Historic Building Appraisal

Sacred Heart Chapel,
No. 36A Caine Road, Central, Hong Kong

Historical Interest

The establishment of Sacred Heart Chapel (聖心教堂) can be traced back to 1860, when the first Chapel was established by the **Canossian Sisters** as soon as they settled in Caine Road. The Canossian Sisters were one of the first group of Catholic missionaries coming to Hong Kong. Their arrival to Hong Kong in 1860 reflected the Catholic missionary journey to Far East in the 19th century. With the help of **Mr. Leonardo D' Almanda e Castro**, the Canossian Sisters acquired a piece of property on No. 28 Caine Road (now No. 36A) which became the centre of their activities. The present Sacred Heart Chapel was constructed in **1907**. Other buildings were gradually built around it, including the Sacred Heart Canossian School, to form the Sacred Heart Canossian Compound.

Architectural Merit

The architectural style of the Chapel is **Italianate Renaissance** featuring open colonnaded arched verandahs and twin corner towers or *campaniles*. The classical orders used are the Corinthian, Ionic and Tuscan orders. The composition of the facades is very carefully worked out and the white painted architectural features impart a suitable classical elegance. Internally, the Chapel is simply but elegantly decorated in white. Architectural features include a coffered dome over the apse, Baroque style niches for religious statues, bull's eye clerestory windows, giant Corinthian Order pilasters supporting an entablature, stained glass windows, and moulded architraves and keystones to window and door openings.

Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity

Although there are other examples in Hong Kong of Italianate Renaissance style churches, Sacred Heart Chapel is a secluded well-preserved example with obvious built heritage value. During World War II, the roof of the Chapel was destroyed by a bomb in 1941. These have been four renovations since it was built, including replacement of the roof in 1989. Nevertheless, the Chapel retains much of its original appearance and its authenticity has not been compromised too much.

Social Value & Local Interest

The Chapel was regarded as a base for spreading Catholicism and for the daily worship of the inmates in the early days. Apart from religious activities the Chapel is used for other social functions and the Canossian Youth Centre in the basement serves multi-functional uses, and provides a gathering place for the Mission Sisters and school societies. As the Chapel is at the centre of the compound it is secluded and out of the public view. It is really only known to those who use it.

Group Value

The Sacred Heart Chapel together with the Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral of The Immaculate Conception (聖母無原罪主教座堂 / 天主教總堂 / 大堂) and

Kom Tong Hall (甘棠第) forms an important group of historical and religious buildings in the area.

Adaptive Re-use

As it is unlikely the Chapel will be used for anything other than its present purpose in the foreseeable future, the question of adaptive re-use does not really arise.