

Historic Building Appraisal
Sham Ancestral Hall
No. 10 Shui Wo, Tai Po

Shui Wo (水窩) is a Hakka (客家) village of the Shams (沈). It is just a short distance from the Ng Tung Chai (梧桐寨) village in its south. It is on the west side of Lam Kam Road (林錦公路) and is one of the 26 villages in Lam Tsuen Valley (林村谷). The village was established by Sham Ting-fung (沈廷鳳), one of the two sons of Man-hing (萬興) who founded Ng Tung Chai. Man-hing was from Wuhau (五華) of Guangdong (廣東) province who came to the village in the late 17th century. Shui Wo village was probably founded some years later. It is not known when the Sham Ancestral Hall (沈氏宗祠) was built. The Shams said that it has a history of over a hundred years. *Historical Interest*

As with other houses in the village, the ancestral hall is facing north-west. It is a Qing (清) vernacular building having a three-hall-two-courtyard plan. It was originally a two-hall-one-courtyard one but extended in 1977 to become the present plan, with a new hall added at the rear. The two open courtyards are between the three halls both have side entrances on either side. The *dong chung* (擋中) is at the end of the middle hall. The building is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and the floors with cement screeding. The painted-red altar is at the end wall of the main hall housing a soul tablet of the Shams for worship. A big Chinese character “壽” (longevity) is painted red on the wall behind the altar flanked with a couplet. The three ridges are decorated with a pair of red geometric mouldings at their ends. No frieze painting is on the wall. The name of the hall is moulded above the lintel of the doorframe of the recessed entrance. *Architectural Merit*

It is an ancestral hall of the Shams to witness their settlement in Shui Wo village. *Rarity*

It has little built heritage value. *Built Heritage Value*

The building was renovated in 1977. It has its authenticity kept. *Authenticity*

The hall has been for the ancestral worship of the Shams and for the celebrations of festivals with special offerings for their ancestors during the Chinese New Year. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual was held on the 15th of the first lunar month for the baby boys born in previous year. The ritual has been discontinued *Social Value, & Local Interest*

in the 1960s when many of the family members emigrated overseas. The worship of Kwan Tai (關帝) deity was held at the hall where a statue of the deity was displayed. It was however removed after the hall was extended. In the past, funeral ceremonies were also held at the hall. Nowadays, the ancestors are still worshipped during weddings, although the ritual has been simplified.