

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Ham Tin

#### Sai Kung, New Territories

Ham Tin (鹹田) is one of the five villages facing Tai Long Wan (大浪灣) in Sai Kung East. The other four are Tai Wai (大圍, today's Tai Long (大浪) in land records), 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).

*Historical Interest*

Ham Tin is a single-surnamed village and locally known as Wan Ka Tsuen (溫家村, literally Village of the Wans).<sup>1</sup> According to the village elders of the Wans in Ham Tin, their ancestors moved from Taiyuan (太原) in Shanxi province (山西省) in northern China and settled in Tai Lam Wu (大藍湖) in Ho Chung (蠔涌) around the early eighteenth century. Later, while the eldest Wan brother stayed in Ho Chung, the second and the youngest spread out to Tai Po Tsai (大埔仔) and Ham Tin Wan (literally meaning Ham Tin bay) respectively. Wan Lin-ying (溫連英) was the founding ancestor (開基祖) of the clan in Ham Tin, and there was once a stone tablet that marked the restoration (重修) of his tomb in the second year of the Jiaqing (嘉慶) reign (1797) during the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911). In 2022, the youngest members of the Wan clan in Ham Tin are the eighth generation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is believed that Ham Tin was established around the mid-eighteenth century.

Similar to the villagers in Tai Long, the villagers in Ham Tin had once worshipped Tin Hau (天后). It was believed that a Tin Hau Temple once existed in the south of Tai Long;<sup>3</sup> but it was abandoned after most of the villagers in Tai Long in the neighbourhood converted to Catholicism.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The villagers of Tai Long are mainly surnamed Cham (湛), Lai (黎), Chan (陳), Cheung (張), Tai (戴) and Ngai (魏) whereas the other four villages are single-surnamed. According to the older generations, Ham Tin is also known as Wan Ka Tsuen whereas Tai Wan (大灣) is also known as Lee Uk (李屋). Tai Wan was established by the Lees who once lived in Lam Uk Wai in the 1930s.

<sup>2</sup> Oral history interview with a Wan at Ham Tin by Antiquities and Monuments Office on 27 April 2022. Wan was born in Ham Tin and a Catholic. He, aged about 70 in 2022, is the seventh generation of the Wans in Ham Tin.

<sup>3</sup> 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").

<sup>4</sup> The history of the missionary activities of the Catholic Church in Sai Kung can be traced back to the 1860s. 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 early 1866, a missionary station was established in Sai Kung Town (西貢墟傳教站), where a group of 19 villagers was baptised. By 1869, there were about 350 Catholics spreading across 12 villages in Sai Kung, including Tai Long, Yim Tin

The influence of Catholicism in Ham Tin was not as strong as in Tai Long. Only some of the villagers in Ham Tin were Catholics. The converts attended Mass in the chapel named Holy Family Chapel (聖家小堂) which was built in Tai Long in 1867. By 1879, the chapel had a congregation of 162.<sup>5</sup> In 1931, the Tai Long Parish (大浪堂區) 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.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from Mass, 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, 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 areas in Sai Kung, among which included Wong Mo Ying (黃毛應), Chek Keng (赤徑) and Tai Long.<sup>7</sup> According to historical records, Tai Loi (戴來) of “Tai Long” and Wan Yung-kiu (溫容嬌) of “Tai Long Wan”, two male residents, were guerrillas who had sacrificed their lives. As mentioned, the Tais and the Wans were the villagers of Tai Long and Ham Tin respectively.

The congregation of the Immaculate Conception Chapel increased to about 500 in the 1950s.<sup>8</sup> A primary school building having a capacity of around 100 students was constructed by the church at No. 18D Tai Long 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

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Tsai (鹽田仔), Chek Keng (赤徑), Wong Mo Ying (黃毛應) 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。

<sup>5</sup> By 1892, Tai Long had become one of the major Catholic communities in San On County before the New Territories came under British jurisdiction. Another three major Catholic communities were Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔), Chek Keng (赤徑) and Sham Chung (深涌).

<sup>6</sup> Oral history interview with a Wan of Ham Tin by Antiquities and Monuments Office on 27 April 2022.

<sup>7</sup> 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 guerillas had also stayed in the chapel in Tai Long for a few days before moving to a nearby stone cave.

<sup>8</sup> Yuen Chi-wai, *Follow in the Missionary Footsteps: The Evolution of the Catholic Mission in Sai Kung, 1841 – 2000*, p. 108.

part-time teacher in Chek Keng. The children of Ham Tin also studied there.<sup>9</sup>

The villagers of Ham Tin mainly relied on farming to earn a living. They also raised livestock like pigs, cattle and chickens. 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 two hours to Pak Tam Au (北潭凹), which is connected to the nearest motor road, Pak Tam Road (北潭路).<sup>10</sup>

In the 1960s, many villagers of Ham Tin emigrated to the UK to earn a living. By the 1970s, almost all the agricultural land had been abandoned. Many houses have been left unattended over the years and some of them, including a group of new and ancillary buildings and structures, which were probably built after the 1960s with rubbles, muds or cement in very humble forms (Serial No. N422).<sup>11</sup>

Most of the village houses in Ham Tin face west. They are traditional vernacular houses built of mud bricks, grey bricks and rubbles covered with plaster. The tiles of the pitched roofs are supported on timber purlins and rafters. 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 houses each comprising two to three house units. The houses at Nos. 5 and 6 (Serial No. N416) and No. 9 (Serial No. N418) are typical examples of type (i) whereas Nos. 7 and 8 (Serial No. N417), Nos. 10, 11 and 12 (Serial No. N419), Nos. 14 and 15 (Serial No. N420) are good examples of type (ii). Regarding type (iii), Nos. 16 and 17 (Serial No. N421) are a typical example of the kind. These houses were probably built before the 1920s. The only exception is the houses at Nos. 10, 11 and 12, which were built in the 1960s. According to the Wan family who built the houses and lived there, their houses were originally situated at Nos. 2, 3 and 4, but were destroyed by typhoons. The building materials were salvaged and reused as much as possible to re-construct Nos. 10, 11 and 12, which are the only row houses decorated with parapets at the roof level in the village.

*Architectural  
Merit*

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<sup>9</sup> 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 Antiquities and Monuments Office.

<sup>10</sup> It took one and a half hours 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.

<sup>11</sup> This group of buildings and structures include the houses at No. 1 and No. 24, the pig pens, cowsheds, chicken pens near No. 24 and a generator house at No. 29.

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

***Social Value,  
& Local  
Interest***

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

***Group Value***

The buildings in Ham Tin have built heritage value and group value for preservation. The entire village as a whole is a reminder of the historical development of the village, the missionary activities of the Catholic Church in Sai Kung, the village life in the old days and the guerrilla activities against Japanese Occupation. No major alteration which may have compromised the authenticity of the buildings' appearance can be identified. Ham Tin is one of the two surviving villages (the other one is Tai Long) 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***

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