

Historic Building Appraisal

Tin Hau Temple

Fong Ma Po, Lam Tsuen

Tin Hau Temple (天后宮) in Fong Ma Po (放馬莆), Lam Tsuen (林村), is believed to be built in the 33rd year of Qianlong reign (乾隆, 1768), Qing (清) dynasty as a cloud gong has the dating inscribed on it. Fong Ma Po is one of the 26 villages in Lam Tsuen valley, 5 of them are punti (本地), whilst the others are Hakka (客家). In the Qing dynasty the villages were divided into 6 units called *kap* (甲), each one consisted of about 100 households. The 6 *kaps* later formed an association called Lok Wo Tong (六和堂, Hall of Six Harmonies) which was for the maintenance of the temple. Its services then extended to other social and village affairs. Fong Ma Po was founded in early Qing dynasty in the 17th century. Being a punti village, its main clans were the Wongs (黃) and Maks (麥). The original name of the village was called Lung Hing Tsuen (龍興村) and later renamed as Fong Ma Po, literally a place for horse grazing, when the villagers started rearing horses in the area. The temple was destroyed by Typhoon Dot (黛蒂) in 1964 and damages further by a fire in 1965. It was renovated in 1967. It has three halls, the middle one being for the Tin Hau, the left one named Man Mo Court (文武殿) for the Kwan Tai (關帝) with a tablet for 12 martyrs who were said to be died for the defense of the village and the left one called Lung Mo Court (龍母殿) with a tablet of Tang Chim (鄧詹) and his wife for their contribution in founding the temple. The temple is managed by the Lam Tsuen Temple Management Committee, a sub-committee of the Lam Tsuen Rural Community.

**Historical
Interest**

This Qing vernacular building has a two-hall-one-courtyard-two-side-chamber plan with its roofs in flush gable style (硬山). All three entrances are recessed. The granite columns, greenbrick walls support the roofs which are with rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The main ridge has a ceramic pearl, two *aoyus* (鰲魚), plastered moulding of two fish and a set of geometric pattern. Wall friezes and fascia boards are respectively with floral, plants, landscape and scrolls carvings and paintings.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a Tin Hau temple to witness the over 237 years of historic development of Lam Tsuen.

Rarity

The temple has moderate built heritage value. The temple was renovated in 1835, 1967 and 2001 with some other unknown ones. The last one was carried out by the Antiquities and Monuments Office. Plastering, false brick patterns and concrete columns added have very much affected the authenticity of the historic building.

**Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

Other than the Tin Hau Festival celebrated on the 23rd day of the third lunar month, Da Chiu (打醮) held every nine years in Lam Tsuen would have great offerings at the temple with Cantonese opera performances, vegetarian meals and others. The two wishing trees (許願樹) by the temple have attracted a lot of worshippers to both the trees and the temple especially during the Chinese New Year.

***Social Value,
& Local
Interest***