

**Heritage Appraisal of Fat Tat Tong,
Nos. 1 – 5 Ha Wo Hang, Sha Tau Kok, New Territories**

Fat Tat Tong (發達堂), literally meaning a mansion of wealth, ***Historical Interest*** was built in 1933 in Ha Wo Hang, Sha Tau Kok. It is not only a testimony of the history of a renowned Hakka family in the area, but also a typical example of the residences of eclectic style popular with the returned overseas Chinese in the early 20th century in the territory.

Fat Tat Tong was built by the trustee called Li To Wan Tso (李道環祖), which was formed by the four sons of Li Towan (李道環) in the 1930s. Li To-wan is a descendant of the Li clan of Wo Hang (禾坑) in Sha Tau Kok, New Territories.

According to the lineage genealogy of the Li clan of New Territories (《新界禾坑李氏族譜》), the Lis of Wo Hang (禾坑) are Hakkas whose ancestors settled in Fujian (福建) province at the end of Song Dynasty. Some of their descendants later migrated to Boluo (博羅) in Guangdong (廣東). During the 1680s, Li Tak-wah (李德華), the founding ancestor of the Lis of Wo Hang, moved from Boluo to the area now known as the New Territories where he established Sheung Wo Hang Village (上禾坑). His grandson Li Jit-wing (李捷榮), settled in Ha Wo Hang (下禾坑) in about 1730. Li To-wan was the 7th generation descendant of Li Tak-wah.

Like many young adults of Sha Tau Kok going abroad to make a livelihood in the late 19th century, Li To-wan went to Vietnam at his early age to earn a living. He and his family returned to Ha Wo Hang with a modest fortune.

¹ On 24 August 1924, a meeting jointed by 102 village representatives was held at the Man Mo Temple in Tai Po Market (大埔墟文武二帝廟) to cast pressure on the Government to abolish the policy of levying premiums on permanent structures built on agricultural land. The Committee for the Keeping of the People's Property in the Leased Territory of Kowloon was founded after the meeting.

² "Tsz Yi" was first appointed by the Governor in 1926 to give advice to District Officer on matters related to local affairs and disputes. The status of "Tsz Yi" is similar to the present Ex Officio Executive Councilors (當然執行委員) of Heung Yee Kuk. The Ex Officio Executive Councilors are mainly chairmen of rural committees.

It is worth mentioning that Li To-wan's eldest son, Li Kwan-lan (李鈞蘭), was the manager of Li To Wan Tso when Fat Tat Tong was built in 1933 according to the land records. Li Kwan-lan was active in local affairs of Sha Tau Kok. He was a village representative of Wo Hang in the 1920s and contributed to the formation of the Committee for the Keeping of the People's Property in the Leased Territory of Kowloon (九龍租界維持民產委員會) in 1924¹. The Committee was regarded as the predecessor of Heung Yee Kuk (鄉議局) founded in 1926, which is an advisory body to the Government on New Territories affairs. Besides, Li was appointed one of the three Tsz Yi (諮議)² of Sha Tau Kok District in 1936 by the Governor to give advice on matters of local affairs and disputes. The appointment of Tsz Yi was regarded as an honorary offer of the Governor which reflected Li Kwan-lan as an influential community leader of Sha Tau Kok at the time.

After the death of Li To-wan before the Second World War, the land of the family was transferred to a trustee called Li To Wan Tso (李道環祖). According to the land records, the main part of the land where Fat Tat Tong is now situated was bought by Li To Wan Tso in 1933 which later built Fat Tat Tong in the same year.

Fat Tat Tong is situated beyond the core of Ha Wo Hang village but it shares the same historic fung-shui settings of Wo Hang valley with other traditional village houses in Ha Wo Hang. Ha Wo Hang is surrounded by a range of hills including Pak Shuen Ling (泊船嶺), Tso Dui Ling (草堆嶺) and Hung Fa Ling (紅花嶺). All the houses including Fat Tat Tong face towards Hung Fa Ling (紅花嶺) and with a river running through the Wo Hang valley in front. It is believed that such environmental settings bring desirable fung-shui effect to the houses in Wo Hang.

*Architectural
Merit*

Fat Tat Tong is a residence composed of Chinese and Western elements. This eclectic building style appears to have been popular with returned overseas Chinese, in particular Hakkas, in the early 20th century, as a way of expressing their wealth and experience gained overseas.

The two-storey residence has a long pitched Hakka-style tiled roof and fronted by a flat-roofed verandah. Traditional green brick and timber as well as modern reinforced concrete are used for the construction. The front of the residence is the most distinctive and is composed of colonnaded verandahs at both floor levels. An ornamental parapet wall featuring a “rolling cloud” pediment as well as ball and urn-shaped finials bound the flat roof over the upper floor verandah. Rows of windows with metal hoods at the ground floor level are used to enhance the security of the building. Besides, each of the five units of the residence has its own front entrance with a Chinese-style sliding door (趟攏門) constructed of metal.

The middle unit had once been used as a common storage for farming utensils and crops of rice while the remaining four units were inhabited by the families of the four sons of Li To-wan. Apart from the middle unit, a staircase is provided for each of the other four units for accessing to the upper floor. The building is also fronted by an enclosed forecourt for drying crops which is a common feature of local traditional rural house.

After the Second World War, the Lis decided to divide the family property, resulting in the blockage of passages between the five units on the ground floor. However, the five units are still connected to one another with a shared balcony on the upper floor and a communal narrow courtyard in-between the main house and a row of rear out-houses where individual kitchens for each unit are located. The long narrow courtyard has an arched doorway at each end. An unusual feature is a roof terrace at the rear over the outhouses connected to the five units of the main house by five small bridges with ornamental brick parapets.

Nowadays, Fat Tat Tong still serves as a residence for the descendants of Li To-wan. Few alterations appear to have been carried out since its construction. Original building layout and some historic features and relics of the residence are well preserved, such as the Hakka-style tiled roof, the plaster couplet on the façade,

Authenticity

ornamental brick parapet walls, staircases and timber balustrades, metal window hoods and sliding doors, etc. The traditional stoves and chimneystacks at the kitchens are still retained.

There is no significant change to the historic environmental settings of Wo Hang valley and the surrounding landscape of Fat Tat Tong basically remains intact. The farm land in front of Fat Tat Tong belongs to Li To Wan Tso that guarantees a good open view of the residence.

Fat Tat Tong is the earliest example demonstrating a mixed architectural styles and the most outstanding residence built by villagers returned from overseas in Wo Hang area. ***Rarity***

As a residence of a prominent family, which gained respect and status in the New Territories, Fat Tat Tong is an iconic building in the area in terms of its size and blending of architectural style. Fat Tat Tong is not only a testimony of the history of a renowned Hakka family in the area, but also a typical example of the residences composed of Chinese and Western elements built by the returned overseas Chinese in the early 20th century in the territory. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

The Li clan settled in Wo Hang area in the late 1680s and subsequently established three villages, namely Sheung Wo Hang, Ha Wo Hang and Wo Hang Tai Long (禾坑大朗). Apart from Fat Tat Tong, there are still other old buildings and structures built by the Li clan in the area such as a declared monument namely Kang Yung Shu Uk (鏡蓉書屋), depicting the historical development of a Hakka clan settlement in Hong Kong. ***Group Value***