

## Honorary Fellow A Citation



### Professor Lo Wai Luen, BA, DipEd, MPhil

The third verse of the anthem of New Asia College reads: “Empty-handed, we traverse a journey without knowing where it would end. In a tumultuous time we have been drifting here and there, our bodies exhausted and our spirit strained. However, hardship urges us to progress, and deprivation brings out our true mettle. Be it a burden heavy beyond measure, we gladly take it upon our shoulders. We shall advance together, while we are young.” Over the years the students of New Asia College have sought direction and encouragement from these words, as they sail gallantly in the vast ocean of learning, buoyed by passion for their nation, their culture and education.

Professor Lo Wai Luen, widely known by her pseudonym Xiao Si (“Siu Si”), was born in Hong Kong in 1939, her native place being Panyu in Guangdong Province. She completed her secondary schooling at Clementi Secondary School in 1960, and graduated in Chinese from New Asia College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, in 1964. Upon graduation her time-honoured career in education began as a teacher in secondary schools. In 1981 she wrote her thesis on *The Literary Activities of Chinese Writers in Hong Kong (1937-1941)*, for which she received an MPhil from the University of Hong Kong. Earlier on in 1973 Professor Lo had travelled to Japan to pursue further research in contemporary Chinese literature, and had served as a Research Fellow at the Institute for Research in Humanities of Kyoto University. Upon her return to Hong Kong she continued to teach in secondary schools, and in 1978 she accepted a teaching position at the Chinese Department of the University of Hong Kong. In 1979 she joined the Department of Chinese Language and Literature at CUHK. She was promoted to professorial rank in 1992, and retired in 2002. An untiring teacher with a special gift for helping students achieve intellectual refinement, she was presented with the Vice-Chancellor’s Exemplary Teaching Award by The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2000, and the Outstanding Educator Award by the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2003. In 2010 she won an Award for Outstanding Contribution in Arts from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Since her retirement, Professor Lo has volunteered her service as the Honorary Director of the Hong Kong Literature Research Centre at CUHK, and from 2008 she has been an Adjunct Professor at the Centre for East Asian Studies as well as an Advisor to the Hong Kong Literature Research Centre at the University. A prolific author, Professor Lo’s major publications include *Talks on the Way*, *Notes from Discipleship*, *Selections from the Cartoons of Feng Zikai*, *Moving in Daylight Shadows*, *Immovable*, *Crimson Cloud Manuscripts*, *A Clear Moon in the Human Estate*, *Literary Footsteps: Writers Who Moved to Hong Kong from the Mainland, and Their Cultural Activities*, *Hong Kong Literature: a Survey*, *Letters from Hong Kong*, *Hong Kong Stories*, *Random Thoughts When Reading at Night*, and *A Lifetime of Discipleship*.

The poet Wang Guowei, in *Renjian Cihua*, a seminal work on the literary genre *ci*, opines that since ancient times, those who accomplish great deeds or open up significant frontiers



in learning are apt to have developed the will to do so in the first place. They must also be amenable to solitude, and willing to experience what is effectively illustrated in these lines: “Last night the westerly wind took the life out of the green tree. I went up to a high loft, all alone, and cast my eyes on the full view of a lifetime’s journey.” This is followed by a state where the scholar will “have no regret when the belt on his garment is gradually loosening, and, for the sake of what he pursues, he has become thin and languid.” After these due processes the scholar will then, all of a sudden, find the ultimate gist of his learning revealed to him “just as the lights begin to dim, and the wicks burn low”. In this way a grand scholarly career reaches its pinnacle. Professor Lo sees literary education as her calling and makes the pursuit of literary research her career. All through her working life, she is engaged in inspiring young people to the study of literature, and empowering them to live beautifully through literary pursuits. When she was doing postgraduate work in Kyoto, she became aware of the enthusiasm for literature among the Japanese, and observed the seriousness and meticulousness with which Japanese scholars managed source materials in literary research. Professor Lo knew that there were a good number of major authors in contemporary Chinese literature, for example Lu Xun, Mao Dun, and Dai Wangshu, who had spent parts of their lives in Hong Kong, lecturing and presenting important treatises on their literary opinions. Xiao Hong, another important writer, penned the best of her major works, now classics, in Hong Kong too. The literary data derived from the sojourns of these writers in Hong Kong would no doubt be important to research on the relevant topics, but it did not seem that much attention was being paid to them by academics at the time. Having witnessed the gradual disappearance of some of these important source materials, Professor Lo decided to direct her efforts towards the preservation and proper management of such materials, the ultimate goal being that the data collected could be studied in conjunction with the history of development of contemporary literature in Hong Kong, from which future parameters and direction for literary research in the territory might be derived.

Those dedicated to scholarly activities understand that to initiate a new area of research, it is essential for source materials to be organized well. To this end Professor Lo made a comprehensive survey on information about Hong Kong literature at the Fung Ping Shan Library at the University of Hong Kong. This was then supplemented by visits to bookstores large and small all over Hong Kong, as well as stalls and shops selling used books. Through such efforts she was able to unearth some highly pertinent and yet little known source materials, comprising a large quantity of old newspapers, literary magazines, first edition of classical works, journals kept by writers, and their correspondences. These ranged from various newspapers and magazines published as early as the late 1920’s which existed in diverse forms, from yellow, brittle cuttings from the original publications to mind-boggling and hard-to-read microfiches. Professor Lo spared no effort in front of these original materials, perusing them with care and transcribing page by page. “Taishan builds up its immense mass as it minds not the smallness of lumps of soil; rivers and oceans run deep as they eliminate not the rivulets”, so goes the famous dictum of Li Si as recorded in *Shiji*. Working on her own, Professor Lo built up a formidable collection of source materials by observing Li Si’s precepts and, during the process, she lived out



the indefatigable spirit that forms the heart of the New Asia academic tradition. Her unrelenting efforts of half a century have yielded a database that has grown from a few shoe-boxes filled with data cards to one occupying an entire apartment, chock-full of cards neatly arranged in plastic cases. Thus by outlining the shape of the things to come and delineating in concrete terms the framework of reference, Professor Lo laid the foundation of Hong Kong literature research. Upon her retirement in 2002, Professor Lo, in an act of the greatest magnanimity and sacrifice, donated her collection of a lifetime to The Chinese University of Hong Kong. With the assistance of Mrs Rita Wong, the Deputy Librarian of the University, she pioneered the establishment of the Hong Kong Literature Collection as well as the electronic database on Hong Kong Literature. Careful tallying reveals that the collection consists of 878 items of correspondence in manuscript by writers and academics, over 25,000 volumes of valuable books, over 1,000 titles in terms of periodicals, and over 38,000 items of primary source materials for research in Hong Kong literature. Among the books and periodicals donated by Professor Lo, there were about 600 volumes published before 1949, about 500 published during the Cultural Revolution, and over 3,600 volumes published in Hong Kong before 1970. These are all important source materials for research on contemporary Chinese literature. Among the books are about 1,400 autographed volumes, by such authors as Ba Jin, Gu Jiegang, Feng Zikai, Bing Xin, Yu Pingbo, Bian Zhilin, and Ai Qing. The Hong Kong Literature Collection quickly attracted the attention of both local scholars and those outside Hong Kong, and all hailed it as the most comprehensive collection of materials on this specialized subject in the world. Today, when we seek information for research on Hong Kong literature, we only need to go to the special rooms dedicated to the Hong Kong Literature Collection in the University Library, find the relevant periodicals on the shelves housed therein, and read at a leisurely pace. Alternatively, we can approach the database via the internet, and browse the relevant newspaper cuttings that have been scanned for storage and display. For all these we must thank Professor Lo Wai Luen for half a century of intense scholarship, unswerving will power and tenacious efforts, from the demise of the green sapling in the westerly wind, through the lifelong journey surveyed from above, to the loosening belt and the languid and pallid figure. It was a sound and secure foundation that Professor Lo has laid for those who are called to research work on Hong Kong literature, and at the same time she has also accomplished a most admirable academic enterprise. Where the lights dim and the wicks burn low, Professor Lo never has to suffer from loneliness: in these decades her many students, and other followers committed to Hong Kong literary research, are able “to advance together” on the basis of her research findings, and bear the torch as research activities, which are invariably long and tedious, go on from generation to generation.

Apart from academic research, Professor Lo Wai Luen was an ardent teacher of literature for 40 years, during which she consistently emphasized the importance of concern for others in the humanistic spirit. As we have just noted, Professor Lo was presented with the Outstanding Educator Award by the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2003, the second year of the award scheme. Her acceptance speech at the presentation ceremony was titled *The Footsteps of the Qianfu*. Her thesis was that the community must accord due respect to frontline teachers,



whose role was compared to that of the *qianfu*, the labourers who hauled barges, against the current, upstream on the banks of the Yangtze River. “The *qianfu*, nameless and unmentioned anywhere in written literature, willingly shoulder their onerous responsibility, and in heavy and difficult footsteps transport passengers and goods to far off places. Teachers in the frontline also labour hard, and take upon themselves duties on top of their teaching load. Despite setbacks and prohibitive forces, they convey knowledge to their students.” Professor Lo placed great emphasis on the exchange between teachers and students in the classroom: when she offered the course on Modern Prose at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the enrolment was in excess of 200 students. For this course, apart from the lecture which would accommodate the vast number of students, Professor Lo insisted on conducting almost 10 separate tutorial classes, all by herself, at which she would listen to each student’s perception of modern prose. She was strict and demanding with regard to the reports submitted by her students, as well as speech and mannerisms while in the classroom where no one could expect to cut corners and be able to get away with it. In the eyes of the students, Professor Lo is always the august teacher, yet one whose approachable personality exudes warmth, one who is excellent both as a mentor and a friend. Professor Lo always insists on teaching by example, and that is how she impressed, moved, and converted her students, during those four decades, to higher values, finer sentiments and more profound intellectual accomplishments. Her teachings have helped countless students to advance in both virtue and learning. Her teachings have also enabled them to face the vicissitudes of the human life. With the upright and relentless spirit of the great teacher firmly embedded in their minds, Professor Lo’s students have always sought to encourage each other, and remain steadfast in their benevolent endeavours. Professor Lo is indeed the great *qianfu* that deserves our deep respect: her contribution to education is immense, and it carries long-felt influence and effects. Her achievements are also the manifestation of the New Asia spirit.

Mr Chairman, may I now present Professor Lo Wai Luen for the award of an Honorary University Fellowship.