



Call for Papers

Our Second National Conference will be held in Melbourne over the 18-19 August 2012 weekend. An inner city venue will be advised by June 2012.

Theme: ***Moving On!***

At its inaugural conference in April 2011, *Finding the Chinese Australian Voice*, a resolution was carried binding the National Executive “to look into the Lambing Flat incidents and discriminatory policies against the Chinese, with a view to asking the Australian Government for an apology together with acknowledgement of the contributions of Chinese Australians”.

As a consequence the National Executive has endorsed our first project, *Moving On!*, that will go a significant way towards finding a Chinese Australian voice that will resonate with all who care about the cultural development and destiny of our nation.

This conference is devoted to seeking information, knowledge and expertise that would enhance the execution of our *Moving On!* project.

We seek papers from historians, history teachers, and social researchers on the treatment of Chinese Australian history in current school syllabi which might benefit from re-casting to evoke empathy from a Chinese Australian perspective.

Lambing Flat for instance. Has the academic/historical accounts treated the Chinese experience as troublesome footnotes to the white settlers’ (triumphal) narrative? Papers which reflect on the universality of our human propensity to mistreat the Other, often powerless minorities amongst us, particularly when we fall prey to leaders who are skilful at inciting us to dance with the darkest fears in our national psyche would be most welcome. Papers on the Dame Mary Gilmore’s poem, *Fourteen Men*, (Chinese miners hanging from trees at Lambing Flat), written nearly a century after the event, apparently from her childhood recollections, would break new ground – to shed light on the impact of the Lambing Flat *Expulsions* (of Chinese miners over 10 months) in the spiritual landscape of White Australia.

On another front we would like to see papers which examine existing cultural productions of the Chinese Australian experience in public spaces, with an acute focus on what they implicitly say about the place of Chinese in contemporary Australian society. For instance, what would be the social rationale behind a travelling exhibition made up of a pair of lotus shoes (for Chinese women with bound feet); a posed C19 photo of a Chinese sitting, legs crossed, on a chair against a brick wall in a neglected backyard in North Queensland, in his make-do Sunday best, with a long bamboo pipe to his lips; a horde of Chinese coins found in a re-opened gold mine; and a collection of opium smoking implements borrowed from a historic homestead?

And why are Chinese Australians almost invisible in the public life of Australia, especially compared with ethnic groups with much lower numbers? There are no shortages of well recognised Chinese faces and names in our social and intellectual landscape. Some have even been accorded the status of folk heroes: Mao’s last dancer; Victor Chang, the pioneering heart surgeon; our young memoirist, Alice Pung. But we would be racking our brains to find

a celebrated public intellectual, a prominent human rights or social justice advocate, a visible figure in the judiciary. Furthermore, the number of Chinese in our Parliaments has fallen. We seek, desperately, papers which delve into all aspects of this cultural phenomenon.

Finally there is anecdotal evidence that we could and should do more to provide culturally empathetic welfare services. For instance, we would like to see papers on enhancing settlement services for recent Chinese migrants, exploring what could be done to help them salvage their professional training and intellectual heritage gained in an Asian country?

And similarly, for the other end of life's journey, we would welcome papers which scope the need for retirement/nursing home facilities for ageing Chinese Australians who have come here to join their children, and have come at a time when they are too advanced in age to become sufficiently language proficient or culturally competent to find a second home in mainstream facilities. Papers which present the experiences of Chinese community organisations that have developed culturally affirming aged/nursing home services for our aged parents would be particularly welcome. In similar vein, papers on (say) why a fourth generation native-born Chinese Australian who had lost most of his ancestral heritage during the White Australia period would choose to live in a aged-care facility alongside elderly Chinese who had come here in the last few decades, speaking not a lot of English, might shed light on the universality of our human need for belongingness and identity - to find our roots, even if we have been largely severed from the trunk of the tree.

Background

The *Moving On!* Project has three main strands:

1. To examine representations of Chinese Australian history in Australian school syllabi;
2. To establish a long term exhibition of the Lambing Flat *Expulsions*, preferably in the National Museum of Australia;
3. To seek from the government a Poll Tax Trust Fund, to be used to champion a vital presence of Chinese Australians in the public life of Australia, and to gain a place for Chinese Australian history that demonstrates empathy with the real experience of Chinese Australians. (Our kiwi cousins got their Trust Fund in 2005.)

We believe that this undertaking is a first in Chinese Australian history.

It is an overdue attempt to find our voice in contemporary society.

We want to provide a positive role model for the younger generation, of all backgrounds.

Abstracts

Abstracts of 250 words with a bio of 50 words would be most welcome. Please send your abstract to Chek Ling by email in Word format: ccling@aapt.net.au by 5 December 2011.

Acceptances will be notified by mid January 2011, to allow presenters time to fully develop the papers scoped by their abstracts. Papers are due two weeks before the conference.

Format of conference

We prefer papers which are succinct, well-argued, and provocative. Academic formalities are not mandatory, nor expected. Not more than 3000 words please. Presentation: 15 minutes. Open discussion 10 minutes.

Please direct any enquiries to the Convenor, Chek Ling at ccling@aapt.net.au