

Historic Building Appraisal
Pak Tai Temple
Stanley Main Street, Stanley

Pak Tai Temple (北帝廟) was built in 1805 from rocks on the hillside to the west of Stanley by the fishermen at which time Stanley was the biggest fishing village in Hong Kong having over 2,000 fishermen. Hanging over the cliff and facing the sea, it was built for the worship of the Taoist god Pak Tai who has been a deity the fishermen seeking his protection to pacify the sea other than Tin Hau (天后) and Hung Shing (洪聖). It is also said that the tiny temple was built by the renowned pirate Cheung Po-tsai (張保仔) and secret tunnels were constructed linking it up to the Cheung Po Tsai Cave (張保仔洞) in Chung Hom Kok (舂坎角) nearby. The tunnels were then filled up when Cheung surrendered to the Qing government. Other deities are also being served in the temple including Kwan Tai (關帝) and Kwun Yam (觀音). The temple was kept by villagers nearby especially those in Ma Hang Village (馬坑村). It was managed by the Chinese Temples Committee from 1938 and then by the Stanley Welfare Advancement Association (赤柱街坊福利會) from 1955 which has a long history developed from many local bodies serving the community for over a century.

Historical Interest

Built on a rubble-formed terrace along the seashore facing Stanley Bay, it is a humble structure with barely any decoration. The simple one-hall vernacular temple has white walls, pitched roof with green tiles having a low parapet wall at the cliff end running along the shore. It has no back wall and is in fact building from rocks, part of which levelled to become its altar housing the deities. The building has no column but its roof is supported by joists and purlins painted red.

Architectural Merit

The temple is rare as it has been kept in existence for 200 years. Its built heritage value lies not in its humble structure but its ties with the Stanley fishermen and villagers proving the lengthy history of Stanley. The cloud-shaped gong dated 1805 is the most valuable relic of the temple.

Rarity & Built Heritage Value

No record of its renovations are found in its early stages. It was repaired by the Chinese Temples Committee in 1955. Its cloud-shaped gong is the only evidence signifying its history of over 200 years. The building structure is modernized surely not in its Qing vernacular form and style.

Authenticity

The temple is celebrated on the 3rd day of the lunar month, the birthday of Pak Tai though not that much as those in Cheung Chau and in Wan Chai especially after the Ma Hang Village nearby was demolished in 1993. With the re-erection of the Murray House in the vicinity, tourists and locals are attracted to the area to visit the temple.

Social Value & Local Interest