

Historic Building Appraisal

Hip Tin Temple

Po Sam Pai, Tai Po, N.T.

Po Sam Pai (布心排) on the northern shore of Plover Cove (船灣) is a multi-clan village of the Hakkas (客家) first inhabited by the Chans (陳), the Laus (劉) and the Fans (范) in the late seventeenth century. The villagers were fishermen who also engaged in farming. The Hip Tin Temple (協天宮) in Po Sam Pai was constructed in the 3rd year of the Daoguang (道光, 1823) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty (1644 – 1911) as a stone tablet embedded on its wall has the dating inscribed on it. The temple is for the worship of Kwan Tai (關帝, originally named Kwan Yu 關羽, 162-220) who was a general in the Three Kingdoms (三國, 221-280) period. Being a legendary figure reputed for his loyalty and righteousness, he was also called Hip Tin Tai Tai (協天大帝, Emperor Assisting the Heaven). A study hall was once accommodated in the temple and was closed down in 1941. A kindergarten was set up at the temple around 1964 and was closed down in the mid-1970s. Nowadays, the temple remains as the venue for religious activities and village meetings.

**Historical
Interest**

The temple is a Qing vernacular building of a two-hall plan having three bays. The entrance hall is flanked by two side chambers whilst the main hall by two side halls. It is constructed of bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and its floors cement screeded. The altar is in the middle of the main hall housing the Kwan Tai statue and Confucius (孔子) statue on his left and the Earth God (土地) statue on his right for worship. A *caiman* (彩門), a wooden plaque with intricate carving, is hanged under the eave. At the recessed entrance above the doorway is a name board of the temple. Wall friezes under the eave are with paintings of landscape. A fascia board in front of the paintings is with peony and leaf pattern.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a temple to remind the settlement of the Hakka village, and is of some built heritage value. The temple was renovated in 1889, 1905, 1963, 1975 and 1999. The roofs of the side chambers have been turned into reinforced concrete ones.

**Rarity, Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The villagers do not celebrate Kwan Tai Festival (關帝誕). Rather they celebrate Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) on the 23rd of the third lunar month as the villagers were fishermen. They would have Dim Dang (點燈, literally

**Social Value,
& Local Interest**

meaning lighting the lantern) ritual at the temple on the 15th of the first lunar month seeking the blessing of the deity for their new born baby boys of previous year. The lanterns for the boys are hanged at their homes and their ancestral halls only. Offerings would be made at the temple at festivals and during the Chinese New Year. The temple was used as a venue for teaching village children in the late 1930s employing a teacher from the mainland. The temple is also a place for the villagers to deal with village affairs.

The Hip Tin Temple has group value with other historic buildings in the village, including the Law Ancestral Hall (羅家祠), Yu Cheung Tong (豫章堂) and Lau Ancestral Hall (劉氏宗祠) (all Grade 3). ***Group Value***