

Historic Building Appraisal
Ming Tak Tong Ancestral Hall
Fan Tin Tsuen, San Tin, Yuen Long

The Mans in San Tin (新田), Yuen Long, are the descendents of Man Tin-shui (文天瑞), a blood brother of Man Tin-cheung (文天祥) who was a renowned patriot fighting with the Mongols to protect the Song Emperors in the late Southern Song (南宋, 1127-1279) dynasty. Man Sai-gor (文世歌) was the first settler who moved from Tuen Mun (屯門) to San Tin in the Hongwu reign (洪武, 1368-1398) of the Ming (明) dynasty. Fan Tin Tsuen (蕃田村) is one of the old villages established by the Mans which has a history of over 500 years. Five ancestral halls of the Mans including the Man Ancestral Hall (文氏宗祠), the clan ancestral hall, and four family ancestral halls were built in the village. Ming Tak Tong (明德堂), also called Man Wing Sau Ancestral Hall (永秀文公祠), was built in 1811 to commemorate Man Wing-sau (文永秀), a 7th generation member of the Mans in San Tin. The old ancestral hall was demolished in 1972 and replaced by this rebuilt one completed in 1973.

Historical Interest

The building is a medium-sized ancestral hall in the territory. It is a Qing (清) vernacular design building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. It is constructed of concrete with its walls and columns to support its pitched roofs. An open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls in the middle bay. An aisle is on either side of the courtyard. The main hall houses rows of ancestral soul tablets of the Mans at the finely carved altar at the end wall for worship. A side altar is at the side hall housing a Kwun Yam (觀音) deity tablet on the left of the main hall for worship. A room is on the left of the entrance hall. A staircase is on the right of the entrance hall connected to a structure attached to the upper floor of the hall. The side bays are interconnected on the upper floor with windows and fenced openings. The building is plastered and painted. The front façade is with groove lines. The name of the ancestral hall “永秀文公祠” (Man Wing Sau Ancestral Hall) is engraved on marble blocks above the doorway of the recessed entrance. The descending ridges are with curling ends. The roofs are covered with tiles and with glazed end tiles and drippers.

Architectural Merit

It is a family ancestral hall to witness the settlement of Mans in the village.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

This rebuilt building is a 1973 version of the old ancestral hall. It does not have the authenticity of the old building. Only the granite doorframe of the hall is retained. *Authenticity*

It has group value with the other four ancestral halls including the Man Ancestral Hall, Man Lun Fung Ancestral Hall (麟峯文公祠), Man San Ye Ancestral Hall (莘野文公祠), Ming Yuen Tong (明遠堂) and other historic buildings in the village. *Group Value*

The main function of the hall has been for ancestral worship especially during the Chinese New Year, the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes (春秋二祭), Ching Ming (清明節) and Chung Yeung (重陽節) Festivals. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual is still held on the 13th and 15th days of the first lunar month of the Chinese New Year at the hall where lanterns of new baby boys born in previous year would be lit up. Tai Ping Ching Chiu (太平清醮) was held in the village but has been discontinued. The children studied at the Tun Yu School (惇裕學校) housed at the Man Ancestral Hall. The school was established in 1939 and subsidized by the government. *Social Value, & Local Interest*