'MANY INVENTIONS'
historical archaeology and the Chinese in the Rocks, Sydney, 1890-1930

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This thesis is my own work and all the sources I have used have been acknowledged.
ABSTRACT

This study argues that historical archaeology is an inherently interdisciplinary means of looking at the past, and that the material constitutes only one component of a diverse range of evidence, forming a larger discourse. To exploit archaeology's unique, tangible, qualities, I argue that the physical data needs to be located within the wider world of cultural meaning and process, often regarded as the preserve of historians. To this end, I have made wide use of historical records and historical analysis. The transformations undergone by the material and documentary records require us to employ disciplinary protocols which to an extent produce incommensurable results; yet meaning always starts forth, animated by the juxtapositions which create difference.

This notion of collage helps to grasp cultural difference too, as my investigation of the exchange between Chinese and whites in Sydney's Rocks area between 1890 and 1930 demonstrates. Within the framework of colonialism, there were spaces where a more complex, contingent set of relationships were built. In pasting together my ethnographic collage, I first show that European life in the Rocks itself comprised different, contested codes of meaning and need. Elite attempts to control the city's other were resisted by the real people of the area; public views of the Rocks as slum are challenged by archaeological evidence, from below, for women's lives and aspirations.

I consider the Chinese experience on its own terms, arguing that this 'community' embraced a range of interests and alliances which sometimes crossed race lines. I identify various responses to Sydney life, including its rejection, through walling out white hostility, and the recreation of traditional structures. An inventive jargon of cultural forms was developed, however, to communicate between Chinese and white. I trace the nature of this 'pidgin
English' through the different relationships formed, for example, between wealthy Chinese merchants and middle class whites, through convergent understandings of ideas and practices such as 'respectability,' philanthropy, 'morality,' and guanxi. The very wide array of forms of exchange in the Rocks at the turn of the century shows that analysis which posits an immutable structural opposition between Chinese and white does not account for the complexity of their relations.

In the nineteenth century Rocks, objects and ideas were manipulated to create many identities, and for archaeologists, one implication of this process is the need to recapture the wider, symbolic dimensions of the material record; to see it as one of many texts written in and about the past.
Acknowledgements

This project could not have been carried out without help from many people and organisations. Most of the archaeological data I have used is owned and curated by the Sydney Cove Authority, which has been generous in allowing me to draw upon it and the expertise of its archivist, Susan Duyker, heritage architect, Pam Jeffrey, and archaeologist, Wayne Johnson. During the time I worked at the Sydney Cove Authority, I was encouraged and supported by colleagues: my boss, David Logan, heritage architects Noni Boyd and Helen Lochhead, and archaeologist Nadia Iacono. Discussion with archaeologists and friends such as Cath Snelgrove, Brett Noble, Mary Casey, Tony Lowe, Robert Varman, Dominic Steele, Sarah Colley, Jillian Comber, Stephanie Moser, Bernard Knapp, Peter Grave, Pim Allison and Denis Gojak was always stimulating. The people who helped out during the fieldwork and artefact analysis were crucial: both archaeologists and volunteers, and especially Celia Jones, Charlie Guinness and Robin Stone, students from the University of Sydney, Trevor Kelly and Biggles. Heritage firm Godden Mackay P/L, and notably Richard Mackay and Matthew Kelly, were always ready to assist with requests for information. Discussion with historians, curators and others has provided invaluable perspective on my own concerns: I would especially like to thank Peter Emmett, Susan Hunt, Peter Tonkin, and other colleagues at the Museum of Sydney on the site of first Government House, as well as Grace Karskens, Paula Hamilton, Linda Young, Shirley Fitzgerald, Jan Woods, and Paul MacGregor.

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During this fieldwork, the generosity and kindness of those I encountered was remarkable. In Los Angeles, consultant archaeologist and expert on the overseas Chinese, Roberta Greenwood, allowed me free access to her collection of objects and reports. Helle Girey, of the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at the University of California, Los Angeles, was also helpful, as was Phyllisa Eisentraut, Coordinator of the South Central Coastal Information Center, at the UCLA Institute of Archaeology. Ronald May and Maisie Morris kindly allowed me to examine the Fort Guijarros collection in San Diego. The Asian American Comparative Collection, at the Laboratory of Anthropology, the University of Idaho, in Moscow, Idaho, provided an essential methodological framework for my own data, and I am especially grateful for Priscilla Wegars' comprehensive knowledge of overseas Chinese archaeology, and her generosity and enthusiasm in sharing it with me. I am also thankful for the hospitality shown me by Priscilla and Terry Abrahams at a time when most people prefer to be left alone! In Moscow, Rick Sprague, Head of the Department of Anthropology, was also very helpful.
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Entering Sydney Cove, the Rocks on the right. 'Sydney 1904 - Australia,' Courtesy of Philip Gray Photography Pty Ltd, 4 Oakville Rd., Willoughby, NSW 2068.
Looking westwards across ships moored on the east side of Sydney Cove, to the Rocks. Note the large square Sailor's Home at 106 George Street, a landmark from across the water. Courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum.
Moving around the cove... looking down on Circular Quay to the south-west, with bond stores and Customs House (central, with columns) facing the cove. 1992. Tyrrell Collection, courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum.
From Circular Quay, a key mercantile and transport site, looking west to the Rocks: cabs drawn up on the left, ferries on the right. George Street runs from left to right, out of sight behind the first line of buildings on the other side of the quay. Customs House stood a little out of sight to the left of the photographer, and behind it, further up the hill towards the city, stands the Water Police Court, in Phillip Street. Several official figures can be seen striding across the Quay. 123 Circular Quay, H.King, Tyrrell Collection, courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum.
Looking south back down over the Rocks, 1907-9, from approximately the vantage point offered today by the Sydney Harbour Bridge. George Street curves south in the foreground, with the 'Counting House' at 43-45, occupied by Edward Row and Co. On the left side, at the bend, the Sailor's Home can be seen, with a striped awning over its street entrance. Parallel with George Street, as it heads south towards the city, is Playfair Street, on the right of the photograph, easily identifiable by the washing hung out to dry. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales. ML Px *D61169.
MAP
shewing Design for Subdivision of the
OBSERVATORY HILL LANDS
CITY OF SYDNEY
COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND PARISH OF ST PHILIP
Metropolitan Land District Land Board District of Sydney
Scale: 100 Feet to an Inch

These lands were resumed on the 27th December 1900 under the Public Works Act 1900
The boundaries of the resumption are shown thus —

Resumed land, 1900. Note that 'Harrington Street' north of Argyle is now Playfair Street; 'York' Street is Cumberland Street.
Sydney Cove Authority HP 190.
A Chinese hawker swings through Argyle Place at the Millers Point end of the Argyle Cut.

Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales, OQC47725.
Introduction

In 1990 I began to work for the Sydney Cove Authority, which owns and manages the Rocks, Sydney, as their archaeologist: a new position, of ill-defined scope. I started work on excavation of 'Samsons’ Cottage', an originary name for a small brick and sandstone dwelling built in 1844 by a stevedore, William Samson, and his wife Martha. In a sense, this project was another of the accidents of cultural resource management - we dug because a new 'infill' building was planned for the site (now the 'Puppet Cottage'), and the discovery of evidence for Chinese tenancy was incidental.

Analysis of the data recovered followed methodological procedures which are fairly standard for Australian historical archaeology sites, involving a great deal of description and quantification, but less consideration of how this information might relate to the social and cultural dimensions of life in the past. These problems, which I suggest are unfortunately a fact of life for consulting archaeologists, continued with analysis carried out in stages, due to the large amount of information generated by fieldwork (Samsons' and other concurrent projects), as well as to the requirements of public service resources and procedures. The site report was completed in accordance with the provisions of an excavation permit issued by the Heritage Council of New South Wales, but I was left with a feeling of incompleteness. Post-graduate research is often cited as the solution to the ills that plague historical archaeology, and such a project represented an opportunity to become familiar with a range of issues and

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2 Under Division 9, section 140 of the NSW Heritage Act (1977).
3 e.g. T.Murray, 'Discussant's Closing Comments', Historical Archaeology in the Rocks and Millers Point Seminar, Manuscript, 1991.
debates across history and anthropology as well as archaeology (my 'background'), enabling me to address some of the problems presented by this project in depth.

The chief problem I faced was that historical archaeology has so far dealt with evidence for the Chinese diaspora of the nineteenth century in an extremely narrow way, tracing their so-called 'acculturation' and gradual assimilation into European society through measuring changing proportions of Chinese items in the material record. This perspective can be criticised on a number of grounds: it involves an essentialising and monolithic notion of culture; it perceives culture change as linear and one-way, comprising the absorption of one, less powerful culture into another; it crudely and directly equates such processes with material patterns. Given these inadequacies, I attempted to develop a more satisfying means of understanding this phenomenon. I sought more sophisticated archaeological approaches toward cross-cultural exchange which would enable me to understand the particular context of material culture in creating identity, to recognise its dynamic and manipulable character, and to explore its strategic symbolic meanings.

Reading around these issues caused me to reflect more generally on the nature of historical archaeology, an inherently inter-disciplinary field. Broadly defined as the study of European expansion and settlement through material remains, the discipline is regarded as a new sub-branch of archaeology, and has been taught as a formal subject in Australia only from 1974. Within historical archaeology there are long-standing questions regarding the best means of harnessing documentary and material evidence, and of integrating historical, anthropological and archaeological approaches. Debates within historical

\[4\text{ e.g. Ibid.; J.Birmingham, 'Meaning from artefact: a question of scale,' Australasian Journal of Historical Archaeology, 10, 1992, pp.30-35; M.Leone and P.Potter, (eds), The Recovery of Meaning in Historical Archaeology in the Eastern United States, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC,}\]
archaeology concerning its proper role and purpose advocate work which takes advantage of its 'unique purview', determined by its empirical strength. I decided to explore some of these archaeological issues through a substantive account of life in the past, tightly located in time and place. A growing awareness of recent thinking regarding the complexity of the notion of 'culture', and cultural exchange in the past, in turn led me to consider some of the ways these processes have been dealt with more generally, across history, anthropology, and literary theory.

My data initially comprised the objects and associations excavated from the site of Samsons' Cottage, in the local context of archaeological evidence recovered from the numerous sites dug in the Rocks since 1979. Sites such as 'Lilyvale', on Cumberland Street, where a dozen nineteenth century households were investigated; Reynold's Cottage, Harrington Street, where a well in the rear yard had been filled in with nineteenth century household rubbish; and 'Jobbins' Building', Gloucester Street, where privy refuse formed a 'snap-shot' of a boarding-house, have yielded brilliant, kaleidoscopic assemblages of things which once played a vital role in peoples' lives. This collection offers a particularly clear view of the domestic, female life of nineteenth century Sydney, often missing from documentary sources; the potential of this perspective has not been realised in previous accounts of the area, which stress its public, male

1988; R.Schuyler, 'Archaeological Remains, Documents, and Anthropology: A Call for a New Culture History', Historical Archaeology 22(1), 1988, pp. 36-42.

5 e.g., K.Deagan, 'Neither history nor prehistory: the questions that count in historical archaeology,' Historical Archaeology, 22(1), 1988, pp.7-12; and more recently B.Little, 'People with History: An Update on Historical Archaeology in the United States,' Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory, 1(1), 1994, pp.5-40; There are different views regarding appropriate questions to ask (e.g., N.Honerkamp, (ed.), 'Questions that Count in Historical Archaeology,' Plenary Session, Meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Savannah, Georgia, Historical Archaeology, 22, 1987), but most agree that the real problems are conceptual, particularly the relationship between material and documentary evidence (e.g., M.Leone, 'The relationship between Archaeological Data and the Documentary Record: 18th Century Gardens in Annapolis, Maryland,' Historical Archaeology, 22, pp.29-35). See my discussion of this debate: Lydon, 'Archaeology in the Rocks,' 1993.

6 Ibid.
aspects. In the same way, archaeology represents the Chinese experience of life 'on the Rocks' at a time when linguistic and cultural barriers barred them from entering white records on their own terms. I draw upon evidence from these sites in constructing my argument, using both the unpublished site reports and the boxed objects housed by the Sydney Cove Authority.

This material evidence was supplemented by documentary sources such as the Royal Commission which conducted an enquiry into alleged Chinese gambling and immorality, centred on the Rocks, in 1891. The transcription of evidence taken before the Commission brings together many different contemporary perspectives; in their intersections and divergences may be discerned a complex social world, within which that part of the city called 'the Rocks' formed a distinctive locale. Other important documentary material was drawn from the collections of Australian Archives (NSW), which houses records relating to the administration of immigration and customs for the period; Mitchell Library, where the Quong Tart Family Papers were of especial interest; and the State Archives Office of New South Wales, where I chiefly used the Colonial Secretary's Correspondence. I drew upon newspapers for the period such as the Sydney Morning Herald, the Evening News, The Daily Telegraph, the Chinese Australian Herald, and the Evening Star, and journals such as the Bulletin, the Lone Hand and Cosmos Magazine, working both in the State Library of New South Wales and the National Library, Canberra. Several oral history programs have conducted interviews with former residents of the Rocks and Millers Point, such as Trish Fitzsimons' 'The Point's Changed a Terrible Lot': Memories of the Rocks and Millers Point, and the N.S.W. Bicentennial Oral History Project. Photographs taken of the area, especially during the 1901 cleansing operations, provide

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another angle on the place during the period; I have drawn upon these pictorial sources less heavily, and in less explicit ways than the other evidence due to the project's scope. I examined images in collections owned by the State Archives Office of New South Wales, the Powerhouse Museum, the Royal Australian Historical Society, the Sydney Cove Authority, the National Library, and the Sydney City Council.

Due to the complexity of this empirical collage, I have adopted the historian's arrangement of referencing through footnotes, rather than the terser Harvard system in vogue amongst archaeologists. This perhaps better preserves the integrity of the individual pieces of evidence, signalling their disparate, fabricated quality, yet allowing the text to cohere above them.

The thesis has the following structure: Chapter one, 'pidgin English: towards an historical archaeology of cultural exchange,' starts with a discussion of archaeology and internal debates regarding analytic scale and cultural interpretation; it considers the notion of 'culture' and cultural interaction, and the theoretical traditions that have constituted and scrutinised it. This review is organised around the idea of 'pidgin English' as a means of conceptualising the process of interaction between whites and Chinese in the Rocks at the turn of the century: a language of mutually understood forms created from the artefacts and practices of each culture. To represent this complex exchange, I take up the notion of collage, the juxtaposition of fragments of different kinds, as a means of capturing the process of combining seemingly incommensurable perspectives on a single plane.

Having mapped this conceptual ground, in Chapter two I consider the literature surrounding the overseas Chinese, to which my study in part contributes. I evaluate international and Australian studies within archaeology and history
against my own concerns, arguing that among methodological and theoretical problems with archaeological approaches toward ethnicity and the material record has been neglect of the provisional, inventive dimensions of cultural process. I review the many historical accounts of the Chinese diaspora, from the perspective of different 'host' societies, as well as by those concerned with the phenomenon *per se*, noting the recent upsurge in interest by the Chinese community itself.

The technique of collage informs the organisation of the case study: in examining the intersection of cultures in the Rocks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I devote a chapter each to discerning European and Chinese ways of life, on their respective cultural terms, before turning to a more entangled mode. Chapter three, 'Life *on the Rocks*', defines the European 'norm', although arguing for the existence of a more heterogenous community than elite discourse allowed. It traces white perceptions of the Chinese. Chapter four, 'Inside the Chinese Community', examines the Rocks' Chinese population, identifying the traditional divisions and links, as well as the white attitudes, which shaped life in a new place. Transecting these monolithic categories, local interaction produced a cultural collage of a more intimate kind: in Chapter five, 'Across the racial line: Interaction and confrontation 1891,' I examine the conflict surrounding the gambling craze which swept Lower George Street in the late nineteenth century, through the record of the white enquiry held in 1891, looking through its official, formal structure to define the complex world of people and interests visible beyond it. Chapter six, 'Common morality,' pursues this complexity, exploring the ways that gender, as analytic category, destabilises dualistic oppositions grounded in race. Chapter seven, "Many Inventions": the Chinese in the Rocks 1892-1930', examines the cultural jargon developed between Chinese and white during the period, comprising objects, practices and other cultural forms.
I conclude that the complexity of this situation questions views of the Chinese-white encounter as wholly determined by white racism, providing evidence for a more contested relationship in which the Chinese asserted their own identity and objectives. It reveals a heterogenous Rocks, viewed by bourgeois whites as the city's other, occupied by the 'lamentably alien' in class, gender and race terms, an elite perspective challenged by archaeological and other evidence for the lives of the area's real people. It emerges as 'a kind of village', a close-knit, working-class enclave, which accommodated a complex web of alliances, antagonisms and interests, expressed through performances of different kinds, including those of material things.

Focusing on the Chinese experience on its own terms, as well as on interaction, I address the perceptions that Chinese and Europeans formed of each another. Evil and oppression undoubtedly played a role, and stories of endurance and courage, hate and conflict have often been told, but there is another picture too: the Chinese community from within, the ways it dealt with a new environment, and the varied and creative ways it found to communicate with white society.
Chapter 1. 'Pidgin English'
towards an historical archaeology of cultural exchange

I realize that, with even so much involvement in explanations as this, I am liable seriously, and perhaps irrevocably, to obscure what would at best be hard enough to give its appropriate clarity and intensity; and what seems to me to be most important of all; namely, that these I will write of are human beings, living in this world, innocent of such twistings as these which are taking place over their heads; and that they were dwelt among, investigated, spied on, revered, and loved, by other quite monstrously alien human beings, in the employment of others still more alien; and that they are now being looked into by still others, who have picked up their living as casually as if it were a book, and who were actuated toward this reading by various possible reflexes of sympathy, curiosity, idleness, et cetera, and almost certainly in a lack of consciousness, and conscience, remotely appropriate to the enormity of what they are doing.

If I could do it, I’d do no writing at all here. It would be photographs; the rest would be fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odours, plates of food and of excrement. Booksellers would consider it quite a novelty; critics would murmur, yes, but is it art; and I could trust a majority of you to use it as you would a parlour game.


'pidgin: jargon chiefly of English words used between Chinese and Europeans', Oxford Concise Dictionary.

James Agee’s ethnographic poetry takes circuitous paths towards and around the problems of understanding alien experience. His 'parlour game' foreshadows more recent experiments in representing the other. In developing an approach, via historical archaeology, to understanding cultural contact, exchange and social change in the Rocks, I consider a range of conceptual issues relating to analytic scale, interpretation, and representation. I argue that historical archaeology's rich assemblage of perspectives and substances offers an insight into the short term and the symbolic realm which the broader discipline of archaeology has tended to renounce; it allows an understanding of the complexities of cultural exchange and experiments with representation that go beyond the flat narrative of the distant past. In selecting particular aspects of
debates across archaeology, anthropology, and history, I have attempted to translate the 'pidgin English' spoken and enacted in the Rocks between Chinese and white. The detailed understanding of this process of communication allowed by historical archaeology is achieved through various techniques of juxtaposition.

archaeological interpretation

Within archaeology, analysis which focuses on the symbolic dimensions of the material world has become increasingly established, seeing cultural context as essential to understanding the meaning of things. It intersects with a widespread interest across the social sciences in the 'textualisation' of culture: since Ricoeur and Geertz, the notion that the symbolic structures which shape people's reactions to the world can be considered texts to be 'read', has become commonplace.¹ In archaeology, this approach originated with the work of American historical archaeologists such as James Deetz, arguing for material culture as 'that segment of man's physical environment which is purposely shaped by him according to culturally dictated plans.' Deetz' structuralist account of seventeenth-eighteenth century changes in world view of 'Anglo-Americans' in New England was grounded in the material world of houses and possessions.² Historical archaeology’s empirical advantage in such analysis is often noted.³


Gosden outlines what at first sight seems to be a peculiarly archaeological objection to this approach, related to the physicality of material culture: by limiting the real world, as symbols, to the human realm we deny the possibility of creative interaction between the material and the human. But on closer examination this critique can be seen to parallel that of historians and anthropologists of structuralist views of symbolic schemes and the material record as representing a coherent, stable 'world view'. Following writers such as Foucault, who contends that knowledge is constructed according to a discursive field which creates a representation of an object of knowledge, recognition of the way that social practices condition cognitive discourse has undermined the separation of text and world. The human subject is produced historically from the social world, and language is only one part of this process. 'Geertzian' phenomenological analysis relies on a conception of culture as a system with


2 Whitney Davis, for example, deconstructs this notion of a transcendent reality (logocentric archaeology), and of a direct relationship between thought and its expression in objects, arguing for recognition of their creation in the process of 'writing': the 'material evidence precisely as material, as a material structure of writing, of traces and spaces between them, or of spaces with traces between', concluding that past meaning 'temporarily crystallizes as one kind of retrodictive interpretation of the distribution by an archaeologist': W.Davis, 'The deconstruction of intentionality in archaeology,' Antiquity, 66, 1992, pp.336-346.

internal coherence and interdependence, thereby effacing difference and conflict, and the multiple, contingent meanings of symbols.6

This critique can be countered by the recognition that the symbolic world of meaning embodied in a text must be examined in relationship to the world outside it, because it stands in dialectical relationship to that world.7 This dialectic is inherent in the notion of discourse as a social practice, and its engagement of material and practical life suggests a starting-point for archaeologists pursuing the larger cultural schemes of things, as demonstrated by several recent studies in historical archaeology which explore the discursive, symbolic nature of the material.8 As Tony Bennett's reading of the Rocks as a network of intertextual relations shows, it is a site of many, interleaved levels, the textual object of conflicting representations, such as birthplace of a nation,
home to the working classes, and now a 'tourist showplace and gentrified residential zone for the middle classes'. In practice, the material world is an integral element of cultural process, and analysis of the archaeological record must acknowledge its embeddedness in wider discourse, as well as its internal relations and meanings.

Recent archaeological debates have stressed the differences between things and words (the physical and language), drawing attention to the distinctive qualities of the material, and the ways that humans make sense of it. Where Moore stresses the amenability of material culture to analysis as a text, precisely because of its demonstrable objectification in Ricoeur's terms, others see this same physicality as an insuperable obstacle. Gosden argues that material culture 'does not operate like a text': that over the long term, embodied for example in a landscape, it is not always directly meaningful to us, but acts at a sub-conscious level to shape the world from which all meaning arises. He states that 'a concentration on meaning is all very well for those looking at the texture of life over short time-spans, be they literary theorists or anthropologists. But for archaeologists meaning is only one strand of human history, and a strand that has its own temporary time-scales.' Here the prehistorian's point of view determines the form of archaeological argument, implying a notion of social change which privileges the long term, rather than integrating it with the short term. Historical archaeology, however, admits an emphasis on the event which is necessary in a dialectical understanding of social change.

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11 Moore, 'Action, meaning and text,' 1990, p.112.
Hodder points to the physical and practical role objects play in creating ideas about themselves: objects as signifiers are non-arbitrary in that their use in the real world participates in the construction of their meaning; sometimes their meanings are diffuse, and do not refer to anything specific. As Miller’s analysis of cultural objectification has shown, things can become emblems of identity, playing an active role in the social world through a process of objectification and sublation, defining social identity and relations through the material. But this process is complicated by the recognition that an object’s value lies in exchange, rather than an intrinsic or prior existence; it is determined by cultural relations and alters as it moves through different phases or use contexts. What is important is to establish the specific ways that different aspects of an object intersect with its cultural and historical context and how 'the abstract symbolic meanings of the material world are related to that world by relationships of association, analogy, substitution, metaphor...'. Here, the notion of material culture as 'text' has the abstract sense of 'the marking or tracing of pure relationality' rather than a rigidly analogical definition; the elements of the Rocks' archaeological record indirectly reflect past cultural process and so may systematically be examined for their former meaning. My analysis considers

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15 'Candidacy' is his term for the culturally determined ways that an object can be used, for example in exchange. A.Appadurai, The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, Cambridge University Press, 1986; N.Thomas, Entangled Objects Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1991, provides a particularly useful discussion of the entanglement of culture and things.
16 Hodder, 'Theoretical Archaeology,' 1992, p.203, cites Tarlow’s M.Phil. thesis, noting that material culture is organised by 'loaded or motivated' relationships rather than chains of signifiers; its secondary meaning is created by metaphor from its practical nature: S.Tarlow, Metaphors and Neolithic-Bronze Age burial mounds, M.Phil., University of Cambridge, 1990.
18 V.Buchli makes the point that much confusion results from the interchangeable use of 'metaphor' and 'analogy' to characterise the relationship between text and material record, with corresponding implications for the strictness of analysis: 'Interpreting material culture. The trouble with text,' in I.Hodder, M.Shanks, A.Alexandri, V.Buchli, J.Carman, J.Last and G.Lucas (eds), Interpreting Archaeology, Routledge, London, 1995, p.183.
how these patterns form a code of shared meanings - like the objects which furnish a house-proud woman's cottage, or the diet of Chinese overseas. While recognising archaeology's particular methodological concerns and the ways that things are different from words, symbolic meanings and their 'real' context can be addressed.

archaeology and history

Within the last decade there has been renewed interest by some archaeologists in history, and specifically the *Annales* school, as part of a general reaction against the functionalist logico-positivism of 'processual', or New, Archaeology, which sought to establish general laws in human behaviour, focusing on systems theory and cultural process rather than cultural history. For some time the opposition in traditional archaeology between 'scientific', anthropological analysis and historical explanation has been deplored, paralleling the poststructuralist critique within anthropology of static, ahistorical analysis of culture as a system. It can also be seen in the context of a general tendency in the social sciences towards 'blurring genres' in the pursuit of historical insights into cultural forms and change. The *Annales* school's multi-disciplinarity, rejection of notions of objectivity, interest in *mentalités*, and particularly Braudel's approach to time and space, have sometimes been seen to offer archaeologists an appropriate conceptual framework. The perception that archaeology's unique frame of reference is its ability to explore longitudinal diachronic change has focussed attention on the development of analytic time-scales within *Annales* history. For example, Ian Hodder equates Braudel's event, 'that which has consequences', with the objects comprising the archaeological record, pointing

out that the use of artefacts to define group identity or culture has obscured the individual and the event. But he leaves this key analogy in rather vague terms: events are defined according to the historian's or archaeologist's particular questions; the identification of significant events lies 'in our ability as archaeologists to recognise Braudel's chains of events'. Hodder concludes that adequate analysis of events and social change leads to a search for the long term, allowing prehistory to 'play an indispensable role' in reconstructions of the past.

I argue, however, that debates within archaeology place an unnecessarily restrictive emphasis on the long term. Hodder's use of the Annales approach constitutes a corrective to the ahistoricism of the New Archaeology, and he pursues its archaeological implications carefully. His approach is, however, flawed, less by his dubious adaptation of Braudel, than by the inadequacies since identified in the Braudelian scheme, their implications for archaeological analysis, and by an empirical and theoretical bias towards prehistory. In particular, Braudel's relegation of mentalités to the 'third level' of historical experience has been rejected by fourth-generation Annales historians, for whom world view is 'a primary determinant of historical reality', and who see economic and social relations as being themselves aspects of cultural practice. This question - the integration of structure and agency - has become a core debate in contemporary social theory. Like Braudel, Hodder privileges the long term over

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21 He relates Braudel's framework to archaeological work such as the debate regarding the origin and nature of Indo-Europeans, and the long term underlying structure of Indo-European society, tracing an archaeological tradition from Gordon Childe's *The Dawn of European Civilisation*, published in 1925, which attempted to identify the particular nature of European society. Hodder, 'The contribution of the long term', 1987, p.6.

22 Hodder, 'The contribution of the long term', 1987, pp.4-5.

microhistory, similarly neglecting the role of the short term, of the event, and of human agency in favour of the prehistorian's perspective. This approach overlooks the fact that, even in prehistory, the short term leaves its traces too.\textsuperscript{24} Further, the empirical constraints on the study of prehistory vanish in the historical period. The historical archaeologist's rich aggregation of sources supplies a perspective which has been missing in archaeological debates, through its referential frame, the more recent past.

This empirical advantage has also been flagged with reference to symbolic approaches such as Ian Hodder's 'contextual' archaeology. But Hodder does not integrate his 'Annales' approach to social change and the long term, as outlined earlier, with his 'contextual' emphasis on symbolic meaning; his notions concerning long term structure, on the one hand, and his pursuit of cultural context as a means of analysis, on the other, have remained distinct debates in the archaeological literature. By contrast, within the wider context of social theory, as well as in their specific application in fields of inquiry such as historical anthropology, analytic scale, and various disciplinary methodologies have been productively synthesised.\textsuperscript{25} Change is demonstrated to be a result of the interplay between the long and short term, as are the specific forms it takes, indicating the potential for historical archaeologists of a shift in emphasis from long-term process to include scrutiny of the short term, human agency and the symbolic realm. These general insights may be productively focused on the complexity of cross-cultural contact.

\textsuperscript{24} Knapp, \textit{Archaeology, Annales and ethnohistory}, 1992, p.2.
Orientalism and the problem of 'culture'

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilisation and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of the deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is purely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture.


Edward Said's major study looms up here, a post-Foucaultian exploration of how the 'West' understands the 'East', tracing the discursive formation he calls Orientalism. In this study, Said established the nature of cultures and identities, and the devices we use to conceive, construct and convey meaning about them, as a focus of analysis; it is hard to consider such research, especially into the relations between the 'west' and 'eastern' countries, like China, without reference to its achievements and the problems it raises. In Australia, the arrival of Chinese sojourners formed another, disparate strand in the process of colonisation and the dispossession and destruction of traditional Aboriginal ways of life. The Chinese were strangers to the land and its inhabitants, as well as to dominant white society: from the point of view of Aboriginal people the Chinese were as invasive as Europeans; from the white perspective they were alien and inferior, and so suffered discrimination and oppression in Australia. They were, however, to a great extent able to maintain and assert their own values and practices, and so the Chinese experience cannot be readily appropriated into the discourse of post-colonialism which stems from the Indian and Middle Eastern experience. The complexity of discourse surrounding these relationships and processes is beyond this study, but issues such as cultural

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contact within colonial power relations, and concomitant problems of representation, explored within theories of colonial discourse, are also relevant to my study of the Chinese experience in Australia.

Said's 'Orientalism' refers to three phenomena: the academic tradition of the study of the Orient; a style of thought which takes as its starting point an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident'; and discourse, 'the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.'

Said extends Foucault's cultural analysis beyond exposing the interior construction of a cultural order to examine its external definition, with respect to others. The discourse of Orientalism is characterised by systematicity and abstraction; its stereotypes displace, dichotomize, and essentialise the other.

Since its publication, various problems with Said's conceptual and methodological approach have been identified, standing as signposts to several key issues. Here I focus on his conceptualisation of culture, and the questions it raises for my own study regarding the representation of cultural identity and contact. The chief difficulty is what Robert Young refers to as 'the problem of closure'.

James Clifford's reading of Orientalism similarly centres on his lack of

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29 For example, Said's conception of the Orient and of discourse is said to be ambivalent about whether a 'real' Orient exists, but at the same time he contends that representations of the Orient have had a real effect in imperialism's operation: Young, White Mythologies, 1990, p.129. His divergence from Foucault's methodology in considering individual authors as well as discourse has been seen as a problem (Clifford, Predicament of Culture, 1988, p.269) and as an advance: 'By focussing on individual authors and the singular, "peculiar" features of their texts, Said can trace the busy spreading intricate intertextual quoting and relationships that constitutes Orientalism as a dynamic, possessing pervasive intellectual and imaginative authority.' Curthoys and Docker, Popular Romance, 1996, p.18.
30 Young, White Mythologies, 1990, pp.137-140.
a theory of culture as anything more than ""a massive body of self-congratulating ideas"" and of ""disciplines"" to be unmasked.' Therefore, against the polemical drive of his argument, several submerged problems push his study towards an essentialising, totalizing account both of the discourse of Orientalism, and of the 'West' itself. These problems include Said's use of 'common humanist denominators', which 'bypass the local cultural codes that make personal experience articulate'; he overlooks the fact that these transcendent standards are derived from the totalising Western liberalism he attacks, constantly appealing to standards of 'humanity', 'integrity', or 'human encounter'. Conversely, he neglects exceptions to the fixed discursive formation of Orientalism, therefore reproducing the dualistic structures he attempts to dismantle. Robert Young also notes that Said, lacking a concept of inner dissension, neglects the way Orientalism 'articulated an internal dislocation within Western culture', signifying 'the West's own dislocation from itself, something inside that is presented narrativized, as being outside.' Said notes briefly that 'the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien.' This conflation of racial with class and gender disjunctions can be seen to characterise nineteenth century bourgeois urban discourse regarding Sydney's 'slums', imposing a hierarchy of values which located the Chinese with other 'aliens' - the poor, the 'fallen' - in the Rocks, the city's underworld.

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32 Ibid., pp.261-3.  
33 Similarly, Ann Curthoys and John Docker associate Said's 'neoclassical' rejection of popular culture with the monolithic aspects of his argument. Curthoys and Docker, Popular Romance, 1996, especially pp.14-16.  
Crucially, by questioning Western conceptions of 'Oriental' cultures, Said has cast doubt on the idea of culture itself. Its function in the service of imperialism and oppression leads Said to ask: 'can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality appears to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?' Orientalism also problematizes the notion of the 'Occident.' James Clifford's alternative concept of these imagined totalities is a 'complex dialectic by means of which a modern culture continuously constitutes itself through its ideological reconstructions of the exotic. Seen in this way the West itself becomes a play of projections, doublings, idealizations, and rejections of a complex, shifting otherness.' He argues rather for a notion of culture as negotiated, present processes rather than an essentialising or unified entity, but which retains the element of collectively constituted difference, which need not be static or dichotomous. But regarding culture as fluid and negotiable, and ethnic identity as an ascriptive and contingent construction creates a tension with analysis of collective, or shared systems of meaning, the traditional object of anthropological analysis.

This is especially evident in Chinese history, often seen as the interplay between inherent diversity and a centralized bureaucratic empire administered by scholar-officials who shared 'a remarkably uniform cultural outlook'. Richard Smith claims that an obsession with order, or chih, was expressed in all aspects of existence, producing tendencies towards social conformity, consensus, collective responsibility and fear of disorder. Against this emphasis on shared beliefs,
Helen Siu argues that historically, and especially for south China's shifting population, 'being Chinese has involved diverse groups in continuous negotiation of their cultural identity and history in order to establish a legitimate position in a volatile but all-encompassing cultural order.' Traditionally the Chinese imperial state was a 'malleable cultural idea' whose administrative presence was remote but whose moral authority was pervasive; under the symbol of *tianxia* (all under heaven), local improvisations thrived, so 'Chineseness' is argued to be a complex process of construction involving association with China's civilisation, geography, polity, history and people. Chun reminds us that the traditionally diverse origin and fluidity of identity of the 'Chinese overseas', ordered by kinship and dialect, meant that there was little to unite them except an ultimate destination (China) and a relationship as a bounded community vis-a-vis others.

While ethnicity, as self-conscious membership of a group, is no longer seen to be logically coextensive with culture, it may, as has been argued to be the case for the Chinese overseas, take the form of the 'marked self-consciousness of "culture"'. Chinese ethnicity is crucially defined with respect to others, through manipulation of notions of cultural distinctiveness in specific social and political context; a trait recognised as ethnic has significance only by virtue of the system

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44 Today this 'culturalism' has been noted to be 'reappearing all over the world among the victims and erstwhile victims of Western domination...[it] is among the most striking, and perhaps most significant, phenomena of modern world history': M.Sahlins, *How "Natives" Think. About Captain Cook, For Example*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, p.13. Colonialism has prompted a 'return to the source', in 'acts of culture' self-consciously made by indigenous peoples who simultaneously wish to benefit from the world system, creating differentiated spaces within it: M.Sahlins, 'Why culture is not a disappearing object', Public Lecture, Australian National University, July, 1996.
of meanings in which it is embedded. Study of modern transnational cultures
has shown that diaspora discourse explodes 'localizing strategies' by linking
spatially extended communities through matrices of kin, cultural practice, and
political need, dialectically rather than absolutely. Identity is built from multiple
attachments and allegiances, such as gender. Recognition of identity as
positioning helps to understand the ways that Chinese sojourners fashioned a
range of multiple identities against the authority of a sinocentric core, on the one
hand, and the hostility of foreign 'host' society, on the other.

Cultural contact and colonial discourse
Following Said, many have theorised colonial discourse and the cultural
encounter in relations of imperial power. Against what has been seen as Said's
over-attributeion of power to colonisers, Bhabha identifies a degree of autonomy,
the effect of hybridity and mimicry (creating 'a discursive field split in
enunciation') in contesting and drawing attention to signs of authority as being
nothing more than "empty" presences of strategic devices. By seeing
colonisation as producing hybridity, its absolute dominance, both within the
subjected culture, and in our attempts to understand what happened, is
undermined: 'not less effective, but effective in a different form.' Like the
missionary to China in the late nineteenth century who noted that

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45 See for example Eriksen, Ethnicity and Nationalism, 1993, and E.Honig, Creating Chinese
46 G.Bottomley, 'Identity, Difference and Inequalities: Gender, Ethnicity and Class in Australia',
in C.Price, (ed.), Australian National Identity, The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia,
47 H.Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree
Outside Delhi, May 1817,' in B.Ashcroft, G.Griffiths, and H.Tiffin, (eds.), The Post-Colonial Studies
48 Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders,' 1995, p.35. This argument represents a very different
position from that which dooms attempts to represent the other to be effaced by the epistemic
violence of imperialism e.g., G.Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Ashcroft et al, Post-Colonial
Studies Reader 1995, pp.24-28; D.Chakrabarty, Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History,
reprinted Ashcroft et al, Post-Colonial Studies Reader, 1995, pp.383-390; and see criticism e.g.,
B.Parry, Problems in current theories of colonial discourse, Oxford Literary Review, 9, 1987,
pp.40; also Thomas, Colonialism's Culture, 1994, especially pp.39-65.

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the point of greatest interest is always reached when the traveller begins his meal... The laying out of plates, knives and forks is a great mystery. Much questioning goes on as to the way of using them. They beg to know the reason why we prefer to employ a man to carry all our apparatus for dinner, instead of using their bowls and chopsticks. The spoon and fork, apparently made of solid silver, greatly astonishes them, and the traveller is ready enough to own that they are not silver at all. When we lift our food to our mouth, many hands move in a similar way, as they say quietly to one another, "Look! he is doing like this!"

the mimicry of the Foochow Chinese, against the actors' immediate intentions, defines difference for both sides. The universalising, classifying tendencies of the missionary struggle with this difference throughout the book, as numerous convergences and 'hybrid' forms of practice splinter his smooth assumptions of supremacy. Fundamentally caught within the structures of Christianity and racial superiority, he finds himself frequently defending, admiring, imitating Chinese culture, even as he denigrates his own ('the traveller is ready enough to own that they are not silver at all'); his narrative conceals ambivalence and uncertainty within its authoritative organization. In the same way, representations of the Chinese in the Rocks, and of Chinese-European interaction in Sydney have often sought to present a dualistic, hierarchical relationship, which on closer examination dissolves and re-combines.

The cultural encounter is inventive. As Sahlins has showed, cultural structures of meaning are transformed as well as reproduced in their practical realisation, often most spectacularly in the process of cultural contact. The shifting, fluid

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49 E.Dukes, *Everyday Life in China; or, Scenes along River and Road, in Fuh-Kien*, London Missionary Society's Edition, c. 1890, pp. 71-72. And again 'A Chinese crowd like this delights to reproduce whatever the foreigner say (sic) or does. If he is eating they will lift up their hands in the same way. They pass the word from the foreground to the rear, "the foreigner is eating", "the foreigner is writing", "the foreigner laughs", "the foreigner says so and so", p.133. And note that these encounters centre on food and dining practices.

character of Chineseness and its manipulation within various host societies of south-east Asia has been extensively explored. Its ambivalence and provisional nature is captured by Paul Carter's stress on the self-conscious, performative qualities of contact, 'the persistent, frequently melodramatic efforts of both Aborigines and whites to improvise pidginized forms of communication (both linguistic and gestural)... on occasion at least, both sides saw themselves through the eyes of the other and acted their parts self-consciously, hoping by their performance to initiate a form of communication that might modify the course of colonization and mitigate its trauma'.

Sustained contact produced effects more tangible than the fleeting impressions of first encounters, if no less theatrical. Cultural contact and transformation is particular and contingent, subject to re-working within a specific social and historical context. The relationship between material things and cultural schemes is also manipulable and dynamic; it has been shown that both objects and cultural practices, such as Christianity, are always acted upon and reformulated by indigenous populations, but these acts of derivation and displacement take place within changing political circumstances. It is the 'real ramifications of the entanglement of local politics in wider relations that need to be appreciated'. Cultural contact cannot be characterised simply as either the effacement of difference as in the universalising Christian rhetoric of white missionaries, nor of its exaggeration, as in the distancing discourse of the White Australia policy; images of the other can combine strange and familiar, deployed according to contextual, contingent purpose.

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Recent approaches to cross-cultural exchange also posit the complex social role of the material. Within a more fluid cultural schema, an essentialising notion of objects as direct and unproblematic markers of social change is displaced by a recognition of their polysemous, dynamic character. 'Westernisation' sees contact in terms of emulation, borrowing and the possible absorption of one group by another; western goods and traits are indices of 'acculturation'. But objects have unstable identities and are entangled with cultural forms, used to mediate, objectify, and appropriate, to specify alterity and to incorporate the powers of the other. To understand why certain objects and activities are adopted and what they mean, it is necessary to understand the social strategies and choices of the group concerned, rather than attributing them to the external structure of 'European' prestige.

Archaeology and cultural identity

Within the discipline of archaeology, the notion of identifying human groups through their material remains has always played a central role. From the late nineteenth century, prehistorians such as Kossina defined 'cultures' spatially and chronologically by material traits. This cultural-historical paradigm has

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[54] Implicit in this approach are notions of 'progress', and of some hierarchical relation between the groups concerned, leading to the construction of oppositions such as western/traditional, rural/urban, past/present, as part of a general evolutionary scheme which places modern western society at the top of a 'temporal slope': J.Fabian, *Time and the Other: how anthropology makes itself*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1983.


provided the dominant framework for archaeological analysis throughout most of the 20th century, producing a mosaic of peoples and cultures expressed in maps, tables and charts. It is founded on several assumptions: first, that bounded, uniform cultural entities correlate with particular ethnic groups, in turn relying on a normative, monolithic view of culture and the notion that cultural practices within a group conform to collective rules of behaviour. Internal change is assumed to take place slowly, with the exception of a few creative groups, which act as the centres of innovation; sudden change is attributed to external forces. The transmission of ideas (observable through material patterning) is assumed to be the result of interaction between groups or individuals; social and physical distance between past populations is 'measured' in terms of the similarity or difference of assemblages.

The demise of this view of culture came with the establishment of the 'processual', or 'New Archaeology', of the 1960s and 1970s, with its conceptualisation of culture as a system, and its emphasis on the functionalist explanation of social processes and cultural evolution.\textsuperscript{58} Archaeological remains were argued to be the product of a variety of past processes rather than a reflection of ideational norms: as Binford stated, 'culture is not necessarily shared; it is participated in. And it is participated in differentially'\textsuperscript{59} - that is, different individuals, factions and activities are articulated through various social institutions into broader groups. Archaeological assemblages were regarded as structures functioning within culture, conceived as a differentiated social system acting as an adaptive mechanism between humans and the environment. Processual archaeology aimed to identify relationships between variables in cultural systems, change in one variable therefore seen 'to relate in a predictable


\textsuperscript{59} Binford, 'Archaeological systematics,' 1965, p.205.
and quantifiable way to changes in other variables, the latter changing in turn relative to changes in the structure of the system as a whole'.

Explanation was seen to be the prediction of relationships between variables, observed empirically, and it was assumed that quantification could be used to assess the significance of associations, ultimately leading to 'the laws of cultural process'. The adaptive role of cultural forms was emphasised, assuming that they passively reflect functional utility in a straightforward way. Positively, work on site formation (taphonomy) examined the complexities of the processes which produce the archaeological record, and an important insight gained was the recognition of archaeological 'cultures', defined by the presence or absence of traits or types selected by the archaeologist, as being intuitive, arbitrary, and artificial.

An interest by historical archaeologists in these issues developed from around 1970, taking the form of a focus on ethnic groups which can be attributed to a general interest in explaining sociocultural phenomena and processes within the New Archaeology program, to the rise of historical archaeology as a discipline, and perhaps to a broader, Marxist-related concern with problems of racial discrimination and conflict, in which ethnic affiliation is particularly salient.

Much of this work has been within the New Archaeological tradition. It has had several different, but related aims: to chart assimilation and acculturation (or the lack of it) of ethnic groups into Anglo-American culture, to uncover oppressed groups' otherwise unknown past, and to explore the nature of different ethnic groups' distinctive material culture patterning.

The dominant concept of ethnic

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60 Ibid., p.21.
61 Ibid., p.199.
63 In the large research community of north America, substantive research has concentrated on African Americans, Hispanics, and overseas Chinese, generally in situations where these ethnic groups were minorities, and in clear contact with dominant Anglo-American groups. E.Staski, 'Studies of ethnicity in North American historical archaeology,' North American Archaeologist, 11(2), 1990, pp.121-145.
identity in historical archaeology is 'instrumentalist', following Barth's theory of ethnic groups as self-defining systems: the persistence of an ethnic group depends on maintenance of a social boundary, involving criteria for determining and signalling membership; sharing criteria for judgement; and structuring of contact between groups of different cultures, which allows the persistence of differences. This view has been stated in explicitly functionalist terms, for example by McGuire: 'The focus here is on the exploitation of ethnic identification as a political and economic tool to advance the group's welfare...individuals employ ethnicity in strategies for manipulating other social dimensions, especially wealth, prestige, and occupation.' The two related concepts of 'assimilation' and 'acculturation' are also functionalist: 'assimilation' is a process which is perceived to eliminate the need for ethnicity; 'acculturation' by contrast is only one aspect of this process, 'one that eliminates particular behavioural and material patterns that symbolically distinguish those individuals who are members from those who are non-members of the ethnic population'. As Staski notes, these processes may be addressed through the material expression of symbols, and practices such as consumption and diet.

As I have noted, more recent conceptualisations of identity stress its fluidity and contingency, problematising the relationship between ethnicity and culture and showing that a focus on ethnicity as allegiance to a bounded group fails to account for the complexity of the cultural encounter. For example, the New Archaeologists' functionalist conception of culture, including material culture,

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66 McGuire, 'Study of ethnicity,' 1982, p.161. Staski identifies two purposes served by the ethnic group: to allow members of the group to identify with a 'symbolically ascriptive and exclusive subculture', and to confine their 'primary relationships' to this group. The need for these processes is attributed to the impersonal nature of global 'political and economic systems': 'Studies of ethnicity,' 1990, p.122.
as an adaptive mechanism, produced a dichotomy between what were seen as
functional utility and normative culture. More recently it has been recognised
that people's assessment of functional utility is determined by their cultural
framework, and that the signification of identity is generated by conceptual
schemes which determine all aspects of social relations. Because each culture is
a unique historical product, intra-ethnic social differentiation and practices are
linked to the form and material expression of inter-ethnic relations; forms of
self-conscious ethnic identification are echoed in other dimensions of material
culture which do not overtly signify ethnicity. Behind function is a cultural
framework which must be understood in its own terms.

Further, the functionalist view allows little place to human agency, subsuming
individuals into parts of systems, with set roles to play. Its emphasis on cross-
cultural generalisations, which provide predictive statements denied the
historical or cultural dimensions of activity. Resulting generalisations were

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68 Hodder, *Symbols in Action*, 1982, p.3. This approach is exemplified by the debates surrounding
style in material culture, whose full complexity is beyond the scope of this study. Briefly,
viewing style as information exchange, and its purpose as facilitating social interaction, Wiessner
argued for emblemic (formal variation transmitting a clear message to a target population about
identity) and assertive (formal variation which is personally based) style: P. Weissner, 'Style and
ethnicity in the Kalahari San Projectile Point,' *American Antiquity*, 48, 1983, pp.253-76;
P. Weissner, 'Reconsidering the Behavioural basis for Style: A Case Study among the Kalahari
San,' *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 3, 1984, pp.190-234; P. Weissner, 'Style or isochrestic
style, or 'isochrestic variation', as a passive carrier of ethnic symbolism because it is created
within a bounded ethnic unit: J. Sackett, 'Approaches to style in lithic archaeology,' *Journal of
Anthropological Archaeology*, 1, 1982, pp.59-112; J. Sackett, 'Style and ethnicity in the Kalahari:
a reply to Weissner,' *American Antiquity*, 50, 1985, pp.154-60. Wiessner subsequently developed a
framework which encompassed all of these ideas, based on the notion of 'identification by
comparison': some forms of style may operate as deliberately symbolic, where advantageous,
while isochrestic variation occurs unconsciously or automatically as part of local culture rather
than through a process of identification through comparison. Thus there may not be a clear
distinction between style and isochrestic variation, as the meaning of the variation depends on a
specific and changing context. P. Weissner, 'Style and Changing Relations Between the Individual
70 I. Hodder, I. 'Theoretical Archaeology: A Reactionary View', in I. Hodder, *Theory and Practice in
therefore limited to mechanical or physical aspects of life or were simplistic. Different levels of theory were defined, 'middle-range' theory for example referring to the construction of links between past systems and their material traces. Again, these distinctions cannot continue be made with respect to cultural processes which are recognised to be provisional, creative, and responsive to specific circumstances.

These insights, however, have made little impact on archaeology. Despite a range of 'post-processual' archaeologies, tied to contemporary trends in the social sciences such as post-structuralism and post-modernism, there have been few explicit attempts to examine past ethnic processes, or issues such as the relationship between ethnicity and culture. Among these few, Hodder's ethnoarchaeological studies in Kenya investigate what material 'cultures' represent in a living context, demonstrating that while discontinuities and marked boundaries in the material record may be evident, these patterns are not explained by normative or functionalist approaches. For example, distinctive variation between groups (caused for example by the use of items made within and used only by a single, sharply bounded, group) may persist, despite close interaction, over a long period, and Hodder suggests that this phenomenon is due to economic competition between these groups, and members' reliance on group support for their livelihood. Group allegiance is expressed outwardly through material culture, which rather than passively reflecting, in fact 'constitutes the group differences and is actively articulated in relations of negative reciprocity'. Less overtly, ethnic differences may be constituted in the mundane

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71 Ibid., p.100.
72 See S.Jones, Archaeology and ethnicity. Constructing Identities in the Past and the Present. PhD, University of Southampton, 1994, for a useful overview.
as well as the decorative. But several kinds of material culture in fact disrupt ethnic boundaries, where artefacts' symbolic meaning may be manipulated across groups, regardless of ethnic affiliation. Hodder demonstrated that economic strategies of competition and symbiotic integration are related to distinctively different types of cultural patterning, but there is no simple correlation between resources, material culture patterning and degrees of economic competition, because social and historical context determine specific cultural forms. While increased competition between groups for resources may be associated with more distinct cultural boundaries, the reason why these tensions are channelled into boundary expression at all, may derive from the groups' internal organisation and cultural order.

This complexity is also due to the active part played by material symbols in social and economic relations between groups, and their meaningful constitution within larger symbolic schemes. Even where material culture discontinuities are apparent, some groups will be invisible because their internal organisation may not have involved overt material culture ethnic expression. Hence ecological or behavioural views which expect a straightforward relationship between material culture and ethnic boundaries are inadequate; analysis of archaeological cultures in relation to interaction and cultural identity must consider internally generated symbolic schemes through a contextual and historical understanding of the relations which underlie the structure of the material record.

Studies of 'contact' between invading Europeans and indigenous Aborigines by Australian archaeologists have also begun to emerge. While most have stressed the power of colonial discourse and the 'fatal impact' of colonisers on

75 Ibid., p.27.
76 Ibid., p.125.
77 Ibid., p.186.
indigenous societies, more recently analysis has recognised the dynamic, complex, reflexive nature of intercultural relationships. Isabel McBryde’s study of exchange in Port Jackson between the area’s Aboriginal people and the English penal settlement of Sydney Town examines cultural perceptions of exchange of both sides, setting material culture within broader cultural schemes of exchange and foregrounding the dynamic, creative uses to which objects are put. The discourse of contact is ambivalent and plural, and has variable potential for manipulation according to time, place and interest. In different circumstances, responses such as the appropriation of ‘foreign’ objects and practices, hybridity and mimicry assume different meanings, as the power of discursive practice is disrupted by agency and inventiveness. These considerations have several implications for my own study, including the recognition that culture change is complex and historically contingent, taking forms which are related to opportunities and processes as perceived by different elements within a society. The notion of ‘acculturation’ becomes clearly inadequate, together with a view of culture which sees imperialism as a process of globalisation wherein artefacts and social practices are taken as essences that have merely been moved physically from their places of origin. To understand the role of material culture in the generation and expression of ethnicity, it is

78 For example, Anne Clarke’s study of contact of the Anindilyakwa-speaking island societies of the Groote Eylandt archipelago in the Northern Territory, with Macassan fishing fleets of southern Sulawesi and then European colonisers. A.Clarke, Winds of Change: an archaeology of contact in the Groote Eylandt archipelago, Northern Australia, Ph.D., Australian National University, 1994.
79 As she points out, ‘to map the distribution of certain goods, and the exchange networks of south­eastern or central Australia, is to make statements as much about alliance and social relationships as about economics, technology and the distribution of resources.’ I.McBryde, ‘...To Establish a Commerce of this Sort’ - Cross Cultural Exchange at the Port Jackson Settlement,’ in J.Hardy and A.Frost, (eds), Studies from Terra Australia to Australia, Australian Academy of the Humanities Occasional paper no.6., 1989, pp.169-182.
80 Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture, 1994; and see Hodder, ‘Theoretical Archaeology’, 1992, pp.92-121.
81 See Thomas, Entangled Objects, 1991; Moore, ‘Problems’, 1987 for studies which apply these conceptual insights.
necessary to employ contextual evidence to establish the kinds of identity in which particular material patterns may have been involved: such meaning is culturally and historically specific, varying greatly according to the nature of interaction and the power relations between groups. It is consequently possible to address questions such as the transformation of cultural style into the self-conscious expression of ethnicity and the contexts in which ethnicity is generated and transformed. Provisional categories such as 'European' use of 'Chinese' objects, and their role in social practices or strategies, intersect and overlap in a way that demonstrates the polysemous nature of things, constituting a complex, manipulable dynamic form of communication and expression. Their physical form affects their use in the social world; it is also a source of flexibility and provisional communication. There is, therefore, potential for it to form a shared, commonly - if differently - understood meaning, assuming a form I refer to as *pidgin*. In the Rocks, this cultural 'jargon' was formed of practices, ideas and objects which combined elements of Chinese and English in new forms which had meaning for both. This form of communication constitutes the organising principle for my case study, chapters three to six.

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representation

In our traditional imagery, the Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most rigidly ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached to the pure delineation of space; we think of it as a civilization of dykes and dams beneath the eternal face of the sky; we see it, spread and frozen, over the entire surface of a continent surrounded by walls. Even its writing does not reproduce the fugitive flight of the voice in horizontal lines; it erects the motionless and still-recognizable images of things themselves in vertical columns. So much so that the Chinese encyclopaedia quoted by Borges, and the taxonomy it proposes, lead to a kind of thought without space, to words and categories that lack all life and place, but are rooted in a ceremonial space, overburdened with complex figures, with tangled paths, strange places, secret passages, and unexpected communications. There would appear to be, then, at the other extremity of the earth we inhabit, a culture entirely devoted to the ordering of space, but one that does not distribute the multiplicity of existing things into any of the categories that make it possible for us to name, speak, and think.


The organisation of my case study also responds to issues of representation raised by studies such as Said's: how do we represent this fragmented, fluid, shattered view of cultural process, given our own postmodern uncertainty? As Foucault writes, for the 'west', China has been an emblem of a truly foreign order of things. But with an awareness of 'modern reality as a juxtaposing of alternative cultural viewpoints, which exist not merely simultaneously, but in interaction, and not as static fragments, but each as dynamic human constructions', such monolithic images break down. How can our histories overcome these crisply demarcated categories? One way might be through collage, the device used by the surrealists to represent the heterogenous nature of reality, subverting convention, splintering reality, and drawing attention to the artificiality of its construction. James Clifford argues that in its heavy-handed collation of incommensurables, the tactic of juxtaposition captures both the heterogeneity of modernity and the partiality and contingency of our representations of it: 'the surrealist moment in ethnography is that moment in which the possibility of comparison exists in unmediated tension with sheer incongruity'.

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83 The 'Janus-faced character' of the ethnographic project has more recently been acclaimed as a means of offering a cultural critique of the western, ethnographers' own culture. G.Marcus, and M.Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique. An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, The University of Chicago Press, 1986, p.111.
Interrupting the ethnographic process of making the strange familiar, collage holds 'the surrealist moment in view... to write ethnographies on the model of collage would be to avoid the portrayal of cultures as organic wholes or as unified, realistic worlds subject to a continuous exploratory discourse.' There is a permanent ironic play of similarity and difference, the familiar and the strange, the here and the elsewhere.

Attractive as this idea is, Clifford also notes that it is essential to distinguish the moment of jarring dissonance from 'its normal sequel, a movement of metaphorical comparison in which consistent grounds for similarity and difference are elaborated'. Here I think he identifies the limitations of this technique: the single-authored narrative offers mere incongruity, the strange but really quite possible placement of things on a plane; what Foucault refers to as the 'tabula that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world...upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space.' It fails to capture a 'worse kind of disorder...the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the heteroclite' as with the jarring contact of colonisation and racism, there is no common ground for communication; our language has been destroyed.

By contrast, in a migrant society that 'lives between languages', Paul Carter proposes a 'postcolonial collage' of sound, made up of fragments which are already 'noise', meaningless, unintentional utterances which never had a meaningful context: 'beneath and behind them spreads a widening cone of silence, of

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84 Clifford, Predicament of Culture, 1988, pp.146-7.
86 Similarly, Paul Carter locates the limits of such devices as 'implicitly dramatic. They make the past present by dramatizing it as an arrangement of voices; they create an imaginary theatre where previously isolated monological texts are brought into dialogue with one another; and where, as a result, superficial differences yield deeper likenesses, profound vibrations uniting them. By this poetic synthesis historical differences are transformed into a pattern of equivalences.' Living in a New Country, 1992, p.191.
It is the distance between us and them - the lack of understanding - which is of interest. Against an ideology of equivalence, as for Bhabha, mimicry, hybridity and silence represent a refusal to participate in a dialogue of power, a refusal which dramatizes difference. The historical silences that Carter attends to echo in our own multicultural ('migrant') present. The multiple meanings of sound (bursting on the ear 'punningly like a meteorite breaking up') characterise the everyday migrant society experience. Outside the conventions of the written, Carter's post-colonial collage is a 'sound-based logic of communication', its goal the spaces between words, its means of proceeding the coincidental, punning, 'infinitely fine gradation of phonic variations' which represent different ways of experiencing the world. His 'post-colonial collage' also seems to suggest a solution to the anthropological problem with writing: sound, like the material, displaces our attention from writing to the artefact - of a moment, or of a practice. Stretching the instant of utterance over longer cycles of appropriation and interpretation, the material record may also provide a key to recapturing the many, difficult meanings of the encounter, and of the past. The archaeological record is itself a kind of collage; like a sound, an object's valence resists straightforward equation of context and meaning; the archaeological assemblage needs to be ordered and translated into language before it means anything. Historical archaeology's combination of documentary and material evidence juxtapositions dissonant points of view. Pasting together different cultural perspectives (writing about Europeans, and then about Chinese, and then about their encounter) also provokes this 'irruption of otherness', keeping in mind the need to question dualistic cultural oppositions - such as white Australian versus yellow Chinese - by fragmenting each side, showing the contingency of identity through context, alliance, process, defined

87 Ibid., p.189.
88 Although Ann Curthoys for example has commented that we cannot use the term 'post-colonial' with respect to Australian society: A.Curthoys, 'Identity Crisis: Colonialism, Nation and Gender in Australian History,' *Gender and History*, 5(2), 1993, pp.165-176.
by class, gender and more fleeting interests. For example, through the study of the 1890s gambling craze which largely defined Lower George Street in elite eyes, an alliance between bourgeois whites and wealthy Chinese was forged against those who liked the gambling dens, either as play or for profit - the white policemen, gamblers, and certain elements of the Chinese community. This is not to deny the power of structures of thought and experience built along race lines, especially in contemporary eyes, but it is to assert the complexity of identity as a process. In the following chapters I exploit the potential of these devices to capture Chinese-European interaction.

Yet the deployment of such strategies must be qualified by a recognition of their artifice. Ultimately, as other experimenters with representation, attempting to capture polyphony, or heteroglossia, have decided, this technique also runs the danger of remaining, in the end, only writing." It seems that Carter's phonic collage, like the archaeologists' assemblage of objects, has to be recontextualised on-site, the 'mute ground upon which it is possible for entities to be juxtaposed... that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world' through being translated into words on a page, in which all perspectives are juggled into place by the same curatorial hand, to lie neatly on a single plane. The surrealist moment quickly passes, as Clifford noted.

While we must, in the end, resort to writing, and in English, collage, like Agee's parlour game, perhaps offers a way of thinking about the distinctive insights objects give into the nature of exchange - a better way of conceptualising their role in exchange as complex, contingent and meaningful in many, simultaneous ways. My attempt at ethnographic collage begins on the level of chapter

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organisation; it constitutes another kind of juxtaposition in the combination of sources I deploy. In view of historical archaeologists' methodological debates it seems that whether confronted or meshed, the protocols of disciplinary discourse manufacture these different kinds of information into distinct building blocks, representing a multitude of epistemological and human perspectives. Collating the archaeological record, itself an assemblage of excavated fragments, with other traces of the past, does not produce a seamless whole. Rather than smoothing over these edges, recognition of the disciplinary and cultural differences they reveal may prove productive, allowing a clearer understanding of the specific nature of each of the picture's constituent parts. Finally, the archaeological record itself can be seen as collage, in the way we assemble fragments of things - mutable, unstable, but also enduring - into patterned arrays, mustering bits of knowledge into progressively larger pictures of affected integrity.

I have attempted to see the material evidence as constituting a fresh angle on the past, but further, as playing a fluid, dynamic role in cultural exchange and social change. In Foucault's evocation of China as the 'privileged site of space' (space representing knowledge), it stands for an utterly alien, and terribly precise, order of things: 'Even its writing does not reproduce the fugitive flight of the voice in horizontal lines; it erects the motionless and still-recognizable images of things themselves in vertical columns.' The 'things themselves' of Chinese writing somehow make it clearer, matching more precisely with reality than can our own fugitive prose. The pidgin spoken and enacted in the Rocks, however, exploited the valence of things, seeing the alien clarity of China's motionless things blur, as they toppled and were entangled with Europe. While the constraints of language and (my own) perspective may restrict my view of this process (it remains pidgin English after all), it may communicate better than the Anglocentric stories we have heard before.
Chapter 2. The overseas Chinese.

The mid nineteenth-century flood of Chinese men overseas was the result of social conflict and natural disaster at home, for most, Guangdong Province, combined with the opportunities offered elsewhere - trade, mining, and other possibilities for profit. The 'overseas Chinese' have been the subject of considerable research by historians and archaeologists, into both the specific processes enacted in various 'host' countries, as well as the phenomenon of diaspora itself. The following review establishes the broad form and scope of this research as a context for the chapters that follow. Rather than examine urban history, the more specific background to Chinese life in Sydney, I refer to relevant work in this area within the case study. I address archaeological studies of overseas Chinese, and their methodological approaches, before turning to historical studies of overseas Chinese, both internationally and in Australia.

international archaeological studies of the Chinese overseas.

As noted in chapter one, the study of the 'Chinese overseas' became a focus of archaeological interest in the 1970s in the United States, within a framework of ethnicity, acculturation and assimilation to the host society. As is usual in historical archaeology, evidence was often recovered first or in greatest quantity during cultural resource management (CRM) rather than university-based projects, and the resulting data and interpretation played an essential role in its development within the discipline, despite its relegation to the realm of 'grey literature.' Problems inherent in CRM work include legislative neglect of the
resources needed for post-excavation analysis,' often resulting in a failure to produce reports, or inadequately researched and interpreted results.

Paul Chace's 'Overseas Chinese Ceramics' in Greenwood's CRM report, *The Changing Faces on Main Street* was, in 1976, the first archaeological study to systematically describe the archaeological remains of the Chinese overseas. Chace's detailed, careful 'descriptive catalogue' of artefacts recovered from Ventura, California is still a reference for the basic range of vessel types found on archaeological sites occupied by the Chinese in the United States, although since elaborated, refined, and supplemented by other research. Chace aimed to develop descriptions adequate to define these new ceramics, and to organise these descriptions so as to lead to 'meaningful insights' into the emigrant population. He concluded that the range of artefacts, including ceramic vessels, ceramic bowls of opium pipes, brass opium cans, coins and glass vials, could be assumed to point to the presence of a group which played an important role in 'the building of the American West', concluding that 'acculturation to American ways was not part of their purpose... they maintained Chinese culture in all spheres not requiring accommodation to local circumstances.' Several other projects extended the range of Chace's account, with work for example at the Harmony Borax Works in California, and at Lovelock, Nevada, documenting the nature of remains left by the Chinese, and the social practices they might relate to.


2 P. Chace, 'Overseas Chinese Ceramics,' in R. Greenwood, *The Changing Faces of Main Street*, Ventura Mission Plaza Archaeological Project, Redevelopment Agency, City of San Buenaventura, California, 1976, pp.510-30. Chace also provides a summary of the few previous archaeological projects to examine Chinese material, including his own museum study of Native American re-use of Chinese ceramics in 'several Western regions'. Most of this material came from Chinese railroad constructions campsites at Langtry, Texas and Donner Pass, California, and from urban sites such as Tucson, Arizona and Yreka, California.


In 1980, a collection edited by Robert Schuyler appeared which focused on different ways that archaeology could elucidate processes of ethnic group formation, expression and interaction. The studies included in this volume examined African American and Chinese communities and interaction with the white community. Two studies of the 'overseas Chinese' exemplify the approach taken towards the archaeological material at this time. Langenwalter used refuse from a Chinese-run store in Madera County, California, which serviced Chinese and non-Chinese gold-mining communities in the late nineteenth century, to examine change in Chinese subsistence and economic networks. He argued that these stores were major factors in maintaining Chinese tradition, and his analysis of the material culture established categories which were correlated with 'culture traits': for example, pig was slaughtered on site using the Chinese cleaver, as evidenced by its distinctive butchering marks, whereas other meat was obtained from non-Chinese sources. Langenwalter's approach measures the material evidence against 'ethnohistorical' or documentary sources, hence an absence of certain items referred to by documents, such as chicken, 'apparently represents the individual preferences of the resident storekeeper. Presumably, eggs and fowl were sold by the store but have left no tangible evidence.' He attempts to distinguish between items which reflect the store-keeper's presence, and those which relate to the broader network of patronage. Assumptions created by 'ethnohistorical' data determine interpretation: the European alcohol

7 He isolated a number of 'added' Anglo elements such as baking powder, suggesting that levined breads were introduced into the diet. Chinese items such as ceramic containers, are types 'expected from a site occupied by a Chinese who adhered to a traditional diet.' Ibid., p.108.
bottles 'presumably... were the discards of the store’s patrons and not the keeper'.

Langenwalter hypothesised change as follows: "These acquired non-Chinese culture traits may have been locally derived and a result of the functions of intercultural contact and isolation. The magnitude of these culture traits would be the sum of scarcity of traditional foodstuffs and the intensity and duration of cultural exposure." This 'equation' incorporates a functionalist conception of culture and ethnicity, assuming that culture change comprises a mechanical, linear and quantifiable replacement of traditional traits by new ones. It assumes that the material evidence matches with human behaviour in a simple fashion.

Roberta Greenwood's study examines evidence for the Chinese community in Ventura, California. The very limited documentary evidence available prior to excavation suggested minimal 'acculturation', confirmed by archaeological evidence for dietary practices. Greenwood fits the Ventura site into a frontier model, concluding that the Chinese had no incentive to change, and that interaction between the Chinese and the hostile white community was limited to the economic sphere, with the minor exception of children who played with European toys. While explicitly redressing the former neglect of this subaltern group, and based on rigorous analysis of the data, Greenwood's account is flawed first, by its deterministic equation of Chinese artefacts and Chinese cultural practice, and consequently, of proportions of artefact type within assemblages, and cultural 'purity'.

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8 He therefore concludes that the archaeological evidence, distorted by various processes, nonetheless affirms the ethnohistorical record, and thus the original hypothesis that the Chinese gold miners were 'little acculturated'. The material evidence thus becomes supplementary to the historical record, which is used to provide a 'map' of the material culture rather than as a source of contextual information or a source with independent epistemological status. *Ibid.*, pp.108-9.


A selection of subsequent projects indicates the application of the principles developed by this early work. In 1981, for example, Pastron et al presented an assemblage recovered from an 1880s dump site on the San Francisco waterfront, as a means of understanding the daily domestic practices of this major West Coast Chinese community. In accordance with the past community's status as entry-port and 'pivotal centre of the Chinese American world', this was the largest and most varied recovered to date. This study also consisted chiefly of a 'descriptive analysis,' presenting first social history, then the range of ware types found, finally drawing conclusions regarding its contributions to the historical archaeology of ethnicity. The material was interpreted as representing leisure and ritual practices, and especially traditional Chinese foodstuffs, styles of food preparation and ethnic patterns of food consumption; it indicated internal social differentiation between 'dominant merchant' and 'subordinate indentured labouring classes'. Stressing the important cultural role of food, Pastron et al argued that 'food patterns establish ethnicity' through defining ethnic boundaries, preserving symbolic meaning for ethnic group members and indicating the degree of members' acculturation and social distancing from other ethnic groups; food practices are 'a symbolic measure of acculturation,' and the artefacts were interpreted as indicating Chinese 'cultural conservatism' and external hostility, preventing social acceptance and rapid acculturative change. Pastron et al's argument for 'the central role that the maintenance of traditional food practices had on reinforcing a common cultural identity so important to the survival and well-being of the Chinese emigrants' has been influential in subsequent analysis. While the authors note that a wide range of western goods were used, they do not address the possible significance of these goods.

13 They speculate that 'One of the few pleasures the Chinese workers had during their difficult experience as sojourners in a foreign land was the enjoyment of good, home-style food, cooked in the traditional manner and served in bowls and dishes exactly like those used in their native southern China.' Ibid., pp.368-9.
appropriations, nor, for example, of a short-lived experimental form of stoneware containers of Anglo form, stressing rather the persistence of tradition, as reflected in artefacts related to diet.

Randall McGuire's 1982 review paper marked a shift in emphasis to causality, asking how ethnic groups form and change. This study employs an explicitly instrumentalist notion of ethnicity, seeking to establish 'material correlates of ethnic behaviour', looking to food remains, ceramics and architecture as practices, rather than to 'material symbols' of identity. Hence this approach perpetuates the equation of things and ideas, as well as a distinction between 'normative' culture and functional utility. Using ethnic relations in southern Arizona between 1854 and the early 1900s as a case study, McGuire examines the way that the arrival of the Chinese caused greater social distance between the region's immigrant groups. McGuire argues that the oppositional process, such as economic competition, strengthens and 'determines which cultural systems will become meaningful for ethnic boundary maintenance', but the differential distribution of power is given more emphasis than competition or ethnocentrism in shaping interaction. Ethnocentrism, an innate belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group, is argued to channel competition along ethnic lines, and differential power determines the nature of relations between groups.14

McGuire's emphasis on differential power as the basis for Chinese responses to emigration was more recently attacked by Edward Staski in a 1993 paper, 'The Overseas Chinese in El Paso: Changing Goals, Changing Realities,' pointing to the way that the late 19th century Chinese community of El Paso, Texas, first increased its reliance on Chinese goods, as access to them improved with

transport systems, but then increasingly chose not to depend on Chinese items. He concludes that while inequality of power may have played a part in El Paso, boundary maintenance was most directly affected by the lack of 'structural assimilation' — that is, the all-male Chinese community did not form relations outside the group, a factor which became more important than behavioral and cultural patterns.15

Praetzellis and Praetzellis' CRM work on the Chinese community of Sacramento constitutes a major body of work, seeing the development of a more sophisticated theoretical orientation.16 Their conclusions were published in 1987 as an innovative account which focuses on ethnicity as mechanism, speculating that in the absence of physical 'social distancing' measures, 'individuals and groups in frequent face-to-face contact during the transitional stage would have depended heavily on the conscious manipulation of extrinsic symbols for group boundary maintenance: symbols which often find their referents in behavioural and material form.'17 They argue that for an oppressed group such as the Chinese, boundary expression would have been especially important, expressed through 'aggressive perpetuation of traditional behaviour' or the creation of new symbols of traditional identity. Ethnographic studies have found that Chinese people in hostile overseas communities have reinforced traditional behaviour and

organisation; where relations have been good, outward signs have become less noticeable. Omohundro, for example, shows that merchants manipulate their distinctiveness to 'shift the stress inherent in face-to-face commercial transactions at the ethnic group level' - that is, through identification with ethnic representations, individuals are less personally involved. They stress the conscious manipulation of extrinsic symbols for boundary-maintenance, arguing that in Sacramento, style was expressed through differences in landscape, public display, dress and language. Chinese merchants were influential in maintaining ethnic boundaries, determining the forms of the behavioural and material symbols used in this process; traditionally of relatively low status, they had much more prestige overseas, usually representing the community and serving as middlemen between the host community and their own. Geomancy (feng shui), for example, defined the boundaries of Chinatown by contrast with western architecture, protecting the vulnerable Chinese and maintaining the merchants' role as leaders of the Chinese community. They recognise that even 'Americanisation' may not have had profound cultural significance to the Chinese, the most important elements of their existence continuing to be private and traditional.

Specifically, because food is recognised as a social language in Chinese culture, annual banquets attended by Europeans combined ostentatiously Chinese items with European customs, signalling 'that, although Chinatown was alien and unknowable to outsiders, it was under the sway of a class of people who apparently shared some American values.' Ceramics such as rice bowls functioned as

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19 Praetzellis et al, 'Artifacts as Symbols,' 1987, p.46.
isochrestic (normative, 'passive' cultural forms) artefacts for the Chinese. A mixed assemblage of Chinese and European artefacts, they suggest, may represent not acculturation, but Chinese merchants' superior access to resources, serving to emphasise the differences between merchants as boundary people and the Chinese community generally. In sum, 'limited material innovation on the part of merchants was advantageous for the survival of more important aspects of Chinese culture, particularly those that aided in the consolidation of the merchants' own position of power within the Chinese community.' While they criticise the functionalist '200 sherds of culture change per year' approach, they too perpetuate an explicit distinction between material symbols of ethnic identity and 'ethnically-specific behaviours', the latter being more likely to be evidenced in the archaeological record, following the New Archaeological opposition between ideational norm and function. Praetzellis et al's study, however, represents a major advance on earlier work in that it examines the social context and symbolic meaning of the archaeological evidence, constituting a complex account of past social dynamics and material culture.

More recently, they have extended these arguments, using fresh data for Chinese merchants in Sacramento in the mid nineteenth century, and reconstructing the relationship between them and their Euro-American partners who owned the land and acted as 'go-betweens' on the American side. These significant intercultural relationships represented the American side of the process of interaction addressed in the 1987 paper, which focused on the Chinese merchant role within its own community. Again, 'careful impression management' ensured the goodwill of the general community towards EuroAmerican middlemen's clients; at public events 'the ostentatious display of ethnic symbols in food and artifacts was subtly combined with innovations such as champagne and silverware to create the desired impression among the Americans.'

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20 Ibid., p.47.
Other notable items included vessels on which characters had been pecked, including a willow pattern plate. They ask: 'Did they think of this item differently than the celadon plates? Was it an icon of European-ness?', concluding that the merchants were incorporating 'someone else's symbols' into strategies of ethnicity for benefit, and rejecting 'acculturation' as an explanation.21

Other work continued to derive from the approach established during the 1970s.22 The involvement of some Chinese communities, such as San Diego's resulted in a large project synthesising historical and archaeological research, with chapters on aspects of Chinese culture as reflected by archaeological evidence, such as religion, food and medicine, and recreation; Mueller's contribution, notably, examined the layout of overseas settlements with respect to geomancy.23 In 1990 Edward Staski produced a review of studies of ethnicity in historical archaeology, providing a summary of the work conducted, its aims, case studies and gaps.24 Darby Stapp's dissertation represents a different approach. Examining the rural community of gold-miners at Pierce, Idaho between 1864-1910, Stapp followed Schuyler's method of using multiple kinds of data to produce a descriptive and interpretive synthesis of a social community. Using a 'functional economic model of systemic cultural stability' he examined economic individualism, concluding that the community flourished

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21 A.Praetzellis and M.Praetzellis, 'Artifacts as Symbols of Identity: "Chinese Merchants"
Revisited,' paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology,
Cincinnati, Ohio, 1996.

22 For example, E.Ritter, The Historic Archaeology of a Chinese Mining Venture near Igo in Northern
California, Bureau of Land Management, California, 1986, discusses the issue of 'site ethnic
affiliation': 'The first question relates to distinguishing Chinese from Euro-American mining activities
and cross-fertilization of practices. The association of Chinese goods and archival data provide the main
means of distinguishing - or at least identifying - site ethnic affiliation.; See also H.Pyszczuk,
'Consumption and Ethnicity: An Example from the Fur Trade in Western Canada', Journal of
Anthropological Archaeology 8, 1989, pp.213-249, for a similar approach.

Archaeology, The Great Basin Foundation, San Diego, California, 1987; F. Mueller, 'Feng Shui:
Archaeological Evidence for geomancy in Overseas Chinese Settlements' Wong Ho Leun, Great

24 E.Staski, 'Studies of ethnicity in North American historical archaeology,' North American
after its initial gold rush prosperity due to enhanced trade networks; relations between Chinese and European members of the community were good, due to its stability and interdependence.\textsuperscript{25} Priscilla Wegars' dissertation similarly used a range of sources to reconstruct the experience of the region's Chinese community.\textsuperscript{26} Detailed studies of Chinese artefacts have emerged, such as Patricia Jones' study of the cargo of the \textit{Frolic}, which sank off Mendocino County in California in 1850, providing a tightly-dated assemblage of ceramics destined for the Euro-American and Hispanic population. Jones aimed to establish the global distribution and chronology of the vessel types found on the \textit{Frolic}, providing a useful comparative reference.\textsuperscript{27} Several major CRM reports have extended the corpus of known material, such as Greenwood and Associate's study of the Soo Hoo Property, City of San Buenaventura, of areas of Los Angeles' Chinatown affected by the Metro Red Line project, and Maniery's study of Folsom, California, both in 1993, and Wegars' investigation at Granite, Oregon, providing extensive historical context and documentation of the artefacts recovered.\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{27} P. Jones, \textit{A Comparative Study of Mid-Nineteenth Century Chinese Blue-and White Export Ceramics from the Frolic Shipwreck, Mendocino County, California, M.A.}, San Jose University, California, 1992.

In 1993 a collection of papers on the historical archaeology of the Chinese overseas appeared, edited by Priscilla Wegars, convenor of the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho. Wegars' introduction surveyed the enormous range of places and types of occupation covered by the burgeoning field of Chinese overseas studies, aiming to bring together different aspects of this research. Divided into five parts, this collection examines rural contexts, urban contexts, work and leisure, analytical techniques and comparative and theoretical studies. Parts one, two and three are case studies drawn from a range of places and presenting a mixture of synthetic studies of communities, such as the Salmon River, Idaho, and the Chinese community of El Paso, Texas, or specific assemblages such as faunal remains or ceramics and opium paraphernalia. Wegars' contribution examines the evidence for Chinese women in Idaho, including objects such as face powder packages and jewellery. The section on analytical techniques comprises an account of methods of elemental characterisation of the composition of Chinese ceramics, developed to serve as a guide to authentication, and 'Sourcing and Dating of Asian Porcelains by Elemental Analysis'. The final section comprises an overview of Neville Ritchie's analysis of the remains of mining communities in Central Otago, New Zealand, which I discuss in detail below, with respect to Australian work, and Roberta Greenwood's 'Old Approaches and New

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Directions: Implications for Future Research.' Greenwood surveys the range and scope of work carried out, pointing to methodological problems such as misidentification of artefact types. She summarises some of the advances made in the field, such as the recognition that Chinese communities were complex and dynamic rather than homogeneous and static; that Chinese women did emigrate, if in small numbers; and that the pattern of emigration changed. The underlying framework is one of assimilation and acculturation, however, as when she argues that 'sites of this later period might be expected to evince greater, rather than less, assimilation because of the differing expectations, greater anticipation of permanence, participation in commercial and educational networks, and the higher social and economic status of the new arrivals'. Even where she notes evidence for a more complex situation, such as at El Paso, where Chinese-made artefacts increased over time, a linear notion of assimilation is the assumed fundamental social process. She concludes self-reflexively and critically, advocating questions such as 'whether the ratio of Chinese to EuroAmerican ceramics increased or decreased through the years; the degree to which such ratios reflect economic status, acculturation, or other influences...' in acknowledgement of the problematic nature of traditional approaches in this area.37

Study of the Chinese overseas has generally, then, been addressed in terms of their gradual 'assimilation' into European society through measuring changing proportions of Chinese items in the material record. With the exception of the work of Praetzellis et al at Sacramento, its goal has been to trace the process of so-called 'acculturation.'38 It has successfully demonstrated the methodological

38 Studies of other ethnic groups have also appeared, such as L.Ferguson, Uncommon Ground. Archaeology and Early African America, 1650-1800, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1992, examining the life of African Americans; Anne Yentsch's study of the Calvert family in the Chesapeake including a consideration of the community's cultural interaction: A.Yentsch, A Chesapeake family and their slaves, Cambridge University Press, 1994; and several papers in A.Yentsch and M.Beaudry, (eds), The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology. Essays in Honor of James Deetz, CRC Press, Boca Raton, Florida, 1992, which attempt to incorporate cultural identity into more complex ethnographic reconstructions. In Australia, too, studies of contact are
complexities of identifying groups in the archaeological record: Otto, for example, notes that the poverty of both white overseers and black slaves at Antebellum plantation sites left behind very similar material traces, by comparison with white planters; Baker concludes that while distinctively Afro-American features are present at Lucy Foster's house ('Black Lucy's Garden'), poverty undercut cultural expression in the material record.39

But while Staski, for example, pointed to cases of the survival of distinctive behavioural and material patterns despite culture contact, positing a complex blending of cultures and internal heterogeneity, his theorisation of social dynamics remains within a functionalist framework.40 This perspective can be criticised on a number of grounds: it involves an essentialising and monolithic notion of culture; it perceives culture change as linear and one-way, comprising the absorption of one, less powerful culture into another; it crudely and directly equates such processes with material patterns. While more recently, evidence which challenges these simple correlations has been noted, more fundamental problems are rarely acknowledged.41 Conducted within the functionalist, logico-

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41 For example, the self-sufficiency of the Chinese of El Paso seems to have increased with time, rather than decreasing; the evidence suggests that a disparity of power is not the critical factor in maintaining ethnic boundaries, but rather that such boundaries are maintained by avoiding structural assimilation. Staski suggests several possible explanations for the pattern, including the availability of imported goods, that Chinatown was not large enough to be viable, that later deposits represented the discards of a more recently arrived group, or that it represents a last
positivist approach of the 'New Archaeology', this work is subject to a similar critique.

First, the view of culture (and of ethnicity as covariant with culture) as being an adaptive mechanism which allows humans to adjust to their environment, sees change in one 'variable' (social domain or cultural trait), as relating in a quantifiable and predictable way to others. Ethnicity and status are often seen to be similar, and competing, variables: for example, Staski suggests that 'foodways' are more sensitive indicators of ethnicity than of status; McGuire argues that 'economic status...should be considered the dominant social dimension evident'. It assumes that quantification can be used to assess the significance of associations and cultural process. An unproblematic link is made between culture and the material record: for example, the origin of artefacts or associations identified as culturally distinct, often on flimsy evidence, are equated with cultural practices and thus ethnicity. These traits or associations of features are then seen to be 'diagnostic' of cultural practices; Baker's study of Lucy Foster's home, in Massachusetts, investigated the archaeological visibility of black African culture, claiming that a pattern comprising occurrence of serving bowls as 40% of tableware, and of chopped bones as 100% of faunal remains, are 'diagnostic' of an Afro-American site. He identifies a distinctive Afro-American architecture based on a 12 foot module.

L.Binford, An Archaeological Perspective, Seminar Press, New York, 1972, and see Hodder's critique: I. Hodder, 'Theoretical Archaeology: A Reactionary View,' in I.Hodder, Theory and Practice in Archaeology, Routledge, London and New York, 1992a, pp.92-121; As Staski argues, 'Much of the research into consumer behaviour involves simply recognizing types within particular artefact classes- most often ceramics- and then computing the relative occurrence of traditional ethnic types within the total artefact-class assemblage. It is often hypothesized that as greater relative occurrence of traditional materials reflects a stronger identification with the ethnic group, and thus less assimilation.'

Baker, 'Archaeological Visibility,' 1980. And despite a clearly instrumentalist understanding of ethnicity as contingent and dynamic, (following F.Barth, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,
Several of the studies which do investigate the symbolic dimensions of the material record, such as McGuire's and Praetzellis et al's, make an artificial distinction between symbols and general cultural patterns, creating a false dichotomy between 'normative' culture, based on shared ideas, and functional utility. Further, in this approach material culture, like culture in its broader sense, is seen to have only a functional, adaptive role, and to reflect action in a passive and straightforward way. Changing proportions of artefacts are equated with cultural change. There is an assumption that degrees of similarity and difference in material culture indicate a specific and measurable degree of interaction; proportions of Chinese-made artefacts in an assemblage are argued to represent 'social distance' in a mechanistic equation of material and social patterns. But differences are often the focii of interaction rather than representing social isolation and distance. As Hodder has shown, the signification of identity is generated by conceptual schemes which determine all aspects of social relations, and forms of self-conscious ethnic identification are echoed in other dimensions of material culture which do not overtly signify ethnicity. Assessment of functional use is determined by their cultural framework, and stylistic variation is actively produced and manipulated in the process of communication. Material culture plays an active role in creating, maintaining and transforming culture. The denial of the historical and cultural dimensions of activity obscures the dynamic, complex relationship between material culture and ethnicity. More sophisticated approaches toward cross-cultural exchange, as discussed (see chapter one), point to a need to understand the particular context of material culture in creating identity, to recognise its

Universitetsforlaget, Bergen, 1969), there is often an implicit notion of the ethnic group as a fixed, bounded entity.

McGuire, 'The study of ethnicity,' 1982, p.164. Hence the similarity of African American material culture to that of Anglo-Americans is argued to indicate less social distance than between whites and Chinese.


archaeology and the 'overseas Chinese' in Australia and New Zealand

Relatively little attention has been given to this area in Australia, reflecting the small disciplinary community. The aims and scope of these projects have been limited by the nature of CRM survey work, involving problems such as limited data collection, and a lack of resources for documentary research, archaeological analysis and interpretation. Surveys identify sites and features relating to Chinese occupation, make surface collections of artefacts, and produce inventories, sometimes illustrated. Most seriously, there has been little attempt to design research programs around archaeological questions, of a scale and type appropriate either to survey data, or to excavation. Only Piper's and Ritchie's New Zealand studies pose sophisticated research questions which are amenable to archaeological investigation.\footnote{A. Piper, 'Chinese Diet and Cultural Conservatism in Nineteenth-Century Southern New Zealand,' \textit{Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology}, 6, 1988, pp. 34-42; e.g., N. Ritchie, 'Form and Adaptation: Nineteenth Century Chinese Miners' Dwellings in Southern New Zealand', in P. Wegars, (ed.), \textit{Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese}, Baywood Publishing Co., New York, 1993; N. Ritchie, 'The Excavation of a Small Chinese Mining Settlement and Store, Arrowtown, Central Otago', \textit{New Zealand Archaeological Association Newsletter} 27, no 2, 1984, pp. 83-103.} This work shares the conceptual problems discussed above with respect to work conducted in north America. Where an explicit theoretical approach has been developed, notions of 'acculturation' and 'assimilation' provide the conceptual framework, together
with an understanding of material culture as passively reflecting these processes. Moreover, the substantive object of research has been evidence left by nineteenth-century mining, leaving a large gap in our knowledge of the Chinese experience in Australian cities.

There have been a number of studies of 'joss houses', or Chinese temples, such as architectural theses, perhaps due to their accessibility to architects and heritage specialists. During the 1980s the Atherton Chinese temple was the subject of a number of studies conducted by students associated with the Material Culture Studies Unit at James Cook University, ranging from historical overviews, to discussion of the artefacts which have survived and their probable locations within the temple, and identification of archaeological elements of the temple site. The Atherton Chinatown was surveyed in 1986, and the site of the prominent maize trader Fong On's store excavated in 1991.

In the Northern Territory, Pine Creek has been the subject of several studies. The main influx of Chinese gold-seekers in the Northern Territory occurred in

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52 e.g. P.Bell, Pine Creek: a report to the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory) on an archaeological assessment of sites of historic significance in the Pine Creek district, James Cook University, report prepared for the National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), 1983; J.McCarthy, Pine Creek Heritage Zone Archaeological Survey, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), 1986; J.McCarthy, The New Gold Mountain: Chinese trade networks in northern
1877, reaching a peak with a population of 6,000 recorded in 1888, when restrictive immigration legislation was passed; at Pine Creek there were two boom periods, in 1877-81 and in 1894-5. Justin McCarthy's surface collection and analysis of artefact scatters in 1986 showed that a great range of artefacts survived, including food storage, cooking and serving vessels, many alcohol bottles (and patent medicines which may have served as a substitute for opium after importation was banned in 1901), 'opium tincture phials' and bottle bases which may have been used as opium lamps. On the basis of the diversity of Chinese artefacts recorded, McCarthy proposed that the Chinese were in a strong commercial position which enabled them to operate their own importation and trade network, independent of the British-controlled network which served the rest of Australia at this time. This innovative study however does not address lifestyle and culture, and the mere 'diversity' of the artefact range alone is insufficient evidence to postulate an 'independent' network, a concept which receives little explicit consideration; McCarthy refers to Chinese 'merchants and labour agents' but the mechanics of the proposed system are left unexamined. Given the difficulty of sustained analysis in CRM projects, however, McCarthy's study represents a benchmark in Australasian studies.

Survey of the Chinese settlements at the Union Reef and Twelve Mile goldfields, near Pine Creek, was carried out in 1989, also by McCarthy. The Union Reef was discovered in 1873 and a large population of Chinese is reported by the late 1870s. The coming of the railway in 1889 divided the town into Chinese and European sections, and the Union Town was gazetted the same year. The Twelve Mile was discovered in 1878, and followed a similar pattern: rush,


54 Ibid., p.146.
steady exploitation and petering out. While the survey briefly examines the historical background to the physical evidence, including instances of racism and prejudice, McCarthy states that these attitudes 'leave no direct evidence that is measurable or observable in the archaeological record... Whereas the Chinese may have been forced to set up their camp in a particular location due to government or police pressure, the archaeological remains themselves cannot reflect this.' The report addresses subsistence and Chinese settlements, which were constructed of insubstantial materials. Divisions within the Chinese community related to Chinese regional origin but also to the relative experience of 'New Chums' and 'old hands' who had worked in other goldfields of California and Australia. The survey noted Chinese hearths, and a high proportion of Chinese surface material. McCarthy argues that 'the combination of the presence of certain artefact types and the structural layout of the buildings is now considered enough to positively identify Chinese habitation sites of this period in the Territory,' pursuing the question of a Chinese trade network operating independently from the European system.

There are a number of problems with McCarthy's account. The necessarily perfunctory recording and analysis process involved in this kind of survey precludes in-depth analysis, or even the acquisition of sufficient data for the construction of plausible arguments regarding Chinese lifestyle, social organisation or cultural change. The material record is arranged with an eye to identifying 'diagnostic' Chinese structures and associations, making direct equations between things and cultural identity.

Several surveys have been conducted in north Queensland and particularly the Palmer goldfield. The 20-30,000 gold-seekers who went to the Palmer, west of

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56 Ibid., pp.41-46.
57 McCarthy notes for example that no quantification of artefacts was possible, either in collection or analysis. McCarthy, 'New Gold Mountain', 1988, p.142.
Cooktown on Cape York, between 1873 and 1876 (by 1877 there were 18,000 Chinese to 1,500 Europeans) confronted isolation and an extreme climate; there was antagonism between the area's Aboriginal people, and the Chinese and European miners. Peter Bell's doctoral thesis included a brief comparative analysis of building materials used in Chinese and European habitations on late nineteenth century mining fields in north Queensland. There have also been surveys in South Australia, north-east Tasmania, where Denise Gaughwin conducted a survey of alluvial tin mining sites, many of which were Chinese, and more recently considered the significance of pig ovens, large stone-built structures used by Chinese for feasts.

Chinese market-gardens were an essential part of these remote goldfields communities, and in 1982 an excavation and survey were conducted at 'Ah Toy's garden,' on the Palmer River goldfield in north Queensland. Excavation focused on the house site and several rubbish dumps, occupied by three Chinese lease-holders between 1883 and 1934. A range of artefacts are described and illustrated, including a modified rake used in the garden, which is interpreted as 'a pleasing example of Chinese bush ingenuity in an area where iron was not lightly discarded'. No analysis of the dumps is presented, presumably because analysis was not carried out; it is briefly noted that a range of liquor and beer bottles,

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59 P.Bell, Houses and Mining Settlement in North Queensland 1861-1920, PhD, James Cook University, 1982, pp.304-310.
including Dutch Schnapps, Scottish whisky, English and Dutch gin and Japanese and Philippine beer, condiment and pharmaceutical bottles, some of which were Chinese, Chinese rice bowls (ware unspecified) and opium tins, were recovered; descriptions of these items do not conform to standard archaeological terms and criteria. The authors conclude that the 'bareness' of the house-site was disappointing but with respect to taphonomy, 'it is valuable to show that the archaeological record of a house built in such a way in such a place can be so bare', and that the improvisation showed by Ah Toy conforms to a general pattern of outback occupation and of Chinese life in America.\textsuperscript{62} This is one of the few excavations of Chinese-occupied sites in Australia; it provides a detailed account of the sequence of occupation of the site based on documentary research and oral history interviews, and recounts the nature of the remains as recorded by survey and limited excavation. The project's status as a pioneering attempt to explore the disciplinary and substantive landscape of the historical archaeology of the Chinese overseas led, however, to problems such as a lack of explicit, archaeologically-oriented research goals, and conclusions which are trivial and methodologically weak; no social or cultural analysis is made, and it is difficult to discern any clear objective for the project.

Some of the few traces of Chinese life in Australian cities was excavated prior to redevelopment by McCarthy at the 'Commonwealth Block', Melbourne, bounded by Lonsdale, Latrobe, Spring and Stephen (Exhibition) Streets, and at the extant Oddfellows Hotel within the block. The excavation report comprised documentary research into the nineteenth century 'slums' of the area, and a descriptive catalogue of the range of artefacts recovered. The second specifically

investigated the occupation of the Hotel by Chinese furniture makers between 1912-1948, listing a range of Chinese artefacts. No analysis was made.

Numerous regional surveys, mainly of mining areas, have been conducted in New Zealand, as have specific studies of classes of artefact. Ritchie and Park's 1987 discussion of Chinese coins found at New Zealand sites notes their scarcity; in China, their low intrinsic value led to manufacture of strings of 100 or 1000. Rather than circulating overseas as token coins within 'closed economies', they argue for use in fan tan and other gambling. The age of the coins (most of the group studied was minted during the 17th century) is attributed to the conservatism of Imperial China's economic system, in which coins circulated indefinitely. The Chinese mining settlement and an associated store at Arrowtown, Central Otago, was investigated in 1983. The Central Otago goldfields were occupied by Chinese miners from 1866, and by 1869 a Chinese store was established. Despite anti-Chinese sentiment, by 1885 the Arrowtown settlement was substantial, including two stores and extensive gardens. There was considerable mobility of miners, the settlement's population increasing over summer, with many camping in tents or lodging in buildings such as the stores. Differences between the structural remains from this site and Cromwell's


Chinatown are noted, although explanations are difficult: Ritchie suggests that they may be due either to 'cultural trends or localised behaviour patterns.' Ritchie and Harrison's 1982 discussion of opium smoking and associated artefacts from Central Otago examines opium use in China and New Zealand, using evidence excavated and collected from five sites around Cromwell. While this material was recovered from both residential and business areas of the 'Chinatown', most came from the business area, probably a social centre; one site, at Firewood Creek, yielded 564 opium pipe bowl fragments, an unusually high number, suggesting that it too performed a specialised role.

By far the largest number of New Zealand studies - indeed of Australasian studies - have been conducted by Neville Ritchie, either as single author or with others. Ritchie's doctoral thesis examined 'acculturation, adaptation and change' of the Chinese in southern New Zealand in the nineteenth century, published in his contribution to Hidden Heritage. His paper, 'Form and Adaptation: Nineteenth Century Chinese Miners' Dwellings in Southern New Zealand', begins with a survey of the Chinese background to emigration to New Zealand, and traditional Chinese dwellings, moves on to the nature and distribution of Chinese settlements in New Zealand, the social aspects of occupation (such as sharing huts by men from the same clan or locality of origin), internal layout, and the architectural features recovered during fieldwork. He then discusses

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differences between European and Chinese dwellings, such as that the Chinese made much more extensive use of natural rock shelters than Europeans. He concludes that Chinese miners in New Zealand lived in huts very different from their traditional habitations, due to a different climate, 'the frontier nature of the goldfields', and their detachment from traditional culture. Their modifications to their environment were 'pragmatic responses' to external circumstances.  

Ritchie argues that their design and layout 'were adaptive rather than imbued with symbolic content. This was probably because the majority of the Chinese were from the peasant classes and had never had the resources to build in the high styles of Chinese architecture, as well as because many came as sojourners, never intending to settle permanently.' While provisional construction may well have been a response to the temporary nature of the miners' occupation, Ritchie also distinguishes between 'symbolic' or stylistic expression, on the one hand, and function, on the other, reflecting the processual (New Archaeological) view of culture as an adaptive mechanism, denying the arbitrary, historical, nature of cultural schemes which in practice are expressed in all aspects of existence according to underlying organising principles of meaning. If the lack of restraint and receptiveness to their new environment led to the renunciation of traditional architectural forms, why then did other cultural practices, such as diet, persist? Second, Ritchie's argument relies upon a process of change which is not explicitly examined but which implies a framework of acculturation as linear change, for example when he claims that 'the imprint of many centuries of rigid social organisation in China, did, however, have some carryover effect.' The archaeological record becomes an index to the gradual abandonment of behavioural traits. Despite these conceptual problems, however, this work represents a major achievement in that it comprehensively presents a wide range of the archaeological data within a standard international classificatory

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and analytical framework, presenting a detailed picture of aspects of Chinese lifestyle on the New Zealand goldfields, and constituting an essential reference. Careful cultural and environmental contextualisation characterise Ritchie's account of the archaeological remains and changes in miners' lifestyle consequent upon emigration.

Piper's study of Chinese gold-miners in Otago investigates whether conservatism or acculturation could be discerned through evidence for diet, surveying the traditional Chinese diet and discussing its role in Chinese culture, and specifically in Cantonese peasant life. Faunal remains from 'The Rapids', occupied chiefly between 1880-1899, showed that sheep and pig were the most important elements of diet at the site, unlike in China, where meat was often unavailable. Consumption of mutton represented one of the main areas of change, as did canned foodstuffs and European alcohol, but these were substitutions, simply replacing unavailable accustomed items - such as canned fish for fresh fish. Piper concludes that the dietary pattern was overall very similar to the traditional diet of south China, and that considerable effort was expended in maintaining traditional diet.70

With the 1990s, a rise in interest in their own history in Australia appears to have prompted the Chinese community, centred on the Chinese Australian Museum in Melbourne, to undertake or to sponsor research. In October 1993, a conference, Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: An International Public Conference, was held at the Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, which brought together archaeologists, historians and the Chinese community for the first time. A session on 'The Archaeology of Mining Sites' comprised reviews of archaeological surveys of Chinese sites: Justin McCarthy's, of Pine Creek, Jillian Comber's, of the Palmer goldfield, Far North Queensland;

and more specifically, Peter Bell reviewed the Australian distribution of Chinese ovens, while Denise Gaughwin discussed the occurrence of pig ovens in North East Tasmania.\footnote{Bell et al., 'Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,' 1993.} In this year a bibliography of publications addressing the archaeology of the Chinese in Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea was published.\footnote{Only Jack's paper appeared in the subsequent publication: J.Ryan, (ed.), Chinese in Australia and New Zealand: A Multidisciplinary Approach. New Age International, New Delhi, 1995. But see P.Bell, 'Archaeology of the Chinese in Australia', manuscript, 1996, and MacGregor, Histories of the Chinese, forthcoming.} A session devoted to the history of the Chinese in Australia formed part of the 1994 Australian Historians Association conference in Perth, and again papers were given on material culture by Bell, McCarthy and Jack, presenting a review of some of the major projects carried out.\footnote{P.MacGregor, (ed.), Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an International Public Conference held at the Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, 8-10 October 1993, Chinese Australian Museum, Melbourne, forthcoming; J.McCarthy, 'Chinese Miners in the Pine Creek region, Northern Territory, 1872-1915;' J.Comber, 'Chinese sites on the Palmer goldfield, Far North Queensland;' P.Bell, 'Chinese ovens on mining settlement sites;' D.Gaughwin, 'Pig ovens in North East Tasmania - an archaeological view'. I discuss the conference as an event below, with respect to the recent rise in interest in Australian Chinese heritage.} A three year National Estate Grant has been awarded for a project designed to survey Chinese sites in Australia, currently in progress under the aegis of the Chinese Australian Museum.

As argued above, I advocate an approach which diverges from that formerly adopted in studies of the Chinese overseas, involving instead a notion of culture as differentiated and dialectical, of social change as the interplay between structure and event, and of the dynamic role of the material in creating and expressing cultural identity; consideration of the symbolic dimensions of the archaeological record relies on contextualisation to understand its deployment in these processes. In considering some of the (meagre) archaeological evidence for nineteenth century Chinese urban life in Australia, my conceptual approach has been shaped by the nature of former archaeological work, but also by the
historiographical literature relating to Chinese emigration and the history of the Chinese in Australia.

international historical studies of the Chinese overseas

Historical accounts of the Chinese overseas have proliferated around the specific experiences of communities in different countries and regions; many of these are narratives aiming to fill a historiographical gap, yet writing from a Eurocentric point of view, emphasising the perceptions and efficacy of white discourse. Accounts from the Chinese point of view are scarce, although in recent years there has been increasing interest in Chinese heritage, notably stemming from within modern Chinese communities. A tradition of scholarship on the Chinese overseas, or hua-ch'iao, was identified by Png Poh-Seng's 1973 survey; few general accounts existed, but he lists sources for southeast Asian countries, noting the 'surprising' lack of studies in Chinese, and for Australia, C.F.Yong's dissertation on the Chinese in New South Wales and Victoria in the early twentieth century, and Uchida Naosaku's The Overseas Chinese. Since that time, studies such as Wang Gungwu's China and the Chinese Overseas, and Lynn Pann's Sons of the yellow emperor, with an emphasis on respectively, Southeast Asia and the United States, have appeared, addressing the larger-scale picture of diaspora.

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The work of Wang Gungwu stresses the Chinese perspective, representing a major contribution to the understanding of the Chinese overseas. In 1991, in *China and the Chinese Overseas*, for example, he reviewed the role of Chinese overseas (*hua-ch’iao*) in Chinese historiography, and explored the complexities of Chinese identity, discussing the culture and growing success of the merchants who emigrated and often controlled overseas communities. He addresses the origins and use of the term *hua-ch’iao* and its relationship to state policy.

General, regional accounts have appeared at intervals for the United States, the United Kingdom, Peru, Southeast Asia, New Zealand, and Canada, exploring the particular constitution of Chinese identity, communities, and

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84 An early study was F. Fyfe, *Chinese Migration in NZ in the Nineteenth Century M.A.*, University of New Zealand, 1948.
relations with the 'host' societies. Of particular relevance is Kay Anderson's research into the construction of Canadian 'Chinatowns' by whites, attempting to demonstrate the 'workings of the racialisation process' through the history of Vancouver's Chinese enclave as 'an important site through which white society's concepts about the Chinese were constituted and reproduced.' Racial discourse was an integral element of Canadian nation-building, despite the constitutional limits set on European cultural domination from 1867, and popular notions of a tolerant past; representations of Chinatown as conflating race and place, map the ways that whites came to understand and manage the area. Anderson has also examined the entrepreneurial activity of Chinese Australians who have commercialised difference, redeveloping 'Chinatowns' with state support. More recently, she has aimed to destabilize the polarity of race which structured her earlier account, through a consideration of other 'social locations', gender, sexuality and class, and the mobility and multiplicity of subject positionings. The experience of white women, for example, and their relationships with Chinese men, 'trouble[s] the falsely consensual understanding of racism', supporting poststructuralist critiques of the 'centred subject' by showing how Chinatown was created by stereotypes strengthened by a conflation of race and gender, for example as white notions regarding gender roles were deployed in representations of predatory Chinese men. Anderson's 'autocritique' draws from theories of postcolonial discourse and poststructuralism to argue that race identities cannot be separated from the constitution of other identities.

Despite the daunting scope of analysis, comparative studies such as Andrew Markus' account of the development of restrictive immigration in North America and Australasia have sought to identify the 'peculiar characteristics' of the study areas. California has been seen to offer an appropriate comparison for the Australian experience due to the common historical sequence of goldrush, Chinese immigration and white hostility. As David Goodman points out in *Gold Seeking*, a cultural history of contemporary understandings of the Californian and Victorian goldrushes of the 1850s, through the social languages they constructed, this anthropological juxtaposition 'will always increase our sense of the contingent nature of the constitution of events' and the distinctiveness of local cultural forms.

Studies which focus on the phenomenon of diaspora have appeared in sociology and anthropology, prompted by a widespread interest in cultural identity, and the persistence of 'Chineseness' across time and space: a historical dimension provides antecedents for enduring links and structures in the modern world. Alan Chun, for example, uses the lack of cohesion of Chinese emigrant communities to support his argument against a sense of 'Chineseness' independent of Chinese state discourse.

histories of the Chinese in Australia

Since Yong's dissertation in 1966, there have been several broad demographic analyses of Chinese immigration to Australia, and surveys focusing on Australian foreign policy and the political relations between China and Australia. Choi's 1975 account, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, especially, remains a useful overview. A recent work on this scale is Eric Rolls' *Sojourners. The epic story of China's centuries-old relationship with Australia*, a sensuous, adventurous narrative of the Chinese in Australia. While *Sojourners* lack of citation presents problems for academic use, his evocative prose provides a nuanced account of various aspects of Chinese culture in California and Australia. Moving down the analytic scale, other Chinese-specific studies may be characterised as histories of Chinese communities in Australia, and of individuals such as Quong Tart and Tan Kah-kee, providing insight into individual interactions; Lea-Scarlett suggests, for example, that Quong Tart's unique assimilation by white Australia can be explained by his appropriation of European cultural values, allied to his privileged background. Recent analyses of the primary material relating to Chinese immigration have also appeared.

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Against the celebratory character of the radical nationalist historiography of the 1950s, most work on Chinese-Australian relations in Australia has focused on racist Australian responses to Chinese immigration, beginning with Ann Curthoys' 1973 dissertation comparing the responses of British colonists to Aborigines, Chinese, and Non-British Europeans in New South Wales between 1856-1881, and including Kathryn Cronin's study of the Chinese in Victoria after 1854. Yarwood and Knowlings' general history of Australian race relations has recently been joined by Andrew Markus', which focuses more explicitly on the ambiguities of racial categorisation and the relevance of Australia's history of race relations to solving current problems. There is general agreement on the broad causes of Australian racism throughout its history, such as prejudice and a fear of economic competition, as well as the overall development of Chinese migration, anti-Chinese agitation, and discriminatory legislation. The full complexity of nineteenth century race relations has been more difficult to unravel, however: there is disagreement, for example, regarding the background to anti-Chinese attitudes from the mid-nineteenth century, and the


B. York, Admissions and Exclusions: "Asiatics" and "Other Coloured Races" in Australia: 1901 to 1946, Studies in Australian Ethnic History, No. 9, Centre for Immigration Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1995, which analyses the 'Annual Returns' required under the Commonwealth's Immigration Act, compiled from figures compiled by Customs officials; J. Stacker and P. Stewart, Chinese Immigrants and Chinese-Australians in NSW, Australian Archives (NSW Office), 1996, which tabulates records pertaining to Chinese people in New South Wales.

A. Curthoys, A. Race and Ethnicity. A Study of the Response of British Colonists to Aborigines, Chinese, and Non-British Europeans in New South Wales, 1856-1881 Ph.D., Macquarie University, 1973, see especially section 5; K. Cronin, Colonial Casualties. Chinese in Early Victoria, Melbourne University Press, 1982; Connolly for example has examined the cause of the series of anti-Chinese riots during the gold rushes of the 1850s and later, and especially the 1860-1 Lambing Flat riots, arguing for the interrelationship of the economic threat, racial prejudice, cultural distinctiveness and numbers of the Chinese: C. Connolly, 'Miners' Rights: Explaining the 'Lambing Flat' Riots of 1860-61,' in A. Curthoys and A. Markus, (eds), Who are our enemies? Racism and the working class in Australia, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978, pages 35-47.

interrelatedness of European attitudes towards different non-European races.\textsuperscript{101} Yarwood examines the 1890s and the continued expression of anti-Asian immigration, tracing debate surrounding exclusionist immigration policies; argued on economic but also on 'moral', and race grounds, the 1897 Conference in London saw the adoption of the Natal Immigration Test (The Dictation Test), as the basis of the 1901 \textit{Immigration Restriction Act}'s means of exclusion. He gives a detailed account of the administrative and legislative structure of immigration and customs.\textsuperscript{102} I examine this area in more detail as context for my discussion of interaction in the Rocks (chapter three).

With the 1980s, Australian historiography has diversified, and rather than adopting a unquestioningly Eurocentric point of view, has explored the complexity of white perceptions of China, orientations deriving from art history, cultural studies and anthropology. Alison Broinowski's \textit{The Yellow Lady}, for example, traces the discourses constituted by Australian perceptions of Asia, a wide-ranging survey of ('high') cultural formations.\textsuperscript{103} John Docker's survey of the cultural life of the 1890s charts period's widespread interest in the Oriental and exotic, arguing for its cosmopolitanism and heterogeneity, characterised by the 'call of the other,' noted by Said, which destabilises binary oppositions of race and identity.\textsuperscript{104} The anthropologist Annette Hamilton traces Australian


\textsuperscript{102} Yarwood, \textit{Asian Immigration}, 1964, p.6.


attitudes towards 'cultural patterning,' addressing 'the products of human culture, rather than the behaviour or conscious beliefs of humans themselves,' and looking for the embedded meaning of these texts. Using Durkheim's concept of 'collective representations', she proposes a 'national imaginary'; the distinction of self from others (racism) emerges through the circulation of images. Examining the way Aborigines and Asians have taken on significance in contemporary discourse, she argues that our ambivalence towards each stems from their positions respectively at the 'empty heart' and 'fragile boundaries' of the Australian consciousness: 'although there is a fear.. there is also a lure and a fascination, which can be neutralised not by retreat but by appropriation' of commodified images.105

Substantive thematic studies include Dwight's examination of the Chinese in NSW law courts, based on police records, noting the way that differences in dialects and customs within the Chinese population caused problems for communication in the court room. Similar barriers were formed by cultural differences, such as the Chinese fear and distrust of courts of law; in China recourse to courts for civil matters was discouraged by government policy. He examines the range of offences on which they appeared in terms of Chinese cultural tradition; absconding for example appears often to have been caused by misunderstanding. Generally the number of cases involving the Chinese was not large in relation to the size of the Chinese community. Dwight suggests that it is likely that many cases of maltreatment of the Chinese were not brought before the courts. This study was one of the first which attempted to understand the Chinese point of view, and the nature of cultural difference in the Australian context.106 A more recent study of Chinese involvement in white systems of desire and fiction: official and popular fantasies of a white Australia', (unpublished) seminar paper, Centre for Women's Studies, Australian National University, 1996.

justice is Gary Presland’s 1994 paper, ‘Detecting Chinese crime in 19th century Victoria’, which explores the cultural role played by Chinese who became policemen; all were Christians, and at least three married European women, leading Presland to argue that they were ‘endeavouring to find a place for themselves in European society.’

Several studies address different aspects of the Chinese experience such as their response to the 1911 Chinese revolution, their involvement in the banana trade, and recently, the Chinese contribution to the Australian defence forces. One feature of the Chinese community in Australia was its extreme gender imbalance. In Australia there were many liaisons between white women and Chinese men, in part contributing to tension in the 1880s and 90s. This issue has not been explored in detail.

There have also been studies which locate the Chinese in the nineteenth century urban context, both in Melbourne, and in Sydney, which I draw upon below (chapters three to six). Alan Mayne’s study of newspaper representations charts

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111 Markus comments that one important difference between Chinese immigration to California and Australia was the rigid sexual taboos against relations between Chinese men and European women in California, causing the import of Chinese prostitutes; in Australia, restrictive legislation prevented entry of Chinese women. During the Californian gold rushes, Chinese prostitutes represented a significant component of the population, perpetuating the sojourning system and supporting the migrant labour system in America. Markus, Fear and Hatred, 1979, p. 259; and see L. Hirata, ‘Free, indentured, enslaved: Chinese prostitutes in nineteenth-century America,’ Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1979, pp.39-50.

the way that 'slums' were used by the middle classes to define their own 'normalcy'; the Chinese were integrated within the amalgam of the city's undesirable other. Studies of the Chinese in Sydney have generally either formed part of a larger demographic picture of ethnic distribution, or have been examined on the level of community, as a discrete group. Connell and Ip's examination of the 'residential ecology' of urban Chinese in Australia, with particular reference to Sydney, followed immigration trends and their relationship to occupational structures, identifying cultural changes in Sydney's Chinese population such as the shift in home-province from Kwangtung and especially the Canton Delta, to a flow from the southern provinces immediately after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The location of Chinatown had changed from George Street North to Wexford Street close to Belmore Market, a main centre for the market-gardeners, by 1891, and when Belmore Market was moved to the Haymarket, businesses were attracted to the Dixon Street area.

Racist responses to the Chinese in Sydney were particularly marked during outbreaks of disease, when the Chinese were blamed for creating conditions which caused and encouraged the spread of disease. In his examination of the

115 V.Burage, The Chinese Community in Sydney 1870-1901, M.A., Macquarie University, 1975, and see especially Jan Woods' recent B.A. honours thesis, Chinese Residency in the Haymarket and Surry Hills - 1880 to 1902, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1994, which provides a detailed account of the demographic residential patterns of this community through a combination of visual and documentary evidence.
post-plague cleansing operations of 1900-1901 through George McCredie’s photographic record, Max Kelly matched photographs of Chinese-rented premises with the 1891 Royal Commission’s proceedings. For example, Kelly places the Commissioners’ description, ‘they sleep in bunks ranged round the bedrooms, and sometimes one above the other; six or eight men often occupying apartments which would not afford healthful accommodation for more than one or two persons’, beside a photograph of the interior of a lodging house at 230 George Street. The ambiguity of images such as these, and the complexity of using such different kinds of sources, is explored by Helen Grace, who uses these same views of the cleansing operations as a means of addressing the political language of photographic evidence and the constitution of photographic meaning. George McCredie’s official task, as director of cleansing operations, was to ‘search for the guilty’, and the visual evidence was assumed to constitute an objective view; a context was created for the images which makes their reading naturally accord with the investigators’, for example through the graphic intensity of Inspector of Nuisances Seymour’s verbal evidence to the Common Lodging-houses inquiry. Several oral histories have also been conducted with former residents of the Rocks and Millers Point which reveal something of early twentieth century particularistic relations with the Chinese, such as the King family which ran a business in Unwins Stores, 77-85 George Street, which resident Dolly Bonette remembered, ‘...provided all Chinese things for the Chinamen but not for outsiders, only for themselves.’ The Cumines family also had a business in Playfair Street, and there was a Chinese laundry in George

119 Grace argues that the photograph as evidence assumed the same force by the end of the century. H. Grace, ‘A Practical Man: Portraiture Between Word and Image,’ in J. Richardson, (ed.), Photogenic Papers, Continuum, 6(2), 1993, pp.156-177.
Most residents' memories of the Chinese relate to playing games with them as children - or not.\textsuperscript{120}

The recent upsurge in interest in the history of the Chinese in Australia has been marked by publications such as Henry Chan's survey of histories of Chinese Australian communities,\textsuperscript{121} and events such as the 1993 Melbourne conference, \textit{The History of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific}. This saw papers focusing on economic networks, such as Cathie May's 'Chinese economic activity and race relations in the Cairns district 1876-1920', and Sophie Couchman's 'The banana trade - its importance to Melbourne's Chinese and Little Bourke Street, 1880s-1920s'; on language and representation, such as Ouyang Yu's study of representations of Chinese in literature 1888-1988; on the history of the Chinese in the Pacific, such as William Willmott's 'Beginnings of Chinese settlement in the South Pacific: traders and indentured labour'; on Chinese miners, such as James Ng's 'Chinese goldseekers in Otago, New Zealand'; oral and social histories, such as Manyang Ip's study of Chinese women in New Zealand; on religion, temples and cemeteries, such as Jutta Niemeier's 'Religious practice at the See Yup Temple, South Melbourne, 1856-1993'; on relations with white law, such as Andrew Markus' 'Chinese exclusions and admissions to Australia, 1901-1957'; and on the Chinese community's new sense of its heritage, such as Russell Jack's 'The Chinese community in Bendigo'. These different perspectives, together with the archaeological session (discussed above), were brought together for the first time, creating a sense of a newly cohesive research area.\textsuperscript{122}


\textsuperscript{122} C. May, 'Chinese economic activity and race relations in the Cairns district 1876-1920'; S. Couchman, 'The banana trade - its importance to Melbourne's Chinese and Little Bourke Street, 1880s-1920s'; O. Yu, 'All the lower order: representations of Chinese cooks, market gardeners, street hawkers, laundrymen, storekeepers, domestic servants and herbalists in Australian
A session at the 1994 Australian Historical Association conference in Perth, edited by Jan Ryan, included, for example, Ian Jack's 'The Contribution of Archaeology to the History of the Overseas Chinese', which stresses archaeology's ability to document the illiterate and marginal; James Ng's 'Chinese Goldseekers in Otago, New Zealand', and Norma King Koi's 'Discovering my Heritage: My Chinese Family History'. Henry Chan's concluding paper, 'Community, Culture and Commerce: New Approaches to the History of Chinese in Australia', notes the recent trend toward 'disaggregating' the Australian Chinese into communities, and advocates more of these histories, addressing community, culture and commerce, and specifically Chinese 'institutions and organisations, their social and economic activities, their connections with the home communities in China, and their experience and handling of relations with the host communities,' enabling us 'to examine how Chinese attitudes, values, behaviour and organisations survived or were modified or adapted when transported to the Australian environment.'

The 1995 Chinese Studies Association of Australia Fourth Biennial Conference heard a vast range of papers pertaining to Chinese culture; several related to Chinese Australian history, such as Maxine Darnell's study of indentured labour in northern New South Wales; Yuan Fang Shen's account of writings by Chinese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regarding their experiences in Australia; Bill Willmott's analysis of Chinese identity in the Pacific, arguing for the importance of factors such as intermarriage, ethnic Chinese origin, and economic status, in determining identity; and Janis Wilton's examination of


Chinese general stores in New England within the social and economic networks which sustained them.124

Jan Ryan's study of Chinese immigration into Western Australia is a recent comprehensive regional history.125 Diana Giese's oral history work in the Northern Territory has cast light on the history of the Top End community.126 In Sydney, work by Chinese historian Yulan Poon on Chinese newspapers in Sydney provides fresh insight into nineteenth century Chinese views.127 Shirley Fitzgerald is currently working on a history of the Chinese in Sydney, commissioned by the Chinese community. This stream of activity perhaps reflects a reawakened sense of Chinese cultural identity with China but may also, and simultaneously, be due to a desire to show how Chinese people were 'contributors to the formation of an Australian culture and identity'.128

While I have broken up this discussion according to discipline and scale, in writing my own story of events and relationships in the Rocks I have drawn upon many different elements within this body of evidence. The broad background to racism and anti-Chinese agitation in Australia has been


investigated, and there have been a number of specific studies of the individual histories of particular Chinese communities, as well as of different aspects of Sydney's Chinese community. This review demonstrates, however, the lack of any detailed account of the process of cultural interaction, incorporating the Chinese point of view, or considering the dialectical relationship between structures of culture and the specific forms taken by everyday interaction.

In evoking this distinctive period of time, the chapter also demonstrated that readings of both historical and ethnographic records suggest a more complex landscape than could be presented in even either text alone. This complexity is jeopardized: the historical record speaks more eloquently of the social world of the street, while the ethnographic record makes known the private domain of women's activities and operations.

By the late nineteenth century Sydney's population was changing swiftly, with immigration. If you use a sociopolitical city - 40% of its inhabitants were of British origin, while 73% of those having been born in Australia. The four largest immigrant groups were from England, Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand, Sydney's centre contained the greatest ethnic diversity. While women were numerically dominant in Sydney overall, in the lower city they were outnumbered by 5:100, reflecting the tenantry-farmers who formed the rural.

For example, the 1938 report by Walker, in his report to the Director-General of Public Health on 'The Tenantry-Farmers' in South Australia, New South Wales, University Press, Sydney, 1983, p. 48.
Chapter 3. Life 'on the Rocks'

... Sydney remained the port of Australia: all Home and Foreign business transactions were effected here. Its rapid rise to a great commercial centre was not foreseen, and consequently but little attention was given to the work of forming the city upon an approved plan. This will at once be observed by the visitor who inspects that portion of the metropolis wherein the pioneer inhabitants landed and made themselves a home. From Dawes' Point almost to Charlotte Place, in the locality known as 'The Rocks', is to be observed many indications of the careless method in which houses were thrown together and streets formed. In days gone by "the Rocks" bore an evil reputation. "Brown Bear Lane" (now Little Essex Street) and "Maori Lane" were two of the most noted scenes of riot in the whole settlement. Crime was of frequent occurrence, constables were beaten nightly, and noone could pass "the Rocks" after dark without hazard of being stripped and plundered; where detection was feared, the robbers did not hesitate at murder. But nothing of this kind now occurs.


In evoking this distinctive working-class place, this chapter also demonstrates that readings of both historical and archaeological records suggest a more complex landscape than could be guessed at from either text alone. This complexity is gendered; the historical record speaks most eloquently of the male world of the street, while the archaeological record makes known the private domain, of women's influence and aspirations.

By the late nineteenth century Sydney's population was changing swiftly, with urbanisation.\(^1\) It was not a cosmopolitan city - 96% of its inhabitants were of British origin, 73 % of these having been born in Australia. The four largest immigrant groups were from England, Ireland, Scotland and New Zealand.\(^2\) Sydney's centre contained the greatest ethnic diversity. While women were numerically dominant in Sydney overall, in the inner city they were outnumbered by 53,000, reflecting the tendency for men such as sailors, casual

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\(^1\) For example, the residential area between the Domain, Liverpool Street, George Street and Charlotte Place lost 4000 people during the 1890s, reflecting the transition of land use to business activity. P.Curson and K.McCracken, Plague in Sydney. The Anatomy of an Epidemic, New South University Press, Sydney, 1989, p.75.

\(^2\) Census 1901, cited in ibid..
labourers, and recent immigrants to settle in the central wharf area. The amount of shipping in Australia's ports doubled between 1899 and 1913, NSW receiving the largest share in this trade from 1901. Great inequalities in health and housing conditions existed; Curson and McCracken argue that 'Broadly, a concentric pattern of high central to low suburban values emerges - the highest mortality being associated with a central group of suburbs, where blue-collar or unskilled workers resided or where industry had located.' There was a marked contrast between the demographic profile of waterside suburbs like the Rocks and the rest of the city.

Representations of the Rocks from its earliest days had stressed its dangerous, subversive qualities: it was often compared with London's St Giles, inhabited by felons, prostitutes, fences, and as Alexander Harris put it in 1847, those 'whose brutelike ignorance and uncouthness had rendered it impossible for more orderly and rational society to amalgamate with itself; and many drawn into the vortex of ruin through their mere want of direction, or energetic resolve for either good or evil.' The Rocks as a dark whirlpool of vice, drawing in the helpless, weak and wicked, was a trope that continued to shape outsiders' perceptions. It was, as proclaimed by one of its early pubs, 'The World Turned Upside Down' - a subversive, shifting place outside the usual order of things. But the Rocks was also a hard-working port. It was cosmopolitan; sailors and travellers poured through it, some settling there or leaving their traces, like flotsam left behind by the falling

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2 See J. Wolforth, 'Residential concentration of non-British communities in nineteenth-century Sydney,' *Australian Geographical Studies* 12(2), 1974, pp.207-218, for an analysis of late nineteenth century distribution of non-British people applying for British citizenship, 1901-1903; new arrivals such as Scandinavians, who tended to be mariners, clustered near the docks.


By the late nineteenth century, Sydney’s mainly Anglo inhabitants still eyed the Rocks’ exoticism, by now enhanced by its relative age, with caution: official attempts to survey and control it persisted; some were attracted by its heterogeneity and seedy excitement. It was an object of the bourgeois struggle to control Sydney’s urbanising landscape; the complex discourse of concern for urban health, morality and the environment culminated in resumption of the area in 1901. This radical intervention was a crucial event in the long-term conflict between city officials, the public, and the real people who lived in the 'slums'.

the Rocks: a contested site

The Rocks experienced continual intervention between the 1890s and the First World War. In answer to earlier assumptions of widespread prosperity during the ‘Long Boom’ of the 1860s, 70s and 80s, several scholars have noted the insecurity and hardship endured by the working class, particularly in the cities. Fitzgerald for example argues that despite the self-congratulatory spirit of the 1888 Sydney Centenary celebrations, the industrial upheavals of the 1890s were presaged by two decades characterised by widespread introduction of machinery and a growing division of labour, an increasing discrepancy between skilled and unskilled workers, and the predominance of casual work; this required geographical mobility for men, but immobility for women, affecting

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7 Ross Gibson’s evocation of the colony in the early nineteenth century stresses its marine setting, its fluid, shifting values and protean systems of meaning: ‘Sydney Town surged with ocean-workers... The shoreline around the Tank Stream stammered with opinions, desires and worldviews brought in from the ocean’ : ‘Ocean Settlement,’ Meanjin, 4, 1994, p.670.

family life and security. She concludes that 'in physical terms, inner city living conditions worsened in those twenty years, as population grew ahead of the provision of amenities'.

The re-development of the inner city was shaped by policy-making prompted by the panic caused by epidemics and environmental degradation. Yet the path of the policy-makers was not entirely smooth. The City of Sydney Improvement Act of 1879 split authority between the Council and a government-appointed Improvement Board, exacerbating antagonism between Council and government. A widespread community perception was that sanitary reform was dangerously overdue, both on insanitary and on moral grounds. These were boom years for Sydney, making rebuilding an economically attractive course of action for many landowners. Much sub-standard housing was demolished during the 1880s. At the same time, resistance to the legislation developed, linked to concern over the power given to the mayor and the Council officers. As a result, Council efforts slackened off by the end of the decade, leaving it unprepared for an outbreak of bubonic plague in 1900.

Radiating from the waterside, via rats and those who worked on the docks, the plague also spread intense panic throughout Sydney. Curson and McCracken argue that the location of the outbreak in the city’s poorer areas allowed authorities to implement quarantining, cleansing and inoculation in a way that the ‘more advantaged and politically articulate upper and middle classes’ would not have suffered. As they point out, the impact on the population’s everyday

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lives was larger than the cases and deaths recorded indicate, due to the policy of quarantining 'contacts' as well.\(^{13}\) The Sydney City Council formed a Plague Department which, however, was overwhelmed by its task. George McCredie, architect and consulting engineer, was put in charge of the cleansing operations, documented by photographer John Degotardi, attached to McCredie.\(^{14}\) Operations were on a huge scale, and complaints were many - particularly from the Sydney City Council, which was on bad terms with the State government.\(^{15}\) The long-standing tension between the Sydney City Council and the State government over urban health measures saw the Council boost its Sanitary Department and systematise its work, while in May 1900 the Executive Council invoked the \textit{Lands for Public Purposes Requisition Act} to resume the wharves and a strip of land from Dawes Point to the head of the harbour.\(^{16}\) The Sydney Harbour Trust was created in 1901 with jurisdiction over the port of Sydney, and it resumed hundreds of properties in the Rocks and Millers Point, in 1901 setting up a City Improvement Advisory Board with links to the Public Works Department, to advise the government on how to develop the resumed area. The government's agenda was also to construct a bridge - not to begin for another thirty years, however - and Fitzgerald argues that 'it was very clear to everyone that the government's resumptions concerned far more than the public health.' Since the late 1880s the Council had advocated that it be given control of the Rocks, as part of more general powers to improve disease-prone areas and so it objected to this abrogation of its rights; George Reid accused the government of 'simply placing their paw upon a great area of Sydney'. By 1911, 264 houses had been demolished, and only 108 erected.\(^{17}\)

\(^{13}\) Curson and McCracken, \textit{Plague in Sydney}, 1989, pp.146-152.
An image often used as emblem of the Rocks 'slum': 'A rear view of Cumberland and Gloucester Street', c.1900. Courtesy of the State Archives Office of New South Wales. SAO COD 121B 831.
The Rocks' former mix of classes, distributed logically according to resources and need across its rugged physical spaces, had altered by the 1890s, as beginning in the 1870s many of the wealthier inhabitants moved out along the railway line, leaving behind the working classes, especially wharf-labourers and coal-lumpers, who needed to live near their place of work. Some of the more successful locals, such as Thomas Playfair, butcher and politician, followed from the 1890s, settling in suburbs such as Leichhardt, Marrickville and Botany. This pattern was to continue; some who could afford to, graduated from the area - others fought eviction. From the 1920s, there was a boom in the city's outer suburbs, and suburbanisation 'had become an almost universal cultural ideal'.

The struggle for control of the city's inner suburbs took in the Rocks, sometimes referred to as 'old Sydney'. Here, the complex discourses of city 'improvement' and sanitary reform, social 'purity' and respectability, were enacted in the context of the area's picturesque, exotic otherness: an anthropological interest was aroused in Sydney's overwhelmingly British-descended inhabitants both by its foreign population (most notably the Chinese) and the city's poor, rendered alien by middle class representations. Also of appeal was the area's distinctive physical character, imparted by its age and location - its tumbledown houses, steep, narrow streets, and shelving sandstone, set against the harbour's watery...
backdrop. By the 1890s the reforming zeal of city improvers had slumped along with the economy, but the outbreak of plague in Millers Point in 1900 galvanised the middle classes into action again.

In May 1907 J.D. Fitzgerald wrote:

_The slum is often the most picturesque quarter of a city - at a distance. It has usually the glamor of antiquity upon it. A slum cannot be manufactured in a day. But certain races can create slums in quicker time than others. Our Chinese - also picturesque, but dirty - have a fatal facility in evolving slums out of the newest and most unpromising material. They board out the air and light, and sedulously cultivate darkness and bad ventilation. The slum, however picturesque, from a distance, is, on close scrutiny, hideous, pestilential...the wages of the slum is death - death not only to the poor imprisoned in the slums, but to the rich in their suburban villas and fashionable quarters. For disease is a brazen leveller of all ranks._

Titled 'Sydney Slums. Picturesque and Pestilential', this article was the second in a series by Fitzgerald run in _The Lone Hand_. Next to it appears a drawing of Cumberland Place, the Rocks, by Lionel Lindsay, labelled 'A Prout-like bit in the Rocks Resumption Area,' and other images by Lindsay follow: 'In the picturesque Rocks area', 'A Terrace of Cottages in Surry Hills, similar to -'[beside:] 'A slum in Naples - picturesque but insanitary', and 'The oldest part of Sydney, which should have disappeared by now'.

Fitzgerald was a municipal and state politician, whose career was founded on city planning and housing reform. Unfortunately for Fitzgerald, the impact of his dire message is diminished by its collation with Lindsay's delicate, romantic etchings. It creates a dissonance born of two quite different attitudes: there were

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23 Fitzgerald (1862-1922) was an alderman of the City Council between 1900-04, President of the NSW Labor Party (1915-16) and was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1915. He was the Chair of the new Housing Board in 1912 and involved in the construction of Daceyville and other housing and planning projects into the 1920s: _Australian Dictionary of Biography_, Melbourne University Press, vol 8, 1981, pp. 513-14.
In the picturesque Rocks area, by Lionel Lindsay, c.1905. The Lone Hand, May, 1907.
those (artists, writers, 'bohemians') who enjoyed the worn patina and old-fashioned spaces of the Rocks, and those who saw it simply as another portion of the city's 'slumland', a source of pestilence and a threat to the city's middle classes.\textsuperscript{24}

While Lionel Lindsay (and others such as Livingstone Hopkins) produced images of the Rocks stressing its age, squalor, and exoticism (usually represented by the emblematic Chinese hawker),\textsuperscript{25} sanitary reformers were making comparisons with London and other European centres which were less complimentary. During the turmoil of the plague, City Health Officer C.E. Corlette submitted a report to the Municipal Council of Sydney stating that 'I have had some experience of the poverty existing in certain London slums, and can speak from knowledge when I say that I have seen appearances of poverty as bad in Sydney as any I have seen in London...' He also argued that 'the housing accommodation for the poorer classes of people in Sydney is very seriously in need of improvement, and this not less for their own health, but as a policy of insurance for that of the whole community. I have become convinced that if the people of Sydney wish to secure themselves against future misfortune, there is need for a radical change of policy in this direction...'.\textsuperscript{26} In the rhetoric of urban reform, this notion of cleaning up the slum 'as a policy of insurance', an investment in the whole city's health, was a powerful strategy deployed by advocates of urban renewal.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} And for 'bohemians' in Melbourne, see G.Davison and D.Dunstan, "'This Moral Pandemonium': images of low life,' in G.Davison, D.Dunstan and C.McConville (eds), The Outcasts of Melbourne. Essays in Social History, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.29-57, who explore the complex range of attitudes towards the 'slum', including that which enjoyed its heterogeneity whilst boosting its progress.


\textsuperscript{27} And D.Dunstan, 'Dirt and Disease', in Davison et al, The Outcasts of Melbourne, 1985, pp.140-171 makes a similar point with respect to Melbourne's sanitary reform.
the Rocks from within

The physical and social form of the Rocks in the 1890s bore strong traces of its past; the landscape was heavily marked in its peoples' minds. Old names and localities survived within it, such as 'Gallows Hill', the steep corner of Cambridge and Essex Streets which had afforded a view over the wall of the George Street gaol of hangings at the turn of the eighteenth century. As well as obvious landmarks like Bunker's Hill, Flagstaff Hill, Dawes Point, the Coroner's Court, Watch-houses, Police Station, and Post Office, there were hundreds of private markers blazed by experience, scattered throughout the streets, shops and houses which defined its scope and form. Structures of understanding and attachment endured, shaping and being shaped by the Rocks' particular affairs. Edwina Goodwin, born in Merriman Street in 1899, remembered how the signal would be given from Flagstaff Hill that a ship was entering the harbour, and immediately the shipping butchers' clerks would race out in their boats to be the first aboard to claim their custom, with everyone stopping what they were doing to watch them go.

Long-term residents of the Rocks established close ties to the place and to each other - a solidarity born of hardship and uncertain employment, as well as lifelong social and kinship ties. In 1891 for example, Thomas Playfair testified that he had lived there for 32 years, as successful butcher, alderman, and finally mayor (although he was one of those who eventually moved out to the

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28 This name is used by witnesses to the Report of the Royal Commission into Chinese Gambling and Immorality, New South Wales Votes & Proceedings, (Legislative Assembly), vol. 8, 1891-2, p.124. 29 E.Goodwin, interviewed for the NSW Bicentennial Oral History Project, State Library of NSW, 1988, p.21. Grace Karskens points to the persistence of everyday habits such as drinking, untouched by the flourishing, middle class temperance movement: the Royal Commission into Excessive Use of Intoxicating Drink of 1886 'was shocked by accounts of children sent to public houses to fetch a jug of ale for their parents... something that had been considered quite normal in the 1810s and 1820s', G.Karskens, The Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street Site, the Rocks. An Historical Discourse, Sydney Cove Authority, 1994, p.78.
suburbs). He also told how police sergeants Higgins and Carney, on the Rocks beat, whom he had known for twenty years, had bought cheap land behind Kendall’s Mill and built houses on it, buying cheap materials and doing most of the work themselves; by the 1890s they had two houses apiece in Playfair Street, and one or two in Upper Gloucester Street.  

The increasingly working class residents followed this pattern well into the twentieth century. During the upheavals following establishment of the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority in 1970, and around the Bicentennial, a number of oral history and less formal interviews were conducted with former residents, recognising the importance of their experience of earlier, disappearing ways of life. Kitty Moran, for example, told how ‘I was born down there in the old Dyers building. My mother died when I was five and my aunt raised me - sent me off to St Patricks’ School. My husband William was born in Playfair Street, our children in Harrington Street... the whole neighbourhood seemed to be like one great family growing up together, then watching their own families growing up too.’ Dolly Bonette, born in Playfair Street like her great-grandmother, also spoke of the neighbourhood ‘family group’: her next door neighbours were her sister-in-law on one side and her son George in number 4. The entire family had lived in one or another house in the street at some time. Dolly used to swap houses with her mother - ‘Some day she’d come to me and say she felt like living back in number 9, so I’d move to her house for a while. After a few months she’d change her mind and want to swap back again. My husband used to come home and say “Dolly, where are we living tonight?”’  

While some subscribed to the increasingly appealing ideal of suburban living, others were anchored to the Rocks. Dorothy Beckhouses' father was a coal lumper, who 'liked the Rocks. When we had to move, he said no further than

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30 Gambling Commission, 1891, p.121.  
32 Ibid., and see J.Lydon, Susannah Place. Archaeological Monitoring Project, Sydney Cove Authority, 1992: in this tenement continuity was maintained until a few years ago.
Paddington. He didn’t want to go but we had to go because of the bridge... The Rocks was like a small town of its own. Everyone knew everyone.30

Its retail heart was George Street. In 1901 Eliza Walker recalled how in the 1840s people would descend from their houses on the heights to shop there; it served the whole town.31 At the beginning of the period, however, the colony was in depression. In 1891 Thomas Playfair told how business had declined since the 1860s when Lower George Street had been the outlet for ‘all the traffic from Balmain, Pyrmont, North Shore, Watson’s Bay and Manly Beach. The people coming in the boats from these places would go to Lower George-street and buy all their goods there, especially in wet weather. Since then the trade has been either localised by the development of the suburbs, or has been extended to the other end of the city, where so many attractive shops have been established.’ The establishment of the Australasian Steam and Navigation Company at Sydney Cove had given business there ‘a fillip’, but did not increase the traffic, ‘as the people came to and from the steamers in cabs and buses’. The shipping trade was the principal business down there - ‘not much shopping, in the ordinary sense’ - at Millers Point and Dawes Point, ‘the people have shops near to them...[and] like to go up town and do their shopping at Hordern’s and other places’.35

Throughout the period, community life was defined by public performances. Delivery men traced and re-traced certain routes through the area, supplying staples such as bread, milk, ice, rabbits, props, vegetables, ice-cream to the households of the Rocks. ‘But that’s how it happened, in the street. The Chinese... they were mostly gardeners the Chinese. They all had Chinese gardens and things like

that. There were no shops with the Chinese in. And they'd have their big baskets one on
either side, big ones filled with all kinds of things. And then there'd be the ice-cream
carts going around calling out, ices, and a little trumpet and everyone would rush out.
And there were props. Oh, I mustn't forget the props... it was a bit of a tree, with a fork
at the top and that used to catch the line and you'd pull it up higher. And they'd call out
in the streets.”

Certain rituals cemented community ties; many former residents vividly
remembered the bonfire that was always lit in Harrington Street on New Year's
Eve. Residents gathered around it and sang songs 'and then Auld Lang Syne at
midnight... We used to leave all our front doors open and set up our tables with scones
and sandwiches. Drinks too. And everyone would pop in and out during the evening...
goodness, I don’t think we ever went to bed before 3 or 4 in the morning.” Boys saved
up wood and tyres: ‘We used to run two fires - one in Harrington and one in High
Street. Then we’d run from one to the other, while someone played a piano in the middle
of the road. There were cops everywhere, trekking from one blasted fire to another - but
woe betide the policeman who tried to put one out’ Church attendance was another
regular cycle of Rocks life.”

The Rocks' public aspect was maritime; the docks, wharves, anchored ships
were a blurred boundary between settled households and Sydney's 'floating
population'. Early in the morning, the wharf labourers looking to be 'picked up'
for a day's work, would tramp from wharf to wharf along the 'Hungry Mile',
fringing the waterside from Circular Quay to Pyrmont. It was important to be at
the wharf when a job became available, so as to be able to start immediately, and
it was also cheaper to rent a house in the city's older areas. The 'pick-up' system

37 Kitty Moran in Gowanlock, 'People of the Rocks,' c.1975.
38 Donnelly, ibid., pp.5-7.
39 Ibid., pp.5-7.
remained unchanged until 1940. The work was intermittent, over irregular hours: a man might be picked up for a few hours, or for days. Wives had to be able to produce meals at any time of day: 'they’d get their orders and it might be three meals down the harbour. That meant my mother had to pack three meals. Some of them were cooked and put in enamel plates, and tea and sugar. And sometimes he was working down some of the streets near the wharves, and often I’d take his meal down to him in a basket.' Within this exhausting routine, the heaviest cargoes were handled by the strongest men, called 'bulls', creating a hierarchy which undermined the union's solidarity, and caused disharmony between wives.

Dorothy Beckhouse hated her father being a coal-lumper, 'because it was a very dangerous job. They used to walk the plank about two feet wide over the hold of the ship, and direct the baskets of coal. There were quite a few deaths from that...'.

Medical problems were numerous, but often ignored, because 'sackings were ruthless and you couldn't complain'. Mitchell's analysis of the Report of Enquiry into Grain Sacks Regulation Bill of 1906 reveals 'a system of brutalised labour, practised openly.'

The 1890s were a period of quiet prosperity for ship-owners, the Sydney Wharf Labourer's Union having been almost destroyed by its participation in the Maritime Strike of 1890. In 1914 the wharfies received their first Federal award from the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, allowing for hourly rates and overtime. It was the first Commonwealth award for casual workers and addressed the intermittency and irregularity of the work to determine wages,

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Ibid., p.95.
Billy Hughes became leader of waterfront unionism at the end of the depression years, pursuing a policy of arbitration rather than industrial action. The Waterside Workers' Federation was formed by Hughes, and continued this policy until the general strike of 1917. Mitchell, 'Home Life at the Hungry Mile', 1977.
but was concerned chiefly with procedures, not amenities. Throughout the 1920s, there were periods of irregular employment due to strikes and consequent discrimination against unionists. The years of the Great Depression brought bitter poverty to the wharf labourers' families.

Home
Despite the publicity given the workers by the media, due to their commercial importance, and their leader's political prominence, Mitchell notes that their women, in charge of the domestic sphere, remain anonymous within the framework of demographic and legislative change. As Penny Russell points out, 'Nineteenth-century discussions of women’s “place” in society tended to conflate physical space and social place as though there were no difference between the two. The truism that “women’s place was in the home” served to delineate and contain women’s movement across physical spaces, and at the same time operated as an effective measure of women’s status and respectability.' The streets were represented as a source of moral danger, and respectable women stayed off them. But as the site of gender and class relations, the home, like the street, was constructed as an emblem of social status. The economic need to keep up the appearance of respectability meant that domestic life became a mode of presenting the self to the wider world.

47 Ibid., p.97.
48 Mitchell, 'Home Life at the Hungry Mile', 1977, characterises the lifestyle shared by these women: they married younger than the national average of 24, had more children than the average of 3, and were more likely to be married than middle class women. They were slow to exercise their voting rights and did not become involved in union or political discussions.
While documentary, elite representations delineate the elite worldview,\textsuperscript{50} they are not so helpful when we try to understand what life was like for the 'slum' inhabitants themselves.\textsuperscript{51} One of the uses of archaeological evidence is to provide a different, less distorted perspective on urban processes, through the large-scale, cumulative picture built up of spaces, trends and community.

From within, the untidy domain gestured at by urban improvers resolved itself into orderly patterns created by women and their families, some living in the area for generations, pursuing their productive ways of life. The struggle by the working classes to control their own lives is evinced more clearly than the sensational reports of mayoral inspections of the cities 'rookeries' and 'slums' by the physical representations they created to make their world meaningful, left behind in what we term the archaeological record. Archaeological evidence, 'from below', contests elite perspectives. A varied diet, disposable income, services, utilities and waste disposal, adornments and comfort constituted local knowledge which contests representations of the area as purely subversive of public morals and safety. The archaeological record comprises mostly households, and so reflects the domestic, female, everyday life of the Rocks, refocusing the larger-scale, male view of the area's past which has usually prevailed. It appears to reflect the 'actual' conditions of everyday life, but goes beyond this raw account to tell us, as physical representations, of the symbolic meaning to their owners and to those with whom they interacted.

Accounts such as Max Kelly's, of the 'Picturesque and Pestilential' Sydney slum, and Shirley Fitzgerald's general picture of urban deterioration leading up to 1890 are made manifest by the physical remains. Of course, as Kelly points out, 'The definition of "adequate housing" or of a "decent house" continues to change', with

\textsuperscript{50} Mayne, \textit{The Imagined Slum}, 1993.
\textsuperscript{51} G.Davison, 'Introduction,' in Davison \textit{et al}, \textit{The Outcasts of Melbourne}, 1985, p.3.
our own shifting values. However unstudied or 'raw', the traces of the past are absorbed by our own, contingent, discursive practices. In the early nineteenth century, household rubbish - gnawed bones, seeds, oyster shells, broken crockery, and other scraps - was thrown into the yard, by those who lived in tenements at least, to be trodden underfoot. The resultant 'sheet refuse' was a continuing characteristic of Rocks dwellings. But in addition, disposing of household waste under one's floorboards was practiced from at least the 1830s, as the evidence from the Smidmore Buildings, between Cumberland Street and Essex Lane, constructed ca.1832 shows. Here, excavation of deposits of rubbish made throughout the life of the tenement, until ca. 1882, showed that the rate of deposition accelerated during the late nineteenth century, assisted by deteriorating floors, groundwater seepage and rats. Further, the cess-pits constructed behind the buildings were not regularly cleaned out, even when mains were installed, encouraging residents to find other means of garbage disposal. Although sewerage and other services reached the Rocks early, underfloor disposal was standard in the nineteenth-century Rocks, where for the poor, there was often little choice about where waste could go. Against these aspects of urban life must be weighed others, such as consumption and the ability to shape one's domestic surroundings.

53 G.Wilson, 'Trench 13,' trench report (Lilyvale site), manuscript. It was excavated in 50mm spits in the front room: units 13.070-13.074. Most of these items were small; larger objects were thrown outside. W.Thorp, Report on Archaeological excavations, Lilyvale, Cumberland Street, the Rocks, CRI Management (draft), 1994. The Smidmore Buildings pits were 1.7m deep, containing material dating to the period of construction.  
54 J.Lydon, Susannah Place, 1992. By 1848 a public fountain stood opposite Longs Lane. Water reached houses like Susannah Place in 1855. Sewerage was connected to most areas ca.1865.  
55 And see G.Karskens and W.Thorp, 'History and Archaeology in Sydney: Towards Integration and Interpretation,' Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 78(3-4), 1992, pp.52-75; Karskens, Historical Discourse, 1994; G. Karskens, 'The Cumberland/Gloucester Street Site: An Historical Summary,' in Godden Mackay Pty Ltd, The Cumberland Street/Gloucester Street Site. Archaeological Investigation. Archaeological Assessment and Research Design, Sydney Cove Authority and the Heritage Council of NSW, 1994, pp.10-31 and see Research Design Questions, pp.72-6. This major site project, analysis in progress, aims to contribute to this debate through methods such as comparison of 'substantial street-frontage' households with 'two-room backstreet terraces' to reveal 'important gradations within the working classes of the Rocks'. The Five Points project, New York, is also currently pursuing this potential of archaeology to offer an alternative
Many families in the area took in boarders, a type of living arrangement that expanded greatly during the late nineteenth century and was important not just as accommodation, but as a source of employment for women, especially in the city. The structures of these communal living households persisted well into the twentieth century. It became common for single women, with or without children, to be without support from husbands or family. In the city, a network of boarding-houses was managed by women trapped between the cultural construction of Victorian femininity and economic exigency. In the eyes of the middle classes, city lodging-houses were associated with the 'thieves, prostitutes and dishonest lodging-house keepers who battened upon' Sydney's 'very large floating population'. In the Rocks, the large sailor population had always required on-shore accommodation, and had a choice of private boarding-houses and, from the early 1860s, the Sydney Sailors' Home at 106 George Street. The Sailors' Home aimed at the moral improvement of sailors, chiefly through temperance, although archaeological investigation of the Sailors' Home produced a large

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56 Here I draw upon evidence spanning the period from ca. 1860 to the 1920s. Mrs Lewis' 1860s boarding-house is discussed in more detail in J. Lydon, 'Boarding-houses in the Rocks: Mrs Ann Lewis' privy, 1865,' Public History Review, 4, 1995, pp.73-88; the excavation report presents the data: J. Lydon, Archaeological Investigations, "Jobbins Building", 103-111 Gloucester Street, the Rocks, Sydney, (unpublished) Sydney Cove Authority, 1993.


proportion of alcohol bottles amongst the rubbish of this supposedly 'dry' institution. When the gold rush of the 1850s saw an uncontrollable exodus of seamen to the gold-fields, this was seen to have been encouraged by unlicensed accommodation, and an 1876 enquiry into shore accommodation was called. This distinguished between 'common' lodging-houses and the higher class 'places taken by widow ladies who let rooms and take boarders by the week.' These accorded with middle class views of respectability, defined against sixpenny lodging-houses along the east side of Darling Harbour. The archaeological evidence for one of these 'respectable' households tells us what this nineteenth century phrase actually meant to contemporaries, giving us a fine-grained picture of the circumstances prevailing in Mrs Ann Lewis' boarding-house between 1861-73. It reveals intersection of ideological and material dimensions of 'respectability' at 'Jobbins Building', on the corner of Longs Lane and Gloucester Street.

Mrs Lewis' crockery was dominated by dinner plates, suggesting an individual rather than communal table service, such as prevailed at the Sailors' Home in the same period. The most striking feature of the assemblage, however, was a number of sets of large, robust 'breakfast cups' and saucers. Although they make up cup-and-saucer sets, they do not form a service, yet are very similar, suggesting that they conform loosely to a model type required by Mrs Lewis' household routine. It seems likely that they were used for serving her boarders; they do not, however, appear to be for communal dining in the same way as the Sailors' Home vessels. They are utilitarian but reflect Mrs Lewis' personal taste, which seems to have run to purple, to judge by its predominance. There were no (afternoon) tea and coffee cups in the boarding-house, unlike the large numbers at Samsons' Cottage and other private households, but conversely, communal

60 Select Committee on Common Lodging-houses, 1875-6, p.857.
Statements of respectability: 'breakfast' cup and saucer, from Mrs Ann Lewis' privy, 1865. Photograph the author. Courtesy of the Sydney Cove Authority.
vessels such as platters, found in the Sailors' Home and used for its rough and ready service, were lacking too. Mrs Lewis took care when she purchased the dinner plates and the breakfast cups and saucers, to present a coordinated table-setting of items which if not matching at least conformed to broad ideals - plates with not-quite-the-same blue scenic designs, the cup-and-saucer sets with purple borders or moulded white patterns. Within the complex etiquette of Victorian household aesthetics, these objects represent statements of respectability. Mrs Lewis' concern for public appearance reflects her status as chatelaine of one of the Rocks' respectable boarding-houses, ameliorating perceived and actual threats to health and morality from urbanisation; through her manipulation of her material environment she was enabled to support herself and still conform to contemporary ideals of feminine behaviour.

Other tangible symbols of order and propriety were carefully created on more sombre occasions. It was customary, for example, to lay the dead out at home:

_They used to put white sheets around with black crosses all over them. It didn’t matter what religion you were, you always had that. They’d put it round and lay them out and people’d go and have a look at them if they wanted to. Of course a corpse is very nice to look at you know if they die naturally. They just turn back to their youth, their beauty, strangely enough._

Relatives and friends held all-night vigils; the customary procedures of mourning, then half mourning, were followed. Shared expectations and notions of propriety defined the Rocks' social world, and endured well into the twentieth century. Dorothy Beckhouse remembered (of the early twentieth century) her mother's busy round of washing, ironing, cleaning and cooking, its performative dimensions inseparable from its functionalism: _she used to make hot scones every Sunday morning for dad's friends, and she made pea soup every Saturday, and there was always someone there that came in for mum's pea soup. It was sort of a_

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Rear yard of 41 Cumberland Street. Notice the sandstone bedrock, the elk horns, and the decorative shells. Courtesy of the State Archives Office of New South Wales. SAO COD 121B 905.
53-57 Cambridge Street. Note the lace curtains. Courtesy of the State Archives Office of New South Wales. SAO COD 121B 1676.
full house for visitors." Hospitality was a matter of pride: 'dad...it was nothing for him to bring someone home for dinner. And mum would look at him and he'd say "Give them mine". And she used to make a dinner probably out of hers and dads and make another helping.... He used to often bring strangers that he'd met on the seafront'. The house-proud whitened their front steps every morning before eight, and nostalgically, Evelyn Goodwin later remembered meeting paper delivery boys who had worked in the area: 'it was the cleanest place they'd ever seen. They used to love to throw the things along the polished floors. The women always washed their curtains and windows every week, there was no one dirty...They were always clean, they mightn't have had much money but they were always nice.' Women had an extensive and demanding range of household tasks to perform, including caring for children.

At Samsons' Cottage, a small household in Kendall Lane which was built in 1844 and survived to ca.1920, the archaeological evidence instantiates European domestic working class Rocks' life generally, forming a strong contrast with that of the Chinese, who lived in the same space, on the same site, in the 1920s, as the following chapters explore. Inhabitants of the cottage were working class, often running small businesses from the George Street shop on the eastern frontage, but from 1885, when the frontage was rebuilt as two tenements, the cottage was occupied by a Mrs Brown. The single room on the ground floor had been used for most domestic tasks. Life focused on the fireplace in the south wall, as reflected by the underfloor deposit excavated (rats throve here too, as indicated by their burrows through, and skeletal remains in, the sub-floor material).

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62 Ibid., p.15.
63 Ibid., p.15.
64 Ibid., p.27.
Samsons' Cottage, looking south along Kendall Lane, parallel to George Street. Cleansing operations. Courtesy of the State Archives Office of New South Wales. SAO COD 121B 1633.
The underfloor deposit at Samsons‘ Cottage reveals the wide range of resources, both local and imported, available to residents. ‘Souvenirs’ reflect its key position in maritime and commercial networks: these include coral, a Tea Mart token commemorating the opening of the Sydney Railway in 1855, Indian sequins, a buckle commemorating an English cricket tour in the 1860s, a Madras coin, and ceramics imported from Europe and Asia. Generally, the Rocks‘ material culture reflects its maritime role, yielding souvenirs from around the world. At Samsons‘ Cottage, the evidence for diet demonstrates the purchase of pre-dressed retail cuts of meat, commercially prepared foodstuffs and imported goods - all reflecting city living. The substantial faunal assemblage included at least eleven meat, fish and shell species, and shows that the inhabitants were also exploiting low meat-yielding bones, probably for soup or stock. They favoured mutton. Early this century many residents of the Rocks and Millers Point still kept their own chickens, but no evidence for this was found at Samsons‘ Cottage, located in the densely settled area of the Rocks to the west of George Street. Native wild flora and fauna were not exploited, probably due to the destruction of the habitat by this time. There were many commercial food containers, especially alcohol bottles and condiments. Local production of beverages such as ginger beer accounted for the rest of the assemblage.

As in Mrs Lewis‘ boarding-house, the household crockery reflects the inhabitants‘ daily dining rituals, as well as their perceptions of where they stood in the social landscape. This private household pattern forms a strong contrast with the institutional and public practices noted for example at the Sailors

Households along Cumberland Street displayed foreign objects like a clay mask, from the Sepik River, Papua New Guinea, studded with cowries; a fourth-century BC Egyptian figurine; coral; and shells, like a tiny Venusian Pearl from North America. Thimbles lost beneath floorboards bear mottoes such as ‘Acuerdate de mi’ (Spanish - ‘forget me not’), perhaps owned by a woman waiting for her sailor to come home: Thorp, Lilyvale, 1994.

Home, at 106 George Street (and nearly opposite the Samsons' Cottage allotment) where excavation of a refuse deposit from the Home, dated from the mid 1860s to mid 1870s, produced large purple printed fine earthenware platters and porringers (small basins), which were used to serve food to the sailors. Eating together defined and maintained social bonds in the complex language of Victorian ideology. A wide range of decorative schemes demonstrates that householders had easy access to the ceramic market, but there was no evidence for matched sets. This may reflect the accidents of deposition, or simply the limited means of the tenants. The wide range of tableware, food serving, storage and preparation vessels indicate that British dining tradition was the practice. Twenty-two different ceramic, glass and metal table, serving and storage forms were recovered from the house, as well as other eating utensils such as knives and teaspoons. The individualised, relatively elaborate settings at Samsons' Cottage reflect a concern with the appearance of respectability, expressed through British rituals such as tea-drinking. The most noteworthy aspect of the ceramics found was the very high proportion of cups and saucers recovered, as well as portions of two traditionally-decorated teapots in jackfield and rockingham glazes. Tea had become the colony's staple beverage, crossing all classes, and was offered as an essential sign of hospitality; by the 1880s it was seen as a national beverage and in 1893 Philip Muskett deplored the 'extravagant tea drinking' of the 'gentler sex'.

Household furnishings such as English ceramic figurines, were found at Samsons' Cottage, as well as personal items such as cosmetic preparations, perfume, patent medicine jars and a human tooth. As the location of women's labour, the household offers significant evidence for tasks such as sewing, an integral part of domestic maintenance. Even into the 1920s and 30s, glory boxes

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Gojak and Iacono, 'Sydney Sailors Home,' 1993, p.9; Denis Gojak, personal communication.

were a necessity.\textsuperscript{70} Shoe repair was also carried out at home. Other domestic activities included writing, playing dominoes and smoking tobacco. Former residents of the Rocks remembered that for fun, 'we used to have a lot of euchre parties and dances up the church you see, in Harrington Street, because our school was up there, and the mums used to always...play euchre and the others, a couple of us used to go and dance downstairs.'\textsuperscript{71} Many people had pianos and 'nearly every night' and especially on weekends, would gather around it to sing. One former resident of Millers Point defined the different lifestyle of the turn of the century by these neighbourly patterns of recreation and relaxation: 'The Point's changed a terrible lot. One time mum herself and old Mrs Merriman who lived next door and old Mrs Sainty who lived across the road, they could sit here of a hot night, on their chairs, and have a good talk. You can't do that now. You can't.'\textsuperscript{72}

An elaborate brass belt buckle recovered from Samsons' Cottage points to a cricket enthusiast; it bears a raised scene showing a man dressed in a striped uniform, wearing a knotted necktie and a cap, and holding a cricket bat; he looks to his left, standing in front of a recumbent lion, above the words 'I AM HERE'. This kind of cricket buckle was introduced to England in 1854, worn with cotton canvas belts. George Parr's cricket team toured Australia in 1863/4, starting a fashion.\textsuperscript{73} This emblematic object brings together several elements (the uniformed figure, British lion, and the triumphant caption) which symbolise imperialism and British glory, values to which the owner perhaps subscribed, or at least acquiesced.

Imported crockery and glass at Samsons' Cottage was mostly British-made, but from the early nineteenth century Chinese export wares were used in all classes

\textsuperscript{70} Goodwin NSW Bicentennial Oral History Project, 1988, p.8.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p.31.
\textsuperscript{72} T.Fitzsimons, 'The Point's Changed a Terrible Lot.' Memories of the Rocks and Millers Point, Randwick Tafe Outreach, 1988, p.17.
\textsuperscript{73} K.Kayhurst to R.Dundas, Correspondence of the NSW Cricket Association, 1991.
Brass belt buckle, Samsons' Cottage. It shows a cricketer, standing in front of a reclining lion, captioned 'I AM HERE'. It probably commemorated an English cricket tour. Width, 5cm. Courtesy of the Sydney Cove Authority.
of Rocks households, including this one. At Lilyvale and 'Reynold's Cottage' for example, a wide range of blue-and-white export ware as well as more elaborate forms and decorative types were recovered, reflecting the enduring popularity of Chinese ceramics in the trail of *chinoiserie*, which had been strongest before the mid eighteenth century. From the 1850s, with the influx of Chinese immigrants associated with the goldrushes, a wider range of Chinese-made ceramics appears in the Rocks, as export ware is augmented by that made for use by the Chinese themselves. There was little overlap between these two classes, but given the versatility of the market and makers, presumably some 'domestic' pieces were sold by resourceful Chinese merchants to Europeans as well as Chinese. In addition, Chinese jar forms are found in European households especially from the 1850s, for example at the Lilyvale site, and this probably reflects the import of Chinese condiments (e.g., in 'ginger jars') for use by immigrants, and the subsequent popularity of the contents, the jar, or both, with Europeans. In 1896 for example, a woman described the 'mysterious hieroglyphics which daily confronted me on the tops of ginger jars and tea caddies', and of being presented with 'three jars of ginger, a caddy of tea, and two feather dusters' by a grateful Chinese vegetable seller. In the Rocks, they were a common gift, mediating between Chinese and their European friends or associates.

The 'symbolic valence', or hybrid character of Chinese ceramics and their western imitations has been seen as the 'coalescence of traditional Chinese art with

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74 See discussion in Appendix 1, Archaeological Method: 19th-20th century Chinese ceramics in the Rocks.
75 Lydon, Samsons Cottage, 1991; J.Lydon, *Archaeological Monitoring at Unwins Stores, 77-85 George Street, the Rocks, Sydney*, (unpublished) Sydney Cove Authority, 1991; and e.g., Wilson, 'Trench 13', 1989, who notes an increase of jar forms at the Lilyvale site, on Cumberland Street, from this time onwards, as well as other Chinese items such as coins.
78 *Gambling Commission*, 1891-2. This practice of course was one reason for the accusations of bribery of the police, see chapter 6 below.
the demands of occidental taste in a specific statement of either nationalist or individual identity. More specifically, I argue that the pattern of use by Europeans in the late nineteenth century, assimilating objects like the popular blue and white ceramics into their households, represents the persistence of a fascination with a particular, partial, image of the East, familiarised and yet emblematic of exoticism, like the Chinese hawker on the streets of the Rocks. Despite the threat that the Chinese were often seen to represent, certain forms were domesticated, transformed in particular ways into the familiar and appealing. These Chinese objects in nineteenth century Euro-Australian households may be seen as in one sense representing discursive statements within Orientalism, Edward Said's 'corporate institution for dealing with the Orient'. They make the strange familiar, creating an understanding of China and the Chinese as static, exotically feminine and mystically religious, within a conceptualisation of the Orient as a systematic and rational panorama. But as objects, these tangible 'statements' have a polysemous, mutable character, their meaning defined by particular, historical circumstances and so subject to change. Like other cultural forms, they could be manipulated according to need, forming part of larger cultural strategies of understanding and interaction.

Similarly, following the British invention and popularisation of transfer-printing on earthenware in the early nineteenth century, allowing elaborately decorated pottery to be mass-produced and widely owned, the enduringly popular 'willow pattern' appeared, copied from Chinese landscapes. It became the best-known of the many blue on white decorative schemes, due both to the

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diminishing China trade at the end of the eighteenth century, and to the new availability of English blue and white pottery.

What did it mean for a European to display a 14th century porcelain figurine of the Chinese goddess of mercy, Guanyin? In one, presumably wealthy, household on Cumberland Street, this collector's item stood. The Guanyin statue had been produced in blanc-de-chine from the seventeenth century, and was even more popular than the Buddha himself. She sits or stands, dressed in flowing gown and wearing precious jewels, sometimes holding a child, and occasionally wearing a cross as pendant. These traits often suggested Christian images to Westerners; in fact, some mistook them for Christian in origin, and they were termed 'Sancta Marias' in English shipping records. Mudge argues that they were used by Westerners as art objects or souvenirs rather than for 'religious purposes', but there is evidence for their deliberate deployment in just this way; in the last years of the nineteenth century a missionary travelling through China observed the 'marvellous resemblance' between the rites performed in a Buddhist monastery and 'the Romish mummeries called the Mass'. His account of each was equally scathing, confirming his 'conviction that Romanism is not so much Christianity degenerated towards Paganism, but rather Paganism only slightly Christianized,' but he clearly found the similarities astonishing. Among these resemblances, he noted the image 'Kwan-im, [which]

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82 Copeland claims that English 'blue and white probably achieved its popularity because it was so familiar as Chinese porcelain, and until the 1820s cobalt blue was the only successful underglaze colour.' Copeland, Blue and White, 1982, p.7.
83 Thorp, Lilyvale, 1994. This object is on display in the Sydney Cove Authority's Heritage Centre at 106 George Street.
84 Mudge, Chinese Export Porcelain, 1986.
85 She does however, illustrate an 'exception', a rare figurine which is 'clearly an attempt to imitate Mary and infant Jesus', Mudge, Chinese Export Porcelain, 1986, p.76, fig 113. It is also interesting to note that Guanyin 'was the Chinese form of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who by the Tang Dynasty had become a female goddess of mercy and bringer of children, identified with an ancient Chinese mother-goddess. Her milk, compassionately given to the human race, filled the ears of the rice plant' - that is, Guanyin had been appropriated by Chinese themselves. A.Christie, Chinese Mythology, Chancellor Press, London, 1983, pp.100-1.
is surprisingly like the Romish statues of the Virgin carrying the infant Jesus... [these are] statues of the Goddess of Mercy, the 'Hearer of Cries', called also the 'Holy Mother', and the 'Queen of Heaven', bearing the child in her arms... In a Romish chapel at Foochow there is a large white earthenware statue of Kwan-im used to represent the Virgin and Child. I fancied the priest seemed uncomfortable as we looked at the imposture. Guanyin's appropriation by the Catholic missionaries of Foochow suggests one possible understanding of her appearance in a nineteenth century Rocks household - that is, as signifying familiar Christian values. Again, like Chinese or Chinese-inspired ceramics, she may have been a statement within the discourse of Orientalism, creating a particular, familiar view of things Chinese. But a rigid conceptualisation of such hybrid objects overlooks their polysemous quality: the Guanyin statuette typifies the mutable, multiple quality of these cultural forms, characteristic of Chinese-European interaction, exploited by one side or another to achieve particular ends, and often simultaneously within the cultural schemes of both.

children

In the family life of the area children had their own roles to play. They 'had to carry wood for the fire and the copper... We had to go and gather the wood down the wharves and carry it right up on our own in a wheelbarrow dad made. Everybody had a wheelbarrow in those days, a little woodbox with wheels on it.' They would collect the wooden blocks paving the roads whenever they could 'on one occasion I can remember, from the bottom of George Street right down to the end of Argyle Place, they dug up all the blocks and everybody got out, and they wouldn't let the kids take them in those days, anyway we all pinched the blocks and filled our yards'. They swarmed through the streets, accumulating their own memories and landmarks. Nancy Masters remembered catching the horse bus to church at the railway and going

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Looking north along Playfair Street, c.1901. Tyrrell Collection, Courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum.
to the pictures on a Saturday: 'Used to be called the New York Theatre - just where the Ox on the Rocks [George Street] is now...Truppence to get in on a Saturday... Charlie Chaplin I think it was..." They did not always venture beyond their own domain - however defined. Catherine Ronan recalled how 'As a child I didn't know anything of Miller’s Point. I only knew the Rocks from Dawes Point up the Flagstaff and around that area almost in a circle', and Elsie Solomon told how 'We were never allowed down Millers Point when we were children...There was a bridge going across Princes Street and we used to climb up and look down, you know, and that was Millers Point. That was like another domain to us.' They would walk up the hill, along Essex Street, to attend the local schools - St Patrick's, on Church Hill, Fort Street model school and Fort Street High School, and the little St Brigid's for five and six year olds. In their free time they would build go-carts, which they raced dangerously down the Rocks' steep streets: Argyle Street and the lane near Coroner's Court. They played with a range of toys; at Samsons Cottage a cache of marbles was found secreted in the fireplace, for example - a safe hiding-place.

As the twentieth century began, the changes it brought affected the Rocks too, certain events surviving as landmarks in residents' memories: conscription, world war 1, the General Strike of 1917, the Depression of the 1920s and the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Many were against conscription and Hallinan remembered the many Irish in the area being particularly opposed to it. During world war 1, locals knew when a shipload of soldiers was to depart: they would come down to Dalgety’s Wharf near midnight to be 'shanghaid away'. Asked about the impact of the war on their lives, one former resident said 'We just had to suffer the same as everyone else'. At the end of the war,

86 Gowanlock, 'People of the Rocks,' c.1975.
87 Fitzsimons, 'The Point's Changed a Terrible Lot.', 1988, p.iii.
89 Goodwin, ibid., p.17.
some were taken on a tour of the Queen Mary in the harbour, 'But when it was over we all went up to Martin Place and danced in the street with all those brave young kids who had come home.'

Many, like James Hallinan (born in 1895 in the Rocks), had bitter memories of the railway strike of 1917, which became the General Strike. At a time of depression, country-wide recruitment undermined their solidarity. Volunteers camped at the Dawes Point Battery, and 'there was a great deal of resentment in the community'. Those on strike all 'wore white ties and they were all referred to as “there's a lily white, there's a lily white” because those that come out on strike knew that he was a railway man same as themselves'. 'Practically the whole of the Rocks area, noone was working and you would get coupons...' for essentials such as meat, flour and butter.' The strong ties between working men's families persisted, as did their staunch unionism: 'You daren't be a scab on Millers Point.' In the Depression of the 1920s, 'somehow we looked after one another. A rabbit stew or some hot soup...' The men queued at Floods Wharf for their fortnightly dole tickets: 5/- for groceries and 2/- for meat supplies. They collected plain flour from the benevolent society, and fished in the harbour to supplement the family diet. 'Often he'd go down the Hungry Mile trying to find a job on the wharves, or looking for a jump job... that's a standby job you get if a seaman doesn't turn up for work. Sometimes he was paid five or ten shillings for doing standby work.'

The construction of the bridge represented another major intervention, further splintering the community, dividing the Rocks from Millers Point. There was a car punt at Dawes Point until the Sydney Harbour Bridge was built, a major

95 Beckhouse, *ibid.*, p.17.
96 Fitzsimons, 'The Point's Changed a Terrible Lot.', 1988, p.51.
Rear view of houses on Gloucester Walk, looking south-west from the level of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, under construction. Now 'Foundation Park.' Sydney Cove Authority, 'source unknown.'
Residents recalled that 'Nan Fleming used to serve meals to the bridge labourers. She put up a three course meal for a shilling, and that included a roast dinner and pudding. If the fellows were short of cash they were allowed to tick it up until the end of the week.' At the bridge opening, 'all the mob went down there to have a look. We stood on old fruit cases to get a bit of a view. Some of the younger kids got it for being late home that day.'

Despite the intentions of the middle classes to bring it into line, the nineteenth century Rocks was heterogenous and independent, housing the city's alien Chinese, poor and 'immoral'. But contra the distancing rhetoric of urban 'improvement' and bohemian picturesqueness, it is clear that internal systems of meaning and productivity were created and enacted by its working class and otherwise insubordinate inhabitants, grounded in their daily experience of the place. The Rocks retained elements of its close-knit character and sense of distinctive community well into the twentieth century. The detailed form of an urban, European, working-class culture was shaped by features of urbanisation such as a movement of the middle classes out to the suburbs and a deteriorating physical environment, offset by the ability to construct 'comfortable' domestic surroundings. From outside, it was affected by municipal 'improvement' programs; from within, patterns of interaction with the Rocks' distinctive landscape, especially the sea, evolved. A concern with one's place in the social matrix of class, gender and race, negotiated both on the street and in the domestic sphere, was expressed in forms distinctive to the place. Despite representation as male and maritime, the archaeological evidence for life in the Rocks reveals its domestic character, shaped largely by women who were forbidden the streets. It shows a concern for respectability and order which

98 Bonnette, in Gowanlock, 'People of the Rocks,' c.1975,
overcame problems of poor sanitation and a deteriorating environment. It also shows the existence of other ways of life: curiosities of all kinds mingled in the Rocks against a backdrop of white Australian culture, as the material world was handled in articulations of identity and meaning.
Chinese hawker, c.1890, the Rocks. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales. ONCY 47'23.
Chapter 4. Inside the Chinese Community

A memento of the old days of enforced labour may be seen in the immense cutting dignified with the exalted title of "Argyle", and over which three bridges have been thrown connecting "the Rocks". Now we are in the midst of the cheapest of cheap goods shops- all full of attraction for salt-water Jack. Here he can be fitted out at a moment's notice, change his hardly-earned money for "slops" and sea-togs, and then go to sea again.... A great portion of this district is occupied by Chinese, who pursue their different avocations with considerable profit. A number import largely, and drive a brisk trade with European merchants and their own countrymen; these have a high name for probity in commercial circles. Others are storekeepers, carpenters and furniture-brokers, druggists, fancy-goods sellers, and vendors of curios and nick-nackery. With the exception of some sixteen Christians they all follow the religion of Confucius, and have temples in little back rooms to the honour of "Joss". Opium-smoking is common, but not carried to such excess as in other colonies. The number here located is about 800, one-third of whom have found favour among the daughters of strangers. Chinese do not acquire landed property, and are generally content to occupy the buildings abandoned by Europeans; once in possession, they are secure against intrusion.


Here I focus on the second fragment of my ethnographic collage: the Chinese community itself between 1890 and 1930. I examine the specialised and important role it played in the Rocks and within trade networks, its organisation, and its creation of identity through the display and manipulation of tangible symbols such as food, medicine, and ritual. This process was shaped by the nature of its interaction with the 'host' European community, as traditional forms were reworked, to be appropriated by, made meaningful for Europeans too. Different aspects of Chinese culture and identity assumed fresh meaning, subjected to a foreign gaze in a foreign place.

The fluidity of Chinese identity noted earlier is especially evident for Guangdong province, where during the Qing dynasty its several major ethnic groups actively sought identification with Han culture through acquiring the cultural symbols of the north in strategies of upward mobility. Claiming to share the cultural ancestry of the imperial centre, they created myths and
regional historiographies, compiled genealogies and built ornate ancestral halls
with literati pretensions. Local classification according to family and clan, rather
than a larger sense of nation, had always constituted subjectivity for the
'Chinese'; lineage membership created the fundamental social matrix of
protection, status and identity.

However, the importance of Chinese state discourse in constructing 'Chinese'
identity, had important implications for those who chose to leave, especially
the merchant class. The Ming dynasty ban on contact with the outside world
was gradually relaxed, until between 1895 (China's defeat by Japan) and 1912, a
dramatic shift in attitude had occurred. Gungwu argues for a related
improvement in the role of merchants (shang) in Chinese society, a group
traditionally on its lowest rung, and that this, combined with their wealth and
power, the flexibility they needed to overcome traditional Chinese
disparagement, and the entrepreneurial nature of their 'merchant culture',
developed their economic skills, strengthening their identity and status both at
home and abroad. These shifts were reflected in the changing meanings and use
of the term hua ch'iao, or 'sojourners', which came into use in the late nineteenth
century with connotations of state approval and concern. The role of overseas

2 To the extent that Chun argues that state discourse alone constituted 'Chineseness': A.Chun,
'Fuck Chineseness: on the ambiguities of ethnicity as culture as identity', Boundary 23(2), 1996,
manuscript.
3 W.Gungwu, 'The origins of hua ch'iao,' in Community and Nation. China, Southeast Asia and
Australia, Asian Studies Association of Australia, Southeast Asia Publications Series No. 23, 1992,
4 He notes too, the bias of sources produced by the literati who looked down on the merchant
class, e.g., W.Gungwu, 'Australia and the Four Dragons', Community and Nation. China, Southeast
Asia and Australia, Asian Studies Association of Australia, Southeast Asia Publications Series No.
23, 1992, pp.305-9; W.Gungwu, 'The Culture of Chinese Merchants', China and the Chinese
5 W.Gungwu, 'Southeast Asian Huaqiao in Chinese History-Writing,' in W.Gungwu, China and
Chinese, especially those of southeast Asia, became crucial in supporting reform and revolutionary activity in China.\(^6\)

Hence *hua-ch'iao* identity was complex: the strength of ties with China was offset by economic and political circumstances such as the need to succeed in a foreign society, antagonism felt for its traditional class enemy, the Chinese elite, and from 1895, a commitment to overthrow of the Manchu regime.\(^7\) Salient features of Chinese merchant 'culture' included risk-taking, the development of business organisations such as native-place organisations, managed like an extended family, and comprehensive systems of welfare. Philanthropy was developed as a social strategy, used to acquire status; vertical mobility was common, and was determined by wealth.\(^8\) These practices were deployed in overseas communities, where freedom from mandarin control and a new elite status allowed merchants to grow and succeed.\(^9\) Contact with other cultures transformed a traditional identity grounded in place and family into a stronger Chinese sensibility.\(^10\) Some have argued that in overseas communities, kinship and dialect ties became even stronger than in China.\(^11\) In addition, the experience of life in a new place altered attitudes in different, complex ways. The Chinese in Sydney developed subtle and distinctive strategies to achieve their goals, quietly subverting European


strictures, developing their own, autonomous networks independent of European institutions, and manipulating traditional Chinese cultural forms.

In NSW, the arrival of Chinese hua ch’iao began in the 1850s with the goldrushes; by 1891 it had reached a peak, with the male population numbering 13,048. Restrictive legislation from the late 1880s however saw departures far exceeding arrivals, so that by 1901 the total had dropped to 10,222. Of this population, new arrivals and ex-diggers gradually settled in Sydney, with more than a quarter living there by 1891. Their experience in the city, as on the gold-fields, was to a great extent configured by white hostility, as well as by internal forces. As documented by a substantial body of historiography, white endeavours to control and exclude the Chinese had been continual since their arrival in Australia, and some argue that racism was an inherent part of the Anglo Australian world view, sustained by 19th century anthropological ‘knowledge’, and analogous to attitudes towards Aborigines. The Chinese were despised, like Aborigines, as racially inferior, but because of their numbers and competition, were hated and feared.

12 In 1861, the total Chinese population in NSW had been 12,988, decreasing to 7,220 in 1871 following restrictive legislation. Choi argues that the respective increase in NSW’ population, and decrease in Victoria’s is due to overseas migration rather than overland intercolonial activity, stressing the population’s transience. C.Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, Sydney University Press, 1975, pp.22-4 (table 2.1, Chinese in Australia, by colonies, 1861-1901).


By the end of the nineteenth century, racism was an integral part of the labour movement, caused by a perception of economic threat, and manifested in ways contingent upon local conditions.\textsuperscript{16} The great divide between permanent and temporary labour, together with a changing demographic structure, created a situation which 'readily accommodated discrimination on the basis of race, gender and ethnicity'.\textsuperscript{17} Events such as the 1878 Seamen's Strike, an early victory for the unions, fostered anti-Chinese agitation in the late 1870s, and marked the weakening of employers' interest in the Chinese as a source of cheap labour, against a Sydney background of Chinese competition in the furniture industry, a discrete inner city community, and an increasing rate of immigration. Arguments against the Chinese included economic competition, the fact that they remained a distinct social group rather than assimilating into the community, their 'immorality', and the dangers of interracial mixing.\textsuperscript{18} The successful anti-immigration union campaigns of the 1880s-90s contributed to labour's political development as one of the first causes behind which working class political organisation united. The labour movement's response to non-British immigration at the turn of the century has been seen as particularly important in the development towards federation and in shaping national identity. In addition to widespread anti-immigration feeling, it developed a momentum of its own within the labour movement, and became, in the White Australia Policy, the lynch-pin of the new federal Australian Labor Party in 1901.\textsuperscript{19} Opposition to competition from Chinese cabinet-makers was a chief

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{17} J.Lee and C.Fahey, 'A Boom for Whom? Some Developments in the Australian Labour Market, 1870-1891,' \textit{Labour History}, 50, 1986, p.27.
\end{itemize}
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source of popular hostility in the early nineties in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. In Sydney the furniture trade union continued its anti-Chinese activities throughout the decade. In 1892 stamping of Chinese furniture was included as a plank of the newly-formed Labor Party platform.\(^20\)

Some stress constructions of race based on an evolutionary hierarchy, loosely grounded in Social Darwinism, as being especially important in the later nineteenth century, providing a semi-scientific rationale for the rejection of non-whites.\(^21\) Overt hostility was a strong element of the campaign against Chinese immigration, exemplified by William Lane and the *Bulletin*, and giving the movement a broad base where solely economic arguments could not. The 1890s inherited the legislative measures of the 1888 Second Colonial Conference: the imposition by NSW and Victoria of *Chinese Immigration Restriction Acts*, with entrance taxes of 10 pounds, and increased tonnage limits of 100 tons per Chinese. Choi notes, however, that the high rate of departure from 1881 was due not simply to white hostility but also to Chinese family-lineage pressure and the sojourning attitude.\(^22\) By the early twentieth century, due both to the hostility evinced by the commission as well as to their own shifting needs, the numbers of those who stayed in the Rocks had dwindled, and the community centred on the Belmore Markets. A nucleus remained in this key location, however, creating a focus of support and familiarity.\(^23\) In 1901 the Chinese occupied tightly-defined areas in the Rocks, between George, Argyle, Cambridge and

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\(^{21}\) e.g., Cronin, *Colonial Casualties*, 1982. Fabianism was another political and social doctrine which was imbued with racial superiority, although sustaining radicals in their conviction that a progressive will could eliminate misery and poverty. P.Grimshaw, M.Lake, A.McGrath and M.Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, McPhee Gribble, 1994, p.180.


"the immense cutting dignified with the exalted title of "Argyle"" Argyle Street looking west, c.1900. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales, ML f981.1/N, no.4.
Essex Streets, where 200 people occupied 58 dwellings. The Chinese were the most segregated community in Sydney at this time.\textsuperscript{24} In March 1893 Mr Seymour, Inspector of Nuisances reported that there was a total of 295 Chinese premises in the city, 1168 Chinese were employed, and there were 1628 sleeping premises, or eight Chinese to each dwelling.\textsuperscript{25}

The Chinese in George Street transformed the European spaces they occupied, if relatively briefly. The Victorian architecture of the Rocks was manipulated for Chinese purposes: at extant tenements such as Unwin's Stores, 77-85 George Street, the basements were closed in and outbuildings constructed in rear yards to provide more space, with access via ladders. They strengthened the physical boundaries around these refuges: Robert Nolan describes the places 'built for Chinese gambling-dens' along George Street. These had 'a door here and a door there', providing multiple exits from the gambling-houses which were impossible for the police to inspect.\textsuperscript{26} The Chinese ensured their physical autonomy through the manipulation of their environment, as far as possible enclosing and barricading themselves within their rented properties, despite the overcrowding this required. This process of defending themselves against attempts of hostile white society to expose them to view, survey and control their lives, was echoed in other aspects of the urban lifestyle they established, strategically combined with more interactive modes. It was commonly stated by the Chinese themselves, and by others, that they catered almost exclusively to their own countrymen;\textsuperscript{27} Way Shong, the doctor, for example, administered to

\textsuperscript{24} Containing 62\% of the Chinese population, compared with 13\% of the population as a whole: C.Yong, \textit{The New Gold Mountain}. Raphael Arts, Richmond, South Australia, 1977, p.3; The second urban enclave was defined by Goulburn, Brisbane, Campbell and George Streets, where 1300 Chinese lived in 336 houses. The market-gardening community of course, lived further out, in Alexandria, Waterloo, Botany, Rockdale and Willoughby. P.Curson and K.McCracken, \textit{Plague in Sydney. The Anatomy of an Epidemic}, NSW University Press, 1989, table 4.7: Index of segregation for selected groups, Sydney Metropolis 1901.

\textsuperscript{25} 24 March, 1893, \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Gambling Commission}, 1891-2, p.34.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ibid.}, e.g., Sam Tin p.115; Thomas Playfair p.122.
Looking north past Unwins Stores, 77-85 George Street, and the Samsons' Cottage block, at 75-75 1/2 George Street, 1996. The Kendall Lane frontage was the cottage site. Photograph the author.
Bland facades such as the 'Hong Chong Laundry,' at the corner of Harrington, Cambridge and Essex Streets, concealed private Chinese refuges. Courtesy of the glass slide collection, Royal Australian Historical Society, 4512.
the Chinese alone, and probably due to the restrictions on Chinese practicing in Australia describes himself as 'a kind of amateur doctor'.

divisions within the Chinese population: 'classes'

Broad patterns of life and change in the Rocks affected the Chinese community, but they had a strong rhythm of their own. What was this 'community'? Was it as cohesive as the word suggests? The Chinese population in Sydney could be divided into several 'classes', each with its distinctive ways of life.

Class divisions related to wealth as well as to status within the Confucian social order. In 1891 the Chinese of Sydney were classified by white investigators for the Royal Commission into Chinese Gambling and Immorality as merchants, storekeepers, cabinet-makers, market-gardeners, hawkers, and gamblers. The merchants and store-keepers were 'well-conducted residents. They trade principally with their own people whom they supply with tea, rice, opium, and the more distinctly national commodities of their own race, and in their own lives they realise to a very large extent the European idea of comfort'. This approving assessment did not extend to the cabinet-makers, who competed with European craftsmen. There were about 400 around Sydney, although their numbers were decreasing 'with the stoppage of Chinese immigration and the lapsing of indentures,' and their income and conditions had improved so that they were 'not greatly below the local European standard for the same class of work. In other words, whilst the average European wage is something like two pounds 10s. per week, the Chinamen receive from 20s., to 30s. per week, in addition to board and lodgings'. Similarly, the market gardeners were described as 'masters of the situation'. Having formed syndicates for leasing and cultivating land, shareholders often made fifty or sixty pounds per year in profits, carting

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29 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, pp.27, 119.
vegetables to market within six months of acquiring the land, due to their 'unremitting toil'.

Conflicts and difference within the Chinese population stemmed, for example, from native place. In 1891, Yuen Tah, a witness to the Royal Commission, stated that seven Chinese communities were represented in Sydney. Other divisions were based on socio-economic, clan, or moral grounds. Some Chinese witnesses to the 1891 enquiry said they were afraid to give evidence because of possible reprisals from other Chinese. Some, such as successful merchant Way Kee, who dealt 'about equally' with European and Chinese, and yet who played an active and leading role in his community, were questioned closely on this point. Asked 'Are you afraid of of your own countrymen injuring you if you express your opinion?' He replied, 'Yes; there are too many poor people here of my nation. Then, 'what class of Chinamen are those we have in this colony; are they of the lower class of Chinese, as a rule?'; and he replied, 'They are nearly all farmers and labourers. There are some few good.' And again, 'There are grades or classes of people in China the same as everywhere else; -to what class do the majority of the Chinese here belong to - to the lower, middle, or higher class?' He answered, hinting at the possibilities offered by a new place, 'What I would call the lower class in China are the labourers and farmers. If, when they come here they acquire bad habits, I would call them the lower class here then.' The poorer classes of Chinese were as undesirable to the respectable, wealthy merchants, as they were to European society generally. Way Kee elaborated (through an interpreter) : 'it is this way: The greater number of them here are poor people, who have no money at all, and who would be very glad of an opportunity of killing him if he gave evidence against them.' Asked 'Would you like to see a change in law to send the worst of your people away to their own country?', he responds 'Oh yes; that would be good.'

30 Ibid., p.28.
31 Ibid., p.119.
32 Ibid., p.57.
Certain practices were clearly felt, especially by its upper stratum, to affect the standing of the Chinese community in general, and opposition was motivated by 'moral' and financial concerns. Arguments were framed in terms springing from established Chinese views, but engaging with European discourse as well, for example in the campaign conducted by 'elite' Chinese against the use of opium by their countrymen. In September 1906 a petition was presented to the Legislative Assembly in support of a bill for the suppression of lotteries, signed by five Chinese merchants (Ah Fat, Yung Lee, Tung Foo, Sam See and On Cheong), stating that 'the pernicious effect of Chinese lotteries is being seriously felt in the Chinese community of N.S.W.', and that its suppression would 'have the effect of improving the moral tone of the Chinese community' The signatories wrote 'on behalf of the moral Chinese of Sydney and Alexandria'.

Personal antagonism between different parts of the extended clan network could also develop after arrival in Sydney, through a failure to fulfill expectations of reciprocity, or through the arrogance which could accompany such fulfillment. Even more personal conflicts sometimes drew the attention of the white community; Thomas Nock, of Nock and Kirby's Ironmongers, wrote several letters to the police regarding 'scuffles' which he claimed had disturbed the peace of George Street. Nock was a fervent anti-Chinese campaigner, but while the police concluded that his accusations were 'wholly unfounded and intended to mislead', they did note other incidents: for example, when Ah Sung's cooking was insulted by boarder Lee Sow, he gave him a bloody nose. Lee Sow, making the most of his injury, 'smeared his face with the blood and refused

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33 R.Travers, *Australian Mandarin. The life and times of Quong Tart*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1981, pp.103-118. Representatives of the Chinese community such as Quong Tart and Young Wai organised anti-opium meetings, giving public speeches, for example with Miss Jessie Ackerman of the W.C.T.U. *Official report of Anti-Opium demonstration held at the Congregational Church, Pitt Street, Sydney, on Thursday, April 5th, 1894*, T.J.Houghton & Co., Sydney, 1894.
34 LATP 1906/446, Petition to Hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly, 25 September, 1906.
to have it washed off. Other divisions were more closely tied to European society, such as gambling, which I discuss below.

the merchants' role

Within the Chinese community, merchants represented the uppermost stratum, unlike the lowly position they held in China. Their wealth was effectively deployed to acquire the symbols of elite lifestyle, first in China and then in Sydney. In Chinese eyes, economic and social standing were closely tied to one's ability to adhere to ritual 'as a matter of both Confucian responsibility and public prestige'. I have focused on this elite class, first, because it is better represented in both documentary and material records, and second, because it was a dominant and significant element in the organisation of the Rocks community, whose influence extended far beyond the locality.

Some features of traditional Chinese merchant 'culture' persist; others are reformulated. In the operation of the Rocks' Chinese community, several underlying traditions shaped Chinese life, such as the set of practices colloquially termed guanxi. This system of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence manufactured obligation and indebtedness through the exchange of gifts, favors and banquets, serving to meet the needs and desires of everyday life. Guanxixue did not organise the dominant discourses of Chinese society, nor its major institutions, such as families or schools; its significance lay in its pervasiveness - used for example to obtain goods in short supply, of better quality, or at lower prices, to gain employment or housing, or to promote

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human nature. Though the spiritual element is almost entirely absent from their teaching, they have lifted people as far as mere morality can do. We do not mean to assert that the generality of the Chinese made a direct effort to live up to the standard of original goodness stated in the above passage by Mencius; b

only that missionaries and others who know the intimately are often impressed with the fact that

political advancement. Many types of guanxi existed in Chinese political and social life, most commonly based on lineage (qinshu guanxi), in-law ties (yinqin guanxi), family friendships (shiyi guanxi), shared home area (tongxiang guanxi), educational ties (shisheng guanxi) and bureaucratic linkages (liaoshu guanxi or tongliao guanxi). It was organised around several key concepts in Chinese culture: kinship and locality ties, renqing, li, and bao.

Kinship was also a dominant element in the thought and basic organisational framework of late imperial China, and manifested itself in various other areas of social life. The Chinese merchants of George Street were nodes in a wide-cast net of business and trade, kinship, fictive kinship, native-place and neighbourhood ties, patterned on Chinese family structure. The family was the primary unit of trade; business organisations were managed like extended families. Guanxi was also rooted in traditional Chinese personal and fictive kinship relations, as well as the Confucian values of filial piety, brotherhood, loyalty and trust, all of which placed great importance on gift relations as a way of cementing relationships of mutual aid and obligation.

It was also embedded in renqing, the 'formulation of human relations as an endless flow of interpersonal exchanges and reciprocal commitments.' Renqing was an older discourse of human feelings - the natural human emotions involved in family relationships, and in friendship. These feelings were the basis of 'ritual' or li - the proper and ethical conduct of social relationships and exchange, that constituted the social order. In ritual, such as ancestral sacrifices and funerals, gifts or things played a central role. Exchange behaviour, such as throwing banquets and

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39 Yang, Gifts, Favors and Banquets, 1994, pp.91-100.
44 Ibid., p.67.
giving gifts, was therefore laden with the symbolism of social solidarity, concretising and nurturing social relationships. Another important feature of renqing relationships was the notion of bao - reciprocity, obligation, and indebtedness in human relations, integral to the Confucian and Mencian tradition of 'personalised ethics', based on relative status (high and low, near and far, young and old, inside and outside). With wealth and status went responsibilities; loss of wealth and a failed business was equated with a loss of moral standing. The phrase 'going into crooked ways' expressed this double, financial and moral, character. When Way Shong, treasurer of a native place association, became insolvent around 1890, he had to give back the books. As was said of Way Kee's relationship with his lower class countrymen, who were in trouble for gambling, if he 'did not go and bail them out, being a leading man, it would not look well'. Guanxi's instrumental aspect, often involving exchange relations in which ethics did not play a part, distinguished it from renqing, and the cynical description of guanxi as 'thick and black learning' alludes to this sometimes morally ambiguous aspect of guanxi.

Guanxi has been seen in modern China as a creative deployment of a 'counter-ethics' which makes room for the personal and the private in a public sphere monopolised by the state. In late imperial China, it provided comfort and security within the impersonal bureaucracy of government, its informal organisation designed to resist rigidity, authority and the law. Similarly, in turn-of-the-century Sydney, guanxi was manipulated by merchants within a largely repressive 'host' society to 'beat the system', both within the Chinese community, and in its dealings with Europeans. The use of guanxi and other

46 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.52.  
47 Yang, Gifts, Favors and Banquets, 1994, p.123.  
49 Ibid.  
50 Smith, China's Cultural Heritage, 1995; Yang, Gifts, Favors and Banquets, 1994, p.55.
Chinese traditions and material culture formed part of strategies through which the Chinese in the Rocks acted upon and reformulated Chinese and European cultural practices.

The Chinese businesses of George Street were multi-purpose depots, located at the nexus between Sydney's main shipping centre, Sydney Cove, and the land transport artery of George Street. They were ostensibly business enterprises - in 1890 listed as storekeepers, importers, tea merchants, boardinghouses, saloonkeepers and cabinetmakers. Those who remained in the area over the next few decades tended to be the merchants - the importers and shipping providores. But they were also ideally placed to play an essential role within Chinese-Australian society - to house newly arrived countrymen, providing board and lodgings, as well as information, assistance, and protection. They acted as conduits, channelling job-seekers out to the market gardens of Belmore and Alexandria, or further inland to country towns. They lodged those Chinese preparing to leave Sydney, sponsoring their business and personal affairs, such as applications for Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDTs).

The George Street merchants were essential stations in a web extending inland to country towns and suburbs, and overseas to China, Hong Kong and other 'Trading Stations'. They mustered clerkly skills to conduct the necessary bureaucratic procedures and assembled support in the form of letters of recommendation. For example, gardeners Ah Choy and Ah Ben of Willoughby, Joe Sing of Botany and Fong Yon of Double Bay all applied for CEDTs in April 1903, on letterhead of the firm of On Yik and Lee, 225 George Street, where they were lodging. The recommendations are local - that is, solicited from the

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51 Sands Sydney and NSW Directory, 1890.
52 And see Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.67; during the gold rushes one house fitted out 700 Chinese.
53 Even under the Commonwealth Restriction Immigration Act of 1901, the rights of domicile of non-European immigrants were acknowledged, allowing for exemption from the Dictation Test. While requirements were tightened in December 1905, those who held valid re-entry permits could still enter the country. Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, 1975, pp.38-40.
White officials seized the opportunity to scrutinise 'Chinese sleeping quarters,' 230 George Street, during the cleansing operations, in 1901. The bunks, benches, and very public quality of the space revealed might strike the modern viewer, but such images were manipulated by contemporary whites within the discourse of urban improvement. Courtesy of the State Archives Office of New South Wales. SAO COD 123 7447.
They would also act as bankers, looking after the savings of gardeners and hawkers. Merchant Way Kee's grandson Ah Wah described in 1891 how 'on account of seeing that my grandfather was in such a large way of business, and was trusted, these men would take their money to him to keep for them... each one would come individually by himself, and leave the money there'. Way Kee also acted as treasurer for the Koon Yee Tong, a society which shipped 'dead men's bones' back to China. They lent money to each other - for example, in 1891 Way Kee had lent to other merchants such as We Sang Loong and On Yik Lee. These systems were consistent over the years.

The George Street merchants' familial role was also recognised and exploited by European officials. In April 1904, for example, Charlie How from Emmaville applied for a CEDT and was sponsored by the companies of On Chong and Co., and by On Yik and Lee, and Customs Inspector Donohoe endorses it, 'based on his enquiries to the George Street firms'. It is in this guise that Hong On Jang's firm first appeared, later represented by archaeological evidence. In 1910 the Eastern and Australian Steamship Co Ltd requested permission to bring ashore two Chinese for transshipment from New Zealand, to lodge with him while awaiting departure of a steamer for Hong Kong. Hong On Jang's household is discussed in detail below.

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54 April 1903, series SP 42/1, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, Box 2, 1903/2583-1903/10701.
55 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, pp.49-51.
56 Application for CEDT by Charlie How of Emmaville, 11 April 1904, annotated by Inspector Donohoe, SP 42/1, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, Box 2, 1903/2583-1903/10701.
57 And again in 1911, Norddeutscher Lloyd, p.p. Lohmann and Co, General Agents, request permission to lodge six Chinese en route to Tahiti at 'the boarding house of Hong On Jang, Harrington Street'; in March 1911 Gibbs Bright and Co request permission 13 Chinese to stay at Hong On Jang's, Harrington Street. SP 42/1, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, Box 13, 1911.
The S.S. Courtfield incident

As protectors and sponsors - surrogate families - these merchants developed guanxi networks which functioned independently of European systems, subverting regulations which sought to control and restrict them. For example, on the day before Christmas, 1908, the Collector of Customs in Sydney sent a telegram to the Melbourne Head office, informing it that he and his men had discovered eight stowaways on the S.S. Courtfield, which had just arrived in Sydney Harbour from Hong Kong. Interrogation by a Chinese interpreter of the men, all from rural villages in southern China, revealed how they had made a deal with a stranger in Praya Road, Hong Kong, to be brought into Australia. Ah Hing, Ah Wai and Ah Yum stated that, 'Kau ah Kow, the cook, brought them on board about midnight, the night before the ship sailed. They were put in the rice store room in the after part of the ship, were never let out and only received one meal about midnight each week, which sometimes consisted only of rice soup.' While the men claimed not to know who was meeting them in Australia, probably to protect their contacts, letters were discovered on board which, translated, were found to be addressed to Hong On Jang, storekeeper, of George Street, who was to house them until they could be sent to their relatives further inland. In this emergency, several other merchants rallied in support, contributing to a bond of 1100 pounds, guaranteeing the return of the stowaways on the next ship leaving for China. Guanxi networks extended into Australia through the pivotal George Street merchants.

trade networks

The merchants of George Street also played a key role in regional trading networks. Within the extended family-style structure, trusted representatives or

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58 File on S.S. Courtfield incident, 24 December 1908, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs SP 42/1, Box 9, 1909/6-1909/4674.
TRANSLATION OF LETTERS DISCOVERED ON S.S. "COURTFIELD" ON SEARCH AT SYDNEY FOR STOWAWAYS.

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(1) Envelope - Addressed to Woo Ging c/o Hoong On Jang, Storekeeper Sydney by Lew on board steamer.

Letter - To Ah Ging,

Sir,

The steamer Courtfield with a yellow funnel and 2 red bands from HongKong is berthed at the Large Bridge. The head fireman Lew Lim requests you to come down immediately at noon in reference to a matter of yours.

2nd day 12th month arrival

Lew Lim (Signed)

(2) Envelope - Important letter to be delivered to Woo Ging c/o Hoong On Jang, Storekeeper, Sydney.

From Hop Chung Loong,

(Stamp)

Praya HongKong.

Letter - Am sending per Lew Lim 2 packages of goods and request you to keep same for a day or two.

Wire Chun Leong Qun of Melbourne and when he arrives kindly hand over to him.

I have written to him to refund you any expenses incurred. Thanks very much for your trouble.

Again request you to wire Chun Leong Qun c/o New Lee Melbourne to come over and take delivery.

To Woo Ging.

Toy Lim (Signed)

(red seal) Hop Chung Loong

Praya HongKong.

'Translation of Letters Discovered on S.S. "Courtfield" on Search at Sydney for Stowaways,' Memorandum from Revenue Detective Inspector Donohoe, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 8, 1909/6 - 1909/4674.
kin assumed the important role of \textit{caigouyuan} (industrial supply-agents), or 'intermediary-guarantors'. Traditionally, according to \textit{guanxi}, contact between organisations was maintained through these individuals, carried out transactions on a personal basis.\textsuperscript{59} Two merchants entering into a contract did so through an intermediary of good reputation who assumed personal responsibility for ensuring that each side kept their word.\textsuperscript{60} In the Rocks, the respected firm of On Chong and Co, at 223 George Street, constructed such a system. They established a 'Trading Station' at the Gilbert Islands, building a shipping enterprise which maintained links to China, Hong Kong, Australian nodes such as Townsville, and regional centres such as the Gilbert Islands, as well as to the transport routes further into the city and inland to country towns. Some, such as Ah Moon, married Gilbert Islanders, cementing trading links with family connections.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{Caigouyuan} were created according to local need. They became literate, a skill valued by upwardly mobile Chinese merchants.\textsuperscript{62} For example, in early January 1903, Pang Fong Chong, son of the lately deceased principal in the firm, Uh Chong, applied for a CEDT to allow him to go to the Gilbert Islands for twelve months on business. He had been 'learning for commercial' at Mr Whyte's School in Stanley Street for 16 months. He had been born in China in 1875, had arrived in Australia in 1900, and lived on the business premises in George Street.

Pang Fong Chong's application also reveals the firm's Australian success: he lists his share of his father's extensive estate, accumulated over thirty years of


\textsuperscript{60} Yang, \textit{Gifts, Favors and Banquets}, 1994, p.152.

\textsuperscript{61} Quan Lee to Collector of Customs, 6 December 1902, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1390 - 1903/2583.

residence in New South Wales, including property in George Street, Fairfield, Young, Coonamble, Parkes and in Queensland, worth 3000 pounds. This was the class of Chinese in Australia whom Europeans considered acceptable - Customs official Donohoe commented that the firm was 'one of the oldest and most respected Chinese firms in the state', 'very respectable Chinese'. It owned a barque, the "Loongard", and employed other 'island traders', such as Yung Fat and Chung Fook, the ship's supercargo for five years.63

links
The Chinese were connected to each other by ties based in the lineage system of clan and native place. Bonds were maintained by giving and sharing. Where no actual kin relationship existed, fictive kinship ties were created by employing kinship addresses, extensions which brought people outside the family group such as neighbours, friends, and business associates, into the circle of familiar and trusted relationships.64 They assiduously maintained lineage and home ties, establishing businesses together, sharing premises or hosting each other, willing property to each other and sponsoring each other's children. Their position in local, regional and international trade and transport routes meant that the merchants of George Street were especially well-placed to play this role.

63 Yung Fat and Chung Fook, On Chong and Co., 223 George Street to Collector of Customs, 19 January, 1903, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1903/2582; and there are other examples: in August 1905 four Chinese 'island traders' arrived from the Gilbert Islands, staying at On Chong and Co's for a month, until a ship arrived which could take them away (See Hing et al to Collector of Customs, 2 August 1905, SP 42/1, Box 4, 1905/94-1905/2168). Again, but going the other way, Chinese from Hong Kong en route to the Gilbert Islands stayed at On Chong's in August 1905, paying a bond of 100 pounds (On Chong & Co. to Collector of Customs, 28 August 1905, SP 42/1, Box 4, 1905/94-1905/2168).

142-4 George Street, 'Yeesang Loong, Importer and Exporter.' Courtesy of the Foster Collection, Royal Australian Historical Society, 121F.
The tenements of George Street served as storehouses, business premises, boarding-houses and family living spaces. This was where Chinese goals were realised, traditional customs maintained, links strengthened, trips home planned. For example, in 1914, Eliza Goo Gan, then living with her sister in Dubbo, recalled her involvement as a child with the families of Ah Ming and Sidney Lettman, of the firm of On Chong & Co. She remembered meeting Mr Ah Ming in 1894 in the private house above their warehouse in George Street North (at number 223, between Essex Street and Charlotte Place), when he was preparing to go to China on a trip with his family. She stated: 'I well remember the occasion as it was a new experience for me to come to Sydney, and the said Ah Ming was very kind to me and being a friend of my Father's and apparently liking me as a child he in accordance with a Chinese custom gave me a gold coin wrapped in paper and was apparently really desirous of taking me with him promising to bring me back to my people in a year or two...’ This traditional gift of pocket money to a child (ya sui qian) was a concrete expression of the social bond between members of On Chong & Co's extended household.

societies

In his evidence to the 1891 Royal Commission, witness Yuen Tah listed the different Chinese factions in Sydney, based on native-place: the Chang Sing, Toon Goon, Heong Shang, See Yip, Sam Yip, Har Kar and Go You. In the Canton Delta where most Chinese came from, those from Toishan, Sunwui, Hoiping and Yangping spoke the Sze-Yap (Four Districts) dialect, probably corresponding to Yuen Tah's 'See Yip'; those from Nanhai, Punyu and Shunte

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63 Case of Sydney Bernard Essington Lettman, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 46, C02749.
67 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.119. Robert Lee Kum lists the sub-groups Chong Sing, Doon Goon, Hung Shang, Sun Wing, Sun Wiy, Hoy Ping, Ying Ping, Hock Sang, Go You, Go Ming, Sun On, Poon Yee, Nam Hoy, Sun Tack, Par Yoon and Sam Soon communities (although there were very few from the latter): sixteen altogether. p.145.
spoke the Sam-Yap (Three Districts) dialect, Yuen Tah's 'Sam Yip'. Canton city and the districts of Chung-Shan ('Heong Shan') and Kao-Yao ('Go You'), being near the Three Districts, were also places where the Sam-Yap dialect was spoken. There were also the Hakkas (Yuen Tah's 'Har Kar') who retained their own village system and distinctive Mandarin style language. These dialect groups (except for the Hakkas) corresponded to places of origin and provided one of the basic classificatory criteria of Chinese migrants. For sojourners and merchants in a strange city this network was an invaluable source of support and assistance. But the Chinese community in the early 1890s was large and heterogenous, and while alliances were forged to fend off aggression from different sources, internal conflict stemmed from clan, commercial or other interests, such as gambling. Robert Lee Kum for example readily accused the See Yip community of being the greatest smokers of opium and gamblers. He defined the clan as numbering about 300, living at numbers 152, 166, 228, 226, 224, 222, and 220 Lower George Street. Six lottery-banks altogether were connected with the See Yip community. He claimed that there were more than a dozen gambling-houses kept by the Heong Shang community in Lower George Street, six or eight by the Tung Yap community, eleven to the Go You Yap.

The importance of personal and fictive kinship relations was expressed formally in surname, guild (huiguan) or native-place associations (tongxianghui) which shared ties of ritual brotherhood. One such organisation was the Lin Yik Tong, or Chinese Merchants Society, to which belonged wealthy businessmen such as Quong Tart. It undertook a number of functions, including the performance of symbolic public gestures, designed to create a public identity, and to form bonds with influential Europeans. In 1897 for example, several members presented an address to Lord Hampden, attending the Jubilee Carnival at the

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69 Skinner, The City in Late Imperial China, 1977.
70 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.145.
Sydney Showgrounds. In 1903 the Lik Yik Tong entertained The Times correspondent, Dr Morrison of Peking, before his return to China. Mr Whiteley of the Eastern and Australian Steamship Company was presented with a marble clock upon his retirement.

For poorer Chinese, numerous 'benevolent institutions' based on kinship and native place existed, to provide general assistance in Australia, and to transport old men and the bones of deceased countrymen to China. Way Kee had been the treasurer (with Sun War Loong) of the Koon Yee Tong, to which gardeners and hawkers of the Doon Good community contributed for 32 years (1857-1889). Members paid one pound to join; its object was 'to take up dead men's bones'. It had nearly 2000 pounds to its credit in the Commercial bank, in the names of four stores - Way Kee's, Quang Hing Chong, Yuen Tah and Chun Goon Fing. Quang Hing Chong was reluctant to divulge the whereabouts of the account books to the 1891 enquiry because 'the whole of my community are interested in it, and they would like to know the why and the wherefor of anything done in connection with it'. The books showed all expenses in connection with 'taking up dead bodies'. The total cost of raising 84 dead bodies was 529 pounds and 19s. and 2s.

Way Kee, perhaps prompted by clan rivalry, told how the Loon Yee Tong had become insolvent a few years before and the money had been sent back to China.

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71 3 September, 1897, Chinese Australian Herald.
72 20 February, 1893, Sydney Morning Herald.
73 7 March, 1893, Evening News.
74 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.28.
75 Ibid., p.59.
76 Ibid., p.48.
77 Ibid., p.54.
78 Such as 4s. 6d. for a ledger and thirty small books for collecting; 5s. 10d., for small books given round to stores in Sydney for collecting money; 11 yards of white calico - for giving receipts on - each 3 x 4 in; 2lb of melon seed; two pounds for stamping papers to put inscriptions on, with the names of the departed; 15s. was spent on cigars, as 'when they come together they talk and smoke'; with 7s. for postage; and 4s. for red calico. Ibid., p.57.
to provide for coffins on boats in case of death at sea, while a small sum was donated to a hospital.\textsuperscript{79} Tong Fong and Way Shong, the doctor, kept the books, but their business was unsuccessful and they had 'gone into crooked ways'. This term denoted 'insolvency and general bad credit', demonstrating the link between loss of wealth, moral ruin and a loss of standing in his own community.\textsuperscript{80} The members demanded their money back, suspecting Way Shong of dishonesty. The Pow On Tong was another society based on native place, whose object was to send old men who were unable to work, and the skeletons of those buried in Australia home to China. In 1891 Jasper Ung Quoy was treasurer and it had over 1000 pounds.\textsuperscript{81}

material culture and identity

The traditional basis of 'Chineseness' was clan and place, involving the creation of insider/outsider distinctions; for example to initiate \textit{guanxi} required establishing familiarity, transforming the other into the familiar through establishing a shared identity.\textsuperscript{82} Traditionally, Chinese identity was malleable, its constitutive elements significant only by virtue of the system of meanings in which they were embedded.

It has been argued that for an ostracised group such as the Chinese overseas, clear definition of the difference between themselves and the alien society they found themselves in would have been especially important, expressed through

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p.55.

\textsuperscript{80} A meeting was called, which the different heads of Chinese communities within the attended. It was decided that 420 pounds were to be distributed, mostly to charities in Hong Kong, to buy coffins to put on boats so if a Chinese man died at sea his body would not be thrown overboard; twenty pounds was donated to a hospital. The community sent out four men with books to get subscriptions. The society's object was to take up men's bones, and to assist 'poor, and lame, and sick Chinamen.' \textit{Ibid.}, pp.56-70.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p.104.

'aggressive perpetuation of traditional behaviour' or the creation of new symbols of traditional identity.\textsuperscript{83} In the face of hostility, people bond together for mutual comfort and support; by identifying with group ethnic representations, individuals are less personally involved.\textsuperscript{84} Aspects of Chinese culture, including practices grounded in the material, such as food and its accoutrements, medicine, and ritual, were used to assert sameness and difference.

food

Food had enormous social importance in traditional China. It was used in sophisticated ways to create and maintain personal ties, and as a 'marker and communicator in social transactions'.\textsuperscript{85} Meals were a concrete expression of social bonds, and it was very rare to eat alone; one ate with one's family, or in tea shops, with friends, or at work. Sharing rice, the staple of south China, created a basic human tie, and the expense, symbolic status, quality and setting of meals communicated the social dynamics at work very clearly.\textsuperscript{86} However, the accustomed diet of rural south China was also determined simply by what was available in this densely populated, sometimes hungry region. The staple was rice. Chicken and pork were luxuries and so protein came mainly from beans and fish, supplemented by a vast number of green vegetables, especially members of the cabbage family.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86} Anderson and Anderson, 'Modern China: South,' 1977, pp.375-6.
In Australia, the Chinese accommodated available resources within the framework of custom. In Sydney, for example, in 1891, the cabinet-makers' diet was said to consist of three meals a day - chiefly of pork, fish, rice, cabbage, and tea, with poultry, and Chinese liqueurs as a rule on Sundays. It was noted by a witness to the Royal Commission that 'the Chinaman appreciates a full meal; and if European luxuries are conspicuous by their absence, he has nevertheless his periods of sober feasting.' They supplemented local fresh produce with imported foodstuffs, usually in ceramic containers (of brown glazed stoneware), and these sometimes made their way into the archaeological record. But in cities, including Sydney and the Rocks, closely scrutinised by archaeologists, there have been few recorded assemblages reflecting Chinese households, as opposed to the distinctive 'trade' wares deriving from the European market for Chinese pottery. This may be due to transient lifestyle, which saw the household packed up and moved on within months or a year, the city-wide rubbish collection services which existed by the end of the 19th century, or perhaps to the furious activity associated with the 'cleansing' operations of 1901, especially of Chinese premises.

**Hong On Jang's household**

One exception to this blank record is the household of merchant Hong On Jang, established at Samsons' Cottage, at 75 1/2 George Street between 1916 and 1924. As noted above, Hong On Jang was a merchant who boarded his countrymen on his premises in Harrington Street from at least 1904 to 1911. His house was nominated by shipping agents as the abode of Chinese during transshipment,
indicating a close link with European organisations. But less respectfully, in European terms, his was also the firm which in 1908 had been the destination of the stowaway villagers aboard the S.S. Courtfield. These documentary traces, despite their European bias, suggest that his firm functioned like other Chinese merchants in the Rocks, as argued above, as surrogate kin, nodes in a guanxi network. By contrast, the material remains tell us what the household was like from the inside, in Chinese terms.

The block of land at 75-75 1/2 George Street, as discussed in chapter three, backed on to Kendall Lane, and it was this, rear portion of the site which was excavated by archaeologists in 1991.90 The 1840s cottage survived the 'cleansing operations' of the 1901 plague, which demolished so much of the Rocks' older housing stock, not being removed until 1920 or later.91 The cottage site was then turned into rear yards for three-storey tenement built on the George Street frontage in 1883, and so was divided in two. Hong On Jang leased the tenement at 75 1/2 George Street, and used the southernmost yard as well, which produced numerous artefacts of Chinese provenance when excavated by archaeologists.

The newly-created yard area was surfaced with a mixture of ash and cement, and a shed was built roughly where the cottage had been, with a roof of galvanised iron. The fireplace in the southern wall, shared with the 'Coachhouse', adjoining to the south, continued to be used within the shed. Presumably Hong On Jang boarded his guests here; the archaeological evidence points to it being a living space, according with the comment by Royal Commissioners in 1891 that 'in the city they further economise space by roofing-in the

90 J.Lydon, Archaeological Investigation, Samsons Cottage, Kendall Lane, the Rocks, Sydney, Sydney Cove Authority, 1991.
91 As indicated by a 1920 coin found in the demolition rubble. Lydon, Samsons Cottage, 1991, P.59.
Location of Samsons' Cottage allotment, at 75-75 1/2 George Street, backed by Kendall Lane, 1900. Detail from Darling Harbour Resumptions, within sections 85, 87, 88 and part of 86. Plan N. City of Sydney. Sydney Cove Authority HP 161.
Looking to south-east, over Kendall Lane and the archaeological site, prior to rebuilding, 1991. The profile of the 1844 cottage was preserved in the wall of the 'Coachhouse', built adjoining and slightly around the earlier structure. The wall fronting the lane is largely original. Photograph the author.
yards and thus converting them into kitchens'. A peculiar organic composition, including matted hair, had been pasted across a block of sandstone in the floor surviving from the earlier cottage wall, forming a threshold into the open yard area. Inside the shed, a round circular depression in the ground perhaps indicates construction of a traditional Chinese stove at some point during its use. During the occupation of Hong On Jang, the fireplace was rebuilt, and another layer of floor surfacing was laid down, and then a green lino-like covering. Postholes suggested that a structure such as a mantlepiece or perhaps even bunks, were added at this time too.

Over the ground surface a scatter of artefacts represented rubbish discarded by the household. A small rubbish pit was dug into the ground in the southeast corner of the shed, next to the fireplace, and was found to contain a 'sand-pot' and many small glass medicine vials which had been used, and thrown away. These objects included clay tobacco pipes, an oval brass brooch containing a translucent stone, buttons and a toy soldier, although most objects reflect the household's everyday storage, preparation and consumption of food and drink.

The faunal assemblage (bones and shell) from this phase is small. Sheep elements are primarily 'waste' bones, and pig, rabbit and cattle are represented by a mere handful of specimens. Ribs, with butchering marks suggestive of roasting cuts and cutlets are evident, more consistently than in previous phases. Fish bones dominate the collection, including snapper, bream and wirrah cod, all available in Sydney Harbour. There are almost no shell remains. The pattern of consumption of Hong On Jang's household represents the persistence of traditional diet, with fish remaining important, but with the occupants taking advantage of the new, readily available variety of meat.

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93 D.Steele, Faunal analysis, Samsons Cottage, the Rocks, Sydney Cove Authority, 1991.
'Sand-pot' and glass vial (see Appendix 1 for further discussion). Photographs the author. Courtesy of the Sydney Cove Authority.
But as well as a range of Chinese items, there were several European artefacts which had also been used by the household. A large part of the total assemblage was made up of European alcohol bottle fragments (37% by number; 35.6% by weight), and 31.6% (by number; 14.7% by weight) of these were catalogued as wine and/or beer, of characteristic olive-tinted glass. Traditionally, alcohol was sometimes used medicinally by the Chinese but by this time had become a regular part of the diet of most people. Drinking games, for example, were popular. Alcohol was carried with overseas communities in Australia and elsewhere in distinctive tear-drop-shaped stoneware bottles known as Jian You, but no examples of Chinese 'wine' (true wines and starch-based spirits were both called jiu[95]) were found at Hong On Jang's. This suggests one area of change, to the consumption of European alcohol.[96]

A large part of Hong On Jang's household ceramic assemblage is Kitchen Ch'ing: Chinese-made, and not for export (23.3% by number; 46.1% by weight). These Chinese utensils include sherds of celadon rice bowls, and stoneware ginger jars, barrel-shaped and wide-mouthed storage jars and a stoneware 'sand-pot'. There is a minimum of 38 medicinal vials.[97] Celadon rice bowls (Appendix 1: type 1) are one of the most common possessions of Chinese overseas, used for eating rice and other staple food. They have been unchanged for hundreds of years, acting as the traditional wine cups of the poorer people.[98] The 'ginger' and other plainer storage jars were used for importing a range of pickled vegetables and fruit, and then re-cycled for a variety of purposes (Appendix 1: ginger jars, types 12, 13 and 14; brown glazed stoneware, types 10 and 11). Recent investigation of Chinese use of this class of vessel indicates that

[96] In the Northern Territory Justin McCarthy has shown that European alcohol became very popular with Chinese miners, in place of traditional beverages: J.McCarthy, *Pine Creek Heritage Zone Archaeological Survey*, National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory), 1986.
they were all-purpose tools, used for storage and even cooking jars, sometimes for example, jar lids being turned into cooking pans or to hold condiments.

The casserole or 'sand pot', so named because of its light porous fabric, was used for braising, stewing, making soup and a multitude of other processes, usually of foods which require long cooking times such as tendon, ligament, pork knuckle, and whole joints of meat; it was tightly covered and used over a low flame (Appendix 1: type 15). Its base could be reinforced, however, for example with wire, and so cooked over a high temperature. Its advantage over the wok used for the typically south Chinese stir-fry, was its slow, even diffusion of heat, releasing excess moisture through its surface, while excess grease was absorbed.

It was made in varying sizes and shapes, with a heavy clay lid. Rice can be boiled in a sandpot glazed inside, such as Hong On Jang's. This vessel is also very similar to a 'medicinal tea-pot' shape, which however, has a spout as well as the hollow handle. It would be unwise to rule out its possible medicinal use, both in light of the Chinese tendency to use utensils for any purpose at hand, and the pot's location of discovery, in a rubbish pit with numerous medicinal vials. This type of pot is rarely found outside China: only a few other archaeological examples have been recorded - one each in Sacramento and San Francisco, California, and one in New Zealand. Its presence at Hong On Jang's can perhaps be interpreted as evidence of unusual care to reproduce traditional dishes or processes. The bonds forged between Chinese through sharing food were maintained within Hong On Jang's household.

102 Sacramento: A.Praetzellis and M.Praetzellis, 'Ceramics from Old Sacramento', manuscript on file in the Asian American Comparative Collection, 1979: Fig. 67c; San Francisco: A.Pastron, J.Pritchett, and M.Ziebarth, Behind the Seawall: Historical Archaeology along the San Francisco Waterfront, Archeo-Tec for the San Francisco Clean Water Program, vol 2, 1981: Fig 9.21; New Zealand: Lion Race Hut, site S 151/3, Neville Ritchie, personal communication to P.Wegars, Asian American Comparative Collection.
Presumably choice of treatment for sickness related to availability as well as perceptions of efficacy. In 1891 a Chinese doctor, Way Shong, lived in a two-roomed house at 8 Essex Street. Careful to disclaim pretensions to Western qualifications, he made 8s. per week by treating Chinese 'who [have] hurt themselves, or who have any malformation'. He had been there for over a year and before that was in Harrington Street, and for ten years before that in Lower George Street. Once a leading man in the community, especially his own native-place organisation, the Loon Yee Tong, his business had failed and he was by 1891 very poor. He and Ah Chong had run a business named Tong Fong which sold English and Chinese goods and housed a Chinese chemist. Way Shong sent to China for his medicines, stating that 'nearly 1000 pounds worth used to come out through my hands to be distributed here' After he had become insolvent, he bought small amounts from local Chinese merchants, to the value of 10-11 pounds/year, as he needed it.

From the small rubbish pit, scattered across the yard area, and at the bottom of the 'stove' depression - came a minimum of 38 small glass bottles. These are 10-12cm high, with necks of thin glass designed to be snapped off, like an ampoule. They are ovoid in section (Appendix 1: type 16). Raised Chinese characters, transliterated as 'Tung Kwan Kok' are impressed on their base, and can be interpreted as a maker's or factory mark. Similar (although not identical) vials have commonly been found on sites occupied by Chinese people in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia (Appendix 1: type 17). Once identified as 'opium bottles', they are more accurately termed medicinal. In Otago, New

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103 He described himself as 'a kind of amateur doctor' and said that he used to be a chemist but had never practised as a doctor; he had a paper entitling him to 'cure bruised limbs and little surgical operations of that kind.' Asked whether the Chinese visit him if they are afflicted with venereal disease, he said, 'no, nor bad disorders'. He had no European patients. *Gambling Commission*, 1891-2, p.72.
Zealand, they are a common archaeological find, and Ritchie states that they are used for '...a variety of medicinal preparations, including but not exclusively tincture of opium.' He suggests that the prohibition of opium in New Zealand in 1901 made it likely that 'addicted Chinese who were unable to maintain their supply, turned to opium-based medicinal preparations.'

In the Pine Creek Heritage Zone, Northern Territory, Australia, Justin McCarthy noted an increase in the use of medicines, tonics and elixirs, after opium was banned in 1901, many of which contained a mixture of opiates and alcohol. The range and number of medicine vessels was great, including, for example, opium tincture vials and patent pain-killers, and suggesting again the maintenance of an opium habit. In nineteenth century Sydney, opium was, for Europeans and the Chinese, the preferred analgesic, being the basis of most painkillers. It is possible that these bottles reflect the maintenance of an opium habit.

But more plausibly, these vials conform to what we know of traditional south China medication. Folk medication in south China was (and remains) largely by oral prescription, acupuncture and other methods being too expensive for non-elite Chinese. Dietetics and herbal medication are the main curative methods and are constantly used. So the archaeological evidence suggests persistence of

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107 P.Wegars illustrates a range of vessels from American sites, including small glass bottles very similar to the type recovered from Samsons Cottage: 'The Asian Comparative Collection,' Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology, 6, 1988, p.10.


109 G.Haines, The grains and threepenn'orths of pharmacy' Pharmacy in NSW 1788-1976, Lowden Publishing, Kilmore, 1976, p.30. A range of artefacts found in the United States, New Zealand and Australia associated with the use of opium has been identified; see for example C.Brott, Moon Lee One. Life in Old Chinatown, Weaverville, California, 1982, p.58; Ritchie and Harrison, Opium Smoking and Associated Artefacts, 1982. No artefacts which could be associated with opium-smoking were recovered from Samsons Cottage, despite statements by former inhabitants of the area that the Chinese who sat along Kendall Lane smoked opium; N.Iacono, Oral History Interview with Dolly, Edith and Kate, Sydney Cove Authority, 1991.

110 Anderson and Anderson, 'Modern China: South,' 1977, p.368.
Chinese medical practices here, too. But counter to this simple equation is contemporary documentary evidence for use by Chinese of European medication. For example, in 1924, L. Nell, Chemist, of 191 George Street, testified that a man named Ah Hoe, boarding with Chinese merchant Chung Lun of Harrington Street, occasionally bought medicines from him. ¹¹⁰

These household objects clearly played a role in maintaining traditions surrounding food and medicine, marking and communicating social transactions. The ceramic vessels indicate the use of Chinese foodstuffs, and of traditional methods of food preparation and consumption. The assemblage indicates the ways that diet asserted identity within the household, inside the racial boundary. The vials (and perhaps the 'sandpot') indicate traditional medicinal practice. In the daily, practical re-enactment of social relationships and traditions, these objects served an important purpose as material symbols of home and the familiar.

¹¹⁰ Case of Ah Hoe, 1924, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/2, Box 285A, c23/5645 - c28/9280.
Chapter 5. 'Across the racial line': Interaction

In the following two chapters, I step from inside the Chinese community, across the 'racial line', examining the kinds of boundaries, and breaches, which shaped interaction between Chinese and European. At the beginning of the period, Chinese-white relations in the Rocks were dominated by gambling, and in a sense reached a climax of hostility, as the white shop-keepers of George Street focused official surveillance of public morals and cleanliness on the Chinese, viewed as a source of corruption within the always-suspect Rocks. But the resulting Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality of 1891-2, while certainly a turning-point in race relations, must be viewed within longer-term patterns of exclusion and hostility, as discussed in chapter four.

From the official, white point of view, the need for control of the moral and physical cleanliness of the Rocks, the city's waterside underworld, was a long-standing perception. The definition of 'normalcy' and 'respectability' against the other, enacted through representations of Sydney's slums, was especially important in the marginal, disorderly Rocks. Like its working class population, the sailors, and the boarding-houses, the Chinese in their turn were constructed as a source of corruption within it, defined in distinctively racial and cultural terms, but susceptible to control by the familiar means of uncovering, mapping, cleansing. Sometimes they were cast as a literal source of disease, and accusations of uncleanliness continued to be made. But this aspect of the Chinese presence was couched within a more comprehensive discourse which

1 A.Mayne, Representing the Slum. Popular journalism in a late nineteenth century city, History Dept., the University of Melbourne, 1990.
constructed them as a source of moral contagion. They posed a threat of corruption to the forces of order, to the innocent and weak, and to feminine purity. There is a notion of movement beneath the surface: hidden, unknown, dangerous - the Chinese were concealed within their impregnable houses, on the other side of an ethnic boundary. In 1891 the photographer Maguire spoke for many other whites when he claimed that 'There are lots of things going on there that we cannot see, though we know they exist.' The Chinese-occupied George Street tenement is depicted as secret, dark, dirty, immoral; young girls and working men are drawn helplessly across its threshold into an exciting, dangerous, evil world. One after another, witnesses express their belief in the existence of police bribery, despite the impossibility of proving it. It 'stood to reason' that no-one outside the transaction would know, there would be no witnesses, no evidence. It lurked beneath appearances, occasionally revealed by cryptic signs and traces.

The Europeans saw a need for surveillance: some wanted to contain the Chinese in a single, controllable, observable area, representing their location in George Street, a main street, as a good thing, 'for you can see better what they are doing than if you had them in small back lanes'. But while some want the Chinese to live 'as Europeans...and have everything in prim style,' others see the physical, public presence of the Chinese as a problem. Fresh arrivals coming by the P.and O. boats would make remarks such as 'First impressions are bad' and 'We have arrived in a den of Chinamen'. White officialdom has to expose, chart...and eventually reassure. Through acts of translation, the 1891 enquiry, like the Chinese from their side, made the strange familiar. Even within the powerful structures of white racism and hierarchy, there was space for exchange, in

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3 Ibid., p.68.
4 Ibid., p.126.
5 Ibid., p.32
6 And see H.Grace, 'A Practical Man: Portraiture Between Word and Image', in J. Richardson, (ed.), Photogenic Papers, Continuum, 6(2), 1993, p.162. Grace argues for the bourgeois' 'taking pleasure from the revulsion he feels' and that 'the official is only interested in that which is hidden from view' in her reading of the 1900 cleansing operation photographs.
pidgin forms crafted from the cultural material to hand. Close examination of the 1891 Royal Commission leads beyond it to the complex world of experience and practice.

On the 1890s street

Lower George Street was a place of movement - swirling foot traffic, horse-drawn vehicles, the shipping and loading of the docks. The 'floating' population of sailors and new arrivals eddied around the Rocks' fixed places and people. Some were part of the street life: the policemen of No. 4 Station - uniformed men such as Inspector Atwill who had been on the Rocks beat for many years, and the plainclothes Constables Carson and Beadman, known for their 'flash appearance', and their friendliness with the Chinese. Outside the gambling 'dens', touts or 'bummers' stood to entice passers-by inside; 'respectable' Europeans hurried in and out trying not to be noticed, but larrikins stood around the doors, and 'seemed to be rather proud of it'. Assignation houses, or brothels, were kept in Essex Street, Harrington Street and Queens Place, and men of all classes would gather across the street, waiting their turn. Girls hung about Suez Canal, 'where the very lowest dregs of society in Sydney are to be found'.

Personal, physical appearance was a crucial aspect of the city landscape: codes of dress, movement, association, expression all combined to produce a person's demeanour, indicating where s/he stood in the social world. In public, people constantly observed and measured each other, deciding who was worthy of respect, who measured up. The term 'respectable' had meaning for Chinese and whites. For women, the appearance of respectability was a matter not simply of

7 Ibid., p.45
8 It was constantly invoked, perhaps indicating its uneasy, contested character rather than its stability. Penny Russell argues for the continually negotiated quality of such social categories following the rapid nineteenth century expansion of the urban bourgeoisie. P. Russell, A Wish of Distinction. Colonial Gentility and Femininity, Melbourne University Press, 1994, pp.6-10, 170-184;
personal demeanour but also of domestic pride. The quality and form of household furnishings and possessions such as tableware and tea services, ornaments and serving tools, all created an environment which signified status or capability of different kinds.9

Respectability relied a great deal on appearance and the income required to maintain it. When Robert Nolan, ironmonger's assistant, refers to the gambler Moy Ping as being, as far as he knew, a 'respectable man', the commissioners press him further: 'when you say respectable I suppose you mean respectable to look at?' When asking about young servant girls responding to an advertisement, the commissioner asks whether they were 'respectable looking'. 10 Occasionally a distinction is made between appearance and a more profound, interior quality, but usually it refers first to the double quality of appearance and economic status, whether it is a white or a Chinese person being spoken of, and only secondarily to moral standing.

In the Chinese community, as noted in chapter four, wealth and business success also signified the ability to adhere to ritual, uprightness and social standing.11 When Way Kee is asked about the 'respectability' of the Chinese of George Street he says he would not doubt it, and the commissioners press him to specify that what he means is, 'so far as their appearance is concerned'. He responds 'Oh yes, so far as their outward appearance, their clothes, and gold watches

and see e.g., M. Maynard, Fashioned From Penury. Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp.96-97 for material evidence for such differentiation.

9 Russell, A Wish of Distinction, 1994; L. Young.

10 Ibid., p.35-36.

11 Hence the proverb: 'Ritual and righteousness are born of adequate wealth' R. Smith, China's Cultural Heritage. The Qing Dynasty, 1644-1912, Westview Press, Boulder, 1994, p.246. For example, Sun Sam Kee speaks English very well and dresses like a European. Asked 'Any amount of jewellery on him, I suppose?', Mathers the President of the Coal-Lumpers Union responds 'Yes; all the Chinese at his place seem very intelligent', equating money, possessions and intelligence. Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.89.

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and chains, they look alright; but I would not know anything about their pockets." So in this amalgam of economic, moral and material worth, signified by one's outward appearance, the notion of 'respectability' represents a convergence between Chinese and European views. It suggests that a language common to both cultures was understood through everyday symbols such as clothing, accoutrements and general comportment.

Relationships were formed and enacted in public - Constables Carson and Beadman for example, would bump into local Chinese such as Moy Ping, and they would go and eat together at an oyster-saloon. Constable 'Hughey' Adair would visit merchants such as Way Kee to check on whether boys had been there selling stolen metal. The area's shop-keepers viewed the scene from the vantage point of their doorways, where they could see and talk to passers-by. Maguire the photographer describes how he and his sister were sitting at their shop door when they had a conversation with Inspector Atwill. Local dignitary Thomas Playfair said 'Lower George-street, you may say, is a kind of village, in one sense, for when anything takes place everyone knows it at once.' They knew it because they watched each other, listened to each other's conversations as they went about their work. A complex web of neighbours, acquaintances, and fleeting encounters was spun across the Rocks' streets and shops, pubs and cafes.

For the Chinese trying to move on the stage which was George Street, it was not so easy: William Pow Chee's loneliness becomes apparent as he recounts how he had few friends in Sydney; these kept either businesses or gambling-houses, and, as he couldn't bother the merchants too often, he went to the gambling-houses for company. In the public spaces of the Rocks, the Chinese were

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12 Ibid., p.51.
13 Ibid., p.48.
14 Ibid., p.121.
immediately marked out by their race. For pleasure, and peace, they turned inwards, re-enacting familiar ways (of eating, of family). So in public, watched and distanced, they developed strategies of difference and similarity: the cabbage-seller, with his bamboo rod and swinging cane baskets, became a familiar element of the urban landscape, and so eventually a symbol - of exoticism, the picturesque. The wealthy merchant, well-dressed in European clothes, moved in paths of respectability, executing his own goals mostly in private, relying on known, steady points in his social world.

organisation of Chinese gambling

At the beginning of the period, Chinese gambling in Sydney had reached its largest proportions ever. For twenty years there had been a few Chinese-run gambling-houses in Lower George Street, but, in 1891, of 36 Chinese businesses along George Street in the Rocks, 28 were said to be used for gaming, paying an exorbitant rent of between 6 pounds 10s to seven pounds per week.\(^{15}\) Some estimated that for a place for which a European would pay 2 pounds 10s. or 3 pounds a week, a Chinese person would pay 4 pounds to 4 pounds 10s. as well as a bonus.\(^{16}\) Where in 1880 they had catered to both Europeans and Chinese, by 1891 gambling was segregated, constructed as a lure to Europeans on the one hand, and on the other as a secret Chinese vice.

In China during the Qing period, gambling was commonplace among all social classes despite the official view that it was associated with crime and violence.\(^ {17}\) The complexity of its traditional place in Chinese society is reflected in the clear distinction within the Chinese community in Sydney between the declining numbers of 'respectable' merchants,\(^ {18}\) who were averse to gambling by

\(^{15}\) Moy Ping also offered 100 gold sovereigns and a three year lease: *Ibid.*, p.10.


George Street Chinese, 1889: Sun War Loong at 169; S.C.S. Dockson and Co., at 171; Sam Chong at 175; Tuck Chong at 177. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales, PXA 514 f31.
education, and saw the threat it posed to their own interests, and the gamblers, who had created a thriving industry in Lower George Street.\(^{19}\) As evidence to the Royal Commission indicated, it was a continuing source of contention within the Chinese community. Wealthy Chinese merchants, such as Way Kee, would have been glad to see the poorer, less 'reputable' Chinese sent home.\(^{20}\) In 1890, when a dispute over fan-tan in Goulburn Street had caused 'a row', serious enough for a Chinese man to be sentenced to three months imprisonment, a meeting was called at the Royal Standard Theatre to discuss the matter.\(^{21}\) William Pow Chee named four Chinese who informed against their countrymen for sly grog-selling, opium-smoking and gambling - Ah Man, Hong Lee Kum, Cheong Sun, and Long Pen. It was his opinion that they acted from jealousy or spite.\(^{22}\) In 1891 Ung Quoy also told how he had attempted to put down Chinese gambling when it first began, ca. 1876, having been appointed by the respectable Chinese merchants of the city to take steps such as getting a committal of the gamblers to the Quarter Sessions. But then, 'Mr Quong Tart's relatives' (that is, those from his native place), who nearly all smoked opium and gambled, together with some of those who had appointed him, worked against him, and he 'threw it up'.\(^{23}\)

The gamblers were, in their own terms, highly successful. They sought safety in numbers, actively seeking to occupy consecutive premises along George Street - for example, offering one incumbent, Mr Chazell, 150 pounds to move. A row of terraces was built specifically for them.\(^{24}\) Profits were said to be large: they

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p.23.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid., pp.57-58.  
\(^{21}\) Ibid., p.57.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., p.166.  
\(^{23}\) The Commissioners were concerned to absolve Quong Tart of any involvement, but this exchange can be read as evidence for a division within the Chinese community based on native place, and further, tension between Quong Tart, the elite 'mandarin,' and his traditional subordinate, the merchant, may reflect contemporary contestations surrounding the shifting Chinese status quo. Ibid., p.106.  
\(^{24}\) Ibid., p.36; 44; 45-6.
banked with the E.S. and A.C. Bank, and Armstrong, tobacconist and hairdresser of 121 George Street North, stated to the Royal Commission that 'you have to stand back for them; they take the money in a carpet-bag. A Chinaman named Sun Lee is said to have sent 60,000 pounds home to China'. Ah Kee (or 'Masher') was said to have arrived in Sydney poor, just as restrictions on Chinese entry had been imposed. He offered fifty pounds to anyone who could get him off the Chinese ship he was on, anchored at Miller's Point, and subsequently became one of the wealthiest gambling-bankers in Sydney.

It seemed that little attempt was made at concealing their real, illegal, purpose, nothing being offered for sale in the windows, 'or probably only a little tobacco or cigarettes'. Despite the large numbers of gamblers who patronised the houses, few were seen leaving or entering by passersby, because 'the majority go into these places - the respectable portion - very quickly'. The 'larrikin element' hung around the doors, waiting for the bank to be drawn. No fan-tan was said to be played in Lower George-street, only pak-a-pu, but this is denied by Chambers (book-keeper at Felton and Nock's), who describes fan-tan at Moy Ping's. The Chinese advertised big wins - 'that "Dutch Peter", or "French Louis", or whoever it may be, has won a large amount'. A Chinese 'half-caste', Samuel Sarsin, who worked as a clerk at On Chong's, had won 270 pounds a few weeks before the enquiry. Gambling was carried on day and night including Sundays, and the hours of 8, 9, 10 or 11 o'clock were busiest. Nolan said that Saturday afternoon at two was busiest because it was payday. As well as the Chinese, 'low

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25 Ibid., p.22.  
26 Ibid., p.90.  
27 Ibid., p.17.  
28 Ibid., p.18.  
29 Ibid., p.22.  
30 Ibid., p.25.  
31 Ibid., p.23.  
32 Ibid., p.167.  
33 Ibid., p.25
Europeans', 'noted thieves', were often employed as touts or 'bummers', exhorting passers-by to 'play fan-tan, very good game'.

'Disturbances and free fights' often broke out. In one incident, an intoxicated European asked about some money lost in gambling and a Chinese man came out with an iron bar and hit him. He was taken to the infirmary. A raid by the police was carried out when the Commission was set up, and Thomas Nock, of Felton and Nock's, ironmonger's ('Importers, Builders and Furnishing Ironmongery, China, Glass and Earthenware'), 194-196 George Street, estimated that 500 men were pushed out into street from the different houses. Others describe a 'scramble' for the doors, a 'regular stampede out of the back lanes out of the numerous back exits'. The ejected gamblers went and ate at Christensen's fish and oyster saloon, and his receipts for the evening were increased by five pounds.

As noted above, the Victorian architecture of the Rocks was manipulated by the Chinese to create physical boundaries which reinforced ethnic and cultural lines. The Chinese barricaded themselves in, sealing themselves off from white scrutiny: the rooms used for gambling 'are right at the back of the premises, and these are cut off from the front rooms by strongly-bolted doors, in which there are slides through which they can look to see who they are admitting, and as soon as the police make their appearance the word is passed to the bankers inside, and these gamblers are then hurried out at the back.' Police Inspector Atwill explained that many places were built for Chinese gambling-dens, and so the police could do nothing

34 Ibid., p.26
35 Ibid., e.g., p.9.
36 Ibid., p.29.
37 Ibid., p.10.
38 Ibid., p.88.
39 Ibid., p.34.
40 Ibid., p.43.
41 Ibid., p.85.
because of the difficulties of surprising the keepers. Set up in cellars, they were dark and insanitary. Smell is often cited as an element of degeneration - the odour of opium, bad cigars, 'filth'.

European involvement: 'a perfect mania for fan-tan...'

For those admitted within, the gambling-houses became ambiguous zones of contact between the hidden Chinese and public white domains; the gambling-bankers operated in between. Inside the barricaded houses of Lower George-street, racial differences were blurred in the excitement of the game. The closed Chinese world was breached when the action inside spilt out, as touts and larrikins stood around the doors, or fights erupted on to the street. Cultural difference is construed as cunning, alien skill:

They are so clever with their hands. I have seen a Chinaman take forty-five coins, and throw them along the table, into separate fives, with an inch and a half between each five; and yet the Europeans will play with them...They are extraordinarily quick at palming... There are Chinese you cannot detect.

This was also part of the attraction for Europeans, to whom the Chinese gambling houses were exotic, strange and exciting. Asked 'I suppose the gambling-rooms are pretty well packed?', Davis replied, 'Oh yes; to overflowing. The excitement is intense. There is more excitement, I believe, when there is a lot of money on the board, and the croupier is picking out the counters, than there is over the Melbourne Cup.'

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42 Ibid., p.34.
43 Ibid., p.42.
44 Ibid., e.g., p.43.
45 Ibid., p.82.
46 Ibid., p.42.
The gambling-houses of George Street were very popular with Europeans. They were perceived by officials as a threat to the innocent, the young, the helpless, the working classes: those who didn't know any better, or who couldn't help themselves. Like Bowker the carpenter, who had played there for nine years, 'heart and soul': asked how much he'd lost at gaming, he replied, 'You might as well ask me how much I sweat from the hand.' They were a snare to local working men: wharf-labourers, coal-lumpers and seamen. Thomas Davis, M.P., told how, as an occupant of the Sailor's Home for over ten years, he had visited the 'dens': 'I myself took part in it when I was at sea. At that time there were over a dozen, aye, a score of us, living in the Sailors Home drawn into it.' He had since 'wondered sometimes that he really did put up with the nasty smells, and the mixture of nationalities crowding over the table simply to put money on for gaming purposes.' He spoke of the 'hardships endured' by large numbers of his men who lost their wages 'I have known men come to Mr Daley, one of the principal coal stevedores, and ask him for the love of God to give them a little money for a bit of meat for Sunday's dinner, and those are men who the day before must have received six pounds 10s. in wages for at times coal-lumpers make good pay. These men seem to have been brought under the influence of Chinese methods of gambling to a very striking extent. They do not go to horse-races or put money on "totes", but many of them have a perfect mania for fan-tan..." The Seaman's Union had unsuccessfully tried to prevent sailors from losing all their money by imposing fines. Boys were susceptible too, and Armstrong tells how they went into his shop to ask for coppers, 'to go up to the Chinamen's and make a rise'. All classes of Europeans gambled, from the boarding-house keepers' wives who sent their boarders to buy tickets, to the
butcher, 'Cursing Jimmy', living immediately at the back of Harrington-street, who was a 'habitual attendant'.

Of course, the unspoken division within the white population was gender. Despite the male commissioners' preoccupation with female involvement in gambling and with the Chinese, all witnesses reject the suggestion that women gambled; it was, it seems, an exclusively male pastime, which, as Marilyn Lake has noted, could have profound implications for women and children.

Witnesses like the white shopkeeper Armstrong told how the wives of gamblers would try to bring out their husbands, although without entering the 'dens' themselves, and how when the week's earnings were lost, the men would 'run tick' with him for a little tobacco: 'I cannot pay you this week, Jack. I lost it all with the Chinamen - will pay you next week.' The grocer Kelly described

harrowing scenes...one woman came to the door of my shop crying bitterly. She had been waiting for her husband to come out of one of these places, to which he had taken the whole of his week's wages. It is a common habit of working men to go into the Chinese gambling-dens, and spend nearly every penny they have earned, and then they have to borrow a little money to keep the family in bread and butter.

Equally dangerously, they enticed the 'respectable', those who should have been steadfast and immune. Davis stated: 'I have seen old men, fathers of families, who had a genteel appearance to keep up, slipping in and trying their luck, sometimes to the tune of half-a-sovereign, and I have seen small boys there, hanging on to the shirts of the winners.' They upset the social order: Nock claimed that he had 'seen officials well up in the Government Service, officers well up in Shipping Companies service, and

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51 Ibid., e.g., pp.8, 20, 24.
54 Ibid., p.28, and see especially, the evidence of the Reverend Taylor.
55 Ibid., p.42.
bank clerks, and I have also seen the thief just out of gaol.' The postmaster in question 'knocked off' before the commission began, following an article in the Echo, but Nock told how he had seen him sitting in a chair in the middle of the gambling floor.56 Those who resisted, or were repelled, chose to avoid this source of contamination. It was stated that 'ladies and respectable persons' would not go down George Street to Circular Quay, but went down Bridge and then Pitt Streets, and thus business in George Street suffered.57 They were accused of being rude to women passing by on the street.58

The Royal Commission of 1892

This scene should be viewed within the wider drama of NSW race relations, which had seen state-wide agitation against non-Europeans subside after the restrictive legislation of 1888 was passed, effectively curtailing immigration in NSW.59 Local opposition continued, however, for example amongst the cabinet-making and maritime industries.60 For many years, local whites had resented the Chinese presence in the Rocks, and had disorganisedly opposed it, but in July 1891 a group of shopkeepers met in a private room in the Fortune of War Hotel, and formed the Anti-Chinese Gambling League.61 On a close reading of the evidence, however, the surprising fact emerges that it was the activities of a mysterious Mr Goldtown which finally prompted the League to take public

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56 Ibid., p 9. Post office officials employed in the sorting department gambled between 8 o'clock and 12 o'clock, between shifts.
57 Ibid., p.45.
59 A.Markus, Fear and Hatred. Purifying Australia and California 1850-1901, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp.159-161.
60 Ibid., pp.161-2, 136.
61 There had even been an attempt to initiate an earlier enquiry: see the evidence of Maguire, and Nock, p.8: 'they have been pegging away at it for the last ten or fifteen years'. Before the League was established individual members had been active privately. When asked the cause of the deputation and formation of the League, Armstrong, the President, said 'it was simply in consequence of the falling off in business...It was a matter of general complaint.' Ibid., p.23.
action. League members recounted how a few weeks after their formation, the respectfully-dressed, well-educated Chinese silk merchant had attended one of their meetings, offering twenty-five pounds to assist them, on behalf of twenty-five anonymous Chinese merchants. Goldtown informed them of the bribery of police, a sustenance fund for gamblers, and generally indicated that a level of organisation and entrenched corruption existed which the League felt was amenable to official investigation.

'Brought up to the law in Canton', Goldtown was a confirmed member of the Church of England, and was said to be 'very remarkable...on account of being such a good English scholar...one of the best educated Chinamen that has come to this country...'. He resided at 417b (or 497a) Pitt-street and belonged to the the Go You Yap. Described on his card as a silk merchant, he had formerly kept a tea-house in Barrack Street. When Goldtown attended the Anti-Gambling League meeting shortly after it was formed, he 'represented that he was a consul of China, and represented about twenty-five Chinese merchants in the city, who desired him to attend the League for the purpose of assisting in its objects'. He informed the League that in China he had campaigned against gambling, and told them of Chinese restrictions of the practice: 'He is a very fair speaker.' He then told the League, informally, after the meeting, that 2d. in the 1s. was stopped from the different gambling-houses' prize funds every week for the purpose of bribing the police. He offered to pay the League twenty-five pounds on behalf of twenty-five Chinese merchants to assist in carrying out its objects. He gave the money to the treasurer, Buchanan, but Armstrong the president decided that it would not 'be right', and 'might injure the standing of the League, to take the money'. They said that he could enter the League by paying the same fee (2s. 6d.) but he said

63 Ibid., p.166.
64 Ibid., p.146.
65 Ibid., pp. 21, 142, 166.
66 Ibid., p.22.
no, the other Chinese did not want to become known, 'as the Chinese had a secret society, and that their lives might be endangered.'

Soon afterwards, in September, the League formed a deputation, comprising the businessmen of Lower George-street, 'supported by the presence of Messrs. Fitzgerald, Fegan, Davis, Kelly, Black, and Sharp, Ms.L.A.', the Members for West Sydney, and took their grievances to the Colonial Secretary, Sir Henry Parkes.  The chief complaints were that the gambling houses of Lower George Street were blatantly illegal, paying inflated rents, attracting larrikins, and being rude to women, causing 'respectable' pedestrian traffic, which would normally have flowed along George Street on its way down to the Quay and south into the city, to find other routes, thus damaging the area's legitimate businesses. Finally, the local police of No. 4 Station, the Rocks, were accused of taking bribes - gold watches and diamond rings - in return for allowing the houses to remain open for business.

In responding, Sir Henry Parkes separated the issue of the police taking bribes from the other charges against the Chinese. If that proved true, he said, and that 'subscriptions were made with the view of rendering their services as conservators of peace and good order to State useless' he would immediately investigate the matter.

This distinction between varieties of nuisance may reflect the novelty, as well as the gravity, of the accusation against the police; the other charges, regarding opium, women and gambling, had been heard before.

Armstrong, Christensen and Davis, M.L.A., all League members, went to Quong Tart to enquire regarding Goldtown's status. Tart said he believed he was a

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67 Ibid., p.21.
When the Chinese settlement in the interior of the province was opened up to foreign trade, a number of influential Chinese merchants were invited to look into the matter. Among them was the firm of Goldbourn, who had been in the Chinese market for many years. They decided to take advantage of the new opportunities, and opened a branch in San Francisco. The firm consisted of Mr. Goldbourn and two of his sons, who had been brought up in the business. They soon found that the demand for Chinese goods was very great, and that they could sell everything they had in stock.

The firm's policy was to be as fair and honest as possible. They refused to accept any bribe or commission, and were content with a small profit. They believed that this policy would help to establish good relations with the Chinese people.

Mr. Goldbourn, the head of the firm, was a man of great influence in the community. He was respected by all, and had the confidence of the Chinese merchants.

"The Evening News," 2 March, 1892.
respectable man. Other League members, however, approached other 'respectable Chinese' and were told that he was 'no good'. The League visited Goldtown to get him to make an affidavit before a Justice of the Peace, but he responded that now that the Commission had been appointed he would verify everything he had said before it.\(^{70}\)

When the Chinese realised that they were in trouble, the gamblers called a meeting at Sun Sam War's, convened through William Pow Chee, which thirty or forty men attended.\(^{71}\) Pow Chee, there as translator of European press reports, described the meeting's aggrieved mood - comments such as 'I suppose we are to be prevented gambling now'. He had asked whether anyone had given anything to the police but 'One of them said "Is it likely we would give money to the police? - We would not do it."' Two young men were identified as responsible for insulting women, and were 'cautioned by the meeting very strongly'.\(^{73}\)

Goldtown was present, and again at a second meeting held the next night, to explain his actions with respect to the League. He was accused of being the cause of all the 'nonsense' about bribing policemen - as indeed he had been. He denied having really represented twenty-five businessmen, and falsely claimed that he had told the League that the collection of money from gambling funds was for charity, not to protect the gamblers. Goldtown represented himself to his countrymen as a kind of 'spy, or informer': while the League thought they were getting a lot of useful information, Goldtown had only been 'fooling' them. But the general opinion of the meeting was that Goldtown's motive had been to cause all gambling-houses, except the ones in which he had an interest, to be removed - he had told the League that two gambling-houses were run

\(^{72}\) Robert Lee Kam, *Ibid.*, p.147. Their aim was to raise 400-500 pounds, but they collected only a small amount for advertising and preliminary expenses.
'European-style', as private clubs. They did not believe him, and one called out 'He wants a beating'. They decided that Moy Ping, who was very friendly with Goldtown, was probably at the bottom of it, and so being suspicious of each other did not come to agreement about how to deal with the gambling charges. They did not meet again.\(^{74}\)

In fact, Goldtown was the initial source of the accusations of bribery against the police.\(^{75}\) Respectable Chinese, such as Jasper Ung Quoy, denied that they had authorised Goldtown to speak for them. The Chinese community generally exhibited mixed feelings about him; at first impressed by his skills and respectable appearance, his subsequent involvement in gambling and bad debts soon made enemies.\(^{76}\) At this distance it is hard to say what his motives were, or whether he was associated with the 'respectable' or the gambling Chinese. After the raid was carried out, he was seen paying the arrested men's fines, which was when the League first suspected him of not being what he seemed.\(^{77}\) Becoming afraid of attack by his countrymen, he had come to the last two meetings of the League by cab.\(^{78}\) By the time of the enquiry, he had 'cleared out', perhaps sent away by a gambling syndicate, not to reappear until another row, a few months later.\(^{79}\)

More practically, when the Chinese community got wind of an inspection by the 1891 commission they 'scrubbed and cleared' their premises, and took down the fan-tan signs. A shop-keeper told the Commission that 'immediately before the Commission came round we sold more brooms and scrubbing brushes to the Chinamen than we ever did before.'\(^{80}\) The Europeans pointed to a traitor in the police camp

\(^{74}\) Ibid., p.165.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., p.23.
\(^{76}\) Ibid., e.g., p.142.
\(^{77}\) Ibid., p.101.
\(^{78}\) Ibid., p.103.
\(^{79}\) See below, the Philip Street clash. Ibid., p.103.
\(^{80}\) Ibid., pp.9, 75.
because the Chinese knew. An attempt was made to muster support, and experience, from a leading clan member in the bush: Robert Lee Kum had been a storekeeper in Sydney until about 1879, when he went to live in Gundagai and then Tumut, growing tobacco and running a garden. In November 1890 some of the Sydney merchants telegraphed him, requesting his assistance. They wanted him to go to Inspector Mackay to ask him to take out warrants against the gamblers, which he was ‘glad to do... as a public duty’. His appeal, however, had no effect.

the enquiry

In October 1891 Parkes selected a committee, comprising the Mayor of Sydney, Alderman W.P.Manning (President), Francis Abigail (Vice-President), Ramsey McKillop, J.Stuart Hawthorne and Quong Tart,

81 Ibid., p.135.
82 Ibid., p.19.

Royal commissions were a type of government enquiry designed to examine dispassionately public issues on the basis of evidence submitted under oath. They represented a 'commonsense approach to the solution of social problems...an expensive kind of people's court', in which evidence was presented by 'ordinary men and women', and so was often held to be more reliable than that of
specialists. The 1891 enquiry has been noted in passing by historians pursuing the larger picture of race relations at this time, but has not been closely examined in terms of its local significance. Approximately sixty witnesses were called on, whose evidence was transcribed in full. This material is detailed, personal, colloquial: a rich collage of perspectives reflecting the Rocks' diverse community.

To an extent, its heterogeneity was marshalled into order by the formal and intimidating courtroom environment. The power of European justice was represented by the commissioners, and on the face of it this was assured. But their authority was disputed covertly: by Chinese inability (or pretence of it) to respond, due to ignorance, traditional protocols of spokesmanship, or unwillingness to comply with an alien system of order; by Europeans who similarly denied all knowledge of the dangerous matters being probed, sometimes perhaps because they came too close to home - literally, in the case of Thomas Playfair whose denial of trouble may reflect his life-long involvement in the Rocks as 'respectable' butcher and politician. Some witnesses obviously felt at ease, making jokes, but the commissioners' ultimate control is reflected in their manner of questioning, which sometimes became aggressive or threatening. When a Chinese informant appears uncooperative, like Robert Lee Kum, or they suspect him of untruthfulness, they bully him, but it is sometimes hard to tell how effective this is, especially when Chinese witnesses sought shelter behind a language barrier. The colloquial language is full of

85 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, e.g. p.62.
86 For example George Black, ibid., p.500, although this particular example may have been due to the intense political antagonism which existed between Black and at least one member of the commission, as I discuss further.
commonsense terms, such as 'respectable', 'class of person', 'well-conducted', which relate to demeanour, habitus, everyday codes of perception.

European views of the Chinese
The range of European views of the Chinese expressed through the enquiry is broad. The attitudes of those who initiated it - the Anti-Chinese Gambling League and the Members for Western Sydney - represent one extreme. Their motives can be seen to be a mixture of racism and fear of economic competition. While never explicitly stated, the link between the Rocks investigation and deeper currents of racism and especially its relationship with the labour movement, emerges in the figure of George Black, M.P., politician and journalist. Black had headed the deputation to Parkes, and was the first witness called before the enquiry, representing 'the respectable citizens residing in George Street North'. As Ann Curthoys has noted with respect to the anti-Chinese campaign of the 1880s, 'The role of Assembly members in linking the extra-parliamentary movement to the parliamentary sphere was crucial'. Black was an urban professional politician, representing one element of Labor leadership at this time, and subscribing to the notions of racial purity which formed the basis of the anti-immigration movement.”

Black had also been sub-editor of the Bulletin since 1889. The hate-filled, oftencited, cartoons and diatribes printed in the Bulletin prompted and articulated popular anti-Chinese attitudes, which Markus has argued contributed a

87 Ibid., p.497.
distinctively Sydney emphasis on the moral evils associated with the Chinese. Police Superintendent Read denied the deputation's charges, and Black was asked to substantiate his claims. Writing on Bulletin letterhead, he replied, "the Government are desirous of losing sight of the gambling evil altogether, in the dust of a police enquiry. While they are attempting to ignore a police inefficiency that is the talk of Sydney, the various Ms. L.C., and other respectable citizens continue to share, under the name of rent, the ill-gotten gains of greasy opium-drenched barbarians. Therefore, further agitation will be necessary. You'll get it."

But before the enquiry, his claims quickly prove to be based on hearsay, mainly that of the anti-Chinese Gambling League, and his involvement appears to have been a bid for electoral support.

The link between the enquiry and the labour movement was viewed cynically by many at the time, such as the Sydney Morning Herald columnist who sarcastically wondered what the relationship was between the social evils allegedly caused by the Chinese, which had prompted the enquiry, and its final recommendations, which related most directly to the stamping of Chinese furniture.

Extremely hostile witnesses, such as Thomas Nock, articulate anger and grievance, based on economic interest, to the point of irrationality. Nock's speech before Parkes had argued on directly economic grounds, as he was to do throughout the enquiry, and his testimony relied upon some of the most extreme racial representations of the period. He claimed that well-known public men owned property but let it to the Chinese because they paid large rents, and

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91 Markus, Fear and Hatred, 1979, pp.126ff.
92 Col.Sec.Corr.Rec'd., 91.10430. The allusion to rent may refer to the fact that Manning owned property occupied by Chinese: see Parliamentary Debates, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1 March 1892.
93 Which was successful; in 1894 he won a 'non-solidarity' seat against the endorsed Labor candidate in Sydney-Gipps, the Millers Point area of West Sydney. Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1981.
94 'Fugitive Notes', Sydney Morning Herald 10 February, 1892, p 3.
because landlords were 'in good positions - some of them being members of the Legislature' the police would not interfere. 'Because of this the League asked the assistance of the labour party, who knew no side in Parliament'. Like Black, Nock embodies the complex relationship between racial imagery and fear of economic competition. During the inquiry, for example, he attempted to play on the street violence and fighting sometimes associated with the gambling, writing to Mayor W.P. Manning in September 1891, halfway through the hearings:

Referring to the nuisance at this end of the city we would like to tell you that the fights at Moy Ping's Gambling House have been continued off and on all this day, at times stopping the pedestrian traffic. As becomes men who are suffering severely from this pest we would respectfully ask you to let me have what immediate relief you can as the Police were not present at any time during the scuffles. - We address you on this matter as Chief Magistrate of the City trusting you will see that justice is done

The police, as so often, played a mediating role, reporting Nock's account as misleading. We hear of a policeman saying to him 'Look here, Mr. Nock, what is the use of your growling about the Chinamen. They are not hurting you' And Nock's virulence is plainly at odds with the attitudes of the commissioners themselves. When he says 'No men would go into a stinking place with a lot of Chinese gamblers unless-' The commission President responds 'But everyone has his own form of delights'. And even Nock distinguishes between the 'respectable' merchants and those running the gambling houses. He names the 'decent' merchants, such as Ah Toy the cabinet-maker and Quong Ti, engaged at Sun Sam Ti's, seeing them in terms of how closely they conform to European ways, describing Mr Lee as 'a really "white man."' The 'respectable' merchants of George Street, he claimed,

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95 Re Complaints against Chinese in Lower George St, September 27, Col.Sec.Corr.Rec'd. 91/12788.
96 Gambling Commission, 1891, p.504.
97 Ibid., p.503.
98 Ibid., p.505.
Some kind of excitement at Nock and Kirby's, 192-4 George Street. Courtesy of the glass slide collection, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1880.
were frightened of intimidation. So, despite racist generalisations, even some of the most hostile witnesses are willing to acknowledge individual Chinese' good qualities.\footnote{Ibid., e.g., p.32.}

the official view: the report

The report of the commission was issued in January 1892.\footnote{And a summary of its findings were printed in the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 6 February, 1892.} It addressed the alleged gambling and immoralities of the Chinese, the charges against the police, the visits of inspection, and the callings and occupations of the Chinese. Most seriously regarded were the accusations of police bribery, followed by the Chinese economic threat, examined with respect to their occupations. Comparatively little space was given to those aspects of the Chinese occupation originally brought before the premier by the anti-Chinese Gambling League, reflecting the enquiry's transformation into a means of scrutinising and measuring the moral state of the Rocks and of the Chinese.

The 1891 enquiry concluded that the Chinese were addicted to gambling, approximately one fifth of Sydney's Chinese population practically subsisting on the proceeds of gambling-houses: "...gambling, as a means of livelihood, is the common resort of the ordinary Chinaman who has failed in honest pursuits." But while it condemned its effects, no marked distinction could be drawn between

\footnote{First called were the members of the deputation, Black, Nock, Kelly, and other whites of George Street, who elaborate on their grievances. Then the matter of a book-case said to have been given as a bribe to Inspector Atwill by cabinet-maker Ah Toy was investigated. Witnesses included Chinese merchants such as Way Kee, in business in George Street for over twenty years. Several European and Chinese men with experience of gambling were called, followed by notables such as Thomas Playfair, a prominent businessman, local politician and Rocks resident, educated Chinese such as the merchant William Fow Chee, the Reverend Peter Le Rennatel, the Reverend William Taylor, a Wesleyan Minister, and several small businessmen from the area, such as David Rip, a vanman. The last third of the enquiry is devoted to evidence from policemen: those on the Rocks beat, allegedly involved in taking bribes, and their superiors. They were followed by Inspector of Nuisances Robert Seymour, then by three European women who lived with Chinese men, and finally, Mrs Nora Ah Toy.}

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Chinese and other, European forms of gambling. While the Chinese were "...responsible for a distinct phase of the gambling mania, and for the additional misery accruing from a new variety evolved from a pre-existent evil," the report concluded that their activities were "trifling in every respect when compared to the gambling practised in Sydney in consultations and betting by totalisators".102 As with many of the witnesses, the commissioners' account is not expressed in the racist terms often seen as characteristic of the period. They conclude that the Chinese were a 'singularly peaceable and generally law-abiding section of the community. There is a low percentage of criminality amongst them, and it is not without significance that, owing to the exercise of private charity by the well-to-do towards the poor of their own race, they do not depend for relief to any extent upon the benevolent institutions of this country.'110

Similarly, the charges against the police broke down under examination. The commissioners rebuked witnesses on numerous occasions for exaggeration or for reporting hearsay as fact, following allegations, for example, of bribery with diamond rings, to their ultimate source, only to find that it was a joke.104 Under cross-examination the prejudices and assumptions of the racist European community are revealed. The commissioners conclude that the supposed increase in rent in the area, imputed to the Chinese presence, is 'a matter of opinion'.105 As far as the living conditions of the Chinese were concerned, the most serious problem was said to be their tendency to overcrowd, and their 'extreme antipathy to ventilation'. The Commission notes 'with satisfaction', that the Municipal Council intended shortly to submit to Parliament a Bill giving enlarged powers to sanitary officers; they recommend a Common

102 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.20.
103 Ibid., p.22.
104 Ibid., p.43.
Lodging House Act as also leading 'to an improvement in the conditions in which the Chinese live'.

The callings and occupations of the Chinese were given serious attention, because of the concern regarding the economic competition they represented in the areas of cabinet-making and gardening. While allowing that it was difficult to estimate the deleterious effects upon Australian industry, the report stated that Chinese predominance in cabinet-making had kept Australians out of the area, and that the deception practised by large furnishing houses of passing off Chinese-made furniture as European should be counteracted by the compulsory stamping of all goods turned out of the Chinese factories.

The overall conclusions of the Commission are surprisingly objective and well-disposed towards the Chinese, by comparison with the broadly-based anti-Chinese movement, for example in newspapers, and specifically by witnesses before the commission. The presence of well-known merchant Quong Tart on the committee, and the sometimes sympathetic tone of questions put, indicate that it was not overtly prejudiced against the Chinese. It was seen to be pro-Chinese at the time, as a question put to Manning, the president, in parliamentary debate as to whether he was the owner of a number of Chinese dwelling-houses shows (he denied it). This may have been amplified by political antagonism between Black and the other members for Western Sydney, who had in July defeated enquiry Vice-President Abigail at the polls, effectively

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107 Ibid., p.27.
109 Parliamentary Debates, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1 March 1892. 1 March, 1892.
ending his parliamentary career. Even intense political antagonism, however, fails to explain the complexity of racial attitudes indicated by the evidence.

**Chinese views**

For the Chinese, there was a strong Eurocentric bias in the structure of the proceedings, reflecting more general problems facing the Chinese in their daily existence. Often perceived as a single, homogenous group by whites, faced with hostility and criminal investigation, most Chinese witnesses responded by retreating behind ethnic boundaries, drawing a sharper and thicker racial line between themselves and the Europeans. Those who did not, such as William Pow Chee, attempted to demonstrate their acceptability in European terms.

Chinese tradition employed different means of solving problems, based on the hierarchical relationships of kinship and the Confucian order. Many Chinese had a dread of law courts. As the evidence of William Pow Chee demonstrates, Chinese cultural practice dictated different modes of solving social conflict: of the post-deputation meeting of the Chinese community of George Street North he stated that 'They are not like Europeans in their meetings. They have a few members to do the talking.' The majority deferred to a few men of standing or to relatives, according to Chinese hierarchy. When Way Kee's grandson Ah Wah is questioned extensively by the Commission he replies in monosyllables, professing ignorance. When asked whether he is opposed himself to Chinese gambling and opium smoking he responds 'So far as I am concerned, if there was any agitation to put it down, in my own mind, I would like to see it done; but I have to ask my grandfather before giving an opinion.' He is pressed further: 'You do not hold

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112 Ibid., p.164.
you, yourself as a free agent to express an opinion upon it at the present time?" and replies 'No; I have to ask my grandfather. I am not free'.

To these cultural hurdles were added language difficulties. An interpreter was required for most Chinese. Some appear to have manipulated this situation to their advantage, however, like Sam Tin, who could apparently speak English but persisted in speaking in Chinese to the interpreter, until the latter was asked to retire. He continued to ask for the return of the interpreter, continued to be refused, and the subsequent exchange between the commissioners is full of confusion, repetitions and non sequiturs, such as 'You are a very respectable Chinaman, are you not?' 'Oh, I have not been so long in this country'. While it is not easy to perceive from the transcript whether Sam Tin's difficulties were genuine, the Commissioners obviously thought not!

But while the Chinese witnesses are often called upon to condemn gambling, several Chinese witnesses refuse to state that they believe gambling to be wrong. In some cases this is because they appear to be frightened of the revenge which might be exacted by their (gambling) countrymen, but Yuen Tah, for example, when asked 'Do you not think that it is a very great evil?', says 'I do not know that it is very bad. They gamble in China just as they do here...If a person wins money he says "gambling very good", if he loses money he says "gambling no good"'. And the fact that gambling was legal in China at this time is cited by several Chinese witnesses to demonstrate its legitimacy. These different Chinese attitudes towards gambling continued to shape events within the community.

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113 Ibid., p.51.
114 Ibid., p.116.
115 Ibid., p.118.
116 Ibid., p.163.
Chinese gambling in 1892

The 1891 enquiry had tried to extract evidence from the Chinese witnesses as to the object of the notorious Loon Yee Tong, suggesting that one of its functions was to protect gambling houses. They asked whether it paid Police Court fees, or whether if a Chinese was sent to gaol for keeping a gambling house, it would pay him when he came out (the suggested rate was a pound per week in gaol). They also suggested that the society would pay a Chinese who killed a European. Witnesses such as Yuen Tah denied any knowledge of the organisation, except that to say that it had been dissolved three years before, and that it had been responsible for sending human remains back to China and for donating money to the hospital. Yuen Tah argued that its object was charitable, and incompatible with such immoral purposes.117

But a spectacular clash occurred a few months later, causing a sensation in the European press, which showed that the Loon Yee Tong remained an active force. This event is revealing of the organisation of gambling in the Chinese community and the divisions it caused, casting fresh light on the European enquiry. On the 2nd of March in 1892 the Water Police court in Philip Street, a little uphill from Circular Quay, was the scene of a battle between two Chinese factions. A case of extortion was to be heard, and at an early hour, as the Evening News described, Phillip Street outside the court was 'simply impassable, and when the case was called on the court room was beseeched, and in five minutes every corner was occupied, and many remained in the passages, but they were soon cleared out.' The hearing lasted about an hour, and the accused was discharged.

A frantic yell in court was immediately followed by others, and the doors were rushed, all seemingly eager to get into the street, where, sitting on the kerbstone, were about 200 more Chinese who had not been able to obtain admission into the courtroom. The result of the case was transmitted from mouth to mouth, and it was soon made evident that many had come prepared for something more. One

117 Ibid., p.118.
Chinaman, better dressed than the others [the interpreter Mr Goldtown\textsuperscript{118}], got up and said a few words to the crowd, who by this time had been strengthened by men who had listened to the case. They then in a body walked to the front of the court, began yelling, and without separating into opposing sections began hammering each other with weapons, which they seemed to have carried beneath their coats. Batons, long poles, and even dumbbells were brought into use, and with great violence were used upon each other, and in some cases upon the backs of men who were apparently lifeless upon the roadway. The howls were deafening, and a number of horses became so affrighted that they bolted right away from the throng. Two ladies were at the outset, about to alight at the court verandah, but the rush was just then beginning, and the cab was turned around and away the horse followed some of the others that had galloped up the hill. The Chinamen then took possession of the street. The footpath was soon covered in blood, and a large number appeared to be seriously injured. By this time a large body of police had arrived, and numerous arrests were made.\textsuperscript{119}

The four policemen who had been in the court - Senior-Constable Beadman, and Constables Richardson, Wilson and Sloggard, had a difficult time amidst the melee but were soon supplemented by a detachment of police from the Lower George Street station under Senior-Constable Cubbon, and in a few minutes they cleared the street. Twelve men were arrested, although they rioted and nearly escaped from the watchhouse: Ah Gar, 30, a carpenter; Jemmy Lee, 39, a merchant; Ah Sun, 66; Ki Hung, 28, hawkers; Chong Kee, 36, a carpenter, and Ah Toy, 33, Yet Kong, 30, Yee Hoon, 36, Ah Lee, 26, Ah Loy, 28, Ah Hoy, 28, and Ah Sing, 25, all gardeners. All but three were fined 40s, 'levy and distress'. The press dwelt on the weapons which had been used, 'including a rod of iron two feet long, iron mallets weighing over 200 pounds, and knuckle dusters of huge size\textsuperscript{120}; One of the factions had carried two baskets containing iron rods covered over with vegetables, and had 'laid them where they could be obtained at a moment's notice... Every one of them was armed with some weapon, the commonest of which was an iron rod, about 2ft. 6in. long, with cane-strapping as a handle. Others had knives, knuckle-dusters, stones, and long bamboo rod (sic) found favour with a few.' Senior-

\textsuperscript{118} Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March, 1892.
\textsuperscript{119} The Evening News, 2 March, 1892.
\textsuperscript{120} The Evening News, 2 March, 1892.
Constable Beadman was in plain clothes so 'had some nasty encounters- he with his handcuffs and the Chinamen with their weapons. He was struck several times with iron-rods, and was compelled to take possession of a bamboo-rod in self-defence.' The timely interference of a man-o'-war's sailor and some Englishmen fought off the assailants. 'One Chinaman was armed with a short stick with a nob of iron at one end, weighing 7lb. or 8lb.'

The dispute had originated within the Loon Yee Tong, 'nothing more or less than a Chinese "mafia"', whose object 'was the propagation of gambling and the punishment of informers against this illegal pastime'. Some merchants had tried to stamp it out; others belonged to it. Those who were frightened of it were unable to find out who the ringleaders were to bring them to justice, due to the secrecy observed. There were two factions, the 'Dwoon Goon' (led by Gwoon Sing) and the 'Go Yen' (led by Ah Chew), based on native-place differences. It was estimated that at this time in Sydney, 2000 Chinese belonged to the 'Dwoon Goon' district, and only 1600 to the 'Go Yen'. Most members of the Dwoon-Goon faction resided in Lower George-street, Campbell-street and Goulburn-street.

Gwoon Sing accused Ah Chew and Ah Lup of having filled in two forms differently, recognising the possibility of a slip in the draw, with the purpose of using the one which proved to bear the most characters drawn by the outsider. Ah Chew's version however triumphed, before both Chinese and European courts of justice. Community leader Quong Tart convened a meeting of the 'principal Chinese merchants and gaming experts' - a 'Kai Fong'. Its aim, Quong

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121 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 March, 1892.
122 *The Evening News*, 15 March, 1892.
123 Also termed the Chang Sing, *Gambling Commission*, 1891-2, p.146.
124 *The Evening News*, 15 March, 1892. The dispute arose over the conduct of the Chinese game of pak-a-pu, a form of Chinese lottery, which the article described in detail, as played in the Rocks and Sydney's gambling houses. It also outlines the 'sting' allegedly carried out by Ah Chew. See also E.Rolls, *Sojourners. Flowers and the Wide Sea*, University of Queensland Press, 1992, pp.346-375.
"GWOON SING,"

The Evening News, 2 March, 1892.
MR. QUONG TART,

The Evening News, 2 March, 1892.
Tart stated, was to reach an amiable agreement and to maintain 'the reputation for law and order that his countrymen have until recently always held'. This committee comprised two members to represent Gwoon Sing (Yuen-Tah - who had denied the Loon Yee Tong's existence a few months before - and Chow Tum), two for Ah Chew (Hip-Long and Quong-Mow-On), and six neutral (Quong Tart, Ye Hing [of On Chong and Co.], Lee [ of On Yik and Lee], Quong Lee, Quong Hing, and Sum Hing Chong.

First, Ah Chew pointed out the 'absurdity of supposing for an instant that Ah Lup as a member of the Dwoon Goon faction and himself could ever work in consort to defraud or do anything else but fight'. This was a telling point in the eyes of the Kai Fong, and demonstrates the strength of native-place allegiance. He swore that the 'duplicate' Gwoon Sing claimed to have found on the floor of the gambling-house was a forgery, and that Gwoon Sing had waited to accuse him until he realised that threats would not dissuade him from demanding his winnings (instead of immediately accusing him as was customary). He also stated that when he asked for payment, he was referred to Sam War and Company of Lower George Street, who were represented as the stake-holders, and that they refused to pay him unless he brought an order from Gwoon Sing - when he applied again, having been told by Gwoon Sing that it was 'O.K.', he was told that the 'bank' refused to honour his claim unless he could prove that he had not conspired with Ah Lup to defraud the bankers. The Kai Fong decided in favour of Ah Chew. Gwoon Sing refused to pay, threatening Ah Chew with an action for conspiracy and perjury, and refusing to listen to the committee. He claimed that Ah Chew had 'obtained his eight marks' by fraud. Ah Chew (futilely, knowing that gambling was illegal) threatened (European) legal proceedings and Gwoon Sing trumped up a charge against him which forced him to the court in self-defence. The Kai Fong washed its hands of the matter. 

125 The Evening News 15 March, 1892.
The dissension caused by this affair also involved the white community, as one of the factions 'pressed into its service a number of white larrikins,' who had also taken part in the Philip Street battle. The life of the 'well-dressed' Mr Goldtown was openly threatened, and the Loon Yee Tong put 200 pounds on his head; he remained 'concealed and guarded by his people, in actual fear of his life'. Some of the witnesses in the case were also threatened, and Ah Chew had to flee to Cook's River, while the market gardeners and others of his faction had 'to be protected from the violence of their foes [with the aid of the white larrikins] both day and night'. With relish, the white journalist predicted another clash, which would result in many deaths, but this seems to have been averted.\textsuperscript{126}

The dualistic opposition often created between white and Chinese communities can be seen to fracture and dissolve, as evidence emerges for divisions within the Chinese community, and alliances across the racial line. Identity was more complex than the crude axis of 'race' allows, constituted by other interests and allegiances, such as profit, 'standing' and 'respectability', 'morality', and gender. Gambling and sex were both a focus of white concern; for the white middle classes, Orientalist attitudes towards the Chinese articulated internal dislocation within Western culture, 'something inside... presented narrativized, as being outside.'\textsuperscript{127} Values alien to the rest of the city were located in the dangerous Rocks.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., For example by a meeting in the office of Quong Tart in response to rumours of another riot in the Haymarket. Police Inspector Fosbery warned the merchants that very stringent measures would be taken to prevent another such incident: The Evening News 7 March, 1892.

Chapter 6. 'Common morality'

I read an account of the proceedings in the next morning’s daily papers; I felt that I did not understand the merits of the case and could not decide whether it were wise or otherwise to say that no Chinaman should enter the Colony save by the payment of 100 pounds, but I promptly resolved, by a logic which I at least understood, that, it being my day for cake-making, I should present Ah Yoo Sin with some cakes that day. My Gloire de Dijon roses were in full bloom, and I cut a spray of these and fastened them on to a packet of cakes, made up in the daintiest manner of which I was capable. I wonder had Ah Yoo Sin heard of the poll tax! I do not know, yet I fancied his patient face had an added tinge of patience and sadness in its expression that day. He seemed much gratified and cheered by the small gift, and almost smiled as he went away. An hour afterwards he returned, bearing three jars of ginger, a caddy of tea, and two feather dusters - one large and one small. These he placed in triumph on our kitchen floor...


White Australian concern for sexual 'morality' is a recurrent element in the process of mapping and cleansing the Rocks. The Chinese, almost all-male community was represented as a threat to racial and sexual purity, a theme pursued relentlessly by the 1891 enquiry. White women cohabiting with Chinese men were a particular object of concern. Such women appear to have been doubly subordinated, according to conventional Chinese views as well as by whites, yet they also benefited from their liaisons with Chinese men, often forming stable, mutually beneficial relationships. Gender, the 'dangerous supplement', transforms our notions of Chinese and white: against a unified notion of culture, the views of marginalised white women assert themselves; the convergence of Chinese and white male attitudes destabilises the oppositional structural relationship often posited between them.

The sexual imbalance of the Chinese community in Australia was used to argue for the supposed Chinese corruption of white women. In the 1891 enquiry, women's voices were rarely heard, and when they were, belonged to lower-class, or otherwise marginalised white women such as the 'fallen', or opium addicts, who had already been excluded from the 'protected' private world. No
Chinese women's voices were heard. White women were constantly talked about, however, as innocent, susceptible to corruption by the 'immoral' Chinese.

**white fears of moral corruption**

Whether the Chinese of Lower George Street were 'insulting' European women as they passed by is a recurrent question put by the commissioners of the 1891 enquiry. Thomas Nock stated that he knew of several cases and that was why women avoided the area. Their husbands 'would be glad to give evidence'.

Alfred Chambers described the Chinese 'making signs to them, and making noises with their mouths... making grimaces at them and signs with their hands'. Here it is the middle class, 'respectable', woman who is threatened, and male attempts to protect her extend to shielding her from appearing in public, before the enquiry. At first, the grocer Richard Kelly tried to avoid naming specific women whom he had known to have been insulted, asking whether they would therefore be called before the enquiry: 'The Commission will understand that it is a delicate matter for a female to come before a body of gentlemen to give evidence in a case of this kind'. He reluctantly revealed that his wife had been 'insulted', and on one occasion, upset, had asked him to 'go back and close up the shop'. This was why he had joined the League. He went on to say that it was '...their manner and general carrying on, which would indicate that something improper was meant...'. One woman had told him that '...on one occasion a Chinaman had run out and caught her by the arm, and asked her when she was going to come in and stay a little while with him.'

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2 Ibid., p.27.
3 Ibid., p.30.
This picture begins to waver as one examines it more closely. By the account of the Chinese themselves, it was two 'larrikin Chinamen' who accosted female passers-by. Armstrong also referred to a 'larrikin Chinaman', passing remarks to women he 'very likely knew'. It appears that two Chinese men in particular were responsible: at the meeting held by the Chinese at the start of the enquiry, they were identified and cautioned. Even some of the white witnesses discern different values at work within the Chinese community: the photographer Henry Maguire, for example, states that the Chinese are very 'moral', because he has 'seen a woman with a little liquor going into a shop, and the Chinese standing like statues, as though they do not know how to touch her.' We cannot know exactly how the proxemics and subtler street interaction between men and women operated at this time. Eye contact and more tangible encounters may be inferred: for example, one woman had met her Chinese lover through walking along Wexford Street regularly. In lieu of more formal meeting-places, the street is likely to have seen rituals of all kinds!

'unhappy backgrounds'

A common white perception was that 'most of the Chinese are rather fond of the European ladies'. They were linked with women of the lower class, or 'bad' women of poor moral character; 'respectable' women avoided the area. A recurrent concern in 1891 was the supposed network of 'assignation houses' kept by the Chinese of the Rocks. Some of the more hostile witnesses claimed that 'the Chinese keep private houses in Cambridge-street, in Little Harrington-street and on the Rocks for these girls to live in'. A terrace kept in Cambridge Street was

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5 Ibid., p.63.
6 Ibid., p.383.
7 Ibid., p.20.
8 Ibid., p.27.
9 Ibid., p.45.
described as well-furnished and its female occupants lived 'in style' - a step up for the George Street gamblers, who had once simply kept women on their business premises. Harrington and Little Harrington Streets were often cited, as well as Essex Street and Suez Canal, 'where the very lowest dregs of society in Sydney are to be found'. Boys and men gathered in the street outside. Nolan, ironmonger's assistant at Nock, Felton and Co., spoke of a great deal of prostitution in Queen Street - some places with bunks - the 'traffic confined to the lower order of Chinamen and native girls'. His premises were across the road, affording him a good vantage point to observe the public side of the trade: 'you turn round by a fruit-shop, up the lane'.

Chambers told how in April 1891 a number of 'young girls' had come to Felton and Nock in answer to an advertisement for 'a young woman wanted as general servant'. Dawson told how sitting outside his shop (170 George Street) he had seen 'young girls from 18 to 20 years of age, apparently standing on the footpath, and watching the Chinamen's place opposite. Then they would go across and enter this No. 179.' To the Commissioners, it is the girls' status which is important: are they 'respectable', or of the 'low class of women'? Corruptible, or already corrupted? Dawson explained: 'They appeared to be very respectable in appearance. I should be very sorry to put a question to them if I was looking for a woman for an immoral purpose. They appeared to be respectfully-dressed, ladylike young women.'

Despite the commissioners' constant probing, only one witness charged the Chinese with the seduction of girls (younger than 14), and the report concluded

10 Ibid., p.10.
11 Ibid., pp.18, 45.
13 Ibid., p.36.
14 Ibid., p.76: He argued that they must have had an 'immoral purpose' because they waited for so long before going in. Chinese men would come across and talk to them, at times putting their hand in their pockets and giving them something, and then they would go away. Sometimes there were two, sometimes as many as four.
that it no longer occurred. It was found that a large number of Chinamen had habitual intercourse with European women: these were young women with 'unhappy backgrounds' who lived almost as wives with individual Chinamen, and as prostitutes. Generally European women living with the Chinese were 'the common property of many Chinamen, for whom they keep accommodation-houses in Sydney, and occasionally travel through the various Chinese camps in the country districts.' These were almost always victims of brutal Europeans: 'they had lost caste; they had taken to drink; they were the drudges of larrikins who ill-treated them; some had been in gaol; none were enjoying the protection of decent homes.'

The commissioners identified opium as the one genuinely destructive element of these relationships. The European women living with Chinese men were all opium addicts, as were nearly all their Chinese lovers (all the gamblers, a fair proportion of market-gardeners, and 'here and there a cabinet-maker'). However, opium addiction amongst the Chinese was found to be class-based: 'The Merchants and haberdashery hawkers are apparently free from the vice. Indeed, it is only fair to state that no traces of opium were discernible about the premises of the better class of merchant or cabinet-makers, or the dwellings of the haberdashery hawkers.'

Instances of prostitutes associated with the Chinese, who were addicted to opium, and who lived in 'filthy' environments, continued to be reported, associating moral and literal contagion in popular imagery.

In March 1893, the case of a female opium addict who had supposedly died of starvation attracted some attention. She had resided in Wexford Street, and been

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15 Ibid., p.29.
16 Ibid., p.22.
17 e.g. Ada Davenport, 19, on remand, was charged before Mr C.Delohery, S.M., at the Central Police Court with being a prostitute. Senior-constable Jeffes, who arrested her, stated that she frequented Chinamen’s opium dens and brothels. The case was remanded the week before because she was craving for opium. The magistrate said it would be a kindness to send her to gaol for medical treatment, and sentenced her to one month’s gaol. 'A Victim to Opium,' The Evening News, 11 March, 1892.
admitted to the Benevolent Asylum just before her death. Shortly after her
admission, several of the asylum’s board members visited the house where she
had been living, and subsequently mounted a deputation to the Mayor,
Alderman J.P. Manning. They found that for some weeks before her death she
had lain on a wooden bench, and refused to eat, ‘craving instead for opium’. The
house was described as being ‘in a most filthy condition, and a menace to public
health. Food was cooked in a most abominable manner, and in other of the houses fruit
and vegetables were kept, and subsequently sold to the citizens of Sydney.’ The
deputation urged the increased severity of the Chinese Restriction Act. The
mayor disclaimed responsibility; the moral condition of the Chinese ‘was clearly
outside the scope of the council, and these matters must be left to the Churches, and
those who believed it to be their duty to rescue these people from lives of infamy, sin, and
degradation. The same remark might be applied to the inspection of women.’ He felt
that it was better to congregate the Chinese in one area, ‘because they would
have better supervision over the whole of them’ - reiterating the 1891 Royal
Commission’s concerns.

Sun Johnson, editor of the Chinese Australian Herald, wrote to refute the ‘alleged
seduction and drugging of virtuous girls by the Chinese’, arguing that the girls
would escape if they wanted to - all had gone there of their own accord:

I have spoken to several, and they all say that they went there without any
persuasion whatever on the part of the Chinese, but they are well treated, and that
they prefer living with the Chinese than with white men. Of course this state of
affairs is terrible, but what can be done? You cannot prevent it or stop it.

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18 Maxted’s report was published in the Herald and a supplementary report was given to the
mayor. His graphic account was characteristic of ‘slum’ representations of the period, e.g., ‘...as
an illustration of the degradation prevailing, the case may be quoted of a girl who was found apparently
drugged or stupefied with opium and lying nearly naked on an opium bunk surrounded by eight or ten
Chinamen.’ Sydney Morning Herald, 23 March, 1893. For further discussion see A.Mayne,
Representing the Slum. Popular journalism in a late nineteenth century city, Dept. of History, the
University of Melbourne, 1990; H.Grace, ‘A Practical Man: Portraiture Between Word and

19 Inspector Seymour’s report on 10 Wexford Street detailed numerous, ineffective, visits. Ibid.
Undoubtedly there is a great deal of truth in the statement that immorality is prevalent amongst the Chinese, but how about the white people?  

As was his custom, Sun Johnson's protest was couched in European terms, explicitly equating Chinese and European notions of 'immorality'.

Chinese attitudes towards white women

What did the Chinese community think? Way Kee acknowledged that some members of the community were 'a bit rowdy with the women', but examination of the nearly all-male Chinese community demonstrates different possibilities for relationships with whites. Confucian gender roles required women to be chaste, and this was re-emphasised from the eighteenth century onwards in reaction to the growing freedom of women during the Ming-Qing transition. Many areas of gender relations, such as patriarchal authority, and standards of fidelity and propriety, were more tightly controlled, as debate about gender roles spanned all social classes. The onus was on women to uphold morality through protecting their own virtue. Chinese sons married to ensure the continuation of the lineage, heirs to worship at the family altar. Marriage also constructed hierarchies in a society where every relationship was understood as hierarchical - structuring inequalities between families, men and women, and among women. It was considered a universal right, and dowries made the difference between being a wife or a concubine; great efforts were

20 Sun Johnson to Sydney Morning Herald, 24 March, 1893.
21 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.50.
made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century even among poor peasant families to set aside a portion for unmarried sons and daughters.\textsuperscript{25}

Where possible, the Chinese in Australia maintained traditional Chinese relationships. For example, in 1891, Way Shong, doctor and businessman fallen on hard times, was shortly to return to China. He had two Chinese wives - the first one, in China, had sent him a younger one with whom to have children (he had a three-year-old girl), as was customary.\textsuperscript{26} Ah Wah and Way Kee, merchants, had both married and brought their wives back to their George Street premises. Ah Wah, aged 22 in 1891, had been back to China the year before, for five months, when he married, subsequently bringing his wife back with him. He stated that there were only about 14 or 15 Chinese women in Australia, all living with their husbands.\textsuperscript{27} Way Kee's wife had lived in China for 22 years before he brought her out in 1891; he had been home to see her four times. As he told the 1891 enquiry, the reason why so few wives were brought out was the recently-imposed 100 pound poll tax, but most were too poor to pay the passage out for their wives anyway.\textsuperscript{28} Here, class differences determined the possible form of relationships. The life led by these Chinese women who came to the Rocks is shrouded. Traditionally, the Chinese cultural ideal was to isolate women of the upper classes in inner apartments as much as possible; men by contrast enjoyed sexual freedom and contact with servants and prostitutes.\textsuperscript{29} These practices seem to have persisted in the Rocks.

Attempts to bring out wives or female relatives were continuous. In April, 1902, for example, Ada Ah Len applied for admittance, having been born in Queen Street, Sydney, in 1892 and then taken to China, where her parents died. She

\textsuperscript{25} Bray, 'Review', 1994, p.989.
\textsuperscript{26} Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.74.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p.52.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p.58.
\textsuperscript{29} Smith, China's Cultural Heritage, 1994, pp.250-3.
had been given in marriage to a Chinese man in Sydney and wanted to return.\textsuperscript{30} The Chinese also tried to maintain other family ties: in February 1900 a request to bring the 13-year-old Australian-born daughter of Sun Hoon Kee and Co, Cabinet-makers, of Globe Street, was, unusually, granted at the suggestion of Customs Inspector Donohoe.\textsuperscript{31} But on the whole, such requests were viewed unsympathetically by officials, because they encouraged Chinese entry.

One such incident demonstrates the interplay between Chinese objectives and official white attitudes, and even the use made of racist representations of Chinese 'immorality'. In 1905 William Wood of the Presbyterian Church of Australia wrote to the Department of External Affairs on behalf of Mr Young Mason, resident of Sydney for 18 years (except for a period in Fiji), 'well known to the leading Sydney merchants' and to the Reverend J. Young Wai of the Chinese congregation of Forster Street. Young Mason wanted to bring his Chinese wife to Australia, and Mr Wood wrote that

\begin{quote}
in the interests of common morality we would urge the very special consideration of your Department to this application, as you can quite see how forcing a Chinese to live here without his wife would militate very considerably against the community generally. I need not go further into details in this connection.
\end{quote}

But the secretary for the Minister of External Affairs responded that 'Large numbers of the Chinese who live in Australia have wives in China, from where they are voluntarily separated for long periods in accordance with what appears to be a custom among them.' He cited the tendency for these couples, once reunited, to make further demands regarding other family members, and refused the request.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} 28 April, 1902. Her father, George Ah Len, had been an interpreter; her mother's name was Ching Sheung Chung. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1390 - 1903/2583.
\textsuperscript{31} 6 February 1900, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1390 - 1903/2583.
\textsuperscript{32} Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 4, 1905/94 - 1905/2168.
Chinese views of white women and social mores generally emerge in the Sydney Chinese' newspapers. On the subject of morality, the moderate, high-brow *Tung Wah Times* was restrained, but the populist, sensationalist *Chinese Australian Herald* dwelt on the degeneracy of Australian society, indicated by reports of crimes such as incest, rape and adultery. In a recent article, Yulan Poon notes that in relation to the level of attention given to most local news, the detailed accounts of these crimes 'created a false impression of their pervasiveness in Australian society'.

Sexual deviance and promiscuity were contrasted with Chinese moral standards. The contemporary disputes surrounding European Australian gender roles, and the comparative freedom of white women, were construed as degeneracy by the Chinese. They were, like the whites, concerned with 'racial purity', condemning interracial marriage, and representing Australian women as 'lewd, vicious and domineering' through reports of real or exaggerated crimes. In this sense, Chinese attitudes towards aspects of white Australian society mirrored the concern of white officials and church authorities, and Poon points out (following Broinowski) that at a time when women's rights were becoming a matter for public debate, male image-makers' stress on the 'moral evils of spinsterhood, childlessness, illegitimacy and miscegenation' was shared by Chinese and whites.

In the context of Australian feminism and its fight for the right to vote, equal wages, and membership of unions, traditional Chinese values shaped a perception of white women as a major cause of Australian degeneracy; they were characterised as murderers (especially infanticides) and as promiscuous.

The *Chinese Australian Herald* mounted a campaign against women's rights, arguing on the basis of 'natural law' that women were inferior, and that

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feminists were 'outrageous' and 'shameless' 'hen crows' - in public office they would be partial (favouring other women), and lack stamina and courage. Poon stresses the convergence of Chinese attitudes with white views such as the Bulletin expressed at the same time. Given white fears of Chinese seduction of white women, it is ironic that these same women were themselves represented by Chinese men, with contempt, as dangerously degenerate.

'Crossing the racial line'

Yet there is evidence also for mutually beneficial relations between Chinese men and white women, as noted by the 1891 Royal Commission. For white women unable or unwilling to conform to their own society's expectations of appropriate female behaviour, the Chinese could be a means of escaping problems. For some Chinese men, relationships with white women obviated the traditional need for involved and expensive rituals surrounding marriage and concubinage. Female witnesses to the 1891 enquiry explained how they were kept in a house in town and visited once a week, while their lovers lived in all-male market-gardening communities during the week. This points to Chinese men taking advantage of the different sexual mores of Sydney. Some women were undoubtedly exploited by Chinese men, but despite popular representations, the evidence suggests these relationships suggests that they offered both participants material and emotional benefits. The 1891 enquiry concluded that those who lived in 'constancy',

were the victims of seduction by Europeans, or of domestic unhappiness, and have, almost without exception, found shelter from lives of shame in the homes of the Chinese. They are there kindly and liberally treated. Their houses are comfortably furnished, and, apart from racial considerations, they have some reason to be satisfied, as they say they are, with their surroundings.

Four European women living with Chinese men were interviewed by the Royal Commission: three, Hannah, Adelaide and Ellen (surnames suppressed), told how their unhappy experiences with European men led to their association with Chinese men. In each case, it was only after reaching the bottom of the European social scale that they formed a liaison with a Chinese man. But each spoke highly of her lover, Hannah, for example, declaring 'There could not be a better man to me in the world.' These women had lost contact with other Europeans, and all smoked opium; Ellen was an addict who smoked constantly. The Reverend Le Rennetel supported their claim, describing Chinese men as 'excellent husbands', but also describing the way that prostitutes who lived with the Chinese 'gave themselves at night to sailors', thus contracting 'terrible diseases'.

The Chinese men living 'in constancy' with European women also exerted their authority over them, attempting to make them conform to traditional notions of correct female behaviour. Hannah for example stated that 'My man does not like me to go out much, or go to the hotel, or anything like that', and Ellen, when asked whether the man she was with allowed her to have intercourse with other men, said no, he objected to it. Nora Ah Toy's 1891 evidence reveals the tension which could arise when this control was resisted. Their twenty-seven year marriage had apparently broken down a couple of years earlier. She was eager to give evidence to the enquiry despite her husband locking up her clothes. She was determined to damage his reputation ('He is a bad man... He is as big an old gambler as anybody else'), although when the commissioners pursue their chief concern, a charge of bribery with which Ah Toy has been associated, her

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36 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.382.
37 Opium was seen to be the most salient issue, of 'momentous consideration'; most of these women were 'all more or less slaves to "the habit"...the opium pipe beclouds their lives.' The men with whom they live are not addicts and often try to stop them smoking. Ibid., pp.385, 21.
38 Ibid., pp.171, 174.
39 Ibid., p.382, 386.
evidence perforce substantiates his case.\textsuperscript{40} These women’s experiences refute the common perception of Chinese exploitation, showing the men to be caring and generous. They were in a position to move beyond the cultural stereotypes of racism to a more intimate and informed understanding. Hannah for example explains that she has lived with her Chinese lover for a long time, \textit{‘...and understand their language, and as I live with him I have to follow the Chinese fashion as well.’}\textsuperscript{4}\textsuperscript{41} She acted as a cultural intermediary between Europeans and Chinese, explaining Chinese motives and correcting European misapprehensions regarding their way of life.\textsuperscript{42}

The intersection of gender with other structures of power and meaning destabilises many of the categories we use to conceptualise the past. The notions of morality common to white and Chinese men structured specific forms of interaction according to opportunity. As the following chapter demonstrates, inventive ways were found to circumvent white restraints.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p.463.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.382.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.382-383. This role has been noted elsewhere, for example with respect to Indian (New World) women: C.Kidwell, ‘Indian Women as Cultural mediators,’ \textit{Ethnohistory}, 39(2), 1992, pp.97-107.
Chapter 7. 'Many Inventions': the Chinese in the Rocks 1892-1930.

God hath made men upright; but they have sought out many inventions.
Ecclesiastes ii:29.

The barriers erected by white legislation effectively limited Chinese immigration into Australia from the late nineteenth century, and especially after 1901, with the enactment of the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act. With more Chinese departing than arriving, as those who had grown old went home for good, and the continued exclusion of women, the total Australian Chinese population steadily diminished. There was a pronounced 'urban drift'; occupations such as laundering and market gardening were abandoned, but between 1910-20, large wholesale fruit and vegetable distributing firms began to be established, especially in what was now the centre of Chinese life in Sydney, Surry Hills. ¹ In the Rocks, the declining population noted in 1891 continued to diminish, but those who were left largely maintained the structures of their existence. Viewed as dangerous and alien, they chose to appropriate forms valued by Europeans, as well as to deny them, mimicking and transforming them into the familiar, as well as walling them out. This chapter explores the strategies of communication which developed on the street and in other public places, in dealings with organisations and individuals, such as shipping companies and the Customs Department, the police, interpreters, neighbours, missions, and schools.

¹ C. Choi, Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia, Sydney University Press, 1975, pp.43-7. In Australia in 1911, there were only 1,456, or 6% of the total Australian-born population. C.Yong, The Chinese in New South Wales and Victoria 1901-21, with Special Reference to Sydney and Melbourne, Ph.D., Australian National University, Canberra, 1966, pp.83-7.
Some of these encounters were violent and racist, however, communicating nothing but hate. The Chinese were most vulnerable to attack by larrikins or boys on the streets. The pattern of assault was straightforward: a Chinese man would be going about his business when one or more Europeans would throw stones or otherwise attack him. Sometimes he sought refuge in a friendly house or shop, ran away, or occasionally tried to fight back, though usually against the odds. In 1892, for example, two men, Michael Lennon and John Offord, were charged at the Central Police Court with having assaulted Ah Cum Clina. At about 11p.m. on the preceding Saturday the accused and several other men had passed Ah Cum Clina, and as they did so one of them knocked against him, and then he was assaulted by the other. He gave them 'no provocation, but remonstrated with them, and then knocked one of them down'. Lennon was fined three pounds, including 21s professional costs and 10s interpreter's fee, and Offord 40s, with 10s interpreter's fee. Chinese-English word-books of the period preserve poignant fragments of Chinese attempts to communicate even here. One example, dating to the 1880s, contains English phrases such as 'you have no reason,' 'he is full of spite,' 'ask your own conscience,' 'coward,' and 'don't bother me.'

Sometimes the Chinese response to prejudice and hostility was overt and angry, and translated into white terms, for example when Sun Johnson, editor of the *Chinese Australian Herald*, wrote indignantly to the Colonial Secretary to protest policemen insultingly securing Chinese prisoners by their queues, or when Chinese writers expressed their view of the "Harsh and Vexatious Restrictions"

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2 They pleaded not guilty and were fined five pounds each, 12 pounds for the damage, or six months hard labour. *The Evening News*, 1 March, 1892.
of the intercolonial barriers to immigration. They sought to demonstrate their acceptability and worth according to European codes, but abandoning neither Chinese tradition, nor Chinese goals. A strong sense of equality with Europeans was often declared, for example when in 1891 successful businessman Ung Quoy was asked whether he kept a fan-tan table in the cellar of Tin War and Co, opposite the Sailors Home. He angrily responded, 'What do you ask me that for? I am as good as a European.' And when Yuen Tah is reminded that the Commission wants to prosecute their enquiry into the 'gambling, opium-smoking, and filthy places' of the Chinese, he retorts through the interpreter, 'I want to explain how opium was forced upon the Chinese. It was forced upon them by Englishmen.' These attempts to assert Chinese identity established equivalence by reference to European standards. In between two extremes - the reproduction of Chinese tradition, and the proficient appropriation of white cultural forms - lay an array of inventive and provisional responses to contact, forming a kind of cultural pidgin. Food and drink was one tangible system of social relationships which could be managed on public occasions, such as when in 1894 Quong Tart, on behalf of the Lin Yik Tong, presented visiting opera singer Miss Ada Crossley with a 'China cup and saucer'.

**Economic relationships**

Economically, the Chinese were largely autonomous, although the city provided opportunities for cross-cultural consumption; there is evidence both for Chinese-only supply networks as well as for economic interaction. In March 1904 Customs Inspector Donohoe refers to Ah Seck, who 'carried on the

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5 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February, 1893.
8 Newspaper clipping (no citation), 21 March 1894, Quong Tart and Family Papers, 1831-1940, Box 4, 1882-1894.
business of pork butcher supplying only Chinese'. Moreover, some whites refused to allow the Chinese to shop with them: Dawson the grocer for example claimed that they had 'plenty of rows' because they wanted to 'pick the fruit about'. Archaeological evidence for remote mining communities suggests the use of predominately Chinese-made goods, but the urban archaeological pattern as indicated at Samsons' Cottage suggests use of European goods, such as household crockery and groceries, and personal items including a brooch and a toy soldier.

All-Chinese trade networks were seen as evidence of the Chinese failure to contribute to Australian society as a whole. In 1897, 'J.A.P.' wrote in refutation of this 'Popular Fallacy', and T.A.Coghlan's claim that 'if the Chinese, to his habits of industry, added a capacity for consuming the articles which the European laborer produces, he would not be so cordially disliked.' He argued that the Chinese drew their supplies of food, clothing and luxuries from their own country, pointing to 'the statistics of imports from Hong Kong and other Chinese exports to NSW for 1895... [which] equals 8 pounds per capita. As the food and clothing allowance of the poorest Chinese labourer is 26 pounds/year (based on enquiries made at 20 gardens in the metropolitan district), he must use 18 pounds of necessaries per year obtained from non-Chinese sources. So even a conservative estimate shows that "John" uses 243,990 pounds worth of goods of our produce, manufacture or importation annually.' Merchants such as Way Kee traded with Europeans, buying their groceries in the stores in George Street, their drapery from McArthur and Co., or patronising Christopher Newton's, Hoffnung's, and W.Gardiner and Co. They

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9 Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 3, 1904.
11 T.Coghlan, Results of New South Wales Census, 1891, Government Printer, Sydney, 1894.
12 The Daily Telegraph, 4 August, 1897.
13 Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.56.
sold items such as opium usually to their own countrymen, but sometimes to adventurous Europeans.\textsuperscript{14}

Shipping companies had a special relationship with the Chinese, their existence of course depending on continued Chinese movement in and out of the country. They advertised in the Chinese press, and, in the debate surrounding the White Australia Policy, formed a pro-Chinese lobby.\textsuperscript{15} In 1897 it was pointed out that

\begin{quote}
The trade between Sydney and China involving the steamers of the E. and A. Company, the China Steam Navigation Company, and the Nippon Yusen Kaisha make around 52 round trips per annum. The freight and passage money earned by the steamers of the first two companies on a trip from China to Sydney equals 600-700 pounds, while the receipts of the upward trip would be about 120 pounds. The Japanese line, recently established, would earn scarcely as much. The victualling, coaling etc of these ships must involve spending many thousands of pounds in Sydney every year, while the advantage of producing a tourist route to China and Japan and the Straits settlements, with ramifications to the Philippine Islands and America [is great]... The maintenance of these excellent services would be impossible without the Chinese trade.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Some George Street firms were agents for shipping firms, like Tin War and Co. for the E. and A. Company.\textsuperscript{17} They acted as sponsors and information bureaus, informing Customs of Chinese movements, and chiefly their intended destination on arrival, usually with the firms of George Street and elsewhere in the city.

\textsuperscript{14} For one pound, 0s. 3d. for a tin containing about 5 oz. The average consumption was 3 dwt./week, and 'a fair amount' 3s. or 4s. worth in a week. Ibid., p.60.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{The Daily Telegraph}, 4 August, 1897.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Gambling Commission}, 1891-2, p.106.
Shipping companies were also forced by the Australian government to become the 'first line of defence' against illegal immigration, subject to fines when Chinese deserted or stowed away.\textsuperscript{18} For example, G.S.Yuill and Co, agent for the China Navigation Company, traced and arrested a deserter from the "Tsinan" in July 1903, and was refunded the fine in May 1904.\textsuperscript{19} In July 1904 the Oceanic Steamship Co., American and Australian Line, signed for Burns Philp and Co., undertaking to carry out the identification muster of crews, furnish a list of crew members 'not of European birth or descent', to accept service for any legal proceedings that might be instigated, and to pay any penalty that might be imposed under the provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.\textsuperscript{20} They took an active role in developing the mechanisms of immigration.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{Charity}

Merchants participated in white society in ways that actively sought to impress. Systems of welfare were an integral element of Chinese society, and became a crucial strategy for acceptance from the white Australian community. As noted above, the extreme stratification of Chinese late imperial society placed merchants lowest, below the hereditary nobles, scholar-gentry, peasants and artisans, although, in practice, this could be overcome, especially in the later nineteenth century, through identification with the values of the literati.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Yarwood, \textit{Asian Immigration}, 1964. This role was explicitly encouraged by Customs. See for example, Internal memorandum, July 1908, Department of External Affairs, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 8, 1908/32 - 1908/7011.
\item \textsuperscript{19} May 1904, file notes. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 3, 1904.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Accepted by Collector of Customs, 2 August 1904. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 2, 1903/2583 - 1903/10701.
\item \textsuperscript{21} For example, in March 1904, when Messrs Gibbs Bright and Co suggested increasing the bond from 100 pounds per Chinese to 2000 pounds. Correspondence relating to issue of bonds (securities) re prohibited immigrants, 1904-1948. Collector of Customs, SP 740/1/1.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Philanthropy was systematically developed by successful merchants, as a strategy for upward social mobility. In Sydney, Chinese merchants such as Quong Tart became known for their generosity and charity. The Anglo community often referred to his charitable works in glowing terms; 'good works', in Victorian terms, were a solid, positive qualification, comprehending a successful strategic response to historical circumstances, shaped by Chinese cultural tradition, but comparably powerful in European terms. The privileged Quong Tart played an important coordinating role in organising an unceasing round of teas, dinners, processions and other fund-raising events, combining moral worth with public display. In 1893, a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that 'it is not generally known that the Chinese in Sydney subscribe most liberally towards the different hospitals and institutions, over 250 pounds being collected annually from different Chinese merchants and storekeepers. These statements I can prove, showing that there is a good deal of humane feeling in the breast of a Chinaman.' Through expressing values shared with whites, this practice created a sense of sympathy with a particular image of China.

This persona was harnessed by merchants in their struggles with white officialdom. When prominent merchant Chow Kum, of 230 Elizabeth Street, applied to have his wife allowed to enter the Commonwealth, following a disastrous fire at his warehouse, he was initially refused, and his associates were mobilised in support: the Manager of the Union Bank of Australia Ltd wrote '...he has been the means of getting up demonstrations for charitable purposes on several occasions and to a considerable amount and for which he has received medals'. Lasseter & Co. contributed two testimonials:

> Perhaps the most notable function was the "Orphan's Fair", held during the latter part of last year. At this fair Mr Chow Kum, through Mr Quong Tart,

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24 Sun Johnson to *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 March, 1893.
organised a most attractive display in which the leading Chinese merchants of Sydney took a prominent part. I am sure I am speaking for the Orphan boys and girls of the Kincumber and Gladstone House Orphanage, in aid of which the fair was organised, when I say I am heartily sorry to learn of the heavy loss Mr Chow Kum has sustained by the recent fire at Hentsch Bond.

Quong Tart noted that 'he was foremost in organising the Chinese Procession in connection with the Huge Demonstration provided to augment the Patriotic Fund during the late South African trouble.' Customs Inspector Donohoe supported the application, informing Atlee Hunt that Chow Kum had 'rendered exceptional service in connection with the trial and conviction of certain Chinese in the "Chingtu" alleged murder case'. And Chow Kum himself appealed again for his wife to be allowed to come 'and comfort me in my misfortune'. In May 1903 the Prime Minister reconsidered the matter and granted his request. Incidents such as this demonstrate the interrelatedness of public display and charitable works in creating a popular identity for wealthy Chinese merchants, deployed in practice through personal business and neighbourhood connections.25

Gatekeepers: 1. police

'It was well known that Lower George-street was one of the best beats for making money. The police there were not content with making a watch in three or four months, but must have diamond rings as well. They were simply paid to shut their eyes.'
William Davis, Seaman's Union, 1891.26

Merchants decisively shaped the forms of Chinese interaction with Europeans, getting things done through guanxi connections and often successfully subverting European regulations. While these practices are often difficult to perceive through European eyes, certain events can be understood this way. The

25 Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 2, 1903/2583 - 1903/10701.
notion of gate-keepers as key figures in *guanxi* networks, or *guanxiwàng*, informed the relationships between the Rocks Chinese and the officials with whom they had contact, such as policemen and customs officials. Gatekeeping in Chinese society was (and is) the result of the huge number of officials and bureaucrats who supervised distribution of goods, people and opportunities, and the importance of personal relationships as well as material inducements in unlocking them. The *guanxi* network mediated between social groups, but always through strategically located individuals; these often stood to benefit personally, thus blurring the line between *guanxixué* and corruption. The presentation of offerings to officials and influential persons echoed the practical attitude toward the gods or immortals in traditional Chinese popular religion.\(^\text{27}\) In China, *guanxi* was implicated in what a western scholar has termed the 'Qing bureaucracy's endemic organised corruption'.\(^\text{28}\) Nevertheless, Yang argues, *'the art of guanxi cannot be reduced to a modern western notion of corruption because the personalistic qualities of obligation, indebtedness, and reciprocity are just as important in transactions as material benefit.'\(^\text{29}\)

The Rocks police represented law and order - the barrier between evil and the public. They spent their time on the streets, passing and re-passing the shops and houses, becoming, in their uniform, an emblem of security and safety. They developed good relations with the Chinese community, presumably based on knowledge built up from daily encounters; these ties fitted into Chinese and white ways of understanding personal relationships.


\(^{28}\) Smith, *China's Cultural Heritage*, 1994, pp.64-5.

A policeman chats with two neatly-wrapped-up women, Ferry Lane. Tyrrell Collection, Courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum.
The evident friendliness which prevailed had been taken as evidence for corruption, and became the focus of the Royal Commission. The European reasoning was that gambling was illegal, so that for it to have flourished directly under the eye of the police, corruption must have existed. As ex-journalist turned photographer Maguire put it, using a theatrical image which stressed the logic of concealment, 'the police would not ring a bell all over town if they were going to accept bribes from Chinamen - that would be done behind the scenes. I have been on the stage before today, and I know the ropes. Pressmen do know a little more than the majority of human beings.'

Bowker the carpenter told how he had been in Moy Yook's shop, at 202 George Street, one day when a policeman, Constable O'Sullivan came in and said to him (Moy Yook), 'Do you want to fight?' The Chinese man replied 'I will fight you'. The policeman walked through into the hall and the Chinaman went with him. Further than that I cannot say.' He suggested that the policeman, having given a password, went into 'some interior apartment' of the Chinese shop 'for tip'. As Bowker concluded, speaking in terms which are typical, 'I do not think you will find out much about the police, because it is done in a curious way.' Again, the Chinese community knew of the police raid before it happened, and so Davis, for example, insisted that a policeman must have been bribed, informing the Chinese by going into their shops to buy crowbars.

Several of the Rocks police officers were said to have been suspiciously successful in amassing property, but Playfair explained how Atwill, Carney and Higgins had been frugal and saving, buying cheap land in the Rocks and building their own houses. The accusation was also made that when a raid was carried out, the police dived for the money on the table - explained by the police as confiscation.

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31 Ibid., p.83.
32 Ibid., pp.44, 52.
33 Ibid., p.88.
These perceptions of complicity reveal a range of relationships between the police force and the Chinese of the Rocks. Exceptions were the violent Constable Quealey, who ‘was a terror to them... he frightened them’, and Sergeant Dawson who intimidated Way Kee into paying him protection money. But relationships seem mostly to have been friendly, for example between Ah Toy and Atwill, and between the gamblers of George Street and the jovial plainclothes Constables, Beadman and Carson. Witnesses to the 1891 enquiry told how Atwill spoke to the Chinese ‘in a free and easy manner’. Several white witnesses refer to being told of chests of tea or jars of ginger being given to Inspector Atwill.

The charge of policemen receiving watches and diamond rings, reported in the Sydney Morning Herald following the 1891 shop-keepers’ deputation to Parkes, turned out to have stemmed from an allusion Davis had made – ‘it was an old joke about a policeman getting a watch in three months from the time of his entering the force. But it appeared he was not satisfied with a watch, and wanted a diamond ring,’ referring to the bribery which was supposed to exist. Some policemen did wear diamond rings. Constable Beadman was said to be ‘very heavy in the paraphernalia of his jewellery,’ and to wear a very large diamond ring, which he claimed to have bought in a pawn shop. Constables Beadman and Carson, plain clothes men, were intimate with the Chinese; they were seen leaning over the counter of gambling dens in Queen’s-place, and left ‘joking and laughing...I have seen them pat gamblers on their backs, and ask what won this game and who won...’

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34 Quealey treated people ‘very roughly’ when dispersing crowds; one man broke his foot leaping a stool to get away from him. Ibid., pp.81, 88. Maguire had been informed by one of Way Kee’s clerks, and it was ‘common talk in neighbourhood at the time’ (ca. 1881), that he had paid Dawson a ‘large sum of money’ in return for his silence about stolen goods such as scrap iron and engine parts supposedly in Way Kee’s possession. Ibid., pp.60-1.
35 Ibid., p.35.
36 Ibid., p.23.
37 Ibid., p.21.
38 Ibid., p.24.
39 Ibid., p.64.
that...I have seen them drinking and having dinners with the boss gamblers. 40

Armstrong told of them regularly going into an oyster-saloon in George Street with Chinese and having supper. 41 Alfred Chambers spoke of seeing them day after day going into Moy Ping's - he wondered who they were and was astonished to find that they were policemen. 42 Hing Jang and Moy Ping were often seen in company with Constables Carson and Beadman - they would meet casually on the street then go to the Coffee Palace - on 'very friendly terms'. 43 This relationship seems to have been part of the Constables' enviably unconstrained working conditions, of which they made the most. After the 1891 enquiry began, Nolan told how he had seen Carson and Beadman stand at the doorway of the hostile Nock's shop, and 'in mockery', 'hold up their hands to show the rings on their fingers and pull out their watches...They were just like two schoolboys' 44 Even Constable Adair seems to resent the plainclothes men: 'Oh well, I cannot help it; if police officers will go bumming round there all day smoking cigars, it is not our fault.' 45

Nock and Chambers accused Ah Toy of obtaining a bill from them for a fancy cabinet, which he wanted back-dated eighteen months, for the purpose of disguising it as a sale, not a gift to Inspector Atwill. Ah Toy was a well-known cabinet-maker at 192 George Street, employing over forty men. 46 When questioned, Ah Toy explained that he normally charged about seven pounds for such a bookcase, but 'If it was a friend I would give it him cheaper. If he was a good man, who looked after me in the city... A Chinaman who has a good heart will give a box of tea or some other present. There is nothing in that.' 47 He had sold the bookcase to

40 Ibid., p.7.
41 Ibid., p.22.
42 Ibid., p.25.
43 Ibid., pp.34, 35.
44 Ibid., p.35.
45 Ibid., p.35.
46 Including two servants, four polishers, and one cook. They all slept on the premises, in a fifteen room house. He lived upstairs with his European wife Nora. Ibid., p.37.
Inspector Atwill for five pounds, because 'Well, sometimes if people know me for a time I give them something for nothing.' He was questioned closely, but convinced the commissioners that he really had sold it honestly. In official European terms bribery was dangerous because it was submerged; the forces of law and order were being corrupted by the alien Chinese in hidden ways and places. Plain clothes-men Carson and Beadman are doubly suspect because their role is more ambiguous: they already straddle the boundary between guard and guarded, and are perceived even by their colleagues as having escaped from regulation. Their appearance as well as their behaviour created an impression of license, as they were freed by their plain clothes from the emblematic status of uniformed police, to cross Chinese thresholds, descend into the cellars of the gambling-houses.

The Commissioners decided, however, that in order to be successful, corruption must have extended right through the ranks, which was impossible. But while the charges against the police were 'hopelessly general', and 'broke down generally under examination', they do, with many qualifications, conclude that 'in their opinion the police might, though at some inconvenience, have taken more active measures for the suppression of gambling in the Chinese quarters...', although emphasising that this would have meant 'subordinating the public interest in other directions'. They recommend changes to police powers to apprehend gamblers.

On a close reading of the evidence, it seems clear that the police were tolerating gambling. From the Chinese side, informal relationships with 'gate-keepers' like Carson and Beadman into the well-guarded gambling places they were transforming the other into the familiar, creating particularistic ties to effect day to day ends. The police often

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48 Ibid., e.g., p.19.
49 Ibid., pp. 22-26.
50 And there is also evidence for whites adopting this view: Atwill told Maguire that he thought that policemen should have their photographs taken free, 'He also considered that the baker, the butcher, and that the coal and firewood man should supply him free of charge for the protection rendered
appear as mediators between prejudiced whites and the Chinese, administering justice according to the letter of the law. Heated complaints by whites such as Thomas Nock are dismissed.\textsuperscript{51} The police also provided the testimonials which were an important element in the Chinese relationship with white immigration administration.\textsuperscript{52}

**Gatekeepers: 2. customs officials**

In Chinese eyes, giving gifts in exchange for material gain or to strengthen personal relationships was an integral aspect of *guanxi*. So it was appropriate for Way Kee to 'give a little ginger away to different people; ... the men in the shop would know my friends. Personally, I would not know who received the things. The people in the Custom-house and people on the wharfs I would give to.'\textsuperscript{53} The administration of the NSW Restrictive Immigration Act of 1888, and then the successive acts of 1898 and 1901, was carried out by Customs officials working from Customs House at Circular Quay, from the water police docks at Campbell's Cove, and around to Walsh Bay and Darling harbour. In November 1898 'Chinese Inspector' Donohoe was appointed to carry out the provisions of that year's *Immigration Restriction Act*.\textsuperscript{54} The administration of both customs and immigration was carried out by one department. Inspector Donohoe's duties included boarding new arrivals in the harbour, checking passengers and cargo.

\textsuperscript{51} e.g. 6 Oct 1891, Constable Dick terms one complaint as 'wholly unfounded and calculated to mislead.' Col.Sec.Corr.Rec'd., 95.16374.

\textsuperscript{52} Eventually some officers' references became rather perfunctory: in September 1910 Sergeant Jeffes, of No. 2 Police Station, provided a written testimonial for Willie Choy - 'he bears a very good character and is a respectable, hard-working man' - who was in gaol at the time. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 12, 1910/4293 - 1910/5853.

\textsuperscript{53} *Gambling Commission*, 1891-2, p.56.

\textsuperscript{54} He may have been there already. Col.Sec.Corr.Rec'd., 98/19013.
taking photographs of crews as an identity check. Sometimes he moved away from the water, into the Rocks or the Domain, to pursue connections and people. He developed a close relationship with many Chinese, especially those merchants of George Street who had trading and maritime links, and with whom he dealt regularly over a long period.

His primary role was to exclude the Chinese, however, who proved indefatigable in overcoming official restrictions, and who once ashore were usually safe. In June 1890, for example, he reported seven stowaways dressed as saloon waiters aboard the S.S."Changsha", concluding that 'There is sufficient evidence to show that there is an organised conspiracy existing to smuggle Chinese and that arrangements are made by Sydney Chinese firms, with persons on board the ships trading from China - and that the owners and masters are not privy to such arrangements.' Most of the illegal passengers were on their way to the nearby George Street merchants, attempting to avoid paying the 100 pound poll tax which did not cease to be imposed until ca. 1903. A month later he apprehended ten more stowaways aboard the S.S."Taiynan", 'each having paid a large sum as passage money to Chinese and possibly Europeans belonging to the crew, and were consigned to certain firms in Sydney. They were discovered due to information given by a Sydney Chinese merchant. Another means of evading the law has been discovered by these astute people...'. Donald proposed to take a group photograph when the ship arrived as a means of checking its identity, a measure which was subsequently introduced, but as the S.S.Courtfield incident of 1908 demonstrates, was ineffective.56

55 Yarwood, Asian Immigration, 1964, p.46.
56 In ca. 1890 Inspector Donald was offered a bribe of 30 pounds to allow the exchange of Chinese on board the 'Taiynan'. Collector of Customs, Collector of Customs, Sydney. Outward Letter Books to Under Secretary of the Treasury. 1859-1901. A1014/14, Box 3.
But as time goes on, Donohoe's contact with the Chinese becomes increasingly friendly and cooperative, even as the nation's White Australia Policy was cemented in place. The *Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test* (CEDTs) which were required by those hoping to return to China and then re-enter, required evidence of domicile in Australia and testimonials to the applicant's character.57 A network of Rocks community relationships, comprising neighbours, policemen and other officials such as the postmaster of the Rocks' George Street Post Office, emerges from these documents through the attached letters and memoranda, usually endorsed or annotated by Donohoe. They also underline the important role of the George Street merchants in sponsoring these applications. For example, in September 1904, On Chong and Co of 223 George Street applied for a CEDT on behalf of Yee Lum, their bookkeeper for nine years, and Donohoe wrote that 'he is a very respectable man indeed and since his return has been constantly under my eye at the Customs House doing the business in connection with the imports of On Chong and Co'.58 In other cases, Donohoe consulted with the 'George Street firms' regarding an applicant's character and history.59

Subversion of entry regulations was constant throughout the period.60 While officials focused on illegal entry, importation of opium was often winked at. In

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57 After December 1905, clause 3n of the *Immigration Restriction Act* which allowed for residents to leave temporarily was replaced by section 4B which required applicants to be of good character and to have resided in Australia for five years. J.Stacker and P.Stewart, *Chinese Immigrants and Chinese-Australians in NSW*, Australian Archives (NSW), 1996, pp.9-10.
58 Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 3, 1904.
59 This echoes the arrangement reached in other south-east Asian settlements, where prominent Chinese were appointed by the host state as a means of achieving indirect rule over the Chinese community. See for example L.Skinner, 'Creolized Chinese Societies in Southeast Asia,' in A.Reid, (ed.), *Sojourners and Settlers. Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese*, Asian Studies Association of Australia, Southeast Asia Publications Series, No. 28, 1996, pp.51-93.
60 In 1924, for example, Ah Hoe applied for a CEDT, giving his address as 30 Essex Street. Investigation by Senior Boarding Officer Clifford led him to conclude that Ah Hoe had probably entered the Commonwealth as a stowaway, had resided at 120 Gloucester Street and that he had since left and was 'not likely to call at the Customs House'. Case of Ah Hoe, Miscellaneous
Ah Way, Certificate of Domicile, 1904. Australian Archives (NSW Office). Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test, 1904-1951, ST84/1.
Ah Woo, Certificate of Domicile, 1904. Australian Archives (NSW), Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test, 1904-1951, ST84/1.
1891 opium was an illegal import, but Jasper Ung Quoy, resident partner in Tin War and Co, readily admitted that he sold it by the case. He said that the police knew he sold it, but had never asked him about it, and that 'all the landing-waiters, and collectors, and Customs officers know it'. Sometimes Customs was assisted by Chinese informers who either disapproved of opium-smoking, or were settling some score. Sometimes this practice itself was exploited. In November 1905, for example, Revenue Detective Inspector Donohoe reported how he

was approached by a Sydney Chinaman on the 14th instant, who asked me if the company would give any reward if the Chinaman who deserted was arrested. I said, I thought a reward would be given for information and suggested that he should see the Agents for the "Australian". ... He went away and returned at 11 o'clock, and said that the deserter was near the Swimming Baths near the Domain, that he saw him there a few minutes before, fishing near the sea wall.

I went to the Domain and saw a Chinaman there. I questioned him but he denied being from the "Australian." Being suspicious of the informer, I took this man (whom I had no doubt was the deserter) to the office of the Agents, and assisted by the Superintendent, Captain Green, obtained the services of one of the Chinese Merchants as interpreter, and ascertained that this man did not wish or desire to desert from his vessel, but had been made to believe that he would receive good wages if he came on shore to work, and that he had stayed at a Chinaman's house in the city, and was induced to leave the vessel.

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62 For example, in September 1921, Yee Wah of Flinders Street, Sydney, wrote to the Melbourne Customs Office, informing them 'that Sun Goong Shin of 198 Bourke St has imported 600 Tins of Opium by St. Albans of which that boat will arrive in Melbourne Monday. Its valued @ 12 pounds per tin at the present time the total amount is worth 7000 pounds. Sun Goong Shing has carried on this business for the past 3 years and each time has been most successful in landing it. The cook of the steerage brings it out from China to him, but some of the Customs has a great deal to do with it because they get paid for it/they pay 1 pound per tin for each tin that is carried ashore. Im sure some of them are making a great fortune from it/not only Chinese smoke it but many of the white girls also/ I hope you will see into this at your earliest and prevent this deadly poison from landing/ each trip the same people are most successful Im sure if you watch the boat & place carefully you will have a good haul you may be sure.' Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 11/28, Folder 2.
Donohoe concluded that because the informer was a friend of the owner of the house, it had all been a device to obtain the reward offered by the agents, and so 'a warrant was issued for the arrest of a Chinaman named Ah Hung.' In this incident may be seen the fragmentation of the Chinese 'community', as its members exploit one another for personal advantage, and Donohoe seeks assistance from within it in upholding European law. It also evokes the experiential landscape behind these relationships: the paths traced between the harbour's shipping and administration, the strategically located Chinese tenements, and the other streets and spaces around Sydney Cove. For Donohoe's Chinese informer, these, like white restrictions, were known quantities, to be manipulated for his particular ends.

It is also possible that it was Inspector Donohoe's growing intimacy with the Chinese community that was the reason for his suspension in 1924. In October of that year, Senior Boarding Officer L.L.Clifford, relieving Donohoe while 'suspended from duty', forwarded to his superiors a packet of Electrotype found in one of Donohoe's drawers, which reportedly read 'Lam Kee Macao Opium'. Clifford's memo is wonderfully evocative of rivalry between the customs officials, implying that Inspector Donohoe had conspired with Dick King, the manager of King Nam Jang's business at Unwins Stores, George Street, to smuggle opium into the country. Subsequently Donohoe disappears from the Customs records, no doubt to the regret of the Chinese.

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63 Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 4, 1905/94 - 1905/2168.
64 The archive box which contains these documents also contains the packet of electrotype in question, which interestingly does not bear the word 'opium' in English: did Clifford have a translation of the Chinese characters? Or was he simply manufacturing evidence against Donohoe? General Correspondence Files, 'B' Series, (Recorded by Collector of Customs, Sydney), SP11/28, B1924/3563.
Senior Boarding Officer.

A packet containing Electrotype found in drawer in Revenue Detective’s Branch.

The Collector/

On 16-10-24 Boarding Officer R.W. Wilson found an open packet in a drawer in the Revenue Detective’s Branch.

2. The packet was addressed “King, Nam, Jang, 85 George St. North, Sydney, N.S.W.”

3. The packet was found to contain the attached electrotypes. Both blocks have been built up with paper which suggests that they have been made up to the correct height for use with printing type. These blocks bear the trademark of "Lam Kee Macao Opium" (number one grade of Smoking Opium).


5. I have always suspected that this firm dealt in Opium.

6. Dick King, the Manager of King, Nam, Jang, is very friendly with Mr. Donohoe.

(Sgd.) L.L. CLIFFORD.

Senior Boarding Officer.

29-10-1924.

Memorandum from L.L. Clifford, Senior Boarding Officer, 29 October, 1924, regarding discovery of electrotype stamps 'Lam Kee Macao' and his suspicions regarding fellow officer Donohoe. Australian Archives (NSW Office), General Correspondence Files, 'B' series, 1924, 1183-1924, SP11/28
Impression and photograph of stamps, courtesy of Australian Archives (NSW Office).
In the hand-written letters and notes attached to the applications for CEDTs, it is possible to visualise more intimate links between the Chinese and whites. Chinese boys, for example, who were brought out and educated at the Commercial School in Stanley Street were then put to work in the firms as clerks. Here they seem to have dealt with the post-master, W. Powell, who subsequently provided testimonials for many CEDT applications. In 1903 Kum Tong applied for a CEDT so as to visit his parents in China. He was a bookkeeper and storeman, with 100 pounds in the bank. A letter accompanied the application from the George Street North postmaster, stating that 'as I have been brought in contact with him almost daily I can bear testimony as to his conduct being that of a highly respectable and worthy Citizen...'

The photographs attached to the CEDTs were taken by Maguire, on his premises at 'The Anthony Studio/ 196 George St. Sydney' (stamped on the back), and they are often, especially for the poorer classes of Chinese, accompanied by a letter from Sergeant George Jeffes of No. 2 Police Station, usually in the following form: 'I have known the applicant Ho Way, "A Licensed Hawker" for the

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65 For example, an application in 1900 from an employee of On Yik and Lee, at 225 George Street, stated that the firm supported the Reform Society, and that he wanted his son to come to Australia to learn English and English ways. Thomas Playfair, butcher and politician, wrote a letter of support. 15 June, 1903, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1390 - 1903/2583.

66 8 April, 1903, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 2, 1903/2583 - 1903/10701.

67 Another, from W.L.Moore, Manager of the English, Scottish and Australian Bank, Queens Wharf, demonstrates that links between the Chinese firms and this institution had survived from the early 1890s. In September 1905, Chew Lee and Co, 'Wholesale Greengrocers and Fruiterers' of 168 George Street North, applied on behalf of Law Chong, supported by the recommendations of postmaster of George Street North: 'has always appeared to me to be a highly respectable and studious youth...I am certain all who have the pleasure of meeting him will be glad to hear of his return', and the principal of the Commercial School in Stanley Street noted his 'gentlemanly behaviour both in and out of school'. He worked as a clerk in the firm. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 3, 1905.
past 8 or 9 years. He bears a very good character and is a non-smoker of opium’. There are often testimonials from businessmen presumably known through financial dealings, such as W.G. Whiting, Director, of Henry Turnbull & Co Ltd, of York, Market and Clarence Streets. Europeans who worked with or for the Chinese firms are regularly called upon - the signature of Henry Palser, J.P., of On Chong and Co.'s, recurs throughout these files; perhaps he had a wider role as middleman, or mediator. A carrier, Rogers, operated his business from 210 George Street and is often sought out. Lindsey Williams worked for the Resumed Properties Department, in Princes Street, and must have developed close ties with the local Chinese; on his retirement in November 1922 he worked as clerk for Chung Lun, at 120 Gloucester Street, until his death in July 1924.

Interpreters

Some Chinese chose to become interpreters, playing an explicitly in-between role. They tended to be of the better-educated classes, often learning English in Hong Kong before coming to Australia. William Pow Chee, for example, kept schools for his adult countrymen in Harrington Street, Little Essex Street, and Queen Street, into the 1890s. He made a living as an interpreter, acting for

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68 Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 8, 1908/32 - 1908/7011.
69 Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 8, 1908/32 - 1908/7011.
70 e.g., William Lindsey to Dept. of External Affairs, 20 May 1912, attached to Ah Dippe's Application for CEDT, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 15, 1912/14-1912/4372.
Chinese, or for the Australian government. Interpreters were at call, like Alfred Archey for the S.S.Courtfield incident in December 1908.

Some, like Mr Goldtown, exploited linguistic skill for an immediate purpose and then moved on. Others, like official government interpreter Ah Chong, who changed his name to Alfred Law and lived at 113 Gloucester Street from ca. 1876 with his brother Joseph, became permanent residents. In the 1860s, Ah Chong, then living at 119 Lower George Street, married a white woman, Mary Smith Clark. Alfred Law’s large household was listed in 1891 at both 113 Gloucester and 30 Cambridge Streets, home to a total of fifteen people, including the only Aboriginal person, a man, recorded for the Rocks. In the Gloucester Street residence which still stands south of Longs Lane, five men lived; in Cambridge Street were five men and five women, all Chinese except for the Aboriginal man. The large number of women here is also unusual: was greater latitude extended to these figures? Alfred Law stayed in Australia, as his descendants are currently investigating. Like Alfred Law and his family, interpreters were likely to settle down in Australia, assured of a role in both worlds.

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71 He had acted in twenty cases over the previous six months; he was paid according to the distances he travelled and the length of time occupied by the case - ninety pounds for one case in Queensland, where one Chinese man was supposed to have been murdered by others. In the higher court (Quarter Sessions) he was generally paid five pounds, five s. for a day. Gambling Commission, 1891-2, pp.161-2.

72 Similarly, in 1910, Wong Yue was charged with being a prohibited immigrant. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1 Box 11, 1910/1921 - 1919/4292. Gambling Commission, 1891-2, p.163.

73 1891 Census. S.A.O. NSW Collectors Books R.2537. Other less expected arrangements are also visible: at 74 Harrington Street, for example, two Chinese women are listed alone, under the name of Con Leuing: perhaps prostitutes? At 46 Harrington Street, at Goon Ding’s, eight men, one of whom was white, are listed as living with three white women, pointing to the ‘mixed’ relationships referred to in the Royal Commission.

75 Philip Bramble has been researching his wife’s ancestor Ah Chong who married Mary Smith Clark in the 1860s when they lived in 119 Lower George Street. Phillip Bramble, personal communication, 1995.
'a Commonwealth man of the future': schooling

Momentous events in China during the early twentieth century had profound implications for the overseas communities. The 1911 revolution which ended the Qing dynasty, and the efforts of the May Fourth Movement from 1919, stimulated a further shift towards the west, in addition to the changes in Chinese military and political institutions effected by contact since the 1860s. The reformers actively sought to strengthen bonds with the overseas communities, and in Australia, some wealthy Chinese, especially in Melbourne, played an active role, sending money and propagandising through newspapers, and reading and drama groups. The Republican Government's efforts, together with Chinese reactions to the White Australia Policy, saw a rise in Chinese nationalism overseas. In Sydney, most merchants belonged to the Chinese Empire Reform Association, formed in 1900 by a group of merchants including Thomas Yee Hing and Ping Nam, both of On Chong's in George Street, and Chun Sowe of 166 George Street, for some time its Secretary. The Sydney Association was royalist, aiming to reinstate the Emperor Kuang Hsu as a prelude to social change in China; by contrast, the Melbourne reformers worked directly for reform and modernisation in China. Amongst the Sydney Chinese, growing tension between royalists and republicans saw Thomas Yee Hing and his faction writing to Australian newspapers in an attempt to discredit the revolutionaries in China, and establishing the New South Wales Chinese

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76 I.Hsu, The Rise of Modern China, Oxford University Press, Hong Kong, 1983, p.510. Education overseas had been part of the Self-strengthening Movement, as early as 1872 a group of boys having been sent to Hartford, Connecticut, p.283.


78 Chun Sowe to Collector of Customs, application for a CEDT on the advice of his doctor, for bronchial asthma. June 1902, Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, C.C. SP 42/1 Box 2, 1903/2583-1903/10701.
Chamber of Commerce in 1913, also based in George Street North, which continued as a centre for conservative Chinese activity.\textsuperscript{79}

The politically conscious merchant class, eager to appropriate useful aspects of western culture, sent their sons to Australian schools, taking advantage of students' exemption from the Dictation Test under the 1901 Commonwealth Immigration Act.\textsuperscript{80} In late 1900, for example, On Yik and Lee, of 225 George Street, requested the Customs Department to allow his son, Yip Hop, to remain in New South Wales for a year for the express purpose of studying the English language, and it is his intention to remain for a period of about twelve months. The object of visiting the colony is the outcome of the desire by many Chinese (especially in Canton) for Reform in the laws of the Chinese Empire, and the English laws are favoured most, and where young Chinese have been successful at school in China and have friends or relations in the colonies as in this case, the parents are anxious to send them here with the hope that they will learn much quicker the laws and customs of the British. The relatives of Yip Hop in China are strong supporters of the Reform Society and in their anxiousness to send him out to Sydney to complete his education they omitted to make the necessary application to the authorities on his behalf...

This request included letters of support from elite Chinese such as Sun Johnson (proprietor of the \textit{Chinese Australian Herald}) and Quong Tart.\textsuperscript{81}


\textsuperscript{80} Choi, \textit{Chinese Migration}, 1975, p.41.

\textsuperscript{81} As well as receipts from the \textit{Commercial and Classical School} for Yip Hop's tuition from October to December 1900 (3 pounds, 3s), and for his poll tax. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1390 - 1903/2583. Another request for a refund of the 100 pound poll tax for the son of Yip Moy Hing in November 1900 (refused) refers to placing 'him at a school in a British Colony, where he would learn the ways and customs sooner'. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1, Box 1, 1899/1390 - 1903/2583.
Some whites saw this phenomenon as a first step towards Chinese absorption of Australian culture, as indeed it may have been. In March 1911 an assistant at On Yik and Lee's requested permission for his son Jong Sang, aged 13, to study at Mr Dobbie's School, at 'Arcadia', Victoria Street, Darlinghurst. An accompanying letter of reference from Bramwell and Co of Pitt Street, stated that 'judging from the intelligent, honourable and ambitious character of the man, that it will be an advantage to the Commonwealth to have his boy (a Commonwealth man of the future), educated here, as tending to promote friendly and commercial relations between the two countries. We have known Mr Sheing for about twenty years...' Senior Sergeant Carson of No. 4 Police Station, George Street North, supported the application strongly. Beyond the demographic pattern of exclusion and decline, the nature of Chinese life in Australia was complex. Chinese objectives could become, in practice, the means of cultural change.

Chinese hospitality: 'tea fights'

One important Chinese custom, embedded in the complexities of kinship and food, was for community leaders to express social status through guanxi behaviour such as giving feasts. Descriptions of display by prominent merchants such as Quong Tart reveal their use of this traditional social form in manipulating cultural symbols to forge ties with influential Europeans. Quong Tart played in many ways a unique role in Sydney's Chinese community, having appropriated so many European practices and skills, including a love of Scottish culture and a European wife; he exerted considerable control over the

82 At the same time Sheing, another assistant at On Yik and Lee's, made the same request regarding his 15 year old son Chong Yow. Correspondence relating to immigration restriction and passports. Collector of Customs, SP 42/1 Box 13, 1911/13 - 1911/2795.
Chinese community, and became a de facto cultural ambassador. His popular tea rooms catered to Europeans, unlike the Chinese tea-shops of Lower George Street and Surry Hills, hosting meetings of Louisa Lawson's Dawn Club, for example. But these flexible spaces also became a public, cross-cultural zone, for example to feast both Chinese and European communities during the Chinese New Year. Visiting Maori 'King' Tawhaio had breakfast at the Sydney Arcade Tea Rooms, in return giving Quong Tart a piece of greenstone which he had owned for twenty years. Guanxi travelled well.

In December 1898, the opening of Quong Tart's fifth tea room in Victoria Markets, christened the 'Elite Hall', was reported in the social pages of The Evening News. The opening was appropriately attended by members of the Government, Members of Parliament, consuls, 'ministers of all religions, and persons of every degree: doctors and lawyers, and literateurs and artists, City Fathers, distinguished strangers from the four corners of the earth, heaps of undistinguished ditto.' Miss Soldene, social writer, was the only woman invited to this event, reporting that

This was a tea fight of the first magnitude. A regular red button, yellow-jacket, tea fight, the opening of the new tea room in the Victoria Markets. It is a splendid saloon, with a stage and a pretty back cloth - a scene in China. Monday the whole place was beautifully decorated with flags of all nations, and conspicuous among them ran the golden legend "Quong Tart's Teas. Try a Packet," or words to that effect. Down the centre were long tables with flowers, fruit, cakes of the most adorable, iced and plain, jammy and unjammy; every delicacy in the way of soft drinks, and some particularly choice and particularly

84 R.Travers, Australian Mandarin: The Life and Times of Quong Tart, Kenthurst, Kangaroo Press, 1981; E.Lea-Scarlett, 'Quong Tart - a study in assimilation,' Descent, vol 4, 1969-1970, pp.81-101, 121-40. For example, while photographs show the Tart family at home in his villa at Waverley, seemingly full of comfortable Victorian furnishings, these were reportedly completely of Chinese manufacture 'even to the pictures, which are by Celestial artists after European design.' Quong Tart and Family Papers, 1831-1940, Box 4, 1882-1894.
85 Evening News, 27 February, 1893.
86 Sydney Morning Herald, 14 April, 1884.
sour claret. At the healths and sentiments, gentlemen were desired to "charge their glasses", so they did...

The Mayor made many toasts in tea - to "her Majesty", "the Governor" and other dignitaries.

The Mayor called Quong Tart everything that was nice, and everybody "hooray'd" and "Hooray'd" again; and everything and everybody was very jolly indeed, and distinct way was made with the claret. For my own part, I cannot help thinking his Worship was not entirely uninspired by the situation - a successful landlord, and a good tenant. *** Then we all drank Quong Tart’s health, with three times three, etc. “For He’s, etc., etc.,” and the band played "Annie Laurie", a delicate Celestial-cum-Caledonian compliment, I suppose.*** Then up rose Quong Tart to respond. “Get on a chair” yelled the crowd, and he did, and convulsed everybody. He called the company a "Scotch mixture", he was full of apropos maxims...

Several features of this performance are striking: the decoration of the tea room combined Chinese elements (the 'pretty back cloth - a scene in China', the China teas), and European features (the food, drink and table decorations) with an international, cosmopolitan flavour imparted by the 'flags of all nations', including the advertisement for Chinese tea, the saloon’s own emblem. The well-loved Quong Tart himself exemplified the exotic, friendly mix of cultural symbols - speaking in his famous Scottish-Chinese-accented English, quoting Robert Burns and making terrible puns. His renowned energy in undertaking charitable works and campaigning against Chinese opium-smoking, unclean living conditions and gambling, were strategies adopted by other merchants, such as Way Kee, of Lower George Street. In the carefully-orchestrated display involved in the tea room opening, this persona combined elements of the exotic and the familiar, creating a Chinese identity highly esteemed by the white community.

67 ‘Sydney Week by Week,’ Evening News, 8 December, 1898.

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'Many Inventions'

Other displays served to assert Chinese identity in more dramatically alien statements. In south China, festivals traditionally provided a strong contrast with everyday reality, involving feasting, drinking and boisterous celebration, made as sensational as possible. Festivals honoured gods, ghosts and ancestors, involving food, dancing, fortune-telling, opera performances and processions. Chinese popular religion involves a conception of a nearby, accessible spirit world whose structure mirrors the human world; gifts to spirits of food, entertainment and money are reciprocated with prosperity and moral direction. Overseas Chinese communities enthusiastically maintained traditional festivals, often re-worked in new contexts. Processions were often organised either for Chinese reasons, or to mark an event of shared importance with the community as a whole. A parade was mounted to celebrate Federation in 1900, for example. Cronin reproduces a 'procession' in Beechworth, which shows a range of opera characters and props.

In August 1897, Sydney's Chinese community participated in the Jubilee Charity Carnival in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Anniversary, held at the Sydney Agricultural Ground. A Chinese procession played a prominent part, for which the Chinese community had brought costumes from Bendigo and other Victorian towns. The 'sports' also included Chinese bands, bicycle races and athletics, as well as a dragon dance. Lord Hampden was the guest of honour, and was greeted on arrival by address by the Lin Yik Tong Society, read

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Lord Hampden said he would treasure the address 'as coming from a law-abiding, hard-working, and peacable people,' and 'general satisfaction was expressed on all hands that the Chinese had thrown their efforts in so public-spirited a manner into the cause of charity.' The European community enjoyed and responded to the richness and complexity of this event. Aware that beside the 'quaintness' of the spectacle, it held another series of meanings for the Chinese, they were content with admiring the spectacle put on by 'first-class showmen', although a process of equating foreign with familiar forms is also apparent. On one level, the Chinese self-consciously manufactured a display designed to delight and engage their white audience; on another, the performance can be read as an assertion of Chinese parity with English power and sovereignty, ostensibly the object of the celebrations. The report which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald is revealing of white views of the carnival, and is worth quoting at length:

[the dragon] is always the triumph of these Chinese spectacles, and the Chinamen proved themselves to be first-class showmen and as great a "draw" as the intercolonial footballers, champion cyclists, or English cricketers. Just as the record reign procession in London represented the image of the British Empire, so the Chinese procession on the Agricultural Ground on Saturday epitomised the story of China. Every colour and item in the fantastic parade symbolised some fact of tremendous importance to the children of the Sun. Every tradition and achievement of the oldest civilisation in the world was vividly represented in that procession of red, white, blue, gold, magenta, green, scarlet and cerise. But even the significance of the gorgeously dressed processionists paled before the portent of the dragon, 200ft in length, with truculent head and fearsome tail. This was carried by 80 Chinamen and represented many joints. The old legend allowed but one joint to the dragon, but Chinese ingenuity added a new joint for every province captured by the Empire. The dragon is, therefore, symbolical of the all-devouring policy of the builders of the Empire. The procession, moreover, embraced every degree of nobility which is conferred by the Emperor himself. The colours of the processionists were made to represent the titles of the various orders of the aristocracy of China, and so had a significance to the Chinese present which was perhaps missed by the rest of the beholders.
However, apart from any interior meaning, the spectacle was a very fine one, and some of our theatrical managers might get some useful hints from the bizarre effects introduced at these Mongol displays. The dragon really made a very fine sight as it trailed its huge length round the ground - its strangely grotesque head drawing after it a trail of ecstatic Chinamen, all dressed in gorgeous and costly garments.

But the whole procession was in the large degree striking. Banners bearing the strangest devices whose bearers rustled in the bravest of silks, soldiers carrying outlandish and murderous-looking weapons, some mounted knights and heralds, the quaintest little Chinese children in go-carts marched with solemn and stately step round the ring to the strains of barbarian music. Or perhaps the music was not barbarian, it seemed to resemble so much our classical style at its very highest development. The national Chinese composer is evidently a sort of exaggerated Wagner, and the masterly manner in which he can produce a series of musical cataclysms without break is calculated to make the most energetic executants envious. However, the general effect of the whole procession was very fine, and the great audience - it was estimated that over 20,000 witnessed it - loudly cheered the actors in it.

In this event were familiar elements from festivals such as the Chinese Lunar New Year, or as part of travelling theatrical troupes. As noted by the European reporter, the lion danced and whirled and 'his original comic effects greatly delighted the crowd'. A photograph taken of the performers indicates that he greatly delighted the Chinese too: amidst the costumes and headdresses two Chinese men dressed in European clothes stand grinning and animated, absorbed, like the other bystanders, by the leaping performer and his billowing train. Similarly, a procession of carnival-like or operatic characters often accompanied the dragon's dance during New Year celebrations; in Australia, as in other overseas communities traditional forms were used to suit the immediate purpose, as had always been the case, and costumes brought out for opera performances could be used for processions too.

91 Sydney Morning Herald, 30 August 1897.
92 Stepanchuk and Wong, Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts, 1991, p.39; MacGregor personal communication.
Drama was extremely popular in China and was closely connected to religious ritual. Village troupes often travelled the countryside, as did 'Lion Dancers' and 'stilt-walkers' or masqueraders, impersonating familiar characters from myth or history. One distinctive feature of Chinese opera is its 'multifacetedness' - it tells a story through mime, song, speech and dance as well as slapstick and acrobatics. Visual splendour is created through make-up, costume, and setting; symbolic gesture and highly formalised music play a central role. A basic principle of 'theatricality' is the deliberate departure from the familiar and usual to underline the fantasy and heightened sensibility of the performance. A system of role types (jiaose) provides a visual and aural formula denoting characters such as the wentwusheng (principal male role), visible in the Sydney parade on horseback, wearing a robe over which is a tunic, perhaps signifying armour (kai kao) and a military hat with pheasant plumes (luo mao and zhi wei) and tassels; four military banners, or kao qi, waved from his shoulders, and sashes or streamers hung from his robe.

Cantonese opera incorporates traditional tunes, combined and varied within 'families' recognised by the audience and associated with particular dramatic

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96 Also the zhengyin huadan (principal female), xiaosheng (supporting male), erbanghua (supporting female), chousheng (comic) and wusheng (military). Yung, Cantonese Opera, 1989, pp.20-21.

The wenwusheng (principal male role) on horseback, wearing a tunic, perhaps signifying armour (kai kao) and a military hat with pheasant plumes (luo mao and zhi wei) and tassels; four military banners, or kao qi, wave from his shoulders, and sashes or streamers hang from his robe. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales, 'Chinese procession at Sydney Sports Agricultural Grounds,' 1897, BCP 06076.
This more elaborate, urban version accents the chief features of the Sydney performance, showing Beijing performer Tan Fuyang as Li Keyong, the *wusheng* (military) role, in 'The Pearly Screen Fort, early this century. *A Pictorial History of Beijing Opera*, c.1990, p.104, fig.3.
structures. Visible in a photograph of the Sydney procession are some of the 'melodic' ensemble, including the two-stringed bowed lute (erhu), who leads the way, followed by two fiddle-players, holding long horse-hair bows, the tuning pegs at the top of the neck protruding. They are preceded by two dizi or flute players, and behind them one man holds a yueqin, or moon guitar, while the nearest figure seems to be playing a sanxian, or long-necked three-string banjo. These are the core melodic instruments, belonging even to the smallest troupe. Here were united the traditional elements of lion and dragon dancers, mythical characters in dramatic costume and music, altered in details, but reproducing the essential structures of Chinese festival.

The 'interior meaning' of the 'spectacle' may have been lost on the Sydney audience, but it was delighted by the display, like the journalist admiring its 'strange life and colour', who concluded that 'John' was seen to 'enjoy himself with a heartiness and abandon that the Caucasian with his methodical habit of seeming to take his pleasures sadly sometimes appears to lack, and if his manner of doing so is original, are there not "many inventions"?' Like the 'Wagnerian' percussion, his report draws attention to the convergences between the Chinese performance and European ways, appearing to 'translate' the event into familiar forms. But do these analogies serve to absorb the other, or to distance it further? As in Kipling's anthology of this title, the 'many inventions' he delights in are defined against the European norm, the 'upright' man of the biblical couplet. In broad

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98 The large instrumental ensemble is collectively termed the pengmian (face of the shed), split into civil (wenchang) and military (wuchang) sections - the latter responsible for percussion. Yung, Cantonese Opera, 1989, pp.11-15.
Musicians at the Diamond Jubilee Charity Carnival at the Sydney Showgrounds, 1897. This photograph shows some of the 'melodic' ensemble, including the two-stringed bowed lute (erhu), followed by two fiddle-players, preceded by two dizi or flute players. Behind them one man holds a yueqin, or moon guitar, while the nearest figure seems to be playing a sanxian, or long-necked three-string banjo. Courtesy of the State Library of New South Wales, 'Chinese procession at Sydney Sports Agricultural Grounds,' 1897, BCP 06075.
A representation of the carnival which subsequently appeared in the Chinese press. 'Sketches at the Diamond Jubilee Carnival,' Supplement to the Chinese Australian Herald, 3 September, 1897.
terms, white perceptions were rooted in colonial structures, a 'virtual fact of nature'\textsuperscript{101}; colonial discourse constructed a divide between the white Christian European and the multitude of lesser peoples with their 'many inventions'. This was after all, 1897, and in London, simultaneous Jubilee celebrations were being attended by white Australian law-makers, whose desire for exclusionary measures was even more explicit than the English government's.

But while the European observer registered 'barbarian', 'bizarre effects' first, and only secondarily the intersections of meaning, the encounter was infused with further complex meanings. Just as any performers, distanced by costume and formality, enact a character or situation through self-conscious mimesis, the Sydney Chinese community collectively played the role of 'China' for its foreign but enthusiastic audience. Certain elements of the act - the energy and the visual spectacle embodied in costuming and dancing - were understood as they were always meant to be. Others, such as the music, were given meanings by analogy with western forms, while yet others were simply not understood - itself an ignorance of which some spectators were quite aware - subsumed under European headings such as 'quaint' or 'barbarian'. While the Chinese knew that the meaning of their performance was changing or disappearing, and while the white audience knew they were 'seeing' only its outside, the spaces in between were filled with goodwill and excitement.

The carnival also reproduced Chinese tradition in a powerful, all-consuming form; fitting ritual to a new context, Chinese structures were transformed as they were reproduced, producing new versions of old customs. And finally, the carnival celebrated 'imperial power and magnificence', as some of the white onlookers acknowledged: 'Just as the record reign procession in London represented the image of the British Empire, so the Chinese procession on the Agricultural Ground

on Saturday epitomised the story of China.’ juxtaposing the might of ‘the oldest civilisation in the world’, with British Imperial power, the ‘children of the Sun’ were declaring the force of Chinese tradition and identity.
Chapter 8. Conclusion: 'triumphant return'

'I'm here for the money. When I earn enough I'll go back. I've got the wife, kids and folks waiting for me, so I just want to make a packet and go. But I'm going back in any case. I'll give myself till January next year, so I can make it back in time for Spring Festival... Yup! They're waiting for me, and for the colour TV, video, and fridge; we sussed out the makes and models ages ago... Sure I get homesick, but I'm not a basket case. I've been with my old lady six or seven years already, we've got plenty of time ahead. Miss her or not, I'm still here. My little girl is six this year. She'll have a great time when dad comes home with pockets stuffed full of cash, foreign cash at that. I'm going back through Hong Kong so I can buy my little princess all the toys and goodies she could ever hope for, and everything the missus has ever wanted too. I'll be buying things for the folks and the in-laws too. That oughta keep them happy in their old age. I reckon you could call it a triumphant return.'


In some areas of life, clearly defined Chinese spaces and customs marked out a relatively autonomous domain; within dwellings such as Hong On Jang's, preservation of Chinese ways created and strengthened bonds between Chinese over decades. Turning inwards, they buttressed the ethnic boundaries against attack, the better to pursue traditional ways of life. But for the Chinese, the Rocks also represented an opportunity. Building businesses and networks achieved success for Chinese merchants rooted in lineage, kinship and other traditional values, yet extending into foreign customs and spaces. Viewed in regional terms, the Chinese community in Sydney carved out a niche comparable with others throughout Southeast Asia, although its particular form was shaped by local circumstances.

Different classes and individuals within the Chinese 'community' had their own agendas: Mr Goldtown, the 'larrikin Chinamen', the gamblers, those who formed relationships with white women, the artisans and labourers. Sydney's many factions communicated through a complex language of images, gestures and things, spanning as well as defining difference. From 'China cups and
saucers' and ginger jars, to charitable works, and 'respectable' comportment, the Chinese constructed a cultural pidgin publicly uttered in moments such as the 1891 Royal Commission enquiry or Queen Victoria's 1897 Diamond Jubilee, privately in individual encounters; it provided a basis for communication which could overcome cultural misunderstanding.

Accounts of white racism and conflict with the Chinese are many, and I do not wish to deny the unsightliness of what they reveal. It is, however, important to acknowledge the diversity of cultural relations in specific historical context. Within and across a dualistic opposition structured by 'race,' a multitude of attitudes and identities emerged. When the commissioners to the 1891 Royal Commission, one of whom was Quong Tart, interrogated members of the Rocks' Chinese community, alliances between elites were evident in their shared values and interests. Gender also fractures these cultural divisions, first, in the relegation by Chinese and European of women to a confined and subordinate role, and second, through the real relationships formed between Chinese men and European women. In the 'village atmosphere' of the Rocks, knowledge of other people developed in fine-grained detail: shop-keepers, long-term resident families and other local identities encountered each other every day, and understood each other in terms which got below the abstract level of stereotypes. The Chinese cultivated a particular facade which as alien picturesqueness could act to displace unwelcome attention, or like the well-barricaded gambling-houses of Lower George Street, to ward it off. They manipulated traditional and newer cultural forms in dynamic strategies which resisted dominant colonial strictures, for example when they wove together the familiar guanxi cats-cradle of business contacts and obligation. The Chinese in Sydney therefore do not fit neatly into historiographical frameworks of colonialism which emphasise white control at the expense of Chinese inventiveness.
This account of the Rocks and the Chinese has built up a picture of complex cultural interaction. The events and people I have written of exemplify the persistence of structures, but also human ingenuity in the face of the new, as social reproduction necessarily entailed its transformation. Acknowledgement of different viewpoints, individuals and events, and the fragmented ways they were understood, allows us to see the heterogeneity of Chinese 'culture' and 'community'; it contests deterministic frameworks which stress colonial power over Chinese agency, not by denying their strength but by showing that there were other possibilities as well. Convergences existed between white and Chinese structures; invention and resistance successfully side-stepped them. In crafting 'pidgin' systems of mutually understood meaning and identity, Chinese and European drew upon cultural forms of all kinds, especially the material.

The project began with several interrelated aims, rooted in dissatisfaction with existing possibilities for interpreting evidence for a nineteenth century Rocks Chinese household. How could I collate a rubbish pit full of Chinese medicinal items, ca.1920, with a transcription of evidence given before a Royal Commission, printed thirty years before? This broad question regarding the relationship between the very different kinds of evidence I had, in turn rests upon formulations regarding three closely linked issues: the organisation of human groups, the role of material culture in this process, and the kind of material traces they leave behind: that is, the notion of 'culture' and its relationship to the archaeological record. What did the rubbish pit 'mean'? Did it indicate that the household that left it behind was very Chinese, somewhat Chinese, or did its significance lie in the symbolic realm? These questions about the archaeological record have to be addressed with respect to archaeological debates regarding appropriate analytic scale, and approaches to interpretation. It became impossible not to ask how the framework of colonialism shaped or
did not shape Chinese discourse: to what extent did dichotomous structures of power determine life for white and Chinese? Finally, what form should the answers to these questions assume? How to represent the Chinese, for the 'west', a culture perceived as truly 'other'?

Hence my answer to the primary question of the relationship between disciplines and bodies of evidence comes by way of a roundabout excursion through a related set of issues, first developing an understanding of culture and cultural contact as contested and contingent, but without rejecting the possibility for shared systems of meaning. Looking at the Rocks 'close up', and especially using archaeological evidence, allowed local views to disrupt the discourse of urban improvement; the different interests and responses - by women, the diverse community labelled 'Chinese', the working classes - contested elite, monolithic constructions. In this view, 'traits' and things are manipulable; identity can be seen as positioning. The Chinese created particular personae and techniques to suit their purposes.

The material world is integral to the complex process of cultural interaction: my study has demonstrated that a language of cultural forms, including objects, and practices grounded in the material, was constructed between Chinese and white cultures. Mimicry and the creation of hybrid forms are exemplified by Quong Tart's philanthropy, or complacent European appropriation of a softened, less alien representation of China printed on blue-and-white plates, or by the multivalent Guanyin. Sometimes there was a refusal to speak - a silence which served its own purpose, like the enactment of Chinese solidarity through sharing food, walling out the hostile street life of Sydney; the autonomy which continues to characterise the diasporic Chinese was never completely effaced by colonial discourse.
I have used the archaeological evidence as one strand in this complex cultural exchange, asking: what does the material mean? Objects, like other cultural forms, are part of the dynamic process of cultural reproduction and transformation; different aspects of experience are combined in practice, in creating systems of meaning, and the material cannot, therefore, be regarded in isolation in analysis of this process. While acknowledging the special nature of things, it is important to address their role with respect to other aspects of past life as well - as historical archaeologists are able to do through the rich collage of available sources.

Each discipline has protocols which have to be observed. The creation of archaeological meaning is a cumulative practice which is often misunderstood by outsiders: there is an idea that an object says a thousand words, or, as Foucault wrote, in the 'motionless and still-recognizable images of things themselves' of Chinese writing, pure meaning is seized, and fixed to the page; that a rich assemblage of forms and wares 'stands for' a viewpoint or culture in a direct way. But the small assemblage of Chinese material I began with in 1991 has not become more coherent; it still doesn't 'speak' for itself. The process of interpretation of these fragments moved through increasingly more cooperative levels of meaning, following archaeological methods: the glass vial I found in the rubbish pit became 'Chinese' as my artefact supervisor told me of the embossed characters she had washed clean; it originated from Guangdong when its basemark was translated for me. Comparison with other archaeological reports and collections enabled me to identify its function, and the other associations and roles it has had. Quantification, and consideration of the broader site distributive and taphonomic picture contextualised it further. Thinking about its role in Chinese tradition prompted speculation regarding its new use in the Rocks, and what it 'says' about culture and identity. Together with other objects and forms, such as cooking pots, diamond rings, guanxi, and
festivals, it formed a text. Like Paul Carter's fragments of 'noise', these bits and pieces also start off as meaningless, in need of a matrix that only language can provide.

But while Carter's collage of sound attempts to recapture difference through phonic coincidence and the infinite, fleeting differences between fragments of sound, objects by contrast are lumpen and stolid. They persist, sitting there, mutely like toads. Their 'candidacy' for meaning may be an amalgam of multiple functions and symbolisms, which change according to the viewer and their context; the willow pattern plate may have begun life in Samsons' Cottage standing on the mantlepiece, as a proud new statement of means and sophistication, referring to a romanticised East, to respectability and feminine competence; use and different owners might have seen it move into the stack of plates under the sink, and finally become the dog's bowl in the yard outside.

The potential of historical archaeology's 'parlour game', as James Agee hints, is to capture something of the tactile, experiential richness of the multifacteted world we live in and respond to. The collage of things, words, and images which make up our record of the past calls for a dialectical process of interpretation, complicated by the epistemological differences between things and words, and the distinct ways historians and archaeologists speak for them. In a sense they are incommensurable: things mean differently.

This process seems to me to be like pasting together a collage. On a disciplinary level, prescriptions about the use of material and documentary evidence, and their respective 'weight' or 'unique purview' are in practice left behind as one's specific questions determine a particular combination. Sometimes these different stuffs overlap and concur, as in the debate regarding nineteenth century standards of living. Sometimes they clash, such as when the rubbish of the

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Sailors Home, a 'temperance' institution, was found to contain a substantial number of alcohol bottles, or more profoundly, when archaeology provides evidence for female or Chinese lives. They may also go past each other without speaking, as large-scale questions regarding political and economic processes fail to mesh with the fine-grained picture of everyday life produced by archaeology. In my account I have made use of each of these different juxtapositions, drawing attention to the process of placement.

By exploring European, Chinese, and hybrid systems of meaning, I have structured this study according to cultural difference - categories which my analysis often acts to destabilise. Yet race was the line which marked self from other, 'upright' from 'inventive', during the period, and so must figure in our histories. This contrast, too, is revealing. While it is only momentary, the shock of juxtaposition may imitate that of cultural difference.

Finally, the patterns formed by placing the past side by side with the present, always force us to question our own assumptions and outlook. They undermine perceptions of our liberality and progress by showing that in some ways, supposedly discarded attitudes are with us still. Here it is not the difference between us and them, but the likeness, which discloses 'conformity between the colonial past and the locations in which critics read and write...'; similarity 'defamiliarises the here and now and subverts the sense of historical progress'.

The continuities demonstrated by 'Working class scholar', quoted at the head of this chapter, have seen the development of a global network of hua-ch’ aio, or as they are known today, Chinese 'astronauts', whose international, highly profitable trade network is still rooted in family structure and guanxi. The

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1 However, Thomas cautions against the denial of specific, historicised practices and ideas, and the ruptures in discourse which ensue: N. Thomas, Colonialism's Culture. Anthropology, Travel and Government, Melbourne University Press, 1994, pp.1-32; quotation from p.21.
2 S. Mills, 'Connections the key to a Chinese success story,' Sydney Morning Herald, 12 August, 1995; Overseas Chinese Business Networks in Asia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1995.
autonomy of Chinese sojourners has seen the production of a different, independent vision of modernity.4

Australian responses to this phenomenon are sometimes welcoming,5 as they could be in the past, but the 'social cohesiveness' advocated by many white Australians in the present, and concomitant manipulation of immigration policy, have uglier antecedents.6 As yet official policy has resisted responding to recent community surveys which identify a majority of the Australian population who disagree with our current regional balance of immigration, largely from Asia.7 Perhaps the view that there is 'less to gain and potentially more to lose by changing immigration and multicultural policy', thereby risking 'alienating ethnic organisations in Australia or political and business elites in Asia' is still ascendant.8 Since the 1970s, the White Australia Policy and our racist past have been repudiated,9 but complacent assumptions of our own tolerance can be shaken by the recognition that we have not necessarily left all the problems of nineteenth century race relations behind. The more complete our view of this past, complex exchange becomes, the more clearly we may see the sameness, as well as the difference, between then and now.

5 e.g. D.Lague, 'Chinese the key to Asian trade: report,' Sydney Morning Herald, 16 August, 1995.
6 M.Millett, 'Shutting the door,' Sydney Morning Herald, 6 July, 1996, p.29. The Howard government's recent proposals for tightening entry requirements have included a reduced overall intake, and a reduction of over 25% in the family reunion program, in which people already in Australia may sponsor the immigration of 'preferential family members.' A proposed bond of $30,000 to ensure that new migrants settle outside capital cities was greeted with anger by many 'ethnic leaders': e.g., C.Skehan, 'Greens threat to migration bonds scheme,' Sydney Morning Herald, 15 July, 1996.
7 Millett, 'Shutting the door,' 1996, p. 29. The increasingly conservative political climate of the 1980s reached an extreme with John Howard's 'One Australia' policy in 1988, although it was perceived at the time as a factor in his loss of Liberal Party leadership. A.Markus, Australian Race Relations, 1788-1993, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p.219.
Looking north along George Street to the newly-completed Sydney Harbour Bridge, 1930s. Sydney Cove Authority, CQ 32.
Looking back down at the Rocks and the city, to the south-east, c.1930. Sydney Cove Authority, AR1.
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I have argued in this thesis that interpretation of archaeological evidence must consider its symbolic meaning and social context. Archaeological method remains fundamental to this operation, however: my conclusions regarding the use and meaning of the late nineteenth century Chinese artefacts recovered from Samsons Cottage and other sites relies upon an understanding of their role in social world, built up from identification of their original form, how they were made and distributed, and what they were used for. This process is often invisible to non-archaeologists: detailed description, quantification and contextual research take up little space in interpretative accounts, despite their domination of post-excavation analysis. My account has also consigned the raw archaeological data to the margins; I refer those who would like more detail to the site report, which presents the archaeological evidence according to standard methods.  

Classification was designed to record information about the objects arranged into standard taxa which would enable recognition of meaningful patterning, as a basis for interpretation.

Material evidence for the Chinese and their encounter with the 'west' consists largely of ceramics, which range from export ware to containers of food taken with hua-ch’iao for their own use. The western export trade in Chinese porcelain originated in the sixteenth century with Portuguese shipping and flourished as a

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1 J.Lydon, *Archaeological Investigation, Samsons Cottage, Kendall Lane, the Rocks, Sydney*, Sydney Cove Authority, 1991, see '5.2 Methodology', pp.27-9. This report is lodged with the Sydney Cove Authority and the Department of Planning, NSW. Artefact analysis followed procedures developed by the Sydney Cove Authority which provides a system which is standard for Rocks sites: C.Snelgrove, *A report on the methodology used in the recording of the Sydney Cove Authority’s artefact collection*, Sydney Cove Authority, 1990.
luxury market until 1800, when it gradually declined. Analysis of the complexity of interaction as embodied in these expensive, beautiful objects has been conducted within art historical frameworks, sometimes focusing on their stylistic hybridity and their makers' inventiveness.3

But Chinese ceramics found by archaeologists in the Rocks relate also to a more ad hoc exchange. From the colony's earliest days, Chinese ceramics were brought by English colonists and the East India Company, and soon more directly through American and Sydney merchants.4 This was mass-produced and cheap, rather than the top-of-the-market chine de commande so popular in north America.5 From the mid-nineteenth century, this class was augmented by the arrival of 'kitchen ch'ing': also cheap and mass-produced, but attractive, crockery used by the Chinese themselves, as well as sold to Europeans. This class shades into that which appears to have been used only by the Chinese themselves.

Understanding the nature of these objects and their place in the past begins with the process of identification. This is currently difficult to carry out in Australia: there has been little work by archaeologists on the Chinese ceramics from the


4 See W.Campbell, 'The East India Company and the Australian Trade,' The Australian Historical Society Journal and Proceedings, IV(V), 1918, pp.241-268 for an early account of the beginnings of the colony's trade.

5 Rare custom-made pieces exist, such as the punch bowls made c.1775-1800 which are decorated in polychrome famille rose; around the outside a 'rare perspective view' of 'View of the Town of SYDNEY in NEW SOUTH WALES'; inside is an interior drawing of Aborigines en grisaille, with sepia spears and clubs. S.Miller, Chinese Export Porcelain. A Loan Exhibition from New Jersey Collections, The Newark Museum, 1980, Plate 45, pp.14-15.
mid-nineteenth century onwards. No coherent methodological framework exists. Cataloguers frequently fail to recognise or understand the nature of Chinese artefacts. Fortunately, historical archaeologists in the United States have conducted extensive analysis, and I was able to visit collections and acquire reports in California and Idaho, providing an essential comparative matrix grounded in the Chinese diaspora. In particular, the Asian American Comparative Collection at the University of Idaho, in Moscow, Idaho, was a valuable source of comparative objects and information, offering a comprehensive range of easily-accessed artefacts, as well as an up-to-date library which includes numerous unpublished reports. I also examined Roberta Greenwood's collection of archaeological and collector's ceramics in Los Angeles, California; an assemblage from Fort Guijarros, San Diego, California; and material from Sacramento, housed by the Archaeological Studies Centre, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, California. This first-hand experience of the objects and their documentation was crucial to an understanding of my Australian material, enabling me to fit my ceramic sherds into the more complete puzzle represented by whole pots, whose use and history had been extensively researched.  

Illustrated 'types'  

This section illustrates and describes a small range of Chinese ceramic types found at Samsons' Cottage and other archaeological sites in the Rocks; I also show some types of 'kitchen ch'ing' which I have not encountered in Sydney but which are very common in the United States, both as comparison with the Rocks examples, and as illustration of my discussion; further, these types may prove to

As was the hospitality and friendliness of the people responsible for these collections: a resource which is more difficult to tabulate!
have been found, but not recognised, in Sydney. It is not intended to represent the full range of Chinese ceramics found in the area, but is restricted to those relating most closely to the argument of the text.

A large part of Hong On Jang's household ceramic assemblage is Chinese-made, and not for export (23.3% by number; 46.1% by weight). These Chinese utensils include sherds of celadon (porcelain) rice bowls, and stoneware ginger jars, barrel-shaped and wide-mouthed storage jars and a stoneware 'sand-pot'. There is a minimum of 38 medicinal vials.

**Kitchen Ch'ing**

Termed by Mudge 'rough domestic/export', this class has come to be known, after Willetts, as 'kitchen ch'ing' - the nineteenth century ceramics used every day to eat from, by ordinary Chinese. The most common form is the rice bowl, but others such as plates, spoons, bird feeders, jarlets, cups and sauce pots are also found. The bowls are usually porcellaneous stoneware, coarsely potted, quickly painted and glazed; underglaze designs are simple.

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7 By 'type,' I refer to the Chinese potter's mass reproduction of particular combinations of form and decoration, formulae which endured for centuries and which varied little, and slowly, within its class.

8 Mudge defines this class as the 'ware imported largely for the overseas Chinese immigrants... Such china was much rougher than the usual export porcelain and differed in typical design. Dating from the Gold Rush to the twentieth century, its nature - for the Chinese domestic market - and design variations are a subject unto itself.' She suggests that these were made in Guangdong Province, the origin of the emigrants. Mudge, *Chinese Export Porcelain*, 1986, pp.191-2.

9 Willetts avoids use of the term 'export' because they may have been 'simply domestic Chinawares sent to take their chances on the markets overseas'. He argues that the term captures the role of the kitchen as the centre of Chinese life and therefore the setting of the ceramics; it is equivalent to the Chinese *min yao* ('peoples' ware'); W.Willetts and L.Poh, *Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ch'ing: Ceremonial and domestic pottery of the 19th-20th centuries commonly found in Malaysia*, The Southwestern Asian Ceramic Society, West Malaysia Chapter, and Oxford University Press, Malaysia, 1981, p.2.

10 e.g., Willetts and Poh, *Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ch'ing*, 1981, Plate C9, p.35.

11 Porcellaneous stoneware comprises kaolin, feldspar and quartz in varying quantities. The term T'zu means 'high-fired ware', which includes stoneware and porcelain.
Research in the United States has documented the range of this 'tableware' carried with Chinese emigrants. For example, a Californian Chinese general store of the late nineteenth century included amongst the range of ceramics it stocked, for sale to Chinese, bowls of (the relatively expensive) Celadon ('Winter Green'), and blue-and-white decorative schemes known as 'Double Happiness', 'Four Flower' ('Four Seasons'), and 'Prosperity' ('fu'); more than half were rice bowls. This range is typical, as illustrated by Wegars.

Celadon rice bowls are one of the most common possessions of Chinese overseas, used for eating rice and other staple food. They have been unchanged for hundreds of years, acting as the traditional wine cups of the poorer people. Sherds of this plain, elegant ware are very commonly found on archaeological sites in Sydney.

The differential distribution of decorated 'kitchen ch'ing' across Australia, the United States and Asia, probably reflects both changes in ceramic production and the origin of Chinese emigrants, taking the products of local kilns overseas with them. In the States, the 'Double Happiness' was the cheapest type available; it was very common until ca.1870, when it was superseded by

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13 Although Jones' study of the cargo of the Frolic, wrecked off Mendocino County, California, in 1850, identified a different but overlapping range of blue-and-white wares, mainly 'Rocks and Orchid', 'Bamboo', 'Peach and Fungus', 'fu', and 'Snail', she notes that of the Frolic's types, 'Bamboo' is found on almost all western United States sites, whilst the others are not. P.Jones, A Comparative Study of Mid-Nineteenth Century Chinese Blue-and-White Export Ceramics from the Frolic Shipwreck, Mendocino County, California, M.A., San Jose State University, 1992; P.Wegars, 'Chinese and Japanese Artifact terminology', manuscript, Asian American Comparative Collection, Alfred W.Bowers Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, (revised) 1993; and see P.Wegars, 'The Asian Comparative Collection,' *Australian Historical Archaeology*, 6, 1988, pp.43-8.
'Bamboo'. Ritchie states that no examples of 'Rocks and Orchid', 'Peach and Fungus', 'Fu', or 'Snail' pattern have been found in New Zealand, where Chinese immigrants arrived from 1866, although 'Bamboo' is found, less often than Celadon and 'Four Seasons'. The details of this phenomenon are beyond the scope of this study, but briefly, the types 'Bamboo' and 'Double Happiness', which are commonly found on sites in the United States, appear to be absent from archaeological contexts in the Rocks, although this observation may be refuted by further research. The fragmentary nature of the archaeological material also presents problems of identification, and excavation of more complete examples may supplement the known range. From the Rocks, however, I was able to identify 'Rocks and Orchid', 'Peach and Fungus', and 'Four Seasons' types; celadon vessels are also common. The very wide range of Malaysian examples illustrated by Willetts and Poh includes forms which are not found in the United States but are found in the Rocks, notably as the 'Chrysanthemum and conch' and 'Om' types. These divergences suggest an Asian context for trade and interaction, and a useful starting point for tracing other archaeological variations and the past cultural processes to which they relate.

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15 Sando and Felton, 'Inventory records of Ceramics', 1993, p.160.
17 But one sherd of 'Double Happiness' was found at Cossack, W.A., 1600 km north of Perth: J. McIlroy, An Archaeological Survey of the Asian Quarter of Cossack, Australian Heritage Commission, National Estate Programme Grant, 1988, p.158; and examples in the Sydney Cove Authority's collection may include 'fu' or similar wares such as 'Snail': a comprehensive analysis awaits further research.
18 Their absence from the United States was noted during research at the Asian American Comparative Collection and in discussion with Priscilla Wegars. Willetts and Poh, Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ch'ing, 1981, pp.3-6.
brown glazed stoneware

These vessels are made of stoneware, with brown glaze applied to the exterior and often, the interior. They were made in a wide range of shapes, and contained food. They are common, and are often termed 'utilitarian brown ware'. The evidence suggests that they were used exclusively by the Chinese. A recent study identified seven main forms: spouted jars, liquor bottles, wide-mouthed jars, globular jars, straight-sided jars, barrel jars and pans. It concluded, however, following interviews with elderly Chinese from Canton now living in the United States, who remembered the conditions of production and use in Guangdong, that their purpose was in practice highly flexible; they were all-purpose tools, used for storage and even cooking jars, sometimes used as cooking pans or to hold condiments. People of all classes used most forms, except for the pan, which was used by the poor as a serving vessel.  

I illustrate the range of known types. At Samsons' Cottage, fragments of large barrel-shaped jars and wide-mouthed jars were recovered. Barrel-shaped jars (nga gong), could be used to store raw goods, from sheet sugar to rice and other grains, sticky rice powder, and whole soy beans. They could be left outside to collect rainwater; the largest examples were also used for shipping the bones of the dead back to China. The wide-mouthed jar (fut how nga peng, sometimes called shouldered jars) came in a range of forms. They could be used for products such as preserved tofu, sweet bean paste, beans, pickled turnips and cabbage, and shrimp paste. They can be used to store sugar and other condiments.  


Footnotes:
ginger jars

Ginger jars also contained a range of preserved vegetables and fruit; their quality varied from relatively plain stoneware types such as were found at Samsons’ Cottage, to more decorative blue-and-white examples. There is evidence for this form’s popularity with Europeans, and their use by Chinese as gifts (see chapters three and seven).

sand-pot

The casserole, or ‘sand pot’, so named because of its light porous fabric, was used for braising, stewing, making soup and a multitude of other processes, usually of foods which require long cooking times such as tendon, ligament, pork knuckle, whole joints of meat - it was tightly covered and used over a low flame. Its base could be reinforced, however, for example with wire, and so subjected to high temperatures. Its advantage over the wok, used for the typically south Chinese stir-fry, was its slow, even diffusion of heat, releasing excess moisture through its surface, while excess grease was absorbed. It was made in varying sizes and shapes, with a heavy clay lid. Rice can be boiled in a sandpot glazed inside, such as Hong On Jang’s. This vessel is also very similar to a ‘medicinal tea-pot’ shape, which, however, has a spout as well as the hollow handle.

It would be unwise to rule out its possible medicinal use, both in light of the Chinese tendency to use utensils for any purpose at hand, and the pot’s stratigraphic association with numerous medicinal vials. Medicinal herb tea-

pots were used on the stove top, for example to make bitter herbal tea. This type of pot is rarely found outside China: only a few other examples have been recorded - one each in Sacramento and San Francisco, California, and one in New Zealand. Its presence at Hong On Jang’s can perhaps be interpreted as evidence of unusual care to reproduce traditional dishes or processes.

glass vials

From the small rubbish pit, scattered across the yard area, and at the bottom of the 'stove' depression at Samsons' Cottage, came a minimum of 38 small glass bottles. These are 10-12cm high, with necks of thin glass designed to be snapped off. They are ovoid in section. Raised Chinese characters, transliterated as 'Tung Kwan Kok,' are impressed on their base, and can be interpreted as a maker's or factory mark. Similar (although not identical) vials have commonly been found on sites occupied by Chinese people in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. Once identified as 'opium bottles', they are more accurately termed medicinal. In Otago, New Zealand, they are a common archaeological find, and Ritchie states that they are used for '...a variety of medicinal preparations, including but not exclusively tincture of opium.' He suggests that the prohibition of opium in New Zealand in 1901 made it likely that 'addicted Chinese who were unable to maintain their supply, turned to opium-based medicinal preparations.' Wegars illustrates a range of vessels from American sites, including small glass bottles very similar to the type recovered from Samsons' Cottage.

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24 Sacramento: A.Praetzellis and M.Praetzellis, 'Ceramics from Old Sacramento', manuscript on file in the Asian American Comparative Collection, 1979: Fig. 67c; San Francisco: A.Pastron, J.Prichett, and M.Ziebarth, Behind the Seawall: Historical Archaeology along the San Francisco Waterfront, Archeo-Tec for the San Francisco Clean Water Program, vol 2, 1981: Fig 9.21; New Zealand: Lion Race Hut, site S 151/3, Neville Ritchie, personal communication to P.Wegars, Asian American Comparative Collection, Food processing bowls and equipment.


26 See for example P.Wegars, 'The Asian Comparative Collection,' Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology, 6, 1988, p.10.
In the Pine Creek Heritage Zone, in the Northern Territory, Australia, McCarthy noted an increase in the use of medicines, tonics and elixirs, many of which contained a mixture of opiates and alcohol, after opium was banned in 1901. The range and number of medicine vessels was great, including, for example, opium tincture vials, patent pain-killers, and suggesting again, the maintenance of an opium habit. In nineteenth century Sydney, opium was, for Europeans and the Chinese, the preferred analgesic, being the basis of most painkillers. It is possible that these bottles reflect the maintenance of an opium habit.

But more plausibly, these vials conform to what we know of traditional south China medication. Folk medication in south China was (and remains) largely by oral prescription, acupuncture and other methods being too expensive for non-elite Chinese. Dietetics and herbal medication are the main curative methods and are constantly used. So the archaeological evidence suggests persistence of Chinese medical practices here, too.

28 G.Haines, *The grains and threepenn'orths of pharmacy. Pharmacy in NSW 1788-1976*, Lowden Publishing, Kilmore, 1976, p.30. A range of artefacts found in the United States, New Zealand and Australia associated with the use of opium has been identified: see for example C.Brott, *Moon Lee One. Life in Old Chinatown*, Weaverville, California, 1982, p.58; Ritchie and Harrison, 'An Archaeological Analysis of Opium Smoking and Associated Artefacts,' 1982. No artefacts which could be associated with opium-smoking were recovered from Samsons' Cottage, despite statements by former inhabitants of the area that the Chinese who sat along Kendall Lane smoked opium: N.Iacono, *Oral History Interview with Dolly, Edith and Kate*, Sydney Cove Authority, 1991.
29 Anderson and Anderson, 'Modern China: South,' 1977, p.368.
Illustrated types

Photographs (by the author) are of whole examples of each type; provenance and notes are given, including the Sydney Cove Authority's type series reference number, for types found on Rocks sites. Individual site catalogues are keyed to the Sydney Cove Authority type series.  

**Kitchen Ch'ing**
1. Celadon
2. 'Four Seasons'
3. 'Rocks and Orchid'
4. 'Peach and Fungus'
5. Chrysanthemum and conch
6. Om

(United States:)
7. 'Bamboo'
8. 'Double Happiness'
9. Prosperity ('fu')

**Brown glazed stoneware**
10. Barrel-shaped jar
11. wide-mouthed jar

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*Snelgrove, A report on the methodology, 1990.*
Ginger Jars

12. stoneware, green-glazed exterior.
13. lids
14. blue underglaze, body and lid.

15. Sand-pot
16. Glass vials (Samsons Cottage)
17. Glass vials (United States)
1. Celadon rice bowl
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

Rocks examples: Samsons' Cottage, context 121, cat. no. 03. rim sherd.
Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 1811.
2. 'Four Seasons' plate
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

Polychrome overglaze enamel. Porcelain body. The flowers depicted and the seasons they represent are prunus (Winter), peony (Spring), lotus (Summer), and chrysanthemum (Autumn). This decorative type is used for a range of forms, including plates, saucers and bowls.


3. 'Rocks and Orchid' rice bowl
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

This decoration was used for several forms, including bowls, plates and saucers. Blue underglaze decoration comprising rocks, bamboo, Winter prunus and peony or sweet pea.

Rocks example: Harrington Street, 1990 (HS 90), context 1.008, 1.011, cat. no. 1079, 260. Saucer. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 798.

\[\text{\cite{Willett and Poh, Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ch'ing, 1981, p. 62 and see Plate 33; Jones, Frolic, 1992, pp.25-9; figures 14-19; table 9.}}\]
4. 'Peach and Fungus' rice bowl
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

This blue underglaze scheme consists of overlapping petal forms in tiers, containing alternating longevity symbols, *ling chih* ('fungus of immortality') and *t'ao* (peach) motifs. They are known in China as 'immortals' fungus birthday congratulations bowls', which Willetts terms simply 'birthday bowls'.

Rocks examples: 30 Harrington Street 1990 (HS 90), no context, cat. no. 182. Rice bowl. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 816.

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5. Chrysanthemum and conch
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

As Willetts notes, this blue underglaze decorative scheme is a descendant of a version comprising star-shaped chrysanthemums, alternating with conch shells. There is also a form termed 'Sino-Islamic' or 'Allah' plates, on which appear a clearly-drawn or scrawled motif recognizable as the Arabic character for 'Allah'. These variations do not form a linear devolution, and Willetts argues that at some point in the deterioration of the conch-shell element, its curvilinear appearance may have suggested a resemblance to that of Arabic calligraphy. These do not seem to have been taken to the United States, but are common in Malaysia and on Rocks sites.

Rocks examples: 30 Harrington Street 1990 (HS 90), context 1.008, cat. no. 1090. Rice bowl. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 806.

\footnote{Willetts and Poh, \textit{Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ch'ing}, 1981, pp.3-5, figures 1-4, plate C4.}
6. Om plates
(from Willetts and Poh, Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ch'ing, 1981, plate c4)

This blue underglaze decorative type is characterised by a schematic Sanscrit character, repeated in bands around the vessel; sometimes the centre of the piece bears the Sanskrit character for om, the mystic syllable.¹

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 84, cat. no. 01. (illustrated) Rice bowl. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 806.

¹ ibid., pp.6-7, figures 5-6, plate C5 (illustrated)
7. 'Double Happiness'
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

Very commonly found in the United States until c.1870.\(^6\)

\(^6\) R. Sando and D. Felton, 'Inventory records', 1993, p.160.
8. 'Bamboo'
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

Very commonly found in the United States after c.1870, when it superseded 'double happiness'.

7 R.Sando and D.Felton, 'Inventory records', 1993, p.160.
9. Prosperity ('fu')
(drawing from Jones, *Frolic*, 1992, figure 26)

Figure 26. FU Type (dia. 25.6-25.7 cm).

Found in the United States.
10. Barrel-shaped jar
(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

This brown glazed stoneware form could be used to store raw goods, from sheet sugar, to rice and other grains, sticky rice powder, and whole soy beans. They could be left outside to collect rainwater; the largest examples were also used for shipping the bones of the dead back to China.⁵

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 117, cat. no. 06. Base and rim sherds. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 1846.

11. wide-mouthed jar

(example held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

The wide-mouthed jar (*fut how nga peng*, sometimes called shouldered jars) came in a range of forms. They could be used for products such as preserved tofu, sweet bean paste, beans, pickled turnips and cabbage, and shrimp paste. They can be used to store sugar and other condiments.

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 117, cat. no. 05. Base and rim sherds. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 1845.

*Yang and Hellmann, 'What's in the Pot?,' 1996, pp.6-7.*
12. Ginger jar
(examples held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)

stoneware, green-glazed exterior on the top two-thirds of the jar, extending over the rim and about one centimetre inside lip. Very thin brown wash/glaze inside. (right hand side vessel in photograph)

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 83, cat. no. 11. Rim sherd. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 1851.
13. Ginger jar lids
(1. top example from Samsons Cottage; 2. bottom Lilyvale)
1. Stoneware, unglazed interior and exterior; slight double concentric circle impression on exterior

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 9, cat. no. 05. Lid, Height 22mm; base diameter 43 mm; rim diameter 50mm. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 1844.

2. Stoneware, green glaze on top and top portion of sides. Impressed motif (similar to cash shape), in which glaze has collected, forming a darker shade.

Rocks examples: Lilyvale, 15.043. Lid. No type series number.


Rocks examples: Lilyvale, context 22.000, reg. no. 16953. Body sherds. No type series number.

2. Lid stoneware, beige paste. Blue underglaze decoration, comprising water and reeds.

Rocks examples: 30 Harrington Street (HS 90), context 1.008, cat. no. 1080. Lid. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 799.
15. Sand-pot
(example from Samsons Cottage, currently on display in 'the Rocks Heritage Centre', 100 George Street, the Rocks)

The casserole or 'sand pot', so named because of its light porous fabric, was used for braising, stewing, making soup and other processes (see discussion above). This vessel is also very similar to a 'medicinal tea-pot' shape, which, however, has a spout as well as the hollow handle. Medicinal herb tea-pots were used on the stove top, to make bitter herbal tea. This type of pot is rarely found outside China: only a few other examples have been recorded - one each in Sacramento and San Francisco, California, and one in New Zealand.¹⁰

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 142 (rubbish pit), cat. no. 05. Almost complete sand-pot. Sydney Cove Authority type series no. 1819.

¹⁰ Sacramento: A.Praetzellis and M.Praetzellis, 'Ceramics from Old Sacramento', manuscript on file in the Asian American Comparative Collection, 1979: Fig. 67c; San Francisco: A.Pastron, J.Prichett, and M.Ziebarth, Behind the Seawall: Historical Archaeology along the San Francisco Waterfront, (unpublished) Archeo-Tec for the San Francisco Clean Water Program, vol 2, 1981: Fig 9.21; New Zealand: Lion Race Hut, site S 151/3, Neville Ritchie, personal communication to P.Wegars, Asian American Comparative Collection, Food processing bowls and equipment.
16. Glass vials
(example from Samsons' Cottage, currently on display in 'the Rocks Heritage Centre', 100 George Street, the Rocks)

These small glass vials are 10-12cm high, with necks of thin glass designed to be snapped off, like an ampoule. They are ovoid in section. Raised Chinese characters, transliterated as 'Tung Kwan Kok' are impressed on their base, and can be interpreted as a maker's or factory mark. Similar (although not identical) vials have commonly been found on sites occupied by Chinese people in the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. Once identified as 'opium bottles', they are more accurately termed medicinal.

Rocks examples: Samsons Cottage, context 142 (rubbish pit), cat. no. 05. Vial. Sydney Cove Authority type series (glass) no. 639.
17. Glass vials (United States)
(examples held in the Asian American Comparative Collection, Laboratory of Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho)