

An Extended Look at Our Cultural Inheritance

Since the end of the 19th century, the present site of Jao Tsung-I Academy has served, in succession, as a customs station, as quarters for Chinese labourers, as a quarantine station, as a prison, as a hospital for infectious diseases, and as a psychiatric rehabilitation centre. It has performed totally different roles and functions in response to the different needs of society at different times.



Jao Tsung-I Academy was one of the first batch of projects in the Hong Kong Government's Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme.

The revitalisation of the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital by The Hong Kong Institute for Promotion of Chinese Culture (an NGO), who is responsible for its operation, management, and the many cultural activities all in one complex in a self-financed basis. Apart from the green surroundings, there is a Heritage Lodge in the upper zone; exhibition halls, a theatre, a lecture halls, activity rooms, souvenir corner, restaurant, coffee shop, and teahouse in the middle zone and low zone.

Oral Histories

"This village! In the 1950s, it was just fields, grain seedlings, and sweet potato. Every year there were two crops, and after the harvest, we would plant vegetables and sweet potatoes."

~Tsang Chun-man~

"I heard some people use the English word "market" when they were going to buy things. When I was small I wore white canvas shoes, the grandmother would say *lap ba* because they were originally made out of rubber."

~Tsang Wai-kwok~

"We had our lessons from P1 to P3 at Yeung Ching Study Hall. In P4 we moved to the new school. The old school didn't have a sports field, so when it was time for sport, we would walk go to Fuk Lei playground in the new village. From P1 to P3 we had lessons on the upper floor. The teachers' room was on the lower flower as well as our classroom from P4 to P6."

~Ng Yuen-fong~



▲ Western-style house

Buildings

There are different types of buildings in Kau Wah Keng Old Village, including traditional village houses, squatters' quarters, and school buildings. These represent over 80 years of historical buildings, including Western bungalows in the architectural style of the 1920s and 1930s.



▲ Tsang Ancestral Hall

The Tsangs built an ancestral hall in the 1900 in honour of Tsang Chao-fung, the son of Tsang Wai-heng, the founder of Kau Wah Keng. The villagers gather here to worship their ancestors on festive occasions.

The Tsang Ancestral Hall was built in 1905 to commemorate Tsang Wah-hon's father-in-law Lok Bit-hing. Villagers will gather here to worship their ancestors at every important traditional festival.

Customs & Rituals

The Hakka people regard the unicorn as an auspicious beast, which can dispel evil influences and bring good luck, so they will perform the unicorn dance to celebrate the Lunar New Year.



▲ unicorn

When the unicorn dance came to Hong Kong with the Hakka, it combined with local traditional music and martial arts to develop into its own unique style, footwork, and costumes.

Kau Wah Keng Old Village still has the custom of performing the unicorn dance and its steps are passed down from generation to generation with young villagers learning it by observation.

The Hakka perform the unicorn dance to celebrate the annual harvest, and the villagers' wish to live and work in peace and happiness.

Social Practices

Every autumn, the village head of Kau Wah Keng Old Village and village representatives will first weed the ancestral graves. On the day of grave visiting, villagers place sacrifices in front of the graves, usually roast meat, cooked chicken, and fruit.



▲ Autumn grave visiting

After worshipping, adult male, *Nan Ding*, are responsible for burning ingots of paper and gold. After the rituals are completed, the sacrifices will be divided up and eaten.

The "food hill ceremony" has been simplified over time. Now it is called *poon choi* (basin meal), so the custom lives on to this day.

History of Kau Wah Keng Old Village

The history of Kau Wah Keng Old Village can be traced back to more than 300 years when the ancestors of the Tsang clan moved to the area when the seaban was cancelled in 1669 (the 8th Year of Kangxi, Qing dynasty). Kau Wah Keng Old Village is dominated by the Tsang clan and is one of the three largest Hakka clans in Kwai Tsing. The clan still maintains its own ancestral hall and traditional customs such as lantern lighting.



▲ Kau Wah Keng in the 1940s

In 1921 Yeung Ching Study Hall in the village was one of the first government-subsidized village schools to teach English.

Over a century of change, Kau Wah Keng Old Village has now become the closest traditional New Territories village to the urban area, but it has preserved the way of life, culture, and traditions of old New Territories villages, including clan festivals, unicorn dances, and making tea cakes.

A Study of Kau Wah Keng Old Village & Surrounding Areas



A Stroll in the Lifecycle of a Community

A Housing Historical Trail

There are few traditional villages in the Kowloon Peninsula and the surrounding areas, but convenient transportation still attracts people to Kau Wah Keng Old Village. By researching social history, and studying the transformation of Kau Wah Keng Old Village and its surrounding areas, we can distinguish how Hong Kong housing has changed and how Hong Kong people lived in different eras.

Kau Wah Keng Old Village is the starting point of the "Housing Historical Trail" while Jao Tsung-I Academy is the end point. The diversity of Hong Kong buildings and the housing history of Hong Kong people can be seen through the different types of buildings along the trail.

Over the past half century, Kau Wah Keng Old Village and its surrounding areas have undergone tremendous changes. This is a portrait of the renewal of the region and a microcosm of Hong Kong's social changes.

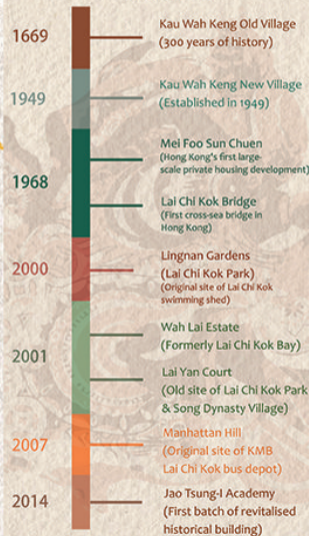


1. Kau Wah Keng Old Village
2. Kau Wah Keng New Village
3. Lai Yan Court
4. Wah Lai Estate
5. Mei Foo Sun Chuen

6. Lingnan Gardens
7. Lai Chi Kok Bridge
8. Manhattan Hill
9. Jao Tsung-I Academy

Kau Wah Keng Old Village & Surrounding Areas

Timeline



Supported by the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust



Through this funded project, Jao Tsung-I Academy hopes to explore the surrounding communities, taking advantage of the site as an axis to explore Kau Wah Keng Old Village and its neighbouring areas; to explore the contours and changes in the communities, and to share the life stories that are close at hand.

Visit <https://www.jtia.hk/en/hwht-kwk/> for "A Study of Kau Wah Keng Old Village & Surrounding Areas" Research Report.



A Study of Kau Wah Keng Old Village & Surrounding Areas

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*Non-scale simplified illustration