

Historic Building Appraisal
Chi Chuk Lam – Main Building
Lower Keung Shan, Lantau

Located in a levelled terrace of Lower Keung Shan (下羌山) of Lantau, Chi Chuk Lam (紫竹林) is a Buddhist nunnery founded in 1918 by three Bhikshunis (比丘尼), namely, Fat Wai (法慧), Fat Sum (發心) and Fat Sheung (法常). In 1916, the three ladies had their Bhikshuni ordination in Tai Mao Pung (大茅蓬, renamed as Po Lin Monastery (寶蓮禪寺) in 1928. Fat Sum became the first abbess of the nunnery until her death in around 1958. She was succeeded by Fok Kai-chiu (霍戒超, 1897-1996) who had her first ordination at the Dinghubaolian Monastery (鼎湖寶蓮寺) of Foshan (佛山) in 1915, came to Hong Kong in 1917 and stayed in the nunnery since 1919. Abbess Fok passed away in 1996 and was succeeded by the present abbess Mother Ting Moon (定滿師傅, 1942-), who is a native of Tai O and has resided in the nunnery since aged 4.

**Historical
Interest**

Chi Chuk Lam is a private nunnery for the study of Buddhist sutras. Its devoted deity is Kwun Yam (觀音) with Wai Tor (韋陀) as the protective deity. The present **Main Building** of Chi Chuk Lam had been a one-storey stone house built in the Guangxu (光緒, 1871-1908) reign of the Qing (清) dynasty. It was rebuilt into two-storey premises in **1918**.

The **Main Building** is a Qing vernacular design building of two storeys. It is a long rectangular building facing south-west. It is constructed of coarse granite blocks and green bricks with its walls and columns to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The lower courses of the walls are of granite blocks whilst its upper courses are of green bricks. This might show that the stone structure of the building was the original remaining portion of the stone house erected in the Qing dynasty. The walls are all plastered and painted but still showing the coarse surface of the granite blocks. The Kwun Yam statue is in the middle of an altar on the ground floor hall with an offering table in its front. The upper floor is with bedrooms and storerooms. The name board of the nunnery is above the recessed entrance which three characters are painted in gold colour.

**Architectural
Merit**

Together with other nunneries in Lower Keung Shan, Po Lin Shut (寶蓮室, erected in 1916), Ng Chun Nunnery (悟真, erected in 1927) and Ling Yan Monastery (靈隱寺, erected in 1928), it is one of the Buddhist establishments to remind the development of Buddhism in the area.

Rarity

It has some built heritage value.

***Built Heritage
Value &***

The original masonry structure which existed in the Guangxu (光緒, 1871-1908) period was largely reconstructed and added to a first floor in 1918; therefore, the construction and materials of the two floors are different.

Authenticity

There were some 20 residents in the nunnery after the Second World War, half of them were *jushis* (居士) and the others were nuns. Now only Mother Ting Moon and her brother Chan Sau (陳秀) stay in the nunnery. Most of the elderly nuns either passed away or have been arranged to stay in the elderly home.

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

Chi Chuk Lam is built in local vernacular style that reflects the old building construction customs on Lantau at that time. It is a typical part of Lantau original culture. A number of buildings of similar design remain in the surroundings. It blends nicely with the remote rural environment that is full of trees. There are two small shrines and a small pavilion of Western style on the back sloped and downhill of the monastery. The pavilion housed a plaque of the second year of the Republic (1913;民國二年). Ng Chun and Po Lin Shut are the other religious heritage buildings neighbouring Chi Chuk Lam. Master Ting Moon (定滿師傅), the abbess (住持, literally the nunnery head) of Chi Chuk Lam nowadays, has close relationship with Ng Chit and Wai Sau Yuen in Luk Wu.

Group Value

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise at the present time.

***Adaptive
Re-use***