

Historic Building Appraisal
Tang Tsing Lok Ancestral Hall
No. 297 Shui Mei Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen Long

Tang Tsing Lok Ancestral Hall (清樂鄧公祠) was built by the Tangs in Kam Tin to commemorate the 17th generation ancestor of the Tang clan, Tang Tsing-lok (鄧清樂) of the Ming (明) dynasty (1368-1644). It is also called Sze Shing Tong (思成堂) and a number of soul tablets of the earliest ancestors of the Tang clan including that of Tang Han-fat (鄧漢黻) is placed on the top row of the altar. The building is the oldest ancestral hall built in Kam Tin and could have been first erected in late 15th century. The present building was probably rebuilt in the 18th century. Tang Tsing-lok was a grandson of Tang Hung-yee (鄧洪儀) of the 15th generation, who was a well respected ancestor of the Tangs in Kam Tin. The Tang clan had settled in Kam Tin (錦田) as far back as the Song dynasty (宋, A.D. 960-1279). Shui Mei Tsuen (水尾村) where the ancestral hall situated is one of the most historic villages in the territory.

**Historical
Interest**

It is one of the biggest and spacious ancestral halls in Hong Kong. The hall is a Qing vernacular building having a three-hall-two-courtyard plan of symmetrical design. The most important element of the building, the ancestral altar, lies at the far end of the central axis in the middle of the main hall. The building is constructed of green bricks having its walls, granite columns and buttresses to support its roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The recessed entrance has one platform on either side. Parts of the bases at the entrance and columns of the main hall are made of red sandstone which is previous and expensive used only in a few number of ancestral halls in Hong Kong. The ridge is decorated with curling ends of grass patterns with dragon, bats, vases, treasures and floral patterns in the middle. Two glazed ceramic *aoyus* (鰲魚) are on top of the ridge. The two other ridges are of similar motifs of less complement. Timber beams, brackets and fascia boards are with unique carvings of unicorns, flowers, clouds, phoenixes and other patterns.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a historic building of high built heritage value to witness the historic development of Kam Tin. It is one of the most important ancestral halls in Hong Kong.

**Rarity &
Built Heritage
Value**

With parts of its walls plastered and some unsightly added fixtures, such as the bar and fence at its entrance, the authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

A number of historic buildings in Shui Tau (水頭) and Shui Mei Tsuens in

Group Value

Kam Tin include Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall (廣瑜鄧公祠), Yi Tai Study Hall (二帝書院) and this one which have closely related group value.

A number of tablets are displayed in the ancestral hall. The most respected ones are those of royalty (忠) and filial piety (孝), being the core elements of the Confucian belief of the clan. Some other honour boards of the successful clan members in the Qing Imperial Civil Service Examination such as Juren (舉人), Wuju (武舉) and others are also put on display. Carved couplets either to celebrate the completion of renovations of the building or to praise the clan are displayed at the main hall. Other than normal ancestral worship, special offerings are held at the Chinese New Year, Chung Yeung (重陽節) and Ching Ming Festivals (清明節).

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