

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Tsing Shan Monastery – “Heung Hoi Ming Shan” *Pai-lau***  
**Castle Peak, Tuen Mun**

Much have been mentioned in county gazetteers (縣志) and other sources on Castle Peak (青山, literally meaning green mountain) in Tuen Mun. It was said that Master Pei Tu (杯渡禪師, water-crossing on a cup ) from Southeast Asia visited the mountain in the Lau Song dynasty (劉宋, 420-479). The mountain had since then long been called Pei Tu Mountain (杯渡山), or holy mountain, for its association with the eminent monk. Master Pei Tu then returned to Southeast Asia in his old age. The story goes that after his departure, the Pei Tu Cave (杯渡岩) he had resided was worshipped by a nun, who also established a Buddhist nun hermit (菴堂). In 1829, the To (陶) clan, which had settled in Tuen Mun since the fifteenth century, built a Taoist temple named Tsing Wan Kwun (青雲觀) and the nuns moved into the temple. The site was then extensively redeveloped from the late 1910s by Chan Chun-ting (陳春亭), a successful merchant and Buddhist enthusiast who later bestowed as Master Hin Ki (顯奇法師). He purchased lots of the adjoining land starting from 1910. With his effort, the Tsing Shan Monastery (青山禪院) first constructed in the 1910-1920s became a renowned Buddhist monastery, one of the biggest in the territory attracting overseas and local worshippers and tourists.

*Historical  
Interest*

The monastery at the mid-level of Castle Peak is some 160 metres above sea level. It is composed of building complexes clustered up the southern slope. The site is dominated by the main terrace including the “Heung Hoi Ming Shan” *pai-lau* (「香海名山」牌樓), the Mountain Gatehouse (山門), the Main Hall (大雄寶殿), the Hall for the Protection of the Law (護法殿), the Bodhisattva and Ksitigarbha Hall (菩提薩埵殿), the Hall of Merit (功德堂, alias Ancestral Hall, 祖堂), the Guest Hall (客堂), a dormitory (宿舍) and others. In its upper level are the Absolute Gate of the Law (「不二法門」牌樓), the Kwun Yam (Goddess of Mercy) Pavilion (觀音閣) and the Devotee’s Forest (居士林, alias Nunnery, 定厂).

*Architectural  
Merit*

The “Heung Hoi Ming Shan” *pai-lau* built in 1929 is on the motor road leading to the monastery. It is a symmetrical three-bay four-column structure with a wider central bay to allow access for vehicles and devotees. It is built of reinforced concrete with washed granolithic finishes. Three horizontal flat plaques rest on the beams and a roof is supported by the two middle columns. At the front elevation, the middle plaque is engraved with four gilded characters Heung Hoi Ming Shan (香海名山, literally meaning fragrant sea and prestigious

mountain) written by the then Governor Sir Cecil Clementi (金文泰) who had visited the monastery in 1927 and 1928. At the back is another four characters, Wui Tau Shi Nong (回頭是岸, literally meaning repentance is salvation), written by Master Tit Shim (鐵禪法師). Inscriptions are also on the other plaques and columns. The roof is with green glazed pan-and-roll ceramic tiles. The ridge is with Shiwan (石灣) glazed ceramic decorations of two dragon fish locally known as *aoyu* (鰲魚), opera figurines and geometric pattern made by the Guangzhenxiang (廣禎祥) kiln selected by Wah Chun (華珍) company of Hong Kong.

The monastery has a historical link of Buddhist and Taoist development in the holy mountain for a period of over 1,500 years. It is a rare Chinese religious complex among other temples and monasteries in Hong Kong. The oldest structures of the monastery though only built in the 1910s-1920s have considerable built heritage value to recapture the long and much talk-about history of the site and area. After the monastery's completion in late 1920s, a number of repairs and reconstruction took place.

***Rarity, Built  
Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

The monastery has attracted thousands of visitors until the 1970s when it became comparatively less attractive. It has been serving a renowned venue for religious worship, as well as for retreat, rest and sight-seeing. Distinguished visitors include the former Governor Sir Cecil Clementi (金文泰) in 1927-1928 and Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東).

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

The various buildings and structures in the compound have co-related group value.

***Group Value***