Making the 'last Chinaman':
Photography and Chinese as a 'vanishing' people in Australia's rural local histories[1]

ABSTRACT

From the 1900s residents of declining former gold-rush towns in south-eastern

Australia took snapshot photographs of frail, elderly Chinese men. A small but

distinct group of these photographs were subsequently termed the 'last Chinaman'.

This article argues that photographs of the 'last Chinaman' have been mobilised in

local histories, to describe Chinese involvement in the gold rushes as part of the

history of rural towns, contributing to the construction of Chinese Australians in

national history as a 'vanishing' people. The implications of this are that Chinese who

were 'everyday' Australians have been overlooked in our histories and the public

circulation of photographs which illustrate Chinese as Australians have also been

constrained and overshadowed by those of the 'last Chinaman'.

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Wong Hor, also known as 'Blind Tommy', was described as Beechworth's 'last

Chinaman' in the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* as early as 1924.[2] Some time around

1941 he was also drawn and photographed as one (see Image 1).[3] Wong Hor was

blind, elderly and lived on his own out of town. At the same time as Wong Hor was

being represented as a 'last Chinaman', James Albert Wong, the third son of Chinese-

born Bartholomew Wong Poo and his Devonshire-born wife Sarah Jane, was also living in Beechworth - raising a family and working as a commercial photographer.[4] James Albert Wong would still have been viewed by many in the community as 'Chinese' but he was not photographed or represented as a 'last Chinaman' (see Image 2). In the same way that many surviving descendants of Aboriginal people in Tasmania had to be ignored in order to imagine Truganini as the 'last Tasmanian Aboriginal', it was a particular kind of Chinese person who was photographed, singled out as a 'last Chinaman' and utilised in local histories.[5] This has meant James Albert Wong's life, as one among many ordinary Australian lives, has not been noted or remarked on. His story as an Australian who happens to have Chinese ancestry, is overlooked in historical discourse. Instead it is Wong Hor, constructed as the 'last Chinaman' of Beechworth, who is remembered, both visually and in print, as part of Australia's Chinese history. An examination of the trope of the 'last Chinaman' and the creation, function and meanings of photographs within the genre of the 'last Chinaman', demonstrates how and why Chinese were included in Australia's earlier histories and how this continues to constrain our understandings of Chinese as 'everyday' Australians in our histories today.

The trope of the pitiful, lonely Chinese man who remains behind after the gold rushes is well recognised and remembered. Ann Curthoys observed how these men 'perch at the edge of our historical consciousness, figures of fun and shame, a marker of our colonial origins and the colonial vestiges in our present culture'.[6] For Jan Ryan the remnant Chinese market gardeners in Perth are 'etched into our folk memory'. Keir

Reeves described the trope to challenge it. According to Reeves Harry Hoyling, his wife and children and the 'thriving community' of Chinese market gardeners who lived in the Mount Alexander area in Victoria until well into the twentieth century, complicates and challenges the 'stereotype of aging men in a dissolving community' that Wong Hor represents.[7] However, no-one has investigated the construction and circulation of textual or visual representations of this trope or explored how it has shaped our understandings of Chinese Australian history.

Recent scholarship in Chinese Australian history has tended to focus on the absence of Chinese in Australia's early historiography, rather than their presence.[8] Until the late 1970s there was little recognition of the role of Chinese in Australia in local and national histories. Since then, one of the significant roles played by historians of Chinese Australia has been to 'find' and document the existence of Chinese in the historical record.[9] This has been an important and necessary part of the development of the field. The desire to recover the place of Chinese in Australian's past has, however, also meant that the presence of Chinese in Australia's earlier written histories has tended to be marginalised.[10] While some have noted that Chinese were remembered as caricatures or in a vague and distant way in the public imagination, the nature of this earlier remembering has not been deeply interrogated.[11]

Identifying the few occasions when Chinese were included in these histories and exploring how and why this was achieved provides us with a more complete understanding of their place in Australian history making, particularly at the local

history level. Janis Wilton has described how the collection of objects, documents and

photographs, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, by local museums and historical

societies in regional New South Wales was an example of how Chinese were included

in early history-making in Australia. This surprised Wilton 'given the history of

racism in Australia and the fleeting presence of Chinese in regional New South

Wales'.[12] Her analysis revealed the layers of meaning attached to these objects and

demonstrated how Chinese held a contradictory place in the memories of these local

communities.

> These objects, their labels and their inclusion in local museum
> collections symbolise the pervasiveness of racism and its associated
> myths and folklore as a relatively unquestioned mentalité. They also, in
> a contradictory way, indicate an acceptance by the same people that the
> Chinese presence was an integral and important part of the
> development of a district.[13]

The creation of photographs of 'last Chinaman' personalities and particularly their use

as illustrations in local history making, is another example of how Chinese were seen

by white Australians to have this kind of contradictory place in Australia's history.

Until recently, there has also been little recognition in the historiography of the bias

that results from the creation, function and uneven circulation of photographs and the

impact this has had on how Chinese are visually remembered in the past and in the

making of history. Certain kinds of images and histories of Chinese in Australia have been more likely to circulate publicly at different times.[14] For example the photograph of James Albert Wong, depicting him as an 'everyday' Australian [Image 2], mentioned at the start of this article, remained in a private collection until quite recently, while images of Wong Hor, as 'the last Chinaman', have circulated in various public spaces for several decades and have been mobilised on a number of occasions to tell Beechworth's history.

There has been a tendency to read photographs and photographic illustrations as truthful, self-explanatory and impartial representations of the past.[15] The deeply problematic nature and meaning of photographs has not been fully appreciated by Australian historians until recently.[16] Photographs are both representations of the past and material objects that acquire their own history.[17] The relationship between a photographic representation and the 'real' may appear direct, in that it is mechanically and chemically produced, but there is sufficient distortion in the process of photography to destabilise this relationship.[18] The apparent truthful quality of photographs is socially constructed. It is the people who view and interpret a photographic representation, based on its context and their knowledge and experience of the world, that ultimately gives it meaning and worth.[19] A photograph's meaning is integrally tied to the physical and social context in which it is created and viewed and as these contexts change across time and space, photographs continue to acquire meanings.[20]

It is possible, however, to confine and draw meaning out of photographic source material through the use of photographic genres. Although in theory an individual photograph can acquire an infinite number of meanings, in practice an arena of shared expectations about the meanings of photographs, or 'photographic discourse', develops that limits the range of an individual photograph's possible meanings.[21] In practice the kinds of photographs produced tend to cluster into identifiable genres of photographic practice, which are defined by their visual style, form, intentions, uses and rhetorical strategies. Surrounding these genres is the expectation and assumption that photographs will be contained within a particular genre, 'code of representation' or 'pictorial and discursive convention'.[22] These genres are useful for analysis and interpretation, but are also interdependent, overlapping and difficult to precisely define, and are therefore always provisional.[23]

The 'last Chinaman' genre of photographs depict elderly men either working or posing in front of a very basic home.[24] Subjects wear everyday clothes, commonly a mismatched suit and, aside from their faces, tend to show no obvious markers of their Chinese ancestry. They are generally full-length portrait snapshots - informal, spontaneous photographs without professional intent. Most were taken in former gold-rush regions of Victoria and New South Wales from the 1900s to the 1930s, but sometimes later. Whether created as 'last Chinaman' photographs or not, some time after their creation they are described as depicting a 'last Chinaman'. The photographs document the decline of the Chinese population in rural areas. This is achieved through their captioning and visually through the elderly appearance of the subjects

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who have deeply wrinkled skin and hunched postures. A careless or poor physical appearance is marked by worn, ill-fitting and damaged clothing and unkempt hair styling and their appearance and weather-worn skin denotes years of hard physical labour, which is reinforced by poses that include their work tools. By being photographed alone, a sense of social isolation is achieved. Individuals described as the 'last Chinaman' were born in China, or physiognomically appear to be, and were engaged in occupations generally associated with Chinese in Australia at the turn of the nineteenth century, such as mining, hawking or market gardening.

We know very little about most of the people who created photographs of the 'last Chinaman'. Their motivations are obscure, but there does seem to be a link between their creation and the burgeoning of amateur local history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These photographs were largely created, before the emergence of formal academic Australian history in the post-World War II period, when it was the 'plain men and women', as Graeme Davison described them, who were making Australia's history, generally in the form of local history.[25] These amateur historians were the descendants of Australia's earlier pioneers.[26] Their interest in history grew in part from 'scientific curiosity or from intimacy with a place or a community' and they drew on a wide range of 'documentary, oral and environmental sources', including photography, to tell that history.[27] Rather than recalling and celebrating the past as their pioneer forebears did, these early twentieth-century historians were more structured in their activities; recording, commemorating and chronicling the past.[28] They also began to organise themselves in a sustained way

into country and suburban historical and genealogical societies and so collected material for historical posterity with public distribution and display in mind.[29]

Inspired to remember the activities of their pioneer ancestors, the places they colonised and the communities they built, these early amateur historians were precisely the sort of person to have noticed the fast diminishing number of old Chinese men living in their rural communities and value them as worthy of being photographed as a remnant of their district's past. A couple of 'last Chinaman' photographs published in local histories can be sourced back to the private collections of amateur historians, although their provenance before this is unknown. They are generally casual snap shots, without the markings of a commercial photographer, and they chiefly survive in the local communities where they were created. 'Last Chinaman' photographs were also largely created by amateur photographers with relationships with their subjects that reveal both the familiarity of being part of the same small rural community and also the distance of someone who is photographing a person who is not a family member or close friend. Some subjects willingly posed and smiled for the camera, brief anecdotes often accompanied photographs, and many of the men photographed are named, either with simple nicknames, shortened personal names or fuller Anglicised Chinese names. There were, however, also errors naming some individuals and some subjects were also photographed without being alerted to the presence of the camera, or taken just after becoming aware of the camera (see Image 1). Despite being remembered, sometimes quite fondly, these men were also often portrayed as subjects to be pitied, or quirky 'characters' and figures of fun.

Robert Fun Yet, for example, was photographed in an oversized top hat and tails.[30]

This mockery allowed local communities to relate to these individuals in a way which

kept them outside mainstream local society.[31]

Regardless of who created them and why, from at least the 1920s, photographs of

frail, elderly Chinese men, began to be mobilised in public spaces as the 'last

Chinaman' to tell local histories. These spaces included museum exhibitions,

published histories in monographs and newspapers and the collections of rural

historical societies and museums. In some instances it is possible to trace the

movement of these photographs from the private to public realm in some detail. Ah

Pen was photographed by Daryl or perhaps Lionel Lindsay around 1917. At least two

prints were created and both ended up in public collections; partly because of their

subject matter and partly because the Lindsay family is one of Australia's significant

artistic families.[32] Some time after the 1930s, Edwin James Semmens, a forester and

local historian in Creswick, Victoria, obtained a print of the Ah Pen photograph,

presumably from the Lindsay family as it was initialled and annotated by Daryl

Lindsay and it became part of his large collection of documents and artefacts relating

to the history of the Creswick area.[33] This private collection later formed the basis of

the public collection of the Creswick Historical Society. In 1969 parts of this

collection were donated to another public archive, the University of Melbourne

Archives.[34] The second print of Ah Pen remained in Peter Lindsay's private collection

of photographs and manuscripts which were donated to the Mitchell Library in

Sydney and opened to public access around 1990.[35] This shows how both copies of

the same 'last Chinaman' photograph have found their way from private family collections into the public sphere.

A nostalgia for the gold-rush period and the passing of an idealised rural lifestyle inspired residents to make local histories and to include Chinese and the 'last Chinaman' in them.[36] The beginnings of legends that romanicised the lives of gold-diggers developed in the 1890s as former gold-rush towns declined, those who had lived through them began to pass away, and those remaining reflected on the lives of this earlier generation.[37] The decline in the fortunes of rural communities, in contrast to Australia's growing metropolises, led some communities to strengthen their flagging self esteem by memorialising the glory days of the gold rush period.[38] The gold rushes marked the hey-day of many towns. They fuelled many towns' expansion and development and their passing highlighted the comparative rise of Australia's cities and the beginning of the decline of rural areas.[39]

There was a melancholy associated with the passing of an idealised rural past which allowed for the simultaneous celebration of the modernisation and progress of rural towns. The loss of this past could be used to bolster the town's self image. The Chinese who had been so significant to the delivery of those vegetables during and immediately after the gold rush were part of the fading of that sentimentalised past. 'Last Chinaman' photographs were taken from the 1890s when the gold rushes began to be popularly memorialised and were published in newspapers from the 1930s and in local histories from the 1960s, both popular eras for local history-making.[40] They

were created in south-eastern Australian 'gold-rush' towns that had subsequently declined such as Hill End and Uralla in New South Wales and Beechworth, Jordan, Linton, Creswick and Ovens Valley in Victoria. The old age of the men was often considered important enough to include in photograph captions, perhaps to establish them as 'genuine' gold-rush immigrants. Some were remembered and described as being much older than they probably were in order to achieve this. According to local historian Harry Hodge, New Chip (Mew Chip) arrived in Australia in 1851 (before the gold rushes) aged twenty-two and died some time after 1933 at the 'reputed age of 104'.[41] His death record stated, however, that he was ninety-one years old when he died in 1937 and so he would only have been a child when the gold rushes started.[42]

The decline of gold-rush towns coincided with that of the town's Chinese population, giving these photographs an added symbolism and nostalgia in local histories. Harry Hodge finished his 1964 history of Hill End with a chapter on the Chinese and a discussion of the last Chinese in the area. After some anecdotes about the few Chinese who remained in Tambaroora, he described how 'The remainder hung on, gaining a precarious existence from sluicing and gardening and living for the most part on the product of their vegetable patches'.[43] The chapter is illustrated with a single full-page photograph of 'New Chip (also Mew Chip) – the last Chinaman on the Field' (see Image 2). Hodge closed his history of Hill End with these words:

Little trace of the Chinese on the field now remains. Even their cemetery has disappeared to all excepting the informed observer. Some

of these aliens still sleep in lonely, unmarked graves in the Macquarie

and Turon gorges, but the remains of those who lived out their lives at

Tambaroora have returned long-since to the land of their forefathers.[44]

Tom Griffiths also made the decline of the Chinese population emblematic of the

general decline of Beechworth after the gold rushes in his history of Beechworth in

1987.[45] While he did not explicitly describe 'Blind Tommy' (Wong Hor) as the 'last' of

his kinsmen, nor does he invoke the same nostalgia as Hodge, he does use two

photographs of Wong Hor, one full-page, to illustrate his chapter about the fading

post gold-rush fortunes of Beechworth, titled 'Decline' (see Image 1).[46]

'Last Chinaman' photographs in local histories also visually expressed the idea that

not only were these men the last Chinese resident in a particular area but that there

were, and would be, no further Chinese arrivals. By the time they were created and

used, in the early decades of the twentieth century, strong restrictions on new Chinese

immigration had been in place in most Australian colonies since the 1880s. These

'last' Chinese marked the end of an era. This can be seen in the text accompanying a

photograph titled 'The last Chinese man on the Jordan' (see Image 3) in Rogers' 1997

history of Jordan:

    As time passed on and shadows grew long on the ground towards the

    turn of the century, between the years of the great 1890s Depression

    and the beginning of the South African (Boer) War, only a small

number of Chinese miners remained on the Jordan diggings. Old men

now, with little or no money, they had few possessions of any

substance. Men almost toothless, pigtails turning grey and eyesight

failing, they were barely able to scratch a living from fossicking.

Unable by law to obtain any part of the newly introduced old age

pension those that remained substituted their diets with the few

vegetables they managed to grow or subsisted through the generosity

of their benevolent neighbours.[47]

Even if there was to be another gold rush or similar economic boom, restrictions

meant there would be no new Chinese immigrants to participate in this imagined

event. 'Last Chinaman' photographs therefore also mark the success of the White

Australia Policy and colonisation of Australia by white races over the Chinese.[48]

This documentation of Chinese within local histories as a 'vanishing' people is similar

to how Aboriginal history was integrated into Australia's histories as one of a 'dying

race' or 'the last of the tribe'.[49] The concept of 'the last of the tribe' was based on the

'belief that Aboriginality was defined immutably by physical attributes … and not

culture'.[50] In a similar way the popular historical narrative of the Chinese in Australia

as a 'vanishing' people is based on birthplace and is easily illustrated by the statistical

decline in the resident Chinese population. Australia's Chinese population is estimated

to have reached its peak during the Victorian and New South Wales gold rushes in

mid-1857 at as many as forty-two thousand.[51] As opportunities offered by these gold rushes petered out and measures to restrict Chinese immigration were introduced, the number of Chinese resident in Australia in 1871 dropped.[52] Despite some fluctuation of the total Chinese population in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century, the overall picture described by these population statistics in the pre-World War II period is one of population decline. By 1947, the Chinese population in Australia was a little over nine thousand.

It has, however, taken an act of imagination to construct the history of Chinese in Australia as one of a disappearing people. What these national statistics obscure is the growth of the Chinese population in the cities and a longer view of Chinese immigration that extends to the present. Despite the overall decline of the Chinese population between the 1850s and the 1950s, which was most extreme in rural areas, the number of Chinese in Australia's major cities grew until at least the turn of the nineteenth century. Melbourne and Sydney's Chinese populations as a proportion of the total Chinese population in Victoria and New South Wales rose from around two per cent (581 and 189 respectively) in each colony in 1861 to around thirty-four and thirty-eight per cent (2,431 and 3,474 respectively) by 1901.[53] Complex communities evolved that formed political and business associations, printed Chinese-language newspapers, and built multinational companies.

In the second half of the twentieth century many Chinese who came to Australia came from places other than southern China and for different reasons to earlier arrivals and

so it is appropriate to consider the history of Chinese in Australia in these two periods separately. This division however, cuts short Australia's earlier Chinese immigration history, which is reinforced by 'last Chinaman' photographs. This statistical profile combined with a desire to focus on the gold-rush period and the negative impact of restrictive immigration policies on the Chinese in Australia – both significant issues in Chinese Australian history – has also meant that the experiences of those who arrived after the gold-rush period and the Chinese men, women and children who remained in Australia, particularly those who lived uneventful ordinary lives, have been rendered insignificant.[54]

At a very basic level 'last Chinaman' portraits mark the decline in numbers of Chinese in towns after the rushes in a way that early local histories often marked beginnings, firsts and lasts or the biggest and smallest, longest and shortest.[55] These images are not celebratory or noble, in the way that images of the 'last' bush pioneer, swagmen and other white 'bush types' were.[56] Instead they have been used to represent Chinese Australians in economic, social and physical decline, as visual subjects to be pitied by viewers. They visually support a compressed version of Chinese Australian history that narrates the disappearance of Chinese in Australia. It presents an uncomplicated end to the story of Chinese immigration to Australia that separates the lives of Chinese Australians from the rest of Australia's history. The recurrent use of 'last Chinaman' imagery through time shows just how resilient and powerful this narrative of the 'vanishing people' has been. They form a very small but distinctive genre of photographs within Australian photography, but resonate so strongly in the public

imagination that many photographs of elderly Chinese men can be read as 'last Chinaman' images, whether described as such or not.

'Last Chinaman' photographs gain a greater influence on the public imagination because counter-images, that show Chinese Australians as ordinary, modern Australians, have obtained much less public exposure particularly outside the field of Chinese Australian history. A wide range of photographs were created of Chinese in Australia, but it is only since the mid-1980s that privately-created family photographs of Chinese Australians have been collected by public institutions and opened to public exposure. Instead it has been portraits of impoverished, elderly Chinese men that have been more likely to cross the boundary from private spaces and into public circulation in our local museums, libraries and historical societies and published in regional histories. This is in part, because the kinds of histories that have been told about Chinese in Australia, have focussed on telling the local history of Chinese during the gold rushes, and the detrimental impact of the White Australia Policy on the Chinese population in Australia.

C.A. Wooley's photograph of Truganini as an elderly woman grew to become so emblematic as an image of the 'last Tasmanian' that it eclipsed other more youthful, and arguably more representative images of Truganini. In a similar way images of decrepit old Chinese men, the 'last Chinaman', have eclipsed other more varied and dynamic images of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in Australia. Both served the need to have these populations 'vanish' from a white Australia.

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[1] Thanks to Amanda Rasmussen, Richard Broome and the two anonymous referees for their comments.

[2] *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 24 May 1924, 2.

[3] 'Chinese file', Burke Museum, Beechworth.

[4] Thanks to Kate Bagnall and Leonard Hill for information about this family.

[5] Rebe Taylor, *Unearthed: The Aboriginal Tasmanians of Kangaroo Island* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2002), 140. Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997), 49.

[6] Ann Curthoys, '"Men of All National, except Chinamen": Europeans and Chinese on the Goldfields of New South Wales', in *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*, ed. Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook, and Andrew Reeves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 103.

[7] Keir Reeves, 'A Hidden History: The Chinese on the Mount Alexander Diggings, Central Victoria, 1851-1901' (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2006), 192.

[8] This focus on absence has also been observed by Amanda Rasmussen, 'Chinese in Nation and Community Bendigo 1870s-1920s' (PhD, La Trobe University, 2009), 5.

[9] Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*, 4.

[10] See for example: Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920*, vol. 6, *Studies in Northern Queensland History* (Townsville: Department of History, James Cook University, 1984), 1. Kathryn Cronin, *Colonial Casualties: Chinese in Early Victoria* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982), 1. Janis Wilton, 'Revealing the Chinese Past of Northern New South Wales', in *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific: Proceedings of an International Public Conference Held at the Museum of Chinese Australian History, 8-10 October 1993*, ed. Paul Macgregor (Melbourne: Museum of Chinese Australian History, 1993), 249.

[11] See for example: Jan Ryan, *Ancestors: Chinese in Colonial Western Australia* (Fremantle, Western Australia: Freemantle Arts Press, 1995), 11. Shirley Fitzgerald, *Red Tape, Gold Scissors: The Story of Sydney's Chinese* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press, 1996), 6. Shirley Fitzgerald, 'The Chinese in Sydney with Particular Focus on the 1930s', in *The Overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, Settlement and Interactions: Proceedings from the Symposium Held in Taipei, 6-7 Jan 2001*, ed. H. Chan, A. Curthoys, and N. Chiang, *Monograph 3* (Taipei: IGAS, National Taiwan University & CSCSD, Australian National University, 2001), 140.

[12] Janis Wilton, 'The Chinese History of Heritage of Regional New South Wales', in *The Overseas Chinese in Australasia: History, Settlement and Interactions: Proceedings from the Symposium Held in Taipei, 6-7 January 2001*, ed. Henry Chan, Ann Curthoys, and Nora Chiang (Taipei: IGAS, National Taiwan University and CSCSD, Australian National University, 2001), 95.

[13] Ibid., 97.

[14] For further discussion of this see Sophie Couchman, 'In and out of Focus: Chinese and Photography in Australia, 1870s-1940s' (PhD, La Trobe University, 2009).

[15] On the use of photographs as illustrations in photographic histories see: Anne-Marie Willis, *Picturing Australia: A History of Photography* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson Publishers, 1988), 260-63.

[16] On the reluctance of historians to understand visual material in more sophisticated ways see: Damousi, Joy. "In This Issue." *Australian Historical Studies* 123 (2004): iv-v. On the problematic nature of photographic meaning and its theoretical underpinnings see: John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin, 1972). Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1979; reprint, 1984). Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1979). J. Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: MacMillan Education, 1988). Allan Sekula, *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (Nova Scotia: The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984). Abigail Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the Dock: Essays on Photographic History* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1991). Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

[17] Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, 'Introduction', in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London: Routledge, 2004).

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[18] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 2-5.

[19] Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 8. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 15, 27-28, 271-73.

[20] Sekula, *Photography against the Grain*, 10.

[21] Ibid., 3.

[22] Pierre Bourdieu and Luc Boltanski, *Photography: A Middle Brow Art* (Cambridge: Polity Press, c1990), 5. Edwards, *Raw Histories*, 21. Helen Ennis, 'Mirror with a Memory', in *Mirror with a Memory: Photographic Portraiture in Australia* (Canberra: National Portrait Gallery, 2000), 12-13, 17. Jane Lydon, 'Regarding Coranderrk: Photography at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, Victoria' (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2000), 8.

[23] Sontag, *On Photography*, 132.

[24] Analysis of 'Last Chinaman' images is based on the following sources: Mitchell Library, Small Pictures Collection, ML Pic 4470. State Library of Victoria, A.C. Dreier postcard collection, H23576, H23577. Harrietville Historical Society, 'Ah Lok'. Burke Museum (Beechworth), 'The last Chinese survivors of the Chinese mining community Beechworth', viewed May 2006. Banfield, Lorna L., 'Chinese and the gold digging days in old Ararat', *Ararat Advertiser*, 17 February 1938, 5. *Sun News Pictorial*, 21 October 1922, 13. Linton and District Historical Society, *A Pictorial History of Linton 1839-1989* (Linton: Linton and District Historical Society, 1989), 8. Owen F. Tomlin, *Gold for the Finding: A Pictorial History of Gippsland's Jordan Goldfield* (Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1979), 100. J.G. Rogers, *Jericho on the Jordan: A Gippsland Goldfield History* (Moe: J.G. Rogers, 1997), 114. Lionel Arthur Gilbert, *New England from Old Photographs* (Sydney: John Ferguson, 1980), 24. Ian Handley, *The Land of the Mccrossins: A History of Uralla* ([Uralla?]: I Handley, [197?]), 7. Malcolm Drinkwater, *Hill End Gold* ([Hill End?]: M. Drinkwater, [1982?]), 14. Harry Hodge, *The Hill End Story: A History of the Hill End-Tambaroora Goldfield Book 1* ([Newcastle?]: H. Hodge, 1964), 189.

[25] Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), 201. Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 211. Stuart Macintyre, *A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 1-4.

[26] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, 202.

[27] Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, 1-3.

[28] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, 203.

[29] Ibid.

[30] *Sun News Pictorial*, 21 October 1922, 13.

[31] In the context of Aboriginal history see: Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 117.

[32] Smith, Bernard. "Lindsay, Norman Alfred Williams (1879 - 1969)." In *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 106-15. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986

[33] Francis Robert Moulds, 'Semmens, Edwin James (1886 - 1980)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 211-12. Catalogue entry for E.J. Semmens collection, University of Melbourne, http://db.lib.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/library?form=Accessions-new-3.all&accessio_1=76&accessio_2=33 (accessed 5 June 2006). Personal communication, Wendy Ohlsen, Creswick and District Historical Society, 18 May 2004.

[34] University of Melbourne Archives, E.J. Semmens collection, uncatalogued photographic prints.

[35] State Library of New South Wales, Lindsay, Peter – Photographs mainly of the Lindsay family, 1870-1970, ML MSS 647/3.

[36] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, 204.

[37] David Goodman, *Gold Seeking: Victoria and California in the 1850s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), ix, xxix.

[38] Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, 204.

[39] Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978), 241-57. Peter Quartermaine, 'Johannes Lindt: Photographer of Australia and New Guinea', in *Representing Others: White Views of Indigenous People*, ed. Mike Gidley (Exeter: University of Exeter Press for AmACAS, 1992), 94.

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[40] *The Ararat Advertiser*, 17 February 1938, 5. Hodge, *The Hill End Story*, 188. On local history: Davison, Graeme. *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003, 203-206.

[41] Hodge, *The Hill End Story*, 189.

[42] NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Attorney General's Department of NSW, http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/familyHistory/searchHistoricalRecords.htm (accessed 18 May 2006).

[43] Hodge, *The Hill End Story*, 188, 191.

[44] Ibid., 192.

[45] Tom Griffiths, *Beechworth: An Australian Country Town and Its Past* (Richmond: Greenhouse Publications, 1987), 36-38.

[46] Ibid., 36-38.

[47] Rogers, *Jericho on the Jordan*, 114-15.

[48] On the global dimensions of racial competition see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008).

[49] I adopt the term 'vanishing' people from John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2007), 212. Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, 105, 00, 18. McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* . Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History since 1800* (Melbourne: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 101-110.

[50] Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, 101.

[51] C.Y. Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975), 20.

[52] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3105.0.65.001 Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2008, http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3105.0.65.0012008?OpenDocument (accessed 7 December 2009).

[53] Choi, *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia*, 28.

[54] On the marginalisation of urban history see: John Fitzgerald, 'Another Country', *Meanjin* 60, no. 4 (2001): 70-71.

[55] On 'firsts' in local history see: Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, 200.

[56] Richard Anthony John Neville, *Faces of Australia: Image, Reality and the Portrait* (Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press, 1992), 50-51. Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1977 (first published 1958)), 180-206. Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, ed. Heather Radi, *The Australian Experience* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), chapter 6.