

Heritage Appraisal of Lui Seng Chun
No. 119 Lai Chi Kok Road, Mong Kok, Kowloon

Located at No. 119 Lai Chi Kok Road in Mong Kok, Kowloon, Lui Seng Chun (雷生春) is a four-storey *tong lau* (literally meaning Chinese-style building (唐樓), the local term for Hong Kong shophouse typology)¹ located on a triangular site. It was built in 1931 and owned by Lui Leung (雷亮, 1863-1944), one of the founders of The Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited (“KMB”). The Lui family ran a Chinese medicine shop named “Lui Seng Chun” on the ground floor and resided on the upper floors. Lui Seng Chun has been revitalised into a Chinese medicine and healthcare center since 2012. It is a testimony to the history of a well-respected family, including the economic activities of their Chinese medicine shop around the Second World War.

***Historical
Interest***

Lui Leung, alias Lui Hung-wai (雷鴻維), was born in a family of Chinese medicine practitioners in Taishan (台山), Guangdong. He arrived in Hong Kong in 1922 and set up a trading company in Western District in partnership with Lui Wai-shun (雷維信) from the same hometown. Lui Leung purchased a piece of land at Kowloon Inland Lot No. 2792, i.e. No. 119 Lai Chi Kok Road, on 11 March 1929 and appointed W. H. Bourne, a local architect, to design Lui Seng Chun.

The building was constructed in 1931. After the house was fitted out and furnished in 1934, the Lui family moved in. Lui Leung opened his Chinese medicine shop on the ground floor, while the upper floors were used by his family as living accommodation with the elders on the first floor and younger members on the upper floors. The shop’s name “Lui Seng Chun” was embedded in a couplet,² which had an allegoric meaning of curing people by medicine produced by the Luis. Since a large plaque inscribed with the shop’s name is erected

¹ The term *tong lau* (唐樓), will be used in the appraisal to refer generally to this kind of shophouse buildings in Hong Kong.

² The couplet installed at the Lui Seng Chun medicine shop reads “雷雨功深揚灑露，生民仰望藥回春”。It was a gift from a friend of Lui Leung congratulating him on the opening of the shop.

at the top of the building, the building is also commonly referred to by the shop's name.

According to the Lui family, Lui Seng Chun only produced and sold one kind of bone-setting medicated wine.³ Its principal function was to aid the setting of broken bones. As the herbal medicine business was non-profit-making, there was neither mass production nor publicity. Lui Leung only wished to bring benefits to the community through the medicated wine. In fact, from purchase of herbs, production and packaging of the medicated wine to distribution, all were done at Lui Seng Chun by the family members. The medicated wine, however, won good reputation with its popularity not just confined to the neighbourhood. There were constant demands from his hometown, and the Taishan communities in overseas, such as the United States, Australia, Southeast Asia, and even as far away as Peru. The medicated wine was exported to these markets through Lui Leung's trading company named Man Sun Long Kam San Chong (萬信隆金山莊).

A few years after Lui Leung's death in 1944, the medicine shop was closed as no family member was interested in continuing the medicine business. The Lui family rented the two shops facing Lai Chi Kok Road on the ground floor to two men's tailor shops, i.e. Yan Wo (仁和) and Tai Tung (大同) until 1972.

In the 1960s, as the family size became bigger, there was a growing pressure for living space. The Luis finally moved out from the building and the upper floors were used by their friends and relatives from their hometown. In 1972, some members of the Lui family set up the Kiniland Investment Company Limited (金利源置業有限公司) which purchased the remaining shares of the building from other shareholders. Lui Seng Chun thus came under the sole

³ Although different names and functions were mentioned on the cartons and advertisements of the medicated wine, such as "Liquid Chinese Herbal Medicine Curing Broken Bones and Wounds" (八寶跌打刀傷藥露), "Liquid Chinese Herbal Medicine Curing Staunching Blood" (八寶跌打刀傷止血水), and even the function to cure abscesses on gums, they all referred to the same product.

ownership of the aforesaid company.⁴

In 2000, the family decided to donate the building to the Government for preservation. The transfer of ownership was completed in 2003. Lui Seng Chun was revitalised successfully into a Chinese medicine and healthcare center by the Hong Kong Baptist University in 2012.

Lui Seng Chun was designed by W. H. Bourne. It is one of the few remaining distinctive *tong lau* from the 1930s. The building was used as residence on the first to third floors while shops on the ground floor. While the majority of the standard *tong lau* in pre-war years were designed and constructed by local builders using a “pattern-book” approach, Lui Seng Chun was individually architect-designed according to the client’s order.

***Architectural
Merit***

Located at the junction of Lai Chi Kok Road and Tong Mi Road, Lui Seng Chun adopts a curved design to the main front elevation with a rectangular frame and a row of decorative balustrades. It is a building of neo-classical style mixed with Art Deco elements which are often characterised by sweeping horizontal lines and robust classical elements. The mixed style was commonly found in *tong lau* in the 1930s. With eight granite columns on the ground floor, the verandah extends over the public pavements forming arcades. This kind of shophouses is classified as Verandah Type. The deep verandahs above the arcades provide sufficient natural light and ventilation for the interior whilst providing shelters for users of the pavements.

The interior of the upper floors adopts an open-plan, i.e. no fixed partitions constructed. Each floor was equipped with a kitchen and a bathroom with flushing toilet. There is a separate staircase running from the ground floor to the upper residences and the roof

⁴ According to the will of Lui Leung, Lui Seng Chun was inherited by his sons. Lui Fook-hong (雷福康), Lui Lai-tong (雷禮唐) and Lui Ki-yung (雷祺庸), sons of Lui Leung, were the directors of the Kiniland Investment Company Limited which paid \$794,000 to purchase the remaining shares of Lui Seng Chun from other shareholders.

terrace. Therefore, it was not necessary for the family members to pass through the shop when they went out and returned home.

Lui Seng Chun has retained much of its original architectural form and most of the distinctive architectural features despite internal refurbishments, alterations and additions carried out in the past. After officially taking over Lui Seng Chun, the Government carried out basic repairs including removing modifications, restoring the original open-plan design and conducting reinforcement works.

Authenticity

In 2011, the alteration and addition works to revitalise Lui Seng Chun to a Chinese medicine and healthcare Center started. The revitalisation of the building involved the addition of a staircase as fire escape route, a lift for barrier-free access, and toilets also suitable for people with disabilities, restoration and reinforcement of the existing structures and elements, addition of glass enclosures along the verandahs, installation of drainage, fire safety, electrical and air-conditioning facilities, etc. The works followed the principle of minimum intervention to maintain the authenticity and the integrity of the building whilst meeting the contemporary needs. Although new facilities were installed, maximum reversibility was ensured. To minimise the intervention to the facade and integrity of the building, the project team thoughtfully built a new outdoor steel and glass staircase next to the rear verandahs, used a special type of glazing to enclose the verandahs, and camouflaged the solar water heater, fire service water tank and air conditioner system on the roof level.

Major features of the Lui Seng Chun medicine shop which were originally located at the curved corner area on the ground floor have been retained. These include, for instance, the wooden tablet of Lui Seng Chun, the shop windows with their window shutters, and the glass panel of the main entrance with Lui Seng Chun's advertising logo on it. The original features and elements reinforce the authenticity of the building.

Lui Seng Chun is uncommon among the *tong lau* of the pre-war years in Hong Kong as it, unlike most of the *tong lau* in Hong Kong which were usually designed and constructed by local builders

Rarity

using a “stereotype” approach at that time, was specially designed by an architect according to the site condition and views of the owner. In addition, most of the original features and elements like granite columns with decorative capitals, flooring tiles, timber doors and windows, iron grilles and terrazzo exterior walls and staircase are well preserved. Flushing toilet in residential building is another rare facility in Hong Kong in the pre-war years. Apart from the distinctive architectural form, Lui Seng Chun is a rare example in Hong Kong as it embodies the early history of a local well-respected family and reflects the economic activities of a Chinese medicine shop in an earlier era.

Lui Seng Chun is socially significant in many ways. First, it is an exceptional landmark in the district. Second, it was a well-known Chinese bone-setting medicine shop which served the locals in Mong Kok as well as Sham Shui Po in the past. The medicated wine produced by the Luis was even exported overseas through Lui Leung’s trading company. Although the medicated wine and the medicine shop no longer exist, the building named “Lui Seng Chun” is a remarkable reminder of the product and the medicine shop.

***Social Value &
Local Interest***

In 2000, the Lui family offered to donate Lui Seng Chun to the Government on a totally non-remunerated basis for conservation purpose. The donation was unprecedented in Hong Kong. The generous offer from the Lui family demonstrates the support given by a family to heritage conservation in Hong Kong.

In 2008, Lui Seng Chun was included in Batch I of the “Revitalising Historic Buildings through Partnership Scheme” launched by the Development Bureau. Hong Kong Baptist University revitalised the building into a Chinese medicine and healthcare center in 2012 and has been operating it since then. The revitalisation allowed Lui Seng Chun to resume its medical services to the community. Lui Seng Chun has become an attraction to both local and overseas visitors after its revitalisation. The project was well recognised by the design and architectural professionals and was awarded the winner of the “2012 Special Architectural Award – Heritage & Adaptive Re-use” by The Hong Kong Institute of

Architects in 2013.

Lui Seng Chun is within walking distance of other historic buildings, such as the Old Kowloon Police Headquarters (舊九龍警察總部, Grade 2), Nos. 190 to 204 Prince Edward Road West, Nos. 210 and 212 Prince Edward Road West (all Grade 2), Nos. 177 and 179 Prince Edward Road West (Grade 3), Nos. 1 and 3 Playing Field Road (Grade 3), No. 729 Nathan Road (Grade 3) and No. 1235 Canton Road (Grade 3). These historic buildings collectively witnessed the socio-cultural development of Mong Kok. The various historic *tong lau*, including Lui Seng Chun, also exhibit the characteristics of *tong lau* architecture, especially *tong lau* in pre-war years.

Group Value

REFERENCES

Document Records at the Public Records Office, Hong Kong

HKRS No. 57 D.&S. No. 6/10702 〈香港占領地總督部家屋登錄所〉

Document Records at the Land Registry, Hong Kong

“Lease of Kowloon Inland Lot No. 2792,” (11 March 1929).

“Memorial, no. 930573,” (3 October 1972).

“Kinliland Investment Company Limited. Assignment of Kowloon Inland Lot No. 2792,” (October 1972).

Newspapers

“Renovation the remedy.” *South China Morning Post*, 2 May 2012.

〈“雷生春”的活化重生〉，《中國文物報》，2013年7月24日。

〈活化雷生春 加裝電梯興建於外牆〉，《成報》，2008年3月6日。

〈雷生春活化存難度〉，《大公報》，2008年3月6日。

〈雷生春返魂有術〉，《太陽報》，2012年4月25日。

〈雷生春尋自負盈虧營運商 倡開放予公眾 提供社區服務〉，《明報》，2007年2月21日。

〈雷生春開店 維修成本高〉，《明報》，2008年3月6日。

吳永順：〈活化雷生春 讓歲月留痕〉，《星島日報》，2012年4月16日。

吳倩瑩：〈沉睡半世紀 雷生「回」春〉，《東方日報》，2012

年 4 月 19 日。

陳天權：〈雷生春〉，《大公報》，2012 年 4 月 21 日。

高志堅、王小青：〈九巴創辦人之孫雷添良：向爺爺學習「雷生春」精神 勤奮做實事〉，《明報》，2012 年 4 月 23 日。

鄭敏華：〈雷生春樓 古迹生財試點〉，《東方日報》，2003 年 4 月 14 日。

黎佩芬：〈雷生春無償捐出 九巴創辦人祖屋、闢作古蹟展覽〉，《明報》，2003 年 10 月 6 日。

Books, Articles and Other Sources

AGC Design Limited, “Revitalisation Scheme Conversion of Lui Seng Chun into Hong Kong Baptist University Chinese Medicine and Healthcare Center”, in *HKIA Journal*, Issue No. 64, 2012, pp. 94-97.

(http://www.hkia.net/en/pdf/journal/HKIAJ_64_71-83.pdf, accessed on 31 January 2022)

“Awards: Lui Seng Chun Chinese Medicine Center”, website of AGC Design Limited.

(<https://www.agcdesign.com.hk/en/awards/>, accessed on 23 February 2022)

“Batch I of Revitalisation Scheme” (第一期活化計劃), Website of Revitalisation Scheme, Commissioner for Heritage’s Office.

(<https://www.heritage.gov.hk/en/revitalisation-scheme/batch-i-of-revitalisation-scheme/batch-i-historic-buildings/index.html>, accessed on 29 January 2022)

“Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme: Lui Seng Chun Resource Kit” (〈活化歷史建築伙伴計劃：雷生春資料冊〉), Website of Revitalisation Scheme, Commissioner for Heritage’s Office.

(https://www.heritage.gov.hk/filemanager/heritage/en/content_56/R_essource_kit_Lui_Seng_Chun.pdf, accessed on 30 January 2022)

Hong Kong Baptist University (prepared by AGC Design Ltd.), *Heritage Impact Assessment Conservation Management Plan for Lui Seng Chun*, April 2010.

(<https://www.amo.gov.hk/filemanager/amo/common/form/20100427-LUI-SENG-CHUN-HIA.pdf>, accessed on 31 January 2022)

“Hong Kong Baptist University School of Chinese Medicine – Lui Seng Chun”, website of Hong Kong Baptist University School of Chinese Medicine.

(<https://scm.hkbu.edu.hk/lsc/en/index.html>, accessed on 26 January 2022)

“HKBU School of Chinese Medicine – Lui Seng Chun Revitalisation Project Wins Special Architectural Award by HKIA” (「香港浸會大學中醫藥學院—雷生春堂」活化項目獲選香港建築師學會「主題建築」得獎作品), website of *HKBU News*, 5 June 2013.

(<https://bunews.hkbu.edu.hk/news/people/hkbu-school-of-chinese-medicine-lui-seng-chun-revitalisation-project-wins-special-architectural-award-by-hkia>, accessed on 23 February 2022)

Kwok, Eva. *A New Lease of Life: the Story of Lui Seng Chun* (《活化重生—雷生春的故事》). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist University, 2012.

Lee, Ho Yin and DiStefano, Lynne. *Tong Lau: A Hong Kong Shophouse Typology*. View at website of *Gwolo: Old Hong Kong*.

(<https://gwulo.com/tong-lau-Hong-Kong-shophouse>, accessed on 31 January 2022)

“Mong Kok’s Historical Lui Seng Chun Tenement donated to People of HK”, website of *Press Release of Hong Kong SAR Government*, 7 Oct 2003.

(<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200310/07/1007134.htm>, accessed on 21 February 2022)

Siu, Kwok Kin, and Sham, Sze, “Lui Seng Chun Lau (Building).” *In Heritage Trails in Urban Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Wan Li Book Co., Ltd. 2001), pp. 145-147.

Tam, Vivian W. Y., Fung, Ivan W.H. and Sing, Michael C.P., “Adaptive reuse in sustainable development: An empirical study of a Lui Seng Chun building in Hong Kong,” *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 65 (2016), pp. 635-642.

Vigers HK Limited. *Specialist Conservation Study for Lui Seng Chun*, commissioned by Architectural Services Department, March 2001.

〈行政長官出席「香港浸會大學中醫藥學院－雷生春堂」開幕典禮致辭全文〉，《香港特區政府新聞公報》網頁，2012年4月25日。
(<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201204/25/P201204250338.htm>, accessed on 25 January 2022)

〈雷生春活化為中醫藥保健中心〉，《活化@Heritage—活化歷史建築通訊》，第24期(2012年5月24日)。
(https://www.heritage.gov.hk/filemanager/heritage/en/content_46/evb_cfh_newsletter24_final2.pdf, accessed on 24 January 2022)

〈雷氏家族訪問紀錄〉，古物古蹟辦事處，2001年11月9日。

林中偉：〈香港建築保育歷程 1970-2010〉，《香港建築師學報》(*HKIA Journal*)，第60期，頁92-95。
(http://www.hkia.net/uploads/tc/publication/journal/HKIA_Journal_60.pdf, accessed on 24 January 2022)

林中偉：《建築保育與本土文化》。香港：中華書局(香港)有限公司，2015年，頁80-82。

祈宜臻：《活現古蹟：工廈、活化、新生》。香港：商務印書館香港有限公司，2019年。

香港浸會大學物業處雷生春項目組：〈雷生春的活化重生〉，
載國家文物局編：《海峽兩岸及港澳地區建築遺產再利用研討會論文集及案例匯編(上)》(北京：文物出版社，
2013 年)，頁 84-94。

楊淑敏、李翠媚、李煒佳編：《古蹟黃頁（九龍篇）》。(香
港：小島出版社，2010 年)，頁 158-161。

關慧玲：〈城市怪屋之謎〉，《壹週刊》，1999 年 2 月 5 日，
頁 78-82。