

Historic Building Appraisal

Lau Ancestral Hall

No. 40 Sha Tin Tau, Sha Tin

Sha Tin Tau (沙田頭) is close to Tsang Tai Uk (曾大屋) of Sha Tin. It was a *Historical Interest* Hakka (客家) village first settled by the Chans (陳) and later by the Laws (羅), the Lams (林), the Yips (葉), the Laus (劉) and others. The **Lau Ancestral Hall** (劉氏家祠) was built before 1900. The Laus, who are Hakka natives, were farmers engaged in rice and vegetables growing. Lau Wai-yuen (劉惠原), the founding ancestor of Sha Tin Tau village, moved from Longchuan (龍川) of Guangdong (廣東) province to the village in the mid-19th century. The Lau clan has lived in this village for nine generations by the early 21st century.

Located in the front row of the two rows of village houses in the village, the long and narrow ancestral hall is a Qing (清) vernacular building having a *Architectural Merit* two-hall-one-courtyard plan. It is probably the middle recessed bay of the Hakka *doulang* (斗廊) style of building. It is constructed of green bricks, rammed earth, rubbles and granite blocks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The open courtyard is between the entrance and main halls. The internal walls are plastered and floors cement-screeded. The tall altar occupies the entire end wall of the main hall with a soul tablet of the Lau ancestors for worship. The front wall of the façade is still with fare-faced green bricks. The name of the hall is moulded above the lintel of the recessed entrance.

It is an ancestral hall of the Laus to remind their settlement in Sha Tin Tau *Rarity* village.

It has some built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

The building was renovated in the 1950s. Its authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

The ancestral hall is used for ancestral worship of Lau ancestors. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual is still practised at the hall for new born baby boys of the previous year. Wedding ceremonies were held at the hall for the Laus but have been discontinued. *Social Value, & Local Interest*

As Sha Tin Tau is formed by families of various surnames, there are many *Group Value* other ancestral halls of other surnames in the neighbourhood. Lau Ancestral Hall, along with other ancestral halls and old villages houses in its vicinity, remain as

remnants as the past. It is also close to the declared monument of Wong Uk (王屋), as well as other buildings graded by the Antiquities Advisory Board such as Tsang Tai Uk (曾大屋), Che Kung Temple (車公廟), High Rock Christian Camp (靈基營) and Old Sha Tin Police Station (舊沙田警署). All these buildings have good value from a heritage and cultural point of view.