

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Entrance Gate

#### San Wai, Ha Tsuen, Yuen Long, New Territories

The entrance gate of San Wai (新圍), which literally means “new walled village”,<sup>1</sup> is situated in a local district known as Ha Tsuen (廈村) or Ha Tsuen Heung (廈村鄉).<sup>2</sup> Ha Tsuen was founded by two brothers, Tang Hung-chi (鄧洪贄) and Tang Hung-wai (鄧洪惠), both ninth generation members of the Ng Yuen Tso (五元祖) of the Tang (鄧) clan.<sup>3</sup> As one of the oldest villages in Ha Tsuen, San Wai has a history of more than 250 years. It was established by Tang Tso-tai (鄧作泰, 1695 – 1756), an eighteenth generation member of the Ng Yuen Tso, and Tang Wai-yuk (鄧為玉, 1715 – 1755), a generation younger than Tso-tai. The village’s name “新圍” in Chinese and “San Wai” in English can be identified from a government report of 1899 and a land record of the then colonial government dating from 1905 to 1907.

*Historical  
Interest*

Regarding its layout, San Wai is composed of rows of houses, with an entrance gate. It is believed that the entrance gate was originally situated on the central axis of the village. As the village expanded, this central axis gradually lost its significance, and the view from the entrance gate was eventually blocked by rows of houses. A map dated 1917, which is the earliest record of its kind identified, shows that by that time two rows of houses had been built in front of the entrance gate.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, no shrine was built within San Wai, as villagers believe that the village is “protected” by the Earth God shrine near the Yeung Hau Temple (楊侯古廟), which is locally known as Sai Tau Miu (西頭廟, western temple). It is said that this Earth God shrine, Sai Tau Miu, and another Yeung Hau Temple (楊侯宮) at

<sup>1</sup> According to the villagers, the village is locally known as San Hing Wai (新慶圍), literally meaning a “new walled village filled with celebrations”. To date, a couplet “新增百歲 慶祝三多”, which can be translated as “increase of 100 years of age and celebration for abundance of fortune (多福), longevity (多壽) and offspring (多子孫)”, is hung at the front entrance.

<sup>2</sup> Ha Tsuen Heung is mainly composed of 16 villages in Ha Tsuen, namely San Wai (新圍), Sik Kong Tsuen (錫降村), Sik Kong Wai (錫降圍), Tseung Kong Wai (祥降圍), Tung Tau Tsuen (東頭村), Lo Uk Tsuen (羅屋村), Hong Mei Tsuen (巷尾村), San Sang Tsuen (新生村), Tin Sam Tsuen (田心村), Lee Uk Tsuen (李屋村), San Uk Tsuen (新屋村), Ha Tsuen Shi (廈村市), Fung Kong Tsuen (鳳降村), Pak Nai Tsuen (白坭村), Ha Pak Nai Tsuen (下白坭村) and Sha Chau Lei (沙洲里). These villages were established by the descendants of Tang Hung-chi and Tang Hung-wai, except Tin Sam Tsuen by the Chans (陳), Lee Uk Tsuen by the Lees (李) and Fung Kong Tsuen by the Wus (胡).

<sup>3</sup> The five brothers of Tang Yuen-ying (元英), Yuen-hei (元禧), Yuen-ching (元禎), Yuen-leung (元亮) and Yuen-wo (元和) are collectively known as Ng Yuen Tso.

<sup>4</sup> To date, the entrance gate remains to front two rows of houses as it was in 1917.

The two rows of houses were built by one of the Tang families, which had attained more achievement in the imperial examination system, and had higher social and economic status. They built the houses to accommodate increased numbers of family members.

Tung Tau Tsuen (Declared Monument), which is also known as Tung Tau Miu (東頭廟, eastern temple), together provide a united protective force for the whole Ha Tsuen district.

The entrance gate was built in a traditional simple form. It is *Architectural Merit* constructed of grey brickwork and has a traditional pitched tiled roof with gable ends and pan and roll tiles, supported on timber battens and fir purlins. The roof comprises the main ridge with traditional curled-up ends, together with gable ridges in similar style, and all are decorated with plaster relief mouldings. There are painted murals on the cornice of the front elevation, which include depictions of flowers, bamboo and hills. The main walls are of grey brickwork laid mainly in stretcher courses, although some header courses have been introduced. The brick side walls of the building project outwards to form brick piers, which give more stability to the structure and support the overhanging portion of the projecting roof eaves. The side elevations cannot now be seen due to the closeness of the adjoining buildings on either side of the entrance gate. The front doorway comprises a frame, lintel, threshold, step, door sill and hinge socket, all in granite. The rear doorway is an archway in grey brickwork. Both the front and rear sets of doors are missing.

Internally, round fir purlins support the pitched roof made of a single layer of traditional clay tiles. The walls were previously treated with a thin plaster coating and painted to match the high quality grey brickwork, but much of this has been disturbed due to repairs to the internal wall. The walls are enhanced by a painted decorative frieze at cornice level showing floral scenes of plants and flowers. The floor is of smooth cement. Adjoining the front doorway is a small Earth God shrine that continues to be well-used and respected by the villagers.

The entrance gate of San Wai is typical of buildings of the kind in terms of its design and traditional building materials, craftsmanship and construction techniques. According to the villagers, this is the only gatehouse of San Wai.<sup>5</sup> No significant alteration was identified. The Gate Tower of Ha Tsuen Shi (Grade 2) is another surviving historical building of the kind in Ha Tsuen. *Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity*

The entrance gate serves as a reminder of the historical appearance of this old village. Although, due to surrounding development, it no longer serves its original function as an entrance gate, it still remains a key element of *Social Value & Local Interest*

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<sup>5</sup> In the past, the villagers would act as watchmen (更練), and the house adjoining the gatehouse would be used as a guard post until the village was secured from banditry. The house once serving as a guard post, however, has become seriously dilapidated.

the village's historic layout and a vital part of the historic village's identity.

San Wai is a member of a village alliance locally known as Ha Tsuen Heung Yeuk (廈村鄉約).<sup>6</sup> A local custom known as Ta Chiu (打醮) is organised by the member villages of the alliance at a ten-yearly interval. The last Ha Tsuen Heung's Ta Chiu, with a grand parade accompanied by dragon dance and lion dance, was organised in 2014.<sup>7</sup> Leading the parade were the "dragon" and the representatives of San Wai. The "lion" would arrive at the entrance gate via the village's narrow lanes, whereas the longer and larger "dragon" would dance in the open space in front of the village.

Besides, wedding rituals are still performed at the entrance gate. The groom will worship alone at Sai Tau Miu and the Earth God shrine near it, and then at the entrance gate. With the bride he will worship at the Tang Ancestral Hall (鄧氏宗祠) (also known as Yau Kung Tong) (友恭堂) dedicated to the clan's ancestors and finally at his own family's ancestral hall (家祠) known as Yau Sin Study Hall (友善書室). To celebrate the birth of male offspring in the last lunar year, the "lighting the lantern" ceremony, locally known as *dim dang* (點燈), will be performed in the entrance gate. Together with the worship of the Earth God, a lantern (*dang* in Cantonese) representing a new boy (*ding* in Cantonese) will be lit (*dim* in Cantonese) in the entrance gate on around the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month and would hang there from then on until around the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the same month, when the lantern will be burnt.<sup>8</sup> Worship will also take place at the entrance gate at midnight on Lunar New Year's eve.

Other historic buildings in Ha Tsuen include the Tang Ancestral Hall, Guest House (禮賓樓), Yau Kung School (友恭學校) (Declared Monuments) and Gate Tower (門樓) (Grade 2) at Ha Tsuen Shi (廈村市), Yeung Hau Temple at Tung Tau Tsuen (Declared Monument), Shi Wang Study Hall (士宏書室) at San Wai (Grade 3), and an old village school at No. 1 Tung Tau Tsuen (東頭村) (Grade 3). **Group Value**

<sup>6</sup> Ha Tsuen Heung Yeuk is mainly made up of the 16 villages in Ha Tsuen, as well as Mong Tseng Wai (輞井圍) in Ping Shan (屏山) and Tsz Tin Tsuen (紫田村) in Tuen Mun.

<sup>7</sup> The parade is known as Hang Heung (行香), literally meaning "moving incense".

<sup>8</sup> *Dim* means "to light"; while *dang* is the transliteration of lantern in Chinese. *Dang* (lantern) and *ding* (male offspring) are similar in pronunciation in Cantonese.

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