

Historic Building Appraisal
Tin Hau Temple
Ha Wai, Tap Mun, Tai Po, N.T.

Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) on Tap Mun (塔門) was built probably in the 2nd year of the Qianlong reign (乾隆, 1737) of the Qing (清) dynasty (1644 – 1911) by an official Wu Man-shou (胡文壽) without any construction record. It was erected by the Hakka (客家) fishermen on the island for the worship of Tin Hau. To the right end a chamber, Kwan Tai Kung (關帝宮), was built later for the worship of the deity who, a legendarily general in the Three Kingdoms period (三國, 220-265), is a symbol of bravery, loyalty and righteousness. A renovation plaque shows that the temple was repaired as early as in the first year of the Jiaqing reign (嘉慶, 1796). It was also recorded that villagers named Tsui Shiu-fan (徐紹勳) and Yip Ngong-sun (葉昂申) had donation of farmland made to the temple in the 8th year of the Qianlong reign (1743).

Historical Interest

The sea-facing temple on the west coast of Tap Mun is a two-hall building with an open courtyard in between. The Kwan Tai annex was built later to its right and another annex to the left. They are in Qing vernacular design having pitched roofs and grey brick walls in symmetrical plan. The temple is highly decorated with elegant ceramic Shiwan (石灣) opera figurines, a pearl, a pair of *aoyus* (鰲魚, dragon fish) and geometric patterns. Its plastered mouldings and wall paintings on its wall and gable friezes are as well of merit craftsmanship.

Architectural Merit

It is a rare temple to signify the historical development of Tap Mun in the north-eastern part of Hong Kong. It is a temple with built heritage value, though having been renovated in recent times.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) on the 23rd of the third lunar month will be highly celebrated by the Tap Mun residents but not on Kwan Tai Festival (關帝誕). Fa Pow (花炮) lucky draw will be held. Tai Ping Ching Chiu (太平清醮) held every ten years would be celebrated with Cantonese opera performances, puppet shows and vegetarian meals.

Social Value, & Local Interest

The Tin Hau Temple has group value with Shui Yuet Kung (水月宮) on the island.

Group Value