

Historic Building Appraisal
Haw Par Mansion
No. 15A Tai Hang Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Haw Par Mansion (虎豹別墅) was named after two Burmese Chinese brothers, **Mr. Aw Boon-haw** (胡文虎) and **Mr. Aw Boon-par** (胡文豹). The Mansion was built in 1935 by **Aw Boon Haw** (胡文虎) for his family. In the adjoining landscaped Tiger Balm Garden, which was built for the public, there were sculptures and tableaus teaching traditional Chinese moral values. The garden has now been demolished for redevelopment but Haw Par Mansion has been saved together with its private garden.

*Historical
Interest*

At the very beginning of the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong (1941-1945), Aw Boon Haw was being captured by the Japanese. He was forced to stay in The Hong Kong Hotel (香港大酒店) for two months' of time but he was released back to the Mansion due to sickness.

The Aw family came from Fujian Province (福建省). Aw Boon Haw was the second son of **Aw Chi Kim** (胡子欽) who settled in Rangoon (仰光) in the 1860s, where he opened a small herbal shop, Eng Aun Tong (永安堂) in 1870. In 1908, Aw Boon Haw and his brother **Aw Boon Par** (胡文豹) inherited the medical business. Their most famous product, Ten Thousand Golden Oil (萬金油), became a household name in Rangoon and other parts of Southeast Asia. Apart from investing in the pharmaceuticals industry, Aw Boon Haw also founded the well-known "Star Press" (星系報業), with twelve newspapers published in different countries, which won him the title of "The King of the Press" (報業大王). Aw Boon Haw was also notable for his generosity in sponsoring the establishment of schools, hospitals, orphanages and homes for the aged, as well as providing timely relief to victims of natural disasters.

Architecturally, Haw Par Mansion is built in the **Chinese Renaissance** style, a blend of Western and Chinese construction methods and architectural theory. Chinese architectural features include flying eaves, brackets, moon-gates, red columns and green glazed tiled roofs. The plan is more Western being roughly symmetrical with the adoption of porches, bay windows and fireplaces. Internally, there are beautiful painted glass windows from Italy, carvings and mouldings, gilded with gold and murals showing Indian and Burmese influence. The Mansion is composed of a two-storey main block with a lower ground floor with a servants' quarters annex at the rear. On the roof there is a penthouse in Chinese style with two corner towers, a roof terrace, a hexagonal pavilion and a pagoda-like structure acting as a tower for the water tank. Chinese Renaissance is a rare style in Hong Kong and therefore has considerable built heritage value. Over the years there has not been a great deal of change to the Mansion which

*Architectural
Merit*

*Rarity &
Built Heritage
Value &*

retains its authentic appearance as envisaged by Aw Boon Haw.

Authenticity

The social value and local interest lies in the Mansion's image of a residence of a rich and powerful merchant family in the 1930s and a focal point of Chinese culture in Hong Kong.

*Social Value &
Local Interest*

Haw Par Mansion is now surrounded by a number of high residential buildings, such as Villa Splendor (華苑) built in 1964, Dragon Garden (龍園) built in 1976 and Ronsdale Garden (龍華花園) built in 1986 which led to the demolition of parts of the Tiger Balm Garden. In front of the Mansion is True Light Middle School of Hong Kong (香港真光中學). Physically, it is close to Lin Fa Temple (蓮花宮).

Group Value

Ideas for adaptive re-use of the Mansion have included the setting up of a Hall of Fame also a Folk Art Centre including a period display to show furniture and other household items illustrating the daily life of the Aw family.

*Adaptive
Re-use*