

Historic Building Appraisal

Tin Hau Temple

Joss House Bay, Sai Kung

Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) in Joss House Bay (大廟灣), Sai Kung, is **Historical Interest** legendarily to have been built by Lam Tao-yi (林道義) in the 2nd year of the Hsienshun reign (咸淳, 1266) of the Southern Song dynasty (南宋, A.D. 1127-1279). The location of the temple is called Pak Fat Tong Mun (北佛堂門, north of Fat Tong Mun) and a stone inscription behind the temple indicates that a temple was built in South Fat Tong Mun (南佛堂門, somewhere around Tung Lung Island). The temple has been the most popular Tin Hau temple both for fishermen and for others in Hong Kong and is called the 'Great Temple' (大廟). Even the police have the launching ceremony of their new cruisers held at the temple. The temple was managed by the Lams until 1939 and since then it has been managed by the Chinese Temples Committee (華人廟宇委員會).

The sea-facing temple is in Qing vernacular design having two halls in the middle flanked by two annexes on each side of the middle halls. Between the halls and the annexes is a lane with an arched entrance. The open courtyard between the middle halls have been covered whilst those between the halls of the annexes are open. The recessed main entrance has a raised platform with a system of granite columns and timber brackets to support the roof. Granite columns, greenbrick walls and timber frameworks are the main support of the building which roofs have timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The main ridge is decorated with a ceramic pearl, a pair of *aoyus* (鰲魚) and dragons and the gable ridges with ceramic unicorns and geometric patterns. Wall paintings, gable mouldings, wall friezes and eave boards are with patterns of scrolls, landscape, flowers-and-rocks and others for decorations. **Architectural Merit**

It is the most popular Tin Hau temple in Hong Kong in a very strategic position. **Rarity**

Though modernized it has some built heritage value. Recorded repairs include that in 1840, 1877, 1962 and 1990. During the last renovation, the temple roof has been covered with green glazed ceramic tiles. **Built Heritage Value & Authenticity**

The 'Great Temple' has been the most popular temple in Hong Kong that it is crowded with worshippers on or before the 23rd day of the third lunar month, the Tin Hau Festival (天后誕), and at the end and beginning of the Chinese New Year for thanks and fortune-begging offerings. **Social Value, & Local Interest**