

Historic Building Appraisal

Tin Hau Temple

No. 53 Shau Kei Wan Main Street East, Shau Kei Wan, H.K.

The Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) was erected by fishermen of Shau Kei Wan in 1873 which had long been a fishing village. Tin Hau, legendary a girl surnamed Lin (林) in Fujian (福建) province of the Song dynasty (宋, 960-1279), had supernatural powers to help fishing folk from storms, disasters and to heal the sick. Temples of Tin Hau deity are the most popular ones in Fujian and Guangdong provinces. With the building of the temple the people in Shau Kei Wan spared the least destruction in a typhoon came in 1874 believed to be under the deity's protection. With her blessing also, only a few people were injured in the area during the Japanese Occupation in 1941-45 as the Lyemun Barracks was just a short distance away having a lot of bombings. The temple was kept by the Kaifong Temple Worship Committee (街坊神功值理會) and later managed by the Chinese Temples Committee since 1928.

**Historical
Interest**

The building is a Qing vernacular temple of a two-hall layout with a courtyard (now covered) in between. The main chamber is flanked by two side halls with skywells interconnected. The temple is now 'sunken' due to the lift-up of the road's level to its front. The entire façade is recessed with a nice system of granite columns and wooden brackets supporting its roof. The roofs are in flush gable style and turned into green ceramic tiles in a postwar renovation. The main ridge is featured with a set of Shiwan (石灣) ceramic decorations of its Wenrubi (文如璧) kiln having a firing pearl, a pair of aoyus (鰲魚) and phoenixes, opera figurines, geometric and floral patterns. The entrance door is framed with granite blocks and so is its base. The wall paintings at its front wall and plastered mouldings on its gables are outstanding decorations also.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is one of the few surviving Tin Hau temples on Hong Kong Island of this medium size. It is a well-maintained Tin Hau temple with the most important structure retained to identify the worship development of the historic Shau Kei Wan.

**Rarity & Built
Heritage Value**

Renovations were carried out in 1876, 1902, 1920, 1948 and 1991. The 1948 one was for an explosion of an ammunition bunker of the Lyemun Barracks nearby causing a serious damage to the temple in 1946. After so much repairs though the temple has still retained much of its originality.

Authenticity

On the 23rd day of the third lunar month fishermen in Shau Kei Wan will celebrate the birthday of Tin Hau having colourful flags put up in their fishing boats anchored in the typhoon shelter, paying offerings to the temple and other forms of celebrations.

**Social Value &
Local Interest**