

Historic Building Appraisal
Lau Ancestral Hall
Sheung Yeung, Sai Kung

The Lau Ancestral Hall (劉氏宗祠) in Sheung Yeung (上洋) village of Pan Long Wan (檳榔灣), Sai Kung, is the ancestral hall of the Laus built in 1929 to replace their five family ancestral halls. The Laus are Hakkas (客家) whose ancestors were natives from Xingning (興寧) of Chengle (長樂), Fujian (福) province. They first settled in Niwan (泥灣) of Shenzhen (深圳) before they went to Wong Chuk Shan (黃竹山) in Tai Po. They then moved to the Hang Hau (坑口) Peninsula. The three brothers of the Laus, Tze-Yu (子瑜), Tze-Kai (子玠) and Tze-sun (子瑄) respectively settled in Ha Yeung (下洋), Sheung Yeung and Pan Long Wan (檳榔灣村) villages in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1786) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. They were farmers growing rice and vegetables and fishermen. Sheung Yeung village was a single-surnamed village of the Laus but now also occupied by some others. The ancestral hall was rebuilt with modern materials in 2004.

**Historical
Interest**

The ancestral hall is a Qing design vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. The small open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. The middle bay courtyard and halls are flanked by side chambers and rooms on either side. The building was constructed of stones and bricks with its walls and columns to support its pitched roofs and timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls were plastered and painted. The finely carved wooden altar was at the end wall of the main hall housing a soul tablet of the Lau ancestors for worship. Soul tablets of the branch ancestors are also on display at the side chambers. The ridges were decorated with mouldings of geometric pattern, auspicious treasures, flowers and unicorns. The name of the ancestral hall is engraved on a piece of stone above the lintel of the recessed entrance. A side entrance is at the right elevation with the name of the Ling Wan Study Hall (凌雲書室) moulded above the entrance. The gable walls of the courtyard are of *wok yee* (鑊耳) style. Wall paintings of figures, flowers and birds, and calligraphy are under the internal eaves and at the *dong chung* (檔中).

**Architectural
Merit**

It is an ancestral hall of the Laus to witness their settlement in the Hang Hau Peninsula of Sai Kung.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

The reconstruction has destroyed the authenticity.

Authenticity

Special offerings for the ancestral worship would be held at the hall on the first and second days of the Chinese New Year. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual would be held at the hall for new born baby boys of previous year by lighting up lanterns from the 13th to the 20th days of the first lunar month. A school Ling Wan Study Hall was housed at the ancestral hall teaching students from villages of Sheung Yeung, Sheung Sze Wan, Tai Wan Tau (大環頭), Mang Kung Uk (孟公屋) and Pan Long Wan. The teacher resided in a room in the hall. The study hall had been in a village house of the village before the building of the ancestral. It operated from 1929 until 1958 when it was replaced by the Clear Water Bay Central School (清水灣中心小學). The ancestral hall is owned by the Lau Ng Fuk Tong (劉五福堂) of the Laus.

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*