

Historic Building Appraisal

Pak Tsz Lane,
Sheung Wan, Hong Kong

Located in the bustling Central district, Pak Tsz Lane (百子里) can arguably be considered to be a cradle for the 1911 Chinese Revolution under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (Sun Yixian, 孫逸仙). During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was a meeting place for the Chinese revolutionaries notably Tse Tsan-tai (Xie Zantai, 謝纘泰) and Yeung Ku-wan (Yang Quyun, 楊衢雲) for discussion of political affairs and plotting rebellions that eventually led to the downfall of the Qing dynasty. *Historical Interest*

Yeung Ku-wan (楊衢雲) founded Foo Yan Man Ser (Furen wenshe, 輔仁文社, “Literary Society for the Promotion of Benevolence”) (the Society) in the premises of No. 1 Pak Tsz Lane on 13 March 1892, and the Society’s motto was “Ducit Amor Patriae” (in English: “Love of country leads [me]”). The sixteen members of the Society, who always held meetings in private to discuss political issues and the future of China, had all been educated in Hong Kong and most of them were employed as teachers or clerks in government offices or shipping companies. Several of these men joined Hsing Chung Hui (Xingzhonghui, 興中會, “Revive China Society”) when it was founded in 1895, and Yeung was the President of the Hong Kong branch of Hsing Chung Hui.

Yeung Ku-wan was shot dead in his residence in No. 52 Gage Street, at the end of Pak Tsz Lane. The murder took place in the evening of 10 January 1901, when he was holding his English class for boys. Historical records show that the murder was instigated by the Qing authorities in Guangdong Province. On a Saturday afternoon, Yeung was buried in the Hong Kong Cemetery in Happy Valley. The original old house in Pak Tsz Lane accommodating Foo Yan Man Ser (輔仁文社) has been demolished decades ago. The entrance and steps leading to the site, however, remains the same as in the past when members of Foo Yan Man Ser often walked up the steps to their meeting place.

Pak Tsz Lane is a small lane behind the buildings fronting Gage Street in Central. There is no vehicular access to the lane, but pedestrian access is provided through five entrances from nearby narrow passageways which connect with the surrounding streets namely Aberdeen Street, Peel Street, Hollywood Road and Gage Street. These narrow entrances are typical examples of wynds, pends, or throughgangs, the Scottish version of narrow paths in slots between buildings to link up streets often at different levels such as this site. The original old houses in Pak Tsz Lane have been demolished long time ago. *Architectural Merit*

with now a pair of post-war tenements (Nos. 1 to 2 Pak Tsz Lane) remaining. Part of the area adjacent to Pak Tsz Lane has been laid out as the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) Sam Ka Lane Children's Playground. Concrete paving, modern brick paviers, modern railings and chain link fencing have replaced traditional materials that defined the original streetscape.

The original old houses of Pak Tsz Lane have been demolished and therefore the site does not have too much built heritage value remained, except the granite steps and the adjoining wall capped by coping concrete in front of the dark and narrow lane which are believed to be the original built structures of Pak Tsz Lane. Indeed, a site plan in 1901 shows that the physical layout of Pak Tsz Lane, including the entrance and steps along the lane leading to the site of Foo Yan Man Ser (輔仁文社) and the aforesaid adjoining wall, still looks the same as it did back in the late 19th century.

Arguably, the genius loci or 'spirit of the place' of Pak Tsz Lane as a base of revolutionary activities has been lost to some extent. However, the granite steps and adjoining wall which show a degree of authenticity still exist and are considered a rare landmark of a place that carries historic significance in the modern history of China. ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

Pak Tsz Lane is of local interest as the secret rendezvous of the patriotic revolutionaries who discussed social issues and advocated reforming China at their meetings at No. 1 Pak Tsz Lane, which is now one of the important spots of the Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail. ***Social Value & Local Interest***

It is physically close to a number of historic buildings such as the Former Police Married Quarters on Hollywood Road, the original site of the Former Central School, and the Bridges Street Market – the original site of the Preaching Home of the American Congregational Mission, where Sun Yat-sen was baptised in 1883. ***Group Value***