

**The Historical Heritage of
Ho Chung, Pak Kong, and Sha Kok Mei, Sai Kung**

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The Early History of the Sai Kung Area

In the Nanhan (907-971), Sung (972-1279 in the Hong Kong area), and Yuan (1280-1367) periods, the Hong Kong area fell into the then County of Tung Kuan (東莞). Probably in the Nanhan period, the coastal areas of this County were divided into eight sub-districts, or To (都: see Map 1). The coast-lines of these eight To were controlled by two Imperial Monopolies: seven of them by the Imperial Salt Monopoly, and one by the Imperial Pearl Monopoly. The area of coast controlled by the Imperial Pearl Monopoly comprised approximately the coasts of today's Sai Kung, Sha Tin, Tai Po and North Districts, from Lei Yue Mun Point (鯉魚門) a little east of Kowloon City, to Mui Sha Tsim Point (梅沙尖), just east of Sha Tau Kok. The Imperial Pearl Monopoly had a major pearl-fishing centre and garrison at Tai Po, at least from Nanhan times. The area was, in these years, the second most prolific pearl-fishing ground (after the pearl-fishing area off Hainan) in China, and produced a significant percentage of the pearls used in the production of Court robes and vessels.

Protection of the Pearl Monopoly's interests required that casual access to the pearl-fishing areas be heavily restricted. Theft of pearls by the pearl-fishers, their illicit sale to commoners, and their smuggling out of the pearl-fishing area were always serious risks, given the high value and tiny size of the pearls. The Pearl Monopoly always had a substantial garrison of soldiers at Tai Po, to patrol the area and put down smuggling, and also to act as guards to convoy shipments of pearls from Tai Po to Canton as needed. More significantly, access to the area by ordinary Chinese was forbidden. Ordinary Chinese found in the area without a pass issued by the Pearl Monopoly were guilty of a serious criminal offence, and would have been severely punished, even if no evidence of smuggling or illicit pearl-dealing was uncovered. Settlement by ordinary Chinese in the area was even more strictly forbidden. The area was made an Exclusion District, and kept as empty as possible, to protect the Imperial rights. The Nanhan had put the pre-Chinese inhabitants of the area under military discipline, and forced them to labour as pearl-fishers, without any right to leave the area or escape from the hardships of their life. Until the early Ming, it would appear, these groups of at best semi-sinicised pearl-fishers, and the Chinese soldiers and officials who controlled them, were the only inhabitants of the area.

The life of the pearl-fishers was extremely hard, and many drowned or were killed by sharks. In 1324, a local scholar, Cheung Wai-yan (張惟寅) wrote an impassioned Memorial to the Emperor, denouncing the cruelties of a system which forced men to go to their deaths in this way, and the pearl-fishing was ended as a result, for a few years. It was re-opened, however, and closed down again, several more times until, in 1374, in the very early Ming, it was discontinued for the last time. The cruelties of the system were undoubtedly one of the reasons the system was ended, but the local pearl-beds had also become exhausted by the late fourteenth century, and too few pearls were, by 1374, being found to justify the expenses of the local Imperial Pearl Monopoly office.

Once pearl-fishing was ended in the area, the area became available for settlement. It seems likely that the area was initially granted to Ho Chen (何真). Ho Chen was the late Yuan Warlord of Kwangtung, who had declared at an early date for the first Ming Emperor, and who had handed the south over to him without a fight. Ho Chen had accordingly been greatly honoured by the new Ming Court, being granted the office of Minister of the Left (左丞, often given in the form 左臣) shortly after 1368, being made Earl of Tung Kuan (1385), and being given substantial estates by the victorious Ming. Among these estates granted to Ho Chen seems to have been this now closed down Imperial Pearl Monopoly Tai Po estate, almost certainly including the Sai Kung area, probably very shortly after the pearl-fishing was ended. Ho Chen would have received this area on the assumption that he would find arable tenants for it, and develop it to his eventual profit. Ho Chen seems to have started to look for tenants to settle parts of this area, and especially the area immediately around Tai Po: among other groups settled here were the Tang (鄧) clan, who descend from one of Ho Chen's close aides from his days as Warlord.

Ho Chen managed to remain on good relations with the first Ming Emperor until his death in 1388. His family, however, subsequently fell before the first Ming Emperor's paranoia, being believed by the Emperor to have been involved in the conspiracy of Lan Yu (藍玉) in 1393. All the family (except for one young man, who managed to escape the proscription by flight), were accordingly executed in that year. The lands granted to Ho Chen thereupon reverted to the Government. This proscription, and the reversion of the Tai Po area to Imperial control, probably initiated a period in which settlement and development of the area slowed down. After the late fourteenth century settlement of the immediate Tai Po area under Ho Chen, the next known episode of settlement in the wider Tai Po area, seems to have taken place no earlier than a full century later, in 1488, when the first settlement took place in today's Sha Tin district.

Of all the old Imperial Pearl Monopoly estate, the Sai Kung area was probably the least attractive as an area for arable settlement. The area is extremely mountainous, with very little flat land. It typifies the description of the County in the 1688 San On County Gazetteer, "The County is made up of many high mountains and lofty peaks, which rise up immediately from the shores of the deep sea (其地多高山峻嶺而鄰於大海)". It is to be expected that this area would be taken up later than the better-located and more fertile areas nearer the centre of the old Pearl Monopoly estate. In fact, it seems probable that the first Chinese settlement in Sai Kung began no earlier than the middle sixteenth century, and was, until the very end of the seventeenth century, limited to the three villages of Ho Chung, Pak Kong, and Sha Kok Mei, one village in the centre of each of the only three significant areas of flattish land in the district.

Settlement History of the Villages

Ho Chung

The Sai Kung area, or at least the Ho Chung and Pak Kong parts of the area, were first granted, or sold, to the Wong clan of Mui Lam in San On (新安縣梅林黃姓). The Wong clan was a major and ancient clan, rich and powerful. It never settled in the Sai Kung area, but looked to that area to produce income for the clan, who were, following the grant or sale to them, the landlords and Taxlords, the holders of the Subsoil Rights for the area. The first actual settlers were thus people who took up the Wong clan offer to

become perpetual tenants (holders of the Topsoil Rights) of the Wong clan. The terms of the Wong clan holding, and when they acquired the area, are quite unclear: all that we know of them is in an account of a long dispute between the Wong clan and their tenants in the early nineteenth century (for which, see below).

Ho Chung (like both Pak Kong and Sha Kok Mei) is a multi-surname village. It is built at the foot of the hill, strung out along the banks of the river. Because space is limited, the houses are built very close together, very much more so than is usual in the New Territories (see Plate 1 for a view of Ho Chung before the rebuilding of recent years). The villagers of Ho Chung believe that their village was established in the middle Ming, no more than a few years, at most a generation, before they founded the Che Kung Temple there, which they believe dates from about 1555. The village clans today believe that the longest settled clan there is the Lai (黎) clan. The Lai clan Genealogical Record (族譜) states that "Our Ancestor moved to Ho Chung in the late Ming. Our clan was the first to settle there. Then the Wan and Cheung clans came together and settled there. Now, however, it can be seen that those clans number several hundred adult males, while our clan has no more than something over ten. 祖自明季移居蠓涌.我姓為主始.溫張二姓全居.今見他姓人丁幾百而我姓不過十餘" (not surprisingly, the Genealogical Record goes on to say that the clan became convinced that there was something seriously wrong with the clan's Fung Shui, and hired experts to investigate, as a result of which the graves of the Ancestors were all moved, starting with the First Ancestor, whose grave was moved in 1869: the writer of the Genealogical record was the man behind this major - and very expensive - exercise, and, indeed, wrote out the Genealogical Record to a large degree in order to record the changes he had supervised: it is pleasant to note that the clan did indeed grow during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries).

The Lai clan Genealogical Record gives a little more information on the move to Ho Chung. It states, of Lai Ho-fu (黎何富), a man of the ninth generation of the clan resident at Pak Sha (白沙, Baisha) in Tung Kuan, that he "moved to San On, in the Sing Fa period of the Ming, 大明成化向居新安". It does not say where in San On he lived, but it records of his three sons that the eldest moved to Ping Shan (坪山) at Pik Kap Sz (碧甲司, Bijiasi: this is not the Ping Shan in the New Territories), the second (or, probably, the descendants of the second) eventually moved to Tai Long Sai Wan (in the far east of today's Sai Kung District), and the youngest, Lai Kwan-yau (黎君祐) was the first to move to Ho Chung. It is likely that Lai Ho-fu moved to San On at the very end of the Sing Fa period (1465-1487, say about 1485), and that he was then a young man (perhaps born about 1465), and still unmarried, so that his youngest son was born about 1520-1530. The dates given in the Genealogical Record for Lai Kwan-yau's eighth and ninth generation descendants (born in the 1780s and the 1810s-1820s) would be difficult to square with any earlier date of birth for Lai Kwan-yau. Assuming that Lai Kwan-yau was born in the 1520s, the most likely date for his move to Ho Chung, and thus for the foundation of the village, is about 1550.

The Cheungs of Ho Chung, who the Lai clan Genealogical record state arrived in Ho Chung at the same time as the Wans, and well after the Lais, claim to be a branch of the ancient and powerful clan of Wong Pui Leng (黃貝嶺, Huangbeileng, near Sham Chun, 深圳, Shenzhen). The Cheung clan first settled at Wong Pui Leng in 1466, and their settlement at Ho Chung must be after that date, therefore. The Cheungs of Ho Chung are

believed to have a Genealogical Record although it has been mislaid, and I was not able to consult it. The current elders of the clan (born in the 1920s) claim to be of the 47th generation. However, the current elders of other branches of the Cheung clan with genealogical connections with Wong Pui Leng from other villages claim only to be of the 30th generation, so the exact genealogical position of the Ho Chung Cheungs remains in some question. Copies of the Cheung clan Genealogical Record from other villages do not show the point of juncture of the Ho Chung branch with the main stem, but, since this point of juncture must, as noted above, be after 1466, which is where the Genealogical Records consulted cease to give details for the main, Wong Pui Leng, stem, this is hardly surprising. The most likely date of settlement for the Cheungs (and the Wans) at Ho Chung is the end of the sixteenth century, with the first Cheung clan settler there, Cheung Suen-lung (張孫隆), being a man from the fourth generation, or perhaps more likely the fifth, of the Cheungs settled at Wong Pui Leng.

Of the other dominant clans of Ho Chung, the Laus settled there "several hundred years ago", but the clan no longer have any detailed records. As noted above, at least one of the two Wan clans settled in Ho Chung settled there somewhen during the Ming, probably about 1600: a branch in due course moved out to Tai Po Tsai, where they were settled from the late seventeenth century. The Laus are sure they settled in Ho Chung not long after the Wans, however, so probably also during the Ming, or the very early Ching. By the date of the Coastal Evacuation (the driving inland of all those living along the coast, to deny assistance to Koxinga and the Ming remnants resident on Taiwan, 1662-1669), there were thus at least four clans settled at Ho Chung: the Lais, Cheungs, Wans and Laus.

The Tses settled at Ho Chung almost certainly immediately after the rescission of the Coastal Evacuation Decree in 1669. The Tse clan is also settled at Sha Kok Mei, where they have a Genealogical Record. That states that the Tses settled first at Sha Kok Mei, in 1646. The first Ancestor of the Tses had four sons. He eventually "quarrelled with his wife", who left him, and went to settle at Ho Chung with the eldest son, the other three staying at Sha Kok Mei with the father (the descendants of the second son in due course moved out to Pak Sha Wan). The likely date for this splitting of the family is somewhen shortly after 1669.

The other village clans all seem to have settled at Ho Chung well after 1700.

The Ho Chung villagers thus believe that the village was founded in the mid-sixteenth century. Supporting this date are clear village traditions about the date of their temple and of the great bund they built across the front of the village to protect it from floods.

The temple is dedicated to Che Kung, a general from the late Sung period. The villagers believe that their ancestors revered this man ever since the end of the Sung (they believe he was involved in the abortive attempt to keep the Sung state alive by smuggling Prince Ping and his brother out of the Palace, and bringing them down to the South), and that they built him a temple as soon as they could, and very shortly after the first settlers settled at Ho Chung. They also state that the temple was founded "about 1555", or at least "before 1585". The only evidence they have for this is village oral tradition, but the date fits very well with the likely date of first settlement, and this village tradition as to the date of the temple can be taken as reinforcing the estimated date of first settlement from the Lai clan Genealogical Record. What is more, the villagers are quite certain that the Che Kung Temple at Sha Tin was founded from Ho Chung, when the god was

"invited" from Ho Chung to Sha Tin, to stop a terrible epidemic that was raging there. The Sha Tin villagers have an oral tradition to very similar effect, and date this event to the "late Ming": the epidemic of 1629 may well be the one in question. This also reinforces the general consensus that the village and the temple at Ho Chung were both founded in the mid-sixteenth century.

The temple in existence today probably dates largely from 1878 (the date of the inscription on the door-frame), although the villagers state that the temple furniture dates from the Hsien Feng era, 1851-1861, and so the 1878 date must be a thorough-going restoration of that date. It was thoroughly restored again in 1905 (an inscribed board inside the temple refers to this restoration), and again in 1934 (an inscription in the temple records this restoration), and finally in 2000 (an inscription outside the temple). It is a good example of a traditional large New Territories temple (see Plates 2-5), built of brick (today rendered in cement) on good quality stone footings, in three bays, with a light-well in the central bay, and with the central bay inset to provide a small eaves-overhang over the main entrance. The main entrance has a door-frame of well-made and beautifully inscribed granite blocks. The roof is of tile, which must originally have rested on timber beams and rafters, but these have recently been replaced with poor-quality cement beams. The building was decorated with stucco-work pottery figurines, and eaves-paintings: these decorations were all restored in the 2000 restoration. The temple has quarters for a Temple Keeper as well as the worshipping space, and the building is large enough to have not only an altar to the main god, Che Kung, but a side-altar as well, to Hung Shing. To one side of the temple is the Second Earthgod Shrine of the Ho Chung people, sheltered under a huge Fung Shui tree. In front of the temple and the Shrine is a Fung Shui courtyard, edged by a low wall (see Plate 6). Among the deity's powers are to protect people from flood: the old footpath here, in front of the temple, could be very dangerous when the river rose, especially if this coincided with a high tide - the footpath was the main access route to Sai Kung Market, and was thus heavily used, as is discussed further below.

As to the bund protecting the village from the river, the oral tradition of the villagers states that this was "built in the late Ming, at a date shortly after the foundation of the village" (蠔涌圍，相傳建於明末，斯時正立於村之久)，according to a statement written out by the elders in 1971, when the old bund was destroyed to make way for the present concrete river defences (see Plate 1 for a view of the pre-1971 bund). This, again, supposes, or at least is entirely in line with, a mid-sixteenth century date of foundation for the village.

Pak Kong

Pak Kong, like Ho Chung, was first settled by tenants of the Wong clan, in the mid-sixteenth century, but probably a generation after Ho Chung, perhaps about 1570. Like Ho Chung it is a multi-surname village, with the clans resident there today being the Lok (駱), Cheng (鄭), Lei (李), Lau (劉), and Leung (梁) clans. It is built at the foot of the hill-slope, like Ho Chung, but on a slightly broader site, and higher up above the stream, so that the lanes of the village are not quite as narrow as at Ho Chung.

However, the Lok clan, which is today the largest, and claims to be the longest settled of the current resident clans, were not the founders of the village. According to the Lok clan Genealogical Record, "Our Ancestor came to Pak Kong, and then the Lei clan came after, so that the Loks and the Leis, the two surnames, were the first there. They first

settled on the left side of the village. The Mok clan were the original settlers, but, after our Ancestor settled there, the Mok clan moved away, to Tai Wai in Lek Yuen. 我祖至北港,李姓次第而到.駱李二姓初到.先在左圍籍居住.本村源係莫姓所居,後我祖遷于此住,莫姓遷瀝源大圍村去了." The Lok clan Genealogical Record also states that the Loks settled at Pak Kong in the Tin Kai era of the Ming (1621-1628).

The Mok clan at Tai Wai today have no memory of any period in which they were settled at Pak Kong. They believe they have always lived at Tai Wai ever since they left their previous home near Sham Chun "about 400 or 450 years ago", i.e., about 1550-1600. That they have indeed been settled at Tai Wai since the middle Ming is suggested by the fact that, according to their Genealogical Record, a Wai (韋) of Tai Wai married a Mok about 1615, well before the Moks would have left Pak Kong, and, while this Mok lady cannot be assumed to have been certainly living at Tai Wai before her marriage, this is likely. However, the Mok clan at Tai Wai descends from two brothers, and the elders of the Mok clan have suggested to me that perhaps one brother went to Pak Kong, while the other settled at Tai Wai, and that, when the descendants of the one brother left Pak Kong, they went to live at Tai Wai where they already had close relatives, the descendants of the other brother: this is a very plausible explanation. If so, then the settlement at Pak Kong and the settlement at Tai Wai probably took place at the same time, i.e. in the second half of the sixteenth century, perhaps about 1570.

The Lok clan Genealogical Record, as noted above, assumes that the village of Pak Kong was inhabited only by the Moks until the coming of the Loks in the 1620s. The Lok Genealogical Record has an interesting statement as to the settlement of the Loks. It states that the First Ancestor (Lok Wai-san, 駱維紳) left his ancestral home in Tung Kuan County together with his two elder brothers, and settled at Pak Shek (白石, Baishi), near Nam Tau (南頭, Nantou). In due course, the eldest brother remained at Pak Shek, and is the ancestor of many groups of Loks living in the general Nam Tau area. The second brother eventually moved to Tsiu Keng in today's Hong Kong, and is the ancestor of the Loks of that village, and Lok Wai-san moved to Pak Kong.

It is very likely that Lok Wai-san moved into the Pak Kong area because he already had relatives nearby. According to the Wai clan Genealogical record, a Wai of Sha Kok Mei married a Lok in about 1590. Lok Wai-san in turn married a Wai, probably of Sha Kok Mei. It is probable that the lady of the Lok clan who married into the Sha Kok Mei Wai clan was a close relative of Lok Wai-san, perhaps a sister or aunt. What is more, the Loks may have been friendly with the Lais of Ho Chung as well: the ancestral homes of the Lais and the Loks in Tung Kuan seem to have been very close together. One ancestor of Lai Ho-fuk, about 1420, married a Lok, who may well have been related to the Loks of Pak Kong. It is entirely likely that Lok Wai-san moved to Pak Kong precisely because he had heard from the Lok lady married to the Wai, and from the Lais, that there was good land there for the asking, and it can scarcely be doubted that his marriage with one of this lady's husband's close relatives was connected with this. A Wai of Tin Sam in Sha Tin also married a Lok, in about 1605, probably also a relative of Lok Wai-san, so the family probably had excellent relations with the area before he moved to Pak Kong.

It is likely that the Lei clan settled at Pak Kong within a generation of the Loks, that is, by the time of the Coastal Evacuation (1662), since the other village clans, who all agree that they arrived after the Leis, all seem to have settled there starting shortly after the Coastal Evacuation Decree was rescinded in 1669. The First Ancestor of the Cheng clan

of Pak Kong, for instance, according to their Genealogical Record, was Cheng Pan-kwai (鄭品貴), who was of the 17th Generation of the clan at their previous ancestral home. The present-day elders of the clan (born in the 1930s) are of the 25th Generation. This implies that the First Ancestor would have been born between about 1690 and 1730, depending on whether a 30 or a 25 year generation-gap is chosen. Settlement of the Chengs at Pak Kong about 1730-1750 is likely, therefore.

The Chengs were also probably related to, or at the least friendly with, both the Loks and the Lais of Ho Chung before they settled at Pak Kong, and can be assumed to have settled there because of this. Cheng Pan-kwai's great-grandmother was a Lok, and it is probable that she was of the same clan as the Loks of Pak Kong, since the Cheng clan, before Cheng Pan-kwai moved to Pak Kong, were resident, according to their Genealogical Record, first at Pak Sha (the original home of Lai Ho-fuk, the ancestor of the Lais of Ho Chung), and then at Pak Shek, probably the same Pak Shek as the village where Lok Wai-san's elder brother and his descendants were resident from the early seventeenth century. The Cheng clan Genealogical Record thus at the least suggests that the Loks and the Chengs were closely related and friendly from well before Cheng Pan-kwai moved to live alongside the Loks at Pak Kong.

Pak Kong, like Ho Chung has a temple, in the case of Pak Kong dedicated to Tin Hau. Like the Ho Chung temple, it marks a significant Fung Shui line (the line marks the eastern edge of the residential area of the village). It is not as old as the Ho Chung temple: the villagers believe it dates "from the Ching". The oldest dated artefacts in the temple are of 1872. These do not include the characters for "restoration", but the temple is, nonetheless, probably rather older than that. It may well have been first built after the village bought out its landlords, in 1841. The temple has been recently restored. It is a small structure, entered through a courtyard surrounded by a Fung Shui wall, with a gatehouse (see Plates 7 and 8). The temple is built of brick, and is a single-bay structure, without a light-well, entirely typical of the smaller New Territories temples.

Since only the Pak Kong people worshipped at this temple, the villagers were concerned that perhaps on some festival not enough people would go to worship, and that the Goddess would feel offended. The villagers decided, therefore, to divide the village households into five groups, or Kap (甲), and to make each Kap responsible in order for the nine festivals each year on which they thought the Goddess should be honoured. There is a board in the temple with an inscription listing the households and the festivals: this was drawn up about forty years ago, but replaced older boards: the villagers believe this system of ensuring an appropriate level of worship has been in place since the temple was first built. The board states its purpose in these words: "Everyone living in Pak Kong village must accept their duty of taking a turn on behalf of the village as a whole to arrange things for the common good. Let everyone be united in their views and acts, sincere in their hearts, and work together. 凡在北港村居住者當有責任為本村當負一切事務與公益.群策群力誠心合作."

Sha Kok Mei

Sha Kok Mei is built as a block of lanes at the foot of its Fung Shui hill, but, like Pak Kong, it is built sufficiently above the stream to be well above the risk of flooding. It is a village with some thirteen or fourteen indigenous clans resident today, but only the Tse (謝), Wai (韋), and Lau (劉) clans are believed to have lived there for any length of time,

the others having arrived there mostly during the nineteenth century. These late-comer clans are represented today by only one or two households each. It is probable that the Wai clan are the oldest, having settled there about 1570, with the Tses moving there in 1643, and the Laus immediately after the rescission of the Coastal Evacuation Decree, in 1669-1670.

The Wai clan of Sha Kok Mei is a branch of the Wai clan of Tai Wai, Tin Sam and Keng Hau in Sha Tin. The First Ancestor of the Wais, Wai Kin-yuen (韋建元), according to their Genealogical Record and to the traditions of the elders, was born in 1457, to a poor family. He left home at the age of 14, and took a position as a hired hand to one of the Tang clan of Ha Tsuen. When he reached the age of 31, after labouring there for seventeen years, he had gathered together enough money to allow marriage, and he was able to marry a daughter of the household in which he worked, and to acquire undeveloped land in Sha Tin, which he then started to farm. He was the first settler in the Sha Tin area, that area apparently only being opened by the Government to settlement then. Other families, including the Cheng (鄭) clan, and the Choi (蔡) clan moved there shortly afterwards. Wai Kin-yuen had four sons, of whom three survived to marry. Of his descendants, the line stemming from his third son today live in Tai Wai, in Sha Tin, those stemming from the fourth and youngest son live today in Tin Sam in Sha Tin, and those stemming from the oldest son live today, some at Sha Kok Mei, and some at Keng Hau in Sha Tin.

The Genealogical Record states that, at first, the family, and those other families who had moved into the area in the years after Wai Kin-yuen started to develop the area lived in houses scattered about among their fields, the Wais in particular living at the place called Pak Shek, 白石, a little south-west of today's Tai Wai (this is not the same Pak Shek as the village where the Loks and Chengs lived from the early seventeenth century).

In the period 1568-1574 the depredations of the bandit Limahong (Lam Fung, 林鳳) caused huge suffering and difficulties in the area (the Ming History states that he caused the deaths of 20,000 people in the Kwangtung area, and the 1688 San On County Gazetteer makes it very clear that he caused huge problems in the immediate Hong Kong area). The villagers were forced to look to their defences. In the immediate Hong Kong area, the villagers of Nga Tsin Wai at Kowloon decided to abandon their houses scattered about the fields, and to build a new village, with stout walls and a deep moat, and move inside these new defences, even though the houses there were smaller than the old ones. The Sha Tin villagers also considered their position. The descendants of the third son of Wai Kin-yuen decided to build a walled village like Nga Tsin Wai (at Tai Wai: it was set out by the same Fung Shui master as Nga Tsin Wai, and to an identical plan), with the support of some of the other local residents. The descendants of the fourth son decided similarly to build a walled village (to a slightly different plan from that of Nga Tsin Wai and Tai Wai) at Tin Sam, again with the support of some of the other local resident families (the Chois in particular).

Building a walled village of this type was hugely expensive. The walls had to be twenty feet high, built on solid stone foundations, thick and well-built, with gun-embrasures. Cannon had to be bought, and gunpowder for them, to render the walls defensible. A Gatehouse had to be built with thick gates (those at Nga Tsin Wai were of timber three inches thick), buttressed by heavy (and immensely expensive) iron bars. Around the

walls a moat up to a fifty feet wide and up to six feet deep had to be dug. In addition, all the new houses inside the walls had to be built, the streets paved and drained, and outhouses and wells built as well. Groups deciding to opt for defences like these might well find themselves financially strapped for generations, even if they were safer than those clans who decided against defences. In Sha Tin the Cheng clan decided not to invest in these new walled villages: they gathered themselves together and built a village (where at least they were all living close by one another and able to support each other should attack happen), at a site, Kak Tin, tucked away under the shadow of the hills, where, presumably, they hoped they would be invisible to bandits.

The descendants of the oldest son of Wai Kin-yuen also declined to have anything to do with the two new walled villages being built by the other two Wai clan descent lines. No property within the walls at either Tai Wai or Tin Sam was ever to be owned by descendants of this line, therefore. They retained their third share of the tiny acreage of taxed-land at Pak Shek which had been bought by the First Ancestor, but they excluded themselves from the new villages being built. It is entirely probable that they instead decided to build a new village at Sha Kok Mei at this date, since, after the middle 1570s, they would have had nowhere to live in the Sha Tin area.

The descent line of the eldest son of Wai Kin-yuen in this period close to 1570 consisted of three members of the third Generation, and three of the fourth Generation (each member of the third Generation having one son). In 1570-1575 these were, respectively, 57-62, 54 (this man died in 1571), and 51-56 years old, and 29-34, 24-29, and 21-26 years old. The fourth generation members were probably all married by 1570: they were each also to have one son, born in 1572, 1573, and 1571 respectively.

Of the Wais of Sha Kok Mei, a significant number eventually returned to Sha Tin, settling at Keng Hau. The Genealogical Record states that this happened in the Chien Lung period (i.e. somewhen in the middle or later eighteenth century).

That the move to Sha Kok Mei took place in the 1570s, as a reflex of the move of the other Sha Tin villagers into walled villages at that date, is made very likely since one member of each of the third and fourth Generations of the descendants of the first Wai clan descent line (these men died respectively in 1583 and 1615) were to be buried near Sha Kok Mei, at the place known as Ta Tit Fan (打鐵墳), or Tsuk Shue Ngam (竹樹巖) (the Genealogical Record states that the place was known by both names), which is almost certainly the same place as the area near Sha Kok Mei today known as Tsuk Shue Ha, 竹樹下, or adjacent to it, strongly suggesting that they had lived near there, i.e. at Sha Kok Mei, before their deaths (the places of burial of the other members of these Generations has not been recorded).

Of the other Sha Kok Mei clans, the Tses moved there in 1643, according to an explicit statement in their Genealogical Record. The Laus remember that they settled at Sha Kok Mei immediately after the rescission of the Coastal Evacuation decree, in 1669-1670.

Summary

The evidence so far given for the dates of settlement at these three villages is thus all congruent with foundation in the mid sixteenth century, perhaps close to 1550 at Ho Chung, and about 1570 at Pak Kong and Sha Kok Mei. No other dates seem to fit the traditions and evidence so well as these.

One point of interest is the suggestion in the Genealogical Records that the founders of these villages were known to each other before they settled in the Sai Kung area, and that the settlement should thus be seen as a concerted move by a group to take up the offer of land here, and not just the adventitious arrival of unrelated individuals. The Lais of Ho Chung and the Loks of Pak Kong seem to have come from the same village background, as did the Chengs later, and the Loks, Wais, and Moks were closely related by marriage, either before the date of settlement, or at least immediately after the settlement period. Some details of the rent-dispute discussed in greater detail below suggests that the families settled in the Sai Kung area kept in contact with their relatives back in their older native place for some centuries after they settled in the three villages. This suggestion, that the founders knew each other before they settled would, clearly, have made settlement easier: the new villages, initially with just one household each, would have had the psychological satisfaction of knowing that they would be supported by their neighbours should the need arise.

There is one further piece of hard evidence which also points to a Ming foundation date for these villages, and which is at least not at odds with the mid-sixteenth century dates proposed above for the foundation. This is in the San On County Gazetteer of 1688, which contains, at chuan 3, a list of all the villages in the County. Because of the chaos caused by the Coastal Evacuation of 1662-1669 the Gazetteer notes that many of the villages of the County had still not been re-instated by the date of compilation, and many were actively at that date being re-instated on a continual basis, and so the Gazetteer re-printed the list from "the Old Gazetteer" (here clearly the 1635 Gazetteer) rather than trying to produce an up-to-date list. On this list the three villages, Ho Chung, Pak Kong, and Sha Kok Mei, are all included, as the only villages in today's Saikung. This list was probably, like the corresponding list in the 1819 County Gazetteer, drawn up from the County Tax Records, and is unlikely to include any village newly established at the date of compilation (in the 1819 Gazetteer no village established after about 1770-1790 seems to be included). This list, therefore, not only demonstrates that these villages were in existence in 1635, it makes it entirely likely that they were in existence before 1600, and thus makes a mid-sixteenth century date of foundation entirely reasonable.

At the same time, it is clear from all three villages that the original foundation was by one small family, and that, in each case, the village community was greatly strengthened by the addition of other resident clans at the end of the Ming and the very early Ching, in the period 1620-1650, and again, by the addition of yet further resident clans, in the years following the rescission of the Coastal Evacuation Decree in 1669.

In each village, all the resident clans were Punti (Cantonese-speaking). Today, the great majority of the Saikung villages are Hakka, and these three villages, with their dependencies and off-shoots, are the only significant Punti villages. They exist, however, as an important historical reference back to the period before 1662, when there were no Hakka in the area.

Ho Chung and Pak Kong were, as noted above, originally founded by clans who accepted perpetual tenancies from the landlords, the Wong clan of Mui Lam. Between 1827 and 1841 a major rent-dispute broke out involving these two villages and the Wong clan, which ended with both villages being freed from the need to pay any rent to their landlords thereafter. The Lok clan Genealogical Record contains two introductory essays by the writer, Lok Ping-man (駱炳文). This man, born in the period 1840-1845, and writing in 1891, was educated by his grandfather, Lok Chung-fan (駱龍芬), who lived 1793-1875. Lok Ping-man was a scholar of considerable depth, and had taken, but not successfully, the Sau Tsoi examinations in the 1860s. Lok Chung-fan was deeply involved in this rent dispute, and the introductory essays are clearly Lok Chung-fan's views of this event, as recorded by his grandson.

The first of these essays is an extended biography of Lok Chung-fan, leading to a statement as to why he spent his life on the study of Fung Shui, and why Lok Ping-man had followed him in this. The second gives a full account of the rent-dispute itself. Both are of the greatest interest, and a translation of both is given below (the Chinese is not given for reasons of space).

Now, in his youth my paternal grandfather [Lok Chung-fan] had a high reputation locally for study. He passionately wanted to make a name for himself and to become outstanding, so as to improve the standing of the clan. However, by ill luck, he was constrained by living in troubled times. The clan had received certain insults at that time, and he found he could not live happily at home. At 17 years of age [1810] he left his teacher and went to San On City, where he was forced to live homeless, like a dog, starveling thin, together with Chan Mung-kai (陳夢芥). They committed crimes in Sha Tseng (沙井 [Shajing, in the far north of the County, a full fifty miles from Pak Kong]) in the property of the brothers Chan Sai-yeung (陳世仰) and Chan Kwai-tsik (陳桂藉). He was one of a gang of bandits comprising some tens of men, under the leadership of Chan Hon-chuen (陳翰泉) and Chan Ying-yung (陳應用). However, he was caught in broad daylight in Sha Tseng, and he was imprisoned for ten months, until a bribe of more than 1,000 dollars was paid. Having been freed, he came home. He thought carefully while at home in the silence of the night. He passionately wanted to do something outstanding, to deal with the hatred and enmity the clan faced. He considered how, within San On County, which was so large, the clan was so tiny, and so lacking in manpower. It was difficult to become outstanding, and difficult not to be constrained by the land [i.e. by the Fung Shui of the land]. The land of the place where they lived was unsuitable as a residence for men. There were no good grave-sites, nor good open lands in the area. Because of these two factors, the clan would be insulted for a hundred generations, that was certain. He went on to think that this Fung Shui might be changed. If things were done in accordance with the rules of Fung Shui it would be difficult for the clan to remain small and poor. He determined that he would save the clan, and make it wealthy, prosperous, and outstanding, and, in particular, to ensure that it would never again be insulted by others. So he went to find a good Master, to study Fung Shui, and to understand its underlying principles. He travelled everywhere, and eventually found ... a Master in Tung Kuan, at Pak Sha (白沙, [Baisha]), one Cheng Ting-yan (鄭廷恩), who had long studied Fung Shui and its underlying principles. He also greatly desired to improve his clan's position and to make the descendants prosperous: they were of

one mind [this Master was clearly a relative of the Chengs of Pak Kong, living in the clan's old native place].

Lok Ping-man goes on to say that Lok Chung-fan also studied with one Pun Hoi-king (潘海鏡), that his studies lasted five years, and comprised both practical work ("climbing mountains to seek out grave-sites and to study the lie of the land and the water") and academic studies ("at night he read the arcane texts"). After he returned home, presumably a little after 1815, he studied the lie of the land in the area around the village, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, drew up Fung Shui maps, and took steps to improve the Fung Shui of the family graves. Lok Ping-man studied Fung Shui with him and continued this work in his turn (the fourteen magnificent Fung Shui maps he added to the Lok clan Genealogical Record, and the very detailed and superbly ordered Fung Shui descriptions of the sites in question show him to have been a very accomplished Fung Shui Master) .

The "insults", "enmity" and "hatred" Lok Chung-fan found so unpalatable were, almost certainly, connected with the dispute over rent, which must have been simmering for some time before it came to Court in 1821. The insults would have been given by Ho Chung people, as the second essay, on the rent dispute itself, makes clear. The essay starts with a brief statement as to the early history of the clan, and then proceeds:

Our High Ancestor came to Pak Kong village. In this County there was a Wong clan, of Mui Lam village, who were willing to lease the land. Our Ancestor married a Wai, and had five sons. Our Ancestor came to Pak Kong, and then the Lei clan came after, so that the Loks and the Leis, the two surnames, were the first there. They first settled on the left side of the village. The Mok clan were the original settlers, but, after our Ancestor settled there, the Mok clan moved away, to Tai Wai in Lek Yuen. Thus our Ancestor took into his hands the village, the hills, the fields, and the lands, paying an annual rent of 93 Shek of grain, and 10,080 cash to the Wong clan as landlords. This was paid year after year and everything was peaceful. Later, however, the neighbouring village of Ho Chung quarrelled with the landlords, the Wong clan, about the rent-grain. The quarrel lasted from Tao Kuang 1 [1821] to Tao Kuang 7 [1827]. Throughout this period, the Ho Chung tenants were opposed to the Wong clan landlords, and they could not avoid a long lawsuit. Our village of Pak Kong got involved in payments to Ho Chung. Now, the Ho Chung people were greedy, like a snake trying to swallow an elephant. They demanded that our village of Pak Kong pay them a rent of 200 Shek a year. We of Pak Kong agreed to give them a one-off payment of 200 Dollars, to help them with the expenses of their case, but we rejected any increase in our rents. They were unwilling to accept this, but we were not to be bullied over this. In Tao Kuang 7 [1827] we of Pak Kong quarrelled with them, and we were taken to Court by them, where they behaved very fiercely, trying to usurp landlord rights over us, and to make us their tenants by Court Order. We could not escape this Court case. Luckily, a man from Heung Sai village (向西, [Xiangxi]), in this County, a friend, of the Cheung surname, came to our rescue, sending his village brother, Cheung Tak-mau (張德茂), to pay money to protect us in Court, and by sending to our aid two experts from Nam Hoi County, Pun Lo-yi (潘老二) and Leung Lo-luk (梁老六) [Since Heung Sai is another name for Wong Pui Leng, these Cheungs were in fact distantly related to the Cheungs of Ho Chung]. Thanks to these two, the decision went against Ho Chung. In Tao Kuang 14 [1834]

the case was ended. The original rent of 58 Shek and 4,700 cash, which had been raised at some date to 93 Shek and 10,080 cash, was reduced back to the original figure as stipulated in the Wong clan deed, that is, to 58 Shek, without the additional 35 Shek which had been falsely added, and so our dispute with Ho Chung was ended. This was providential good fortune. When the Mui Lam landlords saw our Pak Kong people in dispute with Ho Chung, and in Court, and when they saw our Pak Kong elders with the two experts Pun and Leung planning our case, in which we said that our rents were properly paid to the Wong clan of Mui Lam, they saw that we were good tenants. To express their appreciation they then and there offered to sell to us Pak Kong people the rent due, the village, the fields, the hills, and everything else, and to cancel the rent-deed, so that we would be free to cultivate the land, and to receive all the crop, ourselves. In Tao Kuang 21 [1841] the price of 1,270 Dollars was paid over to the Wong clan, and the red deed was handed over to us, so that every year we should thereafter receive the crop in peace. These things done by the previous generation are worthy of detailed remembrance.

The likely background to all this is that Ho Chung refused to pay rent to their landlords, probably from about 1800. This was part of a wider movement throughout the New Territories area, when tenant villages in many places took this line, believing themselves to have become too strong for the landlords to enforce their rights. Usually, villages taking this line needed the support of the other villages near them, so that a united front would be presented to the landlords. Pak Kong, by refusing to assist Ho Chung by stopping the Pak Kong rent-payments would have made Ho Chung's position far more difficult. This must be the background to the "insults", "enmity" and "hatred" Lok Chung-fan found so unsupportable in 1810. By refusing to take on their landlords, the Pak Kong people were certainly opening themselves to accusations of cowardice and weakness by their neighbouring village, and this is probably why Lok Chung-fan was so desperate to find ways of strengthening the village and clan. In due course, the Wong clan must have forced Ho Chung into Court (they might not have dared do this if a genuinely united front had been achieved involving all the local villages). There, it would seem, the Wong clan eventually failed: probably they were unable to produce the original deed by which the land had been leased to the Lais 250 years before.

Having achieved their aim of freedom from the Wong clan landlords, the Ho Chung people then tried to force Pak Kong out of their tenancy relationship with Mui lam, and instead to take on a tenancy from themselves, presumably at a sharp increase in rent. No hint is given as to how the Ho Chung people thought they might convince the County Magistrate to this, but they clearly were able to put together enough of a case to scare the Pak Kong people. Eventually Ho Chung failed. In the process Pak Kong, while recognising its duty of paying rent to Mui Lam, found itself in the happy position of having its rent to Mui Lam dropped by order of the Magistrate (no wonder Pak Kong found the whole affair "providential good fortune"). The reason for the Magistrate's order dropping the rent was that Mui Lam could only produce a deed with a rent specified of 58 Shek, and could not produce another deed covering the increase to 93 Shek. The most likely scenario is that, when the area was first leased to the Moks, the Wong clan specified a rent of 58 Shek, and, when the Loks and the Leis came, the Wongs had agreed to this, subject to an increase in the rent, but with the deed reflecting the rent increase subsequently lost.

Thus, from the early nineteenth century, both Ho Chung and Pak Kong had escaped their status as perpetual tenants, and were entered on the County Land Tax records as the owners of the land they occupied, so making themselves eligible, for instance, to take part in the Imperial Examinations, as Lok Ping-man did.

There can be little doubt that Lok Chung-fan played a prominent part in these disputes. His overwhelming desire to see his clan and village strong and independent was brought to a triumphant conclusion when he was 48 years old. He must have been hugely satisfied that his researches into Fung Shui, and his amelioration of the Fung Shui of his clan's graves, had had so marvellously happy an outcome!

Sha Kok Mei did not take part in any of these disputes. It is quite likely that Sha Kok Mei was always, from the date when the Wais first settled there, land owned rather than tenanted by the residents. Certainly, the Wai clan were, from 1488, Land Tax payers for the land at Pak Shek in Sha Tin, and so landlords in their own right, and this status they probably enjoyed at Sha Kok Mei as well.

This dispute is of the greatest interest, not only to the history of the Sai Kung area, but as illustrating in a very clear way many of the attitudes, beliefs, and problems faced by villagers in the nineteenth century in this area.

Traditional Life

Subsistence

All three of the ancient Punti villages of Sai Kung were, before recent decades, emphatically arable, rice-subsistence villages. In every case, the sole significant way of life was ploughing the village fields to grow rice to subsist on. Each of the villages also had a few sampans, used for inshore fishing off the coast, but in no case were these sampans anything other than very subsidiary sources of food. Very few of the villagers ever got involved in running a shop in the market. Little was sold from the villages, except that all three villages sold firewood in Kowloon City, and one Ho Chung man, about eighty years ago, had a money shop (銀庄) in Kowloon City. All three villages were very self-sufficient and self-contained. Since the three villages owned the three largest areas of flat and fertile land in the district, they were generally prosperous and rarely suffered hunger. Neither during the Coastal Evacuation nor during the Japanese Occupation did starvation hit them seriously. The villagers were satisfied with themselves and their life-style: no-one from any of the villages, for instance, became Catholic when so many of the Saikung villagers did, during the later nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that the villages were generally reasonably prosperous, there are signs of land-hunger from the early nineteenth century, after all the arable land in the three valleys had been taken up. The establishment of Sheung Sze Wan by groups from Ho Chung and Pak Kong, probably in the early nineteenth century, given the definitely marginal quality of the arable land there, is such a sign, as is the establishment, at about the same date, of Ngau Liu by a group from Sha Kok Mei, since the land at Ngau Liu is also rather marginal.

Another sign of stress is that, according to their Genealogical Record, at least three members of the Lai clan of Ho Chung went to the California gold-fields in 1854:

most of the Chinese people who went there at that date did so in desperation at their prospects at home. Lai Yik-fan (黎奕芬), born in 1834, went there at the age of 19, and his uncle, Lai Shui-ting (黎瑞廷), born in 1820, and his second cousin, Lai Lin-fuk (黎連福), born about 1825, went as well. Lai Yik-fan died on the gold-fields in 1861: his uncle brought his remains back to the village. Lai Lin-fuk also died on the gold-fields, but the place of his death was not known, and the village never got the remains back.

At the same time, the villages had few very wealthy families. After the early nineteenth century rent-dispute, they did not pay rent, and seem to have developed a rather "flat" society, with few very rich or very poor families.

Fung Shui

Each of these three villages stands on a very powerful Fung Shui line (see Maps 2, 3, and 4). This is not surprising, since each village was founded in completely undeveloped territory in the mid-sixteenth century, so there was no prior development stopping the founders ensuring that their houses were built at the optimum site in the three valleys.

At Ho Chung the main Yang Fung Shui line rises at Wong Ngau Shan (黃牛山, West Buffalo Hill), passes through the centre of the easternmost part of the village and is anchored on a locally prominent knoll on the southern side of the valley, near Mok Tse Che village. This line was so strong that the village founders decided to build across it, even though this meant the houses of the village would have to be built close to the river, despite the risks of flooding that this implied (Ho Chung has flooded regularly over the centuries, unlike Pak Kong and Sha Kok Mei, where the villagers know of no episodes of flooding). As a defence against flooding (and designed to be both a physical and a Fung Shui defence), the village is fronted by a long Fung Shui wall, which the villagers believe was built soon after their ancestors first settled there. At the gaps in the wall to allow access closable or permanent flood-barriers were built, although at least occasionally the river has over-topped them (see Plate 9, where a set of steps inside the opening in the wall acts as a permanent barrier to the river waters).

At Pak Kong, the main Fung Shui line rises on a small peak of the ridge lying just west of Ngong Ping village, and is anchored on the hill immediately behind Tsiu Hang Hau village. At Sha Kok Mei, the main Fung Shui line rises from a peaklet on the ridge running south-west from Ngong Ping Shan (𨋖平山), and is anchored on the peak of Leung Shuen Wan Island, across Sai Kung Hoi.

In the case of each of these three villages, the subordinate Yang Fung Shui lines are harmonious and tie in with the main Yang Fung Shui line in a satisfying fashion.

At Ho Chung the relationship between the main Yang Fung Shui line and the Yin lines represented by the streams does not exhibit an entirely classic pattern (see Map 2). The right-hand side of the main Yang line is appropriately "embraced" by the stream-line running up past Kai Ham and Tai No to a spring close to the point of origin of the Yang line, in the classic way, but the left-hand side Yin line is relatively weak, requiring to be supported by major Fung Shui woods in this area. The main

Yang line crosses the main Yin line immediately in front of the village at a right-angle, which is also a weakness. The main Yin line in front of the village thus requires strengthening. The water of the stream should be still in this area and not flow, since this strengthens the Yin forces here, or at least not flow fast. The villagers forbid fishing in this section of the stream, again to strengthen its Yin properties, and there are Fung Shui trees along the bank. From the village to the sea, the main stream curves in a double bend: this stretch of the stream is of major Fung Shui significance, and the gentle curve of this section is of major Fung Shui significance, as are the trees along the bank here.

At Pak Kong, the relationship between the main Yang line and the Yin lines is, as at Ho Chung, stronger and more classic to the right of the village than it is to the left, although the left-hand line is stronger than at Ho Chung (it rises at Pak Kong Au: see Map 3). The relationship between the main Yang line and the Yin line in front of the village is stronger than at Ho Chung, with the two lines meeting and "embracing" in a satisfactory way. The lower stretch of the stream, inland from the coast, is a sensitive Fung Shui area, as are the trees along the bank of the stream there. As the Lok clan Genealogical record states so emphatically, the village has been concerned about its Fung Shui in the past, and is likely to be concerned about any damage to it.

At Sha Kok Mei, the pattern formed by the main Yang line and the Yin lines is much closer to a classic form than at either Pak Kong or Ho Chung, and is generally strong (see Map 4). The site of the village is, however, exposed to the front, and the stretch of stream in front of the village, near the present road, is of the greatest Fung Shui sensitivity, together with the land on the further side of the stream, between the stream and the sea. All the trees in this area are of Fung Shui significance to Sha Kok Mei.

As to negative (煞氣) directions, the most important is at Ho Chung. There is a major negative Fung Shui line running from the hillock behind the temple to the pass at Pak Kung Au (see Map 2). The temple is sited where it is explicitly to block this direction, and to protect the area from this dangerous line: it is for this reason that the villagers believe the temple was built very shortly after they settled in the village, in the mid-sixteenth century (see Plate 10, which is sited immediately down this negative direction from the Temple). The line-of-sight between the village and the temple is thus of Fung Shui sensitivity: trees along the banks of the stream between the village and the temple, obscuring the sight-line to the danger-zone are thus of sensitivity. The stretch of the stream immediately in front of the temple is of major Fung Shui sensitivity, together with the trees on both banks: the water here should be as deep, still, and full of fish as possible (here, too, fishing is forbidden by the villagers). The main Ho Chung village Earthgod stands next to the temple, again as a defence against this dangerous direction.

Ancestral Halls

There was a traditional belief in the New Territories Punti communities that stand-alone Ancestral Halls, or Ancestral Halls in prominent positions, were unsuitable for commoner families without gentry status. In fact, unlike in Hakka villages, Punti villages in the New Territories often have no Ancestral Halls, the village families either worshipping their ancestors within their own homes, or a few closely-related families (often defined as those with a common paternal great-grandfather) keeping

some small house for the families Ancestral Tablets, such a house being known as an Ancestral House, 祖屋, and being seen by the villagers as something sharply distinct from an Ancestral Hall).

No villager of these three villages ever achieved any significant official position, and the villages were, therefore, emphatically commoner villages, despite their long history. Not surprisingly, therefore, they have few Ancestral Halls, and those they have are almost all small, and rather anonymous, standing within the rows of village houses, and with little to single them out. Many of them are rather run-down. Quite a few have been rebuilt as houses and let out, the clan not finding any need for a purpose-built Ancestral Hall. Hardly any can be called a "Display Building". Many of them are arranged in what is more usually considered a Hakka style, with a simple altar, and on it a single Ancestral tablet, "to all the Ancestors of the X clan".

There are Ancestral Halls of this type in all three of the villages, Ho Chung, Pak Kong, and Sha Kok Mei. Ho Chung has only one, of the Chan (陳) clan, the other two villages have two or three each. Of them, the only one of any architectural pretensions is the Chan clan Hall at Ho Chung. This stands in the front row of the village, and is a three-bay building, of brick and tile. It has never, it would seem, been restored, and is today beginning to fall into some disrepair. It is fronted by a small Fung Shui courtyard, delimited by a low Fung Shui wall. The Chan clan is a late-comer to the village, and this Ancestral Hall is very much more substantial than any of the others. It was probably built about a century ago, perhaps a little more (see Plates 11-13: it can also be seen on Plate 1). None of the other Ancestral Halls are of any architectural or other pretension.

The Sai Kung Alliance of Six and other Inter-Village Groupings

There are a number of documents dating from about 1900 which mention an organisation called "The Sai Kung Alliance of Six (西貢六約)". Other New Territories organisations with similar names (for instance "The Lek Yuen Alliance of Nine, 瀝源九約" in Sha Tin, "The Ta Kwu Leng Alliance of Four", 打鼓嶺四約, or "The Sha Tau Kok Alliance of Ten, 沙頭角十約") were all district organisations, into which all the villages of a district fitted, the villages forming oath-sworn anti-bandit alliances among themselves, with the four, or nine, or ten, or however many, such oath-sworn areas joining together to form an over-arching organisation which was the indigenous district management and community grouping. In these other cases, the over-arching joint organisation owned the district community temple, and mounted rituals once or several times a year, involving all the elders of the member villages, and followed by a feast for the elders at which district problems were discussed and agreements reached for improvements. Usually, such a district would have a Ta Tsiu (打醮) ritual every ten years involving all the villages of the whole area. The villages of such a district regard themselves as "brothers", and the organisation was critical to the stability of the community. In most cases the organisation survives today, at least for ritual purposes, although their political and community roles have mostly been taken over by the Rural Committees.

It has always been a surprise that the Sai Kung Alliance of Six seems to have survived less well than any of these other organisations. The reason seems to be that it never covered more than a percentage of the villages (probably less than half), and

had no communal ritual life. In other words, it seems never to have properly got off the ground, and never managed to represent the whole of the indigenous Sai Kung community.

The Ho Chung and Sha Kok Mei elders say that they have no memory of the Sai Kung Alliance of Six at all. The Pak Kong elders, however, have "dim memories" of the organisation being mentioned in their youth, although they know nothing of it or how it worked.

The Ho Chung elders say that Ho Chung was the centre of an inter-village grouping, the Ho Chung Tung (蠔涌洞). It was this inter-village grouping which owned the Che Kung Temple at Ho Chung, not Ho Chung alone. This grouping, however, comprised only Ho Chung, Nam Pin Wai, Mok Tse Che, Tai Lam Wu (including its off-shoot of Ngau Liu), Man Wo (including its off-shoot, Chuk Yuen), Tai Po Tsai (on the Clearwater Bay peninsula), and (part of) Sheung Sze Wan (also on the Clearwater Bay peninsula). The elders were not sure whether part of Wo Mei (and its off-shoot, Heung Chung) did not also have the right to be members (since these villages long ago became Catholic, they no longer have any interest in the temple). Shek Pok Wai, which is treated as an off-shoot of Ho Chung, also has a share. The organisation is also called the Ho Chung Seven Villages (蠔涌七鄉). All these villages are Punti, and all have a genealogical relationship with Ho Chung, having been settled (in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century, or even in the late seventeenth in the case of Tai Po Tsai) by groups splitting off from the Ho Chung clans. This organisation, with its tight genealogical relationships, was very strong, and it survives to this day.

The Hakka villages of the area, such as Tin Liu, Kai Ham, Tai No, Tai No Sheung Yeung, Nam Wai, and Pak Wai, had no share in this inter-village grouping, and no share in the temple. While they were at liberty to worship there if they wished, the main annual rituals were conducted by the Seven Villages only, and the Hakka villages had no part to play nor ritual role. Similarly, the Ho Chung decennial Ta Tsiu was a matter only for the Seven Villages (including the two Clearwater Bay villages, well outside the valley), and the Hakka villages (even those inside the valley) had no share.

At the same time, the elders of Ho Chung consider that their relationships with the Hakka villages within the Ho Chung valley were generally amicable, although there was never any inter-marriage (mostly Ho Chung married within the village, or else with Pak Kong or Sha Kok Mei). The elders remember that, if bandits came, the Ho Chung people would beat a gong, and the young men of the Hakka villages of Tin Liu, Kai Ham, Tai No and Tai No Sheung Yeung would come down to support the young men of Ho Chung and the smaller Punti villages of the valley to fight them off. Ho Chung owned a cannon and some guns, and they were prepared to defend the river-side wall, although it cannot have been anything other than a rather feeble defence (it was only about five feet high). The cannon was mounted at the northern end of the village, facing towards the sea. However, Nam Wai and Pak Wai were outside this agreement to unite together against bandits, and the relationships between these villages and Ho Chung were often acrimonious. In fact, disputes with Nam Wai actually broke down into an inter-village war between Ho Chung and Nam Wai, at some date no longer remembered, and Ho Chung even fired its cannon into Nam Wai, causing a fire and some casualties. Given Ho Chung's attitude to its

brother Punti village at Pak Kong in the early nineteenth century rent-dispute, as discussed above, it is entirely likely that Ho Chung arrogated to itself landlord rights over at least some of these villages (indeed, this may well be the reason for the fighting with Nam Wai).

At Pak Kong, the temple was owned by Pak Kong alone, and worship there was normally only for villagers of Pak Kong. Pak Kong did not have any inter-village alliance centred on it: perhaps because it had few off-shoots. The Pak Kong Ta Tsiu (also decennial) was a matter for Pak Kong, Tai Hang Hau (on the Clearwater Bay peninsula), and part of Sheung Sze Wan alone. Tai Hang Hau and Sheung Sze Wan were settled in the eighteenth century by groups splitting off from Pak Kong (Leungs and Loks). Thus part of Sheung Sze Wan, the descendants of Ho Chung clans, attend the Ta Tsiu there, and the other part of Sheung Sze Wan, the descendants of Pak Kong clans, go there for the Ta Tsiu. The Ta Tsiu is thus, as at Ho Chung, the ritual of a group of genealogically connected villages, and not the ritual of a geographical area: the Hakka villages of the Pak Kong valley (Uk Cheung, Pak Kong Au, and Wu Lei Tau) have no share.

As at Ho Chung, the Pak Kong elders say that their relationships with the Hakka villages of the Pak Kong valley were generally good, although there was no inter-marriage (marriage was usually within the village, or with one of the other nearby Punti villages). As at Ho Chung, if bandits came a gong would be beaten, and the young men of the Hakka villages of Uk Cheung, Pak Kong Au and Wu Lei Tau would come to the support of Pak Kong. The villages along the sea-coast, however, (Pak Sha Wan, Ta Ho Tun, Tsiu Hang Hau and Che Keng Tuk) were outside this agreement, and would not support any such fighting.

At Sha Kok Mei, the elders say their relationship with the local Hakka villages (Lung Mei, Fu Tei Hau, Wo Tong Kong, Nam Shan, Fu Yung Pit, Keng Ping Ha, Kak Hang Tun, and Long Mei within the valley, and Shan Liu and Tai Wan to the east) was usually less than good. Sha Kok Mei was closely allied only with its off-shoots (Kap Pin Long and Ngau Liu). There used to be a Ta Tsiu at Sha Kok Mei, but it ceased to be held "eighty or ninety years ago", after a dispute within the village: when it was held, it was only Sha Kok Mei, Kap Pin Long, and Ngau Liu which had shares in it. As at Ho Chung and Pak Kong, marriage was usually within the village, or else with Ho Chung or Pak Kong: there was no inter-marriage with the Hakka villages. Sha Kok Mei had no temple (it worshipped at the Tin Hau Temple at Sai Kung Market), and had only a rather impoverished ritual life, but in no case were any of the village rituals shared with the Hakka villages.

The Sha Kok Mei elders do not remember what the arrangements were if bandits came ("no bandits have come for over a century, so how would we remember?"). Presumably Kap Pin Long and Ngau Liu, the Sha Kok Mei off-shoots, would have come to support Sha Kok Mei, but, if any of the Hakka villages had agreements to come to the aid of Sha Kok Mei, they were doubtless few.

However the six inter-village alliances of Sai Kung were arranged it would seem likely that Ho Chung, Pak Kong, and Sha Kok Mei would have formed the centre of one each (another was the Pak Tam Chung Yeuk, 白潭涌約, which is mentioned on

the inscription at the Higher Earthgod Shrine at Pak Tam Chung, which would have been this entirely Hakka area's main ritual focus, and another was probably the Shap Sze Heung, 十四鄉, across the mountains to the north of Sha Kok Mei, which the elders say was always part of Sai Kung). If so, the lack of ritual focus for the alliance areas, the ritual restriction of the main ritual focus in each area to the Punti villages, and the fact that many substantial Hakka villages do not seem to have been in any oath-sworn alliance with their neighbours would certainly have fatally weakened the system. The lack of any ritual focus for the area as a whole (the Sai Kung Tin Hau Temple was not owned by the villagers of the whole area, but by the merchants in the town), and the absence of any Alliance of Six Ta Tsiu would also have been serious weaknesses.

It may well be that Pak Kong's refusal to join with Ho Chung in opposing their landlords, the Wong clan, in the early nineteenth century was the reason why the Alliance of Six never really got off the ground. In many of the other areas of the New Territories the cognate organisations arose from alliances originally formed to fight landlords and to free the area of rent and other signs of subordination. The fact that such a united-front was not put together then may have doomed the Alliance of Six from the beginning.

Roads and Footpaths

From a very early date there has been an important footpath passing through this area, carrying the traffic from Kowloon City to Sai Kung and on to Shap Sze Heung and North Sai Kung. In the area between the present-day road bridge over the Ho Chung River and Sai Kung Market, the present road runs close to the line of this footpath, but the footpath does not lie along, or even close to, the present-day road in the Ho Chung and Sha Kok Mei areas.

The footpath left Kowloon City, and climbed up along the slope of Kowloon Peak to the pass at Cha Liu Au (茶寮凹), along a line mostly quite close to the present road-line. From Cha Liu Au, however, the old footpath diverged sharply from the present road-line, taking the direct line from the pass down to Ho Chung, through Pak Kung Au, and dropping steeply down the hill-slope. The present road-line takes a longer, but less steep, line.

The footpath crossed the river by the bridge which still stands at the western end of Ho Chung village (see Plate 14). This was, until recent decades, a stone bridge on stone revetments, but it was later replaced by a concrete structure, although some of the stone revetments seem to survive.

Two other footpaths of significance joined this footpath to cross the river on this bridge: the footpath from Sai Kung to Tai Po Tsai and the Clearwater Bay peninsula area, and a footpath linking the Ho Chung and Clearwater Bay areas with Sha Tin (see Map 2).

This footpath from Sai Kung to Kowloon City was, until the present road was built during and immediately after the last War, a very busy one. Much of the firewood sold in the Kowloon City Market was carried there by Sai Kung villagers, along this path. Furthermore, much of the fresh fish sold at Kowloon City Market was carried there by porters from Sai Kung, who would leave Sai Kung before dawn, carrying

the heavy baskets of fish, with the aim of getting to Kowloon City shortly after day-break, to be ready for the morning marketing. In addition, Sai Kung was where most of the lime used in Kowloon was made (it was a vital component of the plaster which was used in every building), and where most of the alcohol sold there was made as well. All the lime and spirits had to be carried along this footpath by porters. It is likely that, at peak periods, there would have been, in the 1930s and before, an almost non-stop flow of people walking to market, and porters carrying goods there, along this path. Cha Liu Au means "Tea-house Pass": there was a hut at the summit of the pass where tea was sold to the porters and travellers on the road, when they needed to stop for a rest after the hard climb up the hill - the hut would have had good business, given the numbers of people using the road. The present-day bridge at Ho Chung is a non-descript and unexciting structure, but it is a place of significant historical interest nonetheless, as marking this ancient route-way.

Pak Kong was always a little off the major routes, which, in this area, ran close to the present road.

In the Sha Kok Mei area, as in the Ho Chung area, the old main footpath ran along a line different from today's road. The old footpath took a direct line from Sai Kung Market to Sha Kok Mei (see Map 4), crossing the southern branch of the river by the bridge in front of Kap Pin Long village. The footpath then ran along the front of Sha Kok Mei village, and crossed the other branch of the river by the bridge north of Sha Kok Mei village, and then went by way of Lung Mei village, and so steeply up the hillslope to join the present line of Sai Sha Road near the summit of the pass, close to O Tau village. As in the Ho Chung area, the present road takes a longer, but less steep route. The present-day road north of Sha Kok Mei was, before the present road was built in the 1960s, just a local footpath carrying the traffic between Sai Kung Market and Pak Tam Chung and the North Sai Kung villages. The footpath from Sai Kung Market through Sha Kok Mei to Shap Sze Heung was never as busy as the footpath through Ho Chung to Kowloon, but it was a major route-way nonetheless, and carried at least a reasonable amount of traffic.

Patrick H. Hase
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10.2.2.2 The Built-Heritage and Historical Heritage of the area

The notes included below identify the historical heritage of the area. They are divided into two parts: (a) the built-heritage and historical heritage of the area, and (b) the Historical Landscape of the area (that is, the amenity and Fung Shui of the villages).

A: Fet Kong Temple

The Fet Kong Temple (in more usual transliteration, the Fat Kwong Nunnery; see Map 5), is not an old institution. A Buddhist monk (believed to have come to Hong Kong as a refugee from the "Anti-Superstition" campaign waged in Canton in the late 1920s and 1930s) bought this land from the Government in the 1930s. He built a small hut on it, and lived there as a hermit. After the War, once access to the City from the site along the new Hiram's Highway was feasible, this hermitage was rebuilt into a small villa, where the monk taught his disciples. This was completed in 1951 (photographs of this villa exist in the nunnery today). In 1975, the whole complex was demolished down to the ground, and the present structures built. The nunnery has little contact with the local villagers: worshippers are city-people. Thus the nunnery has only a relatively short history, and the present buildings are only 28 years old.

The nunnery is built high up on top of a bluff above the Pak Kong River (the terrace stands seventy feet, that is, 22.9 metres, above the river). The nunnery is built on the summit of the bluff, which has been levelled. The Buddha Hall is a well-built concrete two-storey structure, with the main Hall on the upper floor, and a subsidiary Hall (doubling as the nunnery office) is on the lower floor. The Buddha Hall faces towards the river. The Hall opens onto a broad terrace, which at the forward end is carried on a series of concrete piles over the slope. This terrace is at least fifty feet wide. The existing Hall was built in 1975 (the date is given in at least half-a-dozen inscriptions). Behind it are the residential quarters of the nunnery, built in 1975 as well, completely unadorned and undistinguished, made of concrete. There are four ordained nuns in residence, and some lay women.

Plate 15, (The Buddha Hall from the Terrace), 16, (the view over the river to the sea from the Terrace), 17, (the view up to the Buddha Hall from the road)

Condition: Extremely good

Built-Heritage Value (Cultural): Moderate

Built-Heritage Value (Historical): Low

B: The Che Kung Temple Area, Ho Chung

A. The Che Kung Temple (Grade II)

This temple (see Maps 2, 6A and 6C) is believed to have been founded about 1555, but the present structure is Ching, and probably basically of 1874 (restored 1905, 1934, 2000). The temple stands half a mile from the village, blocking a particularly dangerous Fung Shui direction (Plate 10). The temple is built in three bays, each originally with a light-well (those in the side bays are now roofed over). It is entirely built of blue-brick, on solid and well laid ashlar stone footings (at least on the front face: the quality of the stone footings along the side faces cannot be seen: Plates 2, 4). The building is plastered throughout, except in the inset main entrance bay (Plates 2, 4). There are side doors in each of the two side-walls (plates 2, 4), but it is not clear if these are an original feature (they have a small concrete protective rain-shield above them, which was clearly added at a recent restoration).

The roof is of tile, originally on timber beams, but now carried on concrete beams (which are beginning to fail). The roof is carried on a moulded plaster corbel. The gable-ends are decorated: the outer gables are carried on "swallow-wing" gables, with moulded plaster decorations (Plate 4), and the gable at the original light-wells is of the "Wok Yee" type (Plates 2, 4).

The main entrance is deeply inset (Plate 5). It is reached by two shallow stone steps. The door-frame is of very high quality carved granite (1874), including the lintel, with the inscription 車公古廟, and the jambs, with a laudatory couplet, set in a decorated carved granite frame (Plate 5). Above the doorway is a panel with Shek Wan figurines. Above is a double set of carved eaves-boards. There are eaves paintings (re-painted in 2000) on the return walls of the entrance front (Plate 5). The roof-line above the entrance is decorated with moulded plaster decorations and ceramic fishes (Plates 4 and 5)

The side-walls originally had stucco decorations below the roof, but very little survives (Plate 4).

The outer bays of the front face have bands of stucco work under the roofs, and bands of stucco also around the ground-floor windows which light the Temple-Keeper's quarters (Plate 18).

The temple fronts a courtyard, which is edged by a low Fung Shui wall (see below, Plate 34), originally of stone, now mostly of cement, but with stone surviving here and there (especially on either side of the main entrance to the courtyard area: Plate 6). This is designed to defend the temple and the Earthgod Shrine from the dangerous Fung Shui line they face, and to ensure that anyone visiting the temple must enter the temple precinct from the safe side directions, and not from the line directly in front of the temple entrance, which would otherwise bring people in directly along the most dangerous Fung Shui line. The integrity of the Courtyard, and its Fung Shui Wall, is thus of considerable significance to the Fung Shui of the temple and its role in the Fung Shui defences of the area at large. This is particularly so for that part of the Courtyard and Fung Shui Wall immediately in front of the temple, i.e. close to the negative Fung Shui line. The area between the Fung Shui Wall and the river (i.e. the land occupied by the road) is also sensitive: in particular, any structure within this area which would be higher than the

Fung Shui Wall would be a problem for the Fung Shui. The junction of the main Fung Shui line and the river and adjacent stream-courses is also sensitive: any change to the stream-courses or river-course in this area would require careful handling, particularly any change which brought sensitive Fung Shui lines closer to the negative Fung Shui line.

Within the courtyard, a recent metal frame structure protects an exterior worshipping table, used because the numbers of worshippers visiting this temple is, on occasion, more than the temple building itself can hold. To one side is a recent brick oven for the burning of paper offerings. On the eastern side of the temple another metal frame structure is used as a protective shelter for chairs and other furniture used by the temple.

The amenity of the temple is to a very large degree dependent on the trees along the river bank, which are, of course, also of Fung Shui significance.

Plate 2 (North side-wall), 3 (Front Face), 4 (South side-wall), 5 (Entrance), 6 (Fung Shui Wall and Courtyard), 18, (Stucco-work on outer Front Face), 34 (Fung Shui Wall).

Condition: Generally Excellent

Built-Heritage Value: Very High

B. The Ho Chung Second Earthgod Shrine

This Earthgod Shrine is placed immediately to the south of the Che Kung Temple (see Map 6C), in the shade of a very large Fung Shui tree: it faces into the negative Fung Shui direction, the same as the temple, and this is why the Shrine was built here, so far from the village: as with the temple, it is protected by the Fung Shui Wall of the temple. The Shrine was extensively renovated in 2000, and little of the older Shrine can be seen. The Shrine is a brick structure, heavily plastered, and painted in red and black. The shelf with the stone which represents the deity is roofed over: the roof is now of concrete, with tiles fixed on the outside. The Shrine is built at the summit of a small rise which lies south of the temple.

The amenity of the shrine is to a large extent dependent on the very fine tree under which it stands, and the trees facing it along the river-bank. These latter are also, of course, of Fung Shui significance.

Plate 19

Condition: Excellent

Built-Heritage Value: Moderate

C: Ho Chung Village: Built Heritage

Please see Maps 6A and 6B for identification of structures noted.

In 1960 (see Plate 1), Ho Chung was a village of entirely traditional architecture. From the few fragments remaining, much of this was of a high quality. However, over the last twenty years, almost every building in the village has been destroyed and replaced by new, three-storey, "Spanish Villa" type houses, of little if any architectural or built-heritage value. Of the nearly 300 buildings in the village, only twelve survive built in traditional styles and materials (no more than 3.5%). Furthermore, of these twelve, only three are still in use (two houses and the Chan clan Ancestral Hall) and in reasonable or good condition: the other nine are either deteriorating or ruinous. Of non-house structures, the only significant one, the Ming riverside bund, was destroyed in 1971, and replaced by a crude concrete wall.

Building A

Shed. Field-stones set in mud mortar. Originally plastered (a few traces of plaster remaining). No windows or decorations. Roof replaced by a sheet of corrugated iron.

Plate 20.

Condition: Almost ruinous

Built-Heritage Value: Very low

Building B

House, 9th Lane. This must have been a fine house when first built. A three-bay, two storey structure, with the entrance inset to provide an eaves-overhang. Threshold-stones in front of entrance (Plate 21). Door with timber framing. Built throughout of blue-brick, plastered on all sides. No sign of stone footings. Roof: tiles, on timber beams and rafters. Roof supported on corbel of blue-brick, on all sides. No windows to upper floor on front face (air-vents in two side bays), but windows (with part blue-brick and part stone framing) on side walls (Plate 22), with blue-brick corbelling above to provide protection from rain. Stone air-vents for ground-floor rooms on side-walls (Plate 23). No decorative features. At some date the westernmost bay was separated off as a separate house, and given its own entrance. No longer in use.

Plate 21 (Front Face), 22 (Window), 23 (Air-Vent)

Condition: Deteriorating

Built-heritage Value: Moderate

Building C

House: Nos 20-21 8th Lane. A fine and solidly-built house. This two-storey house faces into a small walled courtyard (Plate 24). It consists of a three-bay rectangular block, with a smaller annex on the western side, forming an "L" shaped whole. The main block has a central door, with a window on each side, and two windows above on the upper floor. Windows on both floors on the side wall as well. The annex has a separate door, and windows on both floors. The whole front of the house is carried forward in a deep eaves overhang: the pillars carrying this, and the beam carrying the

eaves are of concrete, suggesting that this house is not of any great age. Built otherwise entirely of high-quality blue-brick, plastered on the side walls (the annex is plastered on the front face as well). Substantial and well-laid ashlar stone footings. Threshold-stones before entrance. Door-frame and window-frames all of high-quality stonework (Plate 25). Roof: tiles on timber beams. No decorative features. The annex has been separated off as a separate residence. Signs of recent care (new window-frames). Still used as a house.

Plate 24 (Front Face and Courtyard Wall), 25 (Entrance)
Condition: Good
Built-Heritage Value: Significant

Building D

House: No. 22 8th Lane. Adjacent to Building C. Two-storey house, built of blue-brick (no sign of stone footings), plastered throughout. Entrance front carried forward to provide an eaves-overhang. The pillars carrying this, and the eaves-beam, are of concrete, suggesting this house is not of any great age (it may have been built at the same time as the adjacent house, C). Threshold stones. Roof: tiles on timber beams. Door on ground floor, and single window above. Window recently added in side-wall for upper floor. Faded arabesque patterning in painted band below eaves on side-wall. Much smaller than adjacent building C (about one-third the size). Signs of recent care (new window-frames). Still used as a house.

Plate 26.
Condition: Good
Built-Heritage Value: Moderate

Buildings E & F

Pair of Houses: Nos 37-38 1st Lane. Single-storey houses, built throughout of blue-brick on ashlar stone footings (Plate 27). No plaster. Entrances stone-framed (also stone framing to protect corner of building) (Plate 28). Threshold-stones in front of entrance. Built with small courtyards in front of main residence at back. This pair of houses is probably older than any other houses surviving in Ho Chung. When built they must have been of a very high quality. These are the only surviving traditional houses in Ho Chung with significant decorative features (eaves paintings over entrances, now very worn, and blue-brick corbelling). Roofs: tiles on timber beams. Original doors survive. No windows (courtyard acted as a light-well). Originally part of a longer terrace, the eastern end of which has been rebuilt in recent decades.

Plate 27 (Front Face), 28 (Entrance)
Condition: Deteriorating
Built-Heritage Value: Significant. These buildings could be restored, and would form an excellent venue for a small village Museum, if the villagers were interested in such a thing.

Buildings G & H

Houses: Ruinous. This pair of poor-quality houses is now ruinous. Built of field-stones set in mud mortar and heavily plastered (the plaster now damaged in many places),

with the front face with blue-brick door-frames and two window-frames (one on the front-face of one house, the other on the side face of the other house) also of blue-brick. No decorative features. Roof: tile on timber beams (beginning to collapse inwards). Access difficult.

Plate 29 (Side and Back), 30 (Front)
Condition: Ruinous
Built-Heritage Value: Low

Buildings I-K

Row of three sheds. This row of small sheds is now ruinous. Built of field-stones set in mud mortar and plastered (plaster lacking in places). Roof: tile on timber beams (collapsed in places). No decorative features. Air-vent on one side-wall.

Plate 31.
Condition: Ruinous
Built-Heritage Value: Very Low

Building L

Chan Clan Ancestral Hall. This is a very fine building, the only surviving building in Ho Chung village proper which can be called a Display Building. It is built throughout of high-quality blue-brick, on the highest quality ashlar stone footings. The only plaster is a rubbing-band along the lower part of the side wall, which fronts the main access-path into the village, where the building would be liable to damage from passers-by. The Ancestral Hall faces into a small courtyard, which is edged by a low Fung Shui wall of field-stones (Plate 11). The hall consists of three bays, with the entrance bay inset to allow an eaves-overhang. Internally, it is arranged around a light-well in the central bay. Original windows survive in the front face of the two side bays, and in the upper-floor in the side-bays (Plate 12). The building is basically single-storey, but has cocklofts in the side-bays. Entrance door-frame is of stone, and the window-frames are also of stone. The original door survives (a triple door, comprising the main door, a folding outer half-door, and a sliding wooden door inset into the walls when not in use: all painted red). There are bands of stucco-work under the roof on outer bays of front-face, and along the outer part of the side-faces. The rear part of the side-faces has a painted arabesque decoration in a band under the roof. The roof has a moulded plaster corbel of no great decorative value. The entrance has good quality eaves paintings (now worn and faded) and a carved decorative eaves-board in need of restoration (Plate 13). There is no inscription above the entrance or on the door-frame. The roof has small and somewhat nondescript plaster decorations on the main ridge and the ridge over the entrance. The condition and detail of the interior could not be seen.

The amenity of this Ancestral Hall is dependent on its front-row view of the river and the river-bank trees.

Plate 11 (Front Face), 12, (Front and Side Face), 13, (Entrance)
Condition: Reasonable, but in need of restoration
Built-Heritage Value: High. This building should be preserved and restored properly.

Building M

Village Bridge. This is a recent, concrete, structure, of little cultural heritage value, but the bridge-crossing here is of great historical heritage significance to the history of the area (Plate 14). The present bridge replaced an ancient stone bridge on the same alignment. The lower part of the revetments of this ancient stone bridge can still be seen (Plate 14). They are built up of large stones, roughly shaped. Some other stones, almost certainly from the old bridge revetments, can be seen in the water, on the river-bed.

Plate 14

Condition: Good

Cultural Heritage Value: Marginal

Historical Heritage Value: High

10.2.2.3 Amenity and Fung Shui

The villages of the area are all set at the centre of Fung Shui systems of some significance and complexity. In each case, the river-course is vital to the Fung Shui system, since the main Yin force-line flows along it. Equally, the river-courses, with the Fung Shui trees along their banks, are extremely important to the amenity of the area.

Ho Chung

As discussed above, the river running across the front of Ho Chung village is of critical Fung Shui significance to the village. The main Yin force-line of the area flows along the river (shown on Map 2 and detailed at Map 6A). The left-hand side subsidiary Yin lines are two: one runs immediately to the east of the village (it is also shown on Map 2 and detailed at Map 6A), and marks the eastern edge of the village: no houses should be built east of that line. The second runs immediately west of the Che Kung Temple (also shown on Map 2 and detailed at Map 6A): it marks the eastern edge of the village Fung Shui system. It has been interfered with in the past, when the building of the large factory next to it caused it to be straightened and thus weakened. The Yang force-lines of the village (again shown on Map 2 and detailed at Map 6A) run through the village and cross the river almost at a right-angle, immediately in front of the village. This is a rather harsh relationship, and any reduction in the water-flow of the river, or the depth of the water, would weaken the Yin forces seriously. In order to strengthen the Yin forces in this section of the river it is important that the river form still pools, which should be deep. A series of bunds across the river immediately in front of the village currently assist in ensuring that such pools exist. In order to strengthen the Fung Shui effect of the river it is important that the river be full of life: there are many fish in this section of the river, and catching them is forbidden, as a large notice painted on the bank of the river opposite the village states very clearly (Plates 32-33). Similarly designed to strengthen the Fung Shui effect of the river are trees along the lip of the river-bank: these are designed to broaden and deepen the Fung Shui strength of this important Yin line. There are two important Shat Hei force lines (both are shown on Map 2 and detailed at Map 6A and 6C). One runs from the hill behind the Che Kung Temple to the main summit of Kowloon Peak: it is the latter peak which causes the problem. It looks like a "Tiger Turning its Head" and looking balefully back into Ho Chung, and is a cause of serious risk to anything standing in the direct line-of-sight of the "Tiger". The Che Kung Temple stands where it does, facing squarely into this dangerous Fung Shui line to protect the district against this baleful influence: the second Earthgod Shrine of the village stands next to the temple to support the temple in this Fung Shui protection. Che Kung has a reputation for his ability to deflect dangerous Fung Shui influences. The temple and its adjacent Earthgod Shrine are protected by a Fung Shui Wall designed to force visitors not to enter the temple area along the most dangerous Fung Shui line (Plate 34). The second negative Fung Shui direction bisects the area between the two left-hand side Yin Fung Shui lines. It runs from a prominent peak behind, to a very prominent pyramidal peak on the opposite side of the valley. This pyramidal peak is a "Fire Peak", and a definite source of risk to anything within its direct line. The Higher Earthgod Shrine of the village stands squarely across this line, and is of vital Fung Shui significance in the Fung Shui defence of the village (see below for a description of this Shrine). All these factors make the stretch of the river between the Ho Chung village bridge and the bridge carrying the Sai Kung Road over the river, seaward of the Che Kung Temple, of the greatest Fung Shui sensitivity. The Che Kung Temple, the Earthgod Shrines, the trees along the lip of the river-bank, the pools in, and the bunds across the river, the fish

swimming in it, the left-hand bank streams (and particularly the outfall-points where they reach the main river), are all Fung Shui significant. It is not just the stretch of river immediately in front of the village which is important, but equally the stretch in front of the Higher Earthgod Shrine, and the stretch in front of the temple.

The Higher Earthgod Shrine

This Shrine (see Maps 6A and 6C) is built of brick (now entirely covered with a concrete facing), set within a walled in area (the surrounding wall is also now concreted over) (Plate 35). The Shrine is set squarely across a dangerous Shat Hei Fung Shui direction. The altar consists of a brick oblong, concreted over. On it an old stone incense-holder, with the inscription 大王爺 (Plate 36), stands in front of the pointed stone which is the focus of worship. The altar, and the wall around it, is picked out in red paint. To one side a tall burner for paper offerings stands. It is impossible to see what this is made of: it is heavily plastered over and painted red (Plate 37). The shrine is heavily worshipped by the villagers.

The whole area of the Shrine (that is, the whole area within the surrounding wall of the Shrine) is of Fung Shui significance, and part of the Fung Shui defences of the whole area. The area between the Shrine and the river (occupied by the road) is also of Fung Shui significance, and requires to be kept clear of structures.

Plate 35 (The Shrine), 36, (The Incense-Holder on the Altar), 37, (The Burner for Paper Offerings)

Condition: Good

Built-Heritage Value: Moderate

Pak Kong

The Fung Shui system for Pak Kong is sketched at Map 3. The trees on the western side of the Pak Kong River near Hiram's Highway are important to the amenity value of this area as seen from Hiram's Highway. Many of them were planted by the nunnery in the years after 1951.

Sha Kok Mei

Sha Kok Mei is built very close to the sea, and is open along its front to the potentially dangerous effects of the open sea (although Kau Sai and Leung Shuen Wan Islands block off the view to the ocean, and moderate this danger). The main Yang Fung Shui force-line of the village is anchored on the peak of Leung Shuen Wan, which assists with the moderation of this danger. Nonetheless, the village is still open on this front, and much of the village's Fung Shui system is designed to protect it from the effects of this direction. As shown on Map 4, the prime defence is the line of the river as it loops backwards and forwards across the front of the village. The meandering bends of the river are important to its Fung Shui role, as they strengthen the Yin forces here, which are the main component of these defences. The trees along the river strengthen and deepen this Yin defence line, as do the other trees between the river and the sea, especially those near the road. It is critical to the Fung Shui defences of the area that the Yin forces run from north-east to south-west across the front of the village, both the river and its adjacent tree-bands.

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