

# Towards Urbanisation: Shuen Wan and Plover Cove Reservoir

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Tai Po Sea refers to the bay between Tai Po Market and Grass Island. Today it is also known as Tolo Harbour. In fact as early as 1899, Stewart Lockhart had referred to this bay as Tolo Harbour in his report on the New Territories to the Colonial Government.<sup>1</sup> An elongated bay stretching horizontally from east to west, Tai Po Sea has Chek Chau and Grass Island at its east exit, Pat Sin Leng and Wang Leng at its north and the Sai Kung peninsula at its south. With Chek Chau and Grass Island blocking sea waves in the east and the Lam Tsuen River and Shing Mun River supplying much fresh water and nutrients, Tai Po Sea is an ideal location for fishing. The area northeast of the sea, surrounded by Yim Tin Tsai, Tung Tau Chau, Pak Sha Tau Chau and Fu Tau Sha Peninsula, is known as Plover Cove, or Shuen Wan Hoi.

In terms of administration, the northern coast of Tai Po Sea is managed by Tai Po District Council. At present, Ting Kok Road runs along the area's east-west axis on the northern coast of Tai Po Sea, and is an indispensable access route between the coastal areas and Tai Po. Not only the coastal areas intimately connected to Tai Po Market in terms of transportation, but also the tourists visiting Tai Mei Tuk, Plover Cover Reservoir, the Bride's Pool and Pat Sin Leng bring business to the market. Meanwhile, Plover Cove Reservoir has always been a major infrastructure in Hong Kong's water distribution system. We know for a fact that the northern coastline of Tai Po Sea is an important part of Tai Po's administration and community, but what was the relationship like between these locales and the rest of Tai Po in the past? This article sets out to show the influence of political and economic forces on the northern shores of Tai Po Sea, especially Shuen Wan, and how community relationships have gradually been formed with the rest of Tai Po.

## Tai Po Sea before the Qing Dynasty

There has not been much written about Tai Po Sea's northern coastline before the Qing Dynasty. In 1985, eight lime kilns were discovered in Nai Tong Kok of Wang Leng Tau in the northeastern corner of Tai Po Sea.<sup>2</sup> The

kilns are believed to have been built in the Tang Dynasty and this suggests that there was already human settlement in Wang Leng Tau then. Lime was produced by burning shells, oyster shells and coral reefs in the kilns, and it was used in constructing buildings and boats as well as making salt.<sup>3</sup> The Wang Leng Tau area had little flatland and thus was not suitable for human habitation. Also, it was far away from Lam Tsuen and Shing Mun River Valley, where many villages were located. Since there was no convenient transportation, the lime produced by the kilns in Nai Tong Kok was not intended for people living in inland areas. The existence of the lime kilns speaks of a thriving fishing, salt or pearl farming industry in the Tai Po Sea region in the Tang Dynasty.

During the Five Dynasties, Tai Po Sea was a prime location for pearl picking. An emperor of the Southern Han Kingdom during the Five Dynasties set up Meichuan Sector ("du") in Tai Po Sea and sent a troop of 2,000 men to guard it. The emperor also sent agents to pick pearls in "Meizhu Pond." The pearl farmers needed lime to build housing and make boats for their trade, and the lime kilns in Nai Tong Kok supplied construction material for boats and houses. After Northern Song invaded the Southern Han Kingdom, Meichuan Sector was abolished in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the Kaibao Reign (972 A.D.) because pearl picking was believed to do the kingdom harm. As a matter of fact, pearl picking was banned altogether. Later in the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, the industry was revived but its scale was much smaller and activities were sporadic.<sup>4</sup> Where was "Meizhu Pond"? Historical documents suggest it was somewhere in Tolo Harbour but the exact location is not clear.<sup>5</sup>

During the Ming Dynasty, Tai Po enjoyed robust growth. Many people settled in the district and built villages, yet little is known of the developments of the coastal areas. According to *Yuedaji* (粵大記) (Guangdong Records) by Guo Fei, Lek Yuen Village and Tai Po Tau Village were villages along the coast of Tai Po Sea.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Siu Kwok Kin's research shows that there were many villages along the coastline of Tai Po Sea during the Ming Dynasty, including Wu Kai Sha, Tai Po Tau, Lek Yuen Village, Grass



Island, Yung Shue O, Lai Chi Chong and Pan Chung.<sup>7</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Shunzhi Reign in the Qing Dynasty (1661), the Qing Court ordered the coastal evacuation as part of its efforts to fight anti-Qing activities launched by Zheng Chenggong. People living in the coastal areas of the four provinces of Jiangnan, Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong were relocated inland. Residents in the coastal areas of Guangdong were ordered to move fifty Chinese miles inland. In the third year of the Kangxi Reign (1664), a second coastal evacuation was enforced. Most of present-day Hong Kong was on the relocation lists of these two evacuations. In the eighth year of the Kangxi Reign (1669), the Qing Court permitted the reinstatement of the territory, as requested by Viceroy Zhou Youde and Governor Wang Lairen. Residents were allowed to return to their original homes. Du Zhen was commissioned to tour the coastal areas of Fujian and Guangdong to find out the impact of the evacuation on local communities. He finished his tour with the report *An Investigative Tour of Yue and Min* (粵閩巡視紀略), which records each village in Xin'an County that was affected by the evacuation, including Tai Po Tau, Pan Chung, Ting Kok Village and Yung Shue O.<sup>8</sup> This allows us to infer that, before the Qing Dynasty's coastal evacuation, Tai Po Tau, Pan Chung and Ting Kok Village, among others, were already established in the Tai Po Sea area.

There are a few reasons why there have been few historical records on Tai Po Sea during the Ming Dynasty. First, Tai Po Sea is located in northeastern Hong Kong, a rather distant location in the past that was not on Guangdong's coastal trade routes. It was also close to the inland, and not an important military outpost or tax collection point. Second, the coastal evacuations in the early Qing Dynasty had an enormous impact on all of Hong Kong: almost all residents were relocated inland. After the reinstatement of the territory, many of the villagers who lived in the New Territories before the evacuation did not return to their original homes. At the same time, many Hakka people moved to Hong Kong, especially from the northeastern areas.<sup>9</sup> The fact that many of the original villages were not rebuilt when a large number of new residents moved into the area resulted in tremendous changes in the local

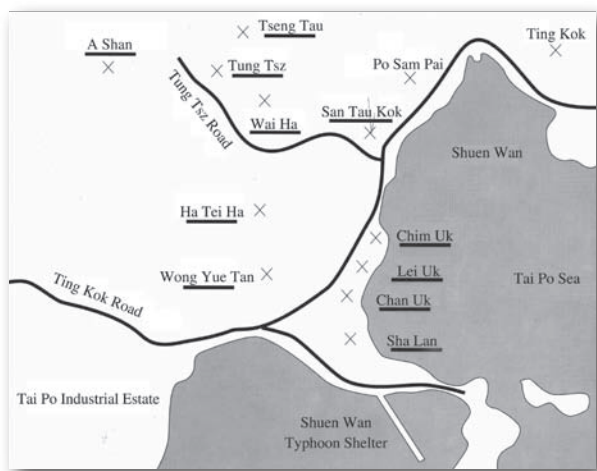
communities. A large number of historical records were lost, which poses a major problem when researching on the New Territories today.

### *Brief Overview of the Development of Hakka Villages along the Coasts of Shuen Wan after the Reinstatement of Territory*

When the territory was reinstated during the early Kangxi years, many Hakka people moved into Tai Po and a few local communities were formed along the coastline of Tai Po Sea, including Shap Sze Heung on the southern coast of Kei Leng Ha Hoi, Grass Island in the east, Luk Heung, Ting Kok and Shuen Wan on the northern coast, and the Fung Yuen villages to the northwest of Tai Po Market. Due to geographical barriers, transportation and trade were difficult and these local communities did not have close relationships.

Ting Kok Village was one of the first few villages to be rebuilt on the northern coast of Tai Po Sea after the reinstatement of the territory. According to the *Gazetter of Xin'an County* (新安縣志), compiled in the 27<sup>th</sup> year of the Kangxi Reign (1688), Ting Kok Village was re-established after the reinstatement of the territory, but when was the village first founded? Did it exist as early as the Ming Dynasty? There remain mysteries to be solved. Judging from the surrounding geography, Ting Kok Village must have been an early village in the area. It is located in the flatland area on the southern foot of Pat Sin Leng.<sup>10</sup> The streams flowing from Pat Sin Leng via Lai Pik Shan and Shan Liu to Ting Kok supplied a rich source of fresh water for the residents, making Ting Kok fertile ground for agricultural produce and fishing. Kwan Tai Temple of Ting Kok was built in the early Qing Dynasty. Currently the temple has two plaques from the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Qianlong Reign (1785) with the inscription, "Renovation of this Temple", marking it as the earliest temple built in the Shuen Wan area. The inscription on the plaques, along with the donation records, show that Kwan Tai Temple of Ting Kok Village was also the largest

temple in the Shuen Wan area. This suggests that Ting Kok Village was the most prosperous village in Shuen Wan during the Qing Dynasty. The inscription on one of the stone plaques also records that seven trawlers<sup>11</sup> contributed funds for the renovation of Kwan Tai Temple, illustrating that Shuen Wan was a fishing area at the time, or alternatively, that the Ting Kok Village area was a docking station for the fishing boats.<sup>12</sup>



The location of Shuen Wan Joint Village. Source: *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊).

Wong Yue Tan Village and Tung Tsz Village, both located west of Ting Kok Village, were also settlements re-established after the reinstatement of the territory. According to the *Kangxi Gazetter of Xin'an County* (康熙新安縣志), villages rebuilt in the Tai Po area included Pan Chung Village, Ting Kok Village, Tung Tsai Village (Tung Tsz), Kei Leng Village, Tai Po Tau, Wong Yue Tan, Kau Tong Village, Tai Hang Village, Lam Tsuen Village, Wun Yiu Village and Cheung Shue Tan Village. Thus we see Tung Tsz Village and Wong Yue Tan Village were founded before the Kangxi Reign. According to records by the Yip villagers of Tung Tsz Village, their ancestors moved from Danshui in Guangdong to Lin Ma Hang in Sha Tau Kok, and finally settled in Tung Tsz and founded the village. It was around 600 years ago during the mid-Ming Dynasty.<sup>13</sup> Due to the lack of historical evidence, I maintain a more conservative view on this history. As to the Cheungs of Wong Yue Tan, they claimed an ancestry from Wuhua County of Guangdong. Their ancestors

settled in Wong Yue Tan, but there is no record on the time of settlement.<sup>14</sup> Neighbouring villages acknowledged that these two villages were the earliest settlements, but there was no consensus on which village was founded first.

The rest of the villages in Shuen Wan were built after the reinstatement of the territory. A Shan Village, located downstream from Tung Tsz Village, was founded during the Qianlong Reign (1736-1795) over 300 years ago. Lams and Suens resided in the village, separated by the river.<sup>15</sup> As to the villages of San Tau Kok, Wai Ha, Ha Tei Ha and Chan Uk downstream from A Shan, they were built surrounding the bay area. This bay was girdled by land and was closely related to the history of Chim Uk. According to records by the villagers of Chim Uk, the village has been in existence for over 250 years. The entire village belonged to the Chim clan, which originated from Wuhua of Guangdong. After its founding, Chim Uk collaborated with other villages to build a dam connecting it to San Tau Kok. Slowly the bay area between the dam and the land was cultivated for farming.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, members of other villages confirm that the dam has been in existence for 300 years, and it was a collaborative effort by the different villages. However, they can no longer describe in detail how villagers at the time organised themselves to build the dam. San Tau Kok Village was founded by the Sungts 200 years ago. Later most of the Sungts moved out of the village, and the Tsangs from Hingning in Guangdong, the Chans of Sha Lan, the Lees from Sha Lo Tung, Siu Kau and Wu Kau Tang, and the Lees from Hua County and Dagang of Baoan, Guangdong moved in. These different clans settled down in different parts of the village and formed clusters of village houses, and they maintained their own ancestral halls within the clusters. At the moment, the Lees of Hua County, the Lees of Dagang, the Chans and the Tsangs still keep their ancestral halls there. The Lees of three different origins moved to Sha Lan 200 years ago. Today, besides one family of the Yims, the rest of the villagers are all of the Lee clan. The Chans no longer live in Sha Lan. The Lees have three founding fathers and the three bloodlines each have their own ancestral hall in the village. The Yims also operate an ancestral hall. According to Lee villagers, the Lee village was founded by their founding father more than 100 years ago, and at present



the Lees and the Los reside in the village. The Chan village was founded by the Chans 250 years ago. In this village live the Tangs, Kos and Los today, besides the Chans. The Chans were of three different origins, and thus there are three Chan ancestral halls in the village. The Tangs also have one ancestral hall. The village of Ha Tei Ha hosts the clans of Lo and Chim. The Los moved from Danshui of Guangdong to Lee Uk during the Kangxi Reign. After many generations, the clan grew and some descendants moved to Chan Uk. When the dam connecting San Tau Kok and Chim Uk was completed, some Lo and Chim villagers moved to Ha Tei Ha and settled down there.<sup>17</sup>

The six villages of Chung Pui, Chung Mei, Wang Leng Tau, Kam Chuk Pai, Tai Kau and Siu Kau were located east of Tai Mei Tuk. The earliest of them was founded in the mid Qianlong Reign. Out of these six villages, only residents of Kam Chuk Pai were from the Wong clan, the rest were members of the Lee clan. Both the Wongs and the Lees were of Hakka origin. Wang Leng Tau, Kam Chuk Pai and Siu Kau were the earliest settlements. Later a member of the Lee clan founding Wang Leng Tau moved to Chung Mei, and Tai Kau was the latest settlement out of the six.<sup>18</sup> The Lees of Wang Leng Tau and Tai Kau as well as the Wongs of Wang Chuk Pai claim that their ancestors moved to the current locations from Wu Kau Tang. According to clan history, by the 1960s, the villagers of Kam Chuk Pai had already passed on twelve generations, and those in Tai Kau only had nine. Assuming that one generation spans twenty years, the Wongs of Kam Chuk Pai should have settled in the area around 1761 to 1781, namely the mid Qianlong Reign. Other villages were successively founded afterwards.<sup>19</sup>

Out of all the villages in the Shuen Wan area, only Ting Kok and Tung Tsz are indigenous (Punti) villages. The rest are villages of Hakka origin. Farming activities flourished in Ting Kok, for there was vast flatland with rich water sources. As to the villages of San Tau Kok, Wai Ha, Ha Tei Ha and Chan Uk, agriculture improved only when the dam encircled arable farmland for rice. The six villages including Siu Kau and Tai Kau were founded later on, and, located on elongated land, their agriculture was confined by natural limitations. Wang Leng was right at the north of

these villages, and there were only small pieces of farmland close to the water source. Out of these six villages, only Chung Mei and Tai Kau had more farmland. The Bride's Pool supplied fresh water for Chung Mei Village and washed over a vast piece of flatland in front of the village, creating favourable conditions for farming. The villagers of Siu Kau Village developed step fields next to the village. Since transportation access was difficult, the six villages mostly planted rice until the 1960s.

In this light, the villages relied on fishing as the main source of income and livelihood. Ting Kok was a docking station for trawlers, suggesting there were rich fishing resources in the area. The villagers of Tung Tsz, Wong Yue Tan and Chim Uk all say that their ancestors were fishermen and farmers, while the villagers of Chan Uk and Sha Lan, both located close to the sea, say their ancestors were mostly fishermen. According to the Chan villagers of Chan Uk, the village used to be a fishing port and the fishermen exchanged their catch for produce. Many villagers turned their homes into stores and the village resembled a small town.<sup>20</sup> The villagers of Siu Kau and Tai Kau also say their ancestors were fishermen and farmers. The women of the villages farmed while the men fished. These six villages were once famous for scallop picking. The abundance of scallops was probably the main reason why the villagers of these six villages chose to settle down there.

In June of 1898, the Chinese and the British governments signed *The Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory*, under which the British Government leased the vast land south of Shenzhen River, including the waters and the islands. This land became known as the New Territories. Since the British had little knowledge on the New Territories, they commissioned Colonial Secretary Lockhart, who knew Chinese, to conduct a field survey of the land. In August of 1898, Lockhart began the survey and completed it in less than a month. He then submitted a report to the British Government in October known as *Report on the Extension of the Colony of Hong Kong* (香港殖民地展拓界址報告書), which became an important source of information for research on the New Territories.



The report contains specific information on the development of the Shuen Wan coastline. In the appendix, the area now known as the New Territories is divided into different "yuek" ("yue" in Putonghua, meaning "alliance"), including Shenzhen Yeuk, Sha Tau Kok Yeuk, Yuen Long Yeuk, Sheung Yue Yeuk, Kowloon Yeuk and Island Yeuk. The report states that the most populous village on the northern coast of Tai Po Sea was Ting Kok with a population of 650. Shuen Wan followed with 250 residents (see Chart 1). "Shuen Wan" in the report refers to present-day Chan Uk, Lee Uk, Chim Uk and Sha Lan. However, Wong Yue Tan, San Tau Kok and Wai Ha villages are not part of Shuen Wan in the report.<sup>21</sup> These come under Sheung Yue Yeuk.

Chart 1: Village Population on the Northern Coast of Tai Po Sea

Alliances (Yeuk)	Village	Number of Residents	Hakka / Punti
Sha Tau Kok Yeuk	Sha Tau Kok	700	Hakka
	Siu Kau	150	Hakka
	Tai Kau	100	Hakka
	Kam Chuk Pai	100	Hakka
	Chung Mei	60	Hakka
	Wang Leng Tau	150	Hakka
	Wang Leng Tsui	70	Hakka
	Sheung Yue Yeuk	Tai Po Market	280
Wai Ha		120	Punti
Wong Yue Tau		100	Hakka
Sha Lo Tung		100	Hakka
Shuen Wan		250	Hakka
Ting kok		650	Punti
San Tau Kok		50	Hakka
Tung Tsai		130	Hakka
A Shan		10	Hakka
Tai Mei Tuk		60	Hakka
Lung Mei		150	Hakka
Po Sam Pai		100	Hakka
Lai Pik Shan		25	Hakka
Cheung Shue Tan	500	Punti	

Source: *Report by Stewart Lockhart on the Extension of the Colony of Hong Kong*, Appendix No. 5.

Information gathered from this report shows that the fishing industry was very important to the development of these villages. In the villages of Shuen Wan, the coastal villages had as many residents as their counterparts in

the inland areas or those that owned more farmland. Each village had an average population of 100, generally more populous than the villages along the Lam Tsuen River. For example, Pan Chung was built as early as the Ming Dynasty, and by 1898 the village had a population of 100 people. The development of the villages along the Shuen Wan coasts was on a par with that in the inland areas. This was because the rich sea resources in Shuen Wan provided ample food for the villagers.

### *Community Relations among the Villages of Shuen Wan*

There are few sources on the local community of Ting Kok. Along with the neighbouring Hakka villages of Shan Liu, Lai Pik Shan, Lo Tsz Tin, Lung Mei and Tai Mei Tuk, Ting Kok belonged to Ting Kok Yeuk.<sup>22</sup> Kwan Tai Temple of Ting Kok was the centre of worship for this village alliance. Indeed, this alliance was also the most economically powerful. In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Guangxu Reign (1892), Tai Hang Yeuk, Lam Tsuen Yeuk, Jap Wo Yeuk, Chap Wo Yeuk, Cheung Shue Tan Yeuk, Ting Kok Yeuk and Fanling Yeuk formed the Alliance of Seven to build Tai Wo Market, which was later known as Tai Po New Market. As Tai Wo Market was located south of the Lam Tsuen River exit, villagers of Lam Tsuen Yeuk and Fanling Yeuk had to cross the river by boat to purchase goods there. It was very inconvenient, and Kwong Fuk Bridge was built in the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of the Guangxu Reign (1896) to benefit the villagers. On the list of contributors are residents of Tai Hang, Fanling, Wun Yiu, Lung Mei, Ting Kok, She Shan, Sha Lo Tung, Sai Kung, Kau Lung Hang and more. This shows that, among the villages of Shuen Wan, only Ting Kok and Lung Mei contributed funds in the name of the village or yeuk. The villages of Tung Tsz, Wong Yue Tan, Tai Kau and Siu Kau did not make collective donations as a village or yeuk. Thus we see Ting Kok was substantially more prosperous than its neighbours in Shuen Wan.

The villages of Tung Tsz, Wong Yue Tan, Sha Lan and Chim Uk formed Chap Wo Yeuk, a village organisation,



with the villages of Sha Lo Tung, Cheung Uk Village, Lee Uk Village and Lo Wai. The latter four villages were located more towards the inland in the north. Chap Wo Yeuk was a member of the Alliance of Seven that founded Tai Wo Market. The villages of Sha Lo Tung have now been vacated, and there are not many records on Chap Wo Yeuk. In fact, local residents rarely mention Chap Wo Yeuk today.

Currently, the eleven villages of A Shan, Tung Tsz, Wai Ha, Ha Tei Ha, Tseng Tau, San Tau Kok, Wong Yue Tan, Chim Uk, Chan Uk, Lee Uk and Sha Lan make up Shuen Wan Heung. The time of Shuen Wan Heung's initial emergence is unknown, but in the late 1970s, the term "Shuen Wan Heung" was already used to refer to the region including the villages of Wai Ha, Sha Lan and Chan Uk Village.<sup>23</sup> An administrative organ for Shuen Wan Heung was established in 1992.

Worship activities at the Sam Kung Temples and the "she" altar held the villages of Shuen Wan Heung together as a cohesive entity. The Sam Kung Temples were located next to Kei Shan Kok between Wai Ha and Ha Tei Ha. This area used to be a waterfront before the bay was developed as arable land. The Sam Kung Temples refer to Hip Tin Temple, Tin Hau Temple and Confucius Temple, worshipping Kwan Tai, Tin Hau and Confucius respectively. Confucius was worshiped because the temple was once the private study for Shuen Wan Heung. The Sam Kung Temples were believed to have been built over 300 years ago. Villagers used to give alms and seek blessings at the end of each lunar year and worship festivities were held there in the first lunar month. During the festivities, puppet troupes were invited to perform.<sup>24</sup> By now, most villagers no longer recall details of the puppet shows, but they remember that the celebrations lasted for five days and four evenings. After the Sam Kung Temples collapsed during a windstorm, worship festivities were held at the "she" altar worshipping gods of the earth in Wai Ha instead. The altar was located on the edge of the sea before the bay area was developed into farmland. A small altar next to the bay and the woods, it has always been simple and unsophisticated. Today villagers still gather at the altar for worship festivities on Chinese New Year's Eve.

Meanwhile, the festivities held in the beginning of the lunar year were the most important joint activities for the eleven villages of Shuen Wan. The eleven villages are divided into seven jia. Each jia appoints two leaders, who are responsible for the twice-yearly worship ceremonies. They also select the dates for the altar worship. On the actual day of worship, villagers sacrifice live pigs in front of the altar and wash the offering in the small stream close by. The pork would then be cooked and villagers would picnic in front of the altar. Only villagers who have made contributions to the festivities are entitled to a share of the pork.<sup>25</sup>

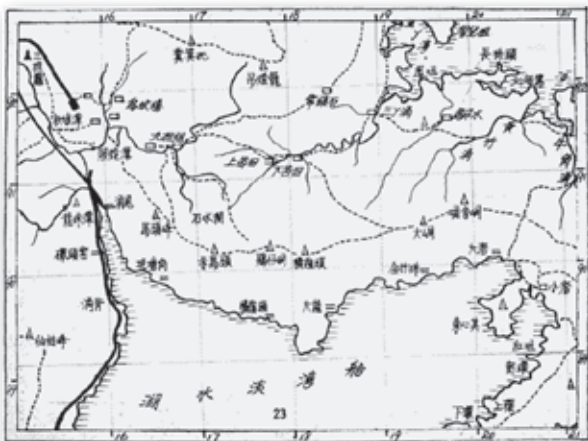
What kind of relationship did Ting Kok Yeuk and Chap Wo Yeuk have? And what was the relationship like between Ting Kok Yeuk and Shuen Wan Heung? There is little existing evidence today to draw a conclusion. When the villagers of Shuen Wan Heung reminisce about the past, few ever mention Ting Kok. Thus the relationship between Ting Kok and Shuen Wan Heung in the olden days does not seem close. Some villagers say during Dragon Boat Festival, the route of the boat race used to run from Shuen Wan to Ting Kok, and villages of Ting Kok also participated in the race. However, during the race, there were often fights between the teams from Ting Kok and Shuen Wan.<sup>26</sup> Apparently the two villages did not have the harmonious relationship they share today.

Shuen Wan Heung is within the economic zone of Tai Po and villagers mostly traded in Tai Po Market. In the 1940s, it took more than one hour to walk from Shuen Wan Heung to Tai Po Market. Villagers used to collect wood and grasses from the hills and sell them as fuel, and would then use the money to buy necessities. They also sought doctors in Tai Po Market, as well as managed special occasions such as weddings and funerals.<sup>27</sup>

The six villages of Chung Pui, Chung Mei, Wang Leng Tau, Kam Chuk Pai, Tai Kau and Siu Kau, located on the northeast corner of Shuen Wan, made up Luk Heung. In fact, there was Nai Tong Kok between Chung Mei and Wang Leng Tau, and Wang Leng Tsui Village next to Wang Leng Tau. There are different references to this area, including



Wang Leng Pui, Wang Leng Tsui, Tai Lung or Tai Tung.<sup>28</sup> The Lockhart Report only records the six villages of Chung Mei, Wang Leng Tau, Wang Leng Tsui, Kam Chuk Pai, Tai Kau and Siu Kau, and does not include any discussion on Chung Pui and Nai Tong Kok. Aerial Photographs of Tai Po in the 1950s, a collection at the Hong Kong Lands Department, show buildings in Nai Tong Kok and Wang Leng Pui. Unfortunately there are no records stating the construction year and history of these structures. Some reports state that there was only one school, Yuk Yin Public School, in Nai Tong Kok during the 1960s.<sup>29</sup> As to Wang Leng Pui or Wang Leng Tsui, the village had been relocated but it was not mentioned in the newspapers. When the villagers mention Luk Heung today, they usually only refer to the above-mentioned six villages.<sup>30</sup>



The location of Luk Heung.



Villagers of Shuen Wan sharing sacrificial pork before the Earth God Shrine. (Photography by Ma Kin Hang)

The name "Luk Heung" should not have appeared earlier than 1941. Even though the villagers of all six villages claim they belong to Luk Heung, they hold different views on how this name came to existence. Some villagers say the name Luk Heung refers to the local administrative system instituted by the Japanese during the occupation years. At the time, the area of the six villages, along with Hung Shek Mun, was referred to as Luk Heung.<sup>31</sup> Other villagers say the term "Luk Heung" appeared in 1966, when the Hong Kong Government had to relocate the six villages to construct Plover Cove Reservoir. The area was referred to by the government as Luk Heung. Meanwhile, some villagers further divide the six villages into Sheung Sam Heung (the upper three) and Ha Sam Heung (the lower three) – Chung Pui, Chung Mei and Wang Leng Tau formed Ha Sam Heung, while Kam Chuk Pai, Tai Kau and Siu Kau made up Sheung Sam Heung. Sam Kwong School was located at the border of the upper and lower villages.

The villagers of Luk Heung, whether they were the Wongs or the Lees, were close relatives of the villagers of Wu Kau Tang. According to the villagers, their ancestors had relocated from Wu Kau Tang because it was getting overcrowded and not enough farmland was available. The current location was good for both fishing and farming. The founding fathers of the six villages were mostly branch families from Wu Kau Tang. Most of them were the Lees, but the Lees of the six villages are not directly related. Today the Lees can only trace back to a common ancestor a very long time ago, Lee Huode, who originated from Wuhua of Fujian. Before the villagers relocated, there were two ancestral hall one in Chung Pui and one in Siu Kau. After the move, the ancestral hall in Chung Pui was rebuilt in Luk Heung Lane of Tai Po. For Siu Kau, an ancestral hall was built in Fanling after the relocation. Before the villages moved, all villagers would return to Wu Kau Tang to worship their ancestors before Chinese New Year. After the relocation, most villagers still practised this annual custom of returning to the Wu Kau Tang Ancestral Hall for rituals, with the exception of the villagers of Chung Pui and Siu Kau, who built new ancestral halls.<sup>32</sup>



The villagers of these six villages have all emphasised that the villages were united and maintained harmonious relationships. For example, they often held feasts together. I am certainly not sceptical of this, and I believe that there had been cooperation and socialisation between the villagers, such as marriages. However, current sources do not indicate that there had been village alliances formed. There had been no common temple for these six villages, and there was no joint effort in worship rituals. Even for the Lees of different villages, there had been no joint activities to worship common ancestors, albeit of a very far origin. The six villages emphasise that they all belonged to Luk Heung and had always been involved in recognised communal activities, but there has been no evidence found of a particularly close-knitted community relationship in Luk Heung before the villages moved.<sup>33</sup>

Even though Luk Heung was located on the coast of Shuen Wan, community relations with Sha Tau Kok were close. Before the 1950s, the villagers of Luk Heung traded in Sha Tau Kok Market, and rarely did they go to Tai Po Market. Villagers climbed the hill behind Tai Kau Village and headed eastwards for Hung Shek Mun. Going westwards past Kwun Yam Tung, they could reach Wu Kau Tang from Sheung Miu Tin or Ha Miu Tin. At the same time, the villagers could head west from Luk Heung for Wu Kau Tang through Chung Mei. From Wu Kau Tang, the villagers could reach Kuk Po via Fun Shui Au and Sha Tau Kok Market by boat.<sup>34</sup> Due to the blood relationships, the convenience of



Villagers having a meal in front of the ancestral hall of the Lee Lineage in Siu Kau. (Provided by Lee Hing)

transportation and economic ties, Luk Heung belonged to Nam Shan Tung, one of the ten yuek of Sha Tau Kok before the New Territories became part of the British colony. The Lockhart Report shows that Sha Tau Kok Market was a major market in northern New Territories, and its economic influence was apparently superior to Tai Po Market.<sup>35</sup> The route from the west of Luk Heung towards Tai Mei Tuk was a very rigorous path, and it was not easy for the villages of Luk Heung to be connected to Tai Po Market. They rarely went to Tai Po Market; in fact, they might have never gone to Ting Kok either. They did not maintain close relationships with villagers of Ting Kok.

Thus we see the villages along the coast of Tai Po Sea, or those in Shuen Wan, actually formed a few distinct communities. They did not maintain close economic or social ties. Some did not even participate in the economic circle of Tai Po Market.

### *Changes in Tai Po District's Economy*

As early as the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the Kangxi Reign (1672), the Tangs of Tai Po Tau had run stores next to the Tang Ancestral Hall of the Filial Son. The stores were known collectively as Tai Po Tau Market (later known as Tai Po Old Market). After the British took over Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula, trade in Tai Po Sea began to develop. Goods from Sha Tau Kok Market could pass through Kuk Po, Wu Kau Tang to Tai Mei Tuk or Ting Kok, and then be transported to Wun Yiu or Cheung Shue Tan by boat. At the same time, goods from the coast of Tai Pang Wan could be transported to Wun Yiu or Cheung Shue Tan across Tai Po Sea. After arriving in these two locations, they could be distributed to Shatin, Tsuen Wan or Kowloon.

The emergence of Tai Wo Market was an indication of growing trade in Tai Po Sea. In the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Guangxu Reign (1892), the Alliance of Seven established Tai Wo Market across the Lam Tsuen River to the west of Tai Po Old Market. It was known as Tai Po New Market. The location of Tai Wo Market was more favourable for the docking of commercial boats. There is evidence that, despite





the establishment of Tai Wo Market, Tai Po Old Market did not experience an abrupt and immediate decline.<sup>36</sup> The co-existence of the two markets at the river mouth exit of the Lam Tsuen River shows that there was tremendous trade growth in Tai Po.

Existing records also show that Tai Po Sea enjoyed robust trade growth during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Po Sam Pai is located between Shuen Wan Heung and Ting Kok, and from the trawler docking station in Ting Kok we can infer that Po Sam Pai was also a docking area for large boats. Hip Tin Temple was an important religious site in Po Sam Pai. The inscriptions on the Plaque of Hip Tin Temple of Po Sam Pai, established in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the Daoguang Reign (1823), and the Plaque at the God of the Earth Temple of Wun Yiu, established in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the Daoguang Reign (1828), do not mention any local trade.<sup>37</sup> A possible explanation is that the Tai Po Sea area was not a common trading venue at the time. Established in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the Guangxu Reign (1889), the wooden plaque of Hip Tin Temple of Po Sam Pai denotes the origins of the contributors before their names, such as Tung Tsz, Wo Hang, Lin Ma Hang, Danshui and Ping Yeung.<sup>38</sup> This was an effort to illustrate the status of the village by showing that contributors came from many places. Wo Hang, Lin Ma Hang and Ping Yeung were villages in the Sha Tau Kok area, while Danshui was an important market along the coast of Tai Pang Wan. The villages of these areas contributed funds to the construction of Hip Tin Temple in Po Sam Pai because they had trade relations with Po Sam Pai. The wooden plaque of the 31<sup>st</sup> year of the Guangxu Reign (1905) records contributors from Cheung Shue Tan, Tseng Lan Shue, Sham Shui Po, Xiangshan (present-day Zhongshan) and Dongguang,<sup>39</sup> suggesting that people from these locations had maintained social ties with residents of Po Sam Pai. These two inscriptions reveal that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Po Sam Pai was on the trade route between Sha Tau Kok and the coasts of Tai Po Sea or even Kowloon. The name Cheung Shue Tan appears on the inscription at Hip Tin Temple of Po Sam Pai, allowing us to infer that the goods from Sha Tau Kok were transported to Cheung Shue Tan via Po Sam Pai, and then to Tsuen Wan or Kowloon.

Cheung Shue Tan is located on the western coast of Tai Po Sea, and was part of the important transportation route from Tai Po Sea to Shatin and Tsuen Wan via Tai Pang Wan. The Lockhart Report states that the population of Cheung Shue Tan was 500, and the village was on a par with Ting Kok in terms of economic development. Cheung Shue Tan Village and Tai Po Mei Village made up Cheung Shue Tan Yeuk. Hip Tin Temple of Cheung Shue Tan was the centre of worship for the local community there. The *Inscription of Contributors for the Renovation of Mo Tai [Hip Tin] Temple* (重修武帝古廟樂助芳名開列碑) records the names of contributors from Lek Yuen, Sha Tin Tau, Sha Tau Kok, Wo Che, Kowloon, Mang Kung Uk, Luk Keng, Tsuen Wan, Sai Kung, Nam Chung, Lam Tsuen, Kwai Chung, Lai Chi Wo, Wu Kau Tang and more. As contributors came from all over Sha Tau Kok, Tsuen Wan and Shatin, travelling merchants at the time must have valued the transport and trade routes at Cheung Shue Tan. The *Wing Lok Bridge Inscription of Cheung Shue Tan* (永樂橋碑) in 1925 records contributors from Tsuen Wan, Sha Tau Kok, Yim Tin, So Lo Pun and Lin Ma Hang. This is once again proof that there were trade relationships between Tsuen Wan, Sha Kok and Tai Pang Wan. The inscription says, "left towards Tai Po, right towards Shatin. Neighbours from far and near go through this path; farmers, workers and merchants rally on their way. Even though it is not a main street in the city, it is an essential route for many walks of life." This statement illustrates that Cheung Shue Tan was an important trade route in the Tai Po Sea area in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1910, the Kowloon-Canton Railway began servicing the New Territories with stations in Shatin, Tai Po and Fanling. Tai Po Station was later renamed Tai Po Kau Station and a pier was built on the bay. The railway station was located there to benefit the transportation of goods from Tai Pang Wan to Kowloon on the train, once again indicating that Cheung Shue Tan, next to the train station, was an important transport hub between the coasts of Tai Po Sea and Tai Pang Wan. In 1913, Tai Po Market Station was built next to Tai Wo Market, and the transport of goods and passengers became concentrated in the Tai Wo Market area. Tai Po Old Market was gradually replaced by Tai Wo Market in terms of



significance.<sup>40</sup> It is unclear when Cheung Shue Tan lost its status as a transportation hub. However, it is plausible that Tai Po Kau Train Station brought competition to against the human transport of goods through the hills from Sha Tau Kok or Tai Pang Wan to Tsuen Wan.

In 1937, the Japanese military invaded Guangzhou. Trade in Tai Po Sea became even more vibrant in order to stop the Japanese from blocking the ports of China. The economy of Grass Island (Tap Mun) developed rapidly, and merchants congregated there. During the occupation, the Japanese military set up armed investigation outposts in Yuen Chau Tsai and conducted regular surveillance on the ships coming in and out of Tai Po Sea. The military were also stationed at Sha Tau Kok and Sai Kung. People took different routes to smuggle in basic goods for survival. The first route was from Tai Po Market to Tai Pang Wan. Since there was a Japanese military outpost in Yuen Chau Tsai, people took the land route from Tai Po Market to Tai Mei Tuk, and then boarded boats at Ngau Au bound for Tai Kau. This route was relatively safe because even if they were discovered by the Japanese army, the smugglers could claim they were taking goods back to their own villages. Once in Tai Kau, they could climb a small hill to reach Hung Shek Mun. There they would wait until dark to board a boat to Sha Yu Chung in Tai Pang Wan, which was controlled by guerrilla forces. The smugglers usually stayed in Sha Yu Chung for a day, and then started their journey to the Mainland. Otherwise they would purchase goods in Sha Yu Chung and waited until dark to return to Tai Po. Each of these smuggling trips would take three to four days.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, smugglers taking the second route began their journey from Sai Kung through the hills to Nai Chung of Shap Sze Heung. Then they took a boat to Tai Kau or Grass Island and finally to Tai Pang Wan.<sup>42</sup> As Hung Shek Mun was an important point on the smuggling route, the guerrilla force set up a tax booth there. The tax income was an important source of financial support for guerrilla activities. When the Japanese controlled Hong Kong, the relationship between Luk Heung and Tai Po improved as Luk Heung was an indispensable stop along the trade route.

During the 1950s to 1960s, there were major changes in the transportation linking Luk Heung with the outside

world. Sha Tau Kok became a restricted area and the transport of goods was no longer allowed. As a result, the villagers of Luk Heung began going to Tai Po for purchases. Out of necessity, local transportation was improved. Some villagers operated boat transport businesses from Siu Kau to Yuen Chau Tsai. They used sailboats initially and upgraded to motor boats later. Each journey took two to three hours and the boats accommodated thirty to forty people. The Kadoorie Farm supported the villagers in building a pier at Tai Kau to benefit the docking and boarding of the boats.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, the Hong Kong Government was proactive in improving local education and built many schools. Yuk Yin School was founded in 1959, and some of the better-off villagers went to Tai Po for school or to work.

Since the villages along the coasts of Tai Pang Wan could no longer trade in Tai Po Sea as they did before, Grass Island and Cheung Shue Tan lost their status as a transportation and trade hub. The centre of commercial and trade activities gradually shifted to Tai Po market. Moreover, there were a large number of fishermen settling down in Hong Kong from Mainland China. In 1957, it was estimated that there were 60,000 fishermen in Hong Kong with a total of 7,000 fishing boats.<sup>44</sup> In 1959, 5,288 fishing boats were registered with the Marine Department and the total number of fishermen was 72,300.<sup>45</sup> In 1961, the government released new statistics, that there were over 10,000 fishing boats and the number of fishermen was more than 22,000.<sup>46</sup> The fishing industry in Shuen Wan was confronted with fierce competition. In addition, the cheap rice imported from Southeast Asia soon replaced locally grown rice. As a result many villagers in the New Territories left their farmland.<sup>47</sup> The rice economy was no longer profitable, and groups of villagers living on the coasts of Tai Po Sea left their villages for job opportunities in the urban areas or even abroad. How serious was the trend of outward migration from the Tai Po Sea villages? We can take a look at the situation in Luk Heung. Although Luk Heung was located on the northeast corner of Shuen Wan, a large number of villagers left their homes for opportunities elsewhere. According to a research in 1968, before the villages were moved, an average 40% of villagers were already living outside their villages (Chart 2). It is uncertain whether they were living in Tai Po, in the city



or abroad, but this illustrates the seriousness of the problem. For these villages, Tai Po Market became the link to the outside world. Letters and remittances from overseas would first arrive at trustworthy stores in Tai Po, which would keep them for the villagers.<sup>48</sup> Tai Po Market gradually rose in significance as a venue for transportation and trade.

Chart 2: Villagers of Luk Heung Who Lived Outside their Villages

Village	Number of villagers living outside the village	Number of villagers living in the village	Ratio
Siu Kau	41	73	56.2
Tai Kau	38	97	39.2
Kam Chuk Pai, Tai Lung	161	107	1.5
Wang Leng Tau, Nai Tong Kok	98	125	78.4
Chung Mei	22	62	35.5
Chung Pui	73	134	54.5

Source: Berkowitz Morris, *Plover Cove Village to Taipo Market: A Study in Forced Migration*. p. 99.

## Construction of Plover Cove Reservoir

In the 1950s, a large influx of migrants came to Hong Kong due to political instability in the Mainland. The population in Hong Kong continued to grow (see Chart 3). At the same time, the industries in Hong Kong developed rapidly after the War. The number of factories rose along with the size of the workforce (Chart 4). To meet the needs of Hong Kong's swiftly expanding industries, the government decided to develop Tsuen Wan into an industrial zone for the light and heavy industries in the late 1950s, increasing the urban area from two to eight million square feet. During this time, both Shatin and Tai Po were included in the plan to develop new towns.<sup>49</sup>

Chart 3: Estimation of Hong Kong's Population by Year

Year	Estimated Population
1957	2,677,000
1958	2,806,000
1959	2,919,000
1960	3,190,000
1961	3,226,400
1962	3,526,500

Source: *Hong Kong Annual Report, 1957-1962*. (香港年鑑)

Chart 4: Factories in Hong Kong and the Number of Factory Workers

Year	Number of Factory	Number of Factory Workers
1950	1,525	89,512
1951	1,788	93,837
1952	1,987	92,852
1953	2,131	100,952
1954	2,303	106,291
1955	2,557	118,568
1956	3,145	138,836
1957	3,290	148,035
1958	3,765	168,138
1959	4,860	186,142
1960	5,135	228,999
1961	6,245	259,774

Source: *Hong Kong Yearbook, 1962* (香港年鑑), Chapter 15, Article 2, p. 45.

Increasing demand for fresh water, especially from the factories, exerted enormous pressure on the existing water distribution system. From 1960 to 1961, Hong Kong's total water usage was 1.11 million cubic metres, representing an increase of 22% from the previous year. From 1961 to 1962, total water usage amounted to 1.37 million cubic metres, an increase of 23% annually.<sup>50</sup> According to statistics by the Hong Kong Government, the population growth in 1961 and 1962 was only 1.14% and 9.3% respectively (see Chart 3), suggesting that the surge in demand for fresh water was mostly a result of the growth of industries in Hong Kong.<sup>51</sup>

During the 1950s, the Hong Kong Government allocated a large portion of its budget to the construction of dams and reservoirs. Tai Lam Chung Reservoir was constructed in 1952 and water accumulation began in 1957 with a capacity of 4.5 billion gallons. Shek Pik Reservoir, with a capacity of 5.5 billion gallons, was completed in 1964. Notably the reservoir that had the most significant impact on the New territories was Plover Cove Reservoir.

The original idea was to entirely enclose Shuen Wan with an embankment dam to create an artificial lake. Then the sea water would be pumped out and replaced with fresh water. In fact besides Plover Cove Reservoir, the Hong Kong Government had made plans for a fresh water lake / reservoir in Pak Sha Wan of Sai Kung as well, but for

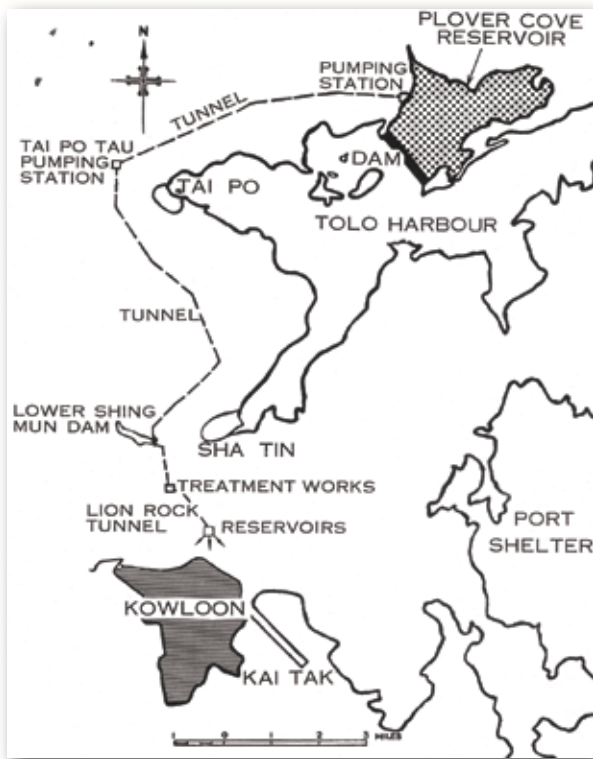


Diagram of the construction plan for Plover Cove Reservoir

reasons unknown the project was aborted. Meanwhile, the scale of Plover Cove Reservoir was also significantly smaller than planned. When construction eventually began, the main dam only ran from Pak Sha Tau to Tai Mei Tuk, and the secondary dam from Pak Kung Tsu to Tung Tau Chau. The Plover Cove Reservoir project had two phases. The first began in November of 1960 and included the construction of the water treatment plant in Shatin and the catchwater system, as well as the pumping station and inflatable dam in Tai Po Tau. The second phase began in 1964, and included the construction of the main dam, pipelines and the Lion Rock Tunnel. The reservoir's total capacity was 37.3 billion gallons and the dam was 2,100 metres long.

Apart from collecting rain water, Plover Cove Reservoir was built for a second purpose – to store water from the Dongjiang River in Shenzhen. The Hong Kong

Government announced in March of 1959 that it was looking into the possibility of changing Shuen Wan into a fresh water lake to solve Hong Kong's water shortage problem.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, construction for Shenzhen Reservoir began on 15 November 1959, and its main dam was completed on 12th January 1960. At the time, it was known that besides supplying fresh water for the population and industries in Shenzhen, the reservoir would have enough water for another three million people for seven months.<sup>53</sup> Needless to say, the three million people referred to the Hong Kong population. On 6 March 1960, Shenzhen Reservoir celebrated its grand opening. Tao Zhu, Vice Provincial Governor and General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party's Provincial Committee, made a public statement saying that Shenzhen Reservoir could supply fresh water to Hong Kong. The previous day, Hong Kong's Financial Secretary had announced that water charges may be increased in the budget for the second half of the year.<sup>54</sup> This could have been an effort to let Hong Kong people choose between taking water from the Dongjiang River or a hike in water charges, so that an agreement with Shenzhen Reservoir would be met with less opposition. At the same time, the increase in water charges could have been a way to raise funds for future water works. On 5 November 1960, the Hong Kong Government concluded an agreement with the Guangdong Provincial Government, under which 5 billion gallons (22,700,000 cubic metres) of fresh water would be supplied to Hong Kong by Shenzhen Reservoir. The total capacity of Hong Kong's reservoirs was only about 10 billion gallons then. The planned capacity of Plover Cove Reservoir was 29 billion gallons, sufficient for storing the water from the Dongjiang River. In 1960, the Hong Kong Government began constructing the catchwater system from Man Kam To, Shek Po Tau, Fanling to Tai Lam Chung. In 1964, a second pipeline with a diameter of 54 inches was built from Man Kam To to the pumping station at Tai Po Tau, connecting to the pipelines of Plover Cove Reservoir. The Dongjiang River water supply system was completed in January of 1965, and Hong Kong began taking water from Dongjiang in March of the same year. It was quite a "coincidence" when the progress of, and schedule for Plover Cove Reservoir were compared with those of Shenzhen Reservoir (see Chart 5).



Chart 5: Comparison Chart of Shenzhen Reservoir and Plover Cove Reservoir

Shenzhen Reservoir	Agreement	Plover Cove Reservoir
In June of 1959, the Shenzhen Reservoir Construction Command Centre was officially established.		In March of 1959, the Public Works Department released a work report and announced that the feasibility study for Plover Cove Reservoir had been completed.
15 November 1959, a project inception ceremony was held at the main dam.		
On 4 March 1960, the main embankment dam, one kilometre long and thirty metres high, was completed.	On 15 November 1960, the Hong Kong Government concluded an agreement with Guangdong Province to take 5 billion gallons of fresh water from Shenzhen Reservoir.	In April of 1960, the Hong Kong Government announced the inception of the Plover Cove Reservoir project.
	On 22 April 1964, the two parties signed a formal agreement: with effect from March of 1965, Guangdong would supply no less than 15 billion gallons of fresh water to Hong Kong each year. Each 1,000 gallon would be bought at 1.06 Hong Kong Dollars.	The second phase of the Plover Cove Reservoir project began in 1964.
		The six villages of Shuen Wan were relocated in November of 1966.
		In January of 1967, the main dam was completed. In April, fresh water was collected in the reservoir.

After Plover Cove Reservoir was built, the water level rose and the villages of Luk Heung were in danger of flooding. The Hong Kong Government initiated conversations with the villages to find a solution. They finally agreed that the Hong Kong Government would relocate the villagers to thirteen four-storied residential housing units built on reclaimed land in Kwong Fuk Road, Tai Po. In brief, each male villager over sixteen years old was entitled to one flat (storey) and families that owned houses were allocated a unit on the ground floor. At the same time, the villagers

received monetary compensation of 25 cents for each foot of farmland. For example, Lee Kwun Yau had one wife, one son and two daughters, and he received two flats and one store unit on the ground floor. In addition, over 800 dollars were offered in compensation for sprouts, and 1,200 dollars were offered for fruit trees.<sup>55</sup> Villagers opposed the compensation amount because it was much lower than market value. According to records in *Hong Kong Yearbook, 1967* (香港年鑑), in November of 1966, one catty of Choi Sum or white cabbages cost 45 cents.<sup>56</sup> Despite this, the Hong Kong Government did not back down from its offer.

On 11 and 12 November 1966, the Hong Kong Government executed the relocation operation of the six villages. Since the land routes were inconvenient, the villagers of Wang Leng Tau, Kam Chuk Pai, Tai Kau and Siu Kau were taken by British Navy vessels to Shuen Wan, and then transported to Tai Po by car. The villagers of Chung Pui and Chung Mei Village were taken by lorries directly to their new homes in Tai Po. There were 145 families in the six villages and 1,150 villagers (Chart 6). Government Official Bedford of the District Office said the relocation had made history involving the most number of villagers and villages.

Chart 6: Population Moving Out of the Six Villages

Village	Number of Families	Population
Chung Pui	28	
Chung Mei	11	
Wang Leng Tau	31	
Kam Chuk Pai	9 / 25	
Tai Kau	21	
Siu Kau	20	
	Total 145 families	Total population of 1,150

Source: Hong Kong Government Records Service, item no. HKRS70, 1-179.

The main dam of Plover Cove Reservoir was completed in January of 1967, and the extraction of sea water began immediately. In April of the same year, the first phase of extraction was completed and some of the water gates were opened to let in fresh water.<sup>57</sup> In October, the Hong Kong Government supplied fresh water from the reservoir to Hong Kong residents because there was a serious drought and hence a severe shortage of fresh water. At the time, the water from the tap had a strong salty taste and was not of good quality.



The feeling of the villagers of Luk Heung as in their facial expression. (Provided by the Public Record Office of Hong Kong, Government Records Office)



A meeting between officials and villagers held in front of the ancestral hall of the Lee Lineage in Siu Kau about relocation. (Provided by the Public Record Office of Hong Kong, Government Records Office)



Villagers of Luk Heung preparing for moving away from their home place. (Provided by the Public Record Office of Hong Kong, Government Records Office)

The construction of Plover Cove Reservoir influenced Luk Heung, Shuen Wan, Tai Po Sea and even Tai Po Market greatly. In order to carry out soil testing, construction and transportation, the Hong Kong Government improved transportation between the coasts of Shuen Wan and Tai Po Market. The road connecting Ting Kok with Tai Po Market was built in 1959 and construction for the carriageway between Ting Kok and Tai Mei Tuk began in February of 1960.<sup>58</sup> When transportation improved, communication between the villages of Shuen Wan and Tai Po Market also improved, and Tai Po Market became even more important as the centre for trade and transportation. At the same time, the Tai Mei Tuk area became a popular tourist attraction: travellers could take boat rides in Shuen Wan or go hiking in Pat Sin Leng or the Bride's Pool.<sup>59</sup>

Although the Hong Kong Government pledged to the residents of Tai Po that Plover Cove Reservoir would not affect water sources for the farmland, and also built Hok Tau Reservoir specifically to supply water for irrigation, as a matter of fact, the fresh water sources of Pat Sin Leng and Kau Lung Hang Mountain were cut and diverted to Plover Cove Reservoir. This had adversely affected agricultural production in the area. Deterioration of agriculture on the northern coast of Tai Po Sea was apparently more serious than that in Lam Tsuen River Valley. The villagers attributed the failure of local agriculture to the destruction of natural water sources by Plover Cove Reservoir.

This project not only impacted farming in Tai Po, but also destroyed the local ecology. The main goal of the project was to clear out the sea mud in Shuen Wan, so that a main dam 6,800 feet long and 127 feet high could be built on the exposed firm sea bed. According to a study, the clearing of the mud emptied forty feet of the sea bed. The mud was disposed of at various locations in Tai Po, including Wu Kai Sha, Ma Liu Shui and Pak Shek, while rocks and sand from the coasts were taken to build the embankment, adversely affecting water quality. The marine ecology of Shuen Wan could no longer support the once thriving fishing industry. Villagers recall that the fishing industry had gone downhill since the construction of Plover Cove Reservoir and had never been recovered.<sup>60</sup> The villagers of Cheung Muk Tau



in Shap Sze Heung believe that the coral reefs along the coastline had disappeared since the construction of Plover Cove Reservoir.<sup>61</sup>

As to villagers of Luk Heung, although their material livelihood improved, it did not mean they were leading better lives than before. When the villages of Tsuen Wan were relocated, an entire village was relocated to the same area and villagers stayed together even after the relocation. This was not the case for the relocation of Luk Heung. First of all, the ground floor units in the new blocks in Luk Heung Lane was given to families that owned a village house, while the remaining villagers were allocated units nearby. Some villagers were relocated to Luk Heung Lane, while others of the same village were moved to Kwong Fuk Road. The established social relationship of the local community was disrupted and destroyed.



The new home in Luk Heung Lane, Kwong Fuk Road, Tai Po. (Provided by the Public Record Office of Hong Kong, Government Records Office)



The villagers of Kam Chuk Pai Village are boarding the boat provided by the government for the trip back to their old home to sweep their ancestors' graves. (Photography by Ma Kin Hang)



The villagers are transferring from one boat to another boat at Plover Cove. The journey is far from safe. (Photography by Wong Wing Ho)

A study had revealed that those who earned less income tended to miss their village lives, and this tendency was especially prevalent among women. These female villagers faced a series of challenges when they tried to adapt to the new living environment and assimilate into the new community. For example, in the past, they did not make daily budgets in monetary terms. When they ran out of fuel, they would simply collect wood from the hills, but now they had to learn how to purchase kerosene and pay utility bills. They used to be able to work, rest and chat outside their homes, but after the relocation they learned to stay indoors and were often bored.<sup>62</sup> They found it difficult to adapt to the new lifestyle.

## Conclusion

Improvements in material livelihood do not necessarily bring harmony and contentment in life. The Hong Kong Government claimed that the relocation of Luk Heung could improve the villagers' lives, but villagers today still renovate their ancestral halls and ancestral tombs and emphasise themselves as villagers of Luk Heung. This shows a strong identification with their previous lives in the villages. During the interviews, the villagers felt a genuine sense of enthusiasm and excitement when they reminisced about picking scallops. It is certain that they did not leave their religion and lifestyle buried next to Plover Cove Reservoir.



When I conducted interview research with the villagers, I was moved by the emotions of the villagers when they talked about picking scallops and the difficult journey to their hometown for ancestral worship during Chung Yeung Festival. An elderly female villager's expression of sadness captured picture taken during the relocation became etched in my mind.

I could not help but ask: when the government was searching for a solution to Hong Kong's water shortage, was it truly impossible to find an alternative to building Plover Cove Reservoir and relocating the villagers of Luk Heung to Luk Heung Lane in Tai Po? The villagers of Luk Heung had requested a permanent location for their villages, so that they could continue their self-reliant lives.<sup>63</sup> Given the relocation of the villages in Tsuen Wan, this was apparently not an unreasonable request. Yet, of course, it was not granted in the end.

Did Plover Cove Reservoir really solve Hong Kong's

water shortage? *Hong Kong Yearbook, 1967* (香港年鑑), records that "as of 29 August 1964, when this book went to print, it has been 27 months since Hong Kong returned to full-day water supply."<sup>64</sup> In other words, after Guangdong began supplying Dongjiang water to Hong Kong and before Plover Cove Reservoir began service, Hong Kong residents were already getting full water supply. Have we exaggerated the contribution made by the Plover Cove Reservoir project in alleviating Hong Kong's water shortage?

The villages of Tai Po Sea and Shuen Wan had maintained local and self-organised communities as well as special relationships with one another before the British took over the New Territories. The villages did not always trade at the same market. Some of them did not rely on Tai Po Market for transportation and community and trade services. However, along with political changes in Hong Kong and the urbanisation of the New Territories, these villages were eventually assimilated into Tai Po Market's economy and community.



A distant view of Tai Kau. (Provided by Lee Hing)





## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> In August of 1898, Colonial Secretary Lockhart conducted a survey north of Kowloon, and submitted the "Report on the Extension of the Colony of Hong Kong" (香港殖民地展拓界址報告書) to the government in October of the same year.
- <sup>2</sup> Siu Kwok Kin, *Tai Po Heritage* (大埔風物志) (Hong Kong: Tai Po District Council, 1997), p. 18.
- <sup>3</sup> Au Ka Fat argues that lime was used as construction material as well as pasting material for bamboo baskets. It prevented leaking from the baskets during the making of dried and salt-preserved food. See Au Ka Fat, "Archaeological Findings in Hong Kong and Their Inspirations" (香港考古成果及其啟示), p. 82, in *Archaeological Discovery in Guangdong and Hong Kong* (粵港考古與發現) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2004), pp. 58-86.
- <sup>4</sup> See Siu Kwok Kin, *Changes in Hong Kong Society Before and After the Qianhai Campaign in Qing Dynasty* (清初遷海前後香港之社會變遷) (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1986), pp. 29-30.
- <sup>5</sup> Gu Zuyu, *Essentials of Geography for Reading History* (讀史方輿記要) (Zhengzhou: Henan Education Press, 1995), Part 1.1, Guangdong 2, Guangzhou, "Xin'an County Helanzhou Article" (新安縣合蘭洲條), "a little more than 100 miles south of the county, there is Tai Po Sea, with Meizhu Pond. During the Southern Han period, pearls were picked here." This shows that Meizhu Pond was located somewhere in Tai Po Sea. Qu Dajun, *Guangdong Xinyu* (廣東新語) (Beijing: Chunghwa Book, 1985), Part 15 on "Zhu (Pearl)" (珠), "during the Yuan Dynasty, there was Meizhu Pond in Tai Po Sea of Dongguan. Aying Pearls were produced there. Thirteen other locations in the county, including Houhai, Longqi, Qingyingjiao, Lizhizhuang among others, produced other pearls, but they no longer exist. In the same book, Part 23 on "Luo (A kind of shellfish)" (贏), "there were many kinds of luo, but xiangluo was the most superior and it was produced in Chaozhou. Second to it was zhuluo from Tai Po Sea of Dongguan. During the Southern Han period, 3,000 people were sent to pick them in Meichuan Sector, which was also referred to as 'the town of zhuluo.' There was also yinmuluo, shaped like a clam. It had many small pearls inside but the colours were not great." Walter Chu, meanwhile, believes that the Chek Mun Channel was Meichuan Sector in ancient times, but I am sceptical of this view.
- <sup>6</sup> Guo Fei, ed., *Yuedaji* (Guangdong Records) (粵大記) (Beijing: Bibliography and Document Publishing House, 1990).
- <sup>7</sup> See Siu Kwok Kin, *Changes in Hong Kong Society Before and After the Coastal Evacuation in Qing Dynasty* (清初遷海前後香港之社會變遷), p. 20.
- <sup>8</sup> See Siu Kwok Kin, *Changes in Hong Kong Society Before and After the Coastal Evacuation in Qing Dynasty* (清初遷海前後香港之社會變遷), pp. 112-114.
- <sup>9</sup> See Siu Kwok Kin, *Changes in Hong Kong Society Before and After the Coastal Evacuation in Qing Dynasty* (清初遷海前後香港之社會變遷), pp. 92-127; Lau Yun Wo, *A Brief History of the New Territories* (新界簡史) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (HK) Co., 1999), pp. 7-12.
- <sup>10</sup> Sima Lung, *Stories of Rural New Territories* (新界滄桑話鄉情) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1990), p. 123.
- <sup>11</sup> "Trawlers" refer to fishing boats that catch fish by using fishing nets. The fish were caught by two methods – the purse seiner or the trawl. Both methods target fish in the mid level water and most of these boats worked close to the shore in the relatively shallow water. The net fishing was performed at night, usually in the northeast of Hong Kong's waters. The mother boats were equipped with floodlights to attract the fish in the mid level water, and the sampans nearby would spread the fishing nets. The bottom of the net would be closed to trap the catch.
- <sup>12</sup> Faure, David, Luk Hung Kay, Ng Lun Ngai Ha, eds., *Inscriptions and Epitaphs in Hong Kong* (香港碑銘彙編) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1986), pp. 45-47. *Plaque for the Reconstruction of this Temple* (重修本碑題助碑) and *Visitor Plaque* (題助客碑). The trawlers contributed large amounts: the three trawlers that contributed the most money were the second highest contributors overall. However, the names of the trawlers were placed at the very end of the contributor list, suggesting that boat people had a low status in the local community.
- <sup>13</sup> Yip Chi Leung, "Tung Tsz Village" (洞梓村), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 27.
- <sup>14</sup> Cheung Kau, "Wong Yue Tan Village" (黃魚灘村), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 24.
- <sup>15</sup> Lam Kwok Wah, Suen Fong Sang, "A Shan Village" (鴉山村), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 22.
- <sup>16</sup> Chim Shing, Chim Yun Nam, "Chim Uk Village" (詹屋村), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 25.
- <sup>17</sup> Lo Sam Shing, "Ha Tei Ha Village" (蝦地吓村), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 29.
- <sup>18</sup> Berkowitz, Morris, Brandauer, Frederick, Reed, John, *Folk Religion in an Urban Setting: A Study of Hakka Villages in Transition* (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 1969), pp. 14-15.
- <sup>19</sup> Berkowitz, Morris, Brandauer, Frederick, Reed, John, *Folk Religion in an Urban Setting: A Study of Hakka Villages in Transition*, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>20</sup> Chim Shing, Chim Yun Nam, "Chim Uk Village" (詹屋村), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 25.
- <sup>21</sup> In the Lockhart Report, the population of Shuen Wan is listed, so is the population of Wong Yue Tan, San Tau Kok and Wai Ha. Therefore, Shuen Wan apparently does not include the latter three villages.
- <sup>22</sup> Ting Kok Village was home to different clans, including the Lees, Wans, Yues, Lams, Pangs, Wus and Chans. Some villagers were related to neighbouring Lung Mei, Tai Mei Tuk, Lai Pik Shan, Shan Liu and Lo Tsi Tin. See Sima Lung, *Stories of Rural New Territories* (新界滄桑話鄉情), p. 123.
- <sup>23</sup> During the early 1980s, there were books referring to the area of Lee Uk, Wai Ha, Chan Uk, Chim Uk, Ha Tei Ha, Sha Lan villages as "Shuen



- Wan", denoting the fact that these villages all belong to Shuen Wan. See N.T. Impartial ed., *Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Yearbook* (港九新界分類年鑑) (Hong Kong: N.T. Impartial, 1981), pp. 141-142.
- <sup>24</sup> Lo Sam Shing, "Preface – The History and Development of the Shuen Wan Villages" (序言——船灣聯村歷史與發展), in *The Tenth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Shuen Wan Joint Village Commons* (大埔船灣聯村村公所成立十週年紀念特刊), p. 1.
- <sup>25</sup> Interview with Mr. Chan of Chan Uk Village at the Wai Ha she altar by Wong Wing Ho, 26 January 2008. Interview with Lee Kwun Mui at the Wai Ha she altar by Wong Wing Ho, 26 January 2008.
- <sup>26</sup> Interview with Cheung Kau of Wong Yue Tan by Wong Wing Ho and Cheung Siu-woo, 10 December 2007.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with Cheung Kau of Wong Yue Tan by Wong Wing Ho and Cheung Siu-woo, 10 December 2007.
- <sup>28</sup> Chu, Walter, *Hong Kong Memories I* (香港舊景掌故新談(一)) (Hong Kong: Society of Hong Kong Nature Explorers, 2007), p. 82.
- <sup>29</sup> Chu, Walter, *Hong Kong Memories I* (香港舊景掌故新談(一)), p. 78.
- <sup>30</sup> Berkowitz, Morris, "Plover Cove Village to Taiipo Market: A Study in Forced Migration", *Journal of Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 8, 1968, p. 96: "There are six villages and two hamlets under question, although at the time of the resettlement of the population one of the hamlets had already been largely deserted."
- <sup>31</sup> Cheung Siu-woo, Liu Tik-sang, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Lee Hing of Luk Heung Tai Kau" (六鄉大滘李興訪問), 26 November 2007, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0335, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>32</sup> Ma Kin Hang, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Lee Lin Sang" (李連生訪問), 10 October 2007, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0097, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>33</sup> There is evidence that, before the 1950s, the six villages did not have a close relationship, see Berkowitz, Morris, "Political Disintegration of Hakka Villages: A Study of Drastic Social Change in the New Territories of Hong Kong", *Chung Chi Journal* vol. 8, no. 2, May 1969, p. 20: "Prior to 1959, the only organisation across village line was the School Committee, which determined the policy of the Sam Kwong school. Since Kam Chuk Pai contributed the largest share of the money for running the school, decision-making in regard to education policy was (mostly) in the hand of Kam Chuk Pai Village."
- <sup>34</sup> The Lockhart Report points out that Shuen Wan was not accessible by land. "Report on the Extension of the Colony of Hong Kong", Appendix, No. 1a.
- <sup>35</sup> At that time, Sha Tau Kok Market had 700 people, whereas Shak Woo Market had only 120, and Tai Po Market had only 280.
- <sup>36</sup> Siu Kwok Kin, *Tai Po Heritage* (大埔風物志) p. 65.
- <sup>37</sup> Faure, David, Luk Hung Kay, Ng Lun Ngai Ha, eds., *Inscriptions and Epitaphs in Hong Kong* (香港碑銘彙編) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Urban Council, 1986), p. 81-83, Inscription of the God of the Earth Temple.
- <sup>38</sup> Faure, David, Luk Hung Kay, Ng Lun Ngai Ha, eds., *Inscriptions and Epitaphs in Hong Kong* (香港碑銘彙編), p. 225, Wooden Plaque of Hip Tin Temple (協天宮木牌).
- <sup>39</sup> Faure, David, Luk Hung Kay, Ng Lun Ngai Ha, eds., *Inscriptions and Epitaphs in Hong Kong* (香港碑銘彙編), p. 346, Wooden Plaque of Hip Tin Temple (協天宮木牌).
- <sup>40</sup> Siu Kwok Kin, *Tai Po Heritage* (大埔風物志), p. 28.
- <sup>41</sup> Cheung Siu-woo, Liu Tik-sang, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Lee Hing of Luk Heung Tai Kau" (六鄉大滘李興訪問), 26 November 2007, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0335, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>42</sup> Lo Wai Ling, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Lee Kam Pui of Sai O Village" (西澳村李錦培訪問), 29 April 2008, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0339, Oral History project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>43</sup> Cheung Siu-woo, Liu Tik-sang, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Lee Hing of Luk Heung Tai Kau" (六鄉大滘李興訪問), 26 November 2007, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0335, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>44</sup> *Hong Kong Yearbook* (香港年鑑), 1958, Chapter 11, Article 2, p. 87.
- <sup>45</sup> *Hong Kong Yearbook* (香港年鑑), 1960, Chapter 13, Article 2, p. 48.
- <sup>46</sup> *Hong Kong Yearbook* (香港年鑑), 1962, Chapter 15, Article 2, p. 64.
- <sup>47</sup> Akers-Jones, David, *Feeling the Stones: Reminiscences by David Akers-Jones* (石點頭：鍾逸傑回憶錄) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p. 22.
- <sup>48</sup> Lo Wai Ling, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Leung Wo Ping of Ma Kwu Lam Village" (馬牯纜村梁和平訪問), 19 March 2008, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0327, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>49</sup> In Tsuen Wan's development proposal, the area was to be developed and divided into four zones – heavy industry, light industry, commercial and residential. See *Hong Kong Yearbook* (香港年鑑), 1958, Chapter 11, Article 2, p. 94.
- <sup>50</sup> Ho Pui Yin, *Water for a Barren Rock* (點滴話當年) (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2001), p. 182.
- <sup>51</sup> The Secretary of Works announced publicly in 1959 that taking into account the increased demand for water by the growing population and industries, if Hong Kong were to supply water all day in the winter of 1964, it would still be 16 million gallons short. Thus it was necessary to build Plover Cove Reservoir. See "This Plan to Solve Water Shortage" (解除水荒，有此計劃), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 12 August 1959, leaf 2, p. 5. On 13 March, 1959, *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報) reports that the Hong Kong Government's Executive Council revealed plans to turn Tolo Harbour into a fresh water lake. On the same page, it reports that Tsuen Wan was supplied with water for only three hours a day, and it would have a severe impact on the industries there. See "Tolo Harbour to be Turned into Fresh Water Lake" (吐露港擬改淡水湖), *Ta Kung Pao* (大



- 公報), 13 March 1959, leaf 1, p. 4; "Three-hour Water Supply for Tsuen Wan Industrial Zone" (荃灣工業地區供水亦三小時), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 13 March 1959, leaf 1, p. 4.
- <sup>52</sup> "Take the New Carriageway to See Scallop Picking" (行新公路、看採帶子), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 13 November 1960, Leaf 1, p. 4; "Two Fresh Water Lake Proposals to be Combined" (兩淡水湖計劃合併進行), *Hong Kong Industrial and Commercial Daily* (香港工商日報), 20 April 1959, p. 5.
- <sup>53</sup> "Main Dam of Shenzhen Reservoir Completed" (深圳水庫大壩合龍), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 20 January 1960, leaf 1, p.1; "A Walk-Through of the Shenzhen Reservoir Project" (參觀深圳水庫工程), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 23 January 1960, leaf 1, p. 1.
- <sup>54</sup> "Water Charges Should Not Increase" (水費不宜增加), *Hong Kong Industrial and Commercial Daily* (香港工商日報), 5 March 1960, p. 5.
- <sup>55</sup> "Six Villages in Tai Po Becomes History, More Than 1,000 Villagers Move into New Homes" (大埔六條村成歷史陳跡，逾千名村民昨遷入新居), *Hong Kong Industrial and Commercial Daily* (香港工商日報), 29 November 1966.
- <sup>56</sup> *Hong Kong Yearbook* (香港年鑑), 1967, Chapter 20, Article 2, p. 87.
- <sup>57</sup> Some studies say fresh water was filled in June of 1967. See *Plover cove*.
- <sup>58</sup> "Take the New Carriageway to See Scallop Picking" (行新公路、看採帶子), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 13 November 1960, leaf 1, p. 4.
- <sup>59</sup> "Boat Ride in Shuen Wan" (新界船灣海上遊), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 11 March 1963, leaf 1, p. 4.
- <sup>60</sup> Tsui Yuen Ling, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Lee Mau Shing of Sha Lan Village" (沙欄李茂盛訪問), 7 November 2007, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0117, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>61</sup> Lo Wai Ling, Wong Wing Ho, "Interview with Wan Sang and Liu Foon Chen of Cheung Muk Tau Village" (樟木頭村溫生、廖歡真訪問), 8 April 2008, Archives Serial No.: TP-OH-0338, Oral History Project (Tai Po District), South China Research Center, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.
- <sup>62</sup> Berkowitz, Morris, "Plover Cove Village to Taipo Market: A Study in Forced Migration," p. 102.
- <sup>63</sup> "Plover Cove Reservoir to be Built, Villages Hope For a Permanent New Village" (船灣遷村建淡水湖，鄉民盼闢永久新村), *Ta Kung Pao* (大公報), 5 June 1963, leaf 2, p. 5.
- <sup>64</sup> *Hong Kong Yearbook* (香港年鑑), 1967, Chapter 2, Article 2, p. 92.

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