



ACIAC Seminar- Mirroring the Past
Chinese-Australia in Historical Perspective

Dr Michael Williams

Jing Han: Hello everyone, welcome to this seminar. My name is Jing Han, I am the director of Australia-China Institute for Arts and Culture. I'm newly appointed and I started about a month ago. Prior to that, I have worked at SBS for 23 years, while I also teach at Western Sydney University, since 2006. We are very pleased to have this seminar, because for all the interesting topics that are related to arts and the culture, and history is very much to our interest and to our heart, and particularly Chinese Australian History. So that is our key area that this institute is devoted time, effort and resources. Promoting the understanding between China and Australia, the most effective way is through culture and arts, and history is obviously an important part of culture. Especially given right now, especially since 2016, census shows that Chinese community now is the largest in Australia. So it is very important for us all to know about Chinese Australian history in Australia. So we are very pleased to have Dr Michael Williams to start the first lecture of our series about the Chinese Australian History. Just a brief introduction of Dr Michael Williams. Many of you would have already known about him. He is a historian and specialises in Chinese Australian History, and he has written quite a lot and did a lot of research on that. He is also the founding member of the Chinese Australian Historical Society and also the author of a book published in 2018 called *Returning Home with Glory* which has just been translated into Chinese as part of the joint translation project between ACIAC, this institute, and Beijing Foreign Studies University. It is a series, so six books in the series, and one of them is Michael's one and it is about China in Australians' eyes. Please welcome Dr Michael Williams.



Michael Williams: Thank you Jing, thank you for the opportunity to speak and be the first of what would be an interesting series and certainly a well needed on Chinese Australian History. So, what I will be doing today is not giving you a rundown of Chinese Australian History, but giving you a little bit of an overview of changing perceptions. So, I've been studying Chinese Australian History now for the last 20 or 25 years. And in that time, I've seen a great change in people's perception on what Chinese Australian history is. And not just more research and more knowledge, but also shifts in how it's been treated, who is interested, and I find this just as interesting as the history itself. Some of my findings and some of my thoughts about this would be in this particular seminar. So what I will be doing is a comparison, a historical comparison between the pre-1949 history, which is to say 19th to early 20th century history, and the post 1989 history of Chinese-Australia. Particularly looking not just at the history, but the perceptions of the history as much as anything else. And the aim is to examine a number of issues, one is the role of white guilt and the other is the impact of the perceived or actual strength of contemporary China, so changes in China, how this has affected the perceptions of the Australian Chinese history. Question of identity, "Chineseness" and what does it mean when we use the term "Chinese- Australian". And also, more particularly the thing I'm particularly interested is how the past is currently being used and abused to serve the needs and desires of the present. History is always a movable feast, it's always about, very often it is about you want to see the present as much as it is about the past. To begin, I will begin not in the beginning or the end but in the middle. The middle being 1901, when Australia officially introduced its White Australian Policy, or particularly the Immigration Restriction Act at Federation.

Australia's first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, introduced that legislation and as part of his speeches, part of his talking about, the need for this restrictive immigration policy was that principle was more important than economics. Which is to say, he thought specifically that a trade damage that might be done as a result of Australia being a little bit more isolated, a bit more white, as not wanting to have any dealings with Asia, was



okay, because the principle of being an unified culture or a single race was more important. This is an interesting perception that I want to go into in a bit more detail. Now he did this because Australia was secure as part of the British empire, so trade with Britain was the key to the Australian economy, he wasn't really that concerned with trade with Japan or China or other nations at that time because it wasn't considered that important. Britain was more important. In the 21st century, of course Australia is no longer secure within any empire and it is an important part a globalising economy, in which countries such as China, plays a very significant role. At the same time, White Australia has been abandoned in favour of a non-discriminatory immigration policy and this of course has led to an increase in those who identify as "Chinese Australian". So this is part of the change in perspective.

Chinese Australian history in that sense I am going to argue has come full circle, from pre-1949 to post-1989 Chinese- Australian history. And this is because history and historians don't operate in a vacuum, so my argument would be that the rise of China and the rise of Australian's identifying as "Chinese- Australian" is having and will have an impact on how that history is perceived and written. So to begin with, I just give a very basic overview of another context, an imperial context. So in the early 19th century, members of two empires, the British and the Chinese, were using a newly established Pacific mobility to move to new spaces in the Australian and American continents. But, by the end of the 19th century, members of the British Empire in Australia had used their political dominance and security within that empire to restrict entry by members of the Chinese Empire. This is a broader overview of the history. But by the beginning of the 21st century, the British Empire has disappeared, and the Chinese Empire has transformed and re-established itself as a dominant global force and its members are once again seeking and gaining mobility around the Pacific, including to the Australian continent. So in that overview, imperial overview, we can look more specifically at history. And when I talk about the pre-1949 and the post-1989 Chinese-Australian



history, these are some of the features that I would like you to consider as both similarities and differences.

So obviously pre 1949 is overwhelmingly Cantonese, now even that term “Cantonese” needs to be unpacked. But just for the sake of argument, I’ll just use the broad terms, “Cantonese” and “Mandarin”. Pre-1949 was also overwhelmingly male, and it was overwhelmingly working class and it was perceived by most Australians at the time throughout most of that period as being non-white. So not just that Chinese were non-white, but simply they were perceived in those categorical terms. Most of that period, China was weak, that is to say, not a major player on the world stage. And again the perceptions of people of China or any non-whites within Australian history were that they were on the fringes of national history. National history would take place for other people, Chinese and others were simply not that important to that. In the post-1989 period, things have changed. It’s mandarin, and again I’ll talk a bit more on that, what I mean by that, is not simply just the language but just as a market. It’s family orientated, immigration to Australia is one large couples, females as well as males, therefore children, it’s very different from the pre-1949 history. It’s more middle class, not exclusively middle class, but certainly much larger. This again, changes perceptions and changes how people been seen and how they behave. It’s multicultural, again, meaning in the context of Australia, Chinese-Australia since being seen one element in the diverse multicultural society, rather than simply labelled as non-white. Again, it is not exclusive way people do things, but a tendency that you can mark out. And of course, China is now much stronger, a growing stronger nation, and this again changed perceptions, changed what’s perceived Chinese Australian and changed how history is perceived. And, what I argue is we are in the midst of re-inventing of the historic role of Chinese Australian, how things are perceived, and how things are argued, is changing. So again, as what I said before, this comparison aims to examine the role of white guilt, the impact of the perceive strength of contemporary China, questions of identity in the



Chinese diaspora in Australia and how the past is used to serve the needs and desires of the present.

So just go into some details about some of these factors that I was talking about. Not everybody understands just how narrowly focused the immigration from China to Australia was in the pre-1949 period. It is not just the single province of Guangzhou, but it is a handful of counties, 8-15 counties around the Pearl River Delta. Mostly connected to Hong Kong. And within those counties, Cantonese was spoken in a number of different dialects and even a few languages as well, they cannot be described as simply the same as Cantonese. You got dialect and language differences within there, which are important because they were important to the people at the time. That is how they organised themselves, organised their shops, how they organised their minks back to the villages, that's how they form their groups and clans, both in Melbourne, Sydney and elsewhere within Australia, it is important to people. So the idea of using Cantonese is just a label, if Cantonese is a label that is not entirely accurate, then the label Chinese is not necessarily accurate. This is just something that you need to bear in mind. The idea of people being conscious of being Chinese is something that grew gradually over this period of time, going back to the 19th century through into the 20th century. The post 1989 period is more mandarin, by mandarin, I mean simply from other locations around China, most people who speak Mandarin probably also often speak other dialects as well. It is also important to people, but maybe not as important as the pre-1949 period. But nevertheless it is something important to people, something to be considered by people who are doing history, so these are some changes that has been taken place. As for male, again, in this figure here just to show you how overwhelmingly male immigration from China was in the 19th and early 20th century, very few females, but there were of course females and there were wives who were in the villages. That's where people sending money back to and where they often travelled back to. There were wives and families, and they just located differently, which wasn't necessarily high in immigration to Australia. There were relatively high intermarriages, we shouldn't



neglect that. It is probably underestimated, but intermarriage between Chinese men and women in Australia was higher than most people think or realise, it is kind of hidden to some extent, but people now with the family history, researchers are now finding more and more Chinese ancestry, that many people have particularly in Queensland and Rural NSW. In Post 1989, we have to say, if there is anything that is more females than males among Chinese-Australian today, but more importantly, it's couples and families, it's high birth rate, therefore, perhaps it is the flowing effect in the demographics of Australia.

Working Class, pre-1949, most people came from villages, they could be described as 'peasants'. When they arrived in Australia, they worked as miners and market gardeners. There were of course merchants, as you can see statistics here that there were about 12 to 13 percent could be described as merchants. Some of them were merchants when they left China, others became merchants as they learned and evolved in Australia itself. Also, got some capital work, by enlarge most people worked and as we've already seen that they were in working class environment. If they have some capital, they were more likely to shift their capital to Hong Kong or to Shanghai. In the Post 1989 period, people more likely to be university educated, more likely to be professionals, but again not enough to shift the perceptions. Sometimes, even if people have the capital, and they already got the capital in China and they are investing it in Australia, so different way of flowing than in the past. Then again, it had never impacted here.

From Australian perspectives, the pre-1949 period can be described, the Chinese Australians can be described as non- white, by which I mean that's how people were perceived. That period history is categorised an increasing series of restrictions, 1855 and 1861 the first restrictions in Victoria and NSW, they were ramped up again in 1881 and 1888. Up to that point, 1888, these restrictions were specifically directed only at



Chinese people. So, Australia or the colonies didn't have immigration restrictions except for those which were only imposed on Chinese people. In 1901, it was much more generalised, we meant to exclude anybody who is non-white, therefore, the establishment of White Australian Policy. But it is probably not too much of a stretch to say that the White Australia Policy was hammered out on the Chinese during this period of time. Now, of course in the Post 1989 period, Australia was adopted a multicultural approach, therefore, we then have the hyphenated Australia, Chinese- Australians, Filipino- Australians. This was to say diversity recognises people from different cultures and different backgrounds. This of course changed on how you perceive history, not just now, in the Post 1989 period, but as you look back on this pre-1949 period. Many people now are trying to re-write the history to make Australia seem more multicultural in the past, which again this has the impact on how you perceive the history.

Another important feature I think we need to look at is, the strength of China. China is a nation and China is an empire. So in pre-1949 period, we have basically a weak China. During the period of the Qing dynasty, mostly in decline in the 19th century, much difficulty with the European colonial interference. Even after 1911, in the fall of the Qing, the Republic of China, again relatively weak, goes into a war lord period, and of course the period of the Japanese invasion, which means they cannot deal very much on the international stage. After 1949, the PRC is relatively isolated politically into the 1970s, so again it doesn't have much of an impact except in a cold war term, but I won't deal with that very much in this lecture. Political change in 1949 is the reason why I picked that date as a dividing term. The two dates that I mentioned is 49 and 89, and of course the two dates are important in Chinese terms and not in Australian terms. This is the emphasis that things that happening in China are influencing Australia. Australia does not grow or develop solidly in isolation, particularly in the Chinese-Australia history. So these days, things that are happening in China, not in Australia, but they impact on Australia. So the Post 1989 period, 400 percent or more increase in trade with China, as China grows and develops comes Australia's largest trading partner in this period after



1989. And, the political attitude of China is becoming important to Australia, increasingly so in the last few years, and some are more negative and there are negative space on occasions. Again, this impacts upon the history and how people perceive or wish to perceive the history.

Now moving more into this history, Pre 1949 period, in general people saw Chinese in Australia as being on the fringes of national history. As national history took place, Chinese involved and they were just marginal and they were mostly seen as victims, not as participants if remembered at all and usually been seen as in terms of stereotypes, gold miners and market gardeners, not very much as individuals, or not as much beyond these stereotypes. In the post 1989 period, there's been a re- evaluation of this history, with many local areas rediscovering their Chinese history, history that was always there they have neglected it or forgotten about or not seeing it as important or central to their history. Part of this is about establishing a claim, again you got more people in Australia identifying as Chinese-Australian, therefore, they are interested to see that Chinese have a longer history within Australia. So about establishing a claim and I'll talk a little bit more about that later on. So it is about white guilt, in this case, I am talking about simply people acknowledging the racism and discrimination of the past, feeling bad about it, and trying to exercise that guilt. It is a dangerous psychology, it is not helpful to history in any ways, but it is important and needs to be taken account of. And tourism, tourism being as part of the rise of China. Rise of China means that you have a rise of middle class, a rise of people with money, they are touring around the world and become tourists and everyone wants a bit of tourists' dollar. This also has impacted upon the history within Australia.

What is this re-interpretation I'm talking about? So the new Chinese Australian historiography, by which I mean the academic historiography, not popular historiography, but people doing professional research in history in depth, by large it



means to show a greater impact of Chinese on Australia in the 19th and 20th century, far greater and more integrated than the popular history, by popular history I mean the general mainstream history of Australia, or perhaps the more popular ones in the bookstores, which was intended to be more of a stereotypes. They are shown for example in terms of shop keepers in rural towns, whole families, Chinese-Australian families ran shops in these rural towns. It is very important to the economies of these towns right through the late 19th into the early 20th centuries. Another on being the effort to find Chinese ANZACs, again ANZACs being kind of hard-core Australian history. So, the more you can find someone with Chinese ancestry who is an ANZAC, embedding Chinese-Australian within hard-core Australia. Again, a bit of a dubious historical play, but nevertheless something important, about myths, it is about establishing a claim, and this claim in many ways is being led by White Australian and broadened the Australian history. There is a bit of culture going on there. The important links to China, of course this is another thing that people has discovered more and more of how it is going on in the village, and also enlarged the international capital level, this is enterprises of course. Basically, the social interaction of Chinese-Australians is well beyond racism, it wasn't just about racism, it is about marriage and family. It was about helping people and work on many levels and many people are beginning to discover more about this and even on a cultural level. For example, Chinese Opera, ran in Australia from the Gold Rush period in Victoria right to the beginning of the 20th century. This something by enlarged that seems to be forgotten. Right here in Sydney, we got quite regular Chinese opera going right down in Castlereagh street at the end of 19th and early 20th century before fading out. Many of these perceptions are hampered rather than helped by white guilt and also by the desire for an identity, by saying those who have the desire to be identified as "Chinese-Australian" to have a claim to have a long history within Australia.

So, white guilt. This is fine, because it is a re-examination on the past wrong impression, so there is nothing wrong with white guilt. You've got to acknowledge the past, you got



to look at what was done wrong or what was done right to decide whether you can do better. But, very often it leads to exaggerations, it leads to focus just on the vilest aspects and the most racist past of history, which tend to exclude other aspects. It often leads to exaggerations because it is a good story. I mean violence, newspapers and journalists often use these things, like a good story, if you lynching here and there and a few murders. That makes a better history than simply more nuanced history that academics want to write. It is also partly that they need to keep up with the Americans. The Americans have a very violent racial history, we all know that, often people think Australia's history is perhaps too quiet, a bit too peaceful in comparison. So, you got to think that things happened in America must also have happened in Australia as well. So, a bit of these elements goes on, with this idea of trying to make the history as racist as possible. It is not saying we all going to deny. There were a lot of racists in Australia, plenty of them. It simply was not necessary quite the standard of the Americans. The danger of course is that this leads to a perpetual victim status, that Chinese and other minorities simply being seen as perpetual victim all the time, because what they need the white guilt to simply kind of exercises this and keep the whites at the centre of the stage and doesn't allow the people to have a voice. These are the dangers I'm saying. Obviously, there is a danger of denying racism, ...other side, you certainly don't want to do that, but you don't want to over emphasis the racism to the exclusion of other relations, otherwise to interacting. This is because it limits the understanding. Nuance, Contradictions, there is always contradictions.

Arthur Calwall is often seen, for an example, one of the most racist immigration ministers against any Chinese. He always went down to China town, always had Chinese friends, spoke a bit of Cantonese himself, has quite a lot of friends in Chinese community, it's contradiction. Yes, people are contradictory. Arthur Calwall is contradictory. Everybody is contradictory. So, some of these ideas white guilt is of course about making the past worse in order to make you feel better about the present, I think that's again a dodgy claim. The present is not as good as we think it is, you don't



make it better by simply making the past worse. In fact, it makes it harder to understand the present if you deny some of the contradictions and some of the good things happened in the past and some of the struggles that people had, because it's the same struggle that we have today. There's also, talking here mostly about the white guilt, the Chinese parallel in this is again, Chinese-Australians will also often emphasis the racism in the past. For similar kind of reasons, the idea being that then you can say how pioneers, how ancestors went through this terrible field of fire, now, we're better, we're doing better. So then again, it is a comparison to make yourself feel better about the present. It's fine and it's true enough, in various ways, but also helps you to obscure things, obscures sometimes more than it illuminates. This perception, which sees one way's right and one way's wrong, but I think it's good to be aware of a range of things.

Now, the strength of China. So, mainly this is in the recent contemporary times, but mostly perceiving in terms, economic terms, 'a rise of trade' and 'the rise of tourism' again another aspect of that economic increase. So this increase respects, having a lot of money, people respect people with lots of money, China has lots of money, we must respect them all, the culture must be better than we thought, because they got lots of money. This is kind of a very modern capitalistic view we are looking at things, very superficial, unfortunately it is also very true. So as the increase respect for the Chinese, I mean that's good, and that floats on a range of things, will be on economics, it led to people wanting to acknowledge past wrongs, but it means they often want those wrongs be firmed in the past and ignore any wrongs that might be happening today. It kind of emphasis the idea that everyone is equal now, because we all got money, there's nothing needs to be changed, except of course a bit more economic activities going on and a bit more money. Just to give an example, how this plays out in the historical level. Tasmania has rediscovered its Chinese past at some point. So, Tasmania actually did have small Chinese communities in north-east Australia in the 19th century, they were tin mines located at very isolated areas. But Chinese miners came down from Victoria and went to Tasmania and they lived there quite a lot of years, about 5 villages



were there that were fairly almost exclusively Chinese and have their own temples. They lasted for a couple of generations and then they have faded out as tin played out. People returned to Victoria or back to China. They were forgotten in Tasmanian history until Chinese tourists started turning up. How do you attract Chinese tourists? One way is to emphasise that you have some Chinese history, so they developed this trail of the Tin Dragons, quite a lovely little tour, it goes winding its way through very nice places, has its little memorial and arts that talk about the Chinese history. Just one example that how local areas have begun rediscover their Chinese past and linked it very clearly to tourism, and the need to increase and attract Chinese tourists.

Orange in NSW has done the similar thing. They did a very interesting historical analysis, done by Barry McGown, very good one and set up display in regional museums about Chinese history. Previously, they have neglected and not been very aware of what's going on. Now Sydney, of course has done the similar thing. There was an exhibition in Sydney Museum, Sydney in 2015 called "Celestial City" exhibition. It was a terrible exhibition and it was almost a white guilt exhibition. It just simply emphasised racism, it centred white people being the most important thing in Chinese history, it was meant to say how terrible whites were. By enlarged, it didn't give much idea of history. And Barry O'Farrell, the premier at the time, opened the exhibition, and in it he said and declared that this exhibition is a kind of exhibition was important to precisely because it helped to exercise ghosts of the past that would smooth the way for greater trade in the future. So he very clearly stated this kind of economic imparity, basically acknowledged all of these crimes in the past and you can forget about them and then you can move on and have lots of trade. So again, it is a very superficial view, but he is just a politician, I don't blame him personally. He said very clearly, I don't like museum, and I was quite annoyed with him at the time.



So another aspect is the question of identity. This is of course something that I am going into a great deal of details, just like I mentioned in the past, just the idea of Chinese. Of course, English has just only one word of Chinese and that can cause a lot of difficulties. We talk about Chinese nationals, but we also talk about people who are national China of the state (PRC). We also talk about people have the cultural racial identity, including many people from re-migration, people that of Chinese origins, identified as 'Chinese' coming from places such as Malaysia and Vietnam. Their family may have well originated in China, but they may could have three, four, five generations ago, they may not speak any Chinese dialects anymore, by the time they arrived in Australia. But they feel identified as Chinese-Australian for various reasons, and of course you have many Australia born Chinese, again, after four or five generations. All these people can be classified as Chinese-Australians or self-identified as Chinese-Australians, but of course it's not always the same thing as there are quite diversities, you have to remember that when we are talking about it. There has been an increase in identifications with Chinese heritage for a variety of reasons. One, being family history, as I have mentioned before, more and more people are digging into their family history and some are discovering Chinese members in their ancestries, grandfathers and great grandfathers from generations. Nowadays, they are likely to be proud of that, they want to learn about that. Couple of generations ago, that's the kind of the thing, like convict past, that would have been hidden, which is why it's less known about but more and more people are doing that. Much of this also to do with class changes as well. This is because people identify, bourgeoisie, middle-class people wanted to identify as something different, it is a bit boring just being a white middle class. A white middle class with Chinese ancestry, or convict ancestry or aboriginal ancestry, that's more exciting, so a lot of this is going at the time which is influencing on how people see history.

Now talking about the people using and abusing the history to serve the needs of the present, I'm trying to give this as one of the examples and an extreme example of how



people want to do this. Many people want to believe that Zheng He discovered Australia, which one of his ships discovered Australia. Now I just want to be categorical of this non- sense of course. Now, maps of where Zheng He went were very clear, exactly where he went. But why do people want to believe this? I want to believe it's the same reasons as why we set up the statues of Captain Cook, that the British sent people south and declared that Captain Cook discovered Australia, it's making a claim, saying a white British guy discovered Australia, British belong here, British sent people to belong here. And that is the way Australia doing things right up to 60s and 70s. Now of course, the statues are still there, annoying the hell out of indigenous Australians and saying they discovered it. Similar kind of thing. Some Chinese people want to do the same thing. If Zheng He discovered Australia, even it's just boat sailing past and waving, somehow it makes a claim that Chinese belongs to Australia. It's fine. I can understand, psychologically, historically it's rubbish. Mark Shying is a better deal, he of course, last year people celebrated the 200 years of Chinese in Australia, they picked on Mark Shying because he can be identified by name as one of the first Chinese to arrive in Australia. His descents still live in Australia and he ran a pub right here in Parramatta, he is a great symbol and myth of the ideologies in history. Then again it's understandable psychologically that it was a bit dodgy.

Another piece of myth is to do with Lambing Flat, often mentioned again and again, as a major racial turning point in Australia against keeping up with the Americans, violent, race rights, certainly was not all the race rights, thousands of people drilling off the gold fields. The question is, did anyone died at Lambing Flat? The answer to this question is no. Or if anyone did die, it's one white one shot... loose. But nevertheless, many people they would believe that many people did die. This memorial here, the one at the top, is Rookwood cemetery at the moment. It was set up a few years ago by a Chinese community group. Originally, the memorial was going to say memorial for those died in Lambing Flat, until it's pointed out that nobody died in Lambing Flat. So they changed it to say that memorial for those who might have died, so they compromised a little bit.



So again the question comes why do people want to believe that a lot of people died? Certainly, the newspaper at the time was an allure, with this kind of illustration around, so right from the beginning there was a lot of exaggeration going on. But it is very key to some of the Australian history, some people claimed that the white Australia policy was born here, again people wants simplistic answers to these kind of thing, they want a specific answer, as if Australia wouldn't have had the white Australia policy if Lambing Flat hadn't come up. But the interesting thing here is that Lambing Flat is now a festival, Lambing Flat Chinese Festival. Young is a town near Lambing Flat. This is a memorial garden that was built close to some of the mines at Lambing Flat itself. Lambing Flat in order to attract tourists, particularly Chinese tourists, has brought its own festival. This has managed to square the circle by actually having a happy tourist festival that attracts Chinese tourists. It only claimed links to China is having racial rights that drove Chinese to one of the Gold fields. This is fairly successful and fairly popular festival. I won't go into details on how they do it, there were some controversies going on there, but by enlarged, they managed to do it because people... we use history for a variety of purposes and it really doesn't matter what the reality may be.

So coming to conclusion, I'm just going to go over four very recent uses of Chinese-Australian history. Two by professional historians John Fitzgerald and Sophie Couchman, and two by non-professional that uses history for their own purposes, Monica Tan, her book *Stranger country* and Tim Watts' *The Golden Country* which was recently published. Now Tim Watts, he is a labour politician who wrote the book and he is the descendent of white settlers. In this, he used history to kind of give a background to what he sees as the future of Australia turning into multiculturalism. What he has done is to have a fairly standard look at Australia's racist past. Tinge with the white guilt argument that I was talking about, but with a more positive spin because he is very keen as a politician, he also is very keen being a leader for the future. And, he's claimed link to China is that he is married to a Hong Kong born woman, and his children therefore are mixed Asian-Australians, he worried about their future, that's fair enough.



He has done what popularists do. When people do their historical researches, they seem to be incapable of looking at something that is less than 20 years old. So his history is ok, there is nothing particularly wrong with it, but there is nothing there that looks like it is written in the last 20 years. He did speak to Steven Fitzgerald and Erin Jin, few people directly. But by enlarge, all are old history, but there is nothing necessarily wrong with that, but it's a bit outdated, but it serves his purposes, which was again talked about the racist past of Australia, so he can then talk about it in terms of the multicultural future. So he is using it for his own purposes. So when I talk about all this history, I'm not saying there is anything wrong, I'm saying this is a different perception, different perspective of history.

Monica Tan identifies a Chinese-Australian herself. She did a very interesting book. She did a tour around Australia and wrote notes about it. They are about identity, the Chinese-Australian Identity, non- indigenous living in various indigenous communities. She uses the history in another way, she looks at the Chinese role in reserving Aboriginal culture and land. And so, she takes a twist that says rather than the other way that says Chinese and Aboriginals are all minorities, they were nicely friendly together against the evil whites, it's kind of a stereo typical view. She realises that of course Chinese were really as much part of the colonial regime as any other white person, and they used their space within Australia to explore aboriginal land as... and to get what they wanted out of it, so they also had a role within this. She identifies that, I think she can do that because she is quite comfortable in the Chinese-Australian society, she realises that as an Australian, she has to acknowledge this, this is what Australians have to do, so Chinese-Australians have to do the same kind of thing, acknowledge their role within Australia and Aboriginal community in Australia. Now the two professional historians have taken two different lines. John Fitzgerald, at the moment is very concerned about China and China's role in Australia. So what is written here in China's century humiliation on Australian history is highlighting the danger of Chinese influence on Australian history, it is saying they are using it for their own



purposes. So when he talks about century humiliation, he is talking about the communist party's standard the line, which says that only the communist party can protect China from centuries' humiliation, centuries of colonial power, China was a victim, then included overseas Chinese, we're not protected because China was weak, if China is strong, it can protect the overseas Chinese. Now, there are some hints that some people can use that mind to rewrite Australian history. Now I would argue, well it's true enough, the communist party can write history however it like. There is an organic reason why anyone who is Chinese Australians might want to also emphasis the racism and emphasis the past for their own purposes. There's nothing to do with Beijing, nothing to do with communists. So, John Fitzgerald is just emphasising one aspect of this, nevertheless it is an aspect that exist, another perception, another way to view this.

Now, Couchman is talking a more orthodox line, she is looking at Barry McGown. He is a very good historian who particularly looked at how Chinese-Australians integrated in the community. It wasn't about racism, it was looking at a county like Bradwood, it was a similar kind of thing, it wasn't just about Lamping Flat racism, it was about a much wider interaction that people had. It includes racism, but also includes interaction, intermarriage and getting on the economy and socialising. Sophie is emphasising this as well, talking about reconsidering race. In this particular paper, she looks at Lamping Flat in detail as well. From an orthodox historian point of view, going over the details, going over particular angles. You can see from these four books how diverse the perception of Chinese-Australian history can be. But these are just four random examples that I pick from very recent publications. There is a lot more going on and a lot more will be going on in the future.

To conclude, I just want to say, it is obviously that the change in the present that means change in the past. There is nothing special about this in terms of the change in the



Chinese-Australian history, as all history does this. Americans do this, Trump tries to do this, Scott Morrison tried to do this, Howard certainly tried to do this, prime ministers of the past tried to do this to rewrite history for their own purposes. This is a standard use of history and it annoys the hell out of historians, but it is part of professional working. History is always re-examined to meet the needs of present day. Australians including present day Chinese-Australians, it is not about definitive or objective history but more about myths, myth creation and myth busting. The question that we have to ask is though, do we just want to exercise the ghosts of the past and move on? Or do we want to learn from the past? So as a historian, these are the questions that I would like to ask. Thank you very much for your time.