

Historic Building Appraisal
Man Ancestral Hall
Tze Tong Tsuen, Tai Po, New Territories

This ancestral hall, namely, Man Ancestral Hall (文氏祠堂), is believed to have been built between 1400 and 1500 when the Mans' ancestor first settled in the area now known as Tze Tong Tsuen (祠堂村). Tze Tong Tsuen is the oldest of three component villages in Tai Hang (太亨). The other two villages are Fui Sha Wai (灰沙圍) and Chung Sum Wai (中心圍, also known as Ching Chuen Wai 青磚圍). This ancestral hall was a venue for ancestral worship for the whole clan during traditional Chinese festivals and ceremonies, education and village meetings. The building was, however, seriously damaged and the ancestral tablets lost during the period of Japanese Occupation (1941-1945). Thus, until recently, rituals had been performed in family halls or elsewhere. The ancestral hall was reconstructed in 2005.

*Historical
Interest*

The ancestral hall is a two-hall type building with an open courtyard in between. It is constructed of bricks and its walls and granite columns support the roofs which have bracketed systems of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Upon entry, a *dangzhong* (擋中) blocking the way to the inner hall identifies the front hall. Two raised platforms are on both side of the open courtyard and part of its columns, base stone together with the staircases of the rear hall are made of granite. Besides granite, Canton tiles are widely used as floor finishes. The fascia boards are coloured with floral patterns and auspicious motifs. Granite columns support the loadings of the roof, and round wooden beams provide lateral support to the columns. Exquisitely crafted brackets are connecting the columns and beams. Moreover, the columns are decorated with calligraphy. The soul tablets of the ancestors are housed in rows at the finely carved altar in the middle of the rear hall.

*Architectural
Merit*

It is the most important historic building in Tze Tong Tsuen.

Rarity

The original ancestral hall was seriously damaged during the period of Japanese Occupation and the existing building was reconstructed in 2005.

*Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

At present, the ancestral hall is not only a venue for the Tai Hang Mans to worship their ancestors and to hold traditional festivals; it is also a venue for gathering and meeting.

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*

Although the ancestral hall itself is reconstructed, its cultural environs are left intact with a close affinity to the *fung-shui* setting. It is still embraced by open space. Behind the ancestral hall there stands an Earth God Shrine having co-related group value.

Group Value

The question of adaptive re-use is not likely to arise in the foreseeable future.

*Adaptive
Re-use*