

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 Shing Miu (百姓廟), literally, temple for all folks. Its main 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. The temple was first completed around 1856 and rebuilt in 1895.¹

***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 recognised a Chinese hospital should be built for such need. This eventually led to the setting up of the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院) in 1870 to provide free Chinese medical treatment to the sick and poor in the Chinese community. The Hospital was constructed and opened in 1872. Kwong Fook I Tsz has since then been managed by the Hospital.

Kwong Fook I Tsz is situated on a raised platform. The Chinese characters of “廣福慈航” (literally meaning fortune and benevolence) have been engraved on the granite plaque above the main entrance doorway. 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. Deities are enshrined in the middle hall. No bracket system is found in the building while the tiles of the roofs have been cemented. Historic building fabrics such as the walls of grey brickwork and the granite doorframe at the main entrance are retained.

***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 significant social value in the 1850-1960s. There is no other surviving temple which performed such functions in the history of Hong Kong. Its importance led to the setting up of the Tung Wah Hospital. Over the years, parts of the interior have been renovated, but some historic fabrics are retained.

***Rarity & Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

¹ The Chinese characters of “光緒乙未孟冬重建敬立” have been engraved on the doorframe at the main entrance, which show that the temple was rebuilt in 1895.

Worshippers for the blessing of Kshitigarbha Buddha and Tsai Kung 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***

Kwong Fook I Tsz has group value with the Man Mo Temple Compound (文武廟, Declared Monument), Main Block, Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院主樓), Chinese Y.M.C.A. of Hong Kong (Central Building) (香港中華基督教青年會(中央會所)) (both Grade 1), and Bridges Street Market (必列啫士街市場, Grade 3). ***Group Value***