

Historic Building Appraisal
Yau Ancestral Hall
Cheung Shue Tan, Tai Po, New Territories

Cheung Shue Tan (樟樹灘) is on the southern shore of To Lo Harbour (吐露港) in Tai Po (大埔), lying in-between Tai Po and Sha Tin (沙田). Its history is thus inevitably linked to the development of these two districts. Indeed, before 1892, it was still part of the Fo Tan *yeuk* (火炭約), one of the alliances in the Alliance of Nine or *Kau Yeuk* (九約) which served as a communal and political structure of the entire Sha Tin district. It is not clear when the Alliance was set up, but evidently, it came into being as a formalized alliance when the Sha Tin Che Kung Temple (沙田車公廟) was renovated in 1890. At least 12 members of the Kong clan (江氏) of Cheung Shue Tan contributed to the renovation project through private donation. *Historical Interest*

Cheung Shue Tan was first settled by the Wans (溫氏) in the 12th year of the Shunzhi (順治, 1655) reign of Qing (清) Dynasty and later followed by the Yaus (邱氏), the Kongs (江氏) and the Chengs (鄭氏). The Yaus were from Bolou (博羅) of Guangdong (廣東) province in the 17th year of the Shunzhi (順治, 1660) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. The Yau Ancestral Hall (燦斐邱公祠) was built in the **1900s**. Although many clan members had emigrated to Southeast Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, and the United Kingdom in the 1950s, or moved to the urban areas, the ancestral hall was renovated around the early 1990s and still serves as a ritual venue for the Wans during Chinese festivals.

The building is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. Side entrances are on either side of the courtyard. A spacious foreground is in front of the building. The building is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and the floors cement-screeded. The ceramic-tiled altar is at the end wall of the main hall housing a soul tablet of the Wan ancestors for worship. Behind the tablet on the wall is a big Chinese character ‘壽’ (longevity) written on a piece of red paper. Two tie beams in the main hall are engraved with ‘百子千孫’ (Hundreds of Sons and Thousands of Grandsons) and ‘蘭桂騰芳’ (Abundant Fragrance of Orchid and Osmanthus). The name of the hall is moulded on the wall above the lintel of the recessed entrance. The front eave of the entrance façade is strengthened with reinforced concrete. The front façade is with ceramic glazed tiles. *Architectural Merit*

It is an ancestral hall of the Yaus to remind their settlement in Cheung Shue Tan. *Rarity*

It has some built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

The authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

The hall has the primary function of ancestral worship of the Yau ancestors. It was a meeting place of the Yaus to deal with the clan affairs. The Yaus became the majority of the village in the 1950s with more than 30 families as many of the villagers had moved away and some worked overseas. Now many of the Yaus have moved to the urban areas and overseas leaving only a few numbers of the Yaus in the village. *Social Value, & Local Interest*

It has group value with Hip Tin Temple in the area (樟樹灘協天宮) and another two ancestral halls in the village, namely, Kong Ancestral Hall (江氏宗祠) and Wan Ancestral Hall (溫氏宗祠). All these buildings have good value from a heritage and cultural point of view. *Group value*

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time. *Adaptive Re-use*