

Historic Building Appraisal
Cheng Ancestral Hall
Shing Mun San Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen Long

Shing Mun San Tsuen (城門新村, Shing Mun New Village) is on the right of Tai Hong Wai (泰康圍), north of Kam Tin Road (錦田公路) in Kam Tin (錦田), Yuen Long. It was built for the settlement of 540 Chengs (鄭) from 84 families moved from six villages in the Shing Mun Valley (城門谷) for the construction of the Shing Mun Reservoir (城門水塘) in 1928. A total of eight villages were in the valley including Shing Mun Lo Wai (城門老圍), Pak Shek Wo (白石窩), Pei Tau To (坡頭肚) and others. Most of the villagers were Hakkas (客家). Other than Kam Tin, some of the Chengs dispersed to Wo Hop Shek (和合石), Pan Chung (泮涌) in Tai Po and other areas. The Hakka Chengs moved from Dongguan (東莞) of Guangdong (廣東) province to Shing Mun Valley in the 19th year of the Kangxi (康熙, 1680) reign of the Qing (清, 1644-1911) dynasty. Other than the long rows of village houses to settle the 84 families, a block of building for two ancestral halls was built in the left front of the village at the same time in 1929. The building housed a clan ancestral hall (鄭氏宗祠) on its left and a family ancestral hall (鄭氏家祠) on the right. A bay was added on its left in 1957 for use as a kindergarten making the building a three-bay structure.

***Historical
Interest***

The ancestral hall is a Qing (清) vernacular design building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. The central bay is about two times bigger than the two side bays. Side rooms are on either side of the main and entrance halls. The open courtyards in the middle of the bays were covered with roofs. Mezzanine floors are added on the side rooms beside the main hall. A roof was added in the forecourt of the building with corrugated sheets. The building is heavily plastered and painted internally and on its front façade. The name of the clan ancestral hall is above the lintel of the central entrance whilst the name of the family hall is on that of the right entrance. A pair of red *ruilong* (夔龍) moulding is at the two ends of the front ridge. Another pair is at the gable ridges at the back of the building. Wall frieze paintings of flowers and birds are at the halls.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is an ancestral hall building to witness the settlement of the Chengs in Kam Tin.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The interior of the building and the front façade which are badly painted very much diminish its authenticity.

Authenticity

After the Chengs moved to Kam Tin, they worked as farmers growing rice and some worked in the Shek Kong Barracks as cooks, guards and workers. Some of them worked in Britain in the late 1950s and in the 1960s. The ancestral hall served as a venue for their ancestral worship, wedding and Dim Dang (點燈) rituals. Other Chengs moved elsewhere in Hong Kong returned to the hall to make worship to their ancestors. The hall was damaged by the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation (1941-45) and the soul tablets were lost. Some of the Chengs now worship their ancestors at their own homes and some have the soul tablets of their ancestors placed at the Kwan Tai Temple (關帝廟) in the village for worship. The entire building was used for the Tung Tak Kindergarten (錦田通德幼稚園) operated by the Chengs which took children in the village and those nearby. The kindergarten was closed in about 10 years. Part of the building is now used for storage.

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