

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

FORTY-FOURTH CONGREGATION

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

A Citation

Mrs Alice Kiu-yue Lam, JP

Owing to its unique historical and geographical conditions, among other things, Hong Kong has been an unusual success story over the last few decades. And yet Hong Kong is susceptible to interference from the outside world, and its continuing prosperity at times is disrupted by external forces. In the same way, although Hong Kong has never been short of outstanding women in all walks of life, in a society in which the East and the West, the traditional and the new converge, the constraints women must face seem to be particularly daunting. Mrs Alice Kiu-yue Lam's career can be said to be a fine example of how a woman, after encountering initial difficulties, manages to overcome them admirably.

Mrs Lam comes from a distinguished family and showed an early inclination for social work. She majored in History at the University of Hong Kong. After graduation, she spent the next nine and a half years teaching at St. Stephen's Girls' College. But then she felt the urge to have a career of her own choice, as an independent woman. To this end, she resigned her teaching job and chose to go into law. Unfortunately, because of her age, she was denied the opportunity to study law in a tertiary institution. She was forced to start from the lowest rung as a legal clerk in a law firm and serve a five-year apprenticeship before qualifying as a solicitor. Things did not turn out as planned, though. At this most crucial moment, fate struck and she found herself a widow. Again, she was obliged to rethink her career, not only for her own sake but also in the interest of her children. After careful consideration, she gave up the legal work for which she had worked so hard to get qualified. She started from the bottom again -- this time in the banking industry. And it took years of hard work before she rose to be Director and General Manager of Hang Seng Bank. She becomes concurrently a Director of Hong Kong Telephone Company and Executive Director of the Wing On Bank. In short, from a secondary school teacher she became a solicitor and then the general manager of one of the leading banks in Hong Kong. The changes in her career have, indeed, been spectacular. That she was able to turn adversity time and again to her advantage speaks clearly for her extraordinary staying power and courage.

The secret of her success lies as much in her sincerity towards people as her extraordinary insight. Back in the sixties when she was teaching at St. Stephen's Girls' College, she became aware that her students were totally ignorant about relationship between the two sexes, thus unable to make well-founded choices on love, marriage as well as child-bearing. She introduced sex education into the curriculum and taught her students how to cope with adolescence. Not only was she a pioneer in introducing sex education into the school curriculum, she also devoted herself to the promotion of family planning in the territory in the seventies, playing active and leadership roles in the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Family Planning Association of Hong Kong.

Though her childhood dream to be a social worker did not materialize, her dedication to promoting the well-being of the community had never wavered. Since she joined the bank in the seventies, she also committed herself to serve on a variety of committees in the financial as well as the public sector. These include among others: Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service; Securities Commission; the Committee on Unit Trusts; the Committee on Takeovers & Mergers; and Securities and Futures Appeals Panel. Apart from these, out of her concern for young people and devotion to the development of human resources in Hong Kong, she has since the late seventies participated in the development of higher education at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and other local tertiary institutions. She has served at different times as Treasurer of the University, Chairman of the Finance Committee, a Trustee of the University Staff Superannuation Scheme and Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Two-Year MBA Programme. In these capacities, she has always tried her best to promote the well-being of the University as well as its staff. As an advisor to the MBA programme, for example, she has always been involved in almost every aspect of planning and personally followed through all the major decisions. As a council member, Mrs Lam has been instrumental in securing some very major donations to the University. She was also instrumental in the establishment of The Chinese University of Hong Kong Foundation and the Hong Kong Institute of Biotechnology. In recent years, Mrs Lam has also made significant contributions towards the founding and development of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology as its council member.

In Hong Kong, where the East meets the West and where the old and the new converge, it is not all that easy to realize one's potentials without constraints. It is even more difficult for a woman to carve out a career of her own. Mrs Alice Lam was, however, able to overcome her difficulties and furthermore volunteer her service to the community in various ways. Mr Chancellor, may I, therefore, request that Mrs Alice Kiu-yue Lam be awarded the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

15th October, 1992