

Historic Building Appraisal
Yiu Kung Ancestral Hall
No. 26A 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 (壙竹角村) 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.

It is believed that this Yiu Kung Ancestral hall (饒公祠) was built before 1905 to commemorate Yiu Wui-yuk (饒會郁), the adopted father of Tsang Chun-kwan (曾振焜) who was the great-grandson of Wai-heng. The other two ancestral halls include the Tsang Ancestral Hall (曾氏外祖祠) at No. 13 of the village and the Ancestral Hall (曾氏家祠) at No. 28B. Yiu had a close relationship with Wah-hon (曾華翰), the grandson of Wai-heng. He also came from Danshui. He helped Wah-hon to improve his living standard. As Yiu had no son, he adopted Chun-kwan as his son.

Located on a separate row of village houses in the west of the village, the ancestral hall is connected to village houses on its left and right. It has a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. The long and narrow building is constructed of grey bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and painted. The altar is in the middle of the end wall of the main hall housing a soul tablet facing the entrance. The floors are cement screeded. The building is also for residential use with a bedroom, a kitchen and a bathroom at the courtyard. *Architectural Merit*

It is an ancestral hall to witness their settlement in the area, and has some built heritage value. Its grey-brick walls and pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles can be still identified.

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. Other than for the ancestral worship, the hall was used to seek the ancestors' blessing for weddings, birth of babies and birthdays of elders. It was also used as a meeting place.

Social Value, & Local Interest

The ancestral hall has group value with 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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08-25-070. *Stonecutters Island in the background and Kau Wa Kang in the foreground* (photograph), 1927.

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