

Historic Building Appraisal

Ling To Monastery

Ha Tsuen, Yuen Long

Ling To Monastery (靈渡寺, Ling To Tsz) is one of the oldest monasteries in Hong Kong. Ling To, according to a tablet dated 1904 in the temple, literally means the Buddha saves common people's souls for rebirth. The monastery was legendarily built by a monk Bei Du (杯渡禪師) in the Eastern Jin (東晉, 317-420) dynasty. He came to Castle Peak (青山) first and then to Ling To Mountain (靈渡山) where he built the monastery. The original monastery was at the back of the present site but abandoned due to the dilapidation of the old structure. The 1927 built monastery had several repairs and was rebuilt in 1970 leaving the façade kept intact. The monastery was built for the worship of the Buddha, Kwan Tai (關帝) and Kwun Yam (觀音). The tablet inscribed in 1904 detailed the healing of a Tang Chung-wing (鄧寵榮) of Ha Tsuen (廈村) with the blessing of the Buddha. Also during the Japanese Occupation the guerrilla and children took refuge at the temple were saved by the Buddha from attack by the Japanese soldiers and from hunger. The historic monastery has a number of relics including a plaque written by Liang Yiu-shu (梁耀樞), a *zhuangyuan* (狀元) of the Qing (清) dynasty and a couplet by a famous Qing scholar Chen Feng (陳豐).

**Historical
Interest**

The monastery was built on a good *fung shui* location by the prominent Tang clan of Ha Tsuen. The building has undergone a number of repairs. The major ones in 1970 and 2002 have very much modernized the building. It is in the form of a traditional Qing vernacular building. A main row of halls for deities is at the back with another row of subsidiary halls to its front. In between is the courtyard parallel to the halls and at one end of the courtyard is the main entrance. The monastery, unlike other local temples in Hong Kong, does not have its entrance and main halls on the same central axis. For easy maintenance, modern materials are used such as its external walls covering with false green bricks. Decorations of the main ridges, gable friezes and fascia boards are either with plastered or carved mouldings of floral and Buddhist treasures motifs.

**Architectural
Merit**

A rare though modernized monastery which history reflects a part of Ha Tsuen's past.

Rarity

The building has little built heritage value due to recent rebuilt and alterations. Much repairs and rebuilds were carried out in the past centuries with a number recorded in 1840, 1861, 1927, 1970 and 2002. Little authenticity, perhaps the shape of the façade, of the monastery is kept.

**Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

Villagers of Ha Tsuen give tribute to the temple occasionally for the worship of the deities. Da Chiu (打醮) held every ten years will be organized.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***