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A NEW CONCEPT OF RURAL PLANNING AND RE-DEVELOPMENT

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Nam Wai village renewal scheme is to assist villagers in creating a 'revitalised new community' that would not only preserve the traditional Chinese cultural values, but also allow villagers themselves to participate in the rapid economic growth of Hong Kong.

INTRODUCTION

Nam Wai is an ancestral Hakka village in the New Territories of Hong Kong. It is situated on the southern coast-line of Hebe Haven in the Sai Kung Peninsula. Nam Wai village consists of two clans which make up the majority of households in the village. The village history has been traced back 27 generations.

The village elders will proudly recount to you in detail how their ancestors, seeking better living conditions, migrated from Mainland China to live in the New Territories. They finally settled along the southern shore of Hebe Haven because of its good 'fung shui' location. Nam Wai village is bounded on the south by hills and two valleys, on the north by Hebe Haven, on the west by coast-line, and on the east by Port Shelter. The location provides an ideal environment for both fishing and farming. The families of two clans co-operated to build a seawall on the southern end of the Hebe Haven for the protection of Nam Wai against typhoons, which gave the village its name, 'South Wall'.

World War II marked a historic turning point for Nam Wai. Farming and fishing declined. Many villagers



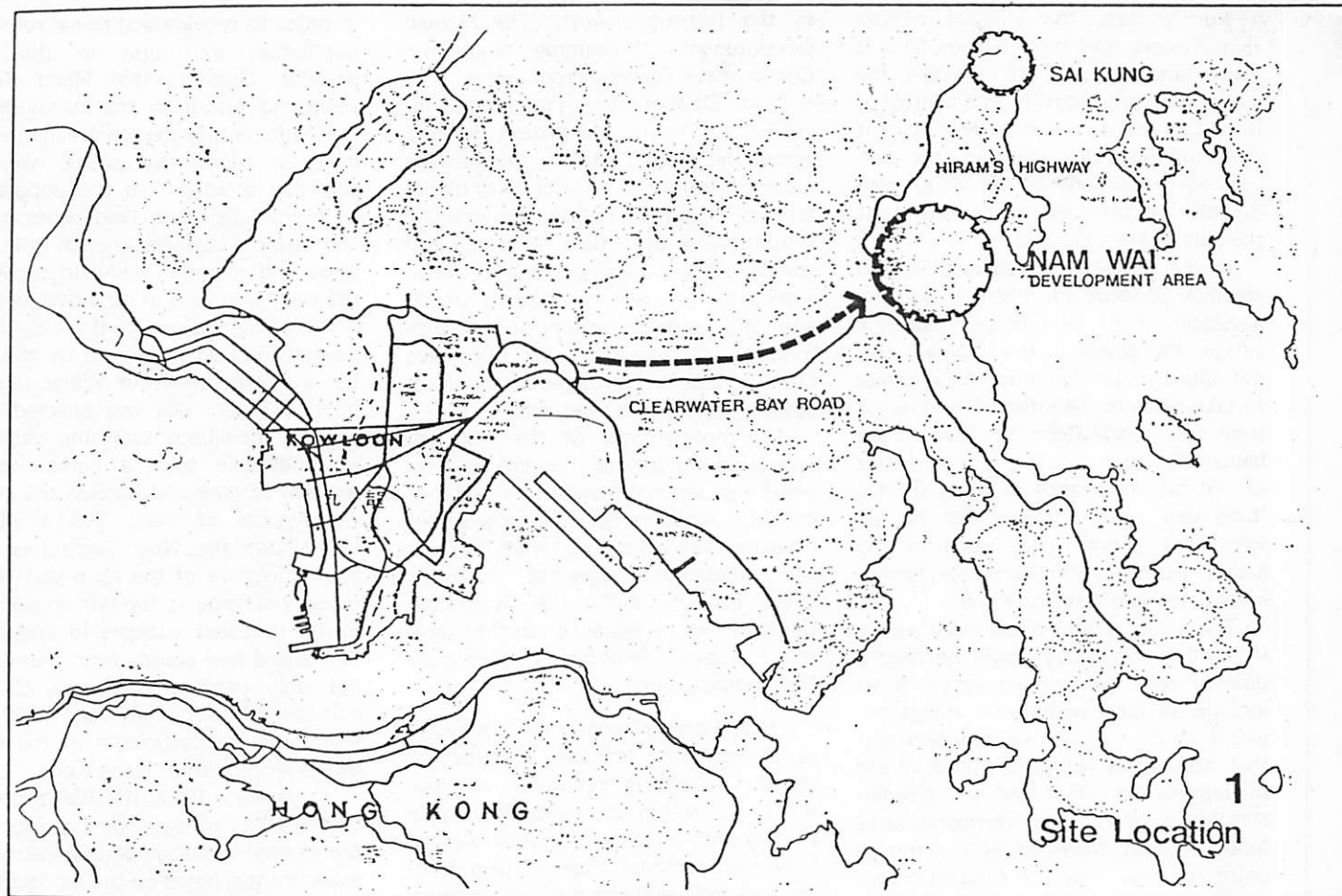
Mr Lo Hsien Hau

left home to make a living elsewhere. After the war, some villagers returned home. But they were unable to make a decent living in the village by farming and fishing. To supplement family income, they had to take construction and factory jobs in Hong Kong and Kowloon. Some found jobs in Chinese restaurants overseas. Over several decades the scenic rice terraces and fishing fleets, once the cornerstone of a pre-war

Hakka village economy, were gradually abandoned. Those who stayed home were the very young and the very old. The pressures of industrial growth and urban expansion in the New Territories were affecting the tradition of Chinese village community.

At present, Nam Wai village has two village representatives, one representing the families of the Yau clan and the other the families of the Shing clan. The existing population of Nam Wai village is about 550 persons. They get water from two small streams above the village, in addition to a limited government water supply. Private land holdings in Nam Wai consist of about 24 acres of padi which have been under cultivation for many generations. However, since 1960 considerable areas of private land have been sold to outsiders for speculative land development purposes.

The sale of private land by a villager to an outsider generally means that an outsider will benefit from the opportunity of increasing the land value through re-development. Naturally, the villagers prefer that Nam Wai villagers themselves or that Nam Wai village as a whole are the beneficiary of the land-development in the village.



THE PROCESS OF CREATING A NEW VILLAGE COMMUNITY

The Nam Wai village renewal scheme began on February 27, 1977 with a week-long consultation. It involved 100 Nam Wai villagers and 113 volunteer consultants from nine nations, many from the Hong Kong area. Those attending included residents from four other human development projects in North America, Indonesia, South Korea and the Republic of the Philippines. Together, they created a planning and re-development concept with 13 components, which became the framework of the four-year Nam Wai village renewal project. To assist the village in carrying out the village renewal planning, a small voluntary staff of ICA families came to live in Nam Wai village. One of their main functions is to train villagers in practical leadership skills.

Emphasis during the first year was on creating some visible signs of progress. The village youth used their skills in construction to repair over 100m of drains and footpaths, and to build a two-storey community building which houses a village library. They wrote, published, and distributed a community newspaper, 'The Nam Wai Voice'. The

village elders wrote and published 'A History of Nam Wai Village', incorporating original clan records and Hakka traditions.

A health survey revealed that dental care was a major problem, so the village organised a dental health day, which 200 people attended. In 1979, a fully equipped dental clinic was established, which is the first fully certified clinic in the district, with three village women trained as dental assistants. Operating on Sunday mornings, and staffed by a dentist from nearby Sai Kung, the clinic served 216 patients in the first nine months.

Increasing village income has been harder to accomplish. Pig raising, a minor income producer, was improved by acquiring six new breeding boars. Government sponsored seminars were held on breeding improvements and disease prevention. Although the number of families raising pigs decreased over a three-year period, the number of pigs raised increased by 30%.

In 1979, new jobs were created through establishing an electronics assembly shop in the Nam Wai village. This experiment employed six people full-time and 12 people part-time. It

lasted one year before closing, because it was unable to meet production cost. Another economic experiment, mushroom cultivation, also proved unprofitable.

After two years of intensive activities, the Nam Wai village renewal scheme still faced the challenge that the whole village continued to need help in gaining participation in the teeming economic life of Hong Kong. Unless a way was found for the village to proceed with a unified planning concept and act on issues of community-wide importance, Nam Wai village community would continue to lose its identity to outside development interests.

THE STRUCTURE OF NEW VILLAGE LEADERSHIP

A major step forward in the Nam Wai village renewal scheme took place in October 1978 when a new village leadership structure was introduced into village life. The new village leadership structure is the 'Nam Wai Foundation Ltd.' which is a representative entity wholly owned by the villagers of Nam Wai. The Foundation will, among other things, act as a decision making body for the Nam Wai village renewal scheme.

Furthermore, the villagers believe that if more and more village land is owned and occupied by outsiders, the village may progressively lose control of its village identity and re-development opportunities. Opportunities for succeeding generations in the village will diminish as outsiders gain control of the bulk of Nam Wai's land.

In the absence of a persuasive and credible concept of planning and re-development of land in and near the village, the government will likely permit outsider's land development schemes to take place in the village. This is what Nam Wai village does not wish to see happening. In particular, it is a matter of critical importance to them from a 'fung shui' point of view that no development should take place in the area in front of Nam Wai village, locally known as 'Nam Wai Fish Pond'.

The villagers would feel more secure if a village boundary could be clearly defined with government approval to include all land within the village environs. But it is generally understood that difficulties will arise unless village boundaries are identified and defined statutorily on a New Territories-wide basis, so that from an administrative point of view they are binding on all parties concerned.

THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND NAM WAI VILLAGE RENEWAL SCHEME

The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) is a post-war voluntary organisation devoted to research, training and demonstration. The services provided by ICA are concerned with the human aspect in world development. In the past 25 years it has worked actively in all areas of the world. In particular, ICA specialises in devising and demonstrating practical methods for comprehensive rural renewal. The ICA's emphasis is on methods which enable rural residents to plan and implement socio-economic improvements in their own communities. Local 'self-sufficiency', 'self-reliance' and 'self-confidence' are three chief aims of ICA programmes.

In a private capacity, ICA works autonomously in 32 nations as a voluntary non-profit making organisation. It has established over 100 offices with five 'Coordination Centres' in Bombay, Brussels, Chicago, Singapore and Hong Kong. In each country, ICA is registered locally, with a Board of Directors and an Advisory Board.

Two major programmes provide focus

to the Institute's work: The Human Development Programme and the Community Forum Programme. The Human Development Programme involves, at present, 149 projects located across the world. Each is intended as a demonstration of a community model for its region or nation. Community Forums have been held in over 8,000 communities around the world. These workshops involve participants of all ages and from all sectors of the community. In Australia, over 500 have been conducted throughout the local government areas in every state.

The programmes of the ICA are supported by private foundations, corporations, service organisations and concerned individuals. Specific programmes have been funded by the United Nations and government agencies, such as UNICEF, US AID, the Australian Development Assistance Bureau and the European Economic Community Development Fund.

Hong Kong is recognised worldwide as an economic miracle, a model of rapidly expanding economic development set within an established community with an ancient Chinese cultural background. While planners in government as well as those in private practice debate over just how many people Hong Kong can feasibly support, and where additional room can be made available for them, the stream of illegal immigrants from the communes of Guangdong, drawn by the promise of a better life in Hong Kong, threatens the prosperity and social well-being of Hong Kong society. This immense increase in population by migration from Mainland China — as high as 7,000 persons a month on occasion, according to government estimates — has pressured the government to tighten its immigration policy.

The Hong Kong government is committed to guarding the integrity of village life by 'the Treaty of New Territories with China', but so far as the land development policy is concerned, it has focused its major efforts in New Town development only. Since 1972, great progress has been made to push ahead on the 'Three New Towns Development Projects' in the New Territories. But 'New Towns' alone are inadequate for projected population growth. It is believed that more room for land development must be found in the rural areas of the New Territories. Therefore, a new concept of rural planning and re-development is not only desirable but also absolutely essential

in order to provide additional room for population expansion in the next decades. Granting that Hong Kong's economic future in the remainder of the 20th century lies mainly in development of more new towns, we must also pay attention to the importance of human issues in land development and assure a balanced growth in human value and material well-being, both in the new towns and in rural development.

Nam Wai was one of the 149 villages selected around the world by the ICA for the experiment in village renewal methods. Nam Wai was selected both because the village leadership was eager to undertake such a comprehensive renewal scheme and because the village was typical of many Hakka villages throughout the New Territories. The main objective of the Nam Wai village renewal scheme is for human development. It assists villagers in creating a 'revitalised new community' that would not only preserve traditional Chinese cultural values, but also allow villagers themselves to participate in the rapid economic growth of Hong Kong.

In January 1977, the ICA proposed to Nam Wai village elders a four-year programme in village development. The experiment is based on the model forged during 20 years of community work in both developed and developing nations. The ICA believed that Nam Wai village had the resources, knowledge, and desire to improve their living conditions, but lacked the images, methods, and models to effect change. Their response to the experiment will create a new concept of village renewal, which could forge a workable prototypical model for rapid social, economic, and cultural improvement in the village communities of Hong Kong.

The social presuppositions to a typical village renewal are generally summarised by the ICA as follows:

1. The project must have a geographic focus clearly defined, so that effort is concentrated on a manageable social unit where results are visible.
2. All community problems must be dealt with simultaneously, recognising the inter-relationship of community life.
3. All social and age groups are engaged in significant community roles.
4. While dealing with the apparent social and economic contradictions of community life, the underlying human issues are identified.
5. Social symbols are used as the 'key' to unlocking community motivation.

Incorporated to represent the entire village on significant social and economic issues, the Foundation's membership was open to all adult Nam Wai villagers. Within the first year, the Foundation's membership included 77% of the adult villager population. The nine-member Board of Directors included the traditional village leadership, ie the two village representatives and the school supervisor — as well as newly elected representatives from the five neighbourhoods in the village. One candidate at-large is also elected.

One of the first opportunities taken up by the Foundation was aggregation of some village owned land, which could be developed for income to fund village improvements. Like many villages in the New Territories, Nam Wai possessed a large amount of agricultural land which had been abandoned for more than a decade. Although land in the New Territories was increasingly valuable for urban housing development, the farming land owned by Nam Wai villagers was scattered as a result of traditional land inheritance patterns, and hence unsuitable for housing development.

The Board of Directors with their

advisors persuaded a group of village landowners to sell their land to the Foundation at a nominal price, resulting in a site large enough for re-development purposes. In the first instance, the Foundation borrowed HK\$15 million to purchase the 700,000 sq ft of land. A joint venture was formed in which the development partners, an outside investor, namely Yuet Fat Ltd, would manage the development of a residential complex on the 700,000 sq ft of land, with the Foundation receiving 51% of the profits of such re-development. The profit will be used for the economic, social and physical improvement of the village. This land deal has already produced direct benefits to the village. At least 80% of the HK\$15 million has been reinvested in the village in the form of new housing, dramatically improving the living conditions of some of the villagers.

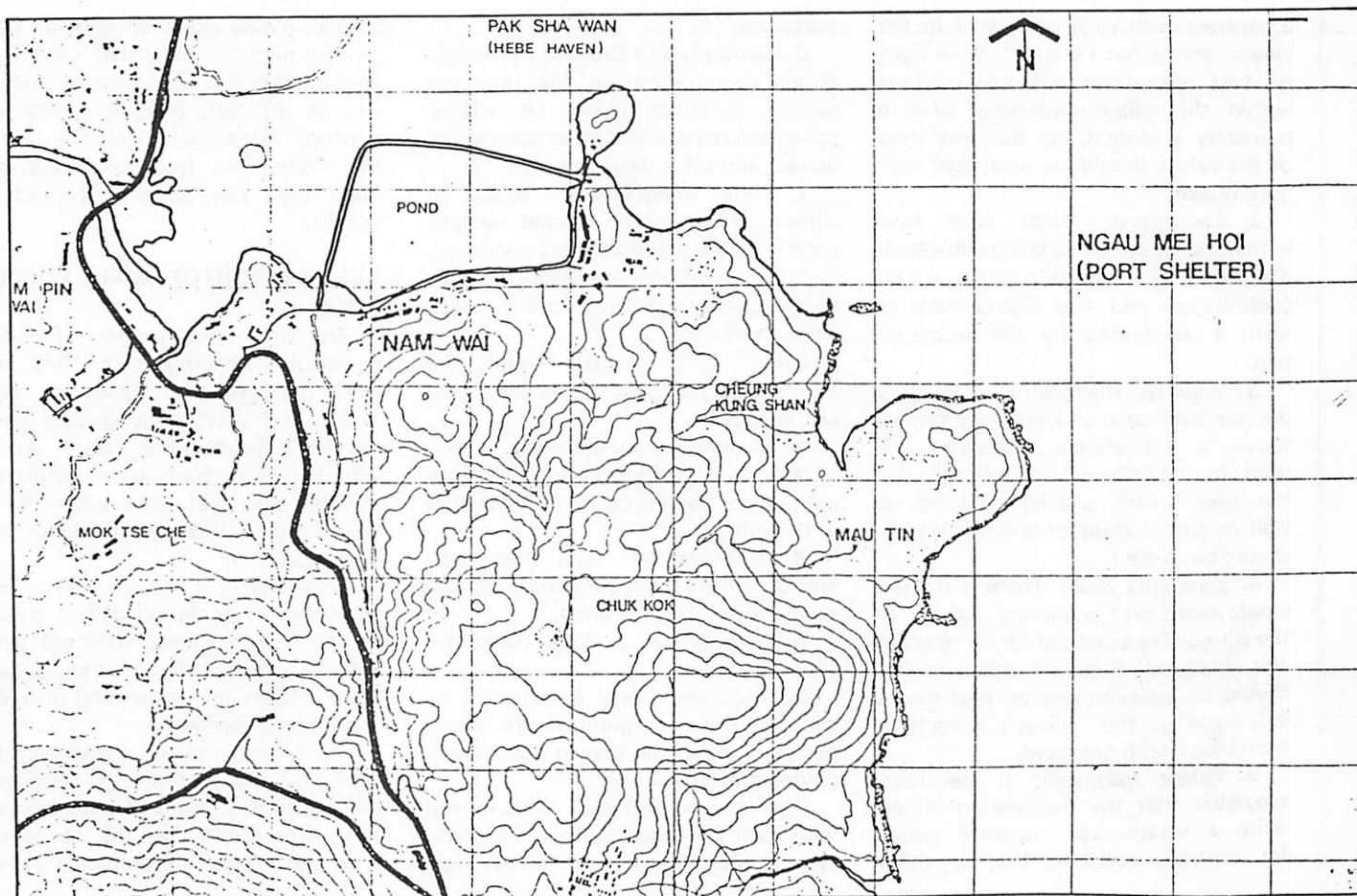
As the land re-development scheme nears completion, the most innovative and challenging aspect of the Foundation's task will begin. The principal advisor to the Board has prepared a planning brief that outlines all the village objectives for the social, cultural, economic and physical im-

provement of the village. When the planning brief is completed, after extensive consultation with villagers and others, the Foundation will hire an interdisciplinary team of consultants to prepare a detailed village renewal master plan and programme based on the villagers' main interests, including an annual construction and expenditure programme.

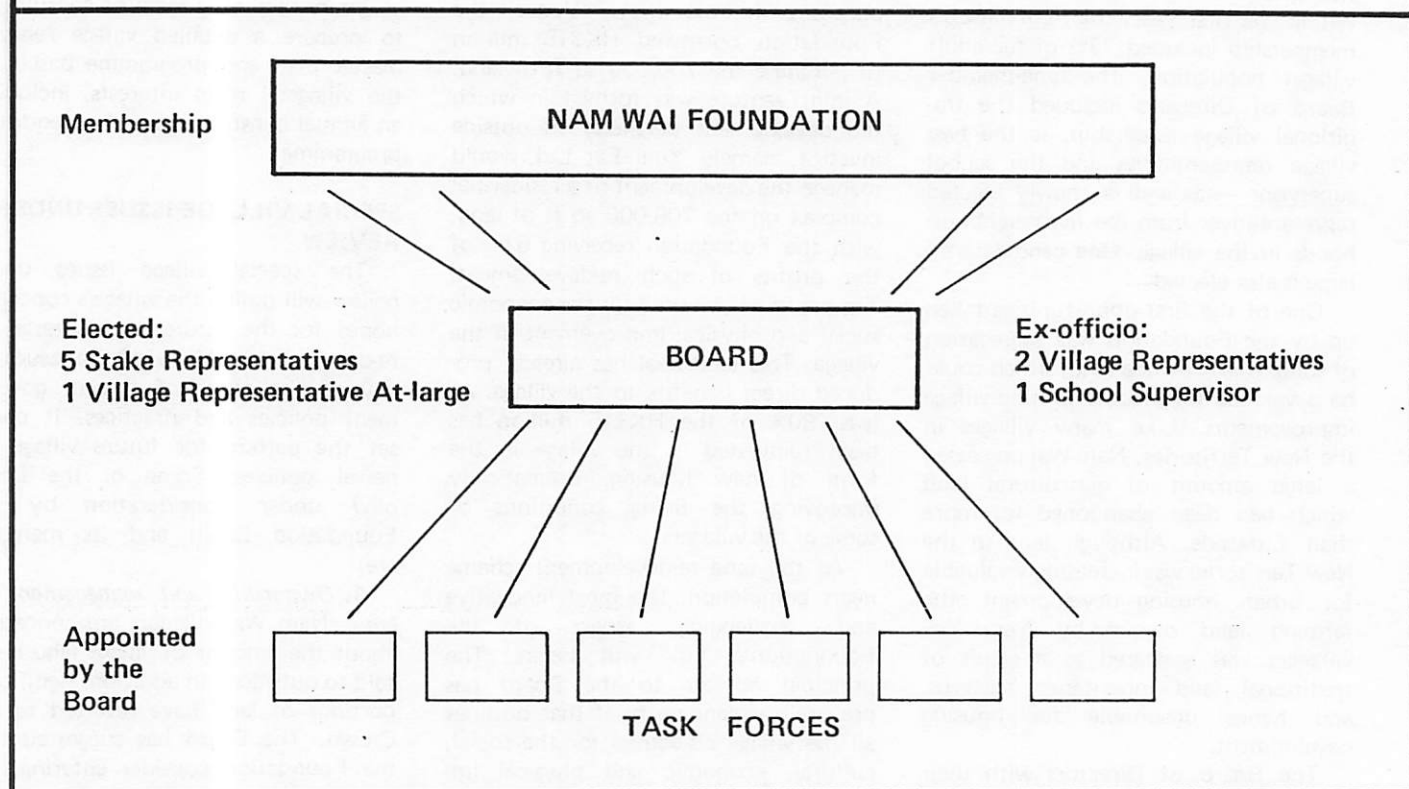
SPECIAL VILLAGE ISSUES UNDER REVIEW

The special village issues under review will define the village's concerns, hopes for the future, and criteria for re-development. Many of the issues go beyond the scope of present government policies and practices. It could set the pattern for future village renewal policies. Some of the issues now under consideration by the Foundation Board and its members are:

1. Ownership and management of land: Nam Wai villagers are concerned about the amount of village land being sold to outsiders. In addition, significant portions of land have reverted to the Crown. The Board has suggested that the Foundation consider entering into



NAM WAI COMMUNITY ORGANISATION



a contract with each landowner in the village, giving the Foundation the right of first refusal on any sale of land within the village boundary. Also, a boundary encompassing the land areas of the village should be negotiated with government.

2. Agriculture: Much farm land within the village is not being cultivated. The viability of agriculture should be carefully assessed, and efforts made to form a cooperative for the raising of pigs.

3. Mobility: The majority of villagers do not own cars, and public transportation is not always accessible. The need for additional transportation for the aged, infirm, and handicapped, as well as school children and employees, should be studied.

4. Economic Base: There is limited employment and economic activity in the village. The potential for commercial and small-scale industrial opportunities should be assessed, and the best means of assuring the village's long-term economic health proposed.

5. Village Insurance: It has been suggested that the Foundation underwrite a village-wide insurance policy for medical, accident, fire, or other

protection.

6. Limitations to Growth: The village should be advised on the optimum growth potential based on village-consensed criteria, including population, houses, and other development.

7. Local Management: Areas of village affairs which would benefit from local management should be identified, and arrangements made for Nam Wai villagers to provide this management themselves.

Other land related issues the Foundation Board wishes to investigate will include:

1. Re-development controls.

2. Village graveyard and regulations relating to the allocation of gravesites in the village.

3. Definition of 'fung shui' areas and agreement with all parties to conserve good 'fung shui' areas.

4. Provision of a 'land bank' for future use.

5. Discussions with government on the possibility of regrant of land which has reverted to the Crown due to non-payment of Crown rent.

The land control issue is concerned with Nam Wai village's economic identity and perpetuating the village's ex-

istence. While there appears to be a general understanding that control of land in Nam Wai village and its environs will be difficult, there is nevertheless a strong determination on the part of the villagers to face the issues, and hope they can achieve as much as possible.

THE QUESTION OF SMALL HOUSE SITES

An incomplete survey of village households undertaken in 1979 indicated that over 100 individuals might qualify for small housing sites under the 1972 Small House Policy. At the end of 1979, 65 applications for exempt housing sites had been submitted to the District Office, Sai Kung for consideration.

Considerable impatience has been expressed by some villagers at government's slow response to these applications, particularly as they believe other villages are succeeding in having applications approved.

The probable reason government has been slow and careful in granting small housing sites to Nam Wai applicants in their expectation that the Foundation is in the process of preparing a com-

prehensive village renewal master plan, and that the determination of location and number of small house sites which can be practically accommodated would be a part of that master plan incorporating the village planning concept.

Many villagers appear to view the small housing entitlement as a 'right' which they should be allowed to use for financial gain. Government has in fact provided for this by permitting the site to be sold upon payment of a premium. It is argued however, that small house entitlements in the village, if properly used, could help Nam Wai retain some of the younger people, thus strengthening village identity and assuring growth and maintenance of the village membership.

THE ASPECTS OF PLANNING AND ENGINEERING CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the special issues, it is expected that the following planning and Engineering aspects will have to be examined in formulating village renewal and re-development proposals for Nam Wai village:

1. **Climate:** rainfall, wind pattern, special microclimate areas.
2. **Terrain:** topography, slope geology,

drainage patterns, geotechnical characteristics, soils, erosion.

3. **Vegetation:** type and distribution, conditions, regrowth potential.

4. **Hydrology:** water gathering grounds, ecological value, pollution.

5. **Agriculture:** distribution, economics, productivity, potential trends.

6. **Fishing:** fish breeding, sea fishing, effects of waterborne pollution.

7. **Wild life.**

8. **Settlement survey:** private land distribution, related activity areas and areas with 'fung shui' importance.

9. **Local development activity.**

10. **Recreation:** existing and planned recreation areas and activities.

11. **Dereliction and blight:** survey of areas of dereliction and blight.

12. **Development proposals:** consideration and evaluation of all development proposals in Nam Wai for conformity with the overall development of the area. This may include recommending the inclusion of specific lease conditions to ensure conformity with the overall plan or, alternatively, some form of contractual agreement between villagers and the Foundation incorporating certain controls on development.

13. **Development in adjacent areas:** as-

essment of the implication of the full development of Nam Wai on adjacent areas, especially from the traffic and visual aspect.

14. **Typhoon:** consideration of the possible effects of typhoon surge on site formation levels for low-lying parts of the area.

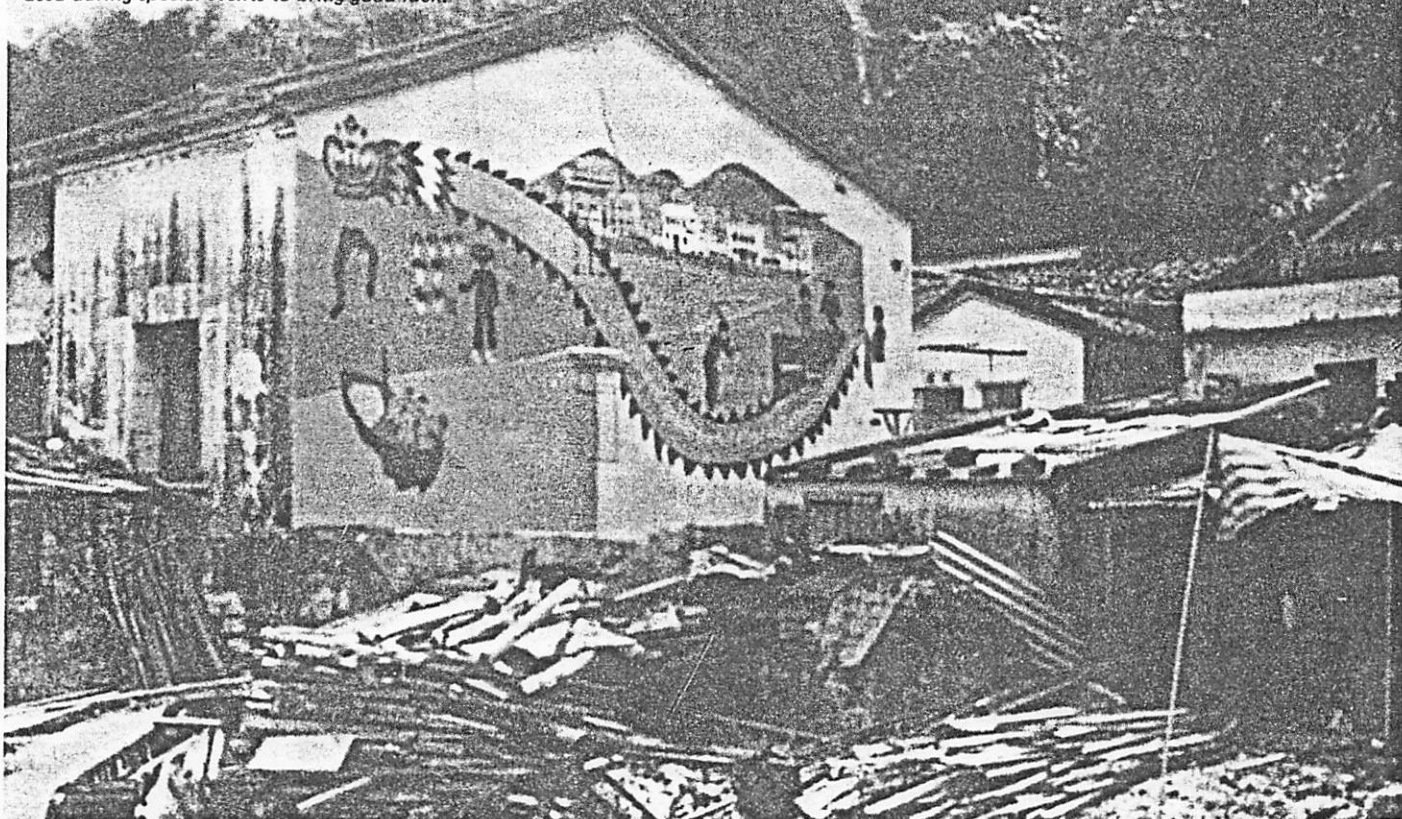
15. **Water supply:** consultation with the Water Supplies Department to obtain information regarding availability and land requirements for potable and flushing water supply system.

16. **Drainage and other utilities:** outline proposals for main drainage and other major utility features in consultation with Drainage Division, and other government departments concerned. Consideration of the impact on Nam Wai of any changes in the drainage system arising from development of nearby areas, and assessing the need for any further investigations or tests subsequently to ascertain the extent and effects of such change, if any.

17. **Sewage:** outline recommendations on sewage collection, treatment facilities and disposal.

18. **Refuse disposal:** consideration of refuse disposal arrangements in consul-

Cultural symbols were used to focus effort and restore self-confidence. This mural depicts traditional Hakka activities, including the ancient Unicorn Dance, used during special events to bring good luck.



tation with New Territories Urban Services Department.

19. Environment: consideration of the environmental impact of developing the Nam Wai area, with particular reference to the effects of water-borne pollution from drainage into Hebe Haven on the marine ecology, particularly the 'mariculture' fishing industry established there.

20. Conservation: consideration of conservation needs of the area, taking into account valuable vegetation, maintenance of the ecological balance, scenic areas, buildings and other features of local or Hong Kong wide historical, archaeological or scientific interest.

21. Other economic opportunities: identification and consideration of economic opportunities, as suitable types of commercial or industrial uses, rental housing Kaito and bus services and formation of companies or entrepreneurial ventures.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the objectives which Nam Wai village has generally agreed upon for physical, social, economic and financial improvement in Nam Wai have been listed by the Foundation as follows:

1. To perpetuate the existence of Nam Wai village, and strengthen the identity of Nam Wai villagers with their village.
2. To improve the prosperity of each villager and of the village as a whole.
3. To achieve a more secure village existence through greater acceptance by government and neighbours of Nam Wai village's management of its local environs, and other interest.
4. To achieve provision of a high standard of village infrastructure, including potable water supply, sewage collection and treatment, storm drainage and flood protection, safe roadways and footpaths, outdoor lighting, parking, refuse collection and landscaping, and other improvements.
5. Provision of a land reserve to meet future village needs and for use by future village generations.
6. Development of the capability to care for elderly, widowed, orphaned, handicapped and indigent members of the village.
7. Development of local experience in management of village affairs.
8. To assist in retaining in the hands of Nam Wai villagers land and buildings within Nam Wai and its immediate en-

virons and, where ownership by non-villagers presently exists, to assist in regaining the ownership through purchase or other arrangement.

The progress and accomplishment of the Nam Wai village renewal project could not have been achieved without the cooperative effort of local villagers, rural leaders, government personnel, individual volunteers, and the business community. In particular, special recognition should be given to all personnel working in the Institute of Cultural Affairs, the Sai Kung Rural Committee, the District Office, Sai Kung, the New Territories Administration Headquarters, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, the New Territories Urban Services Department and Foundation Advisors. The participation of all concerned is vital; each has a critical role to play in the concept of planning and re-development. Government departments provide services, define and regulate policies and facilitate the implementation of policies at the village and district level; business community provides financial and management expertise and supports community efforts with financial assistance, while Foundation advisors conceived and laid the foundation of the legal framework of the new village leadership structure. Consultant volunteers provide professional planning and engineering expertise. Most important of all, the Nam Wai villagers themselves contributed their knowledge of and experience in the village community, so that the village improvement programme will reflect the real needs and practical human issues of their village life.

Perhaps, as the ICA intends, the concept of planning and re-development relating to the Nam Wai village renewal will also be suitable to other villages in the New Territories of Hong Kong. It is argued, however, that rural centre planning should be part of an integrated New Territories development planning approach. Acceptance that the causes of rural poverty and other human issues are inter-related is essential to understanding the complexity of the working mechanism. Naturally, all the human issues and rural poverty cannot be tackled at once. No country has the resources of manpower and finance to mount a one-shot attack on a total rural renewal programme. But given a strong commitment by government and local people, a beginning can be made in the right direction. The Nam Wai case is potentially a viable project in this endeavour. ■