

Historic Building Appraisal
Choi Yi Wah Ancestral Hall
No. 27 Shui Lau Tin, Pat Heung, Yuen Long

Shui Lau Tin (水流田) is a multi-clan village occupied by the Tangs (鄧), the Chois (蔡) and the Fungs (馮) in the south of the Shek Kong Airfield (石崗機場) in Pat Heung (八鄉), Yuen Long. The Chois were the majority who owned most of the houses in the village. The Tangs however had more land than the Chois. The 11th generation ancestor of the Chois, Kiu-chin (喬遷), moved with his four sons from Dongguan (東莞) of Guangdong (廣東) province to Shui Lau Tin in 55th year of Qianlong (乾隆, 1790) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. The Choi Yi Wah Ancestral Hall (彝華蔡公祠) was built by Choi Kei-chong (蔡紀莊) to commemorate his father Yi-wah (彝華), one of the four sons of Kiu-chin. It is not known when the ancestral hall was built. It was probably built in the early 19th century. Kei-chong was a landlord and made his fortune by growing ginger. He intended to build a three-hall building for the ancestral hall. He however had financial problem during the construction that the building was converted into a two-hall one. The middle hall was omitted leaving it as a spacious open courtyard instead.

**Historical
Interest**

The ancestral hall is in the middle of the village with rows of village houses on either side all facing northwest. It is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-two-courtyard plan of three bays. The middle bay is about two times wider than the side bay on either side. The open courtyard in-between the entrance hall and rear courtyard plus the main hall at the back is about two-fifth of the size of the building. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The internal walls are partially plastered and painted. The floors are cement-screeded. The altar is in the middle of the end wall of the main hall housing soul tablets of the Chois for worship. The name of the hall is engraved on a stone board above the lintel of the recessed entrance. Weathered wall frieze paintings of flowers are under the front eave. The rear ridge is decorated with a pair of red *ruilong* (夔龍) plastered mouldings at its two ends. Another pair is at the back wall of the building.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is an ancestral hall of the Chois to witness their settlement in Shui Lau Tin village.

Rarity

It has special built heritage value in consideration of the extraordinary spacious middle open courtyard. ***Built Heritage Value***

The building had its roof tiles renewed in 1980s after a typhoon. The last renovation was in 2002. It has its authenticity kept. ***Authenticity***

It has group value with the Tang Kwok Mou Ancestral Hall (國茂鄧公祠) and a village house situated at No. 57 of the village. ***Group Value***

Other than for ancestral worship, the building especially its spacious open courtyard is used for banquets for the Chois for the celebration of festivals, wedding and other functions. It is also for the Chois to discuss and to deal with affairs concerning the clan and the village. The hall is managed by a trust of the Chois called Yuk Kwai Tong (育桂堂). ***Social Value, & Local Interest***