



Report of investigation  
into the incident on  
man overboard from  
the locally licensed open sampan  
*"P40412K"* near  
Fat Tong Kok  
on 10 May 2006



The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
Marine Department  
Marine Accident Investigation Section



## **Purpose of Investigation**

This incident is investigated, and published in accordance with the IMO Code for the Investigation of Marine Casualties and Incidents promulgated under IMO Assembly Resolution A.849(20). The purpose of this investigation conducted by the Marine Accident Investigation and Shipping Security Policy Branch (MAISSPB) of Marine Department is to determine the circumstances and the causes of the incident with the aim of improving the safety of life at sea and avoiding similar incident in future.

The conclusions drawn in this report aim to identify the different factors contributing to the incident. They are not intended to apportion blame or liability towards any particular organization or individual except so far as necessary to achieve the said purpose.

The MAISSPB has no involvement in any prosecution or disciplinary action that may be taken by the Marine Department resulting from this incident.

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 At about 0900 on 10 May 2006, while the Master of the outboard open sampan *P40412K (the Vessel)* dropping an anchor manually into the water near Fat Tong Kok at approximate position 22° 15.7' N 114° 18.1' E, he fell overboard from the bow of *the Vessel*. The body of the Master was discovered after 3 days near the coast of Fat Tong Kok.
- 1.2 The spouse of the Master saw the incident but was not sure how and why the Master fell overboard. Based on the available evidence, it was possible that he lost his balance on the slippery deck surface or the weight of the anchor threw off his balance when dropping anchor. It was also possible that he was tripped by the anchor rope while it was running out into the water.

## 2. Description of *the Vessel*

### 2.1 Particulars

License No.	:	<i>P40412K</i>
Type	:	Outboard open sampan
Length	:	4.4 metres
Breadth	:	1.7 metres
Thames Measurement	:	1.46 tons
Net Registered tons	:	1.03
Date of First Licensed	:	3 October 1986
Engine/Engine Power	:	One outboard engine 11.19kW



Figure 1 – Photograph of outboard open sampan *P40412K*

### **3. Sources of evidence**

3.1 The Spouse of the Master;

3.2 The Hong Kong Police Force;

3.3 The Hong Kong Observatory; and

3.4 The Hong Kong Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre.

#### 4. Outline of events

- 4.1 At about 0400 on 10 May 2006, the Master and his spouse on board the locally licensed open sampan *P40412K (the Vessel)* sailed from Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter to Fat Tong Kok for fishing.
- 4.2 *The Vessel* arrived Fat Tong Kok at about 0500, the Master and his spouse were fishing there for about four hours. At about 0900, the Master landed his spouse to the rocky beach of Fat Tong Kok for picking seashells. The Master steered *the Vessel* about 10 metres away from the beach and stopped the engine. He prepared to drop the anchor and intended to start fishing there. (See figure 2)
- 4.3 While dropping the anchor, the Master fell overboard. His spouse saw the incident but she could not give assistance to the Master as she did not know how to swim. The beach was a deserted area that no other person was in the vicinity. Furthermore, the spouse did not carry any mobile phone. As such she could not call for rescue service but had to shout for help on the beach.
- 4.4 At about 1400 (about 5 hours after the accident) a passing-by fishing vessel stopped and took the spouse back to *the Vessel*. She was so anxious and did not inform the incident to the persons on board the fishing vessel. After boarding *the Vessel*, she heaved up the anchor and drove *the Vessel* to Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter where she informed her grandson to report the case to the police. Search and rescue operation was started at about 1630.
- 4.5 The Search and Rescue team consisted of Police launches, Government Flying Services aircraft and divers from Fire Services Department. They searched the missing Master in the vicinity of the falling position on 10 May 2006 and 11 May 2006. However, the missing Master could not be found in the searches.
- 4.6 On 13 May 2006, the body of the Master was found near the coast of Fat Tong Kok.

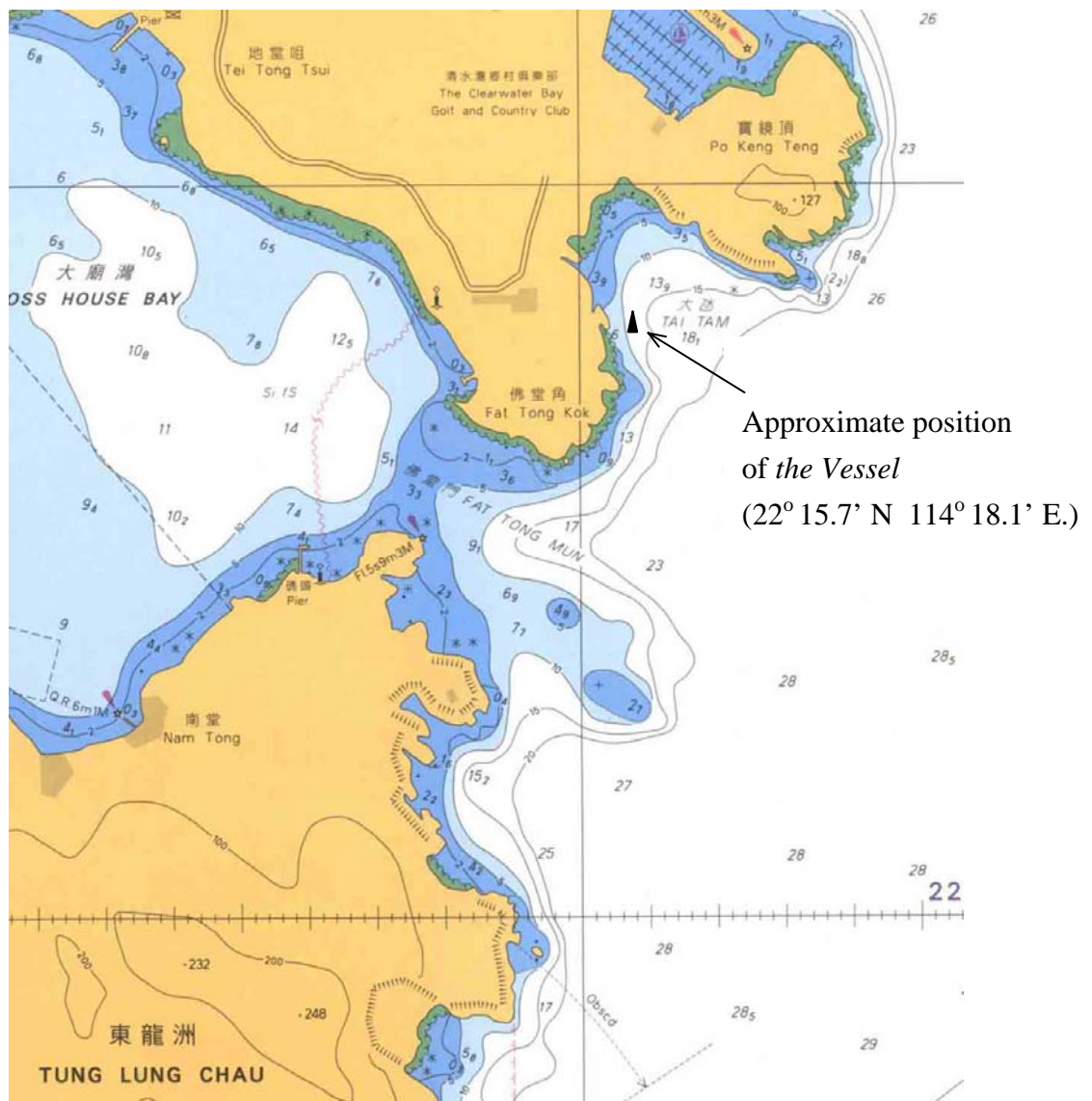


Fig.2: Map showing the position of *the Vessel*

## 5. Analysis of evidence

### Weather Conditions

- 5.1 According to the weather report from the Hong Kong Observatory, seawater temperature at the vicinity area was warm at about 26° C. Southwesterly wind at force 3 with waves at height of about 0.6 metre were prevailing in the area. The position of the accident was a sheltered area, there was no other vessel nearby at the time of the accident. The environment was calm and normal.

### Certification and Experience of Master

- 5.2 The Master held a Local Certificate of Competency as Master to take charge of a powered fishing vessel under 60 tons and he had more than 40 years of experience in taking charge of fishing vessels. He was competent to operate the *Vessel*.

### License of the Vessel

- 5.3 The license of *the Vessel* was valid until 4 July 2006. *The Vessel* was exempted from the requirement of a certified engineer, i.e. it could be operated by a certified master.
- 5.4 According to the licensing conditions of *the Vessel*. It was not permitted to operate in Victoria Port or any typhoon shelter except Cheung Chau and Shuen Wan Typhoon Shelter. Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter was inside the harbour limits of the Victoria Port where *the Vessel* was prohibited from entering. It appeared that the Master had breached the licensing conditions of *the Vessel*.

### Physical fitness and ability to swim of the Master

- 5.5 The Master was a male Chinese of age 78. According to the information provided by the spouse, the Master was not a good swimmer. He was in good health and had not taken any alcoholic drinks before the incident. His Local Certificate of Competency was revalidated on 30 December 2005, according to his spouse, he was physically fit for working on board *the Vessel*.

### The spouse of the Master

- 5.6 The spouse of the Master was also of age 78. She saw the accident from quite a long distance from the position of the accident and she was not sure how and why the Master fell overboard.

5.7 Having picked up by a passing-by fishing vessel, the spouse should request the persons on board to call for assistance. However, she had not done so but requested them to take her back to *the Vessel*. She then steered *the Vessel* back to the Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter. She did not possess a valid certificate of competency for taking charge of *the Vessel*.

#### Working environment on deck

5.8 The Master and his spouse were handling fishing net on deck during the fishing operations from 0500 to 0900. The deck of *the Vessel* was wet with seawater. The Master worn a pair of rubber boots which would be slippery with wet surfaces.

#### Dropping anchor

5.9 *The Vessel* was equipped with an anchor with a weight of about 7 kg (see figure 3). It was secured at the forward of *the Vessel* with a synthetic rope of about 90 feet in length. The rope was coiled on the deck of *the Vessel*. When anchoring, the Master had to lift up the anchor manually and dropped it into the water. During the course of operation, it is possible that he lost his balance on the slippery deck surfaces or the weight of the anchor threw off his balance when dropping the anchor. It is also possible that he was tripped and pulled by the anchor rope while it was running out.



Fig. 3: The anchor of *the Vessel*

### Lifesaving appliances

5.10 There were one lifebuoy and 4 lifejackets on board *the Vessel*. The Master was not donning a lifejacket at the time of the accident.

### Cause of death

5.11 After fallen into the water, the Master was not able to get back to *the Vessel* without any assistance. Had he worn lifejacket, he might have been saved in the accident. According to the Autopsy Report, the body was decomposed and the cause of death was "unascertained due to decomposition".

## **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The accident occurred at about 0900 on 10 May 2006 at the position 22° 15.7' N 114° 18.1' E about 10 metres off Fat Tong Kok.
- 6.2 While dropping the anchor off the bow of the outboard open sampan P40412K, the Master fell overboard.
- 6.3 The spouse saw the incident at 10 metres away but she was not sure how and why the Master fell overboard. The exact cause of the accident could not be established. Based on the available evidence, it was possible that the Master lost his balance on the slippery deck surface or the weight of the anchor threw off his balance when dropping anchor. It was also possible that he was tripped by the anchor rope while it was running out into the water.
- 6.4 The spouse did not carry a mobile phone to call for assistance. After picking up by a passing-by fishing vessel, she did not request the persons on board for seeking immediate assistance. Rescue operation could only be started after 7 hours from the happening of the accident. The body of the Master was discovered after 3 days in nearby waters.
- 6.5 The Master was not a good swimmer. He was not donning a lifejacket at the time of accident. Had he worn a lifejacket, he might have been saved in the accident.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 A number of man overboard accidents occurs on board local sampans each year. In most cases the victims' lives could be safeguard had they worn a lifejacket when on board. It is recommended that the lessons learnt from this accident could be brought up in the Navigation Safety Seminar held by the Harbour Patrol Section of the Marine Department, with a view to address the concern to the wider public and the industry.

8. Submissions

- 8.1 In the event that the conduct of any person or organization is criticized in a casualty investigation report, it is the policy of the Hong Kong Marine Department that a copy of the draft report is given to that person or organization so that they have the opportunity to rebut the criticism or offer evidence not previously available to the investigating officer.
- 8.2 The draft report (without recommendations) was sent to the spouse of the Master for consultation, no submission was received from her.