

Historic Building Appraisal
Tin Hau Temple
Stanley Main Street, Stanley

The Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) in Stanley was built by the fishermen with the leadership of a Chan Shun-chak (陳信澤) in the 32nd year of Qianlong (乾隆) reign of the Qing dynasty (1767) at which time Stanley was the biggest fishing village on Hong Kong Island. The location of the temple is on a crab's head, whereas the entire Stanley village is like a crab, good for *fung shui*. Tin Hau has long been the patron deity of the fishermen who believe she will give protection to them to pacify the sea and to ward off other dangers as well. When two shells hit the temple during the Japanese Occupation, they did not explode saving a lot of people who took shelter at the temple. At the time also a tiger was shot by the Japanese soldiers close to the temple. The tiger skin is still on display at the temple. The temple was managed by the Chinese Temples Committee in 1938 until 1959 when its management has been delegated to the Stanley Kaifong Association (赤柱街坊福利會). In 1962 the typhoon Wanda seriously damaged the temple which needed to be rebuilt.

Historical Interest

The temple is on a two-hall-one-courtyard plan with the end hall housing the Tin Hau deity and numerous other deities including Shing Wong (城隍), Kwan Kung (關公), Pak Tai (北帝) and others at the altars. The reconstruction in 1963 employed much modern materials for the temple such as a triangular timber trusses and most of its internal walls plastered. The plastered mouldings on the ridges, eave-boards and facade are of traditional as well as modern motifs including for example treasures, opera figurines, floral patterns of the former and peacock, dancing horses, flowers of the latter.

Architectural Merit

The rebuilt old temple having over 200 years of history is standing to identify the development of Stanley. The building though rebuilt in 1963 has its granite base, column base, plaques, couplets and others retained to prove its originality. The modernized building structure has very much minimize its built heritage value.

Rarity & Built Heritage Value

The temple has been restored in 1938, 1963 and 2002. The 1963 one was a rebuilt project after the typhoon Wanda's damage stripping much of its building authenticity.

Authenticity

Tin Hau's birthday on the 23rd day of the third lunar month will be celebrated at the temple though not as that much as before especially after the Ma Hang Village (馬坑村) nearby was demolished in 1993. The re-erection of the Murray House in the vicinity has attracted quite a number of tourists and locals to pay visits to the temple.

Social Value & Local Interest