李旭初，1925年出生於中國廣東省，台山縣，密冲鄉，馬崗村。他生長在一個小康之家，書香門第。其父親是廣東省教育廳督學，台山縣立第二中學校長，台山女子師範學院訓育主任。他從小就受到文化的熏陶，小學時，已經對書法感興趣，看見別人書寫時，就站在那裡欣賞，覺得字體有藝術氣息，回家就練習，從沒有跟書法老師學習過，也沒有任何派別。

李旭初就讀於台山縣立第一中學。好境不常，日寇侵華，八年抗戰。1941年日寇入侵台山，入村搜劫，台城淪陷。上課時，常常受到日寇戰機轟炸而被迫停學逃難。

Yuk Cho Lee was born in 1925 in Magang Village, Michong County, Taishan Region, Guangdong Province, China. He grew up in a middle-class family with a scholarly background. His father held the position of Education Inspector of Guangdong Province, Principal of Taishan County Secondary High School, and Disciplinary Officer of Taishan Women's Teacher-Training College. He developed a love for art from an early age. During elementary school, he was immensely interested in calligraphy. Whenever he saw people practising calligraphy, he would stand nearby and admire it, feeling that the characters had artistic charm. He would then practise it at home even without the guidance of a teacher, and not adhering to any specific schools of calligraphy style.

Yuk Cho Lee attended Taishan County First High School. However, the peace did not last long. As the Japanese invaded China, the country faced eight years of War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. In 1941, the Japanese invaded Taishan, looting the village and capturing the city. During school hours, they often had to evacuate due to the bombardment of Japanese warplanes.



祖屋

Ancestral home

1944年，他十九歲。當時的社會，婚姻大事由父母之命，媒妁之言而撮合的。由於他的祖父在美國三藩市開洗衣店，受到西方文化影響，思想比較開放。他是由親戚介紹，先與余若玲女士見面，其後訂婚結婚就由父母包辦。1945年抗戰結束。1951年在鄉下湖溪沖雲小學教書。

他育有三子一女。當時家鄉被戰火洗禮後，繼而又遇上政局改變。為了生計，於1955年帶著妻子到香港尋找出路，留下四個孩子由他母親照顧。

He was 19 years old in 1944. During that time, marriages were arranged by parents and matchmakers. However, his grandfather who owned a laundry shop in San Francisco, was quite open minded, possibly due to influences of Western culture. He was introduced to Ms. Yeuk Ling Yu by relatives, and their engagement and wedding was arranged by their parents.

In 1945 after the end of the war, he taught at Huxi Chongyun Primary School in his hometown.

He had three sons and one daughter. After their hometown was ravaged by war and subsequent political upheaval, they faced difficulties in making a living. In 1955, he and his wife went to Hong Kong to seek opportunities, leaving their four children in the care of his mother.



1944



1946

五十年代的香港，經濟落後，百業蕭條，人浮於事，求職除了要懂英文，靠人事關係，還要用錢買職位。李旭初赤手空拳到了香港，在九龍仔大坑西山邊木屋區，租了一間非常簡陋的木屋居住。後來經親戚介紹，就在北角國民漆廠化驗室工作。不久，轉到牛頭角一間小型織帶廠打工，研究織機的運作和原理。兩夫妻在大坑西住了不到一年，一場暴風雨導致山泥傾瀉，木屋被山泥淹沒了一半，不能再住下去。後來在旺角煙廠街天台買了一間小木屋。

天台木屋超過二十戶人家，都是來自大陸不同的地方，有台山、新會、廣州、潮州、番禺、順德等。幾戶人家共用一個廚房，用火水爐煮飯。沒有廁所，小孩子在木屋背後露天洗澡，大人則到隔籬街的公共浴室。

In the 1950s, Hong Kong was economically underdeveloped, with a stagnant economy and fierce competition for jobs. Besides being fluent in the English language and relying on personal connections, one had to offer payment to acquire job positions. Yuk Cho Lee arrived in Hong Kong empty-handed and only managed to rent a very basic wooden shack at Tai Hang Sai, Kowloon Tsai. Later, through a relative's connection, he eventually found a job in the laboratory of the North Point National Lacquer Factory. Shortly thereafter, he moved to a small ribbon-weaving factory in Ngau Tau Kok, where he studied the operation and principles of weaving machines. Yuk Cho Lee and his wife lived in Tai Hang Sai for less than a year when a heavy rainstorm caused a landslide, burying their wooden shack in mud, rendering it uninhabitable. They then purchased a small wooden shack on the rooftop of a building on Yin Ching Street in Mong Kok.

The rooftop shacks housed more than twenty families from different parts of mainland China, including Taishan, Xinhui, Guangzhou, Chaozhou, Panyu, and Shunde. Several households shared a kitchen for cooking meals using a stove. There were no toilets, and children bathed in the open behind the wooden shacks, while adults went to the public bathhouse on the neighbouring street.

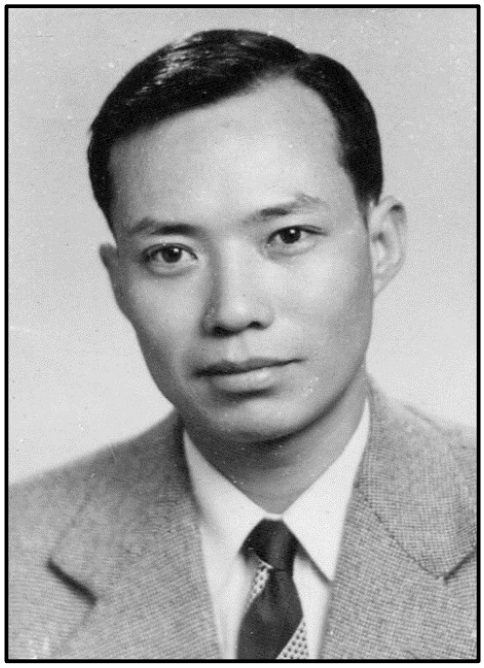


煙廠街天台木屋
Rooftop wooden shacks at Yin Chong Street



1955年 香港電台主辦業餘歌唱比賽獲得冠軍

Winner of an amateur singing competition hosted by Radio Television Hong Kong in 1955



1958

解決了居住問題，其後又添了四個兒子。之後在鄉下的母親和四個子女相繼申請到了香港團聚。一家人同住一間斗室，生活極度困難，年長的三個兒子要外出打工當學徒，賺取微薄的工資幫補家計。

李旭初在織帶廠工作了數年，憑著他的智慧和經驗，很快就當了廠長，生活漸漸有了改善。1966年遷到旺角廣東道，這是他在香港十一年來最安穩的日子。不料，1967年香港發生社會動亂，他終日惶恐不安。為了子女前途，迫於無奈，在朋友的幫助下，成功申請勞工簽證前往英國。

After resolving the housing issue, Yuk Cho Lee and his wife had four more sons. Subsequently, his mother and four children in the countryside successfully applied to reunite with them in Hong Kong. The whole family lived together in a small room, facing extremely difficult living conditions. The three older sons had to work as apprentices to earn meagre wages and support the family financially.

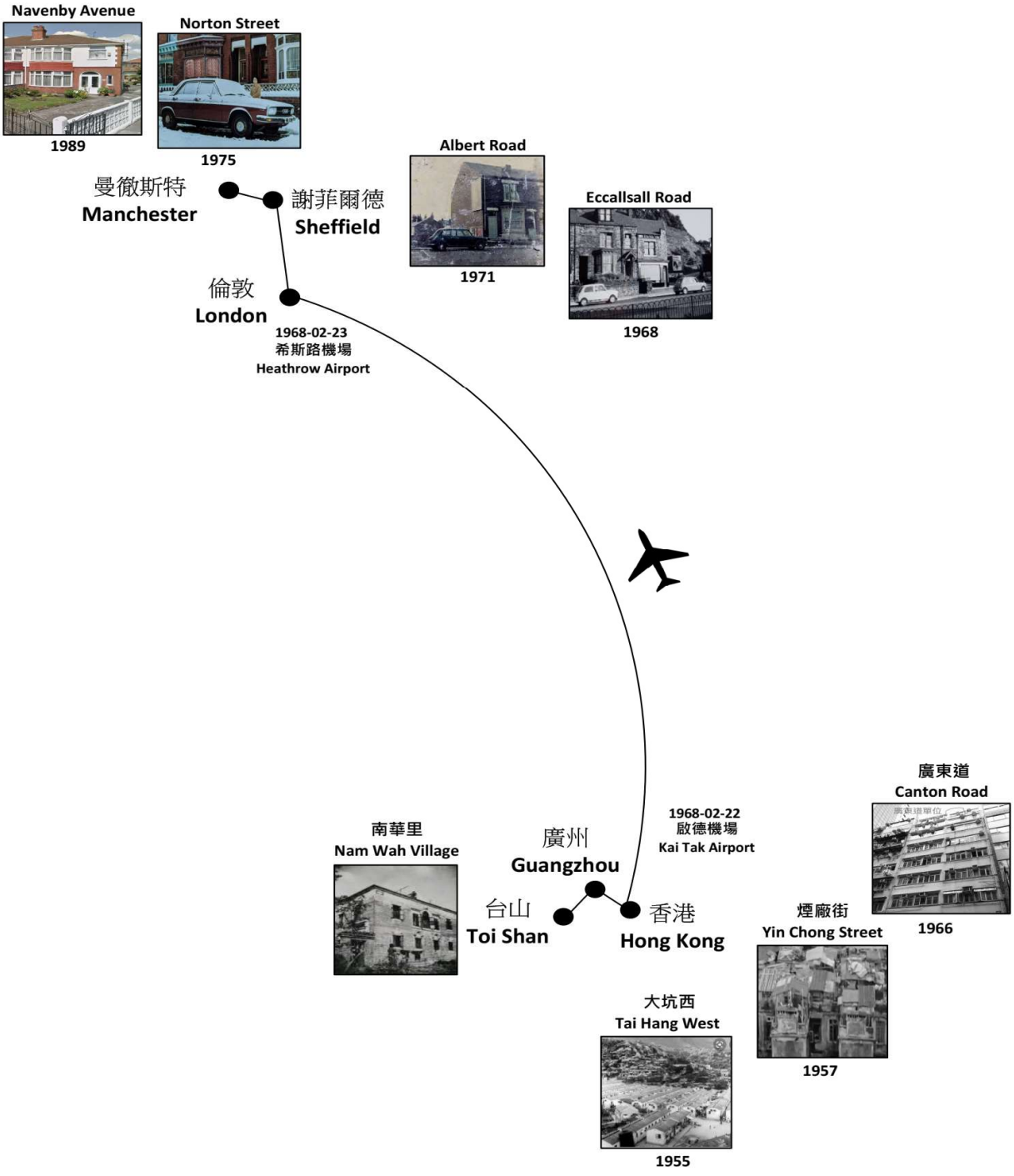
Yuk Cho Lee worked in the ribbon-weaving factory for several years. With his intelligence and experience, he became the factory manager and gradually improved his family's living conditions. In 1966, they moved to Canton Road in Mong Kok, which became the most stable period for Yuk Cho Lee in Hong Kong after more than ten years. However, in 1967, Hong Kong experienced social unrest, causing him constant anxiety and unease, and a feeling of helplessness. For the sake of his children's future, he eventually succeeded in applying for a U.K. work visa and headed to the U.K.



1962年 攝於香港
Photograph taken in Hong Kong in 1962

1968年2月，李旭初帶同長子，告別了家人。經二十多個小時飛行，抵達英國倫敦，轉往謝菲爾德朋友經營的康樂酒樓工作，第二天便上班了。

In February 1968, Yuk Cho Lee brought along his eldest son with him, and bid farewell to his family. After a flight of over twenty hours, they arrived in London, United Kingdom, and then travelled to Sheffield, where a friend operated a restaurant named Concord Chinese Restaurant. Yuk Cho Lee started working at the restaurant the next day.



兩父子在新的環境，異國文化，語言障礙，對從沒有接觸過餐飲業，都是新的考驗和挑戰。李旭初在餐樓學習當侍應生，熟練餐牌和酒水。他兒子在廚房洗大餅(洗碗)及當雜工。工作辛苦，工資低廉。他為了學好英語，時常深宵下班後返回宿舍聽英語錄音帶，翻查字典。

In the new environment, both the father and son faced new tests and challenges in an unfamiliar culture with language barriers. Yuk Cho Lee learned to be a waiter at the restaurant, familiarising himself with the menu and beverages. His son worked in the kitchen, washing dishes and performing various tasks. The work was demanding, and the wages were low. In order to improve his English communication skills, Yuk Cho Lee often studied English language late at night after work in the dormitory by listening to audio tapes with the aid of a dictionary.



1968年 謝菲爾德康樂酒樓
Concord Chinese Restaurant, Sheffield in 1968



1971年 謝菲爾德康樂酒樓
Concord Chinese Restaurant, Sheffield in 1971



1973年 謝菲爾德居所

Sheffield home in 1973



1973年 謝菲爾德植物公園

Botanical Gardens, Sheffield in 1973

四、五十年代的四邑台山人，大多數聚居利物浦，五、六十年代曼徹斯特以客家人移民到英國的居多。大多數打工，少數開餐館。

六、七十年代的英國華人不多，他們大多數是隻身到英國打拼。由於言語不通，無法與本地人溝通，只能在唐人餐館打工，除了工作就幾乎沒有娛樂，生活十分枯燥乏味，所以深夜下班後多數走進casino賭場賭輪盤，碰運氣，因為他們下注重，所以賭場都以華人當上賓看待，供應免費餐飲。

七十年代曼城唐人街並不像現在的繁榮，只有幾家小型中餐館，烹煮一些簡單又迎合英國人口味的中餐，俗稱「雜碎館」。附近幾條街，大多數是工廠及貨倉。後來開了一家「國民樓」，是唯一有點心的粵菜館。此外亦有「新巧樓」、「幸運樓」及「醉瓊樓」等。

事有揍巧，「和生酒樓」新開張招聘經理，李旭初剛好到「和生行」購物，經主管介紹，馬上受聘於「和生酒樓」。李旭初為人樂觀風趣，對人誠懇，待顧客如朋友，受到老闆和同事的讚賞。

1975年一家遷到曼徹斯特居住。

In the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of the Taishan people from the Sze Yap Region in Guangdong settled in Liverpool, while in the 1960s and 1970s, Hakka people migrated to Manchester in larger numbers. Most of them worked as labourers, with only a few opening restaurant businesses.

During the 1960s and 1970s, there were not many Chinese people in the UK, and most of them came alone to seek opportunities. Due to the language barrier and inability to communicate with the locals, they could only work in Chinese restaurants. Besides work, they had little entertainment, leading to a dull and monotonous life. Therefore, after finishing their late-night shifts, many of them would head to the casino to try their luck at roulette. Because they placed heavy bets, the casinos treated the Chinese as VIPs and provided them with free meals.

In the 1970s, Manchester's Chinatown was not as prosperous as it is today. There were only a few small Chinese restaurants that served simple Chinese dishes tailored to the taste of the British population. They were commonly referred to as Chop Shui Bars. Most of the surrounding streets were occupied by factories and warehouses. Later, a restaurant called Kok Man Restaurant opened, becoming the only dim sum Cantonese restaurant at the time. Others followed suit, including Sun Hau Restaurant, Lucky Restaurant, and Joy King Restaurant.

Coincidentally, when Woo Sang Restaurant was newly opened and recruiting a manager, Yuk Cho Lee happened to be shopping at Woo Sang Convenience Store. Through a supervisor's introduction, he was immediately hired by the Woo Sang Restaurant. Yuk Cho Lee was optimistic, humorous, sincere to people and treated customers like friends, earning praise from the boss and colleagues.

In 1975, the family moved to Manchester.

「和生酒樓」規模比較大，聘請了香港及廣州的廚師和點心師傅，吸引了很多華人及西人，生意非常興旺。西人嚐到美味的粵菜和點心，開始不吃「雜碎」，改吃「粵菜」，學會用筷子。

Woo Sang Restaurant operated a relatively large-scale business and hired chefs and dim sum masters from Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Its authentic Cantonese cuisine attracted many Chinese and Western customers. The business boomed as a result. Westerners, after tasting delicious Cantonese cuisine and dim sum, started to refrain from Chop Shui dishes. The locals also showed an interest in using chopsticks.



1992年 曼徹斯特和生酒樓

Woo Sang Restaurant, Manchester in 1992

每年的春節有舞獅、舞麒麟向每家餐館拜年，也有功夫和舞蹈表演，場面十分熱鬧。自此西人也將春節當成是他們的節日，歡天喜地的到唐人餐館慶祝，講「恭喜發財」！

曼徹斯特唐人街牌坊建於1987年，還有涼亭、停車場，更有華人社區中心、醫療服務中心、中文學校等，成為華人第二大集中地。

唐人街隨著時代發展和需求，陸續開了雜貨店如「永發行」、「恆運行」、 香港式麵包西餅店、理髮店、律師行、會計師行等。

Every year during the Spring Festival, there were lion and unicorn dances that visited every restaurant to offer New Year greetings. There were also Kung Fu demonstrations and dance performances, creating a lively atmosphere. Since then, Westerners have also considered the Spring Festival as one of their own holiday celebrations and joyfully visit Chinese restaurants with New Year greetings by saying 'Kong Hei Fat Choi' (Wishing you prosperity).

Manchester's Arch of Chinatown was built in 1987 and includes a pavilion and car park. It also features a Chinese community centre, medical service centre, Chinese language school and more, making it the second largest concentration of the Chinese community.

As Chinatown developed over time to meet various needs, it gradually opened grocery stores like Wing Fat Store and Hang Wan Store, Hong Kong-style bakery shops, hair salons, law firms, accounting firms and more.



1988年 曼徹斯特唐人街
Manchester China Town in 1988

時光匆匆，李旭初的兒女已長大成人，有些也成家立室。四個兒子在香港發展，三個兒子及一個女兒留在英國，各有自己的生活，自己的事業。他終於可以放下腳步，不必再為生活奔波，1992年退休。退休後可以做自己喜歡的事情。

1999年，到了英國已經三十一年的李旭初，他朝夕思念家鄉，為了要圓回鄉夢，他帶著妻子返回闊別多年的家鄉「台山」，探望鄉親父老，又到台城拜訪母校「台山縣立第一中學」。他意識到昔日的黃土公路，已經變成柏油馬路，周圍的景物變化不少，頓時感慨萬千！之後他也時常返回香港探望兒孫、親戚朋友。

Time flew and Yuk Cho Lee's children grew up, some started their own families. Four of his sons returned to Hong Kong for their careers, while the other three sons and daughter stayed in the UK, each with their own lives and careers. He finally could slow down and no longer had to strive for a living. He retired in 1992 and pursued his interests.

In 1999, after thirty-one years in the UK, Yuk Cho Lee yearned for his hometown day and night. In order to fulfil his dream of returning home, he took his wife back to his long-separated hometown, Taishan, to visit relatives and old friends. He also visited his alma mater, Taishan County First Middle School in Taicheng. He realised that the muddy roads in the old days had turned into asphalt roads and there were many developments in the surroundings. He was filled with mixed emotions. Afterwards, he frequently returned to Hong Kong to visit his grandchildren, relatives and friends.



1999年 攝於祖屋前

Taken in front of the ancestral home in 1999



1999年 攝於母校

Taken at the old school in 1999

李旭初喜好園藝，閒來種種花、剪剪草、看看報紙、電視，喜歡體育和時事節目等，過著平淡而安逸的生活。他與時並進，學習用電腦搜索資訊，觀看視頻。從視頻中看到書寫書法節目，重拾起寫書法的興趣。他到唐人街文具店購買了毛筆墨汁，特別購買了中國書畫宣紙和一些有關書法的書籍回家練習。

Yuk Cho Lee enjoys gardening. In his spare time, he plants flowers, maintains the garden, reads newspapers, watches television, and enjoys sports and current affairs programmes. He leads a simple and comfortable life. He keeps up with the times by learning to use a computer to search for information and watch videos. While watching videos, he came across a programme on Chinese calligraphy, reigniting his interest in the art. He went to a stationery store in Chinatown to purchase a Chinese calligraphy brush and ink, Chinese calligraphy paper and some books on calligraphy to practise at home.



2021


2021

沒有寫書法幾十年，初初書寫時手指顯得有點生硬，他耐心練習，參考不同書法家的手法，逐漸掌握了一定的技巧，勤加練習。他喜歡抄寫詩詞，特別喜愛宋詞，愛寫行書。

Not having practised Chinese calligraphy for several decades, Yuk Cho Lee found his fingers a bit stiff when he first started writing again. However, with patience and diligence, he gradually mastered certain techniques by referring to the styles of different calligraphers. He particularly enjoys transcribing poems, especially Song Dynasty lyrics, and loves to write in the semi-cursive script.



2021



2021

2020年秋，李旭初的兒女討論家族的歷史，明白傳承家譜的重要性，有責任讓後代了解家族的經歷，於是集全家四代同堂之力，從李旭初夫婦那零零碎碎的記憶和舊照片，又從網上找到的資料，精心製作了一本家書，由一家之主李旭初命名。

巧合地，李旭初的母親姓余，妻子也姓余，於是為家書命名「李余流芳」。「李」和「余」自然是指李氏家族和余氏家族，「流」取了長江流水的意境，寓意家族的優良血統會像江河一樣流傳下去，「芳」則顧名思義，代表著優雅和美德，襯托出家族流芳百世。

In the autumn of 2020, Yuk Cho Lee's children discussed the family's history and realised the importance of preserving the family genealogy. They felt a responsibility to ensure that their future generations should understand the family's history. Thus, with the collective effort of four generations of the family, they meticulously created a family book. They gathered fragmented memories and old photos from Yuk Cho Lee and his wife, as well as information found online. Yuk Cho Lee, as the head of the family, took charge of naming the book.

Coincidentally, Yuk Cho Lee's mother's surname is Yu, the same surname of his wife. Therefore, they entitled the family book "Lee Yu Lau Fong" which expresses the idea that the Lee and Yu family genealogy will be passed down like the flowing waters of the Yangtze River. The word "Fong" represents elegance and virtue, symbolising the enduring legacy of the family.



2021



2021年 李旭初外孫廖穎仁繪

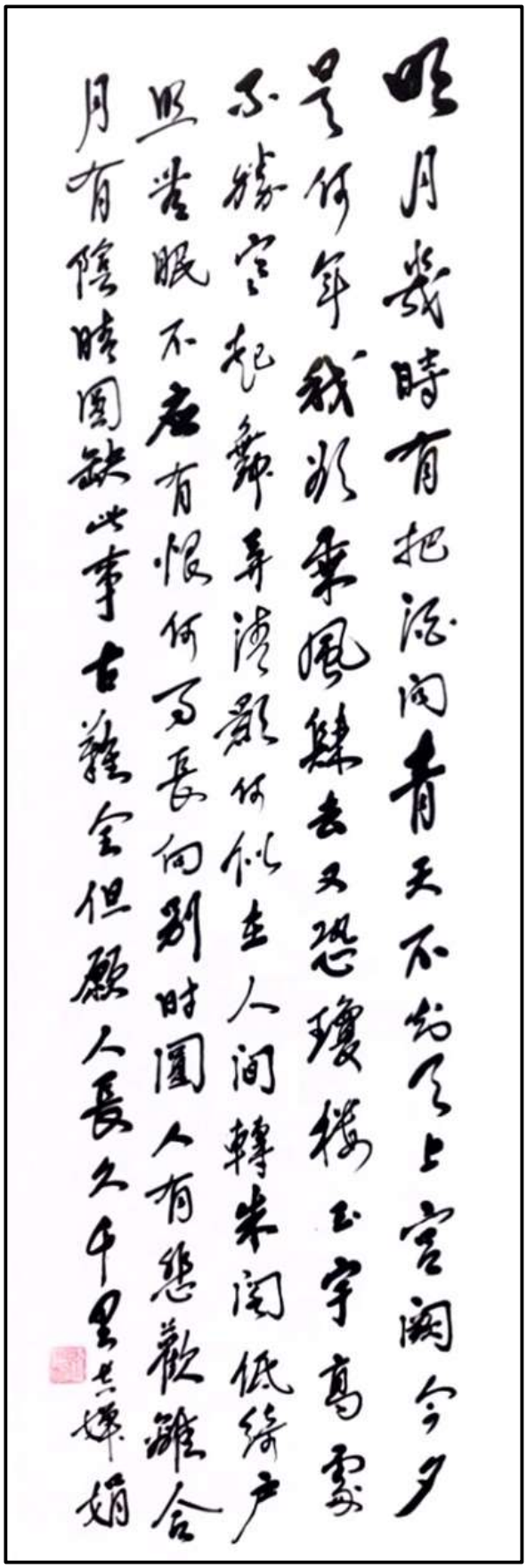
Cover art by Yuk Cho Lee's grandson, Wing Yan Liu, in 2021

李旭初和余若玲從一個小康家庭，發展到現在開枝散葉，經歷了漫長且勞碌的一生，奔波了萬里的旅程，嘗盡了人生五味架，甜酸苦辣鹹。轉眼間渡過了數十個寒暑，如今雙鬢變白，兒孫滿堂，他倆完成了人生重大的里程碑，無憂無慮地安享晚年，可說是苦盡甘來！

Yuk Cho Lee and Yeuk Ling Yu started from a modest family and have now branched out and flourished. They have experienced a long and arduous journey, travelling thousands of miles and tasted the various flavours of life - sweetness, sourness, bitterness, spiciness, and saltiness. In the blink of an eye, they have traversed through dozens of winters and summers. Now, with greying hair and a household filled with children and grandchildren, they have achieved significant milestones in life. They can enjoy their later years without worries, truly experiencing the rewards of their past hardships.

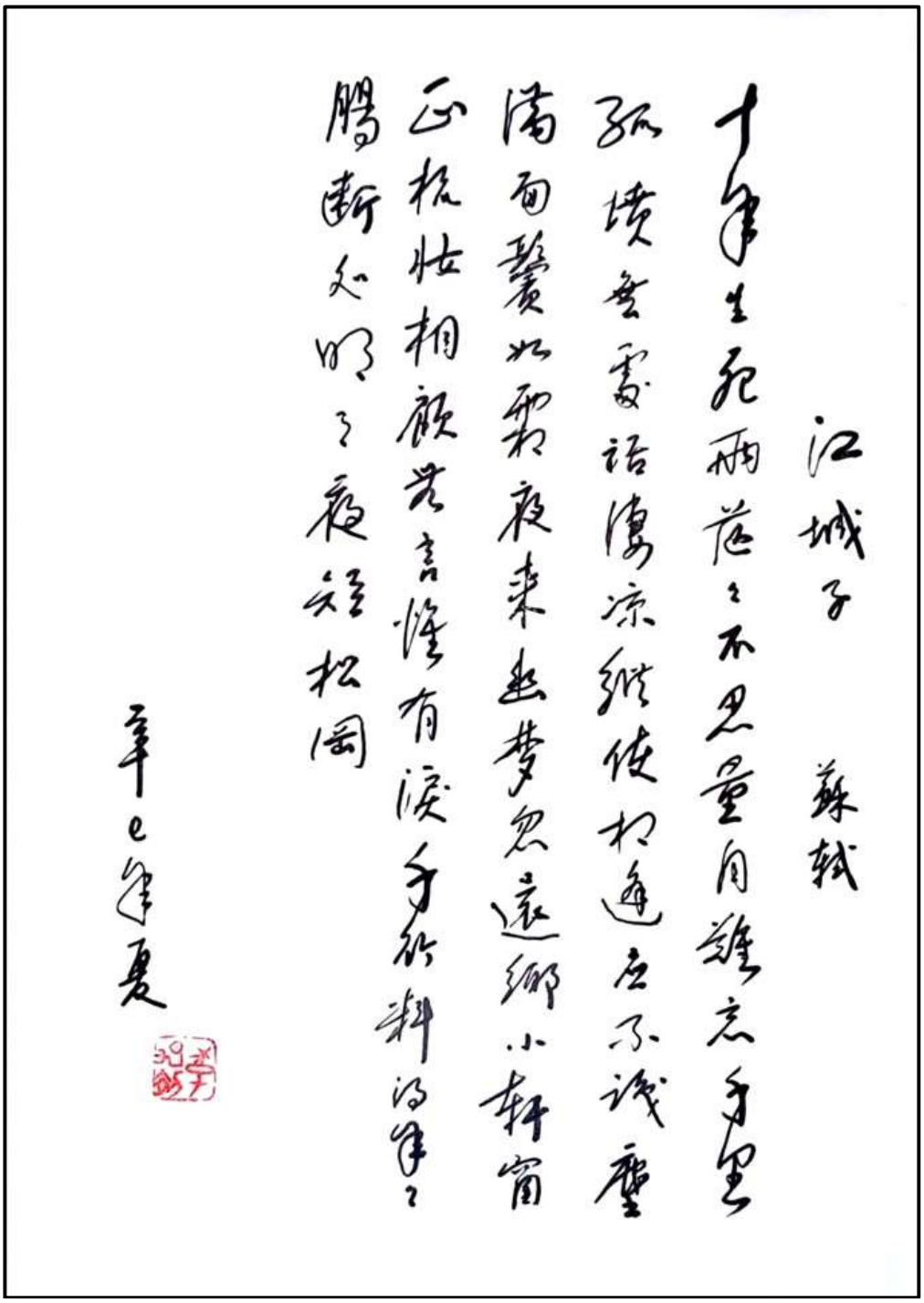


2022



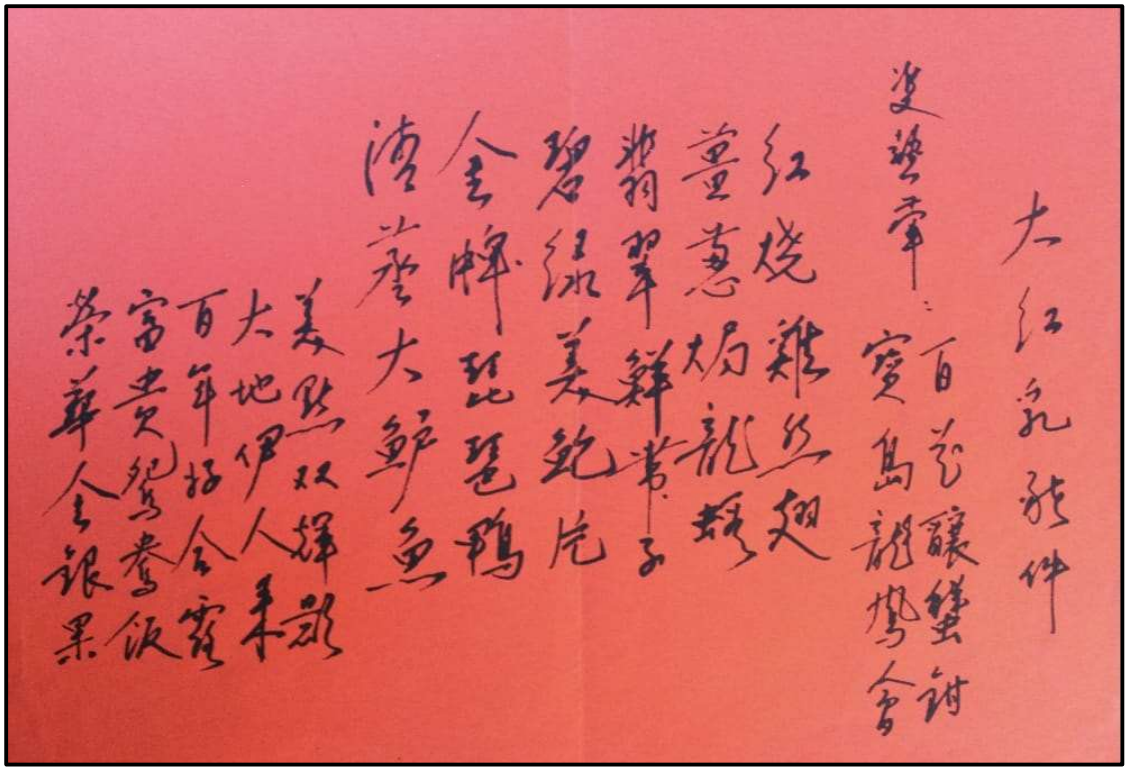
水調歌頭　蘇軾

Water Song, by Su Shi



江城子 蘇軾

Lyrics to the Melody of a River Town, by Su Shi



在和生酒樓寫的宴席菜牌

Woo Sang Restaurant banquet menu