

Historic Building Appraisal
Mo Tai Temple
Nos. 156-162 Hai Tan Street, Sham Shui Po

Mo Tai Temple (武帝廟), also known as Kwai Tai Temple (關帝廟), in Hai Tan Street (海壇街) of Sham Shui Po (深水埗) was constructed before the 17th year of Guangxu (光緒, 1891) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty as a stone renovation tablet in the temple has the dating inscribed on it. The temple was established for the worship of Kwan Tai by local communities, especially the traders of different businesses, workers of the police and forces, those with martial arts and others. Sham Shui Po at the time had already been developed into a place of small business where the nearby ferry provided cross-harbour link with the Hong Kong Island. The locals were in need of the deity's blessing in their security of life and property. It is now managed by the Chinese Temples Committee (華人廟宇委員會).

Historical Interest

The temple is a Qing vernacular building of a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. The courtyard between the entrance and main halls has been covered. The building is constructed of grey brickwork with its walls and granite columns to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The roof of the courtyard is with hip-and-gable style. Its entrance is with a side platform on either side supported by two granite columns and a wooden bracket system with carvings. The roofs are covered with green glazed tiles and its ridges with geometric mouldings and flowers and rocks paintings. A pair of ceramic dragon fish, locally known as *aoyus* (鰲魚), is on its ridges. A pearl is in the middle of the ridge of the entrance hall. The name of the temple is engraved on the lintel above the entrance doorway flanked with a pair of couplets. The altar at the main hall houses the statue of Kwan Tai in the middle with Man Cheong (文昌) to its right and Chu Lap Tai Sin (朱立大仙) to its left. The statues of Kwun Yam (觀音) and Pau Kung (包公) are on the altars of the side bays for worship.

Architectural Merit

It is the only historic temple mainly dedicated to Kwan Tai in Kowloon, and has some built heritage value. However, it has been partially renovated with modern materials.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

A proposal was made to remove the temple for development in the area in 1922. It was objected by the temple management and most importantly its income contributed to the upkeep of the Sham Shui Po Public Dispensary (深水埗公立醫局) at its back other than the temple itself.

Social Value, & Local Interest

The Mo Temple Temple is within walking distance of other historic buildings, such *Group Value* as the Sham Shui Po Public Dispensary (Grade 2), Tin Hau Temple (天后廟, Grade 3) in Yee Kuk Street (醫局街) and No. 170 Yee Kuk Street (Grade 2).