

CHAPTER SIX

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND EXPANSION OF THE TRADE IN CHINESE LABOURERS

Once the legal impediment within the Master and Servants Act was overcome by the enactment of the 1847 amendment, there was virtually nothing that could hinder the successful importation of Chinese labourers. The earlier activities and reconnaissance missions had outlined and informed the interested parties of the devices that had to be followed to implement and bring to fulfilment the desire to import Chinese labourers. The Government, in the person of the Governor, having raised no objections nor provided any indication that it would interfere in the importation of Chinese labourers when the subject was raised by the Coolie Association, would have pleased the prospective importers and employers. The reprinting of the letters of Adam Bogue may be viewed as reassuring those on the outside of direct negotiations that the importations could be accomplished without British Government interference. All that remained was for the organisers and promoters of the trade, to gauge the actual level of demand for Chinese labour amongst the employer class within the colony. This was achieved in two ways, one by means of experimental importations of small numbers of Chinese and thence the arrival of the *Nimrod*; and secondly, through the issuing and publication of letters requesting the recipient's comments on the subject of Chinese immigration and employment.

This chapter details the negotiations and arrangements utilised by the promoters of the trade that were to lead to the arrival of the Chinese labourers in the colony. The discussion covers the manner in which the trade was established, that is how the promoters of the trade discerned the level of demand inherent within the colony for Chinese labourers; the obvious change within the tempo of the trade that occurred in 1852; the explanations that can be offered for this change; and the impact of this change on the future prospects of the trade in Chinese labourers to the colony.

It is incorrect however, to assume that Chinese nationals were unknown to the colony previous to 1847, as a number had made the colony their home since the turn of the century. The early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a number of Chinese sailors remaining in the colony after their ships had left port, and the importation of a small number of Chinese labourers by private individuals. Between 1827 and the arrival of the *Alfred* in 1847, fifteen Chinese have been recorded as residing in the Colony of New South Wales. They were Ahchun age 12, Ahfoo age

22, Ahlong age 38, who were all employed by T. G. Pitman of Sydney;¹ Archoey age 24, was employed by G. Hewitt at Parramatta as a carpenter;² Queng and Tchiou who arrived in 1836 were employed by J. D. Lang as cabinet makers; John Acqu, a cabinet maker in Melbourne, arrived in 1836; John Afoo who arrived in 1838 was naturalised in 1857; in 1838 a Chinese national, name unknown, was buried in the Old Cemetery in Melbourne; in 1842 the owner of the Cricketer's Arms in Sydney imported two Chinese, who were described in *The Australian* as being "...two genuine Chinese Mandarins..."³; Tin Sang was appointed to make office furniture for the Adelaide Customs house in 1842; Wang Ah Hae who arrived in 1843 was naturalised in 1854; John Alloo arriving in Sydney in 1844 became naturalised in 1856.⁴ Another Chinese national, and one who had been in the colony a length of time or who had connections within the colony strong enough to allow mail to be addressed to him there, was Ally Hersin, who was denoted as a Chinese doctor in the listings of unclaimed mail held in Sydney.⁵

From the information contained in Table 2 it can be seen that the first notable importations occurred in November 1847 with four Chinese labourers arriving aboard the *Alfred*. Only 21 labourers arrived in the eighteen months preceding the arrival of the *Nimrod*, in October 1848, and all arrived at the request of individual employers; bearing no indications of an organised or systematic trade.⁶

The "pre-*Nimrod* Chinese' listed above, apart from those that arrived post-1847 are not covered within this discussion as their arrival and employment in the colony was substantially independent of the prevailing economic and political situation. The relative small numbers involved also precludes them from being considered as part of any concerted importation. It is of interest that Governor Fitzroy characterised the

1 The ages stated are as at the 1828 Census. All arrived in 1827 per the *Ephemia* and were listed as Protestants. Malcolm R. Saintly and Keith A. Johnson, (eds.) *Census of 1828*, Sydney, Library of Australian History, 1985, p. 30.

2 Arrived in 1827 aboard the *Midas*. *ibid.*, p. 34.

3 *Australian*, 16th September, 1842, p. 2.

4 Wang Sing-wu, *The Organisation of Chinese Emigration to Australia*, San Francisco, Chinese Materials Centre, 1978, p.263. To this listing may be included three Chinese that were employed by the Macarthur's at Elizabeth Farm, and Mark O Pong who arrived as a free settler in 1817. The latter had arrived in the colony with some capital and was presented with 30 acres of land at Brush Farm in 1821, by Governor Macquarie. This information was drawn from E. Rolls, *Sojourners*, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1992, p. 32, yet was not included in the body of the work as it has not been possible to verify the source.

5 List of Unclaimed Letters for May 1847, *Government Gazette*, 4th June, 1847. It may be that this Doctor was the same one that travelled on the *Nimrod*, the passage of a Chinese doctor on this voyage rarely being noted or commented upon, and the presence of Hersin in the colony at the time equating with the voyage dates of the *Nimrod*.

6 Although Governor Fitzroy reported to Earl Grey in 1849 that 23 Chinese had arrived in the Port of Sydney as passengers and servants between 1-7-1846 and 30-6-1848, the extra two noted by Fitzroy have not been found in the Shipping Records of Sydney and therefore may have arrived in Port Phillip. Copy of a Despatch from Governor-General Sir C. A. Fitzroy to Earl Grey, 3rd October 1849, *BPP*, 1851 (347) Vol. XL.

Chinese that arrived in the Colony after June 1848 as "Imported" in contrast to the earlier arrivals that were in Fitzroy's terminology "voluntary emigrants". Such characterisation indicates that it had been officially recognised that the immigration of Chinese labourers had evolved from one of sporadic, personal importations to a system of organised and sponsored arrivals.

As for the eventual destination of the pre-*Nimrod* Chinese little can be said apart from offering the observation that from information contained within a letter printed in the *Moreton Bay Courier*,⁷ the Chinese that arrived aboard the *Alfred* in November 1847 were employed as shepherds on a property at Yass; however, no other information as to the names of these Chinese or their actual employer has been found.

A: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRADE

Three specific periods may be delineated during the six year time-frame that indentured Chinese labourers were imported into the colony. The first period may be defined as beginning in 1847 and ending with the arrival of the *Nimrod*, as this ship's arrival marked the satisfactory completion of arrangements that were necessary to ensure a successful importation, that is the end of the experimental phase of the trade in Chinese labourers. The second period covers the two year period between the arrival of the *Nimrod* in October 1848 and that of the *Duke of Roxburgh* in February 1851, defining the beginning and the end of the period during which sponsored importations predominated. The third period begins with the second voyage of the *Duke of Roxburgh* which concluded in Moreton Bay in November 1851, when the earlier sponsorship element was overtaken by speculation and the profit motive.

The arrival of the Chinese on the *Alfred* in 1847 may be considered as heralding the genesis of the colonial trade in Chinese labourers as it was from this insignificant base of four labourers that the future trade was to develop. This place of honour within the history of the trade has commonly been afforded to the voyage of the *Nimrod* which arrived in the port of Sydney in October 1848. The author's reason for placing the *Alfred* in front of the *Nimrod* in this respect is that available evidence points to the passage of the *Alfred* constituting a trial of the procedures outlined by Rusden and Bogue, and as a base from which to gauge the level of demand for Chinese labourers that existed in the colony.

⁷ "Chinese Immigration", *MBC*, 19th July, 1848.

The evidence to substantiate this conjecture is found within firstly, the articles of Paul Pax, and secondly, within an "advertorial"⁸ published in the *Moreton Bay Courier*. The articles of Paul Pax⁹ although open to criticism on the views expressed regarding various aspects of the trade, such as the "fairness" of the contracts signed by the Chinese, are uncannily accurate on the conduct of the trade. The proximity of Paul Pax to the promoters and initiators of the trade in Chinese labourers allowed the published articles to contain a comprehensive and detailed exposition of the mechanics of the trade, including an agent's "Letters of Instruction" to the ship's captain and doctor. This degree of knowledge about, and access to the "hub" of the trade determines that the following statement by Paul Pax as to how and when the trade in Chinese labourers was established must be considered as containing more than a grain of truth.

*It is now five years since it was thought desirable to import Chinese labour into this colony.*¹⁰

As the articles were published over February-March 1852, five years previous to late 1851 would have been 1846, as time must be allowed for the writing of the articles. On the 18th March of the following year, 1847 the *Alfred* was despatched by its owners Thacker & Co., to Aneityuna (New Hebrides) for sandalwood and thence to China, with the home bound cargo including four Chinese labourers. This voyage was repeated by the *Statesman* in December 1847, and the *London* in January 1848, carrying four and seven Chinese labourers respectively. These were experimental imports as:

*After the arrival of the first two or three ships, Chinese emigration seems to have fallen away, the great woolgrowers of the colony being desirous of seeing the matter tested by the conduct of those men already brought to the country, and they and the colonists generally keenly watched the effect which this movement would have on the British Government.*¹¹

These early importations were necessary to prove whether or not Rusden and Bogue were correct in their individual assessments of the ease with which Chinese could be acquired and imported into the colony. The positive outcome of these voyages, and the level of disinterest in the importations shown by the British Government, initiated a series of letters regarding the importations which were circulated throughout the colony. These letters attempted to assure the reader of the

8 The term advertorial has been used as the letter in question was neither an advertisement nor a letter to the editor, but had been placed by the editor as part of his editorial for the information of his readers.

9 The first article of Paul Pax, whose identity it has not been possible to establish, appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and continued once a week for six weeks, starting 28th February, 1852 and finishing on 3rd April, 1852.

10 "Chinese Immigration" by Paul Pax, No. 1. *SMH*, 28th March, 1852.

11 *loc. cit.*

suitability of the subjects as shepherds and gauge the level of demand for Chinese labourers which existed. An early direct testing of the strength of the demand market, in contrast to the informative nature of Bogue's letters, was initiated in January 1847 with the publication of an advertisement placed by James Macle hose addressed "TO SHEEP FARMERS, GRAZIER S, AGRICULTURISTS, SETTLERS, SHOPKEEPERS, AND OTHERS", calling for written expressions of interest in the employment of:

*Steady and ingenious machinis.s in every trade, agricultural servants, gardeners, shepherds, &c., which the advertiser strongly recommends to settlers in the interior.*¹²

Another method utilised to gauge demand was the public reprinting of private letters, one of which called for written expressions of interest in the employment of Chinese labourers, and requested attitudes and responses to a series of questions, including the number of labourers that the letter's recipient would be likely to engage. The letter's author, "a gentlen an in Sydney", had the distinction of writing at the instigation of Messrs Tertius Campbell, Wentworth, Dr. Nicholson, and other influential men...' who were ...inclined to try the experiment, if supported...'.¹³ Within this letter the unknown author details the expense, £8 per head of introducing Chinese labourers and the wages, from £4 16s. to £7 4s. per annum, to be paid over the five year period of indenture.¹⁴ The letter continued in attempting to gauge the level of support for the mooted importation by requesting the recipients opinion on whether:

*1st. Do you consider the fact of the Chinese being unable to speak any intelligible language an insuperable objection; or do you think they might be taught to shepherd and make themselves useful notwithstanding this drawback? 2nd. Would the antipathy of the Europeans on account of the reduced wages be an insurmountable objection; or could Europeans and Chinese live on the same establishment?*¹⁵

The letter's author had '...hopes of seeing a regular stream of Chinamen brought down', and if sufficient favourable responses to the above questions were received, these hopes were to be realised by the chartering of a ship which was to proceed:

12 "To SHEEP FARMERS, GRAZIER S, AGRICULTURALISTS, SETTLERS, SHOPKEEPERS, AND OTHERS", J. Macle hose, Macquarie St. Windsor, Aust., 1sth January, 1847. This advertisement was repeated in every issue of the *Aust.* until 8th April, 1847. Macle hose had conducted a warehouse business in Hunter Street, Sydney, from 1834-1843, the depression forcing him into bankruptcy. Macle hose then moved his family to Hong Kong, where he remained, making visits to the colony in 1847, 1848 and 1849. Prior to losing his colonial business, Macle hose wrote and published, *Picture of Sydney and Stranger's Guide to New South Wales, for 1839*, Sydney, 1839, and the *New South Wales and Port Phillip Post Office Directory*. J. Macle hose, *Picture of Sydney and Stranger's Guide to New South Wales, for 1839*, (reprint), Sycney, John Ferguson, 1977. 'List of Foreign Residents in China', 1846-1851, *Chinese Repository*, Vol's. XVI-XX.

13 "Chinese Immigration", *MBC*, 10th April, 1847. This letter was prefaced as a "communication from a gentleman in Sydney to a friend residing in this district".

14 *loc. cit.*

15 *loc. cit.*

'... to Amoy for this purpose, [and] will you take a few Chinamen for your own station? and if so, how many? And will you authorise me to state your intention to the gentlemen proposing to charter a ship?'¹⁶

The series of advertisements masquerading as news culminated with the publication of a letter from a '...proprietor of a sheep station in the southern part of the colony to a gentleman in Sydney...', in the *Moreton Bay Courier* to whom it had been handed specifically for the purpose of publication.¹⁷ The author of this letter declared himself as the person who had imported and employed the Chinese that arrived per the *Alfred* in 1847. Within this letter the reader was assured of the capacity of the Chinese to '...make excellent shepherds being equal in attention, and superior in willingness and steadiness to the European'¹⁸ In conjunction with recommending the Chinese in this capacity, the letter also provides information on the signing of the contract; the costs incurred by the importer/employer; and the benefits to be gained by the employment of Chinese labourers, whether in the capacity of shepherd, cooks or indoor servants. The letter was clearly intended to advertise that the importation was both possible and profitable, as the author prefaced all of this detail with the declaration that:

*I am glad to hear that you take an interest in the experiment of employing Chinese labourers, as I am satisfied of its great ultimate success when it shall have been more largely and systematically tried- my little trial having more than realised my expectations.*¹⁹

The editor of the *Moreton Bay Courier*, A. S. Lyons, justified the letter's publication in the paper, and confirmed the "advertorial" nature of the letter by stating that: 'Its importance will be readily recognised, and the information it embraces cannot prove otherwise than highly acceptable to our readers...'.²⁰

That the *Alfred* made a second trip to Aneityum and thence Hong Kong for labourers only 14 days after returning to Sydney and disembarking its passengers bound for Yass; and the *Statesman* departed about three weeks later; indicates the eagerness with which the experiment was tried. The first four "experimental" importations which culminated with the arrival of the *Alfred* in June 1848, paled into insignificance, quantitatively at least, by the arrival of the *Nimrod* in October of that year.

A(i): THE NIMROD AND BEYOND

¹⁶ *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ "Chinese Immigration", *MBC*, 19th July, 1848.

¹⁸ *loc. cit.*

¹⁹ *loc. cit.*

²⁰ *loc. cit.*

The *Nimrod* captained by Robert Duncan Espinasse had, as with the majority of later consignments of Chinese bound for the colony been organised '...for and on account of Captain Thomas Larkins, of the East India Company's late maritime service, now resident at Hong Kong'²¹ by James Tait in Amoy. The *Nimrod* began its voyage to Amoy from Sydney on 2nd November 1847, travelling there via Port Nicholson (Wellington Harbour) in New Zealand, where 210 tons of coal and 1,000 sheep were delivered. Arriving in Sydney 2nd December, 1848, carrying 100 Chinese men and 20 boys for engagement as shepherds or labourers, plus one Chinese Doctor; Towns believing that the services of the latter were crucial to the success of the importations as '...our European Doctors cannot understand the Chinese Constitution...'.²²

The *Nimrod's* voyage, although exhibiting differences from the earlier importations, must also be considered as experimental because a number of factors suggest that it was not the culmination of the plans advertised in the above letters. The first piece of evidence in support of this stance is once again provided by the well-informed Paul Pax, who dates the first organised shipments of Chinese labourers as occurring in 1851 when reporting that:

*The first specimens of the Celestials having been approved of, a number of colonists determined on despatching a large ship to China in the early part of last year, and in pursuance of this determination, the Statesman, the General Palmer, and several other vessels, sailed on this mission.*²³

The arrival of the *Nimrod*, having been organised by Captain Larkins, may have been the result of the letter noted above reprinted in the *Moreton Bay Courier* in April 1847. Larkins may have organised and acquired this shipload of Chinese on behalf of Campbell, Wentworth and Nicholson and "other influential men" who instigated the letter sent to '...most of the influential squatters in our district...'.²⁴ One piece of evidence that may be used to argue against Wentworth, Campbell et. al., and the 1847 letter finding success in the arrival of the *Nimrod*, is the fact that Henry Moore²⁵ not

21 T. H. Layton to J. G. Bonham, Enclosure 1 in No. 13, Copy of a Despatch from Earl Grey to Governor Fitzroy, 27th February, 1849, *BPP*, 1849, (593), Vol. XXXVIII.

22 Towns to Tait, 19th September, 1851, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/116).

23 "Chinese Immigration" by Paul Pax, No. I, *op. cit.*

24 "Chinese Immigration", *MBC*, 10th April, 1847.

25 Sadly, no biographical information for Moore can be offered, other than that in partnership with his brother Joseph, Moore owned a number of ships involved in colonial shipping, and operated out of premises at Moore's Wharf, Sydney: the brothers held no squatting runs, although Joseph is listed as applying for a License to depasture stock beyond Brisbane Plains (Cabramatta) in 1837. G. Broxam & I. Nicholson, *Shipping Arrivals and Departures, and Gazetteer Sydney, 1841-44*, Vol. III, Canberra, Roebuck Society, 1983, p. 135; J. F. Campbell, *Squatting on Crown Lands in New South Wales*, Sydney, Royal Australian Historical Society, 1968, p. 11.

Robert Campbell²⁶ was the agent for the *Nimrod*. Presented with Campbell's previous involvement in bringing Chinese labourers to the colony aboard the *London* in early 1848; and his naming as one interested in promoting the trade in Chinese labourers it is difficult to accept that if all had progressed according to the plans of Campbell and the "other influential gentlemen", Campbell would not have been the agent for any ship involved in their plans.

If the letter and plans of the influential gentlemen were successful, it may have transpired that the arrival of the *London* in February 1849 carrying 149 Chinese labourers, rather than that of the *Nimrod* was the successful culmination of their plans. The fact that the agency of Campbell organised the importation per *London* combined with the dating of Rusden's letters to Nicholson (February 1848), after the *Nimrod* had left the colony, tends to strengthen the argument for the *London*.

As neither of the cited letters can be directly associated with the *Nimrod* the impetus for this ship's consignment must be sought elsewhere, the involvement of Larkins being integral to any explanation that can be offered. As to why Captain Thomas Larkins was involved in this shipment is difficult to answer with any degree of certainty. There is no evidence that Larkins had recently been in the colony prior to the sailing of the *Nimrod*, his agency being located in Hong Kong, and a survey of Crown Land Commissioner reports has not brought to light any squattages held in Larkins' name. There is, however, evidence that a J. T. Larkins possessed land in the Goulburn District as someone by that name had convicts assigned to them according to the 1837 muster²⁷. Whether this is the same Larkins is unknown, however it is definitely known that Captain Thomas Larkins held property in the Maitland region, and upon his death, for which a notice was placed in the *Maitland Mercury*, Henry Moore acted for Jardine Matheson in the disposal of property located in Maitland belonging to Larkins.²⁸ Although the extent of the property held by Larkins is unknown there is sufficient evidence to show that Larkins did have financial interests in the form of property in the colony, which he may have hoped to augment by undertaking the voyage of the *Nimrod*.

²⁶ Robert Tertius Campbell (1811-1887) was the son of Robert Campbell Jnr., who as the nephew of Robert Campbell, joined Campbell and Co. in 1805. Tertius as with his father and uncle, became a prominent colonial merchant and although suffering severely during the 1840's depression, re-established himself financially through gold-purchases in the 1850's as a colonial agent for Robert Brooks. (*ADB*, p. 206-7) Campbell also held major squatting runs in the New England, Darling Downs, and Moreton Bay districts; namely, "Jondaryan", "Irvingdale", and "Telaman" and "Melcombe" stations respectively.

²⁷ Convict number 7994, John Durss, arrived 1828; and convict number 14290, arrived 1835 per *Henry Tanner*, N. G. Butlin, C. W. Cronwell, and K. L. Southern, (eds.), *General Return of Convicts in New South Wales, 1837*, Sydney, Australian Biographical and Genealogical Record, 1987.

²⁸ Jardine Matheson and Co. Archive, Phyllis Mander-Jones, (ed.), *Manuscripts in the British Isles Relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, Canberra, A. N. U. Press, 1972, p. 389.

Alternatively, or in combination with this, is the fact that Larkins would have possessed intimate knowledge about the importations on the *Alfred* and *Statesman* and the hopes of the importers to extend the trade. This knowledge would have been attained through his agency in Hong Kong, and his dealings with Thacker & Company for whom his ship, the *Nimrod*, had carried sandalwood to China.²⁹ From these facts it is possible to adduce that Larkins may have handled the negotiations in Hong Kong or Amoy for the Chinese labourers that were imported prior to the arrival of the *Nimrod*.

Further evidence that may be produced in favour of the argument that the passage of the *Nimrod* was an experiment or speculative venture on the part of Larkins rather than the culmination of plans devised in the colony, is found within the letters sent between Larkins and his agent in London, J. B. Horsley. These letters indicate that Larkins was undergoing a period of severe financial problems at the time he organised the *Nimrod*. These problems induced him in 1850 to undertake a voyage to California against the advice of Horsley in a ship "uninsured and patched up".³⁰ The commissioning of the *Nimrod* to carry Chinese labourers to the colony, in imitation and extension of the efforts of Thacker, may have been an attempt by Larkins to improve his increasingly tenuous financial position.

If Larkins was not acting solely on his own account it is possible that he acted at the bequest of prospective employers of Chinese, and presented with the fact that 62 of those aboard the *Nimrod* were landed in Moreton Bay, the source of the request is most probably to be found in the Northern Districts. Many of the Northern District squatters had links to India and China either through the East India Company or private traders, therefore Larkins, as the person on the spot may have been contracted on the basis of these linkages to procure Chinese labourers for the colonists. Larkins had an extensive history of trading in the China seas;³¹ trade between the colony and China with his East India Company pedigree extending back to 1614;³² and in the carriage of a "human cargo" as ship's husband of the *Royal Admiral*, carrying

29 D. Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1967, p. 229.

30 Horsley to Larkins 2nd November, 1849, *Papers of Captain Thomas Larkins*, (ML AL 70/7). Larkins was to die 10-3-50, at the residence of J. C. Gammer, aged 65 years while kept in San Francisco being unable to attract a crew for the return voyage. *MM*, 25th May, 1850.

31 Larkins and Tait can be assumed to have been acquainted from Tait's time in Manila as a partner of Otadui and Company, as Larkins as agent for Jardine Matheson had dealt with Otadui in the purchase of sugar. Jardine Matheson and Co. Archive, Vol. 36, Jan-June 1845, Mander-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

32 K. N. Chadhuri, *The English East India Company- the Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company, 1600-1640*, London, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1965, p. 87.

convicts under sentence of transportation to New South Wales in 1793, then proceeding to China to load tea for England.³³

The mercantile, military and familial links that bound together the likes of Richard Jones; the brothers Sandemann and Leslie; Phillip Friel; Captain Thomas Collins; Captain John Pike; Archibald Boyd; and G. W. Rusden; were all forged by participation in trade in the East. The members of at least four of the Northern squatting families, the Everetts', Rusden's, Boyd's and the Leslie's were active in the China trade and in conjunction with the affiliations offered by Richard Jones,³⁴ were perfectly placed to assist in the organisation of shipments of Chinese to their families in the colony using the Hong Kong agency of Larkins.

When it is considered that the letter regarding the positive results attained in the experiment in Chinese labourers conducted in Yass were reprinted in July 1848, just days after the *Nimrod* departed Amoy, the case for the experimental or speculative nature of the *Nimrod* importation is reinforced. Also, although part of the *Nimrod's* complement of Chinese may have been contracted for, the number of contractors was relatively small as Richard Jones alone employed 16 of the 62 landed in Moreton Bay,³⁵ and those that remained in Sydney experienced a slow rate of engagement. Henry Moore in Sydney had to advertise for nearly seven weeks to clear his stores of the last of the Chinese that had arrived on the *Nimrod*.³⁶ A situation that would not have arisen if the enterprise of Larkins had been negotiated for by the prior gathering of expressions of interest.

The attitude of the Imperial government to the large scale importation of Chinese labourers to the colony was also gauged by the passage of the *Nimrod*, whereas the smaller experimental importations had apparently proceeded unnoticed by the British authorities. The passage of the *Nimrod* initiated a flurry of letters between T. H. Layton the British Consul in Amoy, Earl Grey and the Colonial Land and Emigration Office, which resulted in nothing being done, as all expressed the belief that:

We, however, are disposed to view this emigration as one of the expedients resorted to, to meet the urgent demand for labourers in New South Wales,....we think it probable that the

33 E. W. Bovill, 'Some Chronicles of the Larkins Family. The Convict Ship, 1792' *Mariners Mirror*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1954, p. 120.

34 Jones, apart from his affiliation with the China agency houses through his background as a trader, and his partnership with W. S. Davidson, had also acted as the colonial agent for Forbes and Company of Bombay.

35 Included Eu, all being purchased for £8 15s. each. *MBC*, 12th July, 1851.

36 The advertisement for the "Chinese Immigrants per *Nimrod*, from Amoy" were first placed *SMH*, 23rd October, 1848, and continued until 13th November, 1848.

*experiment of importing Chinese labourers, which, under any circumstances, must be of doubtful success, will not, under the present circumstances of the colony, be repeated.*³⁷

Earl Grey's response to the importation of Chinese into the colony per the *Nimrod*, was to request that Governor Fitzroy use his '...utmost endeavours to discourage...' any further importations, and believed that '...the attempt may probably have met with so little success as to prevent its repetition.'³⁸ All of these attitudes were to be proved very wrong with regard to the experiment meeting with little success and therefore would not continue. The fast engagement rate in Moreton Bay of the Chinese per the *Nimrod*, and the measures already taken prior to Earl Grey writing his missive, to gather expressions of interest in further importations of Chinese labourers, shows how inaccurate the authors were on the future of the trade.

B: FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO SPONSORSHIP

Whether the *Nimrod* or the *London* was the culmination of the 1847 letter writer's hopes cannot be stated conclusively, however what can be stated without fear of contradiction is that Wentworth, and the "other influential gentlemen" with whom he dealt, had undertaken a determined and concerted effort to import Chinese labourers to the colony, an effort that was repaid with outstanding success. The letters of Rusden to Nicholson outlining the advantages of Chinese coolie labour and the procedures involved in undertaking such trade; the transmitting of the letter by the unknown author to the noted squatters of the colony; the reprinting in the newspapers of the letters of Adam Bogue, then that of the unknown author; and the changes in the Master and Servants Act which ensured the legality of any contracts signed with the Chinese, which Wentworth had so cleverly engineered; all point to a plan that was initiated during 1846 or 1847, coming to fulfilment with the success of the experimental importations of Chinese labourers.

Four months after the arrival of the *Nimrod*, the barque *London* arrived in the port of Sydney carrying 149 Chinese labourers of which total at least 50 were eventually transferred to Moreton Bay.³⁹ Apart from the transferral of the Chinese to Moreton Bay no other information regarding the Chinese which arrived per the

37 Thomas C. Murdoch and C. Alexander Wood, 31st January, 1849, Enclosure 2 in No. 13, Earl Grey to Governor-General C. A. Fitzroy, 27th February, 1849, Despatches relating to Emigration to the Australian Colonies, *BPP*, 1849, (593), Vol. XXXVIII, p. 103.

38 Earl Grey to Governor-General C. A. Fitzroy, 27th February, 1849, No. 13, Despatches relating to Emigration to the Australian Colonies, *BPP*, 1849, (593), Vol. XXXVIII, p. 103.

39 For more information on dates of arrival and the movement of the Chinese refer to Table 2. As argued above, the fact that Campbell was the shipping agent for this ship may indicate that it was the *London* rather than the *Nimrod*, which carried the hopes of the unknown letter writer to see a '...regular stream of Chinamen brought down...' to the colony. "Chinese Immigration", *MBC*, 10th April, 1847.

London has been found, although it can be conjectured that a number of those sent to Moreton Bay were employed by Robert Tertius Campbell on his properties in the neighbouring districts.

The next substantial shipment of Chinese arrived aboard the *Cadet* in April 1850 which shipment had been organised by the gathering of expressions of interest amongst squatters and other employers in the Northern Districts. The rate at which the Northern squatters had engaged the Chinese aboard the *Nimrod* and then the *London* obviously encouraged the shipping agents to adopt a direct assessment of the demand for Chinese labourers in the northern region. This degree of interest was gauged by the placing of the following advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier*.⁴⁰

<p style="text-align: center;">CHINESE LABOUR</p> <p>If sufficient encouragement is offered, the undersigned is authorised to make arrangements for the introduction of a number of Labourers direct from China to this port. Lists, for the insertion of the names of such persons as are willing to engage the labourers- stating the number each person will employ- lie open with the undersigned; and may also be seen at the office of Mr. Henry Moore, Miller's Point, Sydney.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">W. CONNOLLY</p> <p>Brisbane, 12th April, 1849.</p>

This advertisement was followed by another smaller version on the 12th May, 1849, however the exceptional amount of "sufficient encouragement" produced by these advertisements prompted Connolly to place the following larger and more detailed advertisement on the 19th May.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *MBC*, 21st April, 1849.

⁴¹ *MBC*, 19th May, 1849. Repeated on the front page of the paper, 26th May, 2nd, 9th and 16th June. A question as to the actual promoters of this advertisement must be raised as even though Connolly in the first advertisement states that the list was also to be seen at Moore's in Sydney, it was Robert Tertius Campbell who was the agent for the *Cadet*. The departure of Mr G. Goggs, Robert Towns' agent in Moreton Bay for Sydney on 27th June, (*Shipping Intelligence, MBC*, 30th June, 1849) at the time when Connolly stated that the list was to be forwarded to Sydney, further confuses the issue. Some of the shipments accredited solely to the agency of Robert Towns have the appearance of being joint ventures with Campbell, and vice versa. If the departure of Goggs for Sydney was linked to the passage of the completed list, the partnership of Campbell and Towns may have also been responsible for the arrival of the *Cadet* in 1850. That it was Daniel Peterson, rather than Connolly who advertised later that 'All parties having Chinese indentured to them through Mr R. Campbell, by the ship *Cadet*... are requested to be ready to receive them personally or by Agent at Brisbane', (*MBC*, 17th November, 1849) is inexplicable, but the wording of the advertisement proves that the Chinese per the *Cadet* were all under contract.

CHINESE LABOUR

Application having been made to the undersigned by parties who hired the Chinese Immigrants per Nimrod, from Amoy, and others, for a further number of those men, he has determined upon opening a list for them, with a view to ascertaining the probable number required, and if this is sufficient for the purpose, arranging for their being brought down here. The nature of the agreement to be entered into between the employers and the men, and terms of passage, can be ascertained upon application to the undersigned. As the list will be forwarded to Sydney in the middle of June, early application is necessary.

W. CONNOLLY

South Brisbane, 18th May, 1849.

The eventual result of Connolly's advertisement was the departure for China of the *Cadet* which was intended to land its "human cargo" at Moreton Bay, however inclement weather intervened, forcing the ship to land in Sydney and the Chinese labourers being transferred north by the *Favourite*.⁴² Of the Chinese aboard the *Cadet*, 10 were forwarded to M. H. Marsh's property of "Maryland", which is located on the border of the New England and Darling Downs districts, and straddled the present day State borders of New South Wales and Queensland. All of the Chinese labourers bar four that arrived in the colony per the *Cadet*, were reported to have been engaged to squatters in the Northern Districts.⁴³

This direct marketing approach of placing an advertisement calling for expressions of interest, rather than the more indirect method of reprinting private letters on the subject discussed earlier, was utilised again only six weeks after the arrival of the *Cadet*. This second (counting the three previous advertisements of Connolly as one) advertisement being placed so close to the arrival of the Chinese from the *Cadet* and the 61 from the *Gazelle*⁴⁴ in May 1850, indicates the substantial level of demand for Chinese labourers emanating from the Northern Districts. The engagement rate for the Chinese per the *Cadet* and the *Gazelle*⁴⁵ was extremely rapid

⁴² Refer to Table 2 for more information on departure and arrival dates.

⁴³ "Chinese Labourers", *MBC*, 5th January, 1850.

⁴⁴ By referring to Table 2 it will be seen that of the 131 Chinese aboard the *Gazelle* 61 have been found to have been transhipped direct to Moreton Bay, a number which is possibly a lower estimate as some may have entered the Northern Districts via the Clarence River or Morpeth.

⁴⁵ A note in the Shipping Intelligence, *MBC*, 11th May, 1850, states that all of the Chinese that were transferred from Sydney aboard the *Favourite* were '...under indentures to employers in these districts...'. Although Alexander & Gilchrist are noted as the agents for the *Gazelle* it was Robert Tertius Campbell who had chartered the *Gazelle* '...to proceed to Amoy for Coolies...'. H. Moore to T. Larkins, 9th November, 1849, *Papers of Captain Thomas Larkins*, (ML A1 70/8).

as no advertisements notifying the public that the Chinese were available for engagement were placed in the newspapers.⁴⁶ In fact, by the 25th May, 1850, the *Moreton Bay Courier* was able to report that the 169 Chinese landed in Brisbane over the past few weeks were '...all engaged in service.'⁴⁷

The advertisement reproduced below⁴⁸ which followed closely the arrival of the *Cadet*, resulted in the arrival of the *Duke of Roxburgh*, again in Sydney, with the 242 Chinese aboard then being transferred to Moreton and Wide Bays.

C H I N E S E L A B O U R

PARTIES desirous of obtaining a supply of Labour, from **AMOY** are informed that a letter on this subject addressed to one of the most respectable firms in Sydney, lies for Signature at Mr. JOHN RICHARDSON'S, North Brisbane, and Messrs. WALTER GRAY & CO.'S, Ipswich. Signatures to J. M.'s letter for 190 Chinamen have already been affixed, and parties desirous of adding to the number would do well to attend to immediately, a gentlemen having gone to Sydney in the last steamer to mature arrangements for their immediate importation into this district.

Brisbane, June 21, 1850.

This advertisement raises one important question, who was J. M.? which regrettably cannot be answered with any degree of surety. If it is presumed that J. M. lived in the Northern Districts a number of squatters can be identified as possibly being the owner of these initials, however no merchants have been identified with the importations having names that correspond with the initials: J. A. McArthur of "Warra Warra" station; J. D. McLean of "Bunalbo"; J. Mylne of "Etonswill"; and J. McIver of "Ingleba". Another possibility is James Macabrieu Andrew, Robert Tertius Campbell's partner in "Jondaryn" station, a member of the Coolie Association, and subscriber to the Indian Labour Association, and the Moreton Bay Labour Fund.⁴⁹ Of these J. M. Andrew, if commonly known by his initials, or McArthur are the most likely as both are definitely known to have employed Chinese labourers.⁵⁰ Although there is no evidence to prove this, nor any evidence to show that "J. M." lived in the

⁴⁶ As there are no copies of the *MBFP* still in existence prior to 1852, it is impossible to know whether that paper carried any advertisements calling for either expressions of interest in importing Chinese, although it must be presumed that it did, or advertisements notifying the public that Chinese per the ships in question were available for engagement.

⁴⁷ *MBC*, 25th May, 1850.

⁴⁸ *MBC*, 22nd June, 1850. Repeated 29th June, 1850.

⁴⁹ *MBC*, 19th December, 1846; 22nd January, 1848.

⁵⁰ Refer to the entries for Tui and E in Table 3, Appendix 6.

Northern Districts, the fact that the *Duke of Roxburgh* was specifically consigned to Moreton Bay, appears to allow the conclusion that any letter regarding the importation of Chinese would have emanated from within the region.⁵¹

The *Duke of Roxburgh* after departing Sydney for Amoy on the 11th August 1850, returned to the colony through the port of Sydney, arriving 6th February 1851, transferring the Chinese aboard to other vessels for the trip to the Northern Districts. By referring to Table 2 it can be seen that a number of discrepancies exist in the numbers reported as being transferred north and the actual number landing in Sydney. The *Duke of Roxburgh* was carrying 242 Chinese labourers, all of which were engaged to employers in the Northern Districts;⁵² of this number 180 can definitely be identified as having been transferred to Moreton Bay. The remainder are known to have been transferred from Sydney by the *Albion* and the *Vixen*, however the manifests for these ships carry no mention of the Chinese labourers. This non-reporting of the movements of Chinese labourers from the port of Sydney was to become more prevalent as the number imported increased during 1852; possibly as a way of reducing the amount of publicity given to the importations and the actuality of Chinese in the colony.

As with the *Cadet*, no advertisements have been found to indicate that any of the Chinese labourers who arrived aboard the *Duke of Roxburgh* were in need of places of engagement. However, those that had signed an '...agreement with CAPTAIN COLLARD, of the barque *Duke of Roxburgh*, for the passage of Chinese Labourers, by that vessel from Amoy,...' were informed by means of an advertisement placed by E. Kirsopp of the departure of the vessel from Amoy and the need to ensure that '...immediate arrangements are made for receipt of the men in terms of their undertaking.'⁵³

It is not surprising that the name of Captain E. J. F. Kirsopp is mentioned in relation to the importation of Chinese labourers into the colony of New South Wales, as Kirsopp had captained the *Velocity* in its 1847 tour of the South Sea Islands to

51 Two other possibilities for the initials J. M. may be noted. One is John McArthur who was the captain of the *Julia Percy* which arrived in October 1849 from Hong Kong carrying six Chinese labourers. Captain McArthur in collaboration with the owner of the ship, Robert Towns, may have recognised the ease with which importations of Chinese labourers could be accomplished, and that the greatest source of demand for such labour was within the Northern Districts, and therefore took the action of circulating a letter requesting expressions of interest. The last possibility may be James Macle hose who advertised in 1847 offering his services to those interested in acquiring Chinese labourers, ("To Sheep Farmers, Graziers, Agriculturalists, Settlers, Shopkeepers and Others", *Aust*, 19th January, 1847. Repeated until 8th April, 1847) and may have attempted to continue in this line of employment in 1850 by lobbying those who had responded to his 1847 advertisement.

52 *SMH*, 7th February, 1851.

53 "Chinese Labourers", *MBC*, 1st February, 1851. Repeated the 10th February.

acquire labour. In reporting on his voyage to Benjamin Boyd, a letter Boyd had presented to the *Sydney Morning Herald* for publication, which in turn was reprinted elsewhere, Kirsopp provided Boyd with his impression of the colony's need for labour, and the suitability of the Islanders to answer this need.

Having been a squatter in the colony for five years myself, and suffered from the enormous rates of wages all were compelled to pay during the years 40, 41, and 42, it is with great pleasure I am enabled to assure you that your idea of immigration from the islands of the Pacific I firmly believe will come up to your most sanguine expectations, and that the present want of these colonies in the shape of labour can be supplied from them, with a class of men who, by common firmness and kindness in the management of them, may be induced to do a moderate quantity of work equally as well as any European, and at less than one-third the cost.⁵⁴

As discussed earlier, the plans of Boyd to establish a labour trade in South Sea Islanders were partially destroyed by the 1847 amendments to the Master and Servants legislation that omitted contracts signed with Islanders from the operation of the law, thereby denying employers the ability to enforce worker conformity through the application of the law. It was only the fast, and possibly underhanded work of those with an interest to protect that ensured that any future contracts signed with Chinese labourers did not experience the same fate. When the trade in Islanders had been effectively halted Kirsopp may have accepted the next opportunity offered in the transport of human cargo, which was the importation of Chinese labourers. The previous work history with Jardine Matheson in China of W. S. Boyd, who had taken over from his cousin Ben in March 1848, may even have been utilised in the organisation of the arrival of the *Duke of Roxburgh* which Kirsopp captained.

C: SPECULATION VERSUS SPONSORSHIP

The arrival of the *Duke of Roxburgh* in February 1851 marked the cessation of the second phase within the trade in Chinese labourers to the colony of New South Wales, being the last ship to carry only Chinese that had previously been contracted for or sponsored. The sponsorship element of the early trade in evincing a fast rate of indenture for the Chinese drew other participants into the field, notably Robert Towns,⁵⁵ although Captains Francis Lodge and Thomas Beckford Simpson must also

⁵⁴ "Immigrants from the South Sea Islands", *MBC*, 15th May, 1847.

⁵⁵ It is not possible within this thesis to provide enough biographical information on Robert Towns that would do justice to his place within the mercantile and shipping history of the colony, therefore the reader is referred to the entry for him in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 6, and the works of Frank Broeze, specifically, *Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade- Imperial Business in the Nineteenth Century*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1993, and 'Australia, Asia and the Pacific: The Maritime World of Robert Towns 1843-1873', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 95, October, 1990, pp. 221-238 and D. Shineberg, *op.cit.*

be included in this listing. In the words of Paul Pax the early experimental and sponsored arrivals having been received with such eagerness and approval, '...a number of the colonists determined on despatching a large ship to China in the early part of last year...'.⁵⁶

The first ship to arrive in the colony carrying Chinese labourers in "pursuance of this determination" on the part of the colonists was the *Duke of Roxburgh* which landed in Moreton Bay on the 9th November, 1851. The entry of the new traders changed the focus of the importations from one in which the Chinese were imported on the basis of demand, to a situation where the supply of labourers was determined according to their, the agents, own profit motive. These new entrants to the trade are most likely the colonists referred to by Paul Pax as these people were the agents for the '...*Statesman*, *General Palmer*, and several other vessels (which) sailed on this mission'⁵⁷ to acquire more Chinese labourers. The primary result of the push of the profit motive was a dramatic acceleration in the rate at which Chinese labourers were imported into the colony, resulting in what may be termed the "Rush of 1852" which incidentally coincided with the rush to the gold-fields.

This second voyage of the *Duke of Roxburgh*⁵⁸ manifested many variations from the first voyage, possibly the largest difference, and the one that had the greatest impact was the fact that the voyage was a purely speculative venture.⁵⁹ Another, and closely related reason why the second voyage is of importance is that it signalled the entry of Towns into the trade. A trade that he was to change from one founded on sponsored importations to a purely speculative trade and which he was to dominate for the remaining period during which importations of Chinese were undertaken.

A definite collaboration between Towns and Campbell in the importation of Chinese labourers can be seen to date from this time due to the appearance of Campbell's signature on contracts signed by the Chinese that arrived aboard ships organised by Towns. This collaboration is significant as Campbell had acquired "hands on" experience in the importation of Chinese labourers with the *London* and *Cadet*, with Towns providing some of the financial backing required for the large non-sponsored importations that characterised the trade after 1850. The extent of the Towns/Campbell collaboration in the trade in Chinese labourers is exhibited by their

⁵⁶ "Chinese Immigration", by Paul Pax, No. 1, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ *loc. cit.*

⁵⁸ The *Duke of Roxburgh* had received clearance from the port authorities at Sydney on 19th April, 1851 for its voyage to Amoy.

⁵⁹ This argument is partially dependent upon no notices calling for expressions of interest having appeared in the *MBFP*. As mentioned previously, copies of the *MBFP* from the first two years of its existence have sadly not survived the test of time, therefore it is impossible to state categorically that the voyage in question was purely speculative.

chartering of the *Arabia* to Chilcott and Thacker for the purposes of importing Chinese labourers in 1851. The level of Campbell's involvement is unknown, however he was involved as, in response to an request from R. R. C. Robertson of "Wellington Vale" station for Chinese labourers, Campbell wrote that:

*We have an interest in the charter of a vessel which lately left this for China for the purpose of bringing down Coolies and we will reserve for you the number you require.*⁶⁰

C(i): A PERSONAL APPROACH

For the trade to succeed the market in labourers required buyers, and the consortium of Towns and Campbell through the financial and personal links that they had developed over the years with the squatters, were able to lobby personally and influence potential buyers. Institutions such as the exclusive Australian Club whose membership list included the most notable squatters and merchants in the colony, would have proved invaluable in the lobbying process providing the importers with a concentrated market of potential purchasers. The entry of Robert Towns into the trade in Chinese labourers was to revive the method of direct mail sales of the Chinese, yet this time the letters seeking expressions of interest were sent after the ships had departed the colony for China, and were not published in the colonial newspapers.

Robert Towns relied upon his business contacts with the squatters, many of whom he had been financially supporting⁶¹ by writing directly to those expected to be amenable to the employment of Chinese, rather than using public advertisements to gauge the amount of interest and support for the importation of Chinese labourers. Robert Tertius Campbell, also used his connections within the squatting fraternity to find places of engagement for the Chinese labourers that he, in collaboration with Towns imported.⁶² Towns and Campbell in using their vested interests in many of the squatters to assist their import trade represents a classic example of the merchant/squatter interactions and interconnections that epitomise the colony and the trade in Chinese labourers.

In developing the buyers market for the "produce" in the form of Chinese labourers that he had to sell, Towns impressed upon his targeted market the

60 R. Campbell to R. R. C. Robertson, 22nd July, 1851, *Wellington Vale Station Records*, (UNE A185).

61 The letters that flowed between Towns and P. Ditmus are replete with statements regarding the virtual insolvency of Ditmus, with one letter stating that Ditmus had not settled his account with Towns for a couple of years. Towns to Ditmus, 4th October, 1850, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/116).

62 R. R. C. Robertson to R. Campbell, 16th October, 1849, *Wellington Vale Station Records*, (UNE A185). Within this and a number of other letters the insolvency of Robertson and the need for Campbell to support him financially is discussed.

advantages to be gained from employing Chinese as apart from making '...excellent shepherds (who) may be taught anything',⁶³ they:

*...will be your salvation in shape of labour not so much for the six men but it will teach your other men a wholesome lesson viz that others are to be had if they persist in demanding such wages as you cannot pay... you have the services of these Men for 5 years @ a rate not exceeding 1/4 you are obliged to pay your own countrymen & I find I can get more work out of a Chinaman than a European even in Sydney.*⁶⁴

The personal approach utilised by Towns in writing letters to prospective employers appears however, not to have been as efficient in gauging the level of interest as the earlier public approach adopted by Connolly and the Gray/Richardson/J. M. consortium. Although a report concerning the Chinese aboard the *Duke of Roxburgh* (November 1851) stated that '...most of them are engaged...',⁶⁵ a number of the 127 landed in Brisbane could not be engaged, leading Henry Buckley to advertise under the title CHINESE LABOURERS, that:

*Should the whole of the above not be indented when the next Steamer arrives, they are to be forwarded to Sydney by her.*⁶⁶

Buckley had placed an earlier advertisement about six weeks after the ship had arrived notifying the public that a few Chinese were available to be indented, and that '...early application is necessary...'.⁶⁷ As to whether Buckley did send any of the Chinese to Sydney is unknown as no further reports have been found,⁶⁸ however, a report from the Moreton Bay correspondent of the *Empire*, possibly in response to Buckley's advertisement, stated that:

*Notwithstanding the demand for labour, a considerable number of the Chinamen by the Duke of Roxburgh remain in Brisbane unengaged: whether from the high price of the article or not remains doubtful.*⁶⁹

By the time Buckley threatened to send any excess Chinese to Sydney it was too late for Towns and the other agents to adjust their planned importations as another seven ships had already left Aveyron for the colony, and another the *Spartan*, was to depart only seven days after Buckley's advertisement. These eight ships which arrived

63 Towns to Ditmus, 13th September, 1851, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/116).

64 Towns to A. Trevethan, 31st January, 1852, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/117).

65 *MBC*, 15th November, 1851.

66 *MBC*, 10th January, 1852. Repeated 17th January.

67 "Chinese", *MBC*, 27th December, 1851.

68 The only report that has been found of Chinese being sent to Sydney from Moreton Bay occurred aboard the *Jack*, which departed the Bay 6th March 1852. (*SMH*, 12th March, 1852) However the two month delay between the two occurrences appears to negate any suggestion that those transferred were in fact the Chinese that Buckley had been trying to dispose of since mid-January.

69 "Moreton Bay", *Empire*, 14th January, 1852.

between 21st December, 1851 and 29th April, 1852 were to bring a "rush" of indentured Chinese labourers into the colony, producing a situation of over-supply, and increasing public and official recognition and opposition to the trade.

D: THE "RUSH" OF 1852

The rapacity of the Northern squatters in applying for, and engaging the early shipments of Chinese labourers produced an attitude amongst shipping agents that the squatters were capable of absorbing an infinite amount of labour, a viewpoint which was bolstered and given credibility by the squatters continual calls for more labour. Plans were drawn up according to this erroneous notion of a bottomless labour market for Chinese in the north which would realise the arrival of seven ships during 1852 carrying 1242 Chinese labourers. These ships account for over a third of all the Chinese labourers which were imported during the time period under consideration. If the human cargo of the *Arabia* which arrived in December 1851 is included in this calculation the percentage of total indentured Chinese who arrived in 1852 increases to nearly 50%. The table below, which is drawn from Table 2 in Appendix 5, summarises the number and the tonnage of the ships employed in the carrying of Chinese labourers to the colony, the number of Chinese embarked for the colony, and the number of Chinese labourers embarked per ton of shipping.⁷⁰

TABLE 6a
Ship Numbers and Tonnage by Year of Importation

YEAR	No. of SHIPS	TONNAGE	No of CHINESE	TONS PER CHINESE
1847	1	123	4	30.75
1848	4	1090	137	7.9
1849	4	978	160	6.1
1850	2	618	280	2.2
1851	4	1564	682	2.3
1852	7	2827	1573	1.8
1853	3	1354	719	1.9

The relatively steady progression in the numbers of Chinese imported until 1852 is clearly evident within the table, as is the massive increase that characterised the trade in 1852. Although 1851 is notable for the increased amount of tonnage dedicated to the importation of the Chinese over the previous years, the fact that in 1852 nearly double the number of Chinese were carried on a greater number of ships, with a combined tonnage of less than double the 1851 figure is significant. The search for increased profit meant that a greater number of labourers were crowded onto the

⁷⁰ The figures include all those embarked, and therefore include any deaths during the voyage.

ships, which led to a decreasing level of care during the voyage and increased rates of death and disease.

The amount of tonnage involved in carrying the Chinese is evidence of the decided preference given to the trade in labourers, above other trade with China at that time. Previous shipments had combined the carriage of Chinese labourers with the importation of commodities – tea and sugar in particular, and the export of sandalwood. This can be further summarised by considering that between 1-1-53 and 31-3-53, 19 vessels, with a combined tonnage of 7788, and carrying 284 passengers entered the port of Sydney from China. Over the same period in 1852 the number of ships arriving was 16, with a combined tonnage of 5594 and carrying 744 passengers.⁷¹ Indicating that many of the shipping agents resources had been transferred to the importation of Chinese labourers', yet such importation was undertaken using fewer ships with a substantially lesser tonnage.

D(i): ROBERT TOWNS AND THE RUSH OF '52

There are multifarious explanations that can be offered for the rapid increase during 1852 in the importation rate of Chinese labourers, many of which revolve around one merchant's desire for increased levels of profit. Firstly, in 1851 Robert Towns and Company of Sydney, one of the largest shipping agents in the colony, became involved in the enterprise of importing Chinese labourers, and involved to the extent that this company virtually monopolised the trade after 1851. Towns had previously been involved in the importation of bonded emigrants from England during the 1830s;⁷² he imported, in partnership with Robert Tertius Campbell, 86 Indian labourers aboard the *Orwell* in 1845;⁷³ and had personally engaged at least one of the Chinese labourers that arrived in the colony aboard the *Nimrod*.⁷⁴ Therefore the entry of Towns into the trade in 1851 was by no means his first foray into the carrying of human cargo, and the employment of indentured labour. It may be argued that in one respect Towns timed his entry into the Chinese labour trade perfectly, as he was able to draw on the experiences of other captains and agents in formulating the manner in which he was to undertake the trade, and in the directions he gave to his captains and ship doctors in their conduct in collecting and transporting the Chinese labourers.

71 *SMH*, 2nd. April, 1853. A similar report in the *SMH*, 3rd April, 1852, states that the 744 passengers arrived between 1-1-52 and 31-3-52 underlining the seasonality of the trade in Chinese labourers. The report also states that of the 744 passengers, 734 were "indentured Chinese servants".

72 F. Broeze, 'Australia, Asia and the Pacific: The Maritime World of Robert Towns 1843-1873', *op.cit.*, pp. 223 and 230.

73 Evidence of Robert Towns, 23rd November, 1854, Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, *NSWLC V&P*, 1854, Vol. II, p. 13.

74 This labourer was Eyu, whose contract is included in Appendix 7.

By viewing Table 2 in Appendix 5 the extent to which Towns dominated the trade post-1851 is obvious, importing 1143 Chinese labourers with only two other agents, Henry Moore and Thacker & Company importing 624 and 197 respectively from this date until 1853.⁷⁵ Towns had actually moved out of the trade in horses to India, in which market prices had collapsed, turning his attention, and his ships the *Statesman* and the *Royal Saxon* to the trade in Chinese labourers.⁷⁶ The *Arabia* was the only large importation of Chinese labourers undertaken by Thacker and Company, who after this shipload were to return to their previous course of importing small numbers in collaboration with exporting sandalwood to China. It has previously been mentioned that Towns owned the *Arabia*, and that Campbell also had an interest in this importation, indicating that Towns' dealings in the trade were broader than the numbers imported suggest.

In evidence to the Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, Towns stated that he had '...been the chief importer of Chinese...' bringing in about eight shiploads of Chinese with each ship carrying an average of 300 persons.⁷⁷ A glimpse at Table 2 details the ships referred to by Towns in his evidence although only seven ships have been noted for which Towns was the agent⁷⁸ the eighth possibly being the *Louisa*, which Towns refers to in a letter to Tait and Company in September 1851. In this letter Towns mentions an incident where a Chinese labourer had shot his overseer, which had '...given quite a turn against the Chinamen....[which]...may alter my intentions with regard to the "Louisa" as some of our strongest supporters in Coolie Labour have written me they will not have another Chinese -at any price...'.⁷⁹

It is possible that an idea of the degree to which Robert Towns and Robert Tertius Campbell devoted their resources to the trade may be gained from comparing the amount of bills drawn by these traders on Robert Brooks, for whom both were colonial agents. In his study of Robert Brooks, Frank Broeze provides a table

75 These figures are for the numbers embarked in Amoy and include deaths during the voyage and the 206 aboard the *Amazon* which were carried on to Geelong.

76 Towns to Frederick Hart, 7th July, 1852, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/117). In November 1848 the *Royal Saxon* arrived in Calcutta having lost 19 horses out of the 98 originally shipped.

77 Evidence of Robert Towns, 29 August, 1854, Select Committee on Asiatic Labour. *NSWLC V&P*, 1854, Vol. II, p. 12.

78 The *Kinnear* noted in Table 2 has not been included in this calculation as only two Chinese are recorded as being on board and these were listed as runaways.

79 Towns to Tait, 27 September 1851, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/116). Searches of the Shipping Intelligence columns of the newspapers and through the Reports of Vessels arriving, have not disclosed any reference to a voyage of the *Louisa* from Amoy during the latter months of 1851 or early 1852. The ship was, however, registered as in Sydney Harbour in April 1852 undergoing refitting ("Ships in Harbour", *SH*, 5th April, 1852), therefore Towns may have sent directions to the captain of the *Louisa* that the ship was to be employed in a trade other than the carriage of Chinese labourers.

detailing the amount of bills drawn against him by his colonial agents, an extract of which is reproduced below.

TABLE 6b
LIST OF BILLS DRAWN IN AUSTRALIA ACCEPTED BY ROBERT BROOKS,
1847-52

AGENT	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852
R. TOWNS	150	13,864	20,798	27,350	28,569	42,312
R. CAMPBELL	6,837	10,050	26,955	29,506	25,102	195,010

SOURCE: Compiled from Table 0.4, F. Broeze, *Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade- Imperial Business in the Nineteenth Century*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1993 p. 192.

Although it cannot be claimed that these bills were definitely used to cover the costs incurred by Towns and Campbell in the importation of Chinese labourers to the colony, the dating of the large increases in the amount drawn against Brooks by these merchants appears to indicate that at least a proportion of the increase must have been due to the merchants' latest commercial venture. Admittedly much of the increase during the early 1850s is accounted for by the purchase of gold, with Campbell drawing over £200,000 between October 1851 and July 1852. Without any later figures relating to the post-importation period it is impossible to reach conclusions, although Broeze states that the amount that Towns drew against Brooks peaked at £42,000 in 1852.⁸⁰ It is at least significant that the amounts drawn by Towns and Campbell increased substantially at the times when they entered the trade in Chinese labourers, for Campbell this was late 1848, and for Towns early in 1851. These dates are commensurate with the dispatch of the *Duke of Roxburgh*, leading one to at least speculate that some of this increase must have been utilised as mercantile capital to finance the importation of Chinese labourers into the colony. If such speculation is not too far fetched it is possible to question whether the importation of Chinese labourers would have occurred at the rate encountered if Towns and Campbell were not involved in the trade, or alternatively did not have the vast and relatively uncontrolled resources that their connection with Brooks offered them.⁸¹

It must be asked why Towns was such a relatively late entrant into the trade in Chinese labourers as the combination of his familial and business connections and enterprising manner would lead one to expect his involvement during the early stages. On the familial level, Towns was the brother-in-law of W. C. Wentworth having married the latter's half-sister Sophia in 1833. Given Wentworth's involvement in the

⁸⁰ F. Broeze, *Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade*, *op.cit.*, p. 191.

⁸¹ Broeze makes the point a number of times that Brooks increasingly had little control over the manner in which his colonial merchants devoted his funds. *ibid.*, p. 193-4 and 199.

establishment of the trade discussed earlier it is intriguing that Towns was also not at the forefront of the trade. The continued involvement of Wentworth with Towns in the trade,⁸² at least until elections and public antagonism intervened, makes Moore and Campbell acting as agents in the early trade rather than Towns rather astounding. When the tendency of Towns to an '...inquisitive (I take nothing for granted without a trial)...and never ending speculative spirit...' ⁸³ is recognised, alongside the less public involvement of Towns in the early trade, the answer to this conundrum becomes apparent.

Towns, in keeping with his entrepreneurial talents possibly delayed his entry into the trade in a direct capacity until he was assured that the experimental importations were well received and the trade could be carried on without Government interference. The uncommitted role of Towns in the early importations of Chinese labourers fits perfectly his self description that he took nothing for granted, a tendency which was evident throughout his involvement in the trade, and is extremely apparent within his treatment of the contracts signed by the Chinese. As with the buying and shipping of gold in imitation of Tertius Campbell, Towns' involvement in the trade may also have been a case of follow-the-leader.⁸⁴ The delay in entry may also have been due to the unavailability of the large ships which he owned or was agent for: the *Eleanor Lancaster* was held up in California, not arriving back in Sydney until April 1851;⁸⁵ and the *Royal Saxon* returned from England in late 1850-early 1851. When Towns did make the leap into the trade he entered it in force, tending to use many of his own ships, viz. the *Arabia*, *Statesman*, and the *Royal Saxon*, and had the latter two fitted out specifically for the trade.

D(ii): CHINESE OR EXILES!

A second explanation for the rapid increase in the arrival rate of Chinese labourers during 1852 is that attempts by interested colonial parties particularly in the north of the colony, to resume the transportation of convicts had been finally defeated by moves in the Legislative Council to reaffirm the 1848 moves to remove the Order in Council which allowed the transportation of convicts to New South Wales. These legislative moves had in turn been prompted by the extreme public disaffection shown at the arrival of the *Hashemy* in June 1849. Prior to the arrival of the *Hashemy* large

82 The two are linked together as the major promoters of the trade in Chauvel to Towns, 18th December, 1852, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/196)

83 Towns to Brooks, cited by F. Broeze, 'Australia, Asia and the Pacific', *op.cit.*, p. 223.

84 That Towns was also to engage in the buying of gold during the 1850s '...more in imitation of others like Campbell than out of conviction', provides some degree of evidence that in entering the trade in Chinese labourers Towns was imitating Campbell. F. Broeze, *Mr Brooks and the Australian Trade*, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

85 "Ships in Harbour", *SMH*, 27th May, 1851.

public meetings had been held once Earl Grey's despatch indicating that the exiles were on their way had been received, which resolved that petitions were to be formed, signed and delivered to the Queen, showing the colony's objections to the resumption of transportation.⁸⁶ The transportation of exiles was viewed as a "breach of a faith" on the part of Earl Grey, at least by the non-squatting sector of the community, whose '...protests and petitions...[were]...immediate and obvious'.⁸⁷ Governor Fitzroy was to recommend to Earl Grey that no more exiles be sent to New South Wales,⁸⁸ which the New South Wales Legislative Council reinforced by resolving that '...no more convicts ought, under any conditions, be sent to any part of this colony'.⁸⁹

This resolution by the Council included the Northern Districts, where opposition to the question of the resumption of transportation was muted if not non-existent in most quarters. Employers within the Northern Districts had eagerly engaged 45 exiles from the *Hashemy* which were transferred to Moreton Bay, and the 225 that arrived aboard the *Mountstuart Elphinstone* and then the *Bangalore* in May 1850.⁹⁰ The reaction in the Northern Districts to the Council's resolution was to call public meetings in Ipswich and Warwick, which subsequently resolved to petition the 'The Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies to send Exiles to Moreton Bay...', a petition which was initially signed by the '...proprietors of stations depasturing upwards of 250,000 sheep; 22,000 cattle; 1,200 horses; and employing 550 men.'⁹¹

The realisation that even if granted the right to transport exile labour to the Northern Districts such permission from Earl Grey would take months to be secured, steps were therefore taken to increase the rate of Chinese labour importation, starting with advertisements leading to the arrival of the *Duke of Roxburgh* in February, 1851. One enterprising squatter, Matthew Marsh, travelled to Van Diemen's Land to acquire convicts in 1851 in order to fill the labour requirements of his stations.⁹² The Northern squatters argument was that they were in desperate need of labour, the majority of the

86 The petition and resolutions passed by the 9th March meeting are contained in full in "Public Meeting against the Renewal of Transportation", *Empire*, 10th March, 1849.

87 A. G. L. Shaw, *Convicts and Colonies*, London, Faber and Faber, 1966, p. 324. The petition and protest against the resumption of transport are in Fitzroy to Grey, 3rd June, 1849, No. 140, *C.O.* 201/414.

88 Fitzroy to Grey, 30th June, 1849, *C.O.* 201/421.

89 Shaw, *op.cit.*, p. 327.

90 One agent alone received applications for more than a hundred exiles per the *Mountstuart Elphinstone*. "Labour", *MBC*, 14th September, 1849. In 1850 there were 267 exiles employed in the Darling Downs district, of these 224 were employed by squatters. Maurice French, *A Pastoral Romance*, Toowoomba, University of Southern Queensland Press, 1990, p. 45.

91 "Meeting at Warwick", *MBC*, 14th January, 1850; "Meeting at Ipswich", *MBC*, 14th January, 1850. The petitions signed at these meetings are contained in Boyd to Grey, 30th April, 1850, No. 84, *C.O.* 201/428.

92 Diary of Elizabeth Marsh, 2nd October, 1851, *Marsh Estate Papers*, (UNE A4).

free immigrants that had lately arrived in Moreton Bay were largely inappropriate being families and therefore unsuitable for pastoral employment. Suitable free labour being unavailable, the Government was warned by the Ipswich squatting clique that:

...if employers could not get exiles they would have Chinese...They wanted single men- where could they get them? Surely their own countrymen would not drive them to import Chinese or Coolies when they could get their own exiles...They could not do without labour; and they must have exiles or Chinamen.⁹³

The spectre of more Chinese labour coming to the shores of New South Wales if other labour was not forthcoming was continually raised by the pro-transportationists who were deeply concerned to read that:

...it was in contemplation in New South Wales to send to Amoy in China for labourers, and as I count it a matter of infinite regret, that the wealth of a colony should be expended on foreign workmen, at a time when Great Britain is overburdened by a convict population, whose services if properly directed might become most valuable,...[and]...in my opinion the establishment of an independent government at Moreton bay [sic] would open a valuable field for Convict labour.⁹⁴

The author of this missive, which continued to give a statistical account of the Northern Districts its suitability as a separate colony and an eager receptacle of convict labour, was Archibald Boyd, who had been seconded to press the case for separation in person to the British Government, continuing the earlier efforts of Dr J. D. Lang. Boyd's personal links with the inner cabinet of the British Government had been established in 1846 when sent to England to lobby the squatters cause in the framing of the new Waste Lands Act, which time he also used to extol the system of transportation to New South Wales. These links were re-established in 1849 when Boyd arrived back in Scotland, after having left the colony post-haste under cover of dark with creditors at his heels in January 1849.⁹⁵ Boyd's departure had been predated by the arrival of his cousin William Sprott Boyd on 13th March 1848, who was '...armed with a power-of-attorney to take over from Ben [Boyd] as manager of the Royal Bank of Australia in the Australian colonies.'⁹⁶ The extent of the Royal Bank's exposure to anything that would be detrimental to the interests of the squatters, owning over three million acres which were held in the names of various members of

93 Patrick Leslie, "Meeting at Ipswich", *MBC*, 14th January, 1850.

94 A. Boyd to Earl Grey, 29th November, 1849, *C.O.* 201/424.

95 Archibald Boyd, (1801-1864), *ADB*, Vol. 3, p. 139-140.

96 Marion Diamond, *The Sea Horse and the Wanderer- Ben Boyd in Australia*, Carlton, Melbourne University Press, 1988, p. 170.

the Boyd family⁹⁷ and J. P. Robinson.⁹⁸ explains Archibald's pleas in England for exiles and separation. As Chinese labourers were employed on the majority of the Boyd family/Royal Bank pastoral holdings many arriving with the early experimental importations, Archibald Boyd's emotive warning about the employment of Chinese is simultaneously ironic and prophetic.

It is not surprising that the call for exiles was soon co-joined with the question of separation of the Northern Districts because:

*...if Moreton Bay be created the capital of a separate colony, upon the petition of the resident house-holders, any promise made to New South Wales respecting the exclusion of convicts would not necessarily apply to this colony.*⁹⁹

Earl Grey was to give his tacit support for the transportation of exiles to Moreton Bay 'If the Legislature of New South Wales should shew itself disposed to meet the reasonable wishes of the Inhabitants of the Northern Districts on this subject...'.¹⁰⁰ A developing anti-transportation movement in the north however was to lead to calls for separation to become distinct from the call for the labour of "Exiles or Chinese". The moves already under way in the Northern Districts to acquire labour from China reduced the immediate need for exiles and allowed aspiring politicians facing an "anti-exiles" electorate to distance themselves from the pro-transportationists, yet still push for separation.¹⁰¹

An increasing level of opposition to the question of the separation of Moreton Bay from the Middle Districts for the purposes of resuming transportation became apparent during the early months of 1851, which in combination with the resignation of Earl Grey led to the abandonment of ideas of "separation with exiles".¹⁰² Once this avenue for the procurement of a servile labour force had been closed, employers in the Northern Districts were open to the further employment of the Chinese labourers that they had so emotionally warned the British government would be their only option if denied exiles. The employment of Chinese labourers continued to be offered as a

97 In New England, Archibald Boyd held, "Boyd's Plains" (80,000 acres) in partnership with his brother William Mitchell Boyd and "Whitmore" (50,000); and in the Clarence district "Newton Boyd" (100,000).

98 J. P. Robinson held the licence for "Ya-rowitch", (64,000) and "Shannon Vale" (57,600) in the New England District; "Canal Creek" (70,000) Darling Downs; "Laidley" (150,000) and "Beau Desert" (50,000) in Moreton Bay district.

99 "The Labour and Transportation Question", *MBC*, 31st August, 1850.

100 Earl Grey to Governor-General Fitzroy, 30th October, 1850; "Transportation", *MBC*, 7th June, 1851.

101 "Public Meeting"- held to elect a member for the Stanley Boroughs during which all the candidates expressed their opposition to a renewal or resumption of transportation. *MBC*, 7th June, 1851.

102 Shaw, *op.cit.*, p. 327.

threat to the British government in later requests for direct emigration to Moreton Bay and the need for separation of the Northern Districts from the stranglehold of Sydney.

*In the district of Moreton Bay a constant demand for agricultural labourers exists owing to the increase of stock and the extension of grazing operations... causing ...a scarcity of labour and consequent high rate of wages, which we have been compelled to attempt to remedy by the introduction of Chinese at our own expense, while we have as yet derived little or no benefit from the emigration to Sydney.*¹⁰³

Shipping agents in Sydney would have been aware to the need to satisfy the labour requirements of the north once exiles had been denied, and therefore planned levels of Chinese importation would have been extended leading to the rush of Chinese labourers that arrived in the colony in 1852. The discovery of gold by Hargreaves announced in April 1851, and then the sponsored discovery in Victoria two months later, also influenced the cessation of calls for exiles as the rush of labour to the colony in search of gold '...will speedily remove one of the strongest expediency arguments which the advocates of convict labour make use of'.¹⁰⁴

D(iii): "THE GOLDEN KING"

A third explanation for the increased rate of Chinese importation during 1852, admittedly a rather weak one though, relates to the rush of labour to the gold fields although it may be argued that the effect of the gold-rushes on the labour market was not immediate only becoming apparent in late 1851. The common and simple explanation for the arrival of Chinese labourers in the colony has been to afford to the gold-rushes and the subsequent movement of labour to the gold-fields, the "blame" for the introduction of indentured Chinese labourers. Paul Pax in his articles followed this line in arguing that the majority of the Chinese were imported as a response to the loss of labour when:

*...it was discovered that a king existed in the bowels of the Australian earth, who was to rule us with a golden hand. The great grazing and squatting interests were the first to suffer for a change which could not be otherwise than prejudicial to them, and it was by no means unnatural that they should take steps to protect themselves from what they, and the public generally, considered to be impending ruin. Several ships were, one after the other, despatched to China for emigrants...*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Letter from L. Hope and G. F. Leslie to Fakington, 18th June, 1852, Enclosure 1 in No. 6, Papers relative to Emigration to the Australian Colonies, *BPP*, 1852-53, (1627), p. 69.

¹⁰⁴ "Labour", *MBC Supplement*, 28th July, 1851.

¹⁰⁵ "Chinese Immigration by Paul Pax, No. I, *op. cit.*

It may be argued that it was the expected deficiency of labour arising from the discovery of gold, rather than the gold-rushes themselves, that was responsible for the importation of many Chinese labourers. Those ships that arrived in the colony carrying Chinese labourers prior to 1852 cannot by any stretch of the imagination be assumed to have been induced by the rush of labour to the gold-fields as gold-fever did not fully effect the labour market especially in the Northern Districts until the latter months of 1851. By this time all of the ships that arrived in the colony during 1852 carrying Chinese labourers had already arrived in Amoy, and were loading or had already taken on board their human cargo.¹⁰⁶ This argument is bolstered by the fact that as the *Duke of Roxburgh* sailed from Amoy in August 1851, the '...*General Palmer, Statesman, Regia, Favorite* and *Rendall* (were) all loading for Sydney.'¹⁰⁷ For these ships to be loading at that time indicates that these ships had left the colony at least three months earlier, that is around April/May 1851, which coincides with the announcement of the discovery of gold by Hargreaves.

Robert Towns had at first assumed a positive attitude to the effect of the gold-discoveries on the demand for Chinese labourers, with a letter to Tait joyfully asserting that 'Our new gold discovery will create a very great demand for labour and I am looking forward to a large Emigration from your quarter...'.¹⁰⁸ This attitude was quickly tempered as only two weeks later within another letter to Tait, Towns stated that:

We are daily waiting for the "Duke of Roxburgh"- the coolies will arrive at a good time- but how the latter ships will turn out is yet problematic- new discoveries of Gold Diggings are daily occurring and where it will end and what will be the result is impossible to say- my own opinion is - labour will still be wanted- consequently Coolies in demand....¹⁰⁹

That these two letters had been written in September and October 1851 respectively, after Towns had already dispatched the *Duke of Roxburgh, Ganges, Statesman*, and *Eleanor Lancaster* to Amoy for Chinese labourers, questions the notion that the Chinese labourers arriving in 1852 were imported in response to the actual dearth of labour occasioned by the gold-rushes.

As only three more ships arrived in the colony carrying indentured Chinese labourers over a year after Hargreave's discoveries, in February and April 1853, combined with the previous argument reveals as erroneous the notion that the Chinese were imported as a response to the movement of labour away from the sheep stations

¹⁰⁶ Refer to Table 2 for departure and arrival dates during 1851-52.

¹⁰⁷ Shipping Intelligence, *SMH*, 17th November, 1851.

¹⁰⁸ Towns to Tait, 27th September, 1851, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307-116).

¹⁰⁹ Towns to Tait, 6th October, 1851 *RTC*, (ML MSS 307-116).

of the interior towards the gold-fields. That some movement of this nature did impact on the rate of employment of Chinese labourers cannot be disputed, but to argue that this movement actually drove the rate of importation of Chinese labourers is totally incorrect. By the time the gold discoveries had increased and moved north with the discovery of the Hanging Rock and Rocky River fields, the major importer, Robert Towns, had signalled his intention to abandon the trade due to '...the Swarms of our Own people arriving daily...'.¹¹⁰

An editorial which discussed a possible renewal of the importation of Chinese labour in 1854, (interestingly only months after Towns established himself in Brisbane), appears to have recognised where the Chinese labourers fitted into the gold-rush scenario by stating that '...the presence of the Chinese when first the gold discoveries drained European labour from the pastoral districts, was a most fortunate accident for the squatters...'.¹¹¹

D(iv): A PROFITABLE TRADE?

The rapid expansion that the trade in Chinese labourers exhibited during 1851-52, may also be partially explained by the advantage offered to ship-owners by the more profitable nature of the trade in comparison with other freights offering at the time. It must be recognised that the importers, especially Towns, had invested a great amount of capital in the form of ships as well as money, into the importation of Chinese labourers during 1851; '...it requires a considerable outlay to procure a shipful of coolies...'.¹¹²

In order to explain the actions of shipping owners and agents in allocating so much tonnage to the Chinese labour trade at that specific time, it is necessary to consider not only the agents/owners actions in satisfying an expected demand, but also the alternative uses to which the shipping tonnage could have been directed, and the comparative costs and returns to be gained in each venture. When the trade changed from a sponsored to a purely speculative venture on the part of Robert Towns in particular, a number of previously profitable shipping operations were in the economic doldrums.

One shipping venture that began to decline in attractiveness due to uncertain profits was the booming trade in passengers and freight to the gold-fields of California. Apart from the passenger trade involved the rush of hopeful gold-diggers

110 Towns to Tait, 7th January, 1853 *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/117).

111 *MBC*, 4th February, 1854.

112 Evidence of R. Towns, 29th August, 1854, Select Committee on Asiatic Labour, *NSWLC V&P*, 1854, Vol. II, p. 12.

to California produced a massive increase in the demand within California for food, clothing, housing and the other basic necessities of life. Another cargo that was in great demand in California which could be supplied from the colony was coal, the exports of which increased from less than 2,000 tons per annum, to 10,000 tons in 1849 and then 31,000 tons in 1850.¹¹³ However, this trade was to quickly lose its attraction despite high demand, attractive shipping rates and good chances of acquiring a return cargo, because once a ship reached port the crew followed the well-worn path to the gold-fields.

A report from San Francisco in May 1850, announced that Captain Lodge and the *Eleanor Lancaster* were among the 350 ships and captains stranded in port due to the crew bolting. Captains found it impossible to hire seamen for the return voyage without paying at least '...100 dollars per month...In another month...seamen will be hard to obtain even at 200 dollars per month...'.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the acceptance of freight or passengers to California, where the rates offered were admittedly tempting, meant the agent and/or ship-owner could possibly lose the use of a ship maybe for months at a time due to the inability of obtaining a crew.¹¹⁵ When the announcement of the discovery of gold in New South Wales had reached the unsuccessful diggers on the Californian gold-fields the flow of passengers and crew was reversed; making the carrying trade to the West Coast profitable again. However, this did not happen until late 1852, after the majority of the Chinese had arrived in the colony.

The repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849 and the introduction of high tonnage ships also had a negative impact upon the colonial shipping industry specifically by reducing dramatically the freight rates charged for the carrying of wool; a very welcome occurrence from the squatters' perspective.¹¹⁶ The repeal of the Navigation Acts by allowing the entry of large, foreign ships into the passenger trade between England and Australia at exactly the time that the passenger trade was to boom, deprived the colonial ship-owners of the chance to make further profits from this trade.

113 John Bach, *A Maritime History of Australia*, Melbourne, John Nelson, 1976, p. 64.

114 "Original Correspondence", *PA*, 25th May, 1850. It was noted earlier within the chapter that Captain Larkins had also been warned against proceeding to California due to the near impossibility of ensuring either a prompt return, '...this California is an awful place in the estimation of Lloyd's, they say there are 300 ships there without crew...'. Horsley to Larkins, 2nd November, 1849, *Papers of Captain Thomas Larkins*, (ML A1 70/7).

115 The "further employment" of the *Inchinnan* once arriving in San Francisco in 1849 '...had to be left to chance.' Broeze, *Mr Brooks and The Australian Trade*, *op.cit.* p. 221.

116 By 1851/52 the wool freight rates had declined to $\frac{5}{8}$ d. per pound, whereas stevedoring charges had remained at $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per pound. *ibid.* p. 215.

The shipping of horses to India, another trade in which Towns had been engaged, also slumped late 1840s because of the prevailing low freight rates which did not allow the agent/owner to recoup costs incurred during the voyage. The earlier massive decline within Asian freight rates produced a situation in 1849 where '...conditions in India were so bad that few ships in Sydney went seeking.'¹¹⁷ Towns was to withdraw the *Statesman* and the *Royal Saxon* from that trade in 1851, the latter having already been withdrawn from the migrant carrying trade, and had both ships fitted out for the trade in Chinese labourers. One commentator on the trade in Chinese labourers actually suggested that a way of disposing of the excess horses within the colony would be as "*Food for the Chinese slave market*".¹¹⁸

In the two years prior to 1848 the trade in bounty emigrants had also slumped with free migrants during these years numbering only 1,218.¹¹⁹ Therefore, ship-owners and agents like Towns who had been engaged in these carriage trades were seeking a new source of cargo at precisely the time that the experimental and sponsored importations of Chinese labourers arrived in the colony. Even that most ardent opponent of the emigration of Chinese labourers under indenture to the colony of New South Wales, the British Consul at Amoy T. H. Layton, argued that from the trade in labourers '...much benefit may accrue to our own colonies, to the employment of our shipping,...'.¹²⁰

The withdrawal of these ships from one trade and dedication to importing Chinese labourers, which promised high returns yet was of a very speculative nature, was a business decision rather than a belief in the necessity or desirability of Chinese labourers in the colony. The combination of events within the colonial and international shipping industry forced upon Towns and his compatriots the need to seek out another market in which their ships and agencies could be profitably employed. That freight rates from China had declined along with those applying to the carrying trade from India was to have a positive effect on the trade in labourer from China. The trade in immigrant customarily commanding '...rates of freight from a third to a half higher...'¹²¹ than non-human cargo, in order to cover the higher expenses incurred and the risks associated with the carriage of people.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 218.

¹¹⁸ Original Correspondence by "Cognos & Co.", *MM*, 13th March, 1852.

¹¹⁹ For more detail on changes in the rate of migration to the colony, both assisted and free, including numbers, refer to Chapter 4 and Table 1 in Appendix 2.

¹²⁰ T. H. Layton to J. G. Bonham 17th July, 1848, Enclosure 1 in No. 13, Despatches relating to Emigration to the Australian Colonies, *BPP*, 1849, (593), Vol. XXXVIII, p. 101.

¹²¹ Charles Winchester, 26th August, 1852, Inclosure 3 in No. 8, Dr Bowring to the Earl of Malmesbury, 25th September, 1852, *BPP*, 1852-53, Vol. 68, p. 12.

The "window of opportunity" that was opened by the demand for Chinese labourers in the colony combined with low freight rates for the labourers was offered during a period of general slump within the shipping industry. The only obvious course for the profit-alert businessman was to shift resources into the one area that presented itself at the time as a profitable undertaking, a course which Towns had been considering since 1851 as shown in a letter to Tait, where he states that '...if the speculation turns out remunerative I will put a larger ship the *Royal Saxon* in the trade.'¹²²

By late 1852 Towns recognised that his actions in importing Chinese labourers at such a rapid rate during the preceding year had not achieved the desired profit results. This realisation is evident within a letter to Robert Brooks in England to whom he wrote that 'I am afraid my Chinese speculation will not turn out so profitable as I contemplated.'¹²³ This impression was reinforced by the shipments of 1853 which experienced a very slow engagement rate, causing Towns concern about being able to find places of employment for these Chinese. By the beginning of 1853 Towns' business confidence appears to be shaken as he relates to Lodge firstly that "The "Saxons" Coolies are working off pretty well-...'",¹²⁴ and then "No more Chinese, the "Spartan" will be a losing concern...'.¹²⁵ In the interim, Towns had shifted some of his resources into another aspect of the Chinese labour trade by dispatching Captain Innes and the ship *Inchinnan*, which ship was owned by Robert Brooks, to Amoy to load labourers for Cuba.¹²⁶

The trade in Chinese labourers to the colony of New South Wales began from a very small base of four labourers in 1847 and after a period of experimental importations which tested the market, the procedures of the trade, and the Government's reaction, was to become an established practice. After the arrival of these ships the trade moved into a new stage, expanding rapidly in response to a number of factors which can all be linked to the search for profit on the part of the squatters and shipping agents and owners. The rapid rate of importation, and rapid engagement evinced during 1852 was however short lived. The number of Chinese

¹²² Towns to Tait, 25th April, 1851, *RTC*, (ML MSS307/116).

¹²³ R. Towns to R. Brooks, 23rd October, 1852, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/69) cited by F. Broeze, 'Australia, Asia and the Pacific: The Maritime World of Robert Towns 1843-1873', *op. cit.*, p. 228. Broeze states that within this letter Towns was discussing his importations of tea, however, given statements of a similar nature made by Towns in letters to other business acquaintances, notably James Tait and Francis Lodge it is conjectured that Towns was in fact discussing his trade in Chinese labourers.

¹²⁴ Towns to Lodge, 28th February, 1853, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/118).

¹²⁵ Towns to Lodge, 23rd April, 1853, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/118).

¹²⁶ Towns to Innes, July 1852, *RTC*, (ML MSS 307/117). After carrying Chinese labourers to Havana the *Inchinnan* took on sugar for the London market. Broeze, *Mr. Brooks and the Australian Trade*, *op.cit.*, p. 222.

labourers thrown onto the market within a short space of time had virtually flooded the market for Chinese labour, which was relatively elastic. As the majority of Chinese labourers had indentured themselves for five years during the period November 1851 to April 1852, therefore a number of years would be expected to elapse before any significant level of demand for Chinese labourers would again become apparent.

The increasing unprofitability of the trade in indentured Chinese labourers is documented within Towns' statement that the *Spartan* in 1853 would be a "losing concern". The transferral of the *General Palmer* and then the *Statesman* to the trade in carrying Chinese gold-diggers to the colony from Hong Kong; the return of the *Eleanor Lancaster* and the *Royal Saxon* to the former pursuits of carrying horses, coal and passengers; an involvement by Towns in the carriage of Indian labourers to the colony in 1854, and Chinese labourers to the West Indies; and the sale or projected sale of other ships previously involved in the trade, provide confirmation of the comparative disadvantage of the trade in indentured Chinese labourers to the colony, and determined in part the cessation of the trade.

Over-supply of labourers and the declining profits of the trade in combination with other factors operated to suspend the importation of indentured Chinese labourers from Amoy after the rush of 1852. Increasing competition in Amoy for labourers; dissent in Amoy towards the trade; the negative impact that these factors had on the carriage of labourers to the colony; increasing public dissent in the colony towards the importations; the influx of labour that the gold-rushes induced; and the mis-behaviour and flight to the gold-fields of some of the Chinese were all factors which coalesced to bring a halt to the importation of indentured Chinese labourers. These factors and those derived specifically from the prevailing political climate of the colony are discussed in the following chapters which detail how the trade and the actual employment of the Chinese in the colony were conducted, and at times misconducted.