

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Wong Tai Sin Temple

#### No. 2 Chuk Yuen Village, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon

Wong Tai Sin (黃大仙), which literally means Great Deity Wong, was originally called Wong Choh-ping (黃初平), a Zhejiang (浙江) shepherd in the Jin (晉) dynasty (265-316 B.C.) who had immortal powers to heal the sick. He became a Taoist deity much worshipped by the sick and temples were built to worship him after his death. The present temple in Wong Tai Sin was set up by a Leung Yan-am (梁仁菴) and his son Leung Gwan-juen (梁鈞轉) first in Wan Chai and later moved to the present site in 1921. *Historical Interest*

The temple had been providing charitable services, such as free Chinese herbal medicine, for the locals. The deity is said to be highly efficacious not only for the sick but any request. The temple has been much expanded after the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945) and due to the presence of the renowned temple at the area, the district Wong Tai Sin was named after it.

The temple is situated in an enormous compound in a Taoist setting comprising the main building dedicated to Wong Tai Sin with pavilions, ponds, halls, a garden and a clinic.<sup>1</sup> The yellow-tiled deity building is constructed with modern materials and technology in the form of a Qing (清, 1644 – 1911) Chinese temple. The temple is richly decorated wall paintings, hand-painted pattern decorations, ridge ceramics, plaques and couplets, carvings and others. *Architectural Merit*

The Wong Tai Sin Temple is a rare Chinese temple complex and one of the most popular Chinese temples in Hong Kong. It is such a prominent landmark that the district in which it is situated is named after it. The temple, first erected on the site in 1921, is constructed of modern materials with adequate lighting and ventilation facilities. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

Owned by Sik Sik Yuen (齋色園), a religious charitable organisation, the temple is providing both Western and Chinese medical services for the public. Worshippers are those who beg for the general blessing on luck, fortune, health and others rather than purely health. It is one of the most popularly patronised temples in Hong Kong especially on days close to the end of the Chinese New Year, the first day of the lunar year and the birthday of Wong Tai Sin on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the eight lunar month, when numerous worshippers make their tribute. Many worshippers believe that their offerings at the very first moments on the first day of the Chinese New Year would bring them the best luck throughout the year. The temple is still a very important landmark in Hong Kong. It is much well known by local worshippers and tourists. Besides, in *Social Value & Local Interest*

<sup>1</sup> The main temple building is known as 黃大仙師寶殿 or 大殿 in Chinese.

1997, the temple became the first venue where Taoist wedding rituals can be held and recognised by the government.

The temple building with its auxiliary buildings and structures are on the whole *Group Value* formed by themselves in a Taoist setting having their own group value and not with others outside the compound.