

Digging deep: sources for Chinese-Australian history in NSW

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Interest in researching and writing the history of the Chinese in Australia is growing. The breadth and intensity of this interest is demonstrated by the convening of several recent conferences, namely the Workshop on the Chinese in Australia and New Zealand History, held at the University of NSW in February 2000 and the Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation Conference in July 2000, held at the Chinese Museum in Melbourne. Historians, archaeologists, heritage consultants, libraries and archives are all playing a role in documenting and interpreting the histories of the Chinese in Australia and Australians of Chinese descent.

Some historians have noted the difficulty of locating source material relating to the Chinese in Australia, particularly that produced by the Chinese themselves.¹ However, there is a large amount of material held in both public and private archives and libraries in NSW and the ACT which relates to the Chinese. While some of this material is directly concerned with the Chinese, for example, archives of Chinese businesses or family papers, the full scope of available material is much broader. Mark Seymour suggests that when looking at ‘minority history’ sources, two categories can be observed: ‘those [sources] which are chosen because their content makes specific reference to the question of ethnicity; and those which have no special concern with that question, but which, when chosen carefully, can nevertheless be very informative on the subject.’² Sources for Chinese-Australian history are no exception to this, so it is important that researchers remain flexible in their approach to sources, and flexible in what might constitute a source.

This guide does not claim to be a comprehensive examination of all sources pertaining to Chinese-Australian history in NSW.³ To do so would be a tremendous task. Instead, I hope this guide will provide a starting point for researchers interested in Chinese-Australian history, providing some guidance to where sources may be found, and what types of sources are available. This article will outline the types of sources available in a number of major

¹ See, for example, Kathryn Cronin’s introduction to her volume *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1982, pp. 1-2.

² Mark Seymour, ‘Writing minority history: sources for the Italians’, in Shirley Fitzgerald and Garry Wotherspoon (eds), *Minorities: cultural diversity in Sydney*, State Library of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1995, p. 171.

³ I would like to thank Michael Williams who assisted me in the preparation of this article, and also the staff of libraries, archives and historical societies who have assisted me in my research.

libraries and archives in NSW and the ACT (some of which have their own guides to their Chinese sources), and will also discuss sources held in smaller collections. The sources dealt with in this guide are primarily in English, however a brief mention will be made of Chinese-language sources. A useful and relatively recent publication listing sources of Chinese local history is that by Faye Young and Nicole van Barneveld, *Sources for Chinese Local History and Heritage in New South Wales*.⁴

National Archives of Australia

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) has produced a comprehensive guide to Chinese-related sources in their NSW collection, *Chinese Immigrants and Chinese Australians in NSW*.⁵ This practical guide sets out the NAA's major collections and provides a good introduction to the colonial and federal regulations relating to immigration of Chinese and the administration of immigration in NSW. The Australian Archives holds some pre-Federation records, but the principle of its collection is post-1901. Further records relating to the Chinese can be located through the Record Search database, accessed via the NAA website⁶ or in their reading rooms. Record Search covers all NAA collections, including those in states other than NSW. This is useful as other state offices may hold records relating to Chinese individuals resident in NSW. As the guide provides a general overview of the NAA collection, I will outline and give examples from two series of particular interest.

Series SP42/1 and SP42/2 contain files relating to individuals created by the administration of the *Immigration (Restriction) Act* of 1901⁷, such as applications for passports, Certificates Exempting from the Dictation Test (CEDT), investigations and court cases. These series include files on (mostly male) immigrants from China or Australian-born Chinese, but also includes files on other cases, such as Chinese maids from Singapore entering Australia with their white mistresses; applications for permission for Chinese wives to immigrate; and files relating to Australian-born part-Chinese travelling to China and Hong Kong. Some of these files provide detailed insights into the lives of Chinese, and span decades of travel between China and Australia. These files provide much more than just details of the entry and exit of

⁴Faye Young and Nicole van Barneveld, *Sources for Chinese Local History and Heritage in New South Wales*, 1997. This book is available from the author at 84 Siandra Drive, Kareela NSW 2232.

⁵*Chinese Immigrants and Chinese Australians in NSW*, compiled by Julie Stacker and Peri Stewart, Australian Archives NSW Office, July 1997. This guide is now available for reference or purchase online at http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/Guides_2/Guide_1/guide_1.html. All website addresses given are accurate as of June 2000.

⁶The National Archives website can be found at <http://www.naa.gov.au>.

⁷The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* was introduced at the end of 1901 with the express purpose of limiting the numbers of immigrants to Australia. It stipulated that admission would be based on the applicant's ability to write a dictation in any European language. "The intention of the Act, to exclude all non-Europeans, was not expressed in the legislation, but in its implementation and in the policy behind it, which became known as the 'White Australia Policy'", Stacker and Stewart, *Chinese Immigrants*, p. 9.

Chinese from NSW. They also reveal the processes of the administration of the White Australia policy, and stories about the lives of Chinese in Australia, their interactions with the white community, their businesses and family life.

One interesting example from series SP42/1 is the file of Kathleen Mary Cecilia Spence⁸, the half-European adopted daughter of a Sydney cabinet-maker, Ah Lum. In 1911, Ah Lum wished that Kathleen should be sent to China to be educated in the Chinese language, and applied for permission for her eventual return to Australia. The authorities were concerned that Kathleen, aged 14, would not be well-cared for on the journey. When Ah Lum stated that Kathleen would travel with her foster aunt and then be placed in the care of Ah Lum's mother in Hong Kong, permission was granted and she sailed in October, 1912. She was to remain for two years. In 1916 Ah Lum again wrote to the authorities requesting permission to travel, this time for his adopted son, aged two. Ah Lum wished to travel to China to dispose of some property there, and to see to the marriage of Kathleen. Kathleen had left Australia in 1912 aged 14 and returned six years later, the wife of a man named Moon Ting Young. Hers is just one story of the thousands which exist in these files.

Another series of interest is SP11/26, Applications for Certificates of Domicile. These applications were made by immigrants, mostly Chinese resident in Australia, who wished to be exempted from the restrictions of the *Immigration (Restriction) Act*. In order to be permitted to re-enter once they had left Australia, Chinese (and other non-Europeans) were required to apply for a Certificate Exempting from the Dictation Test or CEDT.⁹ Exemption from the regulations of the Act required possession of an Australian birth certificate, a Certificate of Domicile (CoD) or CEDT. In addition to the files of many immigrant Chinese men, this series contains files of their Australian-born children who went back to Hong Kong or China, and requests for permission for Chinese wives to emigrate. Most files are applications before leaving Australia, however some applications were made from overseas when the applicant had been unaware of the requirements of the Act before leaving Australia. Many of the files include photographs, reference letters from employers or business partners, police statements outlining the applicant's character, business interests, participation in the community and their family.

State Records New South Wales

The NSW state archival body, State Records NSW, also holds a large collection of material relevant to the study of the Chinese in NSW. However, unlike the National Archives, there is no State Records guide of records relating to the Chinese in NSW. Such a guide would be

⁸ National Archives of Australia (NSW): SP42/1, C18/1150.

⁹ These were known as Certificates of Domicile (COD) until amendments in 1905.

invaluable to researchers, as while some of the holdings of State Records relate directly to the Chinese, the bulk of the material held here was created through the functioning of colonial and state bodies (organisations with no particular interest in the Chinese) as they interacted with Chinese people, a significant minority within the population.¹⁰

State Records holds files relating to Chinese immigration, particularly that prior to Federation. For example, ships' passenger lists¹¹ give details such as name, sex, destination, deck class and age.¹² One difficulty with pre-turn-of-the-century shipping records is, however, that rather than being listed by name, Chinese passengers were merely listed under headings such as '6 Chinese'. State Records also holds records of naturalisation and denization. The 971 applications for naturalisation by Chinese men in NSW held by State Records have been compiled into a database by Terri McCormack which provides details such as applicant's name, arrival date, ship's name, place of residence, occupation and reason for wanting naturalisation.¹³ Reasons generally related to the desire to own freehold property, but some also make mention of the fact that these men had families in Australia and wished to remain here permanently.

The Colonial Secretary's Correspondence, the basic correspondence of the nineteenth-century colonial government, covers a wide range of material, including references to the Chinese. Reports include one of a 'crippled Chinaman' escaping from Wellington gaol; an account of an anti-Chinese riot on the Clarence River Goldfields in 1878 and special bundles on the 1881 and 1888 Chinese Restriction Acts. The correspondence is indexed by year. Similarly, State Records also holds the Governor's Correspondence.

Parliamentary reports and proceedings also deal with the Chinese to a significant extent. Most notable is the *NSW Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality*, from 1892, but there are numerous other smaller reports into the Chinese in NSW, such as Martin Brennan and Quong Tart's 1884 *Reports Upon the Chinese Camps*. Some inquiries not directly aimed at the Chinese nevertheless contain important material, for example, the 1876 *Select Committee Inquiry into Common Lodging-Houses*, which provides details of Chinese boarding-house life and conditions, and the 1879 Fisheries Commission, where witness evidence was given concerning Chinese fishing along the NSW coast since the 1860s. These

¹⁰ The Chinese were a highly visible minority in early Australia, and most of their names make them easy to identify in the many indexes held in archives.

¹¹ Ships' passenger lists to 1923 are held by State Records, and thereafter by the Commonwealth.

¹³ Terri McCormack, *Chinese Naturalisation Database NSW 1857-1887*, 1997. This database is also available at the Mitchell Library.

reports can be found within the *NSW Parliament Votes and Proceedings*, held at State Records and at the Mitchell and other libraries.

While less descriptive, Reports of the Government Statistician and census reports provide valuable statistical information relating to the Chinese. Government statistician reports can be found within the parliamentary *Votes and Proceedings*, and also within separate published volumes such as T A Coghlan's *The Wealth and Progress of NSW* and *NSW Vital Statistics*.¹⁴ The NSW census reports also give statistics on the Chinese population in NSW. It is important to note that the figures given may not reflect the true numbers of Chinese in NSW, or may be problematic in other ways. For example, a Chinese man was counted as 'not married' if his wife was not present in NSW. As many Chinese men emigrated during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries without their wives, the statistics give inflated figures for the numbers of 'single' Chinese men in the colony. The 1901 census report gives statistics on the education, age, conjugal condition, religion, occupation and birthplaces of Chinese in NSW, sometimes distinguishing part-Chinese from full-Chinese. The census collectors' books for the 1891 and 1901 censuses still exist and detail householder's names and people within households. Chinese or Aboriginal members of household were noted separately, and this material would be useful for mapping the Chinese population in NSW, noting the presence of mixed households and concentrated populations in specific areas.

Although the majority of Chinese residents in NSW were in no way involved in criminal activities, there is some evidence within court and police records relating to the Chinese. Police gazettes from 1832 to 1939 record all crimes reported, arrests made and prisoners released in NSW, and for later periods these files include photographs. Some Chinese-related examples include items reported stolen by various Chinese merchants and arrests for poll-tax evasion arrests. Court records such as magistrates bench books, and Supreme Court and Quarter Session records also contain cases relating to the Chinese. State Records also holds sets of photographs of all prisoners in NSW from 1862 with cross referencing to Supreme Court cases, including numerous photographs of Chinese poll-tax evaders. It is also likely that Coronial Inquest records hold some information pertaining to the Chinese.

Further areas of State Records holdings which are yet to be thoroughly investigated are those concerning health, education and other areas of state assistance such as charitable organisations and orphanages. Sources could provide information relating to subjects such as the incarceration of Chinese men for insanity, public charity towards the Chinese, the education of Chinese children within the state system, and the placement of Chinese and part-

¹⁴ *NSW Vital Statistics* and other similar works are available in the Mitchell Library in the *ABS Colonial Microfiche*.

Chinese children in state care.

Mitchell Library at the State Library of NSW

The Mitchell Library holds a number of specific collections relating to the Chinese. These deal with a variety of topics such as business, the arts, religious practice and personal papers and families. A guide to the Chinese-Australian holdings of the Mitchell Library has recently been published, listing materials found in the card indexes and index folders.¹⁵ Business collections include the records of the Surry Hills grocer, On Lee & Co and the records of the Australian-China Chamber of Commerce and Industry of NSW (1976-1989). Personal papers include those of the Quong Tart family and William Liu OBE and also a typescript entitled the *Memoirs of Tam Sie, 1875-1925+*, a Southern Chinese man who arrived in Cooktown in 1875.

The Mitchell holds other manuscripts containing information relating to the Chinese, but these manuscripts are not always catalogued as such. For example, there are numbers of records relating to gold mining which may be of use. One such item is a collection of papers relating to gold-mining at Ophir, just north of Orange, written by Leslie Oakes.¹⁶ Oakes notes the Chinese presence on the fields at Ophir, dialect differences between Chinese groups and the organisation of Chinese mining, recounts tales of a local Chinese named Ah Gum and includes a map of the area showing the Chinese camps. Another gold-mining manuscript, *Kiandra Goldfields* by William A Holme¹⁷, which details the author's journey to and sojourn in the Kiandra fields, mentions a Chinese man working as a waiter in a European-owned restaurant in a small southern NSW town.

The Mitchell collection holds many nineteenth century and early twentieth century works on the Australian colonies. Works such as these from the 1850s onwards were written to demonstrate the 'progress' of the colonies or to assist new immigrants. These often have chapters or sections dealing with the 'Chinese Question', outlining the nature of Chinese immigration to Australia, how the Chinese in Australia lived, and reactions to Chinese immigration. Many of these works propound anti-Chinese arguments. Works with chapters on the Chinese include *Australia to the Rescue: A Hundred Years' Progress in New South Wales* (1890) by WF Buchanan, *Australia; or notes taken during a Residence in the Colonies from the Gold Discovery in 1851 till 1857* (1858) by P Just and *An Australian Ramble or A Summer in Australia* (1890) by J Ewing Ritchie. These and other works are listed under

¹⁵ *Chinese Australians: A Guide to Holdings in the Mitchell Library*, compiled and edited by Paul Jones and Terri McCormack, Asian Studies Papers, Department of Asian Studies, La Trobe University, Bundoora Victoria 3038, June 2000.

¹⁶ Mitchell Library ML MSS 58.

¹⁷ Mitchell Library FM4/2270.

'Chinese' in the Mitchell card catalogue. Other works are devoted solely to the topic of the Chinese, for example, E W Cole's *Better Side of the Chinese Character* (1918) and "Yellow Agony" *Widespreading Branches of a Dangerous Tree, lopped off* by A Tomohawk.

Pictorial representations and photographs are another important part of the collection held by the Mitchell Library. The collection includes original drawings and paintings as well as photographic images of the Chinese in both rural and metropolitan NSW. Photographs of Chinese exist in the collections of the Government Printing Office, Sam Hood and Ted Hood, the American and Australasian Photographic Company, the Australian Photographic Agency and the 'At Work and Play' Collection. Some examples from the Holtermann Collection include a series of images from Gulgong and Home Rule during the 1870s, showing Chinese-owned stores and boarding houses. Many images held in the Mitchell and Dixson collections are able to be viewed through the online Picman Database.¹⁸

National Library of Australia

The National Library of Australia in Canberra holds an impressive collection of works relating to the Chinese in Australia, in both English and Chinese.¹⁹ The collection includes not only published works, but also manuscripts, pictures and oral histories (which will be discussed further below).

One of the Library's major manuscript items is the papers of the herbalist and entrepreneur Kwong Sue Duk who came from southern China to the goldfields of Northern Australia. Papers in the collection include a Chinese language diary kept by Kwong, letters and photographs. Other manuscript holdings include the papers of Diana Giese, oral historian and writer, and newspaper cuttings on the Chinese in Australia.

As well as numerous published works on the Chinese in Australia, the Library also holds copies of the British Foreign Office Papers, known as the Foreign Office Confidential Prints (FOCP). Government correspondence and reports include examples which relate to southern China and the background to emigration to places including Australia, or directly relating to Chinese immigration to the Australian colonies. This was particularly the case where Australian colonial legislation was seen to contravene British agreements with China. Examples of reports include a report on the granting of permission by the Governor-General of Guangdong for legal emigration from Canton and correspondence between Britain and the

¹⁸This database is available for viewing at the State Library or via the internet at www.slnsw.gov.au/picman/welcome.htm.

¹⁹Andrew Gosling, 'National Library of Australia: Collections on the Chinese in Australia', paper presented at the Workshop on the Chinese in Australia and New Zealand History, University of NSW, February 2000.

colonial governments in 1888 concerning the implications of that year's *Chinese Restriction and Regulation Act* (NSW).

The library's Pictorial Section has an extensive collection of images related to the Chinese in Australia, spanning both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Andrew Gosling notes that the strengths of the collection lie in nineteenth century images 'depicting Chinese immigration, customs, religious rites and ceremonies, processions, cemeteries, gambling houses, Joss Houses, illustrations of domestic interiors, and cartoons and caricatures'²⁰ and twentieth-century photographic collections.²¹

Newspapers

Considering its relatively small population, Australia has had a flourishing newspaper publishing industry. These newspapers are a valuable source for historians. New South Wales papers can be divided into several categories—the metropolitan dailies and weeklies, rural newspapers and monthlies and periodicals. One of the greatest impediments to research using newspapers is the sheer bulk of material that is available within them, and the painstaking work involved in reading small print on microfilm. The results however can be very rewarding. Most NSW papers are held by either or both the State Library of New South Wales or the National Library of Australia and have been microfilmed to protect the original editions.

The major Sydney newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald* has been used to a large extent by researchers, as has the *Bulletin*. However, there are a large number of papers which are of equal interest and use. Other Sydney papers include the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sydney Mail*, the *Empire*, and the *Town and Country Journal*. Unfortunately, indexes for most of these papers do not exist, except for the *Sydney Morning Herald* for certain periods. Some smaller Sydney papers are well worth examining. One such example is *Bell's Life in Sydney* which was published in Sydney during the second half of the nineteenth century. Its main focus is on sporting news, with columns also devoted to local news and police news, and other interesting 'tidbits'. A sample search of the 1850s brought up over 40 articles related to the Chinese. These included an 1853 advertisement offering a reward for absconded Chinese servants, reports on the murders of Chinese (and an English wife of a Chinese man), editorials on the Chinese Question and a police report from 1858 on the Chinese and 'a case of pork theft'.

²⁰ibid.

²¹Some of these images are available for viewing online at <http://www.nla.gov.au/images1/>.

Rural newspapers are an under-utilised resource. Those rural papers not held in the Mitchell Library or the National Library are often held by regional libraries and some are indexed. Based in smaller communities, these papers provide details about Chinese camps, mining leases and individual Chinese within the communities. For example, the Albury newspapers, the *Albury Banner*, the *Albury Daily News* and the *Albury Border Post* contain numerous references to the Chinese in and around Albury and reports from other locations in both NSW and Victoria. There are stories of Chinese doctors, court reports, burials, ‘immorality’, weddings, Chinese missions, vegetable gardens and Chinese religious practices. References to the Chinese in the Albury papers have been indexed and the indexes are held by the Albury Historical Society. These Albury papers demonstrate the possibilities within other rural papers, particularly those from areas with large nineteenth-century Chinese populations.

The Mitchell Library also holds a collection of books of newspaper cuttings, and within these volumes there are numbers of articles relating to the Chinese presence in NSW and more generally in Australia. Unfortunately not all these volumes give the dates or names of newspapers the articles come from. Examples include articles about the ‘Chinese dens’, Chinese in Victoria, the Deniliquin Chinese quarters and one particularly interesting article entitled ‘Chinese in Australia: Sending Children into Slavery’ which deals with the alleged practice of half-Chinese children being sent back to China, as ‘virtual slaves’, against the wishes of their white Australian mothers. One volume also contains articles from North American newspapers about the Chinese there and is interesting for comparison with the situation in Australia. Articles on the Chinese within these cutting books are listed in the Mitchell card catalogue.

Oral histories

In addition to more traditional archival sources, there are growing oral history collections relating to the Chinese within public archives and libraries. These collections provide the very personal experiences of being Chinese in Australia and can paint pictures not found in other archival sources: ‘These [oral] histories emphasise the informants’ views of history’s process, against official representations, earlier chroniclers. They may contradict what has been glossed over or de-emphasised... Oral history extends what we know about the past beyond what the officially validated, the literate and articulate, have to contribute.’²²

The National Library of Australia holds a number of particularly important collections, including the papers of Diana Giese, whose words are quoted above. Giese has published a number of oral history works on the Chinese and has also been active as the coordinator of

²² Diana Giese, *Beyond Chinatown: Changing Perspectives on the Top End Chinese Experience*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1995, p. 12.

the Post-War Chinese Australians Project which includes interviews with more than eighty-five people.²³ The National Library has been involved in the Australia-China Oral History Project together with the Australia-China Council and the Chinese Australian History Museum in Melbourne. This project has documented the lives of Chinese Australians who were adults in Australia pre-1950 and Australians in China prior to 1950. The tapes and transcripts of both these projects are available at the National Library's Oral History Section.

As well as these collections, the Mitchell Library holds a collection of interviews conducted by Rosetta Sung. These interviews, conducted during the mid-1980s, are valuable because most of the interviewees were born during the first decades of the twentieth century and their stories document a past that few now can remember. The NSW Bicentennial Oral History Collection, held by Mitchell Library and others, has more than a dozen interviews which mention the Chinese.

Genealogical Sources

Sources and records familiar to family historians are often overlooked by academic historians, however these types of sources can provide valuable information. The archives of the Society of Australian Genealogists in Sydney holds some records relating to the Chinese in NSW, such as the Tart/McEvoy family papers and a number of family histories. As well as these records, they hold cemetery records, including transcriptions of headstones in the Chinese section at Sydney's Rookwood Cemetery and rural cemeteries.

The NSW (and other states) indexes of births, deaths and marriages offer a tremendous amount of information concerning the families of Chinese in Australia. These records can provide information concerning marriage patterns of the Chinese, family size, locations of marriage ceremonies, internal migration within NSW. Details such as age at marriage can only be ascertained from the certificates themselves, however.²⁴ Probate records, likewise, are potentially of use. Numerous early Chinese and some wives of Chinese men left wills, which detail property owned at time of death and to whom it was to be distributed. Indexes exist to the NSW probate records, and wills are available through the NSW Probate Office at the Supreme Court of NSW.

Another useful index is the Australasian Genealogical Computer Index (AGCI), available for use at the Society of Australian Genealogists and in some local libraries. This index,

²³ Gosling, 'Collections on the Chinese in Australia'.

²⁴ Birth, Death and Marriage Indexes on microfiche and cd-rom are readily available at the State Library of NSW Family History Section and at local libraries. Access is also available through the web at www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/bdm/index.html. Certificates themselves are available for purchase from the NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages.

produced by the Society of Australian Genealogists and updated every few years, is a compilation of shipping records, cemetery records, parish registers and other relevant sources in Australia and New Zealand. It is useful particularly if seeking information on particular individuals, as it is listed alphabetically by name. Many early Chinese names are easily spotted by the prefix 'Ah'. For example, it lists the baptism of William Henry Ah Hung in Bombala NSW on 25 May 1883 drawn from a Church of England parish register. The AGCI gives reference details to the original source to enable further research.

Local history resources

Local history societies and regional libraries with local history sections are also a good place to look for Chinese history sources. Local history librarians and archivists often possess a wealth of knowledge about their own area, and many of these organisations have some records relating to the Chinese. Sources commonly found in local history collections include local newspapers and indexes, local histories and oral and family histories. Local archivists and historians are also often aware of non-archival histories in their areas, or the local stories and folklore.²⁵ Local history societies sometimes charge a small fee for research inquiries and are always eager to receive any information that you may dig up elsewhere relating to their area.

Other archives and sources in NSW and ACT

Editorial constraints do not allow for a more thorough examination of sources held within other archival institutions within NSW. However, the NSW Parliamentary Archives, City of Sydney Archives and various Church archives all hold sources of potential value to researchers of the Chinese in NSW. The City of Sydney Archives, for example, holds records such as photographs, assessment books, Council reports and correspondence which detail businesses and households in central Sydney. The major Christian churches were involved in ministering to the Chinese community from early days, establishing Chinese churches and language schools; records available in these church and mission archives therefore are also potential sources. The Noel Butlin Archives at the Australian National University in Canberra holds the records of the Australian Agricultural Company (including contacts and payment arrangements for Chinese indentured labourers of the 1840s) and the minutes of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce from the early twentieth century. Other records held by private organisations rather than archives or libraries may also be of importance, such as those of funeral directors involved in sending Chinese dead back to China.²⁶

Chinese language sources

²⁵ A list of archives and libraries, the *Directory of Archives in Australia* maintained by the Australian Society of Archivists, is available on the web at <http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/asa/directory>.

²⁶ Colin Slade, 'Investigating the Chinese Community', *Locality*, Vol. 4, No. 2, July-August 1990, pp.7-11.

Established archives and libraries hold relatively little Chinese language material relating to the history of the Chinese in Australia, although these collections are growing with further bequests. One reason for this is that historically, Chinese people in Australia have not produced large quantities of documentary evidence about themselves. Most of what we have comes from white Australia's reaction to the Chinese presence. This is one of the reasons why oral histories are of particular importance.

The National Library of Australia does hold a large collection of works in Chinese, some of which deal with the Chinese in Australia. Records held by State Records and the National Archives of Australia contain fragmentary pieces in Chinese language. One example is the file of Jimmy Chuck²⁷ who, during the early years of last century, requested several times for his wife to be allowed to emigrate to Australia from China, but ultimately he was never successful. Within the file is a beautiful hand brushed letter written from a friend in Hong Kong outlining his wife's sorrow at being without her husband. Numbers of Certificates Exempting from the Dictation Test and Certificates of Domicile held by the National Archives contain Chinese writing on the back. The Mitchell Library holds a number of Chinese language works, including *The Self-Educator: Chinese and English Conversationalist* compiled by newspaper editor Sun Johnson.²⁸ This small volume, published in Sydney in 1892, is an English phrase book for Chinese speakers living in Sydney.

Australia was lucky to be home to a number of early Chinese newspapers, although these have not as yet been extensively used for research. In NSW, the two oldest Sydney Chinese papers, the *Chinese Australian Herald* and the *Tung Wah Times* have only been used for historical research purposes to any significant extent by Yulan Poon.²⁹ These newspapers and those published more recently provide valuable insights into the Chinese community in Australia, and can be seen, as Poon says, 'as a two-way mirror: not only does it reflect the image of the dominant group as it is perceived by the immigrant group, but it also shows the self-perception of the ethnic community in its new environment'.³⁰ Holdings of more contemporary Chinese language newspapers also exist. Currently, the National Library, in conjunction with La Trobe University and the Australian National University, is working on the development of an English-language web-based index to the *Tung Wah Times*. This index will be invaluable to researchers.

²⁷ National Archives of Australia (NSW): SP11/26 Box 1, J10.

²⁸ Mitchell Library, 495/J.

²⁹ Yulan Poon, 'The two-way mirror: contemporary issues as seen through the eyes of the Chinese language press, 1901-1911', in Fitzgerald and Wotherspoon (eds) and 'Through the Eyes of the Dragon: The Chinese Press in Australia, 1901-1911', final Honours thesis, BA (Hons), University of Sydney, 1986.

³⁰ Poon, 'The two-way mirror', p. 51.

Further Chinese language sources certainly exist in the hands of private organisations and families. It is hoped that in the future more of these records will be made available to researchers or bequeathed to archives or libraries and that more historians with Chinese language skills will emerge.

Conclusion

From this brief discussion of sources for Chinese-Australian history, it is evident that there is a great breadth and depth to the sources available. From government records dealing with immigration to oral history reminiscences about growing up Chinese in Australia, these sources can provide a rich picture of the Chinese presence in the history of Australia. Some sources provide rich descriptive evidence, others contain personal reactions and feelings and others still are just 'facts and figures'. While some sources are well-loved by researchers and have been put to good use, there are many more sources waiting to be discovered.

[Kate Bagnall is currently studying for her PhD at the University of Sydney. Kate's thesis investigates women who lived with and were married to the many Chinese men who resided in Australia during the 19th and early 20th centuries. She was also co-convenor of the recent conference on Chinese in Australia and New Zealand held at the University of New South Wales in February 2000.]

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