

Historic Building Appraisal

Tai Long

Sai Kung, New Territories

Tai Long (大浪) is one of the five villages facing Tai Long Wan (大浪灣) in Sai Kung East and locally known as Tai Wai (大圍). The other four are Ham Tin (鹹田), Lam Uk Wai (林屋圍), Cheung Uk Wai (張屋圍) and Tai Wan (大灣). This group of villages was collectively referred to as Tai Long Tsuen (大浪村) by the local residents. “Tai Long Tsuen” cannot be identified in the 1688 edition of the *Gazetteer of Xin'an County* (《新安縣志》); but it was recorded in the 1819 edition of this gazetteer that it came under the management of *Guanfu* magistrate (官富司管屬村庄). The villagers of Tai Wai (today's Tai Long in land records) are mainly surnamed Cham (湛), Lai (黎), Chan (陳), Cheung (張), Tai (戴) and Ngai (魏) whereas the other four villages are single-surnamed.¹ According to the village elders of the Chams, the clan migrated from Xintang in Guangdong province (廣東省新塘市) to Tai Long during the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911) and they believe that their village, Tai Wai (today's Tai Long),² was established in the early eighteenth century.³

Historical Interest

The story goes that a Tin Hau Temple once existed in the south of Tai Long.⁴ It was believed that the temple was abandoned after most of the villagers converted to Catholicism. The history of the missionary activities of the Catholic Church in Sai Kung can be traced back to the 1860s.⁵ The villagers were more ready to accept a new religion, hoping that the church would be a source of security against the challenges they were facing. The missionaries also acted as a communication bridge between the villagers and the government. In 1867, a chapel named Holy Family Chapel (聖家小堂) was first built in Tai Long. By 1879, almost all the

¹ According to the older generations, Ham Tin (鹹田) was also known as Wan Ka Tsuen (溫家村) whereas Tai Wan (大灣) was also known as Lee Uk (李屋). Tai Wan was established by the Lees who once lived in Lam Uk Wai in the 1930s.

² In 2022, the older generations of Tai Long and Ham Tin, including those in their sixties and seventies, still referred to Tai Long (大浪) or Tai Long Tsuen (大浪村, literally Tai Long Village) as a local area comprising the five villages, and called the village now known as “Tai Long” as “Tai Wai” instead.

³ According to a village elder of the Chams in 1999, the clan moved from Guangdong province to Tai Long Tsuen during the Qing dynasty, and it is believed that their village, i.e. Tai Wai (or today's Tai Long), had a history of about 250 years in that year. Later, in 2022, another village elder of the Chams pointed out that Tai Wai has a history of about 300 years.

⁴ It was said that the temple was situated at a place known as Miu Kok Tau (廟角頭, literally “head of temple's corner”) or Miu Ah Shan (廟亞山, literally “temple hill”).

⁵ In early 1866, a missionary station was established in Sai Kung Town (西貢墟傳教站), where a group of 19 villagers were baptized. By 1869, there were about 350 Catholics spreading across 12 villages in Sai Kung, including Tai Long, Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔), Chek Keng (赤徑), Wong Mo Ying (黃毛鷹) and Pak Sha O (白沙澳). 麥漢楷、梁錦松, 《西貢堂區百週年紀念特刊》(香港:西貢聖心堂百週年紀念籌備委員會, 1981年), 頁 8 – 11。

villagers in Tai Long were Catholics, with a congregation of 162, and by 1892, Tai Long had become one of the major Catholic communities in San On County before the New Territories came under British jurisdiction.⁶

In 1931, the Tai Long Parish (大浪堂區) comprising Tai Long, Chek Keng (赤徑), Pak Sha O (白沙澳), Sham Chung (深涌), Tan Ka Wan (蛋家灣), etc. was established. Later, in 1932, the former Holy Family Chapel in Tai Long was replaced by the existing chapel building at No. 18E, which was renamed as Immaculate Conception Chapel (聖母無原罪小堂, Serial No. 688) in 1954. It could accommodate up to 400 people and was the largest chapel in Sai Kung at that time. The Catholics of Ham Tin in the neighbourhood were also members of the chapel.⁷ The attendance rate of Catholics in the chapel was 300 in 1908, and 250 in 1920 and 1930, being the highest among the chapels in Sai Kung.⁸ Due to the remote locations and inconvenience in the transportation of the villages in the mountainous areas of Sai Kung, the priest came to Tai Long only once in two or three months. Despite that, the villagers would chant the scriptures (唸經) in the chapel every week. Besides, two sisters lived in the village to teach them to recite the scriptures.⁹ A village elder, who was in his seventies in 2022, recalled that some sisters lived in No. 30A (Serial No. N410) and taught the villagers (including himself) to chant the scriptures and sing hymns in the house, which is the only residence having an enclosing wall in the village.¹⁰

The priest hired a teacher to teach Chinese Language, Mathematics and Chinese History in the chapel before the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945). During the Occupation, the priests took great risks in maintaining their visits to villages. Unfortunately, Rev. Francis Wong (黃子謙神父), Rev. Rénatus Kwok (郭景芸神父) and Rev. Emilio Teruzzi (丁味略神父), who served the Catholic communities in Sai Kung, lost their lives. On the other hand, while the Japanese troops were stationed at Sai Kung Market (西貢墟), the Hong Kong-Kowloon Independent Brigade of the East River Column (東江縱隊港九獨立大隊), established Resident Localities of the Brigade (大隊常駐地) in the mountainous

⁶ Another three major Catholic communities were Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔), Chek Keng (赤徑) and Sham Chung (深涌).

⁷ Oral history interview with a village elder of Ham Tin by Antiquities and Monuments Office on 27 April 2022.

⁸ St. Joseph's Chapel (聖若瑟堂) at Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔) had the second highest attendance rate, which was 180 in 1908, 1920 and 1930. "Ecclesiastical Returns of Hong Kong", *Hongkong Blue Book*, 1908, 1920 and 1930, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

⁹ The interviewee was a villager of Tai Long, who was an altar server (輔祭) in Mass in the 1930s. The Catholics of Ham Tin also served as altar server there.

¹⁰ Oral history interview with a village elder of Ham Tin by Antiquities and Monuments Office on 27 April 2022.

areas in Sai Kung, among which included Wong Mo Ying (黃毛應), Chek Keng and Tai Long.¹¹

The number of church members in Tai Long increased to about 500 in the 1950s.¹² A primary school building having a capacity of around 100 students was also constructed by the church at No. 18D in 1958. The school was named Yuk Ying School (育英學校) (Serial No. N401). Two full-time teachers were hired to teach subjects like Chinese Language, Mathematics and Chinese History, and a part-time teacher to teach English Language on Wednesdays. The full-time teachers lived in the school building whereas the part-time teacher in Chek Keng. Meals were prepared in the kitchen block at the back of the school (Serial No. N401).¹³ A latrine block is situated at the side of No. 18E (Serial No. N401). The chapel (built in 1932), school (built in 1958) and the latrine (probably built in the 1950s) form a compound of the Catholic Church. This compound and the sisters' residence at No. 30A are historical reminders that Tai Long was a Catholic village.

In the past, the people in Tai Long mainly relied on fishing and farming (e.g. growing rice and sugar cane) to earn a living. They also raised livestock like pigs, cattle and chickens. Lives were simple and tough. They walked about five hours to Ngai Chi Wan (牛池灣) and Kowloon Walled City (九龍寨城) in order to sell their crops and fish. Some of them transported timber to Shau Kei Wan (筲箕灣) and Aberdeen (香港仔) by boat, and sold them in exchange for daily necessities. There had been ferry service since the 1950s. However, it was disrupted after the pier was destroyed by Typhoon Wanda in 1962. Today, the villagers still have to walk one and a half hours to Pak Tam Au (北潭凹), which is connected to the nearest motor road, Pak Tam Road (北潭路).¹⁴

In the 1960s, many younger male residents migrated to the UK to earn a living. From the 1970s to the 1980s onwards, their wives and children also

¹¹ Many residents in the Tai Long area were guerrillas or offered assistance to the Guerrilla. For instance, some villagers carried explosives and sent the information on the Japanese troops to the guerillas in Chek Keng; some others carried food and letters to the guerillas who were hiding themselves in mountains. The guerrillas had also stayed in the chapel in Tai Long for a few days before moving to a nearby stone cave. According to historical records, Tai Loi (戴來) of "Tai Long" and Wan Yung-kiu (溫容嬌) of "Tai Long Wan" were two male residents and guerillas who had sacrificed their lives. As mentioned, the Tais and the Wans were the villagers of Tai Long and Ham Tin respectively.

¹² Yuen Chi-wai, *Follow in the Missionary Footsteps: The Evolution of the Catholic Mission in Sai Kung, 1841 – 2000*, p. 108.

¹³ Oral history interviews with the Village Representative of Tai Long on 23 March 2022 and a village elder of Ham Tin on 27 April 2022 by the Antiquities and Monuments Office.

¹⁴ It took an hour to reach Chek Keng first and then another thirty minutes from there to Pak Tam Au. Oral history interview with a village elder of Ham Tin by Antiquities and Monuments Office on 27 April 2022.

moved to the UK for family reunion. It was not until sometime around 1970 that electricity was available in Tai Long. Many houses have been left unattended over the years and some of them, including the building remains near the hillslope (Serial No. N399), structures near No. 30A (Serial No. N403), Nos. 22 to 26 and structures nearby (Serial No. N404) and No. 26A (Serial No. N405), had collapsed while some others, including No. 28 (Serial No. N407) as well as No. 30B and the structure nearby (probably built after the 1960s, Serial No. N411), had undergone unsympathetic intervention, whereas the structure near No. 18A (Serial No. N402) had been reconstructed. There are also a small group of humble buildings and structures near No. 39 at the entrance to the village. They are village houses and a generator house probably built between the 1950s and 1960s (Serial No. N415).

The village houses in Tai Long are plain and functional. All the buildings in the village face east and shares similar architectural features. They are traditional vernacular houses built of mud bricks, grey bricks and rubbles and covered with plaster. The tiles of the pitched roofs are supported on timber purlins and rafters. Most of the village houses still have timber doors installed in the main entrance. With reference to site visits and oral history interviews with village elders, three major types of building form can be identified. They are (i) houses with a cooking stove and a bathing alcove near the main entrance, (ii) houses with an annex serving as a kitchen, and (iii) single building each comprising two to three house units. The row of houses at Nos. 34 to 38 (Serial No. N414), No. 30 (Serial No. N409) and No. 31 (N412) are good examples of type (i). No. 34, for instance, has the interior fully utilized by installing a wooden structure overhanging as an attic for storage use. Besides, a wooden staircase was built straight running to the attic. Regarding type (ii), No. 27 (Serial No. N406) and No. 29 (Serial No. N408) are typical examples of the kind whereas Nos. 13 to 15 (Serial No. N398), Nos. 18A to C (Serial No. N400) as well as Nos. 32 and 33 (Serial No. N413) are typical examples of type (iii). These houses were probably built before the 1920s while No. 31 (Serial No. N412) having a parapet with a star motif at the rooftop was believed to be built around the 1920s.

*Architectural
Merit*

The buildings at Nos. 18D and 18E (Serial Nos. 688 and N401) form a compound of the Catholic Church which was guarded by an entrance gate. The school premise is a one-storey concrete building with a flat roof. The school's name (Yuk Ying School) and the year of construction (1958) can be identified on the front elevation. The kitchen block behind it was built of granite blocks, rendered with cement and covered by a pitched roof while the latrine is a humble concrete structure with a pitched roof. The compound can be accessed through a

concrete entrance gate bearing a cross and a panel engraved with “Gate of Heaven” (上天之門) in Chinese characters. It was believed that these ancillary structures were probably built around the 1950s. Besides, the sisters’ residence at No. 30A (Serial No. N410) is a two-storey structure made up of plastered walls and a pitched tiled roof, and is the only residence having an enclosing wall in the village.¹⁵

Apart from their built heritage value, Tai Long and the neighbouring Ham Tin are embraced by the serene view of Tai Long Wan and on MacLehose Trail Section 2. Both are well-known for historians, heritage lovers, hikers, beach lovers and photographers. ***Social Value, & Local Interest***

The buildings in Tai Long have group value with each other. Besides, the village also has group value with Ham Tin in the neighbourhood. The entire village serves as a reminder of the missionary activities of the Catholic Church in Sai Kung, the historical development of the village and village life in the old days as well as the guerrilla activities against Japanese Occupation in Sai Kung. ***Group Value***

The buildings in Tai Long have built heritage value and group value for preservation. Unlike other traditional Chinese villages where people are generally bonded by kinship system, the villagers in Tai Long had been bonded by a Western religion, Catholicism as well. While most of the villages in the New Territories celebrate the Spring and Autumn Rites and other traditional Chinese rituals and festivals, the biggest events in Tai Long were Catholic rituals and ceremonies. The entire village, including village houses, village setting and the environs of the village as a whole is a reminder of the missionary activities of the Catholic Church in Sai Kung as well as a good example to illustrate the historical development of the village and village life in the old days. No major alteration which may have compromised the authenticity of the appearance of the buildings having heritage value can be identified. Tai Long is one of the two surviving villages (the other one is Ham Tin) among the five villages facing Tai Long Wan in the east of Sai Kung. The overall historic ambience of the village is maintained. ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

¹⁵ Oral history interview with a village elder of Ham Tin by Antiquities and Monuments Office on 27 April 2022. According to aerial photos, the building had collapsed in the late 1950s, and was rebuilt into the current form in 1961.

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