

Historic Building Appraisal
Entrance Gate
Shek Po Tsuen, Ping Shan, Yuen Long

Shek Po Tsuen (石埗村) was not a walled village but the name of Shek Po Wai (石步圍) is engraved at the entrance gate. The village houses were built packing together in its outer four sides to form a near square village. Shek Po Tusen was established by Lam Fat-ngau (林發鰲), a descendent of Lam Kau-muk (林九牧) who came from Putian (莆田) of Fujian (福建) province, in the 10th year of Jiajing (嘉靖, 1531) of the Ming (明) dynasty. Fat-ngau was an official in the Guangdong (廣東) province and settled in Chayuan (茶園) of Dongguan (東莞). He was later conscripted to the army that he fled to the place now known as Fui Sha Wai (灰沙圍) of Ping Shan (屏山), Yuen Long. Threatened by the Tangs (鄧) in Ping Shan, the Lams left and settled in the present area to set up their own village. An entrance gate was built in the first row of nine rows of houses in the middle of the northern end of the village. A shrine is at the opposite southern end on the same central axis of the village. It is not known when the entrance gate was built. It was probably constructed some years after the village was established.

***Historical
Interest***

The entrance gate is connected to a house on its left. The gate is a Qing (清) vernacular building of a one-hall plan. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The doorframes, the floor, the wall corners and the lower courses of the front and back walls are of granite. Its front and back doorways are both rectangular. A cockloft is made at the hall with a square hole as its entrance. Two circular holes are on either side of the front doorway for *fung shui* benefit. Under the eave are weathered wall frieze paintings of flowers. Inside the gate entrance on the left is an Earth God (土地) niche on the wall with an incinerator at the bottom.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is an entrance gate to witness the history of the village.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The front portion of the front eave was turned into a flat concrete one in 1958. It has its authenticity kept other than this.

Authenticity

It has group value with the shrine and the Lam Ancestral Hall (林氏宗祠, rebuilt) in the village.

Group Value

The entrance gate was an essential structure to protect the villagers inhabited inside the village. It was used to keep away all the enemies, bandits and any threats that would endanger the villagers. It was closed at night. A village guard force was formed to provide a self-defence system in the village. The force was divided into two teams, one served from 8 pm to midnight and another from midnight to 4 am respectively. Each team comprises 12 villagers stationed at four different corners and at the entrance gate. The village was looted by the Japanese and the bandits during the Japanese Occupation (1941-45). At the Dim Dang (點燈) ritual on a conspicuous day before the 15th day of the Chinese New Year, a lantern would be hung at the entrance gate other than at the shrine and the Lam Ancestral Hall of the village. The Tin Hau (天后) deity at the temple in Hung Shui Kiu (洪水橋) of Yuen Long would be invited to the shrine of the village to give blessing and receive offerings at the beginning of the ritual which is called Hoi Dang (開燈). At festivals, incense offering would be made at the entrance gate.

*Social Value,
& Local Interest*