

Historic Building Appraisal
Kuen Yuen Tung Monastery – Main Building
No. 138 Lo Wai, Tsuen Wan

Kuen Yuen Tung Monastery (乾元洞) in Lo Wai (老圍), Tsuen Wan, is a *Historical Interest* Taoist temple erected in 1958 by Yip Chak-lam (葉澤霖), a Taoist priest of the Tung Sin Se Sect (同善社) which advocates the harmonization of the Three Teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (三教合一). Yip was a follower of Huilonglaoren (迴龍老人) who was a worshipper of Xin Tin Dao (先天道) and established the Tung Sin Se Sect. Yip became a priest at 24 in Guangdong (廣東), came to Hong Kong in the 1950s and started his preaching business. Two separate smaller buildings to its left, Kwan Tong (坤堂) and a dormitory, both for female worshippers, were added in 1977. The monastery is open only to worshippers of the sect and should be applied in advance. It is regarded as a memorial hall of its founder, Yip Chak-lam.

The exact construction time of the main building is unknown. It might derive from a private Taoist monastery before 1958. The two-storey building is in Chinese Renaissance style having a three-bay layout. The upper floor was added in a renovation in 1968. It is constructed of concrete with its walls and beams to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The main hall on the ground floor is having a portrait of Yip Chak-lam in the middle of the wall for worship. U-shaped bedrooms are surrounding the main halls. The upper floor is mainly for worship with altars on all four sides of the storey. The deities include Lui Tso (呂祖), Jade Emperor (玉皇大帝), Man Cheong (文昌), Dou Mo (斗姆) and others. Five types of fruits of green, red, yellow, white and black colours representing the Five Elements (五行) are on the offering tables. Soul tablets of Huilonglaoren, Yip's master, and others were also enshrined at the side altars. Above the recessed entrance is a balcony of the upper floor with the name of the monastery and two circular patterns of a dragon on the balcony wall. Its ridge is decorated with two ceramic *aoyus* (鰲魚) and a pearl. The roof is covered with green ceramic tiles. *Architectural Merit*

The monastery is a Taoist temple to witness the development of Taoism in Hong Kong. *Rarity*

It has some built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

It is in good condition. Its authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with the Kwan Tong and the dormitory buildings.

Group Value

Festivals of the deities are celebrated in the monastery with scripture recitation and vegetarian meal. Most of the important ceremonies and rituals of the sect are held in the headquarters of the monastery on Hong Kong Island. Worshippers from Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand made visits to the headquarters. The monastery has participated in a number of community services including donations to the Project Hope (希望工程) for the building of three schools in Guangdong province including one called Kuen Yuen Tung Hope Primary School (乾元洞希望小學) in Meihuazhen (梅鎮花) of Lechangshi (樂昌市).

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*