

Historic Building Appraisal
Tsing Shan Monastery – Dormitory
Castle Peak, Tuen Mun

Much have been mentioned in county gazetteers (縣志) and other sources on Castle Peak (青山, literally meaning green mountain) in Tuen Mun. It was said that Master Pei Tu (杯渡禪師, water-crossing on a cup) from Southeast Asia visited the mountain in the Lau Song dynasty (劉宋, 420-479). The mountain had since then long been called Pei Tu Mountain (杯渡山), or holy mountain, for its association with the eminent monk. Master Pei Tu then returned to Southeast Asia in his old age. The story goes that after his departure, the Pei Tu Cave (杯渡岩) he had resided was worshipped by a nun, who also established a Buddhist nun (菴堂). In 1829, the To (陶) clan, which had settled in Tuen Mun since the fifteenth century, built a Taoist temple named Tsing Wan Kwun (青雲觀) and the nuns moved into the temple. The site was then extensively redeveloped from the late 1910s by Chan Chun-ting (陳春亭), a successful merchant and Buddhist enthusiast who later bestowed as Master Hin Ki (顯奇法師). He purchased lots of the adjoining land starting from 1910. With his effort, the Tsing Shan Monastery (青山禪院) first constructed in the 1910-1920s became a renowned Buddhist monastery, one of the biggest in the territory attracting overseas and local worshippers and tourists.

*Historical
Interest*

The monastery at the mid-level of Castle Peak is some 160 metres above sea level. It is composed of building complexes clustered up the southern slope. The site is dominated by the main terrace including the “Heung Hoi Ming Shan” *pai-lau* (「香海名山」牌樓), the Mountain Gatehouse (山門), the Main Hall (大雄寶殿), the Hall for the Protection of the Law (護法殿), the Bodhisattva and Ksitigarbha Hall (菩提薩埵殿), the Hall of Merit (功德堂, alias Ancestral Hall, 祖堂), the Guest Hall (客堂), a dormitory (宿舍) and others. In its upper level are the Absolute Gate of the Law (「不二法門」牌樓), the Kwun Yam (Goddess of Mercy) Pavilion (觀音閣) and the Devotee’s Forest (居士林, alias Nunnery, 定厂).

*Architectural
Merit*

The Dormitory was constructed in the 1920s to provide accommodation for monks and the aged. It is a two-storey rectangular building of three bays having a verandah on the ground floor and a balcony on the upper floor at its front facade. The balcony and the verandah are with vase-shaped pottery balusters. The building is in symmetrical design having its entrance at the middle chamber accessible from the verandah platform. The building is built of grey brickwork supporting its gable roofs of concave and convex unglazed tiles.

The middle chamber on the ground floor is the living room with a gilded statue of Buddha housed in a glass case with offerings in front. Two rooms are on each side of the rooms for private quarters and for storage. At the end of the middle chamber on the upper floor is an altar housing a Buddha statue in a glass case, two smaller Buddha figurines and various offerings. Two rooms are also on each side of the middle chamber for use as an office, a meeting room and a washroom.

The monastery has a historical link of Buddhist and Taoist development in the holy mountain for a period of over 1,500 years. It is a rare Chinese religious complex among other temples and monasteries in Hong Kong. The oldest structures of the monastery though only built in the 1910s-1920s have considerable built heritage value to recapture the long and much talk-about history of the site and area. After the monastery's completion in late 1920s, a number of repairs and reconstruction took place.

***Rarity, Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

The monastery has attracted thousands of visitors until the 1970s when it became comparatively less attractive. It has been serving a renowned venue for religious worship, as well as for retreat, rest and sight-seeing. Distinguished visitors include the former Governor Sir Cecil Clementi (金文泰) in 1927-1928 and Sir Robert Ho Tung (何東).

***Social Value,
& Local
Interest***

The various buildings and structures in the compound have co-related group value.

Group Value