Mention the name of Professor Yeo-chi King to any student of the humanities and social sciences in Hong Kong and you will inevitably get this response: "I have read his books". From the 1960s until today, at the close of the twentieth century, the writings of Professor King have left an indelible mark on the minds of budding sociologists and political scientists in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland. Professor King’s work is no armchair reading; it consistently provokes his readers into discussion, dialogue and debate. Very few scholars of the social sciences in the latter half of the twentieth century have that kind of influence on students.

Professor King’s seminal work From Tradition to Modernity, now in its third edition and seventh printing, is a “must-read” for anyone concerned with the social structure, social relationships, social development and modernization of China. Indeed, Professor King’s first and foremost concern has always been and still is: Where is China, this great civilization, heading? Utilizing the theories of Max Weber, and reaching back to the roots of classical Chinese philosophies, Professor King offers a unique analysis of China’s metamorphosis from a traditional to a modern industrialized society under the permeating influence of Confucianism. Make no mistake, the profound influence Professor King currently enjoys in the intellectual world of the social sciences is not merely confined to the Asian arena. He belongs to that unique category of Chinese scholars whose work is well known by non-China specialists in the social sciences. His thoughts and propositions are never overlooked and often reviewed by Western scholars who are concerned with China and its development.

From the pen of Professor King have come numerous articles that are thought-provoking and at times controversial. Is modernity in China necessarily a replica of Western modernity? Should the East emulate the Western model of social order and economics? How might sociology be made indigenous? Can the local be truly international? To Professor King, it is futile to argue which is better - East or West? He believes that the Chinese sociologist needs access to Western sociology and should engage in a dialectical process to resolve the differences between East and West, arriving at a pluralistic system that is sharply focused. Chinese intellectuals have to be “international” but still different.
Professor King has offered an excellent illustration of this approach in his sociological interpretation of Kuan-Hsi (guanxi) and network building.

To the people of Hong Kong, perhaps, Professor King is best known through his seminal paper “The Administrative Absorption of Politics in Hong Kong with Special Emphasis on the Grass-Root Level”, written in 1975. This is one of the most cited papers on the politics of Hong Kong. Twenty years later, his paper “One Country, Two Systems: An Idea on Trial” proved equally invigorating. Professor King has never been shy to make known his views on intellectual issues and to speak out on political issues that are dear to his heart. No one who is concerned with the socio-political analysis of Hong Kong can overlook the contribution and stimulus provided by Professor King.

"We cannot afford not to be involved in social issues", he maintained. In these days of economic turmoil and social instability in many parts of the Asia-Pacific region, one hopes there will be more who will heed his call. Will the post-1997 Hong Kong rise to Professor King’s challenge?

Professor King, a native of Tiantai in Zhejiang Province, went to the United States for his doctoral studies after earning his BA and MA in Taiwan. Upon completion of his doctoral work at the University of Pittsburgh, he came to Hong Kong and took part in the development of the Chinese University of Hong Kong during its formative years. He became head of the Department of Sociology, head of the New Asia College, and took up pro-vice-chancellorship in 1989, a position which he still holds. The contributions he has made to higher education in Hong Kong are abundantly evident through the many graduates emerging from his fine institution. His other scholarly activities have included serving on the editorial board of The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, The China Quarterly, Nexus: International Social Science Review, and The Hong Kong Journal of Social Science. He is a member of the Academia Sinica and has helped to develop the Institute of Sociology in Taiwan.

His academic distinction brought him to the University of Cambridge as an associate in 1975 and as a visiting fellow to the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology the following year. He became a visiting professor at the University of Heidelberg in 1985 and at the University of Wisconsin in 1986, and an Aspen Scholar at the Aspen Institute in 1996.

Professor King has held several advisory positions to...
agencies of the Hong Kong Government, including the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Law Reform Commission, Hong Kong Government Central Policy Advisory Committee, the University Grants Committee, and the Research Grants Council. His services to the Hong Kong community are too numerous to include in this citation. Suffice to say that he has been awarded the Silver Bauhinia Star by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

To the above, we add our deep appreciation of the outstanding service he has rendered as an advisor to the University’s School of Humanities and Social Science from the very earliest day of its creation.

Professor King is not only a distinguished social scientist and educator; he also has several literary works to his credit. In his *Reflections in Heidelberg*, inspired by the moonlit sky of Heidelberg when he was there in 1985, he posed the question: “Where is my home?” To him, his scholarly writings are from the “mind”, but his literary writings are from the “heart”. The latter is where he wishes to retreat when he tries to find a breathing space in his relentlessly busy timetable. We may expect more from the heart of Professor King in the years to come.

Mr Chancellor, I have the honour to present, on behalf of the University, Professor Ambrose Yeo-chi King, Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Sociology in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, for the degree of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.