

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Lee Ancestral Hall

#### Ha Hang, Tai Po, N.T.

Ha Hang (下坑) is right behind Tai Po Industrial Estate (大埔工業邨) in *Historical* Tai Po. It was on the shore of Tolo Harbour (吐露港) facing the sea in the old *Interest* days. It was a multi-lineage village occupied by the Lees (李氏), the Hungs (洪氏), the Chungs (鍾氏) and the Tsangs (曾氏), the Lees being the largest clan.

Originated from Changle County (長樂縣) of Wuhua County (伍華縣) in Guangdong Province (廣東省), the Lees in Ha Hang trace their descent to Li Mingong (李敏公) who was believed to be the descendant of Li Huode (李火德), the common ancestor of the Lee clan in Fujian (福建省) and Guangdong provinces. Li Mingong was the founder of the Lee clan of Changle county who brought his clan members from Fujian to Guangdong during the late Southern Sung dynasty (南宋, A.D. 1127-1279) to escape from warfare and chaos in the north. The Lees moved southward to Dongguan (東莞) during the Kangxi (康熙, 1662-1722) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty (1644 – 1911) and later to Wu Kau Tang (烏蛟騰) of Sai Kung and Lin Fa Tei (蓮花地) in Pat Heung (八鄉) of Yuen Long. Two brothers of the Lees, Lee Yat-ko (李日高) and Lee Yat-wah (李日華) moved again with their families to the area of Ha Hang and established the village in the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 Lee Yat-ko was demolished whereas the one at No.18 and this one between Nos. 13 and 14 were believed to be built in about 1900 to commemorate Lee Yat-wah. The three halls together formed Sam Shing Tong (三聖堂, literally the Hall of Three Saints), which represents the consolidation of the three branches of the Lee clan.

Located in the lower level of the village, the ancestral hall is connected to *Architectural* village houses on its left and right facing southeast. It shares with the house *Merit* on its right a common roof. It is a one-hall structure. It is a Qing vernacular building probably constructed of grey brickwork and mud bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. 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. On top of the tablet is a red paper with the Chinese

character “壽” (longevity) written on it. The name of the ancestral hall is above the lintel of the recessed entrance.

It is an ancestral hall of the Lees to remind their settlement in Ha Hang village, and has some built heritage value. It has its authenticity kept.

***Rarity, Built  
Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

The Lees made use of the hall for ancestral worship and celebration of wedding and birthday with banquets held at the hall and in the open ground of the village. Dim Dang (點燈, literally meaning lighting the lantern) ritual would be held for newborn baby boys of previous year on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Chinese New Year. The Lees were engaged in fishing and farming growing rice and vegetable. 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 fertiliser. The Lee children studied at the Mak Ancestral Hall (麥氏宗祠) in Mak Uk (麥屋) 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***

There is no other graded historic buildings in the village.

***Group Value***