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Abstract

Recently some Australian scholars and historians have reasserted that there must be an Anglo-Celtic "central core" to the Australian identity and that they see this "central core" as being threatened by an equally mythical set of "Asian values". This lecture will challenge such assertions. It will begin with a discussion of the contributions Chinese have made to Australian life and society since Federation and then go on to show how Chinese-Australians have already and will continue to contribute to the development of a truly Australian identity for the Twenty-first century.

Introduction

It is now a truism to assert that we are living in the midst of a globalising age. The twenty-first century will see a vast acceleration of the movement of peoples, goods, and knowledge across national borders. Flexible transnational citizens will probably become the norm as notions of the nation, nation identity, nationalism will be questioned and even jettisoned. Australia is already a typical immigrant society of twenty-first century, diversity of peoples and cultures. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that 23% of the Australian population in 1998 were overseas born and the 1996 Census showed that a further 27% of persons born in Australia had at least one overseas born parent. Twenty-three different languages other than English are spoken at home by nearly two and a half million, or 15%, of the 1996 Australian population. 323 955 of these speak a version of Chinese. Australian responses to the trend and effects of globalisation and increasing cultural diversification have been rather predictable. First, there has been a revival of populist racism at the elite level beginning with Prime Minister Howard's suggestion in 1988, while Leader of the Opposition, that Asian immigration be limited, and reflected in the current Federal Government's difficulties with Aborigines and with Asia. This populist racism was fanned by the Pauline Hanson movement, a local Australian response to the pace of change and uncertainty created by globalisation.

Secondly, multiculturalism has come under question and academic critique. At the government level, the Federal Coalition government has qualified multiculturalism by prefixing it with "Australian" to distinguish it from the multiculturalism of Canada, New Zealand, and societies such the former Yugoslavia where distinctive and separate, almost autonomous, cultural and linguistic communities have developed. The Carr Government in New South Wales has introduced a bill to change the name of the Ethnic Affairs Commission to Community Relations Commission and to spell out the "Principles of multiculturalism."

Thirdly, there is a renewed emphasis on citizenship and citizenship education, and a growing number of monographs addressing the issues of citizenship and national identity. In the past month three new volumes have become available (those by Ross Poole, by Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson, and the volume edited by Ellie Vasta). This emphasis on citizenship and citizenship education has led to the recognition of the importance of history and a debate on how and what Australian history is

to be taught. Those who advocate a "balance sheet" narrative of Australia's past should recognise that the balance sheet cannot simply be the history of Britannic triumphalism but will require the interrogation, negotiation, recognition, and incorporation of the multiple histories of the Australian peoples.

So, in Australia we are in the midst of a new debate over what it means to be Australian, what is the nature of Australian identity? Some recent interventions by Australian historians are a little disturbing. I shall concentrate on the most recent argument by Miriam Dixon, in her *The Imaginary Australian*. Dixon is concerned about the fragmentation of Australia through its multiple histories, and she stresses the need for

social cohesion,

a strong sense of a core culture and identity,

an Anglo-Celtic core to Australian culture and Australian identity;

and she argues that Australia is not a part of Asia and can never be. Indeed, "Asian values" (which Dixon roughly defines as a form of neo-Confucianism in which the public sphere is closely monitored and the independence of the citizen is contested) are antipathetically opposed to our identity as a civil democratic society that comes from our Anglo-Celtic and Judaic-Christian value system. Dixon has mischievously confused the fantasy and fear of Australia becoming "part of Asia" with the real need for Australia and Australians to become engaged with Asia and the Asians within our midst. Most of these Asian-Australians holding values vastly different from the imaginary "Asian values" advocated by authoritarian Asian political leaders with too much power and too little imagination.

Miriam Dixon is concerned that Australians have been for far too long in denial of their Anglo-Celtic heritage. Instead we should celebrate and valorise Anglo-Celtic values as the core of Australian identity. But what about the many Australians who do not come from an Anglo-Celtic heritage but who do uphold "Australian values", leaving aside whether these are Anglo-Celtic or not? It would seem that at the beginning of the twenty-first century some imaginary Australians have hardly advanced their imaginings beyond their desire of a hundred years ago to "be one people and remain one people without the admixture of other races." I wish to begin to contest the centrality of Anglo-Celts in Australian history, by outlining one of the multiple histories of Australia.

Chinese have been at the centre of several defining moments of Australian history!

For instance:

the inclusion of Chinese either as indentured labourers or as commercial middlemen in a British settlement on the Australian east coast feature in the 1780s Botany Bay proposals of John Matra, George Young and John Call. Perhaps it was a mistake the British government decided upon a colony of Anglo-Celtic criminals instead??

There were probably Chinese crewmen on the First Fleet to arrive in Sydney Cove in 1788 since many of the ships were chartered from the East India Company who used Chinese and Indian crew.

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We are more certain that a Chinese Mak Sai Ying, born in Canton in 1798, arrived in Sydney as a free settler in 1818, bought land in Parramatta, Anglicised his name to John Shying, and in 1823 married an Englishwoman, Sarah Thompson. In 1828 he was granted the license to the Parramatta pub called The Lion. After the death of Sarah he married Bridget Gillorley, again in St John's Anglican Church, Parramatta.

One hundred years ago the Chinese communities celebrated Federation, and the first act of the Commonwealth Parliament was the Immigration Restriction Act (1901) aimed against Chinese.

The waste of young Australian blood on the shores of Anzac Cove is celebrated as the defining moment of Australian nationhood. A Chinese-Australian may have been there, at the defining moment of our Australian nationhood: was William Sing, of the 5th Light Horse at Gallipoli and winner of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and a Croix de Guerre "for conspicuous gallantry" of Chinese descent? As I shall later show there were several Chinese who served in the Australian forces in the wars of the twentieth-century.

Then at the other more recent defining moment of Australian history, well, one that was lost last year the republican referendum, a young Australian international human rights lawyer of Chinese descent, recently profiled by ABC Television as the "mild colonial boy", Jason Yat-sen Li, was at the forefront of the republican movement.

Chinese Contributions to Australian Life and Society Since Federation

The origins of the present day established Chinese communities in Australia are to be found during the period 1890-1920. The foundations of our Chinese-Australian communities were laid during the earlier nineteenth-century period, through increasing migration of Chinese females and family groups, and through out-marriage of Chinese males. Chinese communities began to develop in Australian cities in the late nineteenth-century: in the Rocks and Haymarket areas of Sydney, around Bourke Street in Melbourne. Chinese stores become social centres of many Australian country towns, some of these stores are still be operated by descendants of their nineteenth-century founders. By the late nineteenth-century there was a diversification of Chinese occupations and professions: green- groceries, laundries, restaurants, but including first Chinese solicitors and barristers, Chinese newspapers, shipping companies, Chinese-Australian entrepreneurs. Although Chinese societies proliferated there was also participation of Chinese in the wider Australian community - in churches, and on community public occasions such as the celebration of Federation!

Mei Quong Tart, the Chinese Mandarin in Sydney, was merely best known Chinese at the turn of the last century -he was also probably the first Chinese-Australian "astronaut" or "parachute child"! Arriving in Braidwood in 1859 as a nine-year-old child in the care of his uncle he joined the local Scottish family of Robert and Alice Simpson which converted him to Christianity, and gave him an English education and a love for the verse of "Rabbie" Burns. However, Quong Tart, as he became known, remained in touch with his Chinese heritage and family, and in 1881 returned to China to establish a tea trade with his family between Canton and Sydney. A wealthy tea merchant he became quite a figure in Sydney's social and political circles until his death in 1903. Quong Tart, who attend the Duke of York's Sydney levee in May 1901 dressed in his Chinese mandarin robes, was merely one of many well known and respected Chinese in Australia at the beginning of the

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twentieth-century. Consider also Louis Ah Mouy, Cheok Hong Cheong, Kwok Bew, William Ah Ket.. Ten Chinese feature in the Australian National Biographical Dictionary in the volumes up to 1939.

My own family started its Australian history around this time when my grandfather came with a brother in the late nineteenth-century. My grandfather started a store in Wellington, NSW, while his brother went north to Queensland. My grandfather, known as Charles Hunt became a highly respected member of the Wellington community and when he died in 1934 there was a glowing obituary to him in the local newspaper. He and his iron foundry are still remembered in Wellington, NSW. My father and his two brothers all had their childhoods and education in Wellington, NSW, without their mother. In 1933 my father was sent over to Auckland, NZ, to start a branch of the family business there - people from our village and district were already well established in New Zealand and in particular Auckland by the 1930s. My father made regular trips back to Canton and on one of these visits home sired me. Being the wife of the eldest son, my mother was tormented by her brother-in-law's family for producing only daughters. On the arrival of a son she could at last stand up straight. At the outbreak of World War Two she was rewarded by being allowed to take the "new baby emperor" to Auckland as war refugees in 1940, leaving my two older sisters to take care of grandmother.

Survival under White Australia Policy 1901-1966

From the high of 38 533 in 1881 the number of full-Chinese in Australia fell to 29 627 in 1901, to 22 753 in 1911, 17 157 in 1921, 10 846 in 1933, and to a low of 9 144 in 1947, recovering to 21 712 full-Chinese in 1966. There were an increasing number of part-Chinese from 1891 to 1947. In 1891 2,018 part-Chinese pushed the total number to 37 839, and in 1947 2,950 part-Chinese made up 24.4% of the total number of Chinese, 12 094. However, despite the small numbers significant developments in this period 1901-1966 are yet to be documented fully and published about. Consider for instance the following.

Community development: Chinese community associations such as the Chung Wah Society in Perth and Darwin, Chinese Chambers of Commerce, Chinese churches of the various denominations, especially Presbyterian and Anglican, were founded in during this period. There was also community activism and the emergence of community such as the product of a Chinese-European marriage, William Liu in Sydney. Chinese-Australians during this period were, on the whole more interested in Chinese politics in China than in Australian politics.

Chinese business activities: not only was the China-Australia Mail Steamship Line established but some Chinese-Australians were extending their business interests into China and southeast Asia. Ma Yingbiao, and the Gock brothers responsible for the first modern department stores in China and for introducing modern business practices to China based on their experience in Sydney's David Jones and Anthony Hordens. Business networks were also being established in Australia. Kwong Sing (Glenn Innis) and Hong Yuen in Inverell had connections to Newcastle, Sydney, and Wollongong. So we see early versions Chinese transnationalism and "astronaut" behaviour.

Chinese contribution to Australia's war efforts and in Australian defence forces, is now becoming better known (see the book *Dinky-di* by Morag Loh and Judith Winternitz). We can be certain that Tongway brothers who both served in France and James Ah Yee who enlisted in the 37th Battalion in February 1916 and served in France were of Chinese descent, and we do know that Chinese-

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Australians served in the armed forces overseas during World War 2. However, we do not know yet how many more Chinese-Australians served in the Australian forces under anglicised names - for it was difficult if not illegal for anyone not "substantially of European descent" to enlist in the Australian forces. On 17 August 1918, the citizens of Paynesville presented James Ah Yee a testimonial "In grateful appreciation of his Services for King and Country in the Great War". "He answered his Country's Call" was part of the certificate's logo!

Chinese in the professions. Chinese occupations became further diversified as young Chinese-Australians during this period became educated, some went to universities and became doctors, engineers, and a few became lawyers. One full Chinese born in Queensland, Charles Lee, would after graduation joined the Australian diplomatic service, serving as third secretary in the Chungking legation under Frederic Eggleston during the WW2, and ended his career as Australian Ambassador to Spain and Portugal in the 1960s, I think. His story needs to be researched!

The Chinese Communities in Australia since 1966

The 800 000 plus Chinese in the Australian population at the beginning of the twenty-first century carry with them a diversity of experiences, histories, and form very diverse communities. Diverse migratory waves have led to a diversity of Chinese Australians.

There is a diversity of origins. First, there are Australian Born Chinese, both where both parents are Chinese and children of the increasing number of marriages where one of the partners is from Asia (Chinese-European marriages were common from the beginnings of Chinese migration to Australia, Chinese men marrying European women, now as much Australian men marrying Chinese women). Note that C.A. Price estimated in 1993 that by 2005 40% of all Australian marriages will be inter-ethnic and/or intercultural.

Then, there are Chinese who have migrated from a variety of places: from China, but now no longer predominantly Cantonese, from Southeast Asia, and also New Zealand, South Pacific Islands.

Chinese in contemporary Australia, then, carry a diversity of experiences and histories. Descendants of early Chinese settlers, Australian born, or later emigrants from China, or huayi like myself migrating from NZ have family and personal histories deep in the pasts of Australia, China, and other places. The post 1966 migrants from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other parts of SE Asia are themselves very disparate and add to the diversity of Chinese in Australia: business entrepreneurs and professionals, astronauts and their parachute children, transnational, flexible citizens holding multiple passports, often with multiple families as well, refugees from the Indochina peninsula of Chinese descent, and post-Tiananmen students allowed to remain in Australia after 1989 and their families. Finally, there are the increasing number of Australian born full Chinese or children of out-marrying Chinese. The Chinese in contemporary Australia form very diverse communities.

These diverse Chinese communities have vibrant community lives of their own in all our major cities. Chinese community associations and clubs proliferate, Chinese community language schools, Chinese churches, and there are more Chinese daily newspapers than English-language dailies! Many Chinese cultural magazines are edited and produced in Australia. These are not necessarily post-

1966 developments, many of the developments go back to late nineteenth-century. Some achievements and contributions of these post-1966 Chinese communities:

on Friday, 19 November 1999, Prime Minister Howard announced that the late Dr Victor Chang had been voted the People Choice as The Australian of the Century. Did you know that? Why the silence about who was voted by the Australian people as the Australian of the Twentieth-century? Perhaps because a Chinese-Australian had been elected out of a short-list that included Don Bradman, Dawn Fraser, Bob Menzies, Gough Whitlam, and "Weary" Dunlop?? In 1994 another Chinese-Australian medico, Dr John Yu was the Australian of the Year. He is now the first Australian university Chancellor, of the University of New South Wales, of Chinese descent.

The current President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is Professor Alice Tay, one of Australia's most distinguished human rights jurists, who has been Commissioner of the Australian Law Reform Commission, as well as being the Challis Professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Sydney.

Bill O'Chee, the first Australian senator of Chinese descent, lost his Senate seat at the last Federal election but Senator Tsebin Tchen is a Victorian Senator in the current Senate. NSW has three Chinese-Australian Members of the Legislative Council: the Honourable Helen Sham-Ho, Henry Tsang who was previously the Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney, and Dr Peter Wong. Victoria has a Chinese member of the Lower House (Hong Lim). I understand the Victorian ALP has recently pre-selected a Chinese-Australian woman to be in the, safe, number 2 on its next Senate list. The Northern Territory House of Assembly has Dr Richard Lim as a member.

In NSW Irene Moss, who was born and had her childhood in Dixon Street, Sydney, is the Commissioner of ICAC, after being the NSW Ombudsman.

Chinese-Australians have been mayors in various Australian cities and towns and are well represented in local government.

Many Chinese-Australians are active at various levels of most Australian political parties except probably Pauline Hanson's One Nation.

I have already mentioned the leading role that Jason Yat-sen Li played in the Republican Movement in recent years.

With this roll call of Chinese-Australian high achievers I simply wish to point out that Chinese-Australians are active participatory civic citizens in our Australian democratic government system at all levels. There are also many Chinese-Australian quiet achievers.

There are Chinese-Australians in every profession, occupation, and fields of endeavour in Australia from medicine and law, the corporate sector and banking, right down to the sex industry, the new gambling industry (and crime). In universities Chinese-Australians are in most faculties and teach and research in a variety of subject areas other than those related to China!

Though as a schoolboy in a NZ school that has produced many All Blacks and All Black Captains, I was inspired to try to be the first Chinese All Black, there have not been a Wallaby or prominent League player of Chinese descent. Chinese-Australians have, on the whole, not excelled in sports,

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But there was Richard Chee Quee in the NSW Cricket Team, and some Chinese-Australians have represented Australia at table tennis and gymnastics. Four Chinese-Australians are likely to represent Australia in table tennis at the Sydney Olympics: Miao Miao, Shirley Zhou, Stella Zhou, and Jian Fang Lang.

Chinese-Australians are represented in music, literature, theatre, and the arts. Helen Quach, an internationally renowned conductor (NY Philharmonic) had difficulty obtaining recognition as an Australian citizen in the sixties. There are a growing number of Chinese-Australian writers of fiction, poets, and artists.

Have you heard of Jenny Kee and Lisa Ho - Chinese-Australian fashion designers? Clara Law and Pauline Chan, only the most prominent of a new wave of Chinese-Australian film directors and producers? Annette Shum Wah? The Chinese-Australian television presenter - you should read her book *Banquet*. Have you heard of Yellow Peril, aka Sub Bass Snarl, aka Sebastian Chan, a well known Sydney DJ and one of the creators of the Sydney techno-music and clubbing scene - he is due to hit Canberra the weekend after next at the opening of the Contemporary Chinese Art Exhibition at the national gallery - he is mixing the music! Have a look at his web page.

The point of this narration of Chinese achievements in Australia since Federation, from Quong Tart to Victor Chang and beyond, is to show you that Chinese-Australians have made and continue to make significant contributions to Australian society and culture, to our Australian way of life, without trumpeting their "Chineseness" --- and yet, because we are Chinese, not Anglo, European, or white, the identity of Chinese-Australians as AUSTRALIANS is still being questioned. WHY?? I will not suggest any answers in this presentation, that will have to await another occasion. In the meantime I can only pose some more questions.

Questions we have to resolve in the twenty-first century:

Is social cohesion necessary either in
the strong sense of nationalism, or
the weak sense of "being able to live together"?

Is cultural diversity a threat to the social cohesion of Australia?

Miriam Dixson deplores the fact that Australians have a weak sense of national identity. Is this really a problem?

The twenty-first century will be one of globalised economies and societies, with ever increasing flows of peoples, goods, and knowledge. What, then, is the place of the nation state?

Australia has been, is, and will be an immigrant society with diverse cultures - how do we recognise and negotiate the diverse cultures and multiple histories that characterise such societies?

What role should Chinese-Australians play in the evolution of a truly Australian identity rather than an imaginary one? Is such an Australian identity necessary? Should that Australian identity be a porous one? What does it mean to be Chinese in Australia today? What will it mean to be Chinese in Australia in the future?

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Problem for Chinese Australians (especially younger generation): Those of us of Chinese descent are able claim to be Chinese or a transnational, rather than Chinese-Australian. The younger generation of Chinese-Australian may be faced with the need to negotiate between two exclusive identities: that of an Australian "one nation, one people" and that of a Chinese - transnational flexible citizen based on a resurgent Chinese culturalism.

However they may also be able to take advantage of cultural hybridity and be capable of negotiating multiple identities, to be truly transnational citizens while still feeling they "belong to" Australia. On my first visit to China I found myself reborn Chinese in Tiananmen Square but on the next morning flying over the continent of Australia bathed in the crimson sunrise I realised I was "home". But such senses of "home" and "belonging" requires a more inclusive sense of Australian identity that includes and recognises the multiple "histories", in addition to the Anglo-Celtic history, that make Australia. An important history that has been neglected, rendered silent, is that of the Chinese in Australia. As an historian I should like to see that history, the history of the Chinese, restored to the "balance sheet" of Australian history.

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