

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

Ming Yuen Tong Ancestral Hall (明遠堂) in Fan Tin Tsuen (蕃田村), San Tin (新田) is a branch ancestral hall of the Man (文) clan built to commemorate Man Choi-woon (文才煥). It was built opposite to the main ancestral hall of the Man clan, Man Ancestral Hall (文氏宗祠), in the same village. The Mans 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 moved from Tuen Mun (屯門) to San Tin in the Hongwu reign (洪武, 1368-1398) of the Ming (明) dynasty. Due to the lengthy settlement of the Man clan and numerous families branched off in the area, there are altogether five ancestral halls built in the village. This one is the youngest among the five. Man Choi-woon, alias Ching-law (青羅), is the 13th generation descendent of Man Sai-gor. This hall serves as a centre to deal with affairs of the branch families only. It was also used as a study hall like other ancestral halls. This building is believed to be erected in the 1750s by either Man Choi-woon's son, Man Ngou-yin (文翽埏) or his grandson, Man Chor-pak (文楚白).

Historical Interest

It is almost the same size as the Man Ancestral Hall. The building is one of the sizable ancestral halls in the territory. It is a Qing (清) vernacular design having a two-hall plan of three bays. An open courtyard is between the two halls in the middle bay and two aisles are on either side of the courtyard. The middle bay of the deep main hall houses rows of ancestral soul tablets at the finely carved altar. The tall building is basically supported by granite columns and greenbrick walls topped by timber-bracketed pitched roofs. Its grand entrance has two raised platforms one on either side supported by granite columns also. The main ridge is decorated with mouldings including two *aoyus* (鰲魚), flowers, birds, unicorns and a set of geometric pattern. Carvings of the fascia boards and wall and gable friezes are with motifs of auspicious flowers, plants and treasures.

Architectural Merit

It is a rare historic building to witness the settlement of the Man clan in San Tin. A significant ancestral hall of high built heritage value.

Rarity & Built Heritage Value

Recent renovations include those in 1951 and 2004. Some of its granite columns have been turned into concrete ones and part of its roofs reinforced with concrete. This would very much diminish its authenticity.

Authenticity

This building and the other four ancestral halls in Fan Tin Tsuen, namely, *Group Value* Man Ancestral Hall (文氏宗祠), Man Lun Fung Ancestral Hall (麟峯文公祠), Man Sun Ye Ancestral Hall (莘野文公祠) and Ming Tak Tong (明德堂) have co-related group value.

The major function of the hall has been for ancestral worship especially *Social Value,* during the Chinese New Year, the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes (春秋二祭), *& Local Interest* 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.