

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 8 and 9 Tai Pak Terrace,
Kennedy Town, H.K.

Tai Pak Terrace (太白臺) was laid out at the beginning of the 20th century when the slope near Belcher Street (卑路乍街) and Sands Street (山市街) was developed into a residential area for the Chinese. The land developer was Mr. Li Po-lung (李寶龍), the elder brother of Mr. Li Po-chun (李寶椿) and the son of Mr. Li Sing (李陞) who was widely recognised as the most influential Chinese land developer in 19th-century Hong Kong. In order to commemorate a prominent poet of the Tang Dynasty (唐朝, A.D. 618-907) Li Bai (李白), Li Po-lung named the surrounding streets as Tai Pak Terrace (太白臺), Hei Wong Terrace (羲皇臺), Ching Lin Terrace (青蓮臺) and Hok Sze Terrace (學士臺) all drew from Li Bai's title “翰林學士” and the phrases in his poetries; for example, “自謂羲皇人” and “青蓮居士”.

*Historical
Interest*

Nos. 8 and 9 Tai Pak Terrace was built in the **1920s**. It has been owned by the **Hong Kong Society for the Promotion of Virtue**, otherwise known as **Hong Kong To Tak Wui** (香港道德會, “the Society”) since 1927. Inspired by Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, the Society was founded in 1924 to promote the study and practice of ethics and virtues. At the time of its founding, the Society's president and vice-president were famous local businessmen and community leaders named **Au Lim-chuen** (區廉泉) and **Tu Ser-dun** (杜四端) (1859—1940), who were directors of the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院總理). Its office was first established on the fourth floor of Nos. 6-7 Tai Pak Terrace. Due to rapid expansion, the Society purchased the two neighbouring tenement buildings at Nos. 8-9 as permanent premises and moved in 1927. The Society has been on the present site for over 80 years before it moved out.

The buildings are typical Chinese tenement houses of four storeys with a rooftop extension. They appear to retain much of the traditional style building designs and materials on the ground floor entrance, the curved narrow balconies with intricate iron railings in geometric Art Deco patterns and timber joist floors on the upper floors, and a common wooden staircase serving both tenements. Internally, there is little of architectural interest, but original floor tiles, wooden partitioning and some wooden paneled doors still survive. The buildings have some interesting features and period details but they do not have outstanding architectural merit.

*Architectural
Merit*

This type of tenement building is now quite rare, most having been demolished and redeveloped. Nos. 8-9 are in fact the only remaining old tenements in Tai Pak Terrace, as all the neighboring tenement buildings on

*Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &*

either side have been demolished and rebuilt in modern style.

Authenticity

Basically, the buildings appear to be fairly authentic, but their integrity has been compromised by alterations such as removal of front walls to balconies and unauthorized building works such as the rooftop structure. Other alternations and additions include enclosure of balconies, typhoon canopies, signage, alteration to doors and windows, and installation of A/C units.

The social value of the building lies in the role it plays as the office of the Hong Kong Society for Promotion of Virtue for over 80 years. The interior is interesting as the layout and original features which still exist give up a glimpse into the past. The Society has now set up a branch office in Tuen Mun.

*Social Value
& Local
Interest*

Nos. 8-9 Tai Pak Terrace has been included in the Central and Western Heritage Trail. Its immediate environment is very quiet and pleasing. Buildings are mostly low to medium-rises. The famous Lo Pan Temple (魯班先師廟) and Kwong Yuet Tong Public Office (廣悅堂公所) are found along Ching Lin Terrace nearby. Another heritage item in the area is the Ex-Western Fire Station (前西區消防局) at No.14 Belcher Street.

Group Value

The premises at Nos. 8-9 Tai Pak Terrace are now rather neglected and vacated pending redevelopment.

*Adaptive
Re-use*