

**N380**

新界文錦渡木湖瓦窰更樓

**Watchtower, Muk Wu Nga Yiu,  
Man Kam To, New Territories**

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擬議三級歷史建築  
Proposed Grade 3

約建於1911年  
Built around 1911



擬議評級範圍  
Proposed grading  
boundary

# 新界文錦渡木湖瓦窰更樓 Watchtower, Muk Wu Nga Yiu, Man Kam To, N.T.



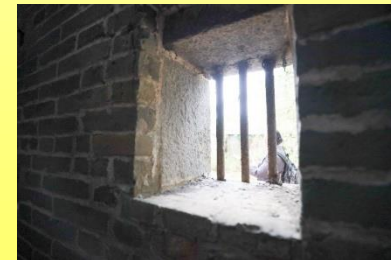
更樓外部  
Exterior of the watchtower



魚形滴水嘴  
A fish-shaped gargoye



外部 Exterior



窗口及槍孔  
Window openings and gun holes

內部 Interior

## Historic Building Appraisal

### Watchtower, Muk Wu Nga Yiu

### Man Kam To, New Territories

The watchtower at Muk Wu Nga Yiu (木湖瓦窰) is locally known as *Pau Lau* (炮樓), literally means “gun tower”, which reflects its function of defending the unwalled village of Muk Wu Nga Yiu. Muk Wu Nga Yiu was established by the Kong clan (江氏), which originated from Baihua town of Huiyang (惠陽白花鎮) in Guangdong province.<sup>1</sup> The plot of land on which the watchtower stands was purchased by Kong Tung Shing (江同盛) in 1911.<sup>2</sup> The record of land sale from that year indicates that the land was intended to be used for building purposes, and it is therefore believed that the watchtower had already been built on the lot or there were plans to build it at that time.<sup>3</sup>

**Historical  
Interest**

Oral history interview reports that, after settling in the village some 150 years ago, the Kongs of Muk Wu Nga Yiu produced grey bricks for supply to nearby villages and even as far away as Guangzhou (廣州).<sup>4</sup> The village became famous for brick making that it was also known as Muk Wu Chuen Yiu (木湖磚窰, literally “Muk Wu brick kiln”).<sup>5</sup> The bricks used to construct the watchtower were said to be produced in the village’s own kilns.<sup>6</sup>

Lying on the southern bank of the Shenzhen River, the village is close to the border with mainland China and it was often attacked and ransacked by bandits, who were rampant in the early decades of the 20th century.<sup>7</sup> To defend against these attacks, the villagers erected barricades made of bamboo and thorny plants and built a

<sup>1</sup> Oral history interview with Mr. Kong, a village elder of Muk Wu Nga Yiu, conducted by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 25 March 2024. See also 蕭國健：《鑑古尋根：香港歷史與古蹟尋蹤》(香港：三聯書店(香港)有限公司，2021年)，頁135。

<sup>2</sup> Property Particulars of Section A of Lot No. 383 in D.D. 90.

<sup>3</sup> HKRS58-1-56-22, “Land at Li Muk Fu, Northern District, N.T., Demarcation District 90, Lots 383A & 434, Application by Kong Tung Shing of Li Muk Fu - for Building and agricultural purposes”, 27 May 1911 to 12 June 1911. Muk Wu Nga Yiu is recorded as “Li Muk Wu (李木湖)” in block government lease, otherwise also spelt as “Li Muk Fu”.

<sup>4</sup> Oral history interview with Mr. Kong, a village elder of Muk Wu Nga Yiu, conducted by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 25 March 2024. See also 蕭國健：《鑑古尋根：香港歷史與古蹟尋蹤》(香港：三聯書店(香港)有限公司，2021年)，頁135。

<sup>5</sup> See Hong Kong Government, *A Gazetteer of Place Names in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1960), p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> Oral history interview with Mr. Kong, a village elder of Muk Wu Nga Yiu, conducted by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 25 March 2024.

<sup>7</sup> 〈落馬洲四大漢行劫磚窰〉，《天光報》，1933年7月13日；〈新界上水發生劫案羅湖磚窰被四賊械劫〉，《工商日報》，1935年8月6日；〈上水木湖村難民區內發生劫殺案〉，《工商晚報》，1938年12月22日。



watchtower. The height of the watchtower allows it serve as a lookout as well as a form of defence against bandits. If approaching danger were spotted, the guards on duty at the top of the watchtower would beat a drum and bang a gong to alert the villagers, who would then take refuge in the watchtower.<sup>8</sup>

The watchtower is three-storey high with a square layout. It was built of grey bricks laid in a pattern of seven courses of stretchers alternating with one course of headers. The upper sections of the four sides of the external brick surface are plastered, while the lower sections are partly plastered and partly fair-faced. As a defensive structure, the watchtower features a simple and functional design with little decorative features, including the stripped cornice at the top of the watchtower and a fish-shaped gargoyle left on the corner of the southwestern elevation. There are at least nine square windows, each of which is protected by thick iron bars set in granite frames. Most of the gun holes are located on either side of the square windows. All of the gun holes are designed as small rectangular slits, except for four that are shaped like a gourd. They are narrower on the outside and wider on the inside to allow the villagers to shoot from different angles. There is an opening in the floor of the top level, which is believed to have been a hatch providing access to the roof.

**Architectural  
Merit**

The watchtower at Muk Wu Nga Yiu seems to have been left vacant for a long time.<sup>9</sup> Although the original built form remains, all of the timber flooring inside the watchtower has collapsed and only the anchoring points of purlins, long since disappeared, on the interior brick walls are still visible. The watchtower has a flat roof, which seems to have been modified. There are examples in other parts of the New Territories of watchtowers that are connected to houses. However, the houses adjoining the watchtower at Muk Wu Nga Yiu have fallen into ruins, which compromised its integrity.

**Authenticity &  
Rarity**

Built with the purpose of defending the village against incessant bandit raids in the early 20th century, the watchtower bears witness to the historical development of Muk Wu Nga Yiu. The village fell within the Frontier Closed Area (“FCA”) after it was established in 1951 and border controls were enforced, so villagers and visitors had to obtain a FCA permit to enter the area.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, one of the

**Social Value  
& Local  
Interest**

<sup>8</sup> Oral history interview with Mr. Kong, a village elder of Muk Wu Nga Yiu, conducted by the Antiquities and Monuments Office on 25 March 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, Topographic Map, 1:1000, Map ref: 3-NW-12C (Ed 1999-11).

<sup>10</sup> “Policy on Frontier Closed Area, Legislative Council Panel on Security”, LC Paper No. CB(2)1713/01-02(06), p. 1, <<https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr01-02/english/panels/se/papers/se0502cb2-1713-6e.pdf>>, accessed 22 April 2024; “Closed border area is extended”, *South China Morning Post*, 20 May 1962.

observation posts known as MacIntosh Forts was built on the hill opposite to Muk Wu Nga Yin to keep watch over the border area, resulting in decrease in crime,<sup>11</sup> and therefore, the watchtower gradually fell into disuse.

There are a few graded historic buildings in the vicinity of the watchtower, ***Group Value*** including the Tin Hau Temple at Muk Wu Tsuen (木湖村天后廟), the entrance gate at Muk Wu Wai (木湖圍圍門) and the village house at No. 19 Muk Wu (all Grade 3).

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<sup>11</sup> “H.K.-China Frontier ‘Most Peaceful in World’”, *South China Morning Post*, 8 November 1965.

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