

Historic Building Appraisal
Hip Tin Temple & Hok Shan Monastery
Lai Chi Wo, Sha Tau Kok

Hip Tin Temple (協天宮, Hip Tin Kung) and Hok Shan Monastery (鶴山寺, Hok Shan Tsz) are connected temples in Lai Chi Wo (荔枝窩), Sha Tau Kok (沙頭角). The village is one of the seven Hing Chun Yeuk (慶春約) Hakka villages, namely the other six, Kop Tong (蛤塘), Sam A (三桲), So Lo Pun (鎖羅盆), Mui Tsz Lam (梅子林), Siu Tan (小灘) and Ngau Chi Wu (牛池湖). The temple was erected for the worship of Kwan Tai (關帝) who is also called Hip Tin Tai Tai (協天大帝, Emperor Assisting the Heaven) and so is the temple named Hip Tin Temple. The temple was probably built in 1900 as its wall paintings indicated. The Lai Chi Wo village is now vacated but in the past it was occupied by the Tsangs (曾), the Fans (范), the Wongs (黃) and the Yips (葉) who have moved to other areas or overseas. Renovation plaques have shown that the villagers from North America and Europe made contributions for the repairs.

***Historical
Interest***

The temple is a simple building of Qing vernacular style. Hip Tin Temple is a three-bay structure having two halls with a courtyard in between. Two lower annexes were later added on each side where the left one is the Hok Shan Monastery. The annexes are both having two-hall-one-courtyard plan. Over the years the green bricks of the walls have been either plastered or covered with concrete dressing. Its roofs are surprisingly having the grey tiles retained. No decoration is found on the main ridge. Its friezes at the recessed entrance are decorated with ceramic figurines and the timber fascia boards with floral patterns. The wall friezes are with plaster mouldings of landscape, fish, and others.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is a rare temple of Kwan Tai worship in the scarcely inhabited area in the north-eastern part of Hong Kong.

Rarity

The simple temple of the Hakka villagers reflects the less prosperous development of the area having considerable built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

Little is known to the past renovations. Modernized dressings are made to the façade and so is the floor with cement screeding. Alterations are however not made to the temple which will very much jeopardize its authenticity.

Authenticity

Two chambers of the temple were used as a village school for villagers of the Yuek. A Wong Kin-sheung (黃建常) of the village donated a sum to build a Siu Ying School (小瀛學校) next to the temple in 1927. The temple has once

***Adaptive
Re-use***

been used as classroom for the school after the Second World War.

Da Chius (打醮) have been held every ten years, the last one in 2001, in front of the temple starting from an epidemic amongst the Hing Chun Yeuk villages. It happened that the disease was suppressed by the chiu where Kwan Tai and Kwun Yam (觀音) were invited. Now that Tin Hau (天后) of nearby Kat O (吉澳) is also invited to the chiu. At the Kwan Tai Festival (關帝誕) on the 13th day of the sixth lunar month, villagers from the seven villages will make special offerings to the deity. Other deities, the Shan Tai Wong (山大王, King of the Mountain) of the yeuk and the earth gods will also have offerings in different seasons. Lai Chi Wo is part of the Yan Chau Tong Marine Park (印洲塘海岸公園) having special ecological value frequently visited by hikers who will at times make visits to the temple.

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