

Historic Building Appraisal

Kam On Lo

No. 68 Shung Ching San Tsuen, Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long, N.T.

Kam On Lo (錦安廬) was built by the Chans (陳) of Sham Chung Tsuen (深涌村) around the year 1900. It changed hands several times before the ownership of the house was divided into three parts held by three brothers, namely, Poon Tak-hing (潘德興), Poon Man-hing (潘萬興) and Poon Yam-hing (潘欽興), in 1947. They were Hakkas from Singapore and operated Luen Wo Sang Company (聯和生公司), engaging in imports and exports business. Now, the left side of the house belongs to the Law (羅) family, the middle part to the wife and daughter of Poon Tak-hing, and the right side to a Tak-hing' brother.

*Historical
Interest*

Tak-hing's wife and daughter live in Singapore. But they come back and spend some days in the house twice a year. For them, the house is not just Tak-hing's heritage, but also the place where their roots take.

The house is rectangular in plan divided by cross walls internally into three parts. There is a detached building at the rear connected by a covered walkway. The external walls are rendered and white-washed with small narrow windows protected from the weather by projecting typhoon canopies. The most distinctive feature of the building is the front façade which is composed of an open verandah or porch at ground floor level with four square columns supporting an open verandah at first floor level. The four columns continue up to support the flat roof over the verandahs. The ornamentation is very eye-catching consisting of decorated beams, shaped brackets and balustrade and parapet panels of pierced screen blocks. A plaque in the centre of the parapet inscribed with the name of the house in Chinese characters and ornamental rainwater pipes at each end complete the picture. The architectural style of the house is said to be **Waitau** (圍頭).

*Architectural
Merit*

This house, with its unusual architectural style is quite a rarity and a valuable piece of built heritage. Unfortunately due to the division of ownership, there have been a number of changes to the layout and alterations made so that the authenticity has been compromised to some extent.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The social value of the house lies in its role since it was built as a village residence, and the Hakka custom of *fenjia* (分家) which divided up the family property. With their overseas working background, the Hakka owners of the house regarded it as the place where they belonged and could come back to.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

As ownership of the house is divided up, adaptive re-use would be difficult and not a practical proposition in the circumstances.

*Adaptive
Re-use*