

## Dr George On Lee (葉七秀): Not Just a Medical Practitioner in Colonial Australia

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**Abstract:** The period between the gold rushes and the federation of the Australian colonies was accompanied by a dynamic engagement of Chinese elites. Very little research has been conducted on one of these men from Sydney, Dr George On Lee. He practiced medicine across four colonies and had interests in market-gardening and mining. His network, which included wealthy merchants and colonial politicians, was extended during the 1887 visit by the Chinese Commissioners. On Lee appeared to be a respected and integrated member of both the Chinese and European colonial communities, but that did not insulate him from a complex set of detrimental circumstances in the colonies towards the end of his life. His reputation was blemished when Chinese market gardeners in his employ charged him with unfair labour practices. His livelihood was further curtailed following increased regulation of the medical profession, which barred him from advertising as a doctor. On Lee's history reinforces the complex dynamics that played out between the Sydney Chinese elites and the communities they belonged to as affiliates of two great empires and a colony. The various facets of On Lee's life serve as a reminder of the blurring identities of Chinese Australians prior to federation and the loss experienced by this community as the century drew to a close.

**Keywords:** Chinese doctor, market gardener, immigration restriction, Chinese Commissioners, litigation

### Introduction

In 1887, two Chinese Commissioners visited the Australian colonies to investigate the conditions their compatriots were living under.<sup>1</sup> In each different colony, they were hosted by resident Chinese elites. Most of these men were merchants, but one of them, Dr George On Lee, was a medical doctor. Although aspects of On Lee's life intersected with the other Chinese elites, there were several points of difference between them. Researchers have met historian Henry Min-Hsi Chan's challenge to produce "scholarly studies and biographies of individual Chinese" in relation to many of these elites, but a similar study of Dr On Lee is overdue.<sup>2</sup> Who was Dr George On Lee and what was his place in the Chinese and European communities of colonial Australia?<sup>3</sup> How did he intersect with his contemporary elites and what does this reveal about the Australian colonies in the late nineteenth century? This article offers one perspective on Dr On Lee. It is not a biographical sketch reflecting On Lee's "singularity"; rather it uses a micro-historiographical approach, considering the particular in order to explore wider historical themes.<sup>4</sup>

Julia Laite has proposed that small histories have a "continuing power ... to explain the past and to connect it to our present".<sup>5</sup> Similarly Jill Lepore has suggested that by examining a particular

<sup>1</sup> Ian Welch, "Alien Son: The Life and Times of Cheok Hong Cheong (Zhang Zhouxiang), 1851–1928," PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2003, pp. 251–267.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Min-Hsi Chan, "The Chinese Communities in Australia: The Way Ahead in a Neglected Field of Research," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 10, 1 (1989): 35.

<sup>3</sup> The contemporary term "European" has been used as shorthand to incorporate the white colonial community, who originated predominantly from the British Empire, but came also from Europe and America.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, "Micro-history: Two or Three Things I Know About It," *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (2003): 10–35; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, "The Singularization of History: Social History and Microhistory Within the Postmodern State of Knowledge," *Journal of Social History*, 36, 3 (2003): 701–35.

<sup>5</sup> Julia Laite, "The Emmet's Inch: Small History in a Digital Age," *Journal of Social History*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shy118>.

life, extrapolations can be made to the whole culture.<sup>6</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis suggested that with microhistories “imaginative leaps” can be made.<sup>7</sup> This approach has proved useful for Chinese-Australian colonial studies, where primary sources frequently present difficulties.<sup>8</sup> Kate Bagnall and others have used a combination of biography and microhistory, often sifting through digital archives to successfully explore Chinese-Australian histories.<sup>9</sup> A similar approach has been deployed for this article.

Much of the primary evidence here has been gleaned from digitised English press reports and government records. The Chinese-Australian point of view is therefore absent, a challenge that Anna Kyi has noted in research of nineteenth-century Chinese-Australian history.<sup>10</sup> Although gaps exist, this portrait of Dr George On Lee serves up glimpses of a prominent Chinese-Australian medical practitioner in pre-federation Sydney. It outlines his diverse sources of wealth and his social and political interactions in the European- and Chinese-Australian communities. It also seeks to enrich the understanding of a vibrant migrant community and to clarify how changing attitudes in the last three decades of the nineteenth century affected a Chinese professional. It exposes the bonds, fissures, hierarchies and attitudes between and within communities in the decades leading up to federation, during which time legislation solidified into the White Australia Policy.

### Establishing a Life in the Colonies

It has been well established that in the mid-nineteenth century, the combined impacts of the Opium Wars, Manchu dynasty woes and gold rushes provided motivation for Chinese, particularly those far from the northern administrative centre, to leave their homeland and seek alternative means of survival. The Australian colonies attracted southern Chinese, predominantly from the Pearl River Delta region.<sup>11</sup> As well as gold miners, market gardeners and merchants, there were hoteliers, cabinetmakers, opium dealers, doctors and others.<sup>12</sup> These mostly male migrants arrived with strong clan linkages and kinship obligations.<sup>13</sup> Some of them, chiefly merchants, became wealthy leaders of their Australian colonial communities.

<sup>6</sup> Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *Journal of American History* 88, 1 (June 2001): 129–44.

<sup>7</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, “Natalie Zemon Davis: An E-mail Interview with Martyn Lyons and Monica Azzolini,” *History Australia*, 2, 3 (December 2005): 91–95.

<sup>8</sup> Kate Bagnall, “Digging Deep: Sources for Chinese-Australian History in NSW,” *Locality*, 11, 2 (2000): 4–12.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Kate Bagnall, “Writing Home from China: Charles Allen’s Transnational Childhood,” in *Migrant Nation: Australian Culture, Society and Identity*, ed. P. Arthur (London, New York: Anthem Press, 2017), pp. 91–118; Kate Bagnall, “Crossing Oceans and Cultures,” in *Australia’s Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, ed. David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2012), pp. 121–44; Sophie Couchman, “Chang Woo Gow: The Man and the Giant,” in *An Angel by the Water: Essays in Honour of Dennis Reginald O’Hoy*, ed. M. Butcher (Kennington, Victoria: Holland House Publishing, 2015), pp. 85–101; Gary Osmond, “Kwok Chun Hang, Swimmer: Researching Chinese Australian Sport History through Digitised Newspapers,” *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, 6 (2013): 64–74.

<sup>10</sup> Anna Kyi, “Finding the Chinese Perspective: Locating Chinese Petitions against Anti-Chinese Legislation during the Mid to Late 1850s,” *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, 8 (2009): 1832–2522.

<sup>11</sup> Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1923), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> William Young, *Report of the Condition of the Chinese Population in Victoria* (Melbourne: John Ferres Government Printer, 1868), <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1868No56.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Ching Fatt Yong, “The Chinese in New South Wales and Victoria, 1901–1921 with Special Reference to Sydney and Melbourne,” PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1966, pp. 53–56.

By 1881 there were 10,205 Chinese residents in the colony of New South Wales. Just over 1 per cent lived in Sydney, four times more than had lived there in 1871.<sup>14</sup> One of these new Cantonese arrivals was Dr George On Lee (葉七秀 Cantonese: Yip Chat-Sau, Mandarin: Ye Qixiu).<sup>15</sup> He disembarked the *Samuel Wallace* in Melbourne in 1871 but made his way to the gold-mining area of Parkes, New South Wales. There, in 1874, the 37-year-old doctor became naturalised, ostensibly to purchase land, but also with an eye on colonial office.<sup>16</sup> Presumably he was already a confident English-speaker with established influence and networks, because just two months later newspapers announced the candidacy of “his celestial Highness” for the NSW Legislative Assembly.<sup>17</sup> Quite possibly On Lee was the first Chinese person to attempt to enter parliament in the Australian colonies. His bid for the Goldfields West seat was, however, unsuccessful against the incumbent (Scottish-born solicitor David Buchanan).<sup>18</sup> It would take another 114 years before the first ethnically Chinese person was elected to a parliament in Australia (Helen Sham-Ho in New South Wales).<sup>19</sup>

It is perhaps surprising that Dr On Lee was the first Chinese person in the Australian colonies to attempt election, because other elites were more likely candidates, especially Quong Tart. Quong Tart is invariably referenced as the best-known Chinese-Australian leader of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> As a child, he arrived in New South Wales with his uncle and soon became a ‘protégé’ of the Simpson family from Scotland. In time he developed into a wealthy miner, charismatic tea merchant, philanthropist and sports patron. Well respected in both the Chinese and European communities, Quong Tart was a passionate advocate for Chinese interests.<sup>21</sup> Margaret, his English wife, claimed that in 1874 her husband could have become the parliamentary member for Braidwood, New South Wales, but he did not stand.<sup>22</sup> Quong Tart was involved in civic life in other ways, for example, by becoming a commissioner tasked with enquiring into conditions of Chinese camps in the Riverina in 1883 and taking a place on the Public School Board at Bell’s Creek. He also tried to influence governments with petitions (including against opium).<sup>23</sup> On Lee had no such civic engagement.

<sup>14</sup> “NSW – 1881 Census,” *Australian Data Archive, Historical*, pp. 112–113, <http://hccda.ada.edu.au/pages/NSW-1881-census-02>.

<sup>15</sup> The name George On Lee has been used throughout this article to reflect press reports and official documents. His Chinese name, 葉七秀, is taken from “榮旋誌喜,” *Guang yi hua bao [Chinese Australian Herald]*, 25 March 1898: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article168657091>. He was referred to as George Ong Lee in Margaret Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart; or, How a Foreigner Succeeded in a British Community* (Sydney: W.M. Maclardy, 1911), p. 28, <http://setis.library.usyd.edu.au/ozlit/pdf/fed0048.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Register of Naturalization 1834–1903, NSW State Archives and Records, Reel 130, NRS 1040 Item 4, 1208.

<sup>17</sup> “Items of Latest News,” *Singleton Argus and Upper Hunter General Advocate*, 12 December 1874: 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article77248822>.

<sup>18</sup> “Former Members,” *Parliament of NSW*, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/formermembers/pages/former-members-index.aspx?filter=B>.

<sup>19</sup> “Helen Sham-Ho,” *Parliament of NSW*, [https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/profiles/sham-ho\\_helen-wai-har.aspx](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/members/Pages/profiles/sham-ho_helen-wai-har.aspx).

<sup>20</sup> Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors* (Sydney: State Library NSW Press, 1997), p. 109; Sophie Couchman, “Then in the Distance Quong Tart Did We See’: Quong Tart, Celebrity and Photography,” *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, 8 (2006): 159.

<sup>21</sup> Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart*, pp. 4–12.

<sup>22</sup> Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart*, pp. 9 and 13.

<sup>23</sup> Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart*, pp. 10 and 31–57.

In nineteenth-century Victoria, Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong and Louis Ah Mouy were amongst the “wealthiest and most influential Chinese residents”. None of them attempted parliamentary membership either, but they engaged politically as activists for their community’s rights.<sup>24</sup> Multilingual Lowe Kong Meng’s entrepreneurship reached across multiple colonies. He had shares in mining, sugar and finance companies, and he owned a fleet of ships that transported goods and labour.<sup>25</sup> Louis Ah Mouy, a carpenter, arrived in Melbourne in 1851, contracted to construct houses. When gold was discovered he notified his brother, resulting in the mass migration of Cantonese to the goldfields. He rapidly established himself as a merchant, miner, rice mill and market garden owner, property speculator, and bank shareholder and chairman. Somewhat different to these two men was Cheok Hong Chong. Although he was also a businessman and landowner, as a Church of England missionary he wielded an entirely different type of influence. These three dynamic Victorian leaders expressed their politics, often jointly, through pamphlets and petitions.<sup>26</sup> For example, in 1879, they authored *The Chinese Question in Australia*, which appealed for fairer treatment of the Chinese community.<sup>27</sup> Marilyn Lake characterised these Chinese activists as “well educated, literate in [multiple] languages, eloquent and articulate.”<sup>28</sup> No record of On Lee’s similar involvement has been found, but as will be shown, all these men became involved in the official 1887 visit to the colonies by the Chinese Imperial Commissioners.

Having failed to win a parliamentary seat, Dr On Lee continued providing medical consultations to the general population, travelling widely to do so.<sup>29</sup> According to Morag Loh, there were Chinese doctors and herbalists on colonial goldfields from the 1850s. Like On Lee, some had regular treatment circuits (including Yee Quock Ping, who travelled Victoria from to St Arnaud to Ballarat), while others consulted in a single area.<sup>30</sup> Ah Bing and Tet Fong based themselves in Armidale, New South Wales, while James Lamsey had a successful practice in Sandhurst, Victoria.<sup>31</sup> Initially, On Lee limited his treatment circuit to New South Wales, consulting in hotel rooms in regional towns including Molong, Orange, Bathurst, Yass and Goulburn.<sup>32</sup> Later he advertised consultation dates in Melbourne, Ballarat, Horsham and Castlemaine in Victoria, and

<sup>24</sup> Kate Bagnall, “Golden Shadows on a White Land: An Exploration of the Lives of White Women who Partnered Chinese Men and their Children in Southern Australia, 1855–1915,” PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006, p. 42.

<sup>25</sup> Ching Fatt Yong, “Lowe Kong Meng (1831–1888),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University [hereafter ANU], <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lowe-kong-meng-4043/text6431>, published first in hardcopy 1974.

<sup>26</sup> Ian Welch, “Cheong, Cheok Hong (1851–1928),” *Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia*. <http://www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/biogs/CH00010b.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Marilyn Lake, “The Chinese Empire Encounters the British Empire and its ‘Colonial Dependencies’: Melbourne, 1887,” *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 9 (2013): 179–86.

<sup>28</sup> Lake, “Chinese Empire Encounters”, p. 179.

<sup>29</sup> “Advertising,” *Evening News*, 8 June 1875: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article130504296>.

<sup>30</sup> Morag Loh, “A Country Practice: Thomas Chong – Herbalist of Bairnsdale, Victoria; His Place, His Practice, His Peers,” in *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an International Public Conference Held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History*, ed. Paul Macgregor (Museum of Chinese Australian History: Museum of Chinese Australian History, 1995), pp. 15–21.

<sup>31</sup> Philippa Martyr, *Paradise of Quacks* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002), pp. 74–75.

<sup>32</sup> “Advertising,” *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 20 February 1875: 34, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70488815>, [henceforth ATCJ].

in Brisbane and Adelaide too.<sup>33</sup> Like other nineteenth-century doctors, On Lee supplied his own medicine.<sup>34</sup> Morag Loh has found that early-twentieth-century Chinese medical practitioners developed lucrative mail order businesses for their herbs and potions too.<sup>35</sup> As early as 1875 though, On Lee provided some form of mail order medicine for his country patients.<sup>36</sup>

Dr On Lee became widely known. Travelling in Australia in the 1870s, journalist Henry Cornish had an encounter with a Chinese doctor. He described his diamond ring and “manners, appearance and conversation of a well-bred English gentleman”.<sup>37</sup> Philippa Martyr has identified this “famous Chinese Doctor of Sydney” with the “tremendous practice” and “big fortune” as George On Lee.<sup>38</sup> These observations about demeanour and diction corroborate the view (introduced in relation to his political ambitions) that On Lee must have spent considerable time in an English territory prior to his arrival in the Australian colonies. It also explains why he was so readily accepted as a doctor by the European community.

According to On Lee, he graduated from “Kum Bee” Hospital, Canton (Guangzhou), before working as a doctor for ten years at “Hoy Yuck Hong” hospital, and in London. He claimed to effect “extraordinary cures in the treatment of internal diseases, of cancers, tumours, and abscesses” and that patients from all the colonies came to him for treatment.<sup>39</sup> He confidently asserted in the press that, without being told, he could discern his patients’ ailments as heart disease, liver complaints or inflammation of the lungs, and could treat several maladies successfully, including rheumatism and broken limbs.<sup>40</sup> According to the well-articulated testimonies published under European names (but most likely written by On Lee), this “Chinese doctor” was honest, informing “when the case was a hopeless one” but otherwise providing cures where other doctors had failed. It was also suggested that he was attended by “crowds” of colonists and had “astonished the good folks by his gentlemanly deportment and the suavity of his manners” in contrast to “others that profess the healing art”.<sup>41</sup> Of course, as these claims were tools to embellish On Lee’s reputation through advertising, they are not necessarily true.

While it is impossible to test the veracity of these statements, it is a favourable indication that no legal cases were reported against On Lee in the newspapers of the day, as they were against other dubious practitioners. He appears more credible than some colonial doctors, as shown during an inquest into the death of one patient, a severely burned girl. After the original attending doctor failed to dress the child’s wounds and became unavailable when her condition deteriorated,

<sup>33</sup> “Advertising,” *Leader*, 21 June 1890: 46, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article198183845>; “Advertising,” *The Telegraph*, 27 August 1888: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article175119205>; “Advertising,” *Adelaide Observer*, 1 February 1890: 22, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article159542816>.

<sup>34</sup> “Advertising,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 November 1875: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13363429> [henceforth *SMH*].

<sup>35</sup> Loh, “A Country Practice,” pp. 20–22.

<sup>36</sup> “Advertising,” *SMH*, 30 July 1875: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13357992>; “Water Police Court,” *SMH*, 13 May 1876: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13373720>.

<sup>37</sup> H. Cornish, *Under the Southern Cross* (Madras: Higginbotham and Co., 1880), pp. 245–246, cited in Martyr, *Paradise of Quacks*, pp. 73–74.

<sup>38</sup> Martyr, *Paradise of Quacks*, pp. 74–75.

<sup>39</sup> “George On Lee. A Distinguished Chinese Doctor,” *Snowy River Mail and Tambo and Croajingolong Gazette (Supplement)*, 18 March 1893: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197114083>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> “Advertising,” *Sydney Mail*, 20 February 1875: 254, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article162486484>; “Advertising,” *ATCJ*, 3 October 1874: 39, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70485371>.

they sent for On Lee. The girl's grateful father testified on behalf of Dr On Lee. Over several hours, On Lee had helpfully "washed and dressed the wounds", providing medicine, lotions and relief before her inevitable death.<sup>42</sup> It is therefore clear that the non-Chinese community patronised Chinese herbalists and medical men like On Lee, sustaining their careers throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

On Lee was drawn to live and work in Sydney but continued providing healthcare regionally. Sydney was a vibrant city, "alive with foot passengers" enjoying a "highway full of omnibuses" with shops selling the "latest fashions", "newest books", and "freshest designs".<sup>43</sup> The Sydney Chinese community comprised a socio-economic spectrum and the Chinese elite mixed with captains of industry and immersed themselves in public affairs. The Sydney Chinese community was largely male. In 1881, one newspaper reported the presence of twenty-seven Chinese women in Sydney. It exoticised their footbinding, silk clothing and jewellery, reporting that the women had been "imported" through agencies at £38 each, or auctioned off as wives to wealthy Chinese men in Australia.<sup>44</sup> Sophie Couchman, however, has identified that Chinese women came to the colonies as wives, servants or for prearranged marriages.<sup>45</sup>

George On Lee's wife, Louisa, was not one of these Chinese women; she was English.<sup>46</sup> Over a thousand Chinese men officially married white women in the colonies of Victoria and New South Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century and many other partnerships went uncertified.<sup>47</sup> There was speculation in the colonies about why white women would marry Chinese men, but the reasons were the usual ones of "love, comfort, security, sexual fulfilment and the formation of family".<sup>48</sup> Twenty-three-year-old Louisa Walden, the daughter of a pensioned mariner, arrived in New South Wales from London on the *Juliet* in 1876.<sup>49</sup> She and her younger sister Isabella travelled saloon, indicating a level of affluence.<sup>50</sup> It is not known where Louisa and George met, but they married at St John's Church, Parramatta in April 1878.<sup>51</sup> Their marriage certificate records Louisa's husband as being fifteen years her senior, although according to his naturalisation papers George may have been five years older than that.

They welcomed a daughter, Louise, that same year. Four other children were registered to Louisa and George in New South Wales between 1880 and 1887: Catherine Eleanor, Arthur Robert,

<sup>42</sup> "Parkes," *ATCJ*, 12 December 1874: 10, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article70487087>.

<sup>43</sup> H.M. Franklyn, *A Glance at Australia in 1880* (Melbourne: Victorian Review Publishing Company, 1881), cited in *Getting it Together, from Colonies to Federation*, Museum of Australian Democracy, Canberra, <http://getting-it-together.moadoph.gov.au/new-south-wales/people-and-places/resource-1.html>.

<sup>44</sup> "Chinese Women in Sydney," *Armistead Express and New England General Advertiser*, 15 July 1881: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article192858727>.

<sup>45</sup> Sophie Couchman, "Oh, I Would Like to See Maggie Moore Again!: Selected Women of Melbourne's Chinatown," in *After the Rush: Regulation, Participation and Chinese Communities in Australia 1860–1940*, eds. John Fitzgerald, Sophie Couchman, Paul Macgregor (Fitzroy, Victoria: Arena Printing and Publishing Pty Ltd, 2004), p. 174.

<sup>46</sup> Marriage Certificate 4363/1878, NSW Births Deaths and Marriages [hereafter NSWBDM].

<sup>47</sup> Kate Bagnall, "Crossing Oceans and Cultures" in *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, eds. David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2012), p. 123.

<sup>48</sup> Bagnall, "Golden Shadows," p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> UK Naval Officer and Rating Service Records, 1802–1979, Entry Book of Certificates, Piece 071, p. 115, Ancestry.com.

<sup>50</sup> NSW Australia Unassisted Passenger Lists, 1826–1922, *Juliet*, 4 July 1876, Ancestry.com.

<sup>51</sup> Register of Naturalization 1834–1903, NSW State Archives and Records, Reel 130, NRS 1040 Item 4, 1208; Marriage Certificate 4363/1878, NSWBDM.

Ernest Walden (deceased at 6 months) and Violet.<sup>52</sup> They also had two children whose births were not registered in the Australian colonies, George and Olive. “Master G. On Lee” was recorded as an arrival with his parents and two sisters in Sydney on the *Tannadice*.<sup>53</sup> He had been born in King’s Lynn, Norfolk, England in 1881, on a family visit.<sup>54</sup> While in England, Dr On Lee set up practice in Harley Street, prompting the *Lyttelton Times* (from across the world in the colony of New Zealand) to speculate facetiously about his qualifications.<sup>55</sup> If they had checked the *British Medical Journal*, they would have charged chicanery too. This journal reported on two “Chinamen in the colonies who call themselves doctors”. One was in Ballarat (probably Yee Quock Ping), the other was On Lee. It was asserted that the Sydney doctor charged £5 5s before holding a “glass” in front of his patients to diagnose their affliction.<sup>56</sup> On Lee’s advertised rate was actually £1 1s, putting in doubt some of their other accusations too – although in advertisements On Lee did claim to be able to diagnose without a physical examination.<sup>57</sup>

I have not been able to establish if the Harley Street practice was successful, but the On Lees returned to Australia after a year. They journeyed to Sydney via Hong Kong, possibly taking the opportunity to visit their Chinese relatives en route. Families like the On Lees and the Tarts strived to reinforce relationships with their overseas families and to their places of birth. They introduced their children to their homelands over long visits, demonstrating the strong ties and pre-federation ease of translocation within the British Empire. This reconfirms the transnational character of biracial couples with financial means in colonial Australia. Kate Bagnall describes this as the “push and pull of cultures, histories and personal desires”.<sup>58</sup>

The Chinese colonial elites retained characteristics of both cultures. Unarguably of Chinese heritage, George On Lee had an anglicised first name and British mannerisms. Scottish acculturated Quong Tart had lived in New South Wales from the age of nine, but retained his Chinese name, as did Lowe Kong Meng, who was born in Penang and regarded himself as British.<sup>59</sup> They were urbane, successful and bilingual. They had English wives and colonial-born children who travelled internationally with them, visiting family in England and China. Both the Tart and On Lee families lived outside the predominantly Chinese areas of Sydney.<sup>60</sup> Unlike the majority of the Sydney Chinese population, who lived near Circular Quay, Haymarket and Surry Hills, the Tarts lived in suburban Ashfield.<sup>61</sup> The On Lees first took up residence at Hyde Park in

<sup>52</sup> Birth Certificates, 1955/1878, 944/1880, 2482/1883, 1527/1886, 2928/1887, NSWBDM.

<sup>53</sup> “Shipping,” *SMH*, 12 October 1882: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13522192>.

<sup>54</sup> England Census, 1881, Class RG11, Piece 2001, Folio 74: 17, GSU Roll 1341482; “Departures for Foreign Ports,” *SMH*, 21 April 1881: 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13475763>; William White, “Lynn (West),” *History, Gazetteer & Directory of Norfolk, 1883*, p. 407, University of Leicester Special Collections Online, <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/246945>.

<sup>55</sup> “A Chinese Doctor in London,” *Lyttelton Times*, Volume LVII, Issue 6593, 15 April 1882: 3, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/LT18820415.2.11>.

<sup>56</sup> “Sydney,” *British Medical Journal*, 2, 1030 (25 September 1880): 528–29.

<sup>57</sup> “Advertising,” *Weekly Times*, 15 December 1877: 11, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article220466017>.

<sup>58</sup> Bagnall, “Crossing Oceans and Cultures,” p. 141.

<sup>59</sup> Tart, *Quong Tart*, pp. 4–113; Paul Macgregor, “Chinese Political Values in Colonial Victoria: Lowe Kong Meng and the Legacy of the July 1880 Election,” in *Chinese Australians: Politics, Engagement and Resistance*, eds. Sophie Couchman and Kate Bagnall (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 82.

<sup>60</sup> Yong, “Chinese in NSW and Victoria,” pp. 1–4.

<sup>61</sup> Tart, *Quong Tart*, p. 91.

the city, before moving to prestigious Wynyard Square.<sup>62</sup> This area resembled affluent London, where only the residents held the key to the gated park.<sup>63</sup> In all likelihood these men regarded themselves as dual citizens of two great empires, but colonial Australia regarded their Chinese-ness as paramount.

Being Chinese did not limit On Lee's practice; he saw patients at Wynyard Square and criss-crossed the colonies offering his services. Sometimes he was accompanied by his wife, suggesting a close relationship between them.<sup>64</sup> While displaying English characteristics, Chinese culture was a central aspect of the On Lees' lives. Under oath, Louisa testified that she understood Chinese.<sup>65</sup> In this regard she is comparable to other white wives who learned Chinese in a domestic "cross-cultural exchange".<sup>66</sup> The On Lees' home proudly displayed elements of Chinese culture. The press reported their annual Chinese New Year celebrations, which drew enthusiastic public viewings and private visits by "Europeans" and "the principal Chinese merchants" including Quong and Margaret Tart. The house was "brilliantly illuminated ... in the Mandarin style", and in 1888 a pyrotechnic display of 150,000 crackers was launched from the balcony, bracketing the week-long lunar celebration.<sup>67</sup> The large number of Chinese visitors were attributed in the press to Dr On Lee's Mandarin rank; however, as James Hayes has determined, these ranks could be bought and the Chinese community was aware of that.<sup>68</sup> The *Australian Star* described the On Lees' camphorwood archway "richly embellished with quaint carvings enveloped in pure gold", and the silk banners adorned with green dragons that hung from the balcony for the occasion.<sup>69</sup>

Other Sydney Chinese merchants also decorated their properties with lights and flowers, and visitors left traditional red cards decorated with Chinese characters.<sup>70</sup> In Adelaide, Yet Soo War Way Lee's Chinese New Year dinner celebrations were so large he hired the Town Hall.<sup>71</sup> Usually referred to as Way Lee, this respected philanthropist, community leader and campaigner for Chinese rights made his home in Adelaide after living in Sydney and Brisbane. Like On Lee, he had arrived in Australia in the 1870s but had established business interests in South Australia, the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia.<sup>72</sup> By displaying

<sup>62</sup> "Advertising," *Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 19 June 1875: 789, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article162489477> [henceforth *Sydney Mail*]; "Advertising," *Goulburn Herald*, 14 November 1882: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article103795933>.

<sup>63</sup> "Advertising," *Queanbeyan Age*, 4 February 1886: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article30790658>; "History of Wynyard Park," *City of Sydney*, 27 March 2013, <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/sydneys-history/people-and-places/park-histories/wynard-park>.

<sup>64</sup> "The Chinese Immigration Question. Arrest of Dr. On Lee," *Evening News*, 8 November 1889: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article117020955>.

<sup>65</sup> "Chinese Civil War in Sydney," *Evening News*, 15 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108786989>.

<sup>66</sup> Bagnall, "Crossing Oceans and Cultures," pp. 123–124.

<sup>67</sup> "The Chinese New Year," *Australian Star*, 13 February 1896: 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article231657323>.

<sup>68</sup> James W. Hayes, "Purchase of Degrees, Rank, and Appointment in Late Qing China: Some Impressions from Contemporary Sources," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 53 (2013): 31–88; "The Chinese New Year," *Sydney Mail*, 25 February 1893: 409, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article162197487>.

<sup>69</sup> "Chinese New Year," *Sydney Mail*, 18 February 1888: 363, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article164359876>.

<sup>70</sup> "The Chinese New Year," *Sydney Mail*, 25 February 1893: 409, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article162197487>.

<sup>71</sup> Roger Burritt, Dylan Walker and Amanda Carter, *Way Lee: 100 Years On* (Adelaide: Centre for Accounting, Governance and Sustainability, School of Commerce, Division of Business, University of South Australia, 2009), p. 24.

<sup>72</sup> Burritt et al, *Way Lee: 100 Years On*, p. 10.

their culture so publicly, and incorporating white colonists into the celebrations, On Lee and Way Lee sought a path to broker their difference, but also to reinforce personal and business networks.

### Diversifying Interests and Influence

The deep connections that men like On Lee, Way Lee and Quong Tart held in both the European and Chinese colonial communities are indicated by the socio-economic standing of their guests. These interactions reference Chinese *guanxi*, an expanding matrix of relationships based on mutual obligation, benefit and philanthropy with “twists of political and economic dimensions”.<sup>73</sup> On Lee built his influential network through his medical, social, philanthropic and business activities. His philanthropy was directed globally and locally. In the 1870s, he donated to hospitals in Goulburn, Yass, Bathurst and Sydney.<sup>74</sup> Among his many causes, he donated to the Irish Famine Relief Fund and initiated the Sydney Chinese community’s substantial donation to the Parkes Fund (to help the former colonial Premier with his personal financial woes).<sup>75</sup> He was also a founding member of the Chinese Famine Fund Committee.<sup>76</sup> According to historian Paul Macgregor, this multilateral philanthropy, which was common among the elites, exemplified a “pan-Chinese” identity.<sup>77</sup> On Lee’s affiliations and identification demonstrably spanned the two great empires (China and Britain), as well as the colony of New South Wales.

Within the colonies, On Lee’s influence and business interests extended beyond medicine. He held shares in the Emerald Proprietary Mining Company (Emmaville, New South Wales) and owned market gardens.<sup>78</sup> Leading up to federation, an estimated 30 per cent of the Chinese population in New South Wales and Victoria were market gardeners.<sup>79</sup> On Lee’s employees grew cabbages, watermelon, peaches and peas, and farmed up to 3,000 ducks on properties around Sydney at Kogarah, Lane Cove and Willoughby.<sup>80</sup> He also leased out a farm and, as will be shown later, organised the importation of Chinese labourers for his agricultural endeavours.

Although shipping records indicate that On Lee imported moderate quantities of rice (20 bags in one instance), there is no direct evidence that he was a major international trader.<sup>81</sup> His involvement however is implied. In 1887, Captain J.E. Williams of the China Navigation Company was presented with a diamond ring “in recognition of the courtesy and attention he had exhibited to Chinese passengers ever since he had been in the trade between Hongkong and Australia”. Included in the 40 attendees were “the most influential Chinese merchants in the city”.<sup>82</sup> Quong

<sup>73</sup> Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts Favors and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press: 1994), pp. 1–7.

<sup>74</sup> “Country and Intercolonial News,” *Evening News*, 5 June 1875: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article130495601>; “A Liberal Chinese Doctor,” *Evening News*, 1 February 1876: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article107188316>.

<sup>75</sup> “A Romance of Charity,” *Truth*, 14 June 1903: 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article167892488>; “News of the Day,” *SMH*, 26 December 1887: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28347662>.

<sup>76</sup> “Advertising,” *SMH*, 6 June 1878: 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13412510>.

<sup>77</sup> Macgregor, “Chinese Political Values in Colonial Victoria,” p. 82.

<sup>78</sup> “Registration of The New Emerald Proprietary Mining Company,” *NSW Government Gazette*, 22 March 1892: 2354, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article222042210>.

<sup>79</sup> Yong, “Chinese in NSW and Victoria,” pp. 56–58.

<sup>80</sup> “A Chinese Civil War in Sydney. The District Court Besieged. On Lee and His Gardeners,” *Evening News*, 14 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108793601>.

<sup>81</sup> “Daily Imports,” *Daily Commercial News and Shipping List*, 9 January 1892: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article157271303>.

<sup>82</sup> “News of the Day,” *SMH*, 5 February 1887: 13, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28354170>; “Classified Advertising,” *Brisbane Courier*, 8 February 1887: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article3463117>.

Tart, who chaired the meeting, easily fell into this category as a wealthy tea merchant and community advocate; however, On Lee's presence and role as vice-chair is less easily explained. The avid interest in On Lee by the press and the frequent mention of him in events involving Quong Tart evidence his level of influence, although the absence of activism suggests he was not a community leader in the same sense as Quong Tart. The source of On Lee's prominent public profile is not easy to discern, but he and Louisa traversed the top stratum of both the Chinese and European societies in New South Wales. For example, they appear to have been on social terms with former NSW Premier Henry Parkes and his wife. When Parkes sent On Lee a photograph (presumably a *carte de visite*, which was popular at that time), On Lee's thank-you note promised the Parkeses a visit.<sup>83</sup>

The question of what social, political or economic capital drove Dr George On Lee's community status remains unsolved, but his public profile reached its zenith in 1887. That year, he fulfilled a quasi-ambassadorial role for the 1887 visit of the Imperial Chinese Commissioners. The visit had been initiated by Governor-General Chang Chih-tung, of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, based on concerns about treatment of his countrymen in the region. He gained permission from the Emperor for a commission to visit the Australian colonies, as well as the modern-day Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Burma and Singapore.<sup>84</sup> The objective of the visit to Australia was ostensibly "to ascertain the condition of the Chinese people and the general character and trade of the colony".<sup>85</sup> It has been suggested that the purpose of the visit was also to assess the possibility of establishing a Chinese consulate and to evaluate ways of "establishing authority over the overseas Chinese ... making them contribute to the expenses of coastal defence".<sup>86</sup> The satirical *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, known for its racist cartoons, wrote that the Commissioners were "frauds ... acting as spies for commercial syndicates".<sup>87</sup>

On arrival in Sydney on a wintery day, the Commissioners and their entourage were welcomed by representatives of the NSW Chinese community, including On Lee and Quong Tart, who were dressed in traditional robes.<sup>88</sup> These two men were eminently suitable hosts for the Commissioners. Despite anti-Chinese sentiment, they were acknowledged within white society; they were Christian, wealthy, well-connected English speakers and naturalised British subjects. They met the visiting party at the Watsons Bay heads and brought the party ashore at Circular Quay in the hired steamer, S.S. *Catterthun*.<sup>89</sup>

A huge crowd gathered to view the pageantry as the Commissioners alighted. The excitement was high for this ambassadorial visit, as foreign diplomacy was usually transacted by Britain.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>83</sup> "Sir Henry Parkes – Papers. A892 MIC 503378," NSW State Library, 17 February 1884; Martyn Jolly, "Delicious Moments: The Photograph Album in Nineteenth-century Australia", in *The Photograph and Australia*, ed. Judy Annear (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2015).

<sup>84</sup> Welch, "Alien Son," p. 251.

<sup>85</sup> "The Chinese Commissioners," *Sydney Mail*, 21 May 1887: 1070, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163280375>.

<sup>86</sup> Sophie Couchman, "Visit – Chinese Commissioners General Wong Yung Ho and Consul U. Tsing to Australia in 1887," *Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia*, <http://www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/biogs/CH00044b.htm>.

<sup>87</sup> "Those Chinese Commissioners," *Queensland Figaro and Punch* 28 May 1887: 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article84111807>.

<sup>88</sup> "Visit of the Imperial Chinese Commissioners to New South Wales," *Illustrated Sydney News*, 15 June 1887: 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63620633>.

<sup>89</sup> "The Imperial Chinese Commissioners," *SMH*, 9 May 1887: 8, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13656581>.

<sup>90</sup> "The Chinese Commissioners," *Sydney Mail*, 14 May 1887: 1000, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163284260>.

Although the *Influx of Chinese Restriction Act 1881* exempted “any Chinese duly accredited to this Colony by the Government of China or ... on any special mission”, On Lee took the precaution of confirming that the NSW government would not impose the £10 poll-tax on the Commissioners on arrival or re-entry.<sup>91</sup> He was right to do so, as the question had been raised privately about whether they should be compelled to pay.<sup>92</sup> A procession of 12 carriages took the new arrivals to a Macquarie Street mansion, which the Chinese community had hired and furnished “sumptuously” in the “Chinese style”.<sup>93</sup> Judging from the effusive and detailed news reports, the colony was captivated by the visit from General Wong Yung Ho, Consul-General Yu Tsing (Secretary to the Peking Prime Minister and China’s Consul-Elect of California), their private secretary Kin Hao King and five servants. Both Commissioners spoke excellent English. Ho had been born and schooled in British Penang, so his accent and fluency was better. The press remarked enthusiastically that he had worked as an interpreter for the British hero, General Gordon, during the Taiping Rebellion.<sup>94</sup> Following protocol for official business, On Lee acted as the Commissioners’ interpreter in the southern colonies.<sup>95</sup>



**Figure 1. The Imperial Commissioners with a man likely to be Dr George On Lee**  
 State Library of NSW: <http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110312671>

<sup>91</sup> *An Act to Restrict the Influx of Chinese into New South Wales* (45 Vic No 11), s. 11; Welch, “Alien Son,” p. 251.

<sup>92</sup> Phil Griffiths, “The Making of White Australia: Ruling Class Agendas, 1876–1888,” PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2006, p. 446.

<sup>93</sup> “The Chinese Commissioners,” *Sydney Mail*, 14 May 1887: 1000, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163284260>.

<sup>94</sup> “The Chinese Commissioners,” *Advocate*, 14 May 1887: 14, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article170599904>.

<sup>95</sup> Welch, “Alien Son,” p. 251.

The Commissioners generally enjoyed an enthusiastic and courteous reception in all the colonies they visited except Queensland. There, some newspapers exhorted the Commissioners to take “John Chinaman” back with them.<sup>96</sup> In Sydney, they were introduced first to the “leading Chinese merchants of the city”, followed by a warm welcome from the Mayor and the Town Clerk. They were received by the NSW Treasurer, the Premier (Sir Henry Parkes), and the Governor (Lord Carrington).<sup>97</sup> Other engagements included the Mayoress’s reception, attended by a staggering 4,000 people; a function at Admiralty House hosted by Lady Fairfax; and an “enjoyable” train journey to the Blue Mountains (with the Victorian Governor and again, Henry Parkes).<sup>98</sup> They attended an event of the City Club at the Hawkesbury River and a picnic with the Sydney Chamber of Commerce. The Commissioners also visited George and Louisa On Lee at home and met extensively with local Chinese in Circular Quay, Haymarket, Pyrmont and Botany.<sup>99</sup>

Businessmen, dignitaries and socialites gained an opportunity to convene with the visitors. In Melbourne, the local hosts were Louis Ah Mouy and Lowe Kong Meng (a school friend of General Ho) and in Adelaide, Way Lee.<sup>100</sup> Despite the Commissioners’ consistent assertions of unfair treatment, the colonial officials displayed no apprehension about what their report back to China would contain. Privately, however, Parkes must have been concerned, because he had entertained the idea of restricting the visitors’ access.<sup>101</sup> The Commissioners, on behalf of Marquis Tseng (China’s Minister to London and by extension Ambassador to the Australian colonies), were concerned about equality of Empires, equality of race, and recognition of China’s regional influence as equal to other “Great Powers”.<sup>102</sup> According to a petition signed by Lowe Kong Meng, Cheok Hong Cheong, Louis Ah Mouy and 44 others, there were three major issues for Chinese in the Australian colonies: the poll-tax that only Chinese paid on entry; the inter-colony border tax; and the unprovoked violence that larrikins meted out on the Chinese community.<sup>103</sup> This eloquent petition was presented to the Commissioners in Victoria, where they met with the same expansive welcome and hospitality.<sup>104</sup> Marking him as a respected and prominent member of the Chinese community across several colonies, Dr On Lee chaperoned the Commissioners in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. He was the only host to accompany them thus and it was prudent, because when Commissioners visited America they were locked in the goods van instead of being allowed to travel on their first-class train ticket.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>96</sup> “The Chinese Commissioners,” *The Week*, 21 May 1887: 17, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article182626565>.

<sup>97</sup> “The Imperial Chinese Commissioners,” *SMH*, 10 May 1887: 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13651901>.

<sup>98</sup> “The Mayoress’s Reception,” *Sydney Mail*, 14 May 1887: 1006, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163284406>; “Miscellaneous Items,” *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser*, 21 July 1887: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18894259>.

<sup>99</sup> “Visit of the Imperial Chinese Commissioners to New South Wales,” *Illustrated Sydney News*, 15 June 1887: 9, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article63620633>.

<sup>100</sup> “The Chinese Commissioners,” *Express and Telegraph*, 17 June 1887: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article207693266>; “Chinese Commissioners,” *The Age*, 27 May 1887: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article190641256>.

<sup>101</sup> Griffiths, “Making White Australia,” p. 446.

<sup>102</sup> John Fitzgerald, “Advance Australia Fairly: Chinese Voices at Federation,” in *After the Rush. Regulation, Participation and Chinese Communities in Australia 1860–1940*, eds. John Fitzgerald, Sophie Couchman and Paul Macgregor (Melbourne: Otherland Press, 2004), pp. 66–68.

<sup>103</sup> Lake, “Chinese Empire Encounters”, p. 183–84.

<sup>104</sup> Lake, “Chinese Empire Encounters”, p. 181–82.

<sup>105</sup> “Three Very Offended Chinese Mandarins,” *Daily Morning Astorian*, 27 September 1888: 2.23–25, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn96061150/1888-09-27/ed-1/seq-2/>.

During the Commissioners' visit, local Chinese leaders invoked international law and human rights in their appeals against discriminatory practices. The colonial governments, however, were fearful of an increase in the number of Chinese residents. Britain tried to call them to account, but the colonies chafed at the interference, emphasising their right to self-determination (expressed through "border protection") and the defence of racial purity (based on social Darwinism).<sup>106</sup> Hysteria about an Asian influx was, however, not born out by statistics, as Shirley Fitzgerald has noted.<sup>107</sup> The widespread and enthusiastic welcome of the Commissioners belied the sentiments that had led to the recent restrictions on Chinese immigration and settlement. The same politicians who had spoken so passionately in support of Chinese immigration restriction and the discriminatory poll-tax eagerly welcomed the Chinese diplomats, blind to the contradiction in their responses. Parkes, who was Premier of New South Wales five times between 1872 and 1891, reasoned that the Chinese and British were not inherently unequal, but that Chinese people had a cultural predisposition to hierarchy. He concluded therefore that they had no appreciation for equality.<sup>108</sup> Parkes was not challenged on the incongruity applied to Chinese Australians with whom he was so familiar, such as Quong Tart and George On Lee. Additionally, many Chinese had pressed for equality within British colonial legal systems and therefore did not inherently accede to a hierarchy.<sup>109</sup> This intersection of national identity and "historical ambivalence about the Chinese" was ongoing, exacerbated later by post-federation restrictions. Echoes of these attitudes reverberated across the next half-century, affecting who could "pass" and who were restricted in Australia. In 1939, for example, ambivalence and conflicting opinions were aired in the press during a visit by the Chinese-American actress Anna May Wong.<sup>110</sup> It has been a repeated pattern in Australian history.

The Commissioners were well aware of the pro and anti-Chinese sentiment. They encountered it in the press, at meetings with dignitaries, as well as at meetings with their community, where complaints of injustice were aired. Sydney was a lively, multi-ethnic migrant city and, in some quarters, the anti-Chinese rhetoric became a unifying target. In the decade leading up to the Commissioners' visit there had been an upsurge of violence against the Chinese that contrasted with the achievements of significant Chinese figures. Sometimes violence was promoted by labour union fears of job losses to these "foreigners".<sup>111</sup> At other times, it came from "the larrikin class", who perpetuated a particular form of gang violence against the Chinese and others.<sup>112</sup> Despite the high profile public presence and philanthropic contributions of Chinese community leaders, there was an underlying menace against the Chinese. The Chinese community anticipated that through diplomacy, the Commissioners would prompt government action against this aggression.

<sup>106</sup> Lake, "Chinese Empire Encounters", pp. 176–178.

<sup>107</sup> Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>108</sup> John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2007), p. 115.

<sup>109</sup> Mark Finnane, "Law as Politics: Chinese Litigants in Australian Colonial Courts," *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 9 (2013): 193–211.

<sup>110</sup> Shirley Jennifer Lim, "Glamorising Racial Modernity," in *Australia's Asia. From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, eds. David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2012), pp. 145–169.

<sup>111</sup> Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors*, pp. 75–77.

<sup>112</sup> "The Larrikin Class," *Singleton Argus*, 14 January 1885: 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article82600381>.

### Contending with Detrimental Circumstances

The Commissioners departed in July 1887. By early November, word filtered back to the colonies that, while the Commissioners were satisfied with and grateful for their reception in Australia, there remained “the question of European–Chinese treaties”.<sup>113</sup> They objected to the Chinese specific poll-tax, particularly the non-reciprocity on British subjects entering China, identified other grievances and proposed a consulate in Sydney.<sup>114</sup> Referencing Anglo-Chinese treaties and protesting against discriminatory practices, their findings were sent to the British government.<sup>115</sup> The British government urged consideration by the Australian colonies, but the colonies bristled at the interference.

Triple eight may be considered lucky in Chinese cultures, but 1888 did not augur well for Chinese Australians. William Lane wrote the first of his Asian invasion novels, both reflecting and fanning the flames of fear.<sup>116</sup> In April, animosity over Chinese immigration and suspect naturalisation papers resulted in the S.S. *Afghan* crisis. Chinese were prevented from disembarking from the ship, causing a flurry of interventions and protests.<sup>117</sup> With a weakening economy, unions warned that unemployment would rise due to Chinese willingness to accept lower wages.<sup>118</sup> The colonies met jointly in June 1888 with the aim of introducing more uniform legislation to limit Chinese immigration. In New South Wales, the poll-tax was increased to £100 and naturalisation abolished for Chinese residents.<sup>119</sup> There would be no consulate either for decades.<sup>120</sup> The Commissioners’ visit was unsuccessful. Despite their political networks and activism, local Chinese elites’ attempts to change this political development were ineffective. Political and economic historian Phil Griffiths proposed that far from helping, the Commissioners’ visit escalated anxieties of a Chinese migrant invasion or military intervention. It also exacerbated colonial notions of British treachery, for placing the interests of empire above loyalty to the colonies. It led directly to the 1888 legislation and, from there, on to the White Australia Policy.<sup>121</sup>

For Dr On Lee personally, 1888 was disastrous, ushering in a rash of litigation. The *Illawarra Mercury*, indicating a pan-colonial ideology that pre-dated federation, declared the first case against On Lee “of unusual importance, from a national point of view”. The case, they said, justified the recent immigration restrictions, even though “the spasmodic way ... they were adopted was illegal and constitutionally unbecoming”.<sup>122</sup> Chinese men often arrived in the colonies on clan-sponsored tickets, on condition that they accepted work wherever they were

<sup>113</sup> “The Chinese Commissioners,” *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, 4 November 1887: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article127724853>.

<sup>114</sup> “The Chinese Commissioner,” *Argus*, 28 May 1887: 10, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article7930259>; “Emigration of Chinese – Commissioners Report,” *Launceston Examiner*, 14 June 1888: 29, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article38316811>.

<sup>115</sup> Lake, “Chinese Empire Encounters,” p. 187.

<sup>116</sup> David Walker, “Shooting Mabel: Warrior Masculinity and Asian Invasion,” *History Australia* 2, no. 3 (December 2005): 89.2.

<sup>117</sup> For a summary of the NSW response, see Barry McGowan, “Transnational Lives: Colonial Immigration Restrictions and the White Australia Policy in the Riverina District of New South Wales, 1860–1960,” *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, 6 (2013): 50.

<sup>118</sup> Welch, “Alien Son,” pp. 223–254.

<sup>119</sup> Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors*, p. 29.

<sup>120</sup> Yong, “Chinese in NSW and Victoria,” p. 28.

<sup>121</sup> Griffiths, “Making White Australia,” pp. 444–450; Lake, “Chinese Empire Encounters,” pp. 183–190.

<sup>122</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 6 December 1888: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article135709404>.

allocated, to repay the costs.<sup>123</sup> The system was opaque to the white colonists, so when such cases became public they drew avid attention, revealing as they did the inner workings of Chinese contract labour.

The litigation began with a wage dispute between market garden overseer Fong Tuck and his boss, On Lee.<sup>124</sup> Barry McGowan had lamented the paucity of “studies on Chinese agricultural activities in Australia”.<sup>125</sup> The cases involving On Lee expose some of the mechanisms of agricultural employment and the potential for exploitation on both sides.<sup>126</sup> Fong Tuck, who may or may not have been On Lee’s nephew, worked for him for three years before On Lee sent him as an agent to secure workers in China. Fong Tuck “knew some men ... who were starving” and was instructed to contract them for five years. This was a classic credit-ticket and debt bondage mechanism.<sup>127</sup>

Frictions soon arose, however. On Lee said he asked for fourteen people but twenty-eight arrived. Fong Tuck and others said they were not paid their promised wage. For example, Sam Boe received £6 after a year’s work and three months quarantine, but had expected £60, in addition to about £3 payment for his family and £2 on arrival in Sydney.<sup>128</sup> In November 1887, Fong Tuck left On Lee’s employment over a wage dispute, and On Lee subsequently reported him to police for theft of a coat and blanket. Fong Tuck was sentenced to ten days’ prison, but this was quashed on appeal. The District Court found that his work agreement included the provision of food and clothes, and therefore they were not stolen.<sup>129</sup> Fong Tuck then applied for legal costs and compensation for malicious prosecution, since he had been incarcerated for five days before his appeal was granted. Eventually he was awarded £88 by the Supreme Court.<sup>130</sup>

In the meantime, following escalating tensions, the men left On Lee’s market garden and went tank sinking, earning the going wage of £1 per week.<sup>131</sup> In February 1889, twenty-four market gardeners (including Fong Tuck) sued On Lee for outstanding wages. On Lee counter-sued eleven men for breach of contract, explaining that the cost of passage and the poll-tax was

<sup>123</sup> Alister Bowen, “The Merchants: Chinese Social Organisation in Colonial Australia,” *Australian Historical Studies*, 42, no. 1 (2011): 31–33.

<sup>124</sup> “Law,” *Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 1889: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236018668>. Note that Fong Tuck’s name is reported as Foong Tack in the early stages of this case.

<sup>125</sup> Barry McGowan, “Chinese Market Gardens in Southern and Western New South Wales”, *Australian Humanities Review*, 36 (2005): 1.

<sup>126</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 6 December 1888: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article135709404>; “A Chinese Civil War in Sydney,” *Evening News*, 14 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108793601>; “The Chinese Civil War in Sydney,” *Evening News*, 15 February 1889: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108786937>; “Chinese Civil War in Sydney,” *Evening News*, 15 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108786989>.

<sup>127</sup> Bowen, “The Merchants,” pp. 25–44.

<sup>128</sup> “Sydney,” *Port Macquarie News and Hastings River Advocate*, 16 February 1889: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article120146996>.

<sup>129</sup> “News of the Day,” *SMH*, 21 December 1888: 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13707999>; “Slavery in Australia,” *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners’ Advocate*, 22 December 1888: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article139047354>. Some newspaper record his name as Foong Tack, others as Fong Tuck.

<sup>130</sup> “Law,” *Daily Telegraph*, 16 July 1889: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article236018668>.

<sup>131</sup> “A Chinese Civil War in Sydney,” *Evening News*, 14 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108793601>.

retained for six months as a guarantee, but would have been refunded after twelve.<sup>132</sup> The men lost their District Court case and their Supreme Court appeal too.<sup>133</sup>

Confusion over pound and dollar currency offers in remuneration discussions may have been a source of some misunderstanding. The foreign exchange rate may also have posed a slight problem, because in Sydney a pound was worth \$5, but in Hong Kong it was worth \$6.<sup>134</sup> Barry McGowan, however, found that in 1890, Chinese pastoral labourers in the Riverina were paid at the same rate or higher than white workers.<sup>135</sup> On Lee conceded he had instructed his agent to offer £15 per year, which was well below Australian wages.<sup>136</sup> The living conditions were also inferior, as the men were only given a “skin of beef and a little rice” and the mosquito nets for their small, narrow beds only covered their heads.<sup>137</sup>

Alister Bowen has suggested that kinship obligations and the credit-ticket system provided Chinese merchants with “a willing and cheap labour source”, but the On Lee cases prove there were exceptions.<sup>138</sup> The cases do, however, reinforce the agency of some Chinese workers and their “engagement in legal remedies” to secure their entitlements.<sup>139</sup> They also reveal a disregard for hierarchy and point to fault lines within the Chinese population of Sydney. Contrary to Parkes’s belief, Chinese Australians *did* value equality and understood their rights to it, which they actively sought to protect.

The On Lee cases delivered a rare “glimpse behind the scenes”, but they also provided ammunition to the anti-migration lobby.<sup>140</sup> Why would labour relationships fray so publicly at the precise moment when paranoia about Chinese migration peaked? No evidence at all of a third force has emerged, but the timing of these very public disputes is a curiosity. Within days of the wage cases commencing, they were mentioned in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, used as an example of slavery-like work conditions in support of the Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill.<sup>141</sup> Phil Griffiths has explained that the legislators were not concerned about the workers themselves as much as they were about the corrosive impact that slavery had on capitalism.<sup>142</sup> These cases therefore neatly bolstered the legislators’ rhetoric in favour of restriction.

For On Lee, there was further adversity to come. Having worked as a doctor in several colonies, and “as well known to the Chinese and European residents of Sydney as the premier himself”, On Lee was on a consulting circuit in 1889 when he was detained at the NSW–Victoria border for failure to pay £100 border tax.<sup>143</sup> Both governments had agreed to exempt him from the tax to facilitate treatment of patients, but NSW Premier Henry Parkes had to intervene before On Lee was allowed into New South Wales by officials at the border. Barry McGowan’s investigation of

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> “Supreme Court,” *Evening News*, 30 April 1889: 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13729180>.

<sup>134</sup> “A Chinese Civil War in Sydney,” *Evening News*, 14 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108793601>.

<sup>135</sup> McGowan, “Transnational Lives,” p. 47.

<sup>136</sup> “The Chinese Question,” *Evening News*, 4 December 1888: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108114476>.

<sup>137</sup> “A Chinese Civil War in Sydney,” *Evening News*, 14 February 1889: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108793601>.

<sup>138</sup> Bowen, “The Merchants,” p. 44.

<sup>139</sup> Finnane, “Law as Politics,” pp. 193–211.

<sup>140</sup> *Illawarra Mercury*, 6 December 1888: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article135709404>.

<sup>141</sup> “Legislative Assembly,” *Argus*, 7 December 1888: 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article6911785>.

<sup>142</sup> Griffiths, “Making White Australia,” p. 147.

<sup>143</sup> “Dr On Lee,” *Evening News*, 8 November 1889: 4, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article117020957>; “A Delicate Question,” *Geelong Advertiser*, 9 November 1889: 3, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article1506228>.

immigration restrictions in the Riverina explored many such cases of overzealous bureaucrats, including one that affected Way Lee when he tried to travel from Adelaide for business reasons.<sup>144</sup>

By 1890, On Lee's consulting fee was advertised at half what it had been in 1877.<sup>145</sup> Then, in 1892, On Lee was fined by the Victorian District Court for using "doctor" as a title, contrary to the *Medical Act 1890*.<sup>146</sup> On appeal, Dr On Lee appeared in his Mandarin robes of Fourth Rank and Blue Button. Despite producing his Chinese diploma and other documentary evidence, as well as his insistence that his advertisement stated it was *Chinese* medicine he practiced, the conviction was sustained.<sup>147</sup> It was surprising that On Lee had been allowed to practice in Victoria at all. As the nineteenth century progressed, the British Medical Association increasingly regulated doctors in the empire. Victoria led the way in Australia, forming medical societies and publishing journals.<sup>148</sup> From the 1860s, qualified "Western" doctors were required to register with the Victorian Medical Board. In the 1870s, several Chinese doctors applied for registration, Yee Quock Ping of Ballarat and Lo Kwoi Sang among them. Their registration was refused after the Consul-General in China confirmed that standards of medical training did not exist in China. Some continued to practice without sanction as "herbalists", although others defiantly continued to use "doctor" as their title.<sup>149</sup>

Besides changing attitudes and regulations in his professional life, On Lee also had to adapt to changing alliances within the Sydney Chinese community. As Mei-fen Kuo has shown, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, as anti-Chinese sentiment increased, a new style of bilingual Chinese community leadership emerged. Liaisons developed outside of clan and kinship loyalties. These new leaders helped the working class to attain wealth, changing community dynamics in Sydney. One of these leaders, Sun Johnson, established the *Chinese Australian Herald* in 1894. This was the first of the Chinese publications that spoke directly to its community.<sup>150</sup> New education opportunities arose. Presbyterian Reverend John Young Wai ran night schools, helping fruit and vegetable traders to transform their businesses to the international market and grow their wealth. The now wealthy fruit traders amalgamated and fostered a Chinese diasporic identity above "an Anglicized 'colonial-imperial' society".<sup>151</sup> Chinese-language newspapers promoted these new outlooks. Another bloc of Chinese elite merchants was created when W.R.G. Lee and Way Kee (the wealthy merchant uncle of Adelaide-based Way Lee) established the Lin Yik Tong. This became a powerful agency for eight steamship companies, and they also carried out charitable works, such as helping old and destitute Chinese return to China.<sup>152</sup> A rival group, the Chinese Empire Reform Association, with the backing of the *Tung Wah Times* newspaper

<sup>144</sup> McGowan, "Transnational Lives": 53.

<sup>145</sup> "Advertising," *Leader*, 21 June 1890: 46, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article198183845>.

<sup>146</sup> "Unauthorised Use of the Title Doctor," *The Age*, 25 November 1892: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article197174446>; *Medical Act 1890* (54 Vict No 1118), Victoria, [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist\\_act/ma189061.pdf](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist_act/ma189061.pdf).

<sup>147</sup> "Melbourne," *Bendigo Independent*, 14 December 1892: 2, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article173683449>.

<sup>148</sup> Milton J. Lewis, "Medicine in Colonial Australia, 1788–1900," *Medical Journal of Australia*, 201, no. 1 (July 2014): S5–S10.

<sup>149</sup> Loh, "A Country Practice," pp. 15–16.

<sup>150</sup> Mei-fen Kuo, "The Chinese Australian Herald and the Shaping of a Modern 'Imagined Chinese Community' in 1890s Colonial Sydney," *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies*, 2 (2008): 34–53.

<sup>151</sup> Mei-fen Kuo, "The Making of a Diasporic Identity: The Case of the Sydney Chinese Commercial Elite, 1890s–1900s," *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, 5 (2009): 341–342.

<sup>152</sup> Mei-fen Kuo, *Making Chinese Australia. Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese-Australian Identity, 1892–1912* (Monash University Publishing, 2013), pp. 36–49; Burritt et al, *Way Lee: 100 Years On*, p. 1.

sparked a “struggle for power and leadership” in the Sydney community on the cusp of the new century.<sup>153</sup>

On Lee and Quong Tart were still regarded as figureheads of the Chinese community and more broadly (for example, both were committee members fundraising for Sydney Hospital), but now there were others who also had extensive business, social and political connections.<sup>154</sup> Despite the growing prominence of new Chinese elites, the English press continued to recognise On Lee’s standing. They still called on him for Chinese-related comment, such as for the 1895 Kucheng massacre. He did his best to assuage fears of a wider anti-foreigner uprising in China and to explain the deep conviction that drove a remote religious group’s violent response to encroaching Christian missionaries.<sup>155</sup> Again, On Lee and Quong Tart were among the leaders of the Sydney Chinese community who held a public memorial service for the missionaries killed at Kucheng.<sup>156</sup>

In March 1898, the press described a farewell for Dr On Lee, who was going to China on a “diplomatic mission”.<sup>157</sup> On Lee’s dockside send-off was attended by crowds of Chinese and non-Chinese residents and dignitaries. In contrast to the Western suits they most often wore in their adopted country, On Lee and Quong Tart were dressed in the “purple, gold and crimson” robes of their Mandarin ranks.<sup>158</sup> Quong Tart’s valediction mentioned that On Lee would be travelling extensively in China to promote goodwill and trade among officials there. To this end, Quong Tart explained, On Lee had in his possession photos, official letters and flags from the Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. Before leaving on S.S. *Australian*, On Lee was photographed, grave faced and dignified, bidding his compatriot Quong Tart farewell on the dock (Figure 2).<sup>159</sup>

It would seem that On Lee had intended to return to Sydney. Two days after his departure, he was elected an officer of the newly formed Sydney Football Club.<sup>160</sup> There are conflicting reports about whether his family accompanied him, but they were not mentioned in the shipping records and, on balance, it appears they did not.<sup>161</sup> There is no record of On Lee’s return to Australia, either in the press or in available shipping logs. In September 1898, Charles Edward Pilcher (a barrister) and Edward Levien Samuels (the wool-trading son of the Agent-General for London in New South Wales) sued On Lee for £4,000.<sup>162</sup> On Lee declared bankruptcy from Hong Kong in 1899.<sup>163</sup> From there, the gaps in the archives widen to an abyss; there are no further press reports of Dr On Lee and colonial records offer few hints about the later lives of the On Lee family. Louisa,

<sup>153</sup> Yong, “Chinese in NSW and Victoria,” pp. 156–58.

<sup>154</sup> Kuo, *Making Chinese Australia*, p. 77.

<sup>155</sup> “Dr. On Lee on the Outbreak,” *SMH*, 8 August 1895: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14003880>.

<sup>156</sup> “The Ku-Cheng Massacre,” *The Capricornian*, 31 August 1895: 27, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article67943000>.

<sup>157</sup> “Dr. On Lee,” *The Telegraph*, 16 March 1898: 5, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article172771228>.

<sup>158</sup> “A Chinese Farewell,” *ATCJ*, 26 March 1898: 32, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article71284782>.

<sup>159</sup> “Dr On Lee’s Departure,” *Sydney Mail*, 26 March 1898: 643, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163804565>.

<sup>160</sup> “Football,” *SMH*, 17 March 1898: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14151961>.

<sup>161</sup> “Departure of Dr On Lee,” *Evening News*, 16 March 1898: 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article108772326>; “Advertising,” *The Australian Star*, 12 March 1898: 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article228437640>; “榮旋誌喜,” *Guang yi hua bao [Chinese Australian Herald]*, 25 March 1898: 6, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article168657091>.

<sup>162</sup> “In the Supreme Court of New South Wales. No. 2,007 A.D 1898,” *NSW Government Gazette*, 16 September 1898: 7436, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article220977367>.

<sup>163</sup> “In Bankruptcy,” *NSW Government Gazette*, 3 February 1899: 1050, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article220990141>.

Louise and Violet moved to England at some point.<sup>164</sup> Louisa died in 1907 as a widow, in her family district of King's Lynn.<sup>165</sup> According to NSW Probate documents, her only assets were two pre-purchased graves worth £50 in Waverley Cemetery, Sydney and £25 from George On Lee's estate.<sup>166</sup>

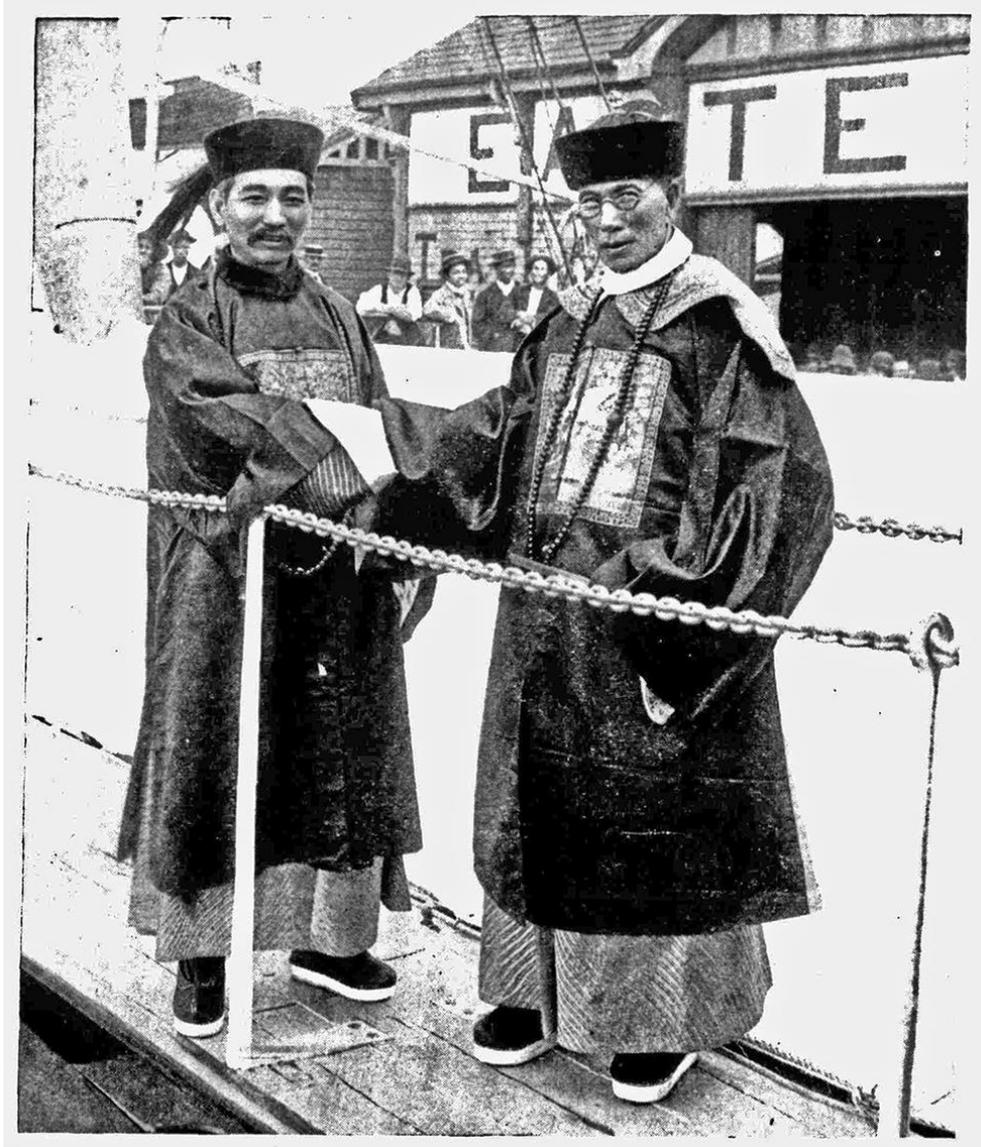


Figure 2. Quong Tart (L) bids Dr On Lee farewell

*Sydney Mail*, 26 March 1898: 643, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article163804565>

<sup>164</sup> Marriage Certificate, Violet On Lee, 1 May 1915, Surrey, England, Church of England Marriages, WOKJ/2/4, Ancestry.com; Marriage Certificate, Louise On Lee, 24 September 1898, London, England, Church of England Marriage and Banns, 1880–1905: 120N 239, Ancestry.com; England Census 1911, Bedfordshire, Tottenhoe 07, Schedule 105, Ancestry.com.

<sup>165</sup> Deaths Registered in January, February and March 1907, England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1837–1919, Reference 4b: 235, Ancestry.com.

<sup>166</sup> Supreme Court of NSW, Probate Division; Deceased Estates Index 1880–1923, NSW State Archives and Records, Pre A 023204 [20/1142], INX-15-109468.

## Conclusion

As the old century was overtaken by the new, the old Chinese-Australian leadership in Sydney was superseded by the new. Their responses to exclusionary policies of the newly formed federation overshadowed the previous decades of eminent Chinese elites. Dr George On Lee, with his complex entanglements and identifications, was consigned to the archives. Those archives have made it more difficult to study him than some of the other Chinese elites of the period. Quong Tart and Way Lee, in particular, displayed an awareness of the historical moment and sought to capture their place in it, leaving behind useful personal documentation.<sup>167</sup> Quong Tart and Way Lee, along with Louis Ah Mouy, Lowe Kong Meng and Cheong Cheok Hong, also left behind strong traces of their lives through their business dealings, their activism on behalf of their communities, and through their families and descendants that remained in Australia. On Lee has left no such obvious records (or perhaps, not any that have been discovered so far).

Digitised historical records have made it easier to stitch together some of the details of Dr George On Lee's life. They disclose his multi-layered identity, the tensions within the Chinese community and the alternating fraternity and friction between the European and Chinese populations. A family man and a medical practitioner with diversified business interests, On Lee considered himself a man of two empires and a citizen of colonial Australia. A respected participant in both the white and Chinese colonial communities in the 1870s, by century's end On Lee found himself marginalised. His experience in the last decade of the nineteenth century is representative of the narrowing options for his compatriots.

On Lee's history highlights the sophistication of social, economic and political networks of Chinese professionals in Australia. Despite the ultimate loss to the structures of power, it reiterates the agency of the elites, who sought to retain their civic and professional rights. It also reveals how Chinese workers availed themselves of the law, prioritising their individual rights over clan networks and hierarchies. It further articulates the history of bilingual Chinese who, after decades playing a productive role in building the colonies, also regarded themselves as Chinese, British and Australian, but were caught in a vortex of alienation and belonging.

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<sup>167</sup> Tart, "Introduction. Author's Notes," *Quong Tart*, p. 4 ; Couchman, "Quong Tart, Celebrity and Photography," pp. 159–182; Y.S.W. Way Lee, *The Chinese Question from a Chinaman's Point of View*, in Burritt et al, "Way Lee," pp. 31–50.