

Historic Building Appraisal
Wai Ancestral Hall
No. 5 Sheung Keng Hau, Sha Tin

Sheung Keng Hau (上徑口) has a history of over 300 years. It is a village of single surname, Wai (韋). Based on a legend passed down from generation to generation of the Wai clan, the Wais are the descendants of a famous Chinese general in the Western Han Dynasty (西漢, 206 BC- 8 AD), Mr **Han Xin** (韓信). Unfortunately, Han Xin was later executed on a conviction of treason. After his death, the Prime Minister ordered an adviser to take Han Xin's son and seek refuge in the South. The male descendants of Han Xin changed their surname to Wai, which was the right half of the character of their original surname; on the other hand, the female descendants changed their family name to Cheung (章), which was similar to the left side of the character Han. *Historical Interest*

The genealogy of the Wai clan in Hong Kong recorded the founding ancestor of Tai Wai as their first generation. With reference to the genealogy, the founding ancestor was called Wai Kin-yuen (韋建元) and he had four sons, namely, Wai Kin-hing (韋乾慶), Wai Hin-hing (韋衍慶), Wai Chong-hing (韋創慶) and Wai Tak-hing (韋德慶) in order of age. The eldest son moved to Sha Kok Mei (沙角尾) in Sai Kung; the second son settled in Tin Sam (田心); the third son stayed in Tai Wai; and the youngest son founded the village of Sheung Keng Hau (上徑口). The Wai clanspeople in Sheung Keng Hau were farmers engaged in crops growing and pig rearing. The present Wai Ancestral Hall (韋氏家祠) was **rebuilt in 1930**.

Located in the back row of village houses of the village, the ancestral hall is facing north-west together with other houses and backed by the Lion Rock (獅子山). It is a Qing (清) vernacular building having a one-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is in front of the main hall. The building is probably constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. A soul tablet is in the middle of the altar at the end wall of the main hall. The walls are plastered and the lower courses of the walls are covered with granite tiles. The front ridge is decorated with a set of red *ruilong* (夔龍) mouldings at its two ends. The doorframe is with yellow glazed ceramic tiles. The name of the hall is moulded above the lintel of the recessed entrance. *Architectural Merit*

It is an ancestral hall of the Wais to remind their settlement in Sheung Keng Hau village. *Rarity*

It has some built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The building has undergone large-scale renovation in the 1970s with many new building materials used on the old hall. This would very much diminish the authenticity of the building.

Authenticity

Dim Dang (點燈) ritual is still held at the ancestral hall for new born baby boys of previous year at the Chinese New Year. The ancestral hall is managed by a branch institution of the Wai clan called Wai Chui Fook Tong (韋聚福堂). In recent decades, another institution named Wai Kin Fook Tong (韋建福堂) has been established to administer the properties and activities of different branches of the Wais (e.g. ancestral worship and grave sweeping) in Tai Wai, Tin Sam and Sheung Keng Hau.

***Social Value,
& Local
Interest***

Wai Ancestral Hall is surrounded by residential units with the hill at the rear. In the past, the village houses were one storey buildings which were gradually replaced by multi-storey buildings. Modern residential units of Spanish style were built in the village. At the two ends of the original village boundary, there are two Earth Gods guarding the whole village. Although the houses are replaced by multi-storey units, the row house configuration is still kept with the entrance gate located between No. 13 and 14 Sheung Keng Hau.

Group Value

The question of adaptive re-use does not arise at present.

***Adaptive
Re-use***