

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa* A Citation



Dr the Honourable Fok Ying-tung, Henry, GBM, DSSc (Hon)

A sad loss indeed. Mr Henry Fok Ying Tung, colossal entrepreneur of our time, who was born in Hong Kong in 1923, died in Beijing in 2006. Mr Fok may well be termed “Son of Hong Kong”, his legendary life being the epitome of the history of Hong Kong and its metamorphosis. From a small fishing village, Hong Kong has developed into an international metropolis. Mr Fok was born of a fisherman family, but with his determination and drive, he made the ranks of world-class business tycoons and found his way to the national leadership. As our ancient sage said, “The dragon lies hidden under water; the dragon soars into the sky.”

Mr Fok lost his father at an early age and grew up under the tender loving care of his mother, who moved from the boat to the city for his education. Mr Fok was a conscientious student and entered Queen’s College with excellent results. During the Second World War, his schooling was disrupted and he had to work to help with his family’s livelihood. His mother opened a small shop with a number of relatives and friends and put him in charge. His business talents began to show in this early debut. During the Korean War, when Western countries imposed a complete embargo, Mr Fok spearheaded the formation of a merchant fleet that defied the embargo and shipped emergency supplies to China, to support the Koreans against the Americans. His audacity and stamina won wide acclaim in Beijing. In the fifties, Mr Fok embarked on real estate development in Hong Kong, starting his own business and introducing pre-sale of uncompleted residential flats, which attracted buyers and brought lucrative returns. In the sixties, he joined in bringing Las Vegas to Macau. In the seventies, Mr Fok began to play an active role in reforming and opening up his motherland. From Chung Shan Hot Spring Resort, White Swan Hotel, Grand Hotel Beijing, to the multi-million development of Nansha, Guangzhou, all his projects bespeak breadth of vision and grandeur in outlook. Dr Fok once said, “Through the construction of White Swan Hotel, we can clearly see that our country’s reform and open policy is very correct.” He also said, “Nansha is my dream, my little window on our country’s road to modernization.” China’s development and the well-being of her people were his ultimate concern in all his undertakings and initiatives.

Nansha was originally an inaccessible piece of barren land. When Dr Fok set foot on it in 1989, he immediately recognized its geographical advantages and development potential. He invested close to ten billion dollars for the construction of a science park and the establishment of Nansha Economic-Technological Development Zone. Nansha is part of Panyu, Dr Fok’s native county, and his soft spot for Nansha was part and parcel of his strong attachment to his homeland. Dr Fok, with his zest for work, saw each project as a new challenge, a new opportunity. Any success was seen as an occasion to share with the community. Dr Fok looked upon each new undertaking as a rigorous test, to be taken under his personal direction and with great caution, his resolution growing ever stronger. After all these decades, Dr Fok had under him over a hundred successful enterprises – in Hong Kong, Macau, Mainland China and overseas – covering real



estate, trading, transport, logistics, tourism, petroleum supply, container production, mechanical engineering and marine engineering.

Dr Fok was held in high esteem for his remarkable success in business, and his vigour and acumen won him the Government's trust. He was a member of the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee, and served as Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference of The People's Republic of China since its 8th Conference. He was, *inter alia*, a member of the Selection Committee for the First Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, a member of the Drafting Committee for the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, a Hong Kong Affairs Advisor, and Honorary Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce of Hong Kong.

Dr Fok spared no efforts in fostering community and cultural developments on all fronts in China and Hong Kong. The Fok Ying Tung Foundation was founded in 1977 to promote public welfare, serve the community, and contribute to China's economic growth and reform and opening up. In particular, charities in science, culture, education, arts, medical care, health, sports, tourism, transport and infrastructure construction in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and other parts of the world have benefited most significantly. Over the years the Foundation has donated HK\$6 billion in support of hundreds of projects, fully testifying to Mr Fok's selfless generosity in returning to the community what he took from it.

Dr Fok loved sports. He believed that sports can bring a people together in unity and performance in sports is a measure of a country's prosperity. Hence he ardently promoted sports, helping to bring China back to the international arena in football, badminton, basketball and volleyball. Starting in 1992, he has donated over one hundred million dollars for the construction of sports facilities in China, including the Ying Tung Natatorium in the Olympic Sports Centre in Beijing. He also played an important role in promoting sports in Hong Kong. However, Mr Fok described his efforts as "but a speck in the universe". Typical of the modest gentleman that he was.

Dr Fok's numerous honours included: the Grand Bauhinia Medal of the HKSAR (1997) in recognition of his contributions to Hong Kong; the Olympic Order from the International Olympic Committee (1995); the Order of Merit from the Federation Internationale de Football Association (1998), for his contributions to sports; and honorary doctorates from Sun Yat-Sen University (1986), Springfield College (1994) and the University of Hong Kong (1995).

In the eighties, when China began to open up, Dr Fok, then Chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, had the vision to appreciate the role that Hong Kong may play in the process and commissioned the Faculty of Business Administration of this University to provide training programmes for entrepreneurs and officials from the Mainland. He subsequently donated continuously and generously to support the University in our teaching and research. In 2005, the Fok Ying Tung Foundation made a generous donation of HK\$40 million to support the establishment of the Institute of Space and Earth Information Science and the Satellite Remote



Sensing Ground Receiving Station, and Dr Fok graced us with his presence at the opening ceremony. Dr Fok thus contributed significantly to our achievements in scientific research.

The young Dr Fok loved to read the English novel *Treasure Island*; the grown-up Dr Fok loved a game on the football field. A legendary figure who took challenges and risks in his stride and dominated the political and commercial scene for decades, Dr Fok suddenly left us in Beijing in October. “At dawn the commanding crane left for the afterworld, taking with it not even a cloud.” Dr Fok brought away the deep respect and fond memories of many, and left behind his innumerable contributions to his country and his community.

May I invite Mr Chairman to confer the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* on the late Dr Henry Fok Ying Tung.