

Historic Building Appraisal

Pun Uk

Au Tau, Yuen Long

Pun Uk (潘屋, literally, Mansion of the Puns) in Au Tau (凹頭) of Yuen Long is a traditional Hakka house built by Pun Kwan-min (潘君勉, 1882-1968) in 1934 to commemorate his father Pun Yum-wah (潘蔭華). A name board inscribed with Chinese characters “蔭華廬” (“Mansion of Yum Wah”) is placed above the entrance. Pun Kwan-min was a Hakka (客家) born in Meixian (梅縣) of Guangdong (廣東) province. He came to Hong Kong at the age of 16 and worked as an apprentice. He became a manager in a Hakka imports and exports firm and later started his own business. His business included exports, banking, textiles and printing. He was the founder and first president of the Ka Ying Chow Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (旅港嘉屬商會) and the founder and first vice-president of the Nanyang Importers & Exporters Association in Hong Kong (香港南洋輸出入商會) whose members were mainly Hakka businessmen.

**Historical
Interest**

Pun Kwan-min also supported the revolution of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) and made donation to the revolutionary group Tongmenghui (同盟會). Marshal Ye Jian-ying (葉劍英), also a Hakka, was a friend of Pun Kwan-min and Ye had stayed in his house with his family in 1938. During the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945) the owner of Pun Uk took care of Ye's family in Hong Kong. Guo Mo-rou (郭沫若), a well known scholar, had received the financial support of Pun Kwan-min and came to visit him at Pun Uk. The house was used by the Japanese as a military headquarter during Hong Kong's wartime period (1941-1945) when the Puns had fled to the Chinese mainland.

Pun Uk is a traditional Hakka mansion of Qing (清) vernacular design. It is in a two-hall-two-row (兩堂兩橫) plan with a semi-circular pond in front taking *fung shui* principles for its building design and environmental settings. Suen Tin-long (孫天朗), a builder from Meixian was invited to take charge of the construction with the help of three Meixian artisans respectively in charge of its woodcarving, mason and painting works. Major building materials were from Shantou (汕頭), Foshan (佛山) and Guangzhou (廣州). The project cost some sixty thousand silver coins which was a big sum at the time. The building is symmetrical with a core hall-courtyard-hall in the middle which are individually flanked by side rooms and side halls. To their left and right are a row of 5 rooms separated by an open lane. The building is constructed of green bricks with its walls, granite columns to support its flush gable roofs of timber rafters, purlins and ceramic clay tiles. Its entrance is with an exquisitely carved timber bracket system having a pair of gilded lions. The mansion is

**Architectural
Merit**

thus commonly called Sz Tsz Uk (獅子屋, Mansion of the Lions). The building is highly decorated with wall paintings, carvings and plastered mouldings of auspicious motifs of plant, flowers, birds and animals and characters.

It is a Hakka house of high rarity in Hong Kong.

Rarity

The house is of extremely high built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value &***

The house is left vacated and is deteriorating in need of upkeep and maintenance. Its authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

The main hall had an altar with photographs of Pun Kwan-min, his wife and father for worship. It had the visits of many distinguished guests including Lady Youde, wife of the Governor Sir Edward Youde in 1983.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***