

Historic Building Appraisal
Tin Hau Temple
Temple Street, Yau Ma Tei

Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) in Yau Ma Tei was probably erected in 1864 as a pair of stone lions having the dating are standing in front of the building. It was however originated from a tiny one in the present Kwun Chung Market location and later moved to the present site by the boat people and villagers in Yau Ma Tei. The sea-facing temple had undergone several expansions leading to the present sizable one comprising the main Tin Hau Temple in 1878 and others including a Shing Wong Temple (城隍廟) in 1878, a Fuk Tak Temple (福德祠) in 1894, a Shea Tan (社壇) in 1878 and a Hsu Yuen (書院) in 1897 connecting side by side with a big public square in front of them. Other than serving as a worship compound for different deities, the Shea Tan and Hsu Yuen were used as a venue for a free school teaching the boat and land people until 1955. The management of temple was transferred to Kwong Wah Hospital in 1928.

Historical Interest

The complex of five buildings are separated by four lanes and surrounded by low walls. The Tin Hau Temple being the biggest is in the middle seconded by the Shing Wong Temple to its right. The other three are almost in the same size. The temples are in Qing vernacular style now having their roofs covered with green ceramic tiles. The roofs are mainly in flush gable style. The Tin Hau Temple, the oldest amongst others, has the most ornated features including the granite columns and wooden bracket system at its entrance facade and a set of Shiwan (石灣) ceramic decorations of a firing pearl, a pair of *aoyus* (鰲魚) and dragons, opera figurines and other geometric and floral pattern on its main ridge.

Architectural Merit

Such a sizable Tin Hau temple (including other deities) is very rare. The temple complex having the functions of worship, communal services and education evolving from a small Tin Hau temple is of high heritage value.

Rarity & Built Heritage Value

The temple was renovated and expanded in 1873, 1875, 1878, 1890, 1894 and 1897 leading to the present format. Other repairs have been carried out by Tung Wah from 1914 with major works done in 1916 and in 1971 after a typhoon damaging much of its structures in 1914 and a big fire in 1969 respectively. The temple has no great alteration affecting its authenticity.

Authenticity

The temple is a landmark of Yau Ma Tei attracting a large number of tourists visiting it. Its square is a spacious ground for open-air entertainment activities and for rest of the locals. The festivals of different deities, including the birthdays of the

Social Value & Local Interest

Tin Hau on the 23rd day of the third lunar month, the Kwun Yam on the 19th day of the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh lunar months, the Shing Wong on the 11th day of the fifth lunar month and the 24th day of the seventh lunar month and others, are celebrated making the temple a busy one throughout the year.