

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Chun Yuen Pawn House

#### No. 72 Cheung Shing Street, Yuen Long Kau Hui, Yuen Long

Yuen Long Kau Hui (元朗舊墟, literally, Yuen Long Old Market) is in the north-east of the present Yuen Long town centre with Nam Pin Wai (南邊圍) and Sai Pin Wai (西邊圍) in its south and west. The market lied along three streets where shops of mixed trades were located. Cheung Shing Street (長盛街) is the longest one. The other two shorter streets, Lee Yick Street (利益街) and Wine Street (酒街), form a parallel pair. There were two entrance gates to the market – Tung Mun Hau (東門口) and Nam Mun Hau (南門口), which were locked up after the market hours to guard against theft and robbery. Two temples, inns and pawnshops were also in the market.

*Historical  
Interest*

Yuen Long Kau Hui was established during the reign of Kangxi emperor (康熙) under the leadership of Tang Man-wai (鄧文蔚). Tang was a 23<sup>rd</sup> generation member of the Kam Tin Tang Clan who attained a jin-shi (進士) degree and then decided to move the market from Tai Kiu Tun (大橋墩) to the present site. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the market was a hub of commercial activities of the Hong Kong region. Farmers, boat people and traders came as far as from the coastal districts of Guangdong province (廣東省) to buy and sell agricultural produce and daily necessities.

Chun Yuen Pawn House (晉源押) is located on one of the busiest streets of the old market. It was originally located at Lee Yick Street (利益街) and it was moved to the present site in the 1910s. It continued to operate until the Second World War when the business of the market declined. After the war, the shop was once used for residential and storage purposes and has been left vacated now. The pawn house was established by Tang Lim-ming (鄧廉明), the father of Tang Pui-king (鄧佩瓊), in the late Qing period. Tang Pui-king was a successful merchant and a philanthropist. He was a committee member and vice-chairman of Pok Oi Hospital (博愛醫院) in 1930-53. He also served on the Heung Yee Kuk (鄉議局) and a number of schools. Pok Oi Hospital Tang Pui King Memorial College (博愛醫院鄧佩瓊紀念中學) was built to commemorate him in 1987.

The pawn house is a Qing (清) building of irregular plan. It has a high ceiling at its customs' hall in the front and the broker's room at the back with a mezzanine. To their right is a two-storey storage house accessed by narrow passage. To the farther right is an open courtyard with two rooms for storage.

*Architectural  
Merit*

Right behind the entrance is a tall wooden screen blocking the eyesight of outsiders. The counter of the broker is at high level with iron bar for security that the customers have to raise their belongings to the broker for inspection. The mezzanine is for business dealing and the ground floor of the storage house is for the bedroom and other facilities. The other areas are for storage. The building is constructed of green bricks with thick granite blocks for its bases and door frame having its walls supporting its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and ceramic tiles. The roof of the storage house has a western truss system. Its windows are with steel bars for tight security. Its recessed entrance has plastered mouldings of unicorns and plants and a fascia board of auspicious treasures carvings. Above its lintel is the name board of the pawnshop flanked by two tiny bared square windows.

The Chik Shing Pawnshop (藉誠) on Hop Fat Street (合發街) in Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) also established by Tang Pui-king has been demolished, leaving this one to remind the pawn business of the market. **Rarity**

It is a pawnshop of high built heritage value.

**Built Heritage  
Value &**

It is in good condition despite some minor defects, including the recent plastering of the external wall to the left of its entrance. **Authenticity**

It has group value with other historic buildings in the old market, including Tai Wong Old Temple (大王古廟), Yuen Kwan Yi Tai Temple (玄關二帝廟), Chun Yuen Pawn House (晉源押) and other shop-cum-residence buildings. **Group Value**

Market days fell on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> days of each of the three ten-day periods of every lunar month; on these days, the place would be bustling with traders involved in the buying and selling of agricultural produce (e.g. rice, vegetables, sugar cane, wine, fish, meats, soy sauce, spices), farming and kitchen utensils, furniture and all kinds of daily necessities. **Social Value,  
& Local  
Interest**

The market operated from 6 a.m. until dusk. It was managed by Kwong Yu Tong (光裕堂), a trust of a branch of the Kam Tin Tang Clan. The market was getting less prosperous and shops were closing down since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in face of competition of other markets especially when the Yuen Long New Market (元朗新墟) in its southwest opened in 1915.