

# **The Honourable Bernard Charnwut Chan, GBS, JP**

## **Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa***

### **Citation**

Born into a Thai-Chinese family in Hong Kong, Mr Bernard Chan graduated from Pomona College in the US in 1988 with a BA majoring in studio art. After graduation, he worked for an investment bank in New York before returning to Hong Kong. Having worked for his family's privately held investment company, he moved to the publicly listed Asia Financial Holdings Ltd, which owns Asia Insurance Co. Ltd and invests in the insurance, health care and other sectors. Today, Mr Chan is President of both Asia Financial Holdings and its subsidiary Asia Insurance, which has grown into one of the financially strongest insurers in Hong Kong. In addition, he is an adviser to Bangkok Bank (China) Co Ltd. He is also Chairman of the Hong Kong-Thailand Business Council, which encourages the development of trade and investment between the two places as well as the growth of Hong Kong and Thailand as gateways to their respective hinterlands in the Pearl River Delta and the Mekong River region.

Yet even such distinguished professional credentials seem to pale next to Mr Chan's record as a top-level non-government figure in public service, where he comes close to being a household name in Hong Kong society. His duties include serving as a Hong Kong Deputy in the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, a non-official member of the Hong Kong SAR Government Executive Council, Chairperson of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Chairman of the Council for Sustainable Development, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Revitalisation of Historical Buildings, Chairman of the Antiquities Advisory Board, Chairman of the Steering Committee on Restored Landfill Revitalisation Funding Scheme, Chairman of a new Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food, along with other current as well as former public duties, including serving as a member of the Legislative Council from 1998 to 2008 as a representative of the insurance industry.

No doubt of special meaning to the Lingnan community is Mr Chan's unique contribution to the University. From initial membership of the University Council and Court to his subsequent appointments as Treasurer, Deputy Chairman and eventually as Chairman of the Council from 2008 to 2014, Mr Chan served Lingnan with inspiring dedication and distinction for a total of 15 years. He has also contributed to higher education abroad by serving as a trustee of his alma mater Pomona College from 1995 to 1998, and again since 2008; both institutions are dedicated to the ideals of liberal arts education. Since 2013, Mr Chan has also been serving as Chairman of the Innovation & Technology Scholarship Award Scheme, which offers opportunities for outstanding local undergraduates in science-related, technology and medical disciplines to widen their intellectual exposure and gain industry experience. Even on a more personal level, Mr Chan is an ardent supporter of his wife's work in running an "alternative" private primary school, which fosters a warm, caring environment that also caters for pupils with special needs.

As a third-generation member of a prominent business family, Mr Chan could easily have led a cosy and elitist life. Instead, he has chosen to spend the larger part of his time on non-profit duties in Hong Kong, earning him the deserved nickname "doyen of public service". His service record is too extensive to be listed in full, but no doubt his work at Lingnan is only a small part of his many major contributions to Hong Kong society, and in particular his broad concern for three social policy areas: education, social welfare and quality of life. What runs through such interests is a deep concern for the young, the disadvantaged, and the life of the average citizen.

As Chairperson of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, for instance, Mr Chan played an active part in the creation of Caring Company, a framework that sets up partnerships between the business and welfare sectors. The plight of the disadvantaged and the lack of social cohesion in Hong Kong today have led him to try ever more actively to build meaningful bridges between the business world and the welfare sector. In addition, Mr Chan had previously served as Deputy Chairman of the Council of Oxfam Hong Kong.

Mr Chan is also deeply committed to enhancing the quality of life in Hong Kong. His concern covers such aspects as the physical environment, health, pollution, cultural life, services and other related factors that keep the city competitive and attractive, both as a business centre and as a home for its local and non-local residents. During his tenure as Chair of the Council for Sustainable Development, Mr Chan led a collective effort to advise the government on pollution and urban environment issues, with focus on sustainable building design, municipal solid waste charging and new approaches to energy saving. It would be no exaggeration to say that he has left his mark on most of the major public service areas in Hong Kong.

Mr Chan's devotion to public service cannot be fully appreciated without the background of his personal growth in younger days. Those who see him as a model of healthy life and a source of boundless stamina may not realise that he has been living with a rare vascular disease since he was 18 years old. In his own words, "I was put through a hard test early in my life, physically as well as psychologically. I went through waiting and complaint, hope and frustration. Then at one point, before turning 30, I decided to accept myself and make the best of my life within the limits I am given." Out of an ailing body rose an even stronger spirit and a caring mind that have renewed and elevated his life for the past 20 years. Such are the uses of adversity.

It is no surprise that Mr Chan has received multiple honours and awards over the years, both in Hong Kong and abroad. He has been appointed a Justice of the Peace, and awarded the Gold Bauhinia Star by the Hong Kong SAR Government for his distinguished and extensive public service. He has also been appointed a Commander (3rd class) of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand. In terms of academic honours, Mr Chan will also be awarded an honorary Doctor of Social Sciences by the City University of Hong Kong in three days' time.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of his distinguished professional achievements and wide-ranging contributions to the Hong Kong community, may I present Mr Bernard Chan to you for conferment of the degree of Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa*.

*English citation written and delivered by Professor Charles Kwong*

# 陳智思議員太平紳士 GBS

榮譽人文學博士

## 贊辭

陳智思先生出生於香港一個泰國華僑家族，1988年取得美國波莫納學院文學士學位，主修藝術。大學畢業後，他在紐約一所投資銀行任職，其後回港，最初在家族旗下一間投資公司工作，後轉職上市公司亞洲金融集團。集團旗下有亞洲保險，亦投資於保險業、保健服務以及其他範疇。今天，陳先生是集團及附屬機構亞洲保險的總裁，而亞洲保險亦已發展成香港保險業中財政最穩健的公司之一。此外，陳先生亦擔任盤谷銀行(中國)有限公司顧問。他也是香港泰國商會主席，鼓勵香港及泰國兩地發展貿易及投資項目，促進兩地分別成為通往珠江三角洲及湄公河腹地的門戶。

然而，如此傑出的專業資歷，似乎仍比不上他在公共服務方面的成績：作為一位非官方的社會精英，陳先生的名字幾乎已家喻戶曉。他的職務包括中華人民共和國全國人民代表大會香港特區代表、香港特區政府行政會議非官守成員、香港社會服務聯會主席、可持續發展委員會主席、活化歷史建築諮詢委員會主席、古物諮詢委員會主席、活化已修復堆填區資助計劃督導委員會主席、新設的降低食物中鹽和糖委員會主席，以及各項目前及過去的重要職位，包括由1998到2008年間出任代表保險界的立法會議員。

對嶺南團體別具意義的，無疑是陳先生對嶺大的獨特貢獻。由開始時出任大學校董會及諮議會成員，到歷任校董會司庫、副主席，以及由2008到2014年出任主席之職，他總共在嶺大服務了十五年，激勵人心，貢獻卓越。陳先生對海外高等教育的貢獻，則包括1995至1998年及由2008年起，擔任母校波莫納學院的校董；嶺大和波莫納都是致力實踐博雅教育理想的學府。從2013年起，他亦擔任創新科技獎學金計劃甄選委員會主席；獎學金計劃為本地修讀有關科學與科技的傑出本科生，提供擴闊視野及增加相關行業經驗的機會。甚至在較個人的層面上，陳先生亦熱誠地支持太太營運一所「另類」的私立小學，營造溫暖而關懷的環境，讓包括有特殊需要的學生得到支援。

作為顯赫商業世家的第三代成員，陳先生本可以輕易地過着安逸的精英生活。他卻選擇了把大部分時間投放於香港的非謀利職務上，名副其實地贏得「公職王」的稱號。他的服務紀錄長得不能盡述，而嶺大的工作顯然只是他獻力於香港社會的其中一小部分；他尤其廣泛關注教育、社會福利、生活質素三方面的社會政策。這份對不同領域的關心，源於他對年輕一代、弱勢群體和普羅市民的深切關懷。

舉例說，作為香港社會服務聯會主席，陳先生積極投放精神創設「商界展關懷」計劃，為商界和社福界建立一個夥伴關係的框架。當下弱勢社群的困境以及香港社會之欠缺凝聚力，促使陳先生更積極為社福界和商界之間搭建橋樑。另外，他也曾擔任香港樂施會董事會副主席。

陳先生亦致力提升香港的生活質素；他的關切範圍涵蓋整體環境、健康、污染、文化生活、服務以及其他有關方面。上述種種，都是令這個城市不論作為商業中心抑或本地和非本地居民的家園，能夠維持競爭力和吸引力的因素。他擔任可持續發展委員會主席期間，領導團隊群策群

力，就污染和城市環境問題向政府提供建議，特別是有關可持續建築設計、都市固體廢物徵費和節省能源的新思維等課題。若說陳先生曾在香港大部分公共服務範疇留下印記，實不為過。

假如略去陳先生年青時的個人成長背景，就不能充分瞭解他對公共服務的獻身精神。那些把他看成是健康生活典範、無盡魄力之源的人士，未必知道陳先生從十八歲起，便一直面對著一種罕見的血管疾病。用他的話說：「我年輕時就經歷了重大的身心考驗。我經歷過等待、埋怨、希望、挫折。到三十歲前某個時刻，我決定接受自我，在上天給予我的限制裡好好過活。」患病的身體打造出更堅韌的精神和關愛的心靈，更新和提升了他的過去二十年的生活。這就是逆境的效用。

無怪陳先生多年來曾在本港及海外獲得不少獎譽。他先後獲香港特區政府委任為太平紳士以及頒授金紫荊星章，表揚其傑出而廣泛的公共服務。他亦獲泰國政府委任為Commander (3rd Class) of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand。至於學術機構方面的榮譽，陳先生將於三天後另獲香港城市大學頒授榮譽社會科學博士。

主席先生，為表揚陳先生傑出的專業成就以及對香港社會多方面的貢獻，本人謹恭請閣下頒授榮譽人文學博士學位予陳智思先生。

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