

Historic Building Appraisal

Ngai Yuen Tong

Tai Hang, Tai Po, N.T.

Tai Hang (泰亨) in Tai Po was occupied by the Man (文) clan since the Ming (明) dynasty (1368-1644). With the increase of the clan members, they branched out from Tze Tong Tsuen (祠堂村) to establish two walled villages nearby including Chung Sum Wai (中心圍) and Fui Sha Wai (灰沙圍). The former was inhabited by descendants of Man Chun (文濬) and the latter by those of Man Lan (文瀾) and Man Chak (文澤). Ngai Yuen Tong (藝浣堂) is a family ancestral hall of the Man Chun branch built about 300 to 400 years ago to commemorate two ancestors, Ngai-wan (藝雲) and Wun-suet (浣雪).

**Historical
Interest**

The family hall is a standalone building in front of four rows of houses of the village. It is a Qing (清) vernacular building having two-hall-one-courtyard of three bays. The open courtyard is in the middle of the entrance and main halls in the middle bay. One side bay with chambers and rooms used to be on either side of the middle bay. Much has been altered in the two side bays. A kitchen and three rooms are on the right bay which was used by the Ngai Yuen School (藝浣學校). A toilet and a room with cockloft are on the left bay. The internal walls are plastered. The front facade of the school and that of the main entrance are plastered. A pediment was added on the front facade of the school, that of the entrance hall and that of the left bay with the names of the former two moulded on them. The building is constructed of grey brickwork with its walls and columns to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. A wooden altar is at the end wall of the main hall housing fourteen soul tablets arranged in four rows for worship.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a family ancestral hall of the Mans to witness their settlement in Tai Hang, and has some built heritage value. It underwent a major renovation in 1964 with a corrugated-sheet roof added to the open courtyard. The side bays have been altered for other uses.

**Rarity, Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The ancestral hall has been used as ancestral worship of the Man ancestors. Dim Dang (點燈, literally meaning lighting the lantern) rituals have not been held at the hall from around the 1970s and the parents of new born baby boys would have offerings and worship at the Tin Hau and Man Tai Temple (天后文帝廟) of Tai Hang instead. The hall was used as a

**Social Value,
& Local Interest**

venue to educate the village children and those in nearby villages. It housed Ngai Yuen School (藝浣學校) after the Second World War at its right bay, which became a subsidised one in 1946. With the establishment of Tai Hang Public School (泰亨公立學校), Ngai Yuen School was closed in 1962. Tai Hang Kindergarten (泰亨幼稚園) was then housed in Ngai Yuen Tong in 1964 – 1965. Besides, the hall was used as a meeting place to deal with village affairs until the Tai Hang Rural Office (泰亨鄉公所) had its office building in 1984. A grocery was housed in the hall but discontinued around the early 1990s.

Ngai Yuen Tong is within walking distance of the Entrance Gate and *Group Value* Enclosing Walls of Fui Sha Wai (灰沙圍, Grade 3).