

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF

### **Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments and Historical Buildings) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Notice 2024**

#### INTRODUCTION

After consultation with the Antiquities Advisory Board (“AAB”)<sup>1</sup> and with the approval of the Chief Executive, the Secretary for Development (“SDEV”), in her capacity as the Authority under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) (the “Ordinance”), has decided to declare two historic buildings, namely Lo Pan Temple situated at No. 15 Ching Lin Terrace, Kennedy Town (魯班先師廟) and Residence of Tang Pak Kau situated at No. 20 Tsz Tong Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen Long (鄧伯裘故居), as monuments<sup>2</sup> under section 3(1) of the Ordinance.

2. The declaration is made by the Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments and Historical Buildings) (Consolidation) (Amendment) Notice 2024 (the “Notice”) (**Annex A**), which will be published in the Gazette on 10 October 2024.

A

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<sup>1</sup> The Antiquities Advisory Board is a statutory body established under section 17 of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) to advise the Authority under the Ordinance on any matters relating to antiquities, proposed monuments or monuments or referred to it for consultation under sections 2A(1), 3(1) or 6(4) of the Ordinance.

<sup>2</sup> Under section 2 of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53), “monument” (古蹟) means a place, building, site or structure which is declared to be a monument, historical building or archaeological or palaeontological site or structure.

## JUSTIFICATIONS

### Heritage Significance

3. The Antiquities and Monuments Office (“AMO”)<sup>3</sup> has carried out research on and assessed the heritage significance of the two historic buildings set out in paragraph 1 above. AMO recommends to the Authority under the Ordinance that the two historic buildings have significant heritage value that meets the high threshold required for declaration as monuments under section 3(1) of the Ordinance. The heritage value of the two historic buildings is summarised in paragraphs 4 to 9 below and elaborated in **Annex B**.

B

#### (a) Lo Pan Temple

4. The Lo Pan Temple (“the Temple”) is a well-recognised historic temple in Hong Kong dedicated to Lo Pan, the patron saint of the workers of Sam Hong (literally meaning “three trades”), which traditionally refers to carpentry, masonry and bricklaying. The Temple was first built in 1884 and was rebuilt at the same site in 1928. Its construction was made possible by donations from many companies and individuals related to the construction industry. In this regard, the establishment of the Temple reflects the booming construction business in Hong Kong at the time.

5. As a symbol of the construction industry in Hong Kong, the Temple was embellished with intricate murals, mouldings and ceramic decorations. Its distinctive gable walls, with five pointed and sharp-angle wings (poetically called the “Five Peaks Paying Tribute to Heaven”), are extremely rare in Hong Kong. The main ridge of the Temple is decorated with supreme-quality Shiwan ceramics produced by the famous Junju kiln. The

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<sup>3</sup> The Antiquities and Monuments Office is the executive arm of the Authority under the Ordinance dealing with matters, among others, relating to research, examination and preservation of any place, building, site or structure which is of historical, archaeological or palaeontological value.

Temple contains representative examples of the design, techniques and craftsmanship of traditional carpentry, moulding and ceramics production.

6. Since the establishment of the Temple, local builders and owners of construction-related businesses have been following the traditional practice of paying homage to Lo Pan on his birthday, commonly known as the “Master Festival”. Thus, the Temple not only bears unique testimony to a cultural tradition that the construction industry has carried on year after year, but also helps reinforce the bonds among the different trades of the Hong Kong construction industry.

(b) Residence of Tang Pak Kau

7. The Residence of Tang Pak Kau (the “Residence”) was probably built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tang Pak Kau (1876-1950) was a businessman and a distinguished member of the Tang clan in Kam Tin. He made remarkable contributions to the development of Kam Tin, Yuen Long and the New Territories as a whole, in particular in the areas of education and medical services.

8. The Residence is a rectangular-shaped single-storey grey brick building with an extreme length-to-depth proportion and a conspicuous watchtower of three-storey height. It is noteworthy that Tuscan columns and archways are consistently adopted in the Residence for both decoration and support of the pitched roofs constructed of timber purlins, battens and tiles. The Residence incorporates security considerations in its design, in particular through the erection of a watchtower. Among all the important features of the watchtower, the staircase and the floor finished with finely crafted red and green terrazzo are extraordinary.

9. The Residence is very special as traditional Chinese elements are juxtaposed with Western structural components inside the building. In addition, most of the original building fabric, finishes and decorations remain intact in the building. The Residence testifies to the development of Kam Tin and Yuen Long, and it serves as a witness to Tang Pak Kau’s achievements.

## **Declaration as Monuments**

10. The Lo Pan Temple and the Residence of Tang Pak Kau have been accorded with Grade 1 status by AAB under the existing administrative grading mechanism<sup>4</sup>. AAB advised in November 2008 that all Grade 1 historic buildings should, given their outstanding heritage value, form a pool of potential candidates for the Authority under the Ordinance to consider monument declaration.

11. With the recommendation of AMO as set out in paragraph 3 above, the support of AAB and the approval of the Chief Executive, SDEV, as the Authority under the Ordinance, has decided to declare the two historic buildings as monuments under the Ordinance. In addition to reflecting the outstanding heritage value of the two historic buildings, the declaration will provide the two buildings with statutory protection<sup>5</sup>.

12. The Lo Pan Temple is situated on private lot and the Temple is under the management of the Hong Kong Lo Pan Kwong Yuet Tong. The Residence of Tang Pak Kau is also situated on private lots. The procedure of serving notices to the respective lawful occupier and owners of the two buildings with regard to the intended declaration is required under section 4 of the Ordinance. Such notices were served on the respective lawful occupier and owners of the two buildings on 14 June 2024. No objection

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<sup>4</sup> The grading system is an administrative arrangement to provide an objective basis for determining the heritage value, and hence the preservation need, of historic buildings in Hong Kong. Under the grading system:

- Grade 1 status refers to buildings of outstanding merit, which every effort should be made to preserve if possible;
- Grade 2 status refers to buildings of special merit; efforts should be made to selectively preserve; and
- Grade 3 status refers to buildings of some merit; preservation in some form would be desirable and alternative means could be considered if preservation is not practicable.

<sup>5</sup> Section 6(1) of the Ordinance provides:

“6(1) Subject to subsection (4), no person shall –

- (a) excavate, carry on building or other works, plant or fell trees or deposit earth or refuse on or in a proposed monument or monument; or
- (b) demolish, remove, obstruct, deface or interfere with a proposed monument or monument, except in accordance with a permit granted by the Authority.”

was received by AMO during the one-month notice period. Explicit agreement of the respective lawful occupier and owners of the two buildings to the declaration proposal has also been obtained.

13. The declaration of the two historic buildings will be made by the Notice published in the Gazette on 10 October 2024. Copies of plans showing the locations of the two buildings declared by the Authority as monuments and deposited in the Land Registry are at **Annex C**. The Notice will take immediate effect and will be tabled in the Legislative Council for negative vetting on 16 October 2024.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL**

14. The declaration is in conformity with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning human rights. It has no financial, civil service, economic, productivity, environmental, family or gender implications. As far as sustainability implications are concerned, the declaration is conducive to upholding the sustainability principle of protecting Hong Kong's heritage assets.

15. Upon the declaration of the two historic buildings as monuments, their repair and maintenance works will continue to be undertaken by their respective owners and lawful occupier as before.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

16. AAB was consulted on the proposed declaration as required under section 3(1) of the Ordinance and rendered its support on 7 March 2024. The Legislative Council Panel on Development was also consulted at its meeting on 25 June 2024. No comments were received from the Panel members.

## **PUBLICITY**

17. A press release will be issued on the date of declaration (i.e. 10 October 2024). A spokesman will be available to answer media and public enquiries.

## **ENQUIRIES**

18. For any enquiries on this brief, please contact Mr. Ivanhoe CHANG, Commissioner for Heritage of Development Bureau, at 2906 1521.

**Development Bureau**

**10 October 2024**

Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments and Historical Buildings)  
(Consolidation) (Amendment) Notice 2024

Section 1

1

**Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments  
and Historical Buildings) (Consolidation) (Amendment)  
Notice 2024**

(Made by the Secretary for Development under section 3(1) of the  
Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) after consultation with the  
Antiquities Advisory Board and with the approval of the Chief Executive)

**1. Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments and  
Historical Buildings) (Consolidation) Notice amended**

The Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments and  
Historical Buildings) (Consolidation) Notice (Cap. 53 sub. leg. B) is  
amended as set out in section 2.

**2. Paragraph 3 amended (declaration of historical buildings)**

(1) Paragraph 3(cu)—

**Repeal**

“Development.”

**Substitute**

“Development;”.

(2) After paragraph 3(cu)—

**Add**

“(cv) the building known as Lo Pan Temple at Inland Lot No.  
2705, 15 Ching Lin Terrace, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong,  
as delineated and shown edged red on the plan marked  
Plan No. HKM11448 signed and deposited in the Land  
Registry under section 3(4) of the Ordinance by the  
Secretary for Development;

Antiquities and Monuments (Declaration of Monuments and Historical Buildings)  
(Consolidation) (Amendment) Notice 2024

Section 2

2

(cw) the Residence of Tang Pak Kau at Kat Hing Wai Lot Nos.  
183, 184, 185, 186 and 187 in D.D. 109, Sections A and  
B of Lot No. 409 in D.D. 109 and Section B of Lot No.  
417 in D.D. 109, 20 Tsz Tong Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen  
Long, New Territories, as delineated and shown edged red  
on the plan marked Plan No. YLM11510 signed and  
deposited in the Land Registry under section 3(4) of the  
Ordinance by the Secretary for Development.”.



Secretary for Development

3 October 2024

### **Explanatory Note**

This Notice declares the following places to be historical buildings under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53)---

- (a) the building known as Lo Pan Temple at Inland Lot No. 2705, 15 Ching Lin Terrace, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong;
- (b) the Residence of Tang Pak Kau at Kat Hing Wai Lot Nos. 183, 184, 185, 186 and 187 in D.D. 109, Sections A and B of Lot No. 409 in D.D. 109 and Section B of Lot No. 417 in D.D. 109, 20 Tsz Tong Tsuen, Kam Tin, Yuen Long, New Territories.



**Heritage Appraisal of  
Lo Pan Temple  
15 Ching Lin Terrace, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong**

Lo Pan Temple is located on Ching Lin Terrace, one of the seven terraces built on the slopes between Pok Fu Lam Road and Belcher's Street in Kennedy Town. Dedicated to Lo Pan,<sup>1</sup> who is revered as the god of Chinese builders and building contractors,<sup>2</sup> the temple was completed in 1928 and bears witness to the development of the construction industry in Hong Kong.

***Historical  
Interest***

A group of local builders and building contractors initiated the construction of the temple in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Guangxu (光緒) reign in the Qing Dynasty (1884).<sup>3</sup> Sympathetic to their cause and impressed by their enthusiasm, the businessman Li Lai Hing (李禮興) donated the land for the temple in the name of his company, Lai Hing Ho (禮興號). Commenced in 1884 and completed in 1888,<sup>4</sup> the construction of the first temple building was made possible by donations from over a thousand companies and individuals involved in the construction industry. The temple underwent several renovations between 1894 and 1910, which were financed with the help of local builders and contractors.<sup>5</sup> The establishment and later renovations of the temple reflect the booming construction business in Hong Kong in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> Born in 507 B.C. in the State of Lu (魯) (now Shandong province) during the Spring and Autumn period (春秋) (770-476 B.C.), Lo Pan, also known as Kungshu Pan (公輸班), was described as the most talented and skilful builder, carpenter and inventor in ancient China. In honour of his achievements, he was made the patron god of the people working in the construction industry after his death. Legend has it that he came to the assistance of craftsmen and builders in despair, and as a result praying for his protection and guardianship became a custom of many Chinese builders and contractors.

<sup>2</sup> A more generalised term for builders and building contractors in Hong Kong is *sam hong* (三行), which literally means "three trades" and traditionally refers to carpentry, masonry and bricklaying. Today, the term *sam hong* is generally associated with the trades involved in the construction and renovation of buildings.

<sup>3</sup> Reference is made to the stone tablet "倡建魯班先師廟簽題工金芳名碑誌" erected in the temple in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the Guangxu reign, which dates back to 1884. The intention behind the building of the temple was to commemorate the virtues and contributions of the great master Lo Pan. The inscriptions on the stone tablet read "茲我行香海經營，創建北城侯魯班先師廟宇，以盡崇德報功、飲水思源之義。".

<sup>4</sup> The inscription "風調雨順，沐恩弟子曾瓊記敬送，北城侯先師案前。光緒十四年季秋吉旦，國泰民安，信昌爐造" can be seen on the bell in the temple.

<sup>5</sup> Stone tablets commemorating renovations in 1897, 1902, 1904, 1907, 1908 and 1910 can still be seen in the temple.

As the condition of the first temple was deteriorating, it was rebuilt at the same site in 1928. A total of 210 construction companies and individuals sponsored the works.<sup>6</sup> In 1949, a pavilion between the two halls of the temple and an annex as quarters for the temple keeper were built.<sup>7</sup> The construction works demonstrate the vigorous development of the construction industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the trade's commitment to the upkeep of the temple.

The construction of the Lo Pan Temple also testifies to the rise of associations established by Chinese people in Hong Kong. Many immigrants from the Mainland and other places were attracted to Hong Kong to make a living in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They noted the need to unite in order to offer each other help and support, and to safeguard their mutual interests. The early Chinese associations in Hong Kong can be roughly divided into associations based on the same family name, on a common homeland, on a local religious belief or on a trade. As the construction industry in Hong Kong grew increasingly prosperous in the 1870s, builders gradually formed sufficient group cohesion to build the temple.

Moreover, the temple is a reminder of the close links that Hong Kong had with other regions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to information on the stone tablets commemorating the construction and later renovations of the temple, donations to the building works included several from individuals originating from different parts of Guangdong province, such as Xinhui, Shunde, Kaiping and Dongguan.

Facing northwest, the temple features a two-hall, one-courtyard layout of a single bay with a recessed façade. It is built of grey bricks. Both the entrance hall and the main hall are topped with a traditional Chinese pitched roof laid with green-glazed roll tiles and red pan tiles, which is supported by a timber roof system and flanked

***Architectural  
Merit***

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<sup>6</sup> Reference is made to the inscriptions on the granite lintel and the stone tablet erected in 1951 in the temple. Reference is also made to a news report in *The Kung Sheung Daily News* of 23 November 1928 and an article in *Hong Kong and Far East Builder*, vol. 19 no. 3 (October 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Reference is made to the stone tablet “本堂奉祀” erected in 1949 in the temple and the approved drawing from the Buildings Department.

with gable walls on both ends. The height between the floor and ceiling is almost two storeys. The temple follows the topography of the site and thus has a few steps leading up to the main hall housing the altar of Lo Pan as well as other deities, such as the god of wealth.

The temple was built and embellished in a highly imaginative and decorative style. Delicate works of art in the form of mural, plaster mouldings, wood carvings and Shiwan (石灣) ceramic figurines adorn all the interior and exterior walls of the temple in abundance and highlight its exceptional architectural and aesthetic values. The exquisite craftsmanship displayed in the wide variety of decorative elements testifies to the superior status of Lo Pan Temple and its significance to the worshippers there.

One of the temple's most distinctive architectural features is its stepped gable walls on both sides of the two halls. These gables, which point upwards like daggers, are built in the “Five Peaks Paying Tribute to Heaven” style (五岳朝天式), a very rare design that is seldom found in Hong Kong.<sup>8</sup>

Another highly significant feature of the temple is the wealth of delicate decorations throughout the entire building. To begin with, both sides of each ridge of the rooftop of the entrance hall and the main hall are elaborately embellished with numerous exquisite Shiwan ceramic figurines. The upper part of the ridge of the entrance hall features precious pearl and a pair of dragon fish and phoenixes used as ridge-end ornaments. The decorations on the main ridges of the two halls and the *chitou* (gable wall heads 墀頭) on the front façade depict figures from the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Chinese novel *Investiture of the Gods* (《封神榜》), a popular theme adopted in ceramic ridges in Hong Kong.

Chinese inscriptions engraved on the main ridge, including “省城聚興選辦”, “均玉窑造”<sup>9</sup>, and “香港鍾照記建” on the roof of the entrance hall, record the names of manufacturers in Guangdong

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Antiquities and Monuments Office's records, there are three historic buildings with this kind of stepped gables: Lo Pan Temple in Kennedy Town, Hau Wong Temple in Kowloon City and Tin Hau Temple in Peng Chau.

<sup>9</sup> Junyu kiln was the renowned Shiwan ceramic manufacturer from Foshan, Guangdong province.

province, the year of manufacture and the local building contractor that was in charge of the construction of the ceramic ridges and decorations. The Shiwan ceramic figurines are not only exquisitely crafted, but also very skilfully positioned. It is noteworthy that a few figurines have been placed leaning forward in order to facilitate a clear and undistorted view from ground level.

The large quantity of superb mural paintings depicting a wide variety of subjects in the temple, numbering as many as 26 pieces, is also exceptional. Right above the door lintel on the front façade is a remarkable mural containing nine paintings and two calligraphy murals on a single tableau featuring various themes such as *Evening Trip to Red Cliff* (夜遊赤壁)<sup>10</sup>, and *Bodhidharma Crossing Waves on a Reed* (達摩一葦渡江), together with subjects from traditional landscapes and plants.<sup>11</sup> These highly decorative murals convey the inspiration of the thirst for knowledge and the virtue of diligence. Other fine murals can be found decorating the front and rear elevations as well as internal walls and wall friezes.

In addition, a total of seven sets of finely crafted plaster mouldings can be found across the temple depicting auspicious motifs and historic folktales. Two of these mention a prominent local building contractor, Chung Cheu Kee Building Contractor (鍾照記建造), and the names of the notable craftsmen Deng Zizhou (鄧子舟) and his son Deng Juqian (鄧居謙) at the border frame.<sup>12</sup> The intricate wood carvings in the temple are also remarkable. Looking up at the covered pavilion reveals an exquisitely decorated *caimen* (彩門), a wooden panel. Depicting historic folktales including *Xue Gang Rebelling against Tang* (薛剛反唐) and other auspicious motifs, the *caimen* was manufactured by Leung So Kee (梁蘇記) and presented by Lam Yam Chuen (林蔭泉), the founding chairman of the Hongkong Building Contractors' Association (香港建造商會), and his son to

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<sup>10</sup> This is the largest painting and is placed in the middle of the tableau. It depicts famous scholar Su Shi (蘇軾) in a boat, Fou Yin the monk (佛印和尚) on the bank and the calligrapher Huang Tingjian (黃庭堅).

<sup>11</sup> The painting above the word “魯” is different from the rest of the paintings. Depicting several books and papers, it is an example of a genre of Chinese art that developed during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in China known as the “eight brokeners”.

<sup>12</sup> Four plaster mouldings crafted by the Dengs are preserved in the temple.

commemorate the temple's reconstruction in 1928.<sup>13</sup>

The temple retains its authentic layout and main elements. ***Authenticity***  
The building structure and the decorative features remain in good condition. The major later additions to the temple include the pavilion that was erected in 1949 over the original courtyard and the temple keeper's quarters in the southwestern corner.

The temple is the well-recognised historic temple dedicated to Lo Pan in Hong Kong. Its stepped gable walls in the style of the "Five Peaks Paying Tribute to Heaven" are a rare sight in Hong Kong. The temple is also one of the most gorgeously decorated temples in Hong Kong. It retains and expresses advanced techniques and superb craftsmanship in the execution of its wood carvings, ceramic figurines, plaster mouldings, mural paintings and stone inscriptions. Both the front and rear sides of the ridges of the entrance and main halls are vividly decorated with Shiwan ceramic figurines, which are found only in isolated cases in Hong Kong. ***Rarity***

The temple is of significant social value and local interest. ***Social Value & Local Interest***  
In the time when it was built, new entrants to the trade learned the knowledge and techniques of construction and building by undertaking an apprenticeship rather than through vocational training in a school setting. Lo Pan can be regarded as the great teacher of all the trades associated with building. Paying homage to Lo Pan at the temple is thus an important part of the heritage of the building trades that reflects the continuity and significance of apprenticeship. Since the temple was built, local owners and workers of construction businesses have followed the traditional practice of celebrating the birthday of Lo Pan, widely known as the "Master Festival" (師傅誕), on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the sixth lunar month every year, when they usually stop work and gather in front of the temple to pay homage to Lo Pan, thanking the master for his protection and asking for his blessing for smooth and safe works. They later hold a banquet in a restaurant in the evening.

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<sup>13</sup> Inscriptions "魯班先師廟廣悅寶堂重建崇陞誌慶" are engraved on the *caimen*. Reference is also made to 馬素梅:《迎祥接福: 香港中式古建築的木雕彩門》, 香港: 作者自印, 2021 年, 頁 158-159。

Traditional celebrations have been held at the temple that last one and a half days over the evening before and the day of the “Master Festival”. The festivities include a consecration ceremony conducted by Taoist priests to enshrine the souls of workers who have died in industrial accidents and the performance of lion and dragon dances. Another memorable activity is the distribution of “master rice” to children in the neighbourhood. Tradition has it that children who eat “master rice” will grow up to be as smart, versatile and hard-working as Lo Pan. “Master rice” was thus very popular in the old days. But as the older generations of craftsmen passed away, the “master rice” tradition has gradually disappeared since the 1960s.

In 2020, the Construction Industry Council in association with the Hong Kong Construction Association launched the “Construction Industry Lo Pan Rice Campaign” during the “Master Festival”, distributing hot lunch boxes to underprivileged groups in the community. The campaign has now become an iconic territory-wide charity event of the construction industry, reflecting the fact that the influence of Lo Pan is not only confined to the tangible historic temple building, but has also extended out in intangible form to a wider community from a socioeconomic perspective.

To promote the spirit of Lo Pan, which values innovation, and to recognize outstanding young practitioners in the industry, the Young Lo Pan Award Ceremony was inaugurated in 2010 by the management of the temple in collaboration with other stakeholders in the industry and is now held at the temple every year. It reflects the strong bonds that the temple fostered within the industry, and continues to foster even today, and testifies to the historical development of one of the major industries in Hong Kong.

Built in 1949, Kwong Yuet Tong Public Office (Grade 3) is located next to the temple. The existence of the office and the temple in close proximity form a significant group value. ***Group Value***

Another renowned temple in Central and Western District is the Man Mo Temple compound in Sheung Wan, which was declared as monument in 2010. Other historic buildings in the vicinity of the

temple include No. 9 Ching Lin Terrace (Grade 3), the Ex-Western Fire Station (Grade 2) and the Senior Staff Quarters and Workmen's Quarters of Elliot Pumping Station and Filters (Grade 2 and 3 respectively).

**Photos of Lo Pan Temple, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong**



Front façade of Lo Pan Temple



Front side of the main ridge decorated with  
Shiwan ceramic figurines





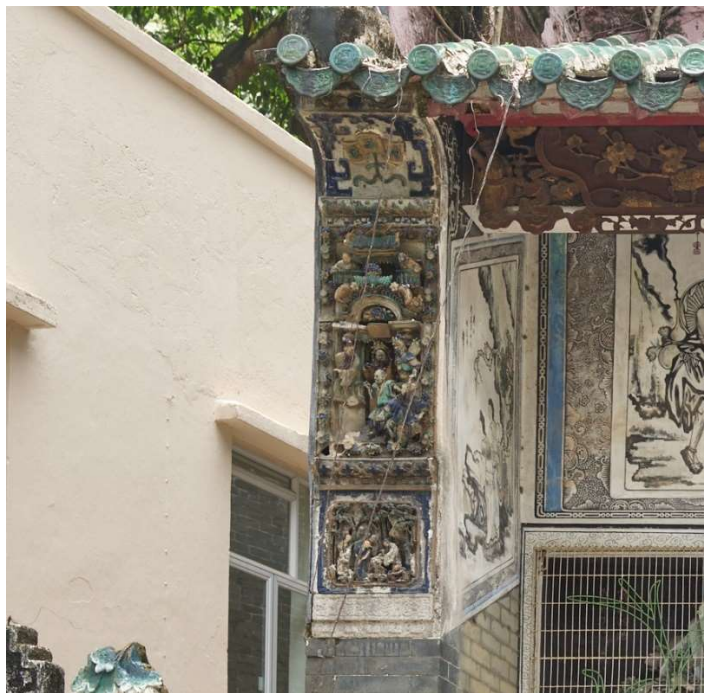
The statues of Sun God (right) and Moon Goddess (left) at the front end of the descending ridges of the Entrance Hall



Gable walls in the style of "Five Peaks Paying Tribute to Heaven"



Mural containing nine paintings and two calligraphy murals on a single tableau at the front façade



*Chitou* (gable wall head) decorated with ceramic figurines at the front façade





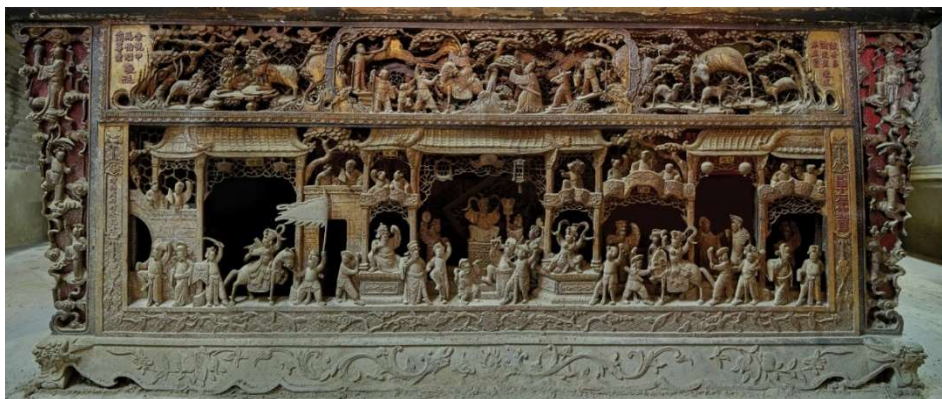
Colourful plaster moulding figurines at the front façade



Delicate mural paintings and colourful plaster moulding figurines



The *caimen* (wooden panel) depicting the historic folktales and auspicious motifs and the main altar dedicated to Lo Pan at the Main Hall



The wood carving on the century-old offering table in front of the main altar

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

The Residence of Tang Pak Kau, located in Tsz Tong Tsuen<sup>1</sup> in the Kam Tin area of Yuen Long, is believed to have been built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building is also known as *Lai Kang Tong* (禮耕堂), which can be translated as “hall for the propriety and cultivation”.<sup>2</sup> A 26<sup>th</sup> generation descendent of Tang Yuen Leung (鄧元亮), who is considered to be one of the founders of the Tang clan in Kam Tin, Tang Pak Kau (鄧伯裘) (1876-1950) was a distinguished member of the Tangs in the area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The residence thus serves as testimony to the life of a prominent figure in Kam Tin and his remarkable contribution to the development of the area and also of Yuen Long and the New Territories as a whole.

***Historical  
Interest***

Following the tradition of providing an education for the younger members of the Tang clan in Kam Tin,<sup>4</sup> Tang Pak Kau set aside part of his residence as a private school for Tang children in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> Known as Lai Kang School, it is believed to be

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<sup>1</sup> Tsz Tong Tsuen can be written in two ways in Chinese, 祠塘村 and 祠堂村, and both versions are currently used by government departments. Tsz Tong literally means ancestral hall, while Tsuen is a village. Members of the Tang clan in Kam Tin who were interviewed for an oral history record by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 28 March 2023 generally believe that the name Tsz Tong Tsuen is derived from Tang Lung Yau Wan Tsuen Um Ancestral Hall (龍游尹泉菴鄧公祠) of the Tangs in the nearby walled village of Tai Hong Wai (泰康圍), which was built in 1768 in memory of Tang Man-wai (鄧文蔚). The area around the hall was sparsely inhabited at this time, and it was only when the population of Tai Hong Wai outgrew the village's walls that people started to settle Tsz Tong Tsuen.

<sup>2</sup> The couplets painted on the wooden door panels at the entrance to the building begin with the words “propriety” and “cultivate” and can be regarded as Tang Pak Kau's personal motto or an expression of what he hoped to achieve.

<sup>3</sup> Tang Pak Kau opened an oil factory called Tai Cheung (泰祥號榨油廠) in Yuen Long in 1915 and later became an agent for A.S. Watson & Co., Ltd. selling its carbonated water. By all accounts a very successful businessman, he acquired a number of land lots in Kam Tin, Yuen Long, Lo Wu and Fanling, as can be seen from the archives of the Public Records Office, Hong Kong (HKRS96-1-6029) and 經濟資料社：《香港工商手冊》，香港：經濟資料社，1946年，頁200.

<sup>4</sup> Of the six private study halls that were built in Kam Tin, five were originally established solely for teaching purposes: Yi Tai Study Hall (declared monument), Lik Wing Tong Study Hall (Grade 1), Chou Wong Yi Kung Study Hall (Grade 2), So Lau Yuen (Grade 3) and Tang Yu Kai Study Hall (Grade 3). The sixth, Cheung Chun Yuen (Grade 1), provided facilities for both ancestral worship and education.

<sup>5</sup> The Block Government Lease and an antique pendulum clock inside the residence offer

Tang Pak Kau's first attempt in his lifelong pursuit to develop education in Yuen Long. He later provided financial support for the establishment of a free school, Yuen Long Shau Kai School (元朗少岐義學) in 1926, founded Mung Yang School (蒙養學校) in the same year and served as the chairman of the School Building Committee of Un Long Public Middle School (元朗公立中學) in 1949.

In addition to promoting education, he participated in the establishment in 1923 of the New Territories Association of Agricultural, Industrial and Commercial Research (租界農工商業研究總會), the predecessor of the Heung Yee Kuk (founded in 1926). He also served on the committee of the New Territories Agricultural Association (新界農業會) in 1930 and as vice-chairman of the Yuen Long Merchants Association (元朗商會) in 1938. Moreover, he contributed to the establishment of the Cottage Hospital (錦田婦孺醫院) for women and children and of the St. John Ambulance Brigade – Un Long Division First Aid Post (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 also appointed as the chairman of Pok Oi Hospital for four terms in 1928-29, 1933-34, 1946-47 and 1947-48.

A key leader in Kam Tin, Tang Pak Kau acted as a bridge between local villagers and the Hong Kong government. He represented the Tangs of Kam Tin when they successfully petitioned the government to demand the return of the iron gates of Kat Hing Wai (吉慶圍) to their original position after they had been seized and taken to Ireland in 1899. He was appointed to the reception committees that welcomed two new governors of Hong Kong, Sir Andrew Caldecott in 1935 and Sir Geoffrey Northcote in 1937. He was awarded a Certificate of Honour in 1930 and the King's Coronation Medal in 1937. He was later appointed a justice of the peace in 1947. Furthermore, he was made a Donat of the Order of St. John in 1939, receiving the distinction of the bronze cross, in recognition of his dedicated service to the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

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clues to the early history of the building. According to the lease, part of the residence, specifically KHWL 183 and KHWL 184 in DD 109, was originally designated for use as a "school". The clock is inscribed with the words "LAI KANG SCHOOL".

A large number of gifts, plaques, couplets and calligraphy rolls celebrating his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday as well as presents congratulating him on being appointed a justice of the peace are on display in the residence, all of which highlight his strong local connections and distinguished status in the community. Some of the names printed on the gifts belong to well-known people of the day, including the renowned 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 famous local Chinese calligraphist Au Kin-kung (區建公) and the wealthy Yuen Long businessmen Tang Pui-king (鄧佩瓊) and Chiu Lut-sau (趙聿修). When Tang Pak Kau died four years later, many prominent figures, such as the outstanding businessman and civic leader Sir Shouson Chow (周壽臣), the Chairman of Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Chau Cham-kwong (周湛光) and the Chairman of the Po Leung Kuk Choi Cheong (蔡昌), and high-ranking officials, including the acting Colonial Secretary, the Secretary for Chinese Affairs, the Director of Education and the District Commissioner of the New Territories, offered their messages of condolences.<sup>6</sup>

The rectangular, grey brick, single-storey building is very different from the surrounding village houses, as it is five times longer than its width and has a prominent watchtower three storeys in height at one end. The entire exterior of the residence is built in the traditional Chinese Qing vernacular style, which is reflected in its flush gable roof system assembled using single-roll double pan tiles with a bare ridge and its grey-brick external wall and mouldings. The building structure and interior decorations, however, feature a striking juxtaposition of traditional Chinese elements and Western components.

***Architectural  
Merit***

The site that the residence stands on comprises various land lots that were acquired from 1905 to 1922, which suggests it underwent several extensions. Looking at the elevation, construction joints can be clearly seen on the external walls: granite blocks have been laid to form the base for the central section, while undressed stone

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<sup>6</sup> 鄧緝煌，《鄧伯裘先生哀思錄》(香港：編輯自編，1950)。



has been used for the section on the left. As granite corner stones are located at the corners of the central section and on the two sides of the main entrance, it is likely that this was the first part to be built and was then extended by the other sections, which all combine to form the present compound. The wall friezes and gable friezes are decorated with mouldings featuring plants and mythical figures, some of which are still well preserved.

The rectangular residence is also divided into two rows, with the main residential area to the rear and the kitchen, storerooms, light wells, passages and corridors at the front. Just after the entrance to the building is a light well decorated with Tuscan columns and arch that act as a frame guarding the opening of the vestibule. The altar to Man Cheong (“God of Literature” (文昌)) and accompanying couplets in the main section lie on the central axis with the main entrance, which is probably related to the building’s original use as a school.<sup>7</sup>

To the right of the altar is a finely carved wooden moon gate, which helps divide the central section into two smaller units. Passing through the wooden swinging doors and a traditional Chinese sliding door, a spacious side hall comes into sight, again featuring Tuscan columns and arches. 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 at the north corner of the residence is a special architectural feature of the compound. The interior is modestly decorated, with a floral pattern at dado level and ceiling mouldings. The whole staircase and the floor are finished in red and green terrazzo. Its design with small windows and minimal ornamentation indicates that it was built for surveillance and security purposes. The security of the tower itself is ensured by thick partitions, a huge and heavy entrance door and security bars.

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<sup>7</sup> It was a tradition to install an altar to Man Cheong in study halls and ancestral halls so that sacrificial offerings could be made. Yi Tai Study Hall, built during the Daoguang (道光) reign (1821-1850) in Shui Tau Tsuen, Kam Tin, also houses an altar to Man Cheong.



In the section of the residence on the left, which the family referred to as “the new study room” (新書房), Tuscan columns and arches are installed at the two sides of the entrance to the living area, which is divided into three bays. Passing through the arch and a passageway, there is another light well with a covered corridor and a transparent roof that was added later. While the central part of the light well is composed of granite blocks, the floor of the covered corridor is paved with white hexagonal chip tiles interspersed with green chip tiles, which form several snowflake patterns. The northern internal wall of the light well is decorated with green glazed ceramic grilles decorated with *ruyi* (如意, sceptres) and crab apple patterns, topped by a plaster moulding with an auspicious motif. It is notable that the Western features of Tuscan columns and arches are consistently adopted in the residence, including in this living room, both for decorative purposes and as intermediate support for the pitched roofs constructed of timber purlins, battens and tiles. The bases of the columns are built in a combination of concrete and terrazzo. The wall friezes are finely decorated with murals featuring landscapes, people and calligraphy; most of them are well preserved and retain their attractive colouring. The floor is also finished with hexagonal chip tiles with a large snowflake pattern at the centre. The new study room provides the best example of this unique design and its juxtaposition of Chinese and Western architectural and decorative features.

The building was extended several times by Tang Pak Kau in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this is authentically reflected in the physical fabric of the residence. Several alterations have also been made – some of the windows have been replaced, internal walls have been replastered, and light wells have been covered to modernise the building for residential use by the Tang family – but overall the building retains much of its original appearance from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The original colours of some murals can still be seen, while most of the original fine details of the building fabric and finishes, which display fine workmanship, also remain.

***Authenticity***

Unlike the villages nearby, Tsz Tong Tsuen, where the residence is situated, was not enclosed by a wall to defend it against

***Rarity***

attacks by bandits. The residence therefore incorporates security considerations in its design, in particular in the form of the three-storey watchtower, which, although there are several examples elsewhere in Hong Kong,<sup>8</sup> is the only one of its kind in a residence in Kam Tin.

The L-shaped layout of the rectangular residence and the watchtower is also a distinguishing feature. What further sets it apart is the impressive juxtaposition, in a village house, of traditional Chinese decorative features and Western structural components, which reflect the life of the Chinese gentry in Hong Kong in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A prominent figure in Kam Tin in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tang Pak Kau is still remembered by people living in Kam Tin and Yuen Long even today, especially by the older generations. His residence is an important building that bears witness to the development of Kam Tin and Yuen Long and especially the history of private schools in the territory in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the residence is the only historical building that testifies to Tang Pak Kau's contribution to education in Yuen Long. In addition, the building is located next to the footpath connecting the train station and the main street of Kam Tin and stands as a landmark in Tsz Tong Tsuen.

***Social Value &  
Local Interest***

The residence shares a group value not only with Tang Lung Yau Wan Tsuen Um Ancestral Hall (Grade 3) in the same village, but also with historic places in the vicinity, including Kat Hing Wai (Grade 1), Wing Lung Wai (featuring Grade 2 and 3 historic buildings)<sup>9</sup> and Tai Hong Wai Entrance Gate and Watchtower (northwest) (Grade 3) as well as Tang Kwong U Ancestral Hall (declared monument), Yi Tai Study Hall (declared monument), Lik Wing Tong Study Hall (Grade 1), Cheung Chun Yuen (Grade 1), Chou Wong Yi Kung Study Hall (Grade 2), Tang Chan Yui Kuen Ancestral Hall (Grade 3), So Lau Yuen

***Group Value***

<sup>8</sup> According to the Antiquities and Monuments Office's records, other examples of residential buildings with a watchtower include the Ho Residence in Pak Sha O, Tai Po (watchtower and side chamber, Grade 1), Yuen's Mansion in Chung Hau, Mui Wo on Lantau Island (east and west watchtowers, both Grade 2) and No. 15 Hok Tau Tsuen in Fanling (watchtower, Grade 2).

<sup>9</sup> The entrance gate to Wing Lung Wai is a Grade 2 historic building, while both Chung Shing Temple and Kang Sam Tong are Grade 3 historic buildings.

(Grade 3), and Hung Shing Temple (Grade 3) in Shui Tau Tsuen and Tang Tsing Lok Ancestral Hall (Grade 1) and Tin Hau Temple (Grade 3) in Shui Mei Tsuen, all of which are in areas neighbouring Kam Tin. These historic places and buildings form a heritage cluster reflecting the development of the Tang clan in the territory from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, while the residence of Tang Pak Kau bears witness to his achievements and the benevolent acts he performed for his fellow clansmen and townsmen alike.

**Photos of Residence of Tang Pak Kau, Kam Tin, Yuen Long**



West elevation of Residence of Tang Pak Kau



Light well right behind the main entrance with  
Tuscan columns and arch



Finely carved wooden moon gate in the main hall



Green glazed ceramic grilles topped by a plaster moulding of auspicious motif





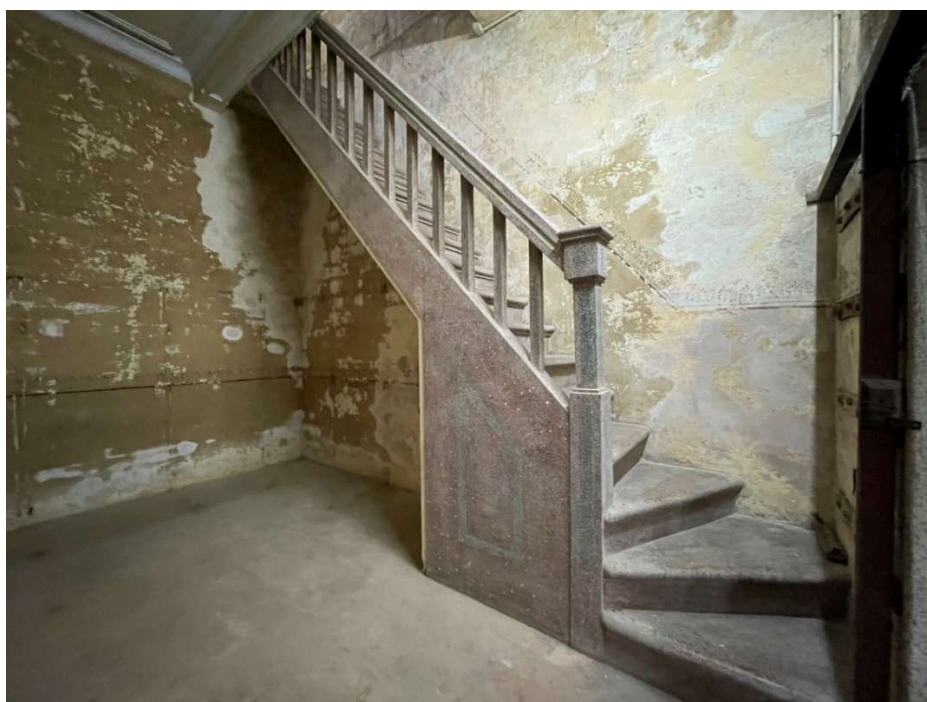
Tuscan columns and arch in the new study room



Colour mural at the wall frieze



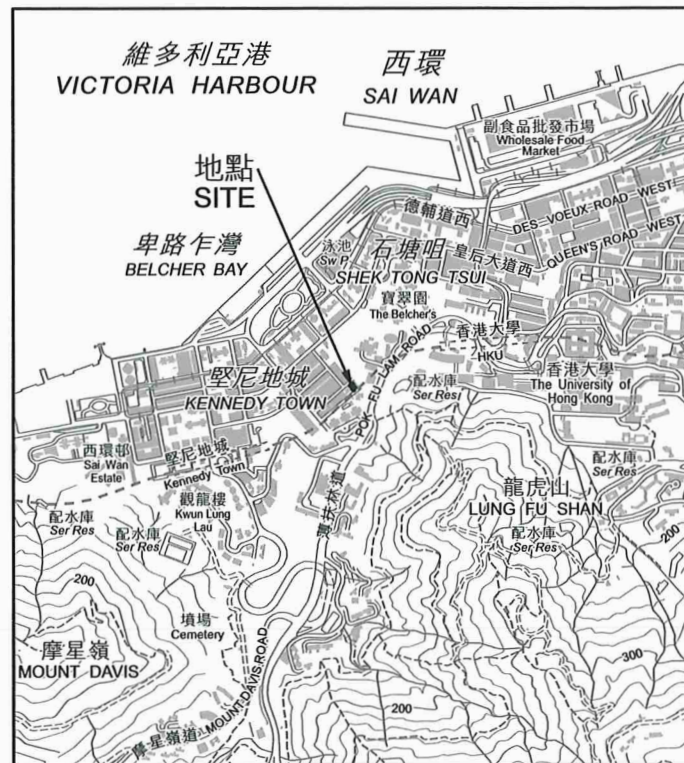
Hexagonal chip tiles featuring a snowflake pattern



Staircase finished in red and green terrazzo inside the watchtower

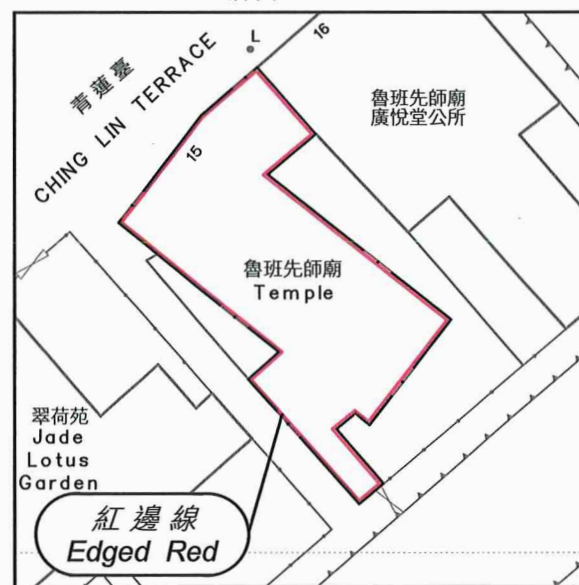


位置 LOCATION



比例 SCALE 1 : 20 000

插圖 INSET



不依比例 NOT TO SCALE



以紅邊線標示的面積約為 119 平方米  
 EDGED RED AREA 119 SQUARE METRES (ABOUT)

比例尺 SCALE 1:1 000

米 metres 20 0 20 40 60 80 100 米 metres

只作識別用 FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES ONLY

地政總署 港島測量處  
 District Survey Office, Hong Kong  
 Lands Department

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古物及古蹟條例 (第53章)  
 根據第3(4)條存放於土地註冊處的位於  
 香港堅尼地城青蓮臺15號內地段第2705號  
 稱為魯班先師廟的建築物的圖則  
 ANTIQUITIES AND MONUMENTS ORDINANCE (CAP. 53)  
 PLAN OF THE BUILDING KNOWN AS LO PAN TEMPLE AT INLAND LOT No. 2705,  
 15 CHING LIN TERRACE, KENNEDY TOWN, HONG KONG  
 DEPOSITED IN THE LAND REGISTRY UNDER SECTION 3(4)

檔案編號 File No. LANDSD SMO/Regional-004-006-DSO/HK-002-003-P001

測量圖編號 Survey Sheet No. 11-SW-7C

發展藍圖編號 Layout Plan No. --

參考圖編號 Reference Plan No. --

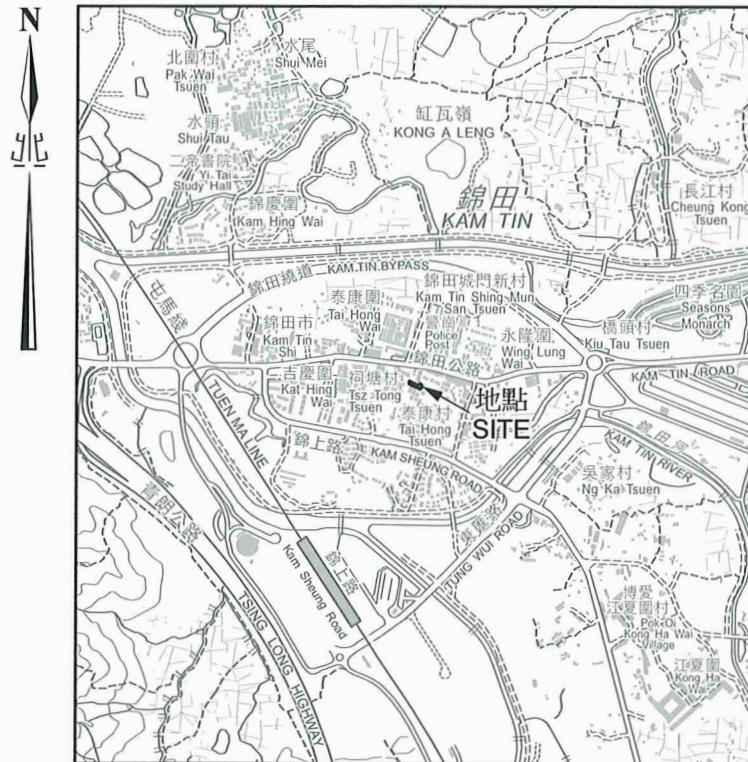
圖則編號 PLAN No. HKM11448

*Bernadette Linn*  
 (甯漢豪 Bernadette Linn)  
 發展局局長 Secretary for Development  
 日期 Date 3 October 2024

日期 Date: 30/09/2024



位置 LOCATION

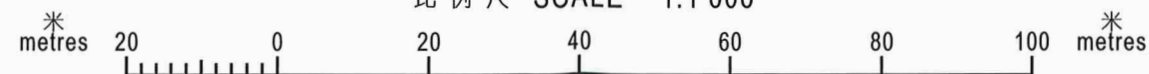


比例 SCALE 1:20 000



以紅邊線標示的面積約為 324 平方米  
EDGED RED AREA 324 SQUARE METRES (ABOUT)

比例尺 SCALE 1:1 000



*Bernadette Linn*

(甯漢豪 Bernadette Linn)  
發展局局長 Secretary for Development  
日期 Date 3 October 2024

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District Survey Office, Yuen Long  
Lands Department

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古物及古蹟條例 (第53章)  
根據第3(4)條存放於土地註冊處的位於  
新界元朗錦田祠塘村20號丈量約份第109約  
吉慶園地段第183、184、185、186及187號、  
丈量約份第109約地段第409號A及B分段及  
丈量約份第109約地段第417號B分段的郭伯裘故居的圖則  
ANTIQUITIES AND MONUMENTS ORDINANCE (CAP. 53)  
PLAN OF THE RESIDENCE OF TANG PAK KAU  
AT KAT HING WAI LOT Nos. 183, 184, 185, 186 AND 187 IN D.D. 109,  
SECTIONS A AND B OF LOT No. 409 IN D.D. 109 AND  
SECTION B OF LOT No. 417 IN D.D. 109,  
20 TSZ TONG TSUEN, KAM TIN, YUEN LONG, NEW TERRITORIES  
DEPOSITED IN THE LAND REGISTRY UNDER SECTION 3(4)

檔案編號 File No. DSO/YL/14/2/5 P.2

測量圖編號 Survey Sheet No. 6-NE-12B

發展藍圖編號 Layout Plan No. -----

參考圖編號 Reference Plan No. -----

圖則編號 PLAN No. YLM11510

日期 Date: 04/09/2024