

Historic Building Appraisal

Hon Lo,

No. 61 San Wai Tsuen, San Tin, Yuen Long, New Territories

Hon Lo (漢廬) was built in 1931 by **Wong Lai-hon** (黃禮漢) who probably acquired wealth working overseas. He is believed to have emigrated to the U.S.A. before the house was built, so presumably sent remittances back to his family in Hong Kong to buy a plot of land and build a house. However another story is that the house was originally owned by a Hung clansman named **Hung Shai-chim** (洪世瞻). The present ownership seems to be very complicated. *Historical Interest*

San Wai (新圍) consists of Sheung San Wai (上新圍) and Ha San Wai (下新圍). During the late Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644-1911) and early Republican period (民國), the Yeungs settled in Ha San Wai from Taishan (台山) because banditry was rampant in Mainland China. Initially, Ha San Wai was called Fuk Hing Lei (福興里). Due to the population growth of Ha San Wai, Sheung San Wai was developed later. It was inhabited by families including the Yeungs (楊), the Lees (李), the Wongs (黃) and the Chans (陳). Sheung San Wai is known as San Wai Tsuen nowadays.

Most of the villagers of San Wai Tsuen acquired wealth by working overseas. The United States and Canada were their main destinations. They sent money back to San Wai Tsuen through sailors, *xunyangma* (巡洋馬) or money shops (銀號). Hence, the villagers were mainly sustained by remittances.

Hon Lo shows strong Western influence in its design, but its basic architectural style is **Qing Vernacular**. The house is two storeys high with a pitched roof over the central main section and a classical style portico in front. The walls are built of grey-green bricks. There is a single storey detached annex built of grey bricks at the rear of the house. The front portico is three bays wide with open colonnaded and balustraded verandahs. The parapet is fairly simple in design with a central pedimented panel and ball ornaments to the posts. The rear and side windows are regularly spaced with white painted hood mouldings and surrounds. The original windows have been replaced with modern steel framed or aluminium units. The combination of Western architectural features and local traditional construction methods mean that the house is of **mixed style**. *Architectural Merit*

Apart from the replacement windows, Hon Lo appears to retain much of its authentic appearance. As a house of mixed style with Western influence it has built heritage value. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

As the house has always been used as a residence, it has relatively low social value to the local community. With its elegant classical style front portico it is an interesting building worthy of preservation. Together with No. 60 and No. 62 San Wai Tsuen, it has group value.

Probably the best use for the house is for it to continue to be used as a residence. Any alterations for adaptive re-use might well affect its authenticity.

Social Value

& Local

Interest

Adaptive

Re-use