

Historic Building Appraisal
Tin Hau Temple
Nga Yiu Tau, Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long

Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) also known as Tai Shu Ha Tin Hau Temple (大樹下天后廟, Tin Hau temple under the big tree), is situated in Nga Yiu Tau (瓦窰頭) of Shap Pat Heung (十八鄉), Yuen Long. It is legendarily said that the temple was built by the Tanka (蛋家) people 350 years ago by the side of a tree. A tablet at the temple with a dating of the year 1786 might indicate the earliest possible existence time of the temple. Another tablet on the temple's renovation with the year 1856 inscribed on it surely shows its existence. It is believed that the 1856 renovation was the adding of a chamber to the left of the temple which was later named Ying Yung Tsz (英勇祠) to commemorate those who died in a battle in 1899 against the British occupation of the New Territories. The temple was built for the worship of Tin Hau by many villagers of the area not merely Shap Pat Heung (literally 18 villages). In 1884 a Wing On She (永安社), almost the same size as the temple, was built to its right for the worship of Man Tai (文帝) and Mo Tai (武帝). Wing On She had since its erection also been used as a venue of a study hall for teaching children from nearby villages. A primary school was provided at the compound after the Second World War until 1962.

***Historical
Interest***

The temple extended in different stages is of Qing vernacular design. The added blocks are in one row parallel to the temple. Each one had two halls flanked by a courtyard in between but later converted in different designs and a corridor was made cutting through the three blocks behind their entrance halls. The sizable temple has pitched roofs constructed of green bricks with granite bases. Part of the interior has been repaired with modern materials whilst its exterior has an original look. The ridges are decorated with mouldings of *aoyus* (鰲魚), a pearl, and patterns of floral, flowers-and-birds, landscapes motifs. The wall friezes and fascia boards are equally ornated with similar mouldings.

***Architectural
Merit***

The temple stands to witness at least over 150 years of historical development of Shap Pat Heung.

Rarity

The partially altered building has considerable heritage value. The temple has been expanded in stages. The last one was a Foon Hak Hall (欸客堂, Guest Hall) added to the far right in 1979. A repair in 2004 covered the external and internal walls with ceramic tiles very much diminished the authenticity of the temple.

***Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) will be highly celebrated at the temple on the 23rd day of the third lunar month with procession and Fa Pow (花炮) activities. Yue Lan Chiu Wui (盂蘭醮會) organized by the Chaozhou (潮州) community will also be held at the temple. Dim Dang (點燈) and Da Chiu (打醮) had been held at the temple but ceased for a time. The temple was used as a place for communal affairs of Shap Pat Heung villages for a long period until the setting up of the Rural Committee.

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