

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Confucius Hall**  
**No. 77 Caroline Hill Road, Causeway Bay, H.K**

Standing on retaining walls built of dressed granite blocks, the main building and staff quarters of Confucius Hall Hong Kong (香港孔聖堂) at No. 77 Caroline Hill Road were completed in 1935. Two occupation permits were issued by the Building Authority on 3 October 1935 to certify the completion of the “Confucius Lecture Hall” and “quarters”. Its name in Chinese, 孔聖講堂, literally meaning Confucius lecture hall, was inscribed on the front elevation of the main building when it was built, although it is more commonly known as Confucius Hall in English.<sup>1</sup> Foundation works commenced in October 1932, whereas the construction of the lecture hall itself began in September 1934. Confucius Hall was formally opened on 10 December 1935, with the then Secretary for Chinese Affairs, the Hon. Mr. N. L. Smith as an officiating guest at the opening ceremony. *Historical Interest*

The construction of Confucius Hall as a public place and community hall for the reverence of Confucius (孔子, 550 – 478 B.C.) demonstrated the great enthusiasm and efforts of Confucian believers, including prominent businessmen and leading figures of the Chinese community, together with scholars and retired officials from mainland China, in their advocacy for the revival of Confucianism amid the strong tides of modern science on the Mainland and in Hong Kong during the early twentieth century. Confucianism was indeed only one of the schools of thought that the supporters of traditional Chinese culture endeavoured to advocate.<sup>2</sup> Apart from Confucius Hall Hong Kong (founded in 1928), there were another three major Confucian societies in the city, namely the Hong Kong Confucius Society (香港孔聖會, founded in 1909), Confucian Association of China (中華聖教總會, founded in 1921) and The Confucian Academy (孔教學院, founded in 1930).<sup>3</sup> All these four societies are still operating today.

The construction of Confucius Hall was initiated by Tsang Foo (曾富)<sup>4</sup> and Kan

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the main building was referred to as Confucius Hall in the English newspapers of the 1930s and 1950s. The current land records show that it is “孔聖講堂” in Chinese and Confucius Hall in English.

<sup>2</sup> The promotion of the respect for traditional Chinese culture was also shown by the establishment of the School of Chinese of The University of Hong Kong (香港大學中文學院) in 1927 and construction of Fung Ping Shan Library (馮平山圖書館, now known as Fung Ping Shan Building 馮平山樓) in 1931 (opened in 1932) for the Chinese book collection of the university, for instance.

<sup>3</sup> The current addresses of the three Confucian societies are set out below:

- (i) Hong Kong Confucius Society (香港孔聖會) at Room 1201, Bonham Centre, Nos. 79 – 85 Bonham Strand East, Sheung Wan;
- (ii) Confucian Association of China (中華聖教總會) at Unit B, 3/F, Shun Fat Building, Nos. 72 – 76 Queen’s Road East, Hong Kong; and
- (iii) The Confucian Academy (孔教學院) at No. 10 Tai Shing Street, Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

<sup>4</sup> Tsang Foo, also known as Tsang Siu-wing (曾兆榮), a native of Xiangshan (香山) of Guangdong Province, was born in 1861.

Hung-chiu (簡孔昭),<sup>5</sup> who thought it important to erect a prominent building embodying Confucianism. The proposal was endorsed at the first formal meeting held in April 1928. In the same meeting, Kan Hung-chiu initiated the project by donating a plot of land, of around 120,000 square feet, on Caroline Hill Road for the building of Confucius Hall. Moreover, a preparatory committee composed of notable businessmen and community leaders was formed. Members included Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東, 1862 – 1956), Tso Seen-wan (曹善允, 1868 – 1953), Tsang Foo (曾富, 1861 – ?), Yau Lit (尤列), Li Yik-mui (李亦梅, c.1877 – 1957), etc. Revolutionist Yau Lit wrote a manifesto (宣言) on the construction of Confucius Hall.<sup>6</sup>

In February 1929, the second general meeting was held. A committee was set up to organize subscriptions to implement the proposal. The committee was composed of other well-known businessmen and community leaders, including Sir Shouson Chow (周壽臣, 1861 – 1959), Sir Robert Kotewall (羅旭龢, 1880 – 1949), Tso Seen-wan and Chau Tsun-nin (周掇年, 1893 – 1971) were elected to form a presidium (主席團), while Ip Lan-chuen (葉蘭泉, 1865 – 1946) was elected the Secretary; Li Yau-chuen (李右泉, 1861 – 1940), Chau Tsun-nin, Tsang Foo, Lui Yum-suen (雷蔭蓀, 1876 – 1953), Kan Hung-chiu etc. the Money Collectors (勸捐員); Tang Shiu-kin (鄧肇堅, 1901 – 1986), Chau Tsun-nin, Leung But-yu (梁弼予, ? – 1954), Au Lim-chuen (區廉泉, c.1868 – 1958) etc., the Money Keeper (接收捐款員), and Li Yau-chuen, Tang Shiu-kin (鄧肇堅, 1901 – 1986), Au Lim-chuen, etc. the Treasurers (司庫員).<sup>7</sup> By around October 1929, \$80,000 was subscribed.

A committee for general affairs (總務值理) of some 100 members was also

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He went to Yokohama (橫濱) in Japan to earn his living as a merchant. Later he returned to Hong Kong and opened “曾富洋煤公司” selling imported coal and a 成昌雜貨鋪 providing ship’s supplies. He had a beautiful garden in his villa Nam Fung Terrace (南豐臺), also known as Tsang Foo Villa (曾富別墅), near Kowloon City, and made use of this garden for charitable affairs. For example, a bazaar was established in the garden. The receipts from the bazaar were contributed to the relief for the famine in Tianjian (天津). He also established a school in the garden for provincial students and free schools for the children of the poor in Kowloon. Confucius classics were taught there. The existing statue of Pak Tai at Yuk Hui Temple (玉虛宮) in Lung On Street (隆安街), Wan Chai (declared monument) was bought from Guangdong by Tsang Foo in the early twentieth century, and was enshrined in his villa until it was demolished in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Tsang was also a founder a charitable organisation named Chung Sing Benevolent Society (鐘聲慈善社). As a president of the society, he made generous donation for the famine reliefs during the floods in Tianjian, the typhoon at Swatow (汕頭) and the floods in Guangdong Province (東西北三江水災). Tsang was also a member of the Boards of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院, 1922-1923) and Po Leung Kuk (保良局, 1921 - 1922).

<sup>5</sup> Kan Hung-chiu assisted in the family business of the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company (南洋兄弟煙草公司).

<sup>6</sup> Yau Lit, Yeung Hok-ling (楊鶴齡), Chan Siu-pak (陳少白) and Dr Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) often got together to discuss overthrowing the Qing dynasty, and were therefore called the “Four Desperados” (四大寇).

<sup>7</sup> These founding members of Confucius Hall, though only to name some, were past members or chairmen of the Boards of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院, renamed Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (東華三院) in 1931) and/ or Po Leung Kuk (保良局), etc. Sir Shouson Chow, Sir Robert Kotewall and Tso Seen-wan were Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council (定例局) and Chau Tsun-nin a member of the Sanitary Board (潔淨局).

Lui Yum-suen was one of the founders of The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (香港中華總商會). He also served on the Board of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital in 1917/1918 and 1926/1927, and that of Po Leung Kuk in 1918/1919, and was the chairman of Chung Sing Benevolent Society (鐘聲慈善社), etc.

formed. Members included businessmen and philanthropists like Tsang Foo, Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東, 1862 – 1956), Li Yik-mui (李亦梅), Ngan Shing-kwan (顏成坤, 1903 – 2001), Au Lim-chuen, etc., as well as notable scholars of the then Qing dynasty, namely Chen Huanzhang (陳煥章, 1880 – 1933),<sup>8</sup> Lo Sheung-fu (盧湘父, 1868 – 1970),<sup>9</sup> Lai Tsi-hsi (賴際熙, 1865 – 1937),<sup>10</sup> Ou Dadian (區大典, 1877 – 1937),<sup>11</sup> Zhu Ruzhen (朱汝珍, 1870 – 1942), etc.<sup>12</sup> However, almost all the money was spent on site formation and foundation works. Eventually, Kan Hung-chiu donated some \$57,000 in the name of his father, Kan Long-shan (簡朗山), who supported the promotion of Confucianism, to cover the cost of constructing Confucius Hall. The front elevation of the main building, at the ground floor level near the main entrance, is embedded with a plaque engraved with “簡朗山公贈建孔聖講堂全座 民國廿四年 吉日立”,<sup>13</sup> while at the roof floor level, it bears the inscriptions of “孔聖講堂” and “謝家寶” (Tse Ka-po, the calligrapher).<sup>14</sup> In-between the characters “孔聖” and “講堂” is a plaque engraved with “玉振金聲”.<sup>15</sup> Confucius Hall was formally opened on 10 December 1935. Tso Seen-wan was the first president of the society.

Confucius Hall is situated on a plot of land registered as “Inland Lot No. 3357” (or I.L. 3357). According to the Government Lease of I.L. 3357, the lessee “will

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<sup>8</sup> Chen Huanzhang was a student of Kang Youwei (康有為). In 1911, he was conferred a Doctor’s Degree by the University of Columbia. In 1912, Chen established the National Confucius Association (孔教總會) in Shanghai and was its first president (會長). Later, the association was moved to Beijing, with Kang as the president and Chen as the secretary (總幹事). Branches were established on the Mainland. In 1930, Chen came to Hong Kong and established the Confucian Academy (孔教學院) at No. 13 Bonham Road. He was the first president of the academy from 1930 to 1933.

<sup>9</sup> In 1889, Lo Sheung-fu went to Japan and taught at the Da Tong School (大同學校) at Yokohama (橫濱). He returned to the Mainland in 1900 and later moved to Macau and then Hong Kong. He operated a secondary school named “湘父男女中學” in Hong Kong for 30 years. Lu was the third president of the Confucian Academy from 1942 to 1970, and also served on the Boards of Directors of the Confucius Society (香港孔聖會) and the Confucian Association of China (中華聖教總會).

<sup>10</sup> The School of Chinese Studies (中文學院, renamed Department of Chinese Department (中文系) in 1933) of The University of Hong Kong was established in 1927. Lai Tsi-hsi was appointed Reader in Chinese History and Head of the department. He was also one of the founders who established a Hakka association named Tsung Tsin Association (崇正總會) in 1921.

<sup>11</sup> Ou Dadian was appointed Reader in Chinese Literature of the Chinese Department of The University of Hong Kong in 1927.

<sup>12</sup> In the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of the Guangxu reign (光緒三十二年, 1906), Zhu Ruzhen was sent by the Qing government to study law at the Hosei University (法政大學) in Tokyo. He then taught at the imperial school of law in Beijing (京師法律學堂), and in the early 1920s he taught at the Confucian University (孔教大學) established by Chen Huanzhang in Beijing. Chu was the second president of the Confucian Academy from 1934 to 1942.

<sup>13</sup> The plaque literally means “Confucius Hall was built by the donation from Kan Long-shan. Plaque erected in the 24<sup>th</sup> Republican year”.

<sup>14</sup> In the early twentieth century, Tse Ka-po was a comprador of the a Japanese navigation company named Nippon Yusen Kaisha Line (日本郵船公司). This facilitated him to transport rice to Hong Kong from Guangdong Province in 1918 in order to alleviate the shortage of the supply of rice due to the famine in the northern part of the Mainland (華北). He served on the Boards of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital and Po Leung Kuk in 1920/ 1921, and one of the subscribers for the construction of the Aberdeen Technical School (香港仔工業學校) (Grade 3) in 1935. Besides, Tse was dubbed “contemporary calligrapher of Lingnan” (當代嶺南書法家).

<sup>15</sup> “玉振金聲” is a phrase developed from a saying of another sage, Mengzi (孟子). It expresses the appreciation of Mengzi to Confucius for the latter’s great achievement in academy and ethics. The saying originated from Mengzi’s work, namely 《萬章下》:「孔子之謂集大成;集大成也者,金聲而玉振之也。金聲也者,始條理也;玉振之者,終條理也。」 For instance, “金聲玉振” is engraved on an entrance *pai-fong* (牌坊) at the Temple of Confucius (孔廟) at Qufu (曲阜), Shandong (山東).

not except with the consent of the Governor erect or allow or suffer the erection on the said piece or parcel of ground or any part thereof any building other than a Confucius Hall and ancillary buildings thereto ... and for any purposes whatever other than for the purposes of the propagation of Confucian morals and principles (including charities, education, celebrative functions and ceremonies and recreation)".<sup>16</sup> The use of the site is restricted to the activities mentioned in the said lease. The Birthday of Confucius is still annually celebrated and lectures are organized there. An orphanage named “孔聖堂兒童保康院” was opened at Confucius Hall on 25 March 1939, but it ceased operation in 1941 due to the outbreak of the war.<sup>17</sup> The building was slightly damaged during the Japanese invasion (mainly the glass panes of doors and windows broken by the nearby bomb attacks). During the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), the main building was occupied by the Japanese as an office and a sanatorium.

There are a number of artefacts in the lecture hall that show the patronage of Confucius Hall by the leading figures of the Chinese community and its social network in Hong Kong. They include the wooden couplets presented to Confucius Hall in celebration of its completion in 1935. The gilded couplet which flank the main entrance door of the hall were presented by the founders. It is flanked by the couplet presented by the Hong Kong Confucius Society (香港孔聖會). In the middle above the main entrance door is a plaque from The Confucian Academy (孔教學院), written by Zhu Ruzhen. The couplets inside the hall were presented by the Confucian Association of China (中華聖教總會), The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce (香港中華總商會), a children’s hospital in Guangzhou named “廣州志德嬰孩醫院”, as well as some community leaders of the New Territories, including Tsoi Po-tin (蔡寶田, 1872 – 1944), Ng Kei-cheung (伍其昌, 1859 – 1938) and Tang Fan-sun (鄧勳臣, 1874 – 1953).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Land Registry Office, Government Lease of L.L. 3357.

<sup>17</sup> Zhu Ruzhen (朱汝珍) was the headmaster of the orphanage. It aimed at providing the destitute children with a home, making them healthy through nutrition and physical exercise, and giving them education on contemporary general knowledge (應世常識) and moral values.

<sup>18</sup> Tsoi Po-tin was a prominent figure in Hong Kong and a leader of the Tsoi clan in Wang Chau (橫洲), Yuen Long. He engaged in construction company named Wing Yick & Co. (榮益公司) at No. 25 Gage Street (潔志街), Central. The company was a building contractor of Oi Kwan Mansion (愛群大廈), a 15-storied building completed in 1937 and measured 65.27 meters in height, which was the tallest building in Guangzhou before the Second World War. Tsoi was also one of the founders of Hop Yick Co. (合益公司) in order to set up Yuen Long New Market. Besides, he was a member of the Board of Directors of Po Leung Kuk in 1934/1935. The mansion named Yu Yuen (娛苑, Grade 2) was built by Tsoi Po-tin in 1927 as a summer villa at his birthplace, Tung Tau Wai (東頭圍), Wang Chau.

Ng Kei-cheung, alias Ng Shing-chi (伍醒遲), was one of the important leaders of the “six-day war” (from 14 to 19 April 1899) against the British takeover of the New Territories. He was influential in Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long, and enlisted the Shap Pat Heung people to join the war. In the early twentieth century, Ng was one of the community leaders who helped found Hop Yick Co. to set up Yuen Long New Market, and organize subscriptions to establish Pok Oi Hospital (博愛醫院). He also contributed to education, for instance, by establishing a school named Wing On She (永安社, renamed Wing On School (永安學校) in 1938) in the Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) at Ngau Yiu (瓦窑), Shap Pat Heung, also known as Tai Shue Ha Tin Hau Temple (大樹下天后古廟, Grade 2).

Tang Fan-sun was a local gentry of Tai Po Tau (大埔頭), Tai Po. The Tangs at Tai Po Tau branched out from Kam Tin. In 1947,

The lecture hall and the adjacent staff quarters are accessible from the entrance gateway, which takes the form of a *pai-fong* (牌坊) erected along the pavement on Caroline Hill Road and then the granite stairways leading from the gateway to the elevated platform upon which the buildings stand. The concrete *pai-fong* is surfaced with washed granolithic render, and inscribed with the society's name “孔聖堂” (Confucius Hall) and that of the calligrapher “雷蔭蓀” (Lui Yum-suen), who was one of the founders of the society. The delicately carved Chinese-style granite balustrades bordering the northern and eastern edges of the platform remain intact.<sup>19</sup>

Confucius Hall was designed by Tam Shiu-hong (譚肇康, 1875 – 1961), who was a well-known architect at the time. The building applications were submitted to the Building Authority by Messrs. Leigh and Orange, while the contractors were Messrs. Kin Cheong (建昌建築公司).<sup>20</sup> It is a reinforced concrete structure with Chinese-style features. The building consists of a main hall overlooked by an internal balcony, and a second floor constructed over the front part of the building. Externally, the two concrete roofs are covered with green glazed pan and roll tiles. At the front there is a hipped roof (四坡頂), while the rear one is a hip-and-gable roof (歇山頂). The main ridge of the front roof is decorated with a pair of dragon fish (鰲魚) with a pearl in the middle. The side ridges are decorated with wave-like ornaments. Beneath the eaves are concrete brackets, which imitate the *dougong* (斗拱) of Chinese architecture, and bands of painted decoration with Chinese patterns. On the ground floor, the entrance bay is composed of three red wooden doors and fanlights decorated with patterned metal grilles, while the cantilevered balcony above has a Chinese-style granite balustrade. The bay is embellished with a pair of red terrazzo colossal columns, a band of *ruyi* (如意) motifs, and decorative panels with *ruyi* motifs.

In 1985, a statue of Confucius (孔子像), a pavilion named “觀鳳亭” near the

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he was one of the founders of Luen Wo Land Investment Company Limited (聯和置業有限公司) and served on the Board of Directors from 1947 to 1953. The company established Luen Wo Market (聯和墟), which was formally opened on 20 January 1951.

<sup>19</sup> The northern edge is in front of the main building and the eastern edge on its right.

<sup>20</sup> It was Kan Hung-chiu who asked Tam Shiu-hong to design Confucius Hall and monitor the construction works. Tam was born in Xinhui (新會) of Guangdong Province (廣東省) in 1875 and graduated from St. Paul's College in Hong Kong. He then graduated in architecture in Dalian (大連) of Liaoning Province (遼寧省), and worked with the works bureaus of the Qing government in Dalian and Tianjian (天津). In 1908, Tam moved to Hong Kong. He firstly worked with the Public Works Department and then a construction company. Later, he established his own companies named Wing Lee & Co. (永利建築公司) and Yee Lee Co. (裕利公司). Tam further founded Lam Woo & Co. (聯益建築公司) in partnership with Lam Woo (林護, 1870 – 1933), a well-known figure in the construction field. His companies had been the building contractor of many government projects, such as the Aberdeen reclamation, and the construction of the Tai Tam Tuk and Shing Mun Reservoirs and staff quarters in the early twentieth century. He was one of the founders who established The Building Contractors Association Limited Hong Kong (香港建造商會, now Hong Kong Construction Association) in 1920, and was elected the president of the association in 1922. In the 1920s, there were serious labour problems. Workers in the construction industry occasionally went on strikes. Tam, as a representative from the association, acted as the arbitrator and settled the strikes. He had become a Life Advisor (永遠維持顧問) of the association by the early 1950s. As a philanthropist, he was one of the Principal Directors (首總理) of the Tung Wah Hospital in 1932 and served on the Board of Directors of Po Leung Kuk in 1934, for instance. Tam and Lam Woo had also provided much financial support for the revolutionary activities of Dr. Sun Yat-sen.

statue and a one-storey building named “書劍軒” near the lecture hall were erected to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Confucius Hall.<sup>21</sup> The design of these structures, which reflect the influences of Chinese architecture, makes them compatible with the external appearance of the lecture hall.

Internally, the main building consists of two parts. The rear part is a double volume space comprising the main hall with its internal balcony. Regarding the front part, this comprises a ground floor entrance hall, above which is a mezzanine floor with the main hall’s internal balcony and a room adjacent to it. This room has a cantilevered balcony with a Chinese-style decorative granite balustrade, and was formerly a conference room and a classroom, and is now a reading room. It is said that the officiating guests at the opening ceremony stood on this balcony to greet the guests, and they could enjoy a panoramic view of Victoria Harbour. During the Japanese Occupation, the room was used by the Japanese as a conference room. A library is housed on the top floor above it.

The main hall is an auditorium built with a great deal of consideration. The design is practical but elegant. It is a column-free hall, and the usage of the space is therefore very flexible. To achieve such a column-free space, a concrete arched-beam roof structure with vertical hangers was designed and installed above the ceiling (in the ceiling void next to the library) in order to suspend the huge roof over the main hall. The ground floor has a gentle slope to enhance audience experience through better visibility. It is an open plan design without fixed seating to suit the needs of different events. The internal balcony is stepped for better visibility, and has a U-shaped form to provide more space to accommodate rows of historic timber seats. For acoustic reasons, it was reported that the hall’s ceiling was lined with Celotex panels.

The building’s decoration mostly adopted traditional Chinese elements or motifs. *Ruyi* motifs in different forms are widely used, for instance, on the brackets at the ground floor and upper levels of the main hall, on the parapet surrounding the balcony and the ventilation grilles on the ceiling of the main hall. Chinese meander patterns and four-petal motifs are also identifiable on the balcony’s parapet. The decorative elements are elaborate and eye-catching with their use of bright and contrasting colours and with a high level of craftsmanship.

There are other features that are worthy of mention, as they serve to illustrate the contemporary building materials and techniques used in the 1930s. They include

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<sup>21</sup>The building “書劍軒” was built to house the archives of the Confucius Secondary School (校史室). It is now used as an activity room of the primary section of the Chinese Academy (晉德學校).

the terrazzo finishes of the colossal columns, the entrance surround and the flooring of the entrance hall, and the coloured cement tiles at the entrance hall, in the reading room and on the cantilevered balcony. Besides, the library is made of long hard wood floorboards, some of which are around 4.2 metres in length.

The three-storey ancillary building was built for use as staff quarters. As an annex building, it adopts a humbler design with practical use in mind. Simple moulded cornice can be identified between the second and third floor levels, while the balcony on the third floor is surrounded by a balustrade with bamboo-shaped balusters, which enhance the aesthetics of the building. Toilet facilities and storerooms are housed in the building now.

It was said that before the opening of Hong Kong City Hall in 1962, Confucius Hall was the major venue for large-scale activities and lectures, and the only community hall open to the public before the Second World War. For instance, in August 1940, a remembrance service for the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of the late Lu Hsun (魯迅, 1881 – 1936), with an attendance of some 300 members of the public, was held at Confucius Hall. Hsu Ti-shan (許地山, 1893 – 1941) delivered an opening speech and Xiao Hong (蕭紅, 1911 – 1942) introduced the biography of Lu Hsun. In September 1941, a memorial service for Hsu Ti-shan was also organised there, which was attended by some 700 people from around 40 cultural and educational groups and tertiary institutions, etc., After the war, during an event in 1948 commemorating the May Fourth Movement, public lectures delivered by Guo Moruo (郭沫若) on “Science and Democracy” (科學與民主) and Mao Dun (茅盾) on “The Mission of Contemporary Artists” (當前文藝工作者的任務) attracted an audience of about 1,000 people. These examples also show the inclusivity of Confucius Hall, in that it welcomed people holding different ideas, including those who advocated science and new expressions of culture rather than traditional Chinese culture and beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

*Social Value  
& Local  
Interest*

Various other kinds of events were also held at Confucius Hall. For instance, it was a venue for rallying supports and arousing national spirit and patriotic feeling against the Japanese invasion of China. On 12 May 1938, for example, the Hongkong Committee for Student Relief (香港學生賑濟會 or 學賑會 in abbreviation), comprising students of secondary schools and The University of Hong Kong, organised a mobilisation ceremony at Confucius Hall. It was attended by representatives of student organisations, including those from the UK, France,

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<sup>22</sup> The topics of the lectures were indeed not restricted to Confucianism. For instance, in 1952, Jao Tsung-I (饒宗頤, 1917 – 2018) gave a lecture on Chinese classics and palaeography (經義與古文字學), and in 2013, Joseph Ting (丁新豹) on the history of Hong Kong during the early colonial period at Confucius Hall.

Guangzhou and Macau. On 31 March 1939, the committee organised a mass oath-taking ceremony named “國民公約宣誓典” at Confucius Hall. Some 1200 students from about 100 schools pledged their loyalty to the country and their determination to mobilise patriotic feeling against the Japanese invasion in accordance with the anti-Japanese convention of national citizens (國民抗敵公約 or 國民公約 in abbreviation), which became effective across the Mainland from 27 April the same year. Activities such as singing and drama performances and exhibitions were also held there in order to gather subscriptions and raise funds to provide necessities for the destitute and soldiers on the Mainland.

At present, Confucius Hall is still a venue used for the celebration of the Birthdays of Confucius and Mengzi. Memorial services for well-known public figures, such as Ip Lan-chuen (葉蘭泉, 1865 – 1946) and Shum Choi-sang (岑才生, 1922 – 2016),<sup>23</sup> were also held there. It is also the assembly hall of the Confucius Hall Secondary School (孔聖堂中學, first built as Tai Shing Secondary School (大成中學) in 1950, and renamed its current name in 1953).

Confucius Hall has group value with other historic buildings, including the Race Course Fire Memorial (馬場先難友紀念碑, Declared Monument), Tung Wah Eastern Hospital (東華東院, Grade 2), Shing Kwong Church (聖光堂, Grade 2), St. Paul’s Convent Church (聖保祿修院, Grade 1), S.K.H. St. Mary’s Church (聖馬利亞堂, Grade 1) and Main Building of Po Leung Kuk (保良局主樓, Grade 2). **Group Value**

When completed in 1935, Confucius Hall was described as a “novel building” and a “notable structure”.<sup>24</sup> Its design is a fusion of Chinese and Western architectural features. The movement that was rejuvenating Chinese architecture by incorporating the use of modern building materials and methods was in its heyday on the Mainland at that time. Confucian Hall displays the influence of the movement on Hong Kong’s architectural community. The replacement of original timber windows with aluminium ones is the only obvious alteration that can be identified. Without any major alterations that might have diminished its authenticity, Confucius Hall is one of the rare and outstanding surviving examples of design and construction combining both Chinese and Western architecture in Hong Kong. It is also the only surviving building built for the promotion of Confucianism that has this kind of **Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity**

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<sup>23</sup> Shum Choi-sang was an acclaimed journalist and publisher of *Wah Kiu Yat Po* (華僑日報, 1925 – 1995), a well-known Chinese newspaper founded by his father, Shum Wai-yau (岑維休), in 1925. From 1997 to 2008, Shum Choi-sang was School Supervisor of Confucius Hall Secondary School (孔聖堂中學校監). He had also served on the Board of Directors of Confucius Hall for many years, including being President, until passing way in 2016. He also made generous donations to education, from kindergarten to tertiary levels.

<sup>24</sup> “Confucius Hall: Novel Building Near Completion at Caroline Hill,” *South China Morning Post*, 13 August, 1935, and “Colony’s Progress: Building Activity in the Past Year – Notable Structures,” *South China Morning Post*, 8 October, 1935.



design.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, Confucius Hall is also the oldest surviving historic building constructed for the reverence and advocacy of Confucianism in Hong Kong. It is still an important venue for the annual celebration of the Birthdays of Confucius and Mengzi. As a cultural venue, its commitment to inclusivity, as demonstrated by lectures held there on Confucianism and other classical and modern cultures has made it a place of great cultural diversity and dynamism. The hall was the only pre-war community venue open to the public for large-scale gatherings and it hosted important historical events, both shortly before and during the war years, which have enriched the historical value of the building.

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<sup>25</sup> Other surviving examples include King Yin Lei (景賢里), Tung Wah Museum (東華三院文物館), Tung Lin Kok Yuen (東蓮覺苑), Race Course Fire Memorial (馬場先難友紀念碑) (Declared Monuments), Haw Par Mansion (虎豹別墅), S.K.H. St. Mary's Church (聖公會聖馬利亞堂)(Grade 1), Old Block of Holy Spirit Seminary (聖神修院舊座), Maryknoll House (瑪利諾神父宿舍) (all Grade 1), and the S.K.H. Holy Trinity Cathedral (聖公會聖三一座堂, Grade 2).

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