

Migration and Other Voyages

5. Steal a handkerchief, see the world: the trans-oceanic voyaging of Thomas Limpus

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In Geoffrey Blainey's seminal work *The Tyranny of Distance* the idea is present even in the title. For the early Europeans in Australia, he argues, their distance from their homeland was the 'tyranny' of their position, and that distance obviously involved the miles between land masses. The sea, by implication, was a void, a barrier to be crossed to another 'real' location. What is more, Blainey is uninterested in the experiences which had led the convicts across that watery non-place to their new home. It had apparently been covered as if in the blink of an eye. Distance was something that had just been imposed on them from above, rather than the seas being a space they had themselves inhabited directly before their appearance on the shores of Port Jackson. The journey was not a process which had informed their knowledge of the distance and established their new lives as residents of a new land, it was simply an abyss.¹

This view of the sea as lacking any history of its own is currently being challenged in many fields of historiography. Derek Walcott's much-quoted line 'the sea is history' has become the clarion cry to avoid the kind of formulation unconsciously used by Blainey.² Increasingly the ocean is seen as the arena in which much transnational history was lived, rather than simply being the means by which internationalism was achieved. One recent edited collection, Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun's *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean*, sets its task as moving 'beyond outworn patterns of historical causality and explanation ... to recover in the history of the sea a paradigm that may accommodate various revisionary accounts ... of the modern transnational experience of contact zones'.³ The designation of the seas as 'other' in historical study is increasingly regarded, just like the 'othering' of groups of people throughout history, as unconstructive and subjective.⁴ Yet much Australian convict scholarship seemingly remains

¹ Geoffrey Blainey 1968, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Melbourne: Macmillan).

² Derek Walcott 1979, 'The Sea is History', originally published in *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

³ Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun (eds) 2004, *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York, NY: Routledge), p. 3.

⁴ Philip E. Steinberg 2001, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 35-8.

tied to the idea that the long voyage out merely delivered – largely unchanged – British and Irish people to their new home in the southern hemisphere.

This is problematical, not just because of this current global focus on the sea as a historical arena, but also because of the realities of the early British settlement in Australia. It was, after all, a peculiarly maritime arrangement, ruled by the only naval governor who presided on land in the British realm. Early Sydney was a 'sailortown'.⁵ What this suggests is that the protracted voyage to this settlement was hardly a non-time, but was rather a formative and transformative experience for those who were forced to make it to atone for their crimes. Time, life, experiences, these things did not stop while the voyage was made; the sea was not a watery chasm to be crossed to another 'real' place. It was, rather, the site of adjustment and alteration. To use rhetoric often utilised by the historiographies of other forms of non-free migration, the long voyage southward was the convict settlement's roots as well as the convicts' route.

This nautical characteristic of the early settlement was also one of the traits which set it apart from earlier sites of convict transportation, and this factor changed essentially the nature of the voyage felons embarked upon to reach it. Historicising the oceans in terms of convict studies reveals that it was not simply the destination that changed with the British settlement of New South Wales in 1788, but also the purpose of the voyage by which criminals were banished. The familiar discussions of the origins of European Australia – the loss of the American colonies, the attempts to find an African site for a penal settlement, plus various attempts to re-start the American trade – were not merely theoretical posturing, but were lived as experiences which preceded the First Fleet voyage for some of Australia's founding convicts. Their enforced transnationalism was enacted largely at sea, their familiarity with seagoing then becoming an integral part of the sailortown identity of early Sydney.

In this chapter I want to explore what the convict voyage across the sea meant to one man who, astonishingly, made three very different versions of it. Thomas Limpus is of interest because he was in many ways the archetypal convict – he was a handkerchief thief – but also because his experiences as a transported convict covered the whole realm of events which led to New South Wales. Of all the places commonly mentioned as background to the founding of the penal settlement – locations as diverse as North America, West Africa, and even the peripheral Honduras Bay settlement – Limpus had either been sent there or had narrowly escaped that fate. His route to Australia mirrored the complex twists debated by historians of 'the Botany Bay decision' but he *lived* these destinations;

⁵ Alan Atkinson 1997, *The Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), volume 1, pp. 37, 57, 110-115; Grace Karskens 1997, *The Rocks: Life in Early Sydney* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), pp. 183-94.

to him they were not merely abstract decisions imposed on Britain's miscreants from on high. He arrived in New South Wales not as a newly deported Briton, but as a man who – probably unbeknownst to him at that time – had just ended a segment of his life in which he had constantly been cast away from land. Life had already displayed to him that convict voyages could take many forms, that the sea was both punishment and escape, and that it was a place in which he could negotiate space for himself as an individual.

Thomas Limpus's first convict voyage

Thomas Limpus was in many ways a typical First Fleet convict. He had been sentenced to three years hard labour in 1777 at the age of fifteen for the theft of a handkerchief, so beginning his criminal career banished to an area between sea and land.⁶ After the rebellion of the American colonies, hulks anchored on the Thames were established as a stop gap arrangement on which convicts were employed in moving gravel and filling pits, driving in posts to support new wharves, digging ditches and building drains. Although skilled prisoners might be put to other tasks, for the majority the work was monotonous and extremely arduous.⁷ Unable to find a place 'beyond the seas' to which to banish the felons, the British government chose to at least settle them on the river, a space which was neither truly land nor sea. At the age of 15, Thomas Limpus's life as a man cast beyond the littoral had begun.

Three years later, back on dry land, he was again at the Old Bailey charged with stealing another handkerchief. It was probably the violence he showed at his arrest that set him on his destiny as international voyager. A witness to the theft said that he heard the watchman, Mr. Collins, 'halloo out Stop thief!' and heard Limpus swear 'damn his eyes, he would cut his bloody ... life out'. Knives were drawn, and Limpus had allegedly tried to cut the watchman. It was evidence enough to ensure that he was sentenced to be transported away from Britain's shores for a period of seven years.⁸

Limpus was sentenced to this particular punishment at a peculiar moment of penal history. With the American colonies already lost (though hope of them accepting British felons was not yet totally despaired of) the government was searching for a new place to receive the reprobates it wished to export. It turned to the outposts of British authority on the West African coast, principally in those years engaged in transatlantic slave trading. Although the leaders of the African Company and slaving merchants had vehemently resisted convicts being

⁶ Mollie Gillen 1989, *The Founders of Australia: A Biographical Dictionary of the First Fleet* (Sydney: Library of Australian History), p. 221.

⁷ Duncan Campbell Letterbooks, Mitchell Library, Sydney, A3230 f. 29a.

⁸ Old Bailey Sessions Papers [hereafter OBSP] T17830910-41.

sent to their forts, they were perennially short of labour because of the catastrophic death rates among the white fort soldiers and guards. Eventually the British government circumvented their objections by sending several hundred convicts not as transported felons but by giving them respites to join the British Army. As such they had no different status to the regular soldiers and the African Company could offer no objection. Despite the fact that the army expedition was a total disaster, which ended with the majority either dying or deserting to the supposed enemy and their commander charged with murder, the British government continued its plans to transport convicts to West Africa.⁹

Thus Thomas Limpus had the misfortune to be convicted at the Old Bailey to seven years transportation, not merely to the unstipulated 'places beyond the seas', but to go specifically to Africa. He was to go to West Africa not as a soldier but simply as a transported felon, although what role he was supposed to fulfil there was unclear. Others who went aboard the same ship were to be soldiers at the African Company forts.¹⁰ Moreover, the settlement at which Limpus disembarked had plenty of convict soldiers. Its governor, Joseph Wall, who would later be hanged for having some of those soldiers whipped to death by black slaves, described those he ruled over as 'generally regiments in disgrace for mutiny, deserting their colours, riot or some other cause'. 'Their ranks', he complained, were 'usually recruited by desperadoes, picked up from convicts from our gaols, or incorrigibles in our military prisons.'¹¹ Regardless, it was not Limpus's fate to be a fort soldier.

Strangely enough, at this point Limpus's story intersects with that of the twelve million plus captive Africans who were transported to the Americas. Searching for a vessel to take the convicts sentenced to Africa, a deal was struck with the owners of the *Den Keyser*, which would continue its voyage transporting Africans to be sold into slavery in perpetuity once the convicts had been delivered.¹² So Limpus was embarked with about forty other convicts 'chained two and two together' aboard one of the notorious slave trading fleet operating out of London at that time.¹³ Among his shipmates were two other men who would later be First Fleeters to the colony of New South Wales. John Ruglass and Samuel Woodham had been part of a group of ten or so people who had robbed and

⁹ The story of these convicts will be told in much more detail in my forthcoming book on this subject.

¹⁰ John Petty, John Prime and John Soons went out on the *Den Keyser* to be soldiers at Commenda Fort. Papers of the Royal African Company for 1784, T 70/1550, National Archives of the UK, London [hereafter NA UK, formerly the PRO].

¹¹ *The Genuine and Impartial Memoirs of the Life of Governor Wall* (London: 1802), p. 9.

¹² David Eltis, David Richardson, Stephen D. Behrendt and Herbert S. Klein 1999, *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), voyage ID 80980.

¹³ OBSP t17830910-41.

beaten a sailor who was newly arrived home from sixteen long years at sea, a crime for which they had originally been sentenced to death.¹⁴ Another First Fleeter, John Martin, described as 'a negro' at his trial, narrowly escaped departing on the *Den Keyser* when he was returned to gaol too sick to travel.¹⁵

This, then, delivered to a slave ship anchored in the Thames, chained by the legs to another convict, was Thomas Limpus's first experience of convict transportation. Perhaps the convict to whom he had originally been chained had been the black man John Martin. Of course it is not possible to push this analogy too far: British convicts were never slaves. Yet in the uncertainties inherent in their destination, and a lack of knowledge of what was expected of them, there were some strange parallels. Even the fact that their position was temporary rather than theirs to suffer ceaselessly had little reality when very few British men survived for seven years in West Africa. 'Beware beware the Bight of Benin, for one that comes out, there's forty go in' said the seamen's ballad. The *Den Keyser* was not delivering its white cargo to the Bight of Benin, but that was probably little comfort to Limpus, even if he was aware of it.

Beyond these shared experiences, however, it is evident that there is no comparison between the nature of the voyage endured by Limpus and his fellow convicts, and that made by the 300 or so African slaves the ship would transport later on its voyage.¹⁶ The difference was not chiefly the humanity shown (or rather the lack thereof) but in the very purpose of the voyage. In fact, while the *Den Keyser* was a slaving vessel, the function of convict and slave voyages had actually been more similar during the period of transportation to the American colonies when the captain and crew of a ship had a financial interest in the labour of banished British felons. On this occasion, the rationale behind sending the convicts to Africa was ambiguous, and while a fiscal deal had been struck between the British government and the ship's owners and contractors, the crew of the ship were told merely that the shackled passengers were felons who had to go to Africa. John Townsend, who worked for Akerman the keeper of Newgate, later recounted that he had been one of the men who took the prisoners to the port to board their vessel. Once they had 'delivered them safe, and they ironed them, and put them in the hold' the entire duties of the crown and its employees was seemingly discharged.¹⁷ This was truly the moment at which the convict voyage was itself intended as punishment, with each nautical mile covered representing the entire purpose of the venture.

¹⁴ OBSP t17810425-49; OBSP t17810530-52; PCOM 2/169 and PCOM 2/170 NA UK.

¹⁵ OBSP T17820703-5.

¹⁶ Eltis et al. 1999, *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, voyage ID 80980.

¹⁷ OBSP t17830910-41.

This uncertainty about the nature of the *Den Keyser's* voyage to Africa was evident in events after arrival, for it delivered convicts to at least three locations to fulfil vastly different roles. Thomas Limpus and about nineteen other convicts were the first to be disembarked, leaving the ship not at Cape Coast Castle, the centre of British slave trading on the West African coast and the destination of most of the transported convicts, but rather in the Senegambia region, probably at Fort St Louis. Exactly where the notorious governor Joseph Wall was when Limpus and the others disembarked is uncertain, but his harsh, chaotic rule is certainly evident behind stories of what happened next. Captain Lacey, who appears to have been as antagonistic to others as his superior officer, having already been challenged to a number of duels, ordered the convicts to be 'drawn up in a circle on the parade'.¹⁸ According to Thomas Limpus, he then 'told us we were all free men, and that we were to do the best we could, for he had no victuals'. John Ruglass said simply that Lacey 'had sent them off' and they were forced to go and fight for their survival as best they could.¹⁹ The uncertainty inherent in the purpose of the voyage, apparent from the moment John Townsend had delivered them with no instructions other than to take them to Africa, had reached its logical conclusion. The voyage had achieved no objective other than to remove the men from Britain, and that, and abandonment, was to be their punishment.

Limpus turned his face back towards the seas. With few other options, he went on board a British ship that was in the river at that time. Going ashore several times he did some work for Governor Wall but ultimately chose to sail away with the ship when she weighed anchor rather than stay behind. It was still wartime, and the French and Dutch, were all around the coast. As he plaintively later put it, 'I did not chuse to go into the hands of the enemy'.²⁰ Limpus had learned what many before him also had, that the sea could provide escape as well as incarceration. His words also suggest another truth: ships were small outposts of the mother country. They could return him to his homeland, but they also, in another sense, were part of that country floating on the deep blue sea.

John Ruglass and Samuel Woodham also decided on a similar step to Limpus. Having originally been sentenced together, they very probably escaped together, almost certainly also taking passage on a ship that arrived in the area. They may well have had seafaring experience despite being very young, as they had lived and committed their original crime among London's seafaring community.²¹

¹⁸ CO 267/20 ff. 373, National Archives, UK; OBSP T17830910-41; OBSP S17841208-1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ OBSP t17810530-52.

Ironically it could well have been a slave ship (or ships) that took away all three men, for they often stopped in the Senegambia region on their way down to the larger slave trading ports of the coast and often needed additional hands to replace seamen who were already dead. So the men who had been despatched from their homelands on a slave ship learned the vagaries of the seafaring life. It was a fact many a seaman – falling foul of his captain or being taken a prisoner of war – had also learned. The gap between chained captive and useful crew member could be very slim indeed.

Unfortunately for Limpus, his freedom was to be short lived. While the ship was temporarily docked in London he was seen by men who knew him to be a banished felon and he was sentenced for having returned from transportation. When he was charged at the Old Bailey, he said that he had only returned to England temporarily and unavoidably; he had planned on to go back to sea with the same captain that had enlisted him in Africa.²² Indeed, his pleas were not unreasonable. The exact nature of what was expected of a transported convict was in dispute for long after the 1780s, and technically a man did just have to leave the shores of Britain for the term imposed. Of course he should not have been in London, but a seaman's life was clearly reconcilable with the idea of banishment for long periods. Convicts had in recent history been offered respites to serve in the Royal Navy, and occasionally even the merchant marine.²³ Perhaps Limpus had been held in Newgate with men who had exchanged their death sentences for the seafaring profession. Whatever the reasons for his plea, clearly the man who had been loaded on a slave ship, chained by the ankles to a companion, had come to regard the sea as a potential refuge as well as a fate to be endured. He hoped that banishing himself not to a 'place beyond the seas' but to the seas themselves would mollify the British government.

The second voyage

It was not to be. He was sentenced to death for returning from transportation, a fate which was then commuted to transportation for life. This time, as before, there was a specific destination mentioned, but this time it was America.²⁴ Part of a defiant attempt to get the Americas to again accept British offenders, Limpus was embarked on the *Mercury*, a ship which, following in the wake of the earlier *Swift*, would try to disembark convicts in the rebellious colonies. The subterfuge was that they claimed to be destined for Nova Scotia, but would then put in to Baltimore, Maryland, announcing that they were too short of water or provisions

²² OBSP t17830910-41.

²³ See, for example, HO 42/1 f.475; HO 42/12 f.260; HO 42/35 f.351 NA UK. There are also countless examples in the Duncan Campbell letterbooks, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

²⁴ OBSP T17830910-41.

to make the more northerly destination.²⁵ And so Thomas Limpus again embarked on a ship, this time not as a working member of the crew as he had hoped and planned, but once more as a captive held below decks.

This voyage was an attempt by the British government to return to the past, to revert to paying private contractors to remove convicts sentenced to transportation who would then have a fiscal stake in their labour power. Before the American Revolution, banished criminals had been privately owned by masters in the Americas, with many convict ships selling their labour power to the highest bidder after arrival. Although their situation was never directly akin to that of African and African-American slaves, there was far more similarity in the intention of the voyages. Both convict transports and slave ships transported men, women and children to labour elsewhere, and sold them after arrival to those needing labourers.²⁶ For those engaged as captain and crew of such vessels, part of their job was to deliver the 'goods' in such a condition that they would return the best price.

The contractor for the *Mercury*, George Moore, had the same scheme in mind. He had arranged to take the prisoners, Limpus included, with the idea of profiting financially from their export. In fact it was to prove a gross miscalculation, with the *Mercury* not permitted to disembark its prisoners at any of its intended ports of call. The authorities in Maryland were still smarting from an earlier attempt to pass off convicts from the *Swift* as indentured servants and refused to let it land its passengers.²⁷ It then sailed for the Honduras Bay settlement in Central America, where despite an acute need for additional labour, the convicts were once again unwanted, the settlers fearing that they 'would damage the credit and character of the country'.²⁸ Moore's gamble had not paid off, but for those who sailed on the *Mercury* their experiences of the voyage, until its disastrous

²⁵ Bob Reece 2001, *The Origins of Irish Convict Transportation to New South Wales* (Hampshire: Palgrave), pp. 67-9.

²⁶ Jed Martin 1975, 'Convict Transportation to Newfoundland in 1789', *Acadiensis*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 84-99; Eugene I. McCormac 1904, *White Servitude in Maryland, 1634-1820* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press), pp. 42, 61, 99; Kenneth Morgan 1985, 'The Organization of the Convict Trade to Maryland: Stevenson, Randolph and Cheston, 1768-1775', *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, vol. XLII, pp. 201-7; Stephen Nicholas and Peter R. Shergold 1988, 'Transportation as Global Migration', in Stephen Nicholas (ed.), *Convict Workers: Interpreting Australia's Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 29-38; F. H. Schmidt 1986, 'Sold and Driven: Assignment of Convicts in Eighteenth-Century Virginia', *Push from the Bush*, vol. 23, October, pp. 2-27.

²⁷ A. Roger Ekirch 1984, 'Great Britain's Secret Convict Trade to America, 1783-1784', *American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no. 2, pp. 1285-91.

²⁸ John Alder Burdon 1931, *Archives of British Honduras* (London: Sifton, Praed and Co.), vol. 1, pp. 146-8.

end, would have been similar to earlier generations of criminals sent to the Americas. The sea crossing was designed to deliver much needed workers and to create a profit for the contractors. The punishment was in the loss of control over their personal autonomy and the fruits of their future toil, and for this they had to be prepared for their 'sale' to a master.

For Thomas Limpus, however, whatever his experiences as a man being prepared for the sale of his labour power, they were short lived. He had in fact left the ship long before it reached Maryland and the Honduras Bay settlement. Only four days after the ship departed from England some of the convicts had mutinied and temporarily captured the vessel from the captain and crew. It is not clear what part Limpus took in these proceedings, but it is possible that his previous work aboard ships had given him just the kind of knowledge, and even possibly anti-authoritarian spirit, which the mutineers needed. The rebels first steered for Ireland and then Spain before finally coming to rest in Devon. There the majority, including Limpus, escaped.²⁹

Quickly recaptured, Limpus, along with many other of his fellow *Mercury* escapees, was provisionally imprisoned in Exeter gaol. However, this was not designed to take such a large sudden influx of inmates and was sorely overcrowded. Fearing that 'infectious Distempers' would break out, or that they would attempt a mass escape, and unsure where to banish them to, they were removed to the *Dunkirk* hulk.³⁰ Limpus was again at sea, if this time anchored just offshore.

The government, of course, had not finished trying to banish Thomas Limpus. By a strange twist of fate, the place they had in mind was the one from which he had already escaped. Yet the experiences of Limpus and his fellow transports in Africa had obviously not gone completely unnoticed, because by this time transportation to Africa was considered to be a far worse fate than America. As the admiralty itself put it, 'in the routine of Punishment' Africa was 'considered as next in degree to that of Death'.³¹ Even the authorities balked at the punishment, questioning whether they should suffer 'so severe a sentence as Transportation thither'.³² The problem, therefore, was clear. If convicts taken to Africa simply died, as so many had, or escaped, there was no justifiable objective. As Limpus's earlier voyage on the *Den Keyser* had illustrated, there was nothing constructive in merely dumping men and women onto another

²⁹ Ekirch 1984, 'Great Britain's Secret Convict Trade to America'; Reece 2001, *Irish Convict Transportation*, p. 69; HO 42/4 f.166 NA UK.

³⁰ Letter from Lord Sydney, 29 May 1784, ADM 1/1451, NA UK; Letter of J. P. Bastard to Admiralty, 5 November 1784, ADM 1/1451, NA UK.

³¹ Admiralty to John Nicol, Mayor of Plymouth, 29 December 1784, HO 42/5, ff.461-2, NA UK.

³² *ibid.*

continent. A sea crossing was not, in itself, what the convicts were sentenced to, the government had obviously decided. It had to be a means to an end; it had to be fulfilling part of a larger aim. In the end the admiralty advised the Mayor of Plymouth that a general sentence of banishment 'beyond the seas' would be the best solution for the recaptured *Mercury* mutineers like Limpus.³³

The third voyage: the First Fleet

Ultimately, of course, the Botany Bay proposal was adopted and once it was embraced the former *Mercury* mutineers waiting on the *Dunkirk* hulk were among the first to be earmarked for the new scheme. Once again, Limpus was among those chosen. For transportation to his third intended continent of banishment he was sent aboard the *Charlotte* in early 1787. Many other *Mercury* veterans were also embarked on the vessels of the First Fleet. Among them were Robert Sidaway who would later part-own Sydney's first theatre; the youngest of the male convicts on the First Fleet, John Hudson, who had been only nine years old when convicted at the Old Bailey in 1873; and James Cox, who would later daringly escape Sydney with the Bryant party.³⁴ Also embarked on the First Fleet vessels were John Ruglass and Samuel Woodham, Limpus's old *Den Keyser* shipmates who had avoided the *Mercury* fiasco but now were again in chains awaiting shipment.

It is only at this point, then, that Thomas Limpus fits into the usual stories of early Australia. Yet this was clearly not a man who shrieked with fear at the noises of the First Fleet weighing anchor, or who necessarily lamented his homeland fearing he would never return. So how was the long First Fleet voyage experienced by a man like Thomas Limpus? Firstly, it becomes clear that the differences the Botany Bay scheme had from earlier plans, such as the idea to form a settlement in the Gambia River at Lemane Island, were not merely abstract arguments. Certainly to those like Limpus, Ruglass and Woodham, and probably also to many who had narrowly escaped the fate of being abandoned in the Honduran backwoods, it would have been apparent from the outset that this scheme was different. They would not just be deserted, for if that was the plan, surely the British government would not have gone to so much trouble outfitting the fleet, and providing personnel for it. Among the arguments as to whether the penal colony in the southern hemisphere was founded for strategic reasons or merely as a place to get rid of the convicts crowding the gaols, few would

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Gillen 1989, *Founders of Australia*, pp. 434-5; Robert Jordan 2002, *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia, 1788-1840* (New South Wales: Currency House), pp. 250-5; Robert Holden 1999, *Orphans of History: The Forgotten Children of the First Fleet* (Melbourne: Text Publishing), pp. 77-85, 205.

disagree that before the felons embarked on their vessels, the plan had become one of colonisation.³⁵

The scale of the arrangements for the First Fleet undoubtedly gave Thomas Limpus a view of this venture different from that of his two earlier convict voyages. It would have been apparent in the time spent outfitting the fleet, the presence of soldiers and even the fact that there were women convicts, that this was a different type of venture. New South Wales was, to be sure, an unknown quantity and was much further away than Africa or America, but from the first the experience must have been different to being put on a slave ship where the crew had no instructions but to dump them where they could. Compared to being abandoned to Africa's deadly disease-ridden environment and feared native peoples, Thomas Limpus's role in the new venture perhaps seemed oddly certain. He was, at least, wanted alive, and his labour power had value.

The organisation, peopling, medical care and victualling of the First Fleet were in large part due to Arthur Phillip, who clearly intended the voyage of the First Fleet ships to have a very different function from oceanic passages made in earlier eras of convict transportation. He aimed to deliver men and women as potential colonists, people who would be useful to Britain from afar. This approach was the origin of the horror at the time of the arrival of the Second Fleet in 1790 – a fleet infamously outfitted by slave traders. Phillip's complaint at the condition of the Second Fleet is telling, for his objections were practical as well as humanitarian. 'Many of those now received are in such situation from old complaints, and so emaciated from what they have suffered in the Voyage, that they never will be capable for any Labour', he wrote.³⁶ At a time when the fledgling colony desperately needed supplies and a fresh input of workers, he was greatly alarmed that the merchants and captains of the Second Fleet had misunderstood what was required of convict transportation. Its primary function, he seemed to be saying, was not to punish men and women, but to deliver workers.

What this meant on an individual level was that because the nature of the voyage was different to his prior experiences as a transported felon, Limpus could almost certainly negotiate a different space for himself than he had previously. Neither the kind of freedom he had claimed after his abandonment in Africa, nor the slack control which had allowed the mutiny on the *Mercury* would be found during the First Fleet's journey, but there were other advantages. In a colony which would depend on those who were sent off in chains, men like Thomas

³⁵ Alan Atkinson 1990, 'The First Plans for Governing New South Wales, 1786–87', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 24, no. 94, pp. 22-40; Alan Frost 1980, *Convict and Empire: A Naval Question* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), pp. 34-40.

³⁶ Phillip to the Admiralty, 13.7.1790, T 1/694, NA UK.

Limpus who had seafaring experience were perhaps the most immediately useful of all. Throughout the era convict men were repeatedly put to work in assisting the seamen during the long voyage to Australia. The skills Limpus had gained, or honed, during the years of his banishment were now of use in the new settlement.

In negotiating these particularised spaces, a new 'Australian' culture began to be formed. It had roots between the wooden walls of the convict transports as they crossed the seas, and it borrowed from seafaring culture, not abandoning those traits when it reached the shore. This was partly because of Phillip's rule, for as a naval man he knew that seamen's ethics could not be overlooked. But maritime culture was also adopted by the convicts, among whom those who had been seamen often had positions of privilege or esteem.³⁷ Seafaring skills would be a nexus through which status could be bargained and which could often grant personal latitude on the edges of the close control of the new settlement, and former convicts with seafaring skills were often put in places of authority.

Thomas Limpus did not succeed in returning to his homeland a third time – he died on Norfolk Island prior to 1801 – but we can suspect that he never gave up hope that he might.³⁸ Certainly his trans-oceanic voyages as a British convict had not been blank periods of time; rather they had been part of his formative experiences. He embarked on the First Fleet vessel *Charlotte* not as a landlubber forced to sea for his trifling crimes, but as a man who had already experienced two other convict voyages which were destined not only for separate continents, but which had different intentions altogether. By the time he arrived in Botany Bay he could well have learned to use the sea as a site of refuge, a means of rebellion, and to see seafaring culture as a source of alternative authority. He was one of those who ensured that New South Wales was a sailortown in its earliest years. Far from having descended on Port Jackson to forever lament the distance of his homeland, the salt water which rushed through the heads and lapped the shores of Sydney harbour had been his home for some time and he had carved out for himself a status at sea. To Thomas Limpus, the sea definitely had a history, for it was an integral part of his own life story. It is time that historians of the convict trade examined the extent to which that maritime life story was replicated in various ways throughout the early colony. In so doing they might begin the process of unlocking the sea's untold history.

³⁷ Atkinson 1990, *Europeans in Australia*, especially chapter 6.

³⁸ Gillen 1989, *Founders of Australia*, p. 221.

6. Revolution and respectability: Chinese Masons in Australian history

John Fitzgerald

The Chinese now are all Freemasons, and form one brotherhood. The old Emperor and his son are Chinese Tartars, and the new emperor intends to carry out all one brotherhood.

– Howqua, Chinese interpreter, Melbourne 1855.¹

Introduction

In 1911 a lodge of the international Hung League opened an impressive building in Mary Street, Sydney, looking west along Campbell Street towards Paddy's Markets where many of its members earned their livelihood. The Hung League – or Triads as they are often known in English – had grown over the five decades since setting foot in colonial Australia from a loose affiliation of rural clubs into an organised social network with a prominent urban profile. With the opening of its new headquarters in Sydney, the New South Wales Hung League put on a respectable public face under the English title impressed on the building's façade: Chinese Masonic Society.

Mounting a respectable public face was a considerable achievement for an organisation that all 'decent' people were inclined to deride as thieves, thugs, and opium addicts. Not long before the Sydney Masonic Hall was opened, members of the more respectable See Yup native-place association² in Victoria took objection to the criminal behaviour and stand-over tactics of the Hung League in Melbourne and established a rival league to do battle with the triad fraternity. Gangs took to fighting one another in the streets. Sydney also had its share of Tong Wars but these were well behind it when the Hung League

¹ 'Commission appointed to enquire into the conditions of the goldfields of Victoria', (1855).

Reprinted in Ian McLaren (ed.) 1985, *The Chinese in Victoria: Official Reports and Documents* (Melbourne: Red Rooster Press), pp. 6-14, especially p. 14.

² Native place associations were established by people migrating within China or overseas to Southeast Asia, Australasia and the Americas to provide common sites of worship, enduring social networks, and practical assistance to members. Membership was based on a migrant's town, county, or district of origin. The See Yup Association was the largest native place organisation in Victoria embracing natives from four districts ('see yup' in Cantonese) south of the provincial capital of Canton.

announced it was emerging in public as a Masonic Society.³ The Chinese Masonic Society of NSW was working to become the kind of organisation that respectable men would consider joining.

The ideal of respectability was one of the most powerful forces working for social transformation among immigrant communities in federation Australia. Drawing on the work of British social historians, Janet McCalman has observed that a cluster of social traits associated with the idea of respectability (including self-reliance, independence, and self-discipline) were popularised among all classes in the industrial revolution before being transplanted to Australia 'by immigrants hoping for dignity and prosperity in a new land'.⁴ The struggle for respectability crossed class, gender and ethnic lines among the inner-urban communities that staffed and ran the factories, utilities, wharves, warehouses and markets of early twentieth century Australian cities. Immigrants who did not harbour aspirations for modern respectability before they arrived were not long in acquiring them after arrival. Children of immigrants from the pre-industrial counties of Ireland, for example, struggled to escape the stigma that attached to the name 'Bog Irish'. Incentives for achieving respectability were particularly strong in societies where migrating settlers from England, Scotland, and Ireland mixed with one another (and with the occasional Russian or Chinese) to a degree rarely replicated in their countries of origin. Opportunities beckoned not only for prosperity but also for achieving equal recognition for themselves, their families, and their particular religious and ethnic communities.⁵

Despite its attempts to achieve respectability the Hung League has yet to gain recognition that its growth and transformation were in any sense comparable to those of other community organisations transplanted to Australia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This chapter questions both Australian and Chinese historiography, and uses a transnational approach to develop a new interpretation of the origins, history, and significance of the Hung League. In seeking explanations for the organisation and conduct of Chinese secret societies it is tempting to look to China for motives and precedents; certainly the rules, rituals, hierarchies, and patterns of internal organisation of secret societies were similar from one place to another. But when the New South Wales (NSW) Hung

³ C. F. Yong 1977, *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia 1901–1921* (Richmond, SA: Raphael Arts); Shirley Fitzgerald 1997, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese* (Sydney: NSW State Library Press).

⁴ Janet McCalman 1985, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900–1965* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press), p. 22.

⁵ Charles Taylor 2004, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press). For an excellent summary see his 2004 article 'Modern Social Imaginaries', *Public Culture*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 91–124.

League went public under the title Chinese Masonic Society it was responding to forces at work not in China but in Sydney, and possibly also in Auckland and San Francisco. The NSW League sought recognition of the rightful place of a Chinese community organisation in a European settler country and it sought acknowledgment that the working men of the Hung League were no less decent than the Chinese-Australians who looked down on them. By focusing on the distinctive local features of secret societies in Australia, rather than turning to China for generic explanations, we gain some sense of what was 'Australian' about Chinese-Australian communities, and we open a window on federation Australia that goes beyond the spectre of a closed and autarkic European enclave that wanted, above all, to keep Chinamen out.

The argument of this chapter is not entirely consistent with Chinese historiography of secret societies either. The role ascribed to secret society networks in China's republican revolution is circumscribed by two common assumptions. One is that secret societies were essentially social in their aims, character and activities. The other is that their limited political aspirations never rose above atavistic notions of imperial restoration, as is suggested in Howqua's deposition to the Victorian commission in 1855, which begins this chapter, specifically referring to the overthrow of the Manchu 'Tartars' and the substitution of a native Han Chinese emperor who could realise the League's aspirations for egalitarian brotherhood. It follows from both these assumptions that if and when secret societies were to come out on the side of the republican revolution they needed to be prodded along by Sun Yatsen's republican movement, which introduced modern nationalism to the Hung League and converted its members into proto-revolutionary allies for the republicans' assault on the Qing Empire.

The notion that modern revolutionary ideologies needed to be imported into overseas secret society networks from outside the networks themselves is not borne out by the Australian case. To be sure, the Chinese Masonic Society of New South Wales is not generally known for engaging in partisan political activities. By reputation it is a community organisation that provides social support for its members, that takes a patriotic stand on current events in China, and that occasionally engages in stand-over tactics against those who deny its authority. A similar reputation attaches to national branches of the Hung League in North America and Southeast Asia. In the Australian colonies, however, members of the Hung League appear to have been capable of politicising and depoliticising themselves, and to have borrowed as freely from Anglo-Australian institutional networks as they did from Sun Yatsen's Chinese nationalist organisations. The Chinese Masonic network of New South Wales had an indigenous revolutionary history long before it adopted a respectable public face. Further, there is reason to believe that the Australian Masonic network was *deradicalised* by the time Sun Yatsen's nationalist movement rose to

prominence. In New South Wales, when republican nationalists called upon local lodges of the Hung League to support their revolution, they confronted not atavistic notions of imperial restoration but rather an organisation that had shrugged off a revolutionary past and had come to embrace the Australian ethic of egalitarian respectability.

Evidence for this argument is summoned from two sets of sources. The first includes an oral legend about an early leader of the NSW Hung League who died in 1874 and the historical records of his followers in south China later in that century. The second set relates to the consolidation of a statewide Chinese Masonic network early in the twentieth century and to its links with English, Scottish and Irish Freemasonry.

History and legend

Today the triangle of lanes that encloses the Chinese Masonic building at the eastern end of Campbell Street has been left behind in Sydney's conversion into a world city. At the western end, Paddy's Market now encases a three-star hotel, a four-star university, and a five-star residential development emblazoned with advertisements in Chinese characters. When the building opened in 1911 the eastern end was almost as prosperous as the west. A parade of storehouses, restaurants, and civic associations bearing Chinese characters ran along Campbell Street between the new Masonic Hall and the brick colonnades of Paddy's Markets. Just around the corner from the new building, at the eastern tip of Campbell Street, sat the small but popular Chinese Christian mission church of the Rev. John Young Wai. The opening of the Mary Street headquarters placed the Chinese Masonic Society at the heart of Chinese-Australian community life in the recently federated states of Australia.

Today the Masonic Hall stands as a monument to a time when the Hung League was an organisation of some standing in the community – a time when Chinese-language newspapers were edited and printed on its ground floor, when business was transacted over Oolong Tea on the second, and when secret rituals were enacted and vendettas plotted in the closeted chambers of the third floor. None could cross the threshold to the third floor but sworn brothers who had vowed to keep the secrets of the fraternity and to defend each other's honour unto death. The ground floor reception hall of the Mary Street headquarters bears little trace of the partitioned offices and printing presses that once marked out its busy floor plan. The floorboards have been resurfaced, the walls repainted, and tables and chairs are laid out to welcome guests. But a number of old images pinned to the walls still bear messages conveying the spirit of solidarity, justice, patriotism, masculinity, and egalitarian defiance that characterised the Chinese Masonic network from its earliest days in Australia.

To the right of the reception hall hangs a framed photograph of General Cai Tingkai, the general who defied Generalissimo Chiang Kaishek when he took on battalions of Japanese military invaders in 1931 and founded an independent People's Government in Fujian in 1934. The Australian Masonic Society invited General Cai to tour Australia in March 1935 and meet with Chinese-Australians who shared his contempt for Chiang Kaishek's strategy of fighting Communists in preference to resisting Japanese invaders. The photograph on the wall bears a signed message from General Cai thanking the Sydney Masonic headquarters for its assistance in arranging his visit.

To the left hangs a large framed watercolour of the legendary 108 outlaws of the Liangshan marshes, one of the many fabulous sources to which Chinese lodges trace their eclectic liturgy of beliefs and rituals. Legend has it that seven centuries ago this band of outlaws professed principles of loyalty and justice while upholding an ideal of universal brotherhood – that 'all men are brothers' to borrow the title of Pearl Buck's popular translation of the legend.⁶ The 108 outlaws swore oaths of loyalty to one another that they would struggle for justice in the face of corrupt authority.

Like their outlaw heroes, members of the Chinese Masonic network were partial to the trappings of higher orders albeit domesticated into ritual hierarchies of honour and loyalty to which any member could aspire. They also practised collective discipline. A member found guilty of breaking the code of conduct was liable to receive 108 beatings with a cane, a form of punishment that was possibly more familiar to colonial readers of court columns in nineteenth century Australian newspapers than it is to kung-fu movie fans today. In 1896, for example, Victorian newspapers closely followed a case involving 108 beatings which came before the local bench in Bendigo, Victoria, after a certain Lee Fook gave evidence for the prosecution in a criminal case against a sworn brother. For this violation of the code Lee was allegedly summoned before a meeting of 200 brothers and sentenced to a punishment of 108 lashes.⁷ Similar punishment was possibly inflicted in ritual spaces on the third floor of the Sydney headquarters. The painting of 108 heroes of Liangshan which hangs prominently on the ground floor serves as a reminder to members of the egalitarian and heterodox values that bound them together and of the punishments that awaited them if they violated the code.

On the far wall, facing the entrance, hangs a set of framed scrolls boldly scripted in large characters. Two vertical scrolls hang left and right, the one on the right reading 'Exert effort for the Hung League through commitment to loyalty and justice', and the one on the left, 'Sacrifice personal interests for the common

⁶ Pearl Buck, translator, 1937, *All Men Are Brothers* (London: Methuen).

⁷ *Bendigo Advertiser*, 17 April and 10 August 1896.

good in working for the Lodge'. Between the two vertical scrolls hangs a large horizontal work of calligraphy framed behind glass. It reads:

Our history can be traced to the two Grand Lodges
Our prestige reaches out forever through branches overseas
Hung League brothers are all loyal and just
With one heart protecting the Chinese Masonic Lodge [*Zhigongtang*]⁸

Tracing the history of the Australian Chinese Masonic network to the 'Two Grand Lodges' in China leaves unanswered many of the questions we might like to ask about the arrival and expansion of the network in colonial and federation Australia. For this we need to consult local legend and Australian historical records.

Legend has it that the precursor of the Chinese Masonic Association, known variously as the Yee Hing or Gee Hing Company as well as the Hung League, came to Australia in the trail of the Taiping and Red Turban rebellions that shook south China in the middle of the nineteenth century. One fable that circulated in Melbourne, Victoria, tells of a Taiping leader by the name of Tock Gee (Huang Dezhi) who fled with his followers in a fleet of small boats from South China to Darwin, before leading them south to seek their fortunes on the goldfields of western Victoria. Tock Gee was known colloquially in Melbourne as the King for Pacifying the South in the Chinese rebel forces.⁹ In the Victorian version of the legend Tock Gee is remembered as founder of the southern goldfields chapters of the order in Australia. Another legend emanating from New South Wales tells of an anti-Qing leader by the name of Loong Hung Pung (Long Xingbang) who led hundreds of his comrades to goldfields in the western districts of the colony and there laid the foundations for the NSW lodge of the fellowship.

Historians are properly sceptical of legend. In the Victorian case, there was certainly a man by the name of Tock Gee who passed under the nickname of King for Pacifying the South within the Melbourne Masonic organisation. But there is little evidence to support the claim that Tock Gee led rebel forces in south China before migrating to Australia. Historians are also sceptical of the NSW legend of Loong Hung Pung. In a path-breaking study of Chinese-Australian history, C. F. Yong noted in passing that a certain Loong Hung Pung was

⁸The characters for the three scrolls hanging in the main hall are transcribed on the opening page of *Aozhou zhigong zongtang yibai wushinian jinian tekan* [Special commemorative publication marking the 150th anniversary of the General Headquarters of the Chinese Masonic Association of Australia] (Sydney: Chinese Masonic Association, 2004), p. 1.

⁹ Alfred Grieg Papers, Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Sophie Couchman brought this written version of the legend to my attention. Oral versions of the legend are still recounted among elderly members of Melbourne's Chinese community.

rumoured to have headed a group of anti-Manchu revolutionaries in Australia in the 1850s and to have cultivated a group of devoted followers who oversaw the development of the underground NSW network over the second half of the nineteenth century. There Yong leaves the legend much as he found it. Loong Hung Pung rates no further mention in his history of Australian Chinese communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁰ In Yong's view 'better documented accounts' confirm the pedigree of two other leaders, John Moy Sing (Mei Dongxing) and James A Chuey (Huang Zhu), as founders and organisers of the brotherhood in New South Wales from the 1850s to the 1920s.¹¹

To date, the founding of the parent lodge in nineteenth century New South Wales has been attributed to these two community leaders who brought the underground rural network into the open in Sydney and built the grand Masonic Hall in Mary Street over the first decade of the twentieth century. Around the turn of the century the NSW Masonic network went under the name of the Hongshuntang (Hung obedience hall) which was derived from the title of the Cantonese Lodge in China.¹² Within a decade, we noted, the organisation ventured into the wider English-speaking arena under the English title of Chinese Masonic Society.¹³ In June 1916, the Hongshuntang adopted another Chinese title, the *Zhonghua minguo gonghui* (Chinese Republican Association) to keep pace with a similar change of name on the part of the organisation's general headquarters in Hong Kong.¹⁴ Three years later, the Sydney office adopted yet another Chinese name, the Chee Kong Tong (Exert Public Benefit Lodge) in keeping with the title adopted some years earlier by the United States branch

¹⁰ Yong 1977, *New Gold Mountain*, pp. 157-8.

¹¹ The Sydney lodge supports the leadership sequence but not the timing of succession set out in Yong's work. The official genealogy reads as follows: John Moy Sing (1854–1898), James Chuey (1898–1930), Yu Bin (1930–1957), Guo Zilin (1957–1960), Lau Ting (1960–1993), Stephen Huang (1993–). See *Aozhou zhigong zongtang yibai wushinian jinian tekan* [Special commemorative publication marking the 150th anniversary of the General Headquarters of the Chinese Masonic Association of Australia] (Sydney: Chinese Masonic Association, 2004), pp. 26-7.

¹² *Hongshantang* was the name of the Guangdong Lodge of the Hung League network, distinguishing it from the Fujian Lodge or *Qingliangtang* (Green Lotus Hall) and other provincial lodges of the network. See Irene Lim 1999, *Secret Societies in Singapore* (Singapore: National Heritage Board). The first appearance of the title *Hongshantang* in Australian public life is unclear. The name was used in newspaper publicity by the 1910s. See for example *Minguo bao* [Chinese Republic News], 12 November 1916.

¹³ Yong 1977, *New Gold Mountain*, p. 160.

¹⁴ *Minguo bao* [Chinese Republic News], 12 November 1916.

office based in San Francisco.¹⁵ Despite these changes to its formal Chinese designation, the organisation retained its informal titles of Hung Men and Yee Hing in colloquial Chinese parlance and retained its formal English title of Chinese Masonic Society without interruption.

These changes in the English and formal Chinese titles of the Masonic network coincided with the leadership transition from Moy Sing to James Chuey, who between them oversaw the transformation of the network from a loose rural affiliation of secret-society lodges into a more tightly focused urban institution with a prominent public profile. Moy Sing is credited with founding the parent organisation around the mid-nineteenth century. C. F. Yong regards Moy Sing as the founder of the organisation from its establishment in 1858 to his retirement in 1913, when James Chuey is assumed to have succeeded him in office.¹⁶

Elsewhere I have questioned the claim that Moy Sing was the sole founder of the NSW Chinese Masonic network and have pressed a rival (or complementary) claim for the legendary figure of Loong Hung Pung.¹⁷ Put simply, I have suggested that a number of loosely-related lodges were founded at different goldfield sites and tin mines from the middle of the nineteenth century. Moy Sing certainly played a key role in consolidating these rural lodges into a statewide network based at his Sydney headquarters over the federation period. Indeed he based the lodge at his private home for a spell before the Mary Street headquarters was completed.¹⁸ There is little evidence to suggest that any significant lodges operated in Sydney before this time. There were however a number of lodges in rural NSW. Up to the 1880s almost ninety percent of Chinese immigrants lived in rural settlements and regional townships in the Australian colonies. They based their lodges at the same rural sites.¹⁹ The early history of the Masonic network is bound up with the experience of these rural community

¹⁵ The term Zhigongtang refers to a four-character expression of the Masonic organisation, “zhi li wei gong” (“exert strength for public benefit”). The abbreviated term Zhigongtang means ‘Lodge for Exerting Public Benefit’.

¹⁶ The timing of leadership succession in Yong’s account differs from the formal Masonic record published in 2004. According to the latter, Moy Sing led the organisation from 1854 to 1898 and James Chuey from 1898 to 1930. See note 7 above.

¹⁷ John Fitzgerald 2005, ‘Legend or History? The Australian Yee Hing and the Chinese Revolution’, *Studies on Republican China*, no. 8, pp. 87-111.

¹⁸ I would like to thank Kuo Mei-fen for bringing the role of Moy Sing’s private home to my attention.

¹⁹ C. Y. Choy 1975, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* (Sydney: Sydney University Press), pp. 28-9. Rural sites in NSW for which we have irrefutable evidence of Hung League lodges include Bathurst (site of the Loong Hung Pung legend), Albury, and Tingha. See Janis Wilton 2004, *Golden Threads: The Chinese in Regional New South Wales* (Armidale, NSW: New England Regional Art Museum in association with Powerhouse Publishers).

networks, an experience readily overlooked in retrospective reconstructions of leadership genealogies constructed from the perspective of the metropolis. Without retrieving something of the diversity of this early history it is difficult to appreciate the equally varied political and social history of the movement.

Political history of the Masonic network

Accounts that place Moy Sing at the centre of Chinese Masonic history in Australia make little mention of his politics. Moy Sing's achievements, it appears, were largely administrative. He consolidated the lodges into a statewide network and elevated the status of the old brotherhood to something akin to freemasonry in Australia; that is, respectable, formidable, and above sectarian politics. Loong Hung Pung, by contrast, is identified in legend as the founder of a revolutionary tradition in Australia that long predated the Sydney consolidation and which extended the local Masonic network well beyond Australia.

In 1958, two Taiwanese scholars published an unsourced account of Loong Hung Pung's place in the history of the greater Chinese revolution in the period preceding Sun Yatsen's arrival on the scene. In a chapter of their book on Chinese-Australian history, Liu Daren and Tian Xinyuan state that Loong Hung Pung was the inspiration behind a radical movement based in Australia that helped to set up the earliest of Sun Yatsen's revolutionary organisations, the Revive China Society (*Xingzhonghui*). Loong Hung Pung, they reported, 'was the head of the secret societies in Australia, and advocated opposition to the Manchus and restoration of the Han people while advocating fairness and freedom'. Liu and Tian trace a revolutionary genealogy that bears out many of the claims made for Loong Hung Pung in other sources that recount his influence on the radicalisation of nineteenth century Chinese-Australian communities. These include the claim that Loong inspired Chow Toong Yung and others to set up a revolutionary organisation which was to form a pillar for the erection of the revolutionary Revive China Society in Hong Kong in the 1890s.²⁰

In 1933 the serving Grand Master of the Chinese Masonic movement, writing under the cryptic title of '19 1/2', published a eulogy for 'The Great Leader' Loong Hung Pung in the Shanghai magazine *United China*.²¹ Loong, he wrote,

²⁰ Liu Daren and Tian Xinyuan (eds) 1958, *Aozhou huaqiao jingji* [Chinese-Australian Economy] (Taipei: Haiwai chubanshe), p. 131. I wish to thank Kuo Mei-fen for this reference.

²¹ Grand Master of the Chinese Masonic Lodge 1933, 'Lung Hung Pung "The Great Leader"', *United China*, vol. 1, no. 11, p. 433. In the same article Grand Master '19 1/2' notes cryptically that his curious numerical title was chosen out of respect for Loong Hung Pung. In all likelihood the title '19 1/2' relates to the numerical hierarchies of Hung League leadership in which Grand Masters of regional lodges were ranked as '21'. By implication, it appears succeeding leaders declined to rank themselves at 20 or 21 out of respect for Loong.

was the embodiment of the literary and artistic genius of his race. His writings and speeches were 'faithful to the noblest traditions of the ancients'. At the same time they were highly original, making a lasting 'contribution towards the enrichment of the general mass of mankind, and towards the creation of a New China in the New World'. This reference to Loong's writings touches a treatise associated with his name and known in English as 'The Reconstruction of China as a Modern State'. A pamphlet under this title is reported to have circulated internationally among anti-Manchu activists in the nineteenth century and to have reached Sun Yatsen some time before Sun penned his famous Three Principles of the People. Assuming it ever existed, the text is no longer extant. According to one not wholly reliable source, Sun Yatsen drew upon Loong's work in drafting his famous Three Principles: 'Sun Yatsen procured a copy of Loong's great masterpiece ... and started to copy and transpose it. He was unlucky to lose his copy in a fire, and could not procure another, though he tried hard.'²²

The source for this claim, an Australian journalist by the name of Vivian Chow, proceeded to the less credible claim that Sun tried to pass off as his own what he recalled of Loong's work from memory. 'Thus we have the pot-pourri of the Great Leader, Loong Hung Pung, advanced under the name of Sun Yatsen, "The Three Principles of the People".' Although tendentious this claim finds indirect support in Sun's own writings. Sun Yatsen complained at one point that he could not access his collection of books and manuscripts when he drafted the Three Principles of the People in 1924 because his library had been recently destroyed in a fire.²³ Still, the key claim that Sun passed off Loong's writings as his own is unverifiable. It is worth noting all the same that Sun included in his final manuscript a curious Australian story about a land speculator who made his fortune by bidding for property at auction, in Melbourne, while gesturing aimlessly in a drunken stupor. The moral of this Australian tale was that the state should capture increases in property values because land speculation was an immoral source of wealth.²⁴ To this day, the source for the Melbourne episode in Sun's Three Principles remains a mystery.

Loong was reputed to have been an organiser and strategist as well as a revolutionary pamphleteer. Vivian Chow credited him with organising 'great expeditions ... numbering thousands per contingent' to the Australian goldfields, and with cultivating the major 'goldfields commanders' including Yeng Lee, Yik

²² V. Y. Chow 1933, 'Sun Yatsen's "Fatherhood" of New China', *United China*, vol. 1, no. 11, p. 427.

²³ Sun Yatsen [1924], *San Min Chu I, The Three Principles of the People*. Translated by Frank W. Price. Edited by L. T. Chen 1943, (Chungking: Government Printing House), Author's Preface.

²⁴ Sun Yatsen [1924], *San Min Chu I*.

Bow, Way Lee, and Kai Koon, who was placed 'in charge of goldfields affairs'. Some of these names are difficult to trace today; Way Lee as we shall see was an early Freemason as well as Chinese Mason, and Kai Koon was naturalised as a British subject in Grafton in 1857.²⁵ Much of this early Hung League activity seems to have centred on the town of Grafton and neighbouring townships in northern NSW. Loong's organisation was also said to have had members in China to whom it sent funds from the goldfields to support anti-Manchu activities.²⁶

By one account their contacts in China let the Australian organisers down. Exposure of mismanagement and waste of the funds remitted from the goldfields to brothers in China appears to have shaken and transformed the NSW Masonic leadership. Corruption of the network in China was exposed through an inquiry into the movement undertaken over the period following Loong's death. The results of this inquiry led to a decision to cease remitting funds to China and encourage instead direct intervention by Chinese-Australians in the anti-Manchu revolution in China. Loong Hung Pung's successors were directed to leave Australia and carry their ideals back to China.²⁷

The decision to commit people rather than funds to the cause in China appears to explain why one activist, John See, returned to China in the 1880s. If so, it also accounts for the involvement of his children James and Thomas See in the avant-garde reform and revolutionary movements that emerged in Hong Kong in the early 1890s. It may also help to explain why Moy Sing, James Chuey, and their consolidated Sydney lodge felt at liberty to plot a new path of civic respectability for the brotherhood from around the turn of the century.

The claim that elements of a revolutionary rural lodge in NSW were relocated to China to promote some kind of revolution appears to have some foundation. One source for the claim, Vivian Chow, enjoyed close family connections with the Hung League.²⁸ His mother, Jessie Mary King, was the daughter of Stephen King and Annie Lavinia Lavett who married in Grafton in 1877. Vivian recalled that his grandfather Stephen, was the second Grand Master of a rural lodge in NSW and a pioneer revolutionary in what he called the 'Revolutionary and Independence Association of Australian Chinese'. Vivian's father Chow Toong

²⁵ V. Y. Chow 1933, 'In 1850 the Revolution was Born', *United China*, vol. 1, no. 11, p. 424.

²⁶ 'Australia acknowledges (A compilation of press reports On the Official Historian's visit to Australia)', *United China*, vol. 1, no. 11, 1933, p. 450.

²⁷ V. Y. Chow 1933, 'Odyssey in the South', *United China*, vol. 1, no. 11, p. 436. The author does not say whether the original was written in English or Chinese. The parenthetic reference identifying Stephen King Jung Sao appears to be the author's since the term 'Masonic' was not employed before the 1910s.

²⁸ Claims to this effect can be found repeated in the articles Vivian Chow published in *United China* magazine in 1932 and 1933. See above and below for citations.

Yung is reported to have been co-leader of this Australian revolutionary party with his friend John See. During a brief visit to Sydney in October 1932, Vivian claims to have convened a meeting of 'the remnants of the Australian Chinese Independence and Revolutionary Society'.²⁹ At this time he was touring NSW as 'Official historian of the Chinese Masonic Lodge and Revolutionary and Independence Association of Australian Chinese' – a grandiose title which nevertheless asserts an explicit link between the later Masonic network and the little-known political association founded by his relatives five or six decades earlier.³⁰

Another source for the claim that there was an Australian revolutionary society which pre-dated comparable societies in China and Hong Kong is John See's son James – better known to historians of China under the name Tse Tsan Tai. After moving to Hong Kong with his father, James played a role in founding the first revolutionary organisation in Hong Kong and subsequently co-founded the first revolutionary party with Sun Yatsen and others in that colony. James himself left a record of these events which revealed that the Australian secret society network was on intimate terms with Taiping rebels in China and with a variety of post-Taiping secret society organisations based in Hong Kong and Canton from the middle to the end of the nineteenth century. He also acknowledges in passing that his father led an Australian revolutionary party which he called the 'Chinese Independence Party of Australia'. This was presumably his own rendering of the society which Vivian Chow called the 'Revolutionary and Independence Society of Australian Chinese'.³¹

James See came into the world in Sydney on 16 May 1872 at a time when Loong Hoong Pung was still entertaining visitors at his store in Bathurst.³² Loong belonged to the generation of James' father John who was born in Kaiping County in Guangdong Province in 1831, arrived in Australia in the late 1850s or 1860s and, with his wife Que Sam, bore six children over the decade beginning in 1870.³³ On first arriving in Sydney, John See established a business at 39

²⁹ Chow 1933, 'Odyssey in the South', p. 441.

³⁰ Chow 1933, 'In 1850 the Revolution was Born', p. 423.

³¹ Tse Tsan Tai 1924, *The Chinese Republic: Secret History of the Revolution* (Hong Kong: South China Morning Post), p. 7. I have yet to find a source supplying a Chinese-language title.

³² 'Australia acknowledges', p. 450.

³³ James See notes that he had three sisters and two younger brothers. See Tse 1924, *Chinese Republic*, p. 7. Four are recorded in the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages under the surname See or Ah See as follows:

1438/1870 Sydney See, Ah Father Ah, Mother Sam

1366/1872 Sydney See, Tan Hi Father Ah See, Mother Sam Que

Sussex Street under the title of the Tai Yick (*Taiyi*) Firm.³⁴ He later moved with his family to Northern NSW where he opened the Tse & Co general store in Grafton before finally settling in a tin-mining town not far from Inverell known as Tingha. The family was well-known on the northern tablelands of NSW under the surname Ah See. All six children were raised as Christians. The young Tse Tsan Tai was baptised James See by Anglican Bishop Greenway on 1 November 1879 in Grafton's Christ Church Cathedral, along with his elder sister Sarah and younger brothers Thomas and Samuel.³⁵ In 1887 John See moved with his family to Hong Kong where he lived and worked until his death in 1903.³⁶

According to Vivian Chow, John See had long been a 'secret sect member' and 'Chinese Freemason' in Australia before retiring to Hong Kong.³⁷ Elsewhere, as we noted, Vivian Chow claimed that John See was co-leader of the Revolutionary and Independence Association with Vivian Chow's father Chow Toong Yung.³⁸ These claims are supported in a book James See published in Hong Kong two decades after the death of his father. In *The Chinese Republic: Secret History of the Revolution*, he painted a graphic picture of the involvement of his father's generation in a revolutionary secret organisation in Australia dating back to the 1870s which continued to maintain links with defeated leaders of the Taiping Rebellion in China well into the 1890s.

The See family became involved in insurrectionist movements against the Manchu imperial government shortly after they stepped ashore in Hong Kong. While a lad of seventeen, James joined a group of like-minded young men to plan the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty. With Yeung Ku Wan (Yang Quyun), in 1891 he formed the earliest revolutionary organisation in China, the Foo Yan Man Ser Kwong Fook Hui (*Furen wenshe guangfuhui* – Furen cultural society restoration association).³⁹ It was this association that later merged with Sun Yatsen's

12109/1876 Grafton Ah See, Thomas Father Ah See, Mother Sam

13251/1878 Grafton Ah See, Samuel Father Ah, Mother Sam

The first listed was also known as Sarah; the second was Tse Tsan Tai himself, also known as James Ah See; the third was known in Chinese as Tse Tsi-shau (Xie Zixiu).

³⁴ Tse 1924, *Chinese Republic*, pp. 6, 7, 24.

³⁵ 'Australia acknowledges', p. 450; also Chow 1933, 'Odyssey in the South', p. 444; Tse 1924, *Chinese Republic*, pp. 6, 24.

³⁶ Tse 1924, *Chinese Republic*, p. 7.

³⁷ Chow 1933, 'Odyssey in the South', pp. 443, 450.

³⁸ 'Early Revolutionary Crosses Great Divide', *United China*, vol. 1, no. 10, 1933, p. 402.

³⁹ Chow 1933, 'On Writing a History of the Chinese Revolution', p. 462. A photograph of the group dated 1891 features 10 youngish men including James See and Yeung Ku Wan seated together in the middle: Chow 1933, 'In 1850 the Revolution was Born', p. 425.

Hawaiian faction to form the Hong Kong chapter of the Revive China Society (*Xingzhonghui*). Yeung was the inaugural leader of the Hong Kong Revive China Society but within a short time surrendered the position to Sun Yatsen.

James See followed Yeung in preference to Sun, and refrained from joining Sun Yatsen's later organisation, the Revolutionary Alliance (*Tonmenghyui*), on account of his loyalty to Yeung. At the same time he maintained his Australian connections and encouraged his patron to consider visiting Australia. Yeung consented. In a letter dated 26 May 1900, Yeung Ku Wan informed Tse Tsan Tai of his plans to visit Australia over the coming year. This visit was possibly prompted by news that Liang Qichao, a leader of the rival Empire Reform Association (*Baohuanghui*), was intending to visit Australia around the same time. Liang visited Australia from October 1900 to May 1901. Yeung was less fortunate. On 10 January 1901 a gang of hired assassins broke into the school room where he was taking classes and murdered him. The assassins fled to sanctuary in imperial Canton.⁴⁰

Although siding with Yeung Ku Wan in his competition with Sun Yatsen in Hong Kong, James See maintained independent Australian connections that were facilitated by his father's links with secret society organisations and Taiping rebels through the old Australian Masonic network. On one occasion, James recalled, a nephew of the Taiping Christian King Hong Xiuchuan called by to speak with his father John See at their home in Hong Kong. This nephew of Hong Xiuchuan was said to have trained and fought in Taiping armies in the 1850s and 1860s. He travelled under a variety of names including Hung Chun-fu, Hung Wu, and Hung Chuen-fook. On this occasion Hung called by to seek strategic advice from James' father regarding plans to mount an anti-imperial uprising in Canton. John See was by this time too frail to take part himself and encouraged his twenty-seven year old son to step forward in his place. James and his younger brother Thomas then set to work with the nephew of the Taiping leader in plotting an armed uprising in China under the guidance of the aging leader of the Revolutionary and Independence Association of Australian Chinese.

The aim of the uprising was to overthrow the imperial system and establish a modern democratic form of government in China. They certainly did not propose to restore the Ming but, significantly, nor did they propose to establish a republic. James See described the 1902 putsch as a 'commonwealth' uprising, in contrast to the 'republican' uprising organised by Sun Yatsen. He explained the difference: 'I decided to plan and organize another attempt to capture Canton and establish [a] Commonwealth Government under a 'Protector', as I was of the

⁴⁰ Tse 1924, *Chinese Republic*, pp. 19-20.

opinion that the 'Republican' form of government was too advanced for China and the Chinese.⁴¹

Before the uprising took place, James expressed the view that the new commonwealth should be set up under 'able Christian leadership'.⁴² It is not difficult to detect his Australian experience in James' revolutionary proposal to establish a 'commonwealth' (on the model of the new 'commonwealth' government of Australia) in which the Chinese people were placed under the care of able Christian 'Protectors'.

Urbanisation, consolidation, and depoliticisation

The legend of Loong Hung Pung and the history of his successors in the leadership of the Chinese Masonic network opens a rare window onto social networks operating among Chinese communities in rural Australia in the colonial period. Loong's story illustrates networking across Chinese native-place communities, networking between Chinese-Australian community leaders and European-Australian elites (as I have shown elsewhere), and networking across international boundaries of the Australian colonies, British Hong Kong, and the Chinese Empire.⁴³ To be sure, we have yet to estimate the role of the early lodges in facilitating labour migration to the colonies, yet to define the kinds of relationships that were maintained among rural lodges in NSW and Victoria over the period, and yet to understand how colonial Australian lodges related to others on the Pacific rim. Nevertheless the transition from the legendary era of Loong Hung Pung to the historical era of Moy Sing and James A Chuey highlights a number of important issues in Australian and Chinese social history, and invites reflection on the causes and consequences of the consolidation of scattered rural lodges into urban-based statewide lodges around the turn of the century.

As I have suggested elsewhere, archival and family records support the basic outline of legendary accounts of the founding of Chinese Masonic lodges on the western goldfields and northern tin-mines of NSW in the mid-nineteenth century under the leadership of Loong Hung Pung. The same sources help us to trace the extension of this network into a republican brotherhood based in north-eastern NSW later in the century, and to observe its further elaboration into a modern revolutionary organisation centred in Hong Kong and Canton at the turn of the twentieth century. By Vivian Chow's account this network survived, in attenuated form, through his own efforts and those of his comrades in Hong Kong, Canton and Shanghai into the 1920s and 1930s.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴³ See Fitzgerald 2005, 'Legend or History?'

By this time however the Chinese Masonic network on the eastern Australian seaboard was moving in a different direction, indicated among other things by the English title the Chinese Masonic Society impressed on the façade of its new headquarters in Mary Street. Why did it call itself the Masonic Society? In one sense the term is a cross-cultural translation – the predominant sense in which the term appeared in early English and European accounts of Chinese secret societies. Commenting on their elaborate rituals and imagined traditions in 1925, J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling observed that ‘like Freemasons in the West, the Hung or Triad Society seems justly entitled to claim that it is a lineal descendant of the Ancient Mysteries’. Gustav Schlegel made a similar observation four decades earlier: ‘Every person who has read anything of the secret societies in China must have been struck with the resemblance between them and the Society of Freemasons.’ Earlier still, in 1855, Howqua engaged in cross-cultural translation when he told the Victorian goldfields commission that the rebels who were known to Chinese miners as Hung League or Taiping rebels were ‘Freemasons’. This was translation by analogy.

Analogous features of the two institutions aside, there has been little attempt to identify concrete sets of relationships that may have developed between the two autonomous networks, or to explore their wider implications for the social and political orientation of Chinese secret-society networks outside of China.⁴⁴ One exception is C. F. Yong’s pioneering study of Chinese-Australian history of the period, which hints that the League’s adoption of the title Chinese Masonic Society was not merely an act of translation. There were, he noted, networks of personal associations linking Chinese Masons and European Freemasonry at the time. Nevertheless the details of personal and institutional relations remain largely unexplored.⁴⁵

In colonial Australia the relationship between the two networks was more concrete. The reorganisation of the Hung League in the 1890s and early 1900s followed closely on the consolidation of European Freemasonry as an urban-based network in Sydney in 1888, when many scattered rural and urban lodges of European Freemasonry merged to form the NSW United Grand Lodge. The Chinese brotherhood followed suit, first moving toward colony-wide consolidation in the 1890s, building offices for its state headquarters in Mary Street over the following decade, and finally proclaiming itself the headquarters of the Chinese Masonic Society of NSW.

The analogous sequence of Masonic consolidations, involving both the Chinese Masonic Society and the United Freemasons, could be regarded as fortuitous

⁴⁴ Gustav Schlegel [1866] 1973, *The Hung League* (Batavia; New York, NY: AMS), p. ix; J. S. M. Ward and W. G. Stirling 1925, *The Hung Society* (London: Baskerville), 3 volumes, vol. 1, p. i.

⁴⁵ Yong 1977, *New Gold Mountain*, p. 160.

were it not for a number of identifiable connections linking the two fraternal networks. Chinese-Australians were among the first people of Chinese descent in the world to gain entry to the international order of Freemasons. Some time before the successful consolidation of colonial Freemasonry, the Sydney tea merchant and teashop entrepreneur Quong Tart (Mei Guangda) was admitted into the Order of Oddfellows under the English constitution. On 8 October 1885 he was initiated to the Lodge of Tranquillity which convened at Bondi in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. Quong rose to the second degree in the Lodge of Tranquillity on 11 March 1886 and was elevated to the status of Master Mason on 12 July 1886. Quong Tart was not, to my knowledge, a member of the Hung League when he joined the Freemasons. He was however on close terms with a number of Chinese Masonic leaders and he remained an active Freemason until his death in 1903, when forty members of the fraternity accompanied his funeral procession, in full regalia, processing behind an oak coffin draped with his Master Mason's apron.⁴⁶

By one account, Quong Tart was the third Freemason of Chinese descent to be admitted to the order anywhere in the world.⁴⁷ By the time of his death in 1903 he was far from the sole Chinese-Australian member of the Order. 'Chinese and Western' Freemasons marched side by side in his funeral cortege according to a contemporary Chinese-Australian newspaper account.⁴⁸ Others admitted into the order between his initiation in 1885 and his death in 1903 include Sun Johnson, W. R. G. Lee, and his son William Lee, in NSW, and Way Lee in South Australia – each at the same time a prominent member of the Hung League who played a role in translating its idioms and rituals into the wider English-speaking world of Federation Australia.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ At the time he joined the lodge it was registered as Number 1552 under the English constitution. After the consolidation of 1888 it became Lodge 42 under the Australian constitution. G. Cumming 1995, 'Mei Quong Tart (1850–1903)', *The Masonic Historical Society of New South Wales*, no. 23, 22 May, p. 6.

⁴⁷ The first by this account was Teh Boen Keh, who was initiated in Surabaya (Java) in 1857, and the second Tsung Lai Shun who was initiated into the Hampden Lodge in Massachusetts in 1873. G. Cumming 1995, 'Mei Quong Tart'. Cumming based the claim for Quong Tart's place in the international Order upon an unpublished report issued by Right Worshipful Brother Christopher Haffner in 1995.

⁴⁸ *Guangyi huabao* [Chinese Australian Herald], 8 August 1903. I wish to thank Guo Meifen for this reference.

⁴⁹ Way Lee was admitted to the United Tradesman's Lodge No. 4 in Adelaide in the late nineteenth century. I wish to thank Patricia Jamieson and Kevin Wong-Hoy for this reference. Sun Johnson entered Lodge Southern Cross No. 91 on 14 August 1892. Sun Johnson and William Lee both acted as English Secretaries for the Chinese Masonic Association during James Chuey's term as director.

It would be misleading to suggest that local Freemason lodges embraced Chinese-Australians as freely as they did Australians of European descent. Chinese-Australians were no more widely welcomed into the Order of Freemasons in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia than Chinese in colonial Asia or North America. Very few Chinese names are recorded on Australian membership rolls before the mid-twentieth century. In cases where Minute Books do refer to Chinese nominees they occasionally record blackball attempts at exclusion. Records of the inner-Sydney Wentworth Lodge record a case in 1903 when a Chinese nominee was withdrawn before his name came up for voting:

In September [1903] a Chinese merchant was proposed, but before his separate ballot was reached his name was withdrawn, and his proposer and seconder called off, together with three other members. The interruption to the smooth working of the Lodge, which was very unpleasant, however, proved only temporary.⁵⁰

While some lodges discriminated against nominees on racial grounds other lodges appear to have been founded to accommodate minorities. The invitation for Quong Tart to join in 1884 was issued by a Jewish lodge. Although raised by a Scottish family in rural NSW, and living in the western suburb of Ashfield while expanding his Sydney business interests, Quong Tart was initiated into a lodge that had been established with an exclusively Jewish membership in June 1875. Three years elapsed before the first non-Jewish member was admitted, in May 1878, and no more than a dozen members were admitted to the brotherhood in any one year when Quong was initiated in the 1880s.⁵¹

Despite these limitations on membership, invitations to join Freemason lodges were issued to some of the most prominent Hung League members in the 1890s and early 1900s. In consequence, the transformation of the Hung League into the Chinese Masonic Society over the first decade of the twentieth century came to mirror the institutional history of the NSW United Grand Lodge of Freemasons

I wish to thank Kuo Meifen for this information. William Lee joined a Freemason's lodge in 1903. Yong 1977, *New Gold Mountain*, p. 160.

⁵⁰ *Jubilee History of Lodge Wentworth 1881–1931* (np nd), p. 29. Archives of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Box 171. The minute books fail to record why the merchant's name was withdrawn. See 'The First 90 Years of Lodge Wentworth No. 89 UGL of New South Wales', p. 6. Typed Manuscript. Archives of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Box 171.

⁵¹ The Grand Master who presided over his initiation was Mr. G. Gabriel. See Bro. O. U. Nickless 1961, Forward and Narrative in Two Parts of the History of the Lodge of Tranquillity No.42 UGL of NSW for the Period January 1874 to 11 May 1961. Typed Manuscript dated 11 May. Archives of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, Box 517.

in the late 1880s and early 1890s. European Freemason lodges came together to form the NSW United Grand Lodge in the third year of Quong Tart's membership of the fraternity. Under the leadership of Moy Sing and James Chuey, rural Hung League lodges converged to form the NSW Chinese Masonic Society, and refocused their energy from the political emphasis that had characterised rural lodges associated with Loong Hung Pung, towards social, economic, and domestic political priorities related to their members' immediate concerns in colonial and federation Australia. Its leaders built a statewide organisation on a substantial urban base to mobilise support for reform of Australian laws and regulations governing Chinese immigration, for promotion of business ties between Chinese and European Australians, and for the expansion of Australian imports and exports with colonial Hong Kong and Malaya and with the treaty ports of imperial and republican China.

They also took advantage of the resources of the consolidated European network. As early as January 1896 Chinese-Australian community leaders were convening public meetings in the Sydney Freemasons Hall, and in 1901 community members gathered in the Masonic Hall to celebrate the Emperor Guangxu's birthday. Chinese Masonic leaders also made use of the hall. In November 1911, for example, Masonic leader James Chuey convened a meeting of the Young China League with leading Sydney merchant George Bew in the United Freemason's Hall.⁵² As individuals, prominent Masonic members such as James Chuey held partisan political views and took part in a range of reformist and revolutionary organisations, including the Young China League and, at a later date, the Chinese Nationalist movement. From the turn of the century, however, the Chinese Masonic network no longer sponsored its own political party. It worked instead to forge links with other community organisations including European-Australian institutions and Chinese-Australian ones.

These institutional innovations were grafted onto the early foundations of rural Hung League networks long operating in NSW, in the sense that the politics of the early lodges forged regional *colonial* ties that sat alongside ties of kin and native place in China. The year of Loong Hung Pung's death falls into the earliest period for which we can find written records of pan-Chinese associations rooted on colonial Australian soil. By one account, Loong Hung Pung was laid to rest under a tombstone that recorded the gratitude of the 'Chinese Community of NSW' to their departed leader in 1874.⁵³ If true, this was a significant gesture. We are accustomed to thinking of Chinese immigrants as organising themselves along lines of kinship and native-place associations for mutual aid and social

⁵² *Guangyi huaboa*, 13 January 1896; *Tung Wah Times*, 31 July 1901.

⁵³ J. D. Fitzgerald 1918, 'A Celestial Gentleman', in Ethel Turner (ed.), *The Australian Soldier's Gift Book* (Sydney: Voluntary Workers' Association), pp. 137-42.

advancement in the mid-nineteenth century. Most of the consolidated organisations that appeared around the Pacific rim from the mid nineteenth century were loose confederations of native place and surname associations referring to China.⁵⁴ As early as the 1870s, however, some Chinese institutions in Australia were organising regional colonial networks that were not only unrelated to native place or kinship ties in China but specifically related to their place of domicile in Australia. Those who mourned the death of Loong Hung Pung in 1874 did so through the agency of a pan-Chinese community of an Australian colony – a secret society network with an organisational locus in New South Wales.

In Memoriam

In conclusion, I would like to speculate on the significance of a number of cemetery monuments erected over this period in Victoria and Tasmania. These monuments certainly indicate pan-Chinese sentiments among immigrants in colonial Victoria and Tasmania. The question I wish to pose here is whether they also signify a ‘modern’ sense of China as a political state, in the Victorian case, and as a Confucian national community in the case of Tasmania. If so we may be in a position to trace a transition from revolution to respectability that parallels, monumentally, the narrative history we have been recounting of Chinese Australian history.

From the early 1870s, monumental stele began to appear in colonial Victoria bearing Chinese language inscriptions commemorating the deaths of ‘elders’ from ‘all provinces’ who were laid to rest on Australian soil. These early steles refer to the immigrants’ country of birth not by the contemporary Chinese term ‘Great Qing State’ (*Daqingguo*) but by the modern idiom ‘Chinese State’ or ‘China’ (*Zhonghuaguo*). To the best of my knowledge these are among the earliest recorded references to the modern term for ‘China’ to be found on Chinese-language monuments in the world.⁵⁵ In avoiding the term for China used by the Manchu Qing dynasty we might ask whether they also challenged the legitimacy of the Great Qing State. We cannot say for certain. But a banner preserved among

⁵⁴ The general exception to this rule is the Chinese Masonic network. See L. Eve Armentrout Ma 1990, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatowns: Chinese Politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press), and Yong Chen 2000, *Chinese San Francisco 1850–1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

⁵⁵ Adam McKeown has drawn my attention to the phrase *zhonghuaguo* found in documents produced in Peru some years earlier. See Chen Hansheng 1980, *Huagong chuguo shiliao huibian* [Historical materials on Chinese labourers abroad] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), 7 volumes, vol. 1, part 3, p. 965. It should be noted that delegates of the Qing state promoted use of the term ‘zhonghua’ among Chinese community organisations in San Francisco in the 1860s and 1870s. See Ma 1990, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists and Chinatown*, chapter 1; Yong Chen 2000, *Chinese San Francisco 1850–1943*, p. 72.

holdings of Chinese Masonic artifacts in the Bendigo Golden Dragon Museum suggests that the term circulated within the nineteenth century rural Hung League network. It was possibly members of the Hung League who erected these memorials in the 1870s.⁵⁶

One of the earliest of these Victorian steles was erected in the Melbourne General Cemetery in 1873. The central column reads 'Graves of Honorable Elders from all Provinces of China' (*zhonghuaguo*). The column on the left reads 'A common offering from native villagers of the two Guangdong prefectures of Guangzhou and Zhaoqing.' The right column reads 'Erected on an auspicious day in the spring of 1873' (*Tongzhi guiyounian*). Similar steles were erected in Ballarat, Bendigo and Beechworth cemeteries over the decade, each avoiding mention of the Manchu Qing state in favour of the term 'Chinese State' and each referring to elders 'from all provinces'. The choice of words possibly reflects the development of pan-Chinese nationalism directed against the Qing but not noticeably oriented toward the restoration of the Ming, as standard histories of the Hung League would predict.

By the turn of the twentieth century, political terms of this kind were no longer to be found inscribed on cemetery monuments. Comparable steles erected in cemeteries in Northeastern Tasmania in the early 1900s refer to the 'Great Qing State' in preference to the 'Chinese State'. They also make reference to the teachings of Confucius. One memorial stele erected alongside a ceremonial oven in Moorina Cemetery in 1906, for example, bears inscriptions in Chinese and English. The Chinese reads: 'Great Qing State, Graves of honorable elders, thirty-second year of Guangxu'. The accompanying English inscription reads: 'This stone has been erected by the Chinese of Garibaldi, Argus and Moorina as a place of worship of Confusias [*sic*] religion to the departed Chinese in the Moorina Cemetery.'⁵⁷ An almost identical memorial, erected in nearby Weldborough Cemetery in 1909, begins with the Chinese expression 'Great Qing State' and ends in English with the dedication: 'This stone has been erected by the Chinese as a place of worship of Confusias [*sic*] religion to the departed Chinese and those connected with the Chinese in the Weldborough Cemetery.'⁵⁸ Such references to the Manchu Qing dynasty and to Confucianism are nowhere to be found among the earlier cemetery monuments in rural Victoria.⁵⁹ In the design of its cemetery steles, Victorian Chinese communities possibly declined

⁵⁶ The banner reads simply "Zhonghuaguo" (Chinese state, or China).

⁵⁷ Helen Vivian 1985, *Tasmania's Chinese Heritage: An Historical Record of Chinese Sites in North East Tasmania* (Launceston, Tasmania: Australian Heritage Commission/Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery), 2 volumes, vol. 1, plate 24.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, plate 5.

⁵⁹ They are frequently found on individual gravestones, as distinct from monumental stele.

to acknowledge the presence of the Manchu Qing Dynasty on the same grounds that Loong Hung Pung and his followers in NSW swore to ‘oppose the Manchus and restore the Han people’.

These differences may indicate varying regional orientations on the part of Chinese-Australian communities in NSW and Victoria, on the one hand, and those of colonial Tasmania on the other. Given the close association between Tasmanian and Victorian Chinese communities this seems fairly unlikely. It is tempting to speculate that the disappearance of the modern term for China found on 1870s memorials in Victoria and its replacement on later memorials with references to departed elders of the great Qing state reflects a new kind of community politics that was emerging around the turn of the twentieth century – a kind of politics more in keeping with the respectable and conservative urban leadership of Moy Sing and James A Chuey, in Sydney, and their counterparts around Australia over the federation era. This was the *deradicalised* space into which Sun Yatsen and his republican nationalist revolutionaries made their move when they introduced ‘modern’ nationalism to Australia’s Chinese communities over the period up to and succeeding the 1911 Revolution in China.

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7. 'Innocents abroad' and 'prohibited immigrants': Australians in India and Indians in Australia 1890–1910

Margaret Allen

In 1907, Eleanor Rivett MA, a young modern woman and a graduate of Melbourne University, left Australia to become a missionary for the London Missionary Society in Calcutta. As she made her way from Colombo up to Calcutta, she stopped off in Madras, and spent a day with Elsie Nicol, another Melbourne graduate. Nicol was running the YWCA hostel in Madras, where women students could stay while studying at Madras University. In following her vocation as a missionary in India, Eleanor was leaving behind her parents and her numerous siblings. But she and her brother David had made a vow, that if he won the Rhodes scholarship he would spend some time with her in India. Later in 1907, she was able to take leave and explore the northern cities of India with David on his way to Oxford. They went to Benares, Lucknow, Cawnpur, Agra, Delhi and Bombay.¹ They were, she recalled, 'the innocents abroad', but it was 'a marvellous tour'.²

Eleanor Rivett was the first Australian to go to north India under the auspices of the London Missionary Society and she would spend some forty years there. But neither she nor Elsie Nicol was the first Australian to work as a missionary in India. As will be discussed below, a number of Australian women and men went to India in that religious capacity. They felt drawn to travel far from their homes to take up the cause, as they saw it, of evangelising the heathen of India. As they devoted themselves to their Christian work in India, many struggled with the long separation from home and family that such a step involved. For a number, such separations were eased somewhat when members of their family and friends visited them in India. Furthermore, missionaries were able to return home on furlough. Thus the ships that serviced the routes between Australian ports and Colombo and other ports on the subcontinent, would often carry a missionary or two. Such travellers felt called and definitely entitled to travel and to stay in India for long periods of time. They engaged in many activities there, such as establishing hospitals and running schools. For Australian women missionaries, the responsibilities as administrators, teachers, preachers, nurses

¹ The names for India cities in use in the period being discussed, i.e. Bombay, Madras and Poona have been retained in this chapter.

² Eleanor Rivett 1965, *Memory Plays a Tune ... Being Recollections of India 1907–1947* (Sydney: the author), p. 10.

and doctors in the mission fields were broader than those they could have taken on in Australia. Some might claim that their religious vocation marked them off from those with a mere desire to travel and see the world, to make a career or simply experience foreign lands. But these women can be also be understood in the same framework as those studied by Angela Woollacott in *To Try Her Fortune in London*. Observing that 'the industrialization of travel and [their] ... modern ambition for education, jobs, and careers promoted [these women's] mobility'. 'The Australian girl', she suggests, came to stand for 'modernity and independence'.³

Also on these ships might be another figure, whom I will describe, for the purposes of summary as 'an Indian'.⁴ Usually a man, the Indian traveller might have lived in India, Australia or another part of the Empire altogether. He could have been returning to Australia after a sojourn in India or a tourist seeking to enjoy the sights of Australia and other destinations. But, with the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act in the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, such travel was limited and controlled. The Australian authorities categorised Indians, although British subjects, as 'natives of Asia', who had no automatic entitlement to travel freely between India and Australia. The Australians and the Indians had 'differential access to mobility'.⁵ Although Indians were negotiating their own modernity, travelling around the world in pursuit of pleasure, greater opportunities and personal transformation, Australian government policies increasingly categorised them as people whose movements should be strictly controlled. Australians tended to represent Indians as exotic and backward. As David Walker has pointed out, Australian accounts of travel in India tended to emphasise its 'antiquity and spiritual wealth'.⁶ He found in Alfred Deakin's writing on India, that 'Ancient India was readily celebrated while modern India and Indians were routinely disparaged.'⁷ In the discourse of modernity, Indians

³ Angela Woollacott 2001, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 8, 157.

⁴ I use this term in a broad and general manner to include Indian subjects of British rule and Indians living in the Princely States of India which were ruled indirectly by Britain. Of course after 1947, some of the people referred to in this paper may have been identified as Pakistanis. Australians often referred to Indians living in Australia as Afghans. It is possible that a couple of people referred to in this chapter as Indians, may have indeed been Afghans.

⁵ Radhika Vyas Mongia 2003, 'Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press), p. 211.

⁶ David Walker 1999, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press), p. 19.

⁷ Walker 1999, *Anxious Nation*, p. 22. Alfred Deakin, a key figure in the moves towards federation and Prime Minister of Australia in the early twentieth century, wrote *Temple and Tomb in India*

were represented as backward, fixed and static. Woollacott has pointed out that: 'Western modernity must be viewed as having been created in a symbiotic relationship with its racially constructed others, and that racial hierarchies, including whiteness as a racial identity, have been integrally constitutive of modernity.'⁸

When the Reverend Theo B. Fischer of the Australian Churches of Christ met some of the Indian lawyers at the High Court in Madras, when on a missionary tour to India in 1912, he was clearly surprised to find that they were 'quite up in the politics of the world, acquainted with most English books of recent date, as well as standard works'.⁹

This chapter will explore the differing experiences of Australian missionaries in India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those of Indians who also sought to travel and improve their life chances in Australia. The newly federated Commonwealth of Australia was established, in part, 'to guard ... against the dangers of Asiatic immigration'.¹⁰ The Australian government insisted upon the creation of a white nation, which meant that the movement of Indians seeking to travel to and from Australia was strictly controlled and often forbidden.

These developments can be viewed within the broader context of the British Empire, in which the movement of British Indians was increasingly being curtailed. As British subjects, Indians posed a challenge to the governments of the settler colonies. Their status as British subjects might have meant that they could travel and settle freely, but with the growth of colonial nationalism, governments sought to maintain the power and influence of white settlers.

Following the abolition of slavery, Indians had been transported around the Empire as indentured labourers and some had elected to stay on in the colonies at the end of their term of engagement.¹¹ Thus there were Indian communities in South Africa, in Malaya, Fiji, in East Africa as well as in the Caribbean. By the late nineteenth century, Indians began to outnumber Europeans in the colony of Natal, which passed legislation to restrict their further immigration following

(Melbourne: Melville, Mullen and Slade, 1893) and *Irrigated India: An Australian View of India and Ceylon, Their Irrigation and Agriculture* (Melbourne: E. A. Petherick, 1893).

⁸ Angela Woollacott 1999, 'White Colonialism and Sexual Modernity: Australian Women in the Early Twentieth Century Metropolis', in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (London: Routledge), p. 49.

⁹ T. B. Fischer 1914, *A Month in India* (Melbourne: Austral Publishing Company), p. 111.

¹⁰ Myra Willard 1923, *History of the White Australia Policy until 1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), p. 119.

¹¹ See Kay Saunders (ed.) 1984, *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834–1920* (London: Croom Helm).

the example of an American Act of 1896 (see chapter by Lake in this collection). In 1897, the Natal government passed an act to 'prevent the importation of coolie labour from India'.¹² This used a language test to exclude those it classed as prohibited immigrants. New Zealand followed suit in 1899 and Australia in 1901.¹³ Canada initially used a poll tax and shipping regulations to deter Indian immigration.¹⁴

The British government, while purporting to uphold the equality of British subjects across the Empire, colluded with colonial governments in their determination to discriminate against non-white British subjects. British officials suggested particular forms of words for colonial legislation that appeared not to discriminate against non-white British subjects and the Empire's Japanese allies, while making it possible for colonial and later Dominion governments to prevent the entry of Asians to their countries, to prohibit their enfranchisement and their participation in particular trades and occupations.¹⁵ The upholding of the rights of the British subject while denying them to British Indians and other non-white British subjects was, as Radhika Mongia notes, a good example of the 'rule of colonial difference'.¹⁶ From time to time, the Viceroy and members of the Indian Civil Service contested this double standard and voiced criticism of particular pieces of legislation such as the Australian Immigration Restriction Act. In the official correspondence, there is evidence of resentment about Australian treatment of particular Indians and a refusal to accede to Australian requests to prevent Indians departing for Australia. Natal, Australia and New

¹² Daniel Gorman 2002, 'Wider and Wider Still?: Racial Politics, Intra-Imperial Immigration and the Absence of Imperial Citizenship in the British Empire'. *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, vol. 3, no. 3, para 30 accessed at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_colonial_history/v003/ on 13 February 2003.

See also Robert Huttenback 1976, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press), p. 139ff.

¹³ Hugh Tinker 1976, *Separate and Unequal: India and Indians in the British Commonwealth 1920-1950* (London: C. Hurst and Company), p. 22.

¹⁴ Mongia 2003, 'Race, Nationality, Mobility'.

¹⁵ Marie de Lepervanche 1984, *Indians in a White Australia: An Account of Race, Class, and Indian Immigration to Eastern Australia* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), pp. 56-71. There are extensive examples in National Archives (UK) Colonial Office papers CO 885/8 no. 158, CO 885/9 .no. 168, CO 886/1 nos 1-3, CO 886/2 no 10, CO 886/3 no. 19, CO 886/4 no. 21. These files comprise correspondence and papers relative to the immigration of Asiatics into the Colonies and the treatments of Asiatics in the Dominions.

¹⁶ Mongia 2003, 'Race, Nationality, Mobility'; see also Partha Chatterjee 1993, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 16-22.

Zealand had restricted immigration and Canada was anxious to do so. Eventually, however, under the guise of wartime controls, the Government of India introduced a passport system in 1915, which controlled the movement of Indians, 'requiring passports from all Indians proceeding outside India'.¹⁷

Mongia has focused upon debates during 1906 to 1915, around 'Canadian demands that Indians emigrating to Canada should have passports',¹⁸ while Radhika Singha has explored the development of passport policy of the Government of India from 1911 to 1923,¹⁹ but a transnational approach allows for a broader address to such issues, bringing together policy developments across the British Empire, at least. Lake has shown the importance of looking further, to the United States, in examining the development of ideologies and techniques to restrict non-white immigration.

Indians resident in settler colonies often campaigned vigorously against racial discrimination. In South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi was a key figure in this resistance from the 1890s and his experiences there were crucial to the later development of his political philosophy.²⁰ The treatment of Indians overseas was of continuing concern to the Indian nationalist movement in the early twentieth century. In 1901, Gandhi was instrumental in getting the Indian National Congress to pass a resolution on the rights of Indians in South Africa.²¹ G. K. Gokhale and the Servants of India Society in Poona and H. S. Polak and the Indians Overseas Association, based in London, as well as numerous Indians across the Empire, kept these issues on the nationalist agenda.²² The distinctions made between the white and non-white subjects of the Empire and, in particular, the denial of Dominion status to India continued to be condemned by Indian leaders in the interwar years.²³

While Indians were campaigning for the protection of their rights as British subjects, Australians were able to move about freely and work and settle in all parts of the Empire, as Australian missionaries did in India. To discuss the missionary activity of Australians in India requires the examination of the work of a number of different Christian denominations, which before and well after

¹⁷ Mongia 2003, 'Race, Nationality, Mobility', p. 210.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 196.

¹⁹ Radhika Singha 2005, *Exceptions to the Law, and Exceptional Laws: The Regulation of Mobility in Colonial India 1911–1923*, unpublished paper presented to 20th International Congress of Historical Sciences, University of New South Wales, 7 July.

²⁰ See Robert Huttenback 1971, *Gandhi in South Africa: British Imperialism and the Indian Question, 1860–1914* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press).

²¹ Tinker 1976, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 23.

²² *ibid.*, p. 24; see also B. Chaturvedi collection in Indian National Archives (New Delhi).

²³ Tinker 1976, *Separate and Unequal*.

Federation, were organised on a colonial and then state basis. In 1882, the South Australian Baptist Missionary Society sent Ellen Arnold and Marie Gilbert to do *zenana* work in Faridpur, West Bengal, where they established the South Australian mission. A number of other Australians from the various colonies followed in their footsteps. Between 1882 and 1913, the Australian Baptist Mission Societies sent fifty-four women and sixteen men to the field in Bengal.²⁴ The Reverend Silas Mead of Flinders Street Baptist Church in Adelaide was a strong promoter of the Baptist mission movement and has been dubbed the ‘father of Australian Baptist missions’.²⁵ From 1892, his son Dr. Cecil Mead and his wife, Alice served as medical missionaries at Faridpur.

In the south of India, the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Association (PWMA) of New South Wales supported the Church of Scotland Zenana Mission with Mary MacLean the first PWMA missionary to arrive in 1891. A few years later, the PWMA took over the mission at Sholingur, just north of Madras. Mary MacLean founded a school there and worked there for twenty years.²⁶

Mission work in India was the goal for a number of dedicated young Australian women. In the early twentieth century, many students at Australia’s fledgling universities supported the Missionary Settlement for University Women (MSUW) and its work with educated and higher caste women in India. The MSUW, which set up a settlement and then a hostel for women students in Bombay, had been established by women from Newnham, Girton and Somerville Colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. Their identity as university women was central to the organisation, which attracted strong interest from students in Australia, who heard about it from the networks of Empire. A Melbourne graduate, Susie Williams, came to know of the MSUW while she was a student at Newnham College, Oxford. She wrote home to her friends, also graduates from Melbourne University, and soon there were branches established at the universities in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.²⁷

²⁴ See Ros [sic] Gooden ‘We Trust Them to Establish the Work’: Significant Roles of Early Australian Baptist Women in Overseas Mission, 1864–1913’, in Mark Hutchinson and Geoff Treloar (eds) 1998, *This Gospel Shall be Preached: Essays on the Australian Contribution to World Mission* (Sydney: The Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity), pp. 126-46; and Margaret Allen 2000, ‘“White Already to Harvest”: South Australian Women Missionaries in India’, *Feminist Review*, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 92-107.

²⁵ Rosalind Gooden 1994, ‘Silas Mead Baptist Missions Motivator’, *Our Yesterdays*, vol. 2, pp. 67-95.

²⁶ Janet West 1997, *Daughters of Freedom: A History of Women in the Australian Church* (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross), pp. 207-8.

²⁷ British Library Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC) Mss Eur f 186/128 Missionary Society for University Women (MSUW) Annual Report 1900, p. 35.

In 1903, Katie Fell, with her sister and their mother, Lady Helen Fell, stopped off in Bombay on their way back from a European tour. Katie had graduated with an Arts degree from Sydney University, where she had become involved in the Student Christian Movement. Inspired by its leader, John Mott, with his message about the evangelisation of the world, she developed a particular interest in the MSUW. In London, its leaders had persuaded her to spend some time in Bombay and she remained there for six months, the first Australian to be based there. Other Australian women later came to work at the settlement and the associated YWCA hostels in Madras and Calcutta. Elsie Nicol had come to India under the auspices of the MSUW and soon after was asked to run the YWCA hostel at Madras, on behalf of both organisations. There she came to love the young Indian women with whom she worked, one of whom, Nallemma Williams, a medical student from Ceylon, became a special friend and her bridesmaid, when she married in Madras, in 1909.²⁸ Nicol supported Nallemma Williams' selection as a delegate to the YWCA world conference in Paris in 1903. Australian supporters of the MSUW could follow the activities of the settlers, which were reported at length in various other missionary publications.

These women were accustomed to the idea of travel and service abroad in the missionary cause. India was an important site of Christian missionary endeavour and for Australian Christians, who sought to become missionaries, India was an important venue. In 1895, Charles Reeve, an experienced evangelist from Tasmania, established the Poona and Indian Village Mission (PIVM) in Poona.²⁹ He travelled regularly to England, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia to recruit missionaries and to raise funds. A number of Australian men and women subsequently joined this mission, including Amy Parsons, a young Adelaide woman, who had initially gone to Faridpur in East Bengal in 1888 under the auspices of the South Australian Baptist Mission Society. In this, she followed in the footsteps of Ellen Arnold and Marie Gilbert, who had been the first missionaries there in 1882.³⁰ But back in Adelaide on furlough in 1894, she was taken by Charles Reeve's message and joined the PIVM, where she served for many years. She continued to travel back and forth to Australia, only finally retiring to Australia in the late 1940s. Having spent virtually all her adult life in India, it is not surprising that she described India as 'The Land of My Adoption'.³¹

²⁸ OIOC MSS/Eur f 186/142 MSUW Quarterly Newsletter no. 40 Jan 1909, p. 7.

²⁹ I am very grateful to Rachel Human (Kew, Victoria), Gillian Watch Whittall (Queensland) and Elisabeth Wilson (Hobart) for sharing information about Charles Reeve with me.

³⁰ See Allen 2000, "'White Already to Harvest'".

³¹ A. Parsons 1920, 'Back to the Land of My Adoption', *White Already to Harvest*, vol. 25, no. 3, p. 59.

The PIVM and other missions depended on the railways and protection of the British Empire. They could count on the support of the British forces should their preaching prove offensive to Indians, when, for example, they campaigned at holy sites on special religious occasions. From 1905, the PIVM missionaries started going to Hindu holy places at Pandharpur, near Poona, at the time of the *jutras*. When these missionaries were attacked in 1908, British authorities arrived to protect them and their mission. Twenty-six Indian men and boys were arrested, tried, found guilty and sentenced variously to rigorous imprisonment and whipping.³²

While Australian women missionaries sought to impart a Christian education to those in the settlements, many Indians in the late nineteenth century sought to enhance their education by travelling across the world to Europe and America. Although Hindus were concerned about travelling across 'the black waters', a steady stream of students made their way to British universities.³³ Moreover, Christian converts went to recruit more to the mission field. Others just wanted to see more of the world and to experience new places and see new people. Some Indian travellers published accounts of their travels.³⁴ One such was Hajee Mahomed, who made extensive tours around the world between 1886 and 1887 and again between 1893 and 1895. He was a man of Empire, Indian born and in business in Cape Town. In the introduction to his book, he explained why he published an account of his travels: 'My principal object in publishing these pages is to give some idea, however faint and crude, to my countrymen, and particularly to my Mahomedan brethren, that beyond the narrow bounds of their home, there lies a world of joy and beauty.'³⁵

On his second tour, he spent some time in Melbourne, Hobart and Sydney and was quite taken with the night life of Melbourne: 'On Saturday night, Melbourne, as is the case with large European cities, was gay and brilliant with illuminations and crowds of pleasure seekers going to theatres, concert and restaurants. I wandered about in amazement and wonder till a late hour.'³⁶ He enjoyed the

³² SIM Archives, North Carolina, USA. Poona and Inland Village Mission Records Box 5 Pandarharpur Station Diary 1908–1909 includes Report in *Bombay Guardian*, 10 October 1908.

³³ Shompa Lahiri 2000, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-India Encounters, Race and Identity 1880–1930* (London: Frank Cass), pp. 5 and 21–9.

³⁴ Antoinette Burton 1996, 'Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers In Fin-de-Siècle London', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 42, p. 128. See also *Pandita Rambai's American Encounter: The Peoples of the United States*, translated and edited by Meera Kosambi 2003, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press).

³⁵ H. S. S. Mahomed 1895, *Journal of My Tours around the World, 1886–1887 and 1893–1895* (Bombay: Duftur Ashkra Oil Engine Press), p. vii.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 62.

sights in the Dandenongs and through his imperial connections was able to visit the Observatory. A Cape Town friend, settled in Melbourne, introduced him to the superintendent, Mr. Ellery, who explained to him 'some of the wonders of the starry world'.³⁷ He then went north, where he enjoyed the beauty of Sydney, 'superior to Melbourne in its natural loveliness'.³⁸ In Hobart he saw some business opportunities: 'I believe that if some enterprising countrymen of mine were to open a business in Indian cloth Japanese curiosities and Cutch [sic] and Delhi metal and art works, they are likely to do well.'³⁹ Generally, he found the colonists he met kind and polite. But he also noted the difficulties encountered by poor hawkers from Bengal, Kashmir and the Sind: 'These traders appeared to be quite a harmless lot, working hard for their daily bread. They are perfectly innocent of English and do not know how very black they are painted by the jealousy and prejudice of writers in the Australian journals.'⁴⁰

A number of Indian men had arrived in Australia from the mid-nineteenth century, and often took work as hawkers or labourers. Some arrived from elsewhere in the Empire. Otim Singh, for example, had worked as a 'supervisor in a large tobacco-plantation on Sumatra, on behalf of an English firm' where he, reportedly, had '200 coolies under his control'.⁴¹ He returned to his home in the Punjab, where he purchased some land, but the call of distant lands caught him once more and he set sail for Batavia (Jakarta) to visit his brother, before arriving in Melbourne in 1890. He worked as an itinerant hawker in Victoria and later in South Australia, where he established a store and a prosperous business which he ran until his death in 1927.⁴²

Otim Singh was one of many Indians living in Australia at the end of the nineteenth century when the Australian colonies began to legislate to restrict the entry of Indians and other 'Asiatics'. In New South Wales, for example, after an attempt to exclude Asians by name was 'reserved' by the Colonial Office, the Coloured Races Restriction and Regulation Bill, utilising the 'Natal formula', was passed in 1897. Aliens, including Indians, had thenceforth to enter their names on an Aliens Register and around ninety Indians did so in Sydney between 1899 and 1902.⁴³ They were required to pay two shillings and sixpence for this privilege. Acts to restrict Asian immigration were also passed in Western

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴¹ H. T. Burgess 1909, *Cyclopedia of South Australia* (Adelaide: Cyclopedia Company), vol. 2, p. 1019.

⁴² *Kangaroo Island Courier*, 10 December 1927, p. 2.

⁴³ National Archives of Australia (NAA) Series SP 822/10 Aliens' Register (Sydney) 1898–1902.

Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.⁴⁴ At the time of federation, in 1901, one estimate calculated the number of Indians in Australia at 7637.⁴⁵ The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, as noted earlier, classified Indians as 'natives of Asia' who could only enter Australia if they could pass a 'dictation test' in a European language, administered in such a manner as to exclude them. In the years following the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act, the number of Indians in Australia declined to around 3698 by 1911.⁴⁶

Initially, after 1901, it became virtually impossible for any Indian to come to Australia, except some who had lived in Australia previously. It was possible for those already resident in Australia to gain a Domicile certificate and, after 1905, a Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDT). This operated like a passport, which allowed the holder to re-enter Australia within three years. It carried two photographs of the holder, a profile as well as full-face view and a handprint. It was possible for holders of such certificates to apply for extensions and some were able to stay away from Australia for twelve or more years before returning. But not all Indians who had resided in Australia were accorded the right to re-enter.

Marie de Lepervanche has argued that in the earliest years of federation, the definition of 'domicile' was very narrow, so that many who had lived for years in Australia were not granted a 'certificate of domicile'. Generally, those who had some capital in Australia were more likely to be allowed to return than those who had very little.⁴⁷ After 1903, it seems that 'applications for domicile were generally approved if evidence of good character and five years' residence was produced'.⁴⁸ In order to establish their worth, local police officers were required to make a check on the applicant for a Domicile certificate, or after 1905, a CEDT. Thus, in 1903, the Walgett police made enquiries about Burket Ali Khan, who applied for a certificate of domicile, as he wished to go to India for 'about three years or less, attending private business'. He had been in Australia since 1895 and was a storekeeper in partnership with Curam Bux, Nabob Khan and Omar Khan at Comborah near Walgett. Although the police reported that Burket Ali Khan was 'not the owner of any land and his share in the business is not worth over £25', he was granted a certificate. The police report noted that they 'knew nothing against his character'.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ de Lepervanche 1984, *Indians in a White Australia*, pp. 51-5.

⁴⁵ Palfreeman, in de Lepervanche 1984, *Indians in a White Australia*, p. 24.

⁴⁶ de Lepervanche 1984, *Indians in a White Australia*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ NAA Collector of Customs, Sydney Series SP 42/1 Correspondence Relating to Immigration Restriction and Passports 1898-1948 C1903/5965 re Burket Ali Khan.

Thus Indians who left Australia had to undergo quite rigorous scrutiny in order to be able to return to Australia. Their applications were accompanied by references, often from employers or people with whom they had done business, in which the referees acknowledged knowing the applicants for some time and testified to their good character. Often the police made a visit to the referees to get confirmation that the photograph on the application was that of the person for whom they had vouched.

Most Indians in Australia were men and they found it difficult if not impossible to bring wives from India. In 1904, Hushnak Singh, a domestic servant of Narrabeen applied for 'a certificate of naturalization'. A Punjabi, he had been in Australia since 1898. He was, he wrote, 'a British subject' and formerly 'a trooper in 6th Bengal Lancer[s] Prince of Wales [Regiment]'. He planned to make a brief trip to India to marry and wanted the necessary documentation to enable him to bring his bride back to Australia. The Department of External Affairs informed him that naturalisation was unnecessary as he was a British subject. His intended bride, however 'would be deemed a prohibited immigrant'. The Secretary Attlee Hunt advised, 'the Lady will have to pass the Education Test which may be imposed in any European language'.⁵⁰ It is not known what happened to Hushnak Singh and his bride, but it was very difficult for British Indians to bring their families to Australia.⁵¹

Until 1904, only Indians formerly resident in Australia and able to get a certificate of domicile were able to enter Australia. However, in 1905, following negotiations with the Government of India the regulations were relaxed and amended to allow for the visits and temporary stays of tourists, students and *bona fide* merchants. The British authorities in India were required to issue passports, for visits to Australia, to those eligible under the revised regulations. The passport specifically devised for this purpose detailed the traveller's name and that of his father, given in both English and the vernacular. Information on this form also included the traveller's caste or clan, residence – detailing town or village and district or state – profession, age and, for male travellers only, a description of distinctive marks. A full description of the purpose of the visit, its probable

⁵⁰ NAA Department of External Affairs Series A1 Correspondence Files, 1904/2531 Hushnak Singh Naturalization.

⁵¹ Huttenback notes that while under the IRA 1901, an immigrant's wife and minor children could enter Australia, this section was suspended in March 1903 and deleted in the amended act of 1905. Huttenback 1976, *Racism and Empire*, p. 308, note 72. De Lepervanche suggests that from 1906 Indian residents could bring their wives over for six months each year. Certainly from April 1919, resident Indians could bring their wives and minor children to live with them in Australia; see A. T. Yarwood 1964, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion 1896–1923* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press), p. 135.

duration, the port of embarkation and the names, ages and relationships of members of the family accompanying the applicant were also to be given. This document and the accuracy of the information on it had to be vouched for and endorsed by a magistrate or political officer in India.⁵²

Article 14 of the amended Act worked to deter shippers from bringing prohibited immigrants to Australian ports. Huttenback notes: 'It required the master or owner of any vessel bringing a prohibited immigrant to the Commonwealth to return him whence he came at no cost to the state and to recompense the Government of Australia for any expenses incurred in the interim.' Shipping companies thus became extremely cautious in deciding whether to allow Indians to embark for Australia. In 1908, when Syed Iran Shah Sahid attempted to travel to Australia to bring back 'an aged relative who had settled there' he failed to secure a passage, although he had the required passport. He travelled four times to Colombo from Madras, but discovered that 'the steamer companies there refuse to book any natives of India to Australia unless they hold a pass from the Australian government allowing them to land'.⁵³ Similarly, Ghulam Jan, who planned to visit Australia 'to search for a brother who has not been heard of for many years'. was also denied a passage by a shipping company at Colombo.⁵⁴ Further information had to be sent to the various shipping companies to explain the new arrangements for Indians with a legitimate passport allowing them to visit Australia.

Once Indian travellers landed in Australia, there was still a possibility of deportation. Ghulam Jan and the servant who had accompanied him ran into trouble shortly after their arrival in Australia in 1908. The West Australian police alleged that they were 'imposters', 'cadgers' and 'undesirables' and they were deported. This was despite the fact that a number of Ghulam Jan's 'countrymen and co-religionists' in Perth signed a memorial testifying that

all can speak of the excellent character he has maintained during his sojourn in this city and the high esteem he is held in by all who have the pleasure of meeting him. We further wish to add that the Syed has been fortunate in his search, and found his brother in Port Hedland (W.A.) for which, and only purpose, he [The Syed] has visited this country.⁵⁵

⁵²NAA Series A1 1925/27045 Admission of Indians, Cingalese [Sinhalese] and Burmese Merchants, students and tourist travellers on passports.

⁵³ibid. Acting Chief Secretary of Madras Government to Secretary Government of India 13 November 1908.

⁵⁴ibid. Agent to Governor General, Baluchistan to Secretary to Governor General, Simla 8 May 1908.

⁵⁵ Indian National Archives, (New Delhi) Foreign Department General A Proceedings April 1909, numbers 36-8.

Indians had protested against the Australian policies since the late nineteenth century. In 1898, Indian traders in Melbourne had sent a Memorial to the Government of India protesting against the Victorian colony's Immigration Restriction Bill and in the following year, 'Certain Sikhs resident in WA' sent a petition 'complaining of their disabilities under recent legislation in that colony'. Such protests continued after 1901. Merchants in an Indian business in Melbourne wrote to the press in 1902 in relation to the Immigration Restriction Act. They were seeking to get five Indians into the country to work in their business: 'the Act is operating very harshly upon us, and is likely to bring about results inimical to the interests of Australia and to the good feeling existing between fellow British subjects of two shades of colour.'⁵⁶ They warned of a boycott, or on the part of the Mohammedans, a 'jihad' just as they had done, they said, in regard to Natal when it introduced immigration restrictions. They advised that the National Congress of India 'have already taken the matter up, and may be expected to pass some resolution on the matter early in the coming year'.⁵⁷

Indians across the Empire became more aware of Australian policies in 1905 when Mool Chand was deported. He was an Indian civil servant from Lahore who arrived in Perth on a visit in 1904. Having previously worked on the railways in India, in Uganda and in the civil service of British North Borneo, he was an experienced man of Empire, able to travel around to take up work. When he was discovered working in a Perth business owned by a fellow countryman, Inder Singh, however, he was summarily deported. This led to a storm of protest from the Indian community in Western Australia and their supporters. Mool Chand instructed a Perth solicitor to institute action for damages for false imprisonment and illegal deportation against the Collector of Customs. He also stated his intentions to institute proceedings against Alfred Deakin, the Australian Prime Minister.⁵⁸

When the Reverend Theo. Fischer of the Church of Christ was visiting missions in India, he was challenged about Australian policies: 'An official to whom we spoke in one place could not understand why Australia, which claimed to be a Christian country, would not admit him, for instance, to Australian shores.'⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Register*, Adelaide 22 December 1902, p. 3.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 22 December 1902, p. 3; see also A. M. Zaidi, compiler, 1987–, *INC [Indian National Congress]: The Glorious Tradition 1885–1920* (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Applied Political Research), vol. 1, pp. 234–5.

⁵⁸ NAA Department of External Affairs Series A1 Correspondence Files, 1908/11468 Deportation of Mool Chand 1905–8. In the event, Mool Chand did not pursue these actions.

⁵⁹ Fischer 1914, *A Month in India*, p. 111.

Indian public opinion was often incensed by Australian immigration policies and Indians began to ask why, when they were being treated so badly by the Australian government, that Australian citizens could still enter India freely and take up jobs and establish businesses there. In late August 1905, three Indian doctors arrived in Perth. While they acknowledged that they had proper papers and did not have 'much difficulty' in landing in Australia, they were shocked to note that they were listed on their ship's papers as 'prohibited immigrants'.⁶⁰ They contrasted the cordial welcome they had received in England, with the efforts to debar them when they were merely making a short visit to Australia. Australian doctors visiting India, in contrast, were 'allowed every freedom'.⁶¹ Furthermore, they would be 'free to come and go and given every help in the pursuit and investigations of their studies'. Certainly, Australian doctors visiting India were not required to carry special exemptions, nor were they on 'mustered up like sheep to pass an inspection' and subject to a penalty of £100 per head for their safe removal.⁶²

While Australians – as white British subjects – enjoyed the freedom to travel to and work and spread the Christian gospel in India, the White Australia Policy effectively debarred Indians from the enjoyment of reciprocal rights in Australia. The mobility of modernity was reserved for those deemed white.

⁶⁰ NAA Department of External Affairs Series A1 Correspondence Files, 1908/11468 Deportation of Mool Chand 1905–8, clipping from *Perth Herald*, 29 August 1905.

⁶¹ A number of Australian doctors worked in India at this time. Some were missionaries while others were hired by the Indian authorities to work as 'plague doctors' giving inoculations and helping to overcome plague epidemics. Dr R. Hornabrook was one of the Australian doctors who worked in this capacity in India in 1902–3. See Margaret Allen, forthcoming 2006, 'Through Colonial Spectacles', in Kate Douglas et al. (eds), *Journeying and Journalling*.

⁶² Allen, forthcoming 2006, 'Through Colonial Spectacles'.

8. Postwar British emigrants and the 'transnational moment': exemplars of a 'mobility of modernity'?

A. James Hammerton

By definition all migration which involves border crossings might be said to be transnational. The truism is so obvious that it's arguable that simply affixing the 'transnational' label does not tell us anything new about meanings of migration, in terms of either collective identities or individual and group experience. Social historians of migration for years have, in effect, written transnational histories, recounting, in Oscar Handlin's classic formulation, the epic stories of the uprooted and the transplanted, their stories of trauma, alienation and vindication in two countries, and subsequently the continuing contacts and networking of family members and communities between, at least, two countries.¹ These were quintessentially transnational experiences.

So it seems legitimate to ask how much the addition of the term 'transnational' to migration history brings in the way of explanatory power or theoretical illumination. 'Migration as Transnational Interaction', the title of one recent article on the subject, seems on the surface to signify a quite straightforward process, but it is in this sense a tautology, since all migration since the formation of nation states has involved transnational interaction.² Migration historians have thus perhaps felt less urgency to articulate explicitly transnational perspectives while others have been challenging histories based on narrow frameworks determined by the unitary nation state.³ While it is true that the history of migration policy and demography has conventionally been written within frameworks of the nation state and state formation, whether of the sending or receiving nations, in recent times migration historians have criticised and superseded this approach. Some have pointed to ways in which the modern ubiquity of global migration challenges the myths surrounding the grand master

¹ Oscar Handlin 1951, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston, MA: Atlantic-Little).

² Loretta Baldassar 1995, 'Migration as Transnational Interaction: Italy Revisited', *ConVivio*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 114-26.

³ See, for example, the deliberations of the American historians who began to debate movement away from narrow national perspectives in American history a decade ago. *Journal of American History, The Nation and Beyond, A Special Issue: 'Transnational Perspectives on United States History'*, December 1999, vol. 86, no. 3.

narrative of the culturally homogeneous and assimilating nation state.⁴ Indeed, writing on migrant life experience, on family and community networks and on individual trajectories of return migration, which has dominated recent research, rarely works within traditional assumptions of the assimilating nation state. So one might suggest that migration history, at least, has only in part been ‘handmaiden to the nation-state’, one of the guiding assumptions driving the turn to transnational perspectives. Nevertheless, there remains a useful purpose in exploring the broad spectrum between different modes of migration history, from the national to transnational, and the ways these are expressed in different aspects of migration. To paraphrase Richard White, some aspects of migration history lend themselves to national historical perspectives, and some demand a global or transnational approach.⁵

These reflections arise from a shift in my own work from the study of one form of migration history to another, specifically from traditional ‘migrations of austerity’, broadly conceived, to more recent ‘migrations of prosperity’, in both cases from the perspective of migrant experience and memory and the meanings migrants make of them. Most of the migration histories still written today are, unsurprisingly, those of austerity and dislocation, since prosperity remains a minority and recent, though increasing, stimulus for migration, most obvious in population movement from developed countries in the latter decades of the twentieth century. The differences reflect variations in traditional ‘push-pull’ models of migration, although for the later twentieth century such models are too simplistic to explain the complexities of modern mobility.

My explicit focus on post World War II British migration to countries of the ‘Old Commonwealth’ illustrates this trajectory from migrations of austerity to prosperity. Between the 1940s and 1960s Australia’s ‘Ten Pound Poms’, about one million of them (and a similar number to Canada), were driven overwhelmingly by forces of austerity.⁶ Their migrations were in the classic mould of permanent transfer from one nation state to another, in subsidised schemes driven powerfully by national interests and policies in the sending and receiving countries. The large movement (sometimes, controversially, defined

⁴ Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes 1994, ‘Some Reflections on Migration and Identity’, in Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes (eds), *Migration and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 5-6.

⁵ Richard White 1999, ‘The Nationalization of Nature’, *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 3, pp. 976-7, 986.

⁶ A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thomson 2005, *‘Ten Pound Poms’: Australia’s Invisible Migrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

as a 'diaspora')⁷ was part of a larger set of postwar global population movements, but it was also framed and is best understood by its unique characteristics. The austerity migrations of the first postwar British generation, while not comparable to the conditions on the European continent which produced ten million refugees or 'Displaced Persons', were stimulated nevertheless by common conditions of postwar dislocation, of shortage and rationing – of food, consumer goods and housing. Their migration was thus deeply traditional, having much in common with the mass migrations of their nineteenth century ancestors. But these migrants – appropriately labelled 'invisible' because of their historiographical neglect and relative low profile as migrants in receiving societies – were privileged by the imperial heritage which shaped their mobility. A common language, 'British subject' status, the frequent official, and preferential, recognition of their occupational qualifications and the general presumption of a British 'foundational culture' in the new country made for an experience which one would expect to be significantly different, certainly easier, from that of most other postwar migrants carrying burdens like language, deep cultural differences and profound marginalisation.

This was a perception often shared by British migrants themselves, at least before their arrival. Many of them observed that they regarded their migration as a move simply 'from one part of Britain to another' – a reason often invoked for not considering the United States.⁸ In the early postwar years in Australia the common currency of a British passport and British subject status made this virtually true, so that the sense of not even crossing an international boundary (as opposed, emphatically, to an unanticipated cultural boundary after arrival) was shared by most. At the outset, at least, they did not see their migration as a transnational experience so much as a translocal one, comparable in some ways to a move from Bradford to London. In these ways postwar British migrants continued to be beneficiaries of the 'colonial dividend', and this postcolonial advantage is what most distinguished them from their non-English speaking counterparts.

The British-Australian understanding of a virtually borderless movement within a postcolonial 'British World' chimed well with official views of postwar Australian and British migration policy and its ethnic goals. Arthur Calwell's well known preference for the 'British and Nordic races as first priority'

⁷ See, for example, Stephen Constantine 2003, 'British Emigration to the Empire-Commonwealth since 1880: From Overseas Settlement to Diaspora?', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, no. 31, pp. 16-35; Eric Richards 2004, *Britannia's Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland Since 1600* (London: Hambledon and London).

⁸ These were the precise words used, among many others, by Ron Penn, a British migrant to Sydney in 1947; Hammerton and Thomson 2005, 'Ten Pound Poms', pp. 325-31.

underlined a general consensus about the need to maintain Australia's fundamental British character. The Menzies Liberals continued the policy seamlessly, echoed in Immigration Minister Harold Holt's declaration that 'this is a British community, and we want to keep it a British community, living under British standards and by the methods and ideals of British Parliamentary democracy'.⁹ Government advertising effectively propagated these policies and assumptions. A 1959 Australia House publication assured its readers that the half million Britons who had emigrated since the war had found a 'British Way of Life' among Australians 'who are predominantly of British Isles stock'. In British Australia migrants could expect to join a familiar culture with the added advantage of superior living standards, enhanced opportunities for home ownership, good education and a sunny outdoor life far removed from Britain's oppressive climate.¹⁰ In their expectations, at least, migrants demonstrated that they were reassured by propaganda which virtually declared that their migration would be borderless. Recalling their decision to leave in 1959, for example, English migrants Maureen and John Butts agreed that they could not have contemplated moving to a 'foreign country' like the United States, but their deeply held patriotism was unchallenged by a move to Australia. John recalled that 'we didn't think about it as a foreign country either ... There was an association with English people that you were going to that you ... felt comfortable with. Yes, yes.'¹¹

As is usual in migrant experience, however, the living out of migrant lives in the new country departed from the anticipation. Most of the British migrants of the 1950s and 1960s moved in nuclear family groups and left close kin behind with limited opportunities for revived contacts, and it is here that the notion of the 'transnational family' – sustained kinship communication across borders to the point of dependence and emotional expectation – becomes useful for understanding how the dominant stories of these 'invisible migrants' echoed those of migrants from other backgrounds. Their move to Australia, arguably to a greater degree than for their Canadian counterparts, involved a sharp and seemingly final break with family members left behind. This was often recalled in precise descriptions of a rich network of extended family who gathered together on the train platform or the ship to bid that vividly remembered final farewell. A Welsh woman, Maureen Carter, recalls:

⁹ Reg Appleyard with Alison Ray and Allan Segal 1988, *The Ten Pound Immigrants* (London: Boxtree), pp. 10, 28.

¹⁰ Chief Migration Officer, Australia House 1959, *Australia Invites You* (London); Hammerton and Thomson 2005, 'Ten Pound Poms', p. 37.

¹¹ Interview, Maureen and John Butts, Perth, Western Australia, 27 March 2000, La Trobe University migration archive (LTU), no. LU 0134.

There must have been hundreds of people on that railway station, all singing, 'We'll keep a Welcome in the Hillside!' It brings tears to my eyes now! And, one of the lines is, 'We'll kiss away each hour of hiraeth [homesickness/longing in Welsh], when you come home again to Wales!' And I, I, I still crack up when I think of it. And I just had that feeling for so long, well it seemed like so long, when I first came.¹²

One response to this loss of kin networks was to set about and valorise the creation of a new family network in Australia, palpably evident in the photograph displays of grandchildren and other new family at home at the time of interviews. The Australian family reunion on the twentieth or thirtieth anniversary of arrival could be a vivid ritual marker of that celebration of the new family. Another response, especially in later years, three or four decades after migration, was to revive contact with lost kin and neighbourhoods back 'home', which can involve the virtual creation of a transnational identity in later life, through frequent return visits and reverse visits, the cultivation of extensive and regular correspondence and, more recently, email exchanges. That is, what was structurally a simple matter of individualist relocation, and a sharp break with family, could give rise to a longer-term cultivation of transnational family links. But over time we can discern different degrees of transnational interaction.

Life history sources like autobiographical writings and oral testimony help to convey the nature and effects of this transnational interaction. Pat Drohan's story illustrates the process.¹³ Pat was single and twenty-four when she emigrated from Wolverhampton in 1958, with prearranged secretarial work in Ballarat, Victoria. She set out as a classic 'sojourner', intent on an adventurous two-year working holiday, but left behind a large, close-knit and convivial family, none of whom ever emigrated. She was one of those thousands of young single people, fairly comfortably employed in Britain, who in a sense 'piggy backed' on a subsidised migration scheme aimed primarily at young fertile families. Her plans shifted dramatically when, before the end of her two years, she met and married an Australian husband and settled in Ballarat. At the time it did not matter to Pat that marriage to an Australian set her on an unanticipated course to permanent Australian residence. But it did mark the beginning of her long struggle to maintain family links, intensified for her by the fact that she left behind a close twin sister. In the early years much of her life in Australia was defined by being apart from her family, especially during critical moments like childbirth. Lacking physical contact, over the years she relied on the telephone for the contact which eluded her. Her heartfelt words on the subject

¹² Interview, Maureen Carter, Sydney, 9 July 1998, LTU, LU 0157.

¹³ Interview, Pat Drohan, Ballarat, 13 August 1998, LTU, LU 0262.

betray the emotional depth and family bond which survived the long years apart.

And over the years the family, with the phone calls and that, they know the time difference and all that, and I've always said to them: 'If anything happens at home, you are, you are to call me, you're to *tell* me; I don't care when. Including...'. And they say: 'We *always* include you, Pat, whatever we do, you're always included in what we do, we ring you when...', 'cause I've missed weddings, I've missed births, but I think the worst are the deaths ... but I just couldn't describe what it was like, to know Mum had gone, and you, you don't know what to do, there's no-one to speak to, just nobody. And then, the calls in the middle of the night, I'll sit up and take the call, I'd, my sons lived at home then and the, my sister died suddenly, with an aneurism ... and what, what do you do? Where do you go? ... And I didn't wake my husband, and it's no good waking my sons, and I sat there crying, and, you can't talk, you can't go round, you can't do anything.

From 1973 (after 15 years) Pat was able to begin making return visits, mostly with her husband, to the family in Wolverhampton. These visits became a stimulus for an increasing sense of ambivalence in her attitude to her emigration, encompassing the idea that she has become closer to the family than before leaving. She was struck by the way her family confirmed her development of independence in Australia, especially in relation to her twin sister, with whom her earlier identity had been submerged. 'When I went back, after 15 years, the family said: "My word, you've changed!" ... They said I'd, I'd become so much more assertive and outspoken ... And I said: "Well you know", I said: "When you go out somewhere that's so far away from home, and you're on your own, you haven't got anybody to, to stand up and speak for you".'

In effect Pat re-fashioned her English identity in her later years through being away from family, through contact and return visits. Reflecting about the interview, in which she began to explore some of these feelings in deeper ways than before, she admitted 'I'm more English now than I was when I left!' As the years have passed and her family have aged, the realisation of distance and frequent farewells has brought a new poignancy to her mobility.

My family are now getting old, we are all thinning in, in numbers ... And I ... although it's unspoken, it's there, but, we're, we're all thinking: 'When will the next visit be, will there *be* another one, and who'll be missing...?' And that, that's a fact of life! Somebody *will* be missing – it might even be me ... And so you have to make the most of every opportunity.

While there is evidence here of a gradual generational weakening of transnational family links over time, even as the emotional burden they bear strengthens, there is also stark evidence of the fashioning, in later life, of a transnational identity deeply attached to family and hyper-conscious of loss – in essence a migrant identity – which is a characteristic feature of that first generation of postwar British migrants; it was shared, to a degree, by postwar migrants from other backgrounds like the Italians from San Fior in Perth, written about by Loretta Baldassar, who juggle their loyalty to family and place through return visits and serial relocation.¹⁴

Pat Drohan began her travels as an intentional sojourner, and many like her managed to continue their travels without being interrupted – or hijacked! – by marriage. They provide a rather different illustration of the evolving nature of ‘transnational interaction’ for British migrants, and underline ways in which it was informed by its postcolonial shadow. These itinerants of the 1950s bear some resemblance to the sojourning mentality of today’s highly mobile backpackers; they are their precursors in a sense, and a prophetically significant by-product of the assisted passage scheme – the ultimate transnationals. Eunice Gardner chronicled her adventures in an aptly titled volume, *The World at Our Feet: The Story of Two Women Who Adventured Halfway Across the Globe*, published in 1957.¹⁵ Leaving Kent alone on the ten-pound passage in the early 1950s, Eunice, a hairdresser, soon met her English companion, Diana Williams. The pair worked in Sydney, hitch hiked around Australia, complete with Union Jacks on their rucksacks, and encountered a succession of like-minded single British itinerants on the move. Eunice’s illustrated ‘memories of Australia’, including a ‘Central Australian bush native’ and ‘making a boomerang from a solid log’, hinted at their comfortable though stereotypical engagement with local populations.¹⁶ Otherness thus served the time-worn purpose of picture postcard memory. Their adventures continued on the overland journey home through India, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Europe, the increasingly popular itinerary of budget-conscious young travellers. In Afghanistan, with the advantage of British embassy contact, the hairdresser from Maidstone danced with the King’s nephew at an ‘International Club’ party, and narrowly evaded having to be escorted by him the next day while wearing a bhurkha.¹⁷ These sojourners palpably claimed the benefits of Empire and a relatively politically docile Third World rendered their global travel relatively safe; like their

¹⁴ Loretta Baldassar 2001, *Visits Home: Migration Experiences Between Italy and Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press).

¹⁵ Eunice Gardner 1957, *The World at Our Feet: The Story of Two Women Who Adventured Halfway Across the Globe* (London: W. H. Allen).

¹⁶ *ibid.*, illustrations, pp. 64-5.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 177.

nineteenth century world traveller forebears they engaged easily, although from less of a position of clear authority and superiority, with people of other races. The 'world at our feet' was symbolically illustrated for them by their wave on the cover – in actuality a wave at a Malayan pearl cutter in Broome, WA. Eunice had never contemplated permanent migration; her travels were motivated by what she described as 'the wander bug', a notion which set her apart from her friends at home, but it took an assisted migration scheme for her, and Diana, to realise their mobility.

We can see here how, over time, the postwar scheme's embodiment of a migration of austerity progressively took on features of the more modern version of the West's postcolonial migration of prosperity; this was underlined by the large return rate of British migrants generally – ranging over time from 20 per cent to 30 per cent.¹⁸ By the 1980s, with the cessation of subsidised passages and new entrance rules, British migrants to Australia were losing their traditional privilege of access, but they also enjoyed easier mobility and were more easily open to 'serial migration' between countries of the 'Old Commonwealth', as well as return migration.¹⁹ Commentators by the mid 1960s were convinced that Western migration was beginning to reveal new characteristics. Most of these are obvious to us now. The half-century after the war coincided with the dawning and consolidation of the jet age, when what had been until recently a momentous and not easily reversible journey across the world, for most became an investment in recreational globe-trotting. The process was reinforced by corporate employment practices which encouraged staff mobility. British migrants, with transnational links and associations with the 'Old Commonwealth' still fresh, were among the first to benefit from this; besides contemplating a return to Britain after an unsettling spell in the new country, they often remained open to re-migration back to their original destination, even from far distant Australia (a more difficult proposition than the so-called '\$1000 cure' back from Canada). Anthony Richmond, the Canadian migration sociologist, described these migrants in 1967 as 'transilients', reflecting the nature of modern urban industrial societies 'whose populations are increasingly mobile, both geographically and socially'. Unlike earlier migrations their movements implied no inadequacy on the part of either country since there was an international market for their skills. These modern migrants 'enjoy travel for its own sake, they find little difficulty making friends wherever they go, and they lack strong family or community ties that might compel them to become sedentary'.²⁰ The British, of course, were not

¹⁸ Hammerton and Thomson 2005, *Ten Pound Poms*, pp. 264-5.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 264-98. I am currently researching the increased British propensity to 'serial migration' since the 1960s.

²⁰ Anthony H. Richmond 1967, *Post-War Immigrants in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p. 252.

alone in enjoying the benefits of the new mobility, but in their easy access to the old 'British world' they continued to enjoy the benefits of the colonial dividend. And as the fiction of 'moving from one part of Britain to another' became harder to sustain, these serial migrants became more willing to include the United States among their migrant destinations.

According to this view then, the 1960s, the crucial 'transnational moment' in migration, witnessed some fundamental transformations in patterns of Western migration in the direction of a 'mobility of modernity'. This was not just an increased predilection towards the youthful and carefree backpacking of sojourners like Eunice and Diana. For the British it brought more complex patterns of 'transnational family' contact, which in one way or another has always been a product of migration. The sheer scale of physical family movement, once cheaper air travel began to free up mobility, could involve a staggeringly complex set of international family links. One such revealing case is Doug Benson, who first went to Australia at nineteen with his parents and five siblings in 1961. As a young man enjoying the greater freedoms of the 1960s he soon left his family, travelled Australia and the world, and returned to South Australia with a Scottish girl friend who he married in 1967. Homesick for Britain, they returned in 1969 to Somerset where they settled and raised a family, often playing host to other visiting family members, the British headquarters of the mobile Bensons. Doug's description of wider family movements since captures the dizzying moves of his wider family, more reminiscent, perhaps, of migrant cultures like those from the Mediterranean more known for chain migration practices in extended families.

My wife has never been back to Australia, but I have been twice for about a month each time – firstly just before my father died in 1980, then again in 1992.

Several members of the large family that originally emigrated in 1961 have subsequently been somewhat unsettled. My parents, brothers and sister have all moved around a lot. My middle brother went back to Britain in 1970; he returned to Australia a few years later, has been back here again for a couple of years but is now resident in South Australia. My sister married a Scotsman in Australia, then they went to live in Scotland in 1970. They divorced in 1982; she returned to Australia for a couple of years around 10 years ago, but returned again to Scotland where she still lives. My parents and two youngest brothers returned to England in 1971, but my parents could not settle and went back to Australia with my youngest brother after 2 years. They returned to Britain again 3 years later, but went back to Australia again in 1979. My father died the following year and my mother, usually accompanied by one of her sons, has lived on and off in both Australia and Britain ever

since. At the age of 83, she is now living in England but hoping to return to Australia, where she has three sons and four grandchildren, at the end of this year ...

As for my own feelings about emigration to Australia, I can say that overall I view it as a positive experience, in fact a turning point of my life. If we had not gone to Australia as a family, our lives would no doubt have turned out completely differently ... The biggest negative result is that as a family we are spread between Britain and Australia and have not seen very much of each other, especially the youngest generation.²¹

It is undoubtedly true that the kind of shifts in the 1960s pointed to by commentators like Richmond signified some deep transformations in migration in the Western world, best understood as a move from migrations of austerity to migrations of prosperity. By the 1980s these patterns had become ingrained, and there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate the depth and extent of the way that 'transnational moment' of the 1960s marked a fundamental divide in migration practices. It is worth remembering, though, that historians are concerned not only with 'fundamental divides' but also with continuities and the ways that major shifts are prefigured in earlier experience. We know, for example, that nineteenth century assisted migration to Australia was accompanied by a substantial element of return and itinerant migration among colonial migrants, not least among single women domestic servants.²² But it was the mid twentieth century before these minority practices became a prominent trend. In this sense the first generation of postwar British migrants were, from the late 1940s, precursors of the mobility of modernity, embodying what became more characteristic of Western migration from the later 1960s.

The life history of Jackie Smith, a woman who now lives in Toronto, and whose migration experience spans the two generations, points the way.²³ On the surface she is a perfect illustration of Richmond's 'transilient', freely traversing continents. In 1959, at the age of thirteen, she and her parents left a rich South London network of working-class neighbours and extended family for Adelaide. She subsequently trained as a nurse, travelled extensively through Europe, back to Australia, then to Africa, married a Canadian (briefly) and eventually settled in Canada, with a young son, where she went to University, became a successful journalist and settled with a Jewish American. A precursor of the late twentieth century 'serial migrant' in every respect, her geographical mobility was matched by her occupational mobility. Yet the modern form of Jackie's life story belies

²¹ Douglas Benson, written account, University of Sussex migration archive, US B10.

²² Jan Gothard 2001, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press), pp. 207-8.

²³ Interview, Jackie Smith, Toronto, 1 July 2000, LTU, LU CS50.

the apparent modernity of her ease of movement and adaptability. The eve of her family's London departure was clouded by a bitter quarrel between her mother and her sisters over an inheritance, so the ritual emotional farewells at the station or ship were replaced by a gloomy and subdued nuclear family departure. For Jackie this family estrangement was compounded by the total loss of all connection with wider family, community and friends, which she had enjoyed in London. Her sense of that permanent loss was crystallised for her by the dramatic moment of departure:

And, so there was this huge problem. And we were going on this six-week voyage. We *knew* we would probably never return, because we didn't have the *money* to come back, you know, you had to go for two years, and we didn't have money, and there was no-one to say goodbye to there, so we took the train, from London ... down to Southampton.

The fracture in family relations was compounded in Australia by the sensory shock of their new environment. Jackie likened the new outer suburb of Elizabeth, physically and figuratively, to a desert: 'There was nothing there. It was dust storms, right? The hellish heat, dust storms, this house with cracks, not a lot of money.' The memories of her early years are dominated by a sense of recollected alienation which recurs in migrant stories of their 'shock of the new'. At school her Englishness became a liability, as she and her brother tried to evade the discrimination that newly arrived 'poms' experienced alongside non-English speakers.

Jackie remembered her early years in Australia as desperately unhappy ones, as her memories of close-knit family intimacy in London yielded to recollections of a dysfunctional and isolated nuclear family in Adelaide and idealisation of the lost network of close relations in London. It is reflected in the extent to which the past continued to govern her attitude to festivities:

And it was very unhappy. You know, Christmas, that was the end of Christmas, like, for years afterwards, around Christmas, I would totally – I still have difficulty with Christmases. I mean, now I live with a Jewish person, we celebrate Christmas, right, I have a big Christmas party every year. I have all kinds of people over; I make Christmas for my son ... So Christmas to me became a huge thing, because in England I had this family Christmas where, you know, everybody got together and it was a real celebration. We went to Australia, there was no more family Christmas. There was no more family, no more family Christmas.

Although Jackie eventually overcame her culture shock in Australia and developed a deep affection for the country, as well as pride in an Australian rather than a Canadian identity – she spoke, in familiar Australian inflection, of

her attachment to 'the land' – the emotional scars of those early years of alienation were enduring. They drove her first into therapy, then into an urge to reconnect with English survivors of her extended family, although she was disappointed both with the old family as well as the old country: 'I would never want to live in England, and I am so grateful that my parents emigrated.' The frequent disillusion with the idealised homeland decades after leaving is often accompanied by disappointment with close family connections in this way. Significantly, it coexists with a seemingly contradictory conviction that migration is unnatural and emotionally traumatic, in conflict with a 'sense of belonging' to family networks:

I think people don't understand it. They don't understand; they think you come here, you know, and you speak the language, and they don't understand the profound internal effects ... the sense of belonging ... you know, the profound effect of getting on a boat, right? At a very young age ... and going to the ends of the earth ... you don't know who you are.

From reluctant and traumatised child migrant, to rootless and itinerant young single, to sophisticated and cosmopolitan serial migrant traversing the 'old Empire', but with a lifelong yearning for enduring 'belonging' to deep family networks, Jackie Smith's life story embodies both traditional and modern modes of migration. For the British the ease of movement which has enabled them to be in the forefront of modern modes of mobility, like Jackie's, has been facilitated by the continuing 'colonial dividend' of prior settlement. But such apparent privileges do not necessarily make for any less painful personal experiences of migration, with ongoing effects on subjective constructions of identity. The stories glimpsed here hint at the multiple ways in which single families can exhibit different aspects of migration simultaneously – permanent one-way migration, serial migration and return migration, all of them carrying their own burdens of personal pain and alienation alongside celebration. The same complexity and contradiction applies to time span; just as we can find precursors of the 'mobility of modernity' among British migrants of the 1950s, like Eunice Gardner, many of their 1980s successors have more in common with traditional permanent settler migrants of the 1950s, or for that matter the 1850s. The 'transnational moment', in this sense, has been a much more drawn out process than imagined by sociologists in the 1960s.