

Historic Building Appraisal
Shrine
Kat Hing Wai, Kam Tin, Yuen Long

Kat Hing Wai (吉慶圍) established in the Chinghua reign (成化, 1465-1487) of the Ming (明) dynasty was one of the oldest villages in Kam Tin (錦田). The ancestors of the Tangs had settled in Kam Tin as far back as in the Southern Song dynasty (南宋, 1127-1279). The walls enclosing Kat Hing Wai were built by Tang Chue-yin (鄧珠彥) and Tang Chik-kin (鄧直見) in the early years of the Kangxi reign (康熙, 1662-1722) of the Qing (清) dynasty to protect the villagers from pirates and other enemies. In the 1899 occupation of the New Territories by the British army, the walls were partly destroyed and the wrought iron gate at its front entrance was seized and then stored in the residence of the then Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Henry Blake, in Ireland. After decades the iron gate was returned with the help of a notable member of the Tang clan, Tang Pak-kau (鄧伯裘, 1876-1950), and reinstalled back to the entrance. Parts of the enclosing walls were repaired after the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945). The moat surrounding Kat Hing Wai except the northern and eastern portions was filled up in the early 1980s.

***Historical
Interest***

The existing wai of Qing dynasty design is some 8,500 square metres in a near square form around 84 metres by 88 metres with a symmetrical plan having 6 rows of west-facing dwelling units on each side divided by the east-west central axis. Four watchtowers were built at its four corners whilst its entrance gate is at the west-facing wall at the central axis with the shrine at the far opposite end of the eastern wall. Attached to the walls, some 6 to 7 metres high, were small houses. The entire wai was constructed mainly of green bricks.

***Architectural
Merit***

The shrine is a one-hall pitched-roof building with the altar at the northern end wall housing tablets of the ancestors and of over 20 deities for worship. The gables of the shrine are the most outstanding features, in *wok yee* (鑊耳) design, having curling grass pattern on their friezes. Corbelling eaves are on the enclosing walls easy for draining the rainwater.

Being one of the biggest preserved walled villages in Hong Kong and its over 700 years' historic tie with Kam Tin, Kat Hing Wai is extremely rare.

Rarity

It is a typical sizable wai of the Qing design having high built heritage value. Though quite a number of old village houses have been replaced by modern ones and repairs to the wai has not been at all satisfactory, its authenticity has not been

***Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

affected.

The entrance gate, shrine and the corner watchtowers are inter-related having their own group value. ***Group Value***

Due to its lengthy history, size and outlook attractions, Kat Hing Wai has been frequently visited by tourists and locals. Villagers in the wai still participate in activities of Kam Tin such as Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) and Da Chiu (打醮). ***Social Value, & Local Interest***