

## Historic Building Appraisal

Chuk Yuen Ching Ser

Luk Wu Tsuen, Luk Wu, Lantau

Chuk Yuen Ching Ser (竹園精舍) in Luk Wu Tsuen (鹿湖村) of Lantau Island is a Buddhist nunnery. “Ching Ser” (精舍), literally “spiritual abode”, generally refers to a Buddhist monastery or nunnery where the monks and nuns practice their Buddhist way of life in a pure and quiet environment avoiding the disturbance of the outside world. **Historical Interest**

The nunnery was founded in 1933 by **Shi Mao Cheung Bhikshuni** (釋茂昌比丘尼). Originally surnamed Lin (林) and a native of Xinhui in Guangdong (廣東新會), she married to a rich merchant. She was interested in Buddhism. And, at 26 years old, she became a Buddhist *jushi* (居士, *jushi* means a person who practice Buddhism at home without becoming a monk or a nun and having his or her head shaven). Ten years later, Rongqiu *Fa-shi* (融秋法師, *fashi* means Buddhist law-scholar) took her as a neophyte and shaved her head. Two years later, she went to Nan Hua Temple (南華寺) in Shaoguan of Guangdong (廣東韶關) where she received the entire commandments, as did a full ordained nun. On her return to Hong Kong, she founded Chuk Yuen Ching Ser.

The devoted deities of the nunnery are Kwun Yam (觀音) and Three Treasure Buddhas (三寶佛). The Buddhist term ‘Three Treasures’ (三寶) is originated from Sanskrit’s *Triratna* which means *Buddha* (佛, the Buddha), *Dharma* (法, the Law) and *Sangha* (僧, the Order). Three Treasures Buddha (三寶佛) refers to three Buddhist images placing in the main hall of a monastery or a nunnery. The centre one is Sakyamuni (釋迦牟尼), on his left is Bhaisajya (藥師) and on his right is Amitabha (阿彌陀).

Located on a levelled terrace, the nunnery is a Qing (清) vernacular design building of three bays. The two-storey building is constructed of concrete, green bricks and stones with its walls, columns and beams to support its flush gable pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. It is a symmetrical building with the one-storey worshipping hall in the middle. The upper floor of the two bays is for residential use. The altar in the hall has the statue of the deities for worship. The ground floor right hall has an altar with soul tablets and a shelf with rows of paper Wang Sheng Pais (往生牌) for worship. The recessed bay in the middle has masonry block imitation lines. The front and side walls are plastered and painted in white colour whilst its rear wall is with fair face of granite blocks. Each bay has its own entrance. **Architectural Merit**

The name of the nunnery “Chuk Yuen” (竹園), inscribed on the wall above the front door, was the calligraphy of **Zhou Lu** (鄒魯, 1885-1954), a member of

the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang, Republic of China (中華民國國民黨中央執行委員) and the principal of Guangdong University (廣東大學, renamed Zhongshan University 中山大學 in 1926 in memory of Dr Sun Yat-sen). On the other hand, the pair of couplets inscribed at the two sides of the front door was composed by Wu Daorong (吳道容), who was a *taishi* (太史, official historian). The pair of couplets reads as follows:

「竹杖偶雲遊，願度眾生皈正覺；」

「園花同雨墮，拈來一笑悟真如。」

“*Buddha, holding a bamboo staff and travelling in the clouds, leads all beings to understand Sambodhi (wisdom of Buddha).*”

“*Enjoying flowers in the garden falling with the rain drops, Buddha holds up a flower and Kasyapa smiles; and Bhutatathata (the eternal reality) is comprehended.*”

It is a Buddhist nunnery on Lantau to witness the development of Buddhism in Hong Kong. **Rarity**

The building has some built heritage value. It is in good condition.

**Built Heritage Value &**

Together with other institutions in Luk Wu Tsuen, Ng Chit (悟徹, erected in 1913) 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. It is a short distance on the left of the Luk Wu Ching Ser (鹿湖精舍). **Authenticity Group value**

During her abbotship before the Second World War, Mao Cheung invited two prominent monks, Wen Hui (文慧法師) and Ci Hang (慈航法師), to give lectures on Buddhist sutras to the devotees. Over ten of the devotees became nuns later. **Social Value, & Local Interest**

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