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# 谷埔 遊覽圖

## Kuk Po Tour Map



### 遊覽說明 Map Legend

- |  |                                    |  |        |
|--|------------------------------------|--|--------|
|  | 遊覽路線                               |  | 景點     |
|  | Tour route                         |  | 建築物    |
|  | 現存民居<br>Existing village dwellings |  | 生態     |
|  | 民居遺址<br>Village dwelling ruins     |  | 村落     |
|  |                                    |  | Hamlet |

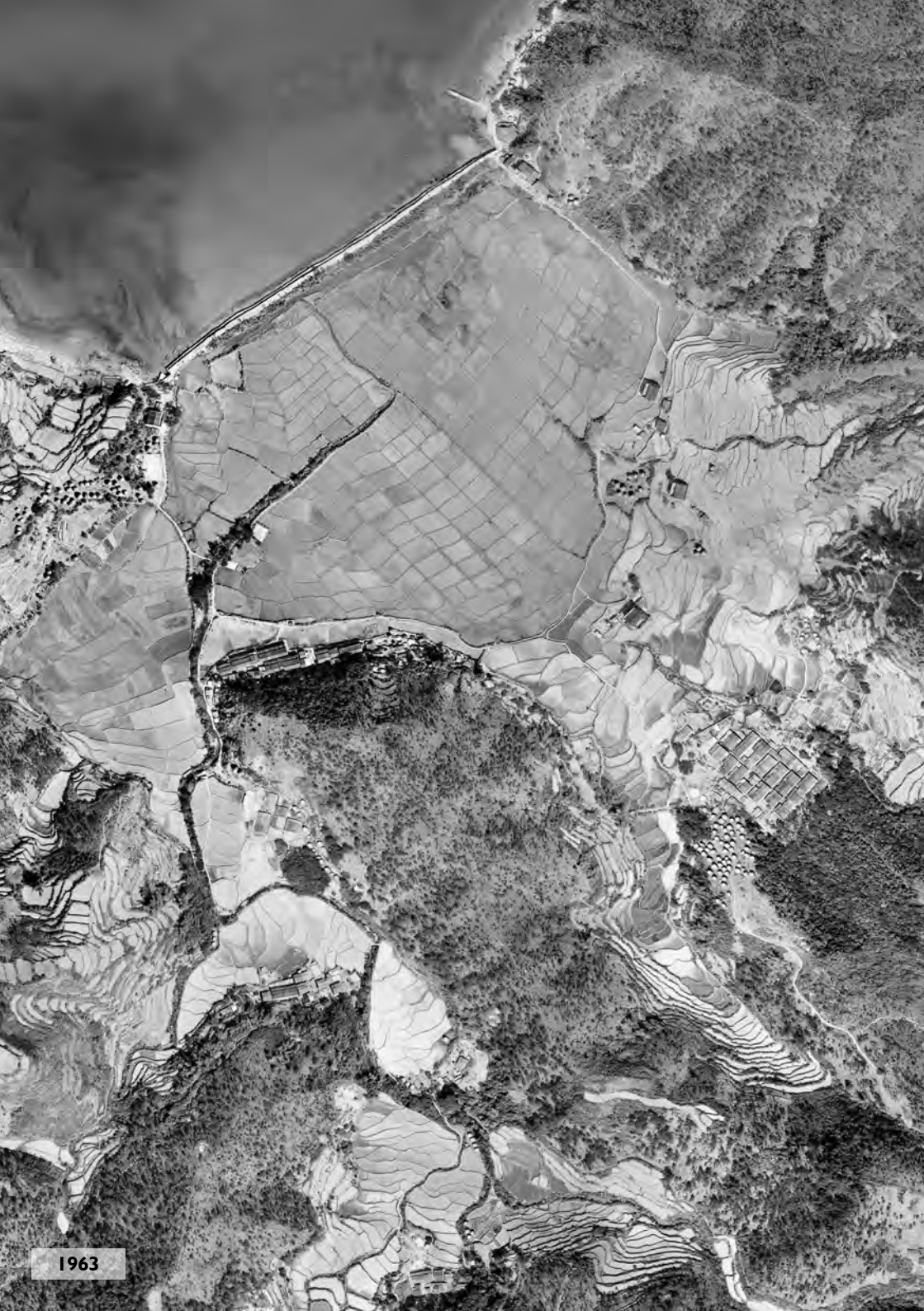
簡易路線 (約30分鐘)  
Beginner route (around 30 mins)

1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 6

完整路線 (約60分鐘)  
Full route (around 60 mins)

1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 6 → 7 → 8





1963



2015



## From Valley to Plain I:

### Conservation and Revitalisation from “Ng To” to Kuk Po River and Plain via Multi-disciplinary, Educational and Action Research

This project pioneers a rural conservation partnership model involving university and village community, and discovers knowledge of the multiple eco-cultural heritages and human-environment interactions of the 300-year-old Hakka settlements from Kuk Po coastal plain to the inland hamlet of Ng To connected by Kuk Po River. By restoring a historic Hakka house in Ng To, enhancing its surrounding landscape, establishing an education-cum-research base and an eco-cultural trail, returning villagers work closely with professors, researchers, students and volunteers to recreate the organic relationship between human and nature of Kuk Po and its vicinity, and explores a viable partnership process for sustainable rural revitalization for the longer term.

From Valley to Plain II forms phase II of the project. This action research harnesses interdisciplinary knowledge as well as professional expertise in architectural conservation and sustainable farming practices to co-create with stakeholders a comprehensive setting for eco-living and cultural experiences in Hong Kong's countryside.



School of Architecture  
THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

# Kuk Po

Nestled in a valley facing Starling Inlet in Sha Tau Kok, Kuk Po is a 300-year-old Hakka village with rich history, natural and cultural heritage. It was once a vibrant village and transportation hub of the region, featuring a massive agro-reclamation project and scenic landscapes.

## Clans & Villages

There are several villages in Kuk Po with the walled village of Lo Wai being the oldest. Most of the villagers are Hakkas including the families of Yeung, Sung, Cheng, Lee, Yau, Ho, Ng and Tsang. When the population increased, they spilled out from Lo Wai to various parts of the valley to form hamlets at San Uk Ha, Yi To, Sam To, Sze To and Ng To.



1962 Lo Wai & Tin Sum

## Prosperity, Exodus & Regeneration

With the benefits of higher yields from agro-reclamation in mid-19th century, the population of Kuk Po had maintained a steady population of around 500 villagers for decades. Yet the exodus of villagers from 1960s onwards has left much of the village in ruins, gradually taken over by nature. In recent years, returning villagers have been working closely with universities and NGOs to explore ways to regenerate Kuk Po's architectural and ecological heritage.



Tin Sum today

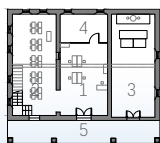


# 01 Kai Choi School

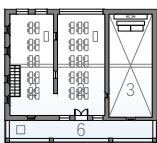
## Confluence of Chinese & Western Cultures

Kai Choi School was established in 1932, serving as Kuk Po's cultural and educational centre. An annex classroom was added in 1963. The school had over 120 students at its peak with students from neighbouring villages as well. It ceased operations in 1993 due to insufficient enrolment. The main building of the School has been recognized as a Grade 3 Historical Building.

G/F

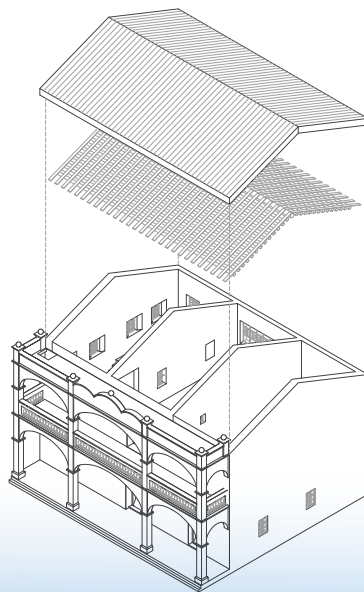


1/F



- 1 Staff room
- 2 Classroom
- 3 Hip Tin Temple
- 4 Staff dorm
- 5 Verandah
- 6 Balcony

Kai Choi School Plan



## International Connection

Villagers of Kuk Po who had migrated remained closely connected to their homeland and gave heartfelt support to local education. Over 70% of the funds for establishing Kai Choi School was donated by villagers residing in New York, USA. The two-storey school building is a Western-influenced architecture, featuring an arched porch and hybrid of Chinese and European styles. It was constructed by the same builder of the prominent mansions of Ho, Lee, and Yeung families in Tin Sum.



Village head Yeung introduced school history to students on the balcony

## Preserving Traditions

Children in Kuk Po learned at an old-style private study hall in Lo Wai before the establishment of Kai Choi School. The medium of instruction was at first Hakka, and then Cantonese decades later. There are classrooms on both floors, with a partition on G/F as staff dorm. The right bay serves as Hip Tin Temple where villagers pay homage to Kwan Ti. It is a rare example of school-temple integration in Hong Kong.



Entrance of Hip Tin Temple

## Outward Engagement

Kai Choi School was the bridge from an old-style private study hall to a modern educational institution, offering the same competitive curriculum as urban schools. The devotion of Sung Qing the founding principal in revolutionary endeavours, donations of villagers in USA, ventures of thousands of graduates from the village to the world, and recent facilitation of regeneration efforts are testimonies to changes and trends in different eras.



Classroom used as event space



1/F Interior of classroom



Interior of Hip Tin Temple



CUHK exhibition in a classroom



## 02 Dyke & Watchtower

### Coastal Frontier

Situated on the coast of Starling Inlet, Kuk Po pier was once a bustling hub for waterway transport and trade, connecting land and sea. Villagers built a massive dyke at the seafront to effectively increase arable land.

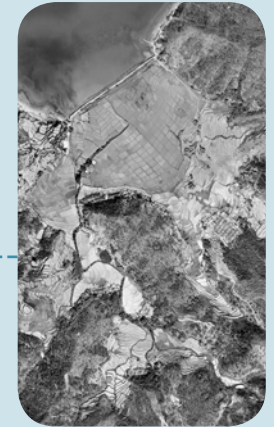


### Production: Agro-reclamation

Facing the challenge of limited flat, arable land, Kuk Po villagers grasped the technique of reclaiming land from the sea around 200 years ago. They converted over 2,000,000ft<sup>2</sup> salt marsh into farmland by constructing a dyke to drain out seawater in the bay and prevent seawater from flooding into the village. This innovative engineering work greatly increased agricultural production for a growing population. It was one of the very first reclamation projects in Hong Kong history.



Hong Kong Map in 1904



Aerial photo in 1963

### Trade and Commerce: Vibrant Market Hub

Kuk Po Pier was a bustling transportation hub for nearby villagers. They would come to the pier on foot, toting all sorts of crops on carrying poles, then continue to Sha Tau Kok Market by sampan. The pier hence became a mini marketplace too with butcheries, groceries, and tailor shops. The pier remains the major gateway to travel to Sha Tau Kok.



Kuk Po pier today

### Watchtower: Defense against Pirates

Kuk Po Watchtower used to play a crucial role in defending against pirates. Villagers could have a vantage point over Starling Inlet, and fire from the gunhole in emergencies. Today a villager surnamed Yeung runs an popular eatery, "Chung Kee Store" here, offering authentic Hakka cuisine at weekends.



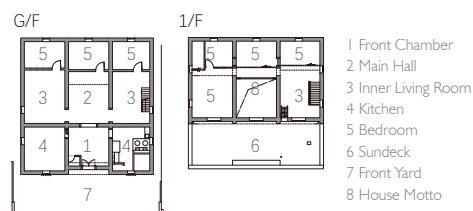
Watchtower used as Chung Kee Store



# 03 Ho's Mansion

## Exemplar of Rural Living

The Ho family moved to Kuk Po in mid-18th century. In early 20th century, some of the family members went to USA to make a living there. They sent funds back in 1930s to build a mansion outside Lo Wai.



Ho's Mansion Plan



## Architectural Features

Ho's Mansion is a two-storey three-bay building with a gable roof structure of Chinese tiles. The parapet above the recessed façade features the Chinese inscriptions "Lan Kwai Tang Fong" - meaning "may orchid and osmanthus flourish and perfume" as a blessing to descendants of the family for prosperity and prestige.

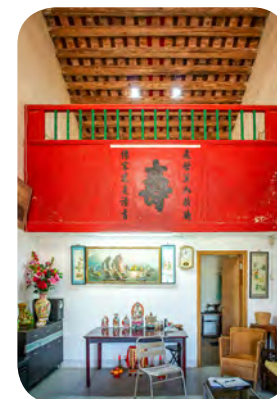


Parapet of Ho's Mansion

## Interior Features

The original horizontal railed shutter was taken down during the innovation works in recent years. Yet the holes for locking the shutter and carved patterns of the door plinth stone remain.

The twin stoves in the kitchen are large enough to fit two big cast iron woks side by side. Firewood and dry grass are stored by the side. The cistern is placed opposite the stoves.



Main hall & family motto

## Private Collections

Mr. Ho works persistently with the upkeep of the mansion after his retirement. An amazing array of farming tools, furniture and other household items from the family are arranged and displayed at the farmshed behind the mansion, offering a good glimpse of life in the olden days.



Farmshed turned into a display room



Holes remained of the original shutter



Brick stoves & chimney



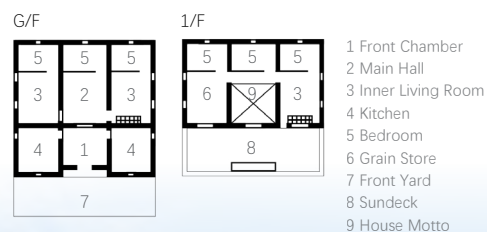
Mr. Ho's private collections



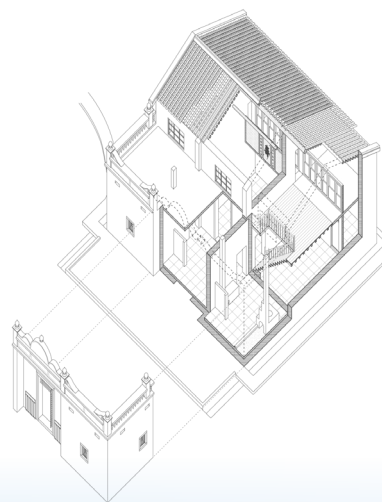
# 04 Lee's Mansion

## Return & Regenerate

The Lee family was originally from Lo Wai of Kuk Po. The two-storey mansion has a traditional gable roof design of Chinese tiles, ornamental parapet and a sundeck on the first floor for sun-drying crops. The stand-alone mansion was funded by family members who worked in USA.



Lee's Mansion Plan



## Family Motto

A large plaque carrying the character of "longevity" with a couplet of the family motto manifestly emphasizes tolerance and harmony in managing family affairs, and diligence and frugality to success and entrepreneurship. The roof features a "descendants beam" with the inscription "countless descendants" and vibrant floral motifs, symbolizing the family's prosperity and abundance.



Main hall & house plaque

## Regeneration of Land & Life

Members of Lee family spanning four generations have returned to Kuk Po in recent years to tend the agricultural landscape of the mansion. They hope to make good use of the mansion and its surrounding farmland for sustainable growing practices and eco-cultural educational activities to explore new opportunities for rural conservation and eco-living.



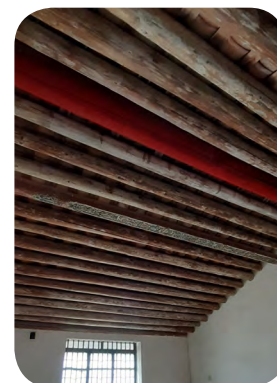
Mrs. Lee introducing crops

## Hakka Flavours

Using local seasonal ingredients, the Lee family skillfully prepares a variety of Hakka delicacies on the ancient firewood stove such as sticky rice cakes, rice crackers, Chinese Fevervine cakes, radish cakes, rice biscuits and yellow wine. These culinary delights showcase the authentic flavours of Hakka cuisine.



Home-made Chinese Fevervine cakes



Roof with a "descendants beam"



Crops grown by the Lee family



Home-made yellow wine & rice crackers



# 05 Lo Wai

## Carrying on the Legacy

Lo Wai is the oldest existing settlement in Kuk Po. After the lift of "The Great Clearance" during the reign of Emperor Kangxi in Qing Dynasty, Hakkas started to move into Kuk Po and established a walled village here.

## Ancient Wisdom: Village Setting

Lo Wai exhibits the typical layout of a Hakka village of "mountain, woodland, house, pond and field". The walled village comprises seven rows of houses with a fengshui wood at the back. Entrances are at the eastern and western ends, and a lane runs north to south in the middle. Most sections of the encircling walls had crumbled or covered by vegetation.



East Gate



The ridge of the ancestral hall of the Yeung clan



## Ancestral Worship & Deities

Traditionally Hakka extended families lived and worked together. Each clan would have its own ancestral hall in the village. Ancestral halls of the Yeung, Sung, Ho, and Lee clans are preserved in Lo Wai. Clanspeople gather at their own halls to perform ancestral worship rituals. Villagers of Kuk Po also pay homage to the Earth God at "Tai Wong Ye" shrine near the western entrance, imploring favourable weather and agricultural blessings.



"Tai Wong Ye" shrine



Ancestral hall of the Yeung clan

## Clan Development & Expansion

Eight clans (Yeung, Sung, Ho, Lee, Cheng, Yau, Ng, Tsang) initially settled in Lo Wai. As the population grew, members of various clans migrated to other areas of Kuk Po. The Sungs moved to San Uk Ha, the Chengs to Yi To, and the Tsangs and Hos to Sam To. The Yeungs settled in Sze To and Ng To.



The lane that runs north to south in the middle

## Tracing Time through Architecture

The construction materials of houses in different eras vary; these are testimonies to the change of time and livelihood of villagers. Earlier houses were built with stones and earth. Lime, blue bricks and red bricks appeared later. Window sizes, window glass patterns and so on tell about circumstances of the village.



Ancestral hall of the Ho clan



# 06 Wetland & Mangroves

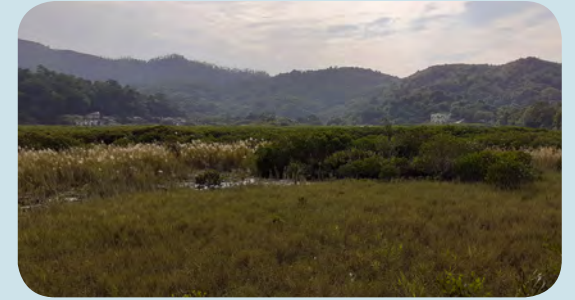
## Interplay of Mountains & Pond

Surrounded by verdant hills, the seafront of Kuk Po features an open flatland of wetlands, marshes and estuarian ponds with mosaic patches of reeds and mangroves. It's a sweeping greenery in spring and summer, and shimmering water of golden reflections in autumn and winter.



## Natural Succession

As villagers gradually left Kuk Po from 1960s onwards, the abandoned farmlands gave way to secondary succession. The intricate network of field paths vanished, terraced fields became shrublands, while coastal farmlands were taken over by mangroves and reeds, forming wetland habitats for diverse species like egrets and mudskippers.



Farmlands became wetlands

## Ecological Value of Wetlands

Imbued by the murmuring, running water of Kuk Po River, some stretches freshwater marshes can be found along the hillside of Kuk Po.

Seawater pushes through the disused sluice and transforms coastal farmlands into brackish wetlands with mosaic patches of mangroves and reeds.

These wetlands nurture a wide range of flora and fauna, serving as a crucial habitat with high ecological value.



Eastern Cattle Egret



Red-clawed Crab



Shuttles Hoppfish (mudskipper)



Mangrove Skimmer



Plain Hedge Blue



Kandelia (a kind of mangrove)



# 07 Kuk Po River

## A Lifeline Through the Valley

Nestled in a valley with mountains on three sides and opens to the sea, Kuk Po is crisscrossed by a river from south to north along which various hamlets root in and thrive.



## Water & Cultural Landscape

Kuk Po River is an "Ecologically Important Stream" (EIS) that boasts high water quality and showcases diverse natural landscapes like waterfalls, pools, marshes and mangroves. Villagers utilized these water resources for their daily needs and irrigated terraced fields. This harmonious relationship with water and agriculture shaped the cultural landscape of Kuk Po.



Collecting water sample



Waterfall & pool in Ng To

## Water Resources & Traditional Wisdom

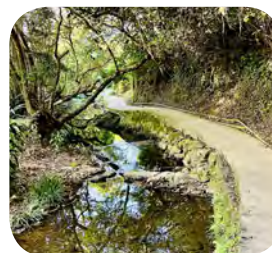
Kuk Po River provides crucial water resources here. The traditional wisdom of villagers is demonstrated in various types of built structures along the river fitting to natural changes, geography, and their daily needs. They skillfully integrate with the environment, making the most of the natural resources available to them.



Weir



Stone embankment



Stepstones



Water channel



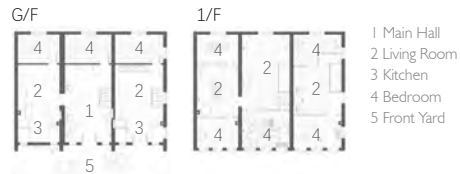
Sluice



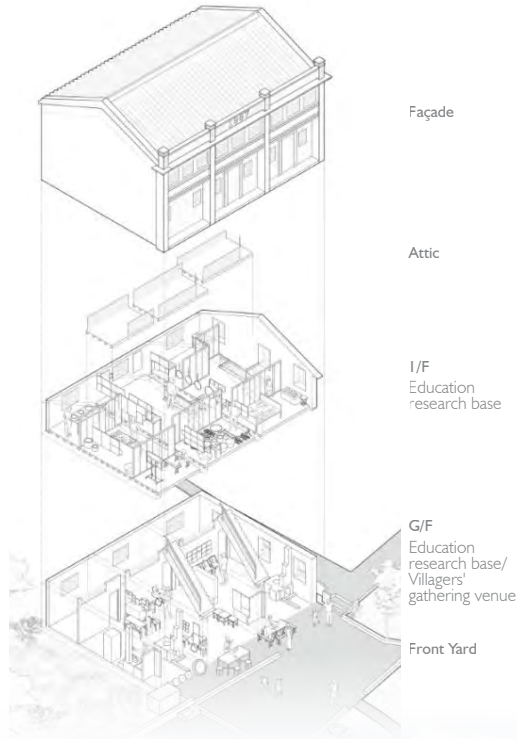
# 08 Ng To

## Rural Revitalization

Ng To is a small basin deep in the valley of Kuk Po. The restored mansion of the Yeung's family in Ng To provides a base for multidisciplinary field studies, as well as venue for returning villagers to gather and revitalize the traditions that had long been cherished.



Yeung's Mansion Plan

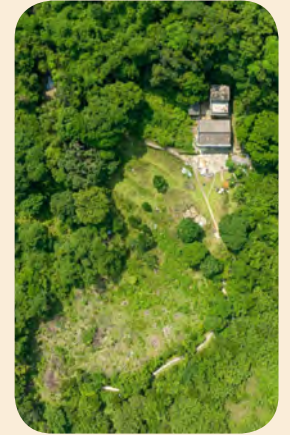


## Landscape Regeneration

The interaction between people and natural landscape had evolved over time in Ng To. The hamlet was founded by the Yeungs who moved out of Lo Wai. It features a natural barrier of fengshui wood, waterfall and several streams, and is hence dubbed as "valley within a valley". Villagers once grew hundreds of pomelo, lemon and mandarin trees and other crops on the terraced fields. Nature has reclaimed the hills as villagers left and abandoned the orchards and fields.



Yeung's Mansion in the late 1990s



Aerial photo of Ng To today

## Architectural Regeneration

The restored Hakka mansion in Ng To were reconstructed in the late 1960s by a Yeung couple who had worked in the UK. The two-storey mansion consists of three bays, integrating traditional Hakka and modern architectural styles and materials. Now serving as the CUHK Education Research Base, they showcase Kuk Po's rich eco-cultural heritage through multi-disciplinary research in architecture, anthropology, life sciences and geography.



Opening ceremony after restoration of Yeung's Mansion

## Knowledge Regeneration

Through education, research, and local restoration, a multidisciplinary team from CUHK is rediscovering the historical, cultural, architectural and ecological aspects of Kuk Po Village. The project aims to revitalize the village by uncovering its local value and training villagers to become docents, sharing the stories of Kuk Po with students and the public.



Multi-disciplinary Education Research Base of the CUHK



## CUHK From Valley to Plain Research Team

Team Leader Thomas CHUNG (ARC)

Faculty Members Jimmy HO (ARC)  
Sidney CHEUNG (ANT)  
Jerome HUI (SLS)  
Martin TSUI (SLS)  
Joanna Lee (GRM)

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Ivan LAM, Joshua LAM, Matthew CHENG, Jack CHEUNG,  
Joy SIT, Karen PO, Isabel WONG, Alex WONG, Anthony WOO

## Project Organization

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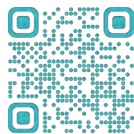


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From Valley to Plain

