

Historic Building Appraisal

Tsang Tai Uk

Sha Tin, N.T.

Tsang Tai Uk (曾大屋, literally the Big Mansion of the Tsang Family) is also called Shan Ha Wai (山廈圍, literally, Walled Village at the Foothill). Its construction was started in 1847 and completed in 1867. Measuring 45 metres by 137 metres, it was built by Tsang Koon-man (曾貫萬, 1808-1894), nicknamed Tsang Sam-li (曾三利), who was a Hakka (客家) originated from Wuhua (五華) of Guangdong (廣東) province which was famous for producing masons. He came to Hong Kong from Wuhua working as a quarryman at the age of 16 in Cha Kwo Ling (茶果嶺) and Shaukiwan (筲箕灣). He set up his quarry business in Shaukiwan having his shop called Sam Lee Quarry (三利石行). Due to the large demand for building stone when Hong Kong was developed as a city since it became a ceded territory of Britain in 1841, he made huge profit. He bought land in Sha Tin from the Tsangs and built the village. The completed village accommodated around 100 residential units for his family and descendents. It was a shelter of some 500 refugees during the Second World War and the name of Tsang Tai Uk has since been adopted.

**Historical
Interest**

The sizable and huge fortified village is a typical Hakka three-hall-four-row (三堂四橫) walled village. It is in a Qing (清) vernacular design having a symmetrical layout with the main entrance, entrance hall, middle hall and main hall at the central axis. Two other entrances are to either side of the front wall. Four 3-storey high corner towers are at its four corners with *wok yee* (鑊耳) gable walls. A metal trident is installed at the tower against intrusion of evil spirits. Residential units were built along the four walls and in rows in the middle. The walled village was constructed with green bricks with granite dressing. Its walls support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and ceramic tiles.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is the only sample of a fortified Hakka village in the territory to witness the very well-off of the Tsangs.

Rarity

It is a unique walled village of high built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Parts of the walls and floors were plastered with cement. Though a number of units and structures are added to the village, its main form is still retained.

Authenticity N

The village took 20 years to complete. The ancestral hall at its central axis in the middle of the main hall was first built with his two residential rooms on either side. Other houses and courts were added in the 20 years. Gun holes were provided along the walls and its four corner towers as pirates and bandits were active at the time. A board engraved with Tai Fu Tai (大夫第, the Mandarin's Mansion) is hung above the entrance of the ancestral hall as the villager founder purchased the title from the Qing government. A carved screen at the ancestral hall with inscription praising the ancestors' family dated 1878 was written by a famous calligrapher. Agricultural farming was the major economic activity of the family and declined over the years. Some of the house units are still occupied by members of the Tsangs.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*