

Historic Building Appraisal
Yuen Kwan Tai Temple
Mong Tseng Wai, Ping Shan, Yuen Long

Yuen Kwan Tai Temple (玄關帝廟) in Mong Tseng Wai (輞井圍) of Ping Shan (屏山) in Yuen Long is erected by villagers of Mong Tseng Wai and Mong Tseng Tsuen (輞井村). A bell in the temple, having a dating of the 31st year of the Kangxi (康熙, 1692) reign of the Qing dynasty, might indicate the construction time of the temple. Yuen Tai (玄帝), or Pak Tai (北帝), is a brave warrior of the Taoist Heavenly Empire most respected by sailors and fishermen. Kwan Tai (關帝) renowned for his bravery too, is a symbol of loyalty and righteousness. The two deities are always placed together for worship by those of the police, martial arts, forces or other trades. *Historical Interest*

The temple is a three-hall structure with a courtyard between the front and middle hall. The end hall, the biggest among others, houses the two deities with others at its altars. Two annex chambers, lower in height, were added to its right and left. The building is a Qing vernacular temple with flush gable roofs for the front and end halls. *Wok Yee* (鑊耳) gables of the middle hall are constructed between the pitched gables. They are said to be the ‘gold’ type of the Five Elements (五行) Gables. The door frames of the entrance and the foundation base are of red sandstone which is most precious, auspicious and rarely use in Guangdong historic buildings. Eight column inside are also made of red sandstone. The moulding of a roaring dragon dominates the main ridge with other patterned decoration of geometric, floral and figurine motifs. Relief mouldings of landscape, plant and animals motifs are on the wall friezes. A six-angled well, built only by those having a *juren* (舉人) degree in the Qing Imperial Civil Service Examination, in front of the temple and an earth god shrine to the left are prominent historic structures of the village. *Architectural Merit*

It is one of the very few dual-deity temples of Yuen Tai and Kwan Tai in Hong Kong. *Rarity*

The *Wok Yee* gable and red sandstone columns and door frames are outstanding features of the temple. The temple stands as a witness structure to record the development of the historic Ping Shan having a high built heritage value. *Built Heritage Value*

Numerous renovations have been carried out to the temple. Recent ones seem to be neglecting the originality of the building such as replacing some of *Authenticity*

the purlins with concrete ones.

Pak Tai's and Kwan Tai's birthdays are respectively on the 3rd day of the third and 13th day of the fifth lunar months. Not much celebration is held at the festivals as in the past having lion dance, opera performances and special offerings. However during the Da Chiu (打醮) of Ha Tsuen, the two deity statues will be on sedan chairs for worship and to 'watch' other functions. The dragon heads of the dragon boats of the two villages are placed in the temple altars for safe custody and installed onto the boats for racing during the Dragon Boat Festival (端午節). The west chambers has once converted for use as a kindergarten but is now closed.

***Social Value,
& Local
Interest***