

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Tai Wong Old Temple

#### No. 26C Cheung Shing Street, Yuen Long Kau Hui, Yuen Long

Yuen Long Kau Hui (元朗舊墟, literally, Yuen Long Old Market) is in the north-east of the present Yuen Long town centre with Nam Pin Wai (南邊圍) and Sai Pin Wai (西邊圍) in its south and west. The market lied along three streets where shops of mixed trades were located. Cheung Shing Street (長盛街) is the longest one. The other two shorter streets, Lee Yick Street (利益街) and Wine Street (酒街), form a parallel pair. There were two entrance gates to the market – Tung Mun Hau (東門口) and Nam Mun Hau (南門口), which were locked up after the market hours to guard against theft and robbery. Two temples, inns and pawnshops were also in the market.

*Historical  
Interest*

Yuen Long Kau Hui was established during the reign of Kangxi emperor (康熙) under the leadership of Tang Man-wai (鄧文蔚). Tang was a 23<sup>rd</sup> generation member of the Kam Tin Tang Clan who attained a jin-shi (進士) degree and then decided to move the market from Tai Kiu Tun (大橋墩) to the present site. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the market was a hub of commercial activities of the Hong Kong region. Farmers, boat people and traders came as far as from the coastal districts of Guangdong province (廣東省) to buy and sell agricultural produce and daily necessities.

Tai Wong Old Temple (大王古廟) was established at the same time as the old market. It was built for the worship of two Tai Wongs, literally great kings, Hung Shing Tai Wong (洪聖大王) and Yeung Hau Tai Wong (楊侯大王), the former being a governor in the Tang dynasty (唐朝, 618-907) legendarily an expert of geography and weather forecast very much worshipped by seafaring traders and fishermen whilst the latter was a marquis in the Southern Song dynasty (南宋, 1127-1279) reputed for his loyalty. The temple is built on the most busiest street of the market. Other than for worship and religious ceremonies, the temple was a venue for solving disputes and discussing market affairs among the villagers.

It is a Qing vernacular temple having a two-hall structure with a courtyard in between. The building has strong granite bases and columns with its load bearing gables and timber brackets to support the roofs. The main ridge is decorated with mouldings of geometric and auspicious treasures patterns whilst the curling ridges of its gables have curling grass pattern. The external wall friezes are relief mouldings of flowers-and-birds, scroll-and-treasures patterns and the gable friezes are mainly black-and-white painted floral patterns. The external walls have been painted with false brick lines. The inscriptions of renovation – part of

*Architectural  
Merit*

them had already been worn off, which are affixed on the interior walls of the temple, tell the stories of the old market.

The temple housing two Tai Wongs under one single roof is rare in Hong Kong especially in the Old Market having a history of nearly 300 years. **Rarity**

The building on the whole is kept intact having a high built heritage value. **Built Heritage Value & Authenticity**

The repairs in the past had only little adverse effect on its integrity.

It has group value with other historic buildings in the old market, including Yuen Kwan Yi Tai Temple (玄關二帝廟), Chun Yuen Pawn House (晉源押) and other shop-cum-residence buildings. **Group Value**

Market days fell on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> days of each of the three ten-day periods of every lunar month; on these days, the place would be bustling with traders involved in the buying and selling of agricultural produce (e.g. rice, vegetables, sugar cane, wine, fish, meats, soy sauce, spices), farming and kitchen utensils, furniture and all kinds of daily necessities. **Social Value & Local Interest**

The market operated from 6 a.m. until dusk. It was managed by Kwong Yu Tong (光裕堂), a trust of a branch of the Kam Tin Tang Clan. The market was getting less prosperous and shops were closing down since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in face of competition of other markets especially when the Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) in its southwest opened in 1915.

The temple is still popular for the villagers in the area. It is frequently visited by locals and tourists to the old market.

The question of adaptive re-use does not arise. **Adaptive Re-use**