

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Yan Shau Tong

#### No. 150 Lam Hau Tsuen, Ping Shan, Yuen Long

Lam Hau Tsuen (欖口村) in Ping Shan (屏山) of Yuen Long was first settled by the Wongs (黃) and later developed into a multi-clan village inhabited by the Cheungs (張), Moks (莫), Mans (文) and Loks (駱), the Cheungs being the latest. Cheung Kwan-heng (張君亨), the 14<sup>th</sup> generation ancestor of the Cheungs, settled in the village after the Evacuation Edict (遷界令) was lifted in 1669 of the Kangxi (康熙, 1662-1722) reign, Qing (清) dynasty. He branched out from Shan Ha Tsuen (山下村), south of Lam Hau Tsuen, whose ancestor was one of the descendents of Cheung Chuk-ping (張祝平) who moved there from Huangcun (篁村) of Dongguan (東莞), Guangdong (廣東) province, in the Shunzhi (順治, 1644-1661) reign of the dynasty. Yan Shau Tong (仁壽堂) is the family ancestral hall of the Cheungs constructed for ancestral worship before 1924. It is also the only ancestral hall of the branch in the village. It dually served as a venue for teaching children of the Cheungs. A Yan Shau School (仁壽學校) was established in the premises, which in the 1950s catered some 30 students.

*Historical  
Interest*

There are altogether three ancestral halls in the village, namely, this Yan Shau Tong dedicated to the Cheungs; another one attached to the left of the shrine for all the five surnames; and the third one named Sze Hei Tong (四喜堂) at No. 5 of the village for four surnames (excluding the Cheungs) which was founded in the 1960s.

The Tong is a one-hall-one-courtyard Qing vernacular building of three bays. It has a symmetrical layout with its altar on the central axis of the building in the middle of the main hall housing rows of the soul tablets of the Cheungs. The altar faces the recessed entrance at the opposite end of the building. In front of the main hall is the open courtyard flanked by two side chambers, one on each side. The main hall is with one side room on its left and right. The building is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its flush gable pitched or flat roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The side chambers are with flat roofs. Its brickwork is in a random header-and-stretcher (丁順) bonding of no specific course ratio. Its main ridge is with a curling end. A pair of fish-shaped rainwater drainage outlets is on the walls of the open courtyard.

*Architectural  
Merit*

It is a family ancestral hall to show the settlement of the Cheungs in the village.

*Rarity*

It has considerable built heritage value.

***Built Heritage  
Value***

A renovation was carried out in 1981. The authenticity of the building is generally kept.

***Authenticity***

It has group value with the shrine and the entrance gate in the village.

***Group Value***

Yan Shau Tong has once served a number of uses. As an ancestral hall, the Cheungs have their ancestral worship at the Tong. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual in celebration of the birth of newborn baby boys is still held in the Lunar New Year, with a lantern hanging in Yan Shau Tong, the shrine and the entrance gate respectively. They would assemble at the building at Ching Ming (清明節) and Chung Yeung Festivals (重陽節). They would also have grave sweeping ceremony at the graves of their ancestors at Lam Hau Ling (欖口嶺) behind the village during the Chung Yeung Festival. Basin meals were prepared at the kitchen of Yan Shau Tong on festive occasions, including Dim Dang and Chung Yeung Festival, and taken at the open space abutting the entrance gate of the village. Rituals and basin meals for wedding were also organized at the Tong. But with the establishment of the office of Yan Shau Tong at No. 146 of the village in the 1970s, basin meals were prepared at the office premises thereafter.

***Social Value,  
& Local  
Interest***

As a study hall, Chinese classics, abacus calculation, calligraphy and other subjects were taught at the Tong in the old days. Evening classes were offered in the evening for female students in the late 1940s. For the increasing demand of better education facilities in the area, a Wa Fung School (華封學校) was established by the villagers in 1953. It then replaced the education role of the Tong.

As a communal hall, Yan Shau Tong was the place where the Cheungs kept their grains and wedding materials, such as gift boxes, wedding palanquin, flags, gongs and drums. Some gift boxes are still kept at the cockloft nowadays.