

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

FIFTIETH CONGREGATION

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

A Citation

Mr Tang Hsiang Chien OBE, JP

A prominent Hong Kong industrialist, Mr Tang Hsiang Chien, born in Shanghai in 1923, is a third-generation textile magnate of a well-established and distinguished family, which has its ancestral home in Wuxi of Jiangsu Province. Family upbringing had encouraged Hsiang Chien since a child to be forthright and persistent, qualities which remain very much part of his character. A very diligent student who thrived on learning, young Hsiang Chien was among the top students in every examination.

In 1948, Tang Hsiang Chien pursued the study of Economics in the United States, obtaining a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Illinois in 1950. Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, he then established Soco Textiles (Hong Kong) Ltd. in Hong Kong. In the early 1950s Hong Kong lacked raw materials, labour, manufacturing facilities and markets for its products, all of which are essential for the successful development of any industry. Despite working in such unfavourable conditions, Tang strove ahead indefatigably, overcoming adversity and making the best of difficult situations. His perseverance paid off and the textile industry headed towards new and brighter horizons.

When setting up a business, Tang Hsiang Chien carefully supervised all tasks, big and small, from site development and building construction to advertising and promotion. In his textile manufacturing, he was devoted to the immaculate planning and design of every detail in spinning, weaving, dyeing and even the production of garments. Only when the business was well on track would this "field marshal" hand over its well-organized management to his young and able "attaches", so that he would be free to start another new plant from scratch. Following this pattern over several decades, Mr Tang established dozens of manufacturing plants not just locally in Hong Kong, but also north and south of the Yangtze, in the remote northwestern part of China, and in other parts of the world.

A firm believer in "No pain, no gain", Mr Tang, who has been an industrialist all his life, never speculates. His accomplishment in breaking new ground and achieving such spectacular success in the textile industry owes much to two factors. The first is his constant search for innovative ideas in various fields, the other is being bold enough to set up business in different regions worldwide.

In 1973, the government of the sugar-exporting Mauritius began to develop its country's other industries. Acting on his impeccable business instinct, the far-sighted Tang Hsiang Chien travelled all the way to Africa to establish a factory there, thus pioneering for other Chinese manufacturers who were to follow his example. In the late '70s, not long after the Cultural Revolution, Tang set about establishing his business in the Pearl River Delta, Shenzhen, Shanghai and Wuxi as soon as China opened its markets. In 1979, he visited Xinjiang. There he set up a factory in 1980, starting production in September that same year!

The first industrial joint venture in Xinjiang, Tian Shan Wooltex Ltd., is one of Mr Tang's investments. The business got off to a rough start owing to its remote location and a general lack of efficiency. Undaunted, the ever practical and efficient Tang Hsiang Chien tackled an overhaul of the management system, developed international markets and set about continually improving the quality of the plant's products. Excellent results were achieved within a short time. After over a decade of hard work, Tian Shan Wooltex Ltd. is among the best performing industrial joint ventures in China and has four times been named as one of the top ten among China's joint ventures. In the book *Journey to Xinjiang*, there appears a couplet by Mr Tang:

The vast land Northwest is always in my mind,
Xinjiang's growth is ever in my heart.

This reflects explicitly on Mr Tang's lofty aspirations in developing new zones. An industrial empire has indeed been built on the boundless prairie at the foot of Tian Shan.

Mr Tang has continued to forge ahead, unperturbed by the fact that many of his dreams have already been realized. In the late '80s, realizing that the electronics industry would have a bright future here, he started the massive firm, Meadville Ltd. Even now, Mr Tang is up at dawn and does not rest until midnight, giving his best as always. That his spirit strives ever forward, reaching out for new ideas, is certainly proven by Meadville's exceptional performance.

As Chairman of Soco Knitters (Hong Kong) Ltd., and a director of various companies such as Uni-Shanghai Wooltex Ltd., the Xinjiang Tian Shan Wooltex Ltd. and Meadville Ltd., Mr Tang is very heavily engaged in the world of business and industry. He has still managed, though, to give time to public service, for he chaired the Federation of Hong Kong Industries. He has also served as Chairman of the Hong Kong Cotton Spinners Association and also as a member of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, a member of the Vocational Training Council, a member of the Industry Advisory Board, and a member of the Industrial Development Board. His concern for health issues is manifested in his work as Director of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals and Director of the Yan Chai

Hospital. He was also an executive member of the Basic Law Consultative Committee. He is currently the Honorary President of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries. He is at once Chairman of the New Asia College Board of Trustees, a member of the United College Board of Trustees and until last April, a member of the University Council, in our own University. As Chairman of the Hong Kong & Shanghai Economic Development Association, he is also a member of the Standing Committee of The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a Hong Kong Affairs Advisor and a member of the Preparatory Committee for Special Administrative Region appointed by the Chinese Government.

Mr Tang is an ardent promoter of education and has generously supported various academic activities. He has established the Tang's Education Fund, sponsored our own New Asia College's commemoration of the Dr Ch'ien Mu Centenary, helped to establish the United Library of Shanghai University and assisted with funding for the students and teaching staff there and in Xinjiang University to participate in academic exchange programmes with the universities in Hong Kong. Adept at reading people and putting his staff's abilities to the best use, Mr Tang appreciates the fact that aside from equipment and raw materials, skilled and talented staff are essential for business success. He believes that education is fundamental to the development of talented people. Mr Tang's firm goal in life is to promote education and contribute to the building of a strong China with the gains from industrial success.

Mr Chancellor, as the preeminent magnate of Hong Kong's textile and electronic industries and as a distinguished philanthropist, Tang Hsian Chien has been a model of assiduity for Hong Kong's industrialists in the past few decades. Mr Tang's beneficiaries include even the people of remote Xinjiang where life is improved through his development there. His contribution to prosperity and education deserves our deepest respect and recognition. Accordingly, in 1982, Mr Tang was appointed Justice of the Peace and in 1983, he was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.). It is now the turn of this University to honour him, Mr. Chancellor, for his outstanding achievements and momentous contribution to our society and its universities. It is my pleasure and honour to present Mr Tang Hsiang Chien for the award of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa*.

January 18, 1996