

Historic Building Appraisal
Lan Fong Study Hall
Chuk Hang, Pat Heung, Yuen Long

The Tangs (鄧) in Chuk Hang (竹坑) village, Pat Heung (八鄉) of Yuen Long, were branched out from Wang Toi Shan (橫台山) in its south. Wang Toi Shan was first settled by the Hakka (客家) Tangs who developed from the oldest Wing Ning Lei (永寧里) village to others. The Tangs moved from Shibi (石壁) of Ninghua (寧化) in Fujian (福建) province to Chaozhou (潮州) of Guangdong (廣東) province and then southwards to Huizhou (惠州) after generations. Tang Ting-kwai (鄧廷桂) of the 14th generation moved from Huizhou to Wang Toi Shan in the 27th year of Kangxi (康熙, 1688) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. He was regarded as the founding ancestor of the Tangs in Wang Toi Shan. His descendents later branched out to different villages in Wang Toi Shan and other areas. With the population increase of the descendents of Tang Hung-tat (鄧洪達), a son of Ting-kwai, they branched out to Chuk Hang and Shui Lau Tin (水流田) villages. To provide a venue for the Tang children to be educated, Tang Kwok-tsun (鄧國傳,?-1892), the great grandson of Tang Hung-mou (鄧洪茂), built the Lan Fong Study Hall (蘭芳書室) in the first year of Guangxu (光緒, 1875) reign of the Qing dynasty.

*Historical
Interest*

The study hall is the biggest building in the village. It is in the front row of six rows of buildings in the northern end of the village. It is a Qing vernacular building having a two-hall-one-courtyard plan of three bays. The open courtyard in the middle bay is in-between the entrance and main halls. Side room and chambers are on either side of the middle bay. A kitchen was later added on the right of the building. It was constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Most of the internal walls are plastered and painted. The floors are cement-screeded. The external walls are of fair-faced green bricks. The name of the study hall is engraved on a piece of stone on the wall above the lintel. Wall frieze paintings of landscape, flowers, birds, figures and animals and calligraphy are under the eave at the front façade and at the front and main halls. Mouldings of flowers and birds, *kuilongs* (夔龍) are on the walls of the front façade. Fascia boards under the eaves are with carvings of flowers and birds pattern. The ridges are decorated with a pair of geometric mouldings.

*Architectural
Merit*

It is a study hall of the Tangs to remind their history and education work in Chuk Hang village.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value***

Some of the arched openings of the side rooms are blocked. A sheet-metal canopy is added at the front of the main hall. This would diminish the authenticity of the building.

Authenticity

It has distant group value with the Shung Man Study Hall (崇文書室), Wui Tsuen Study Hall (匯泉書室) and other historic buildings in the neighbouring Ho Lik Pui village (河瀝背村).

Group Value

The study hall was erected to provide a venue for the village children to be educated to gain success in the Imperial Civil Service Examination in order to pursue an official career in the Qing government. Teachers were employed from the mainland teaching the children with Chinese classics and books with the practice of abacus and letter writing. With the abolition of the Examination in 1905, modern subjects were introduced including mathematics, geography and general knowledge. A Lan Fong School (蘭芳學校) was housed in the building in 1920-30s. A Toi Shan Public School (台山公立學校) was erected by the Tangs in Wang Toi Shan in 1954 to replace the work of the study halls. The building was left vacated until 1970s when it was used to house the Lan Fong Kindergarten (蘭芳幼稚園) taking about 20 to 30 children. The teachers of the kindergarten were accommodated in the study hall. It was closed in the 1980s with the competition from other kindergartens. The hall was used as a residence occupied by the Tangs until 1999. The study hall was used as a place to hold basin meals (盆菜) for the villagers for the celebration of festivals, wedding and birthdays.

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