

Historic Building Appraisal

Lau Wai Yip Ancestral Hall

Kan Tau Tsuen, Sheung Shui

Kan Tau Tsuen (簡頭村) is on the southern side of Sha Tau Kok Road (沙頭角道) in Ping Che (坪輦). The village was inhabited by the Punti (本地) Laws (羅) and Hakka (客家) Laus (劉) and Ngs (吳). The founding ancestor of the Laus was Lau Wai-cheung (劉懷璋, ?-1963), the 7th generation ancestor, who came from Lin Ma Hang (蓮麻坑). He worked in Panama and gained his fortune. He returned to the village with his son Yuk-on (煜安, ?-1971) shortly before the Japanese Occupation (1941-45). The Lau Wai Yip Ancestral Hall (維業劉公祠) is a family one built by Yuk-on in 1968 under the instruction and with the money of his father to commemorate his grandfather Wai-yip (劉維業). Yuk-on invested in construction business after he returned home from Panama. He took charge of the actual construction of the hall. It had a major renovation in 2003.

**Historical
Interest**

Located in the middle of the village, the ancestral hall is a Qing (清) vernacular design building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is in the middle of the entrance and main halls. The building is probably constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and partly painted. The external walls are covered with ceramic tiles of cream and red colours. Even the gable wall friezes are of black ceramic tiles. The floors are cement-screeded or tiled. A big soul tablet is at the altar in the middle of the end wall of the main hall for worship. At the back on the wall is a big moulded Chinese character “壽” (longevity) flanked by a couplet. On the left of the tablet is a small ceramic statue of Kwun Yam (觀音) also for worship. The name of the hall is moulded above the lintel of the recessed entrance. A pair of red *ruilong* (夔龍) mouldings is at the two ends of the front ridge.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is an ancestral hall of the Laus to witness their settlement in Kan Tau Tsuen.

Rarity

It has little built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

The building was renovated in 2003. The dressing of the external walls with ceramic tiles very much diminished the authenticity of the hall.

Authenticity

Wai-cheung donated a certain sum of money for the founding of the Tan Chuk Hang Public School (丹竹坑公立學校) in the village in 1960. The school served children in the nearby villages. This family hall is for ancestral worship of the ancestors in the village. The Laus do make ancestral worship to their distant ancestors at the clan ancestral hall in Lin Ma Hang. The hall has ancestral worship with special offerings at the Chinese New Year and at the Chung Yeung Festival (重陽節). Dim Dang (點燈) ritual was held on the 7th to 15th days of the first lunar month up to the 1980s and has been discontinued. The Laus have a Hong Tak Tong (漢德堂) to manage the ancestral hall and to deal with the clan affairs.

*Social Value,
& Local Interest*