

Historic Building Appraisal
Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre
No. 33 To Fung Shan Road, Shatin, New Territories

Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre (道風山基督教叢林) was one of the earliest centres set up in Shatin to provide a silent retreat and research activities for Christians. It was developed by **Dr Karl ludvig Reichelt** (艾香德牧師, 1877-1952), a priest of the **Norwegian Missionary Society** who put great emphasis on preaching Christianity to the Buddhists. It was designed by Danish architect **Johannes Prip-Möller** (艾術華) between **1931 and 1939**. The Centre was subordinate to the Christian Mission to Buddhists [CMB, 基督東亞道友會, now the Areopagos Foundation (亞略巴古基金)] and it was the continuation of the missionary centre in Jingfengshan (景風山) of Nanjing (南京) which was also developed by Dr Reichelt.

*Historical
Interest*

The development of Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre can be separated into three stages: In the **first stage** (1930 to 1950), the Centre was for sharing the gospel with Buddhists. Missionary work was interrupted during the Japanese Occupation and the Lotus Crypt, one of the buildings in the Centre, was a once shelter for refugees. The Centre also accommodated the refugees fleeing from the Chinese mainland in 1949. In the **second stage** (1950-1962), the vision of the Centre turned to be ecumenical. In the **third stage** (since 1967), the Centre has become a silent retreat and research centre of Christianity.

Engagement of Western Christianity into Chinese context in this Centre makes it outstanding in Hong Kong. Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre spread the Christian message to the Buddhists through contextualization (本色化) and borrowing Buddhist elements. The symbol of the Centre was the combination of Cross and Lotus. In the mass, missionaries and students were dressed in traditional Chinese costumes. The psalms used the Buddhist melodies to sing and the incense burner can be found in the altar of Jingzunbaodian [(景尊寶殿), now the Christ Temple (聖殿)]. Other similar examples include S.K.H. St. Mary's Church at Tung Lo Wan Road and S.K.H. Holy Trinity Church at Ma Tau Chung Road.

The building complex comprises five historic buildings, namely, **Main Block, Pilgrim's Hall, Christ Temple, Tao Fong Shan Service Unit and Conference Hall**. The architectural style of all five buildings is very similar borrowing and combining different elements of Chinese architecture in a style known as **Chinese Eclectic**. Christ Temple is probably more in the traditional Chinese style built in the form of a two-storey octagonal pavilion or pagoda featuring curling Chinese tiled roofs and red coloured columns. The other buildings whilst featuring Chinese architectural elements also incorporate modernist features particularly in the use of reinforced concrete structural elements. Renovations and alterations have been

*Architectural
Merit*

carried out over the years to meet changing needs, and there have been several modifications affecting the whole building group. The buildings are definitely interesting architecturally and have positive group value.

It is rare to have a church complex constructed in Chinese design on such a large scale. Another church complex, if not the only one, with a design and scale comparable with the Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre, is Holy Spirit Seminary in Wong Chuk Hang.

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

Originally, the Centre was for sharing the Christian gospel with Buddhists, later the vision of the centre turned ecumenical and has since become a silent retreat and Christian research centre. Chinese Christian art was also encouraged through its Porcelain Workshop and Art Shop. The Centre encourages religious dialogue, public seminars, research and visiting scholar programmes and publishes academic articles on philosophy, theology and religions studies.

***Group Value,
Social Value
& Local
Interest***

Pressure to release land and redevelop parts of the site may lead to adaptive re-use of some of the buildings in the future.

***Adaptive
Re-use***