

Historic Building Appraisal

Shrine

Nai Wai, Tuen Mun, N.T.

Nai Wai (泥圍) is the oldest walled village of the To clan in Tuen Mun. *Historical Interest* The To clan is the largest lineage in Tuen Mun. To Hon (陶侃) a prominent general in Eastern Jin dynasty (東晉) was one of their ancestors. The To clan moved to Bao'an of Guangdong province (廣東省寶安縣) when the Mongols invaded Southern China. During the Yuen (元, 1271-1368) dynasty, they moved to Ngau Tam Mei, Yuen Long (元朗牛潭尾). During the Ming Dynasty, they left Yuen Long for Tuen Mun Tai Tsuen (屯門大村). Due to the increase of the clan population, five villages, namely, Nai Wai (泥圍), Tsing Chuen Wai, (青磚圍), Tuen Tsz Wai (屯子圍), Lam Tei Tsuen (藍地村) and Tuen Mun San Tsuen (屯門新村) were subsequently developed.

Nai Wai, originally called Wong Kong Wai (黃崗圍), was established in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. It was a walled village with four watch towers at the four corners of the square village. The symmetrical layout of the village had the central axis, the main street in the middle, bisected the village into two halves with seven rows of houses running parallel to the front and back rows of houses separated by horizontal lanes between them. The outlying row of houses, the four corner towers and the entrance gate formed as an external wall to protect the inner houses.

The Entrance Gate of Nai Wai was built in the middle of the front outer row of houses with a **Shrine** (神廳) at the opposite end on the last row of houses on the central axis of the village. The Entrance Gate and the Shrine were probably first built some 270 years ago when the village was established. The Entrance Gate and the Shrine like most of the houses were built facing west. The Entrance Gate was moved to the present southern outer row of houses with its entrance facing south about 200 years ago due to *fung shui* reasons.

The Shrine is connected to a house on either side with its entrance facing west like the other houses on the same row. It was a Qing vernacular building of a one-hall rectangular plan. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The Shrine was renovated in 1999 with its internal and external walls plastered. A projected hood is at the upper portion of the front and rear facades with green glazed ceramic tiles. Its doorway is in rectangular shape. A wooden altar is in the middle of the end wall housing three tiny figurines of Kwan Tai (關帝), Chun Fu (巡撫, an official god) and Man Cheong (文昌), a tablet of the Earth God *Architectural Merit*

(土地), a soul tablet of the Tos for worship.

It is a shrine to witness the history of the village.

Rarity

It has intangible heritage value.

Built Heritage

Value

It was renovated in 1999 with its internal and external walls plastered.

Authenticity

The Shrine was an essential structure of the village enshrining deities and a soul tablet of the To ancestors for worship and expecting their protection given to the villagers. The Tos do not have their ancestral hall in the village. The To Ancestral Hall (陶氏宗祠) was built in Tuen Tsz Wai village in the 57th year of the Kangxi reign (康熙, 1718) of the Qing dynasty for ancestral worship of all the Tos in Tuen Mun. A Ng Lau Study Hall (五柳學校) was established in the village but was replaced by a Hing Tak School (興德學校) set up in 1954.

Social Value,

& Local

Interest

The Shrine has group value with the entrance gate of the village.

Group Value

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

Adaptive

Re-use