

Historic Building Appraisal

Lam Ancestral Hall

No. 16 Shui Tsiu San Tsuen, Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long

Shui Tsiu San Tsuen (水蕉新村) is a Hakka (客家) village in Shap Pat Heung (十八鄉) of Yuen Long occupied by the Wongs (黃), the Yeungs (楊), the Cheungs (張), the Chings (程) and the Lams (林). The Wongs and the Yeungs were tenant farmers working for the Tang (鄧) clan of Ping Shan (屏山). They settled in the village in the 17th century and followed by the others. The village was initially called Fuk Hing Wai (福慶圍) and an ancestral hall Fuk Hing Tong (福慶堂) was built by the five clans. The village has used the present name since the early 20th century. Lam Ting-kwai (林庭桂), the founding ancestor of the Lams, came from Fujian (福建) province in the early Qing (清, 1644-1911) dynasty. The Lams have two ancestral halls in the village. This Lam Ancestral Hall (林氏宗祠) is for the Lams of the Chung Wah Tso (忠華祖) built before the 20th century whilst another one Lam Chun Fung Ancestral Hall (振鳳林公祠) is a family one built in the 1960s by the fifth generation members of Lam Chun-fung (林振鳳). The latter was built to commemorate Chun-fung who was one of the 6th generation ancestors of the Lams.

**Historical
Interest**

Situated in the second row of village houses in the nine rows of houses in the village, the ancestral hall is connected to a house on its right. The hall might have been converted from an ordinary house of the Lams. It is a Qing vernacular design building having a one-hall-one-courtyard plan. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and the floors are cement-screeded. A soul tablet of the Lam ancestors is at the altar in the middle of the hall. A big wall painting of a dragon and a phoenix is in the middle behind the tablet. Other wall paintings of landscape are on either side. A tie beam is carved with “百子千孫” (Hundreds of Sons and Thousands of Grandsons) at the hall. The doorframe of the entrance is of granite. The name of the hall is engraved on a stone and painted on the wall above the lintel of the recessed entrance. Wall frieze paintings of landscape are under the eave of the entrance. A pair of geometric mouldings is at two ends of the front ridge. The main ridge is with curling ends.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is an ancestral hall of the Lams to witness their settlement in Shui Tsiu San Tsuen.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

The renovation in 1977 has undermined its authenticity.

Authenticity

It has group value with the other ancestral halls and study halls in the village.

Group Value

The Hakka Lams have ancestral worship at the hall especially at the Chinese New Year, the Ching Ming (清明節) and Chung Yeung Festivals (重陽節) with special offerings including tea cakes (茶粿) and other Hakka dishes. At the festivals, the Lams would first worship at the Fuk Hing Tong, the Lam Ancestral Hall, and then the Tai Wong Ye (大王爺) and the Earth God (土地) shrines in the village.

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