

**DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS,  
*honoris causa***

Professor Joseph TING Sun-pao, BBS



Mr Chairman,

Professor Joseph Ting Sun-pao, a well-known historian of Chinese and Hong Kong history, considers himself a missionary, but instead of sharing the message of the gospel, he teaches about history. He has committed his whole life in different capacities, as a curator, professor, writer and tour guide, to revitalize history education in Hong Kong. Given the many changes and challenges in Hong Kong society over the past few years, Professor Ting believes that there is an urgent need for Hong Kong people, particularly the young generation, to have a comprehensive and fair understanding of the contemporary history of the country. He is ready to be a key player in this endeavour.

For Professor Ting, history is one of the most important aspects of any child's education. He is particularly keen to help people in Hong Kong learn about their history, origin and culture, or we are like a tree without roots. He points out that studying history helps us understand and grapple with complex questions and dilemmas by examining how the past has shaped and continues to shape global, national, and local relationships between nations, societies and people. It promotes understanding between cultures and nationalities. In particular, Professor Ting says that if we can learn from history, we can avoid repeating the same mistakes and finding ways to overcome challenges.

Professor Ting explained that history also challenges our intellect. Students must read widely, and collect and analyse information that may not have one clear interpretation to come to a balanced conclusion. The ability to question and evaluate information, and to make sound judgements are needed in many industries, and studying history helps stimulate and develop these abilities. Professor Ting seeks to correct the perception that only science subjects require analytical power.

With such a strong passion for history, the ideal job for him should be either a history teacher or a museum curator. In fact, he did both. Upon graduating from The University of Hong Kong in 1974 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Chinese and Chinese History, and minoring in art history and then an MPhil in 1979, he started teaching history in a secondary school. A few months later, he decided to join the Hong Kong Museum of Art as an Assistant Curator, a post which allowed him to be more engaged in “history”. In 1995, he was appointed the Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Museum of History. He retired in 2007 after serving for 28 years, during which he was instrumental in the planning and implementation of the new Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defence and the Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum, as well as fostering the exchange and collaboration with museums in the Mainland.

Professor Ting master-minded numerous exhibitions during his tenure. He is most pleased and also most proud of “The Hong Kong Story” permanent exhibition, which opened in 2001 after six-years of intensive preparatory work. The exhibition takes the audience on a journey through 400 million years of historical space and time to gain an in-depth understanding of Hong Kong's history and culture, and its ups and downs. Anyone visiting this exhibition will certainly respect and love Hong Kong more.

Professor Ting obtained a PhD in 1989, also from The University of Hong Kong. The title of his PhD thesis was “The Chinese Society in Hong Kong 1841-1870”, which focused on how Chinese from various provinces in the Mainland settled in Hong Kong. Through his research, he came to the conclusion that “respecting and embracing diversity” is the key. In the 2020s, after almost two centuries, this conclusion is still valid for people who choose to settle in Hong Kong. Professor Ting said Hong Kong has always been a place that respects and embraces diversity, and this in turn, has contributed to our growth and prosperity.

While not serving as a full-time teacher, Professor Ting has never stopped his “teaching” role, both before and after retirement. A respected scholar on the history of Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta, he has been engaged as an Honorary Professor in The University of Hong Kong's School of Chinese, as Adjunct Professor and Honorary Senior Researcher in the Department of History of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, member of History Subject Committee of the History Department of Lingnan University and City University of Hong Kong, Adjunct Professor in The Education University of Hong Kong, and member of the Cultural Promotion Advisory Committee in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Apart from all these teaching duties, Professor Ting has conducted many lectures for local universities, secondary schools and government departments on topics related to history and culture. He has also organised and led many eye-opening and insightful exploration tours in Hong Kong, the Mainland and overseas, which have been welcomed with great enthusiasm.

In 2017, Professor Ting led a group of students from more than 20 secondary schools to visit the Republic of Uzbekistan for eight days and let them see for themselves the world of Central Asia and experience the Islamic civilisation. Upon their return, the students said that they had a completely different perception of the place and peoples of Central Asia. For Professor Ting, it was mission accomplished.

Professor Ting is a prolific writer, and his books on the cultural heritage of Hong Kong have won a number of awards. Among the books he authored, the one he likes best captures the stories of prominent figures buried in Hong Kong cemeteries. He has conducted many tours to the cemeteries and turned them into a lecture theatre, where he shares the information he gathered about these figures.

With professional knowledge of history and a commitment to serve the community, it is no wonder that Professor Ting is a much sought-after advisor in many government committees and public bodies. He has served as museum expert adviser to the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, HKSAR Government, trustee of The Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, deputy director of the Hong Kong Local Records Foundation, member of the Antiquities Advisory Board and Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee, and member of the Board of Hong Kong Palace Museum Limited. He is also an honorary adviser to, or committee member of, a number of museums in Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Professor Ting is Honorary Fellow of The University of Hong Kong, The Education University of Hong Kong, the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. For his exceptional achievements in museum management and his lifelong endeavours in history education, the HKSAR government awarded him a Bronze Bauhinia Star in 2019.

Professor Ting is a long-time friend of Hong Kong Metropolitan University. He supported the Li Ka Shing School of Professional and Continuing Education in setting up the Professional Diploma in Community Museum Management and acts as a School Advisor.

Mr Chairman, it is my great honour and privilege to invite our President to present Professor Joseph Ting Sun-pao for the conferment of the degree of Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*.

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*Citation to be delivered by Dr Benjamin Chan Tak-yuen*