

## Historic Building Appraisal

Tseuk Yuen,

No. 338 Tan Kwai Tsuen, Hung Shui Kiu, Yuen Long, N.T.

The residence known as Tseuk Yuen (灼園) was built around 1939 by a local villager named Wong Tseuk (王灼). Wong Tseuk was not an indigenous inhabitant of the New Territories, as he originated from Shilong (石龍) in Dongguan (東莞). Although a non-indigenous inhabitant, he became a village representative of Tan Kwai Tsuen (丹桂村) and established good relationship with the influential Tang Clan in Ping Shan (屏山鄧族). **Historical Interest**

Wong Tseuk was a staff of the Hong Kong police force who held a team leader type post in the Old Ping Shan Police Station before the Second World War. He eventually amassed a vast fortune and gained the reputation as the *shou-fu* (首富, “wealthiest person”) of Tan Kwai Tsuen. In the late 1930s, he purchased a piece of land in Tan Kwai Tsuen from the Ping Shan Tangs for the construction of Tseuk Yuen as his residence.

Shortly after the Japanese occupation of the New Territories in December 1941, Tseuk Yuen was taken over by the Japanese and used by them as quarters for Japanese army. Shortly after the War, it remained the residence of the Wong family. Still later, it was sublet to different tenants. The variety of decorations and furniture indicate that the house has been divided up into flats rather than used as a single residence in recent years.

Tseuk Yuen is a detached three-storey residence built in Qing Vernacular style with Western influence. The house is northwesterly orientated and can be reached from a lane which diverts from Tan Kwai Tsuen Road (丹桂村路). **Architectural Merit**

The main part of the house has a pitched roof but the front part of the house has a flat roof with a decorative parapet wall. The front facade is finished with green bricks with transomed wooden casement windows and a simple porch over the entrance door. The window grille under the pediment in the middle of the front wall is designed at auspicious patterns representing “longevity” (壽) and “double happiness” (囍). Moreover, a plum relief is found on the apex of the gable wall. The door frame covered with coloured terrazzo moulding is decorated with geometrical and plant patterns. Old metal rainwater pipes are found at both comers of the front wall. The side elevations are finished in Shanghai plaster grooved to imitate stonework. The windows match the front elevation. Internally, each floor has a symmetrical layout and seems to be laid out according to *fung shui* principles. The living rooms and dining room

are probably located at the ground floor whilst the bedrooms at the upper floor of the main building. The annex block might be used as a kitchen or servants' quarters.

The residence is situated in a compound with an entrance gateway and a pavilion. The entrance gate is made of red bricks. It is decorated with a pitched roof with corbel gable eaves. The ridge end is of “end of straw” (禾末) design. The geometric carvings of circular and triangular patterns at the lintel add a Western element to the entrance gate. Placed on both sides of the gateway are two phrases written as calligraphy, as follows, which is engraved with the name of the residence “Tseuk Yuen” (灼園):

灼簾竹氣靜  
園榻菊香濃

The pavilion is located in the centre of the garden in front of the main door of the residence. The pavilion is octagonal in shape and supported by eight metal poles on circular tapered columns which sit on two semi-circular concrete plinths at the base. Timber planks supported by metal frames formed by I-beams extending from the metal poles are connected at the centre. The planks are covered by concrete topped by a red moulding in the shape of a gourd (葫蘆). The ridge ends of the hipped roof are decorated with rolling patterns. The pavilion is further embellished with iron tendrils forming a nice pattern between the metal poles.

The house and compound form an interesting complex with rarity and built heritage value. The installation of metal window frames and tracery, and replacement of wooden doors by metal doors were carried out, but the house does not appear to have been altered since it was built. Although many of the rooms have been redecorated, there is still evidence of 1930s style decorations which enable us to imagine the original décor.

**Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity**

The social value of the house lies in the way it illustrates how a rich man and his family lived in a rural village years ago. The *fung shui* features in the entrance lobby are particularly interesting, and are visible evidence of the superstitions and beliefs of village people.

**Social Value  
& Local  
Interest**