

Historic Building Appraisal
Nam Koo Terrace
No. 55 Ship Street, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Nam Koo Terrace (南固臺) was probably built between 1915 and 1921. *Historical Interest*
 The two-storey residential house belonged to a rich Shanghai merchant family by the name of To (杜). The land lot where Nam Koo Terrace stands was first leased to a “Victoria Hong Kong gentleman” called **To Chung-man** (杜仲文) in 1915. The building was later sold to **To Chak-man** (杜澤文) in 1921, then later mortgaged it back to To Chung-man in the same year. To Chak-man was the Chief Chinese Silks Salesman (專理紗羅綢緞員) of Wing On Company Limited (永安有限公司) in circa 1915 and later promoted to the post of Assistant Manager (副司理). He was also the Secretary (司理) of Commercial Chamber of The Heung Shan District (香邑僑商會所) and member of The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce. (華商總會).

A story goes that during the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong in 1941-1945, Nam Koo Terrace was used as a “comfort house” (慰安所) as well as “geisha (藝妓) house” for the Japanese soldiers. However, the story is still subject to verification. Nam Koo Terrace remained the property of the To family until 1988 when it was sold to YUBA Co. Ltd. It has been owned by Hopewell Holdings Limited since 1993, but has been left vacated for many years.

The building is designed in **Colonial Eclectic** style adopting **Classical Revival** and **Italianate Renaissance** architectural features combined with Chinese decorations and motifs. The main construction material is red bricks which are used for the walls. The red brickwork is relieved by ornamentation such as rusticated quoins, moulded cornices, and voussoired arches over windows. The front façade, facing the garden is simple and symmetrical, consisting of a curved colonnaded porch and verandah resembling a temple portico. The Doric Order and Ionic Order are applied to the columns. The main entrance gate, which is situated in the side wall to the Ship Street steps, is a combination of Greek and Roman features. A pavilion on the rooftop is built in traditional Chinese style. The position of the entrance gate, the rooftop pavilion and the asymmetrical plan suggest the influence of Chinese *fung shui* on the design. The use of architectural ironwork for the window grilles and entrance gates give an artistic touch to the building. *Architectural Merit*
Rarity & Built Heritage Value

No obvious alterations have taken place in the house, which remains authentic, although seriously neglected and in need of renovation. It is considered to be a rare building type with obvious built heritage value. *Authenticity & Rarity*

Nam Koo Terrace is geographically close to other items graded by the Antiquities Advisory Board. They include the shophouse at No. 18 Ship Street, 72, 72A, 74 and 74A Stone Nullah Lane (石水渠街), those on Nos. 6, 8, 10 and 12 Burrows Street (巴路士街), Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8 Hing Wan Street (慶雲街), Nos. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11 Mallony Street (茂羅街) and Nos. 186, 188 & 190 Queens Road East (皇后大道東). Other physically close graded items include Hung Shing Temple (洪聖古廟) on Nos. 129-131 Queen's Road East and Wan Chai Market (灣仔街市) on No.264 Queen's Road East. **Group Value**

The social and historical value of the building is not fully appreciated by the locals. If the building is to be saved an appropriate adaptive re-use needs to be found which will bring some benefit to the local community. **Adaptive Re-use**