Historic Building Appraisal

Nos. 9 and 10 Yu Lok Lane, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

Nos. 9 and 10, Yu Lok Lane (also known as U Lok Lane) (餘樂里) are Chinese tenement buildings which were once common in Chinese commercial-cum-residential areas. No. 10 is believed to have been built in the late 1930s, but No. 9 was built in 1951 to replace an older building on the site. This type of tenement buildings was widespread during the early days but are now disappearing quickly.

Yu Lok Lane, just off Central Street, was laid out between 1889 and 1910. The plot sizes along here were very narrow, making it very difficult for redevelopment. Until the 1970s and 1980s nearly every backstreet in Central and Western looked very similar to this one, but in most places they have long been cleared and redeveloped.

Architectural Merit

Yu Lok Lane is a narrow lane situated in Central and Western District between Third Street (第三街) and High Street (高街) running from east to west with access from Centre Street. Yu Lok Lane is formed along a raised platform or terrace supported by retaining walls. Probably all the tenement houses in the street looked much the same, however only a few of the original houses, including Nos. 9 and 10, now remain due to redevelopment of the lots. The two houses to be described have narrow frontages and are paired with a shared staircase. The front façades are rendered and painted and originally probably had projecting open balconies at first floor level, but these have now been enclosed with folding wooden casement windows. Original wooden doors and windows still exist to the ground floor. Granite stones incised with the lot numbers 4051/4052 can be seen built into the wall behind the central rainwater downpipe. Internally, the floors are divided into small rooms by partitions. Original encaustic floor tiles can be seen. A wooden staircase leads up to the first floor. This type of Chinese tenement building falls into the **Shophouse** classification. An old advertisement sign on No. 10 indicates that the ground floor may once have been used for commercial purposes.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

Once common, but now becoming rare due to redevelopment, these tenement houses have built heritage value. It is obvious that alterations and additions have been made over the years so that their original appearance has changed, but the structures retain their authenticity.

Social Value & Local

The social value of the house lies in the role they have played (and still do) as housing for low income classes. As two of the remaining old Chinese

tenement buildings in the lane they have historical and local interest. ***Interest***

Three tenement buildings are found not further away at **No. 35 Bonham Road** (般含道) and **Nos. 2 and 19 Hing Hon Road** (興漢道). A number of famous historic buildings are also found nearby, such as the Main Building of St. Stephen's Girls' College (聖士提反女校主樓) (Declared Monument), King's College (英皇書院), Old Tsan Yuk Maternity Hospital (舊贊育醫院) and the Main Building of the University of Hong Kong 香港大學本部大樓 (Declared Monument). ***Group Value***

To find an adaptive re-use for these tenement houses is rather difficult. Probably the best use for them is to be restored and upgraded to current standards for residential use. ***Adaptive Re-use***