

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 13-19 Ha Mei San Tsuen
Wang Chau, Yuen Long, New Territories

Ha Mei San Tsuen (蝦尾新村) is in the western end of Wang Chau (橫洲). *Historical Interest*
 It is a multi-clan village mostly inhabited by the Chans (陳) and the Wongs (黃). The Chans originated from Shajing of Shenzhen (深圳沙井). During the Qing Dynasty times, they settled in Sheung Cheung Wai of Ping Shan, Yuen Long (元朗屏山上璋圍) which was dominantly occupied by the Tang (鄧) clan. Still later, the Chans moved to an area previously known as Ha Mei Tsuen (蝦尾村 which no longer exists) which was located in the northern part of the present village.

Ha Mei Tsuen was founded by Chan Wai-chun (陳維進) in the early 20th century. Due to negative fung-shui setting, the Chans gradually left Ha Mei Tsuen and settled in elsewhere. Wai-chun's elder son, Tat-shing (達成) moved to Fung Chi Tsuen (鳳池村), south of Wang Chau, and then settled in Shui Pin Tsuen (水邊村) further south. Wai-chun's second son, Tat-ho (達可) moved a bite south to settle in the area now known as Ha Mei San Tsuen. The name of this new village, Ha Mei San Tsuen (蝦尾新村), literally means "a new village of Ha Mei Tsuen."

Built in the 1900s, the row of brick houses at Nos. 13-19 Ha Mei San Tsuen is a group of vernacular residences. According to oral interviews, the bricks might have been purchased from Yuen Long market. During the Second World War, the Japanese troops encroached into the village and hung a zinc plague at each of the said houses, with numbers in Japanese word, "番" (meaning "number"), The house at No. 12 was destroyed by Typhoon Wanda in 1962 and was rebuilt into a two-storey house around 1979.

The row of connected houses is Qing vernacular buildings each having a one-hall plan. They are in the second last row of four rows of houses in the village. They are all facing northwest like the others. The front façade of each of the houses is slightly recessed. An open forecourt for drying crops is in front of the houses. A household of the house terrace, who was believed to be richer than the others, built a kitchen at No. 19 outside his house unit. *Architectural Merit*

The houses are constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The base of the front wall is of granite blocks. There is no courtyard in each house because each house is a one-hall structure. A bedroom is located at the back of the hall, and a *mizhuang* (米椿, a rice polishing mill consisting of a wooden pile to hull rice with a weight) is placed at the right side of the hall. An altar is placed at the

centre of the hall. A brick cooking stove and a bath corner is respectively on the left and right of the hall. Further inside is the living room and a bedroom. A cockloft is above the bedroom also for use as a bedroom or for storage. An altar is at the far end of the living room for ancestral worship.

It is a row of connected houses to witness the settlement of the Chans and the Wongs in the village. The house terrace has some built heritage value. It tells a lot about the daily life in a traditional rural village.

The house terrace at Nos. 13-19 is the best preserved historic building in Ha Mei San Tsuen. The house terrace are preserved with high authenticity though the front eaves of Nos. 15 and 16 were repaired and turned into concrete ones shortly after Typhoon Wanda.

At Ha Mei San Tsuen, there is no ancestral hall in the village, so the villagers worship their ancestors at home instead. Celebrations for wedding and feasts were held in front of the house terrace. The villagers have an organization called Yee Wo Tong (義和堂) to deal with village affairs. The Chans have close relationship with their brother members in Fung Chi Tsuen and Shui Pin Tsuen, for example, Chan Fuk-tak (the founding ancestor of Ha Mei San Tsuen) was one of the sponsors of the renovation of Tin Hau Temple, Fung Chi Tsuen (鳳池村天后宮) in 1908.

At the west end of the village, there is an entrance gate. It is built of bricks and there are two holes on the top of the front façade for security reasons. Part of the surrounding wall remains attached to the entrance. The gate was the main passage before the Mei Sun Tsuen Road was built.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value**

& Authenticity

**Social Value,
& Local
Interest**

Group Value