

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 4 & 7A, and Lot WCL 132 in DD123, Sai Tau Wai
Wang Chau, Yuen Long, New Territories

Sai Tau Wai (西頭圍), set up around the 7th year of Jingtai (景泰, 1456) reign of the Ming (明) dynasty, is one of the villages in Wang Chau (橫洲), southwest of the Yuen Long Industrial Estate (元朗工業邨), Yuen Long. It is a multi-clan village mostly inhabited by the Leungs (梁) and the Chans (陳). It is said that the Leungs came from Dongguan (東莞) of Guangdong (廣東) province. Some of them later branched out to Tai Tseng (大井), further north of the village and Shun Fung Wai (順風圍) in Tuen Mun (屯門). In the past, most of the Leungs in Sai Tau Wai were farmers engaged in rice and vegetable growing. Later on, around the 1950s, some of them went overseas (e.g. Britain and Holland) to earn their living. The four connected houses, No.4, WCL132 in DD123 (without house number) and No.7A (two houses), were built by the Leungs for residential purpose probably before 1903. They are the best preserved houses in the village.

**Historical
Interest**

The four connected houses are in the northern part of the village all facing southeast like the others. The houses are Qing (清) vernacular buildings each having a one-hall-one-courtyard plan. It is constructed of green bricks and stone with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The lower courses of the side and back walls are of granite blocks. A cooking stove and a bath corner is respectively on the left and right of the open courtyard in front of the hall. The living room is in front of a bedroom at the hall. A cockloft is above the bedroom also for use as a bedroom. Above the stone lintel of the entrance of each house is a projected eave with plastered mouldings of auspicious fruits, flowers and floral and cloud patterns. A wall frieze plastered moulding is running under the front eave but part of it weathered. The gable wall at the left end is decorated with black-and-white wall frieze mouldings of curling grass.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a block of four connected houses to witness the settlement of the Leungs in the village.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Part of the front wall of No.4 has been damaged.

Authenticity

It has group value with the shrine of the village. All the residential houses

Group Value

including the shrine in Sai Tau Wai were built to face north. They are aligned in rows, forming a linear village which is a common style of Hakka village. There is an open lane at the middle dividing the village into two halves. At the end of the lane there stands the shrine whose location is believed to have been carefully selected under *fungshui* principles. Sai Tau Wai is itself forming a historic complex of architecture, featuring the shrine, Nos. 4 & 7A, and Lot WCL 132 in DD123 and the Earth God Shrine.

The four houses were for residential use of the Leungs. Only No.4 is still occupied. The others are for storage. When the Leungs resided in the houses, they had their ancestors' soul tablets and Kwun Yam (觀音) deity worshipped in their houses. Since they have no ancestral hall in the village, the Leungs and the Chans have their traditional rituals and celebration of festivals at the shrine of the village. They have their Dim Dang (點燈) ritual once every three years for the new born baby boys at an auspicious day before the 15th day of the Chinese New Year. They would invite some 12 deities from the Tin Hau Temple (天后宮) in Fung Chi Tsuen (鳳池村), west of Yuen Long town centre, to the shrine and a lantern hung at the shrine. Every family in the village would take turn to have the service of incense offering and daily cleaning of the shrine which they called Lun Heung Pai (輪香牌). They would also participate in the Da Chiu (打醮) activity of Wang Chau held once every eight years.

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

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time.

***Adaptive
Re-use***