

Historic Building Appraisal

Tin Hau Temple

No. 182 Aberdeen Main Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong

This Tin Hau temple (天后古廟) was founded by some Aberdeen fishermen in the 1st year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng 咸豐 (1851). Most Tin Hau temples are located on seashores. The Aberdeen Tin Hau Temple is no exception. However, with reclamation which took place over the years, the temple is now away from the coast and surrounded by bustling streets. Tin Hau (Queen of Heaven) is a patron deity of seafaring folks in the coastal provinces of Guangdong (廣東) and Fujian (福建). Since Aberdeen was originally a fishing village, local fishermen built this temple to look upon Tin Hau as the goddess for safety on the sea. Apart from the main deity of Tin Hau, the temple also houses Choi Bak Sing Gwan (財帛星君, Goddess of Wealth), Kwun Yum (觀音, Goddess of Mercy), Wong Tai Sin (黃大仙, one of the goddesses of Medicine) and Wah Tor (華陀, one of the goddesses of Medicine).

*Historical
Interest*

The administration of the temple was formerly in the hands of a Kaifong Temple Worship Committee which appointed a keeper to look after the temple. The Committee also arranged annual theatrical performance and the scramble for luck during the Tin Hau Festival. Since 1929 the temple has been put under the management of the Chinese Temples Committee (華人廟宇委員會, CTC). In 1999 the CTC rebuilt the temple, preserving the undamaged ridge, stone columns and historic relics.

The temple is a two-hall type building with a courtyard in between. It is situated on a recessed site. There is a flight of steps down the main entrance door. At the recessed entrance the name of the temple is engraved in the lintel of the stone doorframe. In the entrance hall is a *dong-chung* (擋中). Roofs of timber rafters and purlins, laid with Chinese clay tiles, are supported by gable walls. The roof of the temple is decorated with pottery figurines of females along its ridge. At the rear of the temple is the main hall where the images of deities are kept. Apart from the main hall, there are side halls on both sides. One is the management office while the other is the bedroom of Tin Hau.

*Architectural
Merit*

Despite the rebuilding in 1999, the temple has preserved some historic building materials (e.g. the ridge and stone columns) and relics of the Qing Dynasty. The most notable relic is a copper bell cast in the 4th year of the reign of Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (1726) which was donated by some fishermen.

It is the only Tin Hau temple in Aberdeen. It witnesses the settlement of the fishermen in the area.

Rarity

The temple underwent renovations in 1873 and 1898. It was rebuilt in 1999, with the undamaged ridge, stone columns and historic relics preserved.

***Built Heritage
Value
Authenticity***

The temple has the patronage of Aberdeen fishing folks, mostly Hoklos. Other residents also come to pay homage to the deities. The busiest time of the temple is during the Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) on the 23rd day of the third lunar month. Many visitors also come in the beginning of the Chinese New Year to seek blessings and in the end of the year to offer thanksgiving to Tin Hau.

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

The question of adaptive re-use is not likely to arise in the foreseeable future.

***Adaptive
Re-use***