

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa* A Citation



Tin Ka Ping

Mr Tin Ka Ping is one of Hong Kong's best known industrialists and philanthropists. He was born in 1919 in the Yintan Village of Dabu, in the City of Meizhou, Guangdong Province. His father Mr Tin Yuk Wu, a merchant of Hakka descent, had a good reputation for being upright and charitable. His mother Madam Tin was a paragon of the thrifty and practical virtues for which Hakka women are known. Mr Tin Ka Ping, born late in his father's life, was much loved but brought up under strict discipline all the same. Mr Tin senior was apt to encourage his son with the exemplary stories of the ancient sages and heroes, and reference was frequently made to the *Rules for the Household of Zhuzi*. The young Tin Ka Ping, guided by his father's firm hand, thus learnt to uphold his values and persevere in adverse conditions, and also began to cultivate a benevolent character.

Mr Tin senior passed away in 1935, when Ka Ping was only 15 years old and had just completed the second year of junior high school. However, family duties made it necessary for him to forego school life and to inherit his father's business. In 1937, Mr Tin went to Vietnam to found his own business and, in less than two years, had established himself as the largest supplier of kaolin in that country. In the summer of 1939 Swatow fell to the Japanese and the supply of kaolin was cut off. Mr Tin then found it expedient to move south and landed in the city of Bandung in Indonesia in 1939, where he joined his elder brother in a sundries and local produce business. He made remarkable progress in a couple of years but, with the occupation of Indonesia by the Japanese in 1941, Mr Tin, operating in a militarised zone, soon found it necessary to give up and move to Jakarta. There he joined his relatives and moved from trading into industry, and had his first experience in salaried employment.

During his time in Indonesia, Mr Tin gave his all in diligence and entrepreneurial spirit to building up his business. He also showed a remarkable flair in making the most of commercial opportunities. In 1945 Japan surrendered, and Mr Tin, seeing great potential in the field, began his effort in the processed rubber industry. His hard work yielded fast results, for, by 1951, he had become a young industrialist known all over the Indonesian capital, and he was only 31.

Much concerned about the surging anti-Chinese sentiments in Indonesia, Mr Tin made another opportune move in 1958. He closed down his highly successful rubber business and relocated his resources to Hong Kong which, at that time, could boast of no favourable economic factors for the investor. As we all know, Hong Kong is a stamp-sized place and its major attraction to international traders lies in its stability and the government's *laissez-faire* policy. In addition, it is a predominantly Chinese community. Thus Mr Tin was able to raise his five sons and four daughters in a Chinese-language environment, providing them with an education based on Chinese culture and Confucian values. And indeed Mr Tin's children



have all grown up to be worthy citizens dutiful to their families and kind to their friends, upholding high principles and commanding great respect in the conduct of their business.

When Mr Tin first came to Hong Kong he was entirely unfamiliar with the place. But this hardly deterred the entrepreneur who was intent on building his fortune and fame in this land. Mr Tin wisely discerned the great international trade potentials that were latent in Hong Kong at the time, and decided to devote himself to the development of plastic film manufacture and associated industries. To this end he purchased and reclaimed land in Tuen Mun on which he built extensively to accommodate his plants and offices. By the autumn of 1960 the magnificent edifices of Tin's Industrial Estate had risen bold and unchallenged by the Tuen Mun seaside, to the admiration and praise of the business community in Hong Kong. Mr Tin soon branched out his business into the international market and, from then on, his business empire has gone from strength to strength. It has been forty years since and Mr Tin's effort has born abundant fruit, as witnessed by the accolade given to him as "King of Synthetic Leather", as he has come to be known the world over.

Mr Tin is a businessman of great intelligence and courage, and the exemplary ethics he observes have earned him great trust in the business community. With these, he took in his stride the bank run of 1965, the social turmoils in 1967, the collapse of the stock market in 1973, the irregularities in global oil supply in 1974, the anxieties over Hong Kong's future in 1982, the fall of the property market in 1984, and the Asian financial crisis of 1997. These are events which toppled many a well structured firm with a solid foundation, and have driven many others abroad. Yet Mr Tin steered his enterprise safely out of troubled waters on each occasion by being constant amidst changes, and persevering amidst challenges. The Tin business empire has also reached unsurpassed heights in reputation and growth, thanks to Mr Tin's immense courage and sustaining power in the face of hardship.

Despite his great success Mr Tin is a modest gentleman who leads an austere life of self-restraint. When asked how one should bear himself in life in order to achieve success, he suggests the four virtues of "diligence, frugality, sincerity and modesty". He believes that one should not differentiate between top jobs and junior jobs and that, whatever one's station in life, one should be loyal to his own calling and be happy with it. It is only with this attitude that one can hope for improvement and gradual achievement of success. In point of fact Mr Tin has at his command exceptional business discernment and a remarkable ability to enlist the service of men of great capabilities. Hence he is able to turn adverse business situations to advantage, and working for him is a joy indeed. Mr Tin is very much a hands-on industrialist and always the most hardworking member of the team. He truly earns the trust and respect of those in his employ, hence the exemplary cooperation and dedication that one finds in the Tin industrial empire.

In 1982, Mr Tin established the K. P. Tin Foundation. The objectives of the Foundation are to comfort the elderly and assist the young, to build schools and promote education, to enhance and promote culture, to contribute to the welfare of fellow-citizens, and to contribute



to the community and the country. Mr Tin has donated generously over the years to facilitate these lofty goals, and the charities the Foundation has endowed or supported are virtually uncountable. The major beneficiaries of the Foundation include the schools of education attached to over 30 institutions of tertiary education found in the 31 provinces, cities, autonomous regions and centrally administered municipalities of China, over 40 secondary schools, as well as several hundred public amenities such as hospitals, roads and bridges in Mr Tin's homeland. The Foundation has also supported the project on the reform of the structure and contents of teachers' training programmes in higher education in the 21st century initiated by the Ministry of Education, financed the Biological Specimen Hall of the Natural Science Museum in Beijing, contributed to the Astronomical Science Exchange Centre at the Purple Mountain Observatory under the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Nanjing, and subsidised 550 school libraries in rural schools all over the country. The extent to which the Foundation has assisted in the promotion of education in China is very extensive indeed.

Mr Tin has a special predilection for charities of an educational nature. This has to do with his philosophy that a country's prosperity is dependent on its human resources, and the nurture of human resources in turn hinges on education. The prerequisite for the development of education lies in the effective training of teachers, hence teacher training is, drawing an agricultural parallel, nothing less important than sowing the good seeds and providing efficient irrigation. Whether in building up a business or a school, it is essential that the objectives be clearly and properly defined, and the details will then neatly fall into place. Mr Tin has been subsidising educational efforts without territorial discrimination. His good work is seen everywhere, to the benefit of the nation as a whole.

In his philanthropic acts, Mr Tin has never sought to further his own name. And yet his reputation is legion all over the land. In 1982 he was awarded the Badge of Honours, and in 1988 he received a commendation from the Taipei authorities. In 1993, the Purple Mountain Observatory in Nanjing named the asteroid 2886 the Tin Ka Ping Star, from which time on Mr Tin's name has joined other luminaries in adorning the firmament. In 1996 Mr Tin was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire. He is also the recipient of a number of honorary degrees and fellowships, and civic awards have included honorary citizenship of over 30 provinces, cities and prefectures. Scores of universities have offered honorary professorships to Mr Tin.

Mr Tin has been a staunch supporter of The Chinese University of Hong Kong and, early in 1992, the "K. P. Tin Foundation Fund for Academic Research and Development" was established at the Chinese University. As a token of the University's profound appreciation, a library-cum-multi-purpose building was named after Mr Tin in recognition of his magnanimity and contributions to academic research. Together with his wife Mr Tin has built up a family that is exemplary in familial virtues, and many future generations will speak of his charitable acts. Mr Vice-Chancellor, in recognition of his great benevolence to the community and outstanding achievements, I present to you Mr Tin Ka Ping, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa*.