

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 51 and 53 Yen Chow Street,
Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

According to an inscription on the central pediment on the roof, the two adjoining shophouses at Nos. 51 and 53 Yen Chau Street were built in 1932. They are very characteristic of the shophouses commonly known as *tong-lau* (唐樓). The shophouses were usually built in contiguous blocks and range from three to five storeys with verandahs or balconies facing the street. They were usually used for both commercial and residential purposes. The upper floors are residential while shops occupy the ground floor for business. The ground floor of No. 53 was occupied by a local café-cum-bakery (餐廳餅店), which was reported to have been operated there for 55 years between 1959 and 2014. It was also reported that a herbal tea house (涼茶舖) and a tea house (茶居) were opened there before 1959.

*Historical
Interest*

Villages known as Sham Shui Po (深水莆), Cheung Sha Wan (長沙灣) etc. had been established on Kowloon Peninsula before the twenty-fifth year of the Jiaqing (嘉慶) reign (1820) of the Qing (清) dynasty. With the extension of their rule to Kowloon Peninsula in 1898, the British named the areas to the north of Boundary Street, including places known as Sham Shui Po, Lai Chi Kok and Kowloon Tong today, as “New Kowloon”. However, significant increases in population and economic activities in Sham Shui Po took place only after the government carried out large-scale reclamations at the coast of Sham Shui Po in the 1910s and 1920s. Thus, the shophouses at Nos. 51 and 53 were built in 1932 against a historical context of rapid growth in the population and economy of New Kowloon and Sham Shui Po at that time. The lot number, “New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 366”, on which the shophouses are situated, reveals that they have witnessed not only the development of Sham Shui Po, but also New Kowloon.

Nos. 51 and 53 Yen Chow Street were built as a pair of shophouses with Neo-Classical elements. The front facade of the four-storey building juts out over the pavement supported on columns which forms a covered walkway or arcade. Giant square columns rise up the full height of the facade and terminate below the projecting eaves in Corinthian capitals. The front verandahs each have a short column on either side with Ionic Order voluted capitals. Pierced grille patterned balustrades are built between the columns. The staircase entrance has a small porch formed with Ionic columns supporting a simple entablature and arched pediment or fanlight filled with a metal decorative grille. Another metal decorative grille still exists behind the

*Architectural
Merit*

signboard of the then local café. Cement floor tiles of geometric patterns can be found at the landings of the staircase.

Shophouses built in this architectural style are quite rare, and Nos. 51 and 53 should be considered as having high heritage value. Inevitably alterations have been made over the years such as replacement of some of the doors and windows, enclosure of open balconies and partial replacement of the wooden staircase. The Neo-Classical ornamentation on the front elevation appears to be in good condition.

***Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity***

The social value of the shophouses lies in their historical role in the economic development of Sham Shui Po and the residential accommodation they provided. With their distinctive facade, the shophouses are quite different from the modern neighbouring blocks and therefore have local interest.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

Structures nearby are mainly medium-rise building. Some other pre-war shophouses are also found in Sham Shui Po, such as Nos. 117, 119 and 121 Nam Cheong Street (南昌街) (Grade 3), Nos. 123 and 125 Nam Cheong Street (Grade 3) and No. 189 Apliu Street (鴨寮街) (Grade 2). Nos. 51 and 53 Yen Chow Street are also within walking distance from three Grade 2 historic buildings, namely Sham Shui Po Police Station, Mei Ho House and the old North Kowloon Magistracy.

Group Value

REFERENCES

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Property Particulars of The Remaining Portion of Sub-Section 5 of Section A of New Kowloon Inland Lot No. 366.

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