

Honorary Doctor of Social Science

Dr CHAN Sui-kau

Chinese citation written and delivered by Professor Benjamin T'SOU Ka-yin

Pro-Chancellor:

There is a time-honoured saying that “you are what you wear”. For any one individual to dedicate decades to the manufacture of garments and clothing for all strata of society, it is undoubtedly a praiseworthy endeavour.

Dr Chan Sui-kau, a native of Dongguan County, Guangdong, was born into a family with a long and rich history in the manufacturing and trading of Gambiered Canton silk. At a young age, he left with his family for Guangzhou after his native village was ransacked by bandits. The Chan family then settled down in Chencun Town, Shunde County, where Dr Chan studied at a homeschool. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War forced the family to move to Hong Kong. When Dr Chan was just 11-years-old, his father died. The family’s extensive experience in the textile business provided a solid foundation for the enterprising Dr Chan who, as a 23-year-old in 1949, founded the Yangtzekiang Garment Manufacturing Co Ltd in Hong Kong. It has since grown from a humble business with no more than 100 workers into two publicly-listed corporations with more than 20,000 employees and plants and business operations all over the world. Dr Chan’s Yangtzekiang Garment Group, a developer of *haute couture*, is the owner of such name brands as Guy Laroche, Michel René and Hang Ten. Also under the same roof are renowned brands such as Ashworth, Aquascutum and Charles Jourdan. The group is an export-oriented manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of these brands. The group is still expanding and is striving to develop more name brands of its own.

Setting himself a high bar, Dr Chan has restructured his conglomerate in recent years, gradually allowing indigenous employees of regional factories to become shareholders and partners of the factories to which they are affiliated. His decision will not only help foster industries in these regions and reinforce the sense of belonging of his employees, but will also let him retrieve some funds for investment in other quarters. This is illustrative of Dr Chan’s quick responses and adaptation to new situations in doing business.

Dr Chan is management-conscious and has divided the operations of his company into three large divisions: manufacturing, trade and retail. He is a tireless worker and still works long hours everyday even in his 80s. “A straw shows the way in which the wind blows” is his philosophy. He believes that to train his mind, one must not overlook seemingly trivial matters and lessons can also be learnt from the solving of small issues.

In mid-1960s when Hong Kong’s garment sector was burgeoning, foreign countries dealt a great blow to local garment manufacturers by slapping on them a quota system. To make life even harder, the authorities concerned were poised to apportion a lion’s share of the textile quota to foreigner-owned companies in the territory on the pretext that local manufacturers were mere novices at international trade. Coupled with the late Mr Lam Kan-sing, Dr Chan united with representatives from various trade associations in protesting this proposal and challenged the reasoning behind it. In negotiating with foreigners, he insisted on using Chinese to make known his views. Thanks to his eloquence, Dr Chan succeeded in encouraging the party sitting on the other side of the table to backpedal, resulting in the quota in manufacture and export for Hong Kong being split evenly. The rapid development of the textile and garment sector in Hong Kong in the ensuing decades and its development into an important local industry were partly attributable to the efforts made by Dr Chan in those years.

For more than 30 years since the late 1960s, Dr Chan was a high-ranking official of the Federation of Hong Kong Garment Manufacturers. During his tenure, he voluntarily took on the onerous task of trying to persuade the disparate parties involved of the need to speak with one voice. He was appalled by scenes in which the entrepreneurs of the local textile, dyeing, knitting and garment sectors struggled for survival independently as a chaotic rabble. By 1988 the 13 trade associations had finally reached an agreement, leading to the creation of the Textile Council of Hong Kong. Due to his acumen and tireless contribution to the industry, Dr Chan was elected the first Chairman of the Council. Under his leadership, the local textile and garment sector was awarded the status of a functional constituency and a seat in the Legislative Council.

Dr Chan has a long record of distinguished public service, and has sat on various Government boards as an advisory member. Since the late 1960s he had served as Vice-President of the Federation of Hong Kong Garment Manufacturers until he was elected to the office of the President in 1977. He stepped down in

1988, and is currently the Federation's Life Honorary President. In 1983 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace. From 1986 to 1997 he became the Chairman of the Clothing Industry Training Authority. From 1988 to 1994 he was the Chairman of the Textile Council of Hong Kong, and presently he is the Council's Honorary Chairman. In 1988 he was awarded the OBE by Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II. From 1993 to 2003 he became a member of the 8th and 9th Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee. In 2001 he was awarded a Doctoral Degree of Business Administration by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and in 2002 he was awarded the Gold Bauhinia Star by the Hong Kong SAR Government.

Dr Chan is also a philanthropist who has made donations to help build a more caring community. Over the past years he has been supportive of education in Hong Kong and mainland China, and has made generous donations to the educational institutions of both. In support of CityU, for example, Dr Chan contributed in January 2006 HK\$15 million to fund the "Bridge to Success" project that caters to the development of student services. Then in September the same year, Dr Chan injected another HK\$1 million towards kick-starting the establishment of the Chan Wing Fui Scholarships to offer assistance to students at CityU's Student Hall 5. The hall was renamed Chan Sui Kau Hall after Dr Chan in appreciation of his contributions to the development of education in Hong Kong.

What is worth mentioning is that Dr Chan, together with Leung Kwok-ching and other local entrepreneurs, promoted the organisation of the China Synergy Programme for Outstanding Youth in 1999. As its motto states: "Learn More About China and Chinese Culture", the programme provides financial assistance to ethnic Chinese students studying at renowned overseas universities in the form of scholarships so as to enable them to make visits to Hong Kong, Macau and the mainland. During their visits, they will have the opportunity to learn first-hand about the current socio-economical, technological and cultural development of China. This programme, now in its eighth year, has had a profound influence on Chinese and overseas Chinese communities.

Dr Chan met his wife, Ms Lam Moon-chun, when they were young and the couple tied the knot in Macau in 1944 when he turned 18. For more than six decades, their marriage has passed all the litmus tests. Unfortunately, Mrs Chan is now confined to a wheelchair, after suffering a stroke. To help her, Dr Chan subsequently invested much of his time and efforts towards her care. In discussing

the secrets to a unified family, Dr Chan stressed the importance of harmony, which was a prerequisite for a happy and prosperous family.

The Confucian ideal holds that humankind is intrinsically good in nature. *The Three-Character Classic* originated in the Song Dynasty purports in its opening line that “People at birth, are naturally good”. When asked about his formula for success, Dr Chan said that his sincerity in dealing with other people might have been a contributing factor. He lives by the adage that everyone is good-natured and none is bad unless proven otherwise. In other words, bad apples are good apples that have become rotten, and we should not consider all apples bad after finding a few bad ones. This principle in dealing with other people has at times proven costly, but he refuses to shift his stance.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, in recognition of his significant contributions to the well-being of the textile industry and society, may I now ask you to confer the degree of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa*, to Dr Chan Sui-kau.