



An address given by Professor Tunney F. Lee, BArch

On behalf of my fellow recipients, it is with a profound sense of humility and gratitude that we accept the Honorary Fellowships that have been so graciously bestowed upon us by the University. We have each, in our many and diverse ways, supported and participated in the continuing growth and development of Chinese University. In that process, the University has enlarged our visions, given us opportunities to grow intellectually and changed us for the better. For this, we thank you.

What a pleasure it is to be back in the place where I spent so many productive years helping to create a new department of architecture. This task was possible only with creative colleagues, talented students, supportive administration and the encouragement of the citizens of one of the most amazing cities in the world. I first saw Hong Kong in 1938 from the deck of a ferry coming from Taishan, fleeing from the Japanese invasion. Hong Kong was about to enter the lowest point in its history – population decimated and economy in tatters. Hong Kong recovered from that crisis and many more in the seven decades since. It has continuously reinvented itself in the face of crises of every kind – war, political change, economic turmoil. Its people have found the strength and ability to adapt.

The University was founded in one of those times of turmoil, joining together three colleges with their unique histories and identities into a synergetic whole greater than its parts; it has since grown with many new disciplines as well as new colleges. It used learning and the pursuit of truth and knowledge to build bridges of understanding – bridges between tradition and modernity, between Chinese and English, between China and the world.

The University has been a vital part of the immense changes in Hong Kong. The city has changed from a colony with third world infant mortality and life expectancy rates to one of the economic powerhouses of the world. Yet, that success has also created new problems of environmental degradation, social upheaval and political transformation. The world has become more complex and ever more entwined. Changes come more rapidly than ever before.

The Chinese University has a unique role as a bi-lingual and poly-cultural institution that can look both outwards and inwards. Just like its city, the University will use adversity as impetus for innovation and to create a better and stronger society out of whatever is at hand.

Symbolic of that process is the site where we are now holding this ceremony. Four decades ago, it was a barren site where rock had been quarried to dam Plover Cove. Not a sprig of green or hint of life was left. Yet, today, with determination, persistence and trial and error, it is a beautiful green site for 20,000 students, more than 5,000 faculty and staff members offering over 300 programmes in 61 departments at every academic level.

We are proud to be part of this great undertaking. We have every confidence, given its successes so far, that the University will rise to the new challenges. We thank you again for the opportunity and privilege of contributing to this mission.