

Historic Building Appraisal
Cape Collinson Muslim Cemetery & Mosque
Cape Collinson Road, Chai Wan, Hong Kong

Cape Collinson Muslim Cemetery (歌連臣角回教墳場) was established in **1963** to replace the old Muslim cemetery (*i.e.* Kowloon Cemetery No.3) founded in 1930 in Ho Man Tin, at the rear of today's Pui Ching Middle School (培正中學) which was resumed by the Government in 1962 for redevelopment. In 1963, a new cemetery, together with a mosque located in close proximity, was established on the present site.

Historical Interest

It is one of two Muslim cemeteries in Hong Kong, the other one being the Muslim Cemetery in Wong Nai Chung Road, Happy Valley (跑馬地黃泥涌道回教墳場) which was established in the 1870s.

The history of Muslim immigration can be traced back to the early days of the British colonial era, when Muslims came to Hong Kong as soldiers, seamen, merchants and traders. Later, attracted by the opportunities created by the development of the opium and tea trade, Bohra Muslim merchants from India followed into their steps. In the 1860s, another group of Muslim traders from the southern Indian city of Madras arrived and successfully established their business in the colony.

The Muslim Cemetery is reached by a flight of steps also a footpath from Cape Collinson Road. Another flight of steps and footpath at the north of the Cemetery leads to the **Mosque** (清真寺) which is built on a separate site and has its own separate access road. The architect of the Mosque was **Mr. A.M. Wahab** of the Public Works Department. The design is a rather strange eclectic mix of Modernist and Islamic architecture. The Mosque serves as a place of worship as well as a mortuary and funeral parlour and therefore has a dual function. Islamic features include an onion-shaped dome, *Purdah* screens, *Narthax* (oyer for taking off shoes), *Mihrab* (niche), *Qiblar* (prayer wall), *Mimbar* (pulpit), *Sahn* (courtyard) and *Sardivan* (fountain or washing place). The gravestones in the cemetery have rounded or curved tops, some shaped as ogee or multi-foil ogee arches. The Star and Crescent symbol and Arabic inscriptions reflect the religious identity of the deceased.

Architectural Merit

Cape Collinson Muslim Cemetery is the second Muslim cemetery on Hong Kong Island. With its unique combined style of architecture, the Mosque is a rare piece of built heritage. As far as can be ascertained few alterations or

Rarity, Built Heritage Value &

additions have been made since it was built.

Authenticity

The social value of the Cemetery and the Mosque lies in their historical role providing for the needs of the local Muslim community. The Mosque serves not only as a quiet place of worship for the congregation of Muslims living in the neighbourhood, but also as a mortuary and funeral parlour. They are symbols of the cultural and religious diversity of Hong Kong and as such of considerable local interest.

Social Value & Local Interest

Situated in the mountainous area of Chai Wan in the Eastern District, Cape Collinson Muslim Cemetery and Mosque are sited in hilly greenery which is very suitable for its function. There are other cemetery grounds along Cape Collinson Road, such as the Buddhist Cemetery (歌連臣角佛教墳場), the Sai Wan War Cemetery (西灣國殤紀念墳場) and the Catholic Cemetery (歌連臣角天主教墳場). The declared monument — Law Uk Hakka House (羅屋) is also located in the area.

Group Value

Although cemeteries are sometimes resumed by the Government for road widening schemes or even redevelopment, this is unlikely to happen to the Cape Collinson Muslim Cemetery. The question of adaptive re-use does not therefore arise.

Adaptive Re-use