

Chung Ancestral Hall

No. 107 Tong Min Tsuen, Tai Po, N.T.

Tong Min Tsuen (塘面村), literally “pond surface village”, is also known as Tong Sheung Tsuen (塘上村). It is a Punti (本地) village and one of the twenty-six villages in Lam Tsuen (林村). During the Qing (清) dynasty (1644-1911), Lam Tsuen was a member of Tsat Yeuk (七約, literally, Seven Alliance). Tsat Yeuk was an inter-village alliance which formed Tai Wo Market (太和市) in 1892 to break the monopoly of the old Tai Po Market (大埔墟) formed by the Lung Yeuk Tau Tang clan (龍躍頭鄧氏). Of the twenty-six villages of Lam Tsuen Valley, only five are Punti (本地) while the other are Hakka. The history of Lam Tsuen can be traced back to the Song (宋) dynasty (960-1127). Its early settlers were the Chungs who formed a large proportion of the population in the area. The villages were linked together by an inter-village alliance named Luk Wo Tong (六和堂, literally meaning hall of six harmonies), which was derived from the *baojia* system (保甲制) at the Ching times. Luk Woh Tong remained its key role in the valley until it was replaced by the Lam Tsuen Rural Committee (林村鄉公所) in 1954.

**Historical
Interest**

Tong Min Tsuen is a multi-clan village occupied by the Chungs (鍾氏), the Maks (麥氏), the Cheungs (張氏), the Chans (陳氏) and the Wus (胡氏). The Chungs probably settled in the village in the second half of the eighteenth century. They might have connection with the Chungs in Chung Uk Tusen (鍾屋村) in Tuen Mun who moved from Dongguan (東莞) of Guangdong province (廣東) in the Ming (明) dynasty (1368-1644). The Chung Ancestral Hall (鍾氏宗祠) was built in 1939, probably by a member of the Chungs who returned from abroad. Due to *fung shui* reasons, the ancestral hall has been abandoned and used as a storeroom since the 1940s.

Located in the front row of four rows of houses in the village, the ancestral hall faces a sizable pond in its front. The village had a big pond for fish cultivation from which its name derived. The hall is a one-hall structure. It is a Qing vernacular design building with a western styled feature fashionable in the 1930s. It is constructed of grey brickwork with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The internal side walls are plastered and the floor is with cement screeding. A finely carved wooden altar is at the end wall of the hall still housing a number of soul tablets. A carved tie beam is carved with “百子千孫” (literally

**Architectural
Merit**

meaning hundreds of sons and thousands of grandsons). Wall frieze paintings of deer, landscape and calligraphy are under the eaves. The most attractive feature of the building is the pediment at the front facade. A semi-circle is in the middle having two short square columns topped with a ball on either side. The year 1939 is moulded on the semi-circle. A cornice beneath is with blue mosaics. The pediment is decorated with flowers, butterflies, vases and curling leaves patterns. The name of the ancestral hall is engraved on the stone lintel above the doorway. The ridge is with a pair of red geometric mouldings at its two ends.

It is an ancestral hall of the Chungs to witness their settlement in Tong Min Tsuen. The special pediment of the building is a 1930s fashionable feature prevalent in Chinese buildings of some built heritage value. The building is not maintained properly and is deteriorating.

***Rarity, Built
Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

The hall was abandoned soon after it was built. Some of the ancestral tablets of the Chungs were moved back to individual families for worship. No collective celebration of festivals and ancestral worship were held. Even the Dim Dang (點燈, literally lighting the lantern) ritual was held by the families at their own houses instead. Most of the Chungs have moved out of the village with a majority of them in Britain.

***Social Value,
& Local Interest***

There are no other graded historic buildings near the Chung Ancestral Hall.

Group Value