Lowe 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 Lowe 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 Lowe 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.
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%).
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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Value of imports (£)</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Asia (China)</td>
<td>699,174</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia (India &amp; Ceylon)</td>
<td>545,192</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Ocean (Mauritius)</td>
<td>523,986</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia (Philippines, Burma, East Indies)</td>
<td>234,967</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East (Suez, Aden)</td>
<td>105,616</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa (Cape of Good Hope)</td>
<td>18,383</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islands (Fiji)</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,128,357</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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.
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 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.
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.
Sugar-Undescribed: imports to Victoria, 1859. Sample page from ‘Imports: general imports into the colony of Victoria, during the year ended 31st December, 1859’, Blue Book for 1859, p. 198.

As most Chinese miners in Victoria were from Guangdong province, near Hong Kong, it would make sense that the bulk of their supplies would come via this British colonial port, though it is clear from the shipping registers that other European-named agents were also bringing Chinese miners’ supplies from Hong Kong.[72]

A major anomaly is that most of the rice was coming from Calcutta. Although no ship from Calcutta had Kong Meng as agent, the volume of rice, compared with the number of Chinese in Victoria, indicates it was primarily for Chinese consumption. Given Kong Meng’s Calcutta connections, it is possible he could source rice cheaper there than from China, and had another agent handle the importing. This is also likely to have been the case with other goods he was importing from places besides Hong Kong.

While one 1863 source states that Kong Meng’s chief imports were tea and opium, and ‘anything that will pay’,[73] it is likely his role in tea was small at the time. British traders were the ones supplying most of the British tea-drinkers in Melbourne (the majority of the settlers in the colony), although Kong Meng imported 1200 packages of tea on the Warrior in 1864.[74]

John Fitzgerald follows Wang Sing-wu’s reading of J Dundas Crawford in stating that Australia’s Chinese merchants funded Chinese coming to Australia using the credit-ticket loan arrangement.[75] One can view this as the labourers being a commodity ‘bought’ by merchants to work on mining projects, although Adam McKeown has highlighted the difficulties of applying this approach to Chinese ‘free migration’. Closer reading of Crawford suggests more complex economic arrangements:

In mining matters the merchant finds it more lucrative, rather than be himself the labour-master, to act as banker for mining-captains, as registrar of mining guilds, and charterer of immigrant ships, or camp purveyor through his agencies, leaving the arrangement of work to head-men of co-operative gangs and experienced mining captains, entrusted with bonded labourers and slaves, to work their claims.[77]

Many of the ships Kong Meng brought from Hong Kong to Melbourne had Chinese passengers, but in small numbers: between 1857 and 1867, only 1856 Chinese are recorded on his ships, and most were from 1862 onwards, when Victoria’s anti-Chinese taxation began to be relaxed.[78] Only one of the ships for which he was agent, the City of Carlisle, is recorded as offloading Chinese passengers at Robe in South Australia in 1857, to avoid the poll tax, before coming to Melbourne to deliver its cargo. This out of 32 ships from whom 14,616 Chinese disembarked at Robe across 1857.[79] It is possible that Kong Meng was the labour importer on these ships, but the data known so far does not confirm this.

### East Asia (China) (£)
- Sugar 28,364
- Tea 416,373
- Grain 13,346

### South Asia (India & Ceylon) (£)
- Coffee 42,037
- Drugs (mainly medicines) 10,451
- Opium 23,552
- Spices - Undescribed 9,895
- Tobacco 8,893
- Tobacco - Pipes 296
- rice 195,437
- Other 587

### Middle East (Suez, Aden) (£)
- Total for Asia/Indian Ocean (£)

### Other Main Imports
- (1) Sonstetn & Medicines
  - Coffee 42,037
  - Drugs (mainly medicines) 10,451
  - Opium 23,552
  - Spices - Undescribed 9,895
  - Tobacco 8,893
  - Tobacco - Pipes 296

- (2) Food
  - Grain - Gram 39,202
  - Grain - Oats 19,895
  - Grain - Beans & Peas 8,086
  - Fruit - Oranges 45
  - Fruit - Pears 80
  - Oils - Undescribed 22,708
  - Provisions - Preserved 47,516

- (3) Ordinary Consumer Goods
  - Apparel & Goods 12,268
  - Other 10,137

- (4) Production Goods
  - Bag & Sacks 5
  - Carryage 452
  - Other 27,265

- (5) Specialties
  - Bottles 306
  - Drapery 40
  - Jewellery 196
  - Silks 7,306
  - Water & Clocks 7,000
  - Other 15,251

**TOTAL** 305,114

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Figure 8. Main imports to Victoria from Asia/Indian Ocean in 1859 (over £5,000 per annum). Compiled and classified by the author from ‘Imports: general imports into the colony of Victoria, during the year ended 31st December, 1859’, Blue Book for 1859, pp. 147-211.

Breaking down Chinese products by port (see Figure 9), it is clear that Fuzhou and Macao were providing mostly tea; Hong Kong provided the greatest diversity of cargo. Imports from Swatow [Shantou], Shanghai and Canton [Guangzhou] were insignificant by comparison. The profile of goods from Hong Kong matches well the needs of a Chinese mining population: preserved foods, oils, opium, wine, spirits, medicines and clothing.
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]
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]
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;[99] 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.[100]

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.[101] 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. [102] 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[103] – 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.[104] 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.[105] 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.[106] His role from 1866 as a founding shareholder and board member of the Commercial Bank of Australia has often been mentioned.[107] 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.[108]
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-quart er 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]

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 the 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 in 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

[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 Ruhlen, 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. xxxii).

[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.


[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.


[22] ibid., p. 43.

Henry Colburn, London, 1845, p. 3.

New York, 1981, p. 47; WH Hall and WD Bernard, ibid. Sir Edmund Stanley is described as the first Recorder of Penang, implying that these were alternative or early titles for that school. See the websites of the Historical Society, Penang Free School and the Penang Story website, pp. 27-8 (accessed 3 September 2012).

'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.

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.


District Court Thursday, June 2', The Argus, 3 June 1859.

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


[59] ‘Mr. Lowe Kong Meng’.

[60] Humphreys, p. 263.

[61] ‘The Chinese population; Kong Meng’.


[63] ibid.

[64] Humphreys, p. 263.

[65] ‘The late Mr. Kong Meng’.


[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-de-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 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.


[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.


[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.
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.’

‘Mr. Lowe Kong Meng’.


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.

‘Chinese residence tax’.

(a) Sands & Kenny’s commercial and general Melbourne directory for 1859, pp. 23-4:

Little Bourke St, West:
49 Chinese boarding house
53 Houng 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
? Houng, 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
Meng 1861-65? See 'Old house attracted romantic legends', Albert Road/Bridport Street, South Melbourne, occupied by Kong Park House, 352 Moray Street, corner of Moray Street and Kong Meng.

and commercial displays for these exhibitions. See 'The late Mr. International Exhibition of 1888, and organised Chinese cultural International Exhibition of 1880-81, and also the Centennial Nation of China' , he was later a Commissioner for the Melbourne 'nothing in the colony … that would reflect credit on … the Great Although he declined this invitation, on the basis that there was Buildings] , Unit 5, Inter-colonial and Fine Arts Exhibition, 1869.

1869, in PROV, VPRS 927/P0 Correspondence relating to various buildings, 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).

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’.

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’.

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.’

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).


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.

'The late Mr. Kong Meng'

Purcell, The Chinese in Malaya, p. 61.

'Mr. Lowe Kong Meng'.

'The Chinese population; Kong Meng'.

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.

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


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. 15.
