

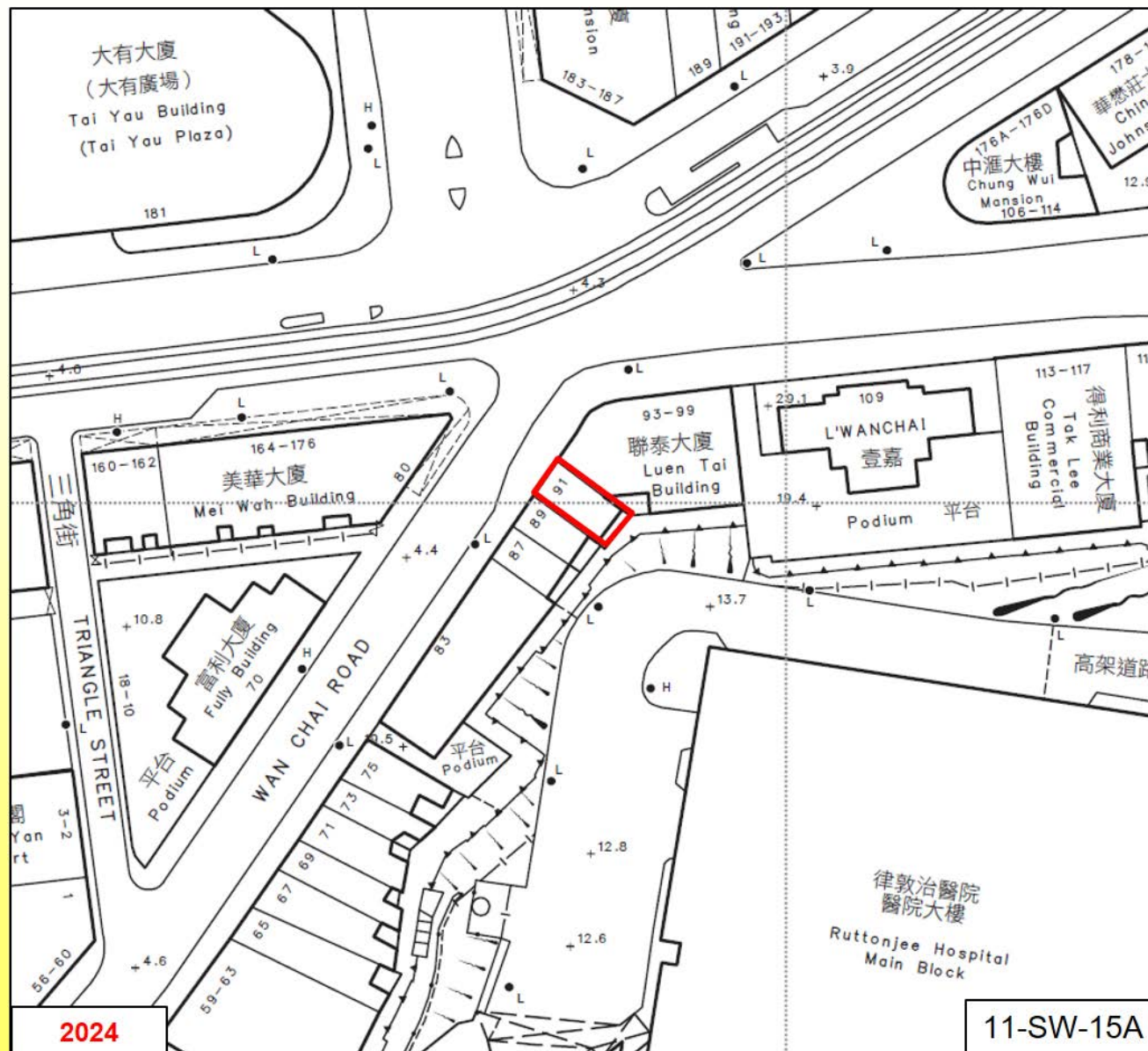
N247

**香港灣仔灣仔道91號振安大押
Chun On Pawn Shop,
No. 91 Wan Chai Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong**

香港灣仔灣仔道91號振安大押
Chun On Pawn Shop, No. 91 Wan Chai Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

擬議三級歷史建築
Proposed Grade 3

約建於1924年
Built around 1924



擬議評級範圍
Proposed grading boundary



正立面
Front elevation



背立面
Rear elevation

Historic Building Appraisal
Chun On Pawn Shop (振安大押)
No. 91 Wan Chai Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

The building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road that currently houses the Chun On Pawn Shop (振安大押) is believed to be built around 1924 based on a land lease registered in the same year.¹ The building was initially home to a pawnshop called “Kee Yuen” (其源),² which was relocated from No. 85 Wan Chai Road.³ It was owned by the prominent local merchant, Li Yau Tsun (李右泉), CBE, JP,⁴ who was also the earliest recorded owner of the building.⁵ His contribution to pawnbroking business earned him the nickname the “king of pawnshops” (當舖大王) before the Second World War.

*Historical
Interest*

Li Yau Tsun sold the building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road in October 1926 to fellow pawnbroker Wong Hong Yeuk (黃康若) and two other merchants Tse Lai Cho (謝礪初) and Li Shiu Yuen (李少源),⁶ who later sold it to Tse Kai Chun (謝啟震) and Tam Woon (or Yuen) Fong (譚婉芳) in April 1943.⁷ The building continued to operate as the “Kee Yuen” pawnshop until the 1940s, when it changed its name to “Chun On Pawn Shop” (振安大押) which it is still known as today.⁸

Later in 1963, the building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road was acquired by the Lo family (羅氏),⁹ which has played an influential role in the pawn business in Hong Kong for several generations. One of the family members, Lo Yu Chik (羅裕積),

¹ The plot of land that was originally assigned the addresses Nos. 87, 89 and 91 Wan Chai Road was registered as Inland Lot No. 2347 (I.L. 2347) (see Land Registry Office, Government Lease of I.L. 2347, 13 October 1924). It was divided into two plots in 1926. No. 91 and Nos. 87-89 are now registered under “Section A of I.L. 2347” and “Remaining Portion of I.L. 2347” respectively (see Land Registry Office, Memorial No. UB102711, 12 October 1926).

² 《香港商業名錄》(香港：中華編述公司，1924-25年)，頁19。

³ 鄭紫燦編：《香港中華商業交通人名指南錄》(香港：編者自刊，1915年)，頁724。

⁴ Government Notification No. 95 “New Year's Honours”, *Hong Kong Government Gazette* dated 1 March 1929, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online; Government Notification No. 624 “Mr. Li Yau Tsun to be a Justice of the Peace”, *Hong Kong Government Gazette* dated 5 November 1926, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

⁵ Land Registry Office, Property Particulars of I.L. 2347.

⁶ Land Registry Office, Memorial No. UB102711, 12 October 1926 and Property Particulars of Section A of I.L. 2347.

⁷ Public Records Office, HKRS57-6-3711, “I.L. 2347 S.A.”, 1942-1945 and Property Particulars of Section A of I.L. 2347.

⁸ According to a business directory published in 1940, the pawnshop at No. 91 Wan Chai Road was still named Kee Yuen Ngat (其源押) at that time. There is no record of when the pawnshop was renamed, but it is noted that it was referred to as Chun On Ngat (振安押) in a directory published in 1948. See 《港澳商業分類行名錄》(香港：港澳商業分類行名錄出版社，1940年)，頁6；*Look' Hong Kong Directory*. Hong Kong: China Trade Publishing Co., 1948, p. A25.

⁹ The building was sold in 1963 to Lo Shiu Chun (羅肇珍), also known as Lo Siu Yu (羅少裕), one of Lo Yu Chik's (羅裕積) son who signed the purchase agreement on behalf of the Lo family. See Land Registry Office, Memorial No. UB392317, 5 March 1963 and Property Particulars of Section A of I.L. 2347；哲夫、高強：《羅肇唐傳》(北京：中央編譯出版社，2011年)，頁34-37。

who was known as “a magnate of the pawn business” (當舖業鉅子), served on the first board of directors (理事長) of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Pawn Brokers Association (港九押業商會) when it was founded in 1947.¹⁰ His son, Lo Shiu Tong (羅肇唐) later took over the family’s pawn business and expanded it into other sectors, especially property development.¹¹ Apart from Chun On Pawn Shop, the Lo family still operates Woo Cheong Pawn Shop (和昌大押) in Sai Ying Pun and Tung Fung Pawn Shop (同豐大押) in Wan Chai nowadays.¹²

The building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road is four-storey high with a pitched roof. **Architectural**
The shop frontage is narrow with an elongated plan to match the dimensions of the **Merit**
lot. The front façade is designed with a cantilevered balcony on each of the upper floors that projects over the pavement. All the balconies are now enclosed with aluminum windows. The other notable feature of the front façade is the Chinese name of the pawnshop “振安大押” below each of the balconies and set against a background of mosaic tiles laid out in patterns resembling old bronze Chinese coins. Marble cladding has been affixed to the ground floor street frontage and bears the manufacturer’s name in Chinese “恒昌營造裝飾”, and its contact phone number, which is six-digit long, suggests that these finishes were probably added in the 1960s. The front and rear façades of the building are rendered and painted in white. The security fans, comprising radial bars with spikes, on either side of each upper floor on the front façade are indicators of the stringent security measures implemented for this pawnshop building.

Internally, the main hall on the ground floor is paved with white hexagonal floor tiles, while the lower half of the walls is finished in yellow terrazzo with green and red borders. The hall is also fitted with a wooden screen, commonly known as a “shy screen” (遮醜板), facing the main entrance and, behind that, a high countertop fitted with guard bars, both of which are unique features of a traditional pawnshop. Behind the guard bars is the secured area, restricted to staff only, where the ceiling reveals the underside of the first floor that is constructed with timber planks laid over timber joists. According to the layout plan that was attached to the title deed of the House Registration Office of the Japanese Military Government in 1943,¹³ the internal staircase to the upper floors can be accessed from the rear of the building.

¹⁰ 〈港九押業商會—里程碑〉,《港九押業商會有限公司》, <https://www.pawn.com.hk/> (2024年4月11日瀏覽)。

¹¹ “Company Profile”, *Yu Tai Hing Company Limited*, uploaded on 2023, <https://www.eng.yth.com/about> (11 April 2024 accessed).

¹² “Pawn Shops”, *Yu Tai Hing Company Limited*, uploaded on 2023, <https://www.eng.yth.com/pawn> (11 April 2024 accessed).

¹³ Public Records Office, HKRS57-6-3711, “I.L. 2347 S.A.”, 1942-1945.

Over the years, the building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road has undergone some major alterations. For example, all three balconies were originally open, but were later enclosed with steel-framed windows. These windows were subsequently replaced by the aluminum windows that can be seen today by no later than mid-2021. The roof was originally a Chinese tiled roof, but has been replaced by corrugated metal roofing. Although the application of modern materials to the exterior has inevitably affected the original appearance of the building, the original built form of the building as a pawnshop together with some old timber structures on ground floor have been retained. It remains an example of pre-war shophouse in Wan Chai that is still used for its original purpose as a pawnshop.

Authenticity & Rarity

The building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road is a tangible witness to the pawnbroking industry that once flourished in Hong Kong and also to the urban development of Wan Chai since the 1920s. The building, first housing “Kee Yuen” pawnshop and now Chun On Pawn Shop, has served the local community with pawn services since the 1920s.

Social Value & Local Interest

The building at No. 91 Wan Chai Road has group value with other graded pre-war shophouses in the vicinity, including Nos. 72-74A Stone Nullah Lane (Grade 1), Nos. 1-11 Mallory Street (Grade 2), Nos. 6-12 Burrows Street (Grade 2), Nos. 60A-66 Johnston Road (Grade 2) Nos. 2-8 Hing Wan Street (Grade 3) and Nos. 186-190 Queen’s Road East (Grade 3).

Group Value

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