

PH0660833

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JAN 24 1978  
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

\*\*

TONG WO SOCIETY

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

None 41527

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Halawa

VICINITY OF

2nd

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Hawaii

15

Hawaii

001

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_PUBLIC

XOCCUPIED

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_MUSEUM

XBUILDING(S)

XPRIVATE

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_PARK

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_BOTH

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

XRELIGIOUS

\_\_OBJECT

\_\_IN PROCESS

XYES: RESTRICTED

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_NO

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Tong Wo Society

c/o James K. S. Chai

STREET & NUMBER

Box 244

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Kapa'au

VICINITY OF

Hawaii

96755

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Bureau of Conveyances

STREET & NUMBER

1151 Punchbowl Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Honolulu

Hawaii

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Hawaii Register of Historic Places #10-02-7115

DATE

September 26, 1977

\_\_FEDERAL XSTATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historic Preservation Office

P.O. Box 621

CITY, TOWN

Honolulu

STATE

Hawaii

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Tong Wo building is a two-story double wall construction building with bevel siding sheathing. The gable roof structure with its shed roof extensions sits on top of a slight slope. Open verandahs surround the building on two floors and are enclosed by a light balustrade composed of turned balusters. Thin square posts support each floor and are enhanced by serpentine scroll sawn brackets. The presence of these decorative brackets gives the building an oriental feeling which is enhanced by the calligraphic plaques that frame the doorways. Another decorative feature is the slight pedimental heads above the windows.

### Architectural Interest and Merit:

The building is a well-preserved example of Chinese society house built in the late years of the 19th century. It is a good example of the period's architecture with fine details and pleasant proportions.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      Organized 1886      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Unknown

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tong Wo Society is the best preserved Chinese society building on the Island of Hawaii, and is one of the best preserved in the State. Its site and general location reflects its importance and function in a rural, agricultural environment. The site is a major historical element in the history of the Chinese in the area, and in Hawaii, and in the agricultural history of Kohala.

Chinese secret and fraternal societies have a long developmental history in China, with most serving primarily a political function, dedicated to the overthrow of the Manchu Dynasty (1644-1911). Societies established by overseas Chinese served more broadly by filling economic, social, and religious needs.

With the growth of the sugar industry in North Kohala, from 1860 onwards, labor requirements caused the importation into the district of hundreds of immigrant Chinese laborers. Most of them were from Kwangtung Province, and spoke the Hakka dialect. The establishment of the Tong Wo Society in 1886 filled the general needs of most of the Chinese community in North Kohala (see also HRHP 7114). As many laborers were bachelors or married men who left families behind, intending to return to China after accumulating savings, the Society immediately provided companionship and aid, appropriate to its name, roughly translated as "together in harmony."

Brides and families soon came to North Kohala, and membership and activities of the Society increased. Society membership was restricted to those over sixteen and under sixty. The younger ones were barred because they were unable to endure initiations rituals and also unable to pay membership dues. The older ones were barred because they were unable to accrue enough membership payments to provide for their burial. Elderly men hoped to be buried among fellow Chinese and made efforts late in life to join societies that would care for them.

Tong Wo originally had six buildings: the main building; living quarters; a building for entertainment, gambling, or eating, or all of these; another structure for quarters and for a mortuary; an outhouse; a cook house. Only the main building remains.

One of the buildings was used as a Hakka dialect school, probably the multi-purpose building. On week-ends after being used for educating young Chinese in the culture of their homeland, the area offered gambling and opium smoking for adult males.

(Continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bonk, W. J., "Chinese Fraternal Society Sites on the Island of Hawaii." ms.  
 Tin Yuke Char, "Report on Chinese Fraternal Clubhouses and Cemeteries on the Island of Hawaii." October 20, 1972.  
 Hal Glatzer, "An Old Society Gets a New Life." Sunday Star Bulletin and Advertiser, October 31, 1971.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.0 A

UTM REFERENCES

A	05	2110	640 4410	2123	8916	15	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C							D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Tong Wo Society Building is located on and includes the entire Hawaii State Tax Map Parcel #5 - 3 - 08:20.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

~~John Wright - Historian and Ellen Fong Mitchell - Architectural Historian~~

ORGANIZATION

State Historic Preservation Office Survey

DATE  
November, 1973

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 621

TELEPHONE

548-7460

CITY OR TOWN

Honolulu

STATE

Hawaii

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

*Jane L. Silveira*

DATE

*January 9, 1978*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*[Signature]*

DATE

*6/9/78*

ATTEST

*Walter W. Cole*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*6.9.78*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Another of the recently demolished buildings at the rear of the main building was one which served as quarters for elderly members. Just behind it was a structure known as "the death house," where a member could die, consoled by being among friends in his last days and confident he would be buried among fellow Chinese. To die in one's own home was, additionally, considered bad luck.

Scholars of Chinese customs consider one of the primary functions of these societies as a place to die and as a place to be buried. There was a strong desire among immigrant Chinese to be buried in their native villages. This could be better facilitated if initial burial were made on the society's grounds. Bones could later be removed and sent to China for re-burial, once funds were available and arrangements could be made. Burials, in keeping with Chinese tradition, were made on a hillside adjacent to the Tong Wo building. Today, only 102 of the original 600 grave plots remain filled.

The second floor of the main structure houses two small altars. The older one is a tribute to Kuan Ti, the Society's patron saint. Often called the God of War, Kuan Ti actually was more a keeper of the peace, which included war, if necessary, so that his nature is frequently misunderstood as warlike. A newer altar honors Kuan Yin, Goddess of Mercy, and perhaps the most famous of popular Chinese figures. Her compassionate diety met the needs of Chinese women especially.

About 1920, the Society began providing community meetings for members raising families. Informants who at that time were children estimate the Society fed as many as 400 people on such special occasions as Chinese New Year.

The number of older members began to decrease, and younger members began moving away from plantations to urban areas, and by 1941-45 the Society was abandoned. Ah Fook Ching assumed custodial care for the buildings. In 1966, returning from the Mainland, James Chai became involved with the upkeep of the buildings and was one of the first to draw public attention to the value of maintaining the Society. His efforts and those of many others resulted in the rededication of the Society in October, 1971. Prof. William Bonk of the University of Hawaii, Hilo, has studied Tong Wo and other Chinese society buildings of Hawaii, and plans to publish material on them.

The history of the Tong Wo Society reveals the early hopes, fears, and customs of a major ethnic group which contributed significantly to the social, cultural, and economic growth of Hawaii.