

Historic Building Appraisal
Kwan Tai Temple
Kat Hing Back Street, Tai O, Lantau

Kwan Tai Temple (關帝古廟) in Kat Hing Back Street (吉慶後街) of Tai O (大澳), Lantau, was originally built in the Hongzhi (弘治, 1488-1505) reign of the Ming (明) dynasty. It was rebuilt on the same site in the 6th year of the Qianlong (乾隆, 1741) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty and a bell in the temple has the year inscribed on it. The temple for the worship of Kwan Tai (關帝), a symbol of braveness, righteousness and royalty, is most respected by the soldiers, forces, those of martial arts and traders. A plaque in the temple dated the 2nd year of the Xianfeng (咸豐, 1852) reign of the Qing dynasty recorded the donation of a renovation sponsored by a number of naval troops of the Guangdong (廣東) forces. Tai O on the north-western coast of Lantau was a village of fishing and salt production which salt was famous as far back as in the Song (宋, 960-1279) dynasty. A Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) is on the left which is about one third of its width and of equal length. It was built in the 37th year (1772) of the Qianlong reign of the Qing dynasty.

*Historical
Interest*

The temple is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of a three-bay layout. The courtyard between the entrance and main halls has been covered. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls and columns to support the pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls have been plastered. Its walls on the front façade have been with imitation brick lines. Its doorframe, wall corners and lower courses of the front walls are with granite. The middle bay of the main hall houses the statue of Kwan Tai for worship. The altar of the left bay houses Tai Sui (太歲), God of Wealth (財帛星君) and Tai San (太神) whilst that of the right bay houses Wah Tor (華陀). Some other deities are also worshipped at the temple including Kwan Ping (關平), Wong Ling Kwun (王靈官), Yue Tau Tai Wong (魚頭大王) and others. The main ridge is with Shiwan (石灣) ceramics made by the Gungyuk (均玉) kiln in the 25th year of the Guangxu (光緒, 1899) reign. They include a set of Two Phoenixes Adorning the Sun (雙鳳朝陽), Yeung's Military Family (楊家將), two *aoyus* (鰲魚), a pearl and two unicorns. The descending ridges are with *ruilongs* (夔龍) mouldings. The wall friezes are with landscape and figure paintings and reliefs. Its fascia boards are with flowers, plants and figures carvings.

*Architectural
Merit*

It is a Kwan Tai temple to witness the history and settlement of Tai O.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value. The Shiwan (石灣) ceramics decoration on the ridge is one of the best preserved samples among the Chinese historic buildings in the territory.

***Built Heritage
Value
Authenticity***

The temple was renovated in 1741, 1835, 1852, 1903, 1959, 1975, 1987 and 1997. Its authenticity is kept.

It has group value with the Tin Hau Temple next door.

Group Value

Kwan Tai Festival (關帝誕) and Kwan Ping Festival (關平誕), son of Kwan Tai, were celebrated on the 24th of the sixth and 13th of the fifth lunar months respectively in the playground in front of the temple in the form of Cantonese opera performance (神功戲).

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