

Historic Building Appraisal
Kwong Fook I Tsz,
No. 40 Tai Ping Shan Street, Sheung Wan

Kwong Fook I Tsz (廣福義祠), which literally means temple of common benevolence, was first initiated by Mr Tam Choy (譚才) and founded in 1851 to accommodate the soul tablets of many Chinese inhabitants who worked and died in Hong Kong so that their souls could be pacified and worshipped locally. Kwong Fook I Tsz was also used to provide refuge and medical service for the sick, homeless and elderly. Due to its multi-functions, it was also called Bak Sing Tsz (百姓祠), literally, temple for all folks. Its deities for worship have been Kshitigarbha Buddha (地藏王), the guardian of the earth who can alleviate people's sufferings, and Tsai Kung (濟公), commonly known as the Buddha for all requests.

***Historical
Interest***

The heavy consumption of the temple as a venue for accommodating the sick and the dead made its sanitary condition unacceptable. It was in 1869 that the Hong Kong government recognized a Chinese hospital should be built for such need. This eventually led to the setting up of the Tung Wah Hospital finally opened in 1872. Kwong Fook I Tsz has since then managed by the Hospital.

Kwong Fook I Tsz is situated on a raised platform. It is a three-hall narrow building with two courtyards connecting the individual halls. It is believed the end hall is the original structure of the temple now still used to accommodate soul tablets. The two deities are enshrined in the middle hall. No bracket system is found in the building while the tiles of the roofs have been cemented. No elaborate decorations are found in the temple except some geometric patterns on the ridges.

***Architectural
Merit***

Kwong Fook I Tsz in its early stage was used as a venue physically and spiritually to alleviate the pains of the sick, the hungers and to comfort the dead. It had a significant social value in the 1850-1960s. There is no other temple which performed such functions in the history of Hong Kong. Its importance led to the setting up of the Tung Wah Hospital.

***Rarity & Built
Heritage Value***

Much has been altered and modified in the building. Corrugated plastic and framed coverings are fixed at its entrance and an unsympathetic structure for the caretaker built by the side of the entrance hall. Renovations have not been accorded their objectives to put back the originality of the temple.

Authenticity

Worshippers for the blessing of Kshitigarbha Buddha and Tsai Kung (濟公) are still enthusiastic to pay tribute to the temple though little known has been made to its significant role it played in the communal services in its early stage when it was erected.

***Social Value &
Local Interest***