

Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa*

Ms Rebecca Lee

Citation

"I am an ordinary person, but I have met some extraordinary people." When Ms Rebecca Lee says this, she is reflecting on people she has met, literally, all over the world, for she has walked on the seven continents and sailed the five seas. Author, photographer, film art director, magazine editor, art director, world traveller, polar explorer, Ms Rebecca Lee started off, at age 19, as a graphic designer for an advertising agency, after studying at Hong Kong Polytechnic. Her first job was with the early editions of *Discovery*, Cathay Pacific's in-flight magazine, and one of her trips included a ride to Guangzhou on the Hong Kong-Yaumatei Hovercraft ferry in 1978. She had just launched a new publication at the time, called *Pearl Magazine*, which she offered the ferry company free of charge as "inflight" reading. This act of canny marketing led to other affiliations, and soon the China Travel Services was distributing *Pearl Magazine* at all its offices, the first "foreign" publication to be made available in China.

Since 1970, she has taken her backpack and sleeping bag, and travelled virtually to every corner of the globe. She saw a lot of China on the ground in 1978, and she joined the Chinese Antarctica expedition in 1985 and journeyed to the Chinese Antarctica "Great Wall" Station (she was to return to the Antarctic three more times, in 1987, 1990, and 1993). In 1986, she went to the other extreme, and visited the North Pole, approaching it via Canada, returning again in 1990, but this time taking a route through Greenland, and living with the Eskimos for part of the journey, learning how to hunt, build an igloo, tend to huskies, dig a fishing hole in the ice, and repair sleds. She found the Eskimos brave, self-sufficient, stoic, and in exchange for their inspiring company, she would regale them on a harmonica with her favorite tunes at the campfire.

In 1992, she accompanied a Chinese scientific expedition to Mount Everest. On her 1993 trip to the Arctic, she planted a Chinese flag at the North Pole. Then, also in 1993, turning from the coldest regions to the hottest and most arid, she joined a Chinese expeditionary group on a trip to the Taklamakhan Desert in Xinjiang.

Ms Rebecca Lee was born Lee Le-shih which might be translated as Li, "A Delighter in Poetry". But the poetry she has enjoyed has been as much the poetry of the earth, and the poetry of natural beauty, as the poetry read in texts. The scenes she has seen with her poetic eye have been captured not only in the thousands of photographs she organized for exhibitions mounted in Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, England, Singapore, Taiwan, and China, but also in her accounts of her journeys. She has written travel essays, as well as travel journals, in a series of books in Chinese: *Backpacking Through China* 《背囊·睡袋·遊中國》; *Antarctica: Dream Fantasy* 《南極夢幻》; *The Resonance of the North and South Pole* 《南北極足音》; *Polar Power* 《白色力量》; *The Sounds of Time* 《年華之音》; *The Desolate Route to the North Pole* 《茫茫北極路》; *Intimations from the Top of Mount Everest* 《珠峰密語》; *Sailing Through the Desert* 《沙漠行舟》; and *Stirrings at the Antipodes* 《極地驚情》.

Surely Ms Rebecca Lee has more than lived up to her name: 樂詩. Widely read in the ways of the world, she has witnessed the travails and miseries of ordinary people where mere survival is a triumph. Her photo albums show her view of the world as well as her views on the world. Her travel musings, while offered as mere personal meditations, nevertheless border on the poetic. On her trip to the Taklamakhan Desert, she jotted down these thoughts:

人生路途也不是十全十美的，
完美的目標是沒有的，
總有起有落，
有冷有熱，
在起落冷熱之中，
人生只有勇敢地走下去，
總會走出路來的。

On the road of life, not everything is perfectly beautiful,
Perfect beauty simply doesn't exist,
There will always be ups and downs,
Coldness and warmth,
Yet in the ups and downs, the cold and the warmth
If we but proceed with courage and determination
We will always find a way.

These unpretentious thoughts have the eloquence of plain song. Ms Rebecca Lee catches the essence of things with rare discrimination and insight. Where we see coldness, she finds warmth; where we see desolation, she finds life; where we see vast empty spaces, she finds meaning.

She has contributed to polar exploration, offering her art in the service of science. In recent years, she has devoted her considerable energies to the global environmental movement, as well as to fund-raising for the China Polar Museum Foundation, which she established in 1997. And she has sought out in her travels, all over the world, what was extraordinary in ordinary people, seeing in humility the essence of nobility.

Ms Rebecca Lee has, truly, "walked the earth".

When the writer of these lines met Ms Rebecca Lee some months ago at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, the doorman, not knowing that I had just interviewed her, pointed her out to me and said, "She's travelled all over the world -- even to places where you and I wouldn't want to go." There was real affection as well as pride in his voice, as if to say that more people should know about Ms Rebecca Lee -- that she was, indeed, a celebrity *worth* knowing.

Mr Chairman, it is for her vision, and not only through the lens of a camera; for her humanity, which cares not only for the common man but also for the common ecological good; for her courage, which has taken her not only to the ends of the earth but to the top of the world, that Lingnan University is proud to confer on Ms Rebecca Lee Le-shih the degree of Doctor of Humanities *honoris causa*.

「我是平凡的人，但我碰到好些不平凡的人物。」李樂詩女士說這些話時，敘述的正是她在全世界遇上形形色色的人物經歷；「全世界」一詞並非言過其實，因為她的確走遍七大洲，航越五大洋。如今身兼作家、攝影家、雜誌編輯、世界旅遊家、三極探險家的李樂詩女士，十九歲畢業於香港理工學院後，在一所廣告公司任平面設計師。國泰航空公司機上雜誌《Discovery》的早期刊物，是她參與的第一份工作。她當年的旅程之一，是在1978年乘搭香港油麻地小輪公司的氣墊船往廣州。那時候，她免費為油麻地小輪公司創辦及編撰一份新穎的船上讀物《海珠雜誌》，這種精明的市場推廣和發行策略迅即為她帶來出版上的聯繫。不久，中國旅行社就在全國各分社派發《海珠雜誌》，這本雜誌也就成為第一份打入中國各地的「外國」刊物。

從1970年開始，李樂詩女士就馱著背包和睡袋，踏遍地球上差不多每一角落。1978年，她通過與大地的接觸，看見中國多種不同的面貌。1985年，她加入了中國南極考察隊，並抵達南極洲的長城站。（其後她分別於1987年、1990年、1993年三度重返南極。）1986年，她又經加拿大進入北極區，走到地球的另一極點；並於1990年再訪北極，不過這次則取道格陵蘭島，還在旅途中與愛斯基摩人相處了一段日子，學習狩獵、建造圓頂小舍、照料愛斯基摩狗、在寒冰中挖洞捕魚、修理雪橇。李女士發現愛斯基摩人不但勇敢，而且自給自足、恬淡寡欲。為了酬答他們啟發性靈的相伴，她間或在營火堆旁用自己的口琴吹奏數曲，以饗雪地友朋。

1992年，李樂詩女士隨中國科學探險隊登上珠穆朗瑪峰考察。1993年，在探索北極地帶的旅途中，她在北極點的冰原上插上的一面中國五星紅旗。同於1993年，她加入一團中國探險隊的行列，前往新疆的塔克拉瑪干沙漠。於是，她從最嚴寒的地帶，踏進最炎熱最乾旱的地區。

李樂詩女士人如其名，她的名字「樂詩」，可詮釋為「以詩為樂」的意思。然而，令她心醉神往的，除了是文字寫成的詩章外，還有大地的詩歌，以及散溢著大自然美態的詩篇。她以詩人的慧眼捕捉的情景，正呈現在數以千計的照片中，並在香港、美國、加拿大、英國、新加坡、台灣、中國各地舉辦的攝影展中綻放異彩。這些情景，也在她的旅遊記述中活靈活現。李女士撰寫了不少旅遊見聞和日誌，收錄在一系列中文書籍中，作品包括：《背囊·睡袋·遊中國》、《南極夢幻》、《南北極足音》、《白色力量》、《年華之音》、《茫茫北極路》、《極地驚情》、《珠峰密語》、《沙漠行舟》、《雪域紅塵》等。

毫無疑問，李樂詩女士絕對配得上樂詩這個名字，甚至有過之而無不及。閱歷豐富、見聞廣博的她，曾目睹不少人間的勞苦與悲愴；對一些普通人來說，能保存性命，已是相當僥倖的勝利。她的攝影集既展現了她眼中的世界，也揭示了她心中的世界。她的旅遊默想，雖然純粹以個人冥思的方式表達，卻彷如詩一般優美。在前往塔克拉瑪干沙漠的旅途上，她匆匆記下了這樣的感觸：

人生路途也不是十全十美的，
完美的目標是沒有的，
總有起有落，
有冷有熱，
在起落冷熱之中，
人生只有勇敢地走下去，
總會走出路來的。

流露於字裏行間的思想，純樸真摯，有若詩一般素淨流暢。李樂詩女士察看事物的眼睛，往往閃爍著詩人獨特的觀照。在寒峭的凝冷中，她看見溫煦的暖意；在荒蕪的死寂中，她瞥見青蔥的生機；在無垠的虛空中，她察見真實的意義。

李樂詩女士致力於極地艱苦的探索，在科學的探究中，投入她藝術的生命。近年來，她更不遺餘力地推動全球性的環保運動，並為她於1997年成立的中國極地博物館基金的籌措而忙碌。在行遍世界的茫茫旅途中，她深切領悟何謂平凡中的不平凡，並在謙卑中透視崇高的真諦。

李樂詩女士名符其實地「走遍天涯海角」。

數月前，撰寫這篇贊辭的筆者與李樂詩女士相約在文華東方酒店會面，大堂門前的服務員不曉得筆者不久前剛訪問了她，指著她對筆者說：「她環遊了整個世界，甚至去過一些我們不想踏足的地方。」他的聲調夾雜著一份真感情和自豪感，彷彿在說：李樂詩女士該被更多人認識、她確實是一個值得認識的名人。

為著她的視象——她察看的，不是單單從攝影鏡頭察看的世界；為著她的人道精神——她關懷的，不是單單局限於普世的人類，還遍及全球的生態；為著她的勇氣——她探索的，不是單單停留在地球的兩極，還上達世界的頂峰，我謹此恭請主席先生頒授榮譽人文科學博士學位予李樂詩女士。