

Historic Building Appraisal

Nos. 39 Kau Wa Keng, Kwai Tsing, N.T.

The Tsangs (曾) in Kau Wa Keng, also locally known as Kau Wa Keng Old Village (九華徑舊村), are Hakkas (客家) who settled in the village in the Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. Before their arrival, the village was settled by a family surnamed Ng (吳). Tsang Bak-tao (曾伯韜) first moved from Wangniugang (望牛崗) of Danshui (淡水), Huizhou (惠州), to Lizhujiao village (壙竹角村) of Baoan (寶安), Guangdong (廣東) province, that is, the present day Tai Lam Chung (大欖涌) in 1737. His second son Wai-heng (維亨) later moved to Kau Wa Keng in the mid-18th century. Wai-heng is considered as the founding ancestor of the village.

*Historical
Interest*

Hong Kong Island was declared as a free port in 1842 and the Kowloon Peninsula was leased by Britain in 1860, which resulted in the general growth of China trade. A large number of Chinese were employed by shipping companies. Many villagers in Kau Wa Keng started to work as seamen before the lease of the New Territories. Their remittances made the village well-off.

Nos. 39, 42 and 42A were built by Tsang Po (曾寶) alias Tsang Tai-sham (曾大琛/深) in 1927. He worked as a seaman and with his acquired wealth he built the houses. Nos. 42 and 42 A were built for his family and No. 39 was built for a relative. Tsang Po retired before the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945).

The three terraced houses are built in mixed Chinese and Western design. Each house is two-stories high built to a simple rectangular elongated plan. The roof is pitched from back to front with flush gable end walls. Walls are rendered and painted. A distinctive architectural feature is the arched windows at first floor level on the front elevation. It appears that originally there were open verandahs at the ground floor and first floor levels but these have been enclosed with windows. Other architectural features are moulded cornices, window cills and hoods over the windows. The windows are a mixture of modern aluminium units and traditional wooden casements. Access to only No. 42 and No. 42A was allowed. The interiors have been modernised.

*Architectural
Merit*

The mixed design reflects the impact of Western influence on local *Rarity*,

Chinese culture. Such houses are commonly seen in rural villages but rarely of the same design. The house has cultural and built heritage value. Its authenticity has been affected by alterations, window replacements and modernisation.

***Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

As family residences the social value to the community of these three houses is relatively low. As an example of mixed architecture the building has local interest.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

No. 39 has group value with other historic buildings in the village, and the former Lai Chi Kok Hospital (荔枝角醫院) (Grade 3).

Group Value

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