

Historic Building Appraisal
Residence of Tang Pak Kau
No. 20 Tsz Tong Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen Long

The Residence of Tang Pak Kau (the “Residence”), located at Tsz Tong Tsuen,¹ Kam Tin, Yuen Long, was probably built in the early 20th century. The building is also known as ‘Lai Kang Study Hall’ (禮耕堂).² **Historical Interest**

Tang Pak Kau (鄧伯裘) (1876-1950) was a distinguished member of the Tang clan in Kam Tin in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. He was the 26th generation descendent of Tang Yuen-Leung (鄧元亮), who was considered as the first generation of the Tangs in Kam Tin. Tang Pak Kau was a businessman.³ In addition to running his businesses, he devoted himself to many social services, and his contribution to the development of Kam Tin, Yuen Long and the New Territories was remarkable. He participated in the founding of the New Territories Association of Agricultural, Industrial and Commercial Research (租界農工商業研究總會), the predecessor of Heung Yee Kuk (founded in 1926) in 1923. He was one of the committee members of the New Territories Agricultural Association (新界農業會) in 1930, and the vice-chairman of the Yuen Long Merchants Association (元朗商會) in 1938. In addition, he contributed to the establishment of the Cottage Hospital (錦田婦孺醫院) for women and children and the St. John Ambulance Brigade – Yuen Long Division First Aid Station (聖約翰救傷隊元朗支隊救傷站), which were opened in Kam Tin in 1932 and 1948, respectively. He was four times the chairman of the Pok Oi Hospital in 1928–29, 1933–34, 1946–47 and 1947–48. Tang Pak Kau also contributed extensively to education in Yuen Long. He financially supported the establishment of a free school named Yuen Long Shau Kai School (元朗少岐義學) in 1926, established the Mung Yeung Private School (蒙養學校) in the same year and was the chairman of the School Building Committee of the Un Long Public Middle School (元朗公立中學) in 1949.

¹ There are two versions of Tsz Tong Tsuen in Chinese, namely 祠堂村 and 祠塘村. Both names are being used by government departments. In Chinese, *Tsz Tong* literally means ancestral hall, and *Tsuen* means village. According to the oral history interviews with members of Tang clan in Kam Tin by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 28 March 2023, they generally believe that Tsz Tong Tsuen’s name comes from the existence of Tang Lung Yau Wan Tsuen Um Ancestral Hall (龍游尹泉菴鄧公祠), which is the ancestral hall of the Tangs living in a nearby walled village called Tai Hong Wai (泰康圍). The ancestral hall was built in 1768 in memory of Tang Man-wai (鄧文蔚). When the ancestral hall was first built, no one resided nearby. Villagers moved in to Tsz Tong Tsuen as a result of the increased population in Tai Hong Wai.

² According to the *Block Government Lease*, the original usage of part of the Residence was as a “school”.

³ Tang Pak Kau opened an oil factory called Tai Cheung (泰祥油廠) in Yuen Long in 1915.

Being a key leader in Kam Tin, Tang Pak Kau acted as a communication bridge between the villagers and the government. He represented the Tangs of Kam Tin in petitioning the government to return the iron gates of Kat Hing Wai (吉慶圍) from Ireland, which had been seized in 1899. As a result, the iron gates were returned eventually. He was appointed as a member of the Reception Committee (接待新任港督委員會成員) when Sir Andrew Caldecott (郝德傑爵士) and Sir Geoffry Northcote (羅富國爵士) were appointed the new Governor of Hong Kong in 1935 and 1937, respectively. He was awarded a Certificate of Honour (榮譽狀) in 1930 and the King's Coronation Medal (英皇加冕勳章) in 1937, and he was appointed Justice of the Peace (太平紳士) in 1947. Furthermore, he received the Donat's Badge in Bronze (聖約翰勳章銅章) in 1939 in recognition of his devotion to the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

Many gifts, plaques, couplets and calligraphy rolls from his 70th birthday gifts, as well as presents congratulating him on being appointed as the Justice of Peace, are on display in the house; all of these showcased his strong local connection and distinguished social status among the local community. Some of the names printed on the gifts belong to well-known people of the day, including the famous former-Qing *Hanlin* scholars Lai Tsi-hsi (賴際熙), Kong Hung-yan (江孔殷), Chu U-chun (朱汝珍) and Shum Kwong-yuet (岑光樾), the renowned local Chinese calligraphist Au Kin-kung (區建公) and wealthy businessmen of Yuen Long, Tang Pui-king (鄧佩瓊) and Chiu Lut-sau (趙聿修). When Tang Pak Kau died four years later, many high-ranking officials came to express their condolences.⁴

The rectangular-shaped green brick single-storey traditional Chinese building is different from surrounding village houses because it has an extreme length to depth proportion (5:1), a large L-shaped open courtyard at the back and a conspicuous watchtower of three-storey height. The exterior of the residence is purely in the traditional Chinese Qing vernacular style, as reflected in its flushed gable roof system, green-brick external wall and mouldings. However, the building structure and interior decorations juxtapose traditional Chinese elements and Western components.

**Architectural
Merit**

The site that the Residence stands on comprises various lots of land acquired over the 1905-1922 period, suggesting that it had undergone several phases of extension. Viewing the elevation, construction joints can be clearly seen on external walls; granite blocks are laid as bases for the central portion,

⁴ 鄧緝煌，《鄧伯裘先生哀思錄》(香港：編輯自編，1950)。

while rubble is used for the left unit. As granite corner stones are located at the corners of the central unit and on the two sides of the main entrance, it is likely that the central unit was the first one to be built, and then the other units combined together to form a compound. On the external wall, the wall friezes and gable friezes are decorated with mouldings featuring plants and mythical figures, some of which are still well preserved.

There is only one entrance to the building. The entrance faces the south-western direction. The rectangular residence can be further divided into two rows: the main residential portion is located in the rear part, while the kitchen, storerooms, light wells and circulation space are in the front row.

Right behind the main entrance is the light well, with very impressive Western style decorations upon entrance into the building. Tuscan columns and archways act as a frame guarding the opening of the entrance court. The couplets and altar in the central unit lie on the central axis with the main entrance. A bedroom is located on the left, with fine wood carvings, lattices and a cockloft above. To the right of the altar, there is a finely carved wooden frame decoration. Passing through the wooden swinging doors with a traditional Chinese sliding door, a spacious side hall comes into sight, again with Tuscan columns and archways. Tiles laid in patterns with border lines are used as floor finishes. Three doorways lead to other areas: the spacious backyard, the courtyard on the right with bathrooms and toilets and the watchtower.

The three-storey watchtower is a special architectural feature at the north end corner of the Residence. The interior of the watchtower is mildly decorated, with a floral pattern at dado level and ceiling mouldings. The whole staircase and the floor are finished with red and green terrazzo. Its design of small, minimal windows and ornamentation explained that it was built for surveillance and security purposes. Prudent security of the tower is secured by the thick partitions, a huge and heavy entrance door and pole-bars.

For the left dwelling unit, which was addressed as “the new study room” by the family, Tuscan columns and archways are installed on the two sides of the entrance to the living area, which is divided into three bays. It is noteworthy that the Western style features of Tuscan columns and archways are consistently adopted in the residence, including this living room, for both decoration and intermediate support of the roof. The bases of the columns combine concrete and terrazzo. The wall friezes are finely decorated with murals featuring landscapes and people and calligraphy; most of them are well preserved with attractive colour.

Tang Pak Kau was one of the prominent figures in Kam Tin in the late 19th and early 20th century. He is remembered by people living in Kam Tin and Yuen Long even today, especially among the elders. His residence is an important building in Kam Tin, which testifies to the development of Kam Tin and Yuen Long. In addition, the building is located next to the main footpath connecting the railway station and the main street of Kam Tin. It is a landmark in Tsz Tong Village.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

The Residence not only has group value with Tang Lung Yau Wan Tsuen Um Ancestral Hall (龍游尹泉菴鄧公祠), which is in the same village, but also with the historic places in the vicinity, such as Kat Hing Wai, Tai Hong Wai and Wing Lung Wai (永隆圍), as well as the historic buildings like Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall (廣瑜鄧公祠) (Declared Monument), Yi Tai Study Hall (二帝書院) (Declared Monument), Tang Chan Yui Kuen Ancestral Hall (鎮銳錫鄧公祠), Lik Wing Tong Study Hall (力榮堂), So Lau Yuen (泝流園), Chou Wong Yi Kung Study Hall (周王二公書院), Cheung Chun Yuen (長春園), Hung Shing Temple (洪聖宮) in Shui Tau Tsuen (水頭村), and Tang Tsing Lok Ancestral Hall (清樂鄧公祠) and Tin Hau Temple (天后古廟) in Shui Mei Tsuen (水尾村), all of which are in nearby areas of Kam Tin. Most of these historic places and buildings are examples of the Tangs' contribution to the development of the territory since the 11th century, and the Residence has witnessed Tang Pak Kau's charitable acts for his fellow clansmen and townsmen alike.

Group Value

A residence of a renowned character of the Tang clan in Kam Tin is rare. Unlike the villages nearby, Tsz Tong Tsuen, where the Residence is situated, did not have a wall to withstand bandit attacks. A watchtower was therefore erected in the Residence. It is unique for a residential building to have a three-storey watchtower in the territory. The L-shape of the rectangular-shaped Residence and the watchtower is also a distinguishing feature. It is very impressive in that this traditional Chinese Qing vernacular residential building is juxtaposed with Chinese and Western elements, which reflects the living of the Chinese gentry class in the early 20th century.

***Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

Although its internal walls have been plastered and some windows have been replaced, the building is in a basically unaltered condition. Some of the decorations, including reliefs and murals, still remain with their original colour. Most of the original fine details of building fabric and finishes, which display fine workmanship, have been retained.

REFERENCES

Records of the Hong Kong Government

Report on the New Territories for the Year 1925, Hong Kong Government Administrative Reports dated 1925, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

Medical & Sanitary Report for the Year 1932, Hong Kong Government Administrative Reports dated 1932, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

Notification No. 337 dated 3 June 1930, Hong Kong Government Gazette dated 3 June 1930, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

Notification No. 342 dated 14 May 1937, Hong Kong Government Gazette dated 14 May 1937, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

Notification No. 955 dated 10 December 1947, Hong Kong Government Gazette dated 11 December 1947, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

Document Records at the Land Registry Office, Hong Kong

Property Particulars of KHWL 183 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of KHWL 184 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of KHWL 185 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of KHWL 186 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of KHWL 187 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of KHWL 203 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of Lot No. 417 in D.D. 109.

Property Particulars of Lot No. 409 in D.D. 109.

Archives at Public Records Office, Hong Kong

HKRS58-1-70-20. “By Tang Pak Kau Of Kam Tin - For Agricultural Purposes”, 10 January 1914 – 12 March 1914.

HKRS58-1-75-45. “Pak Kau Of Kam Tin - For Threshing Floor Purposes”, 13 July 1915 – 9 September 1915.

HKRS58-1-75-89. “Pak Kau Of Kam Tin - For Drying Ground Purposes”, 27 August 1915 – 12 November 1915.

HKRS96-1-6029. “Tang Pak (Or Bark Or Park) Kau (Or Kow Or Kiu) Alias Tang Shiu Tai Alias Tang Shing Hing Alias Tang Ip Tsung Alias Tang Lai Kang Tong”, 22 March 1956 – 11 August 1959.

Aerial Photos of the Hong Kong Government

Survey and Mapping Office, Aerial photos dated 15 November 1924 (Photo Ref.: PEGASUS_RN_H_0034_0010)

Survey and Mapping Office, Aerial photos dated 3 May 1949 (Photo Ref.: 81A_122_6031)

Maps of the Hong Kong Government

Survey and Mapping Office, Map of 1960 (Map Ref.: 109-NW-C).

Survey and Mapping Office, Map of 1972 (Map Ref.: 109-NW-C).

Newspapers

“HONGKONG AND CHINA: Interesting History Recalled. Restoration of Old Chinese Village Gates”, *South China Morning Post*, 27 May 1925.

“Maternity Welfare Work”, *South China Morning Post*, 9 June 1932.

“New Governor Sir Andrew Caldecott To Be Welcomed Committees Formed”, *South China Morning Post*, 18 November 1935.

“The New Governor”, *South China Morning Post*, 29 October 1937.

“St. John Ambulance, Members Decorated by The Governor”, *South China Morning Post*, 20 January 1939.

“UN LONG MIDDLE SCHOOL OPENS”, *South China Morning Post*, 12 September 1950.

「建築城門水塘之進行」，《工商日報》，1928年2月22日。

「新界農業會消息」，《天光報》，1933年7月21日。

「鄧伯裘父子借出鄧家祠」，《天光報》，1938年7月13日。

「聖約翰救傷隊元朗支隊及救傷站開幕」，《華僑日報》，1948年12月21日。

「元朗救傷支隊擴展」，《華僑日報》，1950年1月4日。

「元朗公立中學校舍落成開幕盛典」，《華僑日報》，1950年9月12日。

「新界蒙養學校新校舍昨落成」，《工商日報》，1954年6月6日。

「港督關懷教育巡視新界三校」，《華僑日報》，1957年1月17日。

「元朗公立中學水牛嶺建標準新校舍」，《華僑日報》，1988年9月18日。

「新界鄉議局的歷史」，《文匯報》，2006年10月24日。

「【校長訪問】從種菜鄉下仔到退休副校長 春風化雨 40載教育學生首重輸得起」，《香港經濟日報》，2021年5月14日。

「鄧伯裘與禮耕堂」，《香港商報網》，2023年3月5日。

Books, Articles and Other Sources

Chan, Wing-hoi, ‘The Dangs of Kam Tin and their Jiu Festival’ in *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 29, 1989.

蕭國健，《新界五大家族》（香港：現代教育研究社出版有限公司，1990）。

馮志明，《元朗文物古蹟概覽》（香港：元朗區議會，1996）。

鄧緝煌，《鄧伯裘先生哀思錄》（香港：編輯自編，1950）。

鄧英槐、鄧慶賢，《源遠流長》（香港：編輯自編，尚未出版）。

趙聿修，《元朗商會成立廿五週年紀念特刊》（香港：元朗商會，1963）。

廖書蘭，《被忽略的主角》（香港：商務印書館（香港）有限公司，2018）。

博愛醫院董事局，《博愛醫院庚子年董事局就職典禮特刊》（香港：博愛醫院，2020）。

「香港賽馬會—港文化·港創意 入鄉隨續」，《文化葫蘆》，2017 年上載，
<<https://had1617.huluhk.org/yuen-history.php?lang=tc>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「香港工商手冊」，《香港經濟資料社》，
<<https://digitalrepository.lib.hku.hk/catalog/1544bp17c#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-653%2C107%2C2505%2C1936>>，accessed on 22 March 2023.

「元朗商會簡史」，《元朗商會》，
<<http://www.ylma.org.hk/%E5%85%83%E6%9C%97%E5%95%86%E6%9C%83%E7%B0%A1%E5%8F%B2/>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「500 年歷史圍村 錦田吉慶圍《香港志·政治部類》錦田考察記」，《香港地方志中心》，2022 年 8 月 19 日上載，
<<https://www.hkchronicles.org.hk/%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%E5%BF%97/%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB/500%E5%B9%B4%E6%AD%B7%E5%8F%B2%E5%AE%A2%E5%AE%B6%E5%9C%8D%E6%9D%91%E9%8C%A6%E7%94%B0%E5%90%89%E6%85%B6%E5%9C%8D>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「保育香港歷史筆記 本地古蹟中的清末民初史 吉慶圍鐵門·楊衢雲墓·孫眉農場」，《長春社》，2014 年 9 月上載，
<<https://cahk.org.hk/upload/subpage2/48/self/619e051f3c97a.pdf>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「香港古蹟遊：錦田學校篇」，《知史》，2021 年 1 月 14 日上載，
<<https://www.myhistory.com/e001/e0014/ydyw0001>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「跑遊元朗錦田鄉 (8) — 祠塘村鄧伯裘故居」，《TEREWONG》，2014 年 4 月 12 日上載，
<<http://blog.terewong.com/archives/12630>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「跑遊元朗錦田鄉 (48) — 吉慶圍鐵門歸還典禮」，《TEREWONG》，2022 年 10 月 27 日上載，
<<http://blog.terewong.com/archives/22024>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

「跑遊元朗八鄉 (32) — 錦田診所（聖約翰救傷隊莫理士）錦田聖約瑟堂（羅惠德羅三姑）」，《TEREWONG》，2018 年 9 月 23 日上載，
<<http://blog.terewong.com/archives/19239>>，accessed on 21 March 2023.

“Historic Building Appraisal Tang Lung Yau Wan Tsuen Um Ancestral Hall”, Antiquities and Monuments Office,

<https://www.aab.gov.hk/filemanager/aab/common/historicbuilding/en/775_Appraisal_En.pdf>, accessed on 21 March 2023.

“Historic Building Appraisal, Former building of Yuen Long Public Middle School”, Antiquities and Monuments Office,

<https://www.aab.gov.hk/filemanager/aab/common/historicbuilding/en/N209_Appraisal_En.pdf>, accessed on 21 March 2023.

“Historic Building Appraisal Watchtower and Side Chamber of the Ho Residence”, Antiquities and Monuments Office,

<https://www.aab.gov.hk/filemanager/aab/common/historicbuilding/en/67_Appraisal_En.pdf>, accessed on 21 April 2023.

“Historic Building Appraisal Yuen's Mansion, East Watchtower”, Antiquities and Monuments Office,

<https://www.aab.gov.hk/filemanager/aab/common/historicbuilding/en/242_Appraisal_En.pdf>, accessed on 21 April 2023.

“Yuen's Mansion, West Watchtower”, Antiquities and Monuments Office,

<https://www.aab.gov.hk/filemanager/aab/common/historicbuilding/en/244_Appraisal_En.pdf>, accessed on 21 April 2023.