

Historic Building Appraisal

Sin Wai Nunnery

Ho Sheung Heung, Sheung Shui

Sin Wai Nunnery (仙慧庵) in Ho Sheung Heung (河上鄉), Sheung Shui, was built by a Tang Chuen-ho (鄧專好) in 1919. She was a village girl from Kam Tin (錦田), Yuen Long, who was married to a Liu (廖) of Sheung Shui Wai (上水圍). The marriage was not a real one as the bridegroom was represented by a cock. She fled to Ho Sheung Heung where she helped the grandmother of Hau Tai-hong (侯泰康), a rich man and a local representative of the area, in a lawsuit. She was given a piece of land where she built the nunnery. It houses Kwun Yam (觀音), Sakyamuni (釋迦牟尼佛), Kshitigarbha Buddha (地藏菩薩) and Skanda (韋馱) for worship. The nunnery adopted girls from poor families providing them with accommodation and their education at the Ho Kai School (河溪學校) nearby. They were taken care of by the nuns in the nunnery. Some of the adopted girls could become nuns.

**Historical
Interest**

The nunnery is a Qing (清) vernacular building of a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. A connected annex of two compartments to its left was added later for cow and pig rearing and for service and kitchen use. The open courtyard between the entrance and main halls has been roofed with semi-transparent sheets. Side rooms are on both side of the halls and courtyard. Rooms on the upper floors are mainly bedrooms. The pig pens and cow sheds of the annex have been converted for residential use. The building is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The finely-carved altar in the middle of the main hall houses the statues of the Buddhas for worship. Internally the walls have been painted whilst its external walls are remained in fair face. The main ridge is with curling ends mouldings for decoration. Wall friezes are with plastered mouldings of plum and other flowers and calligraphy.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is one of the nunneries in Hong Kong.

Rarity

It has considerable built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Despite some later added fixtures, the authenticity of the building is kept.

Authenticity

The nunnery is not open to the public. It does invite nuns from other nunneries to come to chant Buddhist scriptures on the Buddha's Birthday on the 8th of the fourth lunar month. It was self-sufficient in the old days which reared cows and pigs. It has its own orchard growing fruit trees which produce were

**Social Value,
& Local
Interest**

sold in the Sheung Shui Market. Tang Chuen-ho could cure illness for the villagers of Ho Sheung Heung. She was a *wenmi* (問米) lady who had the ability to communicate with the nether world.