

Historic Building Appraisal

Tai Long Tsuen

Sai Kung, New Territories

Tai Long Tsuen (大浪村) is the oldest village in the area of Tai Long (大浪) in Sai Kung East, facing Tai Long Wan (大浪灣). The other villages in the area include Ham Tin Tsuen (鹹田村), Lam Uk Wai (林屋圍), Cheung Uk Wai (張屋圍) and Tai Wan Tsuen (大灣村). The latter three have become ruins. In the past, the people in Tai Long mainly relied on fishing and farming (e.g. rice and sugar cane) to earn a living. Lives were simple and tough; many of them walked 4 or 5 hours to Ngai Chi Wan (牛池灣) in order to sell their crops and fish. Some of them transported timber to Shau Kei Wan (筲箕灣) and Aberdeen (香港仔) by boat, and sold them in exchange for daily necessities. Today, Tai Long still has not had a ferry pier. *Historical Interest*

Tai Long Tsuen has a history of over 250 years. The villagers are of several surnames, namely, Chan (陳), Cheung (張), Cham (湛), Tai (戴), Lai (黎), Ngai (魏). The ancestor of the Cham clan, Cham Kai-ming (湛繼明), came from Xintang in Guangdong province (廣東省新塘市) and settled in Tai Long Tsuen during the Qing Dynasty. *Xin'an County Gazetteer* (新安縣志) (嘉慶二十四年版 Jiaqing edition of 1819) records that Tai Long Tsuen came under the management of Guanfu magistrate (官富司). Nowadays, many villagers in Tai Long Tsuen have emigrated to Britain and there are only less than 10 villagers in total.

When **Tai Long Tsuen** was established, almost all the villagers prayed for protection from Tin Hau (天后). It was believed that a Tin Hau Temple was situated in Miu Kok Tau (廟角頭) in the south of Tai Long Tsuen a long time ago, but nothing can be found in the area, not even the relics. Later on, however, about 99% of the villagers became Catholics after the arrival of missionaries over 100 years ago. The influence of Catholicism has been so strong that even today many of the village houses still have pictures of Virgin Mary posted on walls. The Immaculate Conception Chapel (聖母無原罪小堂), founded in 1867, is a witness to that part of history.

The village houses in Tai Long Tsuen are plain and functional. All the buildings in the village face east and shares similar architectural features. Most of them were built of mud bricks and covered with plaster, which are made of local materials. The interiors of the buildings are fully utilized by using wooden structure overhanging an attic for storage use. A wooden staircase is built straight running to the attic. Normally, there is a small annex building adjoined to the house which is commonly used as kitchen. Most of the village houses have low screen doors installed in the main entrance. Apart from the collapsed houses at the back row, *Architectural Merit*

most of the village houses are generally in good condition. Tai Long Tsuen is one of the few remaining historic villages in Hong Kong with the traditional layout preserved intact.

Unlike other traditional Chinese villages where people are bonded by kinship system, the villagers in **Tai Long Tsuen** have been bonded by a Western religion, Catholicism. As other villages celebrate the Spring and Autumn Rites and other traditional Chinese rituals and festivals, the biggest events in Tai Long Tsuen were Catholic rituals and ceremonies. *Rarity*

The traditional vernacular houses in Tai Long Tsuen have built heritage value, and have group value for preservation. The integrity of the houses is still kept intact over the decades and has not been disturbed by major alteration, unlike many other old villages in the New Territories. *Built Heritage Value Authenticity*

The missionaries had great influence on the lives of the people in Tai Long Tsuen. They persuaded the government to do things in the benefit of the people. They also looked after the people by giving them food, milk and medicine for free. They organized a primary school named Yuk Ying School (育英學校), next to the Immaculate Conception Chapel, which was the only school in the area until the 1970s. *Social Value, & Local Interest*

The area might be adaptively re-used for cultural tourism or eco-tourism, or both. *Adaptive Re-use*