

Historic Building Appraisal
Shrine
Sai Tau Wai, Wang Chau, Yuen Long

Sai Tau Wai (西頭圍) village is one of the six villages in Wang Chau (橫洲), Yuen Long. The wai was set up in around 1456. Wai literally means walls (normally four) enclosing a village. This Sai Tau Wai, however, according to the villagers, has no wai ever built around the village at all. Most of the villagers of the wai were surnamed Leung (梁) and Chan (陳) coming from Dongguan (東莞) in the mid-15th century. The shrine (神廳) of the wai was probably built at the time the wai was constructed. The original shrine has collapsed and was rebuilt in 1945. Since there is no ancestral hall in Sai Tau Wai, the shrine has become a venue to hold such traditional ceremonies like Dim Dang (點燈), Da Chiu (打醮) and others. The former will be held every three years and the latter eight years jointly participated by all the six villages of Wang Chau. At the altar of the shrine, a tablet has 15 deities' names written on it for worship.

***Historical
Interest***

The shrine is a small two-hall structure of Qing vernacular design. The shrine together with other villages houses of the wai are in parallel rows facing north-west. The recessed entrance hall is an open courtyard, through which is the main hall with the altar at its far end in the middle. It is constructed of green bricks with granite bases. The pitched roofs are supported by timber rafters and purlins. The ridges have a set of geometric pattern and wall friezes and gable friezes are decorated with floral motifs. The fascia board and wall paintings at the façade with flowers-and-birds patterns have the colours faded.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is a rare structure to witness the historic development of the Sai Tau Wai.

Rarity

The simple structure has some built heritage value in local context.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The shrine was rebuilt in 1945. Its maintenance has been satisfactory.

Authenticity

It is the tradition of the wai for its families to take turns to have Lun Heung Pai (輪香牌), a service for the shrine by cleaning it and offering incense on the first and fifteenth day of each month and at festivals.

***Social Value,
& Local
Interest***