

**MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD**

DECLARATION OF THREE HISTORIC TEMPLES AS MONUMENTS

PURPOSE

To seek Members' advice on the proposal to declare the following three historic temples, which are under the administration of the Chinese Temples Committee (華人廟宇委員會) ("CTC"), as monuments under section 3(1) of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (the "Ordinance") (Cap. 53):

- (a) Lin Fa Temple (蓮花宮) on Lin Fa Kung Street West, Tai Hang, Hong Kong;
- (b) Hung Shing Temple (洪聖古廟) on Hung Shing Street, Ap Lei Chau; and
- (c) Hau Wong Temple (侯王古廟) Compound at the corner of Junction Road and Tung Tau Tsuen Road, Kowloon City.

HERITAGE VALUE

Lin Fa Temple in Tai Hang

2. Lin Fa Temple, literally means temple of lotus, on Lin Fa Kung Street West, Tai Hang was probably constructed in 1863 for the worship of Kwun Yam (觀音), the Goddess of Mercy, or the Chinese reincarnation of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. It is not only one of the seven existing graded Kwun Yam Temples in Hong Kong, but also an important historic landmark to the local community with its strong association with the Fire Dragon Dance of Tai Hang, which is a traditional event with a history of over one hundred years and was inscribed onto the third national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2011.

3. The architecture of Lin Fa Temple is very unique. Unlike the conventional design of other two-hall Chinese temples with a courtyard in between, Lin Fa Temple is a building with its front hall in half-octagonal

shape. The front hall is connected to the rectangular main (rear) hall without internal courtyard in-between. Since the temple is situated on a hill slope, its front hall with a double-eaves-tended (重檐攢尖頂) roof is built on a granite arched terrace while the main hall with a pitched roof (人字頂) sits on rocks where a big boulder is exposed on the ground surface. Right in the middle of the façade is an arched opening with a balustrade. Access to the temple is through two staircases on the left and right ends of the front hall, unlike other traditional Chinese temples with its main entrance in the middle of the façade.

Hung Shing Temple in Ap Lei Chau

4. Hung Shing Temple in Ap Lei Chau is one of the thirteen existing graded historic temples built for the worship of Hung Shing, a popular deity for the protection of fishermen and marine traders. Hung Shing Temple has been the main temple in Ap Lei Chau since its establishment in 1773. Hung Shing Festival (洪聖誕), which is on the 13th day of the second lunar month, is still one of the major annual local events in Ap Lei Chau and is widely celebrated by the locals.

5. Hung Shing Temple was erected at the north shore of Ap Lei Chau overlooking Shek Pai Wan (石排灣) and Aberdeen. There are two 20-foot high timber poles painted with dragon pattern in front of the temple. Locals call them as “dragon poles” (龍柱) which were believed to be built for protecting the area against the ferocious spirits (煞氣) from the “tiger land” (虎地) (a hill in Aberdeen where the Old Aberdeen Police Station (舊香港仔警署)(1891) is now situated). The temple is a Qing vernacular two-hall-three-bay building, with a courtyard covered with a pavilion in-between the two halls and two side chambers on the left and right of the temple building. Exquisite historic Shiwan (石灣) ceramic figurines can also be found on the roof ridges of the entrance hall and the parapet walls of the chambers on both sides of the internal courtyard. The temple is one of very few traditional temples that still keeps its original fung shui setting (sea-oriented) and close association with the local community.

Hau Wong Temple Compound in Kowloon City

6. The exact construction year of the temple is not known. It was probably built in 1730 or before with reference to the temple bell which was cast in the 8th year of Yongzheng (雍正) reign (1730) of the Qing Dynasty. Hau Wong Temple in Kowloon City is one of the seven existing graded historic temples built dedicated mainly to Hau Wong/Yeung Hau, and also one of the very few in the territory still keeping such a rich

collection of historic relics with direct relation with the garrison town of the Kowloon Walled City (九龍寨城).

7. The temple compound consists of the main temple building with later added side chambers, pavilions and stone inscriptions all standing on a terrace with granite steps leading to the ground level. The main temple building is originally a two-hall-one-courtyard Chinese vernacular building with pitched roofs. A detached pavilion with hip-and-gable roof supported by fine granite columns and wooden brackets is awkwardly standing in front of it. Altars are placed in the rear hall of the main temple building where Hau Wong and other deities such as Kwun Yam are worshipped. The stepped gables of the rear hall in the style of “五岳朝天” (literally means five peaks paying tribute to heaven) is a very rare design seldom found in Hong Kong.

8. All the three historic temples are currently situated on the private lots under the ownership of the Secretary for Home Affairs Incorporated (民政事務局局長法團) and are administrated by the CTC. Heritage appraisals and photographs of the three historic temples are at Annexes A to F respectively.

GRADING AND DECLARATION

9. In recognition of the heritage value of the three historic temples, the Antiquities Advisory Board (“AAB”) accorded Grade 1 status to the Hau Wong Temple Compound on 4 February 2010 and Hung Shing Temple and Lin Fa Temple on 17 May 2010 respectively in the assessment exercise of 1,444 historic buildings.

10. At its meeting on 26 November 2008, the AAB endorsed the establishment of a formal relationship between the statutory monument declaration system and the administrative grading system for historic buildings. Under the endorsed arrangements, Grade 1 buildings, defined as “building of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible”, will serve as a pool of highly valuable heritage buildings for consideration by the Antiquities Authority (i.e. Secretary for Development) as to whether some of these may have reached the “high threshold” of monuments for statutory protection under the Ordinance.

11. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) considers that with the significant heritage values as explained in paragraphs 2 to 7 above, all the three historic temples have reached the “high threshold” to be declared as monuments for permanent protection under the Ordinance. Consent to the declaration proposal has been obtained from their owners and the CTC.

ADVICE SOUGHT

12. In accordance with section 3(1) of the Ordinance, the Antiquities Authority (i.e. Secretary for Development) may, after consultation with the AAB and with the approval of the Chief Executive, by notice in the Gazette, declare any historic building to be a monument. Members' advice on whether the three historic temples should be declared as monuments under section 3(1) of the Ordinance is therefore sought. The intended monument boundaries of the declaration are shown in Annex G.

NEXT STEP

13. If Members support the proposal to declare the three historic temples as monuments, the AMO will take this forward in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
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