

## The *Chinese Australian Herald* and the Shaping of a Modern 'Imagined' Chinese Community in 1890s Colonial Sydney

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the development of the first Sydney Chinese newspaper, the *Chinese Australian Herald*, showing how it rapidly cultivated an effective place for itself as a technically sophisticated moral, social and organizational nexus linking Chinese daily life with larger-scale systems like the political structure of colonial society. It also argues that two major Chinese ceremonial processions conducted in 1897 illustrate the paper's power to help shape new leadership and a new social imaginary, and thus to help reconfigure the Chinese–Australian community to partake in the broader Australian colonial community of the time. The narratives and social networks of the *Chinese Australian Herald* provide insights into the complex process of constructing a modern 'imagined' Chinese community in turn of the twentieth-century Sydney.

### Introduction

This article concerns a short moment in Chinese–Australian history when, in a few years in the late 1890s, the first national Chinese-language newspaper in Australia, the *Chinese Australian Herald*, laid the foundation for a modern 'imagined' Chinese community.<sup>1</sup> In this it was led by new, bilingual Chinese elites whose main members were able to function effectively in both European and Chinese circles. From the 1880s to the end of the 1890s, the city's bilingual Chinese elites were consolidated through wealth, social networking, public ceremonies, newspaper circulation, and political activities. As a result, they were able to take the Sydney community to a pre-eminent position in Chinese–Australian society. My article considers certain important leaders of the developing 1890s Sydney Chinese bilingual elites and examines the new Chinese press they operated and supported. In particular, it analyses two cultural carnivals they helped to sponsor that enabled the Chinese community to emerge, for the first time, as a cohesive participant in the colonial public sphere. This article will argue that this bilingual leadership and their press set out to modernize the local Chinese community in certain crucial ways and in so doing helped create a new 'imagined Chinese community' in late colonial Sydney and Australia.

According to the social scientist Charles Tilly, community can be understood sociologically as a network of inter-subjective meanings derived through negotiation between self and others.<sup>2</sup> When a community is envisioned in this sense, public narratives can provide a key to its understanding because they contribute to building up the 'social imaginary' that invests everyday social surroundings with a common repository of images, stories and legends. This 'social imaginary' is a web of social meaning that, in Charles Taylor's words, is the "common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy".<sup>3</sup> The 'social imaginary' is therefore an important element in the creation of the 'imagined communities' that Benedict Anderson has shown characterize the modern political world.<sup>4</sup> One fruitful way to uncover the historical 'social imaginary' or 'imagined community' of Chinese Australia is thus through the study of the stories

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Tilly, "Interpretation and the science of man", in *Interpretive Social Science: A Reader*, ed. Paul Rainbow and William M. Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 33-35 and 49-71.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Verso, 1991).

and other items narrated or promoted in the Chinese–Australian press. Newspapers have an important role to play in understanding Chinese–Australian history: mundanely, through the historical archives they supply, and more profoundly through the windows they offer on community formation and everyday historical awareness via the agency of print culture. Australian Chinese-language newspapers can thus provide an important source for the study of local elite formation as well as trans-national networking, and associated narratives of belonging, among the wider Chinese diasporic community.<sup>5</sup>

Australian Chinese-language newspapers did not only report on community events; they were significant agents in their own right in the shaping of communities and patterns of urban leadership. By focusing on the first modern Chinese newspaper in Australia, as this article will do, it is possible to show how printed narratives and forms helped to shape both the leadership and the emerging social imaginary of Chinese–Australians in the later 1890s. As we will see, these changes were actively promoted by the new press. In particular, the narratives of self and the world it promoted—and especially the patterns of social mobilization it encouraged surrounding the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Charity Carnival in 1897—sought to persuade Sydney Chinese to re-imagine themselves as a modern Chinese community located within the wider British Empire. In addition to this, Chinese-language newspapers played an even more explicit role in modernising local Chinese consciousness, by inculcating readers with the modern sense of time so necessary for them to function within the broader Australian society, and by shaping public awareness and a sense of community under a new style of urban leadership. If some of this new social imaginary rested on an essentially colonial sense of how Australian Chinese might fit into the global British Empire, meaning it would soon be superseded by the new political realities of Federation and the White Australia Policy, other elements contributed to forming a modernized Chinese–Australian sense of community whose influence would continue into the twentieth century.

The article begins by tracing the historical context and social background underlying the development of the Chinese community in Sydney and the appearance of an important group of bilingual Chinese leaders who came to the fore in the early 1890s.

### **A Rising Sydney Chinese Bilingual Elite**

From the 1880s, Sydney emerged as the commercial hub for Australian trade and investment in the South Pacific.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it became a social hub for Chinese immigrants moving from rural New South Wales and other parts of Australia to urban coastal settlements. Sydney historian Shirley Fitzgerald has emphasized the contribution of the Chinese community in the creation of the city of Sydney.<sup>7</sup> From the late 1880s, increasing numbers of market gardeners, hawkers, carpenters and banana traders found greater mobility and a more comfortable livelihood in the cities. Commercial activity also led Chinese labourers and merchants to relocate the centre of Chinese community life from The Rocks to the

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<sup>5</sup> After the *Chinese Australian Herald* (hereafter *CAH*) was published from 1894, two more Chinese-language newspapers appeared, the *Tung Wah News* (東華新報 [*Donghuaxinbao*], 1898–1902 and later renamed *The Tung Wah Times*, 東華報 [*Donghuabao*] from 1902 to 1936) and the *Chinese Times* (愛國報 [*Aiguobao*], 1902–1905), 警東新報 [*Jingdongxinbao*], 1905–1914] and 平報 [*Pingbao*], 1917], 民報 [*Minbao*], 1919–1922], which continued to publish until 1954).

<sup>6</sup> Because Australia started to attach importance to the Pacific after the 1880s, Sydney's commercial and geographical status was enhanced from the end of the nineteenth century. See T. A. Coghlan and T. T. Ewing, *The Progress of Australasia in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Chambers, 1903), pp. 185 and 447.

<sup>7</sup> Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press, 1997), p. 6.

Belmore Markets district.<sup>8</sup> These changing patterns of commercial, professional, and residential life created new spaces and opportunities for social mobility and, in time, for the emergence of a new merchant leadership stratum. In the 1890s, Sydney's lively urban and commercial environment enabled small merchants to expand their businesses and provided opportunities for hawkers and skilled labourers to make the transition to merchant status. Over time a new merchant leadership stratum began to emerge.<sup>9</sup>

With Chinese coming in greater numbers to Sydney, to provide fresh fruit and vegetables for an expanding Australian urban population, the clan competition of earlier times softened, as urban Chinese acquired new social and cultural skills suited to the rhythms, customs and manners of Australian city life. English fluency became essential for leaders occupying positions at the intersection of Chinese and Anglophone social life, while hawkers and gardeners needed to learn sufficient English to grow and market their produce. As Janice Wood has shown, at this time Chinese residents of Sydney were also choosing to relocate beyond the Chinese community enclaves of the inner city to reside in increasing numbers in European neighbourhoods, something that also aided interaction with the surrounding society.<sup>10</sup>

If clan-based organisations were losing traction in the urban environment, so too were other, previously significant, forms of Chinese organization. From the late 1890s shared native place, kinship and imperial rank were no longer sufficient to claim leadership of an increasingly 'modern' urban Chinese community. Chinese Australians increasingly contested leadership roles using a variety of different status markers associated with new forms of political mobilization and public association that were shaped in turn by urbanism and nationalism. One sign of this transition was the conflict which erupted in the Sydney Chinese community in 1892, when native-place networks and their leaders singularly failed to reduce conflict within the inner-city Chinese community.<sup>11</sup>

Bilingual leaders such as the well-known Sydney tea merchant Quong Tart (梅光達 [*Mei Guangda*], 1850-1903) rose to special prominence over the middle-to late-nineteenth century, when they were often called upon to represent Chinese residents to the wider community of English speakers. Nevertheless, bilingualism alone was insufficient to ensure influence in the Chinese community itself. Quong Tart certainly earned the respect of colonial authorities, who appointed him to Royal Commissions (on alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force) in 1891 and 1892, and his tea rooms were popular among Sydney people, but he did not enjoy the uniform respect of the Sydney Chinese community. In 1892, for instance, he failed to negotiate a successful end to the conflict between skilled labourers and the Gaoyao (高要, also known as Goyou and Goyao) native-place network.<sup>12</sup>

When the colonial bilingual elite did exercise community leadership at this time, its influence was rooted in alliance politics and overlapping relationships. The alliances formed among Quong Tart, William Robert George Lee (李益徽 [*Li Yihui*])<sup>13</sup>, and Sun Johnson (孫俊臣 [*Sun Junchen*]) are a good example: Lee was a leader of

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<sup>8</sup> Janice L. Wood, 'Chinese Residency in the Haymarket and Surry Hills-1880 to 1902', BA (Hons) thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1994, pp. 22-24.

<sup>9</sup> For more on this, see Mei-Fen Kuo, 'Making Chinese Australia: The Role of the Sydney Chinese Community, 1892-1912', PhD, La Trobe University, 2008, pp. 30-50 and 172-175. Ma Yingpu (馬應彪) and James Gock Lock (郭樂) were only two of the local Chinese hawkers and fruit sellers who achieved merchant status in Sydney at the time. See *Ibid.*, pp. 79-83.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, 'Chinese Residency in the Haymarket and Surry Hills', p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the conflict of 1892 see Kuo, 'Making Chinese Australia', pp. 53-67.

<sup>12</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1892. Also see Kuo, 'Making Chinese Australia', pp. 61-64.

<sup>13</sup> He was also known as Lee Yikfai (1844-1911).

the influential Lin Yik Tong,<sup>14</sup> which mediated inter-clan competition; Sun was one of the editors of the first Chinese-language newspaper in Sydney, the *Chinese Australian Herald* (廣益華報[Guangyihuabao], 1894-1923); both were friends of the important businessman Quong Tart; and all had become Freemasons in the early 1890s.<sup>15</sup> Such multiple links helped members of the new bilingual elite in their main public task, that of negotiating between Chinese and dominant Anglophone communities with a view to reducing conflict and competition among contending groups of Chinese in the inner city area. But behind the scenes, their friendship was equally influential. In particular, it helped promote the carnivals of 1897 and the charitable works associated with celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, both examples of how negotiating the gap between Chinese and western customs and manners was also becoming a primary function of urban Chinese leadership by the end of the nineteenth century. We will return to these ceremonial processions after the next section introduces the *Chinese Australian Herald* and discusses its influence in shaping the leadership of the Sydney bilingual Chinese elite and of promoting a new Chinese–Australian identity.

### **The *Chinese Australian Herald*, an Agent of Change (1894-97)**

The Chinese press was the only foreign-language press in Sydney to publish without interruption over three decades, from the 1890s to the 1920s. Furthermore, no foreign-language newspapers of any stamp could match its record of continuous circulation in Sydney over six decades, from the 1890s into the 1950s.<sup>16</sup> Before the first Chinese-language newspaper was published in Sydney, according to one 1890 estimate no more than 1400 resident Chinese in New South Wales could read and write in English, a figure that represents around 9 percent of the Chinese population of the time. A far higher proportion could read Chinese. According to the eleventh census of NSW, in 1891, 9259 Chinese representing 65 percent of the total could read and write Chinese.<sup>17</sup> These figures compare favourably with Chinese communities elsewhere overseas. In Honolulu, for example, contemporary literacy estimates indicate 40 percent could read and write in Chinese but only 2 percent in English.<sup>18</sup> If these figures are correct, the Sydney Chinese were apparently considerably more literate than those in Honolulu, which was one of the largest Chinese communities in the Pacific area.

The *Chinese Australian Herald* had first been proposed in 1892,<sup>19</sup> but the idea took some time to come to fruition. The first issue was finally published on 1

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<sup>14</sup> This group will be discussed further below.

<sup>15</sup> John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2007), p. 95.

<sup>16</sup> Miriam Gilson, *Bibliography of the migrant press in Australia* (Canberra: Dept of Demography, A.N.U., 1962), pp. 1-2; Paul Jones, *Chinese–Australian journeys: Records on travel, migration and settlement, 1860-1975* (Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2005), p. 209. In fact, Chinese presses such as *Chinese Times*, *Chinese World's News*, *Chinese Weekly Press* and *Chinese Mail* started to publish in Sydney in the second decade of the twentieth century. No archive holds a complete set of Chinese–Australian newspapers from the 1920s and 1930s. Copies of these four newspapers and information about them are rare. The State Records of NSW have registration information about the *Chinese Times* and *Chinese World's News*. See State records of NSW, item title: Chinese Times Ltd., Packet no. 7978 in 17/5530 and item: Chinese Masonic Newspaper Co. Ltd. Packet no. 8021 in 17/5531. The National Archives of Australia also has a collection of material related to the *Chinese Times* and *Chinese World's News*. See National Archives of Australia, A1/1933/307, A433/1950/2/6890, SP320/4/ BOX7/Chinese Times, SP106/1/PC295, C320/C8, A1/1921/16152, A445,232/4/18, A2998, 1952/253, A1/1921/16152. The archive of the Chinese Consul-General contains letters from *Chinese World's News* and *Chinese Weekly Press* relating to their early issues. See Correspondence of 1923 in Archives of Chinese Consul-General, Melbourne.

<sup>17</sup> T. A. Coghlan, *General Report on 11th Census of NSW* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1894), p. 208.

<sup>18</sup> *Tung Wah News* (hereafter *TWN*) reports from Lai Kee Bo (麗記報 [*Lijiba*]) of Honolulu that the Chinese population in Honolulu in 1898 was 22,997, of whom 9364 could read and write in Chinese and 527 in English. *TWN*, 8 Oct 1898, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Correspondence of 1923, file of Sun Johnson, in archives of Chinese Consul-General, Melbourne.

September 1894,<sup>20</sup> and from then on the newspaper appeared regularly every Saturday until 25 August 1923. The birth of the *Chinese Australian Herald* coincided with a time of new hope for the colonies. The financial crisis of 1890-93 had passed, and colonial economic development had revived.<sup>21</sup> Sydney Chinese shared in this prosperity. In that same year, Sydney Chinese traders had begun to gradually gain control of the fruit market: Wing Sang and Co., for example, started to trade with Queensland markets at this time.<sup>22</sup>

The initial development of the *Chinese Australian Herald* was based on collaboration between European proprietors and Chinese bilingual editors. The chief figures in this partnership were James Alexander Philp, George Arthur Down, Lee Caizhang (李彩章) and Sun Johnson,<sup>23</sup> with the Europeans forming a company called Down, Philp and Co. It is unclear just why the four came together for such a venture; but they maintained a friendly and stable partnership which would become the root of their publishing success in the late 1890s.

Only one of the proprietors had any newspaper experience. Down seemed a highly unlikely owner of a Chinese-language newspaper, as he was an architect by profession and in fact he played a purely financial role. Philp, on the other hand, had already had a career in journalism. He was Scottish-born, an author, printer and columnist,<sup>24</sup> and had not been long in Australia, having arrived from New Zealand in the early 1890s.<sup>25</sup> Prior to starting up the *Chinese Australian Herald* he had written for the *Bulletin* in Sydney.<sup>26</sup> He was also a member of the bohemian Dawn and Dusk Club, which included many of Sydney's avant-garde artists and intellectuals.<sup>27</sup> This social aspect was significant, for it is evident that Philp maintained close relations with the artists and journalists of Sydney while he published the *Chinese Australian Herald*.

The Chinese editors, Lee and Sun, were bilingual intellectuals. Sun Johnson described Lee as traditionally-minded, having being educated in China and retaining an interest in Chinese literature and mythology.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, Lee died at the end of 1896. In January 1897, the *Chinese Australian Herald* called for a new editor.<sup>29</sup> However, no one was appointed to the position and in 1897 Sun became sole editor of the paper.<sup>30</sup> In the same year, Sun also became a proprietor and joined the company, which changed its name to Down, Philp and Johnson.<sup>31</sup>

Unlike Lee, Sun's life experience combined both Chinese and western cultures. He was born in either 1865 or 1868,<sup>32</sup> and educated at Victoria College and other

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<sup>20</sup> Prior studies by C. F. Yong and Poon Yuk Lan offer a reading of Chinese-language newspapers in studies of the Chinese community that take Federation as the point of departure. Both ignore the early stage of Chinese newspaper circulation and community development in the 1890s. See C. F. Yong's *The New Gold Mountain: The Chinese in Australia, 1901-1921* (Richmond, S.A.: Raphael Arts, 1977), and Poon Yuk Lan, 'Through the Eyes of the Dragon: The Chinese Press in Australia, 1901-1911', BA (Hons) thesis, Department of History, University of Sydney, 1986.

<sup>21</sup> *CAH*, 5 April 1895, p. 2. Also see A. Barcan, "The development of the Australian middle class", *Past and Present*, No. 8 (Nov. 1995): 71-72.

<sup>22</sup> See the witness testimony of George Bew, "Minutes of Evidence and Appendices of fruit industry", *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1913, Vol. IV, p. 1117.

<sup>23</sup> The four partners appear in a photograph taken in 1895. See *CAH*, 16 August 1895, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Matt J. Fox, *History of Queensland: Its People and Industries* (Adelaide: Hussey & Gillingham for the States Publishing Co., Brisbane, 1919-1923), p. 805.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> George A. Taylor, *Those Were the Days: Being Reminiscences of Australian Artists and Writers* (Sydney: Tyrrell's, 1918), p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Members included Victor Daley, Fred Broomfield, Henry Lawson, George A. Taylor, Norman Lindsay, Nelson Illingworth, Bertram Stevens and Frank Mahony. See *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> See interview with Sun Johnson, *Daily Telegraph*, 6 Oct 1896. In 1895 Lee organized a Sydney Chinese poetry association and won a prize. See *CAH*, 16 August 1895, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> *CAH*, 29 Jan 1897, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *CAH*, 3 May 1902, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Sands' Sydney and suburban directory*, 1897. See also *CAH*, 7 Oct 1898, front page.

<sup>32</sup> In his Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDT), in 1907, Sun states that he was born in

institutions in Hong Kong until he was fifteen years old,<sup>33</sup> when his father sent him to London for a further six years of western education. He then migrated to Australia, where he worked at the ABC Café from 1890 to 1891, both in order to make a living and to interact with western people.<sup>34</sup> During this period he wrote a book, an interpretive study of Chinese life in Australia, published in 1891 under the title of the *Chinese English Self-educator*. This book covered a variety of topics and aspects of Chinese experience, and included translations of key English words for Chinese-speakers in Australia who knew little English.<sup>35</sup> Sun's decision to mix with both western and Chinese communities gave him a wealth of cross-cultural experience, which in turn trained him for his role in subsequent years as one of the bilingual leaders of the Chinese community. After Sun became sole editor, his bilingual ability led to a closer relationship with Philp. The pair worked together until 1900 to transform the *Chinese Australian Herald's* printing technology, its editorial direction, and its position on Chinese involvement in colonial society. They also mixed socially.

By the end of 1896, according to Sun, the *Chinese Australian Herald's* regular readership had extended to the other Australian colonies and many of the Pacific islands.<sup>36</sup> By 1897, the newspaper had entered into an arrangement with the bookseller agency Gordon and Gotch in order to enlarge its commercial network and circulation.<sup>37</sup> In that year, the *Chinese Australian Herald* had established a respectable circulation of 800 copies per issue, distributed through Chinese storekeepers around Australia and New Zealand.<sup>38</sup> The secret to this publishing success lay in the financial support the newspaper received from Australian advertisers. This was a result of Philp's entrepreneurial endeavours.<sup>39</sup> Sun credits these Australian firms with providing a very substantial amount of advertising revenue<sup>40</sup> but this was not without its *quid pro quo*. Sun noted that the paper was in many cases obliged to buy goods from their major Australian advertisers in exchange for annual advertising contracts.<sup>41</sup> A further dimension to the *Chinese Australian Herald's* financial dealings was as a retail source of patent medicines, groceries and Chinese imports.<sup>42</sup> The other strand of its success lay with the significant role played by the network of Chinese storekeepers in the paper's local circulation and promotion. One of the paper's core aims was to report on the market price of fruits and vegetables,<sup>43</sup> and this service was an important incentive for Chinese market gardeners, hawkers and fruit storekeepers to become a major part of the paper's readership in the 1890s.

If the commercial climate of Sydney gave rise to both the need and opportunity for a Chinese newspaper's development, it was the fortuitous partnership between Sun and Philp that helped the *Chinese Australian Herald* to become more than

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1865 [National Archives of Australia, ST84/1, 1907/350]; in 1923, however, in his application for a US visa he claimed to have been born in 1868. See Correspondence of 1923, in Archives of Chinese Consul-General, Melbourne. C. F. Yong accepts the latter date in his *New Gold Mountain*, p. 117. Yet the records of the NSW Registry of Birth, Death and Marriage state that Sun was 66 years old when he died in 1925. See record of Sun Johnson at no. 15779/1925.

<sup>33</sup> On his education and career, see letter from Sun Johnson to G. E. Morrison, 19 Dec 1917, in G. E. Morrison's papers, no. 312, Mitchell Library Manuscript; *The Australian Star*, 3 July 1908.

<sup>34</sup> *The Australian Star*, 3 July 1908.

<sup>35</sup> See Sun Johnson, *Chinese English Self-educator*, in Mitchell Library collection DSM/495/J.

<sup>36</sup> *DT*, 6 Oct 1896.

<sup>37</sup> *CAH*, 26 Jan 1897, p. 4. Even though there had been a Melbourne agent for *CAH* from May 1895 to March 1896, the number of its Chinese readers there is difficult to quantify before 1896. See the notice in *CAH*, 10 May 1895, p. 7 and 20 March 1896, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> See letter from *CAH* to Colonial Secretary, 15 July 1897, Archives Office of NSW, Box: 5/6383, letter: 97/10712.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, *Those Were the Days*, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> State Record of NSW, no. 23567, Bankruptcy file of Sun Johnson, 1923.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *CAH*, 30 Nov 1894, p. 7; 5 Jan 1895, p. 8; 18 Jan 1895; calendar poster and 24 May 1895; front page and 21 August 1896, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *CAH*, 1 Sept 1894.

simply a source of commercial and community information. Their collaboration meant the paper would come to play a highly significant role in the everyday processes of life for Sydney's many Chinese communities, expanding their social vision to the larger community of Chinese-language readers and embedding their social imaginary in local urban life.

Aside from the social and commercial factors discussed above, another major factor contributing to the *Chinese Australian Herald's* success and influence was its change in appearance over time. Toward the end of 1896 the paper adopted a new style of typesetting, with movable type replacing the hand-lettered stencils previously used. This amounted to a quiet revolution that symbolically transformed the image and design of print culture in the eyes of the Sydney Chinese. Sun and Philp had begun the process of importing Australia's first Chinese-character typesetting machine from Hong Kong in 1895 and by spring 1896 all was finally ready. With the issue of 2 October the *Chinese Australian Herald* presented a new visual image to its readers. The replacement of traditional brushed characters with movable type signalled more than a mere change in appearance. The *Chinese Australian Herald* was making a highly symbolic move into an era of technological and scientific advancement, and in effect was taking its readership along with it.

Print culture has a well-known and significant role in the creation of 'imagined communities',<sup>44</sup> one exemplified by the *Chinese Australian Herald* in the late 1890s. The newspaper gave urban Chinese access to the broad social imaginary of wider colonial society while providing a safe container in which to envision themselves, their actions and their relationships as part of that modern social reality. Where the specifically Chinese social imaginary was concerned, the *Chinese Australian Herald's* creation of a personal dimension to the publication of its news enabled readers to develop a greater sense of community. Every Saturday, Chinese readers could experience a tincture of 'face-to-face' commonality through their newspaper which contributed to their burgeoning sense of belonging to a 'Chinese' community that stretched across the continent.<sup>45</sup>

Print culture can also help construct modern imagined communities by its propagation of a new, 'secular' understanding of time. This, too, was a factor in the process by which Chinese-Australians relocated their societal position. Anderson argues that social modernity is in part conditioned by a transformed time understanding based on "clocked and calendar time".<sup>46</sup> In his schema, the "homogeneous and empty time" in which the newspaper or novel exists, and is read, impinges simultaneously in different people's minds,<sup>47</sup> creating a basis for a modern sense of community which, to be viable, must be imagined by diverse and disparate individuals simultaneously. In the late 1890s, the Sydney Chinese gradually assimilated clock time into the routines of their daily lives. The investigations of the Royal Commission in 1891 reveal how the occupations of the Sydney Chinese working class were a factor in their understanding of time: Chinese furniture shop owners and carpenters, for example, already calculated their working hours by the clock.<sup>48</sup> It appears likely that occupations of this kind among the Chinese were influenced by the mode of European shops and tradesmen, due to their increasing interactions in urban life. When the Royal Commission questioned Sydney Chinese market gardeners, on the other hand, they could give only approximate times for

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<sup>44</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, pp. 24-36.

<sup>45</sup> For example, the *CAH* simultaneously reported the news on various Tongks that defined many social distinctions in China. These included the Koong Yee Tong, the Hung Fook Tong and the Siyi Society of Sydney. Thus Chinese readers came to know other Chinese with whom they would not normally have any opportunity to interact.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, pp. 23-24.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>48</sup> Report of the Royal Commission on alleged Chinese gambling and immorality and charges of bribery against members of the police force, 1891-1892, Q. 14052, 14198, 14407 and 14473.

their daily working hours rather than using precise clock time.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, they described their working day as extending from dawn to dusk. This type of time-sense, characteristic of the agricultural worker, was quite unlike that manifested by Chinese witnesses to the Commission engaged in trades such as carpentry,<sup>50</sup> among whom the influence of an already clock-conscious Australian working-class was helping to consolidate a growing sense of "clock-time".<sup>51</sup>

Several decades before, colonial Australian workers had fought successfully for the introduction of the eight-hour day—and were the first in the world to achieve this labour objective. In these circumstances, the existence in their midst of a Chinese labour force that did not even fully acknowledge clock-based time regulation could only fuel tensions. It was significant, therefore, that the *Chinese Australian Herald* put considerable emphasis on the idea of eight hours of work and eight hours of leisure each day—the premise of the original eight-hour day campaign—and explicitly encouraged Chinese labourers to base their daily schedule on clock-measured time. This editorial line was deliberately intended to counter anti-Chinese labour sentiment.<sup>52</sup> The *Chinese Australian Herald* not only advocated that the Chinese follow the eight-hour day but also that they treat Sunday as a day of rest, after colonial custom, both as a sign of respect for the Sabbath and to signify that they were assimilating into colonial society and culture.<sup>53</sup>

Another tangible sign of the *Chinese Australian Herald's* role in shaping modern time understanding within the emerging 'imagined Chinese community' was its annual poster calendars. Beginning in 1895, the paper offered its readers a calendar as a Chinese New Year gift, at no cost beyond the price of postage.<sup>54</sup> It was printed from a woodcut, single-page size, and combined Chinese brush pictures and commercial advertisements.<sup>55</sup> The calendar itself was divided into months, juxtaposing the lunar and Gregorian calendars as a demonstration to Chinese readers of the translatability of the two systems of time measurement.

The distribution of calendars would become a tradition of Chinese–Australian newspapers up to the Second World War. The *Chinese Australian Herald* did not originate the idea, however. A similar advertising calendar poster (*yuefenpai*, 月份牌) was first published by the *China Mail* in 1854 in Hong Kong.<sup>56</sup> The *Chinese Australian Herald* calendar style thus reflected an adoption of western advertising practices that occurred in western-influenced cities such as Hong Kong and then diffused elsewhere, including to Australia.<sup>57</sup> Similar calendars appeared in Shanghai in 1898, three years after their appearance in Sydney, as that city also expanded to become an international trading centre.<sup>58</sup>

Aside from western-style manifestations of commercialism it may be argued that the *Chinese Australian Herald* poster calendar also influenced Chinese assimilation of western time through its style of time presentation. Although the Chinese market gardeners and hawkers did not abandon their lunar calendar, increasing numbers of them followed that traditional time system via the Anglo–Chinese posters, which juxtaposed both Chinese and western systems. The *Chinese Australian Herald* took some care in the design of its lunar calendar to ensure its utility. It was at base an

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Q. 15384, 15492, 15799.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Q. 15744 and 15799.

<sup>51</sup> Graeme Davison, *The Unforgiving Minute: How Australia Learned to Tell the Time* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 92–93.

<sup>52</sup> *CAH*, 8 May 1896, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *CAH*, 10 May 1895, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> *CAH*, 18 Jan 1895, supplement.

<sup>56</sup> Ellen Johnston Laing, *Selling Happiness: Calendar Posters and Visual Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), p. 80.

<sup>57</sup> There was in fact another poster calendar circulated in Melbourne in 1894. See Public Records of Victoria: Regina vs. Fun Chung and Ah Chee. Exhibit B. VPRS 30Uait 1005, case 32/1895.

<sup>58</sup> Laing, *Selling Happiness*, p. 28.

agricultural calendar (*nongli*, 農曆), based on the cyclical waxing and waning of the moon and the role of those phases in decision-making specific to agricultural life. Also represented were the twenty-four spans (*jieqi*) of the solar calendar to coordinate with the seasonal cycle.<sup>59</sup> This system, too, was based on agricultural conditions. The names of the twenty-four spans indicate various events such as 'the beginning of spring', 'rain and water', 'the inception of winter', 'light snow', 'heavy snow', 'winter solstice', 'lesser cold' and 'greater cold'.

After publishing its Anglo–Chinese calendar poster in 1895 and 1896, in 1897 the *Chinese Australian Herald* issued a small Anglo-style calendar, produced lithographically.<sup>60</sup> This calendar was divided into months, which were in turn divided into weekdays from Monday to Sunday. Missing were the lunar and solar cycles, along with the pictorial elements of the previous two years. The experiment was not continued, however; the *Chinese Australian Herald* reverted to the Anglo–Chinese poster style the following year. Nevertheless, the 1897 calendar was significant for one feature that lasted into subsequent years: it marked out Sunday.

The depiction of Sunday as a day of rest, and the time organization associated with it, was an example of the *Chinese Australian Herald* shaping a sense of the 'public' among its Chinese readers and encouraging them to share the customs of the colonies. The *Chinese Australian Herald* was specifically advocating its readers to change their everyday routines and embrace the colonial norm.<sup>61</sup> It maintained this position with the 1898 calendar which, while reinstating the poster-style, dual Anglo–Chinese format, retained Sunday as a dividing marker within both the Gregorian and lunar calendars.<sup>62</sup> Technology, once again, was a key factor. The new typesetting capability allowed the compositor to fit the words 'Liba', the symbol for 'Sunday', neatly into the calendar's compact space. The paper continued this approach in following years, an action that strongly supports the argument that print culture, as exemplified by the *Chinese Australian Herald*, was not only a factor in the transformation of its Chinese readers' daily routine but also affected the relationship between them and colonial society.

As the Australian Chinese increasingly embraced the concept and the sentiment of Sunday as a holiday so, too, did other 'public holidays' become part of their growing sense of identity within the wider colonial social imaginary, and of the relationship between daily life and political life. As we shall see below, this change proved significant in 1897, when the Chinese immigrant community was invited to participate in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee festivities. Once again, the *Chinese Australian Herald* would lead the way, playing a key role in mobilizing its readership by explaining the symbolic nature and political importance of the occasion, and by couching it all in terms relevant to their understanding of the world. In the process, the paper was able to convey a sense of the potential benefits for the Chinese in terms of their position in Australian society.

### **Chinese Celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Charity Carnival, 1897**

As the *Chinese Australian Herald*-centred print culture permeated urban Chinese life it contributed to creating a sense of the 'public' time and space occupied by the Chinese residents of urban Sydney. Two events in 1897 crystallized this development: Chinese processions organized first in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Charity Carnival on 28 August and then again, on 25 September, as a charity fund raiser. These celebrations equally highlighted the connections among local Chinese bilingual leaders like Quong Tart, Sun Johnson and W. R. G. Lee. On both occasions, the *Chinese Australian Herald* strongly backed Chinese community

<sup>59</sup> CAH, 18 Jan 1895, supplement.

<sup>60</sup> CAH, 5 Feb 1897, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> CAH, 22 May 1896, p. 3; 11 Dec, 1896, p. 5; 3 Oct 1903, pp. 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> CAH, 21 Jan 1898, supplement.

participation, invoking the symbolic power of the occasion and drawing on the community's social networks to generate enthusiasm for the carnivals.

Where the Queen's Diamond Jubilee is concerned, the first notable aspect to consider is how the *Chinese Australian Herald* was able to utilize a specific depiction of the British Queen as a means of fostering a sense of Chinese community. By integrating notions of Queen Victoria with Chinese mythology, the symbolic power of the Queen was enhanced and used to encourage Chinese to attend the Diamond Jubilee Charity Carnival. The *Chinese Australian Herald* did this by creating an image of the 'benevolent Queen', to encourage Chinese readers to embrace the monarchy, and suggesting in the process that they shared similar values with her. In this way readers were invited to see Queen Victoria as belonging, in a sense, to the same imagined community as themselves.

The Diamond Jubilee Carnival was not, in fact, the first example of the *Chinese Australian Herald* attempting to reshape the Chinese community's relationship to the British Empire or Australian colonial politics. The paper had invited Sydney's Chinese to participate in the discourse on Australian federation. An instance of its activism on this issue was its use of the political virtues of Confucianism as the basis for its analysis of the Federal Convention.<sup>63</sup> Further, the newspaper's approving attitude toward the colonial political system was also expressed in an article on the public debate in Sydney over a planned rail system. The paper enthusiastically participated in the principles of democracy. It further asserted that there was no autocracy in the colonies, and this, too, was in accord with the political values of Confucianism.<sup>64</sup>

The degree of influence such discussions exerted on Chinese readers is, however, difficult to determine. One can easily imagine the ordinary Chinese hawker having difficulty making the connection between colonial politics and the ideas of Confucius. As Craig Calhoun points out, it is difficult for people to understand large-scale organizations and systems without direct personal relationships in the modern world.<sup>65</sup> Thus he asserts that the sphere of political symbolism has become the dynamic by which personal life and large-scale systems interconnect, to enable individuals to imagine themselves as members of communities.<sup>66</sup> It is arguable that the *Chinese Australian Herald's* invoking of political and moral symbols such as that of the 'benevolent Queen' was an example of this dynamic, in that it enhanced the public sense and sense of public participation among Sydney Chinese and, in so doing, helped construct a new 'imagined Chinese community'.

Two celebrations in 1897 gave Australia's urban Chinese a chance to develop their understanding of the new political symbolism. These were the Queen's Birthday and the Diamond Jubilee. But the events by themselves were not enough; the agency of the *Chinese Australian Herald* was an essential component in the process of interpreting this political symbolism. After initiating discussion on the Federal Convention and the colonial political system, the newspaper ran a series of reports on both of the forthcoming royal celebrations. Importantly, in May the paper began by informing its Chinese readership that the Queen's Birthday was a public holiday. It made a point of reminding them that hawkers should not work in the

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<sup>63</sup> The *CAH* reported on the NSW Federal Convention election in order to encourage naturalized Chinese to vote in March. It urged Chinese electors to vote for 10 specific candidates on the grounds that they would promote a better understanding of the 'Chinese question' in the colonies. See *CAH*, 26 Feb 1897, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> *CAH*, 12 March 1897, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> Craig Calhoun, "Indirect Relationships and Imagined Communities: Large-scale Social Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life" in *Social Theory for a Changing Society*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1991), pp. 96-97.

<sup>66</sup> Calhoun emphasizes that political symbols can embed the sense of "'fellow feelings, common interest and shared identity" within members. Thus an imagined community may be identified by indirect social relationships. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

street on that day.<sup>67</sup> Here, it argued, was a chance for the Chinese to demonstrate respect for colonial custom. In addition to this admonition, it drove home the significance of the two celebrations by depicting them as international events.<sup>68</sup>

Further to this latter point, and to reinforce its readers' sense of connection with the global aspect, the *Chinese Australian Herald* represented and explained the glories of the British Empire as a result of the Queen's benign reign.<sup>69</sup> Claiming that Chinese immigrants also benefited from the Queen's 'benevolent politics', it duly began a campaign encouraging Australian Chinese to look on her with favour. Further to this line, it reported that, for instance, members of the Chinese community in Rockhampton had made the effort to buy golden and silver dragons from China to celebrate the Queen's Birthday.<sup>70</sup> The paper would also recount how Quong Tart, who was well-known to its readers, had presented greetings on behalf of the Chinese community on the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.<sup>71</sup> By invoking the actions of other Chinese, the *Chinese Australian Herald* appealed to its readers' sense of shared Chinese identity, while showing them that by virtue of that identity they were participating in a greater colonial and imperial public event. Further, that they owed their place in the event to the fact that they, too, were subjects and beneficiaries of the Queen's 'benevolent politics'.

Interestingly, while directly encouraging enthusiasm among its Chinese readership for the Diamond Jubilee, the *Chinese Australian Herald* was also doing its best to reinforce that enthusiasm indirectly, by exploiting the unifying potential inherent in identifying an alien 'other'—in this case, the Irish. According to the *Chinese Australian Herald*, the Irish were exhibiting a marked lack of enthusiasm for the event, and the paper suggested this could exacerbate the already unstable relationship between the British Empire and Ireland.<sup>72</sup> In expressing this notion, the paper hoped to persuade its Chinese readers to take the British Queen's side, with the aim of improved relations between the Chinese and the colonial political authorities.

In accordance with its avowed role as moral guide to its community of readers, the *Chinese Australian Herald* laid considerable stress on Queen Victoria's image as a regal benefactor who cared deeply for the poor and the children of her empire.<sup>73</sup> A further facet of her virtue, as extolled by the paper, was her industrious and thrifty nature—values, it could be safely assumed, that were shared by her subjects, and especially by the Chinese immigrants. In this way, the gap between royalty and the 'lower' classes was notionally reduced.<sup>74</sup> The implied moral order underpinning political benevolence was elevated to become a motif of the construction of Chinese community. As we will see, this was to be made explicit in the two festivals.

The *Chinese Australian Herald* also enhanced the symbolic power of the 'benevolent Queen' for its readers by utilizing aspects of Chinese mythology and religious belief.<sup>75</sup> For example, in reporting on the Diamond Jubilee day of celebration it noted that the weather in Sydney had been beautiful for the event, and suggested this was due to the Queen's boundless power. It brushed off the fact that there had been a shower of rain at the end of the festivities.<sup>76</sup> Another example of a supposed 'mythological' connection, and one that preceded the actual event, was

<sup>67</sup> CAH, 21 May 1897, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> CAH, 21 May 1897, p. 5; 28 May, 1897, p. 6; 4 June 1897, p. 3; 11 June 1897, p. 3; 18 June 1897, p. 4; 25 June 1897, p. 2; and 2 July 1897, p. 3; 16 July 1897, p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> CAH, 4 June 1897, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> CAH, 16 July 1897, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> CAH, 2 July 1897, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> CAH, 4 June, 1897, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> CAH, 4 June 1897, p. 3, 18 June, 1897, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> CAH, 25 June 1897, p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> CAH, 18 June 1897, p. 4 and 25 June 1897, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> CAH, 25 June 1897, p. 6.

the paper's urging its readers to take part in the carnival on the grounds that, as it was for charity, they would accrue good karma and eventually be rewarded by the Chinese God.<sup>77</sup> In the process of imputing a metaphysical dimension to the symbolism of the benevolent Queen, the *Chinese Australian Herald* thus also addressed common concerns among the Chinese about the future, morality, and their own place in the world.

The use of symbolic power was reflected in another way, too, by highlighting the ongoing negotiation between modern political concepts and national mythology. In the process of constructing an image of the 'beneficent Queen' the *Chinese Australian Herald* also invoked the symbolism of traditional Chinese imagery. The paper drew direct comparisons between the official emblems of the Australian colonies, such as the kangaroo, the emu and golden wattle, which they were employing in their Diamond Jubilee celebrations, and official Chinese emblems like the dragon. The *Chinese Australian Herald* editorialized in favour of the dragon over the colonial emblems, stating that the dragon, which also stood for Chinese morality, was a more powerful symbol.<sup>78</sup> The paper even adopted a dragon symbol for its masthead on its lunar–Gregorian calendar from 1898.

This integration of modern political celebration with traditional beliefs was presumably intended to motivate Chinese readers to imagine the community they formed as one existing within the British Australian colonies, and to encourage them to see their personal lives as intersecting with a large scale—even global—social and political system, the British Empire. Insofar as interpretations and symbolic power are created by social actors, however, it is important to understand how the social actors in this context worked with each other to mobilize the Chinese to act as a community in these two public events, since the importance of symbolic power lies not just in creating linkages between personal experience and large-scale social systems but also in the creation of new networks for social mobilization.

Cooperation among bilingual Chinese leaders, including Quong Tart, W. R. G. Lee and Sun Johnson, arose from the dealings of the Jubilee Charity Carnival Committee. In July 1897 the *Chinese Australian Herald* reported that a member of the committee had visited Bendigo to arrange the loan of the city's golden Chinese dragon, along with silk banners and costumes, for the Sydney carnival which was to take place on 28 August.<sup>79</sup> The idea of a Chinese contribution to the commemorations appealed strongly to Sun and Philp. According to a report in the *Bulletin*, Sydney's Chinese merchants and native-place societies had not been initially involved in arranging the journey of the Bendigo dragon, but Philp and Sun went to some lengths to ensure that the job of getting the dragon to Sydney for the carnival was seen as a task for the 'Chinese community'.<sup>80</sup>

Although the Bendigo dragon had been appearing in that city's public celebrations since 1892, it is likely that few of the Sydney Chinese had heard about the dragon before it was mentioned in the *Chinese Australian Herald*.<sup>81</sup> The paper's description of the dragon combined aesthetics and nationalism; it made much of the dragon's strikingly beautiful characteristics and described it as a glorious icon of the Chinese (*Huaxia* 华夏) people.<sup>82</sup> Such symbolic meaning, as Sun and Philp knew, could potentially give impetus to an expanded definition of Chinese social authority

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<sup>77</sup> CAH, 30 July 1897, p. 3 and 20 August 1897, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> CAH, 11 June 1897, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> CAH, 23 July 1897, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> *The Bulletin*, 4 Sept 1897.

<sup>81</sup> This particular Chinese dragon first appeared in the Bendigo Easter procession in 1892. See *Bendigo Independent*, 20 April 1892. The dragon was shared by Chinese in several colonial states, which helped build up a Chinese Australian network in the late nineteenth century. For more on Chinese contributions to the Bendigo Easter Fair Committee, see Amanda Rasmussen, "Networks and Negotiations: Bendigo's Chinese and the Easter Fair", *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, Vol. 4 (2004): 79-92.

<sup>82</sup> CAH, 23 July 1897, p. 3.

and identity, a prospect that encouraged them to report with great enthusiasm on the arrangements for bringing the Bendigo dragon north to Sydney.

Getting the Bendigo dragon to Sydney was no small matter. The Committee for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Charity Carnival contacted Mr C. F. Whitely, the Chinese liaison officer of the shipping firm Gibbs, Bright and Co., to handle the transportation;<sup>83</sup> but there were many other associated details to deal with, making it problematic for the European committee to stage this event in the carnival without the support of Chinese residents. For example, there were extra costs to be met: the Bendigo Chinese were requesting £3,000 to guarantee the safety of their dragon and the other processional props.<sup>84</sup> In addition, hundreds of Chinese volunteers were needed on the day to carry the dragon and the decking for other performances.<sup>85</sup> Meeting these needs became two major tasks for the committee.

In order to obtain further support and social resources from the Chinese community, the Queen's Jubilee Committee approached Sun and Philp for help.<sup>86</sup> To encourage Chinese merchants to participate in the carnival, the *Chinese Australian Herald* promoted the event as a chance to extend business networks.<sup>87</sup> It also extolled the idea of charity work as socially creditable for merchants, whether western or Chinese, and hence ultimately good for business.<sup>88</sup> The benefits of doing works for charity as a means of expanding one's economic and social networks thus became a motivating influence on the Chinese merchants. A Chinese committee was established by the *Chinese Australian Herald* and other leading Chinese, including members of the Lin Yik Tong, and the Chinese Merchant Assistance and Benevolent Society. Cooperation between the *Chinese Australian Herald* and the Lin Yik Tong was crucial to the success of the festivities.

The Lin Yik Tong had been established on 12 December 1891 as a commercial agency, initially dealing with the Gibbs, Bright Shipping Company. The Tong was organized by eight firms from different Cantonese counties,<sup>89</sup> which in 1897 united to form a single Chinese agency to sell tickets for the various steamship companies.<sup>90</sup> From this moment it was the most significant Chinese society in Sydney, with £600,000–£800,000 in trading capital.<sup>91</sup> However, the success of the Lin Yik Tong lay not just in its steamship agency, but also in its philanthropic activity<sup>92</sup> and its concern to represent the Chinese people. The Tong's regulations reflected the ideals of tongs generally, which were about creating a public space and association for collective negotiation.<sup>93</sup> But the Lin Yik Tong was also a new form of organisation: its subtitle was 'Chinese Association' in English and

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> *Bulletin*, 4 Sept. 1897.

<sup>85</sup> *CAH*, 30 July 1897, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> See letter to the *CAH* from the European Committee. *CAH*, 30 July and 20 August 1897.

<sup>87</sup> The *CAH* reported that the mayor of Sydney and Mr. Law, MP for Balmain, had asked the Chinese community to arrange for the Chinese performance in the Jubilee Charity Carnival. It seems that the *CAH* tried to encourage Chinese merchants to join this carnival as way for them to connect with the colonial authorities and expand their networks. *CAH*, 20 August 1897, p. 2; see also the *Bulletin*, 4 Sept. 1897.

<sup>88</sup> *CAH*, 6 August 1897, p. 6 and 13 August, 1897, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> They were Dongguan (東莞縣, also known as Tung Kuan, Toon Goon, Doon Goon and Doong Goong), Zhongshan (中山縣, also known as Chungshan and Chongshan; 香山縣 [*Xiangshan*] also known as Hsiangshan, Heongshang, Hungsang and Heungshan), Siyi (四邑, also known as Sze Yap, See Yap, See Yup and Sze Yup), Zengcheng (增城縣, also known as Tsangsing, Changsing and Chongsing) and Gaoyao. *CAH*, 21 Dec 1901 p. 5 and 5 April 1902, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> The Lin Yik Tong became the sole Chinese agent for steamship companies such as Gibbs, Bright Co., Burns Philp, and China Navigation Co. Ltd. See *CAH* 21 Dec 1901, p. 5; also in Yong, *New Gold Mountain*, p. 82. The tong later also became the agent for Nippon Yusen Kaisha. See *CAH*, 1 Feb 1902, p. 3. By the end of the 1890s it was the sole Chinese immigration agent in Sydney.

<sup>91</sup> *The Bulletin*, 4 Sept 1897.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, it negotiated cheaper fares for the aged or infirm. *CAH*, 1 Feb 1902, pp. 3-4.

<sup>93</sup> *CAH*, 5 April 1902, p. 6.

*Huamingongzhonghui* (華民公眾會) in Chinese.<sup>94</sup> The use of the term 'Chinese Association' in the Lin Yik Tong's title, and its constitution, further underlined the difference between these Chinese firms and former Chinese merchants working through old-style kin and native-place associations. W. R. G. Lee's leadership encouraged the Lin Yik Tong to develop these differences by beginning to seriously discuss how best to integrate with western networks and adopt western ways of behaviour rather than continue to rely on kinship customs. Indeed, Lee's leadership would help energise the Lin Yik Tong to mobilize the Sydney Chinese into a coherent community in the next years.

On the night of 4 August, the first meeting to discuss uniting the Chinese and European committees was held in Quong Tart's tea rooms.<sup>95</sup> The meeting was successful in persuading the Chinese merchants, who had the ability to bring on board Sydney's Chinese, to work with the European committee. A number of wealthy Chinese and Europeans were involved in the talks, and most favoured a cooperative approach to the carnival. Among the Chinese present were leading members of the Lin Yik Tong, including W. R. G. Lee and T. Yee Hing, who joined the meeting and were introduced to the Europeans by Quong Tart.<sup>96</sup> The group settled on a financial budget for the carnival.<sup>97</sup>

The meeting was productive and notably congenial, and the following media reports on each side of the language divide were optimistic. According to the *Sydney Evening News*, "racial hatreds and class distinctions were forgotten, and the Chinese and his European fellow citizen discussed how best to alleviate the misery of the poor and distressed".<sup>98</sup> Sun Johnson was present and acted as an interpreter. He proclaimed that "charity recognized no nationality or creed".<sup>99</sup> The *Chinese Australian Herald* covered the meeting and reported in buoyant tones that at least one outcome would be better relations between Chinese and Europeans in colonial society.<sup>100</sup>

Shortly after this meeting, the Lin Yik Tong initiated another on 15 August, attended by over 300 Chinese. Such numbers made it impossible to assemble in a Chinese lodge or shop, as was the normal custom, so the gathering convened, according to the *Chinese Australian Herald* report, at a hall in Castlereagh Street.<sup>101</sup> There within a few hours the Tong effectively organized the details and settings for the carnival, including electing the president and vice-president of a Chinese carnival committee.<sup>102</sup> The *Chinese Australian Herald* reported that it was finally decided to choose over 600 Chinese to participate in this celebration.<sup>103</sup> If there remained any doubts over the ability of the Lin Yik Tong to mobilize Chinese immigrants, they were firmly dispelled by the time the meeting closed.

The large attendance at this meeting also resulted from the efforts of the *Chinese Australian Herald*. The newspaper had urged the Chinese committee to encourage ordinary members of the Chinese community to become involved in the carnival. It published a notice on 13 August, devoting a whole page to explaining the origin and nature of the Chinese procession in the Jubilee Charity Carnival, and the origins of the carnival itself. This notice may well have been drawn up by Sun. Its intention was to persuade the Chinese to attend a second committee meeting. The

<sup>94</sup> *CAH*, 1 Feb 1902, pp. 3-4 and 19 July 1902, p. 6.

<sup>95</sup> *CAH*, 6 Aug 1897, p. 7. Quong Tart and Philp, who both had Scottish connections, were already friends, as is shown in a poem from Philp to Quong Tart written well before the meeting. See Margaret Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart*, reprint (Sydney: University of Sydney Library, 2001), p. 83.

<sup>96</sup> *Evening News*, 5 August 1897.

<sup>97</sup> *Bulletin*, 14 August 1897.

<sup>98</sup> *Evening News*, 5 August 1897.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *CAH*, 6 August 1897, p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> *CAH*, 20 August 1897, p. 2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Bulletin*, 4 Sept 1897.

<sup>103</sup> *CAH*, 20 August 1897, p. 2.

notice contained a cogent approval of the Diamond Jubilee and what it stood for, emphasizing the benefits for all peoples who lived in the British Empire. Those fortunate subjects, including Chinese immigrants, the notice stated, enjoyed stable and peaceful social conditions as a result of the benevolent reign of Queen Victoria. It further noted that great numbers of wealthy and upper-class Chinese and Europeans had celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in June. In this context, the *Chinese Australian Herald* maintained its position that the Chinese contribution, including the loan of the Bendigo dragon and other processional properties associated with Chinese imperial ritual, would present an image of the Chinese community as generous and willing to participate meaningfully in public life.

The role of the *Chinese Australian Herald* in regard to the Chinese carnival committee was not merely as a paper of record. It made no secret of its social activism, and informed readers of the doings of the committee via a formal notice rather than conventional reportage. In these notices, Sun described himself as an official of the committee, and, importantly, noted that the *Chinese Australian Herald* and the Lin Yik Tong were cooperating to organize the carnival. The newspaper also faithfully reported the large numbers of Chinese in attendance at the second meeting, in order to emphasize that the Chinese community's contribution was on a par with that of the European committee.<sup>104</sup>

From the foregoing account, it is apparent that the organization of the Chinese aspect of the Queen's Jubilee Charity Carnival was the result of social networks formed by the *Chinese Australian Herald* in collaboration with the Lin Yik Tong, both important institutional power bases for the new Sydney bilingual elite. Together they created a focal point for unified Chinese action and thus for the physical expression of a single 'Chinese community'. As Clifford Geertz has argued, elites "justify their existence and order their actions" with the forms of symbolic power by which they "mark the centre as centre".<sup>105</sup> In this case, local elite actors, using both activism and narrative, invoked the forms of a more powerful elite to "mark the centre" in a new way, and in so doing achieved a practical social connection between the reconfigured centre and the periphery in the form of the two carnivals. This connection took the form of interaction between their fellow Chinese and other spectators where they shared, negotiated, and expanded the meaning of community. Thanks to the effective use of symbolic power by the *Chinese Australian Herald* and its linked social networks, Sydney Chinese embraced the Jubilee Charity Carnival with enthusiasm. But behind the successful Chinese participation in the first carnival, on 28 August, there lay a complex process relying on the combination of modern print culture, traditional values, symbolic power, and new commercial networks.

Insofar as the Diamond Jubilee Carnival offered a different public image of the Chinese it did so in large part through the commentaries published in various Sydney newspapers. After the first carnival, Sydney journalists lauded the Chinese contribution, identifying the Chinese procession as a highlight of the celebrations. The Bendigo dragon and the other lavish paraphernalia created an impressive image in the eyes of the Sydney public. The *Evening News* interpreted the visual splendour of the Chinese contribution as a local example of venerable Chinese traditions.<sup>106</sup> Although the dragon and religious rituals were metaphors for the Chinese Empire, the *Evening News* derived from their use an image of "beneficent Chinese", and welcomed them as "citizens" of colonial society.<sup>107</sup> It asserted that the Chinese demonstration of involvement in the public sphere of the carnival made

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 124.

<sup>106</sup> *Evening News*, 30 August 1897.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

them "bona fide subjects" of colonial society, effectively co-citizens with Anglo-Australians.

The *Sydney Morning Herald's* rhetoric also explicitly approved the transformed image of the Chinese.<sup>108</sup> Although acknowledging that the dragon was a symbol of the Chinese Empire, its reportage focused on the modern, entertaining image projected by Sydney's Chinese, pointing out how valuable was the increasing interaction between the Chinese community and colonial society. The *Sydney Morning Herald* also made mention of Chinese participation in the football matches, bicycle races and cricket at the carnival—even though the unpractised Chinese participants were not notably competitive in the events. In addition, the paper placed considerable store on the Chinese participants' full and highly visible enjoyment of the festivities. It suggested that both their use of such costly materials and their participation in modern amusements and sports emphasized the interest of the urban Chinese in imitating European upper-class manners and customs. In consequence, the *Sydney Morning Herald* suggested, the Chinese performance had the potential to remedy a widespread colonial prejudice that regarded Chinese as parsimonious and avaricious.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Evening News* were not alone in their praise. The *Sydney Mail* used a whole page to republish the *Sydney Morning Herald's* reports plus impressive photographs of the procession,<sup>109</sup> including two large photos of the oriental dragon, the Chinese volunteers and the leading Chinese, some of whom were dressed in their best western clothes and the others in their most ornate national finery. The combination of traditional oriental symbols and modern western amusements was approvingly depicted in the *Sydney Mail* as signifying a hybrid Chinese community. In publishing the pictures the paper spread visible affirmation of the Chinese role in the carnival to a large-scale readership extending beyond Sydney to the entirety of colonial society.

While the Sydney public may have been surprised at the new appearance of the Chinese, the Chinese themselves, or at least the newspaper promoting it, were elated at the advent of a respectable public image in the English-language press, as was reflected in the reports of the *Chinese Australian Herald*. As we have seen, the newspaper initially focused on the dragon display as a metaphor for *Huaxia*—the Chinese nation;<sup>110</sup> however it dropped this metaphor in later commentary. After the first carnival, the *Chinese Australian Herald* published a sketch of the Chinese procession which placed a Chinese actor centrally, rather than the dragon or the regalia, and noted that their deeds on behalf of charity had bestowed honour on all Chinese colonials as a result.<sup>111</sup> It also emphasized the huge European attendance at the procession, and the Sydney newspapers' favourable reports of the first carnival, as evidence that the good Chinese were welcomed by colonial society.<sup>112</sup> It is thus apparent that the *Chinese Australian Herald* had moved on from its original position, wherein it worked to create a sense of Chinese nationality, to one of representing Chinese colonials as benignly disposed and therefore valuable to colonial society.

The *Chinese Australian Herald* was thus highlighting what it deemed a key moral value for both Chinese and colonial society: charity. Arguably, this value was given a peculiarly modern and urban meaning here because charity became a means for creating a public image rather than, as in the past, extending the social networks of native-place and kinship or generating good karma. If this is so, one can argue that the first carnival embodied a narrative of urban Chinese who were

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<sup>108</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 August 1897.

<sup>109</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 4 Sept 1897.

<sup>110</sup> *CAH*, 23 July 1897, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> *CAH*, 3 Sept 1897, p. 4.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

overjoyed at creating their new public image. Their delight at the apparent success of this process encouraged them to mount a second carnival shortly after the first.

### The Second Carnival and its Representation of Chinese Community

Because the Chinese procession in the Queen's Jubilee Charity Carnival was so well received, the *Chinese Australian Herald*, in collaboration with the Lin Yik Tong, organized another one a month later. The second Chinese procession repeated the formula of the first, with the Sydney Hospital the recipient of the charitable donations raised. The carnival was held for over five hours at Moore Park on 25 September, and doubled as a celebration of the Chinese Moon Festival.<sup>113</sup> Although the exact number of Chinese at the second carnival is problematic, it is likely attendance was higher than at the first, due to the favourable reports of the first in the *Chinese Australian Herald* and Sydney's mainstream newspapers. Also, Chinese promoted the second carnival by advertising it in Sydney's English-language newspapers.<sup>114</sup>

The second carnival was conducted on a grander scale than the first. On 25 September, the Chinese procession marched through Sydney's city streets and was the most important part of the carnival. Its route took it from Bent Street to the railway station.<sup>115</sup> Chinese missionaries, merchants, journalists, storekeepers, and market gardeners all attended, demonstrating the unity of the Chinese community. Community leaders walked at the head of the procession, including among them W. R. G. Lee, Quong Tart, Sun Johnson, T. Yee Hing.<sup>116</sup> Lions, unicorns and horses were also represented, as well as dragons. The event was interpreted by Sun Johnson as equivalent to regal processions in China 4000 years before.<sup>117</sup> After the march, all returned to Moore Park where powerful fireworks were detonated as a finale. The *Chinese Australian Herald* reported with unabashed enthusiasm that the whole lavish event symbolized the prosperity and progress of the civilized world.<sup>118</sup>

The procession also showed off the Chinese to spectacular effect for the journalists of the *Daily Telegraph*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Sydney Mail* and *Evening News*.<sup>119</sup> However, they were taken aback by the unfamiliarity of the symbols and legends in the procession, and although all, in their respective newspapers, expressed approval and appreciation of the second carnival's success, they recorded the strangeness, in their eyes, of the imperial procession.<sup>120</sup> This sense of 'strangeness', however, only heightened the *Chinese Australian Herald's* role as mediator between the Anglophone and Chinese-speaking communities. Responding to the Sydney journalists' misinterpretations and confusion over the procession's meaning, Sun, as the *Chinese Australian Herald* editor, took the opportunity to interpret for them the symbolism associated with the dragon and regalia featured. He linked the display with Chinese legend and folklore, and stated that this procession imitated the ritual processions of six ancient kings of China.<sup>121</sup> More importantly, in his own pages he also asserted that the dragon and regalia demonstrated the sophistication of the Chinese and of Chinese civilization rather than merely the authority of monarchs.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> CAH, 10 Sept 1897, p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> CAH, 31 Dec 1897, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> See advertisement for the second carnival in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 Sept 1897.

<sup>116</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 2 Oct 1897; *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Sept 1897.

<sup>117</sup> See photos in the *Sydney Mail*, 2 Oct 1897; also Sun's explanation to the *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Sept 1897.

<sup>118</sup> CAH, 1 Oct 1897, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> See *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Sept 1897; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Sept 1897; *Evening News*, 25 Sept 1897.

<sup>120</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 2 Oct 1897.

<sup>121</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 27 Sept 1897; *Sydney Mail*, 2 Oct 1897.

<sup>122</sup> CAH, 1 Oct 1897, p. 3.

From these interpretations it seems that, despite the second carnival's stated purpose, charity was not the major motive for the procession, and hence that charity may not have been the primary reason for running the event. Rather, by demonstrating something of the splendour of Chinese civilization, the leaders of the Sydney Chinese community had taken an opportunity once again to enhance its public image. Thus the symbolic power of royal processions and national pride in this case supplanted the visible virtue of charitable works in the shaping of the Chinese public image.

Questions remain as to precisely why Sun and the *Chinese Australian Herald* shifted the interpretive emphasis from charity to the symbolic power of the regal procession; but it may be in part because this transformation reflected the *Chinese Australian Herald's* narrative in regard to the emerging 'imagined Chinese community'. As Geertz notes, while governing elites use symbolic possessions to consolidate their social authority, symbolic possessions can be used to present and enhance charismatic social figures in any realm of life.<sup>123</sup> It is thus quite possible that the leading members of the Chinese community who marched at the head of the procession, such as bilingual missionaries, merchants and journalists, consciously grasped the opportunity to affirm their more mundane social authority through the empowering imperial symbolism of the costumes and other attributes of the procession. In this regard, it should not be forgotten that Sydney's Chinese leaders were also concerned that their image as leaders be projected beyond their fellow Chinese and that they be recognised by Anglo-Australian society as well. For example, the success of the two Chinese processions in 1897 additionally clarified W. R. G. Lee's power and profile in Sydney public life. There is no doubt that this influence led to Lee's being offered a leadership position within the Lin Yik Tong from where he did much to further the goal of mobilizing the Sydney Chinese to unite as a community in the years that followed. In this way, it can be argued that symbolic trappings of the kind displayed in the procession helped create a sense of coherent linkages between centre and periphery within the Chinese community by simultaneously appealing to Chinese national pride and historical legacy while equally casting members of the bilingual Chinese leadership group in a flattering new light for the Anglophone newspaper reading public.

#### **Afterword: A New Chinese 'Imagined Community' at a Moment in Time**

In Anderson's concept of the modern nation as an 'imagined community', newspapers are assigned a critical, if often implicit, role. The complex processes of constructing imagined communities, mediated in part by print culture as a modern means of communication, occur at the juncture of indirect social relationships and direct interpersonal relationships. Print culture serves to bridge the disjuncture between the world of indirect social relationships and individual daily life. As I have shown in this article, the *Chinese Australian Herald* admirably carried out this function. It conveyed a sense of secular time through the rhythm of regular publication cycles, through its championing of the new rhythms of modern urban life and by its cultivation of a sense of simultaneous readership that transcended older and smaller bound groupings like clan or native place associations.

The newspaper also helped to refashion and modernize the social imaginary of the 1890s Sydney Chinese community by instructing its members in aspect of western ethics and social manners, and by invoking a new sense of historical progress and the workings of the international state system within which the Australian colonies existed. In particular its promotion of public holidays and festivals played a real role in reorganizing Chinese urban life according to the Western calendar and clock time. Its promotion of public holidays, civic

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<sup>123</sup> Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, pp. 123-24.

commemorations and regulated working hours situated city time in a local, national and imperial matrix which in turn situated readers imaginatively within a modern grid of social, cultural and political allegiances. Beyond that, for the *Chinese Australian Herald*, celebrating certain public holidays or commemorative occasions was a means of promoting the appearance of Chinese civic virtue within the wider Australian community as well. In 1897, for instance, the newspaper encouraged its readership to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on the understanding that those who did so would be participating in a great imperial public event that would be simultaneously celebrated within the colony and throughout the whole British Empire, with its flourishing Chinese dependencies like Hong Kong, Penang and Singapore. To encourage this focus, the *Chinese Australian Herald* even put forward the possibility of a new political configuration for its readers, who were invited to see themselves as part of a world-wide empire whose ruler the newspaper clothed in the symbols of traditional Chinese imperial virtue.

This late 1890s refashioning of the social imaginary had also reflected the emergence a new sort of community leadership, a bilingual urban Chinese elite drawn from among the merchants and intellectuals who had strongly supported the newspaper's creation. Negotiating and maintaining a dual 'Chinese' and 'Australian' vision of urban residential life offered challenges for Chinese community leaders in the 1890s. Earlier Chinese leadership practices in Australia had been similar to those of nineteenth-century Singapore,<sup>124</sup> where a family's wealth made possible the benevolent activities and leadership of native-place associations which conferred authority and prestige upon its principal figure.<sup>125</sup> In the 1890s, this style of leadership was threatened by bilingual Sydney Chinese who joined forces to challenge it through connections with foreign shipping companies, the Lin Yik Tong, and European journalists. The great success of the Chinese processions in the Queen's Jubilee celebration in 1897 only further enhanced the prestige and leadership claims of this group. With hindsight, however, we can see that the days of this new group were numbered, and that the later 1890s were arguably the years of its members' greatest influence.

As mentioned at the start of this article, the story of the 1890s *Chinese Australian Herald* is the story of a particular moment in the history of the Sydney Chinese community. Shortly after the new bilingual elite's great popular successes in the Jubilee year, other Chinese leaders began to use the modern press to pioneer a different route to community leadership. Briefly, fruit traders and other merchants who had increased their wealth and the scope of their social networks sought to establish an alternative to the *Chinese Australian Herald*, a new communication medium through which to work with other bilingual Chinese to secure leadership positions for themselves. In 1899 they founded the *Tung Wah News*, a journal that soon took a very different position from the *Herald* on China's process of domestic reform and on the place of Chinese in the world. Then in late 1899 the leading figures of the *Tung Wah News* group established the New South Wales Chinese Empire Reform Association (保皇會 [*Baohuanghui*] also known as 'Aozhou Niaoxiuweisheng baojiu daqing Guangxuhuangdi Hua [澳洲烏修威省保救大清光緒皇帝會]) to promote radical change in China.

By the start of the twentieth century, a rift appeared in the modernized imagined Chinese community fostered by the new Chinese newspapers and associations. A

<sup>124</sup> C. F. Yong (楊進發), 'Shijushiji xinjiapo huazu lingdaoceng' (十九世紀新加坡華族領導層 [Leadership of the Chinese Community in 19th century Singapore]), in Bak Lim Kua (柯木林) and Wu Zhenqiang (吳振強) ed., *Xinjiapo Huazushi lunji* (新加坡華族史論集 [Essays on Singapore Chinese Community History]), Singapore, Nanyangdaxue biyesheng xiehui (南洋大學畢業生協會), 1972), p. 45.

<sup>125</sup> Chong, Siou Wei (張曉威), 'Wanqing zhu binlang yu fulingshi zhi jiaose' (晚清駐檳榔嶼副領事之角色分析 [The Role of the Vice-Consul in Penang, 1893-1911]), Ph.D. thesis, National Chengchi University (Taipei), 2004, pp. 162-165.

growing number of Chinese fruit traders chose to back the *Tung Wah News* and the Chinese Empire Reform Association, a decision that would form an important factor in the relative decline of the Lin Yik Tong in the early twentieth century. This newly-emerging Sydney Chinese elite would exercise its social leadership through the press and through modern social networks that crossed native-place boundaries, as its 1890s predecessor had done but, significantly, also through new forms of political participation that involved organized political parties. As early as 1901 and 1902 these new men were strong enough to successfully challenge established bilingual leaders like W. R. G. Lee and Quong Tart. Thereafter, the new Chinese leadership and its press began to encourage Sydney's community to orient itself towards identification with China and with a sort of diasporic Chinese nation<sup>126</sup> rather than to imagine itself as part of an Anglo-British colonial-imperial society. The White Australia policy that followed the political federation of the six Australian colonies in 1901 only reinforced this trend. As a result, the 1890s community-forming project of the *Chinese Australian Herald* more or less disappeared from view. Nevertheless, as this article has shown, its impact on shaping a new modernized Chinese 'imagined community' should not be under-rated. The legacy of those few years persisted as a seminal element within a Chinese–Australian urban consciousness that would later help to sustain community members in the changing circumstances of twentieth-century Australia.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Bryan Goodman, 'Networks of news: power, language and transnational dimensions of Chinese press, 1850-1949', *The China Review*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring, 2004): 2.

<sup>127</sup> For a longer discussion of these points, see Kuo, 'Making Chinese Australia', chapter 4 and 5.