

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Nos. 369 & 371 Hennessy Road,**  
**Wan Chai, Hong Kong**

The exact year of construction of Nos. 369 & 371 Hennessy Road (軒尼詩道) has not been ascertained but it might have been built between 1931 and 1934, after the completion of the Praya East Reclamation Scheme 1921-1931. The earliest registered owner of the property is Mr Poon Ho-cheung (潘浩祥). An archival document “家屋所有權登錄申請書” of the Japanese occupation period recorded that Pun Hong Shi (潘康氏) and Pun Leung Shi (潘梁氏) were the executrixes of the property in 1942. At the time, the premises were used for commercial purpose. In 1946, Mr Leung Wai-man, Head Godownman of Holt’s Wharf, was the occupant of the third floor of No. 371 Hennessy Road. *Historical Interest*

The earliest documentary record of Tung Tak Pawn Shop at No. 371 Hennessy Road can be dated to 1939. This pawn shop was associated with a prominent member of the Hong Kong community, Mr Li Yau-tsun (李右泉), C.B.E., J.P. who was nicknamed 當舖大王 (“the king of pawn shops”) in Hong Kong in the 1930s due to his leading position in pawn business. Mr Li also served on the Board of Directors of the Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院) from 1897 and held many key positions in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (華商總會) e.g. Chairman, Treasurer, and Director. Mr Li rented the building on 1 April 1938 under a 3-year tenancy agreement. He subsequently died in September 1940. It is evident that the pawn shop bearing the name of 同德 (Tung Tak) was operating at No. 371 Hennessy Road from 1939 to 1941.

A telephone directory dated August 1946 shows that Tung Tak Pawn Shop was operating at No. 371 Hennessy Road shortly after World War II. Then, in March 1947, the building was purchased by Tak Shing Investment Company Limited owned by Mr Ko Ho-ning (高可寧) (1878-1955), another famous Chinese businessman remembered by local people as 典當業大王 (“the king of pawn business”) in addition to his position as Chairman of the Macau Chamber of Commerce (澳門中華總商會) for 1941 and a wealthy

man who took part in Macau's gambling business. Tung Tak Pawn Shop continued to operate on the site in the following decades. Mr Ko had a finger in different kinds of profitable pie in Hong Kong and Macau, and pawn-broking was one of his many businesses.

The buildings are situated on the southwest corner of the intersection of Hennessy Road and Marsh Road. They are four stories high and the upper floor verandahs project over the pavement being supported on columns to form a covered walkway in front of the ground floor shop. Designed by Raven & Basto Architect (厘份及巴士圖畫則兼工程師樓), the buildings are in the International Moderne style popular in the 1930s applied onto Verandah Type Shophouses of traditional type in spite of their modern appearance. Modernist architectural features include the curved corner, streamlined cornices and string courses and Art Deco style surrounds to verandah openings. Applied Art Deco motifs can also be made out on the columns.

***Architectural  
Merit***

The buildings are built of reinforced concrete post and beam structural frame with the columns and floor slabs emphasized on the facades. The verandahs were open originally but they are now enclosed with green painted steel framed and wooden windows. The east façade facing Marsh Road shows the right angle return of the projecting verandahs to the main part of the building. The roof is flat featuring staircase bulkheads. The ground floor pawnshop is designed in traditional Chinese style in contrast to the rendered and painted upper facade.

Shophouses are becoming rarer due to redevelopment. The shophouse at No. 371 Hennessy Road is a rare piece of built heritage. Its architectural style is quite unusual for a shophouse. Its authenticity has not been affected too much and it seems to retain much of its original appearance. There are at least a dozen recorded pre-war shophouses located at corner sites, but only a few of them display "curved facades" around the corner sites. The other similar examples that may be given are: Lui Seng Chun (雷生春) at No. 119 Lai Chi Kok Road (Grade 1), the pair of shophouses at Nos. 269 & 271 Yu Chau Street (汝洲街) (Grade 3) and the pair of shophouses at

***Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

Nos. 301 & 303 Castle Peak Road (青山道) (not yet graded).

Records indicate that there are four pawnshops in Hong Kong owned by the family of Mr Ko Ho-ning. They include: Nam Cheong Pawn Shop (南昌大押) (formerly called 同安大押) at No. 117 Nam Cheong Street (南昌街) (Grade 3), Tak Wing Pawn Shop (德榮大押) at No. 72 Des Voeux Road Central (德輔道中) (not yet graded), Tak Sun Pawn Shop (德生大押) at No. 178 Shanghai Street (上海街) (not yet graded) and this one at the corner of Hennessy Road and Marsh Road.

The social value of the shophouse lies in the contribution it has made to urban development. The shophouse has evolved through several types. This particular shophouse at No. 371 Hennessy Road is unusual in terms of its curved facades at a corner site and is part of the historical urban fabric of Wan Chai. It is probably of interest to historians and conservationists.

***Social Value  
& Local  
Interest***

Although most of the structures nearby are mainly high-rise buildings, a number of pre-war shophouses can still be found in Wan Chai such as Nos. 1-11 Mallory Street, Nos. 2-8 Hing Wan Street, Nos. 186-190 Queen's Road East, Nos. 72-74A Stone Nullah Lane and Nos. 6-8 Hing Wan Street.

***Group  
Value***