

Historic Building Appraisal
Kwun Yam Temple
Station Lane, Hung Hom, Kowloon

The Kwun Yam Temple (觀音廟) in Station Lane, Hung Hom, stands on a *fung shui* site facing the sea. It was built in the twelfth year of the Tongzhi reign (同治十二年(1873)) during the Qing (清) dynasty by residents of Hung Hom Sam Yeuk Sor (紅磡三約所) for the worship of Kwun Yam, Goddess of Mercy. Together with the temple a Kung Sor (公所), a communal office, and a school were built to its left and right for the benefit of the then farming community. The two buildings were later demolished. The temple has been managed by a Kaifong Worship Committee and by the Chinese Temples Committee (華人廟宇委員會) since 1929. The temple building was spared from bombing during the Second World War, though its surroundings were levelled.

Historical Interest

The temple is a Qing vernacular building constructed with elegant materials on a two-hall-one-courtyard plan with a big deity hall in the middle and two narrow side halls connecting to its left and right. The entrance is fronted by two open terraced platforms on either side which are supported by a system of nicely-carved granite columns and wooden brackets. The roofs are all in simple flush gable style except the covered courtyard in the middle in hip-and-gable style. The main ridge is the most decorated part of the temple with plastered carvings and Shiwan (石灣) ceramics including two dragon fish, locally known as *aoyus* (鰲魚), two dragons, opera figurines, auspicious geometric and floral patterns.

Architectural Merit

It is one of the biggest and typical Kwun Yam temples and the most popular one in Hong Kong. It is of high heritage value and is the best preserved Kwun Yam temple in the territory.

Rarity & Built Heritage Value

Renovations were carried out to the temple with a number recorded in 1889, 1910 and 1988. They are sympathetic to the building.

Authenticity

The Kwun Yam's birthdays are on the 19th days of the second, sixth, ninth and the eleventh lunar months corresponding to its birth (誕), ordination (受戒), deification (登仙) and sea-goddess assumption day (入海為神) respectively. The 26th day of the first lunar month is the day when the activity of Kwun Yam Je Fu, (觀音借庫, that is, Kwun Yam lending treasure (money 富) to ordinary people) is held. At the time, the temple will be crowded with numerous worshippers from different areas of the territory seeking 'treasure' from the deity.

Social Value & Local Interest

There are no other graded historic buildings in the vicinity of Kwun Yam Temple.

Group Value