

Historic Building Appraisal
Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel
Pak Sha O, Tai Po, N.T.

It is believed that the Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel (聖母無玷之心小堂) was built between 1915 and 1923. The chapel was one of the earliest churches in Sai Kung. From 1882 to 1890, Pak Sha O was served by Rev. Leong Chi-hing, Andreas (梁子馨神父, 1837 – 1920), a pioneer in the development of Catholicism in the New Territories. *Historical Interest*

The conversion of Pak Sha O into a Catholic village partly resulted from the desire of the villagers to combat the harassment of the tax-lords of Sheung Shui (上水) on the collection of land rents. The story goes that Pak Sha O and its neighbouring villages had been harassed by the tax-lords before the arrival of Catholic missionaries. One of the ways for land tenants to protect themselves was to convert to Catholicism and to side with foreigners, i.e. the priests.

The chapel was badly damaged during the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), but was restored thereafter. Mass was held at the chapel once a month in the 1950s and 1960s for the Catholic converts who numbered about three hundred. Since the 1960s, the religious activities at the chapel gradually decreased as villagers emigrated to Britain. Mass probably ceased in the late 1970s. In 1982, the chapel was converted by the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong (天主教香港教區) into a tent site and training camp.

The chapel is a simple one-storey rectangular pitched roof building with rendered and painted walls and gable ends. It is divided into three bays, two bays comprising the chapel and one bay the father's residence. The main entrance to the chapel is situated in the east end wall. A pair of double doors is hung in the doorway with a canopy and an arched hood moulding. Above the canopy is the moulding of "AMDG", which stands for *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam* in Latin ("To the Greater Glory of God" in English) (愈顯主榮). Besides, there is a simple Latin cross over the arched hood moulding and another cross at the gable apex. The side walls have simple rectangular windows with arched hood mouldings. The walls are strengthened on each side by a rectangular buttress, one of which is extended above the roof line to form a bell cote. The altar recess is set against the dividing wall between the chapel and the father's residence. It is formed by an archway supported by two decorative columns. The architectural style of the chapel is indeterminate and difficult to categorise, but its decorative arched altar recess *Architectural Merit*

and arched window hood mouldings are Neo-classical features.

The chapel is a simple Roman Catholic mission church with built heritage value. It is common in design together with Holy Family Chapel (聖家小堂) in Chek Keng (赤徑), Immaculate Conception Chapel (聖母無原罪小堂) in Tai Long (大浪) and St. Joseph's Chapel (聖約瑟堂) at Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔). It has undergone several restorations and renovations since it was built; for example, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. From an old photograph it seems to have had a Chinese tiled roof. Its authenticity therefore has been affected but its present appearance reflects the care which is apparently being bestowed upon it.

**Rarity,
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity**

The social value of the chapel lies in the role it played in the religious activities of the villagers, and later as a training camp. As an early Roman Catholic mission church it has historical and local interest.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

Apart from the chapel, there are other historic buildings in Pak Sha O, including the Ho Residence (何氏舊居), and King Siu Sai Kui and Hau Fuk Mun (京兆世居及厚福門) (all Grade 1).

Group Value