

Historic Building Appraisal
Wong U Hing Tong
San Uk Ka, Tai Po, New Territories

San Uk Ka (新屋家) is in the north of Wun Yiu (碗窑), Tai Po. It is a Hakka (客家) village inhabited by the Wongs (黃氏) whose ancestors moved to San Uk Ka about 1635. The Wong U Hing Tong (黃餘慶堂) is their ancestral hall built in the late 19th or early 20th century. The ancestral hall was seriously damaged during the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945) and rebuilt after the Second World War. The pair of couplets at the façade reads “春申世澤，江夏家聲”, indicating that the Wongs of San Uk Ka are originated from Hubei province. “Chun shen” (春申) refers to Chunshenzun (春申君), who was one of the Four Generals of the Warring States Period (B.C. 475 – 221) (戰國四公子) serving the Chu Kingdom (楚國) for over 20 years. “Jiangxia” (江夏) refers to Jiangxia county in Hubei province (湖北省).

***Historical
Interest***

The ancestral hall is in the middle of the village. All the old buildings in the village have been rebuilt. The hall is a Qing (清) vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. It 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 cement-screeded. The altar is in the middle of the end wall housing a soul tablet of the Wong ancestors for worship. A big Chinese character “壽” (longevity) is written on a piece of red paper framed on the end wall behind the tablet. A tie beam at the hall is carved with four Chinese characters “百子千孫” (Hundreds of Sons and Thousands of Grandsons). The name of the hall is moulded on red background on the wall above the lintel at the recessed entrance.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is an ancestral hall to remind the settlement of the Wongs in San Uk Ka.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The building was rebuilt in 1950 and renovated in 2002.

Authenticity

The ancestral hall plays a crucial role in both joyful celebrations and sad ceremonies, also known as the “red” (紅事, rituals that are joyful and worth celebrating) and the “white” (白事, rituals that are sad and serious ceremony are undertaken, meaning death of a clan member) rituals. When a boy was born, *diandeng* (點燈, lamp lighting) would be practiced inside the hall on the Lantern Festival (元宵節, the 15th day of the first Lunar month). Also, the new couple

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

would *kowtow* (叩頭) and practice tea offering (敬茶) to the ancestors' spirits. On the other hand, the hall would be used for funerals. However, most rituals had been abandoned for very long time ago.

San Uk Ka is embraced with mountains at the rear, it is considered to have a good *fengshui* setting. Most of the houses in the San Uk Ka are north-east orientated and employ modern style, only a few houses topped by traditional pitched roofs are still retained in the village, Wong U Hing Tong is therefore surrounded by a group of modern dwellings. ***Group Value***

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