

Historic Building Appraisal

Watchtower

Kuk Po, Luk Keng

Kuk Po (谷埔) is in the southeast of Sha Tau Kok (沙頭角) with Luk Keng (鹿頸) on its west. Kuk Po has a number of small villages including Lo Wai (老圍), San Uk Ha (新屋下), Yi To (二肚), Sam To (三肚) and others inhabited by the Hakkas (客家) surnamed Sung (宋), Yeung (楊), Cheng (鄭), Lee (李), Yau (丘) and others. The three houses including a watchtower are at the northern tip of Kuk Po close to the seashore of Sha Tau Kok Hoi (沙頭角海). A pier is a short distance on their northwest. With a short boat journey across the Sha Tau Kok Hoi, the Sha Tau Kok Market (沙頭角墟) or Tung Wo Market (東和墟), could be reached in a few minutes. The three connected houses were built as a block of shop cum residence by Lee Kung-on (李公安) in the 1920s for his retail shop called Kung On (公安). The shop operated until the Japanese Occupation (1941-45). The three houses were sold to the grandfather of Yeung Yuk-kwan (楊玉坤) in 1956 and converted for residential use only. The Yeungs moved away from the houses in 1999 and the houses have been left vacated since then. They still owned the houses and came back to the houses occasionally.

**Historical
Interest**

The row of three houses is facing southwest with a footpath in its front. A house is connected to its left. The watchtower is at the front portion of the house on the far right. The three houses are individually having a one-hall-one-room plan. The front rooms are used as a kitchen or an entrance hall. The front rooms are flat-roofed. The location of the front room of the far right house is the tower. The watchtower is a three-storey structure. The three houses are Qing (清) vernacular houses each having its own entrance except the tower. The entrance of the tower is at the back entered via the side entrance of the middle house. The tower is constructed of green bricks and rammed earth with its walls to support its flat roof. The tower has thick walls with small gun holes on three sides except the back wall. The walls are plastered and the floors cement-screeded.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a watchtower, a part of the row of three connected houses of shop cum residence of the Lees and of the Yeungs to witness their settlement in the village. It is also a part of the history of Kuk Po.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Its authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with the connected houses.

Group Value

Lee Kung-on was a Hakka coming from Wu Kau Tan (烏蛟騰) in the south of Kuk Po. He was a native of Meixian (梅縣), Guangdong (廣東) province. His shop sold oil, sugar, wine, pork and daily necessities. The shop was in a convenient location for villagers of Kuk Po going out of and coming back to the villages. Wine and bean curds were also made in the houses. Pigs were reared in a piggery next door. The water for wine and bean curd making was from a well inside the house. The beans were milled and the wine brewed in the houses. Kung-on had a large piece of land in the south of his shop for growing rice. The grain other than for own consumption was for wine making. The rice used after brewing was for feeding the pigs. The watchtower other than for defence purpose was for storage use also. The Yeungs were from Lo Wai in Kuk Po who had been there for some three hundred years. The Yeungs paid \$8,500 for the three houses and converted them for their own use.

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*