

Historic Building Appraisal

Pak Mong Watchtower

Pak Mong, Lantau Island

Pak Mong (白芒) is a multi-surname Hakka (客家) village in the west of Tai Ho Wan (大蠔灣), north of Lantau Island, inhabited by the Kwoks (郭氏) and the Cheungs (張氏). The main clan of Pak Mong is the Kwoks whose origin was Taiyuan of Shanxi province (山西省太原). Their great ancestor is Kwok Tsz-yee (郭子儀), a famous general of Tang Dynasty (唐朝, A.D. 618-907), who was bestowed with the title of Fenyang Wang (汾陽王, literally, King of Fenyang). *Historical Interest*

Kwok Shi-ching (郭仕禎), an 8th generation member of the clan, came from Shanghang of Fujian province (福建上杭) and settled at Por Kai Shan (婆髻山) in the west of the present Pak Mong in the 1st year of Wanli (萬曆, 1573) period of Ming (明) Dynasty. The Kwoks moved from Por Kai Shan to settle in Pak Mong in the 15th year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong (乾隆, 1750) of Qing (清) Dynasty. The Kwoks named the area as Pak Mong because their great ancestors were impressed by a kind of plant called Mong (芒, thatcher's grass) which blooms white flowers in November. Pak Mong, together with Ngau Kwu Long (牛牯壟) and Tai Ho (大蠔), were collectively known as "The Three Hamlets of Mui Wo" (梅窩三鄉).

The watchtower in the village was erected by the Kwoks in **around the 1940s** for defensive purpose against pirates, bandits and the invading Japanese. The watchtower was used as a school named Pak Mong Heung School (白望鄉學校) after the Second World War until 1962. It is managed by Kwok Wing Yun Tong (郭永遠堂).

The tower is a detached two-story building constructed on a raised platform in the west of the village. It is facing north providing a high watching position to safeguard the security of the village. It has a rectangular base. It is a Chinese vernacular structure constructed of granite blocks and concrete with its walls to support the flat roof. Rows of granite blocks are rendered in regular bonding with cement and sand mortar. Internally it is plastered. The door is at the south elevation. The first floor flooring is constructed of timber joists and planks. The roof is constructed of reinforced concrete. Two wooden staircases are installed for access to the first floor and the roof. Small windows are on four sides of the tower with hood mouldings on the external walls. Narrow gun holes are on the upper level of the walls. The name of the school "白望鄉學校" (should be "芒") (Pak Mong Heung School) is moulded on a cement board above the doorway. *Architectural Merit*

It is a watchtower to remind the settlement of the villagers in Pak Mong.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Its authenticity is kept.

Authenticity

The villagers engaged themselves in rice and vegetable growing and fishing. Many villagers participated in the construction of the tower. It provided watching and security purposes for any possible attack from the front and side directions. Two villagers participated in the guerrillas to fight against the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation (1941-45). The tower was converted for use as a school called Pak Mong Heung School after the war teaching children from the nearby Tai Ho (大蠔) and Ngau Kwu Long (牛牯壆) villages other than those in the village. It had a maximum of 30 students in its hey days. The school was moved to a new campus near Pak Mong and named as Pak Mong Three Villages School (白芒三鄉聯合學校) in 1962. Due to the limited number of students, the school was closed in 1986.

**Social Value,
& Local
Interest**

The Entrance Gate and the Kwok Ancestral Hall are other historic items in Pak Mong. Besides, there is a huge rock preserved beside the watchtower. The entire village is planned in the same orientation with the watchtower. The rural mountain landscape, the waterstream on the west of the village and the waterfront blend well with this old village and benefit it in *fungshui* setting (風水; topographical and geometrical settings in traditional Chinese belief). The former Pak Mong School remains abandoned at the east of the village with a 10-minutes-walk distance.

Group Value