

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Village Houses, Nos. 35-37 Fung Wong Wu,**  
**Ta Kwu Ling, N.T.**

Fung Wong Wu (鳳凰湖) literally means "phoenix lake village" . *Historical Interest*  
 Legend has it that once a group of villagers saw a pair of birds with colourful crowns and feathers flying and singing above the lake within the woodland of the village. The villagers believed that the coming of the beautiful birds symbolized the fortunate auspice of phoenix, therefore the village was then named "Fung Wong Wu" . This village was recorded in the Gazetteer of Xin'an County (新安縣志) compiled in the 27th year of the Kangxi reign (康熙 27 年; 1688) of the Qing dynasty. Although classified as a Hakka village (客家村) in the 1819 edition of Gazetteer of Xin'an County compiled later in the 24th year of the Jiaqing reign (嘉慶 24 年), Fung Wong Wu is a village with Punti (本地) and Hakka inhabitants.

The **Yik** (易), **Yeung** (楊) and **Ng** (吳) clan groups lived here. The first settlers in the village are surnamed Yik (易). They are Puntis who originated from Taiyuan in Shanxi (山西太原). They lived in Yuen Long (元朗) about 200 years ago before they branched out to this area. Three families of the Yeungs (楊), who are Hakkas, originated from Huizhou in Guangdong (廣東惠州). They moved to Puji (布吉) and Henggang (橫崗) of Shenzhen (深圳), then So Lo Pun of Kat O Hoi (吉澳海鎖羅盆), and finally settled in this area in the Daoguang reign (道光; 1821-1850). The Ngs (吳), who are Hakkas, moved from Sha Lan Ha of Sha Tau Kok (沙頭角沙欄吓) to this area about the same time as the Yeungs.

The village of Fung Wong Wu is located on a flood plain by the Ping Yuen River (平原河) facing northwest. It is surrounded by hills and lies next to a woodland. In the past the villagers made their livelihood mainly by agriculture. The landlords would hire assistants, known as "cheung-keng" (長耕) to help with farm activities. Harvests were taken to the depot in Ta Kwu Ling (打鼓嶺菜站) for onward delivery to Yau Ma Tei Vegetables Market. In the 20th century, many villagers of the younger generation made their livelihood in overseas such as Britain, USA, Netherland, etc. Some others worked in the urban areas, for example, a member of the Ng clan (who graduated from Tsung Tsin College 崇真書院 in Kowloon) was a clerk in "Sang Kee" , an import and export firm in Wyndham Street, Central, during the 1950s.

*Architectural Merit*

Village houses at Nos. 35, 36 and 37 Fung Wong Wu are located at the

first row of buildings at the north of the village, facing north to northwest. In front of the houses, there is an open foreground which was used as a “wo-tong” (禾塘) for sun-drying grains (曬穀) and a venue for villagers’ gatherings, e.g. holding banquets (擺酒). The village houses are vernacular residence built of green bricks with pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles supported on walls. No. 35 is owned by the Ngs while those at Nos. 36 and 37 are owned by the Yeungs.

**No. 35** is a one-hall-one-courtyard plan house. It is divided equally into three bays, with an entrance at the centre for each bay. Externally, the front façade (facing north) and the west elevation keep their green brick fair-faced appearance, while the walls facing east and south are plastered. Each entrance has granite lintel and a pair of traditional wooden door, when the one at the west bay have a complete granite door casing.

A pair of Chinese couplets “延陵世澤” and “渤海家聲” is hung at the entrance of the west bay of No. 35, which is currently used as a family ancestral hall of Ng villagers. At the front of the hall is the altar with tablets of ancestors. Decoration inside the hall is minimal, with some coin patterns at the beam remained. Its central bay and east bay are for residential use and their layout are similar with each other. Cooking stove and a bath corner are at either side of the courtyard. At the front of the hall is the living room, with a bedroom behind it. A wood ladder at the hall leads to a cockloft above the bedroom. Extensive alternations have been done, such as paving of modern glazed tiles on the walls and on the floor, modern-equipped bathrooms and renovated kitchen.

**Nos. 36 and 37** are adjacent to the one at No. 35, each having a one-hall-one-courtyard plan. Externally the walls facing north, east and south are plastered, with the front façade (the wall facing north) painted with brick line. Each house has an entrance with granite door casing and a pair of traditional wooden door. A cooking stove and a bath corner is respectively on the left and right of the courtyard, which was originally open but is now closed with a flat ceiling after alternation. At the front of the hall is the living room, with a bedroom behind it. A wood ladder at the hall leads to a cockloft above the bedroom. Photos of the house owners’ ancestors are hung at the living room. There is a window with burglar bars for each floor at the back of each house. More traditional features are kept at No. 36, e.g. the brick cooking stove, inlaid cabinet, bath corner, wooden staircase, wooden joints of the bedroom door and a grinder at the living room. Alterations have been done

inside No. 37, such as white-painted wall, modern-equipped bathroom and renovated kitchen.

For *fengshui* reason, the front façade of the west bay of No. 35 (i.e. the family ancestral hall) is not perpendicular to the plan of the building. Instead the alignment of the entrance and the wall immediate on its top is slightly tilted eastward, while the walls at the left and right of the door are slightly tilted westward. The front façades of Nos. 36 and 37, too, are not perpendicular to the plan of the building. Instead the alignment of the entrances and the walls immediate on their top are slightly tilted westward, while the walls at the left and right of the door are slightly tilted northward.

These residential houses witness the settlement in Fung Wong Wu. They are of built heritage value and are an important component of the rural atmosphere which is rare in Hong Kong. Although some alternations have been done to the interior of the houses (especially the centre and east bay of No. 35), the exterior authenticity is kept to a large extent.

***Rarity,  
Built Heritage Value  
& Authenticity***

The houses have been used as private residences, and they have relatively high social value to the local community. Surrounded by hills and lies next to a woodland, Fung Wong Wu is said by the local inhabitants to be sited in a fung-setting, having a “green dragon” (青龍) on the left and a “white tiger” (白虎) on the right.

***Social Value  
& Local  
Interest***

The houses have group value with other historic buildings in its environs, such as the Ng Ancestral Hall (吳氏宗祠) (Grade 3), Yeung Ancestral Hall (楊氏宗祠) (Grade 3) and the village houses at Nos. 24-27 Fung Wong Wu (鳳凰湖 24 至 27 號).

***Group Value***