

Mr Michael Hwang

BCL MA Oxford, FCIA – Senior Counsel of the Bar in Singapore and Chief Justice of the Dubai International Financial Court, with a significant record of service to the field of international commercial arbitration

Honorary Doctor of Laws

Conferring ceremony: 2.00pm, 23 May 2014 (Law)

Citation

Deputy Chancellor, I have the honour to present Michael Hwang SC to you for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*).

Like the three riddles in Puccini's Opera *Turandot*, a key to Michael Hwang's life has been three important links with Sydney. The first occurred when he was born here. After Singapore fell during the Second World War, his father escaped to Australia and picked up the threads in Sydney. He met here the daughter of the then Ambassador of the Republic of China, whom he married. Michael Hwang was then born in Sydney and acquired Australian citizenship by birth. He lived here until his family moved back to Singapore and the first link was temporarily severed.

Michael Hwang undertook undergraduate and post graduate studies at Oxford University, to which he won entry by scholarship examination and earned the title of College Scholar. Following his graduation, he reopened his links with Australia and was appointed by this University in 1966-67 to teach law to undergraduates. He worked principally with the late Professor W.L. Morison, one of the great law teachers of that time. Many of his students have gone on to fame and fortune. He began a close association with International House, where he was one of the first cohort of residents in 1967. He later became the first chairman of its Members' Association. He has maintained his links with International House and recently returned to be honoured for those ongoing links.

Back in Singapore, Michael Hwang had joined what is now Singapore's largest legal firm. In 1991 he was appointed a judicial commissioner of the Supreme Court of Singapore. When he retired from his firm in 2002, he might have pursued a life of leisure.

However, by this stage Michael Hwang had been appointed one of the first 12 Senior Counsel of Singapore. He began to mark out a new life in the burgeoning new field of international commercial and investment treaty arbitration. It is here that he has made his special mark. Successively he has been appointed a Commissioner of the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva; a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague; a member and Vice-Chairman of the International Court of Arbitration in Paris; a Court Member of the London Court of International Arbitration and a Council Member of the International Council for Arbitration in Sports at Lausanne. Michael also played a significant role in the development of the highly successful and influential Singapore International Arbitration Centre. He then took part in assisting similar bodies in, Hong Kong, and Dubai. He has spoken and written extensively on arbitration, culminating in the publication of a book "Selected Essays on International Arbitration" late last year. Since 2010, he has been designated Chief Justice of the Dubai International Financial Centre Courts. Michael Hwang is a fine example to a new generation of lawyers worldwide who are engaged in the opportunities of international commercial and investment treaty arbitration. In the contemporary world of international trade, the need for accomplished, honest, professional arbitrators, respected by all sides, is obvious. The law school of this University has recognised this need by teaching courses and recruiting top scholars who promote knowledge of, and expertise in, this new province of law.

Michael Hwang is an outstanding example of the fresh opportunities that are opening up to our law graduates today. He has embraced a new field; but never forgotten the lawyerly skills that he taught in this University 45 years ago.

So arrives the third phase in his links with us. Although long ago he relinquished his Australian citizenship to embrace that of his home in Singapore, now we once again claim him back and name him as one of our own. The Senate of this University resolved that he be honoured with the degree of Doctor of Laws *Honoris Causa*. This is to record our thanks for his early, active life in the Law School and at International House and to thank him for his ongoing connections with us in the land of his birth. We rejoice in his global accomplishments and the University of Sydney embraces the new opportunities of service to the rule of law. We hope that, freshly reconnected with this University, by this degree, Dr Michael Hwang may continue to share with its teachers and lawyers his insights on the future of the law, including in international commercial and investment treaty arbitration. His is an example that many Sydney law graduates will emulate and learn from.

Deputy Chancellor, I present scholar and jurist Michael Hwang SC for admission to the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.