

Historic Building Appraisal

Entrance Gate

Muk Kiu Tau Tsuen, Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long

Muk Kiu Tau Tsuen (木橋頭村) is in the east of Shap Pat Heung (十八鄉), Yuen Long. It was founded by the Wus (胡) who came from Huizhou (惠州) of Guangdong (廣東) province. Wu Yuen-ming (胡玄明) was the founding ancestor of the village who first moved from Sanshui (三水) of Guangdong province to Mong Tseng (輞井) of Lau Fau Shan (流浮山) in the late Ming (明, 1368-1644) Dynasty and early Qing (明, 1644-1911) Dynasty. Later a branch of the Wus moved to Shap Pat Heung and founded Muk Kiu Tau Tsuen in the mid-Qing Dynasty. The Chans (陳) and Yips (葉) subsequently moved to the village. Only the Wus, who form the dominant clan, have their ancestral hall in the village. Some of the Wus later also branched out to Fung Kong Tsuen (鳳降村), north of Ha Tsuen, and Tin Liu (田寮), north of Muk Kiu Tau Tsuen.

**Historical
Interest**

There is an entrance gate at the first row of four rows of north facing houses in the village. The construction year of the entrance gate cannot be determined, but the name of Muk Kiu Tau Tsuen is found in the Xin'an Gazetteer 1819. Thus the entrance gate was probably built in the 18th century. Apart from the entrance gate, the villagers organized a self-defence force called *genglian* (更練) to defend the village. Nowadays, the entrance gate is no longer a defence structure and remains as the main access to the village.

The entrance gate is an independent structure connected to a short wall on either side. On either end is a block of new building. The gate is a Qing vernacular building of a one-hall plan. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The back wall however has been removed. Its front doorway is in rectangular shape. Two circular holes are on either side of the front doorway for *fung shui* benefit. Inside the gate entrance on the left is an Earth God (土地) shrine and an incinerator at the bottom.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is an entrance gate to witness the history of the village.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value &**

The entrance gate was renovated in 2002. It has its authenticity kept. Originally there was a fish pond in front of the entrance gate. It was a *fungshui* pond which warded off evil spirits. Also, "water" means *cai* (財, wealth) in

Authenticity

Chinese. In the 1990s, the pond was reclaimed. To this day, the land is used for holding banquets on happy occasions, such as Lunar New Year and weddings.

The entrance gate was an essential structure to protect the villagers inhabited inside the village. It was used to keep away all the enemies, bandits and any threats that would endanger the villagers. It was closed at night. A village guard force was formed to provide a self-defence system in the village. Three or four volunteers patrolled within the village area every night. A big pond was in front of the village and was filled up in 1996. A Fuk Tak shrine is at the back of the gate which houses the Earth God for worship. The villagers take part in the Tin Hau Festival (天后誕) of Shap Pat Heung each year and a Muk Kai Fa Pow Hui (木溪花炮會), otherwise known as Muk Kiu Tau Fa Pow Hui (木橋頭花炮會), would take part in the Fa Pow (花炮) activity of the festival including the lion dance performance.

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

It has group value with the Fuk Tak Temple (福德宮) and the Wu Ancestral Hall (胡氏宗祠) in the village.

Group Value

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time.

***Adaptive
Re-use***