

Chapter 7
**Demonising the Chinese:
the Pathology of Cultural
Difference**
1855-1906

When Cheok Hong Cheong began his twenty year campaign against the importation of smoking opium into Victoria in 1885 he was faced with the negative stereotypes of the Chinese that began with the gold-rushes. Anti-Chinese sentiment, grounded in racism, worsened during and after the 1880s as colonial and later federal politicians chose to emphasise a culturally homogeneous Australian society.¹

From 1854 onwards media artists had been presenting a variety of images – initially highlighting ‘humorous’ ethnic differences that became, in later years, increasingly malicious – but all racist in portraying the Chinese as ‘different’ by expanding a negative image from an individual to an entire ethnic group in a process of racial/cultural stereotyping.² Almost anything was grist to the mill of the demonisers and some prime examples are discussed in this chapter. In his first published work (Chapter 4, Appendix 1) Cheong posed this question:

Are we an inferior race? No one can say so who knows anything of our history, our language, our literature, our government, or our public and private life.³

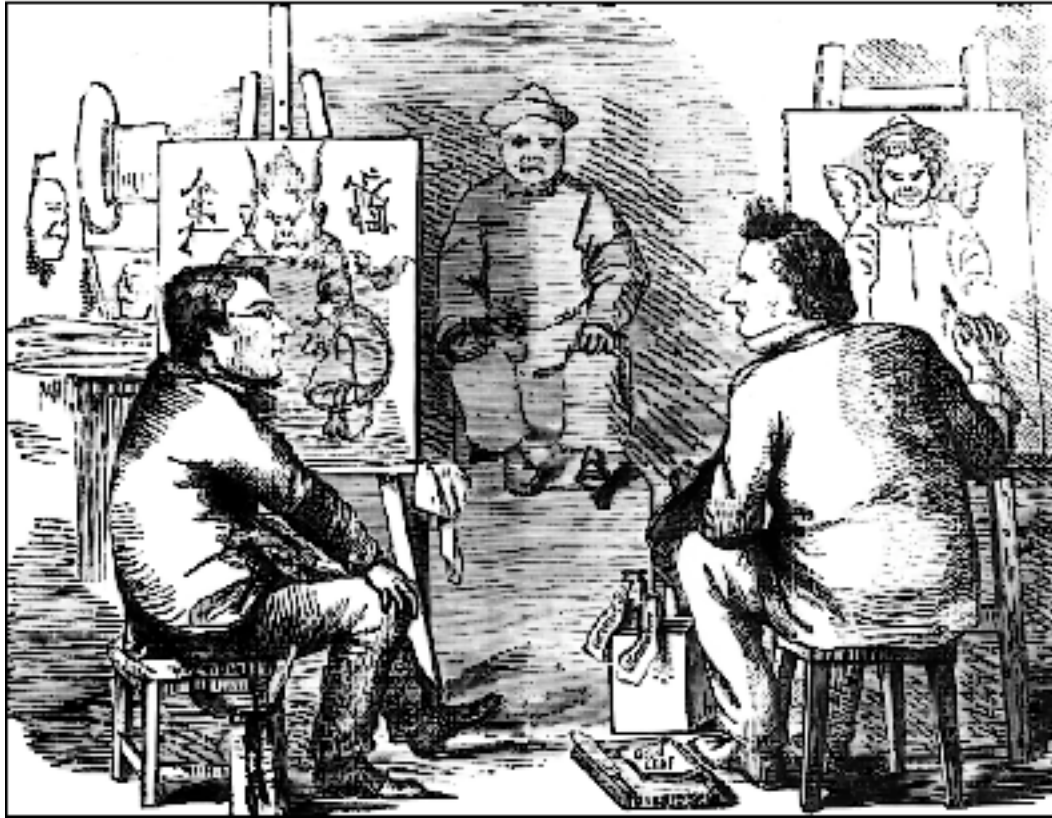
The cartoon following appeared in the Melbourne *Punch*, an antipodean child of the now defunct English journal. It symbolises the confusion of colonial attitudes. Two artists are painting portraits of a Chinese – one sees a saint, the other a sinner. The drawing was published in 1857 as the Victorian Parliament debated anti-Chinese immigration restrictions that became the model for all the colonies. The legislation imposed a poll-tax of £10 upon arrival together with a limit of one immigrant for every ten tons of the ships

1 A useful outline of the use of demonising stereotypes is Major, John S, (1986), ‘Asia Through a Glass Darkly: Stereotypes of Asians in Western Literature’, in Asia Society’s *Focus on Asian Studies*, Vol V No 3, *Contemporary Literature*, pp. 4-8, Spring 1986.

2 See Goode, Erica, (2002), ‘With Video Games, Researchers Link Guns to Stereotypes’, *New York Times*, 10 December 2002. Goode notes, in the context of contemporary white/black stereotypes in the United States that ‘that unconscious biases, possibly instilled by the news media, advertising or other cultural influences, can shape behavior, even when people do not consciously endorse such biases.’

3 Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, (1879), *The Chinese Question in Australia, 1879-80*, Melbourne. (Appendix 1, para 7).

The Chinese Immigration Bill, Victoria, 1857



Melbourne Punch, 22 January 1857.

National Library of Australia

burthen. The Act set the pattern of discriminatory practice against Chinese and other non-Europeans that became infamous as the White Australia Policy.

Cheong was angered by the way in which Europeans presented an image of the Chinese as collectively inferior to Europeans. There were many and varied criticisms of the Chinese that ultimately hinged on the issue of social absorption (assimilation) and the colonial understanding of morality defined in puritanical European Christian terms. A morality was expected of the Chinese that, as Cheong pointed out in *The Chinese Question*, Europeans could not, and did not, claim for themselves.⁴

Australian racism, viewed historically, rests on a three-step framework, i.e, vilification by word and image; discriminatory legislation and socio-cultural separation; and ultimately, acts of violence. Vilification relies on 'demonising' a particular group as a basis for various forms of discrimination that often leads to violence.⁵ The second step,

4 Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, (1879), *The Chinese Question in Australia, 1879-80*, Melbourne. (Appendix 1)

5 A helpful introduction to anti-vilification law in Australia is Johns, Louise, (1995), 'Racial Vilification and ICERD in Australia', *Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law*, Vol 2, No 1 (April 1995). Note ICERD refers to the International Covenant on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and specifically, Article Four,

discriminatory legislation and socio-cultural separation, involves attempts to prevent new arrivals while doing nothing to actively integrate those already in Australia. No effort was made to teach English to Chinese, for example, other than the voluntary efforts of the churches. The separation did not, at least officially, include residential segregation although for a variety of reasons, Chinese often chose to live in distinctive residential areas or 'Chinatowns' – a practice common to many immigrant groups.

Chinese in Australia, unlike those in North America, were not denied access to community facilities, including schools, hospitals, or benevolent homes nor were they denied access to social security provisions such as pensions. They were not subjected to the kind of residential segregation practiced in North America or, for that matter, in the European settlements in China itself. In day to day living, however, and it must be said partly by choice, Chinese did not mix with Europeans on any kind of equal 'playing field'. The net impact of Australia on most immigrant Chinese was a feeling of living in a constant haze of suspicion and dislike with, even if citizens or wealthy businessmen, a sense of being second-rate people. This sense of inferiority was heightened by the humiliation of China's problems during the 19th century discussed earlier. The influential *Encyclopedia Britannica* reflected the 'wisdom' common among English-speaking peoples of the day.

A Chinaman is cold, cunning and distrustful; always ready to take advantage of those he had to deal with; is extremely covetous and deceitful, quarrelsome, vindictive, but timid and dastardly. A Chinaman in office is a strange compound of insolence and meanness... (with) a total disregard for the truth.⁶

Although there has been a tendency to emphasise the third aspect of racism, i.e., violence, there is little reference to it in contemporary Chinese sources. Unlike contemporary Chinese attitudes to foreigners, violence was never a policy endorsed, covertly or openly, by Australian colonial governments.

The issues that most irritated the Chinese were vilification and its companion – social discrimination. They were not the sole victims of prejudice. Aboriginal people suffered far more and other ethnic minorities, including southern Europeans, were also affected from time to time. What made the Chinese situation particularly offensive, as Cheong pointed out whenever he could, was that only the Chinese, as immigrants, had specific legislative and financial obstructions to their entry into Australia.

refers to the International Covenant on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and specifically, Article Four,

6 Cronin, Kathryn, (1982), *Colonial Casualties*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press. The modern classic on the Chinese in 19th century Victoria, p 76.

In their 1879 paper (Chapter 4), Cheong and his co-authors used reverse 'demonisation' to illustrate the stupidity of the anti-Chinese arguments being advanced in Victoria. By applying a 'demonising' approach to British (and by implication, Australian) society they sought to turn the argument by a rational or educative response:

[We] are stigmatized as 'ignorant pagans' and 'filthy barbarians' by persons who have never been in China: who know nothing of its moral, intellectual and social life, and who form hasty judgements and entertain violent prejudices against its people from a very slight acquaintance with immigrants. Although we deplore as much as any fellow-colonist that immorality does exist amongst Chinese residents, at the same time we would unhesitatingly assert that it does not exist to a greater extent than amongst the European population.⁷

A 19th century letter from a missionary with the China Inland Mission stated that views about the Chinese expressed by an Australian were:

utterly misleading as regards the Chinese nation. I fear it is written under a strong bias against them, and it is written in evident ignorance of the Chinese as a nation . . . that 'the 50,000 Chinese at present in Australia' are like 'lepers' or 'vipers' in the bosoms of the Australians is an utter untruth.⁸

The letter was a reminder that anti-Chinese vilification in Australia was reported in China among Chinese and European. It demonstrates an enduring element of 19th century racial vilification in Australia that, in addition to vilifying 'strange ways' identified the Chinese as 'the' source of various diseases of which smallpox and leprosy were the most commonly mentioned.⁹ Susan Craddock sums up attitudes in San Francisco but her remarks apply equally to Australia:

Disease has been one significant factor utilized throughout history by various political and social institutions to define bodies, control their movements, and solidify culturally-produced definitions of gender, race, or sexuality. . .¹⁰

The image opposite appeared in a Queensland journal and is one of the ugliest anti-Chinese images published in the English-speaking world.¹¹ The Chinese skeleton, symbol

7 Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, (1879), *The Chinese Question in Australia, 1879-80*, Melbourne. (Appendix 1)

8 Robertson, D M in *The Spectator*, 8 February 1889.

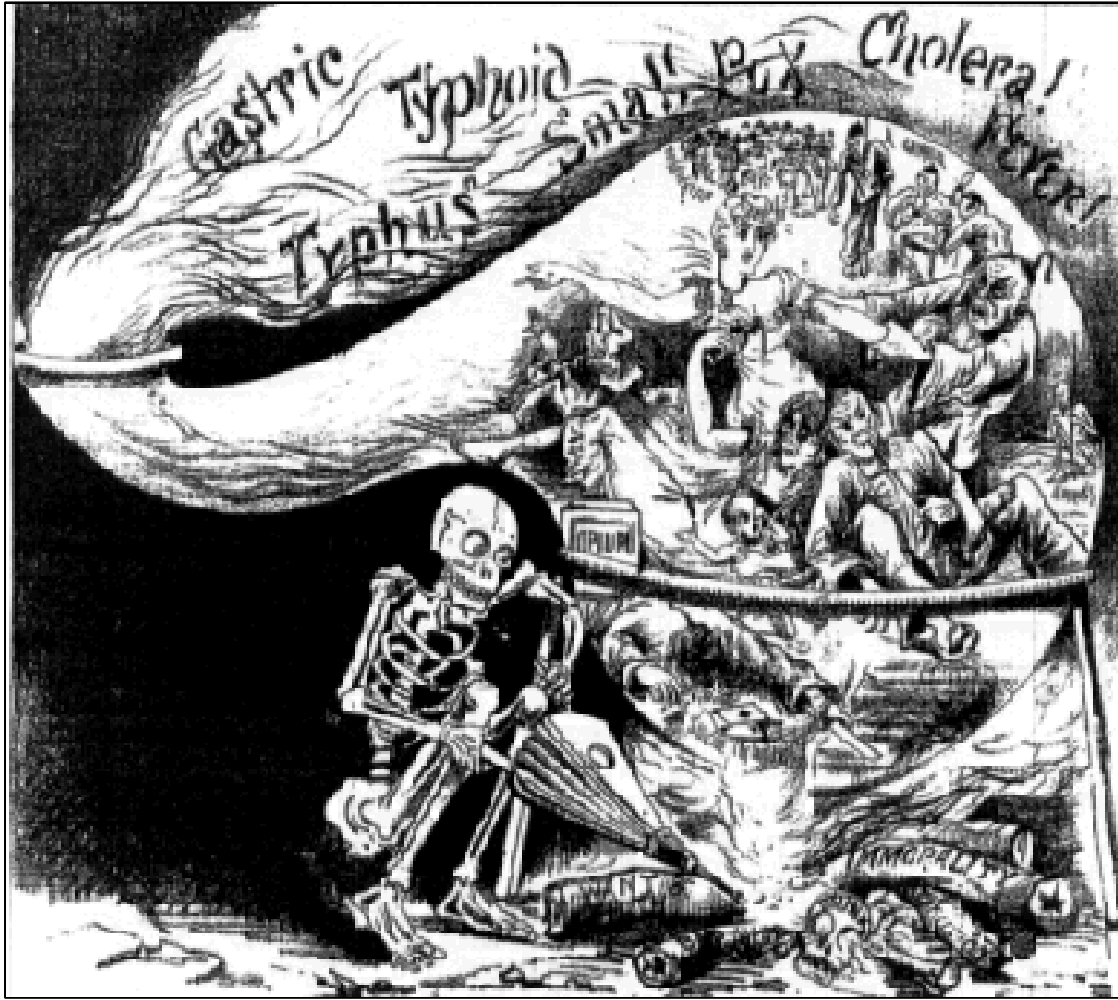
9 Campbell, Judy, (2002), *Invisible Invaders: Smallpox and Other Diseases in Aboriginal Australia: 1780-1880*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press.

10 Craddock, Susan, (1999), *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty and Deviance in San Francisco*, University of Minnesota Press.

11 Griffiths, Phil, (2002). 'Towards White Australia: The shadow of Mill and the spectre of slavery in the 1880s debates on Chinese immigration,' Paper presented to the 11th Biennial National Conference of the Australian Historical Association, Brisbane, 4 July 2002. This paper, and the next, exemplifies a movement to shift at least some of the accountability for anti-Chinese racism in Australasia from the labour movement to the capitalist-ruling class.
Small, Jerome, (n.d), 'Reconsidering White Australia. Class and racism in the 1873 Clunes Riot'. <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/interventions/raceriots.htm> The argument tends to see the capitalist elite using legislative measures to achieve their goals. A paper on the anti-Chinese riots at Clunes in

of death, is heating the fire of immorality, want, and disease to spread sickness and diseases among the European population. As in the cartoon illustrating the horrors awaiting missionaries (Chapter 5) this and other cartoons provided powerful emotional triggers to anti-Chinese vilification, adding sexual envy or fear to the other 'demons' being aroused by the anti-Chinese advocates. The use of virginal young European women as symbols of Chinese concupiscence added to the deliberate ugliness of the imagery and the denigration of the Chinese as a community.

Victoria makes a similar argument. Both are reflective of revisionist writing in the United States that argues that labour and capital should share in responsibility for racial policies against the Chinese. It is probably time to assert that anti-Chinese sentiment was not limited to any section of society. See Lyman, Stanford M, (2000), The "Chinese Question" and American Labor Historians, *New Politics*, Vol 7, No 4 (new series).



Utterly unfit for habitation though it be, in this dark, damp and unwholesome state, were found four women of the lowest castewith several Chinamen. This filthy den is said to be used at night by the most depraved races of the Mongolians and to be the scene of orgies which are simple indescribable. *Health Inspector's Report in Brisbane Courier, 6th May.*

QueenslandFigaro, 13 March 1888

State Library of Victoria

Accusations about Chinese attitudes to European women were common in colonial newspapers. If the conventional view of Australian racism illustrated in some of the cartoons in this chapter was to be accepted at face value, an assault on a European woman should have brought out a lynch gang. That was certainly the outcome facing Ah Yea when a mob accused him of assaulting, with intent to rape, a thirteen year old girl at Hell's Hole, near Mansfield. He was saved from a lynching when two mounted constables arrived.¹²

In a case near Glenluce in Victoria, a nine year old girl, Annie Hunt, was missed after

12 *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 April 1870.

school. Suspicion fell on a man named Ah Pew. Evidence was given by his hut-mate Ah How that the girl had come to their hut about 4 o'clock but had left. Ah Pew had left soon after and returned after about an hour, telling Ah How that he had been to Sheng Yem's to buy nails. Ah How afterwards saw him hiding his boots under an outside fireplace. Later, the Chinese detective, Fook Sing, questioned Ah Pew about the ownership of a broken pipe found near the girl's body.¹³ Ah Pew was finally executed in Castlemaine Gaol, protesting his innocence to the end.¹⁴

When a European woman was murdered in Stephen Street, Castlemaine, it was general knowledge that a man named Hing Tzan was implicated. He was captured by a group of Chinese while trying to conceal himself in bushes near the Chinese camp at Eaglehawk White Gully. He admitted he was part of a group who had watched her, knew she had money, and had broken into her house to rob her but insisted he had not killed her. He was subsequently taken to Melbourne for trial where three other men were named as being accessories.¹⁵ These two incidents, and the reliance on the law that both demonstrate, suggest that the imagery of Chinese lust and pursuit of European women was just that, an image, created largely by vilification at all levels of society.

Allegations about the Chinese and sexual matters need to be kept in context. Newspapers carried endless reports of vile crimes committed by Europeans against children. Sexual assault on females was an almost everyday offence, and it was frequently against young girls as in the instance above. Some parents put girls as young as eight onto the streets and children were found to have contracted venereal disease.¹⁶ At least one new-born baby was found dead each week often as a result of a young woman trying to 'conceal her shame'. Child abandonment was common.

In 1885, an English magazine, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, ran an expose of the prostitution rackets involving women in London, claiming that tens of thousands of women were being drawn into prostitution. The paper went to on to claim that most contracted venereal disease and more than 26,000 were treated for sickness in a six year period. The magazine established, beyond reasonable doubt, that among those who exploited young women were some of the most important men in England, including four members of

13 *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 March 1870.

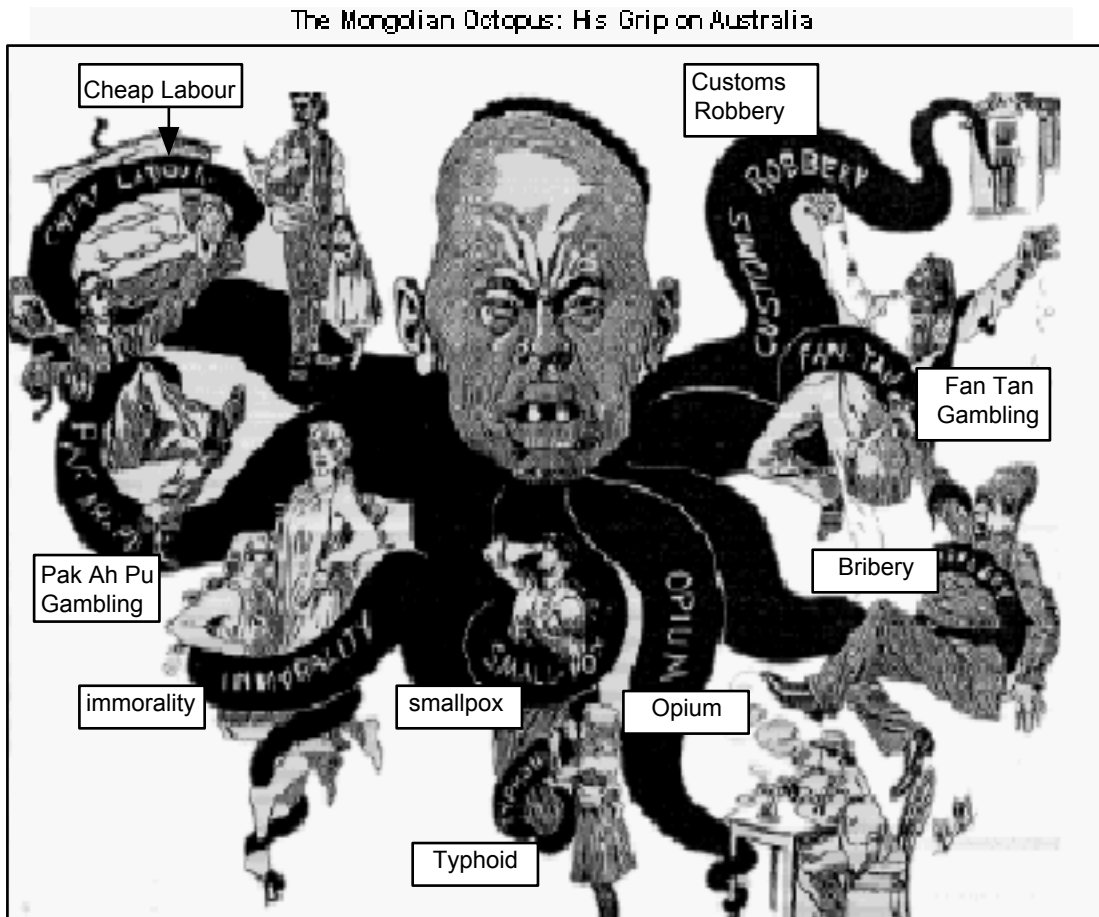
14 *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 1870.

15 The Mount Alexander Mail, 7 August 1857.

16 See discussion in Francis, Raelene, (1994), 'The History of Female Prostitution in Australia,' pp 27-52 in Perkins, R, G Presage, R Sharpe, P Lovejoy, (1994), *Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press.

parliament who had threatened to sue the magazine.¹⁷

Powerful as the previous cartoon is in portraying the vicious 'pathology' of the Chinese it has not remained in the Australian historical memory. Probably the best known of all the Australasian 'pathology' examples of racial vilification against the Chinese is a Phil May drawing for the *Bulletin*, of *The Mongolian Octopus*, shown below.



The Bulletin, 21 August 1886

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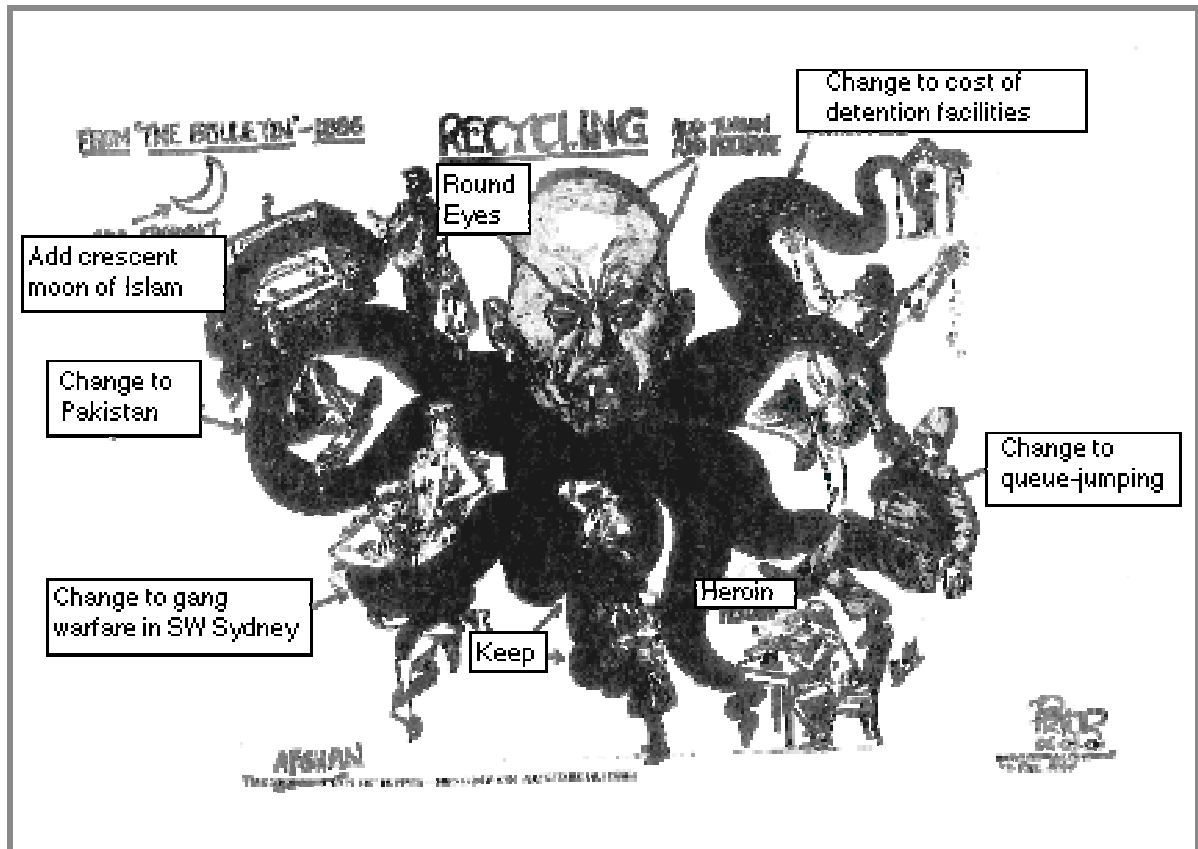
The tentacles identify opium smoking, disease, corruption, sexual immorality and cheap labour as peculiarly Chinese vices. It is important, in context, to observe that similar accusations were widespread in North America and the accusations are not uniquely Australian. And, as mentioned earlier, young European women are prominently

17 *The Daily Telegraph* during 1885. See Bartley, Paula, (1998), 'Preventing Prostitution: The Ladies Association for the Care and Protection of Young Girls in Birmingham, 1887-1914,' pp 37-60 in *Women's History Review*, Vol 7, No 1, 1998 for an English case study.

displayed.

The *Figaro* image earlier and May's cartoon above moved well beyond the kind of petty argument shown in the 1857 Victorian 'saints and sinners' illustration earlier in the

The Afghan Octopus



Prior, Gender in *The Canberra Times*, September 2001

chapter. May's drawing was reproduced, with amendments, in New Zealand.¹⁸ It was re-used more than a century later by the cartoonist Geoff Pryor in *The Canberra Times* in 2001 to highlight concern over the treatment being accorded to Afghan and other unauthorised, i.e. 'illegal' (Middle Eastern) immigrants. In reproducing Prior's image, as in the May original above, the captions have been overprinted by the author to assist the reader.

A Sydney cartoon on the following page is, at first glance, a straightforward Like most of the images in this chapter, the cartoon is far more sophisticated than at first appears. To the accusation of smallpox it links the threat of unemployment, the great and enduring economic fear of low income earners and tagged by May, in the *Mongolian Octopus* under the drawing of the workingman and child, labelled 'Cheap Labour'. The woman's

18 Butler, Peter, (1977), *Opium and Gold*, Waiura, Martinborough, New Zealand.

occupation is symbolized by the clothes-line – a reminder that European widows were among the supposed victims of the Chinese move into laundry work. In a society in which social security for widows and single mothers was unknown, it extended the threat of Chinese labour to the one of the most vulnerable sections of European community. The Chinese being driven away is a hawker of vegetables (See Cheong's comments in Appendix 4) and reflects the unsuccessful campaign to drive the Chinese out of the fresh fruit and vegetables industries. The 'Out You Go' heading integrates visual and verbal vilification to justify discrimination.



The drawing was prompted by an outbreak of smallpox in the Rocks area (city end of the Harbour Bridge) of Sydney that had nothing to do with the Chinese but reflected the location of the district at a major maritime cross-roads in which disease could enter from many sources. The aim of such racist imagery was to divide society by focussing 'blame' on an unpopular minority of society and, perhaps, to avert the righteous outrage against the neglect of municipal and government authorities.

As early as 1857 in Victoria smallpox was claimed to be a disease to which the Chinese

were particularly prone:

The existence of smallpox in Melbourne had caused a stir to be made with regard to the vaccination of the Chinese, who are thought to be especially susceptible of the ravages of that baneful disease. In the Legislative Council, on Tuesday last, Mr. Mitchell, in answer to a question from Dr Tierney, stated that the Government had communicated with the Chinese Protectors on the goldfields, on the subject of vaccination. From the result of enquiries made among the Chinese in this district, by Mr Drummond, the Chinese Protector, and Dr. Dempster, the Public Vaccinator, it would seem that either vaccination or inoculation is practised and is very general among them. In some cases, the lymph is applied by blowing it up the nostrils, in others, the process appears to be similar to that in vogue among Europeans.¹⁹

Fear of smallpox was a widely used device in vilifying and promoting discrimination. The disease was present long before the arrival of the Chinese and was never the threat to the colonists that was offered by a polluted water supply and atrocious sewage handling.²⁰ Water-borne diseases such as typhoid, the result of inadequate sanitary engineering, caused many deaths, but, as with smallpox, any outbreak of disease was an excuse for vilifying the Chinese rather than the authorities. Even poetry was used to add to the public fear of smallpox and the Chinese.

What do you bring, John Chinaman?

What brings you here, John Chinaman?
Why come to New South Wales?
Why do you sail when breezes fan
The north side of your sails.

'Our native country scarce can hold
The increase of the year;
So we, allured by love of gold,
Will try our fortunes here.'

What do you bring, John Chinaman,
As offering of your heart,
To use who feed, protect your clan,
And let you rich depart?

'We bring you small-pox from our land,
Nay, do not raise your ire,
We opium bring – a noble band,

19 *The Herald*, Melbourne, 6 November 1857, reprinted from *The Ovens Constitution*.

20 Campbell, Judy, (2002), *Invisible Invaders: Smallpox and Other Diseases in Aboriginal Australia: 1780-1880*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press.

And to your wealth aspire.
(From Sydney *Punch*, July 1881).

In the letter from the Rev. Mr. Robertson, the British CIM missionary already mentioned, the falsity of disease in the demonisation of the Chinese was raised and roundly condemned:

The poorer [*Chinese*] classes are filthily dirty; but what of the poorer [*European*] classes at home? There is a fearful amount of immorality; but who can speak plainly of the condition of our towns, and the more covert sin in country districts? The Chinese quarters in Sydney and Melbourne may baffle description; but do the police 'make raids' upon similar places at home? Not until compelled. The writer speaks of 'loathsome diseases which emanate from the Chinese settlements, and seize upon the whites,' etc. In inland China many of our members live for months at a time in Chinese homes, and the C.I.M. as a body, get into close contact with the natives. I have experienced more disagreeable sensations in some lodgings at home than ever I have done in China.²¹

Underspending on health infrastructure in Australia continued for more than a hundred years after the goldrushes began in the 1850s.²² Cheong observed that the premises occupied by Chinese in inner Melbourne or Sydney were almost always owned by European landlords who charged high rents and spent nothing on their properties. Rental properties were subject to inspection by municipal health inspectors. The inadequacy of the health inspection system is illustrated by this report from a Sydney inspector:

Mr. Dansey gave evidence on behalf of himself and Mr. Palmer, as follows: 'Met at Town Hall on Tuesday, December 7, 1875, and went first to Park St., where we inspected several boarding houses, all clean and in orderly condition. In the same street is a wooden house containing eight rooms, occupied Wah Lu Ong, a Chinaman carpenter, employing a number of men. Seventeen people sleep in the house, all countrymen of the Proprietor. In one room 14 feet by 12 feet, were eight beds, the room being partitioned off into bunks like the steerage of a ship; bedding of a very varied kind. In some bunks were mattresses, in others only rags and clothing, mosquito curtains black with dirt. In another room over the shop, were five beds of a similar description. We looked into the kitchen downstairs, which was dirty and smoky. The whole place stinks aloud, the horrible and sickening opium smell pervading all through it.'²³

It might be wondered why such a dangerous threat to the public health was not

21 Robertson, D M in *The Spectator*, 8 February 1889.

22 An important study on this issue is Davison, Graeme, David Dunstan and Chris McConville, (1985), *The Outcasts of Melbourne, Essays in Social History*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin. See discussion on social spending in Butlin, N G, (1964), *Investment in Australian Economic Development, 1861-1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

23 Cole, G R Fitzroy, (1878), John Chinaman Abroad, *Fraser's Magazine*, October, p 448.

immediately closed. The chief source of disease in 19th century Australia was not the Chinese but inadequate sewage disposal and a polluted water-supply. Melbourne drew its drinking water from the Yarra River. As late as the 1890s raw sewage and industrial pollutants were dumped into the river as a matter of course. The 'night waste' of the inner city was dumped into huge pits in Royal Park and eventually found its way through the ground water flow to the river. Public outrage led to the foundation of Melbourne's first urban water and sewerage authority, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in 1892, and the construction by the MMBW of the Yan Yean Reservoir and urban water supply system, and the great outfall sewer to Werribee via the technologically advanced Spotswood Pumping Station.

Yet another way of vilifying the Chinese was to stimulate a fear of being swamped by the millions of Chinese eager to immigrate. The threat was primarily economic, i.e., the fear of low wage competition from Chinese, but political and social concerns were sometimes heard. A Victorian Minister for Education wrote that China's vast population 'could swamp us with a single year's surplus of population.'²⁴ If there was any single theme that has endured as a permanent part of the Australian identity, it is the fear of being 'swamped' by unrestricted immigration and cheap labour. As late as 1923 one of Australia's most loved poets, Banjo Patterson penned:

A Job for McGuinness

Oh, it's dreadful to think in a country like this
With its chances for work, and enjoyment
That a man like McGuinness was certain to miss
Whenever he tried for employment.

He wrote to employers from Bondi to Bourke,
From Woolloomooloo to Glen Innes,
But he found - though his wife could get plenty of work -
There was never a job for McGuinness.

But perhaps - later on - when the Chow and the Jap
Begin to drift down from the tropics,
When a big yellow stain spreading over the map
Provides some disquieting topics,

Oh, it's then when they're wanting a man that will stand
In the trench where his own kith and kin is,
With a frown on his face and a gun in his hand -
Then there might be a job for McGuinness!
(Banjo' Paterson. 1923).

24 Pearson, C H, (1894), *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, London, Macmillan, p 17.

As the images on the previous page shows, fear of competition from cheap labour sources was part of the process of vilification and discrimination but, as recent discussions of the role of labour in American anti-Chinese sentiment has shown, it was only one of the issues involved in the systematic demonisation of the Chinese in Australia. Among the first enactments of the Federal Parliament when it met in 1901, was the passage of anti-Chinese immigration restrictions.

The evil of the trade in opium grown in India was accepted but efforts to ban the trade were strongly resisted by successive British governments.²⁵ Opium production financed government in British India²⁶ and the opium trade was, therefore, 'necessarily a discussion of the dynamics of empire.'²⁷

25 See an American observer's assessment in Holcombe, Hon Chester, and B Broomhall, (c1904) *China's Past and Present: Britain's Sin and Folly*, London, Morgan and Scott. (Holcombe's work originally published as *The Real Chinese Question*).

26 Some of the references consulted in this chapter include:

Eitel, E J, (1875), *An Outline History of the Opium Farm of Hong Kong*, pp 27-35 in *The Friend of China*, London, British Anti-Opium Society, March 1875.

Moule, Rev Arthur E, (1877), *The Opium Question*, London, Seeley and Jackson.

Osler, Sir William, *The Plant Of Joy "God's Own Medicine"*, <http://www.opioids.com/red.htm>

Reed Mary, ed, (1892), *Short Sketch of the China Inland Mission, Location of Australian Missionaries, The Truth About Opium*, Melbourne, China Inland Mission.

Quong Tart, (1887), *A Plea for the Abolition of the importation of opium*, Sydney, John Sands & Co.

Owen, David E, (1968), *British Opium Policy in China and India*, Archon Books.

Trocki, Carl A, (1999), *Opium and Empire: Chinese Society in Colonial Singapore*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press. Butler, Peter, (1977), *Opium and Gold*, Waiura, Martinborough, New Zealand.

Hopkins, F R C, (1909), *The Opium Runners*, Sydney, Websdale Shoemsmith Ltd.

27 Milligan, Barry, (1995), *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in Nineteenth Century British Culture*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia. Introduction, p 5 and p 8. See also Major, op cit.



Melbourne Punch 1 January 1872, p 9. ,
National Library of Australia



The need to protect the income of the government of India stimulated a 'public relations' shift from the 17th and 18th century European admiration for Chinese civilisation to the 19th century belief that the Chinese were an 'inferior' people.²⁸ One writer linked demonisation to the need to keep the profits from selling the narcotic in China:

If you are going to sell opium to people -- and especially if you know that opium is not a particularly healthy substance (if, in fact, you have outlawed it in your own country), it becomes psychologically necessary to change your opinion about the people to whom you sell it.²⁹

This shift in British opinion was reflected in the British colonies in Australasia. But opium, of itself, was not seen as a problem for Europeans. The tendency of colonial politicians and police was to leave them alone unless forced to respond to pressure groups, notably moral reformers.³⁰

The testimonies of Christians, such as T'am Hoi Man, a Methodist convert, tended to confirm the image of the drug as a Chinese issue:

After coming to these gold-fields, I also vainly followed my former practices, hardly observing any duty; thus I associated with evil men, gamblers, and opium smokers, and dissipated my substance.³¹

Sum Frit stated that he had come to Australia in an unsuccessful search for gold and was forced to remain through his addiction to opium:

To drown my disappointment I took opium. I neither cared for eating or drinking, nor yet for clothing if I could only get opium. But I was often very miserable, and my body was too enervated to work.³²

Kwaan Chan Yan, described his addiction in his prebaptismal statement:

I opened a store and made a good deal of money; but my heart was still dark, and I was a smoker of opium. Sometimes I used to smoke one or two pounds a week; and thus my money melted away. I soon lost £500; for this habit made me neglect my business. I was like a man asleep, or walking in darkness, and I could not awake.³³

Cheong's attitude to smoking opium reflected the health issues but also contained a Chinese nationalist response to the British role in the opium trade in China. He said that Christianity was rejected by the Chinese because it was being sold by people whose

28 Note the caution about unduly extending this in terms of a 'conspiracy' of domination in Milligan, op cit.

29 Major, John S. (1996), 'Through a Glass Darkly: Stereotypes of Asians in Western Literature', *Focus on Asian Studies*, Vol V, No 3, *Contemporary Literature*, pp. 4-8, Spring 1986.

30 Australians used the terms 'wowser' for individual moralisers and 'wowserism' is the Australian equivalent of the American term 'bluestocking laws'.

31 *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, London, September 1867, p 3.

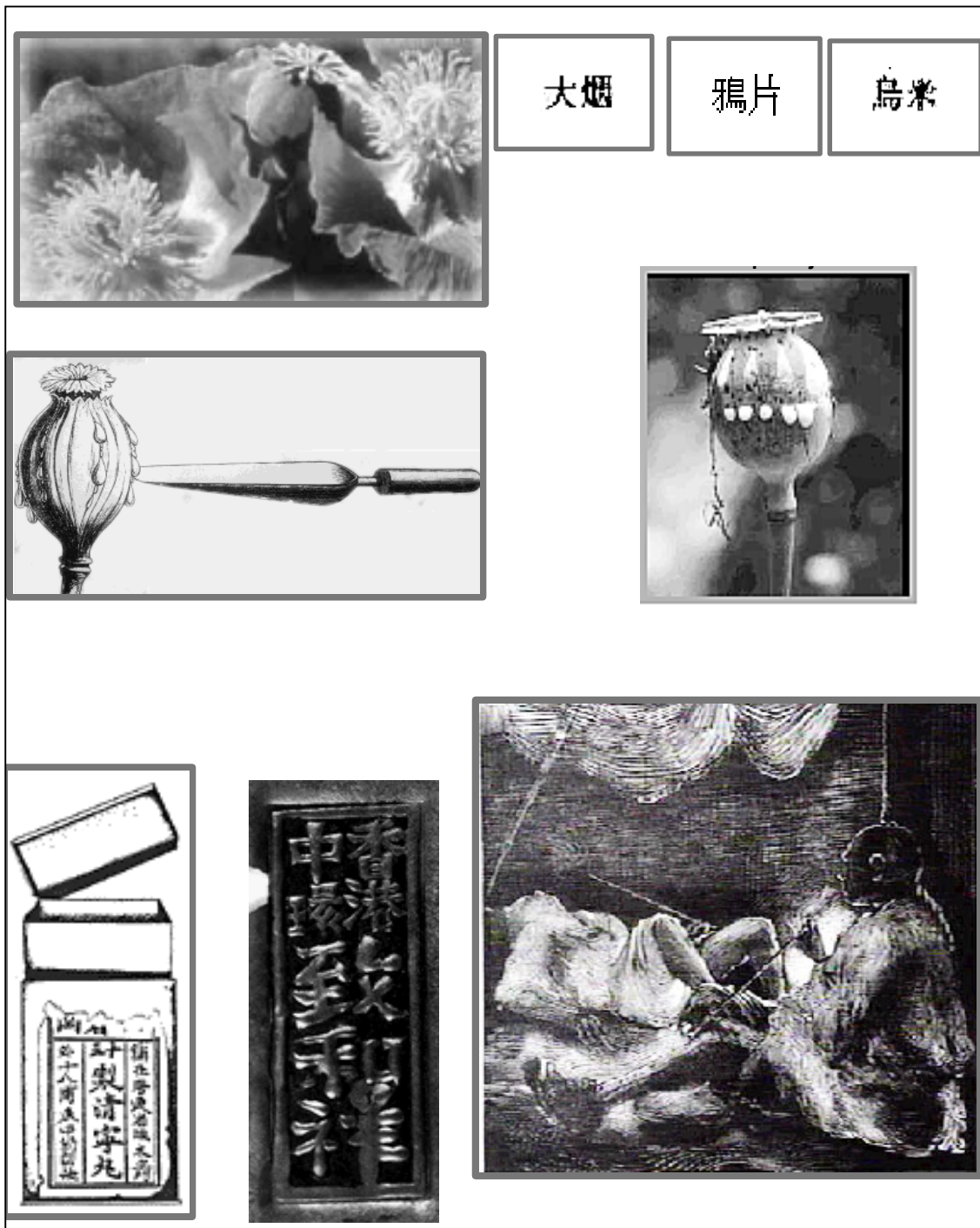
32 *The Mount Alexander Mail*, 21 May 1888.

33 *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, London, July 1868, p 95; September 1868, p 167; October 1868, p 100.

countrymen were profiting from the sale of opium.³⁴ This view was almost universal

Images of Opium

34 Holcombe, Hon Chester, and B Broomhall, (c1904) *China's Past and Present: Britain's Sin and Folly*, London, Morgan and Scott. (Holcombe's work originally published as *The Real Chinese Question*.) See also: Owen, David E, (1968), *British Opium Policy in China and India*, Archon Books. Beeching, Jack, (1975), *The Chinese Opium Wars*, New York, Harcourt B Jovanovich. Waley, Arthur, (1973), *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes*, London, George Allen and Unwin. Lodwick, Kathleen L, (1996), *Crusaders Against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917*, Lexington, University of Kentucky. Cheong Weng Eang, (1997), *Hong Merchants of Canton: Chinese Merchants in Sino-Western Trade, 1684-1798*, London, Curzon.



among 19th century evangelicals. A British Anglican (CMSE) missionary in Central China declared that there was: 'One great obstacle in the prosecution of Missionary work among the Chinese, namely, the connection of our country and countrymen with the opium

trade.³⁵

Opium played a major role in prebaptismal testimonies. Along with gambling it was one of the 'pathologies' of the Chinese that could be changed by the grace of God, through conversion and the coming of the Holy Spirit into man's life. There are many references but fewer statistics. Cheong's evidence about the opium addiction of a number of converts who were considered for catechetical posts with the Anglican Chinese Mission suggest that not all those called were delivered from 'the curse' (Chapter 5).

Cheong described the import of opium tins as shown above left in the preceding illustration in a letter to the Victorian Commissioner for Customs in 1889:

On the other hand the prepared opium , a black treacly stuff, which comes from Hong Kong in small tins of about 1/2 lb each is the kind to which victims of the opium smoking habit is addicted and which causes so much misery and vice.³⁶

The church press, not surprisingly, gave prominence to the testimonies of former opium smokers whose lives had been transformed by their conversion. Quon Fong, in a classic of the genre, said:

I had hard work to give up smoking opium, for I had smoked it for many years, and. . . I could not live without it. I wanted to be baptised, but Ah Ling [James Mouy Ling] told me that I must give up smoking opium altogether before I could be baptised. At last, through God's help, I gave it up, but giving it up nearly killed me. I was very ill, but I thank God, because through His help I have given it up altogether.³⁷

A Methodist convert, Ham Sin Way, described the impact of seeing his friends converted:

First I was a miner, then I became a gardener. . . I smoked opium and spent every day all I gained and did what my wicked heart prompted me to do. I never sent any money to my wife and children; and was a complete slave to opium. My face was as yellow and shrivelled as a dead leaf; my body was like dry wood. I was not like a man, yet I knew no shame. I often tried to escape from this bondage of opium but could not. About ten months ago, I noticed two men pass my door at Moonlight Flat, to go to the Chinese Church at Castlemaine; I knew they were once as great smokers as I was and that they could never give it up till they became Christians. Their appearance was quite changed, and they looked like other men; and I heard people say that, their actions and tempers were quite changed.³⁸

Opium (and gambling) provided anti-Chinese Europeans with a rich source for racial vilification especially when opium was linked to sexuality. It was often presented as the

35 *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Vol VI, No 5, May 1855, p 264. See also Vol II, No 4, April 1851, p 86.

36 Cheok Hong Cheong to the Hon. J B Patterson, Commissioner of Customs, 5 August 1898.

37 *The Wesleyan Chronicle*, 20 May 1871, p 76.

38 *The Wesleyan Chronicle*, 20 January 1869, pp 11-12. *Wesleyan Missionary Notices*, London, April 1869, p 144.

means by which innocent European girls were lured into and kept in prostitution. As Manderson put it:

Opium was . . . the ideal metaphor through which to express those fears which Chinese immigration raised and which the spectre of miscegenation epitomised.³⁹

It was a common 19th century male belief, grounded in a distortion of the Genesis story of the 'fall' of humanity that resulted from the 'apple' eating of 'Eve' and then 'Adam.' 'Eve's' successful tempting of 'Adam' gave women a particular burden of responsibility for human sin. Opium became an explanation for the not inconsiderable number of European women who entered into liaisons with Chinese males:

Time and time again opium was portrayed as the active agent by the use of which the 'sensual' Chinaman corrupted 'innocent' [white] girls. Here is one of many examples from the pages of the *Bulletin*. One day he put a new pipe before me, and made it ready, and after the first whiff from it he or any other man . . . I was a good girl before that.⁴⁰

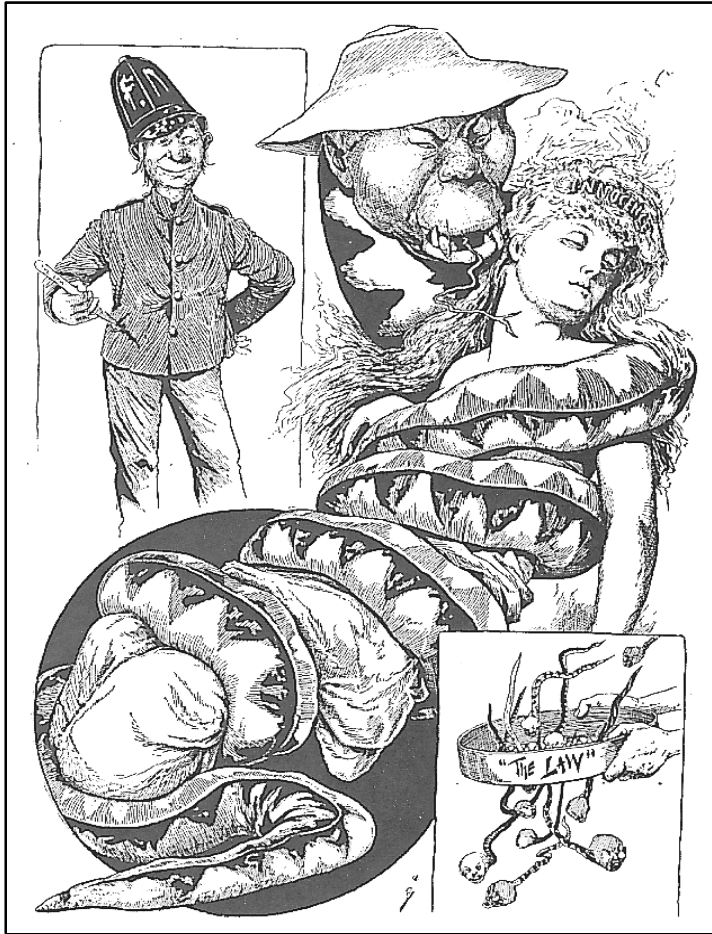
The *Sin Fat* cartoon below comes from the *Bulletin*. It is centred on the seduction of a young European woman with the deadly opium pipe. In the doorway, in *deshabille* symbolic of her descent into prostitution, stands an earlier victim.

39 Manderson, Desmond, (1997), 'Substances as Symbols: Race Rhetoric and the Tropes of Australian Drug History', pp 383-403 in *Social and Legal Studies*, Vol 6, 1997.

40 *The Bulletin*, 21 August 1886, p 14.cited in Manderson, op cit.



The illustration below is another powerful image vilifying the Chinese as a threat to the physical, moral and spiritual well being of a Christian community through the seduction of women. The use of the serpent image from the tempting of Eve in the Garden of Eden, reflects the earlier comment about 19th century views of women as a morally inferior sex.



The name 'Sin Fat', like the labels 'Heathen Chinees' and 'John Chinaman', were in popular use in English-speaking countries during the 19th century. 'Sin Fat' and 'Heathen Chinees' were used, for example, by Bret Harte, the American writer in his 1870 poem shown, with some relevant images, on the following page: The three accompanying drawings show the transpacific transfer of concepts and imagery.

Plain Language from Truthful James

The heathen Chinee is peculiar,
Which the same I would rise to explain.
Ah Sin was his name;
And I shall not deny, In regard to the same,
What that name might imply;
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,
As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third,
And quite soft was the skies;
Which it might be inferred,
That Ah Sin was likewise;
Yet he played it that day upon William
And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game, And Ah Sin took a hand:
It was Euchre. The same He did not understand;
But he smiled as he sat by the table,
With the smile that was childlike and bland.

Yet the cards they were stocked, In a way that I grieve,
And my feelings were shocked,
At the state of Nye's sleeve,
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers,
And the same with intent to deceive.

But the hands that were played,
By that heathen Chinee,
And the points that he made,
Were quite frightful to see,—
Till at last he put down a right bower,
Which the same Nye had dealt unto me.
Then I looked up at Nye, And he gazed upon me;
And he rose with a sigh, And said, "Can this be?
We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor,—"
And he went for that heathen Chinee.

In the scene that ensued I did not take a hand,
But the floor it was strewed,
Like the leaves on the strand
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,
In the game "he did not understand."
In his sleeves, which were long,
He had twenty-four jacks,—
Which was coming it strong, I state but the facts;

And we found on his nails, which were taper,
What is frequent in tapers,—that's wax.
Which is why I remark,
And my language is plain, That for ways that are dark
The heathen Chinee is peculiar,—
Which the same I am free to maintain.
(Bret Harte, 1870, cited in Lounsbury, Thomas R, (ed).
(1912). *Yale Book of American Verse* ,



Australian Version with Aboriginal Person at right:
A Game of Euchre



European women cohabiting with Chinese in 19th century Australia were a mixed group. There were many legitimate marriages (Appendix 12) and probably as many de facto liaisons. It was widely believed, and wrongly, that all women who associated with Chinese were prostitutes – as in the case of Victor Daley’s ‘Chinese Mary’, in which Mary Allen, ‘tired of being treated as a social leper’, is happy to consort with a ‘hideous Chinaman.’⁴¹

It was central to the demonising process that opium, although almost unknown to Europeans, was a destroyer of homes and families and a convenient explanation for the widespread prevalence of prostitution. By introducing European women to opium the Chinese were destroying the foundations of society by threatening the Christian moral foundations upon which Australian society was based. The vilifiers avoided mentioning the official sanctioning of the opium trade by the British Government and the refusal, for many years, by colonial and later federal Australian governments to ban opium imports.

**Opium Corrupts the
the Empire**



British Family and

41 Ouyang Yu (1994), The Other half of the "Other": The Image of Chinese Women in Australian Fiction, *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, No 11 (June 1994), citing Daley, Victor, The Chinese Mary, pp 22-24. in *The Bulletin*, 24 November 1894.

Novels and short stories were another means of vilifying the Chinese. In a comprehensive examination of Chinese and women in Australian writing Ouyang Yu cites Francis Hopkins' short story, 'Heathens of the Bush', in which, Mrs. Long Foo, a European married to a market gardener, is labelled a 'heathen Chinee', whose irreligious practices caused much disgust.⁴² A census collector refers to her as 'what is vulgarly called 'a hard case'' and the author added the following derogatory comment:

Mrs Long Foo – Oh! the irony of Fate! – had no children to her first consort. . . ; but of her second marriage – I shall dignify it by the term, though I have reason to believe no actual ceremony took place (she was bitterly opposed to ceremonials) – she had a numerous brood.⁴³

Mrs Long Foo's degradation fits into the female dimension of anti-Chinese propaganda. But the situation is made worse by her adoption of Chinese religion at the expense of her original belief in Christmas, of which she says, 'there never was no such thing – no time whatsoever . . . Them's old fairy tales, buried for ever and a day.'⁴⁴

Hopkin's attack is unsupported by the facts. Almost all women who married or cohabited with Chinese were careful to have a church wedding whenever possible and to have their children baptised. It must be kept in mind it is a novel and is not referenced to reality. The author drives his didactic point home at the end of the story with this rhetorical question, 'Do you wonder, as I write this last page, that I am in favour of a very White Australia?'⁴⁵

Moral reformers bewailed immorality among or related to the Chinese.⁴⁶ Margaret and Emma Wylie provided one example of many press stories:

Two young girls, apparently about seventeen and fifteen years of age respectively, were noticed in the streets by two of the constables on duty in Little Bourke-street on

42 Ouyang Yu op cit citing Hopkins, F.R.C, Heathens of the Bush, pp 162-71 in *Birds of Passage and Other Stories of Our Own Country*, Sydney, Deaton & Spencer, 1908. See also Ouyang Yu, (1994), The Other half of the "Other";: The Image of Chinese Women in Australian Fiction, in *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, 11 (1994).

43 Hopkins, op cit, pp 163-164..

44 Ibid, p 168.

45 Ibid, p 171.

46 The immigrant English Baptist preacher, Henry Varley, was a prominent evangelical social reformer in Melbourne, and an acquaintance of Cheong.. A list of his published pamphlets is in the reference list. He was well known for his night-time visits, often with the Salvation Army, in rescue missions to save lost girls in the inner city slums of Melbourne. There is a discussion of Varley in Davison, Graeme, David Dunstan and Chris McConville, (1985), *The Outcasts of Melbourne, Essays in Social History*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin. See also Paproth, Darrell, Henry Varley and the Melbourne Evangelicals, *Journal of Religious History*, Vol 25 No 2, June 2001.

Tuesday evening. As the girls had seemingly no good object in hanging about, the constables kept an eye upon them, and noticed that they entered the Chinese quarter. After some little search, the elder girl was found in a Chinaman's house in one of the back lanes, and being there the only female among some five or six Chinamen, was arrested on a charge of vagrancy and brought next morning before the City Court.⁴⁷

There was (and still is) a tendency to blame the victim rather than the causes created by society itself, ie, the lack of social security or support for the disadvantaged coupled with, as Henry Varley's comment below reveals, a lack of social conscience by leading Melbourne landlords:

A SCANDAL AND A DISGRACE TO MELBOURNE

In company with Colonel Barker and Captain Burfoot, I this day paid some visits to the opium dens and immoral houses which abound off Little Bourke-street. I desire to give a resume of the scenes witnessed and the facts which came to our knowledge. Passing from Little Bourke street up a narrow passage we came upon some miserable hovels, erected at the side of the wall of the Alexandra Theatre, measuring about 6ft. in width and in height, by 8ft. in length. Their object is only too clearly disclosed. In the first, upon a wretched bed, just a bundle of rags, lies a poor, degraded woman in the last stage of consumption. Filth and abject poverty meet the eye; there is not a chair or article of furniture in the place; left to perish, the poor creature who only a short time since was one of the flash women of a neighbouring brothel, lies racked with the fatal cough, and is rapidly sinking and passing away. We tried to speak to her of eternal things, but every few moments showed only too palpably that her mind was unhinged and wandering. Colonel Barker had arranged to send some members of the Salvation Army to clean out the wretched hovel, and, now mark! As soon as the Chinese landlord knew it he threatened to turn the dying woman out. These miserable huts (there are four) are built close to the wall of the theatre. Next comes the Chinamans dwelling at the front, where opium dens and couches abound. To an old man, a pensioner, reading in one of the shanties I said, What rent do you pay for this hovel? 4s per week was his reply. And who owns the property? I enquired. Mr B. a gentleman who lives at Wellington parade, Richmond. Property indeed! Is there no law in Melbourne to deal with such cases as these? They are literally haunts of filth, vice and sin. We step across the passage and enter a house where another Chinaman lives. There he sits, stolid and silent as a sphinx. A young woman about twenty-four years of age lies on the opium couch. She has just been smoking, and is half-dazed and stupid. Another young girl reclines at the end of the opium couch apparently waiting her turn: she is not more than eighteen. We speak to her, and she tells us that her father is a resident at Portarlington, and that she has only been six months given to this life of shame, six months of degrading experience which she hates but where can she go? . . .

Into the same room now come two other fine-looking women, both of them daughters of shame. They are hardened by years of degraded experience, but one tells of a mere child of fifteen whom she wishes Colonel Barker to go at once to and

47 *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 1870.

rescue. . . In one brief hour we had seen and conversed with seventeen of these fallen women, and all of them save one were in Chinese opium dens as well as brothels.⁴⁸

In the early days of the goldrushes, women were a minority on the goldfields.⁴⁹ In 1857, there were 43 women for every 100 men. By 1861, the ratio improved to 56:100 and by 1871 it was 83:100. By 1855 there were 17,000 Chinese men in Victoria but three years later only three Chinese women had arrived although there was no prohibition on Chinese female immigration then or at any time in the 19th century.⁵⁰ Only one Chinese woman was ever mentioned in connection with prostitution in Melbourne and she was deported, at Chinese behest, before entering the business.⁵¹ One report suggested that there were 700 European women engaged in full-time prostitution in Melbourne as well as an unknown number of casual workers.⁵²

European women living in Chinese camps in New South Wales were described by Quong Tart and Police Inspector Brennan as hardened prostitutes no longer able to attract European clients.⁵³ After talking with the women, Quong Tart and Brennan rejected the prostitution-opium connection.⁵⁴ For every woman addicted to opium, another was an alcoholic and alcoholism was, for the most part, a European disorder.⁵⁵ A visiting British Methodist missionary from China, the Rev. Grainger Hargreaves, probably came closer to the mark when he observed that:

The unmarried European women in Chinese camps have reached the last stage of their career, the first stage of which was initiated apart from the Chinese. This remark is not based on personal observation but upon the remarks made by public men I have met in travelling through Victoria and other colonies.⁵⁶

The New South Wales Royal Commission on Alleged Chinese Immorality, of 1892, despite repeatedly leading women to attribute their 'immoral' lifestyle to being trapped by opium supplied by the Chinese, reported that the proposition was rejected, out of hand, by most

48 *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 1889.

49 See article 'Women on the Goldfields', prepared by the Sovereign Hill Centre, http://www.sovereignhill.com.au/education/notes_sec_woman.shtml

50 Markus, Andrew, (1983), 'Chinese in Australian history', pp 85-93 in *Meanjin*, No 42, Vol 1.

51 Serle, Geoffrey, (1971), *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press. There were proposals to finance the immigration of Chinese women to divert Chinese in Victoria from European women. See *Illustrated London News*, 30 October 1858, p 452.

52 *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 May 1870.

53 New South Wales Parliament, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, Vol 2, *Report Upon Chinese Camps*, (Brennan and Quong Tart), 15 January 1884. An English Methodist missionary from China, the Rev. Grainger Hargreaves, repeated this assessment. *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 April 1888.

54 New South Wales Parliament, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, Vol 2, *Report Upon Chinese Camps*, (Brennan and Quong Tart), 15 January 1884.

55. *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 February 1870.

56 *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 April 1888.

of the women interviewed.⁵⁷

Only a few of the thousands of prostitutes across Australia lived with Chinese but one it would have been enough for the purveyors of racial prejudice. Bizarre accusations were made, and probably believed by some, such as a story that European 'madams' had established a business recruiting innocent European country girls to work in Chinese brothels. There was no supporting evidence but it was widely accepted as true and illustrated as part of the anti-Chinese pathology of the times.



Cheong always refused to publicly name members of the Chinese community who engaged in activities that contravened colonial law, such as opium smuggling.⁵⁸ In an

57 New South Wales, Report of the Royal Commission on Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality and Charges of Bribery against members of the Police Force, together with Minutes of Evidence to the Committee, 1891-2, pp 387, 399.

58 In addition to refusing to name Victorian opium traders, Cheong also refused to provide information

acrimonious exchange of notes in 1909 he reproved his former friend, William Howat, a Melbourne lawyer and evangelical Anglican layman who was the office manager for the Clarke family of the *Rupertswood* estate at Sunbury, of being fooled by people in the Chinese community who had continued to trade in smuggled opium after the banning of imports in 1906:

You are supporting . . . people who by their devices & efforts are defeating the most salutary of recent enactments, viz the laws against the gambling and opium evils. One of them since the said legislation has devised and the rest have adopted the names of Shanghai Club, Chinese Progress Association etc for their gaming houses & by also distributing palm oil [bribes] liberally to certain officers they have enjoyed an immunity from police raids to which Chinese gamblers of Sydney & Adelaide are constantly subjected and the party who are the greatest gamblers are also the greatest & cleverest of opium smugglers. And further strange as it may appear to you, he whom you look upon as a highly respectable merchant is the greatest adept of them all & his henchman is the thin small man you shook hands with at the Kong Chew Hall on Saturday afternoon. A quiet candid talk with old trusted friend Shi Gean will give you an insight into the men and things Chinese of which you can only have at present but a superficial knowledge & will enable you to open a juster estimate.⁵⁹

Although he knew the criminal element among the Chinese Cheong was not prepared to inform on his countrymen, even when they were engaged in something he hated as much as the opium trade. His defence was that as a Christian minister his duty was to lead a sinner to repentance, conversion and a changed life even if, as he said, it might place him at physical risk:

You mistake my calling when you say 'I am quite at a loss to understand why you as a minister have neglected to lay before the Police the information which appears to be so well within your knowledge' . . . I have in my public discourses & in private dealings reasoned with the gamblers & opium smugglers concerning the iniquity of their ways & I am thankful to note that by God's grace the Word of Truth has not been altogether lost but never in my life have I turned informer upon them & caused their arrest by the Police for the weapons I have been taught to use by my Master are not carnal but spiritual even the gentle suasion of God's own Word. When my own personal safety was said to have been imperilled by my efforts for the suppression of the opium trade & the local agent to the opium farmer of Hong Kong had placarded L Bourke St offering rewards for violence to my person just as the Patterson opium suppression bill was reaching its final stages I was urged by my friends to seek Police protection. My reply was God was my Protector of my allotted span & so long as I was in the way of duty no one could shorten it before its appointed time.⁶⁰

Cheong told Howat that he and William Wong Shi Gean were in danger following

about illegal immigration rackets — see Chapter 8.

59 Cheok Hong Cheong to W Howat, 16 March 1909.

60 Cheok Hong Cheong to W Howat, 20 March 1909.

Howat's release of Cheong's earlier letter.⁶¹ A month later Cheong wrote:

Dear Mr Howat . . . as regards the vices of gambling & opium smoking against which the State legislature has of late & very wisely enacted laws of prohibition towards the securing of which I have contributed no little time & thought & effort I have, not being a judge or magistrate but a Minister of the Gospel, confined myself to public & private exhortation & warning believing that to be clearly my duty. If however I were to do as you urged me I feel that my influence for good with the gambling & opium smokers would be gone. Even this writing to you as a stranger to their nation since the substance has been communicated to them they have treated as an act of hostility to their persons though I meant it against their vices. I trust I have now fully explained to you my position & the guiding principles of my conduct.⁶²

In 1884, Cheong, as the leader of the Victorian Chinese Anti-Opium League, had petitioned the Victorian Government to ban the importation of opium.⁶³ Among the then members of the League, and still active twenty years later, was William Wong She Gean (or Geen) an immigration agent and a former president of the See Yup Association.

In 1885 the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian Chinese Missions, organised by Cheong, sent one of several joint petitions to the Victorian Parliament seeking a ban on the importation of smoking opium. It was signed by over six hundred Chinese, but it failed to generate a government response. Although the tariff on smoking opium (i.e., the specially prepared form of opium prepared in Hong Kong was small (see page 205) the Victorian Government told Cheong that it could not afford to lose any revenue, no matter how trivial the amount might be.

It was not Cheong's first assault on the opium question. In 1879, he wrote that opium was not a Chinese problem alone (Chapter4). It affected people in England, as well as China. His point was that the lack of social sensitivity and compassion shown by tolerance of the trade in opium was hurting the people of Britain just as the British Indian Government was doing in maintaining the trade in opium into China. The co-authors wrote:

Now, let us see what the English newspapers of 1841-2 told us about the state of society there. . . The abjuration of intoxicating drinks was little more than a set-off against the increased consumption of opium . . . In the large manufacturing towns, the druggists now employed their spare minutes throughout the week in making up penny or twopenny packets of opium for sale on Saturdays, when hundreds of poor creatures would come to receive from the long rows on the counter the packets which were to give them stupor until the miserable Monday morning. At this time,

61 Cheok Hong Cheong to W Howat, 30 March 1909.

62 Cheok Hong Cheong to W Howat, 27 April 1909.

63 CMSV Minutes, 19 June; 17 July; 21 August 1974.

thousands of infants were being drugged to death in the manufacturing districts by women in whose charge they had been placed by their mothers, who were at work in factories. At Ashton, the weekly sale of opiates for this purpose, by fifteen dealers, averaged six gallons, two quarts, and one and a half pints. In Preston, twenty-one chemists sold, in a single week, £66 worth of Godfrey's cordial, child's preserver, syrup of poppies, and similar compounds. Children were insured in burial clubs, with a view to their being slowly poisoned, so that their parents might draw the money; until it became a common thing for women among the lower classes to say, when speaking of a neighbour's child, Oh! you may be sure that child won't live; it belongs to a death club.⁶⁴

Cheong explained his participation in the anti-opium movement to the Rev. Dr Steele, an Anglican minister in Sydney, closely associated in the New South Wales opium movement with Mei Quong Tart:

At the Conference of representatives of the Victorian [Temperance] Alliance . . . with the promoters of the prohibition of opium movement in Melbourne held on Wednesday last, the Hon W Anderson informed us that you and Mr Quong Tart are working zealously in the cause in Sydney. We were very pleased to learn the fact, and it has just occurred to me that it may perhaps be helpful to you if I briefly indicated to you what has been done in Melbourne. In August of last year a few friends (Hon W Anderson MLA; W J S Gordon MLA, Mr W Calder, W Shi Geen and myself) met in the office of Mr Calder to deliberate as to what should be done to remove the terrible curse from our midst. It was then suggested we should see the Hon J B Patterson, Commissioner for Customs, which was accordingly done. The Commissioner expressed his entire sympathy with us and said that the matter of £17000 or £18000 duty should not be considered for a moment in face of so great and terrible an evil and intimated that he would do all that lies in his power to secure the object we sought. At the same time, as it involves a question of finance, he desired us to see the Premier also upon the subject. Mr Gillies however was so busy with his Budget and other matters that he made no arrangements for an interview until April of this year.⁶⁵

Cheong soon realised that prohibition on opium imports needed the colonies to act in concert. He took advantage of a Federation Conference in Melbourne to speak to Henry Parkes, Premier of New South Wales, Dr Cockburn of Western Australia and Thomas Playford of South Australia. He outlined the wish of the Chinese to end the importation of opium other than for medicinal purposes hoping, without success, for common legislation.⁶⁶ Although he received a courteous hearing, nothing came of the meeting.

Cheong's reference to the Temperance Alliance and in particular to J B Patterson explains some of the support he received from Europeans. As he mentioned in the note

64 Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy, (1879), *The Chinese Question in Australia, 1879-88*, Melbourne. [A footnote credits this information to Miss Martineau's *History of the Thirty Years Peace*. Book v].

65 Cheok Hong Cheong to the Rev. Dr Steele, 8 September 1890.

66 The caveat 'for medicinal purposes' was taken from the literature of the British Anti-Opium Society.

above, temperance supporters included William Anderson and William Gordon, members of the Victorian Parliament, who had arranged the meeting on 18 July 1889 with J B Patterson who was, at the time, the minister responsible for customs and therefore for the importation of opium.⁶⁷ Like many leading Victorian politicians James Patterson was a self-made man who had worked as a miner, then as the underground manager of a goldmine.⁶⁸ He became a butcher at Castlemaine, entered politics and became a leading Victorian parliamentarian, cabinet minister and, very briefly, premier. In 1891 he decided, like many successful immigrants before him, to visit family to Britain and then to tour the United States. Cheong asked him to make forceful representations to the 'powers that be' in England to end the opium trade. He recommended Patterson to the leaders of the Anglo-Chinese Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade.

Montgomery Villa, Gore St, Fitzroy, Melbourne, 22/12/90

Dear Mr Patterson – My Chinese Friends who are working with me to secure the removal of the Opium curse desire me to take this opportunity of wishing you a “fair wind and favourable tide” both on your voyage to the Land of your Fathers and on your return to this the Land of your Adoption; and to thank you very cordially for the warm sympathy wise counsels and powerful assistance you have rendered the cause of our suffering countrymen ever since the commencement of the Movement for the prohibition of the opium traffic in this and adjacent Colonies.

But much as we know you have done we feel sure that you will be only too glad to do much more for forward the cause of the poor victims wherever and whenever opportunity offers you.

We thought therefore that as you are proceeding to the United Kingdom which still holds the key to the whole situation we would be failing in our duty if we did not entrust you with the prayers and tears of the thousands of victims in this Colony alone who are held spell-bound by this fell-destroyer. You yourself have seen its terrible havocs in your midnight visits and therefore make far more forceful representations to “the powers that be” than any description of mine.

67 *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 July 1889.

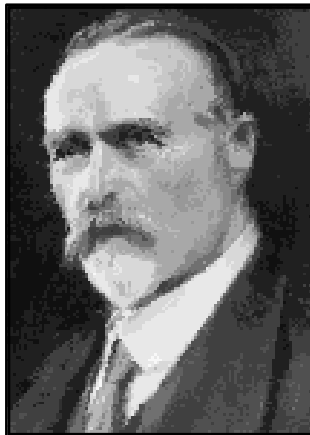
68 The use of marxist analysis to identify colonial politicians and business leaders in an inappropriate context of a European style ruling elite, notably argued by Burgmann, Verity, (1978), 'Capital and Labour: Responses to Immigration in the Nineteenth Century,' pp 20-34 in Curthoys, Ann and Andrew Markus, [eds], (1974), *Who Are Our Enemies, Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Sydney, Hale and Ironmonger, requires great caution. Colonial politicians representing lower house electorates were, by British standards, remarkably democratic in spirit and practice with shifting alliances bringing about short-lived administrations usually free of any recognisable political ideology. Patterson, who held Castlemaine for years, relied heavily on the votes of working people, as did most other Victorian politicians of the time. Vested interests existed but tended to focus on the Upper Houses of the colonial legislatures where a property (and education) restriction applied to the electoral roll. Even here, most members were self-made men and property did not have the same inherited mantle of power and authority associated with the term in, for example, the United Kingdom. The gap between 'radical' lower houses and 'conservative' upper houses that was a feature of Victorian legislative history was really a conflict over attracting votes in a skewed electoral system. Butlin, N G, (1964), *Investment in Australian Economic Development, 1861-1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press provides the best insights into the mixed economy (colonial socialism) of the Australian colonies that suggests that the transfer of Marxist analysis to Australia is, as Marx foresaw, inappropriate.

I enclose herewith clippings from some of the Melbourne papers.
Yours Most Sincerely

The Anglo-Chinese Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade – the Anti-Opium Society – was an evangelically based voluntary society drawing its inspiration from the earlier success of the Quaker-led Anti-Slavery movement.⁶⁹ Prominent Quakers also led the Anti-Opium Society. They included Sir Joseph Pease MP, President, and J G Alexander, a London solicitor, who served as Secretary for many years. Patterson met Pease who wrote to Anderson and Calder asking for information about Cheong. Calder replied that Cheong would make an excellent deputationist and offered to pay £50 towards the costs of a visit. The Society accepted Calder's offer:⁷⁰

It is announced that arrangements have been made for a visit to Great Britain by the eloquent Chinaman, Cheok Hong-cheong (sic) Superintendent of Church Missions to the Chinese at Melbourne, Victoria, who will make a tour of the leading towns in the United Kingdom to address the British public on behalf of his countrymen in China.

William Calder



Courtesy Roads Victoria

William Anderson MLA



State Library of Victoria

The Hon J B Patterson



State Library of Victoria

We are told that Mr Cheook (sic) is a forcible platform speaker, quite at home in the English language, and is thoroughly acquainted with the history of the question he is to address.⁷¹

Cheong addressed 150 meetings held in every major town in Britain and Ireland and each gathering attracted large audiences. As a result of Cheong's success the Society sponsored the Rev. Yen Yung-king, an American educated and ordained Anglican priest from

69 Lodwick, Kathleen L, (1996), *Crusaders Against Opium: Protestant Missionaries in China, 1874-1917*, Lexington, University of Kentucky, p 34.

70 China Inland Mission, *Friend of China*, October 1891, p 230.

71 *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal*, Vol XXXIII, No 1, January 1892, p 43.

Shanghai, to make a similar tour in 1894.⁷² A Chinese woman, Mrs. Ahok, from Foochow, is believed to have been the first Chinese to speak publicly in Britain, on behalf of the Church Missionary Society in Fukien Province.

For a time in the 1890s hopes arose, following a series of favourable votes in the House of Commons sponsored by the Society, that a ban on opium in Australia and Britain might not be much further delayed but the British Government refused to accept the views of the House. In 1893, Patterson formed a short-lived government in Victoria and introduced a bill to prohibit the importation of opium.⁷³ A petition was sent to the Victorian Legislative Council signed by Cheong and 138 members of the Chinese community urging passage of the bill. Unfortunately the Patterson ministry proved short-lived and the legislation lapsed.

The Society's struggle to secure a ban on the production of opium in India continued year after year, progressively gaining support in the House of Commons. A large majority vote in the House of Commons supported an anti-opium resolution and forced the British Government to establish a formal enquiry. The Anti-Opium Society and its Australian supporters, including Cheong, felt constrained to wait until the Opium Royal Commission submitted its report. They waited throughout 1894 while hearings proceeded in England, India, Southeast Asia and Hong Kong.⁷⁴ When the final report was issued, Joshua Rowntree, of the Quaker chocolate manufacturing family, an executive member of the Anti-Opium Society, produced an overview of the 2000 pages of evidence given by 900 people.⁷⁵ After receiving a copy from Alexander, Cheong wrote a note of thanks to Rowntree mentioning that the Chairman of the Royal Commission, Lord Brassey, had been rewarded with the Governorship of Victoria.⁷⁶ The Royal Commission had recommended against changes to the trade in Indian Opium and had stressed the importance of the revenue to British rule in India. Cheong and his associates felt that it was impossible, out of vice-regal courtesy, to attack the findings of the Royal Commission, i.e., to attack the Queen's representative in Victoria.

In 1898 Cheong accepted the Anti-Opium Society's invitation to become a

72 Lodwick, Kathleen L, (1996), op cit, p 52-3.

73 Mss in Cheok Hong Cheong's notebook for 1893.

74 *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 1889.

75 Rowntree, Joshua, (1895), *The Opium Habit in the East: A Study of the Evidence Given to the Royal Commission on Opium, 1893-4*, Westminster, P S King and Son. See also *Friend of China*, May 1895, pp 132-144.

76 Cheok Hong Cheong to J G Alexander, 19 June 1895. Canon Wilberforce was the son of the great evangelical reformer, William Wilberforce.

Corresponding Member of the Executive Committee. This was a singular honour for him although he expressed worries about the membership of one of the Mathieson family (of the opium trading company Jardine Mathieson) on the Committee.⁷⁷ It was only after he was assured that Mathieson had cut all links with the family business that he accepted. Given that Cheong was never likely to return to the United Kingdom or to meet Mathieson, his concerns may seem a little excessive but, as has been mentioned before, he was never one to allow his principles to be compromised.

The Federation of the Australian Colonies in 1901 transferred customs and immigration from the individual colonies to the new Commonwealth Government. Cheong's national leadership among Chinese-Australians was helped by the location of the new Federal Parliament in Melbourne. He found active support for the anti-opium cause within the governing party in Senator William Maloney and the Hon Samuel Mauger, Postmaster-General in Alfred Deakin's government.⁷⁸ Cheong wrote to the Society in London to report that the Federal House of Representatives had unanimously passed a resolution calling for prohibition of the importation of opium other than for medicinal purposes.⁷⁹ A Sydney Christian delegation led by Elliott Johnson, a member of the House of Representatives (later Speaker), had earlier met with Prime Minister Deakin and the successful vote followed. There was no immediate response from the Deakin ministry.

The Victorian Premier, Thomas Bent (see Chapter 5), provided a significant boost to the anti-opium movement when he introduced a bill, under the residual health powers of the state, into the Victorian Parliament in late 1905 to prohibit the sale of opium in Victoria and imposing heavy penalties upon all sellers of opium.⁸⁰ The Victorian Act came into effect on the 1st May 1906.

On the 29 June 1905, the Rev. John Young Wai, Minister of the Chinese Presbyterian Church, Crown Street, Sydney, brought together, under the auspices of the NSW branch of the Chinese Empire Reform Association (CERA), the leading Chinese merchants of Sydney. They agreed to support a mass meeting in Sydney to gain support for a national ban on opium imports.⁸¹ Cheok Hong Cheong came from Melbourne to participate in the

77 J G Alexander to Cheok Hong Cheong, 27 April 1894.

78 Cheok Hong Cheong to Dr Moloney, MP, 17 August 1905.

79 Cheok Hong Cheong to J G Alexander, 25 October 1905.

80 Cheok Hong Cheong to Premier Thomas Bent, 12 October 1907.

81 China Inland Mission, *Friend of China*, October 1905, p 41.

meeting and also gave some public addresses on behalf of the CERA.⁸² The subsequent vote in the Federal House of Representatives was part of the outcome of this movement.

A national petition organised by the CERA was signed by over 200,000 people supporting a ban on the importation of smoking opium. On August 25th, Cheong and a Chinese delegation presented Prime Minister Alfred Deakin with the petition. The Prime Minister was sympathetic but was still not prepared to make a firm commitment stating that some among the Chinese had shown great skill in avoiding restrictions on immigration and he was concerned that they would continue the opium trade by adding to the existing smuggling of the drug.⁸³ The Prime Minister dismissed the argument put by the Chinese delegation that Europeans were at risk. He saw opium as a Chinese problem that would be solved as the Chinese community disappeared through immigration restrictions. Cheong gave this account, in a number of letters, of the meeting with the Prime Minister:

Our Prime Minister's (Mr. Alfred Deakin) reply to the Chinese Deputation noted in my letter of the 25th Oct last was of the same unsatisfactory nature as that which he gave our first Deputation some 16 years ago & so when we came out of the Ministers room I told Sam. Mauger M.P. a very potent member of the Deakin party but a very warm supporter of our cause that the reply was exactly like that which he gave us many years ago & that after sifting the word sympathy which he bestowed so liberally upon us could find not a grain of comfort & that I had the profoundest distrust in the man. My words had evidently stung Mauger to the quick for he went home with the Prime Minister that evening & had him closely closeted until he wrung from him a definite promise of action so that when we followed up the matter by interviewing the State Premiers & securing their cooperation & by a Resolution in the Federal House of Representatives the Prime Minister was left no option but to issue the Proclamation prohibiting the importation of opium except for medicinal purposes.⁸⁴

A summary of the steps that led to the ban by the Deakin Government appeared in the *Sydney Star* of 1 October 1906 and was reprinted in London by the Anti-Opium Society.⁸⁵ The Chinese were the principal cause of the federal prohibition of the importation and sale of smoking opium into Australia.

Cheong's work on behalf of the Chinese community depended on the support of Chinese businessmen. When support was not forthcoming he relied on their reluctance to confront him. His refusal to inform on drug smugglers, mentioned earlier, was a mixture

82 China Inland Mission. *Friend of China*, May 1906., p 67.

83 Cheok Hong Cheong to Joshua Rowntree, 6 January 1906. See also *Friend of China*, October 1905, pp 42-43. While no figures are available there were continuing efforts by Chinese to smuggle opium into Victoria, even when it was a legal import.

84 Cheok Hong Cheong to J G Alexander, 19 March 1906.

85 China Inland Mission, *Friend of China*, January 1905, pp 6-7.

of the spiritual and the secular. In everyday practice he had to balance his Christian ministry against the social and cultural costs of betraying his countrymen. There was also, it may be surmised, a nationalist reason for his silence. To have informed against members of the Chinese community would have been an encouragement to critics of the Chinese and Cheong had no reason to assist in the demonising his countrymen. Cheong's struggle against opium was only one of several areas in which he took an active leading role on behalf of his countrymen. Several of these matters are examined in the succeeding chapters, with the focus chiefly on his constant struggle to defend the Chinese in various matters relating to immigration and employment. Cheong was dedicated to defending the Chinese and fighting against prejudice wherever it occurred. His greatest triumph was undoubtedly his role in achieving the national ban on the importation of smoking opium.

This chapter has sought to address the major areas in which the Chinese were 'demonised' or vilified in 19th and early 20th century Australia. Tan has written about the Chinese in Southeast Asia and his comments apply with equal force to the way in which anti-Chinese interests in Australia sought to make the Chinese a marginalised community in Australia:

Ethnic conflict is very often driven by fear — real or imagined — of a community's future in the realms of physical security, political, economic and cultural. Where states are unable to or do not provide adequate protection for the ethnic group under siege, fear drives an ethnic group into developing a sense of exclusiveness and taking their own unilateral measures to ensure their security.⁸⁶

The Chinese, especially in Victoria, were fortunate to have a man whose language skills and intellectual abilities allowed him to be a forceful defender of their rights against the determined efforts of some sections of Australian society to condemn a whole group of people without a proper respect for their common humanity.

86 Tan, Eugene, (1999), 'The Self-Reconceptualising Dilemma of the Citizen-Chinese in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, Conference, Reconceptualising the Southern Chinese: From Community to Diaspora, Australian National University, 27 February 1999.