

For Information
on 5 July 2006

BOARD PAPER
AAB/65/2005-06

MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE
ANTIQUITIES ADVISORY BOARD

RESCUE EXCAVATION AT CHEUNG SHUE TAN, TAI PO

PURPOSE

To inform Members of a rescue excavation to be conducted by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) at Cheung Shue Tan (樟樹灘), Tai Po in August 2006, as necessitated by the Civil Engineering Development Department (CEDD)'s proposed road project.

BACKGROUND

2. The Cheung Shue Tan archaeological site was first identified by two local archaeologists, Mr. Au Ka-fat and Mr. Mo Zhi in April 2000 with the discovery of several prehistoric pottery sherds. It was later designated as one of the 236 known archaeological sites in Hong Kong, a site plan of which has been circulated to all concerned Government Departments in order that the AMO would be consulted for any development proposals which may affect the site. A plan showing the site's boundary is at Annex A for Members' reference.

3. The then Territory Development Department (TDD) later proposed development projects at Pak Shek Kok. With funds provided by the then TDD, the AMO commissioned an archaeologist, Ms. Liu Mao to conduct an archaeological impact assessment in December 2000. The result of the survey was reported to the Board's Archaeological Committee vide Committee Paper AAB(A)/1A/2001-02.

4. Prehistoric stone implements and pottery sherds yielded from the test pits suggest that the project area may contain cultural deposits of Late Neolithic or Bronze Age. It is recommended that rescue excavation is required prior to the commencement of any development projects. A summary of the survey together with the map showing the area of archaeological potential are at Annexes B and C.

THE PROPOSED EXCAVATION

5. To tie in with the road project proposed by the then TDD, a rescue excavation was originally scheduled for 2003. Owing to the reprioritization of projects, the CEDD determined to carry out the projects in 2006 after the amalgamation of the then Civil

Engineering Department and the then TDD.

6. In view of sparse prehistoric artifacts recovered by the 2000 surveys, the AMO conducted field investigation to ascertain the archaeological potential of proposed road entrance in November 2005. The result of the survey was reported to Members vide Board Paper AAB/49/2005-06.

7. The CEDD has agreed to provide funds of \$4M and logistics support for the AMO to conduct the rescue excavation at the site after resumption of the private lands. It is anticipated that the proposed excavation will recover and preserve valuable archaeological data from the site. Research projects on prehistoric environment and archaeological landscape will also be arranged concurrently to study the archaeological data retrieved by the excavation. The 6-month rescue excavation will tentatively commence in August 2006 for completion in January 2007. The AMO's field archaeological team will undertake the excavation with the assistance of local archaeologists and research institutes.

8. The excavation finds, field archives and the final report will be deposited with the Central Archaeological Repository upon completion of the project. Exhibitions and educational activities will be organized to promote public awareness of protecting archaeological heritage.

9. In view of the fact that the proposed road project will affect the area of archaeological potential in the Cheung Shue Tan, the AMO has no objection to undertaking the rescue excavation as a protective measure to mitigate the adverse archaeological impact by salvaging the archaeological remains before the road project commences. This is in line with the current practice of archaeological preservation.

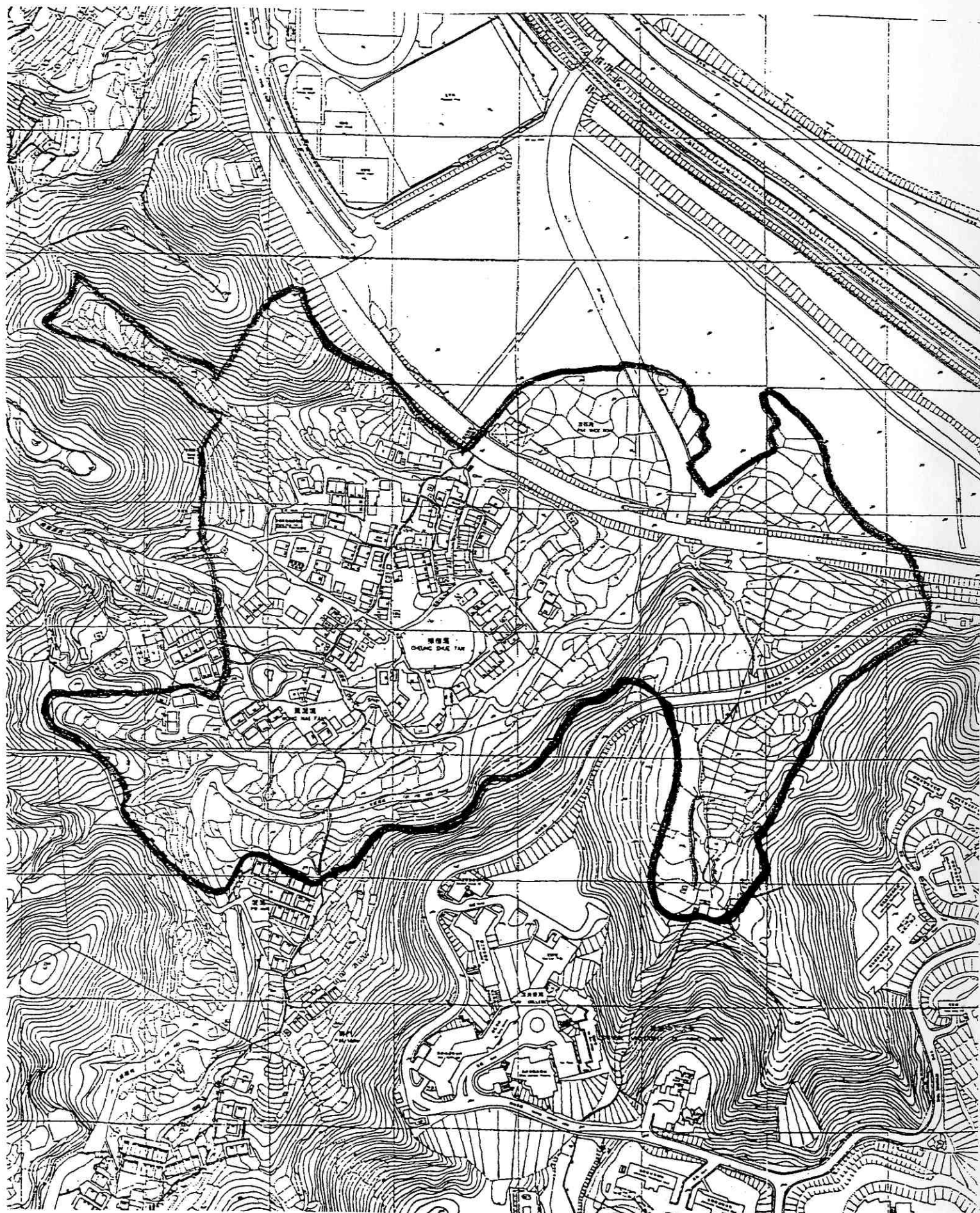
Antiquities and Monuments Office
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
June 2006

Ref : LCS AM 63/1/24/5
LCS AM 22/4/1

Cheung Shue Tan Archaeological Site

樟樹灘考古遺址

7-NE-16B, 16D, 17A, 17C



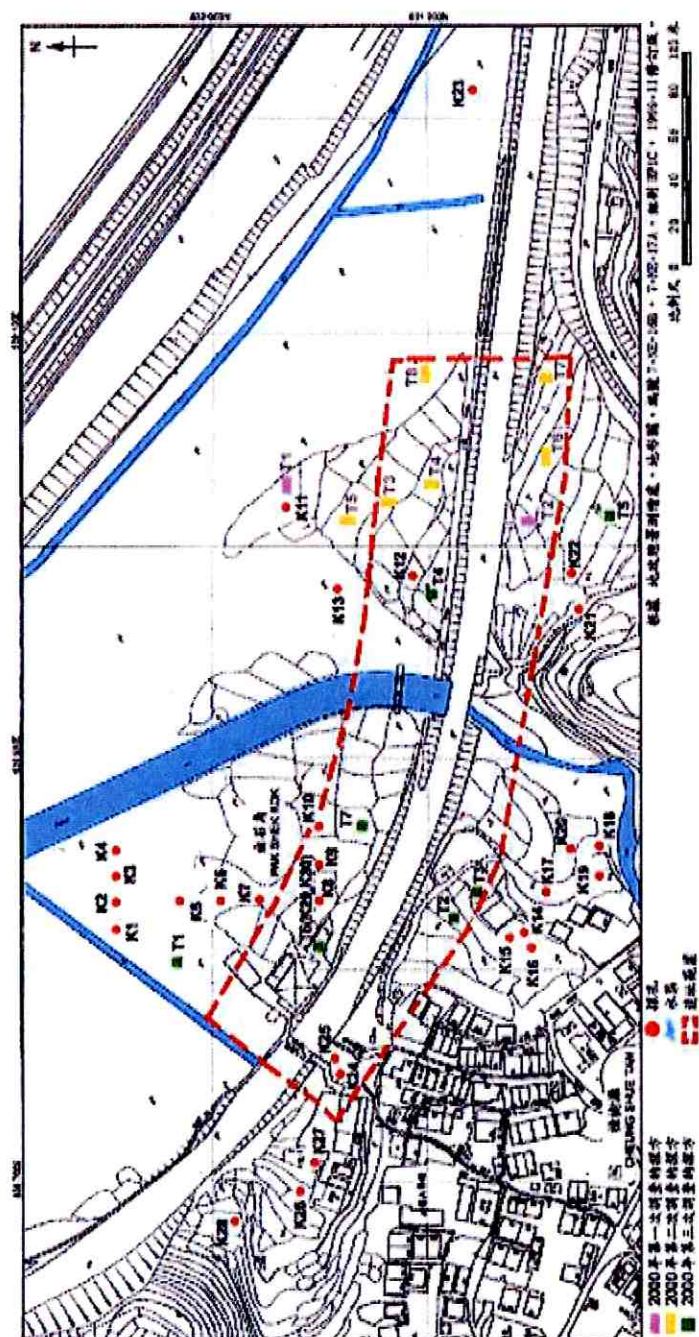
A Summary of the Survey Conducted by Ms Liu Mao

The Hong Kong Institute of Archaeology carried out an archaeological survey and assessment in the work area of the Project of Pak Shek Kok Development (the Project) in Cheung Shue Tan, Tai Po from November to December 2000. The survey was commissioned by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) of Leisure and Cultural Service Department according to the mutual agreement between Territory Development Department (TDD) and the AMO, and was funded by the TDD. The purpose of the survey was to further explore the prehistoric archaeological remains identified in two previous surveys in the Project area, and to assess the potential affect of the Project to the archaeological remains in order to recommend proper mitigation measures accordingly.

In an area of about 0.5 square kilometers along the old Kowloon-Canton Railway in the eastern side of Cheung Shue Tan, the survey team collected surface remains, drilled 30 auger holes and opened 7 test pits. The surface remains mainly include blue-and-white porcelain pieces of the Ming-Qing periods. The drilling revealed complex topographic and geological patterns in the survey area, including hill, terrace and slope, alluvium and sandbar, silt and sludge, and the coastal area of the Tolo Harbour filled up in the late part of the past century. Two of the test pits, T4 in the terrace and slope area and T6 in the alluvium and sandbar area, yielded lithic and ceramic remains of the Neolithic period.

The Neolithic stone remains include three polished axes and one bracelet. The red pottery is characterized by cord-marked surface pattern and blackish sandy paste. The unearthed pottery specimens are too broken to be restored for their original shape, therefore cannot be used to date the site more archaeological precisely. The appearance of the stone bracelet, however, indicates that the Cheung Shue Tan site should be dated to the Phase III to Phase IV of the prehistoric cultures in the Zhujiang Delta area, that is, the late Neolithic period dating from 2900 to 1500 BC. The location of such an early site is especially significant in Hong Kong archaeology, for previously Neolithic sites are mainly found in the western part of the New Territories and offshore islands in Hong Kong.

The Cheung Shue Tan site is mainly distributed in the sandbar and hillfoot areas along the original Tolo Harbour Bay coastal line to the east of the Cheung Shue Tan village (Figure 4). The strip distribution of the site is about 300 meters long and 80 meters wide, with a total area of about 24,000 squaremeters. The work area of the Project is right located in the central area of the site and will cause severe and permanent damage to the site. Therefore, the affected area under the captioned project within Cheung Shue Tan Archaeological Site should be excavated before the commencement of the Project.



Area of Archaeological Potential