The characters in the city: public display of Chinese calligraphy in urban space in Hong Kong

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The Characters in the City
Public Display of Chinese Calligraphy in Urban Space in Hong Kong

KHO Tin Sing

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor: Dr. LAU Chak Kwong, Daniel

Hong Kong Baptist University

November 2014
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of MPhil at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation submitted to this or other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signature: ________________________

Date: November 2014
ABSTRACT

The current thesis aims to offer a new perspective to understand identity creation in the city. It is an investigation into how the identity of a place is constructed by the text displays of Chinese calligraphy in landmarks of physical construction in urban space in Hong Kong.

The study was inspired by an earlier inquiry into architecture and a concurrent interest in Chinese culture, and as such this thesis tries to use the language of architecture and that of Chinese calligraphy which is a quintessential form of Chinese arts, to weave out the identity markers in the city.

Chapter Two then deals with the background theories in the study of text in urban space. By putting the text of calligraphy back into the context of urban space to create a spatial narrative, the homogenous urban space rediscovers a possibility to attain its distinctive character for a place.

To facilitate the discussion, a thematic perspective was taken in the investigation. The thesis will explore the issue through the analysis of both visual and textural materials in the city context. By putting the study of text of calligraphy back in the context of urban space, it reveals a new dimension in identity creation which has seldom been thoroughly investigated.

Chapter Three opens up the discussion with the calligraphy of the political figure, Dr. Sun Yat-sen who is regarded as the founding father of China. His brushworks are used to mark the footprints of his presence in Hong Kong through extensive urban construction.

Chapter Four deals with the use of calligraphy in two sites, both bear an emblematic meaning on the earlier history on the cessation of Hong Kong to the British. Despite of the fact that both sites are designed as Chinese garden, the
use of historical reference has taken in completely different approaches.

Calligraphy is again a key element in identity creation.

Chapter Five looks into the religious venues where ample amount of calligraphy works in different formats can be found. By referencing to historical incidents, the religious content is intermingled with the consents from government officials and emperors to create a common identity.

Chapter Six further examines the creation of public text of calligraphy by the commercial scene in urban space. The verticality of streetscape infested with commercial icons entails the use of large character writing in a more dramatized style. Thus, the tradition of calligraphy practice when carried out in the colonial urban space compels certain modifications to fit into the context. The conflict in reading direction of English and Chinese in many biliterate signage shows a contrast in cultural identity.

Based on the findings from this thematic investigation, the thesis opens up a new dimension in the understanding of brushworks of calligraphy in social and cultural context. By reading the calligraphy in its urban context in Hong Kong, it turns out that the text not only embodies the presence of the calligrapher but also links this presence to a richer spatial background. This crucial link between text, people and space is the fundamental activities for the creation of identity.
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A Note on the Text
All translations of Chinese texts in this thesis, unless otherwise indicated, are by
the author.

Hanyu Pinyin are used in romanizing Chinese characters. Exceptions are reserved
for quotations and for names (proper nouns) and especially street names in Hong
Kong which are better known in other forms of romanization (such as Wade-Giles,
Cantonese, etc.), e.g. Sun Yat-sen 孫中山, Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤, Kom Tong Hall
甘棠第, Pak Tsz Lane Park 百子里公園, Tai Tat Dei 大笪地, Hong Kong 香港.

Chinese personal names are usually given in their original order, with the family
name preceding the given name, such as Kang Youwei 康有為. Exceptions are
people who are better known under names in some other familiar forms, such as
Confucius 孔子 instead of Kongzi, Mencius 孟子 instead of Mengzi.
Introduction

This thesis aims to offer a new perspective to understand identity creation in the city. It is an investigation into how the identity of a place is constructed through the text displays of Chinese calligraphy in landmarks of physical construction in urban space in Hong Kong. By looking into the Chinese calligraphy displays in the city, the encoded meanings behind the public art which are used to create the identity can be carefully compared and analysed.

The study was inspired by an earlier inquiry into architecture and a concurrent interest in Chinese culture, and as such this thesis tries to use the language of architecture and that of Chinese calligraphy which is a quintessential form of Chinese arts, to weave out the identity markers in the city. Many of the earlier studies in urban semiotics have been talking about the language of the city in a purely metaphorical sense.¹ With Kevin Lynch’s first study into the mental picture of a city as paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks, new approaches emerged in urban semiotics as well as in the architectural field. For example, the empirical study of Las Vegas in Robert Venturi’s magnum opus of Learning from

Las Vegas reiterates the significance of the symbolic content of architecture.²

Gradually, in the aftermath of modern architecture in the city, placemaking theory becomes an alternative approach to understanding our city. But to elucidate the diversity of our experiences in the city is a demanding task which requires immense research effort.

Taking into consideration the special condition in urban space in Hong Kong which shows its deep-rooted Chinese traditions entangled with the influence of British colonial rules, the complexity of the city has created an image infested with different identities. To narrow down the scope, this research tries to concentrate on the text of Chinese calligraphy which has undergone a revival in recent years.

The Chinese character is constructed by a combination of different modules which can be simplified here into the fusion of the sound and the picture.³ As Chinese characters are unique in the sense that they are a composite of modules.

According to Lothar Ledderrose this method of modular production as building

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blocks for Chinese characters is also shaping the culture in various ways.\textsuperscript{4} Also the reading and deciphering process of Chinese characters is fundamentally different from English in a number of ways. Chinese characters are logographic scripts consisting of thousands of square characters developed over thousands of years. They were started from the visual and graphical representation of the world. The Chinese character is then constructed by the combination of these different modules which represent the sound and the picture. Thus, the same character commonly used during an era can be pronounced differently in different geographical locations. To put it simply, the Chinese character starts from the visual while the English alphabet starts from the sound. This essential difference leads to a reading process of Chinese writing which involves various levels of embedded meanings and symbols. The character-based writing as a series of pictures allows a certain extent of creativity in writing. More importantly, even though traditional writing adopted a vertical writing system from top to bottom with each column reading from right to left, there still exists a variety of ways to read. The reading direction varies due to the influence of Western culture.\textsuperscript{5} Also, as there is no break between characters in a sentence, the phrasing of characters would create multiple meanings or interpretations to be

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{5} For a detail discussion on reading direction, refer to chapter 6. 
\end{flushright}
embedded with or without the intention from the writer. In addition, the
different script styles which was developed over different dynasties are still
practiced by calligraphers. These script styles provide an expressive tool for
calligraphers.\(^6\)

Due to the aforementioned aspects of Chinese characters, Chinese calligraphy is
an unparalleled and perfect media imbued with meaning for identity creation. To
facilitate the discussion, a thematic perspective was taken in the investigation.
The thesis will explore the issue through the analysis of both visual and textural
materials in the city context. The calligraphy work will be examined within its
spatial setting and in a broader socio-historical context of Hong Kong and China.
Putting the study of text of calligraphy back in the context of urban space reveals
a new dimension in identity creation which has seldom been thoroughly
investigated. Through a better understanding of the creative background of these
brushworks, the multiple-layered meaning can be readily linked back to its origin.
And the mechanism of identity creation for a place can be thoroughly recognized.
Even though there is only a limited theme of interests chosen in this investigation,
this thesis still open up an innovative approach on the study of calligraphy works.

\(^6\) For the system of scripts see Ledderhose, pp.9-23.
Moreover, the selected themes act as platforms for discussion usually intermingle with each other once the analysis delve into the content and historical background of the text. In other words, the signification process is a complex web of negotiation which cannot be easily simplified into discrete elements. As a result, the particular choice of a certain site is not an exhaustive or mutual exclusive selection. There are a large number of calligraphy works in the city from different eras, and the chosen themes are only tools to narrow down the scope to a discussable extent.\textsuperscript{7} As one could see in these limited themes that calligraphy works with educational ideals, religious belief, political ideals, historical referents, personal stylistic preference are often weaved into each other. And a simplistic view by categorizing into discrete essence would be problematic.

For the Western studies on Chinese calligraphy, there is a trend to separate the aesthetic content from the textual content before the appreciation of calligraphy as a purely aesthetic form. As a consequence of this prerequisite, the literary content in the text is usually neglected. However, the literary content for those who can read the Chinese characters is part of the art which cannot be separated from its artistic form. And the embedded meanings in the text are usually

\textsuperscript{7} For a comprehensive list of calligraphy inscriptions in Hong Kong refer to David Faure, Bernard Hung Kay Luk and NG Lun Ngai Ha. \textit{Historical inscriptions of Hong Kong} 香港碑銘彙編. Vol.1-3. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of History, 1986.
encoded in multiple layers which can be deciphered by the reader with different levels of erudition. This mechanism in multiple level of cross referencing, use of allusions and association with historical figures or incidents undeniably facilitates the conveyance of meanings in identity creation.

Furthermore, Bai Qianshen aptly points out the contemporary controversy in the research of Chinese calligraphy. Due to the rise of *beixue* (the study on stele) in Qing period, the study on classical calligraphy works has extended to the writings on archeological relics. These writings by nameless calligraphers from different eras has opened up the study on vernacular calligraphy such as the sutra manuscripts. Even though these writings of the mundane are not from the classical tradition, they still exhibit a stylistic identity. Due to the limitation on the scope of this current study, the scrutiny into the writings based on calligraphers is only used as a way to trace the different identities in the brushworks. For nameless calligraphers, it is more difficult to trace the particular identity through brushstrokes than textual analysis. Hence, it is even more

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8 Bai, Qianshen 白謙慎, *Bai Qianshen shufa lunwenji* 白謙慎書法論文集. (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2010), pp.231-249. See also Bai, *Yuguweitu he juanjuanfawu: Guanyu shufa jingdian wentidesikao* 與古為徒和娟娟髮屋 — 關於書法經典問題的思考. (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2009).


10 For study on sutra manuscript see Hua Rende 華人德, *Hua Rende shufa wenji* 華人徳書法文集. (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2008), pp.43-58.
important to study these works in their physical and historical context. Also, Kang points out that *sangu* 三古, the ancient calligraphers all practiced their writings without claiming the authorship.\(^{11}\) It was until Tang Dynasty that the aesthetic attention to the style of calligrapher became a trend that the name of calligrapher was consciously signed as a colophon to the brushworks.\(^{12}\)

More importantly, putting the study back to urban space is an act of returning the art objects back to its context. As a stone engraved with Buddhist incantation used to suppress sea spirits would lose its contextual connection in the background when placed in the museum, calligraphy strategically placed in the urban context is bestowed with a spatial narrative. The city is both physically and semantically the place of our meeting with others. And it is for this reason that the study of text of calligraphy has to be carried out in the socio-historical urban context. Urban space provides the gathering place in every city where activities happens.

Chapter Two then deals with the background in the study of text in urban space.

With various groundwork laid down by earlier researchers in different fields,

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\(^1\) *Sangu* 三古 refers to Fuxi 伏羲, Zhouwenwang 周文王, Confucius 孔子; see Kang, pp.233-239.

\(^2\) Ibid.
there is a necessity to combine the study of calligraphy in its spatial setting within urban space. With the homogenous cityscape created by modern architecture, the distinctive characters of Chinese calligraphy in placemaking is of utmost significance. By putting the text of calligraphy back into the context of urban space to create a spatial narrative, the homogenous urban space rediscovers a possibility to attain its distinctive character for a place.

The aim of the research is to examine how calligraphy works are used in the urban space as identity marker. Four main themes have been developed to set up a platform for the discussion. Through an examination into the urban design project of Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in the Central and Western District in Hong Kong, Chapter Three opens up the discussion from the calligraphy of Sun Yat-sen who is regarded as the founding father of China. He is usually aptly referred to as the “Father of the Nation” and his calligraphy being displayed in the urban space possesses a significant repercussion in the creation of city landmark. The overall construction programs which includes two urban parks of different scales, a historical walking trail and the adaptive reuse of a listed building Kom Tong Hall as Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum has taken more than ten years. With the trail being first set up in 1996, the opening of Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum in 2006, the
completion of Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park in 2010 and Pak Tsz Lane Park in 2011, a physical path in the urban space can now be used to present a historical narrative of Dr Sun Yat-sen's activities in Hong Kong. Besides the erection of information signages to tell the history along the trail, Dr Sun Yat-sen's calligraphy works become the most important theme in the project. Through a look into how these calligraphy works are represented in different formats and arranged in an urban setting, the project provides a venue for understanding the use of these texts as a marking device in public space.

By a comparison of two park projects in urban renewal, Chapter Four further investigates into two significant historical sites both adopting a thematic design of Chinese garden with colossal use of calligraphy works. Hollywood Road Park and Kowloon Walled City Park have a notorious history as a clashing ground between the British colonial government and Chinese authority. Both sites bear an emblematic meaning on the earlier history on the cessation of Hong Kong to the British. The calligraphy works used to complement the Chinese garden design diverge in a totally different direction in the choice of text. Historical reference is tuned down to an ahistorical theme in the Hollywood Road Park. On the contrary in Kowloon Walled City Park, it is well orchestrated to recreate the history. The
symbolic content in the text of calligraphy creates a distinctively different character. The choice of text in calligraphy demonstrates how the identity of the place is formulated.

Chapter Five is then devoted to an analysis into the realm of religious venues where ample amount of calligraphy works in different formats can be found. The stone epitaph on narrative of establishment, the wooden horizontal tablet authenticated by government officials and emperors, the special way to ward off local evil spirit by calligraphy, the stone inscriptions engraved with Buddhist incantation – such variety of use shows the creativity in identity creation through calligraphy. The calligraphy not only propagated religious ideals through the text, but also intermingled with incidents from local history and ancient figures to shape up the spatial content. Calligraphy becomes the key media in the provision of a platform for the concoction of these elements.

Chapter Six examines the creation of public text by the commercial scene in urban space. The use of calligraphy in the spatial condition of gigantic architecture necessitates a certain transformation in various aspects such as size of character, materials and display positions. The verticality of streetscape
infested with commercial icons entails the use of large character writing in a more dramatized style. Thus, the tradition of calligraphy practice in China when carried out in the colonial urban space compels certain modifications to fit into the context. The conflict in reading direction of English and Chinese can be seen in many biliterate signage after World War II when there was a gradual prevalent practice to place two languages together. Accordingly, traditional writing direction with the use of archaic script style becomes an identity to the affiliation to traditional value.

The public display of the text of calligraphy not only serves its linguistic function to convey a message, but also reaches beyond artistic appreciation to mark individual or group identity. With this thematic investigation, the use of text of calligraphy publicly displayed in the urban area can be used more efficiently as identity markers. The showcase of the disembodied image of calligraphy in museum is a pure form of art object. Reinstating the art object of calligraphy back to its context can explore the possible interaction between the text and its context. In fact, literary content of the text exists not in a disembodied pure form but is always revealed by attachment to physical objects which is related in a larger setting of social or economic nature. In other words, it always possesses a
spatial context which is the essential background for communication of meaning.

Due to the constraint in the scope of this thesis, the selected themes can only be treated as a framework to facilitate the discussion. The thematic topics are not exhaustive but rather introductory which doubtlessly requires further research effort.
Text in the Urban Context

Calligraphy is the one of the most treasured art in China since the third century CE. The writing system was told by various ancient classics to be invented by an official historian Cangjie 倉頡, a legendary creator of the characters who worked in the imperial court of Huangdi 黃帝.13

As a way to enter into the rank of official in the imperial government, literary technique of the person was required to express through the use of brush in various imperial examinations.14 As a consequence, literati had to learn the skill of calligraphy while putting tremendous effort into the mastery of Confucian classics.

And in addition to the literary content, it is believed that brushworks as records of the movement by calligrapher inevitably reveal the heart and mind of the

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13 The myth of Cangjie zaozishou 倉頡造字說 (Invention of Chinese characters by Cangjie) was prevalent since the Warring States period. The story can be found in Lushichunqiu 呂氏春秋, Xunzi 荀子, Hanfeizi 韓非子, Hua'anzizi 淮南子 and also in Shouwenjiezi 說文解字 by Xu Shen 許慎. See also Yang Lihui and An Deming, Handbook of Chinese Mythology. (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.84–86.

14 For a detail account of imperial examinations in Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties China see Benjamin Elman. A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China. (London: Univ. of California. 2002).
writer and thus his character. In other words, calligraphy works are usually endowed with an aura of the actual presence of the identity of calligrapher.

Even a vast majority of common people in the ancient era may be illiterate or poorly literate, the importance of text as a way of communication in the ancient community still worked beyond its trained readers and took a significant role in the cityscape. As the proliferation of calligraphy works were materialized in different sectors in the society, the presence of such text on different objects was usually taken for granted without careful deliberation.

Craig Clunas aptly points out that the importance of text on the streets in Ming Dynasty China by referring to the works of Irene Bierman’s investigation into monumental inscriptions of medieval Cairo. Their common concern for the implication of “public text” going back into the context of the sites provides some useful insights into how meaning which is not solely linguistic can be formulated. The interplay of the formal elements such as particular use of colors, the materiality of text, the form of presentation and most important of all, the

\[15\] For the characterology of Chinese calligraphy, see Amy McNair, The Upright Brush: Yan Zhenqing’s Calligraphy and Song Literati Politics. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998).
specific locations of text are all critical factors in the communication. However, external elements like social and cultural factors also play crucial parts. Thus, all meanings are produced in an interactive process of negotiation between reader/writer and the text in the context which works beyond the formal physical contents. Also, the notion of a “textual community” which includes both literate and illiterate beholders in the reading of meaning of text is of particular interest.

To put it simply, an illiterate or poorly literate beholder is still engaging in an active interaction with the text to derive a meaning. A character fu 福 (good fortune) written on diagonal red square piece of paper posted upside-down on the entrance door during the Chinese New Year which signifies the arrival of good fortune, is not necessarily a text for the literate beholder.

Taking into consideration the fact that ancient China was a country with vast expanse of land and diversified people who used different dialects, a common

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17 The figure of fu 蝠 (bat) is also used to represent fu 福 (good fortune) because of the two characters are homophonous. And dao 倒 (upside down) is also homophonous with dao 到 (to arrive).
18 According to Menglianglu 夢粱錄 (The record on the dream of Liang) by Wu Zimu 吳自牧 in Song Dynasty, “The houses of shi 士 (gentry scholars) or shu 庶 (common people) no matter large or small, all clean up their doors and gates to the alleys, brush away dust and dirt, purify the court and family, renew the door gods, hang up a portrait of Zhong Kui 鍾馗 (a vanquisher of ghosts and evil spirits), pin up a peach wood amulet, stick on the spring plate, perform the ancestral offering.” 「士庶家不論大小，俱當掃諸門閭，去塵穢，淨庭戶，換門神，掛鍾馗，釘桃符，貼春牌，祭祀祖宗。」, The sticking of spring plate is the writing of character Fu on red paper.
writing system was one of the most crucial policies to unify the people. Qin Shi Huang who finally conquered the other six warring states also standardized the writing system to facilitate the communication throughout the territory. As a result, even though different ethnic groups may be using different spoken languages, with a common form of writing being displayed or used in the city, travelers within the country still can understand each other.

Calligraphy when displayed in the urban context is not simply an elite art, but can also serve as a multi-layered identity marker in the physical space. The use of this marking device in public space helps to define the boundary of a place by creating a distinctive character. It is in such a way that calligraphy can be utilized to transcend its functional aspect for communication and artistic dimensions as pure form of art. By the actual presence with meanings in the spatial context in an urban area, the text of calligraphy can be deciphered by people of different levels of literary or cultural background. And the personal

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19 Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 (260-210 BCE), was the first emperor of Qin Dynasty to standardize a common writing system after his conquest of six other states. For history during the Qin Han Period see Chang Chun-shu, *The Rise of the Chinese Empire: Nation, State, and Imperialism in Early China, ca. 1600B.C.-A.D.8 Volume 1*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), pp.43-44.


21 The Chinese characters were also used in various Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and Vietnam. As the vocabulary has borrowed from Chinese, Japanese used kanji 漢字, Korean used hanja 漢字 or hanmun 漢文 and Vietnamese used chữ nôm 字喃 which were adapted from
style revealed through different brushstrokes also helps to create an identity
through distinctive individuality. Thus the public marker of calligraphy when
combined with different architectural elements and placed strategically in
different urban locations can be transformed into an identity marker on the level
of urban scale.

In the earlier study by Kevin Lynch, city image is constructed through a mental
picture of the city as paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. His
empirical study into various American cities shows that the public image of a city
can be readily identified through these simple classifications of elements. His
study is limited in terms of the effects of physical and perceptible objects in the
city, and the current study would try to carry through into the realm of text in the
city. Whether it is the study of the city as text or text in the city, the ultimate goal
of reading the city is to identify workable ways to mark a space with meaning and
create a distinctive character in placemaking. In other words, this study is about
how this primitive act of using calligraphy as an object to mark a spatial setting in
the urban area, and that space in the city can be infused with identity to form a
place.

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Chinese characters. Of which kanji is still used extensively in Japan.
The current void of meaning in the city is an aftermath of the modern architecture legacy. City is a place saturated with images. Yet the cityscape in many major cities is a homogeneous reflection of glass curtain walling office blocks and gigantic concrete pillars residential towers. Also the power of capitalism has conquered the building façade and shop windows with global corporate logos in every city. Such universality of corporate identity and standardized building materials has created a homogenous urban space without distinctive character. As a result, the production of meaning by discrete urban objects which are used to create a network of marking devices is of particular importance.

This phenomenon in the cityscape has led to a dialectic in regionalism which emphasizes an architectural practice based on climate, geography, local material and local cultural traditions.23 The intention of a regionalist approach is to preserve the “difference” with a tint of cultural emphasis in the creation of an identity for a nation-state. Thus, the search for the essence of national identity is usually carried out against the backdrop of ideological function of legalizing the

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nation-state in terms of representations in culture. For some theorists, the belief in such an essence of culture which is shaped by locality of language, geography and traditions which are visualized in objects, is not necessarily an objective fact. The tradition can be largely fictional and is an “invention” in Eric Hobsbawm’s word.

Looking from that perspective, the writing system of Chinese characters was undoubtedly such a conscious invention, purposefully designed to unify the people within the geographical boundary framed by natural terrain. And the use of such a common text in calligraphy to frame a space is a further step forward on placemaking. Putting the text of calligraphy in urban space which is contextual and place-oriented creates a spatial narrative or cognitive map for the beholder. It is exactly such practice in the creation of collective identity and its mechanism that needs further erudition - the mechanism of calligraphy in a visualized form as an object on the construction of city image.

24 In the nationalist movement in 1890s, the identity of the Irish was being differentiated from the English, the Catalonians from the Castillians, the Finns from the Russians and the Swedes. Ibid. p.16.
Calligraphy even in comparatively small scale can still pose a tremendous visual effect in a city space. A simple character of zong 糊 (dumpling) or zhou 粥 (congee or rice porridge) placed outside a shop in an urban space possesses a meaning which is readily decipherable by even some of the illiterate or poorly literate beholders. Using the language of semiotics, when the signifier is placed close to the signified, with the help of daily activities in communication, people can easily decode the meaning of the text even without the ability to write the character in a correct way. And with the modular formation of Chinese character with the index of bushou 部首 (radicals), people would be led by the character mi 米 (rice) to the understanding that the dumpling or congee is to be made of rice. Consequently, the Chinese writing system can be used to reach an even larger audience than it is initially intended. And the meanings embedded in the character provide different levels of understanding which can be easily collected or reconstructed through accumulative learning of each individual person. People with a trained eye in calligraphy would recognize the script types or comment on the strokes, and maybe without much effort on consideration of the meanings. Thus the street scene becomes a background full of encoded messages which can be selectively used by different city dwellers.

26 For the idea of modules as building blocks for Chinese character see Ledderrose, Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art, pp.16-18.
Over the long and sophisticated tradition of writing, the community of calligraphers has developed a rich system of rhetorical formula for conveying meanings. Because of the different ways of encoding their messages, it is possible that there exist multiple readings by different levels of literary knowledge in the calligraphic traditions. This is also the reason why the elitist art of calligraphy can be used to reach a broader people in mass culture beyond the functional aspect of text. Even though the term was coined by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality in Chinese literature is a time honored practice in the literary culture. The borrowing of former classical text to shape the meaning of text not only enriches the text with historical reference, but is also a way to prove the literary technique of the writer. For the calligrapher, the tradition in copying the brushworks of ancient masters is the elementary way of learning the brush skill.

There is a traditional belief that the handwriting expresses the personal character of the writer. The writing is a manifestation of the identity of self. And the practice of imitation shows a personal subscription to the moral principle of the former masters which is regarded as a spiritual communion. The imitation of

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brushstrokes shows the intervisuality of calligraphy as an image. This inter-referencing through the copy of brushstroke style creates a visual connection to the ancient master. And this distinctive character in brushstroke style becomes a symbol of common identity. These ideas are culture-specific elements in the traditional practice in the calligrapher community which on many occasions also convey a message to the general public. Both the intertextual and intervisual elements in calligraphy are perfect vehicles for creating a common identity connection. Using this aspect of calligraphy as identity marker in the urban space facilitates the effectiveness of a mass communication of meaning.

The use of an object as the carrier of ideals and for the sharing of common identity is a traditional practice of the Chinese literati and bureaucrats. The ability to symbolize, share and identify those signs within a closed circle of literati usually requires profound scholastic ability. As a result, art objects such as calligraphy, painting, architecture, and gardening are usually imbued with rich cultural symbols. And they usually share a common ideal in a holistic approach, ideas in Chinese gardening of Ji Cheng 計成 such as suiyourenzuo wanzitiankai 雖

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28 An example of “intervisuality” in painting in Chinese context can be seen in Qingmingshanghetu 清明上河圖 (Along the River during the Qingming Festival) which was created by Zhang Ze Duan 張擇端 and was copied by Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 during the Yuan Dynasty, Chou Ying 仇英 during Ming Dynasty and five court painters in Qing Dynasty.
由人作，宛自天開 (though man-made, should appear to be formed by nature)\textsuperscript{29},

\textit{jiejing} 借景 (borrowed scenery) and \textit{yizaibixian} 意在筆先 (ideas prior to brushworks)\textsuperscript{30} which are shared among with calligraphers and painters. As a result, space can be endowed with multiple identities which can be readily understood by literati.


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, pp.242-243.
Footprints of Political Figure in Public

Sites: Pak Tsz Lane Park and Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park

Theme: Private made Public; Small made Large

After the 1997 return of Hong Kong to China, there has been heated debates on a variety of issues in the political scene. A simplified dichotomy of pro-China or against-China was often used, and yet the content of what contributed to the Chinese identity was generally overlooked. Under such political circumstances, a commonly accepted historical figure, Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866 - 1925) and all his relevant traces of activities in Hong Kong were recollected and displayed to rebuild a comprehensive local history. And the linking of all relevant historical sites on an actual pathway in the city centre can greatly strengthen the mental pictures into a collective memory. Such urban design strategy to bring out the character of a pathway is of particular importance in a city that is so densely built with ubiquitous vertical structures. As the narrow pathways in the roads and alleys are the scenes for daily life of people, a pathway built with characters by a significant political figure facilitates the identity creation. The creation of urban space is inevitably a social product. And through the use of calligraphy, a visual linkage can be set up at the place which is the site for earlier historical events.
The space thus created becomes a product of all the social actions and thoughts.31

Sun Yat-sen was the first provisional president and the founding father of modern China.32 He is usually aptly referred to as the “Father of the Nation”. As such the symbolic meanings conceived by a reproduction or representation of his calligraphy and handwriting coupled with other physical setting to recreate the historical site, would all initiate a significant referent to the history of modern China. Due to the fact that most of the physical landmark buildings related to the history have all been demolished over time, a re-creation of landmarks in the urban centre was of utmost importance. And the provision of open space in the urban centre in combination with a city path imbued with historical references contributes to a distinctive city image.

Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail started in November 1996 under a local consultative body in Central & Western District Board. The Trail has altogether 15 spots, with the starting point at the Hong Kong University and the finishing point at the original site of He Ji Zhan 和記棧 at D’Aguilar Street. In 2001, the Hong Kong

32 Sun was the first provisional president of modern China from 1st January 1912 to 1st April 1912.
SAR Government decided to devote major efforts to the promotion of various historical monuments in Hong Kong, and particularly allocated funds for the provision of new plaques for the Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail. Two additional spots were added to the original 13 spots when Kom Tong Hall 甘棠第 used to house Dr Sun Yat-sen Museum was formally opened in 2006. The active formulation of an actual physical path with historical narrative is a significant identity creation process. And the incorporation of the calligraphy of political figure in a public physical setting has created an affinity of national pride.

Pak Tsz Lane Park 百子里公園 (2011) as the 8th stop of the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail in Central, was home to Furen Literary Society 輔仁文社 which was founded in 1892 (Fig. 1). In 1895, Furen Literary Society was merged into Dr Sun’s Xinzonghui 興中會(Revive China Society) with the help from Yau Lit 尤列. Yang Quyun 楊衢雲 became the president and Sun Yat-sen the secretary of Revive China Society. Due to its strategic location in the British colony, Pak Tsz Lane was the frequent meeting place for the revolutionaries and thus many of the plots against Qing Imperial Government were conceived here.

Pak Tsz Lane Park was opened in 2011 to commemorate the centennial
anniversary of the 1911 Chinese Revolution. All the literary content, physical addition of sculptural figures on the cutting of pigtail and exhibition panels are unified recollections on the thematic origin of Chinese Revolution. The traditional theme of Chinese garden is revamped into this subtle re-creation of history as a cultural symbol. The pavilion designed with new architectural element in material of recycled timber slips is used to present the ideals of Furen Literary Society (Fig. 2). The presentation in slip form can be readily referred to the ancient practice of writing on bamboo slips. But the newly constructed pavilion now takes on a style of contemporary open plan which has incorporated the Chinese characters in Song typefaces. Sculptural presentation of bronze figures recreates a déjà vu of cutting of pigtail by the revolutionaries. With one of the figures wearing a western suit holding a pair of scissors while the other in Qing style changshan (long shirt) with pigtail, the scene shows a cultural clash in the building of a new nation from imperial China (Fig. 3).

The most dramatic presentation is conceived in the calligraphy of semi-cursive script inscription written by Sun Yat-sen in a mourning letter on the assassination

33 Song typeface is also called Ming typeface. The distinctive print type in standard script was developed during the Song Dynasty.
of Yang Quyun\textsuperscript{34} (Fig. 4). To amplify the emotional content of the mourning on Yang Quyun’s death, the semi-cursive script runs in a comparatively unrestrained manner on a series of recycled timber slips. The letter was originally meant to be read in hand, which is now enlarged to a monumental scale. This transformation to a larger format in a series of recycled timber slips in a small park, has drastically increased the visual impact of the original handwriting in a congested urban location flanked by buildings and alleyways on four sides. The traces of emotion in Sun Yat-sen’s brushstrokes can be felt strongly in the representation, but structural layout of his calligraphy is radically distorted with embossed characters in form of a bas-relief (Fig. 5). The emotional content is much amplified through the angular brushstroke in the hardness of material (Fig. 6). The symbolic meaning of the early years of Pak Tsz Lane in the history of modern China is thus re-created with the inclusion of this calligraphy in a modern representation.

Despite the significant history of the path, the urban pathway suffers from a lack of physical edifice with strong character. The creation of a large green space for

urban activities in another monumental construction can accommodate a larger number of urban dwellers. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park 中山紀念公園 (2010) was originally named as Western Park 西區公園 according to its geographical location. In 2002, the government renamed it as Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park. Even though the park is on the shore close to the Central Pier where travelers in the colonial period moored the boat, the location of the park has no particular significant value in any historical incidents related to the 1911 Chinese Revolution. But because of its location near the harbor front and being close to the Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail, a reconstruction and renaming of the park would effectively strengthen the political symbolic meaning in terms of its urban connotation. At that time in 2002, a giant rock with calligraphy painted in red, the political ideal of tian xia wei gong 天下為公 (The world is for all) from The Book of Rites was installed on the west end of the park (Fig. 7).35 The calligraphy is duly authorized by a colophon signature which marks the identity of Sun. The eye catching red paint engraved on gigantic rock placed in the city centre marks the presence of this historical figure in open greenery. The Chinese characters presented at an eye level in a natural stone creates a congenial atmosphere and becomes an eye catching marker for the entrance. The park was then partially

35 Tian xia wei gong 天下為公 is from Liqi Li Yun 禮記禮運, “When the Grand course was pursued, a public and common spirit ruled all under the sky,” trans. James Legge, “大道之行也，天下為公。”
closed from early 2008 for the construction of the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park and Swimming Pool Complex project which was completed in June 2010.

A number of facilities were finally added in the extension project which included a Chinese stone gateway as a landmark in the newly located park entrance near Connaught Road West on the south (Fig. 8). The four Chinese characters of the political ideal of “The world is for all” were used again as the dominant motif. And the horizontal tablet in the middle of this three-tier stone gateway was strategically located in line with a bronze effigy of Sun on an opened lawn. With the map of Central &Western District carved on the ground in polished granite floor, locating the spots of footprint by the early revolutionaries, the mental map for the locations of activities by Sun Yat-sen was thus formally visualized in a grand scale (Fig. 9). The same calligraphy is now placed on the stone gateway which makes it necessary for the beholder to raise his head to appreciate the four large characters. The design of architectural element incorporated with the calligraphy can now be read in conjunction with other motifs in the park such as the Four Desperado Courtyard in an overall urban setting (Fig. 10). Even the calligraphy is small in comparison with buildings in the city skyline, the overall linkage through these design strategies has accentuated the identity created by
small brushworks.

In this project, the Chinese calligraphy of Sun Yat-sen plays an important symbolic role in the creation of the language of this urban landmark. The recurring theme of “The world is for all” represents a very strong political idea which can be readily linked back to a mental picture of the birth of modern China. It was the main political ideal of Sun for a modern China which was repetitively used in many occasions. Even this particular location has no significant place specificity to Sun’s earlier footprints, the symbolic meaning is used in terms of its geographical meaning in Hong Kong as a whole to link back to the history of modern China. The standard script used can be more easily recognizable by people because of the square and orderly form than the more spontaneous cursive script adopted in the Pak Tsz Lane Park. The use of standard script surely facilitates Sun Yat-sen’s political ideals to reach a larger audience for its simplicity and uprightness (Fig. 11). These four large characters in Chinese calligraphy appropriated by Sun from ancient classics into his political ideal have a very strong connotation for Chinese identity. The choice of script type shows a

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36 Leung, Pingwa 梁炳華, ed. Heritage of the Central and Western district, Hong Kong 香港中西區風物志. (Hong Kong: Central and Western District Council, 1998), pp.58-76.
37 The calligraphy of Sun was also reproduced in Hung Lau 紅樓 (Red Mansion) which is a farmhouse in Tuen Mun where Sun planned to overthrow the Qing dynasty. The building is listed in the List of Grade I historic buildings. Flags of Republic of China 中華民國 can be seen in the area shows different approach in presentation of identity.
conscious intention to reach a larger audience by an easily legible text. And the repetitive use in different locations creates a strong mental representation in city space which is further reinforced by the openness of an urban park.

Compared to the modern reinterpretation in Pak Tsz Lane Park, Sun Yat-sen Memorial Park uses a more traditional architectural style of *Pailou* (archway) as an urban landmark which has a stronger symbolic meaning than its functional meaning. And the calligraphy on the giant rock and those on the *Pailou* shows a slight difference in brushstroke used by Sun Yat-sen. The characters on the giant rock give an impression of square brushstrokes while those on the new addition possess more rounded brushstrokes. As pointed out by Qing politician and calligrapher Kang Youwei, “Lifting results in elegance and coherence, pressing results in preciseness. Rounded brushstroke is dispersed and free; square brushstroke is congealed, orderly and calm.” These forceful and upright brushstrokes are then readily associated with his determination in the formulation of his democratic ideals.

Both parks provide an official narrative on the history of 1911 Chinese Revolution.

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38 Kang Youwei p.286.
Even though the physical architecture is long demolished, by infusing the path with images of historical significance and the personal brushstrokes of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the historical trail and urban parks have attained a distinctive character.
Opposite Ways of Rewriting History in Parks

Sites: Hollywood Road Park and Kowloon Walled City Park

Theme: Historical reference to the origin of cessation of Hong Kong to British

The parkland in the city is an important element in the balance of ecological
pattern of high density development in Hong Kong. It provides greenery within
the concrete jungle. As a result, the park is crucial for the daily life of urban
dwellers. It creates a pocket of breathing space within the high rise
developments and congested traffic conditions. As a sanctuary of rest in the
urban setting, it is a good place for meditation and escape from the hustle and
bustle of city life. Besides its functional aspect in the zoning requirement, the
urban park is definitely a perfect place for creation of city character. Apart from
the architectural elements and horticultural styles used to devise a certain
thematic design, the use of Chinese calligraphy to accentuate the Chinese
identity is usually essential in the creation of Chinese gardens. The importance of
Chinese calligraphy in Chinese gardens is stated by Chen Congzhou, as he quotes
the seventeenth chapter of Dreams of Red Mansions that:

“If no inscriptions on tablets are made for the several pavilions and halls in the
Garden with such splendid views, even flowers, willows, hills and ponds will fail to add color to it.”

The inclusion of calligraphy works in the garden is the finishing touch to reveal the ideals behind all the physical construction. Thus, embedded meanings can be carefully orchestrated to be included into the text of this artistic form. In addition to the naming of a place, the calligraphy works are usually a manifestation of ideal relating to Chinese tradition and ethics. Such use of Chinese garden style in the parkland can be readily found even in the colonial period. However, the calligraphy works are simply used as elements of decoration in the architectural setting. Under such circumstances, the text contents used are common eclectic choices for appropriation on the expression of scenic beauty and seasonal greeting. References on specific local history are seldom and rarely used. Even though the elements are drawn from classical Chinese architecture, without any coherent narration of text, the identity of place created becomes an ahistorical theme. And the calligraphy works are reduced to collective cliché on the praise of nature.

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A typical example of a place with significant historical connotation is where the British Army first occupied Hong Kong Island on 26 January 1841. Aptly named as the Possession Point 佔領角, it can still be read today from the street plate in English as Possession Street. The original Chinese name was Po Se Son Kai 波些臣街, based on the pronunciation of the English name. It was later renamed to Sui Hang Hou Kai 水坑口街, literally after a big puddle beside. This change in Chinese translation has significantly softened the colonial connotation. As this was the location where the British Army on HMS Calliope landed on Hong Kong Island before the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, it was formally marked as the Possession Point with a raise of the Union Jack and gun ceremony by the commander of Far East Fleet James John Gordon Bremer. In 1890, an open tender was put on the area to allow the public to set up stalls to sell clothes and grocery. Later in the 1960s, it became a popular bazaar market which was known as Tai Tat Dei 大笪地 (large piece of land). It was nicknamed the "commoner’s nightclub" 平民夜總會 which housed a number of old Hong Kong style street stalls and entertainment activities. With traditional street entertainment such as Cantonese opera singing, storytelling, fortune telling and kung fu performance, the area was vibrant with people at night enjoying cheap food from local
hawkers.\textsuperscript{40}

Till the 1980s, the location was still marked as the Possession Point on the map.

In the name of urban renewal, Hollywood Road Park 荷里活道公園 (circa late 1980s) was designed as a Chinese garden to improve the sanitary and noise problem around the area. Elements of strong Chinese symbols such as red columns, green glazed tiles, pavilion, pool, stone features and white stucco wall with latticed tracery were used to cover up the earlier historical content. And the red column gateway with Chinese calligraphy in seal script inscription on stone (Fig. 12), was completed with the renaming of the English name – Possession Point to Hollywood Road Park with a neutral connotation. When taking a closer look at the seal script calligraphy, one will find that the Chinese text is written from right-to-left which is not the conventional practice for writing Chinese to imitate an archaic feeling (Fig. 13). Even though the location can be classified as the most significant site on the origin of Hong Kong, the only reference to the site history was toned down to a display panel of old photos. Due to the less legible seal script to the general public, a horizontal stone tablet with standard script inscription was erected on the entrance in a less prominent location (Fig. 14). The

\textsuperscript{40} For a brief history of Tai Tat Dei see Chong Yuk Sik 莊玉惜, \textit{Jiebian youdang dapaidang} 街邊有檔大牌檔, (Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd., 2011), pp.45-46.
natural and archaic simplicity of the calligraphy in standard script can be easily traced back to the calligraphy of Zhong You 鍾繇⁴¹ (Figure 15).

Zhong You was a calligrapher and politician in the state of Wei 魏 during the Three Kingdoms period. He was adept at the clerical, semi-cursive and standard script and known as the father of standard script. The typical style of his calligraphy can be seen in Xuanshi biao 宣示表 (Memorial on an Announcement to Sun Chuan) and Jian Ji Zhi biao 薦季直表 (Memorial Recommending Ji Zhi).

Due to its legibility, the script style was used on various moon gates inside the park to signify certain park facilities.

The multiple selection of different script styles evokes a big contrast to the colonial background history of the site. The Chinese characters use to convey the name of the place to general public shows no obvious intention in choice of styles or textural linkage with each other. And the meaning of this urban park in its new physical form is completed with archaic and eclectic appropriated symbolism in Chinese calligraphy (Fig.16 – 19). Even though an explicit Chinese identity is created in the urban renewal project, the overall outcome is just

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⁴¹ Zhong You 鍾繇 and Zhang Zhi 張芝, the Han-era master of the cursive script, along with two Wangs (Wang Xizhi, 王羲之 and his son Wang Xianzhi, 王獻之) have been honored by latter-day scholars as the “Four Worthies” of the calligraphic world.
another Chinese garden theme park without any site-specific historical reference to its colonial background.

The more obvious genius loci\textsuperscript{42} of the place which resides in the site may be the Chinese banyan tree with a base of large aerial prop root. It is an endemic practice by the Chinese to worship tree spirit or localized deity on objects such as rocks, rivers or mountains.\textsuperscript{43} And for Southern China, the use of trees as Fung Shui Woods 風水林 (Plantation woodland) can be seen in various villages in Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{44} In Hollywood Road Park, a rock on the bottom of the tree is engraved with calligraphy in semi-cursive script of dechentian 地承天 (the earth supports the heaven) in red paint (Fig. 20). The rock is strategically embedded and integrated with the large aerial prop root of banyan tree. The calligraphy serves not only as a decorative motif in line with the overall design of the park, but also as an incantation to suppress the tree spirit. The choice of red paint is an apotropaic device incorporated into the masculine strength shown by the unrestrained flow of calligraphic strokes. Such belief in the power of

\textsuperscript{42} The idea of genius loci originates from the belief in protective spirit of a place in classical Roman religion. The term has profound implication in placemaking theory in architecture. See Edward Relph, \textit{Place and Placelessness}, (London: Pion Limited, 1986), pp.46-49.


\textsuperscript{44} For Fung Shui Woods in Hong Kong see Joseph K.L. Yip 葉國樑, \textit{Venturing Fung Shui Woods 風水林.} (Hong Kong: Friends of the Country Parks: Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Dept.: Cosmos Books, 2004).
Calligraphy can also be seen in various rock engravings in temples used to suppress local or wandering spirits.\textsuperscript{45}

In contrast to the aforementioned park, the Kowloon Walled City Park \textsuperscript{九龍寨城公園} (1995) which was constructed during the last few years in the colonial rule has a notorious history of illegal and uncontrolled structures of high density and a virtual lack of civil order.\textsuperscript{46} The area was demolished in April 1994 before the handover of Hong Kong. The agreement between the colonial government and the Chinese authorities was to clear the area and build a park on the site. The idea was to incorporate as many of the remaining building features of historical value into a Jiangnan garden style of the early Qing Dynasty. As a result, the history of the place was carefully incorporated to the design of the new park.

Even though the knoll on the north side of the walled city which was known both as White Crane Hill \textsuperscript{白鶴山} and Twin Phoenix Hill \textsuperscript{雙鳳山}, and also the original wall were completely torn down to provide material to extend the Kai Tak Airport during Japanese occupation, a rewarding number of relics were unearthed during the park construction and subsequently included in the design. And a series of old and newly created calligraphy works are arranged all over the park to weave

\textsuperscript{45} See Chapter 5 Religious Identity Revitalized for rock engravings in temple.

out the underlying historical content.

The only remaining building of historical significance is the Yamen 衙門 which is offices of the Commodore of the Dapeng Brigade 大鵬稟副將 and the Kowloon Assistant Military Inspectorate 九龍巡檢司 during the Qing Dynasty period. It is located in the centre of the park with its main doorway facing the South Gate (Fig. 21). A stone horizontal tablet bearing the engraved English word "almshouse" stands over the front door of the Yamen which signifies that it had been used as elderly homes during the colonial period. It also had been rented by different church organizations for the purpose of orphanage and widow houses, schools and clinics. A pair of new door couplet in wood is now used to flank the doorway to form a triptych arrangement (Fig. 22). The text content with a satirical overtone creates a strong contrast to the English horizontal tablet. And the juxtaposition of two different languages has unveiled a glimpse into the colonial influence. Thus the complexity of the site history is emotionally depicted by this poem which reads:

Western mother cannot rule over the villagers, sons of dragon who dwell oversea

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47 For the history of the origin of Kowloon Walled City see Lu Jin 魯金, Jiulong chengzhai shihua 九龍城寨史話 A Historical Talk on Kowloon Walled City, (Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Co. Ltd, 1988).
dare not to indulge in personal dream.

Departed villagers should have been aged, swallows in village in reminiscent of past still come back to the old city.

西母不能臣，域外龍兒，幽恨敢隨孤夢去；
離人應已老，村中燕子，多情還覓故城來。

The new door couplet was composed by Professor Richard Ho 何文匯 and written by Jat Seeyau 翟仕堯 (1935-2009)48. The couplet depicts a homecoming sentiment of migrant back to the home city. Western mother is an allusion to the British monarch, the Queen who has ruled over the colony. The overtone of sons of dragon returning also strengthens the scene of Hong Kong returning to its “Ancestor Nation” 祖國. This new composition of door couplet is used to mark the entrance to Yamen which is the headquarters of the Commodore of the Dapeng Brigade and the Kowloon Assistant Military Inspectorate. As the only old building from 1847 and the focal point of the park, the couplet in clerical script expresses a sentiment of resistance under colonial rule from the villagers in a

place with strong historical connotation. The Chinese subjects in the colony juxtaposed with a satirical allegory to the Queen suggests the end of colonial rule and can be readily used to construct the identity of Hong Kong people’s connection with China. Reading the text from the time frame of this historical background, the identity of Chinese nationality is well emphasized to foreground the imminent return of Hong Kong back to China. The calligraphy by Jat shows a fine interplay of round and angular strokes with emphasis on the centre-tip brushwork (Fig 23). For the trained eye in calligraphy, the style can be readily linked to clerical script of Han Dynasty stone inscriptions such as Stele for Cao Quan 曹全碑 and Stele for Shi Chen 史晨碑. The structure of the calligraphy is compact with the brushstrokes radiating from the core of each character. Its aura of elegance and robustness when read with the eclectic style of the English word “almshouse” creates a big contrast. The granite head stone as a left over relics from the colonial period, with letters displaced from the centre shows a weird sense of dislocation (Fig. 24). This difference in the visual balance of text unavoidably relates to the sense of order under the colonial rule and the restoration of Chinese sovereignty.

Inside the Yamen, the symbolism on earlier military presence is amplified with the *quanshu* (fist calligraphy) of character *shou* (longevity) (Fig. 25) and *moyuan* (affinity to ink) (Fig. 26) by Zhang Yutang (1794-1870). He was a commodore of Dapeng Brigade and the Kowloon Assistant Military Inspectorate from 1854 to 1866. The characters carved on stone tablets were originally mounted on the Revering Paper Pavilion. The use of fingers, palm or fist to write instead of a writing brush is an expression of the writer’s ability to handle concurrently both literary skill and physical strength. This ability to excel in both civil and military services is also shown by his colophon on one of the stone tablet which titled himself as *hanmo jiangjun* (general of brush and ink).

In addition to these brushworks with strong historical reference, two carved granite plaques unearthed from the original South Gate bearing the calligraphy in standard script Chinese characters for Nanmen (South Gate) and Jiulong Zhaicheng (Kowloon Walled City) were carefully preserved as remnants which strongly symbolized the ravage on Chinese authority (Fig. 27).

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50 Zhang Yutang was the commodore of Dapeng Brigade from 1854-1866, Lai Zhen-bian from 1869-1881, He Chang-qing from 1888-1891.
These broken stone pieces are placed together in a sunken area with the old stone foundation in vicinity. The scene gives an impression of unearthing the footprint of the site history. The calligraphy works not only becomes part of the visualized history but the text in standard script can also be readily recognized by Chinese readers to the site. Hence the calligraphy works not only served as historical relics but the textual meaning also enforces the naming of the place.

To mark the original location of Lung Tsun Free School 龍津義學 which was established during Emperor Daoguang in Qing dynasty in 1847, another historical couplet is used to flank the archway of Fui Sing 魁星 on the west side after one enters from the south entrance (Fig. 28). Fui Sing is one of the five gods of Wenchang 文昌 who sends blessings to scholars in examination. The couplet is a type of xiangqianlian(鑲嵌聯) which uses the Chinese character “Lung” 龍 and “Tsun”津 to embed into the shanglian 上聯 (upper line) and xialian 下聯 (lower line) respectively. Thus the name of the former school is meticulously fitted into the couplet which crystalizes the ideal in free education. The two lines of couplet read:

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51 Lung Tsun Free School used the same name as the Lung Tsun Stone Bridge 龍津橋 which is a former bridge in Hong Kong, that connected Kowloon Walled City to a pier. Both the free school and stone bridge was named after a nearby river, Lung Tsun to the east of Kowloon walled city.
He who resembles a dragon, aspire the carp fish transforms into dragon through the years, wash out the barbaric smoke and Tankas’ rain.

Knowing the pier, wishing to find the origin of river, sharing the sea of Sushi and tide of Hanyu.

其猶龍乎，卜他年鯉化蛟騰，盡洗蠻煙蛋雨：
是知津也，願從此源尋流溯，平分蘇海韓潮。

“Resemble a dragon” was a remark by Confucius after his first meeting with Laozi.
The classical allusion about carp fish jumping through the gate and transforming into a dragon is used to signify success in examination. And because the southern part of China was believed to be inhabited by less civilized people, which the Tankas, the boat people was one of the tribes in the area, educating the people to understand the skill of learning and eagerness to find the law of nature was the ideal behind education. “Knowing the pier” is also from a classical story about praising Confucius’ wisdom on learning, which is a symbolic allegory to the technique of knowledge acquisition. And searching the origin of river implies that the attitude of study should be comparable to an exploration to the source.

Finally, two ancient scholars Sushi 蘇軾 from Song and Hanyu 韓愈 from Tang
Dynasty are mentioned to encourage the student to learn from these role models.

The rich literary content in this couplet shows the education ideal aspired by the Qing scholars in the establishment of this free school.

Originally, there was a shadow wall facing the entrance of Lung Tsun Free School. Now it is reconstructed as a replica which is relocated to the present East gate of the park (Fig. 29). The original shadow wall was used to frame the open ground in front of the school to form a square for the student. And four Chinese characters each measures 1.5 meters square of *Haibin Zoulu* was engraved on the wall. *Haibin* literally means seaside. Since Song Dynasty, *Haibin Zoulu* was used to describe the seashore along southeast China. And *Zoulu* refers to the name of two geographical locations in ancient China with a flourishing culture. Mencius 孟子 was born in the state of Zou and Confucius was born in the state of Lu. Thus the text subtly connected to two role models of education by stating the birth place of these educators. The new tablet with characters in smaller size is a rework reminiscent of the earlier free school. It thus conveys the meaning of free education which nurture scholars of moral and academic

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52 A shadow wall, also called spirit screen, spirit wall or screen wall, (*yingbi 影壁* or *zhaobi 照壁*) is used to shield an entrance gate from outside to improve privacy or delineate an area in traditional Chinese architecture. It is similar to an entrance porch or antechamber in a cathedral which serves also as a psychological preparation for entry to another area of different function.
excellence. All these symbolic meanings can be easily deciphered by well-trained scholars who possess the literary skill taught in the school curriculum. And the composition of such poems and couplets are showcases of their literary technique which is the essence of Chinese identity.

In addition to the rich content of the recovered history, new stone epitaphs on the Narrative on Kowloon Walled City Park are also added both at the South Gate and North Gate. Both epitaphs are written in semi-cursive-standard script to record the history of reconstruction of the park by Chen Shuheng 陳樹衡 on the shadow wall at South Gate (Fig. 30) and by the architect Tse Shunkai 謝順佳 at North Gate (Fig. 31). A number of contemporary calligraphers also contributed to the collection of Chinese brushworks in various script types and formats. As a result, even though there exists only a single physical landmark of the imperial office Yamen from Qing period, the site history of the congested lawless enclave and festering squatter slums during the colonial period is now recovered to an earlier symbol of military post re-created in a park. With the extensive assistance by the works of calligraphy, the identity of the park is greatly enhanced to its Chinese origin.
The Chinese calligraphy works in the park are often crowded with literary allusions which can be used to tell a variety of stories which are all site-specific history. With a careful orchestration of theme, the history is re-presented in the background of a Chinese garden. And the recollection of colonial history in a Jiangnan style garden of the early Qing Dynasty when situated in the modern context involves certain conflict between the functional necessities of modern city life and the semantic charge by its history. This awakening to the historical incident in a park with the help of semantic content of calligraphy is unprecedented. And such persistent use of a strong common cultural object to construct the Chinese identity must be read with reference to the timeline of handover of Hong Kong.

Looking into the attitude towards the historical facts of the site, we can see a different approach is imposed on the textual content of calligraphy works. By comparison of the two projects by the colonial government, one can easily discern that in the Kowloon Walled City Park, there is a considerable improvement in the use of calligraphy in the representation of site history. The Hollywood Road Park with its notorious history of British invasion is intentionally...

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53 For history of development on Kowloon Walled City see Chen, Huifen 陳惠芬. You Jiulongzhaichen dao Zhaichenggongyuan 由九龍寨城到寨城公園. (Hong Kong: Liao ran cong shu, 2008).
downplayed to an urban green land with Chinese overtone. The signification by inclusion of Chinese elements in a garden is experienced as a conflict of its underlying historical content. The choice of calligraphy works reveals a lack of holistic approach in style of overall theme. The inconsistency with traditional practice in writing direction can be seen in various locations with different script types. And its eclectic use of multiple script styles of Chinese calligraphy, i.e. seal script, standard script and semi-cursive script, are appropriated to form a Chinese garden style with superficial and decorative design outcome. The incoherent script styles and the emptiness of content in a site of such significant history has created an irrelevant Chinese garden which is simply an oasis in the urban area void of any in-depth identity.

Rather than an eclectic choice from ancient master to create new paradigm, the calligraphy used in the Kowloon Walled City Park are more carefully organized to reinforce the underlying classical concept and symbol of military outpost. Many of the calligraphy works are intentionally selected to strengthen the historical theme. With a number of site-specific calligraphy works and other antiques such as relics recovered from the site which included three old cannons, stone lintels, couplets, column bases and foundations, a more unified picture of Chinese
sovereignty in the old days is created. All the site-specific texts are ingeniously fitted into the original geographical locations in the Chinese garden to strengthen the identity of the place. Garden architecture and the art of calligraphy from the Qing period are skillfully combined with contributions from contemporary calligraphers. The naming of a new place to mark the location is usually visually identified by the works of calligraphers with contents still inspired by the site history. This display of the brushwork is a personified presence which constitutes a strong symbol of Chinese identity. The common media of calligraphy and unison use of classical texts are interwoven to form a physical narrative.
Religious Identity Revitalized

Sites: Ngong Ping, Lantau Island and Hau Wong Temple, Kowloon City

Theme: Religion and calligraphy; Traditional and Contemporary

China has long been a country receptive of different religions since ancient times. As a result of its ancient trade routes along the extensive border, China has been a cradle for the infusion of various foreign ideas and influences. One of the essences of Chinese culture can be found in the religions of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism which are aptly referred to as the “three teachings”\textsuperscript{54}. As the three religions have a long history in China, they share among themselves a series of common symbols. Different philosophical concepts are shared and mixed into a syncretic aggregate such that it is difficult to draw a clear-cut boundary of the teachings. And many of the relics in Chinese calligraphy are in form of the manuscripts related to these religions. Temples constructed to house the Buddha, historical figures deified, legendary gods and goddesses were exuberant with interwoven ideals from the three religions. Thus the philosophical frameworks behind the three religions have a significant role in shaping the Chinese culture.

With these syncretic combinations of ideals, sometimes it is hard to study the

teachings from a single perspective. And in different periods in China, religions had multi-faceted and complicated roles which can be investigated through a study into the social and political relationships. As a consequence, religious ideals are usually intermingled with historical references, political proclamations, and also social and family exemplar values. These ideals are all crystallized in the Chinese calligraphy works presented in different formats and materials within the public venues earmarked for religions.55

Even under the colonial rule with a rapid encounter of westernization and modernization in Hong Kong, the influence of the traditional teachings of the three religions can still be readily found in all areas. As the use of Chinese language has been actively engaged into the English oriented education system, many of the traditional practice such as Chinese festivals, food culture, family value and ancestor veneration are still deeply ingrained into the daily lives of common people. The calligraphy works in the religious venues eloquently speak their ideals through the easily legible standard script. And the brushworks of calligraphy have greatly enhanced the propagation of religions. By looking into the calligraphy works in these religious venues, the mechanism of identity

building behind can be carefully analysed.

The site-specific nature of Chinese religion derives from the belief that nature is itself occupied by invisible beings. Due to this belief, one of the functions of religion is to pacify the people in times of calamity. This can be seen in stone engraved with Buddhist incantation Namo Amitabha 南無阿彌陀佛 to suppress local evil spirits (Fig. 32).56 And the visual connection made through official wooden tablet decreed by emperor and duly authenticated by imperial officials with the temple, usually create a strong marker to the place.

Ngong Ping 昂坪 is an area of highland situated in the western part of Lantau Island, Hong Kong. With the religious venues such as Po Lin Monastery 寶蓮禪寺 and Tian Tan Buddha 天壇大佛 amidst the hills, the area is designated as a religious area with various tourist attractions. The Po Lin Monastery is a Buddhist monastery formed by three Buddhist monks, Venerables Da Yue 大悅, Dun Xiu 頓修 and Yue Ming 悅明 from Jiangsu Province, China in 1906. It was initially named as Tai Mao Pung 大茅蓬 (The Big Hut) and was renamed Po Lin

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56 Amitabha is the principal Buddha in the 淨土宗 (Pure Land sect), a branch of Buddhism practiced mainly in East Asia,
Monastery in 1924 with Venerable Ji Xiu 紀修 (? – 1938)\(^5\) became the first Abbot. Monk Fa Ke 筧可法師 (1893 - 1971) was the second abbot of the monastery from 1930 to 1972.

As a Buddhist religious area, the area abounds with brushworks of monks and believers from different eras. With a three-tier stone archway as the sanmen 山門 (mountain gate), the calligraphy written by the second abbot, Monk Fa Ke can be seen on the stone tablet placed in the middle with the Chinese characters Baolian Shansi 寶蓮禪寺 in clerical script (Fig. 33). His calligraphy shows an aura of solemnity and serenity. The colophon of Fa Ke is signed on the left hand corner of the tablet which authenticated his deep rooted connection with the establishment of the monastery (Fig. 34). This gold painted calligraphy in horizontal tablet is flanked by a two couplets written in red on the four stone columns. The outer pair of couplet lines in seal script read:

\[ \text{Bhadanta}^{5}\text{ from which way to come, experiences the smoke and water of hundred cities, from where eminent monks many and few.} \]

\(^5\) Venerable Ji Xiu was a native from Siyi 四邑 in Guangdong Province. He was appointed as the Abbot from 1924 -1930. His efforts were made towards both farming and practicing Buddhist teachings. He has set up all Buddhist procedures, rules and disciplines for the monastery from a model on those of Jiangtian Monastery at Jinshan.

\(^5\) Bhadanta is a term of respect applied to a Buddhist or a Buddhist mendicant in Sanskrit.
The virtuous in here to dwell, recollects the sea and sky of ten-thousand miles, in which the Tanmatra is being but non-being.

Xinhai jiaping gudan Yushan Seal script by Feng Kanghou

大德自何方來，經歷煙水百城，那裏高僧多與少，

仁者且於此住，回顧海天萬里，箇中塵境有還無。

辛亥嘉平穀旦禺山馮康侯謹篆。

The inner pair of the couplet lines in clerical script read:

Wish to ride the clouds and water without tiresome cliff unto the house of treasure.

Ascend the high mountain to experience the rugged path turns gentle.

願乘雲水毋疲滄涯入寶所，

59 The five sensory objects of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and physical sensations are referred as the five Tanmatras in Sanskrit.
60 According to the Chinese sexagenary cycle, xinhai 辛亥 is the year 1971.
61 Jiaping 嘉平 is the 12th month in lunar calendar.
62 Gudan 穀旦 is a good sunny day which symbolizes an auspicious day.
63 Yushan 畝山 is another name for Dayushan 大嶼山 which is Lantau Island.
64 Feng Kanghou (1901-1983) is a native of Panyu 番禺, Guangdong. For a biography see Ma, Guoquan 馬國權, “Xianggang Jinhainian Shutan Gaishu” 香港近百年書壇概況 (A Brief Account of Hong Kong Calligraphy in the Past Hundred Years). In Shuhai guanlan: Zhongguo shufa guoji xueshu huiyi lunwenji 書海觀瀾：中國書法國際學術會議論文集. Edited by Harold Mok, pp.189-274. (Hong Kong: The Art Museum and Department of Fine Arts, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1998), pp.241-242.
The text of the both couplets gives a similar message of the experience in pursuing the path of enlightenment which inevitably involves highs and lows.

Thus the fundamental teachings of Buddhist classics are incorporated into the entrance gate to greet the visitors. Also, though the use of different script styles may be out of a personal choice or adeptness with different script types, the overall setting is still well coordinated to strengthen the Buddhist teachings. Feng was an expert in epigraphy. The use of seal script shows his talents in the handling of both literary content of Buddhist teachings and ancient brush skills.

The calligraphy here is one of his few brushworks which is publicly displayed.

Besides all these calligraphy works by different persons, each column of the archway is topped by a clerical script character in circular stone. When read together from left-to-right the four characters convey another Buddhist legacy - 鷲嶺遺風 (jiulingyifeng) (legacy of breeze from the Vulture Peak) which connects to the teachings of Gautama Buddha in the Kingdom of Magadha in Mid-India. According to Buddhist legend, Vulture Peak 鷲嶺山 (Grdhrakuta in Sanskrit) is one of the five mountains surrounding Rajagaha, the capital of Magadha. It was situated on the northwest of the capital where Gautama Buddha delivered his teachings.

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Buddhism in China. Even though the brushworks in diversified styles are written by various calligraphers from different backgrounds, the central ideal of Buddhist teaching revealed in the textual content still links all the elements into a holistic spatial marker. In combination with the Chinese architectural elements and symbolic icons such as the xiangyun 祥雲 (trailing clouds of glory) meticulously sculpted on the columns, the once foreign religious content is now localized and identified with Chinese identity.

Along the axis formed by the mountain gate and the tree-lined path, one would be led through the Hall of Skanda Bodhisattva 韋馱殿 until one reaches the Main Shrine Hall of Buddha – the Mahavira Hall or Daxiong baodian 大雄寶殿 (Hall of Great Strength). It is the main hall of the Buddhist temple where the main image of veneration is presented. With a seven-span structure covered by a hip-and-gable roof with double eaves, the four large character horizontal tablet written by Monk Fa Ke is used to mark the frontal image of the temple (Fig. 35). Mahavira is one of the respected titles attributed to Siddhartha Gautama. The horizontal tablet in clerical script is written in a tightly knitted structure and each character with a heavy brushstroke possesses an aura of amicability and solemnity. The inclusion of calligraphy written by the earlier Abbot placed in a
prominent location to mark the identity of the Main Hall is a significant act of
placemaking. By linking the handwriting with colophon of a personal name to the
physical structure of temple is in another way to recognize his effort made in the
establishment. And this linkage between a spatial setting with personal
brushworks is the primary act of placemaking which gives the place its distinctive
character.

Besides these earlier works of calligraphers and monks, the Ngong Ping area was
given a major facelift in 2002 when the government carried out a plan to improve
the facilities and transport. The Ngong Ping Village which is connected by a
cable car system to Tung Chung was completed in 2005. As a connection between
the tourist spot and the temple area, another major archway is now used to
greet the visitors. The new stone cladded archway in Qing style is based on the
design of Shaolin Monastery in Dengfeng, Henan Province which first opened in
2010. The calligraphy of *nantian fogou* 南天佛國 (Buddhist Land in South
Heaven) written by Jao Tsung-I 饒宗頤 is now engraved on a tablet and placed
on the archway (Fig. 36). The calligraphy shows Jao’s personal style of an
elongated clerical script. His brushstrokes are unrestrained by the structure and
possesses a spontaneous naturalness which shows his personal interpretation of
various ancient sources (Fig. 37). The distinctive variation in thickness of
brushstroke shows his originality in the use of brush. There is also a couplet on
the archway columns also written by Jao which reads:

Build up Buddhism, temples, schools to form a solemn land,

Eminent mountain, scenic spot, monk to nurture a happy sentiment.

_Canglong wuzi_⁶⁶ written by Xuantang

建佛建剎建校莊嚴國土，

名山名勝名僧利樂有情。

蒼龍戊子選堂書

On the backside of the archway in the middle is another horizontal tablet of
_yushan shengjing_ 嶼山勝景 (Great scenery of Lantau Mountain). The clerical
calligraphy brushwork is also by Jao with colophon of his literary name Xuantang

選堂 and seals. The couplet in semi-cursive script is written by Zhao Puchu 趙樸初⁶⁷ (1907 - 2000), the president of The Buddhist Association of China 中國佛教協會會長. The couplet on the columns reads:

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⁶⁶ Wuzi is the year 2008.
⁶⁷ Zhao Puchu was a native from Taihu 太湖 Anhui Province. He was a religious and public leader, also one of the renowned calligraphers in China.
Amidst the abode of Tathagata\textsuperscript{68}, flower collects the solemn ocean of the world.

Under the Bodhi tree, tranquil sky lights the door of the liberation.

如來座中華藏莊嚴世界海，

菩提樹下寧靜光天解脫門。

While the couplet on the frontal façade of the archway briefly tells the history of and missions of Po Lin Monastery, the couplet by Zhao reminds the visitors of the path for enlightenment. The couplet is a replica of a smaller one placed on the door way to \textit{Fajietang 法界堂} under the Tian Tan Buddha. His variations in brushstrokes through the lifting and pressing of brush creates a sense of rhythm. The vigor of brushwork reveals an expansive strength in the free flow of line. Though his earlier years have modelled on the works of Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 and Dong Qichang 董其昌, he is not restricted by the model-book tradition. His freedom in use of the brushstrokes reveals his concurrent enlightenments in both religion and calligraphy.

\textsuperscript{68} Tathagata is a Pali and Sanskrit word the Buddha of the Pali Canon uses when referring to himself. The term is often thought to mean either "one who has thus gone" (tatha-gata) or "one who has thus come" (tatha-agata).
His diverse style of brushstroke can also be seen in his large character writing. A wooden horizontal tablet of calligraphy Fajietang (Hall of Dharmadhatu) by Zhao in clerical script can be found to mark a hall entrance under the Tian Tan Buddha (Fig. 38). The round brushstroke shows a sturdy use of force which conceals the brush tip and turning of strokes. The characters exhibit an aura of order and restraint in line with the literal meaning of the characters to signify a land for a true order. The overall composition is a balance between the round strokes against a square structure which makes one recall the style of Stele for Heng Fang during first year of the Jianning reign, Eastern Han (168 BCE). But when comparing the composition, it can be found that Zhao allows wider space between characters which intensifies the sense of broadness.

Besides the traditional way to present calligraphy to mark the identity of different locations in the religious area, an innovative presentation of the Buddhist classical sutra is added on the eastern slope of Muk Yue Shan. The Wisdom Path (2005) was conceived in June 2002 when Jao Tsung-I completed the Heart Sutra calligraphy and dedicated it to the people of Hong Kong.

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69 Dharmadhatu is the combination of Sanskrit words, dharma and dhatu. In Buddhism dharma means "cosmic law and order", "truth" or "phenomenon". Dhatu means "dimension", "realm" or "sphere". Dharmadhatu is absolute reality or realm of phenomenon.
Kong (Fig. 39). The calligraphy work was much inspired by his visit to the Buddhist stone carvings on Mount Taishan in Shandong Province in 1980. The 260 Chinese characters in clerical script, with each character measuring 600 x 600mm is presented on 38 wooden columns of 8 to 10 meters (Fig. 40). The columns are arranged according to the topography of the landscape in the shape of the infinity sign, \( \infty \). The idea of an outdoor large-scale wood inscription display is said to resemble that of the bamboo slips used for writing in Han Dynasty. As the original inspiration is from stone carvings on Mount Taishan, the calligraphy style shows what Jao has absorbed elements from the ancient stone carvings with his particular personal style in brushstroke (Fig. 41). His writing in clerical script possesses a tall to square structure which is generally similar to modern standard script. In contrast, the Han clerical script tends to be more square to wide in structure and rectilinearity. Also the more pronounced wavelike flaring of horizontal strokes in traditional clerical script is less prominent. This can be easily seen in comparison with the stroke style shown in other Buddhist temples.

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This particular calligraphy style of Buddhist tradition can be found also in the Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery 萬佛寺 (1957) with the two Chinese characters, \textit{wanfo} 萬佛 (Ten Thousand Buddhas) written by Huang Weichang 黃維璋 (1902 - 1993).\textsuperscript{72} The calligraphy work was presented as a giant horizontal tablet, which is literally using the entire façade of the temple hall as a sign (Fig. 42). The calligraphy in red large characters displays a rounded brushstroke which is dispersed and free. The style can be readily linked back to the ancient tradition in line with the \textit{Taishan jingshiyu} 泰山經石峪. As the brushstroke style becomes one of the quintessential exemplar in Buddhist tradition, this calligraphy style is now used to identify with the religious ideal. And a personal imitation of such brushstrokes shows an act of devotion to associate with this tradition. In this way, the copying of sutras in handwriting can be readily found in many of the examples in calligraphy presented in many temples.

In the Wisdom Path, the calligraphy of the Heart Sutra was written in form of \textit{bangshu} 榜書 (large character writing) to increase the legibility of the writing. According to Kang Youwei, large character writing is significantly different from small character writing in the wielding and movement of brush, control of body

\textsuperscript{72} For a biography of Huang Weichang, see Ma, pp.242-243.
position, perfection in copying and brush tip manipulation. Due to these constraints, the presentation and techniques of small character writing in bamboo slip would be drastically different from large character writing in stone carving. This association of the format of presentation with the calligraphy style is arbitrarily decided, maybe due to considerations in other technical issues on site selection, material constraints and design considerations. The style of Jao’s brushstroke used is his personal interpretation which combines the aura of Han bamboo slip calligraphy and the traditional clerical script. His originality in the writing shows his personal identity which connects the site with Buddhist scripture.

As religion is deeply ingrained in the living of people, even in smaller local temples, the use of calligraphy is prevalent. Hau Wong Temple, Kowloon City 九龍城侯王廟 (2006 refurbished and reopen) is located at the north western corner of the Kowloon Walled City Park. The temple was built in around 1730 (8th year of Yongzheng, 雍正 8 年) to commemorate Song general Hau Wong (Marquis Prince), Yeung Leung Jit 楊亮節, who protected the last emperor of Southern Song Dynasty from the Mongol Yuan troops. With this ancient history about defense against foreign invasion, the local temple of such small-scaled
construction has an exceptional huge amplification on local identity.

The temple houses a wealth of cultural relics such as stone epitaph carved in 1822 (2\textsuperscript{nd} year of Daoguang, 道光 2 年) which gives a detailed narrative on the earlier renovation of this Yeung Marquis Royal Palace.\textsuperscript{73} The stone tablet is one of the oldest stone inscriptions preserved in Hong Kong. There are also various wooden horizontal tablets and stone carvings from Qing Dynasty and a series of brightly coloured Shek Wan pottery (Fig. 43).

“Faith to the utmost, foretell in advance” 至誠前知 written in semi-cursive-standard script is based on an essay from Zhong Yong 中庸 which depicts the rise and fall of a sovereignty that can be foretold by a faithful prayer (Fig. 44).\textsuperscript{74} The wooden horizontal tablet was dated in 1880 (6\textsuperscript{th} year of Guangxu, 光緒 6 年) inscribed with the name of the Qing Dynasty government official which shows the active engagement in the divination ritual of the drawing of fortune sticks to forecast the future. The text inscribed with the name of the official Lai Zhenbian 賴鎮邊 has the effect of actually endorsing the local religious practice. The significance of the calligraphy works is in the social

\textsuperscript{73} For the complete text of the renovation narrative refer to David Faure, Bernard Hung Kay Luk and NG Lun Ngai Ha. p.75.
\textsuperscript{74} Zhong Yong 24
function of building a common identity between the ruling officials and the subjects. It is placed strategically in a pavilion in front of the temple proper which marks the entrance. And the message on the rise and fall of a nation foretold by an omen undeniably gives a consent to the local religious practice. Thus with the dedication of an iron incense burner to Hau Wong by another local official Hsu Wenshen 許文深 in 1847 (27th year of Daoguang，道光 27年) (Fig. 45), the temple entrance is marked by the heavy presence of identity of Qing government officials through the use of Chinese calligraphy.

Another wooden tablet of significance dated 1888 (14th year of Guangxu，光緒 14年) with the content in semi-cursive standard script, “Fight the foreign invasion, cleave the bandit” 折洋剣盜 has a strong historical overtone (Fig. 46). The date shows that the tablet was set up after the cessation of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula to the British in the Treaty of Nanking 1842 and Convention of Peking 1860 respectively. The text is based not only on this historical timeline, but also the history about a local bandit Huadanman 花旦滿 who has ravaged the locals during the period.76 The combination of this local history within the background of foreign invasion and duly inscription of the

75 Hsu Wenshen was also the founder of Lung Tsun Free School situated inside the Kowloon Walled City.
76 Lu Jin 魯金, ibid., pp.153-156.
names of Qing Dynasty government officials is infused with political emotions. The placing together of the foreign military presence with the arrest of a local bandit has created a sarcastic caricature of the history. And the names of over ten local officials placed together in the tablet have created a visual effect of a coalition against invasion. Within such a small local temple, the space is packed with a massive identity of local officials authenticated by the name of Qing emperors. Again, the calligraphy work has surpassed its textual and artistic functions into a political expression against foreign aggression. Such usage in different forms of literary presentation in a religious venue has substantially created multi-faceted identities which transcends the pure function of text.

Another incident of historical importance occurred during the Japanese occupation of 1941-45, the knoll, Pak Hok Shan 白鶴山 (White Crane Hill) around the temple area was substantially quarried to extend the nearby Kai Tak airfield. As a large amount of granite stone was needed, the stone wall of the Kowloon Walled City in vicinity was also torn down in the same period. This was the occasion when one of the stone carvings of Chinese character “Goose” 鵝 on rock face was destroyed.
In 2005, the Chinese Temple Committee renovated the temple and reconstructed some of its lost relics. A series of Chinese calligraphy works by contemporary calligraphers (Fig. 47) were added in a new Poetry Gallery (Fig. 48) and Wishing Corner (Fig. 49). And the destroyed stone carving was reinstated as a stone engraving in a covered granite pavilion. The newly created yizie （“goose” in one stroke）is a reconstruction of the former rock carving (Fig. 50). It is now presented on a flat wall in a triptych arrangement with a couplet flanking the central character. The couplet flanking the “Goose” in one stroke written by Li Qing 黎慶 reads:

Imitate the calligraphy of “goose” by Yishao (Wang Xizhi) on the archaic stone, Revere Hau Wong (Marquis Prince) while riding a crane over the famous mountain.

古石書鵝摹逸少，
名山駕鶴仰侯王。

The literary content readily refers to shusheng 書聖（the sage of calligraphy）Wang Xizhi 王羲之 using his alias Yishao 逸少 and the story about his hobby of
rearing geese. A legend describes that he learned the key on how to turn his wrist while writing by an intimate observation on how geese moved their necks. Thus the identity of a famous calligrapher is meticulously linked to the geographical location of White Crane Hill.

The other large character writing yizihe 一字鶴 (“crane” in one stroke) with Taoist connotation is sited behind the main hall of the temple in 1888 (14th year of Guangxu, 光緒 14 年) (Fig. 51). It is the original carving on rock face which has survived the rock blasting during the war period. The couplet flanking the “Crane” in one stroke which is written by Lu Runhua 盧潤華 reads:

The ancient Tao and celestial rock returns to the Crane Ridge,
The splendor of Hau Wong (Marquis Prince) defends the boundary of Dragon.

道古仙岩歸鶴嶺，
侯王顯赫鎮龍疆。

Stone carving of the large Chinese character “Goose” in one stroke and “Crane” in one stroke were written by Zhang Shouren 張壽仁 and Feng Shan 鳳山
respectively. Both couplets shrewdly incorporate the name of Hau Wong into the verses and also use the allusion of crane on Taoism to depict a different picture.

One refers to the ancient sage in calligraphy while the other indirectly hints at the power of Hau Wong on the territory, as the Chinese name for Kowloon which literally means nine dragons. The calligraphy is used here not only as a religious symbol in the form of a ropelike character to signify the power to tie up evil spirits, but also subtly declares the sovereignty on the land which is protected by a legendary ancient figure of Chinese origin. In some cases, the use of red color in writing the calligraphy acts as a substitution for peach wood which is a belief of its magical power to drive away bad luck. The apotropaic property of “one-stroke” character to ward off evil can be dated back to Han Dynasty.77 Here, the large characters are both in black ink with a small tint of red drop shadow for the character of “Crane”. By the literary technique of parallelism in poetry, the geographical location, historical figures, calligraphy and Taoist ideal are all brought together in this religious venue to create a unified identity.

As the practice of three religions in China adopts a pluralistic approach, interplay

of religious ideals can be seen in many temples. The sharing of common symbols and syncretic fusion of practices can be visualized in the calligraphy works displayed in various temples and religious sites. Inscriptions on stone to suppress local spirits, formal tablets for commemorating official and historical events, the use of brushstroke colour and writing style to ward off evils are just a few pervasive practices within the cultural context. And the cross referencing in text enriches the ground for identity building by the intertextuality and intervisuality in the content of brushworks. Calligraphy as a result transcends beyond its primitive function of communication and superlative aspiration as art.
Public Identity created by the Public

Site: Commercial premises and private buildings

Theme: Merchants and calligraphers; Literati in Clan

In ancient China, the state is said to be founded on agriculture. Yet as an agrarian society, there was a clear hierarchy of social structure set up by the ruling class well before Han dynasty.\(^78\) It is said that in the late Zhou Dynasty, the “four occupations” or “four categories of the people” in social hierarchy was already established. These were the shi 士 (gentry scholars), the nong 農 (peasant farmers), the gong 工 (artisans and craftsmen), and the shang 商 (merchants and traders) in descending order. According to Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, Guanzi 管子 was the first to establish the hierarchy of the social classes, which were aptly named as si min 四民 (four categories of the people).\(^79\)

The social hierarchy shows the power structure established to help the administration of people with the merchant class at the lowest level. However, some scholars like Anthony J. Barbieri-Low point out that the classification of “four occupations” can be seen as a mere rhetorical device without any actual

\(^78\) Chun Qiu Guliang Zhan first year of Chenggong 春秋穀梁傳《成公元年》
\(^79\) Guanzi Juan 8 Xiao Kuang 20 管子 卷第八 小匡第二十
effect on government policy. Even though no government statute in the Qin and Han Dynasties specifically mentioned the class of four occupations, some laws did treat these social classes as separate groups with different legal privileges.

In the Shang and Zhou dynasties, the shì were mainly from the knight class and aristocrats. With the setting up of a path to enter the government through imperial examinations in the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the literati and scholars slowly took over the shì class on account of their intellectual ability and administrative skills. The number of candidates who took the examination was drastically expanded and the shì class acquired a more significant role during the Song Dynasties. As mentioned in chapter two, the rise of the shì class as a consequence of the establishment of imperial examinations also promoted the use of calligraphy as a way to measure one’s literary skills and personality. And gradually calligraphy was valued as an art object being collected by the elite class and circulated among the educated men and women. With the increase in number of scholar-officials without aristocratic lineage, there were also more

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81 The number of candidates participating in taking the imperial examinations increased from merely 30,000 to 400,000 from 11th to 13th centuries in Song Dynasty. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Anne Walthall and James Palais. *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company), 2006, p.160.
scholars who had failed to earn an official post through the examinations. In combination with other social and economic factors such as the increase in population, the ease of travelling, and innovations in artisan techniques on production of commodities, some literati who failed the imperial examination were eventually engaged into the activities of commerce as merchant class. Even though merchant class was in the lowest level, candidates with support from their merchant family background were eventually unabashed on their social lineage. Thus the social clash between classes was comparatively less intense in the Ming Dynasty.

The merchant class in China developed their business culture throughout different dynasties as early as in the founding stage of Confucian ideology. As a result of the rise in commercialization of society in the Song and Ming periods, there was an interwoven relationship between the four social classes. Also the success of the merchant class in commerce from the sixteenth century onwards led to the development of connoisseurship in art and craft. The creative energy of artists were substantially supported by the patronage of the merchant

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connoisseurs. At the same time, the younger family or clan members would take the opportunities to learn from these in-house artists or literati. This patronage system can be best exemplified by the production and consumption of paintings by Yangzhou baguai 扬州八怪 under support of wealthy merchant families in eighteenth century Yangzhou.\textsuperscript{83} The artistic production as commodities, were the products of constant exchange of values between the artists and their merchant patrons.

In the earlier days of the colonial rule, influx of Chinese migrants due to the political unrest in China brought along merchants as well as calligraphers with strong commitment to traditional Chinese culture to Hong Kong. In order to support their living in a ceded foreign land, the calligraphers had to carry out different business or use their skills in calligraphy to earn a living. And the use of writing by a calligrapher also shows the owner’s association with these literary traditions. Under such circumstances, some calligraphers have engaged in writing calligraphy in tablets of signage for the local merchants. Important still, before the spread of the printing press, calligraphy is a very handy tool in the production of signage. Thus, relics of their writings can be readily found in the various

locations in the urban space.

Calligraphy associated with private business is generally originated from a simple need to signify the inauguration of business and to serve as an identity of Chinese traditions. The use of calligraphy to mark the identity of a shop name, building name (Fig. 52), clan association (Fig. 53) and labour union (Fig. 54) can be seen in many different urban locations. Regardless of their size, these identity markers are usually placed in visually prominent locations. However, due to the urban context of concrete structure, traditional ways of presentation in an environment of Chinese architecture has to change to fit in different spatial conditions of the street framed by high-rise buildings. Thus the building façade facing streets of a multi-storey structure is often used to present the works of calligraphers. In addition, overhanging signboards of brushworks can also be found projecting over a street from the building (Fig. 55). This gigantic symbol of commercial persuasion takes over the architectural form in space and dominates the streetscape to communicate a commercial identity. Compared to the other elements in urban scale, these calligraphy works have to be executed in large character writing in order to create a visual impact in the streetscape. And in

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order to maximize the impact of these signs with calligraphy, they are usually well
lit with spotlights or outlined with neon lights. This modern adaptation for
calligraphy display indeed transforms the streetscape into an around-the-clock
venue for commercial messages.

The examples of calligraphy in the urban streetscape can be easily found in
business of strong Chinese traditions such as teahouse, antique shop, Chinese
dried seafood shop and clan association. The commercial commodities which
embody the essence of Chinese culture are usually traded by groups of migrants
with a strong bond of common identity from the early colonial period. Besides
the fundamental function of communication, calligraphy is then used as a
common identity marker in a visualized form which contains common ideals and
blessings. In the ceded colonial territory, such identity was of particular
significance to Chinese sojourners. The shop sign with characters in different
styles, is always displayed in a prominent location to be unveiled on an auspicious
day according to Chinese traditional calendar. And the naming of shop always
shows the aspiration of the owner. As a result, the calligraphy on a sign is an
embodiment of the essence of Chinese identity in a visualized form.85

85 For the Chinese tradition in tablet naming in architectural context, see Hou Youbin 侯幼彬,
Zhongguo Jianzhu Meixue 中國建築美學 Aesthetics of Chinese Architecture, (Harbin:
Yee Hing Loong 義興隆 was inaugurated in the trading of rare classic furniture, Chinese arts and crafts in 1945 (Fig. 56). The shop is located in Sheung Wan close to the Upper Lascar Row which is also known as Cat Street. It is an area with a congregation of antique dealers, curio merchants and art galleries. As shown in the colophon duly signed and properly authenticated by his seals, the calligraphy is a work of Luo Shuzhong 羅叔重 (1898-1968). He is a native from Nanhai 南海 in Guangdong Province who moved to Hong Kong in 1923. His clerical script is originated from his study in the Northern Dynasties beike 碑刻 (inscriptions on stone tablet). With an aura of metal and stone, it shows his attachment to the ideals of the stele school of the Qing Dynasty. The association of the Chinese calligraphy work with the ambience of the antique commodities strongly exemplifies the essence of Chinese culture.

Besides the Chinese shop sign in vertical format, there is also a biliterate signage in horizontal format. The shop sign is most probably in an original vertical format with colophon by Luo on the left hand side. This is the traditional format of

86 For a brief biography of Luo Shuzhong see Ma, pp.224-225.
87 For a brief history of Northern Dynasties beike see Hua Rende 華人德, Hua Rende shufa wenji 華人德書法文集 (Beijing: Rongbaozhai chubanshe, 2008), pp.69-85.
Chinese writing. By a visual comparison of the characters in the vertical and
horizontal format, it is obvious that the exact resemblance in brushstrokes on the
horizontal format is a reconstruction of the vertical original (Fig. 57). The
traditional format is likely transformed into a horizontal format in order to be
read together with the shop name in English, thus the Chinese horizontal reading
direction is changed from right-to-left to left-to-right.

The practice of using English together with Chinese in a shop sign was
implemented gradually in the post-war period. Due to more trades between the
foreign occupants or visitors and local Chinese, there was an increasing
acceptance of the use of a bilingual system under the colonial rule. However,
there are still various cases where English reading from left-to-right is placed with
Chinese in traditional reading direction of right-to-left, thus creating a conflict in
the visual flow when reading the biliterate shop signs (Fig. 58). This phenomenon
of conflict in reading direction is especially obvious when the Chinese shop sign is
written separately by a calligrapher and then placed together with the English
name afterwards.

Historically, Chinese adopted a vertical writing system from top to bottom and
with each column reading from left to right. This traditional practice can be seen in the letter written by Sun in chapter three. Chinese horizontal writing was only used in specific locations such as a horizontal tablet over an entrance portal or as a signboard of a shop. As a consequence, the contemporary use of traditional reading direction for horizontal writing is often an external symbol to create an identity of Chinese tradition.

As far as the use of Chinese calligraphy as shop signage is concerned, the most prolific calligrapher is Ou Jiangong 區建公 (1886 - 1972). He is a native from Xinhui 新會 in Guangdong Province. In addition to his role as a calligrapher, he is also a practitioner of Chinese medicine. His calligraphy shows much influence from his earlier study on stele inscriptions from the Northern Wei, Han and earlier periods and also Qing Dynasty calligrapher Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829-1884). He has produced extensive works of calligraphy which have been transcribed into shop signs in different trades from noodle shop, book store, Chinese medicine shop (Fig. 59), glass ware shop (Fig. 60) and machine tool company, bird’s nest trader (Fig. 61) and even coffin shop (Fig. 62). The heavy

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88 For a brief biography of Ou Jiangong see Ma, p.220.
89 Zhao Zhiqian was born in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province. He was the leading scholar-artist of his day. He grew up in a merchant family, but undertook a classical education in order to pursue a career in government. Zhao was equally renowned as a calligrapher, a seal carver, and a painter. In his calligraphy, Zhao is best known for a distinctive "square brush" style derived from the engraved stone writings of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534).
brushstrokes with triangular endings can be easily recognized as inspired by North Wei stele inscriptions.\textsuperscript{90} The brushstroke is usually started with a square brush in an orderly manner. His calligraphy is characterized by an exaggeration in the turning and ending points of brushstroke to create a dramatic effect. The use of these signages executed by calligraphers in a solemn and orderly manner is often regarded as a proof of goodwill and credibility of the merchant. And the expressiveness shown in the flow of these lines creates an eye-catching effect which is particularly important for signages. In addition to his brushworks in signs erected in many commercial premises, he has also marked the stone with his inscription of calligraphy in Tin Hau Temple, Lei Yue Mun (Fig. 63).

Due to the urban spatial setting, such stone inscriptions on natural rock face are rarely seen in built-up areas. However, through the adaptive use of building façade, a large number of such urban inscriptions on concrete can be easily found in many locations. Fu Clansmen General Association 符氏宗親總會 which was inaugurated in 1961. The horizontal signage on the building façade was transcribed from a horizontal scroll (Fig. 64). The calligraphy was written in semi-cursive script by Yu Youren 于右任 (1879 -1964).\textsuperscript{91} Yu was one of the

\textsuperscript{90} See Ma, p.220.
\textsuperscript{91} For a brief biography of Yu Youren See Ma Guoquan, p.231; Shi-yee Liu, edited by Maxwell K.
founding father of Republic of China. He joined Tongmenghui 同盟會 (United Allegiance Society) formed by Sun Yat-sen when he fled to Japan in 1906. Yu was one of the four designated calligraphers for Kuomintang 國民黨 (Chinese Nationalist Party). He was adept at semi-cursive and cursive scripts. The other three were standard script by Tan Yankai 譚延闓 (1880 -1930), clerical script by Hu Hanmin 胡漢民 (1879 -1936), seal script by Wu Zhihui 吳稚暉 (1865 -1953). Best known for his publication on a standard for semi-cursive script calligraphy, he is usually referred to as a modern master caoshang 草聖 (sage of semi-cursive script).

In recent years, the inclusion of calligraphy works in public projects is exceptional both in scale and number, and concurrently there is a revival in the use of calligraphy as signages to mark the shop name. The Lock Cha Tea House 樂茶軒 tablet in clerical script is written by Ou Dawei 區大為 (1947-). The teahouse not only engages in the sales business of tea products, but also tries to provide a venue for Chinese cultural practice. Ou’s calligraphy shows his personal reinterpretation of clerical script by introducing the effect of Han bamboo slip.

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92 Ou Dawei was born in Guangzhou. He is a native from Yunfu 雲浮 Guangdong Province.
calligraphy. The contrast of the stroke thickness creates a dramatic effect through an imbalance in line composition. The wavelike flaring of horizontal stroke of typical clerical script becomes less obvious which is a gradual transition to the standard script (Fig. 65). This aura of freedom in creation of drama and style is well in line with the ambience of leisure in a tea house.

A similar signage for another teahouse, the Sheung Yu Tea House 雙魚茶館 also in clerical script is written by Yuen Hungshue 袁鴻樞 (1910-2012). Yuen’s calligraphy shows his influence by Han Stele calligraphy such as the Stele for Zhang Qian 張遷碑 and Stele for Heng Fang. The square compact structure shows the typical broadness in Han clerical script. The brushstroke features a balance between the square and round brush with the typical flaring of horizontal stroke in Han clerical script (Fig. 66). On a closer look, an aura of metal and stone can be seen in the brushstroke which shows an archaic elegance.

Looking into these works of Chinese calligraphy in public space, one realizes the

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93 Daniel Lau Chak Kwong, personal communication to author, October 3, 2014. Also see Wen hua chao liu 文化潮流 directed by Shen Jinfeng 沈錦鋒, aired October 26, 2008, on Home Channel, Asia Television Ltd., 2008.
widespread application of calligraphy in the daily life of Chinese culture. In such small projects, the calligraphers have more freedom to indulge in the personal expressiveness in their calligraphy ideals. The style of brushstroke shows their personal affinity to different school of thoughts. And they can treasure every way of exhibiting their works on entrance portal, overhanging signboards, shop front tablet and building façade.

Despite the fact that commercial allusions is ephemeral, calligraphers still appreciate any opportunity to display their brushworks. As for renowned calligraphers, there is usually an agreed scale of fee on their brushworks, runli 潤例. Thus, this handy way in production of signage is readily accepted by merchants. The style chosen by the calligrapher is often an external symbol of their affiliation with ancient calligraphy masters and their personal adeptness. In this way, the style of brush strokes, the composition of line and structure of character are all the result from a lifelong pursuit of perfection in calligraphy. They use their brushstroke to flow freely in the cityscape with their distinctive personal identity which is comparable to an actual presence. And this association with calligrapher usually improve the image of commercial practice.

95 Wang, zhongxiu, Mao ziliang, Chen hui eds.王中秀, 茅子良, 陳輝, Jinxiandai jinshi shuhuajia runli 近現代金石書畫家潤例. (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 2004).
Some traditional scholars has slighted the commercial persuasion created by the symbolism in shop signs in popular culture. However, for a trained eye in calligraphy, there are still multifarious examples of historical traces of calligraphy left by nameless calligraphers. These works of calligraphy strategically placed in the urban space are place-specific. To appreciate the art of public display of calligraphy, the beholder has to perform a peripatetic reading which necessitates the actual participation to move through the urban space. It is in this sense that such calligraphy becomes an urban *moya shike* 摩崖石刻 (cliff inscription) (Fig. 67). This writing when executed in large character marks the urban space with special kind of identity. Even though the less legible script cannot be easily deciphered by a general beholder in city, its archaic feeling still links to the identity of Chinese traditions.
Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the calligraphy display in urban space and its function as identity markers of the space. Through the thematic examination into public venues with calligraphy display originated from political, recreational, religious and commercial background, the interplay of these elements can be seen interwoven with each other. The thematic approaches serve jointly as a platform for discussion which is not mutually exclusive.

From this investigation, it is clear that even in the age of electronic communication in virtual space, calligraphy still can find its place in the urban area, as urban space provides a necessary setting for the placement of physical elements which can be used as a vehicle of communication. Understanding meaning is an experience unique to human beings who also show an affinity to urban living. And calligraphy when used as an architectural element in public venues has revealed its effectiveness in the codification of messages. Its flexibility and inclusiveness allow multiple levels of message encoding. Such flexibility and inclusiveness can also be discerned in the characters of Chinese language. This combination of written language and arts is a unique character of Chinese
The image of our city is a conglomerate product by the individual, group, institutions and government. To simplify the discussion, this thesis focuses on the image created by the quintessential form of Chinese arts – the brushstroke of calligraphy. The identity is mainly conveyed through the stylistic and textual aspects of calligraphy. Calligraphy as an elite art with a long established tradition has developed different stylistic approaches as an identity marker. This identity marker is mainly represented through the use of brushstroke style, structural arrangement, script type selection and personal modification. These devices allow many intricate affiliation developed by the calligraphic community as a way to create group identity. More importantly, these different aspects in the creation of identity are usually place-specific, so they can be used to create a spatial relationship. Such a creation of spatial order is fundamental to placemaking in the city.

In chapter three, two different calligraphy works by the political figure, Dr. Sun Yat-sen are used by the government to create a consciousness in the national identity. The personal brushworks due to his significance as the founding father
Large character writing of political ideal - *tian xia wei gong* 天下為公 (The world is for all) which is excerpted from *The Book of Rites* becomes a political motto. And the immensity of his ideal when collaborated with other architectural elements in a vast expansive greenery in the urban centre of verticality unquestionably creates a visual impact in space. Even though this particular construction has no place-specificity, the conscious intention to connect the park to the existing historical trail suffering from a lack in physical construction is still the essential marker in placemaking. The calligraphy works of handwritten personal letter of Sun in semi-cursive script is used to create a connection with the home to Furen Literary Society. This was the frequent meeting place for the revolutionaries and also Gage Street in close vicinity was the site where Yang Quyun was assassinated by Qing agents. The emotional content is well depicted by the letter content, calligraphy style and the ambience of a congested urban location flanked by buildings and alleyways on four sides.

Chapter four explores two urban parks which has strong historical reference to the origin of cessation of Hong Kong to the British. Even though both parks are designed as Chinese garden of a recreational nature, a comparison of the content
used in calligraphy shows a fundamental divergence in the treatment of historical content of the site. Through the comparison, it can be seen that textual reference in calligraphy content becomes a major marker which can be used to create a completely ahistorical allusion. The inconsistency is inadvertently divulged through the misuse of writing direction. The traditional practice of Chinese writing from left to right for horizontal tablet to create an archaic feeling is not complied by the calligrapher. Such divergence shows the influence of English reading direction even though the tablets used here are all written in Chinese only. This meticulous difference in the presentation of calligraphy shows a corresponding and basic difference in culture. Even in this trivial difference is the distinctive component of an identity.

Chapter five further delves into the use of calligraphy in religious venues. The findings show that diversity of styles and contents are borrowed from different aspects of culture to create the identity of religious shrines. And the use of calligraphy as a personal identity from monks, government officials or calligraphers has created a perception on the authentication and affiliation with religious practice. Such visual connection through the personal signatory on a tablet with text on religious ideal creates a communal identity. Based on this
common ground of religious belief, different identities are then incorporated into
the system. Deification of local official, myth on religious site, narrative on local
history and textual connection to ancient master are all effective vehicles for the
bringing together of identities to the place. Also, the local practice in using
calligraphy of Buddhist text as incantation and one-stroke character tactfully
appropriate the peculiarity of calligraphy stroke style to deliver a belief in the
power of religion. It can be seen that calligraphy is an indispensable media in the
creation of religious identity.

Chapter six investigates into the contribution by calligraphers in the creation of
commercial image in public venues. There is a large number of brushworks by
nameless calligraphers in the cityscape. Due to the drastic difference in urban
condition when compared to the traditional Chinese architecture, calligraphers
try to explore the unrealised potential of calligraphy as identity markers in urban
space. Besides the traditional horizontal tablet for shop front, there are various
modifications in the presentation of calligraphy as signs. Large character seal
script on blank wall of verticality, neon-light lit overhanging signboard, horizontal
tablet on parapet wall are all new ways of presentation in a completely different
spatial condition. This particular urban condition which puts emphasis on
commercial persuasion necessitates a choice of expressiveness in calligraphy style. Even though initiated from a commercial point of view, this expressiveness in urban space becomes an embodied image of calligrapher.

Based on the findings from this thematic investigation, the thesis opens up a new dimension in the understanding of brushworks of calligraphy. By reading the calligraphy in its urban context, it turns out that the text not only embodies the presence of the calligrapher but also links this presence to a richer spatial background. This crucial link between text, people and space is the fundamental activities for the creation of identity. The cognitive map or spatial narrative which forms the web of our understanding of urban space not only orients the movement of a city dweller, but also serves as identity markers of space. This current study limits its scope to an investigation only into public calligraphy work as the identity markers in urban space. This limitation is necessary in order to scale down the topic to a researchable extent, but it is also due to the peculiarity of Hong Kong as a cultural mix of the East and the West. This special condition in reading Chinese text within a mixed cultural background is of particular interest. Moreover, this is also the way a distinctive character of Chinese identity can be manifested within this background of profound influence of English culture.
This thesis is constrained by the scope in several aspects. Firstly, the thematic analysis provides only a simplistic platform for discussion which is limited in the sense that no single calligraphy work can be anatomized into discrete elements. And the components as identity markers are usually inter-related to form a complex web of signification. The current research only lays the groundwork for further detailed exploration. Secondly, notwithstanding the impossibility to stabilise the signified in the urban semiotics which is an interwoven web of relationship as postulated by Roland Barthes, this elementary view still contributes to a new perspective on our placemaking in the city. The focal point of the identity building may be as ephemeral as the phenomenon our city centre which is always changing its face. Thirdly, identity is a phenomena that evade simple definition, especially in city space which changes rapidly every day. And the complication of the situation is well-discussed by Kim Dovey on the account of theories of place. The phenomenon of a place cannot be simplified into essences but is always ambiguous. And this is the reason why the word “character” is used which shows this ambiguity.

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