

Chinese immigrants' contribution to australia



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, a significant number of people seeking careers went to the distant areas where gold was discovered. It is called Gold Rush. After California was called 'gold mountain', Australia was regarded as 'new gold mountain' as the gold was found in Victoria in 1851 (Barwick & Barwick, 2001). Considering the problems of distance and the amount of potential gold, some Chinese people thought Australia was a preferable alternative place to exploit for their new careers thus they left for Australia.

In addition, some other factors also forced Chinese people to leave their homeland. The main factor is that two Anglo-Chinese wars destroyed their homeland. The Chinese civil wars also play a big part of the reason they left. During that time, the Qing Dynasty was on the way to fall, thus the government was not able to protect people and create a peaceful environment for people. People who cannot bear the really tough life and chaos caused by wars escaped finally. Most of these Chinese immigrants who came to Australia were from Fujian Province and Guangdong Province (Ngai, 2015).

They are called 'Chinese Digger' later, making up the major of miners in Gold Rush. This essay will argue that Chinese immigrants in Australia play an important role in Australian development during the Gold Rush of mid-nineteenth century in terms of supply of labour, prosperity of various industries and the development of transportation in Australia. Chinese were shipped to Australia as indentured servants in order to meet the increasing demand of labour. In the 1840s, the ceased convict transportation to the

colony of New South Wales caused a dramatical decrease of labour supplied in Western Australia.

Consequently, a great number of Chinese were imported as indentured labourers to make up the shortage of labour supplied. During that period, because China was experiencing the Opium, the colony squatters found that China was a new potential labour market with no government intervention. Thus, they began to import a lot of Chinese labourers under unequal contracts. It is estimated that about 3500 Chinese labourers were imported during 1847-1853 (Darnell, 2004). These Chinese were ordered as commodity through the business of coolie.

Most of them came from Fujian Province and Guangdong Province under five-year contracts with modest remuneration (Ryan, 1992). The come of these Chinese indentured servants satisfied the demand of labour in Australia so the colonies were able to have sufficient labour to continue to develop. Moreover, the Chinese indentured labourers were assigned various jobs such as shepherd and hutkeepers, helping the settlement to exploit in various aspects. These jobs involved brush cutting, marketing garden, irrigation, digging wells, herding sheep and farming, which contributed to opening up the colony (Fisher, 1990).

Furthermore, they brought the agricultural technique to the pristine land. Chinese farming which was efficient, complex and dynamic as a consequence of its five-thousands-year history were brought to the settlement, aimed at intensive-labour crops. They adapted the farming techniques to match the Australian environment rather than simply

transferring their techniques, which benefited the later agriculture of Australia (Frost, 2002). Various other industries flourished by Chinese when the alluvial gold fields petered out.

In 1870s, the prospect of mining industry was not prosperous as the long time of digging led to a fact that gold fields were exhausted. Therefore, Chinese miners, in order to make a living, gradually left the mining work over time, shifting to other occupations such as merchants and hawkers. Some of them moved from the rural areas to urban areas and starting their own new careers. It is estimated that nearly one thousand stores run by Chinese occurred in New South Wales by 1890 (Elsom, 1993).

For the reason that many Chinese immigrants did not dig as indentured labour and pursued a better life, fishing and fish cutting industry began to germinate in 1850s and burgeoned in the following thirty years, supplying Chinese immigrants with high nutrition seafood. Then, the fishing industry seemed to fade away, while Chinese started to be involved in more diverse jobs including marketing gardener, cooks, tobacco farmer, draper and plumber. They did successfully in their occupations and brought prosperity to these industries.

In the meantime, an outstanding Chinese immigrant in the Chinese Australian history called Mei Quong Tart operated a tea house that was very popular in Sydney. Other prominent Chinese immigrants were Lowe Kong Meng and Louis Ah Mouy, two top merchants in Melbourne who played an important role in the commerce in Melbourne. During that period, Chinese immigrants successfully developed furniture making industry which covered

both producing and selling, making it become one of the largest industries in Melbourne during that period (Gittins, 1981).

Chinese during the Gold Rushes contributed to the development of Australian transportation. Until the middle of the 1800s, the main means of transportation were horses and ships. Road system cannot be developed well because there were still insufficient funds though much efforts were made to collect funds through government budgets, donation and loans. As Thomas (1967) stated that the transportation stopped developing because the road system began to worsen after a period of improving by the leading of Governor Macquarie.

The progress of the road system recovered after the gold was discovered in the second half of nineteenth century. After the discovery of gold, the problem of the shortage of funds was solved. In 1854, the first steam railway started to be built between Melbourne and Port Melbourne. After that, the transportation of colonies developed rapidly. During the Gold Rush, Chinese took up twenty-five percentage of the total population in mining industry, which was the largest group of the miners.

Thus, Chinese immigrants were considered as the most contributive people in the Gold Rush so they were indirectly contributed to the funds of transportation (Ngai, 2015). Moreover, the demand of travelling between various colonies during the Gold Rush promoted the route line between these colonies, which can be regarded as the indirect contribution of Chinese miner as well. Furthermore, Chinese immigrants boomed the Port of Adelaide

and the port town of Robe as a large number of Chinese arrived at these port.

Because under the push of increasing anti-sentiment towards Chinese, the Victoria government passed the Immigration Restriction Act which made the policy of 10 dollars tax for Chinese arriving at Victorian ports, sharply reducing the number of Chinese arrivals in Victorian ports. Thus, the increasing arrivals at the Port of Adelaide and the Port of Robe promoted the developments of these ports (Jeffery & Kenderdine, 1991). In addition, the establishment and development of the routines between these areas and Victoria were propelled forward as Chinese arrivals at other ports tried to go to Victoria for mining.

In conclusion, the essay demonstrated that Chinese immigrants in Australia during the Gold Rush at mid-nineteenth century have great influence on the development of the colonies from three aspects. The first Chinese immigrants from Southeast of China were shipped to New South Wales prior to 1848 as indentured labour to satisfy the demand of labour (Darnell, 2004). These Chinese coolies did a variety of jobs, which opened up the colonies and promote the development. In the late Gold Rush, Chinese diggers left the mining industry and started different new careers such as merchants, market gardening, fishing, and furniture making.

They got great success in these industries and flourished the industries (Elsom, 1993). In addition, transportation was developed during the Gold Rush. The great number of Chinese arrivals at the Port of Adelaide and the Port of Robe boomed the ports. Their travel from these ports to Victoria built

the route line between colonies. Meanwhile, the road system improved during that period (Thomas, 1967). In brief, Chinese immigrants in Australia during the Gold Rush contributed significantly to the economic and cultural developments of Australia from various aspects.