

Historic Building Appraisal
No. 329 Shan Ha Tsuen,
Ping Shan, Yuen Long, New Territories

The house under study is one of four individual but adjoining residential units, Nos. 329 to 332, Shan Ha Tsuen (山下村). The houses were built in 1932 by the Cheung (張) family. There were four brothers in the Cheung family. The eldest brother was a sailor but died in the US. His family built Nos. 329-332 and purchased 10 acres of land in the village with the compensation. Four Cheung brothers and their families lived in the houses. A descendant of the third brother, Cheung Hei (張喜), still lives in No. 329, but Nos. 330 to 332 were vacated in the 1970s and have been empty ever since.

*Historical
Interest*

The houses are a mixture of Chinese vernacular and Western styles and can be classified as **Chinese Eclectic**. The houses are built of local grey bricks. The main central part of the building has a pitched roof of Chinese tiles with gable end walls. The rear part, originally kitchens, has a flat roof. Windows are small and regularly spaced and some have hood mouldings for weather protection. The front façade is built in Western Neo-Classical style with an open verandah on the ground floor. Five square brick columns support open sided projecting balconies or verandahs at first floor level. The columns extend up to roof level supporting an entablature, cornice and ornamental parapet with panels and posts capped with ball-shaped ornaments. The parapet has a central stepped pediment. Urn-shaped balusters still exist to the first floor balconies. The roof over the front verandahs is flat. Doors and windows are traditional wooden units. Internally original staircases still survive. There is a small detached single-storey building with grey brick walls and a Chinese tiled roof which was used as a kitchen at the south end of the houses, and a ruined cowshed at the north end. Some sections of the red-brick wall which used to enclose the *wo tong* (禾塘) in front of the houses still remain.

*Architectural
Merit*

Village houses of mixed style are not uncommon in rural areas, so that Nos. 329 to 332, Shan Ha Tsuen are not particularly rare. They do have built heritage value however. Fortunately they have not been modernised so that they retain their original appearance and authenticity. Unfortunately the front façade of No. 329 has been painted white but this probably reversible.

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The social value of the houses lies in the role they played in the lives of the Cheung family. The houses illustrate how a farming family in a rural community lived in the old days. Besides, the Cheung family probably had a close relationship with the Tangs of Ping Shan, as Cheung Fo-on (張伙安), the

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

father of Cheung Hei, donated money to renovate the Tat Tak Communal Hall (達德公所). On the other hand, the architectural style reflects Western influence introduced by members of the family who had worked overseas. The houses therefore have considerable social value and local interest.

It is difficult to come up with an appropriate adaptive re-use for these *Adaptive* houses. Most of the villagers have moved away and there is no farming now. *Re-use* Adaptive re-use depends a lot on the requirements of the local community.