

“Historical and Architectural Traces of Sam Tung Uk” Audio Transcript

Location: Main Entrance

Theme: Introduction

Hello, welcome to the audio guide of the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for the “Historical Architectural Traces of Sam Tung Uk”. On this guided tour, we’ll explore the history and architectural features of Sam Tung Uk.

The Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre (also known as the Hong Kong ICH Centre for short) is located at Sam Tung Uk, a 200-year-old Hakka walled house. Sam Tung Uk was declared as a historical monument in 1981. In 1987 it was restored as the Sam Tung Uk Museum, and the Hong Kong ICH Centre was set up there in 2016. Blending the essence of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Hong Kong, here you can appreciate the features of the traditional Chinese architecture of Hong Kong and also learn about rich and diverse ICH items through the exhibitions held at the Hong Kong ICH Centre.

Let’s now start our tour! In front of you is the main entrance, flanked by a pair of wooden couplets. They depict the past surrounding environment of Sam Tung Uk, with Tai Mo Shan in the background and a bay nearby. Tsuen Wan used to be “Tsin Wan” and was denoted as a shallow bay. The couplets imply that Sam Tung Uk rested on the foothill of Tai Mo Shan and faced the waterfront at one time.

On the main door is a triangular wood-carved panel. It’s called a *caimen* which can be found on the main doors of some traditional temples in Hong Kong. Take a look at the auspicious motifs which appear on the *caimen*, such as pomegranates for high fertility, peonies for wealth, and a bat signifying the Chinese word *fu* relating to the granting of blessings.

Behind the *caimen* is a horizontal stone tablet inscribed with the Chinese characters “Chan Ancestral Hall”. We are going to visit the Ancestral Hall of the Chan clan and learn more about their history.

Can you spot the round peepholes on either side of the stone tablet? Do you know what they’re used for? Actually they’re similar to modern door viewers, as they were used for lookout and defensive

purposes. Sam Tung Uk is a defensive Hakka walled house. Having no windows in the external walls, it mainly relied on the surrounding walls to guard against thieves.

Let's take a look at the wall mural next to the round peephole on your upper right, the chrysanthemums and butterflies are symbols of longevity. Another mural next to the round peephole on the left depicts "magpies on plum tree branches", which represents a succession of happy events. A common theme can also be found on these two wall paintings, which is the "Four Gentlemen" among plants, namely plum blossoms, orchids, chrysanthemums and bamboo.

The empty lot behind you used to be called the "front yard". It was a public space for village gatherings and a playground for children until the late 1970s, when the Chan clan was resettled in the residential blocks in the new Sam Tung Uk village in Cheung Shan.

To continue the tour, please cross the threshold carefully and step into the Entrance Hall of the Chan Ancestral Hall. Please feel free to scan the QR codes on the interpretation stands located at designated spots along our route. Let's go to the next stop! There is an interpretation label under the wooden plaque "Cho Tak Lau Fong" in the Entrance Hall.