

Tam Tai Sin Temple

Shau Tau, Tung Ping Chau, Plover Cove, N.T.

Tung Ping Chau (東平洲) is in the Mirs Bay (大鵬灣), north-east of Hong Kong. Located towards Dapeng peninsula (大鵬半島) in Shenzhen, it is geographically isolated from Hong Kong. The name Ping Chau in Chinese means “a flat island” because most parts of the island are flat terraces. There were five old villages on Tung Ping Chau, namely, Chau Tau (洲頭), Sha Tau (沙頭), Nai Tau (奶頭), Chau Mei (洲尾) and Tai Tong (大塘). Some villagers later left these villages and developed five smaller family villages including Chan Uk (陳屋), Lee Uk (李屋), Chau Uk (鄒屋), Lam Uk (林屋) and Tso Uk (蔡屋). The villagers were mainly farmers and fishing folks.

**Historical
Interest**

Tam Tai Sin Temple (譚大仙廟) is located in Sha Tau (沙頭) on the northern shore of Tung Ping Chau, a short distance from the beach. It was built before the 3rd year of the Guangxu (光緒, 1877) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty (1644 – 1911) as a timber purlin of the temple has the dating inscribed on it. The temple was built for the worship of Tam Kung (譚公), otherwise known as Tam Tai Sin (譚大仙). A native of Weidong in Guangdong province (廣東省惠東), Tam Kung is regarded as a protector of seafarers, having supernatural power to control the weather and to heal the sick.

The temple is a Qing vernacular building of a two-hall plan. A side room to the right of the main hall is in ruin. The building is constructed of local volcanic and sedimentary rocks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The altar in the middle of the main hall houses the Tam Kung statue for worship. A side entrance is on the right wall of the entrance hall. Above the doorway of the recessed entrance is a name board of the temple flanked by two wall paintings of flowers and rocks motif. A pair of ceramic dragon fish locally known as *aoyus* (鰲魚) and a pearl is on the main ridge for decoration. Its walls are plastered in white. Its floor in the main hall is with red cement tiles.

**Architectural
Merit**

Tam Kung Temple has borne witness to the settlement of the villagers on Tung Ping Chau. The use of volcanic and sedimentary rocks on the island for the construction of the temple is rare having considerable built heritage value. The temple was renovated in 1970.

**Rarity, Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

Tam Kung Festival (譚公誕) on the 8th day of the fourth lunar month would be celebrated by the villagers of Nai Tau, Sha Tau and Chau Tau of the island. Shen Gong opera performances (神功戲) were organized so as to seek both the blessing of Tam Kung as well as Tin Hau (天后). The opera performances however have been discontinued as most of the villagers have moved out of the island. They would return on the festival and on Ching Ming Festival (清明節), Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) and Chung Yeung Festival (重陽節) to worship their ancestors and the deity. Tung Ping Chau is part of the Plover Cove Country Park (船灣郊公園), known as Tung Ping Chau Marine Park (東坪洲海岸公園). Nowadays, famous for its natural landscapes, the island has become a popular tourist attraction.

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

This Tam Tai Sin Temple has group value with the Tin Hau Temple (天后宮, Grade 3) on the island.

Group Value