

**CITATION BY PROFESSOR LIONEL WEE,  
DEAN, FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
CO-DEAN, COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES**

**PUBLIC ORATOR FOR PROFESSOR WANG GUNGWU,  
RECIPIENT OF HONORARY DOCTOR OF LETTERS**

**NUS COMMENCEMENT 2022, MAIN CEREMONY  
WEDNESDAY, 6 JULY 2022, NUS UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE**

### **Introduction**

Professor Wang Gungwu graduated with his Bachelor's and Masters in History from the University of Malaya. Soon after, in 1957, he completed his doctorate on North China with the University of London, and went on to teach in Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. In 1968, he became the Professor of Far Eastern History at the Australian National University (ANU). He is now a Professor Emeritus at ANU.

From 1986 to 1995, he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong. In 2007, he was conferred the title of University Professor by the National University of Singapore. Shortly after, in 2009, he was awarded an honorary degree marking Cambridge University's 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Most recently, in 2020, Prof Wang was awarded the Tang Prize in Sinology, and the Distinguished Service Order in Singapore. Just last week, he was also appointed as the 12th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore at the NUS Institute of Policy Studies.

This is but a brief recount of his accomplishments. As an eminent figure and brilliant mind who has spent most of his life in the academic sphere of History, he has distinguished himself at the highest international levels.

Prof Wang, University Professor, National University of Singapore (NUS), please allow me to celebrate your accomplishments with our esteemed audience today.

### **A leading figure in Sinology**

Otherwise termed as Chinese studies, Sinology delves into China's philosophy, politics, language, culture, and more. At the 2020 Tang Prize in Sinology conferment, Prof Wang was described as a world-leading figure with a sophisticated understanding of "the Chinese diaspora" and was lauded for his "trailblazing and dissecting insights on the history of the Chinese world order, overseas Chinese, and Chinese migratory experience."

In *The Straits Times*, the Tang Prize Foundation commended him for fostering a "unique approach to understanding China by scrutinising its long and complex relation with its southern neighbours," and for filling a crucial gap in Sinology by studying the overseas, Han Chinese, and non-Han ethnic groups of China.

### **Renowned public intellectual**

Prof Wang is one of our most sought-after public intellectuals, whose insights into contemporary China are valued for their diversity and depth. One clear example comes from his role as Chair of the Managing Board of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Previously, he was also Director and Chairman of the East Asian Institute. His views and expertise have proven to be invaluable to our policymakers and diplomats.

Singapore Press Holding's *ThinkChina* sought his views<sup>1</sup> on how China and the world responded to the pandemic. There is no doubt that Prof Wang holds a high status — not only in academia but in the public sphere as well. He plays a critical role in helping us make sense of contemporary crises and calamities.

### **Visionary leader and administrator**

In addition, Prof Wang is a visionary leader and administrator who has held senior positions in leading academic institutions. In addition to his Vice-Chancellorship with the University of Hong Kong, Prof Wang was the Head of Department and Director of the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. For his outstanding service to Australian tertiary education, he was accorded the Officer of the Order of Australia, in 2018.

Closer to home, Singapore too, recognised his vital role in guiding three world-class research institutions. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order of Singapore.

Admiration on the international stage and by different universities are truly grand achievements. Today, we are here to celebrate how, as one collection celebrating his works, puts it, “The name Wang Gungwu is iconic.”

### **Conclusion**

Our NUS honorary doctorate adds to the accolades he has received. For NUS, it bears a unique significance. As an NUS alumnus, Prof Wang began his journey to eminence with his undergraduate and postgraduate with the University of Malaya.

Returning to serve as University Prof and as the Head, Director, and Chairman of several NUS institutions, his accomplishments have helped to strengthen NUS's profile as an important venue for research into multiple fields in Southeast Asia.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, this doctorate symbolises the meaningful connections between Prof Wang and the University, and it celebrates the long-standing contributions and value that Prof Wang's scholarly insights bring to Singapore, to Southeast Asia and, indeed, to the world.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, for his dedication to Sinology, his remarkable intellect, his trailblazing vision, and his public contributions, may it please you to confer on Prof Wang Gungwu, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thinkchina.sg/wang-gungwu-even-if-west-has-lost-its-way-china-may-not-be-heir-apparent>