

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows**  
**Sheung Yiu, Pak Tam Chung, Sai Kung, N.T.**

Located at Pak Tam Chung (北潭涌) on the Pak Tam Chung Nature Trail near Sheung Yiu Village (上窰村), a declared monument,<sup>1</sup> the Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows (聖母七苦小堂) was built in 1900. *Historical Interest*

The history of the missionary activities of the Catholic Church in the New Territories can be traced back to the 1860s. The Convention of Peking (北京條約) in 1860 provided missionaries with the freedom to practise their religion in Chinese territory, and the evangelisation work in San On District (新安縣), which included parts of Hong Kong, was entrusted to the Hong Kong Apostolic Prefecture (香港宗座監牧區) later the same year. Missionaries who preached on Hong Kong Island would learn Cantonese, while those in other parts of the territory would learn the Hakka dialect. The Hakka (客家) people were more ready to accept a new religion, hoping that the church would be a source of security against the injustices they suffered. The missionaries also drew a “Map of the San-On District (新安縣全圖)” (including the present-day New Territories), with both English and Chinese characters indicating the locations of many villages, including “Pak-tam-chung” (北潭涌).

The first evangelisation work in areas not under British jurisdiction was carried out in Tai Po. Rev. Simeone Volonteri (和神父, 1831 – 1904) preached in the Hakka villages of Wun Yiu (碗窰) and Ting Kok (汀角) from 1862 to 1864, and later Rev. Gaetano Origo (柯神父, 1835 – 1868) joined him in Ting Kok. Missionary activities then spread to Sai Kung when Rev. Origo first took up residence at Sai Kung Market (西貢墟) in 1865 and then, in early 1866, he established a missionary station in the town (西貢墟傳教站), where he baptised a first group of 19 villagers. About 30 villagers from Yim Tin Tsai (鹽田仔) were baptised at Christmas that year.<sup>2</sup> By 1869, there were about 350 Catholics spreading across 12 Hakka villages in Sai Kung, including Yim Tin Tsai, Chek Keng (赤徑), Tai Long (大浪), Wong Mo Ying (黃毛應) and Pak Sha O (白沙澳).

Sheung Yiu Village (上窰村) was developed by the Wong (黃) clan, a Hakka (客家) family originally from San On District, during the late nineteenth century. They established a settlement at a strategic location along the Yung Pak Corridor (榕

<sup>1</sup> Sheung Yiu Village (上窰村), together with the lime kiln nearby, was declared a monument under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (Cap. 53) in 1981. It was converted and opened as the Sheung Yiu Folk Museum (上窰民俗文物館) in 1983 after full restoration.

<sup>2</sup> According to the current land records, Yim Tin Tsai is recorded as “鹽田仔” in Chinese, while “鹽田梓” has been adopted by the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong.

北走廊) that connected Pak Tam Chung and Yung Shue O (榕樹澳), from where a ferry sailed to Tai Po via Three Fathoms Cove (企嶺下海). They once set up a small shop named “The Passageway” (過路廊) to earn a living, providing local villagers, passers-by and travelling tradesmen with food and accommodation. Moreover, the villagers had built a lime kiln at the roadside and a brick kiln on the opposite shore. As Sai Kung was home to a wealth of coral and shell, these villagers specialised in producing lime and mortar for construction, fertiliser and daily utilities, using the kilns to fire their products. They later also produced and fired grey bricks to sustain their livelihood and the local economy.

Saint Josef Freinademetz (福若瑟神父, 1852 – 1908) of the Society of the Divine Word (聖言會) resided in Sai Kung for approximately half a year in an attempt to immerse himself in the local culture and learn the Hakka dialect. According to the archival record of Hong Kong Diocese, Rev. Freinademetz resided temporarily in Pak Tam Chung during his service in Sai Kung and was conducive to the establishment of the Catholic community in the village. As a result of the continuing efforts of the missionaries who followed Rev. Freinademetz, the entire village of Sheung Yiu, including the owner of the brick kiln, converted to Catholicism. The land on which the Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows stands was originally owned under the name of Lo Ma Tong (羅馬堂, literally meaning Roman Catholic Church). In 1908, the land was registered as the property of the Vicar Apostolic of the Roman Catholic Church. The chapel was then consecrated to provide for the spiritual needs of the village. Government records show that the congregation of the chapel numbered 120 in 1909 and then declined to 80 in 1939.

During the Japanese Occupation (1941 – 1945), the kilns of the village were severely damaged, while the emergence of concrete as a common construction material reduced the demand for lime and bricks. In the 1950s, the villagers tried to diversify into agriculture with the assistance of the government, but the 1960s and 1970s saw them start to move out to Sai Kung Town, urban centres or even overseas to work in other trades, gradually leaving their villages to seek more opportunities and more convenient transport networks. The chapel was no longer able to hold regular masses. From the 1980s to around 2019, the chapel was used by the Catholic Scout Guild as a water activities centre.

In 1954 and 1956, the Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows was ministered by the priest of the Sacred Heart Church, Sai Kung (西貢聖心堂), as part of the Tai Long Parish (大浪堂區). In 1955 and from 1957 to 1979, it came under administration of the Sai Kung Parish (西貢堂區). From 1980 onwards, it was managed by the Sacred Heart Church, Sai Kung (西貢聖心堂), of the Sacred Heart

Parish (聖心堂區).

The Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows and other surviving chapels of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, including St. Joseph's Chapel (聖若瑟堂) at Yim Tin Tsai, Rosary Mission Centre (玫瑰小堂) at Wong Mo Ying and Holy Family Chapel (聖家小堂) at Chek Keng (赤徑) (all Grade 2), Immaculate Conception Chapel (聖母無原罪小堂) at Tai Long (大浪) and Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel (聖母無玷之心小堂) at Pak Sha O (both Grade 3), and the Nativity of Our Lady Chapel (聖母聖誕小堂) at Long Ke (浪茄) (Proposed Grade 3) have borne witness to the historical development of the Hakka communities and the missionary activities on the Sai Kung Peninsula.

The Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows is a single-storey building with a pitched roof. It was built on the eastern bank of the Lung Hang (龍坑) estuary close to the Sheung Yiu jetty, which meant that boats could moor next to the chapel at high tide. The raised platform protects the building against flooding. This setting is similar to that of Sheung Yiu Village. The walls of the chapel are built of granite blocks, providing of how building method and materials were adapted to local requirements. The most decorated facade is at the west elevation, where the main entrance is located. It is ornamented with symmetrical mouldings on the pediment, moulded Chinese characters 「天主堂」, meaning “Catholic Church”, and a cross at the top that shows what the building was used for. The altar is located on the eastern side of the chapel. *Architectural Merit*

The chapel is modest in scale with its interior space divided into two equal parts by a partition running from east to west. One half of the chapel was set aside for prayer, meditation and rites. The chapel does not feature any substantial decorations, with the exception of the altar, where a cross was placed during ceremonies and where the wall was modestly moulded with simple ornamental elements. The other half was originally intended as a dormitory for priests, who were housed there the night before holding masses. It is currently used as a storeroom.

The building served the local Hakka villagers for several decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, masses were held there by Rev. Adelio Lambertoni (林柏棟神父, 1939 – 2006) and Rev. Valeriano Fraccaro (范賚亮神父, 1913 – 1974) who were the priests of the Sacred Heart Church in Sai Kung. They are still fondly remembered by the congregation's older generations, as the oral history interviews conducted by the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong in 2018 show. Moreover, the chapel still has particular relevance to the Catholic community, as it bears witness to the development and spread of the Catholic faith in Hong Kong. Recent years have *Social Value & Local Interest*

seen the Catholic Church organise pilgrimage tours to the chapels in Sai Kung during the Holy Week to promote the historical and social significance of the chapels by continuing commemorative religious rites and ceremonies. The Catholic Church also holds regular open days for worshippers and people visiting the chapel primarily for prayer and meditation. Activities promoting biodiversity in the area have also been held since 2019.

The Sheung Yiu Folk Museum converted from Sheung Yiu Village, a former Hakka village, together with the restored lime kiln, are declared as monument and are in close proximity to the chapel. Some Fathers also stayed in Sheung Yiu Village the night before masses were held at the chapel. Sheung Yiu Village, thus, acts as complementary elements to the chapel to demonstrate the connection between the Catholic faith and the daily lives of the villagers there in the past. ***Group Value***

The Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows is a reminder of the Hakka communities and the missionary activities in the district. The roof of the Chapel should be in traditional Hakka tiled pitched roof supported by timber structure. Temporary corrugated metal sheets were used to cover the roof in the 1980s due to serious damages by typhoons. The kitchen block was rebuilt by the Catholic Scout Guild in the early 1980s. The parapet with a cross on the top of the front elevation, the walls made of granite blocks and the building form are the major historic features that have been preserved. ***Rarity, Built Heritage Value & Authenticity***

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