CHAPTER 4
FAR EASTERN HISTORY: 1948–1954

By the time Douglas Copland returned to Canberra to take up the position of vice-chancellor at The Australian National University in April 1948, the George E Morrison Lectureship, established in 1932 in the memory of the famed Australian China correspondent, was itself little more than a distant memory. The oration had suffered a number of setbacks: the passing of William Ah Ket in 1936 and Colin MacKenzie in 1938 deprived the enterprise of two of its founders and key proponents. From the late 1930s, the selection of prospective speakers, a task originally entrusted to the permanent committee of Liu, Ah Ket, the Director of the Institute of Anatomy, the Minister for Health and the Chinese Consul-General, had fallen solely upon William Liu. Were it not for Liu’s efforts to keep the Morrison Lecture alive throughout the 1940s, there is little chance it would have survived to become a noted annual event in the Chinese Studies calendar at ANU.

The advent of the Pacific War severely curtailed Canberra’s public life, including the annual Morrison Lecture. ‘It would seem that so many people here [in Canberra] are so intently engaged in wartime activities that they have not the time nor the inclination to attend public meetings or addresses’, read a letter to Liu from Frederick Clements, MacKenzie’s successor as Director of the Institute of Anatomy, in August 1944. ‘Thus I believe it wiser to again defer the Lectureship’.194 Not deterred, each year the indefatigable William Liu suggested possible speakers, with Clements then contacting them and arranging publicity for the event. But, after William G Goddard presented the Tenth Morrison Lecture under the title The Min Sheng: A Study in Chinese Democracy on 5 June 1941, there was a lengthy hiatus in the series until Douglas Copland delivered the first post-war oration on the subject of The Chinese Social Structure, on 27 September 1948.

THE SECOND MORRISON

In 1941, Goddard had been Liu’s second choice to present that year’s Morrison Lecture. His preference was for a far more well-known Australian, a man Liu called ‘Australia’s second Morrison in China’: the Lithgow-born newspaperman William Henry Donald.195 It was the result of a cruel irony that Donald would be unavailable to speak in a series in part dedicated to a clear-eyed understanding of Japanese imperial designs: out of sheer disgust with Australia due to its appeasement of Japan, Donald had pledged never to return to his homeland.

In many respects, WH Donald’s career in China mirrored

194 Letter, Clements to Liu, 3 August 1944, ML MSS6294/5.
that of George Morrison (in Peking the two enjoyed a close friendship). In 1902, Donald was a journalist with the Sydney Daily Telegraph when Petrie Watson, on a head-hunting mission for Hong Kong's China Mail, called in at the newspaper's offices. Impressed by Donald's enthusiasm for Asian affairs, and by his sobriety — Donald was a lifelong teetotaller, making him a desirable asset in Hong Kong's booze-addled journalistic circles — Watson suggested that the Mail hire him. Having accepted the offer, Donald arrived in Hong Kong in May 1903. Further details of this period are unclear and, as Craig Collie notes in his biography of the journalist, this and much else of WH Donald's life remain shrouded in mystery. 196

In 1911, Donald encountered Charlie Soong 宋嘉樹, a wealthy missionary and businessman who was the principal backer of the revolutionary Sun Yat-sen; he soon found himself acting as an adviser to Sun himself. Donald was in Nanking on 1 January 1912, when Sun was sworn in as Provisional President of the new Republic of China. Over the following days, he drafted the English-language text of the 'Manifesto from the Republic of China to All Friendly Nations' which was issued under the name of the president and his foreign minister as an appeal for recognition and support for the fledgling republic.

'While Morrison was giving good advice to Yuan Shih-k'ai [a military leader and competitor with Sun for presidential power] in Peking,' writes Morrison's biographer Cyril Pearl, 'another Australian newspaperman, WH Donald, was performing a similar service for the Republicans in Shanghai.' 197 Both Australians soon found themselves disillusioned with the leaders they were advising; this led to a brief falling-out between the two when Donald let slip in an interview with the New York Herald the following: 'I see Dr. Morrison daily, and he does not know whether to be tired of his job or not. Advice is easy to give: the Chinaman listens to advice, but will do what he thinks he wants to do.' Morrison was enraged by the comments, though Pearl notes that: 'the imminent breach between the two Australians — who had a great regard for each other — was averted when Donald explained very apologetically that he had never intended his casual observation to appear in print.' 198

Through a series of chance encounters in the early 1930s, Donald had managed to become an advisor to the warlord Chang Hsueh-liang. He helped 'the Young Marshall' overcome a notorious opium habit and was influential in convincing the warlord to align himself with Chiang Kai-shek's new Nanking government. During the Sian Incident of December 1936, in which the Young Marshall and agents of the Communist Party kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek to broker a second United Front of the Nationalists and Communists against the Japanese, Donald played a key role in negotiations that led to Chiang's release. By the late 1930s, Donald was again advising a republican Chinese president, this time it was Chiang Kai-shek; he was also personally friendly with the president's wife, Soong May-ling, one of Charlie Soong's daughters whom he had known since she was a girl. In 1940, Donald fell out with the Generalissimo over the latter's

196 In this section I have relied on Craig Collie, The Reporter and the Warlords: An Australian at Large in China's Republican Revolution, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013.
197 Cyril Pearl, Morrison of Peking, p.236.
198 Cyril Pearl, Morrison of Peking, p.280.
Top: WH Donald with Soong May-ling in Shanghai, 1935; bottom: Donald in discussion with the ‘Young Marshall’, Chang Hsueh-liang, 1936. (Xinhua Net)
policy towards Germany, which Donald believed was too pro-Nazi. Later that year, he left China for Tahiti where he hoped to recover from a series of health problems. Donald was a significant figure at crucial junctures in modern Chinese history. As the journalist Rowan Callick observes: ‘a case might be made that he had more influence over more lives than any other Australian since Federation.’

On 18 January 1941, William Liu proposed that the journalist be invited to deliver the Tenth Morrison Lecture, with Goddard as a second preference. Liu would have been aware from reading *The Sydney Morning Herald* that Donald was already in New Zealand and preparing to leave for Tahiti. He would need some persuading to return to the country of his birth as it was well-known that the writer ‘deeply resented Australia’s friendly and helpful attitude toward Japan and her lack of assistance to China’. As he told reporters in Auckland:

I am not going back to Australia … I left there 38 years ago, and have never been back. With Australian politics as they are, I shall not go there. … If it had not been for the stand which China has made … Japan by now would have carried out her programme of southward expansion. The Chinese feel very bitterly about the attitude of the democracies.

William Liu, ever the optimist, remained hopeful: ‘He has just passed through Auckland on his way to Tahiti where he will remain for a while to write his memoirs’, he wrote to Clements. ‘In my early correspondence with the late Sir Colin MacKenzie, I referred to Mr. Donald as Australia’s second Morrison in China. An invitation from you may influence Mr. Donald to visit his native land Australia on his way back to China.’ For his part, Clements doubted that the Chinese Consul-General would agree: ‘Dr. Pao has always been most emphatic that the Morrison orator should refrain from discussing politics’, he replied to Liu, noting Donald’s ‘close association with the central government in China and his general attitude on Eastern politics.’ But, by early February, Pao had agreed to the idea of inviting Donald, and Clements arranged to contact him.

By this time, however, the journalist cum-political advisor had placed himself far beyond the reach both of his erstwhile employers in China and of his loathed homeland. ‘Unsettled and aimless, Donald found Tahiti a dreary paradise’, writes Collie. ‘Some of his fading health was recovered swimming in the crystal Pacific water and cycling around the island. It was quiet and restful, but he couldn’t make any inroads into his book. A letter from Madame [Chiang] asked him to fly back [to Chungking], and he replied that he needed four to six months to book a steamship.’

In November, Donald arrived in Honolulu, intending to return to China via Hong Kong. But his ship, the SS Robert Dollar, was rerouted to Manila when Pearl Harbor, then Hong Kong itself, fell under attack from the Japanese. Manila was captured three weeks after he arrived.

After William Goddard delivered the Tenth Morrison Lecture, in June

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201 Letter, Liu to Clements, 18 January 1941, ML MSS6294/5.
202 Letter, Clements to Liu, 5 February 1941, ML MSS6294/5.
1941, William Liu remained anxious that the Lectureship should continue throughout the war years, but despite the best of intentions it was not to be. In May 1944, he suggested a joint oration to Clements with the recently returned Frederic Eggleston taking to the podium with the Chinese Minister Hsu Mo:

Combining the two Ministers’ Orations would fittingly cover 1943 and 1944, two-in-one publication this year. As 1942 was a critical year for us all, it could be mentioned as the reason for ‘the pause’ for that year. Otherwise, our lectures have been continuous since 1931. 204

Eggleston’s sudden appointment to Washington, however, ruled him out, while Minister Hsu declined an invitation to speak as he was worried that he would be addressing an empty house: ‘After careful consideration’, Hsu told Liu, ‘Dr. Clements frankly made it known to me that … owing to various conditions the attendance at my proposed lecture might be embarrassingly small, and intimated that as he could not guarantee the presence of a sufficient number of listeners to give me that inspiration which was desired by every public speaker, the matter might, to our mutual advantage, be dropped for the time being’. 205 Liu was quietly furious with Clements for putting thoughts about possible lacklustre attendance in the Chinese Minister’s mind; then, in a lengthy appeal addressed to Hsu Mo, he replied:

Yes. I am naturally disappointed that you could not, as yet, see your way clear to help us revive the lectureship this year. All the more is this unfortunate, because the honour of having you, as the first Chinese Minister in Australia, to deliver a message, so warmly awaited since your arrival, having been put off so long. There should really be no fear of a lack of interest as all the previous Morrison Lectures were so well received. So many residents of Canberra wishing [sic] to hear about China from Consul-General Dr. C.J. Pao (Sixth Lecture – 4/5/1937) that all attending could not be accommodated with the Lecture Theatre of the Australian Institute of Anatomy … Visualise how much more interest would it be for Officials at the Capital to have a message from the Chinese Minister, especially at such times as we have been passing through during the past years. 206

Neither this, nor Liu’s suggested compromise to Hsu Mo — ‘a Paper from you instead of the Oration to cover 1944 … issued in the usual high grade brochure’ — eventuated.

Finally, in 1947, it seemed possible that the Australian Minister for External Affairs, HV Evatt, would be available to present the long-delayed annual oration, and he even drafted a lecture titled The Life of Morrison. Given Evatt’s hectic official schedule, preparations were all very last-minute. William Liu received an invitation less than two weeks before the proposed date, it came with an apology from Clements ‘for the delay in advising

205 Letter, Hsu to Liu, 28 August 1944, ML MSS6294/5.
206 Letter, Liu to Hsu, 9 September 1944, ML MSS6294/5.
you about this Oration but only to-day did I received confirmation from Dr. Evatt that the 25th June would be suitable to him.207 Liu was nonetheless ecstatic, all the more so because it would offer an opportunity to honour the memory of WH Donald, who had passed away in Shanghai the previous November. Liu immediately got in touch with Donald’s brother, Herbert: ‘I am trying to see if I can find some way to include brother WH in our “GE Morrison Lecture in Ethnology” in which I had taken part to establish in 1931’. He suggested they go together:

I’m trying to go up to Canberra by the regular plane on the 25th instant to save the tedious train journey. Dr. Evatt delivers his address at about 8 pm that night. Come back following day or day after if we find enough interest to keep us there. I say — we — as I am hoping that you may also make the trip for obvious reasons. You could say so much of interest during my discussions with Dr. Clements about perpetuating the memory of brother W.H. through the Lectureship at Canberra — and I believe we could find a very nice way of doing it, and, as I said in enclosed copy letter, by joining to two [sic] great Australians together in such a Lectureship, it should be a great advantage to Australian and Chinese students and diplomats and worthy of the memory of W.H.208

In the event, Evatt’s oration was cancelled at the last minute, as he was required to attend hearings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo (that is, the Tokyo War Trials).209 Yet again, the impetus for the lecture series petered out, although Evatt did finally deliver his address, Some Aspects of Morrison’s Life and Work, but not until December 1952.

On 12 May 1948, Douglas Copland, who spoke and wrote frequently about China following his return to Australia, addressed the United Nations Association at the Trocadero Theatre in Sydney. It was on that occasion that he first met William Liu and, following some correspondence, Liu proposed to Clements that, since Copland would now be in Canberra as the vice-chancellor of The Australian National University, he ‘would be an ideal person to favour us our next Morrison Oration, as I suppose the question of Dr. Evatt’s delivery is still uncertain.’210 Clements agreed with alacrity, adding a note that he had always been uncertain as to why Colin MacKenzie had established the Morrison Lecture under the auspices of the Institute of Anatomy — ‘a biological institute’ after all, ‘concerned with the study of human health and disease’. He went on to suggest to Liu that the endowment for the Lectureship be transferred to the new university:

You have probably seen in the press reports of the establishment of the Australian National University in Canberra with its four major research departments, namely, medical science, physical science, social studies and Pacific studies.

207 Letter, Clements to Liu, 13 June 1947, ML MSS6294/5.
208 Letter, Liu to ‘Don’ (Herbert Donald), 17 June 1947, ML MSS6294/5.
209 Telegrams, Clements to Liu, 20 and 21 June 1947, ML MSS6294/5.
Top: Vice-Chancellor Douglas Copland in his office at ANU, late 1940s (courtesy ANU Archives); bottom: Letter from Copland to NE McKenna (Minister for Health and Social Services) confirming the transfer of the George E Morrison Lecture in Ethnology from the Australian Institute of Anatomy to ANU, September 1948. (Courtesy National Archives of Australia)
The last named discipline offers an excellent background for the Morrison Oration in that they propose to study Australian relationships to the Pacific as a whole extending up as far as China.211

Clements promised to ‘not communicate officially with the National University’ until Liu had conferred with his colleagues in the Australian-Chinese community. Thereupon, Liu contacted SY Woo, who had succeeded Chun-jien Pao as China’s Consul-General, CM Yuen, editor of the Chinese Times, and WJ Lee, a barrister and the son of one of the original benefactors of the Morrison Lectureship. ‘I am pleased to report’, he wrote to Clements, ‘that they also join me in supporting your suggestion for the transfer of the Morrison Lectureship to the National University’.

On 27 September 1948, Copland duly delivered the Eleventh George E Morrison Lecture in Ethnology under the title The Chinese Social Structure, the first since the war brought the orations to a halt in 1941. The following day, the ANU Interim Council agreed that the Morrison Lectures should have a new home at the university. Although ANU formally accepted the Morrison endowment in 1948, the lectures continued to be held at the Institute of Anatomy until ANU’s University House, opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in February 1954, offered a more appropriate venue.

EASTER MEETINGS

In April 1948, a crucial series of discussions between the Canberra-based ANU Interim Council and the four members of the Academic Advisory Committee who had flown to the Australian capital from England were held at the Institute of Anatomy. Known as the ‘Easter Meetings’, this was the only occasion on which the two groups met. The task before them was consequential: to finalise the formal titles and intellectual parameters of the four Research Schools named in The Australian National University Act.213

The Act allowed for considerable flexibility regarding the make-up of the four schools. Each would consist of sub-disciplinary departments, but what these might be, and who would staff them, were still matters for discussion. In light of the university’s mandate as a research institution established to advance the national interest, the Council and the Committee had to

212 Letter, Liu to Clements, 25 June 1948, ML MSS6294/5. Liu added that: ‘In answer to your query why the Oration was originally brought under the auspices of the Institute of Anatomy — seeing that it is a lectureship in ethnology, as Sir Colin gave birth to the idea of providing a channel to promote Sino-Australian understanding through the annual Orations, he was keen to ensure its progress and permanency, and found it most convenient to deal with the matter at the Institute. There were no other organizations in Canberra sufficiently interested in the subject at the time of the foundation in 1931, and Sir Colin, with some anxiety regarding the then tense developments in the Far East — our Far North as he used to say — felt the urge to provide some means to bring about closer thought between the Australian and Chinese peoples. Sir Colin, apparently, found points of common interest in the study of biology and ethnology. He found, as it were, an inking of the human structural make-up with the deeds of mankind generally.’
213 The Australian National University, Conference between the Interim Council and the Academic Advisory Committee, Easter 1948, 30 April 1948, ANUA18, Box 10.
decide just what was expected of ANU. It was an issue that was debated with constant reference to the Act. The two bodies also had to decide how ANU would cooperate with its sister institution, the undergraduate Canberra University College (CUC).

Regarding Pacific Studies, Eggleston conceded that two of his earlier enthusiasms — diplomatic studies and languages — might ‘infringe on the principle that the Australian National University does not touch undergraduate studies’, but he was adamant that geography and history, disciplines covering not just the Pacific Islands but East Asia as well, should still be included in the university’s programme. 214

The Easter Meetings pitted Raymond Firth, the Academic Advisor for the School of Pacific Studies, squarely against Eggleston. As the historians of ANU, Stephen Foster and Margaret Varghese, note, the two men approached the school from different angles; they were ‘almost literally, oceans apart’. Firth advocated a ‘Pacific studies approach’ that emphasised an anthropological stance, while Eggleston championed a ‘Pacific affairs approach’ that favoured what could be called an in-depth multi-disciplinary view. 215

Acknowledging the ambiguity of the term ‘Pacific’, and the capacious set of

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academic specialisations that were called for to study it, Firth concluded that, in an ideal world and ‘with unlimited resources’, the school could encompass a range of disciplines ‘starting at geology and comprising meteorology, pedology, botany and other divisions of biology, history, demography, economics, anthropology, and the other human sciences.’ But, he concluded, reasonably enough, that as the Council had invited him, an anthropologist, to be the School’s Academic Advisor, ‘the emphasis of the Pacific School ... should be on anthropological studies.’ In response to Eggleston’s call for a focus on East Asia, Firth argued:

Research should also be done in the wider field, including not only the Pacific colonial territories but also the fields of Chinese and Japanese affairs. But this should be oriented towards the effects of movement in these bordering countries on Australia and the Pacific island territories rather than to analysis of conditions in these countries per se.  

The historian Keith Hancock, who sided with Firth, felt that the limited

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216 Raymond Firth, ‘Memorandum on School of Pacific Studies’, 30 January 1948, p.2, ANUA 18, Box 10.
resources available to Australian scholars would make it impossible to produce internationally outstanding historical research worthy of ANU’s mandate. Responding to Eggleston’s push for diplomatic and political history, he warned that: ‘in studying such a thing as the partition of China, for instance, a good deal more than official political documents would be required. Such things as the reports of railway companies would be necessary and numerous sociological aspects would have to be considered.’ Much of this source material would only be available elsewhere — ‘Paris, London, Berlin, Moscow’. Hancock argued that the Research School of Pacific Studies should limit its purview and contain its aims within a ‘manageable area’, and ‘accept some geographical limitation and realize that, although individuals would have to be free to go outside the area in some cases, the School could probably make its best contribution to knowledge by concentrating on the South Pacific’. Eggleston responded that Hancock’s remarks betrayed a lack of daring; why not be more courageous and act like ‘the stockbroker who spent his life making decisions on insufficient evidence and ended up by being a millionaire’? Elsewhere he would observe:

I think Professor Hancock will realise that we in Australia are acutely conscious of the lack of academic amenities and the rather thin content of our cultural life. The lamp of culture no doubt burns as brightly in Australia as elsewhere, but, owing to our dispersion of population, it is difficult to get a sufficient number of people willing to organise cultural institutions. The

result is that we tend to lose a great many of our best men who go to places where these institutions are more easily organised. ... What we ask is that Professor Hancock and his colleagues will recognise it is a matter of profound importance in which they will be pioneers.218

In the end, Eggleston got his way. Conceding that the Easter Meetings failed to reach a consensus regarding the structure of Pacific Studies, the Interim Council allowed Eggleston, with the support of the Vice-Chancellor, to develop a plan for the school along the lines he had suggested. In February 1949, the Interim Council ‘received with regret’ a letter from Raymond Firth, who was back in England, in which he resigned from the Advisory Committee. He also turned down the directorship of the School of Pacific Studies. In any case, Firth wrote, both he and his wife were ‘culturally European’ and they did not wish to relocate to Australia.219

In March, Eggleston redrafted the statement for the School of Pacific Studies and included three directives in it: first, to ‘give less immediate emphasis to Geography and more to History and Political Science’; second, ‘to seek as Director of the School a Political Scientist or Historian’; and, ‘to make provision for a study of Linguistics, possibly by the appointment of a Reader’. He conceded that ‘Australian policy in New Guinea will rely considerably on anthropological research’, but dispensed with what he called Firth’s ‘microcosmic approach’, with its primary emphasis on anthropology, and proposed six departments: Geography, Demography, Political Science, History, Anthropology and Economics.220 Despite his misgivings, Firth did return for a stint at ANU but only to administer a Research School of Pacific Studies based on Eggleston’s ideas.

Eggleston had successfully dispatched Firth’s ‘microcosmic approach’ to Pacific Studies but, in regard to China, he maintained a ‘microcosmic fixation’ on Hu Shih. Despite Douglas Copland’s suggestions regarding any number of other Chinese scholars, Eggleston still insisted that Hu Shih, and only Hu Shih, be invited on a lecture tour and to advise the university on the development of Chinese Studies. On 10 December 1948, at the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Interim Council, Douglas Copland reported that ‘no further information had been received’ from Hu Shih regarding his intentions to visit Australia. At the Council’s Twenty-Sixth Meeting in February 1949, Copland said that ‘advice had been received from the Australian Embassy in Nanking to the effect that Dr. Hu Shih regrets that the situation in China prevents him visiting Australia this year.’221

Hu had more pressing problems than international travel. As the Communist army tightened its grip on Peiping, laying siege to the city in November 1948, the President of Peking University had fled south to

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219 ANU Interim Council, Minutes of the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, 11 February 1949, p.1, ANUA 198, Box 2; and, Foster and Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, p.41.
220 Report of Committee on School of Pacific Studies, 11 March 1949, p.1, ANUA 18, Box 6; and, ‘Memorandum prepared by the Vice-Chancellor in consultation with Sir Frederic Eggleston in accordance with a resolution of the Interim Council at its 27th Meeting’, 16 March 1949, pp.1-2, ANUA 77, Box 1.
221 ANU Interim Council, Minutes of the Twenty-Fifth Meeting, 10 December 1948, p.6; and, the Twenty-Sixth Meeting, 11 February 1949, p.12, ANUA 198, Box 2.
Nanking in a plane sent by Chiang Kai-shek, leaving behind much of his library, his manuscripts and letters. Not long after, he went to Shanghai and then into exile in the United States. In August 1949, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party Mao Tse-tung denounced the country’s preeminent intellectual figure as a ‘running dog of imperialism’:

But imperialism and its running dogs, the reactionary governments of China, could control only a part of these intellectuals, and finally only a handful, such as Hu Shih, Fu Sze-nien and Chien Mu; all the rest got out of control and turned against them. Students, teachers, professors, technicians, engineers, doctors, scientists, writers, artists and government employees, all are revolting against or parting company with the Kuomintang.

Had Eggleston entertained the likelihood of Communist victory on mainland China with more gravity, as Copland had suggested he do, and agreed to cast the net a little wider in terms of potential visiting scholars, also as Copland had suggested, Chinese Studies at ANU might have had a very different beginning. But, by this time, Copland had taken matters into his own hands. Having received the ‘candid friend’ letter from CP FitzGerald just days before leaving Nanking in March, Copland resolved to contact the historian in late December 1948.

As Foster and Varghese note, FitzGerald’s was ‘probably the only appointment in the history of the ANU that was foretold with the help of a horoscope — or, to be precise, the visit to Australia which immediately led to his appointment was accurately foretold.’ In his memoir, Why China?, FitzGerald recalls visiting Ma Lun, an fortune-teller whom he had frequently consulted, during the Peiping siege:

‘In the sixth month of next year (by the lunar calendar, equivalent to July in the solar calendar) you will go overseas on a long voyage.’ ‘To my home country?’ I asked. ‘No; to a far-off country which you have never visited.’ ‘Alone or with my family?’ ‘Alone: and after three months you will return to Peking.’ ‘What about my wife and children?’ ‘They will remain in Peking while you are away.’ He had already given some details of past experience I had had, in China, and in London during the war, which although strikingly accurate, were not unusual: ‘a period of great danger’, etc., such as could have been of anyone who had lived in the war zones of the recent conflict. But this prediction about a long sea voyage to a distant country I had never visited, alone, was stunning.
LONG VOYAGES

The far-off country was Australia. Copland and the ANU Registrar Ross Hohnen organised a three-month lecture tour for the historian from early August 1949. During a trip that took him to Canberra, Armidale, Brisbane, Sydney, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide FitzGerald delivered sixty-seven public lectures. Most of these addressed university audiences, although in his report on the tour FitzGerald noted that he also spoke to senior high school classes, including students at Cranbrook in Sydney, at Wesley and Scotch colleges in Perth, as well as to public audiences at branches of the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the United Nations Association.

FitzGerald came to Australia expecting to speak about Chinese history, his own area of expertise; some of what he called the 'more sophisticated' members of the audience, in particular those at universities and members of the public service in Canberra, did indeed show an interest in the subject. However, he soon discovered that most interlocutors quickly changed the subject to focus on contemporary events, and understandably so: on 1 October, during the Melbourne leg of the lecture tour, Mao Tse-tung proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. FitzGerald reported that:

It was extremely interesting — and encouraging — to observe that although what I had to say was often to my audiences unexpectedly favourable to the Chinese Communists and very little in accord with their political inclinations, I always found that the questions asked were objective and discerning, rarely displaying a blind prejudice or closed mind. 226

Frequently, audiences expected him to know something of Australia’s former enemy: ‘the fixation was still all with Japan’, he recalled. ‘You’d give a lecture about the Chinese revolution, and the question “do you think Japan is going to invade us again?” was inevitable every time’. 227

While it appears that no copies of FitzGerald’s lectures are extant, the substance of what he had to say is clear from a number of media interviews he gave at the time and an article he published during the tour. In August, he told Perth’s Daily News that the Communist successes were due to the desire of the Chinese people to see an end to the Civil War; ‘the efficiency and discipline of their armies’ and the ‘honesty of their administration’ in comparison with the Nationalist government, he argued, turned public opinion ‘from passive acceptance to open support’. 228 The following month, he published an article on the Communist revolution in Brisbane’s Courier Mail. Now that China had at last achieved strength and unity, he charged — quoting the words of US President Truman on the eve of the Marshall Mission to China in December 1945 — it was the duty of the Western powers to recognise the new regime:

Top: CP FitzGerald in China, late 1940s (courtesy Mirabel and Anthea FitzGerald); bottom: ‘This is What a Red China is Going to Mean to Us’, The Herald (Melbourne), 7 September 1949. Written in the middle of FitzGerald’s lecture tour, just weeks before the founding of the People’s Republic of China on 1 October, this article appeared as an ‘exclusive’ in several major newspapers.
During the past 50 years, when the statesman of the Western world made their rather infrequent declarations of policy towards China, they were wont to declare that they hoped to see the ‘emergence of a strong, united and independent China.’ They have now seen their hopes fulfilled, but not, perhaps, quite in the way they expected. ... This result creates an entirely new situation in the Far East, which, to Australia, is the Near North.\(^{229}\)

Recognition of a new Communist regime in Asia was a thorny issue at a crucial time in Australia’s political life. A Federal election was due to be held in December and Ben Chifley, prime minister of the incumbent Labor government, was reluctant to press the issue of recognition. Widespread fear of Communism in the context of the emerging Cold War was one of the defining issues of the election campaign. Chifley’s attempts to nationalise Australia’s banking system, and a coal miner’s strike in the middle of the year, played squarely into the hands of his conservative opponent, Robert Menzies. Although Chifley had sent the army in to break the strike, Menzies was able to portray the Labor Party as being ‘soft on Communism’ — a theme he repeatedly returned to, after winning the election, during his seventeen years in power.

Due to his support for Australia’s recognition of the People’s Republic of China — and later, his opposition to the Vietnam War — the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) placed FitzGerald under close surveillance; the monitoring would continue until 1975. The first entry in his ASIO dossier dates from October 1949 when, during a talk at the Physics Lecture Theatre of Adelaide University, FitzGerald claimed that: ‘the Chinese Communist Government wanted peace and the Australian Government should recognise the new regime’.\(^{230}\)

While FitzGerald’s lack of academic qualifications would prove something of an obstacle to his appointment to ANU, the positive response to his lecture tour was enough to convince most members of the ANU Interim Council and its Academic Advisory Committee that he was a good candidate to establish Chinese Studies in Australia — the one exception being Frederic Eggleston. William Macmahon Ball, the Professor of Political Science at Melbourne University wrote that FitzGerald was:

> extraordinarily generous with his time and effort … his talk to the Institute [that is, the Australian Institute of International Affairs] here was the best in our memory. People who attended the staff seminar we arranged, together with the honours and pass students to whom he has lectured, all seem to have been most deeply impressed with his scholarship, his precision, his exceptional skill in exposition, and his humanity.\(^{231}\)

In South Australia, FitzGerald’s host was Garnet Vere Portus, a historian at the University of Adelaide. Portus suggested that FitzGerald should have ‘the opportunity of meeting the Prime Minister, because it would appear of

\(^{229}\) CP FitzGerald ‘What a Red China Means to Us’, *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 16 September 1949, p.2.

\(^{230}\) See ‘Charles Patrick FITZGERALD’ — Volume 1’, NAA A6119/674.

\(^{231}\) Letter, Macmahon Ball to Copland, 6 October 1949, ANUA 18, Box 11.
such importance that Australian relations with the new Government should be fostered, particularly as FitzGerald indicates we are held in favour by the ComMos up there.\footnote{Letter, Portus to Copland, 17 October 1949, ANUA 18, Box 11.} Similar praise was expressed by William Mitchell, the former Chancellor of Adelaide University, and CS King of the University of Tasmania’s history department. John Gifford and G Greenwood, both of the University of Queensland, were similarly effusive about the visitor, details of which Copland submitted for the Council’s consideration in November.\footnote{See ‘Extracts from Letters’, 14 November 1949, ANUA 18, Box 11.}

The first Australian Ambassador to the People’s Republic, Stephen FitzGerald (he is unrelated to CP), later wrote that CP FitzGerald was ‘more identified with China in the public mind than anyone else in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s’. His main public intellectual enterprise during those decades ‘was at base a challenge to Australians to come to their senses and consider who they were and where they were and how they should express that, and the touchstone was China’.\footnote{Stephen FitzGerald, \textit{Is Australia an Asian Country?}, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997, pp.16-17.}

Frederic Eggleston, however, was sorely disappointed with FitzGerald. He complained to Copland that the English historian seemed ‘much more interested in Chinese politics’ than in history,\footnote{Letter, Eggleston to Copland, no date, probably late September or early October 1949, NLA MS423/12/414.} and he reiterated his longstanding belief that an ‘Oriental’ was needed at ANU:

All I know is that if we do not appoint Orientals to positions of this kind, one of my dearest wishes when I suggested the School, [we] will be disappointed. Your objections to the appointment of Chinese today are political and just as irrelevant as my opinion on FitzGerald’s propaganda for the recognition of the People’s Government. It struck me that one who recommends recognition just as one would decide putting on one’s overcoat ignores all international practice and principle and indicates a somewhat low intellectual quotient. We do not know whether the People’s Government is governing or can govern China. The latest news is that they are seriously considering liquidating Shanghai, that is, removing half the population to the country on the grounds that they cannot provide for them in the city.\footnote{Letter, Eggleston to Copland, 14 October 1949, ANUA 19, Box 17.}

Copland stood firm and told Eggleston that he was ‘not sanguine’ about attracting a Chinese scholar ‘in the near future’:

Those who would be available would probably not be persona grata with the Chinese authorities in the new regime and we do not want to take any unnecessary steps that would complicate our relations with the Chinese Universities. I would not feel very happy about the work of anyone who was sponsored by the new regime in its early days and I thought, therefore, that we would be much better served by a person like FitzGerald.\footnote{Letter, Copland to Eggleston, 7 October 1949, NLA MS423/12/422.}
Eggleston countered by seeking outside expert opinion on the quality of FitzGerald’s scholarship, specifically suggesting that ANU approach George Sansom, a British former diplomat and historian of Japan, who at the time was engaged in establishing Japanese Studies at Columbia University in New York. In response to the query, Sansom cabled Ross Hohnen: ‘I CONSIDER FITZGERALD VERY SUITABLE AS READER ORIENTAL STUDIES APPROPRIATE COLLEAGUE CONSULTED SHARE MY OPINION.’ Hohnen also contacted John King Fairbank at Harvard University, but no response is contained in the ANU Archives. In a letter thanking Sansom for his reference, Copland wrote that: ‘We are almost certain to appoint [FitzGerald] for a period of three years to a Readership in Oriental Studies. ... For my part, I see no reason to reject a man because he has not had a formal University training. It is his scholarship that really matters, and FitzGerald has a most interesting story.’

It was also inevitable that the Council consider Firth’s advice on the matter. Initially, Firth had his doubts: ‘... as an anthropologist [FitzGerald] is hardly systematic enough by modern standards to carry very great weight’. But, after conferring with Professor Evangeline Edwards, the Chair of Chinese at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, Firth changed his mind. In a letter to the Council, he quoted Edward’s remarks:

\[\text{[E]xcept the \textit{Tower of Five Glories}, [FitzGerald’s books] have been written for the general public and therefore are not annotated, but they are of a good standard. He knows China really well and is intensely interested in the Chinese, and understands better than most the Chinese mind. I would not call him brilliant but I would certainly describe him as sound all round, and from what I know of the Australian attitude to Far Eastern studies I can think of no-one better suited than C.P. FitzGerald for the post. ... He is also very sound on language and so far as I know his work has been based on original sources. He has just finished a book on the Empress Wu of the T’ang dynasty and is embarking on that other great figure Ming Huang.}\]

In the report on his lecture tour that CP FitzGerald submitted to the ANU Interim Council, he raised a crucial point, one which amidst the deliberations about the structure of Pacific Studies at ANU and the question of Chinese visitors, had been entirely absent to that point. He said that no university library in Australia had any Chinese books, ‘with the exception of Sydney, which has one of the sets of photostatic reproductions of classical works presented by the later Chinese Government.’ As mentioned in the prologue to this study, these were the books donated to ANU in November 1948, which were subsequently given on loan to the University of Sydney at the request of its new Chair of Oriental Studies, John Rideout. FitzGerald now advised the

238 Telegram, Sansom (East Asian Institute, Columbia University) to RA Hohnen, 9 November 1950; and, letter, RC Mills to RA Hohnen, 10 November 1949, ANUA 18, Box 11.
239 Letter, Copland to Sansom, 21 December 1949, ANUA 18, Box 11.
240 Letter, Firth to Copland, 19 September 1949, ANUA 18, Box 11.
Cover and pages from *Incantation of the Jubilant Buddha-Corona* 佛頂尊勝總持経咒, Peking, 1608. The elongated format of the text meant it could easily be held in one hand as the practitioner intoned the chants. (Courtesy Menzies Library, ANU)
Council that: ‘at least the basic historical and classical books of China, and a wider selection of modern literature’ would be essential to develop work related to China at ANU ‘either as a language, or as a medium for the study of Far Eastern Culture.’

In December 1949, FitzGerald was appointed as a Visiting Reader in Oriental Studies. It was the first of a number of titles bestowed upon him that were slightly at odds with the Australian context, and ANU. FitzGerald was not really ‘visiting’ (in fact, he spent the year 1950 outside Australia); and his primary academic task was not to ‘read’, but to call on centres of Sinology in Europe and America on a Rockefeller Grant that had been arranged by Douglas Copland, as well as to start building, from scratch, the first collection of Chinese books at any Australian university.

In the first half of 1950, FitzGerald visited scholars of China in the US and Europe, including Jan Duyvendak at Leiden University in the Netherlands, and Bernhard Karlgren at Stockholm University in Sweden.

One of Karlgren’s students, Hans Bielenstein, would soon prove to be an important figure in setting up the School of Oriental Languages at ANU’s undergraduate sister institution, Canberra University College. Later in the year, FitzGerald turned his attention to acquiring books for the ANU library. He arrived in Hong Kong in September with the intention of travelling on Peking. But, in spite of Copland’s efforts to secure him a visa — in October, the Vice-Chancellor urgently requested the assistance of the Department of External Affairs and he also cabled the British Embassy in Peking — the onset of the Korean War created a tense diplomatic situation between China and the West, leaving FitzGerald stranded in the British colony.

This proved to be fortuitous. ‘I have found that, for the most part it is now almost impossible to get into China — British Embassy personnel have been applying without success for entry permits’, he told EH Clark, ANU’s Administrative Officer in the UK. But, he noted:

I can, and am, getting all the books I need for the University right here in Hong Kong. Having got in touch ‘through information received’ as the police say, with a small firm (literally back room boys) who have connections with China (i.e. are, or are associated with smugglers). I find that they, all very well educated Peking university men, can get me any book, including all those which one would not be allowed to take out of China. I have already been able to make some remarkable good finds, including a Ming copy of one of the great histories, in about sixty volumes, dated 1509, and stamped with the seal, on each copy of the Imperial Library. A beautiful book.

In much of this painstaking work, FitzGerald was aided by Yang Tsung-han, a Mongolian Bannerman and scholar from Peking who had relocated to the British colony.

In Memoriam: Charles Patrick FitzGerald

Far Eastern History, no.6 (December 1993): 105-142.
Hsu Ti-shan in 1939. (From The Collected Works of Hsu Ti-shan 許地山全集, Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1951)

A page from the Imperial Exhortations 御製勸善要言 (Manchu title: Han-i araha san-be huweksye-bure oyonggo gisun), Peking, 1655. This guide to ethical behaviour was printed under imperial commission shortly after the Manchu Ch’ing dynasty established itself in Beijing in 1644. Ascribed to the Shunzhi emperor (Aisin-Gioro Fulin) it features a parallel text in Manchu and Chinese. Qing emperors made strenuous efforts to project themselves as righteous rulers and to that end issued exhortations to promote morality and the social good. (Courtesy Menzies Library, ANU)
The minutes of a meeting of the ANU Interim Council held in December 1950 record that ‘on Mr FitzGerald’s strong recommendation he [Copland] had approved the expenditure of approximately £2,500 for the library of the late Professor Hsu [Ti-shan 許地山] which contained a rare and valuable collection of Chinese classics’. Of the 20,000 books that FitzGerald shipped back to Canberra shortly thereafter, some 15,000 were from the private collection of Hsu, a scholar of religions, in particular Buddhism, who had been Head of the Chinese Department at Hong Kong University until his death in 1941 at the age of forty-eight. There were also many religious tracts in the collection. The oldest among them, which is still the oldest book in ANU’s library, was a 1411 edition of the Dhāranī of the Jubilant Corona 佛頂尊勝陀囉尼經. There was also a first edition of Fung Yu-lan’s 1939 New Rational Philosophy 新理學, a signed copy presented to Hsu by Fung himself, and a Chinese translation of Thomas Huxley’s Evolution and Ethics by the late-Qing dynasty reformer Yen Fu. 246

After returning to Australia on 1 January 1951, FitzGerald’s first task was to unpack this formidable collection. In one of the Old Hospital Buildings on Acton Peninsula, near the site of what is now the National Museum of Australia, which was then serving as a holding site for much of ANU’s early library acquisitions, FitzGerald took to the packing boxes containing the books with a hammer and chisel: ‘That was the level of what had to be done, and so, at least, we started off that way — at least you knew what there was’, he later reflected. 247 The first ANU student to avail himself of this collection was Noel Barnard who began his doctoral research in 1952 and, in 1957, became ANU’s first PhD graduate in Chinese Studies with the completion of his thesis, Forgery of Archaic Chinese Bronze Inscriptions: a preliminary investigation of the extent of forgery amongst inscribed bronze ritual vessels of the Western Chou period.

FitzGerald was Barnard’s supervisor, although this was at a time when ANU had yet formally to establish a department devoted to the study of China, and when FitzGerald’s own position at ANU was as yet undecided. In 1952, he was made ‘Reader in Oriental Studies’ — the word ‘Visiting’ in his previous title was dropped — but his lack of academic qualifications remained an uncomfortable issue for ANU, as the fledgling institution sought to establish a reputation for outstanding research. At the end of 1952, FitzGerald received an offer of an associate professorship at SOAS in London. The invitation prompted Mark Oliphant — who was acting vice-chancellor following Douglas Copland’s recent appointment as Australia’s High Commissioner to Canada — to concentrate on developing the Chinese programme. FitzGerald wanted to stay at ANU, but not just as a Reader: he asked Oliphant if he could be made a professor, and if the university could establish a department dedicated to the study of things Chinese.

245 ANU Interim Council, Minutes of the Forty-Sixth Meeting, 8 December 1950, p.5, ANUA 198, Box 2. The amount of £2,500 in 1950 is equivalent to approximately $120,000 in 2015.

246 Xu Dishan, Additional 线装 [cloth-bound] books found on open shelves by Associate Professor Cheuk Yin Lee, March 2008. I thank Rebecca Wong and Friederike Schimmelpfennig for providing me with these unpublished notes and other material on the Hsu Ti-shan collection.

247 Stephen Foster, ‘Interview with Emeritus Professor CP FitzGerald’.
In early 1953, the ANU Board of Graduate Studies asked CP FitzGerald to formulate a name for his new department head. He advised against using the term ‘Oriental Studies’: the University of Sydney had followed this nomenclature, which was also the name of his own ‘Readership’ but, FitzGerald contended, the connotations of the term were too narrow and brought to mind ‘the Near East, India and Middle Eastern parts of Asia and the languages and cultures, living and extinct, of that region.’ Considering the department names used at other leading universities — Columbia University had an East Asian Institute and Harvard a Department of Far Eastern Languages — and in light of the historical focus of the work unfolding at ANU, he suggested that ‘Department of Far Eastern History’ would be the most appropriate name. The Board of Graduate Studies approved the suggestion, and Oliphant wrote to Copland informing him of this development. Copland was overjoyed:

The decision to appoint FitzGerald to a Chair is clearly right. Everywhere I go I hear praise of FitzGerald’s work. It is at one and the same time recognized as being a scholarly work and a piece of rather good English prose. Of course, there will be critics who think that no good should be said of the new China but a scholar has to accept that sort of thing, especially when he writes on matters that touch the prejudices of some sections of the public.

When the Department of Far Eastern History was formally established in the new year of 1954, it consisted of four research staff. CP FitzGerald (now Professor and Chair) was engaged in work on Empress Wu Tse-tien

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248 ‘Far Eastern History: Item Two of Agenda of Board of Graduate Studies Meeting of 27th February, 1953,’ 23 February 1953, ANUA 284, Box 1.
249 Letter, Copland to Oliphant, 11 August 1953, NLA MS3800, Box 70.
of the Tang dynasty, which he published as *The Empress Wu* with Cresset Press in London in 1956. The Department’s Senior Research Fellow, the Dutch Sinologist Gerrit Mulder, was focusing on the marriage system of the Han dynasty. In addition, the Department had two Research Fellows: BC McKillop, whose area was Neo-Confucianism, and the Japan specialist Joyce Ackroyd, who had studied under Arthur Sadler at the University of Sydney and would go on to become a key figure in establishing Japanese Studies at ANU. She worked on Tokugawa history. All four had the linguistic abilities necessary to conduct research in their respective fields but, as the university’s Annual Report for 1954 observed:

Language qualifications are obviously of the highest significance and it has proved necessary to make provision for further instruction in Chinese for two of the Department’s five students: this has been arranged at Canberra University College, where the co-operation of Professor H Bielenstein is much appreciated by the Department.  

ORIENTAL LANGUAGES IN CANBERRA

From the earliest days of the Walker Committee, the relationship between Canberra University College and ANU had been a topic of discussion. ANU was envisaged as a dedicated post-graduate institution with no room or programmes for language instruction. In the case of Chinese and Japanese studies this presented a problem: Australia had very few graduates or scholars with sufficient language proficiency to undertake postgraduate research. In the early years this is why ANU was closely linked to the University College which, in 1952, established a ‘School of Oriental Languages’. FitzGerald’s Department of Far Eastern History and the College’s School of Oriental Languages shared library resources; there was also a commingling of staff — FitzGerald and other ANU scholars frequently taught College undergraduates. When, in 1960, ANU and the College were amalgamated, the undergraduate school became the ‘Department of Oriental Studies’ under the auspices of a School of General Studies, while Far Eastern History continued as part of the postgraduate School of Advanced Studies.


Another appointment to the academic staff of the university familiar with China, and Chinese, was Michael Lindsay. Lindsay taught economics at Yenching University in Peiping before fleeing the Japanese-occupied city with his wife, Hisao Li, to live in Yenan where, working as a radio engineer, writer and broadcaster, he made the acquaintance of such Communist luminaries as Mao, Chou En-lai and Chu Teh 朱德.

Lindsay was invited to ANU in July 1949 by Walter Crocker, who would soon head the Department of International Relations. The two men had known each other since their student days at Balliol House, Oxford University. A man with important insights into international policy and Australia’s place in Asia, Lindsay was frustrated by the young university’s old-style bureaucracy and he left Canberra under a cloud in 1958. See James Cotton, *International Relations in Australia: Michael Lindsay, Martin Wight, and the first Department at the Australian National University*, Canberra: ANU, 2010; and, Hisao Li Lindsay, *Bold Plum: With the Guerrillas in China’s War against Japan*, Morrisville (North Carolina): Lulu Press, 2007.
Top: Landscaping works to the south of the newly constructed Oriental Studies building (left), August 1965. The site of the Australian Centre on China in the World (established in 2010), is located behind the poplar trees to the right (courtesy ANU Archives); bottom: An article in The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 March 1953, describing Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakov’s life in China, arrival in Australia and early work cataloging Chinese books at ANU.
As Dani Botsman observes in his searing analysis of the story of Japanese Studies at ANU, the reasons behind the establishment of the School of Oriental Languages at Canberra University College in 1952 were similar to those that informed the creation of a Japanese language programme at Duntroon in 1917: a fear of the oriental Other and national security. Similar to Duntroon, the School was set up at the suggestion of the departments of External Affairs and Defence, both of which expressed concerned about the national need for army and diplomatic cadets to be trained in Asian languages. The three languages initially taught at the School were Chinese, Japanese and Russian, the latter sitting somewhat awkwardly under the rubric of the ‘Oriental’. As Bostman notes: ‘The inclusion of Russian suggests that instead of “Oriental Languages” it could just as appropriately have been called the School of Enemy Languages’.

As the Asian languages programme was being built up, CP FitzGerald again proved to be pivotal, this time in the recruitment of language instructors. It was at his suggestion that Hans Bielenstein was invited to head the School and, in 1952, the Swedish scholar introduced the teaching of modern and classical Chinese. Another FitzGerald appointment was Svetlana Rimsky-Korsakoff (known to her later students as Vieta Dyer), who would teach generations of ANU scholars, including Stephen FitzGerald and Geremie R Barmé, until her retirement in 1991 — although at the time of writing she was still teaching Chinese to mature-aged students in Canberra.

Grandniece of the composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakoff, Svetlana was born in the northeastern Chinese city of Harbin, her parents being among the millions of Russians who had fled their homeland in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Trilingual in Russian, English and Chinese (which she spoke with an elegant northern accent), in the late 1940s Svetlana had become acquainted with many members of Peiping’s foreign community, including a young student of Chinese literature, later the noted translator David Hawkes, as well as his future wife, Jean, for whom she proved to be a valuable guide. During the Peiping siege of 1948, Svetlana, who was studying at Fu-jen University in the city, lost contact with her parents who were teachers at Tsinghua University in an area outside the city walls which was under Communist control. When her father managed to send some money to her via the British Consulate, located inside the walls, it was FitzGerald who sought her out in her university dormitory.

In May 1956, FitzGerald led the first Australia cultural delegation to the People’s Republic of China. This redacted ASIO file lists the academics and artists believed to be joining the delegation. (Courtesy National Archives of Australia)