

Historic Building Appraisal
Entrance Tower,
Tai Kiu Tsuen, Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long, N.T.

Tai Kiu Tsuen (大橋村, literally Village of Big Bridge) at the northwest of the Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) was so named as to its west was a stone bridge. According to the village elders of the village, it is believed that Tai Kiu Tsuen was established by four clans, namely, the Chans (陳), the Tangs (鄧), the Tses (謝) and the Leungs (梁) in the early seventeenth century. The Tangs probably came from Ping Shan (屏山) and the Chans from Baoan (寶安) of Guangdong (廣東) province. The entrance tower was built after the village was established. The villagers were mainly farmers engaged in cultivation in nearby lands. Their produce were sold at Gai Dei (雞地) where the present Shap Pat Heung Rural Committee (十八鄉鄉事委員會) is located. An Earth God (土地) niche is in the tower for the protection of the villagers. It is also called Wai Mun Gung (圍門公) (literally the deity of the walled village). Two small holes are above the lintel of its front facade which are for fungshui benefits.

***Historical
Interest***

The structure is a simple one-hall Qing (清) design constructed of grey brickwork having its walls supporting its pitched roofs of timber rafter, purlins and clay tiles. It has only one rectangular doorway in its front whilst two at rear. A niche housing the Earth God with an inbuilt offering table to its front is facing the entrance between the two doorways. The lintel is of granite and so is a column with diamond-shaped holes fixed at the doorway which was for a wooden sliding door.

***Architectural
Merit***

The entrance tower at Tai Kiu Tsuen is an ordinary example of the kind in Yuen Long. It stands as a historical reminder of the village. The structure is of some built heritage value. The tower was damaged by typhoon Wanda (溫黛) in 1962 and was repaired. Its internal walls are plastered and its floors with cement screeding.

***Rarity, Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

There are no graded buildings in the vicinity of the entrance tower.

Group Value

The Earth God acts as the guardian of the villagers. Villagers believe that it would also provide with them fortune and virtues. He is a registrar of birth, death and marriage. He would guide the souls of the dead safely through the region of darkness. The tower has provided its passing-by and shelter function for many generations of the villagers since several hundred years ago.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

REFERENCES

Books, Articles, and Other Sources

Lim, Patricia. *Discovering Hong Kong's Cultural Heritage* (Hong Kong; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Oral history interviews with the villagers by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 20 December 2002.