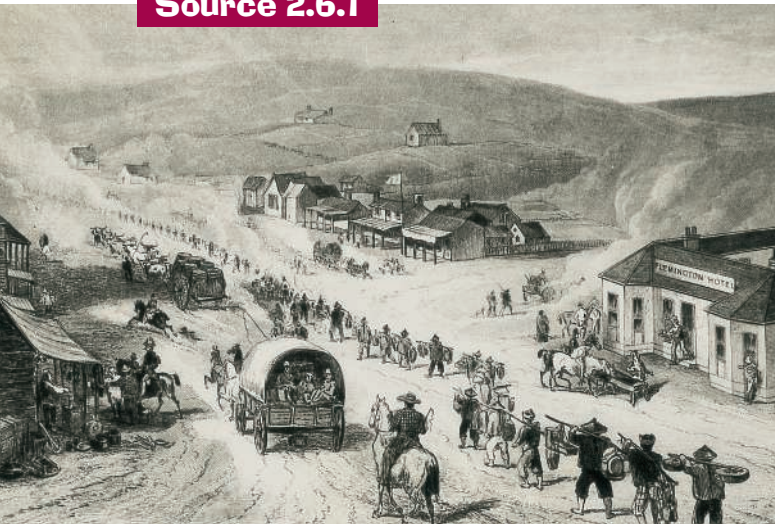


THE CHINESE AT THE 'NEW GOLDFIELDS'

Miners who came from the Guangzhou region of southern China called the Australian goldfields *Tsin Chin Shan*. It meant 'the new goldfields'. The Chinese were often resented and distrusted. They looked different, with their long pigtaails, wooden-soled shoes and wide-brimmed straw hats. They ate different food, had different customs and spoke Cantonese, a very different language. The Chinese carried everything to the goldfields across their shoulders on long bamboo poles.

Source 2.6.1



Chinese on the way to the goldfields. *Off to the Diggings — Flemington Near Melbourne* (Reproduced from *How to Farm and Settle in Australia* by Samuel Charles Brees)

Source 2.6.2

Letter from a miner, Antoine Fauchery, on Chinese miners

They lived in their own camps often quite isolated from those of Europeans. In many cases [Lambing Flat area] they were confined to certain areas by the local police and so contact with other miners was limited. There were very few Chinese women in these camps. There were 8 female among 24 000 males in Victoria in 1861. They built their own temples [joss houses] and stores and organised their own entertainment.

They were described as being 'strong, industrious, patient, they work slowly perhaps but methodically, never stopping and never worrying anybody at the mines ... preferring to work on poor deposits that give moderate but regular results'.

Antoine Fauchery, *Letters from a Miner in Australia*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1965.

Source 2.6.3

Report from the Victorian Legislative Council, 1856–57

Ninety-nine-hundredths of their race are pagans, and addicted to vices of a greatly immoral character. They feel bound to state that the presence of such a large number of their class in the midst of our great centres of population must necessarily have a most destructive effect upon that portion of the rising generation with which they most frequently come in contact.

Victorian Legislative Council, Report of the Select Committee on Chinese Immigration, Votes and Proceedings, 1856–57, pp. 853–4.

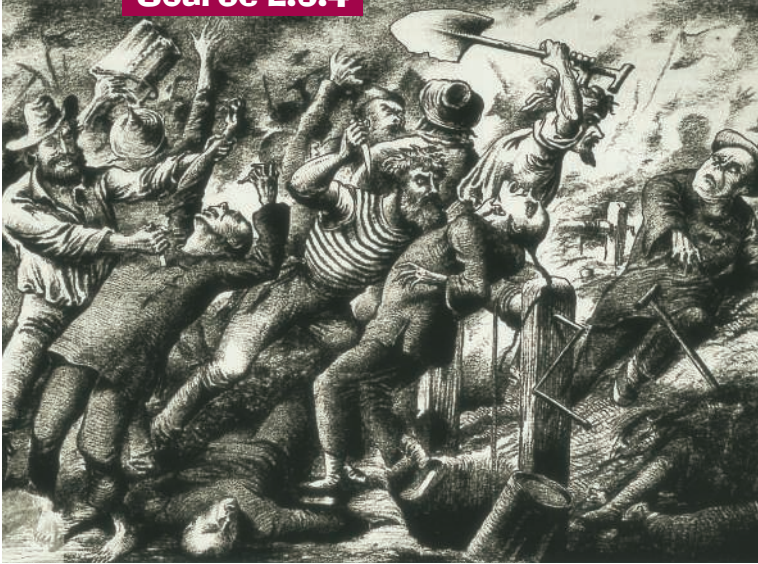
The Chinese were amongst the first visitors to Australia. It is believed that Chinese sailors landed on the north coast of Australia in the early fifteenth century. After white settlers arrived in Australia, some Chinese worked on farms as shepherds, station hands, cooks and gardeners. It is estimated that 2000 Chinese were living in Victoria in 1850. By 1860, there were over 40 000 Chinese miners in Victoria alone. Gravel heaps, streams and mines abandoned by the European miners yielded small amounts of gold for the hardworking and patient Chinese.

In an attempt to keep the Chinese and European communities apart on the goldfields, a system of Chinese 'protectorates' was set up. Seven Chinese villages were established at Bendigo, with several at other goldfields. Tea-houses, restaurants, doctors and shops catered for the Chinese community. As gold became harder to mine, European intolerance of the Chinese increased and from 1854 onwards sporadic clashes occurred. The Victorian Government decided to introduce a policy of official restriction, which required the Chinese to pay a fee of £10 when they entered Victoria. The Chinese dodged the tax by arriving in South Australia and then walking to the goldfields. When this tax failed to deter the Chinese, the government imposed another tax. The Chinese were required to pay a residence fee of £1 every month; this was increased to £6 in 1858.

European resentment against the Chinese flared into violence in 1857. A group of European miners burned the tents and possessions of a party of Chinese miners who were walking to Bendigo.

In 1861, at Lambing Flat in New South Wales, a riot against the Chinese required police, artillery and sailors to restore order. One thousand men armed with weapons such as pick-handles and whips formed a line and marched to the Chinese miners' camp. The Chinese were insulted, brutally attacked and driven from the goldfield.

Source 2.6.4



Lambing Flat riots, 1861

QUONG TART

Most Chinese eventually returned to their villages in China. Nineteenth-century Chinese immigrants usually shared a belief that it was their duty to return to 'the flowery land', where their ancestors were buried. By 1881, there were only 12 000 Chinese left in Victoria. The Chinese who did remain in Australia after the 1850s gold rush became farm workers, merchants, shopkeepers and carpenters. One of the most highly respected people in Sydney in the 1890s was a Chinese immigrant called Quong Tart. He came to Australia in 1859 when he was nine years old, eventually became a businessman and a mine-owner, married a European woman and became a prominent figure in Sydney. Quong Tart promoted Australian business in China, gave generously to charities and established a number of philanthropic organisations. He was committed to tolerance and building understanding between the Chinese and Australian communities. In 1902, Quong Tart was brutally assaulted and in 1903 died from his injuries. Grief and outrage were expressed in Sydney newspapers, and there was widespread recognition of his contribution to Australia.

Source 2.6.5



A photograph of Quong Tart and his wife

Activities

Understand

1. What attitude did many diggers have to the Chinese on the goldfields?
2. How did the Victorian Government officially restrict the number of Chinese on the goldfields?
3. What happened at Lambing Flat in 1861?
4. Who was Quong Tart? Why is he remembered?
5. Explain what you think would have worried the European diggers most about the Chinese.

Communicate

6. Put yourself in the position of the Chinese diggers on the goldfields. As their representative, compose and present a speech to the Ballarat Reform League explaining your difficulties and the reforms you would like to see.

Teamwork

7. In small groups, research the involvement of the Chinese on the goldfields. Create a series of web pages showing:
 - the nature of the work they carried out
 - features of the Chinese culture that caused suspicion and resentment in the other miners
 - incidents of racial tension, such as riots
 - treatment of the problems by the authorities.

Worksheets

- 2.3 Chinese diary