

Historic Building Appraisal
Shum Study Hall
No. 28 Ng Tung Chai, Tai Po, New Territories

Ng Tung Chai (梧桐寨), also known as Wong Fung Chai (黃峰寨), is a Hakka (客家) village and one of the 23 villages in Lam Tsuen Valley (林村鄉). During the Qing times Lam Tsuen was a member of Tsat Yeuk (七約, literally, Seven Alliance). Tsat Yeuk was an inter-village alliance which formed Tai Wo Market (太和市) in 1892 to break the monopoly of the old Tai Po Market (大埔墟) formed by the Lung Yeuk Tau Tang clan (龍躍頭鄧氏). Of the 23 villages of Lam Tsuen Valley, only five are Punti (本地) while the other are Hakka. The history of Lam Tsuen Valley can be traced back to Song Dynasty (宋朝, A.D. 960-1127). Its early settlers were the Chungs (鍾氏) who form a large proportion of the population in the area. The villages were linked together by an inter-village alliance named Luk Woh Tong (六和堂), which was derived from the *baojia* system (保甲制) in the Qing Dynasty (清朝, 1644-1911). Luk Woh Tong remained its key role in the valley until it was replaced by the Lam Tsuen Valley Committee (林村鄉公所) in 1954.

*Historical
Interest*

Ng Tung Chai was established in the 4th year of Qianlong (乾隆, 1739) reign of Qing (清) Dynasty or earlier as a tablet of its Tai Wong (大王, Earth God) shrine has the dating on it. The village was inhabited by the Yaus (邱氏), the Shams (沈氏) and the Koos (古氏), who lived together in harmony. An organization **Tung Hing Tong** (同慶堂) was formed over 50 years ago to act as a trust and to organize joint activities for the three clans in Ng Tung Chai. The manager of Tung Hing Tong is changed in rotation once a year by the clans.

The history of the Sham clan in Ng Tung Chai can be traced back to the late 17th century when their founding ancestor **Sham Man-hing** (沈萬興) moved from Changle (長樂) of Lianxing county (蓮興縣) in Guangdong province (廣東省). His 2nd son, Sham Ting-on (沈廷安), stayed in Ng Tung Chai. His 1st son, Sham Ting-fung (沈廷鳳), moved to Shui Wo (水窩) in Tai Po to become the founding ancestor of Shui Wo. The **Shum Study Hall** (沈氏家塾) in Ng Tung Chai probably has a history of **around 100 years**. It is one of the two study halls in the village. The other one, Tung Hing Tong, was built by the trust of the village and rebuilt in 1983. A Sham Ancestral Hall (沈氏家祠) is on the left of the study hall.

The Shum Study hall is a Qing (清) vernacular building of two bays. The entrance is at the recessed bay on the left. The hall of the left bay was used as the classroom of the study hall. The right bay was used for the bedroom of the teacher.

*Architectural
Merit*

It was constructed of green bricks, mud bricks and rubble with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and the floors cement-screeded. The windows are with green ceramic grilles. The roofs and part of the rear wall of the building have collapsed. The building is attacked by overgrowth.

It is a study hall of the Shams to remind their settlement in Ng Tung Chai.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built
Heritage**

The building is in ruin very much diminishing its authenticity.

**Value
Authenticity**

The study hall provided night school for the children and adults of the village as they had to be involved in agricultural farming activities during daytime. About ten students were taught in the study hall with a teacher residing in the right bay of the building. The study hall modernized its teaching subjects after the war but closed in 1950 due to the opening of the Lam Tsuen Public School (林村公立學校). Cheung Ji-fan (張枝繁), MBE, JP, a notable representative of Lam Tsuen and chairman of the Da Chiu Organizing Committee of Lam Tsuen (林村鄉太平清醮建醮委員會) in 1963, 1972, 1981 and 1999 was once a teacher of the study hall.

**Social Value,
& Local
Interest**

Shum Study Hall is located on a platform along the hill slope. Located at the end of the row, it is northwest-orientated facing Shum Ancestral Hall. It is surrounded by fields. Tung Hing Tong is located besides the west gateway of the rectangular 'Tsai' uphill. Yau Ancestral Hall, one of the items under Antiquities and Monuments Office is located at the centre of the rectangle while Koo Ancestral Hall is located at the south row.

Group Value

The question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time.

**Adaptive
Re-use**