

Historic Building Appraisal
Lai Ancestral Hall
No. 146 Tze Tong Tsuen, Pat Heung, Yuen Long

Tze Tong Tsuen (祠堂村) is in the southern end of Pat Heung (八鄉), Yuen Long. The 4th generation ancestor of the Lais (黎), Tung-suen (董孫), moved from Huizhou (惠州) of Guangdong (廣東) province to Dongguan (東莞) and then to Kam Tin (錦田) in the Ming (明, 1368-1644) dynasty. Lai Hui-wan (黎會雲), the 13th generation ancestor and an officer of the Qing (清, 1644-1911) government, moved with his clansmen to Tze Tong Tsuen after harassment with the Tangs (鄧) in Kam Tin. It is not known when the Lai Ancestral Hall (黎氏宗祠) was built. It has a history of over a hundred years.

*Historical
Interest*

The ancestral hall is the biggest building in the village. It is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. The open courtyard is in-between the entrance and main halls. The walls are plastered and the floors cement-screeded. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls and columns to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The roofs of the side chambers beside the courtyard are turned into concrete ones. The timber beams at the halls have also been replaced with concrete ones. A tall and big wooden altar is in the central hall housing seven rows of soul tablets for worship. A few number of soul tablets are at the side altars of the side hall. A kitchen is on the right of the entrance hall. The name of the hall is moulded above the lintel of the recessed entrance. A fascia board with floral carving is under the eave. Plastered moulding of geometric pattern is for the wall frieze at the front façade.

*Architectural
Merit*

It is an ancestral hall to witness the settlement of the Lais in the village.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

*Built Heritage
Value*

A renovation was held in 1962. The concrete beams and alteration to the side chambers have undermined the authenticity.

Authenticity

Other than for ancestral worship, the hall would be used for Dim Dang (點燈) ritual for new born baby boys of previous year on the 7th to 14th days of the Lunar New Year where a lantern will be lit up and hung. On the following 15th day a feast called Yam Dang Jou (飲丁酒) in the form of basin meal (盆菜) will be held to celebrate the birth of the boys for the villagers. The hall was used as a study hall which teacher was employed from Lam Tsuen (林村) some

*Social Value,
& Local Interest*

60 years ago. It was used as a kindergarten before the Sheung Tsuen Kindergarten (上村幼稚園) was established. Lai Kam-tai (黎金泰), a 24th generation member of the Lais, gained his fortune in Australia after working as a labourer in the gold mines. He returned home and established Lai Uk Tsuen (黎屋村), west of Tze Tong Tsuen, and built the Chik Kwai Study Hall (植桂書室), his residence and a stable in the village.