

Historic Building Appraisal
Chung Ancestral Hall
Ha Tam Shui Hang, Sha Tau Kok

Chung Ancestral Hall (鍾氏祖祠) in Ha Tam Shui Hang (下担水坑) village is in the closed area of Sha Tau Kok (沙頭角). It was probably built by the Chung clan before 1874. Tam Shui Hang (later divided into Sheung or Upper Shui Hang and Ha or Lower Tam Shui Hang (上、下担水坑)) was a multi-lineage village inhabited by the Ngs (吳), the Wans (溫), the Yaus (丘/邱), the Chungs (鍾), the Chans (陳) and others. The Ngs were the earliest settlers who came in the Shunzhi (順治, 1644-1661) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. Chung Yik-hing (鍾奕興), the founding ancestor and the 10th generation member of the clan, moved from Aotou (澳頭) of Huiyang (惠陽), Guangdong (廣東) province, to the village in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) reign of the Qing dynasty. They were mainly farmers engaged in rice and vegetable growing as well as poultry and pig rearing. Many of the Chungs moved overseas to Britain and other European countries in the 1960-70s and they only return to the village on holiday. Some others moved to the urban area due to the constraint of the restricted area. Only seven families of the Chungs stay in the village.

***Historical
Interest***

The ancestral hall is a Qing vernacular building having a one-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is in front of the hall. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The altar occupies the entire end wall of the hall. It is with fine wooden carvings extended to the ceiling. The carvings are of auspicious treasures, flowers, birds and others. A big soul tablet with two smaller ones are at the altar for worship. A Kwun Yam (觀音) portrait is on the left of the tablets for worship too. A name board of the branch of the clan "燕詒堂" (Yin Yee Tong) is in the middle of the altar above the tablet. Two tie beams under the eave are also with fine carving of similar motifs. The name of the ancestral hall is engraved on a piece of stone on the wall above the lintel of the recessed entrance. Wall paintings of flowers and rocks and calligraphy are at the front façade. Granite is used for the doorframe, wall corners and lower courses of the front wall. The front ridge is decorated with a pair of red geometric mouldings at its two ends.

***Architectural
Merit***

It is an ancestral Hall of the Wans to witness their settlement in Tam Shui Hang.

Rarity

It has considerable built heritage value. Its altar and tie beams with fine wooden carvings are of high aesthetic value. ***Built Heritage Value***

Its authenticity is basically kept. ***Authenticity***

Other than for ancestral worship, wedding, funeral and Dim Dang (點燈) rituals were held at the hall. The Chungs also worship Kwun Yam at the hall. Though most of the Chungs have moved out of the village (some resided in Tai Po), they do come back at the Chinese New Year and at the Chung Yeung (重陽節) and Ching Ming Festivals (清明節) to make ancestral worship with offerings to the their ancestors at the hall. ***Social Value, & Local Interest***