

Historic Building Appraisal
Chat Shing Temple
Kwun Hang, Shap Sze Heung, Tai Po

Chat Shing Temple (七聖古廟) in Kwun Hang (官坑) village of Shap Sze Heung (十四鄉), Tai Po, is for the worship of the Seven Fairies (七姐) and the Mother of Heaven (王母, Wong Mo 黃母 or Mazu 媽祖). It is also said the Chat Shing, seven stars, refers to seven pebbles caught in the sea by a fishermen in Nai Chung (泥涌) nearby who erected the temple as the pebbles rewarded him with great catch. The villagers regarded the seven pebbles as the Seven Fairies. The temple was built in the 27th year of the Qianlong (乾隆, 1762) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty as a bronze bell of the temple has the dating inscribed on it. *Historical Interest*

The temple is a Qing vernacular building of a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. A side chamber of equal length is later added to its right. The temple was constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs. The entire temple was renovated and redressed with new materials in 1998. Its external walls are covered with red glazed tiles and false brick lines. Its roofs are covered with green glazed tiles. The roofs are turned into reinforced concrete ones. The altar in the middle of the main hall houses the statues of the Seven Fairies and the Wong Mo whilst its left bay houses the statue of Kwan Tai (關帝) as well. The main ridge is with a pair of ceramic *aoyus* (鰲魚) and a pearl and plastered mouldings of dragons, unicorns, lions and geometric pattern. Its front façade is with wall friezes of flowers, rocks, birds, landscape and figures mouldings. Its gables are with mouldings of bats, plants and flowers motifs. *Architectural Merit*

It is the only temple of the Seven Fairies and Mother of Heaven in the territory. *Rarity*

It has considerable built heritage value. *Built Heritage Value*

The temple was renovated in 1896, 1908, 1928, 1969 and 1998. The last one has stripped away much of its authenticity. *Authenticity*

The temple has the patronage of the villagers as well as young couples seeking the blessing of the deities to give them happy ending. Those who would like to have children or the ladies who would like to be pregnant would seek their blessing also. The temple was also used as a venue for teaching village children after the Second World War accommodating 60 pupils. It ceased to function as a school when the Kwun Hang Public School (官坑公立學校) was *Social Value, & Local Interest*

rebuilt in the 1950s. The Sai Kung (North) Rural Committee set up in 1954 used the temple as its temporary office until its new building was completed in 1967. The building and its open ground were used as a place for movie shooting especially for the scenes of martial arts. During the Second World War, a member of the East River Column (東江縱隊), Ng Sau (吳壽), was beheaded and his head hanged on a big banyan tree in front of the temple by the Japanese.