

**Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall
at No. 32 Shui Tau, Kam Tin, Yuen Long, New Territories**

Brief History

Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall (廣瑜鄧公祠), also known as Loi Shing Tong (來成堂), in Shui Tau (水頭), Kam Tin (錦田), was built by Tang Tseung-luk (鄧像六), alias Tang Chik-kin (鄧直見), the twenty-first generation of the Tang clan, in the 40th year of Kangxi (康熙) Reign (i.e. 1701) of the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644-1911). It was built to commemorate the ancestor, Tang Kwong-u (鄧廣瑜), alias Tang Chung-fung (鄧松峯), the seventeenth generation of the Tang clan. According to a stone tablet in the ancestral hall, it had a large scale renovation in the forth-seventh year of the Qianlong (乾隆) reign (i.e.1782) of the Qing Dynasty with the donation form the clansmen.

2. Apart from being used as an ancestral hall, it has been converted into a retail shop from the 1950s to 1960s. At the turn 1960s, it was changed into a metal goods manufacturing factory. This factory was closed down around the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Then the ancestral hall remained vacant until it was deemed as a monument in 1994. Since the ancestral hall has been in a poor condition for long time, full restoration was carried out in 1995 to restore its original appearance.

3. When the ancestral hall was being renovated, Sir David Wilson, the former Governor of Hong Kong, visited Kam Tin and the working site of the ancestral hall in 1996. Rehabilitation ceremony of the ancestral hall was launched on 30 June 1996. It was hosted by the village heads of the clan, the then Chairman of AAB and government officials from the then Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Bureau and Architectural Services Department.

4. In the main hall, a board inscribed with the name of the ancestral trust, i.e. Loi Shing Tong (來成堂) is hanging above the altar. Several calligraphies and memorable plaques are found in the ancestral hall in appreciation of the rehabilitation of the ancestral hall in 1996. Some of them were given by the Tangs of other branches in the New Territories which demonstrate the social cohesion and solidarity among the Tangs. On the right of the altar, a stone tablet inscribed with the details of the renovation conducted in 1784 is embedded in the wall.

5. An exquisitely decorated *fa pau* (花炮) (floral shrine) can be found in the rear hall of the ancestral hall. This *fa pau* was drawn in the celebration for the birthday of Hung Shing (洪聖) in Shui Tau (水頭) on the 15th day of the first month of lunar year. The ancestral hall is now served as a meeting place of the clan and a venue for holding various traditional ceremonies, such as lantern raising ceremony, ancestor worship and basin meal banquet.

6. Apart from Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall, there are several historic buildings of the Tang clan in Pak Wai Tsuen, including Yi Tai Study Hall (二帝書院) (Declared monument), Cheung Chun Yuen (長春園), Hung Shing Temple (洪聖宮), Lik Wing

Tong Study Hall (力榮堂書室), Tang Ching Lok Ancestral Hall (清樂鄧公祠), etc. The above historic buildings have formed a unique group of clan buildings depicting the historical and social development of a renowned lineage settlement in Hong Kong.

Architecture

7. Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall is a two-hall green-brick building with side chambers at the open courtyard. The three-bay ancestral hall presents a simple and symmetrical architectural layout. A pair of granite blocks, commonly known as *menzhen* stone (門枕石), are located at the main entrance for fixing the main doors. Exquisite plastered mouldings are found under the eaves of the side bays on the façade, which are considered an impressive decorative feature of the building.

8. Screen doors are placed in the front hall immediately behind the entrance for *fengshui* reasons. There is a side room on each side bay of the front hall for storage use. The side chambers at the courtyard are of humpbacked roofs and fronted with wooden latticed doors and ceramic window grilles. Parapets about the side chambers are decorated with plastered mouldings of auspicious motifs. Ancestral tablets of the Tang clan from the first to the twenty-first generation ancestors are placed in a delicate carved wooden altar at the main bay of rear hall.

9. The traditional pitched roofs are constructed with timber rafters and purlins, and laid with pan and roll tiles. The ridges with curling ends are richly decorated with floral mouldings. The eaves boards and tie beams at the front and rear halls are carved with geometric and floral patterns. The floors are mainly paved with Canton floor tiles. Granite curbs, steps and paving slabs of open courtyard are well preserved. After the full restoration conducted in 1996 and subsequent maintenance works carried out by the Antiquities and Monuments Office, the ancestral hall is currently in sound condition.



The front elevation of the Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall



The courtyard and rear hall of the ancestral hall



The impressive plastered moulding under the eaves of the façade



The wooden latticed doors and ceramic window grilles of the side chamber



The exquisitely carved wooden altar at the rear hall