barrister of Chinese descent admitted to the NSW Bar. In 1909, Barbara had a Chinese student in her class called William Liu who would become another leader of the Chinese community in Sydney and a lifelong campaigner against the White Australia Policy.

After a decade teaching at the Christ Church school, Barbara resigned in 1912 shortly before her marriage, as was expected at the time, and on Friday afternoon 27 September there was a presentation at the school to farewell the school's popular teacher, Miss West. The Reverend Clive Stratham presented Miss West with a cheque from the school board and there were presents from teachers and pupils. The Chinese students presented Miss West with a silver teapot and silver butter dish. There is no greater testament to the esteem in which Barbara West was held by the Chinese community of Sydney's Haymarket. A week later, on Saturday afternoon 5 October 1912, Barbara West married Albert Stephenson at St John's Church, Parramatta.

On Friday afternoon, prior to the Michaelmas holidays, a presentation was made to Miss Barbara West, who has been connected with the teaching staff at Christ Church, St. Laurence, for a period of ten years, and has now tendered her resignation on account of her approaching marriage. Miss West was accorded a hearty farewell by all connected with the school, the Rev. Clive Statham presenting her with a cheque from the school board as a slight recognition of her faithful services, and also with presents on behalf of the teaching staff and pupils. The Chinese children attending the school presented Miss West with a silver teapot and silver butter dish, as a collective expression of their good wishes, and also made individual presentations of tokens of remembrance.

Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954),
 Monday 30 September 1912, page 6.

The friendship between Barbara Stephenson and William Liu which started in 1909 continued for the next six decades until Barbara passed away in 1967 aged 90. Barbara Stephenson was my great aunt and the youngest of those nine children of John Ferguson and Catherine West, my paternal grandmother.

Peter Hack

Your Contribution

We welcome contributions to our quarterly newsletters (next one to appear in June 2019). If you have any stories about your Chinese ancestry or family history that you want to share and is relevant to our members; or are you organizing an event that you want to have publicized, we would be grateful if your copy could reach us by 8th May, 2019.

Chinese Australian Historical Society Inc. (E): peter.hack6@bigpond.com>

Upcoming Events

A History of Chinese Opera in Australia

Date: Saturday 30 March 2019
Time: 2.30 pm
Venue: Mitchell Theatre, Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney
Presenter: Dr Michael Williams
Cost: \$10 members. \$15 non-members
Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com

To the surprise of many, Chinese Opera in Australia has a history dating from its first appearance on the goldfields of Victoria in the 1850s and 1860s before finding its way to Melbourne and Sydney, as well as to northern Australia and even Tasmania into the early 20th century. While much of this cultural activity in a pre-multicultural Australia took place within the Chinese community, Australia's European community was never completely isolated from this form of theatrical amusement. In fact, our main sources of information about this art form in Australia comes from the numerous European observers - patronising, amazed, ignorant, disgusted, sympathetic, surprised and admiring, or all these at the same time.



Chinese Theatricals: *Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers* (Melbourne, Vic. 1867 - 1875), Tuesday 16 July 1872, page 144.

For many, perhaps most Australians, the image of the goldminer or market gardener, despite increasingly diverse research to the contrary, dominates the image of Chinese participation in Australian history. Yet for over 50 years Chinese drama played in theatres up and down the east coast of Australia. And while “opera-goer” is unlikely to supplant these images, it is worth considering the place of Chinese Opera in the history of Australia not only as entertainment, but as evidence of human and cultural exchange, efforts at integration, and as a lost, or perhaps simply delayed, step in the evolution of Australia's Asian fusion culture.

Australian Writers in China in the 1950s-60s

Date: TBA
Time: TBA
Venue: TBA
Presenter: Li Jianjun
Cost: \$10 members, \$15 non-members
Bookings: lowekelley@bigpond.com

The 1950s-60s are a special period in China, when the newly established People's Republic of China was isolated from major Western countries, Australia included. However, in that period, 23 novels, plays and collections of short stories by 11 Australian writers were translated into Chinese and published in China. These writers included James Aldridge, Frank Hardy, Jack Lindsay, Judah Waten, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Dymphna Cusack, Ralph de Boissière, Mona Brand, Wilfred G. Burchett, Leslie Rees, and Henry Lawson among other social realist "progressive" writers.

Mr. Li's talk will demonstrate why and how Australian writers were introduced into China and shed light on the cultural exchanges between Australia and China two decades before the re-establishment of diplomatic relationship between the two countries in 1972. His talk will also examine how the introduction of Australian literature into China was instrumental in bringing the two countries closer and laying a foundation for the re-establishment of the diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

Mr. Li Jianjun is senior lecturer, director of the Australian Studies Centre at Beijing Foreign Studies University (2013-) and secretary-general of the Chinese Association for Australian Studies (2014-). He is managing editor of the *Chinese Journal of Australian Studies* published by the Social Sciences Academic Press (China). He was a visiting scholar at Griffith University in 2002 and a visiting research fellow at Menzies Centre for Australian Studies at King's College London in 2016. He was awarded the BHP Billiton Australia China Scholarship in 2017. Currently he is a PhD candidate at the Western Sydney University's Writing and Society Research Centre, researching on Australian writers in China in the 1950s-60s.

Chinese Furniture Maker Bankruptcies

Date: Saturday 20 July 2019
Time: 2.30 pm
Venue: Mitchell Theatre, Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney
Presenter: Peter Gibson
 Details in the June 2019 CAHS Newsletter.

CAHS History Week Event

Date: Saturday 31 August
 Details in the June 2019 CAHS Newsletter.

CHINESE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Date: Saturday 13 April 2019
Time: 1:30 - 2.30 pm
Venue: Sydney Mechanics Schools of Arts, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney
Cost: \$7 members; \$8 non-members.

A motivational speaker from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will be joining us accompanied by his guide dog. Proceeds from the talk will be included in a donation to Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

RSVP: Email: meilinyum@gmail.com
 Phone: Marie Chan 0410 582 338 or Rose Wong 0418 838 737

WALKING TOUR OF BATHURST CHINATOWN

Location: Meet at Bathurst Courthouse, Russell St, Bathurst
Date: Sunday 7 April
Time: 10.00am - 12.00pm
Cost: \$7 per person - bookings essential
Bookings: Bathurst Visitor Information Centre
Contact: 1800 681 000

Join Charles Sturt University PhD candidate, Juanita Kwok, as she brings to life the Chinese quarter of Bathurst. The walk will begin with the story of indentured labourer and cover the hanging of Newing "the Chinaman" in front of Bathurst Gaol in 1852 for the murder of another Chinese named Ing. Juanita will discuss the lives of Bathurst Chinese residents William Beacham, Ah Guy, Kum Mow, George Chew Ming and others, as you walk along Howick, Rankin, Durham and George Streets.

Learn about the Chinese Masonic Lodge that stood on the corner of Rankin and Durham Streets between 1921 and 1953. All proceeds to Médecins Sans Frontières.

Be quick!! Numbers limited to 20 persons. Juanita's Bathurst walk on Sunday 31 March is already sold out! So don't miss the repeat on 7 April!



Members of the Chinese Masonic Lodge in the backyard of the Durham Street Lodge, circa 1946-1952. Photo courtesy of Tony Bouffler.

AZURE SEAS CANTONESE TRADITIONAL THEATRE

Monkey King and Skeleton Devil plus Chinese Opera Favourites

Date: Friday 26 July 2019
Time: 12.30 pm Chinese Opera Favourites,
 2.30 pm Monkey King and Skeleton Devil
Venue: The Concourse Theatre Chatswood

This well-known story from the Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, will be performed as a full-length opera piece by the Azure Seas Cantonese Tradition Theatre. The majority of this Hong Kong company of performers, musicians and backstage technicians, is comprised of teachers, graduates and students from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Art. For Information and Tickets please contact Gabby Chan 0414 329 880 or Daphne Lowe Kelley lowekelley@bigpond.com 0417 655 233.

CONTEMPORARY ASIAN AUSTRALIAN PERFORMANCE

In Between Two

Dates: Thursday 4 April at 7.00 pm, Friday 5 April at 1.00 pm.
Venue: ARA Darling Quarter Theatre, 1-25 Harbour Street, Sydney.
Cost: \$34 Adult, \$25 Student.

Two hip hop artists take to the stage to explore what it means to grow up Asian in Australia, A hit of the Sydney Festival 2016, *In Between Two* is an autobiographical 'slide night like no other' based on the fascinating family histories of hip hop artists Joel Ma (Joelistics) and James Mangohig. Consummate storytellers and charismatic performers, this is a joyful and captivating show to celebrate our diversity and start conversations.

From a nightclub-owning grandma in an open marriage to globetrotting parents with a political streak, the pair lovingly paint a canvas filled with failed proposals and religious strictures, casual racism and empowerment through music.



James Mangohig and Joel Ma - Photography by Sarah Walker.

THE RISE AND RISE OF NEW SOUTH WALES COUNTRY FESTIVALS CELEBRATING CHINESE HERITAGE

Over the last few years an interesting phenomenon has been evolving in country New South Wales; country festivals celebrating Chinese heritage. The *CAHS Newsletter* is aiming to keep a track of such festivals so that members can plan ahead if minded to attend. *CAHS Newsletter* also welcomes information about other festivals including festivals in other states.

The Lambing Flat Chinese Festival, Young

New South Wales' most notorious Chinese-Australian history venue, because of the anti-Chinese riots in 1861, took the brave step in facing up to its history. The festival was originally known as the Lambing Flat Festival and had been in operation since 2004. In April 2014, it assumed the new title of the Lambing Flat Chinese Festival and is a major fixture in the local events calendar.

A number of Chinese-Australian associations have had connections with the Festival: in April 2011 the Chinese Heritage Association of Australia organised a performance of *The Quiet Brother* (original play set 20 years after the Lambing Flat Riots) and in association with the Chinese Women's Association organised a week-end coach tour to the district and festival. Australasian Art and Stageworks Inc provided support for the three years 2014-2016.

The Festival is well worth a visit. The area has the Lambing Flat Museum and a Lambing Flat Chinese Tribute Gardens, which began in 1992.

The 2019 Lambing Flat Festival is on Saturday 30 March 2019.

Tingha Chinese Lantern Festival

Tingha was a major centre for tin mining in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, situated about 100km north-west of Armidale in the New England area of New South Wales, an area famous for mineral and gem stone deposits which are mined on and off depending on the market price for product. At its height in the late nineteenth century Tingha had a population of around 6,000 of which a quarter were Chinese.

Tingha is the home of the Wing Hing Long Museum which is a Chinese store freeze-framed by being purchased on a walk-in-walk-out basis when the last owner retired in 1998. The walls are lined with the stock as it stood at the time and there are other items of Chinese-Australian historical interest.

In recent years, the Tingha Citizens Association Inc (TCAI) has staged the Tingha Chinese Lantern Festival, held in February generally the weekend after the two weekends which surround Chinese New Year. Unfortunately, the 2019 Festival had to be cancelled because of safety concerns on the access roads following the bushfires around Tingha. TCAI hopes to stage a function later in the year in place of the cancelled Festival.

Fong Lee's Lane Street Party, Wellington

The first of these was held in October 2018 and reported on by Juanita Kwok in the December 2018 edition of the *CAHS Newsletter*. *CAHS Newsletter* is hoping it will become an annual event and aims to keep readers posted on developments. This is part of the Dubbo Region Entertainment Arts and Music (DREAM) Festival. Fong Lee's Lane was named after the Fong Lee & Co store, which opened in Wellington in the 1870s and operated until 1936.

CONFERENCE

2019 ACIAC Emerging Scholars' Forum on Australian and Chinese Arts and Culture: Compare, Contrast, Converge and Commingle

22-23 June 2019
 Call for papers

Convened by the Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture (ACIAC) of Western Sydney University, this international forum intends to bring together emerging scholars from Australia, China and the Sinosphere (including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other centres of Chinese culture), and elsewhere in the world for an exchange in Australian and Chinese studies in arts and culture.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Chinese New Culture Movement and it affords different societies an opportunity to reflect on their current cultural developments, to re-accentuate the importance of global cultural exchange at a time of international distrusts, paranoid nationalism and anti-globalization. This is as much a job of the future as it has been of the past and present, so the involvement of young scholars is important. It is hoped that this could facilitate the building of "New Cultures" in the 21st century that are both more open and accommodating to and appreciative of cultural differences.

Highlighting *comparison*, *contrast*, *convergence* and *commingling* - four aspects in the study of Australian and Chinese arts and culture, as well as the challenges encountered along the way, this forum welcomes paper proposals from Postgraduates and Early Career Researchers of various disciplines.

The proposal must include an author's short bio (100 words), a presentation paper title and a 300-word abstract in English. Call for papers closes on **March 31 2019**.

For accepted papers, flights and accommodation will be covered by the organizers for presenters from outside Australia.

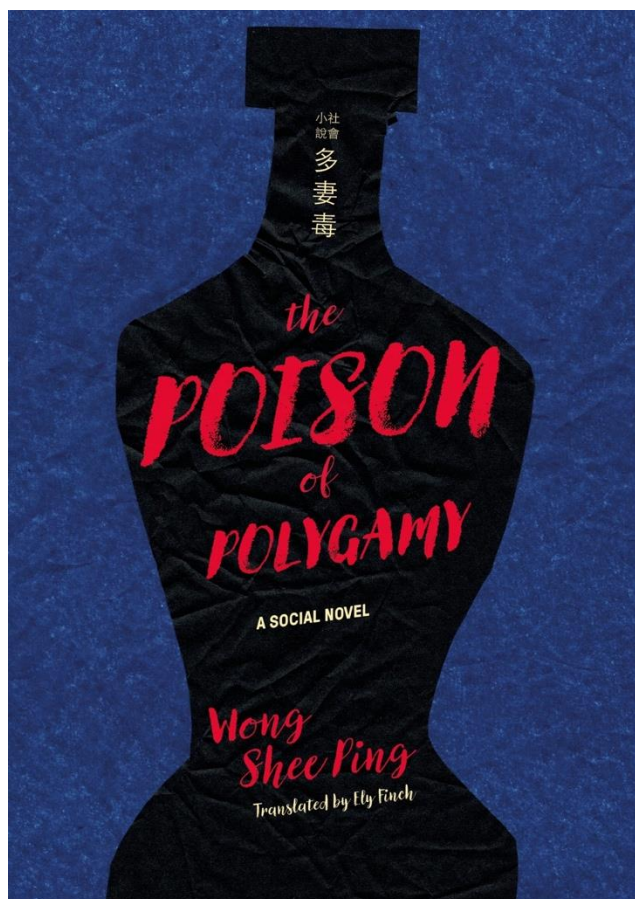
Selected papers will be included in the inaugural issue of a journal in Australian and Chinese arts and culture, to be published in late 2019 to early 2020.

For any enquiry, please contact Dr Kiu-Wai Chu (ACIAC) at k.chu@westernsydney.edu.au

Chinese Australia's First Novel: *The Poison of Polygamy*

It was my honour to be invited by CAHS to deliver a presentation last month as part of the 2019 Sydney Lunar Festival. The title above is the one I chose for the presentation, and the paragraphs below are an attempt to summarise its content, for the benefit of those who missed the talk or would appreciate a recapitulation.

"I've translated an old Australian novel into English" is how I now respond to the question "What have you translated?" Yes, this old Chinese-language novel is rightly deserving of a place within the catalogue of Australian literature. 社會小說多妻毒 "*The Poison of Polygamy: A Social Novel*" was serialised in the Melbourne newspaper the *Chinese Times* from mid-1909 to late 1910 and concerns Chinese Australian history, making it not only the first Chinese Australian novel, but the only one for another 70 years, and the second was in English.



The Poison of Polygamy

It was published toward the end of a significant ten-year interval—between 1901 and 1911—when imperial China, which was on the cusp of a republican revolution, and newly federated Australia were experiencing very different periods in their history. Many members of Australia's Chinese community were keen observers of and active participants in the events of the time. In consequence, there was a lot of free and public political debate going on amongst Chinese Australians, sometimes very heated debate.

While Chinese Australians' political opinions on China differed significantly there was, in general, a great desire to see modernisation and democratisation. Melbourne seems to have been a real base for the republican revolutionaries: the *Chinese Times*, which was then Melbourne's only Chinese-language newspaper, was a mouthpiece for their movement. Sydney was home to Australia's other two Chinese-language newspapers, one of which, the *Tung Wah*

Times, was strongly opposed to revolution. The novel was to an extent a work of political propaganda, representing the views of a key member of the former revolutionary faction.

Although originally published without attribution, persistent detective work, coupled with good luck, eventually succeeded in establishing that the author was a man named

黃樹屏 Wong Shee Ping (A.K.A. 黃右公 Wong Yau Kung). He was born sometime in the 1870s in the district of Hoi Ping, in the See Yip region, which lies southwest of Canton, features in the novel, and is where most of Victoria's Chinese at the time came from. We are led to believe that he trained as a missionary before he left China around 1901, though whether he came directly to Australia or not is unclear. A statement he makes in the novel suggests that he left a wife behind in China, though remarried in Melbourne in 1923.

Wong Shee Ping's family is particularly interesting. Firstly, because their story is intimately connected with Chinese Australian history, which means that he was far more than a foreign intellectual on some propagandist visit. And, secondly, because it turns out that the book's story draws heavily on the family story, and in fact that our author bases the heroic character within it on his own father (a prominent Victorian businessman).



"Portrait of Mr. Wong Yau Kung" (Wong Shee Ping):

The Burlington Studios, 294 Bourke Street, Melbourne.

broad brushstrokes. It is a work that acts as a vehicle for various serious messages that relate to the author's own day and to his republican agenda. In his preface, Wong Shee Ping claims that the work is a true story with slightly changed names. Our historical researches indicate that the story is indeed based, at least to a degree, on real people

The novel is a work of historical fiction set in the latter half of the 1800s, i.e. in Australia's gold-rush era. The main geographical settings are the Chinese diaspora district of See Yip and the Australian Colony of Victoria, the story moving back and forward between the two. The story is convoluted, but essentially follows the life of an antihero, who spends many years in Australia, as well as the life of his wife, who remains in China. The main theme is what the author views to be the social evil of polygamy, hence the title. The work is, however, much broader in scope, dealing with all sorts of intellectual and historical subjects, such as the gold rush, the fabled walk from Robe, community dynamics, business, feminism, religion, interracial relations, marriage, modernization, social change, politics, and industrialization.

An exciting read—covering everything from blackmail and murder to opium smoking and banditry—the novel is a literary work written for a popular audience, which paints its story with

and real events. This makes for some exciting connections to Australian history and presents numerous avenues for further research.

The author was familiar with everyday life in China and in Australia's Chinese community, and described it as only an insider could. The novel thus presents us with a long-forgotten Chinese perspective on the Chinese diaspora experience in the Western world. It is the only novel of its kind, and especially valuable because there is so little in the historical record that concerns Chinese people's—especially women's—emotional and everyday lives. These considerations have been key to historian Dr Michael Williams's instigation and coordination of the translation project, which is soon to culminate in a publication. The book—scheduled to be published by Sydney University Press in June—will contain a full transcription of the original text, along with a translation, in a bilingual parallel format, and various historical accompaniments authored by Dr Williams and Dr Mei-fen Kuo (who is responsible for the rediscovery of the novel). Information updates will be posted on the project's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ThePoisonofPolygamy

I and the other members of *The Poison of Polygamy* team would be most appreciative of your support. A great deal of work has gone into the publication and we hope that you will enjoy the product, inevitable flaws excepted, as much as we do (which we do!).

Ely Finch

(Email: thepoisonofpolygamy@gmail.com)

Ely Finch: *The Poison of Polygamy*: Chinese Australia's first novel

Seven members of the Mar family felt privileged to be present at Ely Finch's presentation on *The Poison of Polygamy*, soon to be published by Sydney University Press in translation by Ely Finch. We are descendants of the author, Wong Shee Ping, our maternal grandfather, who was an editor of Melbourne's *Chinese Times* newspaper in which the novel was serialised in 1909-1910.



Mar brothers, grandsons of Wong Shee Ping.

The Poison of Polygamy is the first known novel written in Australia by a Chinese person and may be the first novel dealing with the Chinese diaspora experience in the Western world. The presenter remarked that it is fruitful to see it as an Australian novel in Chinese, addressing very Australian subjects from race relations in the Gold Rush to thylacine attacks. The talk did not focus principally on the novel and its complex plot, which provides a critique of traditional practices including polygamy and foot-binding, but rather the presentation focused on Wong Shee Ping's

background, his strongly republican commitments and Christian beliefs, and the way in which social criticism could be fashioned within a Chinese genre of “censorious fiction”. Exploring biographical connections assumed great importance during the translation, as the novel seems to draw on the experiences of Wong Shee Ping’s father Wong Pang who came to Victoria during the Gold Rush.

Ely Finch’s talk provided us with an understanding of his approach to translating *The Poison of Polygamy*, in particular his rigorous commitment to conveying both the meanings and rhetorical flavour of the original work. We look forward eagerly to the bilingual publication later this year. As a family we are grateful to Ely and to historians Mei-Fen Kuo and Michael Williams who collaborated on the project. Our knowledge of our grandfather’s identity is entirely due to their detective work; until a few months ago, we had no idea who our grandfather was.

Phillip Mar

Memories of Dad: Charlie Liu (1916 - 1966)

In the wholesale section of Melbourne’s Queen Victoria Market, Charlie Liu was known as the Banana King. In the 1950’s and 60’s, there were only about 70 wholesale fruit merchants allowed to have a privileged licence to deal in fruit and vegetables. The licence for Dad’s firm, Yee Tong and Co., was secured in the 1800’s by Lau Yee Tong, his grandfather (my great grandfather) when the wholesale market was known as the Eastern Market.



*Kingsley's Great Grand Father
Lau Yee Tong (1848 - 1930).*

Back then, bananas arrived on only two designated train loads per week from northern New South Wales. The wholesale market was a massive cash market and was recognized as an informal exchange area for endorsed cheques, postal orders, and travellers cheques. These were deposited into the bank, and some transactions were later found to be fake or without funds.

During my teenage years, and especially in school holidays, I would wake up at 3.30 am and we would drive during the quiet hours across the suburbs of Ivanhoe and Carlton to the market.

As I was short and wiry, I could climb up the rough wooden boards of the banana cases and perch on top, observing and making comments on the many dealing transactions occurring below. My education included being able to yell out

all sorts of swear words in various languages. I got to know most of the green grocery owners and their kinds of dealing methods. There were Jews from Brighton, Greeks from St Kilda, Italians from Fitzroy and Collingwood and all kinds of Anglos from the Eastern suburbs.

A case of bananas weighed 60 lbs. By the time I was 14 years old, I could lift and place three or even four cases in a vertical stack. This stack became dangerously wobbly, when rocked back and forth in order to slide the lifting forks of a trolley hand cart underneath.



Queen Victoria Market 1940's.

When I was 17, I went to Melbourne University in Carlton, and it was so convenient to be able to walk across from the market to my 9.00 am engineering lectures.

Dad served on the Banana Committee in the wholesale market¹. Most of our purchases were on a consignment basis. The Banana Committee recommended the return price for each consignment period after which the growers were paid about 14 days after they had shipped their produce. The relationship between the growers and the wholesalers was

based on trust. However, it did not sound like that most of the time as Dad would often argue with the Italian banana growers over the phone. His English was heavily accented and his speech full of swearing and abusive phrases. Typically, he loved adding, "I will cut your balls off."



Queen Victoria Market 1940's.

Sometimes we would fly up to Coffs Harbour by Trans Australian Airline (TAA) on their Douglas DC3 planes. The slow twin propeller flight would be sensitive to wind gusts and the fuselage would thump and twist in the turbulence. This 1,000 miles, 4.5-hour flight was always scary. We would meet the Italian growers at their packing sheds, where our meetings revolved around fruit cake and hot tea. Sometimes Dad would exaggerate his hand gestures to match the Italians. Both sides seemed to put out last minute promises not to break the previous promises. But

Dad would guarantee his prices, and normally paid a premium over the average fixed price when it was set later by the Banana Committee. My father's relationship with

¹ Frank Chinn and Ron Wong Loy were the other Chinese serving on the banana committee. Its job was to ensure a fair return price to the growers.

many of the Italian growers allowed Yee Tong & Co to frequently dominate Melbourne's wholesale banana trade.

Dad's purchasing expertise was shaped by his interpretation of the weather patterns. The changes in Coffs Harbour weather conditions affected the frequency of picking and the rate of the entire banana supply into Melbourne. A large storm could prevent shipment for a whole week. Hot weather in Melbourne could shift the demand for bananas and tomatoes quickly upwards in a very elastic market. Their wholesale prices could double or more during the week if a shortage developed.

Dad bought a new and expensive Daimler Conquest after a successful gamble on tomato prices in 1957. But the opposite occurred as well, when he made a disastrous loss on hundreds of cases of tomatoes in 1960. We could not sell a single case in the collapsing market and could only look when the tomato sauce factories swooped on the rotting fruit that was left for pickup. At that time Dad most likely, once again, embellished the story to the ANZ bank manager to raise his bank overdraft limit.

A number of workers could have been former Pentridge Gaol inmates. They dealt with the movement of the cases of fruit from the trains to the cool rooms, on to the store room ripening areas and then back to the retailers' trucks and vans. In 1962, there was a famous dawn police raid on the growers and resellers section at the wholesale market. The police found many knives and guns that were dumped on the ground. Of course, no one knew anything about these weapons.

Dad later became a leader in Chinatown. He was the President of both the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the See Yap Association. Most of the Chinese in Melbourne, and indeed in Victoria, were from this district in Guangdong Province.

Dad drank and smoked and was happiest being with his own people and speaking his own dialect. He often loaned money to those in need and did not threaten them when they could not repay.

Our family would often eat at the Hong Kong Garden Restaurant in Little Bourke Street. Dad asked the chef to cook the beans which I had picked that afternoon and when the beans came out overcooked, Dad revealed his colossal bad temper and stormed into the kitchen and threw the plate at the chef. We never went back.

The Lord Mayor of Melbourne often invited Mum and Dad to his Annual Ball. Mum told me that the Lord Mayor was not impressed during one of the balls, because Dad said the word "bloody" far too often in the presence of ladies.

By the mid-1960s, the early modern supermarkets began to appear. Coles and Woolworths were still both only nickel and dime stores at that stage. In 1964, Dad asked me to go with him to view a supermarket in Balwyn. He had guessed the future trend. After the visit I said, "Not a proven idea," as I dreaded the prospect of life behind a counter and filling the shelves. Dad did not pursue it.

During the middle of my final year of Engineering, Dad faded rapidly and died in May 1966 after a belated diagnosis of virulent liver cancer. He was feted with a great funeral

ceremony and as our long motorcade passed through the manned police intersections in the city, including the City Town and Chinatown and the Queen Victoria Market, each policeman saluted our car. The church was filled and there was a large gathering at the Melbourne Cemetery with a prominent representation of the Melbourne Masons.

A friend from the past, Ernie Chinn² who worked in the wholesale market at the firm Quong Hong Wah (later called Chinn Bros) that was adjacent to our storeroom, reflected on Charlie from those days of the fifties and sixties. He said that Dad was noted for being the only one in those days to wear a suit to the market and that he was one of the first to travel regularly to Coffs Harbour to personally meet the growers.

He also recalled that Charlie and an Italian wholesale merchant named Frank Dimattina had each decided to buy a pair of racehorses, from trainer Tony Lopes.³ Apparently, Dad deliberately went a day earlier and picked out the better-looking horse. The Italian got the ugly crippled looking horse whom he named Chicquita. Dad's horse earned nothing after a poor race at Moonee Valley. However, the ungainly Chicquita became one of the highest earning thoroughbreds in Australian racing history. The Dimittina family earned a fortune from the winnings and their betting on this horse typically drew long odds.

Chicquita was trained at Flemington by her leasing part owner Tony Lopes and her name lives on thanks to the many race callers who refer to race fields passing his Chicquita Lodge stables at the back of the Flemington Race Course. Chicquita won 16 races, including eight in succession in Melbourne including the Thousand Guineas, Wakeful Stakes, VRC Oaks and Edward Manifold Stakes and in the spring of 1950, she was second in both the Caulfield Cup and the Melbourne Cup.

Kingsley Liu

The Splayed Eagle

My wife will tell you that I've hoarded too many heirlooms, but with only a little effort you can discover a lot about your past from them - if you know where to look. Unfortunately, both my father and my aunt died before I discovered the *Sydney Morning Herald* article referred to here, so they never knew the back-story of a curious painting their mother had inherited.

On the lounge-room wall of my late grandmother's house hung a pair of framed paintings on silk, the work of her long-dead father Henry Fine Chong. Both featured carefully rendered floral arrangements, but the one my aunt chose not to keep was surmounted by a curiously drawn eagle in flight that added *nothing* to the composition.

² Ernie Chinn was nephew to Ron Wong Loy who also served on the Banana Committee

³ <http://www.racingandsports.com.au/breeding/rsNewsArt.asp?NID=252491>



Eagle Flowers; photographed by the author.

AUSTRALIAN HARDWOODS.

A MARKET IN CHINA.

MR. TONG LEAVING SYDNEY.

It was through the instrumentality of Mr. Tong Chai Chib, editor of the "Tung Wah Times," that the first consignment of Australian wool was recently shipped to China.

A further movement is now on foot by which Mr. Tong hopes to introduce some of the valuable hardwoods of Australia to his country. He has been commissioned by a Sydney timber merchant to travel to Shanghai and other eastern ports in an endeavour to open up the market.

Last night members of the Chinese Reform Association assembled in the society's rooms to wish Mr. Tong a pleasant voyage. Mr. Ping Nam, who presided, presented their guest with an illuminated address and a purse of sovereigns.

The address was typically Chinese. There were only four words on it. The scroll represented the awakening of China, and was about four feet high by two broad. In the centre appeared a large Chinese eagle soaring upwards, bearing in its talons a ribbon on which was the Chinese equivalent of "Awake, awake, awake." Underneath was a cluster of roses, sunflowers, poppies, and chrysanthemums, the whole making a splendid picture in water colours, the work of Mr. Fine Chong.

The president and Messrs. John Hoe, Choi Hing, Joy Yee, T. J. Law, and Fine Chong spoke in high terms of Mr. Tong, who duly responded, whilst farewell messages were received by telegraph from all the reform associations in Australia, and personally from Narrandera, Temora, Tingha, and Tamworth.

Mr. Tong will probably be absent from Sydney eight months, and leaves by the E. and A. steamer Empire on Saturday. He will be met at Shanghai by representatives of the Reform Association from Peking, several of the provinces, and Japan.

Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954),
Thursday 27 August 1908, page 11.

In the mid-1970s my father hung it in an obscure corner of our home, but we could never fathom why his grandfather would have set so much store by such a clumsy-looking image. In the 1880s, under his Cantonese use-name Ah Hing, Henry had done a lot of 'portraits in oils' commissioned from photographs - we still have a couple - but this was clearly a painting he had done for his own pleasure.

It took forty years, and the blessing of the National Library of Australia's 'Trove', to finally divine the painting's meaning. A series of news stories revealed that Henry had been one of the nine leading figures in the Chinese Empire Reform Association - and its unofficial artist. On the 27th of August 1908, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that a representative of the Association headed for Shanghai had been presented "with an illuminated address", a painting by Mr. Fine Chong that represented the awakening of China by way of an eagle "bearing in its talons a ribbon" adorned with characters meaning "Awake, awake, awake" while soaring above a cluster of flowers.

When he died in 1944, Henry Fine took all of the family's Chinese language skills to the grave - but at last it was clear that Henry, loyal servant of the doomed Guangxu Emperor, had chosen to decorate his own home with a less political but more sumptuous version of the same painting.

Brad Powe

What price Chinese ephemera; what value your memorabilia?

A worthless bit of colonial junk or a priceless treasure? In December 2018, Lawsons conducted an online auction of “The Ray Marginson AM and Late Betty Marginson AM Collection, A Hawthorn (VIC) Home Contents Sale”. If you want to look it up, it was Sale 8653A. Lot 109 was described as “A framed testimonial for Mr Lo Kwoi Sang, Chinese Doctor, of Ballarat, together with three prints of houses, and five other prints including figural studies by Pat Shannon.” The estimate for lot was \$70-90. Lot 109 sold for \$700, ten times the low-end estimate! And that is **NOT** because of the worthless prints thrown in by the auction house to make the lot more “saleable”! With buyer’s premium, the total price paid would have been \$875.



How did the auction house get the estimate so wrong? Lo Kwoi Sang is not an “unknown and forgotten Chinaman”. Lawsons could easily have found information about him on the internet. There are entries on CHIA - the Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia website. Lo Kwoi Sang was born about 1839 in Ching Sing in Guangzhou, China. He arrived in Australia on the Eliza Jane on the 25 November 1871. He married Caroline Ramsay and they had four children. As a widower, he married the widow Caroline Moy Foon in Ballarat on 18 February 1884 and they had seven children. Lo Kwoi Sang was a herbalist who practiced in Ballarat. He died on 11 February 1896 of Haemoptysis Exhaustion and was buried in the Ballarat New Cemetery.

Lawsons; Sale 8653A; Lot 109; “A framed testimonial for Mr Lo Kwoi Sang ... etc.”

Lo Kwoi Sang is mentioned by Morag Loh in *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese in Victoria 1848-1985* and on page 132 of

Michael William’s recently published book *Returning Home with Glory*:

Within this narrow range of “typical” occupations, some *Huaqiao* worked in specialist jobs as Chinese medicine practitioners, such as Zhang Bingchang in Sydney or Lo Kwoi Sang and Thomas Chong in Victoria.

The framed testimonial of Lo Kwoi Sang is a remarkable document, well preserved and undoubtedly prized by Ray Marginson AM, now 95, and the late Betty Marginson. We can see that Lo Kwoi Sang arrived in Australia as a ship’s surgeon and set up business as a Chinese doctor and herbalist, consulting from 10 am until 10 pm, at 10 Peel Street South in Ballarat, next to the Presbyterian Church.

The framed document would have hung in the window at 10 Peel Street and contains 10 testimonials to his ability at curing Scarlet Fever, Malignant Quinsy, Paralysis, Abscess and even Cancer. But curing Diphtheria seems to have a specialty, mentioned in seven of the testimonials:

Sir,- I hereby certify that you cured my daughter from a severe attack of *Diphtheria* ; and I would advise any person having any of their children attacked, or even adults, to apply to you at once, for I am sure you can give them relief almost instantly, and cure them eventually, as in the case of my little girl. You are at liberty to make what use you please on this. - I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOS. J. KEANE

Peel Street South, 27th July, 1874.

The next item in the Lawsons auction, Lot 110, was “An original framed miner's right from the colony of Victoria, dated 1858, document size 20 x 22cm, Estimate \$80-100”. It sold for \$475, almost six times the low-end valuation. In their New Acquisitions list for March 2019, Douglas Stewart Fine Books has listed for sale a Miner's Right, Ballarat November 186[3?]. The price is \$600. The successful bidder in the Lawsons auction secured Lot 110 at the right price when adding in the buyer's premium of 25%, bringing the total to \$593.75. Again, how did Lawsons get the estimate so wrong?

Although the generalist auction house may be a little slow to pick up trends in the market, such as the rising interest in Chinese memorabilia, there are specialists who are far more astute. Antiquarian bookdealers have long dealt in a range of ephemera and are well aware of the value of Chinese artifacts. The fabulous collection of rare 19th century books, pamphlets and documents of Robert Edwards AO made its way into four sales catalogues at Hordern House Rare Books. The copy of *The Chinese Question in Australia 1878-79* by Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, in which leaders of Melbourne's Chinese community eloquently demonstrate that restrictive legislation targeting Chinese is in breach of the treaty between the British and Chinese empires and contrary to international law, was sold in 2016 for \$1,400.

But the example of the Lawsons auction makes me wonder what most collectors would think if they knew their relics would one day end up in a general auction without specialist valuation. Or worse, on a table at a school fete or at “Tempe Tip”! Private collectors have always played an important role in the development of our cultural institutions. It is not just public funding, but private benefaction that creates and continues to expand our public galleries, libraries, museums and archives. For the collector, no matter how large or small the collection, how broad or narrow the collector's resources, there are always two issues. How do I protect and conserve the collection? And what ultimately is going to happen to it?

In our homes, wine is often stored under far better conditions than our priceless ephemera - in a cool, dry, dark place (in a cellar or under the stairs), no sunlight, no vermin or insects allowed. We all know a few sad stories. A coloured engraving of a Chinese gambling house, framed and hanging on a wall that gets a couple of hours of afternoon sunlight each day. The elaborate robe made for the Chinese opera and

displayed under the wrong type of spot light. Water or fire damage. A cockroach infested box of old documents and photographs.

But the thing is, there is plenty of free advice around; and it is best to act as soon as possible because conservation and restoration can be very expensive. Staff at the State Library of NSW or the National Archives of Australia can advise and there are many online resources to access. The State Library has guidelines for looking after paper-based material:

<https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/research-and-collections/building-our-collections/caring-libraries-collections/care-paper-based>

If you have old documents or files, you should know about acid-free archival storage boxes. Have you seen an old document with rusty staples? Not good. And those post-it notes do damage over time. Any form of gum or glue is not good.

And the National Archives has a really valuable guide to preserving the family archive:

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/family-history/family-archive/scrapbooking.aspx#section3>

Then there is the vexing question of what is going to happen with the collection. Do you really want that object turning up in a general sale with a vague description such as “oriental decorative plate” written by someone who does not really know what the item actually is? Do your beneficiaries really have the same love and regard for your memorabilia? If they do and you know they do, that’s wonderful; but the children, grandchildren or that niece or nephew may not actually see the same value and importance in an object that you do.

I own some quite rare and valuable 19th century books published in Australia. After the death of an elderly relative, those books were going to be thrown out in a household cleanup. I asked if I could have them. I was nine years old. True story!

Donating objects to a library, museum or archive is an option to consider. Over time, some objects need conservation or restoration which can be extremely expensive; and our homes are not private galleries with constant temperature and humidity controls. So, in some circumstances, it may be better for the object to be donated to an institution where it can be professionally conserved. Also, it is not widely known that items donated to an institution under the Cultural Gifts Program, administered by the Federal Government, may attract a tax deduction for the donor:

<https://www.arts.gov.au/publications/cultural-gifts-program-guide>

Another option is a bequest to an institution. Conditions can be put on a bequest, but it may be useful to find out if the institution actually wants to acquire your bequest.

Some members of the Committee of the Chinese-Australian Historical Society have been talking about an event later this year or next year at which members can bring along their Chinese historical objects. There would be a range of experts on hand to give advice such as university historians, experts in conservation from the State Library and/or the National Archives, and perhaps a lawyer to advise on wills, donations and bequests. Our own version of an “Antiques Roadshow”! If you are interested in the idea, let one of us know.

Peter Hack

Membership

New Members: Welcome to the following new members: Belinda Coombs, Mark Holmes and Megan Neilson who has rejoined. We look forward to seeing you at our events and to your active participation.

Membership Renewals: The membership year is the same as our financial year, 1 July to 30 June. Membership renewals for 2019-2020 fall due on 1 July 2019.

The following have renewed since our last newsletter: Nola Bramble, Rose Boutin, Kerry Choy, Ian Cook, Cheryl Cumines, Margaret Cumines, Philip Emery, Natalie Fong, Juanita Kwok, Michael Quan, Janis Wilton, Ducman Alan Yip and Jing Yuan Wang.

The membership form can be used for membership renewals and also for enrolling new members.

<https://cahsociety.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/cahs-membership-form-2019.pdf>

It can also be downloaded from the CAHS website <http://chineseaustralianhistory.org>

Twentieth Anniversary of Incorporation of the Society Call for documents

The Society was incorporated with its registration on 4 September 2002.

The Committee is keen to prepare a short history of the Society's first 20 years and to that end seeks any old documents relevant to the Society's activities, particularly those from the early years, with a view to creating an archive.

The types of documents we have in mind include:

- Newsletters
- Minutes of Annual General Meetings
- Minutes of Committee meetings
- Treasurer's Reports to AGMs or Committee Meetings
- Copies of correspondence to and by the Society
- President's Reports to AGMs
- Photographs of activities undertaken by the Society
- Details of presentations or addresses made to the Society.

If you require assistance with scanning, let us know and we will borrow what you have and return it. Or if you no longer want the documents, we will happily take them off your hands!

Contact Malcolm Oakes
 SMS or ring 0419 249 697
oakes@tenthfloor.org