

Historic Building Appraisal

Ng Chit

Luk Wu Tsuen, Luk Wu, Lantau

Ng Chit (悟徹) is a Buddhist nunnery in the remote Luk Wu Tsuen (鹿湖村) of Lantau Island. It was founded in the 2nd year of the Republic of China (i.e. 1913) by a Buddhist master **Quanqing Fashi** (觀清法師, *fashi* means Buddhist law-scholar), **Tak-fong Bhiksuni** (德芳比丘尼, *Bhikshuni* (Sanskrit) means a nun who has finished the second act of ordination) and Chan Tak-lok (陳德樂) who was a **Buddhist jushi** (居士, *jushi* means a person who practice Buddhism at home without becoming a monk or a nun). **Tak-fong Bhiksuni** was a student of Monk Quan Qing (觀清法師) of Luk Wu Ching Ser (鹿湖精舍) nearby.

*Historical
Interest*

The name of the nunnery Ng Chit literally means “thorough understanding of Buddhist truth. **Ng** (悟) means “awakening” and “understanding”. **Chit** (徹) stands for “throughout”. The present (third-generation) abbot (住持) of the nunnery, Sik Wai-wing *Bhikshuni* (釋慧榮比丘尼) explains that the name of their nunnery originated from the Buddhist sutras [(佛教經典, literally the discourses and classics of Buddha, also known as *sutrapitaka* (Sanskrit)].

The founders of Ng Chit did not devote themselves to a designated school of Buddhism (佛教宗派). They chose to reside at Lok Wu thinking that the remote and peaceful environment was best for isolation from the outside world and for pure self-cultivation. The third generation of Ng Chit, Sik Wai-wing *Bhikshuni*, thinks otherwise and does not avoid contacting the “outside world.” Originally named Tam Mei-yuk (譚美玉), she finished her primary education in a Catholic school in Tai O and a Buddhist secondary school in Ngong Ping, Lantau (大嶼山昂平). After that, she pursued Buddhist studies and art in National Taiwan Normal University (台灣師範大學). She thinks that widespread propagation of Buddhism is better than a focus on pure self-cultivation and is more in line with the teaching of Buddhism – relieve the painfulness of the suffered. Subsequently, the nunnery has been devoted to Chan Zong (禪宗, the Meditation School) of Mahayana Buddhism (大乘佛教).

Located in a levelled terrace, the nunnery’s main building is a two-storey structure of Qing (清) vernacular design of three bays. The building was constructed of bricks and stones with its walls to support its pitched roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. Subsequent repairs strengthened the building with reinforced concrete columns and beams. The right bay has the main entrance of the building with the name of the nunnery above the doorway flanked by a couplet. The two bays on the left are for residential use which middle bay has a separate entrance. The walls are coarsely plastered and painted.

*Architectural
Merit*

The paints seem to be weathered away. The one-storey right bay is a hall with a finely-carved wooden altar in the shape of a pagoda housing statues of Buddha for worship.

It is one of the oldest nunneries on Lantau to witness the development of Buddhism in Hong Kong. **Rarity**

It has some built heritage value.

**Built Heritage
Value &**

The authenticity of the nunnery main building is barely kept.

Authenticity

Together with other institutions in Luk Wu Tsuen, Chuk Yuen Ching Ser (竹園精舍, erected in 1933) and Fat Chuen Chi (佛泉寺, erected in 1933), it is one of the Buddhist establishments to remind the development of Buddhism in the area.

Group value

Only two or three nuns are residing in the nunnery. The present abbess Sik Wai-wing (釋慧榮) has been a teacher for twenty years after studying Buddhist studies and art in a university in Taiwan.

**Social Value,
& Local
Interest**

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

**Adaptive
Re-use**