

Historic Building Appraisal
Yau Ancestral Hall
Ng Tung Chai, Tai Po, New Territories

923

Ng Tung Chai (梧桐寨), also known as Wong Fung Chai (黃峰寨), is a Hakka (客家) village and one of the twenty-six villages in Lam Tsuen (林村 / 林村鄉). During the Qing dynasty (清朝, 1644-1911), Lam Tsuen was a member of Tsat Yeuk (七約, literally meaning seven alliance). Tsat Yeuk was an inter-village alliance which established Tai Wo Market (太和市) in 1892 to break the monopoly of the old Tai Po Market (大埔墟) founded by the Lung Yeuk Tau Tang clan (龍躍頭鄧氏). Of the twenty-six villages of Lam Tsuen, only five are Punti (本地) while the others are Hakka. The history of Lam Tsuen can be traced back to the Song dynasty (宋朝, 960-1127). Its early settlers were the Chungs (鍾氏) who formed a large proportion of the population in the area. The villages were linked together by an alliance named Luk Woh Tong (六和堂, literally meaning hall of six harmonies), which was derived from the *baojia* system (保甲制) in the Qing dynasty. 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**

Ng Tung Chai was established in the fourth year of the Qianlong (乾隆, 1739) reign of Qing dynasty or earlier as a tablet of its Tai Wong (大王, Earth God) shrine has the dating on it. The village was mainly inhabited by the Yaus (邱氏), the Shams (沈氏) and the Koos (古氏). An organisation Tung Hing Tong (同慶堂) was formed over fifty years ago to act as a trust to manage village affairs. The manager of Tung Hing Tong is changed in rotation once a year by the clans. The Yaus were the earliest settlers. They were originated from Henan province (河南). Two branches of the Yau clan lived in Ng Tung Chai, including the Yau Wan Tsap Tso (邱雲習祖) and Yau Ying Chong Tso (邱應冲祖). These two branches of the Yau clan moved from Shanghang (上杭) of Fujian (福建) province to Guangdong (廣東) province probably in the early eighteenth century. It was said that the Yau Ancestral Hall (邱氏宗祠) was built around 1800.

The Yau Ancestral Hall is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan. The open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. The building is constructed of grey brickwork with its walls to support its timber roof structure. The exteriors of the

**Architectural
Merit**

roofs are decorated with green glazed tiles, whereas the front facade is covered with orange ceramic tiles. The walls are plastered. The name of the hall is engraved on a piece of granite on the wall above the lintel of the recessed entrance. A pair of geometric dragon (夔龍) mouldings is at the two ends of the front ridge.

Internally, the altar is at the end wall of the main hall housing a soul tablet of the Yau ancestors for worship. A ceramic statue of Kwun Yam (觀音) is on the left of the tablet also for worship. The wooden altar is carved with the Chinese characters of “雙鳳朝陽” (literally meaning two phoenixes adorning the sun). The walls are plastered. A tie beam at the main hall is carved with four Chinese characters “百子千孫” (literally meaning hundreds of sons and thousands of grandsons). Above the tie beam is a traditional roof structure composed of timber rafters and purlins, and clay tiles, while the exterior is covered by green glazed tiles. The same can be identified at the roof of the front hall.

The Yau Ancestral Hall is the largest and the best preserved ancestral hall in Ng Tung Chai. It has some built heritage value. It was renovated in 1945, in the 1980s and 2001. Green glazed tiles have been added on top of the clay tiled roofs. Orange ceramic tiles have also been laid on the front facade, diminishing the authenticity of the front elevation.

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

The Yaus who settled outside the village would return to the ancestral hall to worship their ancestors at the Chinese New Year. The ancestral hall was also used for wedding and *dim dang* (點燈, literally lighting the lantern ceremony done for newborn baby boys); however, these ceremonies have been discontinued.

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

The Yau Ancestral Hall does not have group value with any other graded historic buildings.

Group Value

REFERENCES

Document Records of The Land Registry Office, Hong Kong

Property Particulars of Lot No. 1556 in D.D. 10.

Newspapers

司馬龍，「梧桐寨村村民三姓」，《文匯報》，1991年7月21日。

Books and Other Sources

林村鄉建醮委員會，《己卯年林村鄉太平清醮》(香港：林村鄉建醮委員會，1999)。

司馬龍，《穿村：鄉郊歷史傳聞與鄉情》(香港：天地圖書有限公司，2002)。

蕭國健，《大埔風物志》(香港：大埔區議會，2007)。

Oral history interviews with villagers of Ng Tung Chai by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 6 October 2003.