

Historic Building Appraisal

Shrine

Shui Pin Tsuen, Wang Chau, Yuen Long, New Territories

Shui Pin Tsuen (水邊村) in Wang Chau (橫洲) of Yuen Long was named *Historical Interest* owing to its topography. “Shui Pin” (水邊) means “beside water”. There was originally a waterway beside the village, so Shui Pin Tsuen was named as such. Besides, there is Shui Pin Yeuk (水邊約), or the Shui Pin Alliance in English, composed of Shui Pin Tsuen, Shui Pin Wai (水邊圍), Fung Chi Tsuen, Shui Tin Tsuen (水田村) and Ha Mei San Tsuen (蝦尾新村).

Shui Pin Tsuen a two-clan village first inhabited by the Wongs (黃氏), who are Hakkas (客家人) from Shilongzhen (石龍鎮) of Dongguan (東莞), Guangdong (廣東) province. Beside the Wongs, the Tos (陶氏) from Shui Pin Wai (水邊圍) came to live there later. Wong Yat-chow (黃一周), the 8th generation ancestor of the Wongs, and his sons firstly moved to Tsuen Wan (荃灣) and then settled in Shui Pin Tsuen in the early 19th century. The Taos (陶) coming from Shui Pin Wai (水邊圍), north-west of Shui Pin Tsuen, later settled in the village. The Wongs were farmers engaged in fishing and farming. Some of the Wongs later moved to Ma Tin Tsuen (馬田村) and Sai Pin Wai (西邊圍) of Yuen Long. The shrine (神廳) built on the central axis of the village is the oldest existing structure of the village. Most of the village houses have been rebuilt. The shrine was constructed probably in the early 19th century.

The shrine is at the back row of the village with village houses connected to either side. It is a one-storey Qing (清) vernacular building of a one-hall plan *Architectural Merit* having a rectangular layout. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its flush gable pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The bricks have a nine courses of stretchers to one course of header bonding (九順一丁). The floor is with cement screeding finish. The altar is in the middle of the end wall with an offering table in its front, all facing the entrance of the building. A wooden *caimen* (彩門) is hanged above the altar. The ridge is with end of straw design.

It is a shrine to witness the settlement of the Wongs in the village.

Rarity

The shrine has some built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value &

Its roof was repaired in the 1990s. Its authenticity is retained.

Authenticity

The Shrine under study plays an important role in the village. There is an altar *Immediate*

and an incinerator inside the building. Communal and religious functions are held there. Since the 1970s, most of the traditional village houses have been rebuilt into modern residential blocks. The Shrine, though being simple and common in design, is one the historic buildings surviving in Shui Pin Tsuen. *Environs*

No ancestral hall was built in the village. The shrine acts as one for the Wongs. A soul tablet of the Wong ancestors is at the altar for ancestral worship. Earth God (土地) and *Shennongshi* (神農氏) are also worshipped at the shrine. The Wongs have an ancestral worship duty shift called Ping On Tau (平安頭) carried out by three of their members annually. They are responsible for all duties such as normal incense offerings and other celebrations at the shrine. Dim Dang (點燈) and marriage rituals are also held at the shrine. The Wongs also take part in a number of Da Chiu (打醮) held by various villages and parties including those organized by Wang Chau, Shan Ha Tsuen (山下村) and Ha Tsuen (廈村). They would perform lion dances and provide special offerings. *Social Value, & Local Interest*

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