

Historic Building Appraisal

Lee Ancestral Hall

No. 18 Ha Hang, Tai Po

Ha Hang (下坑) village is right behind the Tai Po Industrial Estate (大埔工業邨) in Tai Po. It was on the shore of Tolo Harbour (吐露港) facing the sea in the old days. The village was a multi-lineage village occupied by the Lees (李), the Hungs (洪), the Chungs (鍾) and the Tsangs (曾), the Lees being the largest clan. Originated from Changle (長樂) of Guangdong (廣東) province, the Lees moved southward to Dongguan (東莞) in the Kangxi (康熙, 1662-1722) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty and later to Wu Kau Tang (烏蛟騰) of Sai Kung and Lin Fa Tei (蓮花地) of Pat Heung (八鄉), Yuen Long. Two brothers of the Lees, Yat-ko (日高) and Yat-wah (日華) moved again with their families to the area of Ha Hang and established the village in the 13th year of the Qianlong (乾隆, 1748) reign of the Qing dynasty. Three ancestral halls of the Lees were built in the village. The one on the upper slope built to commemorate Yat-ko was demolished whereas this one between Nos. 13 and 14 and that at No.18 were both built to commemorate Yat-wah. The two Lee Ancestral Halls (李氏家祠) were constructed about one hundred years ago.

**Historical
Interest**

Located in the lower level of the village, the ancestral hall is on the row of houses behind another ancestral hall of the Lees on its left. It is connected to one village house on its left and right facing southeast. It shares with them a common roof. The ancestral hall is only a one-hall structure. It is a Qing vernacular building probably constructed of green bricks and mud bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Except the front façade the walls are plastered and the floor is with cement screeding. The altar occupies the entire end wall of the hall with a red paper soul tablet of the Lee ancestors on the wall for worship. Two tie beams in the hall are engraved with “百子千孫” (Hundreds of Sons and Thousands of Grandsons) and “奕世其昌” (Prosperity from Generation to Generation). The name of the ancestral hall is written a piece of red paper above the lintel of the recessed entrance. Two green glazed ceramic window grilles are on either side of the name of the hall.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is an ancestral hall of the Lees to remind their settlement in Ha Hang village.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

*Built Heritage
Value*

It has its authenticity kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with another Lee Ancestral Hall in the village.

Group Value

The ancestral hall has been used for ancestral worship of the Lee ancestors. They also made use of the hall for celebration of wedding and birthday with banquets held at the hall and in the open ground of the village. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual would be held for new born baby boys of previous year on the 15th of the Chinese New Year. The Lees were engaged in fishing and farming growing rice and vegetables. They also produced lime with the corals and shells collected from the Tolo Harbour. The lime was an essential ingredient of mortar for the construction of village houses and used as a fertilizer. The Lee children studied at the Mak Ancestral Hall (麥氏宗祠) in Mak Uk (麥屋) village a short distance in their northwest before the Second World War. For secondary education they needed to go to Tai Po, Sha Tau Kok or even Yuen Long.

*Social Value,
& Local Interest*