

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 15 Kau Wa Keng, Kwai Tsing, N.T.

The Tsangs (曾) in Kau Wa Keng, also locally known as Kau Wa Keng Old Village (九華徑舊村), are Hakkas (客家) who settled in the village in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. Before their arrival, the village was settled by a family surnamed Ng (吳). Tsang Bak-tao (曾伯韜) first moved from Wangniugang (望牛崗) of Danshui (淡水), Huizhou (惠州), to Lizhujiao village (壢竹角村) of Baoan (寶安), Guangdong (廣東) province, that is, the present-day Tai Lam Chung (大欖涌) in 1737. His second son Wai-heng (維亨) later moved to Kau Wa Keng in the mid-18th century. Wai-heng is considered as the founding ancestor of the village.

*Historical
Interest*

Hong Kong Island was declared as a free port in 1842 and the Kowloon Peninsula was leased by Britain in 1860, which resulted in the general growth of China trade. A large number of Chinese were employed by shipping companies. Many villagers in Kau Wa Keng started to work as seamen before the lease of the New Territories. Their remittances made the village well-off.

The building block formed by Nos. 13, 14 and 15 was built by Tsang Tai-cheung (曾大璋) before 1924 as indicated by an aerial photograph. Tai-cheung worked as a manager and an accountant in a timber shop. Hin-fu (憲富), his son, inherited the building after his father died in the 1930s. Hin-kwai worked as a seaman in a number of ship companies and travelled to the U.S. (by the ships of Canadian Pacific Ocean Services Ltd. (昌興火輪船公司)) and the Philippines (by the ships of Dollar Line (銀元輪船公司), also known as “Tai Loi” (大萊)) until 1941.

Located at the last (northern) row of the eight rows of village houses, the Tsang Ancestral Hall (曾氏外祖祠) at No.13 together with Nos.14 and 15 on its right form an independent form and design of western influences. The three units were owned by the descendants of the same *tso* (祖), the Tsang Chiu Fung Tso (曾朝鳳祖). A horizontal mounding is on the front facade at the level separating the ground and the first floors and at the roof level. A parapet is at the roof level of the facade. The hall is a two-storey building probably constructed of concrete and bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The ground floor and the first floor are having a one-hall-one-room plan. The hall is in front of the room. The walls are plastered and painted white. Timber planks and floor joists are for the structure of the upper flooring. The floor of the ground floor is of cement

*Architectural
Merit*

screeding whilst that of the upper floor is of Canton tiles. The doorframe is of granite.

It is a building of the Tsangs to witness their settlement in the area, and has some built heritage value. The building is in upkeep condition. Its authenticity is basically kept.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

Many of the Tsangs were seamen who worked overseas. They sent money via remittances back to the village, part of it was used for the repair of the building. Hin-fu and his brothers received secondary education in the village and then at the Ying Wa College (英華書院). They were encouraged to take up shipping business as many of the clansmen.

Social Value, & Local Interest

No. 15 has group value with the other historic buildings in the village, and the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital (荔枝角醫院) (Grade 3).

Group Value

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