

Historic Building Appraisal

Village Houses, Nos. 24 and 25 Fung Wong Wu

Tak Kwu Ling, N.T.

The houses at Nos. 24 and 25 Fung Wong Wu (鳳凰湖) in Ta Kwu Ling *Historical Interest* (打鼓嶺) were probably built around the 1920s. Fung Wong Wu (literally meaning “phoenix lake”), can be identified in the 1688 edition of the *Gazetteer of Xin’an County* (《新安縣志》). Although later described as a Hakka (客家, literally meaning “guest people”) village in the 1819 edition of this *Gazetteer*, Fung Wong Wu is a village with Punti (本地, literally meaning “local people”) and Hakka residents.¹ Today, Fung Wong Wu is still a member of a village alliance known as Ta Kwu Ling Luk Yeuk (打鼓嶺六約, “the Six Alliances of Ta Kwu Ling”), which was founded by the Punti and Hakka villages in Ta Kwu Ling in combination in the late nineteenth century.²

Fung Wong Wu was first inhabited by the Yiks (易) (Punti),³ and later joined by the Yeungs (楊) (Punti) and Ngs (吳) (Hakka). The Yik clan’s eleventh-generation ancestor, Yik Kwong-lun (易光倫), migrated from Heshan (鶴山) in Guangdong province to Pak Sha Tsuen (白沙村) at Tai Tong (大棠) in Yuen Long during the early Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911).⁴ However, there was insufficient land and resources for all at Tai Tong. Consequently, some of the Yiks later left Pak Sha Tsuen and settled at Fung Wong Wu, where they could grow rice, sugar cane and vegetables. In 2022, the youngest members of the Yik clan in Hong Kong are the twenty-third generation.

No. 24 is now situated on a plot of land registered as Section C of

¹ The Coastal Evacuation Order (遷海令) was carried out from 1662 to 1669 during the early Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911). Few people returned to their home villages, as many deaths and casualties had resulted from the migration, and the long-deserted fields had become too barren for cultivation. Therefore, in 1684, i.e. the twenty-third year of the Kangxi reign (康熙二十三年), the Qing government encouraged the migration of villagers from Guangdong (廣東), Fujian (福建) and Jiangxi (江西) provinces to Hong Kong. The clans who had settled there earlier, before the repeal of the Coastal Evacuation Order, were regarded as local people (Punti) while those who settled there later were known as “guest people” (Hakka).

² Ta Kwu Ling Luk Yeuk is composed of villages including Fung Wong Wu, Lo Shue Ling (老鼠嶺), Ping Yeung (坪洋), Kan Tau Wai (簡頭圍), Sheung Shan Kai Yuet (上山雞乙), Ha Shan Kai Yuet (下山雞乙), Lee Uk Tsuen (李屋村), Chow Tin (週田), Tak Yuet Lau (得月樓), Heung Yuen Wai (香園圍), Muk Wu (木湖), Tai Po Tin (大埔田), Chuk Yuen (竹園), San Uk Ling (新屋嶺), Lo Wu (羅湖), Nga Yiu Ha (瓦壩下), Wo Keng Shan (禾徑山), Ping Che (坪輦), Tong Fong (塘坊), Nga Yiu (瓦壩) and Chung Yuen Ha (松園下).

³ According to land records, the family name “易” is spelt as “Yik” or “Yick”.

⁴ The Yiks (Punti) migrated from Heshan to Pak Sha Tsuen in Yuen Long in the early Qing dynasty. Some of them later moved to Fung Wong Wu. The Yeungs (Punti) migrated first from Huizhou (惠州) to Shenzhen (深圳), and later from Shenzhen to So Lo Pun (鎖羅盆) in Sha Tau Kok (沙頭角). Some of them later moved from So Lo Pun to Fung Wong Wu in the Daoguang reign (道光, 1821 - 1850). The Ngs are Hakka people who moved from Sha Lan Ha (沙欄下) in Sha Tau Kok to Fung Wong Wu in the late nineteenth century.

Sub-section 4 of Section B of Taxlord Lot No. T13 in Demarcation District No. 82. A Block Government Lease dated 22 March 1910 is the earliest available official record on this Taxlord Lot No. T13 before its sub-division into Sections A to G after 1912. In this Block Government Lease, the use of Taxlord Lot No. T13 is stated to be “Waste”.⁵

No. 25 is now situated on a plot of land registered as Section B of Fung Wong Wu Lot No. 15 in Demarcation District No. 82. A Block Government Lease dated 27 March 1905 is the earliest available official record on this Fung Wong Wu Lot No. 15 before its sub-division into Sections A to B in 1933. In this Block Government Lease, Fung Wong Wu Lot No. 15 is recorded as a “House Lot”.⁶

According to the village elders of the Yiks in Fung Wong Wu, in the late nineteenth century, the grandfather’s generation worked in a laundry shop in the United States, and later remitted money home to build these houses. Since there are no official records which can show the building history of the land lots on which Nos. 24 and 25 are situated, the exact year of construction of the houses is not known. However, No. 25 can be identified in the earliest aerial photo dated 1924. As for No. 24, it cannot be identified in the aerial photo of 1924, but it is shown in the one dated 1945 (the second oldest aerial photo). According to the village elders of the Yiks in 2022, No. 24 was believed to have been built around the 1920s.

In the 1960s, the son’s generation emigrated to the United Kingdom for better opportunities, and in the 1970s the grandsons followed. The Yiks stayed in the houses for about a week when they came back to the village to worship their ancestors during the Ching Ming Festival and for another week during the Chung Yeung Festival.⁷ Such short stays in the houses took place for decades until sometime around 2018.

The houses are built of fair-faced grey-brick walls laid in header (丁) *Architectural* and stretches (順) courses, which support the pitched roofs comprising timber *Merit* rafters, purlins and clay tiles.⁸

⁵ The Land Registry, Block Government Lease of DD82 TL.

⁶ The Land Registry, Block Government Lease of DD82 FWL.

⁷ According to Yik village elders, a rule (祖訓) set out by their ancestors decreed that no ancestral hall should be built in Hong Kong. This embodied their wish that their descendants would return to Heshan to worship at their ancestors’ graves and meet other members of the clan there, thus maintaining the cohesion and solidarity of the clan.

⁸ According to the village elders, it was said that the grey bricks and roof tiles were manufactured in mainland China.

No. 24 had once housed two units. However, the two units have been combined into one. The entrance doorway, consisting of a granite doorframe, an iron sliding door known as *tong lung* (趟籠), a double-leaf wooden door, and a granite floor slab and header with square and circular slots respectively, is retained. The parapets and canopies with plastered mouldings featuring flowers, fruits and birds are present at both units. However, the entrance doorway of the unit at the west end has been blocked up with grey brickwork, and a new window opened. Besides, there are two windows on the side elevation and four windows on the back elevation, all having been altered with cement. The two windows at the upper level retain the canopies with plastered mouldings; but the windows have been enlarged.

Internally, each unit of No. 24 at first consisted of an entrance hall with a cooking stove and a bathing alcove, a living room in the middle, and bedrooms and a cockloft at the end. The entrance hall of each unit has a flat concrete roof, while the living room and bedrooms are covered by a raised tiled pitched roof. The difference of levels between the roofs has allowed for the installation of a window for natural lighting and ventilation. It is observed that the entrance hall with flat concrete roof is a later addition.

Further alterations resulted from the combination of the two units into one are also observed. First of all, a new doorway has been opened in the partition wall at the entrance hall between the two units. Moreover, the cooking stove and bathing alcove at the east end unit (i.e. the unit adhering to No. 25) have been removed, only those at the west end unit being retained. Besides, while cocklofts are present at both units, only the internal layout of the east end unit remains unchanged, comprising an entrance hall, a living room with an altar and bedrooms.⁹ The west end unit has only an entrance hall and bedrooms.

No. 25 consists of a single unit. It is observed that the entrance hall with a flat concrete roof has been added to the house. On the front facade, the top of the flat concrete roof is enclosed by a parapet and a canopy above the entrance, both of which are decorated with plastered mouldings with a relief of flowers, fruits and birds. But the entrance doorway has been altered, with the granite doorframe, sliding door, double-leaf wooden door, and the granite floor slab and header with square and circular slots respectively having been removed. Besides, there are two windows on the ground floor, one on the front elevation and the other one on the back

⁹ The granite block at one end and a hole at the other end of a rice-polishing mill (腳踏碓) can be identified in the living room of the east end unit.

elevation. Alteration with cement can be identified.

Internally, No. 25 consists of an entrance hall with a cooking stove and a bathing alcove, a living room in the middle, and bedrooms and a cockloft at the end. There is an altar in the living room. The entrance hall has a flat concrete roof, while the living room and bedrooms are covered by a raised tiled pitched roof. The difference of levels between the roofs has allowed for the installation of a window for natural lighting and ventilation.

Fung Wong Wu was in the Frontier Closed Area from 1951 to 2012. Accessibility by the public was thus limited. As Nos. 24 and 25 are private residences of the Yiks, they have some social value to the local neighbourhood. ***Social Value, & Local Interest***

Nos. 24 and 25 Fung Wong Wu have group value with the graded buildings in the village, namely the village houses at Nos. 35 – 37, the Ng Ancestral Hall (吳氏宗祠) and the Yeung Ancestral Hall (楊氏宗祠) (all Grade 3). ***Group Value***

The houses are a reminder of the Yik's early settlement at Fung Wong Wu and the historical development of the village, and thus have some built heritage value. They are a common example of traditional village houses in the New Territories. The fair-faced brickwork, doorways, a sliding door, delicate plastered mouldings at the canopies and the tiled roofs are retained. The authenticity of the houses is generally maintained, while it is also observed that the entrance halls were later additions. ***Built Heritage Value Authenticity and Rarity***

REFERENCES

Document Records at The Land Registry Office, Hong Kong

Property Particulars of Lot No. T13, S.B ss.4 in D.D. 82TLL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. T13 S.B ss.4 S.C in D.D. 82TLL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. T13 in D.D. 82TLL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. T13 S.B in D.D. 82TLL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. 15 S.B in D.D.82FWWL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. 15 S.A in D.D.82FWWL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. 14 in D.D.82FWWL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. 15 in D.D.82FWWL.
Property Particulars of Lot No. 1513 in D.D. 82L.
Block Government Lease of D.D. 82FWWL.
Block Government Lease of D.D. 82TL.

Aerial Photos of the Hong Kong Government

Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department. Aerial photo dated 26 November 1924 (Ref. No.: 23-H65).
Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department. Aerial photo dated 6 November 1945 (Ref. No.: 4024-681/4).

Records of the Colonial Office and Hong Kong Government

A Gazetteer of Place Names in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories, Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1960.

Newspaper

《北區星報》，1987年5月1日，第8頁。

Books, Articles and Other Sources

Faure, David. *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986).
Hase, P.H. "The Mutual Defence Alliance (約, Yeuk) of the New Territories." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. 29, 1989.
Hase, P.H. "Notes and Queries: Ta Kwu Ling, Wong Pui Ling and the Kim Hau Bridges." *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Vol. 30, 1990.
靳文謨修、黃袞裳、鄧文蔚等纂，《新安縣志：十三卷》（廣州：廣州出版社，2015年，第一版，據康熙27年刊本影印）。
舒懋官修、王崇熙等纂，《新安縣志》，《中國方志叢書·華南地方第172號》（台北：成文出版社有限公司，1974年，第一版，據嘉慶25年刊本影印）。
北區區議會，《北區風物志》（香港：北區區議會，1994）。
蕭國健，《香港新界北部鄉村之歷史與風貌》（香港：顯朝書室，2010）。

- 蕭國健，《香港古代史新編》(香港：中華書局(香港)有限公司，2019)。
- 阮志，《入境問禁：香港邊境禁區史》(香港：三聯書店(香港)有限公司，2014)。
- 阮志，《越界：香港跨境村莊及文化遺產》(香港：三聯書店(香港)有限公司，2016)。
- 「陳友才口述歷史訪問記錄」，訪問日期：1982年8月5日，訪問者：科大衛、鄭萃群、李麗梅，整理：李麗梅。香港中文大學圖書館藏。
- 「楊才先生口述歷史訪問」，訪問日期：1982年7月28日。訪問者：楊玉珍、鄭萃群、李麗梅；整理：李麗梅。香港中文大學圖書館藏。
- 「萬遠慶口述歷史訪問記錄」，訪問日期：1982年8月4日，訪問者：科大衛、趙惠明、黃永豪，整理：黃永豪。香港中文大學圖書館藏。
- 「鳳凰湖楊才先生訪問記錄」，訪問日期：1982年7月28日，載《北區、沙田及西貢口述歷史資料(1981-1982)》。訪問員：楊玉珍、鄭萃群、李麗梅。整理者：李麗梅。
- Oral history interview with the village elders of the Yiks in Fung Wong Wu by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 7 April 2022.