

At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on May 3, 2022, the following tribute to the life and service of the late Albert Morton Craig was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.

ALBERT MORTON CRAIG

BORN: December 9, 1927

DIED: December 1, 2021

Albert Craig was born in Chicago on December 9, 1927, to Adda Clendenin Craig and Albert Morton Craig. At age 10, Craig lost his father to a heart attack. Family finances were straitened, but he won a swimming scholarship to Northwestern University. There, he set a national swimming record for freshmen.

In 1946 he was drafted. Stationed in Kyoto, he found time to visit temples and practice judo and met Teruko Ugaya, whom he would marry in 1953. Returning home, he graduated Northwestern in philosophy in 1949.

Awarded one of the earliest Fulbright fellowships, he studied economic history at the University of Strasbourg for a year and Japanese language and history at Kyoto University from 1951 to 1953, while earning a fourth-degree black belt in judo. He then pursued a Ph.D. in History and Far Eastern Languages at Harvard, which he completed in 1959. He immediately took a position as assistant professor in the Department of History, where he taught until his retirement in 1999.

Craig's dissertation led to a pioneering monograph, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*. His work transformed historical understanding of the process by which samurai from Chōshū and other domains overthrew the Tokugawa regime and set in motion Japan's modernizing revolution. Against Japanese interpretations anchored in Marxist scholarship, which located the push for change in a cross-class alliance of lower samurai and merchants, Craig posited a "proto-nationalism" anchored in traditional warrior values as the motivating force for the momentous changes of that era. Craig delighted in respectful debate over large questions. In the afterword to *Chōshū* he wrote, "I invariably learn more by disagreeing with Professor Tōyama than by agreeing with most other writers."

Over the following decades, Craig dug deeply into the work of Fukuzawa Yukichi, Japan's most important public intellectual of the modernizing decades of the late nineteenth century. Through painstaking sleuthing—that would have been immensely easier in our time of digital

research—he uncovered important sources of Fukuzawa’s knowledge of the West in popular English language readers aimed at schoolchildren. Craig published articles and later two books—one with translations by Teruko—on Fukuzawa’s writings.

He co-authored multiple textbooks on East Asian and world history, writing sections that exhibited his passion for the history of areas ranging far beyond Japan. Not one for small talk, Craig showed his curiosity at lunches with colleagues through persistent queries about trends in the study of their part of the world. He once began an advising conversation with a graduate student by saying, “Before we start, how is your family? Teruko is always telling me I need to remember to ask that.”

In 1961, President Kennedy appointed Craig’s mentor and senior colleague, Edwin Reischauer, as ambassador to Japan. With a number of talented graduate students suddenly in need of advising, the Department of History promoted Craig, after just one year as assistant professor, to a tenured position. In a letter to the department chair, Reischauer wrote that Craig stood “at the top of his age category in Japanese history and up with the few real stars.” Over the next four decades Craig trained generations of Japan historians, supervising well over 40 doctoral dissertations. For nearly three decades, he also taught thousands of undergraduates in a general education course colloquially termed “Rice Paddies,” focused for his first few years, with John Fairbank and Benjamin Schwartz, on the history of East Asia and then, with Edwin Reischauer and Henry Rosovsky each for over a decade, on the history specifically of Japan. In peak years—generally times of economic tension—the course enrolled over 400 students.

Craig encouraged graduate students to range widely in pursuit of their interests, from eighth-century demographic history to the social and political history of postwar Japan. Asked how he managed this, he occasionally joked that his pedagogy took inspiration from Japan’s artisanal masters, who expected their apprentices to steal the master’s secrets through observation. In fact, he combined frequent queries of the “so what” variety with high expectations and quiet strong support of his students. He offered similarly steady interest in, and encouragement of, the work of junior colleagues in Chinese and Korean history, including the authors of this minute.

Craig held several significant administrative posts during his career, including associate director for Japan at the East Asian Research Center (now Fairbank Center) and director of the Japan Institute (now Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies). But his most impactful leadership roles arguably focused on China and Korea. While directing the Harvard-Yenching Institute (HYI) from 1976 to 1987, he moved swiftly to incorporate China into the Institute’s programs as soon as the U.S. and the People’s Republic of China established diplomatic relations in 1979, ending a 30-year rupture in its close original ties to scholars and universities in mainland China. By skillful budgetary management, he doubled the number of

scholars invited by the Institute to Harvard each year, rebuilding these bridges without reducing the flow of scholars from Korea, Japan, Taiwan, or Hong Kong.

Craig did not wear his politics on his sleeve, but his commitment to political and intellectual freedom was strong. In 1982, the Korean democratic leader Kim Dae-jung was released from prison in Korea and exiled to the United States. Mr. Kim held a long-standing invitation to conduct research at Harvard. As the Korea Institute had not yet been founded, a logical home for Kim would have been the Fairbank Center, but faculty affiliated with the Center rejected the invitation “because he was not a scholar.” Upon hearing this, Craig told the HYI’s executive director, a historian of Korea, that “the HYI doesn’t normally affiliate non-scholars but, in this case, we can make an exception.”

In retirement, Craig continued to pursue his passions for research, writing, and swimming. In his 80s, he set a swimming world record for his age group.

Albert Craig passed away on December 1, 2021. He is survived by his wife, Teruko; sons John and Paul; and three grandchildren. A daughter, Sarah, died in 1992.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Bol
Carter Eckert
Henry Rosovsky
Andrew Gordon, Chair