

**To the Ends of the Earth. From Melbourne to Shanghai, and from Molong to Calgary: The Story of  
Australian Pentecostal Jessie Wong**

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**Abstract**

Through a family history lens, this essay outlines the extraordinary life of an Australian Pentecostal who spread the Gospel “to the ends of the earth.” Jessie Wong was born in Melbourne and travelled to China where she would establish a ministry amongst the Cantonese in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s. Her mission was bombed by the Japanese in 1937 but she managed to continue within the International Settlement during the chaos of the Japanese occupation. Following World War 2, she ministered in Hong Kong, North America, and Australia. She possibly chose to minister in Canada because of bonds formed during her ministry in China, and because the white hegemony of Australia in the 1950s meant that she might not be accepted as a Pentecostal preacher in Australia’s major cities. Perhaps she also found the harvest to be sparse because the Chinese population had diminished so substantially in comparison to the Australian population during her 44 years overseas. Jessie Wong’s story challenges the white/Western discourse that currently dominates the Australasian Pentecostal movement and perhaps even its self-identity. This Australian Pentecostal’s story has arguably been forgotten because she was a Chinese Australian during the White Australia period. But the world has changed since Jessie’s times: the Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate movements have shone a light on the discrimination that people from Global South cultures faced and continue to face. Retelling Jessie’s story might help us to understand the past to be more inclusive in the future.

**Introduction**

This essay recounts the history of a remarkable Australian Pentecostal woman, Jessie Wong Goot Hong. Born in 1892, she was the daughter of Wong Shi Geen (黄世彦), a Chinese civil rights activist and one of Melbourne’s best-known Chinese merchants. Jessie had a heart for

the Chinese people and would make her way to China at the age of 17 in 1910, eventually finding herself in the bustling treaty port of Shanghai in 1919. There, she found work as an English teacher. Through the faith-healing ministry of a Pentecostal missionary, she would be filled with the Holy Spirit and establish her own mission organisation in 1923. This mission would be bombed by the Japanese in 1937 when they occupied Shanghai. Remaining in China during World War 2 she destroyed her British paperwork to avoid capture by the Japanese. In 1950, she started a megachurch in Hong Kong which attracted over 1000 worshippers on its first Sunday. In the 1950s she eventually made a new home for herself in Canada and died there at the age of 101 in 1994. In summary, this woman spread the Gospel to “the ends of the earth” across three continents: she ministered in Oceania (Australia), North America (USA and Canada) and Asia (China). With a ministry in the world’s most populous country, in arguably its most significant city, during a formative period in the indigenous Chinese church, her story was lost until now.

Kamp has previously asserted that Chinese Australian women have been overlooked in research,<sup>1</sup> and Bagnall and Martinez declared that “Chinese Australian women have been doubly erased in a gendered and racialized historiography.”<sup>2</sup> In the Australasian Pentecostal literature, I am aware of only Austin’s research into Mary Yeung<sup>3</sup> as an example of a Chinese Australian Pentecostal “recovery history”—the identification and research of the lives of these individual women with the explicit purpose of un-erasing their lives.<sup>4</sup> Like Mary, Jessie on the surface suffered from the same “triple marginalisation” as a woman, as a Pentecostal, and as a Chinese.<sup>5</sup> And Jessie, because of her unmarried status, had perhaps further reason to be marginalised. However, as I outline in this essay (written through a family history lens), the truth is that despite this marginalisation, Jessie was able to flourish in tumultuous times. In retelling her story, I hope that it might reframe our understanding of Chinese Australians and the role they played in Australasian and global Pentecostalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Alanna Kamp, ‘Chinese Australian Women in White Australia: Utilising Available Sources to Overcome the Challenge of “Invisibility”’, 2013, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Kate Bagnall and Julia Martinez, ‘Introduction: Chinese Australian Women, Migration, and Mobility’, in *Locating Chinese Women: Historical Mobility Between China and Australia.*, ed. Kate Bagnall and Julia Martinez (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2021), 1–23.

<sup>3</sup> Denise A. Austin, “Mary (Wong Yen) Yeung: The Ordinary Life of an Extraordinary Australian Chinese Pentecostal Part I,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 16, no. 2 (August 2013): 99–122; Denise A. Austin, “Mary (Wong Yen) Yeung: The Ordinary Life of an Extraordinary Australian Chinese Pentecostal Part II,” *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 16, no. 2 (August 2013): 123–37; Denise A. Austin, “Women and Guangdong Native-Place Charity in Chinese Australian Pentecostalism: ‘The Miracle of Grace,’” in *Chinese Diaspora Charity and the Cantonese Pacific, 1850–1949*, ed. John Fitzgerald and Hon-ming Yip, 1st ed. (Hong Kong University Press, 2020), 173–92, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv15d80zh.13>.

<sup>4</sup> Bagnall and Martinez, “Introduction: Chinese Australian Women, Migration, and Mobility.”

<sup>5</sup> Austin, “Women and Guangdong Native-Place Charity in Chinese Australian Pentecostalism.”

Bishop has observed that “uncovering women’s past lives in the paper archive, an archive predominantly produced and preserved by men, has been an ongoing and problematic project of women’s history. Women have been present, but buried in mountains of paper.”<sup>6</sup> But as Bishop also noted, the searchability of the global digital archive has allowed researchers like me to uncover the stories of women like Jessie, and bring their light out into the open.

It is important at this point to situate myself in the research and acknowledge some biases I may bring to this work.<sup>7</sup> As a distant relative of Jessie Wong (I am her grand-nephew), this work is of personal significance to me; and as a proud Chinese Australian Pentecostal, it is also of significance to my cultural identity. Unlike her, I have the benefit of male gender and all the privileges this affords me in both modern Asian and Australian contexts. Unlike her, my spoken and written Chinese is rudimentary at present, and thus accessing Chinese language sources was difficult, time consuming, and resource intensive. A goal of this essay is to bring Jessie’s unexamined achievements to the attention of Australasian scholars and historians as a contribution to redress the under-recognition of women, and people of colour in both literatures.

## 1. Jessie’s life

### 1.1 *Jessie’s early childhood, her father, and his work against racism*

Jessie was born at 242 Little Bourke St, Melbourne, the capital of the British colony of Victoria on 2 September 1892.<sup>8</sup> She was the youngest daughter of Chow Ho, and her husband Wong Shi Geen. According to his naturalisation paperwork submitted in 1881, Wong Shi Geen came to Victoria in September 1875 via Hong Kong.<sup>9</sup> His ancestral village, Wong Chong (黄冲村, a village that consisted of the Wong clan),<sup>10</sup> was in the Sunwei (新會) district of Canton (Guangdong 广东 province in Mandarin). His immigration from the See Yup (四邑 “Four Districts”) area to Australia mirrored the migration patterns of Chinese to many parts of the Pacific rim.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Bishop, “The Serendipity of Connectivity: Piecing Together Women’s Lives in the Digital Archive,” *Women’s History Review* 26, no. 5 (September 3, 2017): 766–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2016.1166883>.

<sup>7</sup> Diane Watt, “On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher: The Value of Reflexivity,” *The Qualitative Report*, 15 January 2015, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2007.1645>.

<sup>8</sup> Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Vic BDM), ‘Birth Registration Wong Goot Hong Victoria 34450/1892’, 2 September 1892.

<sup>9</sup> “Shi Geen - Naturalisation” (item, Canberra, 1881 1881), A712, 1881/V9243, National Archives of Australia, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/scripts/AutoSearch.asp?O=I&Number=1608192>.

<sup>10</sup> “See Yup Society Memorial Tablet Database” (See Yup Society, Melbourne, n.d.).

<sup>11</sup> Keir Reeves and Benjamin Mountford, “Sojourning and Settling: Locating Chinese Australian History,” *Australian Historical Studies* 42, no. 1 (March 2011): 111–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2010.539620>.

Prior to 1888, Lowe Kong Meng (劉光明) was one of the main spokesmen for the Chinese community in Victoria. Lowe had been born in the Straits settlement of Penang and was educated in English and French in Mauritius.<sup>12</sup> After Lowe died in 1888, it appears that Wong Shi Geen may have inherited some of Lowe's mantle as a community leader. The relationship between the two men is uncertain, but according to the 1888 Melbourne City rate books, 242 Little Bourke was owned by Lowe's business, Kong Meng & Co.<sup>13</sup> This demonstrates that the two men had at minimum a landlord-tenant relationship.

Wong Shi Geen's mantle as a community leader was possibly due to his English language proficiency, which enabled Wong to interface with the colonialists, and later, the state and federal authorities. It is unclear how Wong Shi Geen became fluent in English, but there remains evidence of his English literacy: His letter to the editor (highlighting the violation of his rights as a British subject in a proposed bill) that was published in *The Argus* in 1907 is articulate, incisive, and succinct<sup>14</sup> (although this may possibly have been polished by his associate, Rev Cheong Cheok Hong)<sup>15</sup> (see Fig. 1 below). He also co-authored (again with Cheong and others) a "Chinese Remonstrance" to the Victorian Parliament and people,<sup>16</sup> and a "Petition of the Victorian Residents Committee to the Intercolonial Conference on The Chinese Question" (both engaging in the debate around racist policies that preceded the White Australia policy) both published in 1888.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Macgregor, "Lowe Kong Meng and Chinese Engagement in the International Trade of Colonial Victoria," *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, no. 11 (2012): 26–43; Paul Macgregor, "Chinese Political Values in Colonial Victoria: Lowe Kong Meng and the Legacy of the July 1880 Election," in *Chinese Australians*, ed. Sophie Couchman and Kate Bagnall (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 53–97.

<sup>13</sup> City of Melbourne, "Melbourne City Rate Books," 1888.

<sup>14</sup> Shi Geen Wong, 'Chinese Citizens' Rights - to the Editor of the Argus', *The Argus*, 23 August 1907, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article10133997>.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Macgregor, "Personal Correspondence to the Author," September 30, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> "Chinese Remonstrance to the Parliament and People of Victoria: Together with Correspondence with Government of the Same, and Address to Sydney Conference. Also, Public Address" (Melbourne, 1888), <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/107652>.

<sup>17</sup> "Chinese Remonstrance to the Parliament and People of Victoria."

**TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.**  
 Sir.—Many years ago, when Sir Alexander Peacock was probably playing marbles at school, and when people seemed to have a much broader view of fairness and justice, I availed myself of an open invitation to give up my status as a subject of the Emperor of China and become a citizen of Victoria. Thereupon, I was in due form of law granted "all the rights of a British subject in Victoria" (except that of becoming a member of the Executive Council!). That part I fondly believed, and still believe, to be inviolable.  
 It came as a rude shock to me, after

Figure 1 Wong Shi Geen's letter to the Editor of *The Argus*.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to being a Chinese civil rights activist, a spokesman for the Chinese community in Melbourne, and the president of the Melbourne See Yup Society (四邑會館),<sup>19</sup> Wong Shi Geen was also a prominent (and presumably prosperous) businessman.<sup>20</sup> Jessie's own recollections were that her father was a tea merchant.<sup>21</sup> However, contemporaneous advertisements and street directories demonstrate that the shop at 242 Little Bourke Street run by the three Wong brothers (Gee Cheong How 怡昌號) also sold other various Chinese sundries including silks and fireworks.<sup>22</sup> His brother, Wong Shi Hoo (黃世圖) also advertised insurance broking from the same address demonstrating that the Wong brothers had

<sup>18</sup> Wong, "Chinese Citizens' Rights - to the Editor of the Argus," *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.)

<sup>19</sup> Sophie Couchman, "Wong Shi Geen - Biographical Entry - Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia," Document (Chinese-Australian Historical Images in Australia, November 11, 2005), <http://www.chia.chinesemuseum.com.au/biogs/CH00011b.htm>; Sophie Couchman, "Melbourne's See Yup Kuan Ti Temple: A Historical Overview," *Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies* 8 (2019): 32; Ian Hamilton Welch, "Alien Son: The Life and Times of Cheok Hong Cheong, (Zhang Zhuoxiong) 1851-1928" (Australian National University, 2003), <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/49261>.

<sup>20</sup> Mei-fen Kuo, "In the Shadow of the Chinese Urban Elite," in *Making Chinese Australia: Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese Australian Identity, 1892-1912* (Monash University Publishing, 2013), <http://books.publishing.monash.edu/apps/bookworm/view/Making+Chinese+Australia%3A+Urban+Elites%2C+Newspapers+and+the+Formation+of+Chinese+Australian+Identity%2C+1892%E2%80%931912/187/Text/Chapter6.html#fn40>.

<sup>21</sup> Lilah Henry, 'Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 26 September 1946, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/61251640/aid-to-refugees-miss-jessie-wong/>.

<sup>22</sup> "Gee Cheong," *Chinese Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1902 - 1922)*, February 5, 1902; *Sands & McDougall's Melbourne and Suburban Directory: 1905, 1905*, <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/404425>.

diversified business interests.<sup>23</sup> According to Welch, Wong Shi Geen also acted as an immigration agent or broker.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, Jessie appears to have grown up in an affluent merchant family, one that Kuo would describe as the Chinese “urban elite” in Melbourne.<sup>25</sup>

### **1.2. Family structure and her conversion to Presbyterianism**

Jessie was raised in “traditional Chinese religion.”<sup>26</sup> This was likely a mixture of Buddhism<sup>27</sup> and the Cantonese “folk religion” (or Shenism) described by Couchman.<sup>28</sup> (For a more thorough exposition on Chinese popular religion, see Teiser.)<sup>29</sup> As a child, Jessie recalls her mother praying to a fertility god hoping to bear a son.<sup>30</sup> Here, it is likely that Chow Ho would have been hoping to perpetuate the patrilineal line in keeping with what Teiser describes as the “religious aspects of the Chinese kinship system.”<sup>31</sup> The fertility god did not answer Chow Ho’s prayers.<sup>32</sup> Despite this, there was no shortage of children: living with Jessie at 242 Little Bourke Street were two older sisters born in 1887 and 1889,<sup>33</sup> and six cousins born between 1886 and 1907.<sup>34</sup> This arrangement of multiple related families living communally was not unusual for Chinese families at the time.

The upper floor of the family’s building was also the meeting place of the Kong Chew Society (岡州同鄉會).<sup>35</sup> This society was founded in 1841 as a welfare and mutual aid organisation for Chinese immigrants from the Sunwei district and is the oldest Chinese community association in Australia.<sup>36</sup> During this time, various legislation was passed with the intent to improve the lives of those living in the colonies. For example, schooling became compulsory

<sup>23</sup> ‘Advertising’, *Chinese Times (Melbourne, Vic. : 1902 - 1922)*, 8 April 1905, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article170095023>.

<sup>24</sup> Welch, “Alien Son,” 220.

<sup>25</sup> Mei-fen Kuo, “Making Chinese Australia: Urban Elites, Newspapers and the Formation of Chinese Australian Identity, 1892–1912” (Monash University, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville’, *Democrat and Chronicle*, 15 June 1947, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/61360002/jessie-wong-slanted-to-speak/>.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story’, *Calgary Herald*, 25 May 1959, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/481221971/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.

<sup>28</sup> Couchman, “Melbourne’s See Yup Kuan Ti Temple: A Historical Overview.”

<sup>29</sup> Stephen F. Teiser, “Popular Religion,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 54, no. 2 (1995): 378–95, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2058743>.

<sup>30</sup> “Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story.”

<sup>31</sup> Teiser, “Popular Religion.”

<sup>32</sup> “Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story.”

<sup>33</sup> Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Vic BDM), “Birth Registration of Wong Ah Kam, 4709/1887,” 1887; Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Wong Goot Hing 14145/1889,” 1889.

<sup>34</sup> Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Wong Han Ching, 4331/1886,” January 2, 1886; Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Wong Ding Ching, 32965/1889,” 1889; Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Wong Ting Ching, 5629/1893,” 27 January 1893; Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Wong Yook Him, 13264/1896,” 1896; Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Wong On Ching, 27828/1902,” 20 August 1902; Vic BDM, “Birth Registration of Dorothy Wong, 28554/1907,” September 3, 1907.

<sup>35</sup> *Sands & McDougall’s Melbourne and Suburban Directory: 1905*.

<sup>36</sup> Couchman, “Melbourne’s See Yup Kuan Ti Temple: A Historical Overview.”

in Victoria in 1872 with the Education Act 1872 (*Vic*).<sup>37</sup> Records note that Jessie attended a mission school while growing up in Melbourne,<sup>38</sup> likely with her sisters and cousins. It is highly probable that she and her cousins attended the Little Bourke Street Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union Chinese School in Heffernan Lane (see Fig. 2). This was an initiative for Australia's Chinese migrants established in 1892 with the help of philanthropist Ann Fraser Bon.<sup>39</sup>



P.W.M.U. CHINESE SCHOOL, LITTLE BOURKE STREET.

*Figure 2 Students and teachers of the PWMU Chinese School as published in 1900. Jessie would have been around eight years old and is possibly pictured here with her sisters and cousins.*<sup>40</sup>

Jessie reports coming to faith in the Presbyterian tradition (around the age of ten in 1902<sup>41</sup>) most likely through her education in the PWMU Chinese School.<sup>42</sup> Her decision to follow

<sup>37</sup> Welch, "Alien Son."

<sup>38</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story."

<sup>39</sup> Frank H. L. Paton, *Glimpses of the Chinese* (Melbourne, Australia: Foreign Missions Committee, Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1907); Joan Gillison, "Bon, Ann Fraser (1838–1936)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed July 12, 2020, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bon-ann-fraser-5284>.

<sup>40</sup> "PWMU Chinese School, Little Bourke Street," *The Messenger*, June 22, 1900, 354.

<sup>41</sup> 'Chinese Woman Missionary to Lecture Here', *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate* (NSW : 1894 - 1954), 24 August 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article132583622>.

<sup>42</sup> 'Guest Speaker', *Langley Advance*, 26 March 1959, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/536970431/?terms=jessie%2Bwong>.

Christ had life altering implications for this young Chinese Australian and her family. She was later inspired to become a missionary in China<sup>43</sup> despite the initial opposition of her parents to her conversion to Christianity,<sup>44</sup> which led to her being disinherited by them<sup>45</sup> and running away from home.<sup>46</sup> However, her persistence also ultimately resulted in her father's conversion to the Christian faith, and his encouragement for her to become an evangelist.<sup>47</sup> This testimony would form the basis of her sermons (see Fig. 3) outlining her own conversion from "Idol Worship to a living God."<sup>48</sup>

**CALGARY'S ALLIANCE CHURCH**  
17th Avenue and 1st Street West  
Ministers: Rev. J. D. Carlson, Rev. J. N. Jamieson

7:25 p.m.—  
**"FROM IDOL WORSHIP TO A LIVING GOD"**

On Sunday evening at 7:25, Miss Jessie Wong, of China, will bring, by popular demand, the concluding portion of her life story. Hear the thrilling account of the conversion of this Idol worshipping Chinese lady to Christianity.

★ Music by Vic Harbidge, Miss Dawn Hommy, and the Church Choir.

Miss Jessie Wong

**SUNDAY MORNING**  
9:45 a.m.—Sunday School—A class for every age.  
10:45 a.m.—REV. NORMAN JAMIESON SPEAKS —  
**"FOUND WANTING"**  
There will also be the serving of Baby Dedication and "every member and every friend" Holy Communion.

**Tuesday, June 2 — 7:55 p.m.**  
MID-WEEK SERVICE.  
HEAR THIS SUBJECT DISCUSSED —  
**"THE REWARDS OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM"**

★ COMING — VACATION BIBLE CLUB —  
JULY 13 - 24.

<sup>43</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story."

<sup>44</sup> Emma Lawler, 'Taking the Gospel to the Soldiers in Shanghai', *The Latter Rain Evangel* 20, no. 2 (1927): 14–16, [https://archives.ifphc.org/pdf/LatterRainEvangel/1920-1929/LRE%201927/1927\\_11.pdf#Page14](https://archives.ifphc.org/pdf/LatterRainEvangel/1920-1929/LRE%201927/1927_11.pdf#Page14); 'Rev J Wong Real Chinese Missionary', *The Ottawa Citizen*, 4 May 1955, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79698201/rev-j-wong-real-chinese-missionary/>.

<sup>45</sup> 'Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences', *The Chilliwack Progress*, 10 October 1951, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/77128334/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.

<sup>46</sup> Lawler, 'Taking the Gospel to the Soldiers in Shanghai'.

<sup>47</sup> Lawler.

<sup>48</sup> 'From Idol Worship To Christ', *The Leader-Post*, 29 October 1960, 1960, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/79632922/jessie-wong-at-bethel-temple/>; 'Calgary's Alliance Church', *Calgary Herald*, 30 May 1959, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/481222739/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.



Figure 3 Advertising for Jessie Wong's preaching<sup>49</sup>

### 1.3. The return to China

Significantly, Jessie was not the only female at 242 Little Bourke St influenced by the Presbyterians. Her aunt, Moysee Shi-Hoo (梅氏) (the wife of Wong Shi Geen's brother, Wong Shi Hoo) died in 1909.<sup>50</sup> Moysee's funeral rites were administered by Frank Paton, the foreign mission secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.<sup>51</sup> This highlights the Christian influences upon these two families. However, the death of Moysee (following her husband the previous year) left their six children orphaned and under the care of Wong Shi Geen. This may have prompted Wong Shi Geen's return trip to China with both families in 1910 on the SS Changsha.<sup>52</sup> He died the following year.<sup>53</sup> At present it remains unclear why Wong Shi Geen took the families back to China, or whether the return was supposed to be temporary or permanent. However, the familial and societal context (of having an orphaned family to support in a politically unwelcoming and discriminatory country) may have had some bearing on the decision of this man who was clearly concerned for his family's welfare as well as wider Chinese Australian civil rights. Given the snide and mocking tone of *The Bulletin* article in reaction to his death (see Fig. 4),<sup>54</sup> some in Australian society were clearly very happy that Wong Shi Geen would not return. The White Australia policy was having its intended effect of making an "Australia for the white man."<sup>55</sup> But Australia's loss would arguably be the world and the Kingdom's gain.

<sup>49</sup> "Calgary's Alliance Church."

<sup>50</sup> Vic BDM, 'Death Registration Moysee Shi Hoo 9667/1909', 1909, <https://my.rio.bdm.vic.gov.au/efamily-history/6008b1b510c0341bf10758f4/record/5c6539e84aba80ac31fcd61d?q=efamily&givenName=Moysee&familyName=SHI%20HOO>.

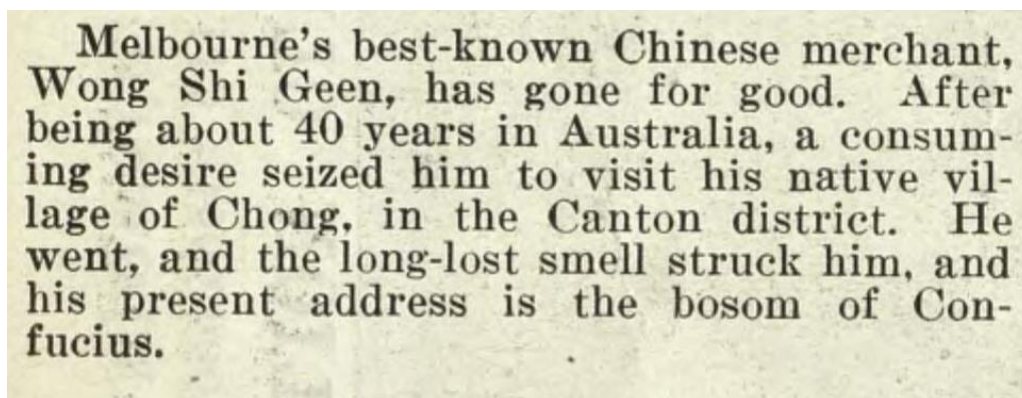
<sup>51</sup> Niel Gunson, "Paton, Francis Hume Lyall (Frank) (1870–1938)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University), accessed January 23, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/paton-francis-hume-lyall-frank-7976>.

<sup>52</sup> "PROV: VPRS 948/P1 Outward Passengers SS Changsha Passenger Manifest," April 1910, (VPRS): 948, <https://prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/explore-topic/passenger-records-and-immigration/outwards-passenger-lists>.

<sup>53</sup> 'Personal Items', *The Bulletin*, 29 February 1912, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-690529172>; 'Deaths (Wong Shi Geen)', *The Age*, 9 November 1911, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/197386343>; 'Family Notices', *Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, 9 November 1911, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11630574>; 'Family Notices', *Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, 9 November 1911, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article11630598>.

<sup>54</sup> "Personal Items."

<sup>55</sup> National Museum of Australia, 'Defining Moments - The Bulletin', National Museum of Australia, 29 July 2020, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/the-bulletin>.



Melbourne's best-known Chinese merchant, Wong Shi Geen, has gone for good. After being about 40 years in Australia, a consuming desire seized him to visit his native village of Chong, in the Canton district. He went, and the long-lost smell struck him, and his present address is the bosom of Confucius.

Figure 4 'Personal Items.' *The Bulletin*, 29 February 1912.

#### 1.4. Life in the early republic

These events place Jessie in Southern China at the end of the Qing Dynasty. During this period China entered a phase of great hope and great instability. Jessie's family presumably returned to their ancestral village of Huang Chong in Guangdong province. Here, Jessie and her Australian-born sisters and cousins likely experienced significant culture shock (perhaps similar to the experience of Mary Yeung).<sup>56</sup> These children had lived their entire lives in Melbourne's Chinatown, and the contrast in living conditions between early 20<sup>th</sup> century Melbourne and village life in rural China were stark. It is unsurprising that Jessie would find her way to the thriving treaty port of Shanghai in 1919 at the age of 27, where a bilingual and bicultural Chinese Australian would potentially feel more at home and have access to greater opportunities. Similar opportunities would also have existed closer to "home" in Hong Kong, and at this stage it is unclear whether Jessie first tried to settle in Hong Kong, or why she chose Shanghai. However, once in Shanghai, Jessie found work teaching English at a non-denominational mission school.<sup>57</sup> She converted to Pentecostalism after witnessing either her niece<sup>58</sup> or sister<sup>59</sup> being healed by the prayer of Mrs Minnie Reimer Hanson, an American Pentecostal missionary.<sup>60</sup>

#### 1.5. Jessie's Chinese ministry

Following her conversion to Pentecostalism, Jessie was filled with the Holy Spirit, and planted a church and mission in the "Cantonese district" in Shanghai in 1923.<sup>61</sup> She named her church

<sup>56</sup> Austin, "Mary (Wong Yen) Yeung," August 2013.

<sup>57</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story"; "Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences."

<sup>58</sup> "Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences."

<sup>59</sup> Minnie Reimer Hanson, 'How Pentecost Entered a Cantonese Church', *The Latter Rain Evangel* 19, no. 12 (1927): 21, [https://archives.ifphc.org/pdf/LatterRainEvangel/1920-1929/LRE%201927/1927\\_09.pdf#Page21](https://archives.ifphc.org/pdf/LatterRainEvangel/1920-1929/LRE%201927/1927_09.pdf#Page21).

<sup>60</sup> Hanson.

<sup>61</sup> 'Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story'; 'Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences'; Henry, 'Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs,

the Cantonese Gospel Mission<sup>62</sup> and its focus was on ministering to the poor,<sup>63</sup> highlighting Jessie's social activism, generosity, and philanthropic nature which she perhaps inherited from her father. (Wong Shi Geen is recorded as giving generously to a number of charitable causes during his time in Melbourne,<sup>64</sup> and he was also made a Life Governor of the Women's Hospital in 1908,<sup>65</sup> possibly as recognition for a large community donation.) Her ministry as a single woman may have been a radical departure from social and cultural norms at the time, but in the melting pot of the Chinese treaty ports, things were far from normal.

China was in the throes of great change. Trade union movements had gained traction with oppressed workers, and Communism was gaining a foothold: The Chinese Communist Party would be founded in 1921 in Shanghai.<sup>66</sup> Following the "unequal treaties" forced upon it following the Opium Wars, China had hoped to end the German concessions at the Treaty of Versailles following World War I. Meanwhile the Japanese were hoping to enshrine racial equality, especially for the Asian races. Both China and Japan left the meeting at Versailles disappointed. Much to China's displeasure, the Japanese retained possession of the German concessions in China;<sup>67</sup> meanwhile the Japanese dream of racial equality was dashed by the wishes of Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes who saw racial equality as a direct threat to White Australia.<sup>68</sup>

It is in this milieu that Jessie commenced her ministry. The focus appeared to be the Cantonese in Shanghai although she reports also ministering in Shandong province in 1928 with other Chinese Christians.<sup>69</sup> At this point it is unclear whether her ministry was focussed

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Reveals Williamson Visitor'; 'Noted Chinese Woman to Speak', *Langley Advance*, 21 June 1951, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/537072337/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.

<sup>62</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story"; "Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences"; Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor"; "Noted Chinese Woman to Speak."

<sup>63</sup> "Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville."

<sup>64</sup> 'Castlemaine District Flood Relief', *The Age*, 9 February 1889,

<https://www.newspapers.com/clip/61362878/wong-shi-geen-reports-collection-from/>; 'The Central Relief Fund', *The Age*, 18 July 1891, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article190629555>; 'Chinese Contributions', *The Age*, 14 March 1900, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/61387694/chinese-contributions-includes-w-shi/>.

<sup>65</sup> 'The Committee of the Women's Hospital', *Age (Melbourne, Vic. : 1854 - 1954)*, 20 February 1908, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article196110368>.

<sup>66</sup> James Zheng Gao, *Historical Dictionary of Modern China (1800-1949)*, Historical Dictionaries of Ancient Civilizations and Historical Eras, no. 25 (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 119.

<sup>67</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Shandong Question," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Shandong-question>.

<sup>68</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*, Random House trade paperback ed (New York: Random House, 2003), 319; Michael Williams, 'The Humanity of Australia Itself Will in Time Revolt', in *Australia's Dictation Test: The Test It Was a Crime to Fail* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2021), 231–62, <https://brill.com/view/title/36268>.

<sup>69</sup> Jessie Wong, 'Good Missionary Report', *Maran-Atha* 5, no. 6–7 (April 1929): 6, [https://archives.ifphc.org/DigitalPublications/USA/National%20and%20International%20Pentecostal%20Missionary%20Union/Maran-atha/Unregistered/1929/FPHC/1929\\_03\\_04.pdf](https://archives.ifphc.org/DigitalPublications/USA/National%20and%20International%20Pentecostal%20Missionary%20Union/Maran-atha/Unregistered/1929/FPHC/1929_03_04.pdf).

solely on the Cantonese from the See Yup area in Canton, or the larger body of Cantonese speakers from Canton as both groups speak minimally inter-intelligible Chinese dialects.<sup>70</sup> Jessie pastored the Cantonese Gospel Mission in Shanghai from 1923 until the mission building was bombed by the Japanese in 1937.<sup>71</sup>

### **1.6. The Japanese Invasion and Occupation**

The invasion by the Japanese and the subsequent second Sino-Japanese War of 1937-1945 sparked a period of intense fear for the Chinese. Jessie, as a Chinese Australian, and British subject, might have been targeted (first as a Chinese beginning in 1937, and then later as a British subject following Japan's declaration of war against the western powers in 1941). However, Jessie stayed in Shanghai throughout the war. She did not dare to speak English for four-and-a-half years,<sup>72</sup> and even destroyed her birth certificate to avoid arrest as a British subject.<sup>73</sup> This demonstrates Jessie's desperation at the time as birth certificates authenticating Australian birth were highly prized amongst Chinese. Earlier in the century, purchase of assumed identities was a known way of circumventing anti-Chinese laws.<sup>74</sup> For Jessie, her bona-fide documentation would have facilitated her re-entry into Australia despite immigration policy during and after World War 2 that remained opposed to Chinese migration.<sup>75</sup>

During these dark times in China, she managed to start a new mission in the international settlement<sup>76</sup> which distributed food and helped the poor while teaching the Gospel.<sup>77</sup> She worked in refugee camps,<sup>78</sup> and assisted at least one American family to flee Shanghai when

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<sup>70</sup> Cecilia Szeto, "Testing Intelligibility among Sinitic Dialects," in *Proceedings of ALS2K, the 2000 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society* (Citeseer, 2000), 1–10.

<sup>71</sup> "Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville"; "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story"; "Rev J Wong Real Chinese Missionary"; Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor."

<sup>72</sup> "Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville"; "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story"; Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor."

<sup>73</sup> Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor."

<sup>74</sup> Kate Bagnall, "Anglo-Chinese and the Politics of Overseas Travel from New South Wales, 1898 to 1925," in *Chinese Australians: Politics, Engagement and Resistance*, ed. Sophie Couchman and Kate Bagnall (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2015), 203–39, [https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004288553/B9789004288553\\_009.xml](https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004288553/B9789004288553_009.xml).

<sup>75</sup> Williams, 'The Humanity of Australia Itself Will in Time Revolt'.

<sup>76</sup> "Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville"; "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story."

<sup>77</sup> "Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville."

<sup>78</sup> Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor."

the Japanese attacked Shanghai in 1937.<sup>79</sup> Jessie also reported that while foreign missionaries were forced out of China in 1941,<sup>80</sup> the localised Chinese Church was able to assist the 50,000 German Jews that had fled to Shanghai.<sup>81</sup> Whether she was directly involved in these efforts is unclear.

Jessie later recounted during speaking tours that she faced starvation and experienced the hyperinflation that accompanied the scarcity of food when the Japanese stopped food rations in 1943.<sup>82</sup> At some point during the Japanese occupation, her health “broke down” to the point where she was unable to function for about two years,<sup>83</sup> and she recounts her joy when learning that the Japanese army had been defeated.<sup>84</sup> In spite of this adversity, Jessie was able to continue her charitable work. Where others only survived, Jessie was in some respects able to thrive, even during the difficult Japanese occupation of Shanghai.

### **1.7. A break from war and an overflowing ministry in Hong Kong**

I have been able to trace Jessie’s next movement to 1946. She boarded the SS General M.C. Meigs from Shanghai on her 54<sup>th</sup> birthday bound for San Francisco.<sup>85</sup> From San Francisco, Jessie would make her way to New York state where she would stay with the MacClurgs, a family who had been fellow missionaries in Shanghai, and whom Jessie had helped leave China.<sup>86</sup> She appears to have stayed on the East Coast until at least October 1947. It must be remembered that China did not see peace immediately following the Japanese surrender. The Chinese Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party would continue until 1949.<sup>87</sup> This period of at least a year in 1946-1947 may have been a well-earned respite from war for Jessie. Over this period, she is recorded preaching at least six times in

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<sup>79</sup> Henry; ‘They Escaped Bombs That Rained on Shanghai: Mother, Tots Safe in Palmyra after Facing Perils of War’, *Democrat and Chronicle*, 25 September 1937, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/14529094/democrat-and-chronicle/>.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Edmonton Woman Heads Alberta Mission Societies’, *Calgary Herald*, 26 March 1964, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/480832276/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.

<sup>81</sup> “Edmonton Woman Heads Alberta Mission Societies.”

<sup>82</sup> Henry, “Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor.”

<sup>83</sup> “Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville”; Henry, “Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor.”

<sup>84</sup> Henry, “Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor.”

<sup>85</sup> “Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at San Francisco, California; NAI Number: 4498993” (The National Archives at Washington, D.C., n.d.), Record Group Number: 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004, accessed July 30, 2021.

<sup>86</sup> Henry, “Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor.”

<sup>87</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Chinese Civil War,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 13, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Chinese-Civil-War>.

New York state<sup>88</sup> and at least once in Pennsylvania.<sup>89</sup> This speaking tour appears to have been at a mix of Pentecostal and Reformed Churches, the latter invitations likely coming by way of personal connection to Rev Henry P De Pree, a missionary to the Reformed Church's Amoy Mission in China from 1907-1948.<sup>90</sup>

I have been unable to pinpoint Jessie's precise movements after October 1947, but at some point, she made her way back across the Pacific. It is unclear whether she returned to Shanghai directly after her New York furlough, but it was reported that she continued to look after Chinese refugees until she left for Hong Kong in 1948.<sup>91</sup> At the end of the Japanese occupation, Hong Kong's population was estimated to be 600,000. In part because of the Chinese Civil War, Hong Kong's population swelled to 1,600,000 by the end of 1946, and by 1950 the population was estimated at 2,360,000. In 1956, Chinese refugees were thought to make up a third of the approximately 2.5 million people in Hong Kong.<sup>92</sup> During this post-war period, Jessie would continue her work amongst the Chinese refugees.<sup>93</sup> Jessie's work in Hong Kong was clearly fruitful. By 1950 her ministry hired the Kings Theatre (which had a capacity of 1080 people) weekly on Sunday mornings. Her first service was held in Jan 1950 and reported an altar call of 40 people.<sup>94</sup> The service grew so large that the Kings Theatre was filled to overflowing.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> 'Church Slates Talk Tonight By Missionary - Miss Jessie Wong to Be Heard at Pultneyville'; 'Mission Convention', *Hartford Courant*, 30 November 1946, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/367924354/>; 'Missionaries Set Talks in Lyons', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 28 October 1946, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/136011666/>; 'Churches List Mission Talks', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 19 March 1947, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/136056421/>; 'Chinese Evangelist to Be Guest Speaker', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 18 April 1947, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/136058853/>; 'Chinese Woman Evangelist Here', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 19 April 1947, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/136058938/>; 'Hear the Chinese Evangelist', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 19 April 1947, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/136058935/>; 'Missionary to Speak', *Democrat and Chronicle*, 5 October 1947, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/136092087/>.

<sup>89</sup> 'Welcome to Indiana's Gospel Tabernacle', *The Indiana Gazette*, 13 May 1947, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/13381058/>.

<sup>90</sup> Hope College, 'Y.W.C.A. Meeting Led by Rev H. P. De Pree', *The Anchor* 27, no. 7 (16 December 1914): 5, [https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1013&context=anchor\\_1914](https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1013&context=anchor_1914); 'Churches List Mission Talks'; 'Reformed Church Missionaries in Amoy (The Amoy Mission--1840-1951)', accessed 29 October 2021, <http://www.amoymagic.com/AMRCAMissionaryList.htm>.

<sup>91</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story."

<sup>92</sup> Chi-Kwan Mark, "The 'Problem of People': British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949-62," *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 6 (2007): 1145-81.

<sup>93</sup> "Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences."

<sup>94</sup> "Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences."

<sup>95</sup> "Chinese Woman Pastor Addresses Local Audiences."

### 1.8. Canadian ministry

Despite her successes, Jessie's ministry time in Hong Kong would be short lived. She left Hong Kong on 4 May 1950 on SS General HW Gordon and arrived in San Francisco on 23 May 1950.<sup>96</sup> Her destination was the Evangelisation Society in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania<sup>97</sup> and she attended the AMW Society meeting of the Evangelical Free Church in June<sup>98</sup> before settling in Vancouver.<sup>99</sup> Jessie was employed full time by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada from 1 Jan 1951 until 3 Feb 1969. She was paid as an evangelist or assistant pastor with the exception of a short period between 1954-1955.<sup>100</sup> Her ministry was focussed on the Chinese in Canada,<sup>101</sup> and she worked with the Cantonese Pentecostal Church of Vancouver (溫哥華華人神召會).<sup>102</sup> Jessie was also noted to be on staff at the Ling Liang World-Wide Evangelistic Mission (基督教靈糧世界佈道會聯會).<sup>103</sup> This organisation was claimed at the time to be the "only independent Chinese mission in Christendom"<sup>104</sup> and was led by Pastor Timothy Dzao (趙世光).<sup>105</sup> (It is unclear what the author intended to convey regarding the Ling Liang Mission's independence, but presumably this meant independence from the foreign colonial powers who had forcibly sought concessions in China during its "Century of Humiliation."<sup>106</sup>)

Jessie was also recorded as a minister at the Christ Church of China in Vancouver (中華基督教會).<sup>107</sup> Not to be confined to one city, she also helped pioneer the Chinese Mission in Calgary with James House in the late 1950s.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, in addition to almost three decades of ministry in China and Hong Kong during very tumultuous times, she spent close to two decades helping to minister to Chinese diaspora communities across two Canadian provinces.

<sup>96</sup> "USS General W.H. Gordon In-Bound Manifest from Hong Kong to San Francisco 1300-106400," May 23, 1950, [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/interactive/7949/CAM1410\\_411-1230?pid=1141352&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=gAy113&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com.au/interactive/7949/CAM1410_411-1230?pid=1141352&treeid=&personid=&rc=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=gAy113&_phstart=successSource).

<sup>97</sup> "USS General W.H. Gordon In-Bound Manifest from Hong Kong to San Francisco 1300-106400."

<sup>98</sup> "AMW Society Ends Season," *The Kingsburg Recorder*, June 29, 1950.

<sup>99</sup> "Noted Chinese Minister Will Speak Sunday," *The Chilliwack Progress*, October 3, 1951.

<sup>100</sup> Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, "Employment History Jessie Wong," April 12, 2021.

<sup>101</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story"; "Noted Chinese Woman to Speak."

<sup>102</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story."

<sup>103</sup> "Noted Chinese Minister Will Speak Sunday"; "Noted Chinese Woman to Speak"; "Ling Liang World-Wide Evangelistic Mission Association 基督教靈糧世界佈道會聯會," accessed November 6, 2020, <http://www.llwwema.org/welcome.htm>.

<sup>104</sup> "Noted Chinese Woman to Speak."

<sup>105</sup> Peter Wongso, "Zhao Shiguang," in *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, ed. Scott Sunquist, John Hiang Chea Chew, and David Chusing Wu (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001); Shin Fung Hung, "Dzao, Timothy," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Global Pentecostalism Online*, ed. Michael Wilkinson et al. (Brill, 2019), [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com:443/entries/brill-s-encyclopedia-of-global-pentecostalism/dzao-timothy-COM\\_040630](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com:443/entries/brill-s-encyclopedia-of-global-pentecostalism/dzao-timothy-COM_040630).

<sup>106</sup> Alexander Rafatjoo, "A Century of Humiliation," in *Modern China: Financial Cooperation for Solving Sustainability Challenges*, ed. Cary Krosinsky (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 75–79, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39204-8\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39204-8_6).

<sup>107</sup> 'Noted Chinese Minister Will Speak Sunday'; 'Women's World Day Of Prayer Friday, Tabernacle Service', *Times Colonist*, 7 February 1951, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/506128328/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.

<sup>108</sup> "Calgary Chinese," *The Pentecostal Testimony*, October 1959, 22.

### 1.9. The 1954 Australian tour

Jessie next appeared in Australia in 1954. This coincides with the short period of eighteen months' unpaid leave in her eighteen years of paid ministry in Canada. I have been unable to locate the records noting Jessie's re-entry to Australia. However, I have been able to piece together a list of churches where her preaching was advertised in Australian newspapers. From these records, it appears Jessie preached mainly in NSW, starting at the Rockdale Assembly of God in July.<sup>109</sup> From there she first went north to Hamilton (near Newcastle),<sup>110</sup> and then back south to Sydney's Sutherland area.<sup>111</sup> She then looks to have spent most of August and September in western NSW towns such as Dubbo,<sup>112</sup> Orange,<sup>113</sup> and Parkes, but also other smaller locations such as Narromine,<sup>114</sup> Peak Hill,<sup>115</sup> and Molong.<sup>116</sup>

In Melbourne she is recorded as visiting the Women's Missionary Council at Richmond Temple on Tuesday 26 October,<sup>117</sup> presumably before she impressed the council sufficiently for her to be given the platform to preach on Saturday 30 Oct and Sunday 31 October 1954.<sup>118</sup> This was no insignificant feat as Richmond Temple was one of Australia's largest Pentecostal churches at that time. All told, these records demonstrate an impressive preaching tour of Australia and are notable as a little-known part of Australia's Pentecostal history.

<sup>109</sup> 'Advertising - Assemblies of God Rockdale', *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954)*, 10 July 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18438024>.

<sup>110</sup> 'Advertising - Assembly of God', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate (NSW : 1876 - 1954)*, 17 July 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article134660438>.

<sup>111</sup> "Outstanding Chinese Preacher," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July 31, 1954, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/123450863/?terms=jessie%2Bwong>.

<sup>112</sup> 'Chinese Speaker at Church Rally', *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate (NSW : 1894 - 1954)*, 10 August 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article132583256>.

<sup>113</sup> 'Chinese Missionary to Speak at Molong', *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser (NSW : 1887 - 1954)*, 17 September 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article140055581>.

<sup>114</sup> 'Public Gossip', *Narromine News and Trangie Advocate (NSW : 1898 - 1955)*, 3 September 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article100424911>; 'Lecture of China', *Narromine News and Trangie Advocate (NSW : 1898 - 1955)*, 31 August 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article100429890>.

<sup>115</sup> 'Church Services', *Narromine News and Trangie Advocate (NSW : 1898 - 1955)*, 7 September 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article100427337>.

<sup>116</sup> 'Chinese Mission to Speak at Molong', *Molong Express and Western District Advertiser (NSW : 1887 - 1954)*, 10 September 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article140055032>; 'Chinese Missionary to Speak at Molong'."

<sup>117</sup> 'Advertising - Assemblies of God', *Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, 23 October 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23456644>.

<sup>118</sup> 'Advertising - Assemblies of God 30 Oct 1954', *Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, 30 October 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23448881>.



### 1.10. *Jessie's return to Canada*

Jessie departed Australia on 19 November 1954<sup>119</sup> and likely never returned to its shores. She returned to Canada and her Pentecostal credentials were renewed on 28 Jun 1955. Effective 1 Jan 1956 she was made an assistant pastor before being paid as an itinerant evangelist from 1 Jan 1958 until her retirement on 3 Feb 1969.<sup>120</sup> Jessie lived to the age of 101, dying in Calgary on 29 Jul 1994.<sup>121</sup>

## 2. An analysis of the influences on Jessie's life and her life influence

The call for papers invited respondents to explore their own cultural roots for this special issue,<sup>122</sup> and it is clear to me that culture and identity played significant roles in Jessie's life. Similarly, I recognise that themes relating to Chinese-Australian family history research may also apply corporately to the Australian Pentecostal "family." Wong Hoy notes that in researching family history, themes of family secrets, silence, the impact of discriminatory attitudes and the reshaping of cultural identity are common.<sup>123</sup> He therefore sees family history research as an invitation to "deepen, broaden and diversify our views of the past," and an opportunity to re-evaluate our understanding of it.<sup>124</sup> As Couchman explains, "powerful emotions can be triggered by uncovering links to our past,"<sup>125</sup> and similarly strong emotions were triggered in me when discovering the prejudice and racism that shaped the lives of earlier Chinese Australians. I will therefore use the following section to interpret some of these sociocultural influences on Jessie's life.

### 2.1 Racism and marginalisation as a Chinese in colonial Victoria and early Federation

As a Chinese Australian, Jessie's story provides important reminders about the systemic racism of the times, but also the activity and agency of earlier generations. As outlined, Jessie's father was an active, if not a central figure in the Chinese civil rights movement in Melbourne. He campaigned against the racist anti-Chinese policies that were introduced

<sup>119</sup> 'Advertising - Union Line', *Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954)*, 13 November 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article18461872>; 'Advertising - Orient Line', *Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957)*, 30 October 1954, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article23448881>; 'A Prominent List of Passengers', *The Province*, 30 November 1954, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/500158430/?terms=%22jessie%2Bwong%22>.

<sup>120</sup> Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, "Employment History Jessie Wong."

<sup>121</sup> "Deaths - Jessie Wong," *Calgary Herald*, August 2, 1994, <http://www.newspapers.com/image/485454834/?article=09524003-90ca-4bc0-8822-863fc67b8787&focus=0.80489516,0.12748156,0.9607502,0.1828547&xid=2378>.

<sup>122</sup> U.-Wen Low and Tanya Riches, "Call for Papers: Aps Vol 22, Issue 2 (Nov) 2021 'the Spirit's Voice from the Margin: Disentangling Australasian Pentecostalism from White Hegemony,'" *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 21, no. 1 (December 6, 2020): 119–119.

<sup>123</sup> Kevin Wong Hoy, "Chinese-Australian History vs Huaqiao History: Chinese in North Queensland," in *Secrets, Silences and Sources: Five Chinese-Australian Family Histories*, ed. Sophie Couchman (Bundoora, Vic.: Asian Studies Program, La Trobe University, 2005).

<sup>124</sup> Wong Hoy.

<sup>125</sup> Sophie Couchman, ed., *Journeys into Chinese Australian Family History* (Chinese Australian Family Historians of Victoria, 2019).

across the Australian colonies and New Zealand beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>126</sup> These policies were designed to legitimise white power and were underpinned by racist theories including social Darwinism and eugenics.<sup>127</sup> These racist theories resulted in anti-Chinese and anti-Aboriginal sentiments that viewed non-European peoples as inferior to European races. In response to these policies, Lew Ta-Jen, the Qing dynasty minister in London complained to Lord Salisbury (the British Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at the time) that these discriminatory policies were incompatible with Sino-British treaties. This political pressure resulted in a “please explain” request from the Colonial Office. Responses to this “please explain,” such as Clark’s memorandum, help us to understand the attitudes and reasoning of some of the politicians of the time.<sup>128</sup> The prevailing racist popular attitude of the day is demonstrated in the publication of Phil May’s infamous 1886 Mongolian Octopus (see Fig. 5) and The Bulletin’s masthead proclaiming, “Australia for the white man.”<sup>129</sup> Kendall, Metcalfe, and Millar have argued that the impetus for Federation was the desire of the colonial politicians to gain self-determination. In achieving self-determination local Australian politicians would have a greater say in potentially banning Chinese immigration and lessen their impact on Britain’s wider international relationships.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Joseph Lee, "Anti-Chinese Legislation in Australasia," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 3, no. 2 (1889): 218–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1879468>.

<sup>127</sup> Timothy Kendall, "Federation and the Geographies of Whiteness," in *Within China's Orbit? China through the Eyes of the Australian Parliament* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007), [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/APF/monographs/Within\\_Chinas\\_Orbit/Chapterone](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/APF/monographs/Within_Chinas_Orbit/Chapterone).

<sup>128</sup> Andrew Inglis Clark and Richard Ely, "Transcript Inglis Clark's 1888 'Memorandum' on Chinese Immigration Introduction and Commentary by Richard Ely," University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection (Australia: University of Tasmania Library Special and Rare Materials Collection, 1888), <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/11912/>.

<sup>129</sup> National Museum of Australia, "Defining Moments - The Bulletin."

<sup>130</sup> Kendall, "Federation and the Geographies of Whiteness"; Louise Metcalfe, "The Impact of 'White Australia' on the Development of Australian National Identity in the Period between 1880 and 1914," *History Initiates*, 2013; Diana Millar, "The Chinese in Australia 1818-1918," *Agora* 44, no. 3 (2009): 24–28, <https://doi.org/10.3316/jelapa.036167578826187>.

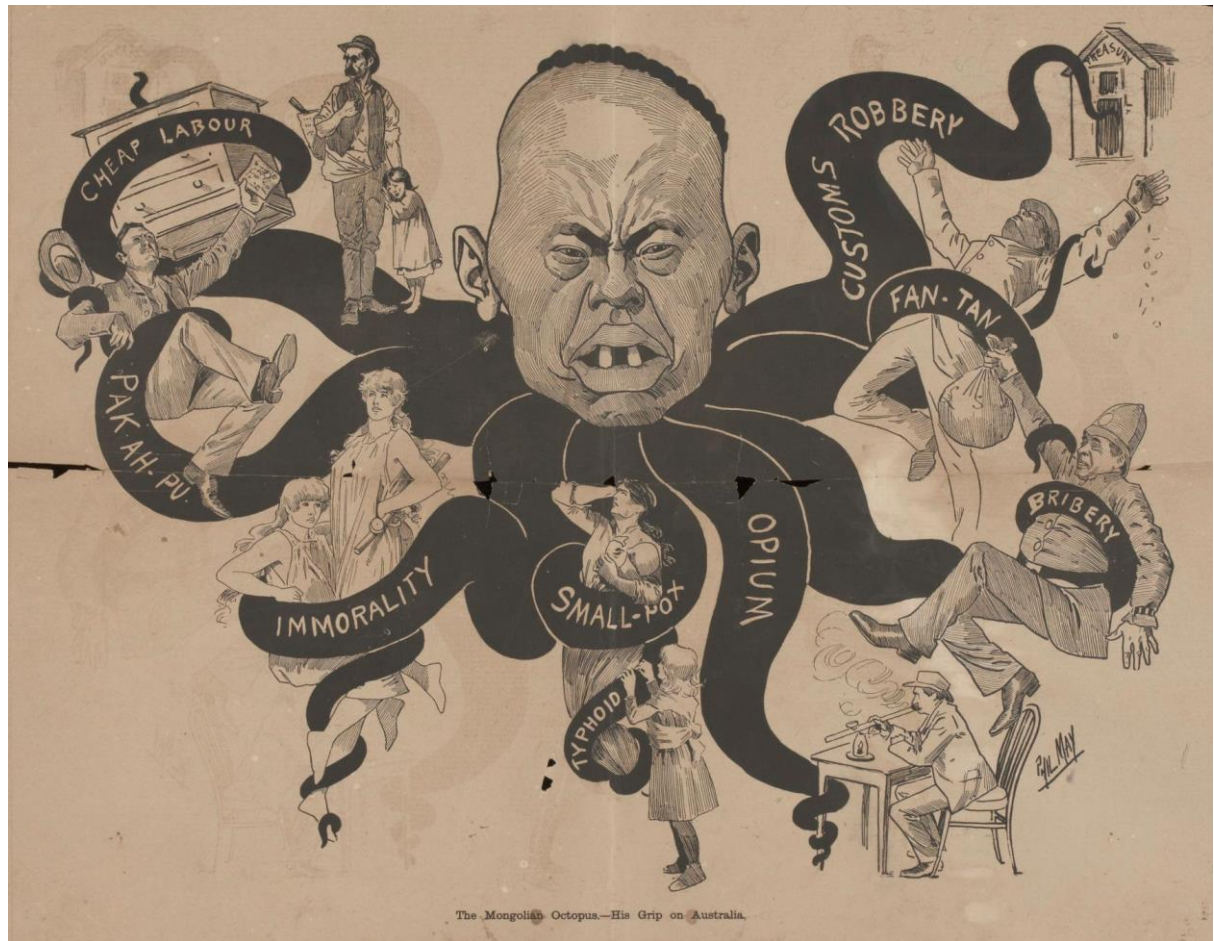


Figure 5 The Mongolian Octopus - His Grip on Australia<sup>131</sup>

Later, these racist policies passed into law in the first year of Federation as the *Immigration Restriction Act of 1901* (Cth).<sup>132</sup> This act was the official apparatus on which White Australia was built. White Australia was further strengthened when non-European migrants were barred from voting in 1902; when Asian migrants were prevented from becoming naturalised citizens in 1903; and when Chinese wives were prevented from joining their husbands in 1905.<sup>133</sup> Fitzgerald questions why White Australia seems so ingrained in the Australian psyche when similar racist anti-Chinese policies were legislated in other countries such as New Zealand, Canada and the United States. He concludes that White Australia was not just what Australia aspired to be but was a policy goal that Australia intentionally pursued for over

<sup>131</sup> Phil May, "The Mongolian Octopus - His Grip on Australia," *The Bulletin*, August 21, 1886; Guy Hansen, "Australia for the White Man," National Library of Australia, May 10, 2019, <http://www.nla.gov.au/stories/blog/exhibitions/2019/05/10/australia-for-the-white-man>.

<sup>132</sup> National Museum of Australia, 'National Museum of Australia', Defining Moments White Australia Policy - 1901: White Australia policy enshrined in law, June 2021, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/white-australia-policy>.

<sup>133</sup> Millar, "The Chinese in Australia 1818-1918."

seventy years,<sup>134</sup> and was an identity that Australian society actively adopted. This was the society of Jessie's formative years.

Despite these restrictive policies, a number of Chinese Australians remained in Australia during this period. Others who had returned to China were able to return permanently, including members of Jessie's own family.<sup>135</sup> Some like fellow Pentecostal Mabel Yeung were able to travel back and forth from China multiple times.<sup>136</sup> These Chinese Australians were able to do so by virtue of their births in Australia rendering them British subjects. Jessie likewise would have been afforded this privilege.

Here it is worth considering how a woman like Jessie self-identified. Having grown up in Melbourne for almost eighteen years, but with a heart to minister to the Chinese people, did she see herself as an Australian, a British subject, a Chinese, or a Christian? Likely it was a mix of all four (or perhaps even more) identities to varying degrees depending on the context she found herself in. Here we might also consider the influence of her father's identity. As the daughter of a wealthy businessman who had become successful in Australia, was Jessie educated and privileged enough that material possessions were of little concern to her? How much of Jessie's charity and philanthropy was learnt at the feet of her father? How much of this generosity was reliant on the wealth her father had amassed and presumably bequeathed to his daughters? And how much of Wong Shi Geen's Chinese civil rights agenda did she adopt as her own? At this stage this remains a mystery. Another question to ponder here is the effect of his death on the entire Wong family. Did his death sever the family's main tie to Melbourne and their opportunities to return to Australia?

## 2.2 Jessie in China

Very little detail is known about Jessie between her arrival in China in 1910 and the beginning of her Canadian ministry in 1950. For example, we know she claims to have taught English at a non-denominational mission school in Shanghai,<sup>137</sup> but which one or ones? On the status of marriage, certainly Jessie was single later in life. Whether she was a spinster or a divorcee would likely have left her at the fringes of western, Chinese, or Christian societies.

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<sup>134</sup> John Fitzgerald, "Belonging and Exclusion," in *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press, 2007), 1–2.

<sup>135</sup> "Concerning People," *Euroa Advertiser (Vic. : 1884 - 1920)*, September 10, 1920; PROV, "Passenger Manifest 'Hwah Ping,' VPRS 947/P0000, Jul - Dec 1920, P27," August 13, 1920, <https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/49F2BE89-F96C-11E9-AE98-A30C0903C2D9?image=27>.

<sup>136</sup> Austin, "Mary (Wong Yen) Yeung," August 2013; Austin, "Mary (Wong Yen) Yeung," August 2013; Austin, "Women and Guangdong Native-Place Charity in Chinese Australian Pentecostalism."

<sup>137</sup> "Chinese Missionary Relates Life Story."

In the period in which Jessie ministered in China, Christianity transformed “from an alien faith preached and presided over by Western missionaries into an indigenous religion of the masses” according to Lian.<sup>138</sup> In 1922, missionaries were perceived as part of the colonising western forces, and an anti-Christian movement formed in Beijing and Shanghai at this time.<sup>139</sup> The National Christian Conference in 1922 aimed to “promote cooperation among denominational missions and indigenization of Christianity in China.”<sup>140</sup> Jessie started the Cantonese Gospel Mission in 1923, and it is highly probable that her ministry was shaped by these events and also her experiences in Australia. Again, identity likely played a role. How nationalistic was she in her outlook? How closely did she cooperate with western missionaries? Did she rely on internationally sourced funds or was hers a truly indigenous and independent ministry?

Lian also outlines a number of ministries that he feels were significant in the development of the Chinese indigenous Church: The True Jesus Church, the Jesus Family, the Little Flock, Ling Liang Tang, and the Bethel Band.<sup>141</sup> Elements of Pentecostalism were evident in these movements, and all of these ministries were headed by men. Extrapolating Lian’s research, it would appear that Jessie was proximal to many of the events Lian feels are significant to the development of the Chinese indigenous Church. Jessie was a Pentecostal, was ministering in the key city of Shanghai, was also in Shandong within a year or two of the Shandong Revival in the 1930s, and was later on staff with Dzao’s Ling Liang ministry. Not only that, Jessie appears to have been involved in a large ministry in Hong Kong in the post-WW2 era. One can speculate what role these events played in Jessie’s ministry and what role Jessie played in these events. Other questions arise: What happened to these ministries in China and Hong Kong? And a larger question, what role did Jessie and her ministry have in the development of the indigenous Church movement in China?

A preliminary search for Jessie Wong in the Shanghai English-language press yielded no record of her activities.<sup>142</sup> This suggests that Jessie operated within Chinese society, and possibly demonstrates the flexibility of her bicultural identity. Here it is important to highlight a weakness of my research—a heavy reliance on English-text sources. At this point in time, I still do not know Jessie’s 中文名字—her Chinese name as written in Chinese characters—nor that of her ministry. How Jessie came to adopt her English name is likely never to be known. Edwards explored the phenomenon of Chinese students adopting English names in a more

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<sup>138</sup> Xi Lian, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, Illustrated edition (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>139</sup> Xi Lian, "Introduction," in *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, Illustrated edition (New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>140</sup> Lian, *Redeemed by Fire*.

<sup>141</sup> Lian.

<sup>142</sup> Robert Bickers, "Personal Correspondence with the Author," July 27, 2021.

contemporary context, finding that perceptions of self, culture and experience interacting with the dominant power structures of the society we operate in influence the names by which we are known.<sup>143</sup> This was likely also true for Jessie, and discovering her Chinese name, and the name of her ministry in Chinese characters will be a key to uncovering Chinese language documents about this period.

### 2.3 The North American Ministry

Jessie's itinerant ministry in the USA in 1946-1947 in Pentecostal and Reformed Churches demonstrate several things about her character and how she interacted with western society. The welcome she was granted, reflects the depth of relationship she developed with some of the western missionaries in China. The MacClurgs clearly felt indebted to Jessie for assisting Mrs MacClurg and her two children to flee China in 1937; and Rev H De Pree, formerly of the Reformed Church's Amoy Mission, or others in the Reformed Church, appeared to have opened doors for her. This likely points to her being moderate in her views on the Western church while in China, unlike some of the contemporary indigenous church leaders whose extreme views alienated western missionaries. Her bicultural identity seems to have served her well, allowing her fluency in English and enabling her to preach in the North American context.

What little is known of Jessie's ministry in Canada is also informative. Because she was employed full time by the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada from 1951, Jessie must have either been credentialled, or been held in high esteem by the Pentecostal movement in Canada. Here Jessie may also have been trailblazing: it would be interesting to know who the first paid Chinese Pentecostal preacher was in Canada, and who was the first paid female Pentecostal preacher. Again, questions here must be asked: What influence did Canada have on Jessie, and what influence did Jessie have on the Pentecostal movement in Canada? This is an area for future research.

### 2.4 The 1954 return to White Australia

When Jessie returned to Australia in 1954, she would have discovered Australia's post-war population swelling with refugees from European countries. Simultaneously, White Australia had attempted to deport many refugees who had come from nearby Asian countries.<sup>144</sup> In

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<sup>143</sup> Rachel Edwards, "What's in a Name? Chinese Learners and the Practice of Adopting 'English' Names," *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 19, no. 1 (May 1, 2006): 90–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310608668756>.

<sup>144</sup> Klaus Neumann, "Guarding the Flood Gates: The Removal of Non-Europeans, 1945–49," in *The Great Mistakes of Australian History*, ed. Martin Crotty and David Andrew Roberts (UNSW Press, 2012), 20; Ben Shackleford, *Immigration Nation: The Secret History of Us*, DVD (Screen Australia, SBS Australia, Renegade Films in association with Film Victoria, 2011), <https://librarysearch.melbourne.vic.gov.au/cgi-bin/spydux.exe/ENQ/WPAC/BIBENQ?SETLVL=&BRN=29876>.

1911, the year following Jessie's emigration to China with her father, the census recorded 22753 "full blood" (0.51%) and 3019 "half-caste" (0.07%) people of Chinese ethnicity, a total of 25772 (0.58%) amongst the Australian population of 4,455,005.<sup>145</sup> In 1954, Jessie would have found that the Australian population had almost doubled to 8,986,530. The census from 1954 also records 15,558 (0.17%) people of Chinese ethnicity (12878 (0.14%) "full blood" and 2680 (0.03%) "half-caste") which comprised approximately 0.17% of the 9 million people in Australia.<sup>146</sup> Thus the Chinese population had reduced by 40% in the 44 years since she left Australia's shores, and relative as a percentage of the Australian population, the Chinese had decreased by over 70% from 0.58% to 0.17%. At the time of Jessie's preaching tour, White Australia was still an active (and effective) policy.

Jessie's 1954 sojourn in Australia creates a curious comma in her almost half-century of ministry, which leaves more question marks than full stops. Why did she come to Australia? Was she led by the Spirit? Was she invited by her contemporaries? Did she still consider Australia home after 44 years overseas? Had she perhaps been homesick enough to return? Did she maintain contact with Australian relatives and come to visit them? Or did she simply want to revisit the city of her youth? Perhaps even more likely, was this a scouting mission to see whether the harvest was ripe amongst the Chinese in Australia and to evaluate whether there was a place for her within the Australian Pentecostal movement? Did she potentially consider Australia as a safer place to live than North America during the escalating Cold War? Having preached to crowds of over a thousand, when Jessie did return to Australia, was it her first choice to be preaching in outback country towns in western NSW where presumably there were few Chinese to preach to? Or were these the only churches that would welcome a Chinese Australian woman in their pulpit? In the 44 years of Australia's whitening between 1910 and 1954, did Jessie find that there was little desire or need for her ministry gifts? Was her own "quadruple marginalisation" as an older, single (or divorced) Pentecostal woman of Chinese ancestry a barrier to the acknowledgement of her life's achievements and her chances of resettlement in Australia (if indeed this was the goal of her 1954 preaching tour)? Research that aims to respond to these questions has the potential to uncover a missing part of Australia's Pentecostal history.

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<sup>145</sup> G.H. Knibbs, "Census of the Commonwealth of Australia Taken for the Night Between the 2nd and 3rd April, 1911: Part VIII Non-European Races" (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1911), [https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/F8A631CD75497EA6CA25783900132215/\\$File/1911%20Census%20-%20Volume%20II%20-%20Part%20VIII%20Non-European%20Races.pdf](https://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/free.nsf/0/F8A631CD75497EA6CA25783900132215/$File/1911%20Census%20-%20Volume%20II%20-%20Part%20VIII%20Non-European%20Races.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> S.R. Carver, "Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 30th June 1954; Volume VIII - Australia; Supplement to Part I - Cross-Classifications of the Characteristics of the Population: Race" (Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, June 30, 1954), <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2108.01954?OpenDocument>.

### 3. Restoring Jessie's voice

Throughout her ministry, Jessie demonstrated bicultural capabilities as a woman who both understood western culture and the English language due to her upbringing in Australia. Kuo has identified that bilingual Chinese Australians established voluntary organisations that helped the Chinese community engage with Australian society.<sup>147</sup> Similar to other bilingual Chinese Australian Christians, Jessie's ministry clearly benefitted from her bicultural and bilingual identity in the context of colonial-era Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Quadruple marginalisation has also not completely silenced Jessie. As noted earlier, digitisation of records has proved a blessing to family history researchers like me. In the hunt for the authentic Jessie – who she was, what she was like, and how she preached – there are some tantalising snippets from biographical advertisements of her preaching, photos advertising her lecture tour, and of reports on her sermons in the local press. I have found a few photos of her in the newspapers,<sup>148</sup> and one from the family that she stayed with in Parkes during the 1954 preaching tour (See Fig. 6). In those photos, she appears dressed in Chinese-style garments. Henry describes her thus:

“Small of stature, with raven black hair pulled severely back and secured in a heavy knot, Miss Wong in her Chinese dress, looks as if she might be a Pearl Buck<sup>149</sup> character come to life. (She speaks) perfect English with a dramatic flare [sic] that would do credit to a veteran actress.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Kuo, "The 'Invisible Work' of Women."

<sup>148</sup> Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor"; "Calgary's Alliance Church."

<sup>149</sup> Pearl Buck grew up in China where her parents were Christian missionaries. She also became a missionary, and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1938. See Horst Frenz, 'Pearl Buck - Biographical', NobelPrize.org, 1938, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1938/buck/biographical/>.

<sup>150</sup> Henry, "Chinese Woman Recalls Aid to Refugees During Japanese Occupation of Shanghai: Her Mission Wrecked By Bombs, Reveals Williamson Visitor."





*Figure 6 Jessie Wong pictured outside the Parkes Assemblies of God Church with the Michalk boys during her preaching tour in 1954.<sup>151</sup> Philip is the taller of the two boys (on the left) and David is on the right. Photo reproduced with the permission of Dr David Michalk.*

At this point, I have discovered few documents written by Jessie herself, in English or Chinese. The following excerpt from a report she wrote, in English, to the US Pentecostal missionary magazine *Maran-Atha*, describes a mission trip to Shandong in 1928.<sup>152</sup> The quotation I have chosen described faith healing during that Shandong trip:

“That same evening the Bible-women begged me to talk to them again, so I spoke three times that day. I was asked to go and pray for a sick girl. The Lord touched and healed her. Praise His Holy Name!”<sup>153</sup>

Thus, I can surmise that Jessie may not have adopted western dress, or at least adopted a Chinese “persona” during her preaching tours. One could speculate that she may have chosen a Chinese identity in western countries to highlight her “exoticness” for the crowds, or to create a cognitive dissonance in them when they heard her speak. Alternatively, she may simply have been proud of her heritage and maintained an outward appearance of her Chinese cultural identity by wearing Chinese clothing. This may also have changed over time

<sup>151</sup> William Henry Dow, *Jessie Wong with the Michalk Boys*, 1954, 1954.

<sup>152</sup> Wong, “Good Missionary Report.”

<sup>153</sup> Wong.

as fashions and society changed. Jessie's writing reveals her strong command of English, and demonstrates her bicultural identity given that she appears to have operated mainly in Chinese circles in Shanghai. Jessie's own words are those of a single woman, born in Australia to ethnically Chinese parents, ministering in China using a Chinese dialect, empowered by the Holy Spirit to heal a sick child through prayer, writing in perfect English to the Pentecostal movement in the United States. From what I have read of Jessie, this appears to encapsulate who she was at that particular point in time. The true Jessie, for now, remains an enigma.

#### 4. The current climate – a coda

Notably, the world has changed since Jessie's times. Outside the Church, the Black Lives Matter movement, in addition to more formalised campaigns such as National Reconciliation Week and National Sorry Day<sup>154</sup> do much to bring the wrongs of the White Australia policy and offences committed against black and Indigenous peoples to the forefront of the national conscience. The official anti-Asian policies have also been dismantled. At national levels, New Zealand in 2002 (later also establishing a Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust),<sup>155</sup> and Canada in 2006 (incorporating symbolic payments to descendants and a historical recognition program)<sup>156</sup> formally apologised to Chinese communities for past discriminatory taxes. In Australia, Chinese Victorians received an apology in 2017 for the Victorian immigration poll tax imposed in 1855 that forced Chinese miners to disembark in Robe, South Australia.<sup>157</sup> Perhaps because of the increasing recognition of Australia's history, some have been thinking about a formal apology from the Federal government too.<sup>158</sup> But to my knowledge, there has never been any formal acknowledgement or apology to the Chinese Australians who were targeted by the Federal White Australia policy. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic seems to

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<sup>154</sup> "National Sorry Day 2020," *Reconciliation Australia* (blog), May 25, 2020, <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-sorry-day-2020/>.

<sup>155</sup> Community Matters, 'Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust Stakeholder', Community Matters, 2021, <https://www.communitymatters.govt.nz/chinese-poll-tax-heritage-trust/>.

<sup>156</sup> Employment and Social Development Canada, 'Prime Minister Harper Offers Full Apology for the Chinese Head Tax', news releases, 22 June 2006, <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2006/06/prime-minister-harper-offers-full-apology-chinese-head-tax.html>.

<sup>157</sup> Iskhandar Razak, 'Descendants of Victoria's Chinese Gold Rush Miners Win Apology', ABC News, 25 May 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-05-25/victoria-apologises-to-chinese-for-racism-during-gold-rush-era/8558998>.

<sup>158</sup> Esther Han, 'Chinese Australians Call for an Apology', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 June 2011, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/chinese-australians-call-for-an-apology-20110629-1gr1t.html>; Daphne Lowe Kelley, 'Chinese Australians Owed Apology for Discrimination against Forebears', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 June 2011, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/chinese-australians-owed-apology-for-discrimination-against-forebears-20110629-1gr05.html>; James Panichi, *White Australia Policy: Time to Say Sorry?*, 2011, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/nationalinterest/white-australia-policy-time-to-say-sorry/3009678>; Barbara Miller, 'Chinese Australians Want Apology for Discrimination', *ABC News*, 30 June 2011, sec. The World Today, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-06-30/chinese-australians-want-apology-for-discrimination/2778014>.

have brought to the surface underlying unofficial racism against Asians,<sup>159</sup> necessitating the Stop Asian Hate movement. As many have noted, this racism is older, deeper-rooted, and systemic than Covid-19.<sup>160</sup> Racist stereotyping, unconscious bias, and under-representation of Asian peoples leading to bamboo ceilings and Asian hate remains problematic.<sup>161</sup>

To its credit, the Australian Pentecostal movement has become increasingly aware of the historical Church's role and complicity in racial injustice.<sup>162</sup> Hillsong Church's response is an example of this. In addressing the Black Lives Matter movement, Brian Houston stated that "the very nature of racism is an affront to the Gospel."<sup>163</sup> Recognising its shortcomings, Hillsong Church made a commitment to racial equity in 2020. But curiously, while Indigenous Australians, and those of African heritage appear to be well represented on Hillsong's Global Racial Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, there appears to be little representation of those from Asian and South American cultures.<sup>164</sup> In 2016, 1.2 million Australians identified themselves as being of Chinese ancestry in the census.<sup>165</sup> China and India are the world's two most populous nations, and 61% of the world's population (4.7 billion) lives in Asia.<sup>166</sup> The simple (and perhaps uncomfortable) questions that arise from these observations are – "Where is the Asian representation on church committees such as these? And why do Asians continue to remain invisible in the formal structures of the Australasian Pentecostal movement?"<sup>167</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Sam Cavrall, "Covid 'hate Crimes' against Asian Americans on Rise," *BBC News*, May 21, 2021, sec. US & Canada, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56218684>.

<sup>160</sup> Abidin Kusno et al., "As Asian Canadian Scholars, We Must #StopAsianHate by Fighting All Forms of Racism," *The Conversation*, accessed June 8, 2021, <http://theconversation.com/as-asian-canadian-scholars-we-must-stopasianhate-by-fighting-all-forms-of-racism-157743>; John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* (Sydney, AUSTRALIA: University of NSW Press, 2006), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unimelb/detail.action?docID=308491>; Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings* (London: Profile Books, 2021).

<sup>161</sup> Christi Carras, "Kim's Convenience' Stars Decry 'Overtly Racist' Storylines, Lack of Representation," *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 2021, sec. Television, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/tv/story/2021-06-07/kims-convenience-simu-liu-jean-yoon-netflix>.

<sup>162</sup> Low and Riches, "Call for Papers"; Henry Louis Gates, *The Black Church: This Is Our Story, This Is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Press, 2021); Cath Pound, "How the Dutch Are Facing up to Their Colonial Past," *BBC Culture*, June 3, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20210601-how-the-dutch-are-facing-up-to-their-colonial-past>.

<sup>163</sup> Brian Houston, "An OPEN Letter to Hillsong Church," *Hillsong Collected* (blog), June 6, 2020, <https://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2020/06/an-open-letter-to-hillsong-church/>.

<sup>164</sup> Hillsong Church, "Racial Equity | Church," Hillsong Church, June 28, 2020, <https://hillsong.com/racialequity/>.

<sup>165</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Media Release - ABS Chinese New Year Insights', 16 February 2018, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbytitle/D8CAE4F74B82D446CA258235000F2BDE>.

<sup>166</sup> United Nations, "Population," United Nations (United Nations), accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/population>.

<sup>167</sup> See Denise A. Austin and Shane Clifton, 'Australasian Pentecostalism: From Marginalised to Megachurches', in *Asia Pacific Pentecostalism*, ed. Denise A. Austin, Jacqueline Grey, and Paul Lewis, vol. 31 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2019), 384, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004396708\\_018](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004396708_018). They note the invisibility of non-white leaders in the Australian Pentecostal movement.

## **Conclusion**

Jessie lived a long and full life, and I believe her story offers insights into the lives of Chinese Australians during the time of White Australia. Her story also adds to the narrative of Chinese Australians contributing to Australian and global Pentecostalism. My research shows Jessie Wong had a clear role in the establishment of the Pentecostal movement in China, Hong Kong, and Canada, and also a minor part in its history here in Australia. My hope is that in addition to the wider lessons we can learn by broadening the available history, Jessie's story also provides an alternative to the white/Western narrative of Australasian Pentecostalism. Finally, as the Stop Asian Hate movement shows us, racism towards Asians has not gone away. Let us hope that in understanding the past, we Australasian Pentecostals might be more inclusive in the future.

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