

Historic Building Appraisal
Lau Village House, Hak Sut Tong
No. 68 Tung Shing Lei, Au Tau, Yuen Long

The Lau Village Houses (劉氏村屋) at Nos. 63, 65, 66, 67, and 68 Tung Shing Lei (東成里), Au Tau (凹頭), Yuen Long, are five unconnected houses built in 1919, 1926 and 1935. No.68, a communal hall called Hak Sut Tong (克述堂), was first built in 1919 by Lau Wai-chow (劉維疇) (1864 – 1933). The rest were for residential use by his eight sons, two for one block. Originated from Taishan (台山), Lau made his fortune in fish wholesaling before he moved to Tung Shing Lei which is in the eastern end of Yuen Long and was once locally called Ma Fung Tei (痲瘋地), literally land of the lepers. Despite the unfavourable condition, Lau bought a large piece of land for building his houses, for cultivation and leasing use. Most of the land was for fish ponds, while the remaining for rice paddy, orchids and vegetables. His land at the peak period produced more than 20,000 cattles of rice a year.

Historical Interest

The communal hall at No.68 Tung Shing Lei was built in 1919 by Lau Wai-chow who employed local workers and builders from Guangzhou (廣州) and Swatow (汕頭). The single-storey house is a two-hall-one-courtyard building of Qing (清) vernacular design having symmetrical layout. The courtyard is between the halls and flanked by side compartments. The building is constructed of grey bricks with its walls supporting its flushed gable roofs of wooden beams, rafters and clay tiles. The recessed entrance has granite door frames, bases and lintel. The parapet at the main hall is a wave-shaped design having the name of Hak Sut Tong engraved on it topped with four cornices. The fascia board, wall painting and frieze mouldings are with patterns of auspicious treasures, floral and plant motifs.

Architectural Merit

The five houses are good examples of village houses. They have borne witness to the development of Tung Shing Lei from “land of the lepers” to a village with fish ponds and agricultural land around. No major alterations which may have diminished the authenticity of the exteriors can be identified.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

The communal hall at No.68 among the five houses was first built for the family’s living, studying, resting and congregation uses. After the rest of the houses were built for the sons, it ceased to be for their residential use. It was said that the hall was once for educational use before the Second World War. Such use of the communal hall served to enhance the social value and local

Social Value, & Local Interest

interest of the adjacent four houses. After the war it was used for storage purpose.

The five houses at Tung Shing Lei have group value with other historic buildings, such as Pun Uk (潘屋), and Chun Yuen Pawn House (晉源押), Tai Wong Temple (大王古廟) and Yuen Kwan Yi Tai Temple (玄關二帝廟) at Yuen Long Kau Hui (元朗舊墟) (all Grade 1). ***Group Value***

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