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A Study of Kau Wah Keng Old Village & Surrounding Areas

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1. Foreword

Kau Wah Keng formerly known as “Dog Climbing Path” (狗爬徑) is located southeast of Kwai Chung. The original name arose because the mountain roads were steep and villagers had to scramble up steep hillsides to get to the surrounding areas. The name was later changed to Kau Wah Keng or “Ninth Shining Path” (九華徑) as villagers thought the name was vulgar and also likened the villagers to dogs.

The Kau Wah Keng area includes Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kau Wah Keng New Village, Cheung Hang Village, Lai Chi Kok Bay Garden, Wah Fung Garden, Wah Lai Estate, and Lai Yan Court. According to the administrative division of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Kau Wah Keng belongs to Kwai Tsing District, and geographical location is bordered by Sham Shui Po District. The daily life of the villagers is closely connected to Sham Shui Po district. Based on Hong Kong District Council divisions, Kau Wah Keng Old Village extends north to Castle Peak Road (Kwai Chung Section) and south to Lai King Hill Road, Chung Shan Terrace to the east and Kau Wah Keng New Village to the west (see Map 1 in Appendices). Kau Wah Keng New Village extends north to Castle Peak Road (Kwai Chung Section), is connected to Kau Wah Keng Old Village in the east, Lai King Hill Road in the south, and slopes to the west (see Map 2 in Appendices).



Plate 1: Kau Wah Keng in the 1940s. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

Kau Wah Keng Old Village are the original residents of the New Territories of all the villages and estates within the Kau Wah Keng area. The “List of Villages in the Kwai Tsing Area” in the *List of Established Villages in the New Territories* (Ref:-BLD 19/4073/89) jointly prepared in 1991 by the Heung Yee Kuk and the Planning and Lands Branch, Hong Kong Government (規劃環境地政科), Kau Wah Keng Old Village is listed as an original village in Kwai Tsing in the New Territories.¹

Kau Wah Keng New Village was built in the 1950s by the Hong Kong Government to house refugees stranded in Hong Kong. As Cheung Hang Village is located at the south-eastern end of Castle Peak Road (Kwai Chung section) adjacent to Shek Lei Pui Reservoir and is a part of Shek Lei Pui, the Shek Lei Pui District Residents Welfare Association is located in the village. The abandoned Cheung Hang Public School has

¹ Heung Yee Kuk (NT), Government Secretariat, Planning and Lands Bureau *List of Established Villages in the New Territories* 《新界原有鄉村名冊》 <http://www.hyknt.org/img/data/009c1.pdf> [accessed: 20 November 2018].

an inscription by Lo Hsiang-lin. Wah Lai Estate is a public housing estate under the Hong Kong Housing Authority and Lai Yan Court is the A23rd home ownership estate put up for sale. Lai Yan Court and Wah Lai Estate are located on what was once known as the famous Lai Chi Kok Amusement Park (Lai Yuen) owned by businessman Deacon Chiu Te-ken (1924-2015). Lai Chi Kok Bay Garden and Wah Fung Garden are private properties.

2. Changes in the Vicinity of Kau Wah Keng Old Village

2.1 Lai Chi Kok

The south-eastern headland in front of Kau Wah Keng Old Village is called Lai Chi Kok. It was originally land that protruded between the two bays. To the west of Lai Chi Kok is Lai Chi Kok Bay and to the east is Cheung Sha Wan. According to the map drawn by the British Army from 1905 to 1909, the location of Kau Wah Keng, its surroundings, and geography are clearly marked.²

There are many versions about how the name “Lai Chi Kok” came about. One version is that it sounds like “scorpion feet” in the Hakka dialect and the character “𪔐” that in Cantonese reads as “lai” (拉), hence the name. The second version is that it was said that it was named after a lychee garden that was once there. Lai Chi Kok Bay, to the west of Lai Chi Kok, is Hong Kong’s former sea bay, and is south of Kau Wah Keng Old Village. Lai Chi Kok Bay was remote and deserted. In the 1920s, the Government wanted to develop the New Kowloon by building a new urban area dominated by industry and commerce in Cheung Sha Wan. The development included the relocation

² *Mapping Hong Kong: A Historical Atlas* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1992), pp.140-141.

of the Mobil Oil Company to Lai Chi Kok and the construction of an oil depot on the newly reclaimed land.

Construction of the oil depot meant that transportation facilities in the area were improved. Apart from this, the population in the surrounding areas increased and subsequently the demand for leisure activities also increased. Swimming sheds and small boat piers were set up at Lai Chi Kok Bay for swimming or boating. There was a Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association swimming shed, a Youth Association Swimming Shed and Eastern Winter Swimming Association in Lai Chi Kok Bay. The structure of the early swimming sheds were very simple, being mainly built with bamboo and wood.³

The Mobil Oil Company's oil depot was heavily bombed by the Allies during the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong. Kwong Chi-man in *Road to Liberation: Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong*, mentions that on 2 September 1943, ten Allied B-25 bombers raided the ships anchored by Stonecutters Island, Cosmopolitan Dock, and the original Mobil Oil Company's oil depot at Lai Chi Kok. The air strikes completely destroyed the oil depot, and the Japanese Forces suffered heavy losses.⁴ During the Allied air raids, bombs landed on the slopes of Kau Wah Keng. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

³ Kwok Chi-Piu, *80 Years of Local Travel in Hong Kong* (香港本土旅行八十載) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2013), p. 37.

⁴ Kwong Chi-Man, *Road to Liberation: Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong* (重光之路：日據香港與太平洋戰爭), (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 2015), pp. 284-28.



Plate 2: Allied air strikes Mobil Oil Company's oil depot. (Source: Mr. Ko Tim Keung)

Lai Chi Kok continued reclamation work between 1956 and 1957 and the swimming sheds had to be relocated to the adjacent harbour. The swimming clubs moved to the side of the Lai Chi Kok Bridge and continued to serve their members and the public. By the early 1960s, swimming clubs were no longer in their heyday. The Hong Kong Chinese Civil Servants' Association Swimming Shed closed in 1961 and by the 1970s, only the Eastern Winter Swimming Association continued to operate. In 1974, the Hong Kong Government completed a reclamation project in Lai Chi Kok Bay to use in the construction of Lai Chi Kok Park, the whole project taking five years to complete. The Eastern Winter Swimming Association also had to move away from the area, thus bringing the history of the swimming sheds in Lai Chi Kok Bay to a close.⁵

⁵ Eastern Winter Swimming Association, "Historical Background" (歷史背景), <http://www.ewsa.org.hk/plus/about/> [accessed 13 November 2018].

The businessman Deacon Chiu Te-ken built and operated Lai Chi Kok Amusement Park (Lai Yuen) in the vacant land behind the swimming sheds. In the beginning, the Amusement Park just had swimming pool, mechanical games, a theatre, and a zoo. In the late 1970s, Chiu built a sightseeing facility beside the amusement park which combined tourism and ancient Chinese culture: “Song Dynasty Village” (宋城). Song Dynasty Village’s performances included juggling, stunt performances, and old-style weddings. Song Dynasty Village was mainly to cater for large-scale tour groups. All the activities in the park had to match the arrival time of these tour groups. Song Dynasty Village closed and was dismantled in 1997 for commercial reasons.

The original Lai Chi Kok Bridge, which was built across Lai Chi Kok Bay was completed in 1968 and was the first cross-sea bridge in Hong Kong. James Hayes (1930-) in *Tsuen Wan: Growth of a “New Town” and Its People* and *District Commissioner, New Territories 1949-50 Annual Departmental Report* points out that in the early days after the restoration of Hong Kong after the war, Tsuen Wan was already the centre of the textile industry in Hong Kong. The factories included yarn mills and dyeing factories and hired a large number of Shanghainese and local workers. In 1961, the Hong Kong Government gazetted and announced the development of Tsuen Wan as the first satellite city in the New Territories. In order to connect the urban Kowloon and the newly developed Kwai Chung and Tsuen Wan, the administration built the Lai Chi Kok Bridge to connect the two places.

In line with the development of the logistics industry in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Government decided in the early 1980s to expand its container terminal at Kwai Tsing to accommodate larger container vessels. The entire extension project included the reclamation of the inner bay at Lai Chi Kok Bay, which is the third phase of Lai Chi

Kok Park today: “Lingnan Gardens”. Lingnan Gardens is a Chinese-garden-style park that was officially opened to the public at the end of 2000. The total area of the park is 12,500 square metres and the water feature area is about 2,600 square metres, accounting for about 20 percent of the entire area of Lai Chi Kok Park.⁶

2.2 Mei Foo Sun Chuen

Mei Foo Sun Chuen, completed in 1968, was the first large housing estate in Hong Kong converted from the oil depot. The ground-breaking ceremony on November 17, 1966 was officiated by Sir David Clive Crosbie Trench (1915-1988), the Governor of Hong Kong. From 1968 to 1978, in eight phases of development Mei Foo Sun Chuen had built over 13,000 flats in 99 blocks. It holds the record of the largest number of residential flats in Hong Kong.

The design of Mei Foo Sun Chuen was very different from the development mode of the single residential building or the *Tong Lau* (tenement buildings) of that time. In addition to the flats themselves, Mei Foo Sun Chuen had community facilities such as shopping malls, cinemas, markets, car parks, and recreational spaces, making it a small community in itself. In addition, the residential units went from being one room to four rooms, which was suitable with the living and family arrangements of the middle class at the time. Mei Foo Sun Chuen was the first private housing estate in Kowloon in the form of a small town. Apart from being self-sufficient in their basic living, estate residents were provided with modern property management such as security and cleaning.

⁶ Leisure and Cultural Services Bureau, “Lai Chi Kok Park (荔枝角公園)”, <https://www.lcsd.gov.hk/tc/parks/lckp/specialties.html> [accessed 23 October 2018].

The completion of the first phase of Mei Foo Sun Chun coincided with the 1967 riots in Hong Kong. When society had calmed down and returned to normalcy, the completion of large-scale residential projects created a stable effect. Mei Foo Sun Chuen also witnessed the development of the district and also extended urbanization to the west of the Kowloon Peninsula. Before the completion of Mei Foo Sun Chuen, there were only scattered villages to the west of Cheung Sha Wan. The Cheung Sha Wan area was a mixed-use area, with industrial, commercial, and residential areas. In the vicinity of the Sham Shui Po, the reclaimed land became the Sham Shui Po Army Camp, and public housing such as Li Cheng Uk Estate and Su Uk Estate developed from the original villages in the district. After the completion of Mei Foo Sun Chuen, over 10,000 people moved into the area, which changed the demographics of the area. It was the first “gentrification” in the district. “Gentrification” involves the reconstruction of urban space, which can be simply interpreted as the transformation of a declining community into a middle-class residential area.



Plate 3: Mei Foo Sun Chuen and Manhattan Hill. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

Since its completion, the Mei Foo Sun Chuen has been one of the indicators for observing the rise and fall of property prices in Hong Kong because there are no other medium-sized housing estates in Kowloon. The residents of Mei Foo Sun Chuen are mainly middle-class families. Their living index is sufficient to reflect the overall situation of Hong Kong. With the development of Hong Kong's urban areas, a number of housing estates have been built in the vicinity of Mei Foo Sun Chuen, including "Nob Hill" completed in 2002 and "Manhattan Hill" which was completed in 2007 and is adjacent to Mei Foo Sun Chuen Phase 8. With the completion of Manhattan Hill and these two high-end complexes, the area has once again undergone gentrification.

Although Mei Foo Sun Chuen was considered a middle class area after it was completed, its basic facilities failed to keep up with the times and soon became outdated. The completion of Manhattan Hill enhanced the capital value of the area and has therefore changed the daily life of original residents of the area. Chan Kun-cheung, a former lecturer at the Community College at Lingnan University, has lived in Mei Foo Sun Chuen for more than 20 years and in different phases of the development. He minutely reveals the middle-class cultural characteristics of Mei Foo Sun Chuen residents as regards to everyday life:

At the micro-level the general cultural level of Mei Foo residents was quite good and they had certain living standards and it was able to accommodate different cultures, races, and did not ostracize people who were different. By observing boys and girls, and classmates estates playing in the parks of neighbouring public housing estates I noticed big differences in the parenting styles of parents from Mei Foo Sun Chuen and the public housing estates. Parents living in Mei Foo Sun Chuen required their children to be clever, orderly, and self-disciplined. But children in neighbouring estates didn't play by the rules nor did their parents pay much attention to the children.⁷

⁷Chan Kun-cheung, *Oral History Interview*, 20 December 2018.

In 1982, when the Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway opened, the station at Mei Foo Sun Chuen was originally called “Lai Wan Station”. It was later changed to “Mei Foo Station” on 31 May 1985 so it would not be confused with Lai Chi Kok Station or Lai King Station.⁸

2.3 Jao Tsung-I Academy

Jao Tsung-I Academy, which lies to the southeast of Kau Wah Keng Old Village, is the first batch project of the Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme by the Commissioner for Heritage’s Office of the Development Bureau in the Revitalising Historic Buildings Partnership. It was tasked for the revitalisation by the Hong Kong Institute for the Promotion of Chinese Culture (HKIPCC) in 2009.



Plate 4: Jao Tsung-I Academy. (Source: Jao Tsung-I Academy)

According to the Legislative Council Panel on Development’s “Progress Report on Heritage Conservation Initiatives and Revitalisation of the Former Lai Chi Kok Hospital into the Jao Tsung-I Academy / Hong Kong Cultural Heritage under the

⁸ See *Apple Daily* “Mei Foo at 50 Years: Mobil Depot Transforms into Luxurious Residences, Lai Wan Station becomes Mei Foo Station” (美孚半世紀·油庫變豪宅 荔灣站改美孚站), 21 September 2018.

Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme”:

The compound comprises a cluster of over 20 buildings of the Utilitarian style, spread over three zones (namely the lower, middle, and upper zones). Most of the buildings are installed with the Chinese double-tile roofing system, showing the influence of local Chinese craftsmanship. The buildings in the compound have been accorded a Grade 3 status in recognition of their architectural merit and the historical significance of the site.⁹

The history of the site dates back to 1887 (13th Year of Guangxu, Qing Dynasty). The Canton Customs set up a Kowloon-wide customs clearance. The Kowloon-Canton boundary marker is still standing on the hillside on the east side of Jao Tsung-I Academy. The origin of the establishment of the customs station in Chinese Kowloon is connected to the long-term use of Hong Kong by foreign countries as a base for smuggling goods from China. In order to ensure the state’s tax revenue, the Qing government of Guangdong Province set up four customs stations in 1871 in Kap Shui Mun, Cheung Chau, Fo Tau Chau, and Kowloon City. The Kap Shui Mun Custom Station was set up in 1871 (10th year of Tongzhi, Qing Dynasty), and it was changed to the Kowloon Custom Station in 1887 (13th Year of Guangxu, Qing Dynasty). Traces of the Kap Shui Mun Custom Station can be found on two old stone tablets: “Kowloon Customs Station” and “The Kowloon Customs have borrowed seven English feet of Land” on Ma Wan Island. The Kowloon Customs Boundary Stone in the present Jao Tsung-I Academy has a historical background connected to these traces of the Kap Shui Mun Customs Station.

⁹“Legislative Council Panel on Development: Progress Report on Heritage Conservation Initiatives and Revitalisation of the Former Lai Chi Kok Hospital into the Jao Tsung-I Academy / Hong Kong Cultural Heritage under the Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme (立法會發展事務委員會：文物保育措施進度報告及活化歷史建築伙伴計劃下・將前荔枝角醫院活化為「饒宗頤文化館/香港文化傳承」) 30 March 2010, p. 10.

On 9 June 1898, the Qing government and the United Kingdom signed the “The Convention Between Great Britain and China Respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory” (otherwise known as the Second Convention of Peking) in Beijing, which resulted in the land south of the Shenzhen River being leased to the United Kingdom for 99 years. In April 1899, the British officially notified the Qing government to withdraw. In May the same year, except for the customs station outside Kowloon City, all the other Chinese customs stations in Hong Kong was declared officially closed.

With the entry into force of the “The Second Convention of Peking”, the Lai Chi Kok area become part of Hong Kong. The Swire Group under the name of The Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Agency, built housing for Chinese workers on the site of the Kowloon Customs Station which were known as “pig pens”. “Pig pens” came into being after the Second Boer War between Britain and South Africa, which had broken out in 1899. After the British won in 1902 and acquired the Transvaal Colony, they discovered large-scale gold mines in the area, so The Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Agency then recruited a large number of Chinese contract workers to work as local miners. The Chinese workers came mainly from Central and North China. They needed to gather in Hong Kong and wait for the ships to take them to South Africa. In 1904, a British-owned company built housing for the Chinese workers on the site of the former Kowloon Customs Station. It was commonly known as the “pig pen” and was temporary quarters for Chinese workers before the voyage. The “pig pen” was abandoned in 1906 when the British Government banned the recruitment of Chinese workers.

In 1910, the Hong Kong Government changed the “pig pen” to a quarantine station to control the spread of epidemics. Between 1921 and 1937, the “pig pen” was

converted for correctional use and renamed Lai Chi Kok Prison. In 1931, the prison was built in the mid and upper zones, becoming the first minimum security women's prison in Hong Kong. In the 1930s, infectious diseases ravaged Hong Kong. The Government turned the prison into Lai Chi Kok (Cholera) Hospital and Lai Chi Kok (Temporary) Hospital. In 1938, it became Lai Chi Kok Infectious Disease Hospital. It needed to provide long-term care and accommodation for the mentally ill and those recovering from leprosy. In 1948, it was renamed Lai Chi Kok Hospital and was used for the quarantine of infectious diseases such as smallpox, diphtheria, and cholera.¹⁰

In 2000, the Hospital Authority set up a long-term care home, Caritas Lai Hong Home, which provided for more than 400 recovering mentally ill persons. In 2004, the Caritas Jockey Club Social Services Centre opened and the Home's work was taken up by the Centre and the Hospital Authority's Care Home was closed. The old site of the Care Home was closed and returned to the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (hereafter the Government of the HKSAR).

In 2008, the Government of the HKSAR launched the Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme to revitalise government-owned historical buildings and declared monuments and set four objectives, including:

1. to preserve and put historic buildings into good and innovative use;
2. to transform historic buildings into unique cultural landmarks;
3. to promote active public participation in the conservation of historic buildings;

¹⁰ Siu Kwok-kin and Jao Tsung-I Academy, *Past and Present – Stories of the Site of Jao Tsung-I Academy* (饒宗頤文化館的前世與今生－歷史與文化) (Hong Kong: Jao Tsung-I Academy, 2018), pp. 21-40.

4. to create job opportunities in particular at the district level.¹¹

The revitalisation of the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital was awarded to the Hong Kong Institute for Promotion of Chinese Culture (HKIPCC). In 2009, the HKIPCC actively commenced work on the revitalisation and development plan on what was to become today's Jao Tsung-I Academy. The Academy was officially opened in June 2014. The facilities in the upper, middle, and lower zones are fully open, providing a comprehensive cultural platform for citizens and visitors.

2.4 Kau Wah Keng New Village

In 1949, a large number of refugees moved to Hong Kong to escape the scourge of war. Some of them built wooden houses on the hills, including the current site of Kau Wah Keng New Village. According to the *Special Issue for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Kau Wah Keng New Village* published in 1974, Austin Coates (1922-1997), Southern District Officer, in order to balance health and security concerns caused by the construction of wooden houses in the area made all land official and then local residents had to apply to build a house. This was based on a law for village buildings ranging from a few hundred to over a thousand.¹²

¹¹ Development Bureau, *Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Program* (活化歷史建築伙伴計劃), <https://www.heritage.gov.hk/tc/doc/RHBTP%20Scheme.pdf> [accessed: 2 November 2018].

¹² Kau Wah Keng New Village Welfare Association Memorial Special Issue Compilation Group, *Special Issue for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of Kau Wah Keng New Village* (九華新村建村二十五週年紀念特刊) (Hong Kong: Tintin Publishing, 1974) pp. 16-17.

Since the establishment of the village in 1949, the management of the village has improved. In 1952, the Welfare Association was established to serve the villagers, including building roads, representing villagers to negotiate water and electricity supply, and maintaining village security services. The most famous building in the village is Tin Toi Ching She (天台精舍) on the hill.

Tin Toi Ching She was founded in 1959 by the Venerable Lok Dou (樂渡). At that time the Venerable (倓虛) and a disciple of Lok Dou was in Kau Wah Keng New Village to build a memorial hall to honour the Venerable Di Xian (諦閑), but also as a place for himself and his disciples to contemplate the Buddha. There is a Huayan (*Avatamsaka Sūtra*) scripture on the mountain gate: “見佛自在生歡喜，發心迴向趣菩提”.

Tin Toi Ching She is a bungalow construction. It is divided into two rooms, one for the Buddha Hall and one for the Memorial Hall of the Venerable Di Xian, an area of over 2,000 feet. There is a plaque at the main entrance to the main hall is the “Venerable Di Xian Memorial Hall” and there is a couplet that reads: “諦老弘經南北諸山稱泰斗，倓公宣講法化一部紹台宗.” The memorial hall has three Buddha statues, and the other Buddha Hall is dedicated to Kwun Yum. Tin Toi Ching She is one of the venues for the Hong Kong Buddhist Youth Association who has long-held events and ceremonies there.¹³

¹³Fushan Tang *Tin Toi Ching She* (天台精舍), <http://www.fushantang.com/1005b/e2023.html> [accessed: 17 March 2019].

3. History of Kau Wah Keng Old Village

3.1 Historical Overview of Kau Wah Keng Old Village

The history of Kau Wah Keng Old Village can be traced back to more than 300 years when the ancestors of the Tsang clan moved to the area when the inland migration order was cancelled in 1669 (the 8th Year of Kangxi, Qing Dynasty). Kau Wah Keng Old Village is dominated by the Tsang clan and is one of the three largest Hakka clans in Kwai Tsing. The clan still maintains its own ancestral hall and traditional customs such as lantern lighting.

Although the history of Kau Wah Keng Old Village is similar to that of other traditional villages in the New Territories, it holds an important position in the history of the development of the Hong Kong Telegraph. On 4 March 1882, mining businessman Ho A-mei (1838-1901) wrote to the Hong Kong government that his partnership had been approved by the Governor of Guangdong and Guangxi to construct a Hong Kong-Guangzhou telegraph line. He was now applying to run a submarine wire from Kowloon to Hong Kong Island. On 13 March, the same year, Ho A-mei established the Guangdong Hong Kong Wa Hop (Huahe) Telegraph Company in Hong Kong to tie in with the construction of the submarine cable project. The whole project was almost endangered by competition from his peers. To ensure the smooth development of the project and his business, Ho A-mei first had the wires laid in the Guangdong area to the neighbouring areas of Kowloon, and then released details to local media about the project to create pressure from public opinion. Ho A-mei provided information about the progress of the project to *The Hongkong Telegraph*, and two reports in 1883 mentioned that Tsuen Wan (under its old name of Shallow Bay) and the Guangdong Hong Kong Huahe Telegraph Company had set up office at Kau Wah

Keng.

Ma Koon-yiu in “The Battle for the Hong Kong to Guangzhou Telegraph Network: The Struggle between China, Britain, and Denmark”, records the reporter’s visit to the telegraph office: “The reporter took half an hour by boat from Central to reach Kau Wah Keng Village. The village is opposite Stonecutters Island. A group of five took the beach to the east and walked along the path to the village. The office is a Chinese-style thatched cottage; the telegraph room is located on the left side of the cottage; there are two telegraph machines, and the wires are supported by wood poles along the north to Guangzhou. Several minutes later, I was able to send a telegram to Guangzhou. I met several villagers as I was leaving, boarded the boat to the west beach, and returned to Stonecutters Island...”¹⁴

The telegraph network based on the Hong Kong Wa Hop (Huahe) Telegraph Company of Guangdong had not been able to access Hong Kong Island. Therefore, ships had to go to and from Hong Kong Island and Kau Wah Keng to transport passengers’ telegraph messages from Hong Kong Island to the Kau Wah Keng Office.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ma Koon-yiu, “The Battle for the Hong Kong to Guangzhou Telegraph Network: The Struggle between China, Britain, and Denmark” (香港至廣州電報網爭奪戰：中國、英國和丹麥的角力), in *The Furnace Ancient and Modern: Hong Kong History Proceedings, Vol 2*, 2016 (October), pp. 65-65 °

¹⁵ Ibid.

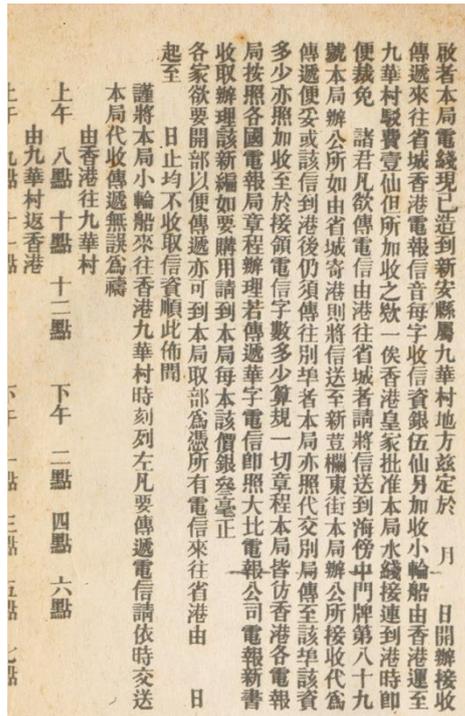


Plate 5: Advertisement for Guangdong Hong Kong Wa Hop (Huahe) Telegraph Company. (Source: The University of Hong Kong Libraries)

3.2 Living Environment

There are different types of buildings in Kau Wah Keng Old Village, including traditional village houses, squatters' quarters, and school buildings. These represent over 80 years of historical buildings, including Western bungalows in the architectural style of the 1920s and 1930s. As villagers were not accustomed to building works, they usually employed contractors from Hong Kong Island, Yau Ma Tei, or Mong Kok to build their houses.

According to the Antiquities and Monuments Office's Assessment Result of the 1,444 historic buildings territory-wide in March 2009, a building in the Kau Wah Keng Old Village was identified as a Grade III historical building with 12 buildings proposed as potential Grade III, while two buildings were not graded (Table 1).

Table 1: Historical Buildings of Kau Wah Keng Old Village	
Tsang Residence, No. 22 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Confirmed Grading: 3
Yeung Ching Study Hall, No. 1 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Old house of the Tsangs 39 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Old house of the Tsangs, No. 42 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Old house of the Tsangs, No. 42A Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
No. 30 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Nos. 4 & 5 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Tsang Ancestral Hall, No. 32 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
No. 14 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
No. 43 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
No. 15 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
The House of Tsang, No. 10 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Yiu Kung Ancestral Hall, 26A Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Proposed Grading: 3
Tsang Ancestral Hall, No. 13 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Nil Grade
Tsang Ancestral Hall, No.28B Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, NT	Nil Grade

The Tsang Residence, which was identified as a Grade III historic building, was built between 1934 and 1937 by Tsang Hin San (曾憲新), a warship crew leader of the United States navy. From the end of the 1940s to the early 1950s, many left-wing intellectuals and artists such as Wang Renshu (王任叔 1901-1972), Lou Shiyi (樓適夷 1905-2001), and Huang Yongyu (黃永玉 1924-) had lived in the building. The Tsang

Residence has been vacant since the 1990s.

Yeung Ching Study Hall (養正家塾) was built in 1921 and was located at No. 1 Kau Wah Keng Old Village. It was constructed to replace the original study hall. Yeung Ching Study Hall started to have English courses in 1922 and was one of the first government-subsidized village schools that provided English courses. In 1971, Yeung Ching Study Hall was replaced by the newly completed Yeung Ching School therefore had been vacant until the mid-1990s. The Yeung Ching Study Hall is now converted to residential use. The Kau Wah Keng Old Village Office has been located in Yeung Ching Study Hall since early 2003.



Plate 6: Yeung Ching Study Hall. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

Buildings No. 39, No. 42 and No. 42A in Kau Wah Keng Old Village were built in 1927. The builder Tsang Bao (曾寶, alias 曾大琛 or 曾大深) was a descendant of Tsang Chang-kwan (曾振焜). Tsang Bao once worked on US warships and became rich while working overseas. In order to enable families have a stable life, two buildings, No. 42 and No. 42A, were built. Later, his relative Tsang Hin Gan built No. 39. Tsang

Bao served as Kau Wah Keng village representative and retired in 1949.

No. 30 and No. 32 of Kau Wah Keng Old Village were built in 1937 by a descendant of Tsang Chang-kwan (曾振焜). A member of the Tsang clan who worked on the *Empress of Japan* of the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. & Steamship Co., as a chief of staff. After accumulating wealth, he returned to his home town to build a house. The reason for the construction of Nos. 4-5, Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing in the New Territories is similar to that of No. 30, Kau Wah Keng Old Village. We only know that the person who funded the construction was a member of the Tsang clan. He had also worked on *the Empress of Japan*, first serving as a seaman, and later as senior management after promotion, before moving back to Kau Wah Keng Old Village in the 1930s.

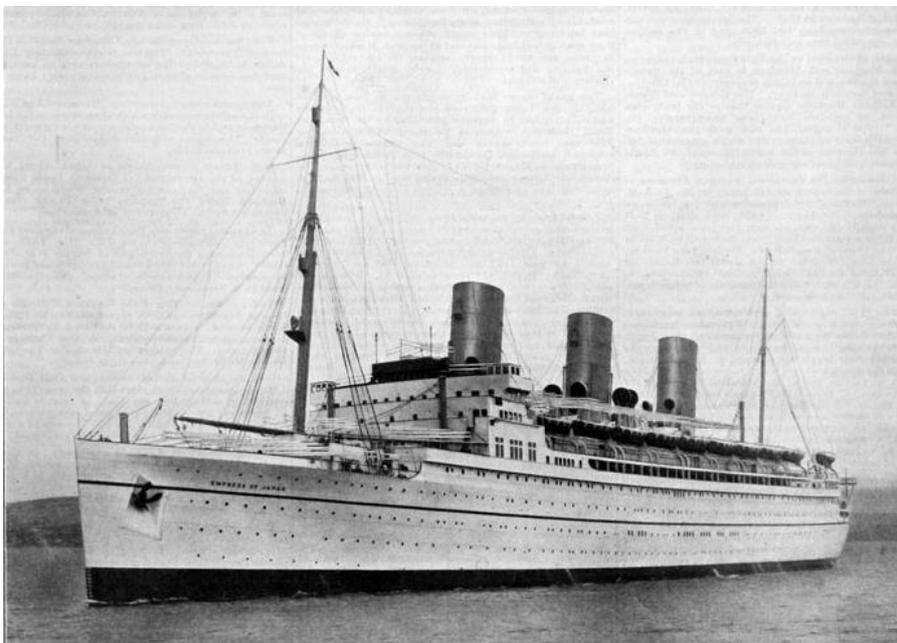


Plate 7: *The Empress of Japan*. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

No. 14 and No. 15 of Kau Wah Keng Old Village were built in the early 1920s. Tsang Tai-cheung (曾大章 or 曾大璋), a descendant of Tsang Chang-choi (曾振彩), built it for his son. Tsang Tai-cheung is the great-grandson of Tsang Wah-hon (曾華翰) who once worked as a manager and accountant in a timber shop in the city. Tsang Tai-cheung was also the trustee for his ancestor Tsang Wah-hon. Tsang Wah-hon's trustee is still responsible for managing the property on behalf of the descendants of Tsang Wah-hon in the village. Tsang Hin-kwai (曾憲貴), Tsang Tai-cheung's son, worked as a seaman before the Second World War. He also worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. & Steamship Co. and the Dollar Steamship Company.¹⁶ In the 1960s, Tsang Hin-kwai served as a council member of Yeung Ching School and as a deputy village representative.

No. 43 was built at the end of the nineteenth century and is a relatively historic building in the village. The founding owner was Tsang Hin-sui (曾憲瑞) who worked on an ocean liner at that time. It is different from the mixed Chinese and Western houses in the village in that it adopted traditional Chinese architecture.

The House of Tsang at No. 10 was built in the 1910s to the 1920s and was originally a Tsang Family ancestral house. Members of the Tsang clan had been seamen for generations and served in warships. Later, they worked in steam merchant ships from 1890 to 1940. Because the economic conditions of the Tsang clan improved, this large house was built of granite and features a mix of Chinese and Western architecture,

¹⁶ Dollar Steamship Company refers to Robert Dollar & Co. was founded by the Scottish Canadian businessman, Captain Robert Dollar (1844-1932). Because Robert Dollar's surname "yuan", means "money", all ships were painted with the "\$" symbol on the chimney. Thus the Chinese called the company the "silver dollar" company.

including a veranda and square western-style columns. The building was used as a temporary shelter during the Chinese civil war in the late 1940s.

Yiu Kung Ancestral Hall (饒公祠) located at No. 26A, was completed in the mid-1900s to commemorate Tsang Chang-kwan's adoptive father Yiu Wui-yuk (饒會郁). Tsang Chang-kwan (曾振焜) is the great-grandson of Tsang Wai-heng (曾維亨), the founder of Kau Wah Keng. Today, at every major Chinese festival, like Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, and other special days, such as weddings, a son's birth, an elders' longevity, the dearly departed, or generally returning to God, the clan will go to the Ancestral Hall to pay their respects.

The Tsang Ancestral Hall (曾氏外祖祠) at No. 13 was built in 1905 to commemorate Tsang Wah-ho's father-in-law, Lok Bit-hing (駱必興). Villagers will gather here to worship their ancestors at every important traditional festival. In addition, the villagers will also hold a lantern lighting ceremony here on the first and fifteenth of the first month of the lunar calendar. The Tsang Ancestral Hall is also the place where family gatherings take place. The ancestral hall is connected to two old village houses.

The Tsangs built an ancestral hall (曾氏家祠) in the 1900s at No. 28B in honour of Tsang Chao-fung (曾朝鳳), the son of Tsang Wai-heng (曾維亨), the founder of Kau Wah Keng. The villagers gather here to worship their ancestors on festive occasions.



Plate 8: Tsang Ancestral Hall. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

There were a number of shops in Kau Wah Keng Old Village that provided for the daily needs for those who live in the area (see Table 2). Among them, Wo Hing Store (No. of squatter huts: RTW/4AA/342-343) is located on the small road in front of Yeung Ching Study Hall, mainly selling biscuits, bread, and soft drinks. They are connected in the middle by a small stone bridge. On the left is Siu Sing Kee Stationery Shop, and two empty shops that are now awaiting demolition. There was also once a market in the village which is located in the open space next to No. 59 that was once very prosperous. Apart from the fixed shops, there were also vendors who came from outside the village, who mainly sold cooked food, vegetables, meat; there were also hawkers from outside who carried bamboo baskets. With the newly development in the nearby district, the market ceased to operate.

Table 2: Kau Wah Keng Old Village Shops	
Opposite 55A Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Fok Hing Blessings & Incense Shop
67A Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Catholic Church
70A Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Laundry

85F Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Hoi Kee Wholesale Plastic Flowers
86 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Hairdresser
86D Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Tailor
88 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Golden Orchid Shanghai Noodle Shop
Opposite 88 Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Chinese Medicine Shop
99A Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Grocery Store
Rest Garden, Kau Wah Keng Old Village, Kwai Tsing, New Territories	Metal & Electrical Store



Plate 9: Wo Hing Store was closed due to the structure being classified as an unauthorised building. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

3.3 Education

Yeung Ching Study Hall was a clan school in the village. It was founded during the Qing Dynasty, but its establishment year has not been confirmed. In the early years of the Republic of China, Young Kwok Sui (楊國瑞), a scholar from Tsuen Wan, taught

there. Young used to be an associate of the Tin Hau Ancient Temple in Tsuen Wan. He took part in the imperial examinations of 1904 (the 30th year of Guangxu, Qing Dynasty) and obtained the title of *Xinsheng* (邑庠生) (commonly known as *Xiucai* 秀才).¹⁷

In 1921, Yeung Ching Study Hall was renamed Yeung Ching School. The then Secretary of Education officiated on its opening day. In the following year it became one of the government subsidized village schools. The teachers were appointed by the Education Department and the courses were approved by the government. The curriculum included English, geography, and physical education; it was the first government-subsidized village school to teach English. In 1971, Yeung Ching School moved to a newly completed school building, and the original school site has now been converted into a residence and village office.

¹⁷ Ip Sum-ming, *The Battle between the Sacred and the Customary--On the Conflict between the New Territories Missionary Society and Local Society in the Early 20th Century* (聖俗之爭——論二十世紀初新界傳道會全完堂與地方社會的衝突), http://www.tkpss.edu.hk/v2/010_about/010-080-040_chist/reading_share/ip/2015.pdf [accessed: 3 February 2019].



Plate 10: Yeung Ching School. (Source: Kau Wah Keng Old Village Office)

Students who attended the school were mainly Tsangs from Kau Wah Keng Old Village with the rest coming from surrounding communities. Wong Chung Hang taught Chinese at the school in the 1970s. When he recalled an anecdote about teaching students in those years:

The students in the afternoon class of Yuen Ching School were better in academics than those in the morning class; a class had about 30 to 40 students. Most of the students are from the Kau Wah Keng Old Village and a few were from neighbouring estates. Generally speaking, the students were relatively unspoilt and pure; the individual students were a little older, and they were very respectful to the teacher. They rarely did anything naughty. Most of the students did not set foot in the city because transportation was not convenient and rural families were poor. I often took students to visit Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei Library or City Hall in Central to broaden their horizons. The students were very excited. In addition, the classroom was equipped with a reading corner to allow students to absorb more knowledge from extracurricular

books. As a result, students liked to borrow books. On Saturdays, there would be an activity class where they were taught to write calligraphy and so enhance their interest in learning new things. I wanted to do my best to pass on knowledge to the students and let them find their own interests.¹⁸

3.4 Entertainment

Kau Wah Keng Old Village is like other villages in the New Territories. In the early days, farming was the main industry. Based on its mode of operation, the daily life of the villagers was quite regulated, and the entertainment and leisure activities were only undertaken in the surrounding area and from the natural environment.

In earlier times, the toys of Hong Kong children were mainly homemade. In the 1940s, Hong Kong society suffered depression as a result of the Second World War. In the 1950s, citizens lived in an elusive environment, and children could only use cheap materials to make their own toys, such as jackstones (抓子) and wooden swords. Children will also purchase marbles and have “marble bombing” (彈波子) competitions on street canopies. Children could also play with cigarette cards that were attached to cigarette boxes.

From the 1950s to the 1960s, the population of Hong Kong swelled. In addition to the rise in the birth rate, people also flooded to escape political movements in mainland China. At that time, Hong Kong society was under great pressure, and parents were always rushing about. Children mainly played games such as football and jump rubber-band rope with their friends in open spaces, corridors, and streets.

¹⁸Wong Chung-hang Oral History Interview, 24 January 2019.

While toys were a luxury for children living in the village, but there were still some cheap toys available from nearby street vendors and stationery stores, such as tin toys, dolls, and doll papers. Neighbourhood children would find joy by playing and sharing their toys together. At that time, children still made things, for example, using folded paper and pen to make “North, South, East & West” (東南西北 – known as “paper fortune tellers”) and paper planes, etc.

In the 1960s, children played with paper dolls and jackstones. There are super humans, monsters printed on the paper. At that time, these patterns were popular and a red seal was used to print them on the paper. They were small, smaller than cigarette cards. To play jackstones you throw several small stones up in the air and you try to grab them one by one before they fall.

In the time where there was a lack of materials, children living in the village did not have quality toys. They just played chasings, flew paper kites, marble bombing, paper dolls, caught “gold cat” insects (*Thiania subopressa*) fooled around playing hide and seek, and, “cut kites” by gluing ground glass on one’s kite string to cut off other’s kites when they were in the air.

3.5 Connections with Famous Chinese

What is hidden behind history is often a moving story. Kau Wa Keng was an ordinary village like many villages in Hong Kong’s New Territories. Its former name of “Dog Climbing Path” provides us with a vivid image of rough, narrow paths, and people walking upward like dogs climbing a mountain. However, Kau Wah Keng is like a piece of jade hidden in rock. Despite the trials of the times, there were still many

brilliant shining lights on both sides of the strait. Of the many, there was the East River and Japanese resistance guerrilla commander, Zeng Sheng (曾生), painter Huang Yongyu (黃永玉), and former Kuomintang member Cheng Siyuan (程思遠). Now we will at the past as if in a mirror at the famous people who have lived in the village. These are described in chronological order.

Zeng Sheng, the commander of the East River Column was a teacher in Yeung Ching School, Kau Wah Keng in 1936. He also organized labour movements secretly when he was still a teacher.¹⁹ During the occupation period, Kau Wah Keng was the main thoroughfare between Kowloon and the New Territories. It lay within the scope of the East River Column, and Zeng Sheng, the leader of the Column, often arranged for intellectuals to escape from Hong Kong via Kau Wah Keng, as he recorded in his memoirs:

(1942) At midnight on January 9, three small boats carrying a group of intellectuals people such as Zou Yufen and Mao Dun sneaked through Hong Kong to Kowloon and came to the secret reception station to make our escape. On the early morning of the 11th, over 20 people, including Zou Yufen and his entourage, the traffic clerk arranged by Comrade He Dinghua took us to Castle Peak Road. At that time, the Japanese army was repatriating the Hong Kong population, and there was a continual stream of refugees and we mixed in with them, and went north to Tai Mo Shan along small roads. Although the roads in the mountain area were difficult to navigate, our team of guerrillas had the area under control.²⁰

Under the active rescue and escort of the East River Column, hundreds of famous intellectuals safely returned to the mainland, including Mao Dun and his wife (茅盾夫婦), Hu Feng (胡風), Qian Jiaju (千家駒), Liao Yusha (廖沫沙), Ding Cong (丁聰),

¹⁹ Tsang Sheng, *Tsang Sheng Memoirs* (曾生回憶錄) (Beijing: Liberation Army Press, 1991), p. 766.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

Cao Juren (曹聚仁), Xia Yan (夏衍) and Liang Shu Ming (梁漱溟), although they did not all pass through Kau Wah Keng.²¹ According to his memoirs, the escape route map was as follows: “from Kau Wah Keng to Tsuen Wan by crossing Tai Mo Shan to Shap Pat Heung in Yuen Long is the safest and most convenient route to Bao’an Base. This line is our Bao’an base to the western line of Kowloon City.”²²

After the People’s Republic of China was established, Zeng Sheng served as Deputy Commander of the Guangdong Military Region, Deputy Governor of Guangdong Province, and minister in the Ministry of Communications. Village head Tsang Chun-man recalled that Zeng Sheng visited Kau Wah Keng Village many times, his last visit to the village being in 1986.

Kau Wah Keng is located beneath Lai King Hill on Castle Peak Road. It is surrounded by mountains on three sides and is hidden in green forest, so nearby villagers may not know that it existed. Given that Hong Kong was under colonial rule, there have been dozens of intellectuals interwoven together in some little-known stories. In 1945, after the victory of China’s War of Resistance against Japan, civil war immediately broke out between the Communist Party and the Kuomintang. At that time, many Communist Party members wanted to flee the Kuomintang. There were also many dissidents who criticized the government and whose views were unacceptable to them, choose to leave and travel south to Hong Kong. Many writers, painters, and poets chose to live in Kau Wah Keng after arriving in Hong Kong. It could be reasonably inferred that they could not afford the rent of urban dwellings, and that they wanted to

²¹ Leung Cho Nga, Ed.: *Kwai Tsing – Past and Present, Inheritance and Breakthrough* (葵青：舊貌新顏·傳承與突破) (Hong Kong: Kwai Tsing District Council, 2004), p. 160.

²² *Tsang Sheng Memoirs* (曾生回憶錄), p. 214.

live a low-key life to escape the attention of the Kuomintang. Its remoteness was another factor in its favour. The quiet mountain forest was especially popular with the literati, especially in 1948 when a large number of intellectuals took up residence in Kau Wah Keng.

Famous painter Huang Yongyu and his wife came to Hong Kong in 1948. They lived on the mezzanine (second floor) of No. 23 Kau Wah Keng with writers or painters such as Shen Manruo (沈曼若), Lu Zhiwei (陸志庠), Yang Taiyang (楊太陽), Li Yuenan (李嶽南), and Kou De Ke (考蒂克), Duanmu Yanliang (端木蕻良), Fang Cheng (方成), Zhu Minggang (朱鳴岡), and Shan Fu, while Lou Shiyi, Zhang Tianyi, and Ba Ren (巴人, also known as Wang Renshu 王任叔) lived on the first floor.²³



Plate 11: Former Residence of Huang Yongyu. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

Huang Yongyu in *The Past is a Hazy Reed Shore - Some Memories of Kau Wah Keng in Hong Kong*, said that he first went to live in a friend's house in Wan Chai, and

²³ Chen Tianquan, *Former Residences of Famous People* (名人故居), <http://news.takungpao.com.hk/paper/q/2013/1102/2010039.html> [accessed 15 March 2019].

after introduction of the writer Yu Yi (適夷) who lived in Kau Wah Keng, I moved into the upper floor of the building and formally became a villager.²⁴ Huang describes the development of the Kau Wah Keng in the 1940s and the surrounding Lai Chi Kok area.

In the 1940s, I went to Kau Wah Keng. I took the route no. 6 bus from Tsim Sha Tsui to the Mobil Oil Depot at the Lai Chi Kok Terminus. The sea along the bay went straight into the small village in the far-off hills. In 1948, the small bay there was not so lively. Many people who came to have fun on Sundays brought things like fishing nets, buckets, and fishing rods, and used this uninhabited place to explore. However, a small amount of seafood in the bay had been depleted by Kau Wah Keng villagers. At that time, the land outside the village was still farmland. Villagers worked spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and the water buffalo and cattle came and went.

Most of the villagers were named Tsang, they were Hakkas. I had the story of how they moved to Kau Wah Keng, I had heard it but I've forgotten it. The mountains on both sides of Kau Wah Keng are very wild. On the right is an expanse of sea and the mountains to the left only have a few young Masson Pines... Lai Chi Kok Amusement Park, and the sound of the big drums would be broadcast every day on the loudspeaker. The people who lived in Kau Wah Keng felt it that is was extremely noisy, but they did not know how complain about it.²⁵

Huang Yongyu recalls the environment of Kau Wah Keng:

My wife, who was teaching at Tak Ming Middle School in Wan Chai, resigned and stayed upstairs with me on the mezzanine with Mr. Lou Shiyi in the Kau Wah Keng. I relied on woodcuts, sketching, and writing essays to pass the days. ... We lived in a two-storey building, the only house in the village that was covered with reinforced concrete, and only three of us intellectuals live there ... There is no running water in the village, and we had to rely on a large slate well on the left side of the building to wash food. ... Mr. Lou Shiyi and I have to take the water upstairs from the well. The toilet was in the thatched pigsty on the edge of the field. After using it, I used a shovel to

²⁴ Huang Yongyu in "The Past is a Hazy Reed Shore - Some Memories of Kau Wah Keng in Hong Kong" (往事模糊蘆花岸－香港九華徑的一些回憶) in Mimi Zhou, *Fragrant Harbour* (芬芳港), (Hong Kong: Peace Books Co., 2007), pp. 91-92.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

cover what I'd done with ash. The rent paid by Mr. Lou at that time was HK\$80. I paid HK\$50.²⁶

From the above, we can see that although Huang Yongyu's living situation was quite basic, he was still able to enjoy himself. Naturally, some of these intellectuals could not be able to endure this self-reliant life. Writers Jiang Tianzuo (蔣天佐) and Chen Jingrong (陳敬容) were not used to washing and gathering water from the well every day, and they moved to Kowloon within a month. At that time, people living in Kau Wah Keng included the writer Lou Shiyi (樓適夷) and his wife Huang Fuwei (黃福煒), the novelist Zhang Tianyi (張天翼), the poet Chen Jingrong (陳敬容), the literary translator Jiang Tianzuo (蔣天佐), the family of Yang Yuquan (楊晦全), the writers Babo (巴波) and Li Yushu (李霽樹) and his wife, Zang Kejia (臧克家) and his wife and Yu Xinqing (余心清), former subordinate of Feng Yuxiang (馮玉祥), the writer Li Yuenan (李岳南), Fang Cheng (方成) and his brother and sister-in-law, Shan Fu (單復). Duanmu Hongling (端木蕻良), Kao Dike (考蒂克) and painter Lu Zhixiang (陸志庠). Around thirty came from Taiwan including Zhu Minggang (朱鳴岡), Lin Duanzheng (林端正) and his wife, Jiang Yanwu (蔣炎午), Li Liudan (李流丹), Chen Manruo (沈曼若).²⁷ The village became a magnet to because these all these intellectuals lived in the same place.

Other scholars who came to the village were Qiao Guanhua (喬冠華), Ye Yiqun (葉以群), Xiao Yu (蕭乾), Zhou Gangming (周鋼鳴), Guo Yiruo (郭沫若) and his wife, Shao Quanlin (邵荃麟), Mao Dun (茅盾), Jiang Muliang (蔣牧良), Nie Gan Nu (聶紺弩), Hu Feng, Luo Chengxun (羅承勛), Sima Wensen (司馬文森), and Hong Yu (洪

²⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 93-103.

適).²⁸ With this group of scholars, the unknown village of Kau Wah Keng suddenly filled with cultural atmosphere, with poetry and painting. Many of the intellectuals living in Kau Wah Keng had their own columns in the supplements of newspapers, for example, “Essay on Kau Wah Keng”, the Kang Po paintings of Nie Gan Nu, the paintings of Huang Yongyu and Duanmu Yanliang’s poem “Song of the Dog Climbing the Mountain Path”. These works revolve around their life and thoughts in Kau Wah Keng; they came to understand the Hakka folk customs of Kau Wah Keng of that time.²⁹

On 1 October, 1949, the People’s Republic of China was proclaimed. Most of the intellectuals who lived in Kau Wah Keng rushed to take a ship to Tianjin on receiving the news. After they had returned to the Mainland, they were active in literary and artistic circles, and some even came to hold important positions in the government, becoming the first batch of famous literati in the People’s Republic of China. At the same time, Hong Kong became a refuge for Kuomintang officers and their supporters. They are scattered throughout Kau Wah Keng New Village, including Cheng Siyuan (程思遠), father of Hong Kong movie star Lin Dai (林黛), who was extremely popular in the 1960s. Cheng Siyuan was the secretary of Li Zongren (李宗仁, later Vice President of the Republic of China), commander-in-chief of the Kuomintang Group IV from 1930 to 1934. Lin Dai in *My father Cheng Siyuan* writes that:

With the liberation of China and the retreat of the Kuomintang to Taiwan, my parents also moved to Hong Kong. At that time, I was not born yet. ... In Hong Kong, we lived in Kau Wah Keng, Kowloon which was far away from the city. Mother designed our own white stone cottage herself, with mountains behind us and the sea out front. We had a large banyan tree. One day in January 1956, two strangers came to

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

²⁹ Kwai Tsing – *Past and Present, Inheritance and Breakthrough* (葵青：舊貌新顏·傳承與突破), p. 164.

the house. They took out the “Report about the Issues of intellectuals”) written by Zhou Enlai, saying that he asked my father to comment on it. My father, who had been engaged in politics for many years, immediately realized things were not that simple. Sure enough, two months later, the two guests came to the door again. This time, they came straight to the point and said: “Mr. Li Renchao wants to invite your father to come to Beijing to discuss it...” Li Renchao was the famous general Li Jishen of the northern expedition, at that time was vice chairman of the National People’s Congress. People often said that “come and go in secret, do not go through the formalities, and come and go freely.”³⁰

After returning to the mainland to settle, Cheng Siyuan served as the Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, and the President of the Association for Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China.

The artist, Margie Tsang (曾華倩), once lived in Kau Wah Keng Village and according to a report, her birthplace was Kau Wah Keng. Every year, the New Year she would bring chicken, fruit, and wine to Kau Wah Keng, and every year there would be a unicorn dance. Tsang was herself a Hakka, but she would only listen and could not speak the dialect.³¹

After the political change in the Mainland in 1949, many Kuomintang military and political figures moved to and settled in Kau Wah Keng. The former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) was also born in Kau Wah Keng Village. His mother

³⁰ Lin Dai, *My Father Cheng Siyuan* (我的父親程思遠), http://fx.nnfzw.com.cn/fx/n_show.asp?id=28356 [accessed: 10 March 2019].

³¹ See *Ming Pao* “Stephanie Cheng Sings Teresa Teng Classics in Hakka” (鄭融客家話·唱鄧麗君經典), 14 June 2012; see also *Wen Wei Po* “Margie Tsang Doesn’t Dare to Recognize Chi Wai” (曾華倩不敢同志偉認親戚). 14 June 2012.

Chin Hou-hsiu (秦厚修) once sold tickets in Lai Chi Kok Amusement Park.³² Villagers Tsang Kam-sim and Tsang Kam-fong, recalled that they used to pick up branches in the nearby hills with her to use for cooking fuel.³³

Kau Wah Keng Old Village was bursting with literary atmosphere and showed how two groups with quite different political ideas could live together in the same space.

4. Intangible Cultural Heritage

4.1 Seafarers and Overseas Connections

Hui Wing-hing (許永慶), who lived in Shek Kwu Lung, Sha Tin, was a Hakka scholar. He took part in the imperial examinations and obtained the *xiucai* degree (秀才) during the late Qing period. He with Luo Man-chang (羅文祥), who lived in Kau To Village in Fo Tan composed many *zhuzhici* (竹枝詞 – literally “bamboo twig songs”). These “Bamboo Twig Songs” were also Songs of the Village (圍村歌謠) or “Village Names in Songs” (圍頭歌), we can see aspects of the early years of Hong Kong from works of two people. There are over 155 “Bamboo Twig Songs” with names of villages and places embedded in. One line in Hui Wing-hing’s *Fourteen zhuzhici of Hong Kong and Kowloon* (香港九龍全灣各村竹枝詞十四首) says: “The masons of Cha Kwo Ling are excellent. The wind propels you passed Stonecutter’s Island. Kau Wah Keng holds civilization in high esteem, and asks about Kwai Chung in autumn”.³⁴ It records the location and life of Kau Wah Keng.

³² See *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, “Kau Wah Keng’s Original Name was “Dog Crawling Path” (九華徑原名狗爬徑), 26 October 2018.

³³ Tsang Kam-sim Oral History Interview, 20 February, 2019; Tsang Kam-fong Oral History Interview, 20 February 2019.

³⁴ Eddy Ching, ed., *Zhuzhici of Hong Kong, First Edition* (香港竹枝詞初編) (Hong Kong: Infolink Publishing, 2010), p. 67.

“Kau Wah Keng holds civilization in high esteem” means that some villagers from Kau Wah Keng Old Village worked on foreign ships. Because they often went abroad and absorbed foreign cultural customs, they had enlightened ideas. The name of Kau Wah Keng is also mentioned in the *zhuzhici* as being opposite to Stonecutters Island and adjoining Kwai Chung, thus describing the location of Kau Wah Keng.

As mentioned above, a number of Tsang clan members of Kau Wah Keng Old Village were seafarers, such as Tsang Bo who worked on US warships. The rest worked on merchant steamships, including the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. & Steamship Co. and the Robert Dollar Steamship Company. The *Empress of Japan* of Canadian Pacific Railway Co. & Steamship Co mainly travelled from the west coast of Canada to Southeast Asia. The Dollar Steamship Company originally first sailed to coastal ports in China, then was mainly based on trans-Pacific shipping and provided charter transportation to Yokohama, the Philippines, and other locations.

The villagers of Kau Wah Keng Old Village were seafarers, and most were introduced by other villagers into the seafaring fraternity. Tsang Kam-hung’s father worked on ships and he recalled how it was:

My father’s generation sailed because they were poor and couldn’t find a job. To find work, they only had to find a ship. How could they find people? Because every village had “Ah Tou” (阿頭 a head – a representative) in the shipping company. What is an “Ah Tou”? Someone to manage an entire crew of Chinese seafarers. The shipping company knows these “Ah Tous” and asks them to recruit men to go to sea. The Ah Tou would then recruit the people he needed. Most Kau Wah Keng seamen, worked in the office, in rooms, in the restaurants, kitchens, pantries, stores, etc.³⁵

³⁵ Tsang Kam-hung, Oral History Interview, 18 July 2018.

These seafarers had a wide-ranging influence on the development of the Kau Wah Keng Old Village. Substantial changes can be observed in where they lived. Their income was enough to build a more comfortable home for their families. The of “mixed Chinese & Western” architectural style not only sees the knowledge they have absorbed from foreign countries, but also changed the original appearance of the village. In addition, unlike the construction of traditional rural buildings, steel bars were used to strengthen the building.

The seafarers’ knowledge also impacted the life of family members and made a few minor changes in language. The younger generation of villagers often pointed out that the older generation were fairly open-minded and accepted new things into their lives including tasting coffee, black tea, and smoking foreign cigarettes that these seafarers brought back with them to enjoy. Imported items included daily necessities such as clothes and shoes. Among the older generation, sneakers were called *lap ba haai* “笠把鞋”; this reflects the intangible cultural influence on language as *lap ba haai* means “rubber shoes” in English. The soles of sports shoes were made of rubber which were different from the shoes worn on formal occasions. Seafarers from the village brought these shoes from overseas and gave them to children to wear and they used the transliteration *lap ba* (笠把) (rubber) to describe the shoes. Apart from “rubber”, a market is also referred to as “孖结” which sounds like the English word “market” (*market*).³⁶

³⁶Tsang Wai-kwok, Oral History Interview, 13 November 2018.

4.2 Unicorn Dance

It is recorded in the *Book of Rites: The Conveyance of Rituals* (禮記·禮運): “What are the four intelligent creatures? They are were the Qi-lin, the phoenix, the tortoise, and the dragon.” The first among them is the “unicorn” (Qi-lin) and it had a lofty status. The *Shuowen Jiezi* (說文解字) describes the “unicorn” as a “righteous beast” and that its nature is very docile and it does not hurt humans or animals. It is therefore especially worshipped by the Hakka who were eager to study even while doing farm work and whose character are restrained and unostentatious.

The unicorn had the head of a dragon, the body of a deer, a sheep’s hooves, and the tail of an ox. And on its head is a large horn. Legend has it that unicorns could ward off evil spirits. Therefore Hakka villagers will perform the unicorn dance at every festival, marriage, and temple opening or new home occupation, and also to pray for fine weather and good luck.



Plate 12: Unicorn. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

The custom of the Hong Kong unicorn dance originated from the migration of Hakka clans in the early Qing Dynasty, and they brought this traditional custom with them when they migrated from the Central Plains. Yip Tak Ping, vice president of the Hong Kong History and Culture Society, pointed out in *The Coming of the Great Auspicious Beast – Hakka Unicorn Dance* talks about the dance:

The Hakka unicorn is different from others. In appearance, the Hakka unicorn is smaller than the crane unicorn, and its forehead protrudes slightly upwards. In the middle there is a single horn and three jade horns, and the eyebrows are decorated with “fin drums” (鱗鼓). The Hoklo unicorn needs comparatively more people in performance, because it has different kinds of martial arts displays, such as shadow boxing, punching, sticking, and knives. Although the performance of each unicorn team is slightly different, there are usually at least five performances. This is commonly known as “moving the colours” (搬五彩). As for the Hakka unicorn, it is not so complicated; rather, it pays more attention to the interpretation of the performance.³⁷

The Hakka people regard the unicorn as an auspicious beast, which can dispel evil influences and bring good luck, so they will perform the unicorn dance to celebrate the Lunar New Year, marriages, birthdays, the opening of ancestral halls, moving into a new house, welcoming guests, during the Da Jiu Festival, and gods’ birthdays. When the unicorn dance came to Hong Kong with the Hakka, it combined with local traditional music and martial arts to develop into its own unique style, footwork, and costumes.

Kau Wah Keng Old Village still has the custom of performing the unicorn dance and its steps are passed down from generation to generation. Village head Tsang Chun-

³⁷ Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union, *The Coming of the Great Auspicious Beast – Hakka Unicorn Dance* (– the 物阜民豐瑞獸來,一漫談客家麒麟舞), <https://www.hkptu.org/ptunews/35118> [accessed: 10 October 2018].

man pointed out: “The last three generations of villagers knew kung fu and the unicorn dance. My grandfather knew how to perform the unicorn dance. When he was in his 60s, he still danced quite actively. I have not formally studied it, some of the young villagers want to learn it; they have to learn it by observation. In the past, if you didn’t perform the unicorn dance well, you would not be able to find a bride or daughter-in-law.”³⁸ The Hakka perform the unicorn dance to celebrating festivals and annual harvests, and shows the wish of the villagers to live and work in peace and happiness.

4.3 Autumn Grave Visiting, Tai Wong Ye Spirit Tablet, Lantern lighting

Rural society in China has been based on clans since ancient times and centred on the family. During the spring and autumn equinoxes or in April and September according to the lunar calendar, clan members gather together for ceremonies to worship the ancestors in ancestral halls or to go to the hills to worship at ancestral cemeteries. These worship activities usually occur in ancestral halls and ancestral graves. The Tsang Clan of Kau Wah Keng Old Village still regards these ancestor activities as major village events. Traditional customs such as the “hill of food” (食山頭) ceremony, the division of pork, and the use of the Hakka dialect are still carried out, but have been simplified.

The ancestral graves of Kau Wah Keng Old Village are located on the hill near Regency Park, adjacent to Cheung Hang Village. Every year before the Autumn Festival, the village head of Kau Wah Keng Old Village and village representatives will first hire an agriculture and forestry care company to weed the ancestral graves. On the

³⁸Tsang Chun-man, Oral History Interview, 21 June 2018.

first day of the Festival, villagers place sacrifices in front of the graves, usually roast meat, cooked chicken, and fruit. After worshipping, adult male, *Nan Ding* (男丁) are responsible for burning ingots of paper and gold. After the rituals have been completed, the sacrifices will be divided up and eaten. The food hill ceremony has been simplified over time. In addition, it has become the villagers call *poon choi* (盤菜, as known as basin meal), so the custom of “food hills” is still preserved to this day, it is only the location that has changed.



Plate 13: The Ancestral Grave of Kau Wah Keng Old Village. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)



Plate 14: Autumn Grave Visiting. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

The villagers believe that Tai Wong Yeh Spirit Tablet, which is adjacent to the steps of Yeung Ching School is the earth god of Kau Wah Keng Old Village, can protect the tranquillity of the village. The earth god is the protection god that most villagers worship, and is also known as Tai Wong Yeh (大王爺), Se Jik (社稷), Tai Bo Gong (大伯公), or Hau Tou (后土). According to Chinese tradition, the official name of the earth god is (福德正神 – “lord of the land”), what the Hakka call Bo Gong (伯公) or Fuk San (福神). In traditional Chinese culture, making sacrifices to the earth god is the same as making a sacrifice to the land, and it has the meaning of ensuring peace and guaranteeing income. The Tai Wong Yeh of Kau Wah Old Village is the god of nature that is worshiped by the villagers. It has a stone altar and on the altar there is a stone spirit tablet that represents the earth god.

The Hakka, who were mainly engaged in farming have very close relationship with the earth god Bo Gong. Farmland needs wind and rain to obtain a harvest. In the traditional Hakka village, it is a routine for the villagers to go to the “Bo Gong” altar every morning and evening to clean and worship. The Tai Wong Yeh spirit tablet in Kau Wah Keng Old Village indicates that it is a Hakka village.



Plate 15: Tai Wong Yeh Spirit Tablet. (Source: Dr. Chow Ka Kin Kelvin)

Lee Leong Sze, in his research on Hakka in Singapore refers to two points about the attributes and significance of Bo Gong to the Hakka group: one is that he is the regions' patron god of the land, and also for the worship of ancestors. The two are not in conflict with each other, for personalizing the gods brings this closer to real life and thus integrates Bo Gong into the life of the group.³⁹

Professor Cheng Chih Ming from the Department of Religious Studies at Fu Jen Catholic University, explained the closeness of the Hakka group to Bo Gong in "Development of Hakka Bo Gong Belief in Southeast Asia": "In Hakka society, the term 'Bo Gong' is generally used for relatives or elders. The title can be used in the general name of the ancestors, and then transferred to other gods, to express a close relationship with the spirits."⁴⁰

As there are no other temples in Kau Wah Keng Old Village the Tai Wong Yeh temple has become one of the main centres of ritual life for the villagers. This personalization of the gods bring them close to real life. Bo Gong's birthday is on the second day of the second month of the lunar calendar. On this day, the tradition was for folk on this day to kill chickens and slaughter ducks and worship Bo Gong. Every year on Bo Gong's birthday Kau Wah Keng villagers brought the same sacrifices to the Tai Wong Yeh Spirit Tablet to worship. On the 13th day of the first lunar month, the villagers will hold a lighting ceremony in front of the Tai Wong Yeh spirit tablet. The villagers will hang lanterns in the special shed to tell the ancestors and the gods that a male was born. Later, the *Ding Tou* 丁頭 (The father of the *Nan Ding*) will bring the

³⁹ Lee Leong Sze: *A Disappearing Settlement: Reconstructing the Historical Path that Singapore's Deguang Island has Traveled* (一個消失的聚落：重構新加坡德光島走過的歷史道路) (Singapore: Singapore National University, Global Publishing, 2009), pp. 39-40.

⁴⁰ Cheng Chih Ming, "Development of Hakka Bo Gong Belief in Southeast Asia", *Journal of Huaqiao University*, (March 2004), p. 65.

lanterns and place them at home. The lanterns will be burned on the 30th day of the 12th month of the lunar calendar.

5. Development Outlook of Kau Wah Keng Old Village

5.1 Current Life and Co-existence with the Surrounding Communities

Over a few centuries of change, Kau Wah Keng Old Village has now become the closest traditional New Territories village to the urban area. Over time, it has experienced all that life has to offer compared to the surrounding areas, but it has preserved the way of life, culture, and traditions of ancient New Territories villages, including clan festivals, unicorn dances, and making tea cakes.

The rapid development of the surrounding areas has altered life in Kau Wah Keng Old Village. The original markets and shops in the village have disappeared. There are a large variety of goods sold in the shops of Mei Foo Sun Chuen and the shopping malls in the neighbouring estates, which bring more choices to the villagers. This is why commercial activities have disappeared in the village.

The relationship between Kau Wah Keng Old Village and the connected Kau Wah Keng New Village are not particularly close, but the interaction between the villagers of the two places shows mutual respect for the space they share. The changing environment in the vicinity has meant that the farming elements of the Old Village have disappeared. Instead, villagers only regard the village as a place of residence, and daily life has become integrated with the surrounding environment. The self-sufficiency of the past is no longer seen. Today, Kau Wah Keng Old Village should be seen as a

member of the “Mei Foo circle of life”. Disasters have become a major concern on based on the types of construction in Kau Wah Keng Old Village. For example, in the fire of 2 October 2009, a squatter hut in the village first caught fire and quickly spread to other nearby squatter huts, triggering over ten petroleum gas tank explosions. Fifty squatter huts were burned to the ground, leaving 180 villagers homeless.⁴¹

5.2 A Historical Trail of Sustainable Development

There are few traditional villages in the Kowloon Peninsula and the surrounding areas, and the convenient transportation network still attracts people to Kau Wah Keng Old Village. By researching social history, and studying the history and changes of Kau Wah Keng Old Village and its surrounding areas, we can observe how Hong Kong housing has changed and how Hong Kong people lived in different eras.

This was the starting point of the idea of a “Housing Historical Trail” while Jao Tsung-I Academy would be the end point. The diversity of Hong Kong buildings and the housing history of Hong Kong people can be seen through different types of buildings (See Table 3).

Table 3: Housing Historical Trail		
Year	Location	Building
1669	Kau Wah Keng Old Village	Traditional village over 300 years
1949	Kau Wah Keng New Village	Village established in 1949
1968	Mei Foo Sun Chuen	The first private housing

⁴¹ See *Apple Daily*, “180 Lose Homes in Kau Wah Keng” (迎月怪火吞村·九華徑 180 人毀家園), 3 October 2009.

		development in Hong Kong
1968	Lai Chi Kok Bridge	The first sea-crossing bridge in Hong Kong
2000	Lingnan Garden	The original site of Lai Chi Kok swimming sheds
2001	Wah Lai Estate	The location of Lai Chi Kok Bay
2001	Lai Yan Court	The original site of Lai Yuen and Song Dynasty Village
2007	Manhattan Hill	The original site of KMB Lai Chi Kok Bus Depot
2014	Jao Tsung-I Academy	The first batch of Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme

6. Conclusion

The rapid development of the city has caused the growing gap between urban and rural areas. Highly developed Hong Kong is full of opportunities, and it is these spurred the population of Kau Wah Keng Old Village to gradually flow to the urban areas. Farming was once the mainstay of the village, but poor incomes from agriculture and the prosperity of the shipping industry saw people go abroad as seafarers, join the ranks of the Hong Kong government, or find other types of work. The farmland was abandoned and underwent an alternative kind of development.

Even though the Kau Wah Keng Old Village's farming community has shrunk, it has not lost sight of its traditional rural customs. Every autumn, villagers return from

all over the world to pay their respects, reflecting how clan relationships and traditional clan culture in rural villages has been inherited and passed on. In addition, clan members who went abroad as seafarers returned and brought things back to Kau Wah Keng Old Village, which changed the living habits of some villagers, giving rise to a new culture.

The intellectuals who came to Hong Kong to live in the village not only wrote articles describing their life in Kau Wah Keng Old Village, but also contributed an indelible footnote for the village and China's historical development.

Over the past half century, Kau Wah Keng Old Village and its neighbouring areas have undergone tremendous changes. This is a portrait of the renewal of the region and a microcosm of Hong Kong's social changes.

Appendices: Maps

Map 1: Current Village Boundary for Kau Wah Keng (Tsuen Wan)
Residents Representative Elections



Source: Home Affairs Department, “Kau Wah Keng”,
https://www.had.gov.hk/rre/images/village_map1922/S/s-tw-18.pdf [accessed 20
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Lin Lin 林琳	23 / 8 / 2018	Kau Wah Keng New Village
Tsang Wai-kwok 曾偉國	13 / 11 / 2018	Kau Wah Keng Old Village

Tsang Chiu-man 曾紹文	1 / 12 / 2018	Kau Wah Keng Old Village
Chan Kun-cheung 陳冠璋	20 / 12 / 2018	Mei Foo Sun Chuen
Tsang Tsz-woo 曾子和	28 / 12 / 2018	Kau Wah Keng Old Village
Wong Chung-hang 黃仲鏗	24 / 1 / 2019	Yeung Ching School
Lai Yin-fan 黎燕芬	14 / 2 / 2019	Kau Wa New Village
Tsang Kam-sim 曾錦嬋	20 / 2 / 2019	Kau Wah Keng Old Village
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HKRS209-4-6-41	SHEET 6. VILLAGES: KAU PA KANG (MAP NO. 104(41))
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Carl Smith Collection, Card No. # 39927	SIU MA SHI; MONGKOK; SIU YAU; UPPER CROSS ST.; SHAMSHUIPO; TSANG KWOK SUI; KAU WA KANG; FUI YIU ST.; KAU WO KAN, 1910
Photograph 08-25-070	Stonecutters Island in the background and Kau Wah Kang in the foreground, 1927 (背景是昂船洲,前方是九華徑,攝於1927年).