

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Cheng Ancestral Hall**  
**No. 15 Lin Au, Tai Po, New Territories**

**Lin Au** (蓮凹), also known as Lin O (蓮澳), is a Hakka (客家) village and one of the 23 villages in Lam Tsuen Valley (林村鄉). During the Qing times Lam Tsuen was a member of Tsat Yeuk (七約, literally, Seven Alliance). Tsat Yeuk was an inter-village alliance which formed Tai Wo Market (太和市) in 1892 to break the monopoly of the old Tai Po Market (大埔墟) formed by the Lung Yeuk Tau Tang clan (龍躍頭鄧氏). Of the 23 villages of Lam Tsuen Valley, only five are Punti (本地) while the other are Hakka. The history of Lam Tsuen Valley can be traced back to Song Dynasty (宋朝, A.D. 960-1127). Its early settlers were the Chungs (鍾氏) who form a large proportion of the population in the area. The villages were linked together by an inter-village alliance named Luk Woh Tong (六和堂), which was derived from the *baojia* system (保甲制) in the early Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644-1911). Luk Woh Tong remained its key role in the valley until it was replaced by the Lam Tsuen Valley Committee (林村鄉公所) in 1954.

**Historical  
Interest**

Situated on the eastern side of Lam Kam Road (林錦公路) in Tai Po, **Lin Au** is a multi-clan village established by the Lees (李氏) and the Chengs (鄭氏) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The Lees are originated from Dongguan (東莞) of Guangdong province (廣東省). The Chengs, who claim themselves as the descendants of Cheng Huan-gong (鄭桓公) of Zhou Dynasty (周朝, B.C. 1100 – 771), are originated from Wuhua (五華) of Guangdong. They settled in Lin Au in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, Lin Au is divided into two small villages, Lin Au Lee Uk (蓮澳李屋) and Lin Au Cheng Uk (蓮澳鄭屋). The Chengs were mainly engaged in rice, vegetable and fruit growing. It is not known when the Cheng Ancestral Hall (鄭氏宗祠) was built. Land record shows that it existed **before 1905**. Managed by the clan's trust, Cheng Tak Hing Tong (鄭德慶堂), the building remains a venue for ancestral worship.

The ancestral hall is on the front row of two rows of houses in the village. It is sandwiched by houses on either side but the one on its left has fallen into ruin. It is a Qing (清) vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. It was constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The building however **has undergone a major renovation in 1988** having its roofs turned into concrete ones. The walls are plastered and the floors with red tiles. The roofs are covered with yellow glazed tiles. The ceramic-tiled altar is in the middle of the end wall of the main hall housing a soul tablet of the Cheng ancestors for worship. A small ceramic statue of Kwun Yam (觀音) is on the left of the tablet also for worship. A big Chinese

**Architectural  
Merit**

character “福” (well-being) written on a piece of red paper is pasted on the wall behind the tablet. Two tie beams carved respectively with “百子千孫” (Hundreds of Sons and Thousands of Grandsons) and “奕世其昌” (Prosperity from Generations to Generations) are at the main hall. The name of the hall is engraved on a piece of stone above the lintel of the recessed entrance. New frieze paintings of flowers and birds and calligraphy are under the eave of the front façade.

It is an ancestral hall of the Chengs to remind their settlement in Lin Au village. *Rarity*

It has some built heritage value.

*Built Heritage Value*

The building was renovated in the 1950s and 1988.

*Authenticity*

The ancestral hall is managed by Cheng Tak Hing Tong (鄭德慶堂). It is used for ancestral worship of Cheng ancestors. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual is still held at the hall for newborn baby boys of previous year. Wedding ceremonies were held at the hall for the Chengs but have been discontinued.

*Social Value, & Local Interest*

It has group value with two other ancestral halls in the village.

*Group Value*

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time.

*Adaptive Re-use*