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# LOONG, CHINESE DRAGON



H2120 loong head



H2120 Pearl



H2120 Flame Detail

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## Location

GOLDEN DRAGON MUSEUM, 5-11 BRIDGE STREET BENDIGO, GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Municipality

GREATER BENDIGO CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2120

## VHR Registration

November 9, 2007

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - April 8, 2013

What is significant?

Loong is a ceremonial Chinese Dragon with its associated regalia of Pearl and Flame which is held in the collection of the Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo.

### History Summary

Chinese participation in the Bendigo Easter Fair is a rare surviving cultural practice of Chinese involvement in similar events, which also took place in Melbourne, Beechworth, Ararat, Ballarat and other gold mining towns in the nineteenth century.

According to Chinese tradition the dragon is a mythical creature with the attributes of a number of animals. The dragon has associated regalia in the form of a pearl (or teaser) and a flame. In procession, dancers carrying Loong's pearl and flame preceded the dragon. The pearl was intended to entice the dragon to join the procession and encourage him to play while the flame symbolised the power of the dragon. The pearl and flame were imported from China, possibly in the nineteenth century.

The Easter Fair has since 1871 raised money for the Bendigo Benevolent Home and Asylum and the Bendigo Hospital. The Chinese took part in the annual Easter Fair celebrations from 1879, providing traditionally dressed actors and dancers for the procession in the streets of Bendigo. From 1892, a dragon provided a focus for the Chinese contribution to the festivities and was extremely popular with the whole community. Two large dragons and one small dragon participated in the Federation celebrations held in Melbourne in May 1901. It appears that one of the large dragons was Loong and the other large dragon may be the one now held at the See Yup temple in South Melbourne.

There is slight doubt as to the date the present Loong was made and imported from China as there were a number of dragons in use in Bendigo and Melbourne at the time, and there are contemporary newspaper reports from Bendigo and Melbourne of dragons and regalia being imported in 1892, 1901 and 1906. Ceremonial dragons are fragile items made of organic materials and some of the dragons described in contemporary sources no longer exist. However the State Library of Victoria holds a photograph of a dragon in front of Parliament House at the Federation celebrations. This photo is securely dated to May 1901 and was definitely taken during the Federation celebration. The details of the dragon's decoration and regalia are almost identical to the existing Loong. The only minor differences seem to be loss of ornament on the chin and sides of the face which are likely the result of later restorations. Therefore Loong almost definitely dates from 1901 at least and may be earlier.

Whether Loong dates from 1892 or 1901 does not diminish his significance as a rare surviving artefact relating to the Chinese in Victoria.

### Description Summary

Loong is a five clawed or imperial dragon. His head is made from papier- mâche and coloured silk over a bamboo frame, with applied mirrors, paint, coloured paper, metals, pom poms, wire, silk, padded silk, cotton and feathers. The body is made from a bamboo frame covered in fabric (probably not original) with scales made from mirrors, coloured padded silk, cardboard, papier-mâche and a three layered loose fabric skirt with silk tassels. It was intended to be carried by a large number of dancers in procession. The dragon was constructed in sections, and was originally about sixty metres in length but is now about forty metres. The dragon has associated regalia in the form of a pearl or teaser and a flame. In procession, dancers carrying Loong's pearl and flame preceded the dragon. The pearl was intended to entice the dragon to join the procession and encourage him to play while the flame symbolised the power of the dragon. The teaser is made of wood, silk, cane and wire, decorated in red and gold with streamers on the pole and a red wooden handle. The flame was imported from Canton and is made of papier-mâche, silk, wire and wood, decorated with green, red and gold stripes resting on an inverted bell-shaped holder on a bamboo pole. The holder is decorated with peonies, symbols of spring.

### How is it significant?

Loong, the Chinese Dragon, and its regalia of Pearl and Flame satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history

Criterion G Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.

Why is it significant?

Loong, the Chinese Dragon, and its regalia of Pearl and Flame are significant at the State level for the following reasons:

Loong, the Chinese Dragon, and its regalia of Pearl and Flame are significant for their association with the history of the Chinese in Victoria. They demonstrate the customary Chinese practice of joining in local performances and processions to raise money for local charities, and the use of the Dragon over a long period in the Easter Fair Procession in Bendigo. (Criteria A and G)

Loong, the Chinese dragon, and its regalia of Pearl and Flame are also significant for the following reasons, but not at the State level:

Loong, the Chinese Dragon and its regalia of Pearl and Flame are significant as rare surviving artefacts of historic and continuing Chinese cultural practices of dragons participating in Bendigo community parades. Loong retired from the annual Bendigo Easter Parade in the late 1960s due to his age and fragility but is still very occasionally paraded. The traditional ceremonies of blessing and awakening Loong before parades also continue and were last performed with Loong at the start of the year of the dragon in 2012 when Loong together with his Pearl and Flame were paraded in order for him to inspect the refurbished temple precinct.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. Note: All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan

endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this determination exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. Minor Works : Note: Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

## STANDARD EXEMPTION - CONSERVATION

Written notification is required for any proposed conservation activities. The applicant will be notified by the Executive Director whether the conservation activity requires permit approval pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995*, or whether it is permit exempt.

## STANDARD EXEMPTION - MOVEMENT OR RELOCATION

The temporary relocation, movement or external loan of a registered heritage object may require permit approval by the Executive Director pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995*. Written notification is required for any proposed movement or loan activities. The applicant will be notified by the Executive Director whether the proposed movement requires permit approval pursuant to the *Heritage Act 1995*, or whether it is permit exempt.

## Theme

### 2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes

Construction dates	1901,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered object,
Hermes Number	14363
Property Number	

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## History

### Contextual History

#### Chinese Dragons

According to Chinese tradition the Dragon is the most powerful mythical animal and plays a significant role in Chinese culture. He is the controller of the heavens and the bringer of spring rains. He is also the wisest of all creatures - the pearl of wisdom is used to entice the dragon out of his lair to chase it down the streets in the Chinese New Year parade. A five-clawed dragon was the symbol of the emperor up to Qing Dynasty times. Now it is China's national symbol.

The Dragon is a fantastic animal made up of many elements: the head of a camel, horns of a deer, eyes of a rabbit, ears of a cow, neck of a snake, belly of a frog, scales of a carp, claws of a hawk and palms of a tiger.

Every Chinese New Year, the Spring Festival is heralded with the appearance of the Dragon, who emerges from the bottom of the sea where he sleeps, into the sky to bring plentiful spring rain ensuring good crops for the coming season. (Source: Chinese Museum, Melbourne)

## Chinese Dragons on Parade

The parading of Chinese Dragons by the Chinese Community in Australia has always been a great spectacle. The Dragon appears amidst a fabulous procession of ornately costumed men and women carrying mythical beasts, lanterns, banners and weapons to ward away evil spirits, and is accompanied by dancing lions, musicians and noisy fire crackers. As early as 1867, the Chinese were involved in processions in Castlemaine and Ballarat to celebrate the British Royal Tour of the Duke of Edinburgh. In Bendigo and Ballarat Chinese processions became popular annual events.

The Chinese procession at the 1874 Beechworth Carnival was 200 strong, while the procession as part of the Melbourne Hospital fund-raising Bazaar in April 1900 involved 600 Chinese participants from around the state.

The Federation procession held in Melbourne in May 1901 to honour the opening of the first Federal Parliament, included two Chinese dragons (one from Bendigo and one from the See Yup Society in Melbourne), a Chinese lion, orchestra and figures on white horses, accompanied by 300 participants. The Duke and Duchess of York arrived in Australia as part of the Federation celebrations. The Royal visit, as much as Federation, became the focus of Melbourne's street celebrations. The streets of the city were decorated, eight arches were constructed and a procession organised.

The Chinese community raised £800 for the construction of a 'Chinese Citizen's Arch' - located across Swanston Street, south of Little Bourke Street - and the £200 necessary for their part in the procession on 7 May 1901. To the disappointment of the Chinese organisers the Chinese procession was not viewed by the Duke and Duchess; however the procession which extended about half a mile in length was greatly appreciated by the many spectators and the press.

## History of Place

The Chinese participation in the Bendigo Easter Fair is a rare surviving cultural practice of Chinese involvement in similar events, which took place in Melbourne, Beechworth, Ararat, Ballarat and other gold mining towns in the nineteenth century.

The Easter Fair raised money for the Bendigo Benevolent Home and Asylum and the Bendigo Hospital, since 1871. The Chinese took part in the annual Easter Fair celebrations from 1879, providing traditionally dressed actors and dancers for the procession in the streets of Bendigo. From 1892, a dragon provided a focus for the Chinese contribution to the festivities and was extremely popular.

The Chinese, who in most cases migrated in the gold rushes of the 1850s to Victoria as single men without family, required the care of local hospitals and homes in cases of accident or illness and in their old age. The involvement of the local Chinese in the Fair was seen as an acknowledgement of the need to share in the cost to the community of supporting needy Chinese.

There is some doubt as to the date the present Loong was made and imported from China as there were a number of dragons in use in Bendigo and Melbourne at the time.

On 28 March 1892 the *Bendigo Independent* reported in a newspaper article the arrival from China and unpacking of new costumes and a dragon, and on 20 April 1892 the local newspaper reported the first appearance of a dragon in the Bendigo Easter Procession. On 1 April 1901 the *Argus* reported that 'the whole of the Chinese costumes, dragons and war implements have arrived, and will be exhibited in the procession for the first time'. (Although this could refer to the second dragon used in the Federation procession). The Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo holds a number of historic images of dragons that look very different to Loong. Reports from the *Argus* and the *Age* on 8 May 1901 discuss two large dragons and one small dragon participating in the celebrations of the opening of the first Federal Parliament in Melbourne. One of the large dragons is described as '...the horns of the dragon were silvered with knobs on the end...' (as is Loong). The State Library of Victoria holds two high resolution photographs of dragons at the Federation celebrations in Melbourne which are securely dated to May 1901. The photograph of the dragon outside Parliament House at the Federation celebrations in Melbourne in May 1901 (SLV accession numbers H27418) shows details of his decoration and regalia which are almost exactly the same those of the existing Loong. The photo of the other dragon in the march (near the German Arch SLV accession number H96.160/649) is only somewhat similar to the dragon held at the See Yup temple and also has some similarities to Loong. The caretaker of the Gee Hing Joss House where the Chinese regalia was stored in the Ironbark Camp was diagnosed with leprosy in 1905. The contents of the building were burnt in November 1905. This fire was documented in the *Bendigo Advertiser* of 9 December 1905. However there is no documentation to determine if one or more dragons were or were not

stored in the Joss House or included in this destruction. The Chinese Museum states that they have no evidence that Loong was ever associated with the Gee Hing Joss religious group as opposed to other Chinese religious groups in Bendigo at the time. They state that the Bendigo Chinese Easter Fair Committee / Bendigo Competition Society (BCS) represented all groups within the Chinese community in Bendigo including the Gee Hing group and BCS stored the parade regalia.

. A dragon may also have been imported in 1906 when the *Bendigo Advertiser* reported that 'The Chinese have made special preparations [for the Easter Fair] and the whole of their costumes and paraphernalia is new, direct from China'. This report of the importation of new regalia could suggest that earlier regalia was no longer in existence or could document the arrival of another dragon in Bendigo. The Golden Dragon Museum states that photo of a dragon from the *Bendigonian* in 1906 does not appear to show Loong and suggests that a different dragon arrived in 1906. The photo is too unclear to clarify this.

A report from the Argus on a fire in the Chinese camp in December 1911 states that the dragon and other processional regalia were rescued from "...3 large stores in which the Easter Fair committee were interested."

The exact date of Loong's arrival in Victoria cannot be confirmed but 1901 is the first securely documented appearance of Loong (based on photographic evidence). The dragon in the 1901 photo has a very close resemblance to Loong, while the photo of the other dragon used in the Federation march has a fair resemblance to the dragon held at the See Yup temple.

Whether Loong dates from 1892 or 1901 does not diminish his significance as a rare surviving artefact relating to the Chinese in Victoria.

#### Loong and the See Yup dragon

The differences between Loong and the See Yup dragon are listed below. These same features also occur on the historic and contemporary images of the two dragons allowing comparison (see images).

The See Yup dragon has striped horns while Loong has silver horns (contemporary newspaper accounts of the Federation March contain a description of a dragon with silver horns). The See Yup dragon has a smaller mirror in its head than Loong. The See Yup dragon has larger eyelids than Loong. There is an embroidered cloth on first part of body of See Yup dragon but not Loong. The two dragons have slightly differently shaped (and coloured?) scales. The two dragons have different designs inside their mouths. The See Yup dragon has downward pointing tusks outside his mouth and Loong's point upwards. Loong has small, square front teeth and the See Yup dragon has very minimal front teeth.

The number of matches seems to show that the dragon in the 1901 photo taken outside Parliament House is Loong but the 1901 photo taken at the German arch may or may not be the See Yup temple dragon.

The second dragon to participate in the 1901 Federation March has a fair resemblance to the dragon currently held at the See Yup temple and also has a few resemblances to Loong. It is possible that this is due to later restorations or this may be a different dragon.

. The beard is in a different position.

. The fabric and decorations on the lower jaw and side of the face appears to be different

. The flame edging is missing

David Leong, one of the elderly custodians of the See Yup temple has stated that dragons were all made in the same town in China, Fat Shan. He says that dragons were made in factories and would have looked very similar to each other. He also remembers that the dragon at the See Yup temple did not arrive there until 1940 (although it could have been stored elsewhere) and that he marched in Melbourne with a dragon in 1939 that was not the same as the one currently at the See Yup temple. His view is that Loong could well be a copy of the 1901 dragon. Given the extremely close resemblance this seems to be unlikely. However it has not been possible to verify whether dragons made around 1900 were identical or not.

State Library of Victoria Photo: THE CHINESE PROCESSION. The Dragon turning the corner of Spring and Bourke Streets. [Melbourne]: Robt, S. Brain, Government Printer, [1901] Accession no(s) H27418.

State Library of Victoria photo: Chinese procession in Collins near Elizabeth Street [picture] / Harvie & Sutcliffe. 1901 Accession no(s) H96.160/649.

15 articles from the Bendigo Advertiser from 1905 and 1906 viewed in Trove <http://nla.gov.au>

McKinnon, L (2012) Loong Bendigo's Golden Dragon. The Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo

Discussion with David Leong, See Yup temple 9 January 2013.

Anita Jack, Director, The Golden Dragon Museum, Bendigo. Emails and images sent between 25 January and 6 February 2013.

## **Plaque Citation**

Loong, the Chinese dragon, is an imperial (five-clawed) dragon with regalia of pearl and flame, carried in procession at the Bendigo Easter Fair celebrations in a tradition dating from the 1870s.

## **Extent of Registration**

1. The Objects known as Loong the Chinese Dragon and Regalia (Pearl and Flame) held in the Golden Dragon Museum, 5-11 Bridge Street, Bendigo.

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*