

Historic Building Appraisal

So Lau Yuen

No. 25 Shui Tau Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen Long

So Lau Yuen (泝流園) is one of the six study halls in the historic village of Shui Tau Tsuen (水頭村) of the Tang (鄧) clan in Kam Tin (錦田), Yuen Long. It was built by Tang Kuen-hin (鄧權軒, 1755-1822), the 21st generation ancestor of the clan, and a descendent of Kuen (錕) of the fourth branch (四房). It provided a venue for the young members of the branch Gi Ka Tong (知稼堂) and others to be taught there aiming at gaining titles at the Imperial Civic Service Examination. The family of Kuen-hin gained three *xiucai* (秀才) and four *wuju* (武舉) degrees in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) and Daoguang (道光, 1821-1850) reigns of the Qing (清) dynasty. It is not known when the study hall was built. It was probably built in the late Qianlong reign.

**Historical
Interest**

The study hall is on the right of Yi Tai Study Hall (二帝書室) in the village. It is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. An entrance corridor was added on its right linked up to its front courtyard. A kitchen of two-storey was also added on its right front. The open courtyard is between the front and main halls. Side chambers are on either side of the courtyard and the main hall. The building is constructed of green bricks with its walls and granite columns to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and painted in grey colour externally and white and yellow internally. The floors are cement screeded. The roofs of the open courtyard are turned into reinforced concrete ones with the support of added concrete columns. A plaque of the Gi Ka Tong is hung in the middle at the end wall of the main hall. The black ridges are in boat shape with white curling pattern and auspicious flowers and birds mouldings. Red geometric mouldings are at the ridge ends. Fascia boards, wall frieze mouldings and wall paintings of similar patterns are at the main hall, wall gables and front façade. Calligraphy and a black-and-white dragon wall painting are above the lintel of the recessed entrance.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a study hall of the Tang clan to witness their settlement and history in Kam Tin.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Major renovations were held in the 1970s and 1980s. A recent one was in 2003. The concrete roofs and the painting of the walls have undermined the authenticity of the study hall.

Authenticity

It has group value with the historic buildings in the village including the Yi Tai Study Hall, Hung Shing Temple (洪聖宮), Loi Shing Tong (來成堂) and many others. **Group Value**

Ming-si (鳴時) and Ming-hok (鳴鶴), the eldest and the second eldest sons of Kuen-hin, was respectively a *xiucai* and a *wuju*. Ming-hok was then a military officer of the sixth grade (六品武官) who built another study hall, Cheung Chun Yuen (長春園), in the village. Other members of the branch obtained similar titles and official positions in the Qing government that they had high position in the community and very much respected. So Lau Yuen was also used a local unofficial *yamen* (衙門, magistrate) to settle disputes in Kam Tin and nearby area. The teacher employed to teach at the hall was from local area or Guangdong (廣東) province and accommodation was provided for him at the study hall. Traditional Chinese books and classics were taught to students of mixed classes. Towards the modernization of the education in the 20th century, the study hall was gradually replaced by the modern school established. The Kam Tin Mung Yeung Public School (錦田公立蒙養學校), established in 1926, with its campus enlarged in 1952 finally replaced the study hall. The building is still used as a gathering place and for basin meals (盆菜) of the branch and the clan. It is also for the practice of lion dance. The study hall was one of the historic buildings visited by the Prince of Wales in 1989. **Social Value, & Local Interest**