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Cover calligraphy  Yan Zhenqing 颜真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

Cover illustration  Portrait of Shao Xunmei 邵洵美 by Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻, Golden Chamber Monthly 1.2 (February 1929)
LIANG QICHAO IN AUSTRALIA: 
A SOJOURN OF NO SIGNIFICANCE?

Gloria Davies

It is commonplace nowadays to draw attention to the narrative structure of historical accounts and to note that a certain discursive contiguity exists between this mode of scholarship and storytelling. Historians, however, will also point out that the dictum of veracity must remain irreducible if historical narration is to be distinguishable as a work of professional scholarship from mere storytelling. Thus, in the telling of any “story” about Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873–1929), we are faced with the question of how we might locate historical veracity when it is contingent on one or another form of narrative structure. Does our ability to relate the occurrence of events by providing the “right” kinds of textual documentation, and in adequate quantities, satisfy one or another “norm” of veracity acceptable to the profession? To what extent is veracity affected by the sequence according to which we order a certain set of events, the rhetorical operations we perform in the act of description, the decisions we make in either departing from or adhering to conventional and authoritative readings of a known historical topic?

It goes without saying that the point of posing these questions is not to encourage an unreflective response that affirms one particular account over other possible acts of historical representation. Rather, the point is to reflect on the different forms that sense making can take. Very often, the form that we regard as the most intimate and authoritative, namely the “internal” perspectives that we seek to mine from the range of published and unpublished accounts produced by actual historical individuals themselves, assumes the privileged position of historical veracity. We tend to assume that our “primary sources” will yield a certain fundamental and incontrovertible truth about the past, no matter which mode of interpretation we bring to bear upon them.

Most of the empirical research for this article was completed in 1981 towards an honours thesis entitled “Liang Qichao and the Chinese in Australia.” I am grateful to John Fitzgerald for persuading me to revisit this thesis and to present a paper on the topic at “The Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation Conference” held in Melbourne, 1–2 July 2000. The thesis, a copy of which unpublished manuscript is available at the Department of Chinese, University of Melbourne, includes annotated translations of a selection of Liang’s Australian poems and more detailed discussions of his visit to various Australian towns and cities.
Liang Qichao is a significant name in any general account of China’s modern history because of its close association with the Hundred Day Reform (百日维新) of 1898, a major event in the narration of modern China. Although Liang Qichao is the subject of a research industry that covers many different aspects and stages of his intellectual and political career, the Hundred Day Reform remains the key “event” that launched his career and to this day, it continues to secure the historical significance of his name. Even though he played only a minor role in the reform program of this time, he was widely recognized as Kang Youwei’s 康有为 protégé, and thus received social and political cachet from his close association with the man who was personal adviser to the progressive Guangxu 光绪 Emperor.

In this context, what is most interesting about Liang Qichao’s sojourn in Australia is that, in order to tell this story, we must rely on a set of primary sources that differ significantly from the ones that form the bedrock of research on Liang Qichao. Liang’s significance is located mainly within Chinese intellectual history where he is often regarded in hypostatic terms as “the mind of modern China”, as the title of Joseph Levenson’s seminal work has it.1 Similarly, Xiaobing Tang’s recent theoretically inflected study of Liang Qichao focusses on Liang’s ideas in relation to historiography, nationhood, revolution, modernity and culture. The title, Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity: the Historical Thinking of Liang Qichao,2 tellingly informs us that, once again, it is Liang’s mind that is at issue. Tang’s approach, while drawing significantly on theoretical concepts of cognitive spatial mappings and paradigm shifts, nonetheless adheres to a certain narrative structure of “the man and his ideas” that constitutes the norm of scholarship on Liang Qichao.
This structure owes in no small part to Liang himself who was one of the most prolific essayists of his time and who published his opinions on a vast range of issues. To historians, the “man” himself thus becomes secondary to the “mind” since “he” constitutes the incomplete fragments of the lived everyday that the historian gleams from diary jottings, contemporary accounts, newspaper reports and so on, only in order to enhance our understanding of the grander (totalistic) intellectual project that “Liang Qichao” signifies. It is as if stories of the “man” are merely there to help explain why the “mind of modern China” might have chosen to think the way that “it”—as befits its hypostatic status—did. Liang’s representativeness as the pioneering mind of modern China has directed historians to examine his “life” primarily through his voluminous collected writings, published as *Yinbingshi wenji* 醍醐室文集 (collected essays)\(^3\) and *Yinbingshi zhuanji* 饮冰室传记 (collected works), in tandem with *Liang Qichao nianpu changbian* 梁启超年谱长编, the authoritative chronological biography of Liang Qichao edited by Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 and Zhao Fengtian 赵丰田.\(^4\) Liang’s Australian “episode” has a very small presence in these texts and is comprised of the following:

- a total of twenty-three poems written whilst in Australia or shortly after his departure,
- two letters, of which one was addressed to his mentor Kang Youwei written while Liang was about to leave Australia and the other, written a month after Liang returned to Tokyo, to members of the Protect the Emperor Society (Baohuang hui 保皇会) in Sydney
- a long nationalist tract, “On Tracing the Sources of Our Cumulative Weaknesses” (*Jiruoyuan lun* 积弱溯源论), which was to have been the first chapter of a historical project of sixteen chapters about China in the decade 1890–1900 that Liang began in Australia but never completed.

Liang Qichao left behind little of his personal impressions of Australia in this slim body of writings. This stands in marked contrast to the substantial accounts he produced of his travels in the United States in early 1900 and 1903, which include much personal correspondence. For someone who was estimated to have produced an average of 350,000 words each year over 33 years, reaching a peak of 450,000 words in 1902, when he founded the *New Citizen Journal* (Xinmin congbao 新民丛报) in Tokyo some eight months after leaving Australia, Liang was uncharacteristically quiet in Australia. Indeed, most of what we know about his visit takes the form of articles published in the Australian English and Chinese language presses of the time. Thus we are led by the sources of his Australian journey, indeed the inadequacy of the textual remainders, to focus much more on the “man” than on “his ideas.” But precisely because Liang matters, above all, as “the mind” and not “the man,” we are still led ineluctably to anticipate an intellectual discovery in spite of Liang’s reticence, and it is with this proleptic caution that I now begin my tale.

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3. Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi wenji* 飴醐室文集 (collected essays from the Ice-Drinkers’ Studio) (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1928), 22 vols.
4. Published by Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe in 1983.
According to Charlton M. Lewis, the Qing court had offered 100,000 taels or £10,000, and the additional 50,000 taels was offered by the Jiangsu governor (40,000 taels) and the Shanghai magistrate (10,000 taels). C. M. Lewis, *Prologue to the Chinese Revolution: the transformation of ideas and institutions in Hunan province, 1897–1907* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), p.92.

**Prologue to a Journey: Divided Loyalties and Political Defeat**

Liang Qichao first expressed interest in raising funds from among the overseas Chinese communities in Australia in a letter he wrote to Kang Youwei dated 4 April 1900 when he urged Kang to visit Australia instead of going to Hawaii as Kang had planned. By this time, Liang and Kang had been travelling overseas for some eighteen months, settling temporarily in different parts of the world, as political exiles each with a price of 150,000 taels on his head offered by the Qing government to would-be assassins. 5 In the wake of the coup d'état staged by the Empress Dowager Cixi's 慈禧 faction on 21 September 1898 that brought the Hundred Day Reform to an abrupt end and effectively placed the Emperor himself under house arrest, Kang Youwei's political authority in China as personal adviser to the Emperor was extinguished. As Kang's deputy, Liang Qichao suffered the same political demise as his mentor and both were judged by the Qing government to be criminals at large. Yet their international reputations were enlarged rather than diminished by their flight from China. In the era of early modern transnational communications in which the Hundred Day Reform occurred, political events in China were increasingly newsworthy items that found daily representation in the major newspapers of modern nations. That the major Australian newspapers of the day often carried reports of events in China is a measure of their identification with, indeed even subservience to the interests of the British Empire. By 1898, the idea of a modern world system was already being predominantly defined by the commercial interests of the advanced capitalist nations of the United State, Britain, France and Germany, extending as these interests of capitalist expansionism did to different parts of the world including China.

In the two years between Liang Qichao's flight from China after the Hundred Day Reform and his arrival in Australia, he became a political campaigner and fund-raiser among the various overseas Chinese communities he visited while continuing to write and publish his ideas of political reform. Already internationally renowned as Kang Youwei's deputy, Liang was closely identified during this time with the network of organizations known commonly as Baohuang hui (literally, Protect the Emperor Society). These were established in rapid succession among the various overseas Chinese communities in Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, Canada, and the United States and, by January 1900, in Australia.

The first of these organizations was funded on 20 July 1899 in Vancouver when Kang Youwei arrived there after being forced to leave Japan two months earlier as a result of diplomatic pressure brought on the Japanese government by the Qing court. Kang Youwei had conceived of a two-fold purpose for the organization that he originally named Zhongguo weixin hui 中国维新会 (the China Reform Association, as it came to be known in English). It was intended to rally international support for the Guangxu Emperor then under house arrest and to raise funds for nurturing political
resistance within China to the Empress Dowager and the powerful conservative faction she led within the Qing government. It also sought to protect and consolidate the local commercial interests of overseas Chinese communities, with a view to improving the social standing and well-being of the overseas Chinese in the different countries where they had settled. At one of the meetings in Vancouver, a leading member of the overseas Chinese community suggested that since the Emperor had risked his life to save the people, the organization should be re-named Baohuang hui to highlight the crucial importance of the Emperor to the reform process. This suggestion was acted upon and the organization was re-named although it continued to be known in English as the China Reform Association.

When Liang set sail for Fremantle on the steamliner Britannia from the port of Penang on 7 October 1900, his political career in exile had reached a very low point. Less than two months earlier on 22 August 1900, his friend Tang Caichang 唐才常 and several of his former students had been arrested and executed under orders from Zhang Zhidong 张之洞, governor of the Hunan-Hubei region, for attempting to stage the overthrow of the Qing government. This was an ambitious attempt, masterminded by Liang and Tang, to stage an uprising that would lead to the declaration of the independence of central China from Peking and the establishment of a new constitutional government in which both Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao would play leading roles.

It is known that even before the Hundred Day Reform, Liang Qichao had begun to differ from Kang Youwei in his ideas of reform. The issues that divided Sun Yat-sen 孙逸仙 and Kang Youwei—in brief, the former’s ambition of overthrowing the Manchu dynasty to found a modern republic and the latter’s insistence on constitutional monarchy—were matters of expediency rather than of principle for Liang. His writings of this period express a desire for the establishment of democratic institutions and the cultivation of an active and nationalistic citizenry but betray little preference for either constitutional monarchy or republicanism. In the year or so that Liang lived in Japan from late 1898 onwards, editing and writing for the Tokyo-based Qingyi bao 清议报 (Upright Discussions), a newspaper established on 23 December 1898 two months after his arrival, Liang Qichao began to drift even further from Kang Youwei in both his activities and the ideas he espoused.

By the time Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao arrived in Japan, Sun Yat-sen had already built strongholds for his revolutionary party within the overseas Chinese communities in Hawaii and Japan. Sun had previously extended several invitations of mutual cooperation to Kang in order to consolidate the effectiveness of the political movements they each led. Kang had repeatedly declined Sun’s invitations on the grounds that he was, as Joseph Levenson puts it, “definitely committed to peaceful change and would have no relations with the revolutionaries.” When Kang and Liang reached Tokyo in 1898, Sun again tried to approach Kang on the subject of cooperation and failed. Harold Schiffrin has suggested that Kang’s refusal to cooperate with Sun probably

6 Jung-Pang Lo, ed. K’ung Yu-wei, a biography and a symposium (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1967), p.180. The title “Protect the Emperor Society” will be used to refer to this association throughout this article in place of the official English title “China Reform Association” (or “Chinese Empire Reform Association” as it was known in Australia) since the former more accurately reflects the Chinese title. Moreover, the distinct difference between constitutional monarchy and republicanism is reflected in the Chinese titles of the Protect the Emperor Society and Sun Yat-sen’s Revive China Society (Xing Zhong hui 兴中会).

7 Authoritative accounts of Liang’s early political vision in Anglophone scholarship remain Levenson, Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and the mind of modern China, Philip C. Huang, Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and modern Chinese liberalism (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1972) and Hao Chang, Liang Ch’i-Ch’ao and intellectual transition in China (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971). Xiaobing Tang’s Global space and the nationalist discourse of modernity: the historical thinking of Liang Qichao is the most recent English language monograph on Liang.


9 Levenson, Liang Ch’i Ch’ao, p.58.
owed to his scholar-gentry bias against the Western-educated Sun who was un schooled in Confucian values, as well as to Kang's own considerable reputation as the Guangxu emperor's personal adviser.\textsuperscript{10} Sun Yat-sen's republican cause would have eventually presented significant problems for Kang whose former close association with the emperor was crucial to the advancement of his political cause of constitutional monarchy overseas. Unlike Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen, Liang Qichao did not lead a political movement and although a prominent activist, he was mainly interested in writing about and publicizing the cause of reform. In Japan, Liang was introduced to a diverse range of texts on European philosophy, history and science in Japanese translation and soon began to reflect republican ideas in the reformist organ, \textit{Upright Discussions} (Qingyi bao 请议报). Quoting an account by the revolutionist Feng Ziyu 冯自由, Schiffrin notes that Liang's leanings towards anti-Manchuiism at this time led Kang Youwei to destroy the plates of "a particularly seditious article" that Liang had planned to publish in the newspaper.\textsuperscript{11}

When Kang Youwei was forced to leave Japan for Canada in March 1899, Liang's leanings towards republicanism and his enthusiasm for ideas of nationalism, democracy and socialism were no longer restrained by the disapproval of his teacher and mentor. At this time, Liang was the editor and chief writer for \textit{Upright Discussions} and the foundation headmaster of the Great Harmony High School (Gaodeng datong xuexiao 高等大同学校), the Tokyo-based upper-level extension of the Great Harmony School, a modern Chinese school jointly established by Chinese reformers and revolutionists in Yokohama in 1897.\textsuperscript{12} Despite his reputation as Kang Youwei's foremost disciple and deputy, Liang began to level scathing criticism against the Qing government, calling for its destruction in direct opposition to Kang's unrelenting defence of the imprisoned Manchu emperor.

Liang Qichao met Sun Yat-sen in the early spring of 1899 and when Kang left Japan for Canada, he began to work closely with Sun towards promoting the revolutionist cause. Drawing from various Chinese sources, Schiffrin writes:

In his negotiations with Sun, he [Liang] is said to have agreed to become second in command under the revolutionary banner. Sun calmed his fears about Kang's fate by saying, "If the disciple becomes a leader, will not the master be even more exalted?" And according to the story, Liang himself asserted that Kang could keep on writing books, and if he disagreed with the revolutionary program, they would pay no attention to him.\textsuperscript{13}

Meanwhile, with the establishment of the first Protect the Emperor Society in Vancouver, Kang Youwei's reformist cause rapidly gained ground among the leaders of various overseas Chinese communities who were eager to be associated with the Guangxu emperor's former personal adviser. In late 1899 Liang, having negotiated an alliance with Sun, sent a letter to Kang, signed by twelve other members of the reformist camp, suggesting that the master retire from politics and that both reformers and revolutionaries be united.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Schiffrin, \textit{Sun Yat-sen}, pp.157-9.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p.162.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Huang, \textit{Liang Ch'i Ch'ao and modern Chinese liberalism}, p.90; Lewis, \textit{Prologue to the Chinese revolution}, p.86; Ding Wenjiang, \textit{Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu chang-pian chugao} [A chronological biography of Liang Rengong] (Taipei: Shijie Shudian, 1958), vol.1, p.43; for a brief account of the schools' establishment, see Schiffrin, \textit{Sun Yat-sen}, pp.155-6, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Schiffrin, \textit{Sun Yat-sen}, p.165.
\end{itemize}
under a new organization established on republican principles. Kang, then in Hong Kong, had already learnt of Liang’s planned alliance with Sun from members of the reformist group still loyal to him such as Xu Qin 徐勤. In great anger, he wrote back to his mutinous disciples, denouncing their intentions and ordering Liang and Ou Qujia 欧渠甲, who were chiefly responsible for the proposed alliance, to travel to Hawaii and San Francisco respectively to campaign on behalf of the reformist cause.\textsuperscript{14}

Liang obeyed his former mentor but remained on friendly terms with Sun Yat-sen and even asked for Sun’s help in advancing his own work in Hawaii. Sun provided Liang with a letter of introduction to his elder brother Sun Mei 孙眉, a wealthy Chinese businessman known locally as “King of Maui” in Hawaii. Sun was later to regret the assistance he rendered Liang when the latter made serious inroads into Sun’s power-base in Hawaii. Liang’s success in depleting the ranks of Sun Yat-sen’s Revive China Society (Xing Zhong hui) in Hawaii to establish the rival Kang Youwei-led Protect the Emperor Society as the leading political movement of the day angered Sun who accused Liang of betraying their agreement of cooperation. In letters written during this period, Liang sought to assure Sun that he still advocated anti-Manchuism in principle but justified his work for the Protect the Emperor Society on the grounds that the public furore over the Empress Dowager’s plan to depose the Guangxu emperor by naming a new heir-apparent (an imperial decree whose announcement coincided with Liang’s arrival in Honolulu) made it expedient for him to promote the ideal of popular government for the time being in the name of protecting the emperor. In a letter dated 28 April 1900 which represents Liang’s last conciliatory gesture to Sun since the latter chose not to respond, Liang urged Sun to realize that “the pro-emperor slogan … was too valuable to be sacrificed.” He argued that republicanism “could best be realized by first restoring the emperor to power and then making him president of the republic.”\textsuperscript{15}

It was in Hawaii that Liang Qichao hoped to attract substantial donations from his overseas Chinese supporters for the armed uprising in Hankou 汉口 that he had first planned with Tang Caichang in Tokyo in 1899. Liang had discussed the proposed uprising with Sun Yat-sen whose revolutionary group was then planning to stage a similar revolt in Guangdong 广东. While Liang and Sun had conceived of their respective plans as ultimately unified in purpose, the bitter rivalry between the reformist and revolutionist groups for donations from the same overseas Chinese communities posed serious difficulties for their proposed cooperation. Since both groups looked to the same finite albeit considerable pool of overseas Chinese funds to develop their projects, they were forced to compete with one another for the attention and support of their potential donors. In 1899 and 1900, the luminous prestige of recent personal association with the Guangxu emperor that Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao enjoyed, coupled with their notable scholar-gentry credentials, made them international social and political celebrities who far outshone Sun Yat-sen in newsworthiness. As Zhong

\textsuperscript{14} Schiffrin, ibid., p.164, provides a summary of these events drawn from a range of primary and secondary sources.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp.185-8 (on Sun Mei, see also p.12).
Gongyu 钟醒 (a.k.a. Chung Kun Ai), one of Sun Yat-sen's closest friends, recalls of Liang's visit to Honolulu:

Everyone wanted to meet this famous reformer. I too called and fell under the spell of the man. A group of us were so enthusiastic that we formed a branch of the "Protect Emperor Party"... We collected subscriptions to send to the main bodies in Macao and Hong Kong. In all, I must have sent $30,000 of our currency. Liang himself was in great demand as a speaker. His intimate, behind-the-scene sketches of political intrigue and corruption in Peking, his picture of the pitiful Emperor Guangxu imprisoned in a small pavilion in the South Lake within the Forbidden City, and his outline of the reforms that would be necessary to make China a modern country; these and other talks kept our enthusiasm at white-heat.... Many persons gave Liang money for his personal use.\textsuperscript{16}

Liang's talent as a raconteur contributed to his success as a political campaigner and he would often shrewdly flaunt his own 'insider's' knowledge of the imperial court. This was a winning formula that he would later repeat in his political campaigns in Australia. Liang had originally planned to make Hawaii merely the first of a series of fund-raising destinations in the United States, across which he would travel in order to raise "millions of dollars" towards the armed uprising to be led by Tang Caichang in central China.\textsuperscript{17} These plans came to nought when an outbreak of bubonic plague in Hawaii, occurring a few weeks after Liang's arrival, led the U.S. government to impose a ban on all Chinese travelling to the mainland. Moreover the health authorities in Hawaii had accidentally set fire to the entire Honolulu Chinatown in an attempt to curb the plague. This resulted in Chinese property owners incurring losses of an estimated three million dollars (for which the Hawaiian government compensated them for only half that amount two years later), which greatly reduced the amount of money that they were able to donate to Liang's cause in 1900. Zhang Pengyuan 张朋园 observes that this series of unfortunate events occurring in the first weeks of Liang's stay in Hawaii effectively sealed the fate of the doomed uprising.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1899, when Liang Qichao, Tang Caichang and other members of the reformist group who were Liang's supporters began to discuss the possibility of staging an uprising in Central China, they were mostly under thirty years of age. Joseph Esherick further notes that though they were descended from lower gentry families:

... many had shown a disdain for literary studies and an interest in boxing, swordsmanship or secret societies during their adolescence. All of them felt a deep sense of patriotic mission in the years following China's defeat in the war with Japan.\textsuperscript{19}

Soon after arriving in Hawaii, Liang took the bold step, unprecedented by Kang or Sun, of joining the Triads (Sanhe hui 三和会) in order to rally support from this powerful secret society, which had many members in Hawaii, to his increasingly militant cause. This move reflects Liang's highly
pragmatic approach to political activism during this time as both he and Tang Caichang had already decided to recruit troops from among the secret societies in the Yangzi Valley for their Independence Army (Zili jun 自立军), the military force that would launch their uprising.\textsuperscript{20}

Although the uprising was not originally planned to coincide with the Boxer trouble in the north, the rapid escalation of attacks on foreigners in the early months of 1900, culminating in the Qing court’s declaration of war on the foreign powers on 21 June 1900, provided a window of opportunity that Liang and the other organizers of the proposed Hankou uprising found irresistible. The Qing court had encouraged the disturbances created by the Boxers in Peking and other parts of northern China. This produced a complex situation where influential provincial governors like Zhang Zhidong and Li Hongzhang 李鸿章 in central, south and south-east China held independent discussions with the representatives of foreign powers and disavowed Peking’s declaration of war but without rejecting the legitimate authority of the Qing court. Both leading reformers and revolutionaries, including Sun Yat-sen, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Tang Caichang, were also engaged in negotiations with these provincial governors and with foreign consuls in the hope of gaining their support at a time when the future of the Qing dynasty appeared uncertain.\textsuperscript{21}

In order to make the reformist uprising seem more palatable to these politically powerful individuals, Tang Caichang even formed a skeletal parliament, the Chinese Congress (Zhongguo yihui 中国议会) which met in mid-1900 in Shanghai and comprised some of the leading scholars of the time. The Congress presented a manifesto to the British consul-general in Shanghai on 26 July 1900 requesting British help in restoring the emperor in exchange for a Chinese constitutional government which, if established, would be based on the British model and would employ foreign advisers.\textsuperscript{22} The British, however, had doubts about the competence of this Congress and preferred to rely on the provincial governors to restore political and social order in the aftermath of the Boxer rebellion. The Congress’s claim to political legitimacy, like that of the Protect the Emperor Society, rested on what was essentially Kang Youwei’s self-arrogated authority as the imprisoned Guangxu Emperor’s envoy in exile. The fragility of this claim was exacerbated by what Schiffrin has observed as a generally disparaging attitude on the part of the British to Kang’s ideas, evidenced in the internal correspondence of the British Foreign Office, even though they “were much more solicitous of his welfare than they were of Sun’s”:\textsuperscript{23}

Acting Consul Bourne, for example, who interviewed Kang as he fled on the S.S. Balaarat on 25 September 1898 [after the coup d’état] described the reformist leader as being “stuffed up with nonsense by Timothy Richard.” […] Kang’s lengthy communication to the British in Hong Kong, including a copy of his purportedly secret memorial form the Emperor and a denunciation of the Empress Dowager, was considered by the Colonial Office to be no more than a “quaint effusion.”\textsuperscript{24}
Meanwhile Liang Qichao's relationship with Kang Youwei had soured because of the former's earlier act of 'betrayal' and, as several historians have suggested, it was likely that Kang Youwei's support for the uprising, albeit staged in the name of restoring the Emperor, was less than wholehearted. Liang himself experienced difficulties in fund-raising and was unable to deliver more than a fraction of the substantial funds he had earlier promised Tang Caichang who, by the early 1900s, had the enormous responsibility of overseeing the uprising as commander-in-chief of the Independent Army. From his correspondence of the time, as a fund-raiser Liang appears to have been somewhat erratic and impulsive. In early 1900, he heard that an American millionaire had allegedly donated thirty million dollars towards buying arms for the democratic Cuba cause. Before he had even met with this supposedly generous donor, Liang told Tang he was confident of raising ten million dollars from him. Furthermore, Liang engaged an American businessman to act as his agent in the United States, giving him $20,000 to promote the cause of the reformist uprising among Americans on the mainland when he was prevented from travelling there himself. In his letters to Kang of March–April 1900, Liang expressed the hope that, as Schiffrin summarizes it, "if the Americans invested money in the pro-emperor movement, they would eventually throw in men and arms to protect their investment." It was to this same American agent, identified only as "Heqin" 赫钦 (Hutchins?), that Liang looked to making contact with the alleged pro-democratic Cuban American millionaire. Zhang Pengyuan describes the agent as a confidence trickster whom Liang never heard from again. Reading the same sources, Schiffrin traces Liang's relationship with Heqin to their first meeting in 1898 at Li Hongzhang's office in Peking and notes that Heqin later fought in Cuba.

Zhang Pengyuan notes that of the eighty to ninety thousand dollars Liang managed to raise in Hawaii, he remitted only forty-four thousand to Tokyo and Macau to support the uprising. There are conflicting accounts given of both Kang and Liang's fund-raising activities of this period. Basing his summary on Ding Wenjiang's biography of Liang (Liang Rengong Xiansheng Nianpu Changpian Chugao 梁任公先生年谱长篇初稿) and personal accounts by Feng Ziyou and other activists of the era, Schiffrin writes:

It has been estimated that three hundred thousand dollars were subscribed at this time, of which one third came from Qiu Shuyuan 邱菽園 [a.k.a. Khoo Seck Wai, the Singapore millionaire], another third from Liang in Hawaii, and the rest from other overseas supporters. According to the Hupei student, Zhu Hezhong 朱和中, Kang kept most of his money and thereby made himself wealthy for the rest of his life. Only $20,000 was sent to Tang Caichang and the latter, according to Zhu, spent most of it in the brothels and gambling dens of Shanghai. Fan Wen-lan 范文澜 claims that Kang raised $600,000 and kept it all for himself. Chung Kun Ai, who had been one of the generous Baohuang hui contributors in Hawaii in 1900, reports his subsequent disillusionment with the organization as a result of his suspicions concerning its financial dealings. A more sympathetic account, however, states that Qiu Shuyuan contributed only $20,000 and that all of it went to
the Hankou plotters. The Manchu government exacted revenge by arresting the entire Qiu clan in China.27

Insufficient funds gravely affected Tang’s ability to organize the Independent Army, made up as it was of mainly secret society recruits whose loyalty could be secured only by promises of substantial financial reward. Meanwhile, rumors circulated both within and outside China of vast sums of money being accumulated by the leaders of the Protect the Emperor Society for their war effort in Central China. As a result, leaders of the Ge lao hui 哥老会 (Society of Brothers and Elders), the dominant secret society in the Yangtze Valley who had earlier been cultivated by Sun’s revolutionist group shifted their allegiance to Tang and the other reformist organizers of the Independence Army.28 The funds that Liang raised in Hawaii, which were significantly smaller than he had expected, were further delayed in reaching Tang because of interference from the Chinese consul in Honolulu. Moreover, Kang Youwei’s control of the Protect the Emperor Society headquarters in Macau and Liang’s greater influence over the Tokyo branch led Liang to send most of the funds he raised to Tokyo rather than Macau. This created dissension within the organization, which led to confusion and mistrust, with both the Tokyo and Macau branches accusing one another of bad faith.29

The uprising was scheduled to take place on 9 August 1900, a time when the Boxer Movement was still creating much chaos in the north. Insufficient funds forced Tang to postpone the uprising several times and he had the added difficulty of maintaining the loyalty of secret society recruits who were unhappy with being paid less than they had expected.30 The date of the uprising was finally set for 23 August 1900 but it had already become clear a day or two earlier that the Qing court (including both the Empress Dowager and the Guangxu Emperor) had been safely evacuated to Xi’an 西安 and that Li Hongzhang would be negotiating peace terms with the foreign powers. For Zhang Zhidong, this meant that the Qing dynasty was clearly still the legitimate political authority and with British assistance (since the Independence Army’s headquarters were based in the British concession in Hankou), he arrested the leaders of the planned uprising on 22 August and executed them the same day.31

Liang Qichao had set sail from Hawaii for Shanghai on 16 July 1900 after receiving a telegram from Shanghai urging his return, which indicates that he believed the success of the uprising was imminent. He arrived in Shanghai only to discover that Tang and the other leaders of the uprising had been executed and the secret society recruits for the Independence Army had dispersed. He remained in Shanghai for ten days and then set off for Singapore to meet with Kang Youwei. Soon after, he made his way to Australia.32 Thus began a period of isolation from friends and allies in Liang’s political life. Many within the Protect the Emperor Society held him personally responsible for the uprising’s failure and the deaths of twenty members of the organization. Qin Lishan 秦力山, one of the uprising’s organizers who managed to escape to Singapore, also accused Kang Youwei

27 Schiffrin, Sun Yat-sen, pp.219–20, n.29.
28 Ibid., p.218.
29 Huang, Liang Ch’i Ch’ao and modern Chinese liberalism, p.95.
30 Lewis, Prologue to the Chinese revolution, p.95.
31 Ibid.
32 Ding Wenjiang, Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu, vol.1, p.142.
of financial mismanagement. Citing Feng Ziyou, Schiffrin notes that Qin’s accusations led Qiu Shuyuan, one of the Society’s main benefactors, to break off relations with both Kang and Liang. The repercussions continued a few years after the abortive uprising when secret society leaders of the Yangtze Valley who had supported the Independence Army demanded belated payment for their services from Kang Youwei in Hong Kong. They threatened to kill him when he reported them to the police.33

Meanwhile, although Liang Qichao’s relationship with Kang Youwei had become very strained from late 1899 onwards, he continued to be publicly identified with Kang as deputy leader of the Protect the Emperor Society. Sun Yat-sen had broken off relations with him and survivors of the uprising blamed Liang for its failure. As a result, Liang’s support base within the Society was significantly undermined even in his former Tokyo stronghold. Liang does not provide us with his reasons for visiting Australia at this critical period in his life when he was under suspicion and ostracized by those with whom he had been close or whose friendship he had cultivated. That the executed leaders of the uprising included a close friend and several former students would also have deeply affected Liang. Undoubtedly, when he met with Kang Youwei in Singapore, his former mentor would have played some part in directing him to reach the decision to travel to Australia. Occurring as it did between two significant periods of his life that have found ample historical representation in both Chinese and English over the last century, Liang’s Australian sojourn is notable for its insignificance in the historical record. As noted at the outset, this is a largely a result of Liang’s own uncharacteristic silence. Yet because the period Liang lived in Australia, between late October 1900 and early May 1901, marks the passage from his abject political failure to his resurgence as a leading advocate of nationalist values through his New Citizen Journal (Xin min congbao 新民丛报), it constitutes an interesting narrative gap that invites both reflection and speculation. It also draws attention to both the appeal and impossibility of closure in historical discourse, as the “why’s” that certain recovered textual fragments seem to answer are in turn complicated by the possibilities of reading.

We know that when Liang wrote to Kang Youwei on 4 April 1900, urging him to visit Australia instead of going to Hawaii as Kang had planned, their relationship was already under severe strain. Kang was then in Singapore and Liang was in Hawaii. Kang would have been pleased with Liang’s success in fund-raising for the Protect the Emperor Society but deepening internal rivalry within the Society leading up to the failed uprising in August 1900 would tend to suggest that little trust remained between Kang and Liang. In the letter, Liang writes:

Singapore is a place where high-ranking Chinese officials congregate and their influence is too great for us to be effective there. Since Australia is in a remote part of the world, it may be easier for us to gain advantage and support there instead. After all, it is also a British colony but one where Chinese authorities are not present. Therefore, there will be little opposition
to our organization and it can easily be developed. Sir, if you are willing to
grace that place with your authoritative presence, we will have certain
success. Since your movements in Singapore are restricted, you are effectively
being forced to be dormant when we are so hard-pressed for time. Sir, do
you agree with what I have said?\(^{34}\)

Three weeks after writing this letter to Kang, Liang made his final appeal
to Sun Yat-sen for continued cooperation, proposing that the Guangxu
Emperor be made the president of the new republic to be established after
the success of the uprising in central China. Some months earlier, towards the
end of 1899, prominent overseas Chinese in Sydney had issued an invitation
to Kang Youwei to visit them, an invitation that Kang did not act upon.\(^{35}\) In
October 1899, Kang had personally written to Quong Tart (Mei Guangda
梅光达), arguably the most prominent overseas Chinese merchant in
Sydney at the time, urging him to form the Australian branch of the Protect
the Emperor Society. Kang’s letter was supported by an open letter to the
Chinese in Australia issued by the then nascent Vancouver branch of the
Society reiterating the urgency of the Emperor’s restoration. Yip Ung (Ye En
叶恩), the president of the Vancouver branch, further echoed Kang’s appeal
in his letter to Quong Tart. Quong Tart, however, had fallen out with the other
Chinese merchants in Sydney keen on setting up the Society and therefore
refused to have any part in its formation.\(^{36}\) It is likely that the loss of this
influential benefactor undermined Kang’s interest in the Society that was
eventually formed in Sydney, in Kang’s absence, in January 1900.

Shortly after the Sydney branch of the Protect the Emperor Society was
established, it issued invitations to both Kang and Liang to visit Australia. On
7 April 1900, Tung Wah News (Donghua xinbao 东华新报), the leading
Sydney-based Chinese language newspaper, reported that the Society’s
Sydney branch had raised £3,000 for Liang’s travelling expenses.\(^{37}\) The report
also noted that owing to Kang’s age, members of the Sydney branch had not
expected the international leader of their Society to make the long and
arduous journey to Australia. What is remarkable about this explanation is
that Kang was only forty-two years old at the time, hardly an old man. But
despite the seriousness of the Sydney branch’s invitation to Liang, it is clear
that he had no interest in visiting Australia in April 1900 as he was then busy
raising funds in Hawaii and planning for his own triumphant return to China
in the event of the uprising’s success. Meanwhile, Liang had also formed a
romantic attachment to He Huizhen 河蕙珍, a young overseas Chinese
woman in Hawaii who acted as his interpreter. Prior to leaving Hawaii for
Shanghai, Liang wrote to his wife (Li Huixian 李蕙仙) that he had not seen
He Huizhen for almost a month in order to avoid negative publicity; that his
feelings for her had caused him much emotional turmoil and that in all his
twenty-eight years, he had not seen himself in such a ridiculous state.\(^{38}\)

This lengthy prologue provides an important context for Liang’s visit to
Australia insofar as it indicates the complexity of Liang’s political and
personal life at the time of his visit. Soon after the failed uprising and the

\(^{34}\) Quoted in Ding Wenjiang, Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu, vol.1, p.111.


\(^{36}\) Reported in Tung Wah News, 11 October 1899, and summarised in Yong, The New Gold Mountain, pp.120–1. This rift will be
discussed in the following section of this article.

\(^{37}\) This news item is cited in Liu Weiping, “Liang Qichao de Aozhou zhi xing” [Liang Qichao’s Australian sojourn], Zbuanjixue
36.1 (1972): 20. There is no mention of the Sydney branch’s invitation nor the money
raised for his visit in Liang’s writings of the period.

\(^{38}\) Liu Tianming, “Liang Qichao zhi yiduan fengliu jiahua” [A romantic episode in Liang Qichao’s life], Changliu 34.1: 3–5, cited in
By the time Liang Qichao visited Australia, the economic activities of the overseas Chinese communities here were already markedly different from the predominant activity of gold-mining that characterized the communities of the 1850s when southern Chinese sojourners first arrived in great numbers. Many of the gold-mines were depleted and the numerous miners who had not made enough money to establish their own businesses or return to China turned to different kinds of manual labour for their livelihood. Market-gardening attracted the majority of these former miners while cabinet-making also flourished. Hawking, laundering and cooking were also dominant occupations. But the few who made a fortune in gold-mining in the later half of the nineteenth century were able to distinguish themselves from the majority of the working class Chinese in Australia by joining the ranks of an emergent Chinese merchant elite.

Chinese merchants became a significant group in the overseas Chinese communities of Australia in the late nineteenth century when increasing numbers of Chinese arrivals from the 1850s onwards created a demand for imported Chinese goods. By 1901, the merchant class represented 11.1 percent and 15.6 percent of the Chinese populations in Victoria and New South Wales respectively. Unlike their labouring counterparts, Chinese merchants conducted their business with people from both the European and Chinese communities. In the two decades after 1870, the rapid decline of the Chinese mining population in rural areas was concomitant with a significant increase in the number of Chinese people in urban areas, especially in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney. This period also saw the Chinese merchants' rise to social and political power as leaders of county guilds and societies that were established within the various Chinese communities. The function of these guilds and societies was to protect the interests and to regulate the behaviour of their members; that admission was granted solely on the basis of one's county origin indicates the presence of mutual prejudice and rivalry between people from different counties.

At the time of Liang Qichao's visit, these county guilds and societies were well established in both Sydney and Melbourne. In Melbourne, guilds and societies founded by those from the See Yap (Si yi 四邑) and Sam Yap (San yì 三邑) regions were particularly influential because the majority of the
Chinese in Melbourne came from counties located in these two regions of Guangdong province.\textsuperscript{46} That Liang Qichao was from Sun Hui (also spelt Sunwui, Xinhui 新会) county in the See Yap region added to the interest of local See Yap leaders in his visit. Indeed Liang was to later complain to Kang Youwei that the enthusiasm of the Chinese people in Melbourne for the Protect the Emperor Society extended only as far as his county-ties with them and that their interest in the Society and its proposed reforms evaporated with his departure from Melbourne.\textsuperscript{47} The Chinese population in Sydney was more diverse and a greater range of county-societies was established there, including those that catered for the numerous migrants from Chang Shen (Zengcheng 增城), Tung Kuan (Dongguan 东莞) and Chung Shan (Zhongshan 中山) counties in Guangdong.\textsuperscript{48}

The clannishness of the Chinese in Australia, particularly of those in Melbourne, was exacerbated by decades of hostility towards the Chinese on the part of the European communities and the various discriminatory laws levelled against Chinese immigrants. By forming themselves into county-based groups, the Chinese afforded themselves some degree of social insulation from an unfriendly environment. Restrictive immigration laws were first introduced in Victoria in 1855 when the number of Chinese in that colony increased by some 15,000 between 1854 and 1855.\textsuperscript{49} But these laws proved ineffective as Chinese migrants were able to land in New South Wales and South Australia where restrictive immigration legislation was not yet introduced. As gold-fever soared, both these colonies passed restrictive legislation against the Chinese and the number of Chinese arriving in the three colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia progressively decreased in the period between the early 1860s and the late 1870s. This decrease led to the repealing of restrictive legislation in the late 1870s but by 1880, with the rise in the number of Chinese migrants, particularly in New South Wales, even stricter restrictive legislation was re-introduced. By this time, the European communities were unified in the defence of a White Australia and the majority of

\begin{itemize}
  \item See Yap (also spelt as See Yup or Sze Yup) consisted of Sun Hui (Xinhui), Toishan (Taishan 台山), Hoi Ping (Kaiping 开平) and Ying Ping (Enping 恩平) while Sam Yap was made up of Nam Hoi (Nanhai 南海), Poon Yee (Fan'ou 番禺) and Soon Tack (Shunde 顺德). See also Yong, The New Gold Mountain, p.189.  
  \item The letter, dated 17 April 1901, was written shortly before Liang’s departure from Australia to return to Japan. The text of the letter is included in Ding Wenjiang, Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu, vol.1, p.143.  
  \item Yong, The New Gold Mountain, p.189.  
  \item Ibid., pp.20–1.  
\end{itemize}
Australian workers joined in the fight against Chinese immigration. This overwhelming hostility resulted in high rates of departure among Chinese migrants to Australia during the 1880s. But it is worth noting that the often temporary nature of early Chinese settlement in Australia, with many intending to return to China once they had earned enough money, was also an important contributing factor to the high rates of departure during the 1880s.

The Chinese communities in Australia were largely working-class with leadership provided by a merchant élite minority. European communities treated these two classes very differently; while Chinese labourers were strongly discriminated against, affluent Chinese merchants were generally admired for their ability and social conduct even though there was some public concern that European women found them highly attractive. Indeed, advocates of restrictive immigration legislation were at pains to point out that working-class Chinese were their targets since they were the ones who posed the threat of lowering the standard of living in Australia. Even at the height of debates on anti-Chinese legislation in 1888, a member of the Victorian parliament remarked that, “All that a Chinese merchant would have to do would be to ask for a permit, and no matter what government was at the head of affairs he would be sure to get it.”

Although they were not the targets of anti-Chinese legislation, the most influential Chinese merchants of the day, together with Chinese clergymen, led the defence of the Chinese in debates on anti-Chinese legislation of the late 1880s. Legislation against the working-class Chinese affected the Chinese élite in Australia in two ways: they suffered from the same humiliation of racial discrimination and the reduction of the Chinese population was detrimental to the merchants’ commercial interests in expanding the market for Chinese goods. By the time of Liang’s visit, the Chinese population in both Victoria and New South Wales was considerably smaller than what it had previously been. This was particularly true of Victoria where the Chinese population in 1901 (6,347) was only about half its size in 1881 (11,959). The following table, based on published figures in the 1925 *Official Yearbook for the Commonwealth of Australia* shows a general decline of the Chinese population across the colonies, except for South Australia and Western Australia.
Table 1: Population Figures for the Chinese in Australia in 1891 and 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(males)</td>
<td>13,048</td>
<td>10,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(females)</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>8,355</td>
<td>6,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>8,497</td>
<td>7,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>1,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>3,598</td>
<td>2,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSTRALIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(m)</td>
<td>35,523</td>
<td>29,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The formation of the Australian Federation in 1901 introduced further restrictions to Chinese migration when the Immigration Restriction Act became the first major piece of legislation to be passed by the new federal parliament in December that same year. The significance of this Act, which brought uniform legislation against the Chinese across the colonies, would not have been unknown to Liang during his stay in Sydney since there were many debates about the Immigration Restriction Bill throughout 1901 that led up to the Act. Liang, however, leaves no written record of his thoughts on this matter during his stay, but published a general critique of the White Australia policy in 1905, long after his departure from Australia. It is clear, however, that the branches of the Protect the Emperor Society that he helped to establish in the colonies during this time provided the basis for the Chinese in Australia to unite across county ties and regional boundaries on issues of national and collective interest. But despite the Society's encouragement of unity, Chinese merchants and clergymen, of whom many were associated with the Society, were unable to form a single body (representing the Chinese communities of Victoria and New South Wales) in their protest against the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901. This is not to say that the Society did not contribute to growing unity within the Chinese communities of Sydney and Melbourne. In August 1901, less than three months after Liang's departure, members of the Society's Sydney Branch convened a special meeting to discuss ways of counteracting the Bill before it was passed as an Act. In

53 These figures were extracted from the much more comprehensive list of Chinese population figures 1861–1901 which appears in Choi, Chinese migration and settlement in Australia, Table 2.1, p.22. These figures include the very small minority of Australian-born Chinese. As Choi notes, in 1901, there were only 128 Australian born Chinese in Victoria (70 males and 58 females) and 195 in New South Wales (114 males and 81 females).

54 A brief account of the Act with photographic images of the original Act can be found at <http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/places/cth/cth4ii.htm#history>.

55 Liang's disappointment with the White Australia policy is discussed briefly towards the end of this article.
September the same year, Chinese merchants in Melbourne urged the Sydney branch to approach British and Japanese shipping companies in Sydney for assistance in opposing the Bill. But it was not until 1918 that the influential Chinese in Sydney and Melbourne were able to launch an effective interstate appeal for the relaxation of immigration laws.

When Liang visited Australia, he spent most of his time in the company of Chinese merchants and clergymen and would have witnessed the important mediating role played by Chinese clergymen in addressing problems between the Chinese and European communities. The very small minority of Chinese clergymen who worked for the various Christian denominations was highly regarded in both the Chinese and European communities. During Liang's visit, Chinese clergymen played an active role in introducing him to leading members of the European communities as well as organizing and interpreting for him at public events to promote the cause of the Protect the Emperor Society.

The reforms proposed by the Society would have found favour among the Westernised Chinese clergy who were likely to have seen it as an effective platform for reducing the significance of county-ties and clannishness among the Chinese in Australia. The formal English title by which the Protect the Emperor Society was known in Australia was the Chinese Empire Reform Association, a title that was subsequently adopted for a different political organization founded in Melbourne in 1904 that bore no relation to the Protect the Emperor Society. That this subsequent Association did not make the restoration of the Guangxu Emperor its key objective nor regarded Liang and Kang as its leaders led the Sydney branch of the Society to formally dissociate itself from this organization in 1905.

It is worth emphasizing that the constitution of the Sydney branch of the Society, based as it was on that of the Vancouver branch established by Kang Youwei in March 1899, called for both the protection of the emperor and the business interests of its overseas Chinese members. It is clear that the latter would have commanded the interest of the overseas Chinese merchant élite. As C.F. Yong has observed, the collection of funds for establishing banks and shipping companies as part of the reform program and for commercial and industrial investment became the dominant function of the Protect the Emperor Society in Australia in the years following Liang's visit. A clause in the constitution of the Society stated that those who donated substantial funds to its cause would be given special privileges to exploit and develop China's natural resources in the event of the Guangxu Emperor's restoration.

A minimum membership fee of four shillings was set for those who wished to join the Society although contributions from Chinese merchants in
Sydney ranged from £2 to £1,000. The élite merchant members of the Society included the owners of successful import and export companies, general stores and wholesale fruit companies in Sydney. Some of the more affluent among these progressive merchants like Chan Harr (Chen Xia 陈霞) and George Kwok Bew (Guo Biao 郭标) came to play important roles in the commercial development of Hong Kong, Shanghai and Guangdong through their involvement with the Protect the Emperor Society. Both were founding members of the Society. At the time of Liang’s visit, Chan Harr was co-manager of Warley and Co. (Huali Hao 华利号), then rated as the third biggest store in Fremantle, Western Australia. Soon after Liang’s departure from Australia, Chan Harr went to Sydney to sell shares for a joint-stock company he proposed to establish that would engage primarily in import and export business and include the founding of a modern department store in Hong Kong to be named after the Warley and Co. in Fremantle. Chan Harr collected some 163,000 yuan 元 (£16,300) in shares for his transnational enterprise from the Chinese in Western Australia and Sydney. By 1918, the Warley and Co. had become the C. H. and S. Warley, a major wholesale and retail grocery with its headquarters in Sydney, a branch office in Fremantle and substantial shareholdings in the renowned Hong Kong firms of The Sun Company, the Sincere Company and Hor Sing and Company.

George Kwok Bew was a leading figure in the banana trade in New South Wales at the time of Liang’s visit. As a fruit merchant, he was representative of a newly emergent Chinese élite in Australia at the turn of the century. Where the old-style merchants had succeeded through engaging in import and export trade with China and Hong Kong, the fruit merchants rose to importance through their involvement in the banana growing industry in northern Queensland. George Kwok Bew, as proprietor of Wing Sang & Co. (Yongsheng guolan 永生果園), became one of the largest wholesale fruit merchants in Sydney when the Wing Sang merged with two other fruit companies (Wing On 永安 and Tiy Sang 泰生) to form Sang On Tiy (Sang An Tai 生安泰) in 1902. Sang On Tiy reputedly occupied some 350 acres of cultivated banana plantations in Fiji and exported some 10,000 bunches to Sydney per fortnight during this period. As they prospered, the owners of Sang On Tiy began to look towards Hong Kong and China to expand their commercial interests. George Kwok Bew and Philip Gockchin (Guo Quan 郭泉), proprietor of the Wing On fruit company, were pioneering members of the same Guo clan who founded the Wing On and Company Ltd in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai. (Indeed, the entire Guo clan made its first fortune in the banana trade in Australia). By 1917, when George Kwok Bew returned to China to become the first director of the Wing On Emporium in Shanghai, the Wing On enterprise had developed a range of interests. Throughout the twentieth century, it grew into a powerful commercial group with trans-national assets in banking, hotel and insurance businesses, and remains to this day one of the biggest corporate empires in Asia.

At its founding in 1900, the Sydney branch of the Protect the Emperor Society included the owners of successful import and export companies, general stores and wholesale fruit companies in Sydney.
Society comprised 59 committee members and some 249 members. To qualify for election to the working committee of the Association, a special membership fee of £10 was required (as opposed to the four shillings for ordinary membership). Among those who paid the special membership fee to become office-bearers were Thomas Yee Hing (Liu Ruxing 刘汝兴), Ping Nam (Ye Bingnan 叶炳南), W. R. G. (William Robert George) Lee (Li Yihui 李益徽), George Kwok Bew (Guo Biao) and newspaper editors like Ng Ngok-low (Wu Elou 伍粵樓) and T. Chong Luke (Zheng Lu 鄭禄). Indeed it was the involvement of men like Thomas Yee Hing and Ping Nam in the founding of the Society that led Quong Tart to dissociate himself from it, despite personal appeals from Kang Youwei and Yip Ung, the president of the Society’s Vancouver branch.

In 1900, Thomas Yee Hing was the managing partner of the import and export firm On Cheong and Co. (Anchang 安昌) and the biggest opium importer in Sydney. On Cheong and Co., established in Sydney in 1865, derived its profits largely from the opium trade. Thomas Yee Hing’s association with the company began in 1877, from which he accrued a sizeable fortune but his influence on the Chinese community in Sydney was not evident until he became involved with the Protect the Emperor Society and a major shareholder in the Society’s organ, Tung Wah News. As a member of the Society, he became active in campaigning against anti-Chinese legislation and, in 1905, he even helped to form the Chinese Anti-Opium League of New South Wales. In the evidence he gave at the Royal Commission on Tariff in 1906, he remarked that if opium smuggling could not be stopped, he was in favour of absolute prohibition of opium importation except for medicinal use as honest competition among importers would be impossible. It seems likely that Thomas Yee Hing had to denounce opium-smoking and advocate its prohibition by this time since he was made president of the Protect the Emperor Society in 1905. In this context, the Society was a significant catalyst for the formation of organizations that represented and protected Chinese interests in Australia across counties, including the influential New South Wales Chinese Merchants’ Society (Zhonghua shangwu zonghui 中华商务总会) in September 1903 under the leadership of Thomas Yee Hing and Ping Nam.

Prior to the founding of the Protect the Emperor Society, a business association known as the Lin Yik Tong (Lianyi tang 联益堂, or the Chinese Benevolent Society as it was known in English) was the first and sole trans-county organization in operation within the Chinese community in Sydney. Established in 1892 by W. R. G. Lee, who became a founding member of Sydney’s Protect the Emperor Society in 1900, the Lin Yik Tong had three civic aims: to do charitable work; to promote business relations among merchants; and to mediate disputes in the Chinese community. As a well-known government interpreter and an import-export merchant of the successful On Yik Lee Store (An Yi Li 安益利), W. R. G. Lee commanded respect within the Chinese community and was a good friend of Quong Tart. Unlike the
Protect the Emperor Society, the Lin Yik Tong was a highly select organization that limited its membership to only eight firms involved in the import and export trade in Sydney, including Quong Tart’s, and was thus resented by merchants like Thomas Yee Hing who had been excluded from its membership.72

Quong Tart’s withdrawal from involvement with the Protect the Emperor Society was primarily a result of his opposition to powerful opium merchants like Thomas Yee Hing and Ping Nam since he was a vigorous campaigner against both opium-smoking and the opium trade. Quong Tart made his fortune in gold claims and used it to establish a successful tea importing business and a café. He was one of the few Chinese in nineteenth century Australia to adopt a totally Western way of life by marrying an Englishwoman and living in the exclusive and predominantly European suburb of Ashfield in New South Wales. He had personally met with Zhang Zhidong when he returned to China for a short visit in late 1888 and was awarded an honorary military rank by the Qing court in 1894.73 In 1883, Quong Tart launched an extensive anti-opium crusade and obtained 4,000 signatures for a petition against the opium trade that he submitted to the Executive Council of New South Wales. However, in view of the substantial revenues the colony derived from the opium trade, the Council disregarded the issue and nothing came of Quong Tart’s campaign.74 The hostility between Quong Tart, as a leading figure in the Lin Yik Tong, and the opium-merchant founders of the Protect the Emperor Society led to a major rift among Chinese merchants in

72 Yong, New Gold Mountain, pp.80-3.
74 It is worth noting that in Quong Tart’s report to the Inspector-General of Police in November 1883, after visiting various Chinese gold-mining camps in New South Wales in the company of Sub-Inspector Brennan, he warned of the risk posed by “the wretchedness and poverty” of Chinese opium smokers to Europeans who might “copy” “their example.” “In this very city may be found many Europeans fast giving way to its infatuating influence, men unable to satisfy their cravings with intoxicating liquors, youths ignorant of its awful results, women who by its degrading influences descend to the lowest depths of depravity.” Quong Tart’s report strongly echoes the rhetoric used by advocates of anti-Chinese legislation in this and other instances. (Cited in Margaret Tart, The Life of Quong Tart, p.49).
Sydney shortly after Liang’s departure from Australia. The battle line was
drawn between Quong Tart and his supporters on the one side, and Thomas
Yee Hing and his supporters on the other. W. R. G. Lee, as both Quong Tart’s
friend and a founding member of the Protect the Emperor Society, left the
Society in 1901 to bring an action of libel against Chan Chou (Chen Shou
陈寿), treasurer of the Society and an ally of Thomas Yee Hing. Liang’s visit,
which effectively secured the social prominence and authority of the Protect
the Emperor Society in Sydney, brought about the decline of the Lin Yik Tong
which had previously enjoyed eight years of unchallenged leadership of the
Chinese community in Sydney. Writing to Kang Youwei at the end of his stay
in Sydney, Liang remarked that as he had been unable to reconcile Quong
Tart’s group with the existing Society, he did not obtain a single cent from
them in donations. The rift between the two groups deepened with W.R.G.
Lee fighting three court cases against Thomas Yee Hing’s group between
1901 and 1903.75 W. R. G. Lee also had the support of Sun Johnson (Sun
Junchen 孙俊臣), another Quong Tart supporter who was editor of the
Chinese Australian Herald (Guang yi hua bao广益华报), while Thomas
Yee Hing had the backing of W. O. Young (Ouyang Wanqing 欧阳万庆),
director of the Tung Wah News, by then the powerful organ of the Protect
the Emperor Society, and the Society itself which was largely in his control
in the early 1900s. The split in Sydney’s Chinese business community caused
by this rift ended only with Quong Tart’s death after he was brutally attacked
by an unknown assailant in July 1903.

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75 Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, pp.82–3. See also the summary results of these cases in ibid., p.244, n.13. Reports of the court
cases are included in *The State Reports, New South Wales* (1903), vol.3 (Sydney: Law

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**Figure 5**

Quong Tart at home in Ashfield,
Sydney (taken from Margaret
Tart, *The Life of
Quong Tart*)
With Quong Tart's death, Thomas Yee Hing's leadership of the Chinese community in Sydney grew rapidly. W. R. G. Lee and his family returned to China a month after the tragedy and the Lin Yik Tong, deprived of its two most influential members, dissolved only to be immediately replaced by the New South Wales Chinese Merchants' Society founded by the triumphant Thomas Yee Hing and Ping Nam. This organization was followed a year later by the founding of the New South Wales Merchants' Defence Association (Huashang huishe 华商会社) whose membership included Chan Harr and George Kwok Bew and which was aimed specifically at countering the rise of anti-Chinese sentiment in 1904. The formation of the Anti-Chinese and Anti-Asiatic League in Sydney that year had developed into widespread agitation for the boycotting of Chinese traders. This Association, established by leading members of the Protect the Emperor Society, was effective in defending the interests of the Chinese merchants to the Australian public and won the sympathy and support of several Protestant churches. The Anti-Chinese and Anti-Asiatic League was disbanded in 1905 after failing to win public support for its cause. The participation of prominent Chinese merchants in Australia in both local social movements and international commercial enterprises after they became associated with the Protect the Emperor Society suggests the Society's importance in galvanizing communal and nationalist sentiment as well as encouraging entrepreneurial innovation among the Chinese in Australia. Liang's visit was the first encounter for many of the Chinese in Australia with an elite scholar-gentry reformer whose political connections reached the highest levels of the Chinese government even though he was in exile and his "patron" the Guangxu Emperor was under house-arrest.

For his part, Liang's almost total reliance on the moral, political and financial support of overseas Chinese merchants during the years of his political exile led to a progressive change in his attitude to merchants. In 1896, although he had become convinced of the importance of commerce and industry, he described merchants in general as "subversive, manipulative and monopolistic," thus displaying a Confucian prejudice that would have made it difficult for him to accept merchants as his social equals. By 1903, his scorn for the monopolistic tendencies of merchants had turned into admiration and he even encouraged them to "combine their efforts with the Chinese government into the biggest possible monopolies." Liang's first major projects after fleeing China for Japan in 1898 (his newspaper Upright Discussions and the establishment of the Great Harmony High School), were both funded by Chinese merchants in Tokyo. Yet despite being the beneficiary of generous donations by overseas Chinese merchants sympathetic to his various causes, Liang continued to express a superior attitude to merchants in private as the following excerpt from his letter to Kang Youwei, written prior to his departure from Sydney, demonstrates. Of his Chinese merchant hosts, Liang wrote:

It is most regrettable that the merchants here have a predilection for pomp and ceremony. During my stay, when I travelled to different parts of

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76 Yong, *New Gold Mountain*, pp.73-6.
78 Quoted in ibid., p.33, and see also pp.25-7.
Yet, a report in the *South Australian Register* (12 November 1900) notes that Liang was “extremely proud of his gift (the gold medal) which he wears on his watch-chain.” See excerpts from this interview with the *South Australian Register* later in this article.


In this context, one might infer that Liang Qichao found the company of Chinese clergymen far more agreeable since extant accounts of his trip relate that he had many discussions with them, stayed at their homes and visited and spoke in their chapels. While in Melbourne, he met with two of the most influential clergymen in the Chinese community of the time, James Moy Ling (Mei Ling 梅灵) and the Revd Cheok Hong Cheong (Zhang Zhuoxiong 张卓雄). James Moy Ling was converted to Christianity in the 1870s and upon his conversion, helped to establish a Chinese church in Little Bourke Street in Melbourne. In the 1880s, he became head of the Chinese Wesleyan Church Mission in Melbourne and was assisted in his work by several Chinese catechists variously located in Victoria.81 The Revd C. H. Cheong, whose father was a Christian convert, arrived in Australia from See Yap in 1863 at the age of fifteen. He attended Scotch College in Melbourne, completing his final examinations there in 1875 at the age of twenty-seven. He then studied at the University of Melbourne and the Presbyterian Theological Hall and began his work with the Church of England in Victoria in 1884. When he was ordained in the Church of England in 1888 at the age of forty, he had already established himself as an influential spokesman for the Chinese community in Melbourne. In 1879, he co-authored with Lowe Kong Meng (Liu Guangming 刘光明) and Louis Ah Mouy (Lei Yamei 雷亚妹), two leading Melbourne Chinese merchants, a pamphlet defending the Chinese position in relation to debates on the Chinese question in Australia. In 1888, he repeated this defence at the height of the anti-Chinese movement in Victoria and New South Wales. C.H. Cheong went to England in 1891 to deliver addresses on the subject of opium at Exeter Hall and in the Banqueting Room of the British Parliament.82 He interpreted at Liang’s major public addresses in both Melbourne and Sydney.

Bilingual Chinese clergymen like James Moy Ling and C. H. Cheong were effective advocates of the interests and rights of the Chinese communities in Australia as they moved with ease between the European and Chinese communities, as did William Ah Ket, a prominent Australian-born Chinese lawyer who interpreted for Liang in Bendigo. At the time of Liang’s visit, William Ah Ket (Mai Xixiang 麦锡祥 or Marc Sec Cheong as he was known in Cantonese transliteration) was twenty-four and at the start of what was to become a highly successful legal and public career in Melbourne. He was the first Chinese barrister to be admitted to practice in Victoria and his formidable reputation gained him many influential clients. He was an active campaigner against anti-Chinese discriminatory legislation and his high standing within
both the European and Chinese communities led to his appointment in 1912 as Victoria's representative, as part of the overseas Chinese delegation, to the inaugural session of the National Parliament convened under the auspices of the newly-founded Republic of China. William Ah Ket was also twice appointed as the Consul-General for China in Australia, in 1913–14 and in 1917.83

Although Liang Qichao leaves no written account of his impressions of these individuals, it seems likely that he would have found a striking difference between them and the Chinese merchants who were his strongest supporters. Unlike the merchants whose support of the Protect the Emperor Society was substantially informed by their own commercial interests, these highly-Westernized Chinese who married European women and chose to have their children educated at Australian schools and universities were permanent settlers with few ambitions for building business empires in China. Their interest in China would have been secondary to their concern over the local Chinese situation in Australia in which they continued to play a leadership role by virtue of their high social standing. Thus the support of men like James Moy Ling, C.H.Cheong and William Ah Ket for Liang's cause during his visit was part of their long-term campaign for better treatment of the Chinese in Australia. Their primary concern would have been with local issues of reform, rather than with the Emperor's restoration and reform goals in a distant China, even though they would have regarded the latter as important for elevating the status of the Chinese overseas.

At the time of Liang's visit, the Chinese in Australia, unlike those in the United States, the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong, did not have a Chinese consulate that could address the colonial governments on their behalf on issues of discrimination and restrictive immigration. Effective advocates of Chinese rights within the Chinese communities were a very small minority and their success in defending the Chinese position was generally limited. In 1887, two Chinese commissioners (Wang Ronghe 王荣和 and Yu Rui 余瑞) visited Australia under instructions from Zhang Zhidong to explore the overseas Chinese situation and they recommended the establishment of a Chinese consulate in Australia on their return. When the British Secretary of State for the colonies H. T. Holland consulted the Australian colonial governments on this matter, the latter unanimously requested that the British home government obtain terms from the Chinese government similar to those concluded between the U.S. and China for preventing Chinese immigration. Thus nothing came of the Chinese commissioners' recommendation.84

Indeed, it was the absence of a Chinese consulate in Australia that, as Liang urged Kang in April 1900, made it an ideal place to promote and raise funds for the Protect the Emperor Society. It is interesting to note that on 17 September 1898, just four days before the Hundred Day Reform Movement of 1898 abruptly ended and forced Liang Qichao into exile, the Tung Wah News carried the following report requesting the appointment of a Chinese consul to Australia:

84 Andrew Markus, Fear and hatred: purifying Australia and California 1830–1901 (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1979), pp.131–3, 143. (The first Chinese Consul-General to Australia established his office in Melbourne, Victoria, in March 1909.)
The Chinese restrictions are getting stricter every day and if more ‘harsh’ laws were added, the Chinese would lose their established footing in Australia. The best way to cope with the pending crisis is to unite all leading Chinese in major Australian cities to petition to the Foreign Office in China informing it of the interests and sufferings of Chinese subjects. His Majesty the Emperor should be asked to send out a Consult to Australia to look after the interests of his nationals. It would lift the prestige and dignity of China internally and would protect the rights and interests of the Chinese subjects externally.\textsuperscript{85}

In the absence of official Chinese representation, Liang Qichao’s visit provided the Chinese in Australia with their first opportunity to raise the profile of their communities. Liang’s tour of Australian towns and cities received coverage in the major English language newspapers and he was often welcomed as a visiting foreign statesman by leading members of the various colonial administrations. It is worth noting that the reports of Liang’s visit published in the \textit{Age} and \textit{Argus} in Melbourne, the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} and the \textit{South Australian Register} do not mention local concerns over anti-Chinese discrimination in Australia in relation to Liang’s reform program. Similarly, no mention is made of Liang’s views on restrictive immigration in either the English or Chinese language press. Yet, within a month of Liang’s departure from Sydney for Japan, the \textit{Immigration Restriction Bill} received its first hearing in Parliament on 5 June 1901.

Let us recall at this juncture that the terms “Liang Qichao” and “the Chinese in Australia” denote asymmetrical modes of historical representation. The former designates an individual subjectivity, richly elaborated through ideas, events, feelings and visions authored in that name while the latter reduces and homogenizes a vast heterogeneous range of lived and recorded experiences to a specific ethnic group. It is crucial to note this asymmetry for it directs the mode of narration taken towards anticipating a “fuller” story to be told about Liang, as if new textual “evidence”
might fill lacunae in existing narratives towards the recovery of historical substance and certainty. Yet, precisely because Liang has written so little about his experiences in Australia, thus consigning this period of his otherwise amply recorded life to historical insignificance, what emerges from an attempt at its historical “recovery” is the performative aspect of historical discourse itself. By means of strategic juxtaposition of textual excerpts from published accounts and the represent-ations they provide of events and individuals, a certain lived complexity of the protagonist’s character. Liang’s enormity in the historiography though what we means of strategic juxtaposition of textual excerpts from published accounts and the representations they provide of events and individuals, a certain lived complexity of the protagonist’s character. Liang’s enormity in the historiography of modern China directs our narration to take this form. Yet, his silence inhibits any easy claim on our part to historical certainty and reminds us that we are no longer in the domain of intellectual history. Rather, our engagement is primarily with journalistic reports that resist dialogue with Liang’s “mind,” even though what we “recover” of Liang through these prosaic accounts might lead us to anticipate such dialogue. The following is a translation of the first lengthy account of Liang’s trip published in two parts in the bi-weekly Tung Wah News in late 1900.86

**An Account of Mr Liang Zhuoru’s Travels in Australia by his Personal Secretary Luo Chang** 87

On 7 October [1900] Mr Liang started on his journey to Australia from Penang. On the 11th, we reached Colombo in Ceylon where the ship then turned eastward. Our ship was delayed at the Suez Canal and we had to wait in Ceylon for six days before we could board it. In the past there were ten or more Chinese people living in Ceylon and they even ran a fairly prosperous store. But since the trouble started by the Boxers in China, they have been insulted and bullied by the local people and, one by one, all of them have returned home. Today, no Chinese remains in that place. Since the [Chinese] government has not undergone reform, our strong and troublesome neighbours have made it impossible for our Chinese merchants overseas to conduct their business in peace. Whose fault is this! Alas! Those who lack knowledge say that a country’s strength or weakness does not affect the lives of its people. How then would they view our fellow-countrymen in Ceylon?88

On 16 October, we boarded the ship at Colombo.89 There was a typhoon and the ship drifted with the wind for four days and four nights. On the 25th, it reached Fremantle in Western Australia. Our fellow-provincials from various towns in Western Australia had earlier received a telegram from the Protect the Emperor Society in Sydney and knew that Mr Liang would be passing through this part of Australia. More than ten men, including Mr Bao Chi, Mr Paul Soong Quong (Song Guangzong),90 Chan Harr (Mr Chen Xia), Mr Li

87 The Chinese title of this account is “Liang Xiaolian Zhuoru xiansheng aozhou youji” and the author Luo Chang describes himself as Liang’s “travelling assistant” (suxing shujii 随行书记). (Xiaolian refers to Liang as a holder of the juren 举人 degree and Zhuoru is Liang Qichao’s bao 号 or style). Liang is referred throughout the article simply as xiansheng 先生, which I have translated, where appropriate, as “Mr Liang” to retain something of the account’s original tone. Luo Chang (1883–1955; also known as Lo Chong), who acted as Liang’s interpreter in Australia, later married Kang Youwei’s second daughter Kang Tongbi. Luo was born in Honolulu and would have been seventeen when he accompanied Liang to Australia. A report in Ballarat’s The Courier of 24 November 1900 confirms his identity as “Mr Lo Chong, a youth 17 years of age.” (I am grateful to Sue McKeegan, research librarian at the Central Highlands Regional Library, Ballarat, for this information). He later studied at Cambridge University and according to Jung-Pang Lo, was one “among the many who were sent to different places to carry out liaison work, transmit messages and transport arms and supplies” for the Society’s planned uprising in Central China of August 1900. See J. P. Lo, ed. Kang Yu-wei, pp.184, 188, 245, 499. (It is worth noting that J. P. Lo is Luo Chang’s son.) Luo Chang is also mentioned as having been in Tokyo at the Great Harmony High School in 1899, its foundation year, and would have first met Liang there (Ding Wenjiang, Liang Rengong xiansheng xianpu, vol.1, p.92).

88 Throughout the account, Luo refers to the Chinese people variously as tongbao 同胞 (fellow-countrymen), xiangren 乡人 (fellow-provincials) or tongren 同人 (fellow-Chinese).

89 This was the steam-liner Britannia, as mentioned in a short report on Liang’s journey in the Sydney Morning Herald, 27 October 1901.

90 Where there are known Anglicized versions of Chinese names, I have used these rather than provided pinyin transliterations of their names in Chinese. It was the common practice in Australia for only the given names to be transliterated, eg. Quong Tart for Mei Guangda, Thomas Yee Hing for Liu Ruxing. This has presented some difficulty in corroborating names in English transliteration with those that appear in Chinese since surnames have generally been omitted from the former. A glossary showing Chinese characters against Anglicized transliterations in Yong, The New Gold Mountain, has been very useful in this regard. The Revd Paul Soong Quong, a Wesleyan Church Chinese missionary, was an active campaigner for Chinese rights in Fremantle and Western Australia. See a brief biographical description in Yong, The New Gold Mountain, p.15.
The Esplanade remains one of Fremantle's leading hotels to this day. See a brief historical description on the hotel's webpage at <http://www.esplanadehotelfremantle.com.au>.

Dianhong 李殿洪, Mr Huang Ji 黄藉, Mr Li Shoutian 李寿田, welcomed us on to shore. Before the ship docked, a journalist from the Western press had already come on board requesting an interview. After the ship was anchored, our fellow-provincials approached and shook hands with us, welcoming us most cordially. They invited Mr Liang to stay in Fremantle for at least ten days before proceeding eastwards. Because this town is a long way from Sydney, Mr Liang accepted their invitation as he thought he might not have the chance to pass by here again on his way back to Japan after Sydney. That same day, the Society in Sydney sent a telegram to the ship to greet Mr Liang and to inform him that arrangements had been made for two of its members to meet him in Melbourne. A telegram from Adelaide inviting Mr Liang to visit and stay there for a while was also received.

The main city of Western Australia is Perth and it is twelve miles from Fremantle to which it is connected by rail. There are six to seven hundred Chinese people living in Perth and if one includes Fremantle and three or four other Western Australian towns, there are altogether about a thousand Chinese living in this area.

The day we arrived, a banquet was held for Mr Liang at the Warley and Co. [Huali Hao] in Fremantle. This store is managed by Chan Harr and Li Dianhong and is the third biggest in Fremantle among both Chinese and Western stores. It is clear that the Chinese people are excellent businessmen whose success, despite the fact that they are outsiders, is equal to that of Westerners. After the banquet, our fellow-provincials [xiang ren] took Mr Liang to the Esplanade ["Ahshipan"] Hotel 阿土盘大客寓 so that he could rest. Two reporters from the Western press came to interview him. The Esplanade is the best hotel in all of Western Australia. It is flanked by the sea on its left and to its right, there is a lake. The scenery is very beautiful and the hotel décor most sophisticated.91 Mr Bao Chi stayed with Mr Liang at the hotel and was extremely attentive to his needs. One can see how much our fellow-provincials respect Mr Liang. Mr Bao, a pastor at the Presbyterian Church, is enthusiastic and knowledgeable and had a lively discussion with Mr Liang.

On 26 October, Mr Liang went to Perth by steam-train to visit his fellow-provincials. On the night of the 27th, he spoke at the chapel of the Presbyterian Church. Several hundred people attended this meeting and it was thereupon suggested that all those present join the Western Australian branch of the Protect the Emperor Society. Before this, Mr Bao and others had received several letters from members of the Sydney branch urging them to form a branch of the Society. They had met once and a dozen or so people had joined the Society. By comparison, the achievement of that night was considerable. On the 29th, Mr Liang went to stay at Reverend Paul Soong Quong’s house in Perth so that it would be easier for people to meet him. On the night of the 30th, he gave a speech at the Town Hall. There were even more Chinese people in attendance than on the 27th. The Chinese audience was greatly moved by his speech and their patriotism was aroused. When they heard that the Emperor was in his present plight because he tried to save his people, none could suppress their emotions and each desired to save China from its crisis. People rushed to have their names registered with the Society.
When Mr Liang first arrived in Western Australia, he received a letter of invitation from Mr Kuang Liang, a fellow-provincial from Geraldton, to visit this town. Touched by his sincerity, Mr Liang accepted the invitation and travelled there by steam-train on 31 October, accompanied by Mr Bao Chi. They set out early in the morning from Perth and did not arrive there until twelve-thirty at night. Mr Kuang had earlier taken the train to meet them at a station eighteen miles from Geraldton. That night, Mr Liang rested at the Geraldton Hotel.

On 1 November, he gave a speech at the chapel of the Presbyterian Church. Altogether, there are fewer than thirty Chinese people in this place and all of them attended and listened intently that evening. After the speech, Mr Kuang proposed the founding of a branch of the Protect the Emperor Society and the audience unanimously agreed with this proposal, truly an admirable achievement.

On 2 November, Mr Liang returned to Perth from Geraldton by train and presented a second speech at the Town Hall on the 3rd. An even greater number of people joined the Society at this meeting. On the 4th, our fellow-provincials held a farewell party for Mr Liang at the Town Hall. The Chinese and Western people in attendance numbered in the several hundreds. That night, Mr Liang was invited to speak again. His speech was translated into English for the benefit of the Westerners. The Governor of Western Australia personally chaired this meeting. He gave an introductory speech in which he described the nature of Mr Liang’s visit and the importance of Mr Liang’s lecture. Mr Liang then spoke, with Mr Bao Chi as his interpreter. All the Chinese and Western people listened attentively and applauded with approval. After the speech, Reverend Paul Soong Quong presented Mr Liang with a gold medal on behalf of the Western Australian branch of the Society as a token of their gratitude and a souvenir of his visit. In accordance with the wishes of the Society’s membership, Mr Soong Quong handed the medal to the Governor, requesting that he present it to Mr Liang on their behalf. The Governor presented the medal to Mr Liang with great decorum and Mr Liang offered his thanks in return. That night, Mr Liang stayed at the premises of Warley and Co. in order to spend more time with his fellow-provincials.

At eight on the evening of 5 November, Mr Liang boarded the ship and set off from Fremantle. More than twenty of our fellow-provincials came to send him off, they paid their respects and we then departed.

On 10 November, the ship reached Adelaide, the most important city in South Australia. Mr Liang had originally intended to sail directly on to Sydney and to visit the different cities separately after settling down in Sydney. But before we reached shore, Mr Y. S. W. Way Lee (Ye Shouhua 叶寿华) and a few other Chinese gentlemen came on board the ship together with the leader of the South Australian parliament and some members of parliament to welcome him. They said that the government of this colony had arranged this welcoming committee and that the Governor had arranged a coach to take Mr Liang to the station. His train tickets had been organized and the Governor had also set aside a train for Mr Liang’s use when he travels to the eastern colonies. Mr Liang was greatly touched by this generosity and stepped on shore.
Since Adelaide proper is nine miles from where we docked, we travelled there by train. A reporter from the Western press met us at the station and travelled with us on the train, asking questions of Mr Liang all through the journey. Mr Y. S. W. Way Lee and two members of the South Australian parliament accompanied Mr Liang into Adelaide and he spent the night at a grand hotel. Mr Y. S. W. Way Lee was a most attentive host who saw to our every need. When the ship docked at the port of Adelaide, Mr Liang received a telegram from the See Yap Society in Melbourne requesting details of his travel itinerary in order to prepare for his visit. Mr Liang replied to them the same day.

On 12 November, Mr Liang paid a visit to the Chief Justice of the colony of South Australia who welcomed him most cordially. The Chief Justice had travelled to China during the period of reform [1898] and was therefore familiar with Mr Liang’s activities. On the 13th, he visited the Mayor of the City Council and they drank a toast to one another’s health. He had also planned to visit the Governor but since the Governor was away at another town, he instructed his secretary to welcome Mr Liang in his absence. In the afternoon, we visited Parliament House where the Speaker of Parliament welcomed us. There are fifty members of Parliament in the colony of South Australia and women have the right to vote. Only South Australians have this privilege in the whole of Australia. The neighbouring island of New Zealand is similar. At four in the afternoon, we set off by steam-train to cross over the border into the colony of Victoria.

At 10 am on 14 November, Mr Liang reached the city of Melbourne in Victoria. More than fifty eminent members of the local gentry and businessmen came to welcome us at the railway station. The Chinese and Western gentlemen who watched our arrival stood packed together like a wall. Together, we took a coach to the hotel where we were going to stay and drank a toast to Mr Liang’s longevity. Mr Huang Zhiqing 黄植卿 stood up to wish Mr Liang well. Mr Liang then stood up to express his gratitude, proposed a toast and the reception party then ended with Mr Liang shaking hands once again with those in attendance and enquiring after their names. Several reporters from the press came and requested interviews. Mr Tan Liecheng 谭烈成, a k a. Le Meng or Let Sing, a merchant in Ballarat and the husband of one of Mr Liang’s paternal aunts, also came to Melbourne to welcome him. His fellow-provincials then invited Mr Tan to accompany Mr Liang and to stay with him at the hotel.

On the 15th, he paid a visit to various stores. In the afternoon, the Kong Chew Society [Gangzhou huiguan 国州会馆] gave a banquet in his honour. That night, Mr Liang spoke at the Temperance Hall. Reverend C. H. Cheong (Zhang Zuoxiong) chaired the meeting, which was attended by an audience of between 1,200 to 1,300 people. On the 16th, two directors of the Sydney branch of the Protect the Emperor Society, Mr Thomas Yee Hing (Liu Ruxing) and Mr W. O. Young [Ouyang Wanqing] came to welcome Mr Liang. Mr Liang’s plan was to stay in Melbourne for a day or two and then proceed to Sydney, returning to Melbourne again at a later date. The Sydney branch had thus sent delegates to meet him in Melbourne and to escort him to Sydney. These two delegates welcomed us most cordially when we met them. As we
had been invited to Mr Tan Yingcai’s 谭英才 home for afternoon tea that
day, we set forth in the company of these two gentlemen. Later the same
afternoon, we visited the fire-station and inspected the fire-engines. That
evening, we attended a banquet hosted by the Tongchang Co.

On 17 November, we visited the Governor of this colony, accompanied
by Reverend C. H. Cheong and Mr Huang Zhijing. In the afternoon, we
got to the Museum. That evening, we attended a banquet hosted by people
from the two counties of Xinning 新宁 and Kaiping 开平. After the meal,
votes were cast for nominations to the various administrative positions in the
local branch of the Protect the Emperor Society. On the night of the 18th, Mr
Liang presented a speech at the Temperance Hall. Since this was a Sunday,
many people from small towns travelled into Melbourne and the audience
numbered some two thousand people with not a single seat to spare. On the
19th, we went to see the railway works and the supervisor of the works
showed us great hospitality by taking us on a guided tour of its various
departments. That night, Mr Liang spoke again at the Temperance Hall. The
audience was as large as the previous evening. On the 20th, we went on a
tour of the zoological gardens, the aquarium, the museum and other sights
of the Exhibition Gardens. In the afternoon, the elders of Mr Liang’s clan
association (Liang zhongxiao tang 梁忠孝堂) held a banquet in his honour.
At eleven o’clock that night, Mr Liang went to visit the printing works at a
large newspaper company. This newspaper prints 120,000 copies daily,
employs over three hundred people and its machinery is worth 3,400,000
yuan (£320,000).

On the 21st, the See Yap Society held a banquet for us during which its
committee members called for donations towards membership in the Protect
the Emperor Society. The donations from this evening amounted to more
than £700.

On 23rd November, Mr Liang visited Ballarat. Many of his Melbourne
supporters went to see him off at the station and two committee members
of the Society’s Melbourne branch, Tan Yingcai and Liang Xiantong 梁贤统
accompanied us on the journey. Messrs Thomas Yee Hing and W. O. Young
also travelled with us. At three in the afternoon, the train arrived in Ballarat.
Our fellow-provincials and Westerners, with both groups numbering in the
dozens, were at the station waiting to welcome Mr Liang. All these people
were influential and well-known members of the community. Mr Liang
shook hands with every one of them when he alighted from the train. With
the mayor of the Eastern town [Ballarat East] as our guide, we were then
taken by coach to the Eastern Town Hall where everyone drank to our
arrival. The Mayor stood up to make a speech during which he praised Mr
Liang’s achievements. Those seated cheered him in unison and all raised
their glasses to drink to Mr Liang’s good health. Mr Liang then stood up and
expressed his thanks. When these proceedings finished, the Mayor of the
Western town [Ballarat West] then escorted us to the Western Town Hall
where drinks had also been prepared to welcome Mr Liang at an equally
cordial reception. This was followed by a guided tour of the waterworks
where a reception equal to those at the two Town Halls was held. After the
reception, the Western officials present accompanied us by coach to the

99 The Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria was Sir John Madden.
100 Liang most likely visited the offices of the Argus.
According to The Courier (24 November 1900), both “wine and temperance drinks” were served at these receptions for Liang. Isaiah Pearce was named as the Mayor of Ballarat East and John Whykes as the Ballarat West Mayor. In making a toast to Liang, Murray was reported to have said that “our visitor need not be afraid of the death warrant issued by the Qing government as Britishers would give him every protection.” My thanks to Sue McKeegan for providing this information.

101 Another banquet had been prepared at Revd Deng Zu’s chapel and when that was over, we proceeded to the Westerners’ church where Mr Liang was to address several hundred people that evening. When Mr Liang finished speaking on China’s problems, Mr Thomas Yee Hing then related the founding of the Sydney branch of the Protect the Emperor Society and proposed that Ballarat should establish a branch of the Society as soon as possible. Mr Tan Yingcai followed with an account of the founding of the Society’s Melbourne branch and listed the names of subscribed donors. The Chinese audience listened with great interest and was deeply moved. After the speeches ended, Mr Liang was accompanied by some of our supporters to the home of Mr Tan Liecheng, the husband of one of his paternal aunts, where another reception awaited him. At midnight, we returned to the hotel to rest.

On 24 November, Mr Huang Baoshi invited us to breakfast at his home. After breakfast, Mr Liang went on a tour of the School of Mines. In Australia, this school is the largest for the study of minerals and is the most famous in this part of the world. People in Australia would not consider a thousand miles too far to travel to study at this school which also has many European students. The director of the school took Mr Liang on a guided tour, pointing out its various features in a most attentive manner. After this, we set off to a wool mill that employed over three hundred people. This was followed by a tour of the public gardens. Mr Liang had wanted to tour the mining shafts at a gold-mine but since it was already dusk, this could not be done. When we had finished visiting different stores in this town, we went to Mr Huang Liquan’s house where we had been invited for drinks. At this gathering, our supporters discussed the matter of donations to the Protect the Emperor Society and about £100 in donations were pledged. In the evening, Mr Liang spoke at the Westerners’ church once more to an audience as large as the previous evening’s. When he finished speaking, Mr W. O. Young and Mr Thomas Yee Hing both spoke in turn.

On the Campaign Trail in Australia

Despite its humdrum tenor, the preceding account of Liang’s travels, amounting to no more than a summary of his itinerary for the most part, is nonetheless of historical value for the information it provides about Liang’s movements. That Luo Chang’s account was intended for publication in the Tung Wah News might help to explain the propagandistic tone of his writings. Tung Wah News, founded in Sydney on 29 June 1898, was the second Chinese newspaper in Australia (after the Chinese Australian Herald). Both co-existed in Sydney without obvious rivalry until the severe rift (discussed
earlier) between Quong Tart and Thomas Yee Hing and their respective allies occurred in 1901 shortly after Liang’s departure. Founded as a joint-stock corporation with paid-up capital of £1,000 divided into four thousand shares held mainly by Chinese merchants in Sydney, the Tung Wah News (Donghua shibao 东华时报) became the organ of the Protect the Emperor Society when the Sydney branch was established in January 1900. The upper floor of the newspaper’s offices at 166 George Street, Sydney, became the Society’s headquarters in Australia. Thomas Yee Hing, who had bought 300 shares of the newspaper amounting to £75, was a major shareholder who came to exercise significant control over its management through his prominence in the Society.102

Luo’s account, when read against other contemporary reports of Liang’s speeches and interviews, is a bare travelogue that relates neither the contents of Liang’s speeches nor his impressions of Australia and the people he met, despite Luo’s proximity to Liang throughout the journey. Brief descriptions of Liang and his mission in Australia were provided in the English language press at the time of his visit. According to the South Australian Register:

Leong Kia Chu is one of the leaders of the Chinese reform party and is making a tour around the world with the object of enlisting the support of the Chinese throughout the various countries in the effort that is being made to introduce Western ideas of civilization in China. The mission is of great importance and the members of the Chinese reform party sincerely believe that an expression of opinion from the Chinese resident outside the limits of the empire will materially assist them in their efforts to release their country from its present condition of unrest and to establish a progressive form of government ....103

The Sydney Morning Herald published the following account:

... the Hon. Leong Che Tchau, a distinguished Chinese nobleman, who is visiting these colonies with the object of enlisting moral and pecuniary support for the part of reform in his native land. Although this gentleman is but 28 years of age, he has had a somewhat remarkable career. He was educated at the universities of Canton and Peking. When 14 years of age, he graduated B.A. and two years later he took his M.A. degree. Subsequently he became principal of the University of the Province of Hunan and Hupeh, and afterwards he edited a paper in Shanghai. He acted as private adviser to the Emperor Kuang Hsu and was a strong advocate of the opening of China to the commerce of the world. About two years ago, the honorable gentleman fell under the displeasure of the Dowager Empress because of the protection given by Great Britain to Kang Yu Wei, one of the Emperor’s lieutenants and the leader of the reform party, and in August last he had to leave the country as the Dowager Empress and Prince Tuan had offered the sum of £15,000 for his apprehension ....104

The interest generated by Liang’s visit within the European communities is undoubtedly the result of continued press coverage of events in China which was largely the result of G. E. Morrison’s work in Peking. Already

102 Tung Wah News, 28 October 1899, also discussed in Yong, The New Gold Mountain, pp.116–17. While the newspaper was identified with progressive reforms at the time of Liang’s visit, Yong points out that after the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1912, Tung Wah News (which had changed its name to Tung Wah Times [Donghua bao] in 1902) became a forum for anti-revolutionary sentiment which promoted support for Yuan Shikai 袁世凯 and his regime. At the same time, many of the Protect the Emperor Society’s former supporters had shifted their allegiance to the Republican cause, including influential merchants like George Kwok Bew who with others founded the Chinese Republic News (Minguo bao 民国报) in February 1914 to spread the message of Sun Yat-sen’s republicanism and to counteract Tung Wah propaganda. The professionalism of this newspaper (with two full-time editors hired from Guangzhou in 1914) made it very popular with the Chinese reading public in Australia and it sold at least two thousand copies per issue (Yong, ibid., pp.146–8). It accelerated the decline of the Tung Wah Times which had in any case come to be perceived from late 1911 onwards as symbolic of an obsolete cause. Indeed in 1912, the Protect the Emperor Society in Sydney was renamed as the Chinese Nationalist Association (Guomin hui 国民会). As Yong notes, its members came to be identified as the conservative section of Sydney’s Chinese business community but continued to exercise considerable influence over the New South Wales Chinese Chamber of Commerce throughout the 1910s (p.135). Liang’s prominence ensured that the Protect the Emperor Society remained the dominant political organization in Australia for the decade following his visit in 1900. It was not until the late 1900s that Sun Yat-sen’s Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng hui 同盟会) began to eclipse the Protect the Emperor Society.

103 South Australian Register, 12 November 1900.

104 Sydney Morning Herald, 7 December 1900.
famous as the China correspondent for the *London Times*, Morrison's insider views of the Boxer trouble in Peking attracted considerable interest in Australia as they were re-published in the major Australian newspapers through arrangement with the *London Times*. Morrison's accounts, together with the reports of other China correspondents for these Australian newspapers, provided the Australian reading public with first-hand and recent information on the Boxer trouble that preceded Liang's visit. By the time Liang arrived in Australia, this interest had turned to the terms of the peace negotiations following the Boxer defeat. The flight of the Qing court to Xi'an added to the high drama of the situation and the *Age* and *Argus* in Melbourne, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *South Australian Register* all carried daily reports on political developments in Peking and at the exiled court in Xi'an while reporting separately on Liang's Australian tour.

The description of Liang as “a distinguished Chinese nobleman” (on whom the newspaper further conferred the title “Honourable”) and the translation of his Confucian educational credentials into modern university degrees indicate the high regard in which the Australian colonial authorities held Liang and the legitimacy they accorded his fund-raising mission. This is evidenced by the official welcomes that Liang received from several representatives of the various colonial governments, as related by Luo Chang and in other contemporaneous reports. Interviews that Liang conducted with the English-language press, such as the following one with the *South Australian Register*, would tend to suggest that he was adept at favourably contrasting the Society's program of modern reform (and its unequivocal support of Western ideas) with the backwardness of the Qing court:

— *Is it true you were forced to leave China?*

Yes, that is so—no less than £15,000 was offered for my head by the Empress Dowager and Prince Tuan, the leader of the Boxers. Since then, I have visited Japan, the Sandwich Islands, and was in Shanghai in August last under British protection and in Hong Kong. On my way to Australia, I called at Penang, where there are 200,000 Chinese, at Colombo and have now just completed a visit to Western Australia.

— *And your reception?*

It has been good everywhere. In Western Australia, I held three meetings, two of which were for Chinese only and the last one over which His Excellency, the Administrator of the government presided, was comprised of a mixed audience, to whom my lecture was interpreted. At that meeting, the Administrator presented me with a gold medal, subscribed for me by the Chinese residents of that colony. (Liang Kia Chu is extremely proud of his gift which he wears on his watch-chain).

— *How long do you propose to be in the colonies?*

That depends, therefore I cannot say definitely but the tour will probably extend over three or four months. I shall visit all the cities and towns having Chinese residents. My countrymen have been exceedingly kind and have forwarded me letters of welcome from all parts.
—What are the nature of reforms sought by the reform party?

We desire to open up China to free commerce between all nations, to establish trade, to do away with the old laws and to form a government in Western principles. We wish to establish educational reforms and to wipe away superstition and distrust of the foreigner. The party has no desire to disturb the religious beliefs of the Chinese. That is a question we would leave entirely in the hands of the people. No, we have no objection to the Christian missionaries. They have done and are doing good work in the translation of English books into Chinese. By this means, Western ideas have been disseminated, the books are being read, and so our aims have been forwarded. It is this very fact that has made the Empress Dowager so bitter against missionaries. We fully recognize the great difficulty in educating the mass of the people in the direction of reform and know that the progress will be slow. At present, the reform party members number between 30,000 and 40,000 but it is making progress, though slowly.

—How do you propose educating the people?

Principally through the medium of newspapers and schools. With the exception of those in the foreign settlements, there are no newspapers in China. They have all been suppressed by the Empress Dowager.

—What is the opinion of the educated Chinese with regard to the present crisis?

They are opposed to the Boxer Movement, answered Liang Kia Chu with a smile. The trouble has arisen among the lower portions of the population urged on by those in power.

—How then do you think a settlement of the differences will be effected?

Nothing can be accomplished until the allied Powers restore the Emperor and separate him from the influence of the Empress Dowager. It will then be possible to arrange a stable form of government. At the same time, a careful watch must be placed upon the officials appointed by the Emperor.105

What is of interest in this interview, given our knowledge of Liang’s political troubles prior to arriving in Australia, is that there is no mention of why he had recently returned to Shanghai under British protection. Indeed, the failed uprising in central China was not mentioned in Australian press coverage of Chinese events of the time, with the exception of the Tung Wah News which published a biographical account of Tang Caichang on 31 October 1900, two months after his arrest and execution.106 That Zhang Zhidong received British assistance in Hankou in arresting Tang Caichang and other organizers of the Independence Army was not widely known although Liang was most likely aware of British duplicity in this matter. No reference was made to the series of treaties forced on China since the Opium Wars, the unfair terms of which were being reflected in the negotiations for peace terms over the Boxer affair, in this or any other published interviews with or reports on Liang. At most, Liang was reported as having expressed
the hope at his lecture at the Melbourne Town Hall on 27 October 1900 that, in relation to peace terms in the aftermath of the Boxer movement, the foreign powers “would not tarnish their reputation” by inflicting cruel policies and that “looting of the people or the despoilation of the tombs of the ancient monarchs” would not be sanctioned.\textsuperscript{107}

In an interview with the \textit{Argus}, Liang stated that “the real leader of the reform party was Emperor Kwang Hsu and Kang Yu Wei and himself were his principal lieutenants.”\textsuperscript{108} In the context of the strained relationship between Kang and Liang from late 1899 onwards, this statement invites reflection over its intended meaning. Was it Liang’s way of asserting equality with his former mentor? Another article published in the \textit{Argus} notes that reports in the Australian newspapers about alleged cooperation between Kang and Sun in the revolutionist Haichow (Huizhou 廉州) uprising caused Liang “some amusement ... the fact being that neither he nor Kang Yu Wei recognized the leader of the southern outbreak as co-worker, nor would they have anything to do with him.”\textsuperscript{109} Liang’s perceived amusement in this report is poignant in the light of his eagerness to salvage his relationship with Sun until at least April 1900 (only six months earlier) when he was finally rebuffed by the latter. These scant references to events and situations of crucial significance to Liang’s political development are engaging since they draw attention to yet reveal little of what Liang’s private thoughts might have been. That, in historical retrospect, we are privy to the complexity of Liang’s relationships with Kang and Sun and the plight in which he found himself after the failure of the uprising renders the promise of historical closure suggested by textual fragments such as these at once irresistible yet ultimately frustrating.

Descriptions of Liang’s appearance were also published in the English language press. The \textit{South Australian Register} reported that he was “a distinguished foreigner ... a typical Southern Chinaman of the mandarin class, medium in height, slightly built” and who “dresses in European costume and has a pleasantly affable manner.”\textsuperscript{110} The \textit{Argus} observed that he had a “highly intelligent countenance” and “spoke in a very quiet but effective style” and moreover “seemed to exercise an extraordinary influence over the local Chinese ... one of whom remarked, ‘It is to such men we have to look for the salvation of China’.”\textsuperscript{111} The honours that Liang was accorded by the colonial administrators stand in stark contrast to the same
administrators' support of anti-Chinese discriminatory legislation and clearly, Liang could not have failed to notice that the efforts of prominent Chinese merchants and clergymen in Australia were concentrated on opposing such legislation. Yet, he was silent on this matter (at least in public) besides referring in the most general terms to the need for the Chinese people to modernize in order to gain wealth and power and thus to fight effectively against such discrimination. At the speech given on 18 November 1900 at the Temperance Hall in Melbourne, Liang was reported in the *Tung Wah News* to have said that, “Commerce would help to provide machinery for the manufacture of a range of goods for enriching people’s lives and broadening their outlook. Then those living within China and overseas would no longer be humiliated by foreigners.”

Liang’s view also received public support from returning Australian missionaries in their lectures on the Chinese situation, one of whom was reported as having commented that the Empress Dowager was not so much anti-Christian or anti-foreigner as anti-reform. But while Liang was accorded honours and English language press coverage of his visit was highly sympathetic to his cause, a number of newspaper articles also highlighted the “exotic” character of his visit. These include descriptions of “a small child who looked extremely picturesque in satins of variegated colours” among the Chinese who welcomed Liang to Melbourne and the perceived awkwardness of Chinese attempts at mimicking the “British ‘hip hip hurrah’.”

The *Bendigo Advertiser* placed the notice for Liang’s public lecture at the Bendigo Town Hall under “Amusements.” The following mocking account of a local Chinese merchant’s response to Liang’s call for reform published in the *Argus* is especially vicious:

> A leading member of the Chinese population of Melbourne who has had an opportunity of familiarising himself with the objects of the reformers discussed certain aspects of our social life very intelligently. In reply to questions he spoke thoughtfully to an interviewer. “Plenty too many Chinamen in China,” quoth Mr Wan Lung fluently, “Chinamen glow in China alle as like labbits. No good choppee off head, no good slicee him in piecee. That much too slow precaution to keep down increase. We going to leco mmend Empless adopt improvement as introduced by Plesbytelian Assembly. No tiffin, no chow-chow savee? No lunch in middl of day. Plesbytelians have agreed to have no lunch. Whaffor? More time for talkee talkee. Savee? What made Plesbytelians adopt that pieece resolution? Because great mandarin, Sir John Madden alle same. He never stop wo rk in middle of day for chow-chow. Work alle time in court. Leformers tink dis great implovem e nt. We shalile commend Empless to send out edict plohibiting all Chinamen to tak e chow-chow. We tell her dis is great plinciple of Inglis civilisation. Bime-by plenty Chinamen starvee. Soon no chow-chow, no Chinamen. Then leformers go back plenty quick, find lots of room in China, lots of chow-chow. Good business O.K. Good tomorrow.”

The wholly different tenor in which the *Age* reported on Liang’s speech delivered in Chinese and translated into English by Revd C. H. Cheong

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112 *Tung Wah News*, 24 November 1900.
113 Expression of European support for Liang was reported in the *Age*, 3 December 1900; the comments of the cited missionary appear in the *Argus*, 25 November 1900.
114 *Argus*, 16 November 1900.
115 My thanks to Carol Holsworth, curator at the Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo, for bringing this to my attention.
116 *Argus*, 17 November 1900.
This essay was subsequently republished as “On tracing the sources of China’s cumulative weaknesses” (Zhongguo jiruo suyuan lun) in Liang’s collected works, Yin bing shi wenji, vol. 2, pp. 13–23. It was to have been the first chapter of a book of some two hundred thousand characters entitled Ch’ina’s history in the last decade (Zhongguo jinshihin shilun) that Liang proposed to complete in Sydney. The headings of the sixteen chapters were published in the Tung Wab News (13 March 1901 issue). The book was to have provided an account of developments leading from the Sino-Japanese War and China’s exploitation by foreign powers up to the Hundred Day Reform and its collapse, the Empress Dowager’s support of the Boxer Movement, the Qing’s court flight to Xi’an and the destruction of Manchuria. The last few chapters of the book were to have focussed on strategies for China’s reclamation of power and biographical accounts of the Empress Dowager and other political personalities.

John Fitzgerald observes that Liang’s attack in this essay... on the flaws and faults of the Chinese people bears[ed] an uncanny resemblance to many of the racist anti-Chinese pamphlets then circulating in Europe, the Americas and Australasia. It is tempting to speculate on the degree to which Liang’s experiences in Australia informed his virulent attack on the character of his own people and perhaps even shaped his commitment to create ‘new people’ in their place. Yet Liang was not racist. The essay shows a clear commitment to a universal vision of scientific progress, political and economic development, and intellectual and moral improvement for all the people of the world. The people of China were faulted, in Liang’s view, not for being Chinese but for being insufficiently enlightened citizens of the world and insufficiently patriotic citizens of China to create a modern state on the model that ‘Western’ states supplied.

My thanks to John Fitzgerald for sharing this insight and allowing me to cite from his forthcoming essay, “The slave who would be equal: the significance of Liang Qichao’s Australian writings,” first presented at The Chinese Heritage of Australian Federation Conference.

to a mixed audience at the Melbourne Town Hall provides an apt contrast to the preceding:

Two things it appeared the Chinese reformers wanted. One was a representative institution like the British legislative system and the other the opening of China for trade and intercourse with the world. An elaborate program of 16 items was the foundation of their demands. They wanted the establishment of state schools, newspapers everywhere with full liberty; a translation bureau for the conversion of foreign literature into Chinese, liberty of all to memorialise the throne direct, liberty for all to cultivate and propagate their religious faith, the abolition of the Li-kin, or internal customs duties; the utilisation of the temples for educational purposes, the establishment of a police force, abolition of the existing systems of selection to government offices on the strength of competitive essays, and also of the antiquated system of military examinations in archery and like obsolete practices; the establishment of a legislative Council consisting partly of foreigners to frame the constitution and several other reforms. This little list seemed to surprise the Lieutenant-Governor who presided. He pointed out that the majority of these reforms had only been adopted in England itself within very recent years and some of them were not exactly in force yet. Until quite recently, for instance, entrance into the public service was not even dependent upon the ability to write an essay but merely upon an influential word or letter of introduction.

In the essay entitled “On Tracing the Sources of Our Cumulative Weaknesses” (jiruo suyuan lun) that Liang wrote in Sydney, the contents of which formed the basis of a series of weekly lectures he delivered to members of the Society’s Sydney branch at the Tung Wab News offices, Liang was stridently critical of what he regarded as the “slavishness” (nuxing 奴性) of the Chinese people. He idealized modern Western nations and the principle of equality that he regarded the West as having effectively institutionalised at all levels of society, against which he contrasted the wholly negative picture of Chinese society as institutionalized inequality and servility. In many ways, Liang’s disdain for the uneducated working-class Chinese—“the common folk who have yet to awaken to their suffering” as he wrote in a farewell poem dedicated to the Society’s members—was not at all dissimilar from the fear expressed by supporters of anti-Chinese legislation that the standard of living in Australia would be lowered by a growing influx of impoverished Chinamen who led “depraved” lives in appalling conditions and who worked for very low wages. Census figures for 1901 show the stark contrast between the numbers of males and females within the various Chinese communities and Liang could not have failed to notice the impoverished conditions in which the majority of working-class single men lived in these communities. Although he did not comment on the situation of the poor in Australia’s Chinese communities, however, Liang’s comments on San Francisco’s Chinatown when he visited it in 1903, provide some idea of his feelings on Chinese poverty abroad. He pointed out that although San Francisco’s Chinatown had a population of twenty to thirty thousand, six newspapers and journals (making it far more literate than any community in
inland China), it was swamped with corruption, infighting, inefficiency and poverty. He concluded that the Chinese were qualified only to be members of family clans—they had neither national consciousness nor dignity of purpose; they were “noisy, inefficient, dirty and lazy” and “were simply not ready for democracy.”

When a delegate from the Soy Way charitable society in Ballarat went to Melbourne to present Liang with £20 collected from its members, the Age reported Liang as having “refused to accept the donation, whether on account of its insignificance or for some other reason is not stated.” A month later, the Age reported that “a riot, probably the most exciting that has occurred here since the rising of the diggers at the Eureka stockade in December 1854” broke out on 16 December in the main joss-house in the Chinese camp at Golden Point, Ballarat East. According to the report, the fight, in which two hundred Chinese were involved, developed as a result of resentment within the local Chinese community over the depletion of funds from their local charitable society, the Soy Way, for contributions towards the Protect the Emperor Society. Liang’s maternal uncle-in-law, Let Sing (Tan Liecheng) had opened voting proceedings at a meeting regarding contributions for the Society. The majority of those present had favoured giving financial support to the Society with the exception of a “clan” known as the Sow Loo, composed mainly of market gardeners, who had strongly opposed this moved. When outvoted, the latter was alleged to have sprung

... with tiger-like ferocity upon their fellow country-men ... chairs and tables were used ... and the Joss was nearly upset from his perch in the sanctuary.

A rack containing spears used on gala days was speedily emptied and the weapons were introduced into the encounter.

Revd James Chue (Huang Zhuwen 黄柱稳, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Church Chinese Mission) was reported as saying that those accused of starting the fight were “Christianized Chinese attending the Presbyterian School” who were “a peaceful people ... not opposed to the reforms although they might be opposed to sending money from this country to assist the movement.” One is led to wonder whether Liang appreciated the significance of the Soy Way contribution when he refused it a month earlier, since its members would have been people on modest incomes for whom £20 would have been a considerable sum.

After his tour of Ballarat, Liang returned to Melbourne and travelled briefly to Bendigo (30 November–3 December) where he met with the mayor and local dignitaries in the company of the lawyer William Ah Ket. He arrived in Sydney on 5 December 1900 to a welcome that matched those held for him in the other major cities, and stayed there for the better part of the remaining five months of his Australian sojourn, with the exception of two weeks in January 1901 when he toured towns in northern New South Wales. He paid an official visit to the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Hopetoun, upon his arrival in Sydney and was invited, in turn, to celebrate the founding of the Commonwealth of Australia (formally proclaimed on 1 January 1901) at a gala
126 *Tung Wab News*, 16 January 1901. The Earl of Hopetoun was named by Queen Victoria in September 1900 as Governor-General designate for the whole of Australia, a role which he assumed upon the founding of the Commonwealth on 1 January 1901.

127 *Tung Wab News*, 2 January 1901. Liang paid Lord Hopetoun a second visit on 14 January 1901, two days after attending the gala celebration at the Sydney Town Hall to discuss further his program of political reform with the newly installed Governor-General. (As reported in *Tung Wab News*, 16 January 1901).

128 Pang Guanshan’s account entitled “Liang Qichao xiansheng keng shang youji” [An account of Liang Qichao’s tour of the towns] was serialized in the following issues of *Tung Wab News*: 23, 26 and 30 January 1901. The full text has also been reproduced in Liu Weiping, “Liang Qichao de Aozhou zhi xing,” pt 2, in *Zhuangj wenzue* 38.4: 119–21.

129 *Tung Wab News*, 23, 26 January 1901.

130 Posthumous idealisation of the six reformers who were arrested and executed without a trial when the Empress Dowager’s faction aborted the Hundred Day Reform of 1898 quickly led to them being referred to as the Six Gentlemen or the Six Martyrs 六烈. Tan Sitong 谭嗣同, a leading Confucian scholar, and Kang Guangren 康广仁, Kang Youwei’s younger brother, were among them.

131 *Tung Wab News*, 30 January 1901.

function held at the Sydney Town Hall on 12 January 1901 at which Edmund Barton, Australia’s first Prime Minister, and Lord Hopetoun were both present. That Liang enjoyed cordial relations with Lord Hopetoun is evidenced by the free travel in New South Wales Hopetoun granted to both Liang and his assistant Luo Chang. For Liang, the founding of the Australian Commonwealth would have been an event of significance since it inaugurated the political unity of six previously separate “colonies” into a single colony and provided the basis for the effective implementation of uniform legislation. One is tempted to draw links between Liang’s positive experience of the Commonwealth’s formation, from his privileged vantage-point as a distinguished guest of the colonial government in New South Wales, and the nationalist values and rights he later espoused in the *New Citizen Journal*, founded months after he left Australia.

Pang Guanshan’s 庞冠山 lengthy account of Liang’s campaigning in the towns of northern New South Wales, which includes substantial transcriptions of Liang’s speeches, provides us with some idea of the tactics Liang adopted in promoting the message of reform. Liang portrayed the Guangxu Emperor as the heroic protagonist of the reform process in China, working tirelessly to “save his people,” listening to the advice of Kang Youwei and himself and “enjoining all state officials to implement various reforms” before he was thwarted by the evil designs of Rong Lu 荣禄 and Gang Yi 刚毅, (the two most powerful conservative Manchu officials) who convinced the Empress Dowager to suppress the Hundred Day Reform. In urging his audience to donate to the reformist cause, Liang described this form of financial aid as an international bid to “save and to reinstate the Emperor” and told heart-rending stories of the Emperor’s plight. He spoke of the Emperor being denied chicken broth in his earlier prison on the Ocean-Terrace Island (瀛台) on the South Lake (南湖) adjacent to the Forbidden City (紫禁城) and the suffering he later endured when forced to flee the capital with the rest of the Qing court during the Boxer Rebellion. He also related a fabulous account of Gang Yi’s death in the course of describing the Boxer Rebellion:

The traitorous Prince Duan 端亲王, Rong Lu and Gang Yi, who had long plotted to assassinate the Emperor, engineered the chaos in Peking during the fifth month. They stirred up the Boxers to create trouble for foreigners living in China because they knew that both Western countries and the Chinese living overseas love and respect the Guangxu Emperor and objected his deposition. . . . They hurt the Emperor and oppress our people, making them slaves of the Manchus and ever afraid of raising their heads. But quite unexpectedly, Providence [tianxin 天心] was on our side and although, at first, the villains were victorious in the war they waged, they were subsequently defeated and had to flee when the capital was overtaken. The Emperor was forced to travel westwards with them as they plotted to make their vicious comeback but when Gang Yi reached Shansi, the spirits of the Six Gentlemen 六君子 approached him demanding retribution for their deaths. With one loud cry, he prostrated himself on the ground in a state of delirium and slashed his own throat.
That Liang advocated the restoration of the Guangxu Emperor while condemning the Manchu dynasty for enslaving the Chinese and even declaring that the Qing dynasty had to fall before reforms could be established in China, demonstrates that for him, the difference between constitutional monarchy and republicanism was elusive. In this regard, Liang appears to have suggested, in much the same way he did when he wrote to Sun Yat-sen in April 1900, that the Emperor was first and foremost a progressive head of state. His cavalier political approach led Sun Yat-sen to remark caustically in 1904 that:

Kang, since he has engraved his subjection to Guangxu in his heart, shows plainly that “bao huang” [protect the emperor] is not counterfeit, while Liang, without definitely making a break, keeps on talking revolution. What is the truth? .... Liang is a man with two ways of talking, like a rat looking both ways. If his revolutionary talk is sincere, then his “bao huang” talk must be spurious. If his “bao huang” talk is sincere, then his revolutionary utterances must be false. 132

But to his Chinese audiences in Australia who (as the various newspaper reports relate) listened spellbound to Liang’s exciting stories of the reform process, embodied in the larger-than-life figures of a heroic Emperor unable to free his enslaved people from powerful Manchu villains, Liang would not have appeared contradictory. On the contrary, they would have regarded him as the first clarion voice of Chinese reform that they had the privilege of hearing in person. (It is likely that Liang spoke in Cantonese, the language of the Chinese in Australia, and his name was generally rendered in transliteration as Kai Chu, Ki Chu or Kai Chiu in the English language press, which are approximations of his name as pronounced in Cantonese. Of these, I have located only three reports, in the Age, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Courier [Ballarat], where his name was given as Leong Che Tchau.) What also emerges from the transcriptions of Liang’s speeches in Pang Guanshan’s account is the picture of an able politician who knew how to captivate an audience of ordinary people by making them privy to the lives of those who lived at the imperial court. Liang encouraged his audience to think of themselves as people who, through the hospitality they showed him and, more importantly, through donations to the Society, played an active role in “protecting” and “restoring” the Emperor.

But despite his success as an orator, Liang was unable to raise the sum of £50,000 that he had originally envisaged as his goal on arrival in Fremantle. His letter to Kang Youwei dated 17 April 1901 provides a wholly pragmatic account of his stay in Australia in terms of fund-raising issues:

At first, I thought that I could mollify the Mei [Quong Tart/Mei Guangda] clique in Sydney and put every effort towards gaining their support but in the end I did not obtain one cent from them. It was only because the Society’s committee members organized another round of donations that I was able to raise an additional £1,000. In Adelaide, donations of more than £40 were pledged but none have been paid. I wrote several letters urging the
Liang visited the towns of Glen Innes, Inverell, Tingha and Tamworth in New South Wales but it was only in Tamworth that a branch of the Society was established after his visit. Ding Wenjiang, *Liang Rengong xiansheng nianpu*, vol.1, p.143.

... collection of these funds but have so far met with indifference. In Ballarat, donations of £80 were pledged of which I have received only £10. At three towns in New South Wales, a total of £300 was pledged of which about £200 has been received.... I also dispatched £700 to Dao Island, which were donations collected in Melbourne. On another occasion, I sent £1,000 donated in Sydney. In Western Australia, about £300 was actually donated although £2,000 was pledged. After I received your telegram, I tried my best to raise £300 to repay Zishan, the Sydney branch’s committee members eventually donated. When I received Xiao Rujia’s telegram, I campaigned for donations once more but obtained only £200. The people in Sydney have donated at least five or six times and we have clearly exhausted their capacity for contributions. Moreover, travel expenses, telegram fees, living expenses and my return boat-fare added to our costs; since arriving in Australia, my expenses alone have amounted to no less than £1,000. . . . I did not visit the small towns. This is neither because I was worn-out nor because I begrudged the time it would have taken away from my research. Rather, it was because if I had set forth without an invitation, I would not have been able to organize a meeting and even if I did manage to do so, there would have been no funds to collect. I first encountered this problem in places like Adelaide and Ballarat. Thus, it would have been pointless for me to visit small towns in New South Wales unless I was invited since I would have been hard put to raise more than £10 from each of these towns. What is more, we already have a number of pledged donations that have remained unpaid. What good could come from such visits? In any case these towns are scattered across the countryside and are separated by distances of several hundred miles. Besides Luo Chang, I require at least one local person to accompany me in my travels, which amounts to about £20 or £30 in travelling expenses alone for three people each time we visit a town. Since the people in Sydney would have to pay for all these expenses thus adding to their hardship, how could I bring myself to set forth, knowing that nothing could be gained from the trip?

Liang then proceeded to explain why it was pointless for him to visit New Zealand or to travel to Queensland. In encountering what the controversial historian Geoffrey Blainey has called “the tyranny of distance” in Australia, Liang evidently discarded his earlier fund-raising plans and confined himself to developing his relationship with members of the Sydney branch of the Society, from whom he obtained most of the donations. The enthusiastic responses that greeted Liang’s many public addresses translated into £3,000 worth of donations rather than £50,000. Elsewhere in the same letter, Liang protested his loyalty and honesty, and was at pains to assure Kang that he was only interested in serving Kang as his student and that he would not dare to deceive him, which suggests that a significant degree of mistrust still existed between them. Indeed, it was in the course of justifying his expenses and the modest size of the donations that Liang complained to Kang of what he called the Chinese merchants’ “predilection for pomp and ceremony” resulting in wasteful extravagance.
It is worth noting that of the ten branches of the Protect the Emperor Society in Australia, only the Sydney branch remained viable after Liang’s departure. The others were never fully functional, and as Liang noted in his letter to Kang, the Adelaide branch did not even collect pledged funds despite several reminders from Liang while he was still in Sydney. The Melbourne branch, the next largest after Sydney, was hampered by its organizational structure since the two key positions of president and vice-president were filled not by individuals but by the See Yap Society and the Bo Leong Association (Bao Liang she) respectively. The Bo Leong, a secret society in Melbourne well connected to the See Yap Society, was a rival organization to the Yee Hing (Yi Xing, literally ‘Righteous Revival’), a powerful international network of anti-Manchu organizations derived from the Triad (which Liang had joined in Hawaii). The intense rivalry between the Bo Leong and Yee Hing in Melbourne would have most likely led members of the latter to dissociate themselves from the Melbourne branch of the Protect the Emperor Society. In New South Wales, however, the Yee Hing faced no challenge from rival societies and it is known that Moy Sing (Mei Dongxing, 姚东星), Grand Master of the New South Wales Yee Hing, was a founding member of the Protect the Emperor Society. Little besides these brief references is known of Liang’s dealings with secret societies in Australia.

That Liang came to Australia at a low point in his life and left Sydney on 2 May 1901 to launch a journal eight months later in Tokyo that would significantly shape the intellectual course of modern Chinese politics would tend to suggest that his Australian sojourn was a productive one. Clearly, Australia’s remoteness from the political turbulence he experienced in the first eight months of 1900 and the hospitality he received from both his Chinese supporters and Australian colonial authorities provided him with some relief from the complex problems that he faced in the aftermath of the abortive Hankou uprising. Was his reticence about Australia constitutive of a period of reflection and political recovery? Decades of international scholarship on Liang and the historical attention he commands as a pioneering modern Chinese intellectual lead us, ineluctably, to pose these questions that reveal more of our own preoccupation with his intellectual legacy than what we are able to say with any certainty about Liang. Despite the bleak account he offers Kang of his fund-raising efforts in Australia, Liang nonetheless also reflects on the disparity he perceives between his situation in Australia and Kang’s in Hong Kong:

Here I am in a remote part of the world, with my needs and comforts provided for by others, while you, Sir, are close to China, bearing the brunt of all kinds of censure. I am filled with regret when I reflect on the incongruity between my fortunate circumstances and the hardships you face.

In the letter Liang wrote to members of the Society a month after leaving Sydney, Liang paints an altogether different and happier picture of his time in Australia:
in Australia. His talent for dramatization resurfaces once more in passages such as the following where Liang recounts the speech he gave on his return to Japan:

When I reached the part in my speech about that fateful week in Shanghai where I entered the lion’s den and managed to get out alive, all present expressed their relief. When I came to the part about the tragic martyrdom of those arrested in Hankou, everyone was outraged. When I reached the part about my arrival in Australia and the loyalty and love extended to me by my comrades in every city, the affection and generosity that you showed me, everyone was moved and said they felt as though they had known you too.\(^{139}\)

Liang also mentions that he displayed the gifts he received in Australia at the end of the meeting. In another section of the letter he describes the financial burden posed by the Society’s various projects, in particular running costs for the Great Harmony High School that Liang had helped to establish in 1898 in Tokyo, no doubt with the intention of inviting further donations from the Sydney branch.

From the explicit reference in Luo Chang’s account to women’s voting rights in South Australia as unprecedented in Australia and second only to New Zealand, we know that this feature of what Liang would have called “Western equality” clearly made an impression on him. The guided tours he took of various government buildings including attendance at a session of parliament in South Australia, museums, hospitals, the School of Mines in Ballarat, wool mills, printing works, parks and so forth, would also have impressed him as concrete outcomes of Western modernization. After Hawaii, Australia was the second “Western” country that Liang visited at this early stage of his political career and the absence of a Chinese consul meant that Liang enjoyed a far greater degree of freedom in Australia than he had experienced in either Japan or Hawaii. More importantly, the absence of official Chinese representation meant that his cause could be and was publicly recognized by the colonial authorities as legitimate; governors, parliamentarians and leading members of society within the various colonies attended his speeches, and he received sympathetic and extensive press coverage without official Chinese objection. While in Australia, Liang thus enjoyed public recognition of his political leadership of the Chinese communities in Australia. On 22 January 1901, while campaigning in Inverell, Liang learnt of the death of Queen Victoria and sent a note of condolence to the Earl of Hopetoun, the Chinese text of which was published in the *Tung Wah News* on 2 February 1901. Liang’s note begins with the words, “I have the honour of writing to Your Excellency on behalf of the Chinese citizens in Australia who belong to the branches of the Protect the Emperor Society [Chinese Empire Reform Association].”\(^{140}\) Did Liang begin to formulate reform in terms of “the new citizen” and “consciousness of rights” in the many positive experiences he had of participation in Australian public life, at a time

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\(^{139}\) The text of the letter was published in *Tung Wah News*, 27 July 1901.

\(^{140}\) *Tung Wah News*, 2 February 1901. It is worth noting that Quong Tart was the only Chinese in Sydney whose condolences to the late Queen’s relatives was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (29 January 1901), among the many notices and condolences that appeared in the newspaper during this time, which provides some indication of his high standing within the European community.
when Federation was being celebrated amidst much fanfare?

Xiaobing Tang points out that “the significant achievement” of “Discourse on the New Citizen” (Xinmin shuo 新民说), the influential essay that Liang wrote in 1902 when he founded the journal of the same name:

[...] is not so much Liang’s systematic elaboration of his nationalist beliefs and liberal programs, which formed the intellectual matrices of his reformism during this period. Rather, it is the fact that nationalism (national sovereignty pitted against imperialism and colonialism) and liberalism (domestic political reform and cultural transformation) are subsumed within the single notion of making new the people. 141

Liang published two essays on Australia in the years following his departure; the first in 1904, commended the establishment of the first Federal Labour government in Australia as a “historical breakthrough” that “should be commemorated throughout the world,” and the second in 1905, criticized the White Australia Policy as a historical travesty that used the threat of the Yellow Peril to justify the suppression of Asian peoples by “the white race.” 142

Given the absence of Liang’s published insights into the social and political life that he saw and experienced in Australia, the links we are tempted to draw between his Australian sojourn and his subsequent political views remain highly interpretive. As such, Liang’s reticence in the context of an otherwise volubly expressive textual “life” (one that has ensured his historical relevance a hundred years on) facilitates reflection on the purpose of history writing.

The “story” or indeed “stories” told here insinuate both a political and intellectual significance to Liang’s Australian sojourn. Yet this significance derives not from any certainty about Liang’s views of Australia but rather from the uncertain process of arranging different accounts of Liang and his few writings of this period to form a textual “unity” of sorts, a narrative that secures meaning for the “life” whose story is being told. In this regard, it is useful to be reminded that the over-riding intellectual authority of “the mind of modern China” assures a certain historical value for any text associated with or bearing its name, whether a brief newspaper item or a mediocre poem crammed with literary allusions. That textual “unity” results from the selection and assembly of different textual fragments to constitute a “past” makes the task of reconstituting Liang’s Australian sojourn especially onerous, for significance can readily be assigned to any of its textual remainders. Should the poems he wrote for his supporters in Australia be included in the account, since they display an unwieldy yet innovative mix of classical allusions and modern nationalist sentiment? 143 Or should more have been made of the prominence of the secret society Bo Leong in the establishment of the Melbourne branch of the Protect the Emperor Society? Should the “story” have started where it did, with Liang’s complex relationships with Kang Youwei and Sun Yatsen and his fund-raising campaign in Hawaii for the Hankou uprising?

Questions like these invariably arise in the act of historical representation

142 Both these appeared first in the New Citizen Journal and have been republished in Liang’s collected works, Yin bing sibi wenji. These are also briefly discussed in John Fitzgerald, “The slave who would be equal” (forthcoming).
143 I have not discussed these poems here since this would have further lengthened an already over-long article. The interested reader might wish to note that Liang shows innovative language use in several places by using Chinese characters as transliterations of English words, eg. "sbum" for “show” (exhibition) and the Cantonese pronunciation of "ke-ge-mi-na" for “forget-me-nots.” (These appear in the poem, “Zengbie Zheng Qiufan jian xie huihua”赠别郑秋คำ谢惠画 [Parting from Zheng Qiufan and with my grateful thanks to him for the gift of his paintings]. This same poem begins with a series of allusions, “Lu Chan of Qishi wept [Lu Chan who lived in the town of Qishi in the state of Lu during the Spring and Autumn historical period who wept because she feared that the state of Lu would fall as a result of the political chaos of the times].” / Zhou Chun the widow could not weep for lamenting,” etc. The texts of these poems were published in the Tung Wah News (1, 5, 8, 15, and 25 May 1901), and have been republished in Liang’s collected works, Yin bing sibi wenji.
since historical representation itself assumes that the “past” is a “totality” of sorts that the historian can illuminate with her tools of analysis. But representation is also judgement, and the plural possibilities of totalization that different modes of interpretation provide lead to the formulation of different judgments. In this context, Liang’s political expediency during this period is of particular interest. Sun Yat-sen, for instance, judges him in strong moral language as “a man with two ways of talking, like a rat looking both ways” while professional historians write in safer clinical terms of his political “complexity.” The significance of Liang’s Australian sojourn may well be the opportunity it gives us to experience the impossibility of closure in representations of Liang, an experience that is rare because, for once, we cannot effect closure through the veracity we attribute to his words. We cannot say he thought and wrote this or that and situate these “truths” in the context of authoritative characterizations of a “past” to confirm, extend or challenge the already known. At least we would not be able to do this with the same confidence that we could for the periods before and after Liang’s Australian sojourn. What we can say with some confidence is that many of the textual fragments through which one or another version of Liang’s Australian sojourn can be reconstituted are remnant traces of the modern print-languages of English and Chinese in which nationalist imaginings of “community” first found effective dissemination. These were languages in which Liang Qichao’s inscriptions of national pride and modern reform readily found a home, and the new institutional authority that newspapers commanded lent both legitimacy and veracity to his reformist cause. What is also certain is that Liang had been inducted into the monetary logic of modern political campaigns by the time he arrived at the port of Fremantle in October 1900. As his letter to Kang Youwei at the end of his journey indicates, he obtained a poor exchange-value for his campaign speeches despite the honours he received, raising a mere £3,000 as opposed to the £50,000 he had originally expected. In this financial context alone, we can safely say that Liang’s Australian sojourn proved to be of no significance.