

Historic Building Appraisal
Tsung Kyam Church
No. 20 Shung Him Tong Tsuen, Lung Yeuk Tau, Fanling, N.T.

Tsung Kyam Church (崇謙堂) was built in 1927 and extended in 1951 as the congregation grew. It is located in Shung Him Tong Tsuen (崇謙堂村) which is a Hakka (客家) Christian village founded in 1903. It is a church of the Society of Basel Mission (巴色傳道會) whose missionaries first came to Hong Kong from Switzerland in 1847.

*Historical
Interest*

From 1903 to 1905 Pastor Ling Kai-lin (凌啟蓮) and his elder son, Sin-yuen (善元), had been spreading the gospel in Shung Him Tong Tsuen. By the winter of 1905, there were ten converts. Pastor Ling requested the Basel mission to send an evangelist to the village to help set up a church. In response, Pang Lok-sam (彭樂三 1895-1947), who was to become an important figure in the village and in the New Territories, arrived to help Pastor Ling with church work.

A cemetery for the congregation, opened in 1931, is situated at the rear of the village. Tsung Kyam Church was once used as a kindergarten. When the building became dilapidated, it was replaced by a new one. The new church was built beside the old one in 1983, and the old church has been used as a Sunday School (主日學) since 1994. Now, it is used as a storeroom.

The church is a very basic and simple two-storey pitched roof utilitarian structure with a rectangular plan orientated to align with the village houses. The first floor was added in 1951 as engraved on a plaque. The side elevations are rendered and painted with rows of regularly spaced windows set in bays divided by piers or buttresses supporting the roof trusses. The roof is finished with corrugated sheeting. The architectural style of the front façade of the church has been described as **Italianate** and **Baroque**. The Basel Mission originated in Switzerland which borders on Italy. Some of the Swizz churches such as St. Anthony, Basel by **Karl Moser** (1860-1936) were highly influential abroad. With its Romanesque arches, ornamental parapet, bellcote and dome, Tsung Kyam Church could well have been influenced by the Renaissance architecture of Churches around Basel.

*Architectural
Merit*

Not many mission churches of this style now survive so that Tsung Kyam Church should be considered a rarity, and with its standing in the community, of considerable built heritage value. Some minor reversible alterations have been carried out in past renovations but otherwise the church building remains fairly authentic.

*Rarity &
Built Heritage
Value &
Authenticity*

The old Tsung Kyam Church was the focal point of the village, not only in a physical and symbolic sense but also in terms of the social organization of the community, daily activities, family life and the political and economic organization of Shung Him Tong Tsuen which were all centred on the church and helped to define the identity of this Hakka Christian community. The Church was also one of the few remaining places where the Hakka dialect was spoken and this acted as a binding force amongst the villagers.

*Social Value &
Local Interest*

Tsung Kyam Church was also socially connected with Luen Wo Tong (聯和堂), the collective security alliance amongst the ethnic Hakkas in the Fanling area against the Puntis (本地) of the area.

In Shung Him Tong Tsuen, there are other historic buildings; for example, Shek Lo (石廬) which is a two-storied residential villa of mixed style built in 1924, as well as the mansion of Kin Tak Lau (乾德樓). The Church is also geographically close to Lung Yeuk Tau Heritage Trail (龍躍頭文物徑).

Group Value

With the building of the new church, the old church has been used as a kindergarten and Sunday School and the upper floor, which originally was used for Sunday services, is now used as a storeroom.

*Adaptive
Re-use*