

# Low Kong Meng and Chinese Engagement in the International Trade of Colonial Victoria

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## Abstract

**The level of integration of the Chinese goldmining sector into the Victorian mid-nineteenth century economy has been given little attention by historians. How much of the gold won by Chinese miners was spent in Victoria; how much was exported? Was it secreted back to China, as believed at the time, or was it used to finance trade expansion in the Asia-Pacific region? To what extent was cross-cultural co-operation involved in running the Chinese Victorian economic sector?**

**The business career of Melbourne entrepreneur Low Kong Meng (1831-1888) offers a locus around which to discuss these questions. A contemporary account stated that 'there were reputedly few wealthier men in Victoria than he' and that the transactions of his firm were 'on a large, it might be said, a gigantic scale'. A Chinese born in British Penang, he came to Victoria for the gold rush in 1853, and within six years, at the age of twenty-eight, was importing goods from China valued in today's prices at £6 million per shipment. Educated in English, French, Malay and Cantonese, he traded in food, tea and opium from China to Melbourne, rice from Calcutta to Victoria, and more. His shipments of gold bullion to Asian ports rivalled**

**the international financial exchange of the leading colonial banks. Head of a firm that by the early 1860s had branches in Melbourne, Mauritius, Hong Kong and London, his colleagues included those in the highest political and business circles of Melbourne, as well as New York traders and members of the Shanghai American community.**

Using shipping records of the Victorian Department of Trade and Customs held at PROV (VPRS 22, VPRS 38) combined with the wealth of trade and economic data in the Victorian colonial government's Blue Books (VPRS 943) of the late 1850s and early 1860s, this article interrogates Low Kong Meng's financial and shipping arrangements, explores his business engagement with Chinese and European Victorians, and maps out his part in the international Asian and imperial networks of trade and investment in the colonial era.



Lowe Kong Meng, c. 1863, aged 32. Thomas Bradley Harris photo album, on website *The Eastern window*, p. 27 (accessed 12 March 2012).

In 1859, the Chinese goldminers of Victoria were on strike. In a civil disobedience campaign longer and more widespread than the Eureka miner's licence campaign of 1854, the majority of the 45,000 Chinese across the goldfields were refusing to pay the newly imposed Chinese residence tax of £4 per annum.[1]

At the height of this campaign, a delegation of Lowe Kong Meng, John A Luk and A Kum, representing Melbourne's 'some 200 Chinese merchants, and persons in their employ', met with the Victorian Chief Secretary, John O'Shanassy, on 30 May 1859, to distance themselves from the miners' campaign and plead exemption from paying the tax.[2] Kong Meng and his fellow Chinese merchants also had with them three non-Chinese supporters: James Grant, lawyer and Member of

the Legislative Assembly, Mark Last King, merchant, and Rev William Young, missionary to Victoria's Chinese.

King argued to O'Shanassy on behalf of the merchants that, as they were not living under the government's Chinese protectorate system operating on the goldfields, the merchants were not causing any cost to the government, and there was no need for them to pay the tax which funded this system. They were already repeatedly paying the poll tax of £10 per Chinese passenger arriving in Melbourne, as they travelled to and from China frequently, being engaged in a large trade importing goods from China to supply the Chinese mining population. King stated that, 'for instance, Kong Meng had a cargo of goods just now arrived' in Port Phillip Harbour 'worth £10,000 pounds'.[3]

In today's figures, comparing average earnings, £10,000 is just over £6 million.[4] In 1863, the *Argus* reported that 'there are reputedly few wealthier men in Victoria', and that the transactions of Kong Meng and Co. 'are on a large, it might be said, a gigantic scale'.[5]

Lowe Kong Meng is briefly cited in a range of histories,[6] and brief biographies appeared in newspapers and books during his lifetime,[7] but little detailed investigation has been published about his life and career, and his impact on mid-colonial Victoria.

Although Kong Meng was active for thirty-five years in colonial, inter-colonial and international commercial affairs in Melbourne from 1853 until his death in 1888, for this article I focus on the 1850s-1860s, when his chief concern was supplying Chinese miners' needs, laying the basis for his wealth and fame.

Little has been written about colonial Victoria's international trade – what was being traded and with which countries, and the people and organisations undertaking the trading.[8] Fortunately, Victoria's 'Blue Books', from 1859 onwards, detail import/export data, itemised by ports of origin or destination, and by goods. [9] 1859 being the year of the meeting with O'Shanassy, this allows a trade context for Kong Meng's £10,000 cargo.

Total imports for 1859 were £15,622,891. There was a preponderance of trade with the UK (59% of value), and a large trade (18%) with other Australasian colonies, but also a strong trade with the Asia/Indian Ocean region (14%), almost as large as the inter-colonial trade. Other imports were from North America (5%), Europe (3%) and Latin America (1%).

**TOTAL VALUE in Sterling of the IMPORTS and EXPORTS of the Colony, from and to each Country, in the Year ended 31st December, 1859.**

COUNTRIES.	Imports therefrom.	Exports thereunto.	COUNTRIES.	Imports therefrom.	Exports thereunto.
United Kingdom ...	£ 9,176,528	£ 13,542,849	Foreign States—continued.	£	£
<i>British Possessions.</i>			Fou-tchow-foo...	276,403	131
New South Wales ...	1,229,100	176,827	Gottenburg ...	43,331	
New Zealand ...	57,110	114,125	Guam ...		58,896
South Australia ...	796,514	269,797	Havre ...		54,864
Tasmania ...	723,845	251,921	Hamburg ...	93,177	50
Western Australia ...	72	11,185	Hermosand ...	8,506	
Aden ...	3,195	32,873	Ilo Ilo ...	8,405	
Amherst ...		2	Leer ...	3,187	
Bombay ...		12,888	Lombek ...	67	4,172
Barbadoes ...		29	Macao ...	112,727	
Calcutta ...	47,1228	367,259	Malaga ...	10,357	
Cape of Good Hope ...	18,383	285	Manilla ...	136,333	82
Ceylon ...	57,219	165,945	Marseilles ...	41,800	
Coringa ...	9,970		Odessa ...	19,444	
Hong Kong ...	277,983	363,604	Philippine Islands ...	200	
Madras ...	5,080		Pondicherry ...		7,867
Mauritius ...	523,986	370,404	Prussia ...	3,230	
Moulinin ...		37	Rotterdam ...	17,712	
Page's Sound ...			Sourabaya ...	14,051	50
Rangoon ...	17,520		Soderham ...	9,523	
Singapore ...	5,641	66	Sourabaya ...	27,073	16,000
St. John's, N. R. ...	6,377	28	South Sea Islands ...		781
Vantover's Island ...	1,300	149	Stettin ...	10,723	
<i>Foreign States.</i>			Stockholm ...	2,100	
Amsterdam ...	19,543		Suez ...	102,421	376,167
Bahia ...	40		Sundsvall ...	3,083	
Bally ...	1,695		Swatow ...	13,000	
Batavia ...	52,541	5,619	Sweden ...	13,259	
Bourbon ...		1,126	Talcahuano ...	8,112	
Boedjaux ...	171,382		Timor ...	1,820	540
Cadiz ...	31,814		Valparaiso ...	83,374	191
Callao ...	29,385	1,286	<i>United States.</i>		
Canton ...	3,010		Boston ...	226,131	57
Chili ...	4,812		Humboldt Bay ...	4,200	
Christmas Island ...		1,550	Mobile ...		31
Copenhagen ...	8,605		New York ...	403,632	1,161
Crossstadt ...	47,280		Panama ...	4,400	
Danais ...	2,350		San Francisco ...	139,431	14,927
Dieppe ...		20,826	Savannah ...	2,275	
Feejee Islands ...	1,039		United States ...	2,911	
			Total ...	15,622,891	13,867,859

Department of Trade and Customs, Melbourne, 1860. W. H. SPAIN, Comptroller of Accounts. VINCENT FYKE, Commissioner of Trade and Customs.

Victorian imports and exports, by country, 1859. 'Total value in sterling of the imports and exports of the colony, from and to each country, in the year ended 31st December, 1859', *Statistics of the colony of Victoria for the year 1859*, Government Printer, Melbourne, p. 272. PROV, VPRS 943/P0, Unit 11, Blue Book 1859.

Port of Origin:	Value of imports (£)	% of Total Trade
<b>Whole World</b>		
United Kingdom	9,176,528	59%
Other Australasian colonies	2,806,641	18%
Asia/Indian Ocean	2,128,357	14%
North America	814,377	5%
Europe	571,065	3%
Latin America	125,923	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,622,891</b>	

Figure 1. Imports to the colony of Victoria, 1859, from the whole world. Statistics compiled from the Blue Book for 1859, p. 272.

Looking closer at the Asia/Indian Ocean figures, the six greatest sources were Mauritius, Calcutta, Hong Kong, Fou-tchow-foo (Fuzhou, China), Manilla and Suez (i.e. Egypt). Between them, their total import value was £1,788,354 – 84% of the total from Asia/Indian Ocean. Two-thirds of the ports in this region were British possessions in 1859.

Six main ports of origin:	Value of imports (£)	% of Total Trade
<b>Asia/Indian Ocean</b>		
Mauritius	523,986	
Calcutta	471,228	
Hong Kong	277,983	
Fou-tchow-foo [Fuzhou]	276,403	
Manilla	136,333	
Suez	102,421	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,788,345</b>	<b>84%</b>
Rest of Asia/Indian Ocean	340,003	16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,128,357</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 2. Imports to the colony of Victoria, 1859, from Asia/Indian Ocean, by port of origin. Statistics compiled from the Blue Book for 1859, p. 272.

Port of Origin:	Value of imports (£)	% of Total Trade
<b>Asia/Indian Ocean</b>		
<i>British Possessions:</i>		
Mauritius	523,986	
Calcutta	471,228	
Hong Kong	277,983	
Ceylon	57,219	
Cape of Good Hope [South Africa]	18,383	
Coringa [India]	9,970	
Rangoon	5,641	
Madras	5,080	
Aden	3,195	
Singapore	2,887	
<b>Total British Ports</b>	<b>1,375,572</b>	<b>65%</b>
<i>Non-British Ports:</i>		
Fou-tchow-foo [Fuzhou, China]	276,403	
Manilla	136,333	
Macao	112,727	
Suez	102,421	
Batavia [Jakarta]	52,541	
Sourabaya [Surabaya, Java]	27,073	
Swatow [Shantou, China]	15,000	
Shanghai [Shanghai]	14,051	
Ilo Ilo [Philippines]	8,405	
Canton [Guangzhou]	3,010	
Timor	1,820	
Bally [West Bengal?]	1,695	
Feejee Islands [Fiji]	1,039	
Philippine Islands	200	
Lombok [Lombok]	67	
<b>Total Non-British Ports</b>	<b>752,785</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,128,357</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 3. Imports to the colony of Victoria, 1859, from British and non-British ports in Asia/Indian Ocean. Statistics compiled from the Blue Book for 1859, p. 272.

Moreover, of Victoria's imports from the Asia/Indian Ocean arena, a third was from China, a quarter from Mauritius, and a quarter from India and Ceylon; these include the ports Kong Meng had great familiarity with in his early mercantile career.

Asia/Indian Ocean: Grouped by Regions	Value of imports (£)	% of Total Trade
East Asia (China)	699,174	33%
South Asia (India & Ceylon)	545,192	25%
Indian Ocean (Mauritius)	523,986	25%
Southeast Asia (Philippines, Burma, East Indies)	234,967	11%
Middle East (Suez, Aden)	105,616	5%
Southern Africa (Cape of Good Hope)	18,383	1%
Pacific Islands (Fiji)	1,039	0.05%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,128,357</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 4. Imports to the colony of Victoria, 1859, from Asia/Indian Ocean, by geographic region. Statistics compiled from the Blue Book for 1859, p. 272.

*Inwards*

Date of arrival	Name of Ship	Tonnage	Port of departure	Date of departure
1	Beaufort	257 1/2	Americum	Dec 25
1	Abneral Naper	459	do	do
3	Christophe Ball	648	Boston	Oct 15
9	Buckmore	640	Hong Kong	Nov 17
11	Lucey L Ball	421	San Francisco	do
22	Kanata	1207	Ramberg	Dec 22
23	Bullfield	397	Hamburg	Nov 2
25	Elonore	426	Hong Kong	Dec 5
25	Alfred	362	Hamburg	Nov
25	Bertrand Brunner		Gotterdamf	Oct 25
25	Reatto	311	Bordeaux	Nov 15
26	Port Jackson	441	Calcutta	do
27	Ed	223	Batavia	Dec 14
27	Henderson	718	Hong Kong	Nov 25

Year	Port of Origin	No. of ships
1857	Hong Kong	1
1858	Hong Kong	3
1859	Hong Kong	3
1860	Hong Kong	5
1861	Hong Kong	4
	Lyttleton [Christchurch, NZ]	1
	London	1
1862	Hong Kong	7
	Otago [Dunedin, NZ]	2
	Adelaide	1
1863	Hong Kong	4
1864	Hong Kong	8
1865	Hong Kong	6
1866	Hong Kong	3
	Brisbane	1
1867	Hong Kong	2
	Sydney	1
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>Adelaide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>Brisbane</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>Sydney</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL 1857-67</b>	<b>ALL PORTS</b>	<b>53</b>

Figure 5. Ships inwards to Melbourne, with Kong Meng & Co. as agent, 1857-67. Compiled from PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Units 3, 4, 5, Inwards shipping reports, 1854-67; PROV, VPRS 22/P1, Unit 1, Shipping index 1864-67.

The Victorian shipping registers highlight Kong Meng's trading activity.[10] From 1857 Kong Meng is listed as customs agent for cargoes coming to Melbourne (see Figure 5).[11] He is the only Chinese agent. Between 1857 and 1867 he was agent for 53 ships arriving in Melbourne: 46 from Hong Kong, three from New Zealand, and one each from Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane and London. He was not the only agent for Hong Kong shipments; in 1859, of fifteen ships from Hong Kong, only three were in his name.[12] But his shipments from Hong Kong increased each year to eight in 1864 (out of nine from Hong Kong that year), dropping again to two in 1867 (out of six ships from Hong Kong).

As to cargo-value per ship, at the time of the audience with O'Shanassy, the Inwards Shipping Report states that the American *Red Rover* arrived in Melbourne from Hong Kong via Sydney, carrying a cargo of sundries, with Kong Meng as agent, and entered for customs on 31 May.[13] This would be the ship mentioned at the meeting. For 1859, there were £277,983 of goods imported from Hong Kong (see Figure 2), and fifteen ships coming from Hong Kong,[14] averaging £18,532 per ship, making £10,000 cargo for one ship a reasonable figure.

**BARQUE ELONORE**, from HONG KONG—This vessel having reported at the Custom-house, and being under demurrage, consignees are requested to **PAID** their **ENTRIES**, and pay freight to the undersigned.  
Arrangements have been made with Messrs. Lloyd and Hunt to lighten the cargo at current rates. Parties objecting to this to notify the same this day.  
**KONG MENG**, agent, Little Bourke-street east, or **FOXTON and HUNT**, Custom-house. 213 mar 2

Arrival of the *Elonore* in Melbourne from Hong Kong on 25 February 1858, Kong Meng as agent. Above: detail from PROV, VPRS 22/P0, Unit 12, Statistical record of passenger ship arrivals and departures, January 1858 to December 1859. Below: Shipping advertisement, *The Argus*, 27 February 1858, p. 1.

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## Asian/Indian Ocean British-Colonial Origins

How did Kong Meng gain such prominence in the import trade within a few years of arriving in Melbourne? The answer appears to lie in his origins in the British port of Penang in Malaya. Yong states that this gave him the advantage of fluency in English, while Cronin suggests that, as well as language fluency, he had the benefit of six years as an Indian Ocean trader before coming to Melbourne.[15] I argue that the Penang and Indian Ocean influences are even more pivotal.

When Kong Meng was born in Penang in 1830/1831,[16] it had been British for forty-five years. His father and progenitors, originally from Canton,[17] had been carrying on, for a century, an extensive business as merchants and contractors[18] and his father, Lowe a Quee,[19] possessed considerable property on Penang island.[20]

Chinese merchants had for centuries been looking for trade, mining and agricultural opportunities in southeast Asia, working with indigenous communities, then with Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch colonies in the region. But the pace of Chinese activity quickened with the expansion of British colonies, east of India, starting with Penang's founding in 1786 by the British East India Company. The British, unlike the Portuguese and Dutch, had a policy of encouraging Chinese immigration, due to their reputation for industry and wealth generation.[21] Within a few years it was realised that Chinese trade would also increase if Penang was declared a free port, meaning no customs duties or trade restrictions.[22] The second step was to encourage Chinese involvement in plantation agriculture, by relinquishing the idea of British planters employing Chinese labour but allowing Chinese capitalists to run their own plantations, bringing labourers from China.[23]

Even before the establishment of British Penang, Malacca, further south on the Malay Peninsula, was the destination of a Chinese-managed labour-import system, bringing coolies from south China each year on junks with the winds of the north-west monsoon in January and February.[24] Under British patronage and support, this grew rapidly, allowing expansion of Chinese mining and plantation in the Malayan and Borneo hinterlands, especially after the advent of steamships in the Straits in 1845.[25] By Kong Meng's time, Chinese merchants in Malaya had well-developed connections with Chinese merchants in south China, familiarity with British port and shipping systems, and well-established processes for recruiting labourers and their supplies from China.

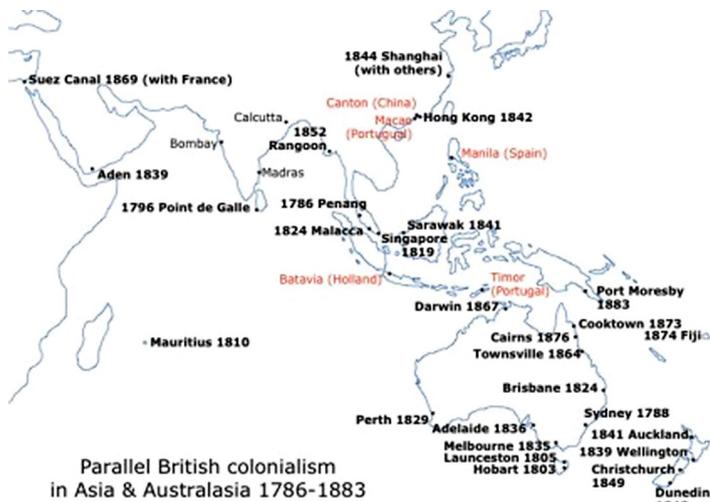
But British colonial agency in the East underwent major changes in this period, providing attractive opportunities for the Chinese to engage deeply in British commercial and cultural spheres. Not only had the focus of the East India Company shifted towards China as well as India, British interest in India also shifted, from maximising trade profits to the establishment of a quasi-government whose main financial rationale was the collection of revenue from people extracting resources from the land.

Roderick Matthews argues that the need to adopt government in India led to new approaches to civil service, both in rationale and mechanism, and in the application of theories of efficiency to government processes.[26] Matthews, and Lakshmi Subramanian, argue also that the tide of liberalism in Britain, one manifestation being the anti-slavery campaign, also saw a 'missionary' role for colonial government, with Britons educating locals in modern ways: especially vis-à-vis science, industry, law, liberalised commerce and Christianity.[27]

Early British Penang (and later British Malacca and Singapore) provided a locus for these modernist developments in colonial practice. Not only was there a public school (Penang Free School, 1817, the first English school in southeast Asia[28] ) but also:

- several newspapers (particularly the *Prince of Wales island gazette*, 1805-27, southeast Asia's first newspaper[29] and the *Penang gazette and Straits chronicle*, 1838-1968[30] ), with an advertising system and increasing freedom of the press;
- a charter of law (1807),[31] and a judicial system (1808)[32] following British legal principles, including trial by jury and probate for wills;[33]
- an early form of city council (the Committee of Assessors, 1800, responsible for rates, road-making and drainage), hospitals, a Post Office, the free operation of private commercial companies based on shareholdings and boards of directors with disputes able to taken to court,[34] the constant through-movement of sailing ships of the latest technology – even the arrival of the earliest steamship in Asia, the *Nemesis*, Britain's first ocean-going iron warship, in 1840.[35]

All were innovations for the Chinese world. Thomas Raffles enhanced these elements of modernity by promoting a vision of an international free-trade emporium – Singapore – at the junction of the Indian Ocean and China Seas, driven by a partnership of Chinese merchants and British independent traders. [36]



Parallel British colonialism in Asia & Australasia 1786-1883.

Kong Meng received an education in English, French and Malay at the Penang Free School.[37] He would have been taught modern subjects of the English schooling system, and acquired characteristics of a British gentleman. He would have read the *Penang gazette and Straits chronicle*, realised how a newspaper could facilitate commercial and shipping intelligence, learned of modern British forms of governance and commerce, and associated socially and commercially with the British in the settlement.

### A French Connection

When he was in his mid-teens, Kong Meng was sent to Mauritius[38] to perfect his English and French,[39] under private tutors.[40] There he established himself in trade as an importing merchant,[41] chiefly transacting Eastern produce,[42] connected to the firm of A. Goon(e) Frères.[43] His ventures were between Mauritius, Calcutta and Singapore[44] during the years 1847 to 1853;[45] and he generally travelled as supercargo,[46] with a particularly intensive trade between India and Mauritius.[47]

Mauritius was then a major source of the world's sugar.[48] In 1810, the British had captured the island from the French. After 1833, when slavery was banned in the British Empire, the plantation owners, mostly French, sought new (paid, indentured) labour from various locations before settling on India as a source.[49] Lowe a Quee, based in Penang where Chinese labour was a principal commodity, would see in Mauritius a potential for expanding that trade.[50] Allied with this, it was the drinking of sweet tea which really drove the increasing British appetite for China's tea,[51] so perhaps Lowe a

Quee saw a Francophone son as a good asset for moving into the sugar trade.[52] Further, though France lost Mauritius, and had been defeated as a major player in India by 1805,[53] even so, throughout the high noon of the British Raj, the French maintained trading ports on the Indian coast.[54] Again, a Francophone Chinese could maximise his trade in the region.

### British Ascendancy

Though Chinese, Lowe a Quee and his son supported the British 1842 victory over China in the First Anglo-Chinese (Opium) War: Kong Meng's 'brother was killed in the Chinese war, in the service of the East India Company'.[55] They would also have been impressed by the establishment, subsequent to victory, of Hong Kong, the opening of the first five Chinese treaty ports to foreign trade,[56] the effective replacement of Chinese junks by European square-riggers[57] and steamers[58] in Asian waters, and the massive growth in British, European, Chinese and American trade between all ports on Asia's Indian and Pacific coasts.

Kong Meng and his father would also have noted a parallel expansion of British ports and colonies throughout Asia and Australasia subsequent to Penang's founding (see Figure 6). This created a web of ports tied by trade, mail, exchange of newspapers, personal and commercial networks, political developments and mutual interest, with Australia a part of this Asian colonial enterprise. During Kong Meng's early years in Melbourne, the *Argus* regularly featured news from Asia and Indian Ocean ports; more if a war was in progress (see Figure 7).

In Mauritius, Kong Meng heard of the Australian gold rush, and came to Melbourne,[59] in 1853, with cargo from Mauritius;[60] the first Chinese merchant in the colony.[61] He tried mining for three unprofitable months, sailing soon afterwards for India and resolving never to return to Australia.[62] In Calcutta, his friends (presumably British, Indian and Chinese traders) induced him to change his determination. He returned to Victoria,[63] with fresh merchandise from India,[64] and in 1854 established an importing firm entitled Kong Meng and Co.[65]

Whether in Mauritius, Calcutta, Penang, Hong Kong, Singapore or Melbourne, Kong Meng would have seen himself as part of overlapping spheres of British and Chinese interests. His upbringing as a merchant's son in the port of Penang, and his education and acquisition of contacts across British Asia, equipped him admirably to trade between ports and across cultures.

Asia/Indian Ocean/Pacific	Australia and New Zealand
Penang 1786	Sydney 1788
Galle, Ceylon 1796	Hobart 1803 Launceston 1805
Mauritius 1810	
Singapore 1819	
Malacca 1824	Brisbane 1824 Perth 1829
	Melbourne 1835 Adelaide 1836 Wellington 1839
Aden 1839	Auckland 1841
Sarawak 1841	
Hong Kong 1842	Dunedin 1848
Shanghai 1844-1854	Christchurch 1849-1856
Rangoon 1852	Townsville 1864 Palmerston [Darwin] 1867
Suez Canal 1869	Cooktown 1873
Fiji 1874	Cairns 1876
Port Moresby 1883	

Figure 6. Founding or acquisition of British colonial ports 1786-1883.

An Indian Ocean country or port: 1 Jan-30 June 1857	'China' 1 Jan-30 June 1857 <i>Note more articles due to Second Opium War in progress</i>	'India' 1 Jan-30 June 1859 <i>Note more articles due to Indian Mutiny in progress</i>
12 January, p. 5 Singapore 30 January, p. 6 Mauritius	21 January, p. 4	20 January, p. 5 22 January, p. 5 25 January, p. 5
25 February, p. 6 India 25 February, p. 6 Singapore 26 February, p. 2 Calcutta 26 February, p. 2 Ceylon	6 February, p. 4 10 February, p. 5 10 February, p. 4	8 February, p. 6 9 February, Supp. p. 1
4 March, p. 6 Cape of Good Hope 4 March, p. 6 Mauritius 9 March, p. 5 Bombay 18 March, p. 5 Ceylon 21 March, p. 5 Singapore 30 March, p. 6 Mauritius 31 March, p. 6 Mauritius	3 March, p. 4 17 March, p. 5 19 March, p. 5	1 March, p. 5 21 March, p. 3 22 March, p. 6
1 April, p. 4 Calcutta 8 April, p. 5 Calcutta 8 April, p. 5 Singapore 8 April, p. 5 Mauritius	3 April, p. 7 7 April, p. 4 27 April, p. 5	
25 May, p. 6 Mauritius 25 May, p. 6 The Cape 26 May, p. 5 Mauritius 10 June, p. 6 Mauritius	15 May, p. 6 16 May, p. 6 23 May, p. 6 11 June, p. 7 12 June, p. 2 23 June, p. 6	2 May, p. 2 2 May, p. 5 12 May, p. 7 9 June, p. 7 14 June, p. 5

Figure 7. Reports from Asia/Indian Ocean in the *Argus*, 1857 and 1859: columns or articles with the names of ports or countries in the heading. Compiled from an online search of Trove, the National Library of Australia's database of Australian newspapers.

He knew how to import men and goods from China, and to source goods across the Indian Ocean. As well as fluency in English, Cantonese, French and Malay, he knew the European-Asian shipping system, the captains, the routes, the times and the annual winds. He had commercial contacts with Chinese, French and British merchants across Asia. He knew how to use the shipping intelligence and advertising columns of English-language newspapers to further his business.

Moreover, his involvement with Calcutta, after 1847, was at a time when British and Indian traders there were actively promoting joint stock companies, providing initial capital and supporting these ventures before opening shares to the public, retaining control by purchasing as many shares as possible and integrating their industries vertically as well as horizontally.[66] Asiya Siddiqi has demonstrated that Parsi merchants in India, such as Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy (1783-1859), were involved in inter-country trade, utilising the British trading system. Jeejeebhoy's income derived from a variety of sources, 'from profits of trade on his own account, the income from hiring freight on his ships, interest on loans to shippers, dividends on shares in marine insurance companies and commission on the sale of his bills of exchange:[67] These approaches are very similar to the business models followed by Kong Meng in Melbourne; possibly the two knew each other. [68]

## The Nature Of The Imports

Well placed to be involved in importing from many ports in Asia, how widespread were the sources of Kong Meng's goods? Although one account stated that he was an importer of Chinese produce,[69] another account says he had establishments in Mauritius, London and Hong Kong, [70] and that he owned a fleet of half a dozen vessels, plying regularly between Australia, India and China.[71]

Figure 8 itemises the principal categories of goods imported into Victoria in 1859 from Asia/Indian Ocean. Sugar, tea and rice predominate – over two-thirds of all imports from the region. Mauritius supplied the great majority of sugar, with the rest from India, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies. Virtually all tea was from China, and the vast majority of rice from India. Beyond these three commodities, China and India were supplying a wide range of other goods; less came from other regions.



	Hong Kong (£)	Macao (£)	Fou-tchow-foo [Fuzhou] (£)	Shanghai [Shanghai] (£)	Swatow [Shantou] (£)	Canton [Guangzhou] (£)	TOTAL CHINA (£)
<b>Principal Imports from Asia/Indian Ocean</b>							
Sugar	13,310	34			15,000	3,010	28,344
Tea	23,787	99,373	276,203	14,000			416,373
Grain - Rice	9,166	4,000	180				13,346
	<b>46,263</b>	<b>103,407</b>	<b>276,383</b>	<b>14,000</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>3,010</b>	<b>458,063</b>
<b>Stimulants and Medicines</b>							
Drugs	10,451						10,451
Opium	20,692	2,900					23,592
Pipes - Tobacco	487						487
Spirits - Cordials	100						100
Spirits - Undescribed	9,895						9,895
Tobacco	8,893						8,893
Tobacco - Cigars	200						200
Wine	19,084						19,084
	<b>69,802</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>72,702</b>
<b>Food</b>							
Arrowroot	565						565
Butter	108						108
Confectionery	725	500	2				1,227
Eggs	100						100
Fish	38						38
Fish - Preserved	3,580						3,580
Fish - Salted	454						454
Flour	1,303						1,303
Fruit - Bottled	20						20
Fruit - Dried	1,805						1,805
Fruit - Green	22						22
Grain - Beans & Peas	8,086						8,086
Honey	3						3
Nuts	1,446						1,446
Nuts - Almonds	76						76
Oils - Cocoa Nut	250						250
Oils - Olive	36						36
Oils - Undescribed	17,070	5,669					22,739
Onions	2						2
Preserves	3,010	50					3,060
Provisions-preserved	47,516						47,516
Provisions, Salted - Pork	40						40
Spices	3,632	90					3,722
Vinegar	80						80
	<b>89,967</b>	<b>6,309</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>96,278</b>
<b>Ordinary Consumer Goods</b>							
Apparel and Slips	12,298						12,298
Boots and Shoes	2,942						2,942
Brassware	12						12
Brushware	120						120
Candles	190						190
Chinaware	195						195
Copperware	34						34
Cottons	63						63
Cottonwick	8						8
Cutlery	212						212
Earthenware	360	3					363
Hats & Caps	316						316
Mats and Rugs	5,233						5,233
Woodenware	229						229
Woolens	220						220
	<b>22,432</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22,435</b>
<b>Production Goods</b>							
Alkali (Soda)	1						1
Bags & Sacks		5					5
Cordage	432						432
Hardware & Ironmongery	246						246
Iron - Pig	90						90
Oilmen's Stores	27,365						27,365
Paints, etc	42						42
Plants			20				20
Quicksilver	112						112
Seeds	1,943						1,943
Stationery	4,121	2					4,123
Tinware	43						43
Tools & Utensils	10						10
Upholstery	13						13
	<b>34,418</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34,445</b>
<b>Specialties</b>							
Arms: Fireworks	1,469	60					1,529
Books	305						305
Curiosities	336						336
Drapery	40						40
Fancy Goods	3,257	20					3,277
Furniture	165						165
Haberdashery	35		3				38
Instruments - Musical	20						20
Jewellery	100						100
Millinery	40						40
Miscellaneous Articles	222	1		1			224
Paintings & Engravings	20						20
Perfumery	1,703						1,703
Silks	7,256	20		30			7,306
Specie - Copper	12						12
Toys	121		15				136
	<b>15,101</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15,251</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>277,983</b>	<b>112,727</b>	<b>276,403</b>	<b>14,051</b>	<b>15,000</b>	<b>3,010</b>	<b>699,174</b>

Figure 9. All imports from China to Victoria in 1859. Compiled and classified by the author from 'Imports: general imports into the colony of Victoria', Blue Book for 1859, pp. 147-211.

The year 1859 saw the peak number of Chinese miners in Victoria. The merchants' delegation to O'Shanassy estimated that there were 45,000 in May 1859,[80] but restrictive immigration laws meant few came to Victoria via the port of Melbourne after 1855, and by 1859 new rushes in New South Wales, then New Zealand in 1862, led to a shift of Chinese miners north and east in the 1860s. Yet in 1866-67 there were still over 19,000 in Victoria.[81]

Based on the increase and then decline in the number of Hong Kong ships with him as agent, it would appear that Kong Meng's business grew to become the largest supplier of Chinese miners' goods to Victoria by the mid-1860s, then dropped off after that as he changed his supply arrangements to follow the miners to other colonies.[82]

The article on Kong Meng in the *Australian news for home readers* in 1866 reported that 'Ever since his settlement in Melbourne he has been carrying on an extensive business ... with his own countrymen and different Europeans'.[83] Calcutta as his first choice to source goods in 1854 suggests an interest in supplying European tastes as well as Chinese, and fireworks, fancy goods, perfumery and silks from Hong Kong itemised in the 1859 import statistics (see Figure 9). He was advertising, in 1856, in the *Argus*, offering 'Patna Rice, 60 tons of the best samples';[84] 'Opium - Three Chests Benares, also 300 Tins of Prepared';[85] and other goods ('On sale, just landed, ex Beatrice and Aurora, White China sugar; brown ditto; Chinese oil, in jars; Ditto, in tins; Ditto matting; Preserved ginger').[86] Being an English-language newspaper, it is unlikely this was for Chinese readers. The volumes offered suggest wholesale, not retail. Most likely he was moving goods promptly through his reasonably large premises at 94 Little Bourke-street East to commercial customers.[87]



'Chinese Quarter, Little Bourke Street, Melbourne'. Wood engraving in *The Australian news for home readers*, 21 October 1863. Digitised image courtesy of State Library of Victoria, Picture Collection - Accession No: IAN21/10/63/5, Image No: mp000693.

## Other Chinese Merchants

It is difficult to determine whether other Melbourne Chinese merchants were bringing in goods directly. The merchants' delegation to O'Shanassy said there were about 200 Chinese merchants and their staff in Melbourne,[88] but the *Sands & Kenny* and *Tanner's* directories for 1859 between them list only thirteen Chinese merchants in Little Bourke Street, the Chinese quarter.[89] Assuming ten staff per firm, and a few firms in other streets, a 200-total staff corps seems reasonable.

Some Melbourne Chinese merchants may have used Kong Meng as agent while maintaining direct relations with Hong Kong businesses. Others may have used European-Melbournian shipping agents. Mark Last King claimed at the O'Shanassy meeting that he 'had acted as agent for Chinese merchants for a long period',[90] although his name as agent is not in the shipping registers. R Towns & Co., of Robert Towns of Sydney, merchant and shipper, was also commonly agent for ships from Hong Kong into Melbourne;[91] research into Towns may shed more light on the Hong Kong import story.

One other Chinese merchant may have been a significant manager of the trade with China – Louis Ah Mouy. His name is not in the shipping registers, but, like Kong Meng, he spoke English, via a Singapore sojourn before arriving in Victoria in 1851. He established a tea merchant's business in Swanston Street, and sent large quantities of goods to Ballarat.[92] In September 1855, he and Kong Meng were jointly agents for passengers travelling to China via the *Tremelga*. [93] Like Kong Meng, Ah Mouy was frequently in the newspapers. His career could well merit further research.

## The International Gold Trade

Another approach to the scale of Kong Meng's trade is to consider the volume of gold he shipped out to pay for imported goods.

Mark Last King told O'Shanassy that 'shipments of gold to China were not to be regarded as profits, won from the diggings, leaving Victoria and the British imperial fold, 'but that the greater portion of the money so transmitted was in payment for goods'. [94] This was of no little concern to some British in Victoria, who felt the gold found here should stay in European hands, rather than going to China to encourage more Chinese migrants.[95]

## MONETARY AND COMMERCIAL.

Melbourne, Saturday.

Export entries were passed at the Customs to-day for 28,414 ounces 17 dwt of gold, of which quantity 5262 ounces 4 dwt were for shipment, per Bombay, for Point de Galle; and 23,152 ounces 13 dwt per Yorkshire, for London.

The shippers of gold, per Bombay, are as follow:—

	oz.	dwt.
Oriental Bank Corporation .....	19743	2
London Chartered Bank .....	9595	16
Union Bank .....	7363	6
M'ulloch, Sellar, and Co. ....	3383	4
Bank of Victoria .....	2468	19
L. Stevenson and Son .....	1217	3
Hysan and Co. ....	809	13
Bank of Australasia .....	542	16
→ Kong Meng and Co. ....	121	0
S. Benjamin .....	105	0
Small shipments .....	3	3
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>45,353</b>	<b>2</b>

The following are the shippers of specie per Bombay, for Point de Galle:—

	Sovs.
→ Kong Meng and Co. ....	7,188
Bank of N. S. Wales .....	5,000
Oriental Bank Corporation ....	5,000
London Chartered Bank .....	5,000
Peninsular and Oriental Co. ....	2,620
Jas. Henry .....	575
Bank of Australasia .....	23
<b>Total, .....</b>	<b>25,406</b>

Kong Meng's shipment of gold to Pointe de Galle, Ceylon, October 1862. *The Herald*, 27 October 1862, p. 4.

Kong Meng was a major gold exporter to Asia. On 27 October 1862, he shipped 7188 sovereigns and 121 ounces of gold to Pointe de Galle (Ceylon) via the *Bombay*. [96] One month later, on 27 November 1862, he sent 9980 sovereigns by the *Madras*, again for Pointe de Galle. [97] He also shipped 8000 sovereigns on the *Geelong*, to Pointe de Galle, on 22 May 1869, as well as 2050 sovereigns, on his own ship the *Joshua Bates*, to Hong Kong two weeks later on 4 June. [98]

It is unclear why he was sending gold to Ceylon if most of his imports were from Hong Kong – perhaps the gold was transhipped from Ceylon to Hong Kong, or perhaps was payment for Indian rice. He also brought two shipments of gold to Melbourne from Otago, New Zealand, one arriving 25 February 1862, on the *Oithona*, the other arriving 29 May 1862, on the *Joshua Bates*;<sup>[99]</sup> perhaps there is a relationship between the Otago gold and that going to Ceylon.

Gold rush historiography pays little attention to the economic uses of Australasian-won gold. The general view is that most went to England, balancing both the import of goods from there, and capital investment from the London stockmarket.<sup>[100]</sup>

Britain remained on the gold standard throughout the nineteenth century. As its national and imperial economy grew exponentially following industrialisation, the commensurate growth in currency transactions required an increase in both the minting of gold coinage and also the quantity of bullion stored in banks to support the money supply.<sup>[101]</sup> Apart from this, though, and a minor role in jewellery, goldleaf and plate, British and European cultural use for gold was nothing compared to the importance of gold for adornment, religious devotion and family wealth accrual in India.<sup>[102]</sup> Yet a feature of Britain's incorporation of India's economy into global trade was that India moved from being an exporter of processed goods (e.g. textiles), and importer of bullion, to being an exporter of raw materials and importer of British manufactures<sup>[103]</sup> – increasing the demand for gold from other sources.

A similar proposition could be made about capital extraction by Britain from China, once it began extorting massive indemnities from China's government each time it won a war there, from 1839 onwards.<sup>[104]</sup> Along with Australia and New Zealand, Chinese-won gold was also being shipped back from North America and Malaya; it could be argued that the dispersal of Chinese miners around the Pacific rim, and the supply trade that followed them, was, perhaps inadvertently, a way of bringing bullion back into the Chinese economy.

So, can Kong Meng's shipments of gold from Victoria and Otago be seen not just as payment for goods from China and India, but as a needed commodity in its own right, a prop for the depleted wealth management and currency systems of China and India? This merits further research.

## The Wider Social Context of Trade

As the Chinese population declined in Victoria over the 1860s, Kong Meng shifted to being a player in the broader economy, such as increasingly importing tea for the colony's European market.<sup>[105]</sup> Nor did he just avail himself of the commercial advantages of understanding the British trading system; he was actively involved in, and courted by, top levels of Victoria's British colonial society. He became an avid investor in many companies (see Figure 10), along the joint stock lines he first experienced in Calcutta. His name on prospectuses sits alongside prominent businessmen and politicians of the day, such as Thomas Bent and David Mitchell.<sup>[106]</sup> His role from 1866 as a founding shareholder and board member of the Commercial Bank of Australia has often been mentioned.<sup>[107]</sup> Less known is that his involvement, and Louis Ah Mouy's, was because the directors desired Chinese depositors – hence Chinese text on the bank's notes.<sup>[108]</sup>



£1 note, Commercial Bank of Australia, date unknown. Kong Meng was a founding director. Photograph held by Chinese Museum, Melbourne (Museum of Chinese Australian History).

### Figure 10 - Victorian companies of which Lowe Kong Meng was a founding director, 1864-1888\*

- 1864: Yarra Distillery Company
- 1864: South Crinoline Amalgamated Quartz-Mining Company
- 1866: Commercial Bank of Australia
- 1866: The English, Australian and New Zealand Marine Insurance Company
- 1874: Hazelwood Coal-Mining Company
- 1886: North Midas Gold-Mining Company
- 1887: Madame Kong Meng Gold-Mining Company
- 1888: Outward Bound Consolidated Silver-Mining Company

\*Note: Other companies may come to light with further research

Sources: Prospectuses and articles in various newspapers (details note 145)

Figure 10. Victorian companies of which Lowe Kong Meng was a founding director, 1864-88. Compiled by the author from prospectuses and articles in various newspapers (see note 106).

A member of the Royal Society of Victoria – the premier organisation for scientific research, exploration and inquiry[109] – Kong Meng was also invited by Redmond Barry to curate Chinese works for the Art Exhibition of 1869.[110]

Far from presuming a Chinese-quarter domicile, Kong Meng lived in European suburbs – South Melbourne,[111] East Melbourne,[112] then Malvern[113] – in grand homes. He also chose an English-Australian bride, Annie Prussia. It is clear from their houses, dress and grooming that Kong Meng, Annie and their children lived as affluent upper bourgeoisie. Nor did their mixed-race union preclude attending British Victorian social events, such as 1867's fancy dress ball honouring the Duke of Edinburgh's royal tour – Kong Meng in mandarin's robes, Annie as a Grecian lady.[114]



Arthur Kong Meng, c. 1863. Thomas Bradley Harris photo album, on website The Eastern window, p. 27 (accessed 12 March 2012).

Agnes Kong Meng, c. 1863. Thomas Bradley Harris photo album, on website The Eastern window, p. 27 (accessed 12 March 2012).



Annie Kong Meng (née Prussia), 1863, aged 24. Thomas Bradley Harris photo album, on website The Eastern window, p. 28 (accessed 12 March 2012).

Kong Meng's association with Europeans was not confined to Melbourne. An album of 1860s' photos originating from Yankee entrepreneur Thomas Bradley Harris locates Kong Meng, his brothers, cousins and Annie in a network of merchants, ships' captains, professionals and colonial officials from American, British, European and Chinese backgrounds, connecting Shanghai, Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, Melbourne and New York.[115]

Kong Meng always proclaimed he was British by right of birth in a British colony,[116] and he was not the only Chinese of his day with this view. Victor Purcell tells of Straits-born Chinese in Malaya who saw themselves as 'white men, meaning that they were British subjects and proud of it, although adhering punctiliously to the outward signs of a Chinaman'.[117] Kong Meng mirrored this, living 'in the style of an English gentleman',[118] yet firmly adhering 'to the costume of his countrymen'. [119] This contrasts with the more famous Sydney Chinese merchant of the next generation, Quong Tart, whose European clothing, Scottish-accented English, cricket playing and public-speaking facility more greatly endeared him to British Australians.[120]

Kong Meng's success in Victoria was in spite of his Chinese cultural traits and the strong anti-Chinese discrimination and immigration restrictions that existed during his early career in the colony. Geoffrey Oddie argued in 1961 that the Chinese merchant elite were acceptable to Victorian colonial society; only the Chinese labouring classes were the focus of racial concerns.[121]

More recently, Amanda Rasmussen has countered that social intermingling at local levels between Europeans and Chinese, including miners and labourers, led to local acceptance of Chinese as members of European-Australian communities.[122] Yet the Commercial Bank's desire for Chinese depositors suggests that, at least in some business quarters, cultural diversity as a principle was acceptable in Victoria. Letters to newspapers supporting Chinese immigration,[123] and the repeal of Victoria's anti-Chinese taxes from 1862[124] also suggest that opinions regarding Victoria's appropriate ethnic mix were more diverse than current historiography usually depicts. Again, another promising field for enquiry.

Cathie May, Henry Reynolds, Regina Ganter, Julia Martinez and Gary Lee have demonstrated that the ethnic composition, and interaction, of colonial tropical Australia was radically different from the predominantly British settlement of southern Australia.[125] Reynolds, Ganter, Martinez and Lee also argue that there were strong links between the peoples of tropical Australian outposts and countries to the north, greater than the links with southern Australia.

Lowe Kong Meng's career demonstrated that he believed an ethnically complex society, tied intimately to Asia, was valid for southern Australia too. His wealth was initially predicated on supplying a large Chinese mining population, using western and Chinese trading methods, efficiently sourcing goods from across Asia. In today's terms, he was sending Australian mineral wealth to Asia in exchange for Asian products. As gold mining's focus shifted elsewhere – to New South Wales, New Zealand and Queensland – his Chinese supply trade followed. Yet he also diversified into supplying Europeans in Victoria with tea and other Chinese goods, and worked closely with European entrepreneurs to develop Victoria's broader economy. His trading endeavours, his attempts to economically integrate Victoria with Asia, and his vision for Australian society are now becoming increasingly prescient of a convergence of the economies and cultures of Europe and Asia in the twenty-first century.

## Endnotes

[1] 'Chinese residence tax', *The Argus*, 31 May 1859, p. 7. For overviews of the Chinese miners residence tax strike, see V Lovejoy, 'Red ribbon revisited: the Chinese rebellion of 1859', paper presented at Chinese Studies Association of Australia conference, Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo, 30 June to 3 July 2005; A Kyi, "'The most determined, sustained diggers' resistance campaign": Chinese protests against the Victorian Government's anti-Chinese legislation, 1855-1862', *Provenance, Issue 8, 2009*, pp. 35-62.

[2] 'Chinese residence tax'.

[3] *ibid.*

[4] Measuring worth (comparing 1859 to 2010 in UK pounds) (accessed 29 April 2012).

[5] 'Our oriental traders', *The Argus*, 14 April 1863, p. 5.

[6] G Oddie, 'The lower class Chinese and the merchant elite in Victoria, 1870-1890', *Historical studies*, vol. 10, no. 37, November 1961, pp. 65-70. See also Oddie's MA thesis, 'The Chinese in Victoria 1870-1890', University of Melbourne, 1959; Ching Fatt Yong, 'Lowe Kong Meng (1831-1888)', in D Pike (ed.), *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol. 5, 1851-1890 K-Q, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp. 106-07 (available online); K Cronin, *Colonial casualties: Chinese in early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, 1982, p. 28; T McCormack, 'Lowe Kong Meng 1831-1888: champion of racial tolerance', in S Baldwin (ed.), *Unsung heroes and heroines of Australia*, Greenhouse Publications, Elwood, Victoria, 1988, pp. 57-8; P Macgregor, "'Before we came to this country, we heard that English laws were good and kind to everybody": Chinese immigrants' views of colonial Australia', in A Broinowski (ed.), *Double vision: Asian accounts of Australia*, Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 2004, pp. 41, 47-54; J Fitzgerald, *Big white lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2007, pp. 66, 68, 111-12, 114-15; A Bowen, 'The merchants: Chinese social organisation in colonial Australia', *Australian historical studies*, vol. 42, issue 1, March 2011. Most of this material is based on brief biographical accounts published in his day (see note 7 below), without critical evaluation and with no additional primary research.

[7] 'Our oriental traders'; 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng', *The weekly herald*, 14 August 1863 (I am indebted to Pauline Rule for bringing this article to my attention); 'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng', *The Australian news for home readers*, 20 September 1866, p. 4; JD Crawford, 'Notes by Mr. Crawford on Chinese immigration in the Australian colonies', September 1877, *Great Britain Foreign Office Confidential Prints*, F.O. 3742 (available as Foreign Office Confidential Print 3742, National Library of Australia; also downloadable from the Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation website, Digitised history documents database, item 1576); 'The late Mr. Kong Meng', *The Argus*, 24 October 1888; HM Humphreys (comp.), *Men of the time in Australia: Victorian series*, Melbourne, 1878, 1882, p. 263 of 1878 edition [the same text is repeated in 'Lowe Kong Meng', in TWH Leavitt (ed.), *Australian representative men*, Wells and Leavitt, Melbourne, 1887; and a facsimile of these pages was reprinted in 'Lowe Kong Meng', in TWH Leavitt (ed.), *The Jubilee history of Victoria and Melbourne*, Duffus Bros, Melbourne, vol. 1, 1888, p. 98].

[8] D Day, *Smugglers and sailors: the customs history of Australia 1788-1901*, AGPS Press, Canberra, 1992 is a broad brush. J Bach, *A maritime history of Australia*, Thomas Nelson, Sydney, 1976, and more generally G Blainey, *The tyranny of distance*, Sun Books, Melbourne, 1966 reflect on trading patterns by sea to and from Australia, and between the separate colonies, but the details of a period and place as specific as mid-nineteenth-century Victoria are too small a focus for their works. M Cannon and I Macfarlane, *Historical records of Victoria*, vol. 4, *Communications customs and trade 1835-39*, Victorian Government Printer, Melbourne, 1985 – see in particular ‘Part I, Shipping and customs’, pp. 3-252 – has many tantalising details, but pre-dates the gold rush era, and focuses on how the customs and port facilities were developing in the incipient harbour town at Port Phillip. O Ruhen, *Port of Melbourne 1835-1976*, Cassell Australia, Sydney, 1976 and J Buckrich, *The long and perilous journey: a history of the Port of Melbourne*, Melbourne Books, 2002 both focus more on the infrastructure and institutional development and less on the traders, and are also too broad in time-scale to provide much detail useful to understanding Kong Meng’s early decades in Melbourne. The best work to date is J Broadbent, S Rickard and M Steven, *India, China, Australia: trade and society 1788-1850*, Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, Sydney, 2003, which squarely situates Australia in an Asian trade context, and focuses on the trading system and the products imported. However its account finishes before the gold rush, deals with New South Wales rather than Victoria, and is almost exclusively about British-Australian individuals and companies.

[9] The Victorian ‘Blue Books’ of 1851 onwards (*Statistics of the colony of Victoria, compiled from official records in the Registrar-General’s Office*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1851-73) include statistics for imports to the colony for each year, itemising the description, quantity and value of goods coming into the colony. The level of detail varies from year to year. From 1851 to 1858, imports are listed by broad groups of ports: ‘Great Britain’, ‘British colonies in the West Indies’, ‘British colonies in North America’, ‘British colonies elsewhere’, ‘United State of America’, ‘Foreign states’. This categorisation is too broad to be of much use in working out which ports, countries or geographical regions the imports were coming from. For instance, ‘British colonies elsewhere’ included all the Australian colonies, New Zealand, India, Hong Kong, Cape of Good Hope, etc. From 1859 onwards, though, the import data becomes much more useful, as all the individual countries or ports that goods came from were specifically itemised, and thus products can be grouped by their origin in a more detailed geographic arrangement. A set of these volumes (hereafter cited as ‘Blue Books’) is held at PROV: VA 856 Colonial Secretary’s Office, VPRS 943/P0 Blue Books and Statistics 1851-1854; PROV, VA 2889 Registrar-General’s Department, VPRS 943/P0 Blue Books and Statistics 1854-1873).

[10] There are a variety of shipping registers in PROV’s holdings. For the cargo trade in the 1850s-1860s, the most useful are VPRS 22, VPRS 38, VPRS 3504 and VPRS 8005. Produced for the Victorian Department of Trade and Customs as blank, bound, ruled volumes, some with printed headings for columns of data, each provides hand-written lists of ships as they arrived in, and departed from, Melbourne (and other coastal ports in Victoria). Some focus on passenger ships, others on all ships. The detail of data varies from register to register, and year to year, but the most useful registers include such data as: name of ship, date of arrival, size of ship (tonnage), the ship’s owner and master, country of the ship’s registry, the number of crew, a one or two word summary of the cargo, the port of origin for the voyage, the number of passengers (sometimes detailing whether they are Chinese or not) and the name of the customs agent. See PROV, VA 606 Department of Trade and Customs, VPRS 22/P0 Customs, Shipping and Immigration Records 1839-1898, Units 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24; VPRS 22/P1 Customs, Shipping and Immigration Records 1864-1893, Units 1 to 5; VPRS 38/P0 Inwards Shipping Reports 1843-1885, Units 1 to 5; VPRS 3504/P0 Inwards Shipping Index (microfilm copy of VPRS 13); VA 1426 Port of Melbourne Authority, VPRS 8005/P1 Register of Shipping 1856-1983, Units 1 to 3.

[11] PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Units 3, 4, 5, Inwards shipping reports 1854-1867; VPRS 22/P1, Unit 1, Shipping index 1864-1867. In Melbourne the term ‘customs agent’ refers to a person who was licensed by the Department of Trade and Customs to do business at Customs House on behalf of merchants or private individuals (Day, *Smugglers and sailors*, p. xxxiii).

[12] ‘Shipping inwards: number, tonnage, and crews of vessels entered inwards into the colony from each country during the year ended 31st December, 1859’, Blue Book, 1859, p. 264 (PROV, VPRS 943/P0, Unit 11); PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Unit 4, Inwards shipping report, 1 December 1858 to 30 May 1863.

[13] *ibid.*

[14] ‘Shipping inwards: number, tonnage, and crews of vessels...’, Blue Book, 1859, p. 264.

[15] Yong, ‘Lowe Kong Meng’; Cronin, *Colonial casualties*, p. 28.

[16] Birth year 1830: ‘Mr. Lowe Kong Meng’; birth year 1831: ‘The late Mr. Kong Meng’ (see note 7 above for these references).

[17] ‘The Chinese population; Kong Meng’ (see note 7).

[18] ‘Mr. Lowe Kong Meng’.

[19] Humphreys, p. 263.

[20] ‘District Court Thursday, June 2’, *The Argus*, 3 June 1859.

[21] V Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 39.

[22] *ibid.*, p. 43.

[23] *ibid.*, pp. 44-7.

[24] *ibid.*, pp. 58-60.

[25] *ibid.*, p. 60.

[26] R Matthews, *The flaws in the jewel: challenging the myths of British India*, HarperCollins, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 130-57.

[27] *ibid.*, pp. 83-104; L Subramanian, *History of India, 1707-1857*, Orient BlackSwan [sic], Hyderabad, India, 2010, pp. 161-8.

[28] G Wade, 'New ways of knowing: *The Prince of Wales island gazette* – Penang's first newspaper', paper presented at The Penang Story International Conference 2002, and published on The Penang Story website, pp. 27-8 (accessed 3 September 2012).

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *ibid.*, p. 30.

[31] Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, pp. 49, 144.

[32] *ibid.* Sir Edmund Stanley is described as the first Recorder (effectively meaning a judge).

[33] Wade, 'New ways of knowing', pp. 11, 23.

[34] *ibid.*, pp. 12, 24, 15, 17.

[35] DR Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, p. 47; WH Hall and WD Bernard, *Narrative of the voyages and services of the Nemesis from 1840 to 1843*, 2nd edn, Henry Colburn, London, 1845, p. 3.

[36] A Farrington, *Trading places: The East India Company and Asia, 1600-1634*, The British Library, London, 2002. p. 105.

[37] In 'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng' it is reported that he was educated at 'an English School'. 'The late Mr. Kong Meng' states that it was the 'High School', but current histories of the Penang Free School imply that these were alternative or early titles for that school. See the websites of the Historical Society, Penang Free School (accessed 2 April 2012) and the Penang Free School, in particular the pdf file 'A brief school history' (accessed 3 April 2012). However, another source indicates that he was educated at a 'private school, established under the supervision of his family' ('The Chinese population; Kong Meng'). See note 7 for articles cited.

[38] *ibid.*

[39] 'The late Mr. Kong Meng'; Humphreys, p. 263.

[40] 'The late Mr. Kong Meng'.

[41] Humphreys, p. 263.

[42] 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

[43] In sources on Lowe Kong Meng, the name Goone is spelt usually with an 'e' on the end but sometimes without; see Humphreys, p. 263.

[44] *ibid.*

[45] 'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng'.

[46] Humphreys, p. 263. Kong Meng is also recorded as having arrived in Melbourne as supercargo of his own ship in 1853 ('The late Mr. Kong Meng'). A supercargo – responsible for managing the cargo of goods in terms of selling or buying – was a common feature of pre-telegraph ship-borne trade. It is uncertain whether other Chinese traders acted as supercargo, but it was not unusual for Chinese merchants in Malaya to have their own ships. Captain Francis Light, founder of Penang, wrote in 1794 that the Chinese of Penang 'employ small vessels and prows and send adventures [sic] to the surrounding countries' (Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 40). Russell Wallace, the famous naturalist, described the typical Straits Chinese merchant he saw, between 1854 and 1862, as one who 'owns several retail shops and trading schooners' (*ibid.*, p. 95).

[47] 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

[48] N Dauhoo, 'The history of sugar with reference to 19th century Mauritius', Articles base website (accessed 13 March 2012).

[49] 'History', on the official website of the Republic of Mauritius (accessed 13 March 2012).

[50] Lynn Pan refers to a 'Chinese settler, a trader called Log Ahime, [who] was commissioned by the first British Governor of Mauritius to go and arrange for the movement of Chinese migrants to the island'. It is tempting to think that 'Log Ahime' is a French romanisation of 'Lowe a Quee', or at least 'Log' the same as 'Lowe' and hence there to be a family connection. L Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: a history of the Chinese diaspora*, Martin Secker and Warburg, London, 1990, pp. 28-9 of 1991 paperback edition.

[51] SW Mintz, *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*, Viking-Penguin, New York, 1985.

[52] Interestingly, when Hop Wah and Co., the first Australian Chinese sugar plantation and mill was established near Cairns c. 1879, all their sugar was consigned to Lowe Kong Meng in Melbourne. See 'In Northern Queensland: the sugar industry, no. 1', *The Argus*, 8 March 1884, p. 4; I was alerted to this article by J Volkmar, 'A company of his countrymen: refining the Hop Wah story, work in progress', paper presented at 'Rediscovered past: Chinese tropical Australia', the fourth conference organised by Chinese Heritage in Northern Australia Inc., Cairns, 11-12 February 2012.

[53] Matthews, *The flaws in the jewel*, p. 80.

[54] At Pondichéry, Chandernagore, Yanaon, Karikal and Mahé. See RH Fifiield, 'The future of French India', *Far Eastern survey*, vol. 19, no. 6, 22 March 1950, pp. 62-4.

[55] 'District Court Thursday, June 2', *The Argus*, 3 June 1859.

[56] Guangzhou (Canton), Xiamen (Amoy), Fuzhou (Fou-tchow-foo), Ningbo and Shanghai.

[57] L Blussé, 'Junks to Java: Chinese shipping in the Nanyang in the second half of the eighteenth century', in E Tagliacozzo and Wen-Chin Chang (eds), *Chinese circulations: capital, commodities, and networks in Southeast Asia*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2011, p. 255.

[58] Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 40.

[59] 'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng'.

[60] Humphreys, p. 263.

[61] 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

[62] *ibid.*

[63] *ibid.*

[64] Humphreys, p. 263.

[65] 'The late Mr. Kong Meng'.

[66] Subramanian, *History of India*, p. 154.

[67] *ibid.*, p. 156; A Siddiqi, 'The business world of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy', *The Indian economic and social history review*, vol. 19, nos. 3-4, 1982, pp. 301-24.

[68] See also two other Victorian Chinese company models: A Kyi, 'Unravelling the mystery of the Woah Hawp Canton Quartz Mining Company, Ballarat', *Active voices, hidden histories: the Chinese in colonial Australia*, special issue of *Journal of Australian colonial history*, vol. 6, 2004, pp. 59-78; and the Hop Wah and Co. sugar plantation and mill (see Volkmar, 'A company of his countrymen').

[69] 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

[70] 'Our oriental traders'.

[71] The scale and growth of Kong Meng's fleet is hard to determine from the historical record. Accounts from his own day give varying stories. The earliest contemporary account mentioning his fleet is 1866, saying he owned 'several vessels' belonging to the port of Melbourne, some of which were engaged in procuring beche-le-mer [sic] from the Torres Straits, whilst the others were constantly trading between Melbourne and Hong Kong ('Mr. Lowe Kong Meng'). It was not until his death twenty-two years later that accounts refer to half a dozen being the number, that he was 'the only Chinese shipmaster in the colonies' [Australasia], and that, when he arrived first in Melbourne in 1853, it was as supercargo of his own ship ('The late Mr. Kong Meng'). Humphrey's account in 1878 stated that 'at the commencement of his mercantile career in Australia, he was the owner of several vessels sailing between Australia and China, and that, in 1864, he first tried to establish communication, by trading vessels, between Melbourne and the settlement at the Gulf of Carpentaria'. However, the first ship in the registers recorded with him as owner is not until 23 August 1865, the *Joshua Bates*; the *Spray* was the next one that was registered with him as owner, on 30 August 1866; then the *Caroline* on 8 April 1867 (William McHugh part owner) (PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Unit 5, Inwards shipping report, 1 June 1863 to 17 December 1867).

Paintings of the *Joshua Bates* and the *Kingfisher* remain as family heirlooms (pers. comm. of descendants of Lowe Kong Meng), and the *Kingfisher* appears several times in the shipping registers, but it was not owned by him before 1868 at least (PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Units 4 and 5; PROV, VPRS 22/P1, Unit 1). However, shipping records for the 1850s-1880s are not complete, nor have all the extant records been viewed by the author, so a definitive account of his ship ownership awaits further research.

[72] PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Units 3, 4, 5; PROV, VPRS 22/P1, Unit 1.

[73] 'Our oriental traders'.

[74] The *Warrior* arrived in Melbourne on 15 November 1864: PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Unit 5. For its cargo, see *The Press* (Canterbury, New Zealand), 9 November 1864, p. 3.

[75] Fitzgerald, *Big white lie*, pp. 66, 68; Wang Sing-wu, *The organisation of Chinese emigration 1848-1888, with special reference to Chinese emigration to Australia*, Chinese Materials Center, Inc., San Francisco, 1978, pp. 114-18; Crawford, 'Notes by Mr. Crawford on Chinese immigration in the Australian colonies', p. 30.

[76] A McKeown, 'The social life of Chinese labor', in Tagliacozzo and Chang, *Chinese circulations*, pp. 62-83. See also A McKeown, *Melancholy order: Asian migration and the globalization of borders*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2008; A McKeown, 'Global migration, 1846-1940', *World history*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2004, pp. 155-89; A McKeown, 'Chinese emigration in global context, 1850-1940', *Journal of global history*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2010, pp. 95-124.

[77] Crawford, 'Notes by Mr. Crawford on Chinese immigration in the Australian colonies', p. 19.

[78] For passenger numbers on ships, see PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Units 3, 4, 5 and VPRS 22/P1, Unit 1. For removal of anti-Chinese taxation, see Wang, *The organisation of Chinese emigration*, p. 275.

[79] See 'Chinese immigrant ships arriving at Guichen Bay from Hong Kong between January 1857 and August 1863', in *ibid.*, pp. 379-80.

[80] 'Chinese residence tax'.

[81] Rev. W Young, 'Report on the condition of the Chinese population in Victoria, presented to both Houses of Parliament', Victoria, 1868; reprinted in IF McLaren, *The Chinese in Victoria: official reports & documents*, Red Rooster Press, Melbourne, 1985, pp. 49-58. Figures in the report are for 1866-67. There is a discrepancy between the population table at the end of the report, which adds to 18,007, and a summation of the Chinese populations in the individual town reports throughout the text (which add up to 19,584), but it appears that the table has some figures from the text left out of it.

[82] Kong Meng and other Chinese merchants in Victoria were invited by influential Otago citizens in 1865 to send Chinese miners to revive the flagging Otago gold rush, and a large movement of them from Victoria to New Zealand occurred in 1866-67: see *The evening post* (Wellington), 27 December 1865, p. 2. *The Bruce herald* (Milton, Otago) reported on 10 April 1867: 'We understand that Kong Meng will shortly make his appearance, and commence business on a large scale.'

[83] 'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng'.

[84] [Advertisements for] Produce, Provisions &c, *The Argus*, 19 September 1856, p. 8.

[85] [Advertisements for] Produce, Provisions &c, *The Argus*, 22 September 1856, p. 6.

[86] [Advertisements for] Merchandise, *The Argus*, 14 July 1858, p. 7.

[87] Although *Sands & Kenny's commercial and general Melbourne directory* lists 'Kong Meng & Co, Importers' at 100 Little Bourke-street East in 1860 (p. 33) and 1861 (p. 32), *Sands & MacDougall's directory for 1869* lists 'Kong Meng and Co., merchants' at 94 Little Bourke-street East (p. 9), and it seems from the positions of the intervening laneways that 94 is the more correct number. The street numbers changed in 1889, and the site is now 177-81 Little Bourke Street.

[88] 'Chinese residence tax'.

[89] (a) *Sands & Kenny's commercial and general Melbourne directory for 1859*, pp. 23-4:

*Little Bourke St, West:*

49 Chinese boarding house  
53 Houg Fat and Co., provision merchants  
89 Song Sang, provision merchant

*Little Bourke St, East:*

46 Shing Lewn Fat, provision merchant  
48 Gee Loy, general dealer  
[before 78] : Tuing Ting, general dealer

82 Sun Kwong Loong, general dealer  
84 Clin Geon Chong, general dealer

(b) *Tanner's Melbourne directory for 1859*, p. 102:

*Little Bourke St, West:*

49 Shing, Hop, dealer  
? Houg, Fat & Co., provision store  
89 Chinese store

*Little Bourke St, East:*

46 Shing Lewn, fat Chinese merchant [sic]  
48 Geeloy, Chinese store  
50 & 52 Chinese shops  
82 Sun Kwong Loon, Chinese dealer  
84 & 86 Chinese stores  
102 & 104 Chinese stores

[90] 'Chinese residence tax'.

[91] PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Unit 3, Inwards Shipping Report, 1 July 1854 to 30 November 1863; Units 4 and 5; PROV, VPRS 22/P1, Unit 1.

[92] 'In days of old; Victoria's first Chinaman; story of the gold fever', *The Sun*, 12 May 1918, p. 5.

[93] Shipping advertisements, *The Argus*, 13 September 1855, p. 1.

[94] 'Chinese residence tax'.

[95] 'The Chinese passenger trade', *The Star* (Ballarat), 30 March 1858.

[96] 'Monetary and commercial', *The Herald*, 27 October 1862, p. 4.

[97] 'Monetary and commercial', *The Herald*, 27 November 1862, p. 4.

[98] For the 8,000 sovereigns on the *Geelong*, see 'Melbourne', *New Zealand herald*, 14 June 1869, p. 4; for the *Joshua Bates*, and also the date and destination of the *Geelong*, see 'Shipping for the month', *Illustrated Australian news for home readers*, 19 June 1869, p. 130.

[99] PROV, VPRS 38/P0, Unit 4.

[100] Bach, *A maritime history of Australia*, p. 136; R Cotter, 'The golden decade', in J Griffin (ed.), *Essays in economic history of Australia*, The Jacaranda Press, Milton, Queensland, 1967, p. 125; G Serle, *The golden age: a history of the colony of Victoria 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, 1968 edition, p. 42.

[101] The general view is challenged in a more recent discussion of the economic context of the gold rushes: see K Reeves, L Frost and C Fahey, 'Integrating the historiography of the nineteenth-century gold rushes', *Australian economic history review*, vol. 50, no. 2, July 2010.

[102] G Rathnam, 'Gold: India's capital asset through history', *Mises daily*, 27 October 2009, website of the Ludwig von Mises Institute (accessed 5 February 2012); P Mehta, 'India's love of gold - 1: the history of the passion', *Gold-eagle editorials*, 24 May 2002 (accessed 5 February 2012).

[103] Subramanian, *History of India*, p. 147.

[104] J Chesneau, M Bastid and M-C Bergère, *China from the Opium Wars to the 1911 Revolution*, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 1977, p. 18.

[105] 'They also offered, on account of Messrs Kong Meng and Co., 1,050 packages fancy teas, ex *Sea Shell*, from Hong Kong, but the whole was passed in': 'Commercial intelligence', *The Argus*, 4 November 1870, p. 4.

[106] '[Yarra] Distillery Company', *Gippsland times*, 27 September 1864, p. 3; 'Prospectus of the South Crinoline Amalgamated Quartz-Mining Company', *The Argus*, 19 December 1864, p. 7; 'Commercial Bank of Australia: Prospectus', *Empire* (Sydney), 30 March 1866, p. 8; 'The English, Australian, and New Zealand Marine Insurance Company: Prospectus', *Sydney morning herald*, 23 June 1866, p. 2; 'Prospectus of the Hazelwood Coal-Mining Company', *The Argus*, 12 December 1874, p. 8 (Thomas Bent and David Mitchell were also directors); 'Prospectus of the North Midas Gold-Mining Company', *The Argus*, 10 July 1886, p. 14; 'Sixth schedule ... Application to register the Madame Kong Meng Gold-Mining Company', *The Argus*, 11 February 1887, p. 8; 'Prospectus of the Outward Bound Consolidated Silver-Mining Company', *The Argus*, 11 February 1888, p. 14.

[107] Yong, 'Lowe Kong Meng'; Oddie, 'The lower class Chinese and the merchant elite in Victoria', p. 67; McCormack, 'Lowe Kong Meng', p. 57; Cronin, *Colonial casualties*, p. 28.

[108] 'In days of old; Victoria's first Chinaman; story of the gold fever'; MP Vort-Ronald, *Banks of issue in Australia*, self-published by author, 1982, p. 135.

[109] Lowe Kong Meng is listed as a member of the Royal Society of Victoria in 1864 and 1866; see Science and the making of Victoria: histories and views of the Royal Society of Victoria from its inception to the present day, and its role supporting science and technology in Victoria, compiled by the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre and the Royal Society of Victoria, Melbourne 2001, Alphabetical list of members 1854-1872, p. 164 (accessed 15 February 2012).

[110] Letter from Lowe Kong Meng to Redmond Barry, 18 March 1869, in PROV, VPRS 927/P0 Correspondence relating to various exhibitions [Trustees of the Public Library, Museum and Exhibition Buildings], Unit 5, Inter-colonial and Fine Arts Exhibition, 1869. Although he declined this invitation, on the basis that there was 'nothing in the colony ... that would reflect credit on ... the Great Nation of China', he was later a Commissioner for the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880-81, and also the Centennial International Exhibition of 1888, and organised Chinese cultural and commercial displays for these exhibitions. See 'The late Mr. Kong Meng'.

[111] Park House, 352 Moray Street, corner of Moray Street and Albert Road/Bridport Street, South Melbourne, occupied by Kong Meng 1861-65? See 'Old house attracted romantic legends', *The Age*, 21 July 1972, p. 12; see also Victorian Heritage Register (VHR no. H0224) (accessed 3 April 2012). On his departure from South Melbourne, the residents prepared an illuminated testimonial of their appreciation. The text of this testimonial is reproduced in 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

[112] Valetta House, 202-06 Clarendon St, East Melbourne. The Victorian Heritage Register (VHR no. H0028) (accessed 3 April 2012) states that Kong Meng lived there until 1875, and that 'At this time the building was described as a brick house with fifteen rooms, laundry, stable and coach house, valued at £230.'

[113] Kooyong, corner of Elizabeth Street and Toorak Road, Malvern. Descendants of Lowe Kong Meng have told the author that it is incorrectly called Longwood in many sources (e.g. 'Kong Meng was a Mandarin', *Progress press*, 7 July 1971, p. 19).

[114] 'The Duke of Edinburgh in Victoria: the Corporation fancy dress ball', *The Argus*, 24 December 1867, p. 5.

[115] Pages 23, 27 and 28 of the Thomas Bradley Harris photo album contain photographs of Kong Meng and family (accessed 12 March 2012). I am indebted to Pauline Rule for drawing my attention to this album.

[116] 'The late Mr. Kong Meng'.

[117] Purcell, *The Chinese in Malaya*, p. 61.

[118] 'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng'.

[119] 'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

[120] M Tart, *The life of Quong Tart: or, how a foreigner succeeded in a British community*, Maclardy, Sydney, 1911; R Travers, *Australian Mandarin: the life and times of Quong Tart*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1981. Sophie Couchman argues that Quong Tart skilfully used the modern medium of photography to ensure that people recognised and remembered him in this style: S Couchman, 'Chinese-Australian visibility and photography: Quong Tart', chapter 7 of 'In and out of focus: Chinese and photography in Australia, 1870s-1940s', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 2009, pp. 235-69.

[121] Oddie, 'The lower class Chinese and the merchant elite in Victoria', p. 69.

[122] A Rasmussen, 'The Chinese in nation and community, Bendigo, 1870s-1920s', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 2009.

[123] For example, see *The Argus*, 1 January 1859, p. 4; 'The Chinese in Australia', *The Argus*, 1 January 1859, p. 6; 'The Chinese', *The Argus*, 12 January 1859, p. 1S.

[124] Wang, *The organisation of Chinese emigration 1848-1888*, p. 275.

[125] C May, *Topsawyers: the Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920*, Studies in North Queensland History No. 6, Department of History and Politics, James Cook University, Cairns, 1984; H Reynolds, *North of Capricorn: the untold story of Australia's north*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2003; R Ganter, J Martinez and G Lee, *Mixed relations: Asian-Aboriginal contact in north Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2006.