

Historic Building Appraisal

Entrance Gate

Tai Wai Tsuen, Yuen Long

Tai Wai Tsuen (大圍村) is in the east of Yuen Long Kau Hui (元朗舊墟, *Historical Interest* Yuen Long Old Market) next to Ying Lung Wai (英龍圍). They were both walled villages. Tai Wai Tsuen was set up by the Wongs (黃) and the Choys (蔡) over 500 years ago. It was later also inhabited by the Tangs (鄧), the Ngs (伍), the Loks (駱) and the Cheungs (蔣). An entrance gate was built at the southern end of the walled village and a shrine (神廳) at the northern end on the same central axis of the village. The walled village was in a near square plan having nine rows of houses facing south. It was called Tai Wai (大圍), as it was the biggest walled village in the area, and Tsing Chuen Wai (青磚圍, Green Brick Walled Village). The entrance gate was reconstructed in 1911 and the structure was switched a little bit westwards and its height lifted due to *fung shui* reasons.

The entrance gate is connected to a house on either side. The gate is a Qing (清) vernacular building of a one-hall plan. It is constructed of green brick with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. A cockloft is at the entrance. The doorframes and the lower course of the front wall are of granite. Its front doorway is rectangular whilst its rear doorway is an arched one. Two circular holes are on either side of the front doorway for *fung shui* benefit. The name of the village is engraved on the lintel. Two bigger characters, Tai Kai (泰階), are engraved on a piece of stone under the eave. Under the eave are also weathered wall frieze paintings of pine trees. Inside the gate entrance on the left is an Earth God (土地) niche with an incinerator at the bottom. *Architectural Merit*

It is an entrance gate to witness the history of the village.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

It has its authenticity kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with the shrine and the Earth God shrine in the village.

Group Value

The entrance gate was an essential part of the wall to protect the villagers inhabited inside the village. It was used to keep away all the enemies, bandits *Social Value, & Local Interest*

and any threats that would endanger the villagers. It was closed at night. A village guard force was formed to provide a self-defence system in the village. A big semi-circular pond was in front of and an L-shaped pond on the left and back of the village to give additional security to the village. They were both filled up later. Farming implements were kept at the gatehouse in the old days when the villagers finished their work at the fields outside the village. At the Dim Dang (點燈) ritual on the 11th to 17th days of the Chinese New Year, three small lanterns would be hung at the entrance gate other than at the shrine and the old well of the village. At festivals, incense offering would be made at the entrance gate. It is now a passing gateway of the village.