

Historic Building Appraisal

Tin Hau Temple

Sai O, Kat O, N.T.

The Tin Hau Temple (天后宮) is situated in Sai O (西澳) on the western shore of Kat O (吉澳, Crooked Island). It was built by villagers of Kat O, Hakkas and Tankas (蜆家), who were mainly fishermen worshipping Tin Hau as their patron deity. Kat O was once a major fishing market in Hong Kong which price of fish and dried shrimp had dominant indication. The temple was built probably in 1763 as the temple bell has the dating inscribed on it. The temple is managed by a Tin Hau Kung Rural Committee (天后宮值理會) which is also responsible for the Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) activities and the management of the Kat O market in the past. Part of the temple was used as school premises before 1930 until the Japanese Occupation. After the war it continued to be the Kat O School until 1957 when the school moved to a new premises.

*Historical
Interest*

The sea-facing temple has a three-hall block in the middle with one annex block connected to its left and right separated by two lanes. The temple is in Qing vernacular style having pitched roofs supported by a system of timber brackets. The original external greenbrick walls have been covered with cement dressing or plastered. The granite steps at the recessed entrance however have been retained. The most valuable relics of the temple are the Shiwan (石灣) ceramics made by its Qiaoruzhang (巧如璋) kiln installed on its main ridge and on the gable friezes. The former includes a pearl, two *aoyus* (鰲魚) and Chinese opera figures and the latter mainly opera figurines. Other decorations such as the mouldings and fascia boards of the temple are also well preserved.

*Architectural
Merit*

The temple is one of the Tin Hau type rare to witness over 200 years of history in the north-eastern part of Hong Kong.

Rarity

The well preserved temple with some minor alterations and additions has high built heritage value.

*Built
Heritage
Value*

A number of repairs and renovations have been held without record. Some of the unsympathetic changes can be reversed to the original.

Authenticity

Tin Hau Festival on the 23rd day of the third lunar month will be highly celebrated at the temple and fa pow (花炮) competition is the highlight of the festival. Da chius are also held every ten year on the ninth month of years ending 6, that is, in 1976, 1986, 1996 and so on. The chiu is called On Lung Da Chiu (安

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*

龍打醮) normally held in front of the temple. Another chiu, called Ya Chiu (壓醮) is also held between the normal chius. The deity of the temple is also invited to attend the *chiu* festival of Tap Mun (塔門) nearby.