

Historic Building Appraisal
Lau Ancestral Hall
No. 26 San Tin Village, Sha Tin

San Tin Village (新田村) of Tai Wai (大圍), Sha Tin, was a single-clan village of the Laus (劉). They were Hakkas (客家) who first moved from Xingning (興寧) of Huizhou (惠州), Guangdong (廣東) province, to Au Pui Wan Tsuen (坳背灣村) in Grassy Hill (草山), north-west of Sha Tin, in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. The founding ancestor was Lau Sau-long (劉秀浪). They were farmers engaged in cultivation. As the population of the Laus increased, they bought a piece of land from the Kek Tin (隔田) and Tin Sum (田心) villages to establish a new village called San Tin in the late 1890s. The village was founded by three brothers of the fifth generation including Wai-kung (維恭), Wai-wei (維惠) and Wai-man (維敏). It is not known when the ancestral family hall was built. However, it was rebuilt in 2001. The hall belongs to the Lau Sam Chun Tong (劉三俊堂), a name to commemorate the three brothers.

***Historical
Interest***

Located on a row of village houses, the Lau Ancestral Hall (劉氏家祠) is connected to the neighbouring houses on its left and right. It is a Qing vernacular design building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. It was originally constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. It has been rebuilt with concrete and new building materials. The only old features are the granite door frame and lower courses of granite blocks on its front façade. The walls and floors of the building are covered with glazed ceramic tiles. The altar at the end wall of the main hall houses a soul tablet of the Lau ancestors for worship. Its roofs are covered with yellow glazed ceramic tiles. Two dragons and a pearl of ceramic are on the ridge for decoration. The name of the hall is engraved on a brown marble above the lintel. Two ceramic pictures of the Eight Immortals (八仙) and Heavenly Official Presenting Fortunes (天官賜福) are under the front eave.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is an ancestral hall to remind the settlement of the Laus in San Tin Village.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The authenticity has been much reduced due to the reconstruction and its modern building materials added to the ancestral hall.

Authenticity

The ancestral hall provides a venue for ancestral worship as well as for the wedding of male members, Dim Dang (點燈) ritual and funeral ceremonies. The Laus had small troubles with the Tsangs (曾) of Kek Tin Tsuen as they were Punti (本地) people. They however had good relationship with Tin Shum Tsuen, also a Hakka village.

*Social Value,
& Local
Interest*