

## A P P E N D I X 11

# THE SACRED HILL – SUNG WONG TOI

The *Sacred Hill* of the Sung Wong Toi played a part in the growth of Kai Tak Airport. First during the Japanese Occupation and later when the airfield came of age.

The dynasty of the Sung family began in 960 AD. It would endure for 319 years and end in anguish. Here is the story of its fall.

The House of Sung defeated by the terrible Kublai Khan was in disarray. To preserve the dynasty a hastily organised fleet sailed south hugging the coast. Day after day storms of severe magnitude whipped the sea to a frenzy. A break in the weather found many ships wallowing dangerously and barely afloat. While still far off, the captain of the leading vessel sighted a mountain that resembled a crouching lion. He considered this a good omen and the fleet sailed towards this mountain – now called Lion Rock.

The poor villagers who lived where Kowloon City now stands grew alarmed when they saw the fleet anchoring. Their faces showed amazement when a grand gentleman came ashore and announced that their young Emperor was aboard. He said that their Emperor needed shelter and food for himself and his retinue. He also needed men to repair his damaged ships.

Some say the grand gentleman was Counsellor Lok So-fu. Turning away he saw a great boulder at the crest of a hillock. Against the boulder rested some large rock slabs that protected the entrance to a cave. Here the 11-year-old Emperor spent many restful days. It became the Terrace of the Sung Dynasty Emperor or Sung Wong Toi. One day while gazing at the hills he saw in them the semblance of dragons, his symbol, the Royal of the Dragon Throne.

He counted the dragon shapes and made the number eight. He turned to his Counsellor and said: "Here are eight dragons."

"Nay, there are nine, your Majesty."

"Nine! I count only eight."

The Counsellor looked at the young emperor. "Truly your Majesty counts but eight, but seeing that your Majesty is in their midst, surely there are nine."

So, according to verbal legend, the district became known as Kau Lung meaning Nine Dragons, or, as the English tongue has it, Kowloon.



**LAST OF THE SUNG DYNASTY**

*Cheung Hing Bing – The Boy Emperor.*

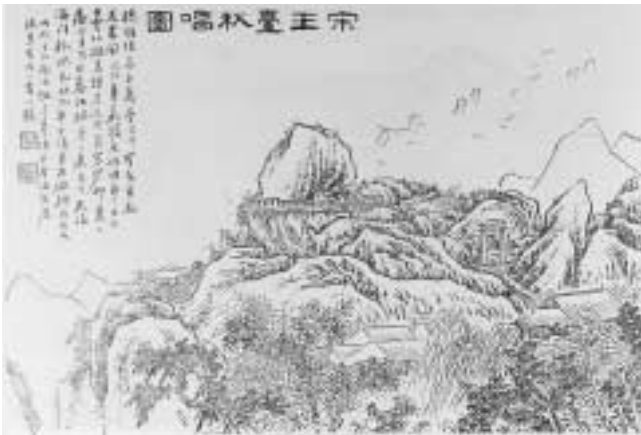
(Photo: Chui Clansmen, Hong Kong)



**COUNSELLOR LOK SO-FU**

*Drowned with the Boy Emperor.*

(Photo: Chui Clansmen, Hong Kong)



**SUNG HUANG TERRACE  
(SUNG WONG TOI)**

*AUTUMN by Wu Tak Yee (artist).*

(Photo: Chui Clansmen, Hong Kong)

**THE SACRED STONE OF  
THE SUNG c1923**

(Photo: Chui Clansmen, Hong Kong)





MY 1947 VISIT TO SUNG WONG TOI

(Photo: Author)

The story ends sadly. The fleet sailed out to give battle to the war-junks of Kublai Khan. They met disaster at the mouth of the Pearl River. With all lost, the faithful minister took the boy Emperor upon his back and leapt into the water. So, in the year of our Lord 1279 the House of Sung ceased to exist.

There is a variation on how Kau Lung, or Nine Dragons, got its name. The peaks from east to west are Razor Hill, Hebe Hill, Kau Lung Peak, Temple Hill, Crown Point, Lion Rock, Beacon Hill, Eagle's Nest, and Tai Mo Shan. From his Terrace the boy Emperor could see only eight of these peaks. Tai Mo Shan, the ninth, although the highest remained hidden by the others when seen from the ground.

During the Yuan Dynasty (1260-1368) an artisan engraved three characters Sung Wong Toi horizontally upon the western face of the rock. Later another engraver added seven characters vertically. These recorded repairs were carried out in 1807 AD in the Ting Mau Year of the Ching Emperor Ka Hing.

Hong Kong born Cliff Large played in the area in 1929. He recalled traces of the encircling stone balustrade. He also recalls the stone's characters were weathering. When I visited the Sacred Hill in 1947 I found it strewn with boulders of varying size and without grass. An elderly Clansman swept the base of the Toi while a capricious wind eddied dust wantonly. No trace remained of the stone balustrade built by Mr. Li Sui-Kam in 1915.

The Toi towered stark and lonely into an overcast sky with its once deeply etched characters crammed with mossy green mud. Here was a bleak reminder of a conqueror's reckless destruction.

In 1915, Professor Lai Chai-Hei (better known as Lai Sui-Hsi) of the University of Hong Kong petitioned the Government to preserve this ancient monument. In 1958, the Hong Kong Government acceded to his entreaty. As the perimeter of the new runway overlapped the Sacred Hill, they created a park W.S.W. of the airport, about 300 feet from the original site. Workmen dressed and there enshrined the Toi. On December 28, 1959, a moving ceremony confirmed this modern setting for an ancient artifact. This satisfied the Chui Clansmen, the ancient guardians of the Sung Wong Toi.



**THE GARDEN OF THE SUNG – 1957**

*Looking towards the checker-board, unpainted, and the Kowloon roundabout at mid-right. Next-door to the Trinity School I had my uniforms and shirts laundered. Ma Tau Chung Road, which passed in front of Trinity, carried little traffic. A vacant tract of land is seen to the right of Trinity. Olympic Avenue (in right foreground) is merely a dusty track. The whole atmosphere is without stress. How different today?*

(Photo: Author)



**THE GARDEN OF THE SUNG – 1972**

*Looking east across the Sung Garden with the Pioneer Concrete plant, for the Tunnel, at centre left. The splendid Terminal building stands at top left.*

(Photo: Author)