

Historic Building Appraisal To Ancestral Hall Tuen Tze Wai, Tuen Mun

The To Ancestral Hall (陶氏宗祠) in Tuen Tsz Wai (屯子圍) village, Tuen Mun, was built by the descendents of To Ka-yee (陶嘉儀) in the 57th year of the Kangxi reign (康熙, 1718) of the Qing (清) dynasty. Originated from Watlam (鬱林) of Guangxi (廣西) province, the To clan moved to Ngau Tam Mei (牛潭尾) and then to Tuen Mun Tai Tsuen (屯門大村). Their founding ancestor is To Man-chat (陶文質) and one of his grandson is Ka-yee. Due to the increase of the clan population, the village dispersed and developed into 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). It had been served as the ancestral hall of the Tos until a new one was built a few blocks away to its left in 1971. The building was leased for use as rattan and fiber factories from then on until 1998. A fire broke out in the 1980s which central part was damaged. A minor repair was carried out to the building. It has been left vacated since 1998.

***Historical
Interest***

The ancestral hall is a Qing (清) vernacular building having a three-hall-two-courtyard plan of three-bays. It is in symmetrical design. The two open courtyards are between the three halls. The entrance hall and the two courtyards have side chambers to their left and right. The most important element of the building, the ancestral altar, lies at the far end of the central axis in the middle of the main hall. The building is constructed of green bricks having its walls, granite columns and brackets to support its pitched roofs of rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The recessed entrance has one platform on either side. The platforms are of granite with granite columns supporting the roof. The door frame and a pair of *menzhen* blocks (門枕石) are also of granite. The main ridges are in curling ends. The moulding decorations on the ridges have been weathered which design was probably with treasures, floral and plants patterns. Wall friezes, fascia boards and beam carvings are in dilapidated condition and decoloured, some of their patterns are hardly recognizable. A kitchen is constructed to its right.

***Architectural
Merit***

The ancestral hall is a rare building to witness the historic settlement of the To clan in Tuen Mun.

Rarity

It is one of the sizable ancestral hall buildings in Hong Kong having a high built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The building is in poor condition especially the middle hall. It has not got the required care and upkeep. With the structure attacked by overgrown, the building would be further deteriorated. *Authenticity*

The new ancestral Hall, the Sam Shing Temple (三聖宮), to the left, and this ancestral hall have their related group value. *Group Value*

The ancestral hall had all the routine worships made to the soul tablets of the ancestors including offerings made daily, during the Chinese New Year, lunar year end, Spring and Autumn Equinoxes (春秋二祭), Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals, Dim Dang ritual (點燈), Da Chiu (打醮) and others . Like other ancestral halls, it also served as a venue for teaching village children. The school inside the hall was called Ng Lau Primary School (五柳小學) and then Tuen Mun Primary School (屯門小學) in 1947. With the construction of a school complex for the latter, the hall ceased to perform its education function. The hall was also used by a Chung Yee Tong (忠義堂), a self-defense organization of the villages which provided martial arts classes at the hall. *Social Value, & Local Interest*