

Historic Building Appraisal
Po Lin Shut – Main Building
Lower Keung Shan, Lantau

Many Buddhist temples and retreat homes were erected in the remote Keung Shan of Lantau Island in the early 20th century. Po Lin Shut (寶蓮室) in Lower Keung Shan (下羌山) was founded in 1916 by a Buddhist monk, Master Ba Si (八寺長老, 1876-1949) and a female Jushi De Shui (德水居士). Master Ba Si originally practiced at Ding Hu Shan (鼎湖山) in Guangdong (廣東) province, a famous Buddhist mountain. De Shui was his relative. After the death of Master Ba Si in 1949 at the age of 73, the monastery became a nunnery exclusively for female Buddhist followers. Under the leadership of Sik Shang-ru (釋勝如, 1892-1967), its service was expanded. More than 15 nuns resided at the Shut in the late 1950s with many devotees came to study Buddhist sutras there.

*Historical
Interest*

Sik Wai-yin (釋慧賢, 1933-2000) became the third abbess of the Shut until her death in 2000. She was succeeded by her three disciples, Sik Chi-ling (釋智寧), Sik Chi-woo (釋智和) and Sik Chi-yung (釋智容). The former two are in elderly home because of health problem whilst Chi-yung is working and staying at Po Lin Monastery (寶蓮禪寺). Chow Kim-pui (周金培), a nephew of Sik Wai-yin, is responsible of the matters of the nunnery which is left vacated. Mother Sik Ding-moon (釋定滿), keeper of Chi Chuk Lam Nunnery (紫竹林) also in Lower Keung Shan, takes care of the nunnery as well.

Po Lin Shut is constructed on a levelled terrace which access is through a flight of long staircases and footpath. At the entrance of the compound is a two-column gate constructed of concrete with a couplet written on it.

*Architectural
Merit*

Po Lin Shut began with a single building with the construction of two more in 1957 and in the 1970s. The **Main Building** of Po Lin Shut (寶蓮室主樓) built in **1916** is a two-storey Qing (清) vernacular building of two bays. It has a rectangular plan with its left recessed bay for entry. It is constructed of green bricks with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The walls are plastered and its external walls painted with earth yellow colour. A *tang lung* (趟籠) is at the entrance. Above the doorway is a moulded name board with the name of the nunnery written on it. The only decoration of the building is the plastered moulding under the eave. Three small ceramic statues of Buddhas and Kwun Yam (觀音) are on an offering table for worship with two photographs of the past abbesses. An Earth God (土地) shrine is at the left corner of its entrance.

Together with other nunneries in Lower Keung Shan, Ng Chun Nunnery (悟真, erected in 1927), Chi Chuk Lam (erected in 1918), 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**

The Main Building has some built heritage value. **Built Heritage Value**

Its authenticity is basically kept. **Authenticity**

The nunnery though called Po Lin has no relationship with the well known Po Lin Monastery (寶蓮禪寺) at Ngong Ping (昂平) of Lantau erected in 1928. Monk Fa Ke (筏可法師), the second abbot of the monastery in 1930-1972, had close contact with the nunnery. Four characters '寶樹蓮宗' at the entrance gate of the nunnery were written by him. **Social Value, & Local Interest**

Po Lin Shut is a Buddhist nunnery of Chinese vernacular style with local adaptations that reflects the old building construction customs on Lantau at that time. It is a typical part of Lantau's past culture. A number of buildings of similar designs remain in the surroundings. It blends nicely with the remote rural environment that is full of trees. Ng Chun and Chi Chuk Lam are the other religious historic buildings neighbouring Po Lin Shut. Sik Chi-ling (釋智寧), Sik Chi-woo (釋智和) and Sik Chi-yung (釋智容), Po Lin Shut's present tenants have close relationship with Ng Chit and Wai Sau Monastery 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**