

Historic Building Appraisal

No. 38 Ha Wo Che, Sha Tin, N.T.

Ha Wo Che (下禾輦) is one of the four Hakka (客家) villages in Sha Tin established in the early 19th century. It was facing the Shing Mun River (城門河) and a pier was constructed at the river bank for its ferry service with outside areas including Tai Po and Sha Tin. The village was also called Ha Wo Ching Chai (下禾青仔). The row of Hakka house at Nos. 33- 39 was constructed by Chan Yi-wo (陳怡和, ?1850-1912). Originated in Xiancun (顯村) of Szechuan (四川) province, the Chans moved to Tsing Yi Island (青衣島) and then to Tai Po. The Chans of the second branch then moved to Ha Wo Che in the 1820-30s. Yi-wo went to California, the U.S., at the age of 13 and returned home in the late 1870s. It is not known when the row of houses was built. It was probably built in the late 19th or early 20th century. The house was inherited by his five sons after his death. It is still owned by their descendents.

**Historical
Interest**

The row of seven residential houses is among houses in the village all facing southeast a short distance from the railway line. An open forecourt is in front of the building. It is a Qing (清) vernacular design building of Hakka *doulang* (斗廊) style. Three recessed units are each individually sandwiched by a projected unit on either side. Each unit is with an open courtyard in its front and a hall at the back. The seven units share a common roof at the back. It is constructed of green bricks and granite blocks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Each unit has its own entrance. The doorframe of each unit is of granite. A wooden *tanglung* (趟籠) is installed at the entrance of the recessed ancestral hall in the middle of the building. A pair of *ruilong* (夔龍) mouldings is at the two ends of the front ridge of the three recessed units and at the rear ridge. Under the front eave of the recessed units are wall frieze paintings of landscape, flowers, birds and rocks and calligraphy and a fascia board of flowers and treasures carving. Wall frieze plastered mouldings of flowers and rocks are at the external walls of the three projected units (except house No.35 which external wall is plastered and painted) and the side straight gables. The two pitched gable walls are with red *ruilong* plastered mouldings. An altar is at the end wall of the hall of the middle recessed unit housing a soul tablet of the Chan ancestor for worship. A big Chinese character “壽” (Longevity) is written on a piece of red paper pasted on the wall. An image of Kwun Yam (觀音) is on its left also for worship. Except the ancestral hall, each unit has its kitchen at the open courtyard (mostly at the right corner). A living room is at the hall with a bedroom at the back. A bedroom is at the cockloft.

**Architectural
Merit**

It is a block of seven residential houses to witness the settlement of the Chans in Ha Wo Che village. **Rarity**

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value**

Except house No.35 with its external walls plastered and painted, the block has its authenticity kept. **Authenticity**

Yi-wo was a labourer working in California during the later part of the gold rush in the 1860s. He returned home after he gained a sum of money. He had a remittance shop called Yi Wo (怡和銀號) in Central. He was also an agent to employ villagers to work as seamen in the U.S. He was a renowned figure in Sha Tin and a philanthropist with contribution for local services such as Da Chiu (打醮) activities. He lost most of his assets cheated by his two nephews at his old age as he was illiterate in both English and Chinese though he was fluent in speaking the two languages. **Social Value,
& Local
Interest**