

Historic Building Appraisal
Tsang Ancestral Hall
No. 13 Kau Wa Keng, Kwai Tsing, N.T.

The Tsangs (曾) in Kau Wa Keng, 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 (壩竹角村) 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.

This Tsang Ancestral hall (曾氏外祖祠), accommodated in No. 13 of the building block occupying Nos. 13, 14 and 15, was dedicated to Lok Bit-hing (駱必興), the father-in-law of Tsang Wa-hon (曾華翰), the grandson of Wai-heng. The exact construction year of Nos. 13, 14 and 15 is unknown. However, according to an aerial photo, it was built before 1924.

Located at the last (northern) row of the eight rows of village houses, the ancestral hall at No. 13 together with Nos. 14 and 15 on its right form an independent form and design of Western influences. 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 altar is at the hall of the first floor with a soul tablet for worship. An incinerator is in front of the altar. The walls are plastered and painted white. Timber planks and floor joists are for the structure of the upper flooring. The doorframe is of granite. The name of the building ‘外祖祠’ (Ancestral Hall of the Ancestor-in-Law) can be identified at the entrance doorway. *Architectural Merit*

It is an ancestral hall to witness the Tsang's settlement in the area. It is housed in one of the residential units, rather than a building purposely built for ancestral worship.

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 ancestral worship, the hall was also used to seek the ancestors' blessing for weddings, birth of babies and birthdays of elders. It was also used as a meeting place. Nowadays, the descendants still make special offerings to the ancestors at festivals there.

Social Value, & Local Interest

No. 13 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.

HKRS209-4-6-41. *Sheet 6. Villages: Kau Pa Kang* (Map No. 104(41)).

Aerial Photos of the Hong Kong Government

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