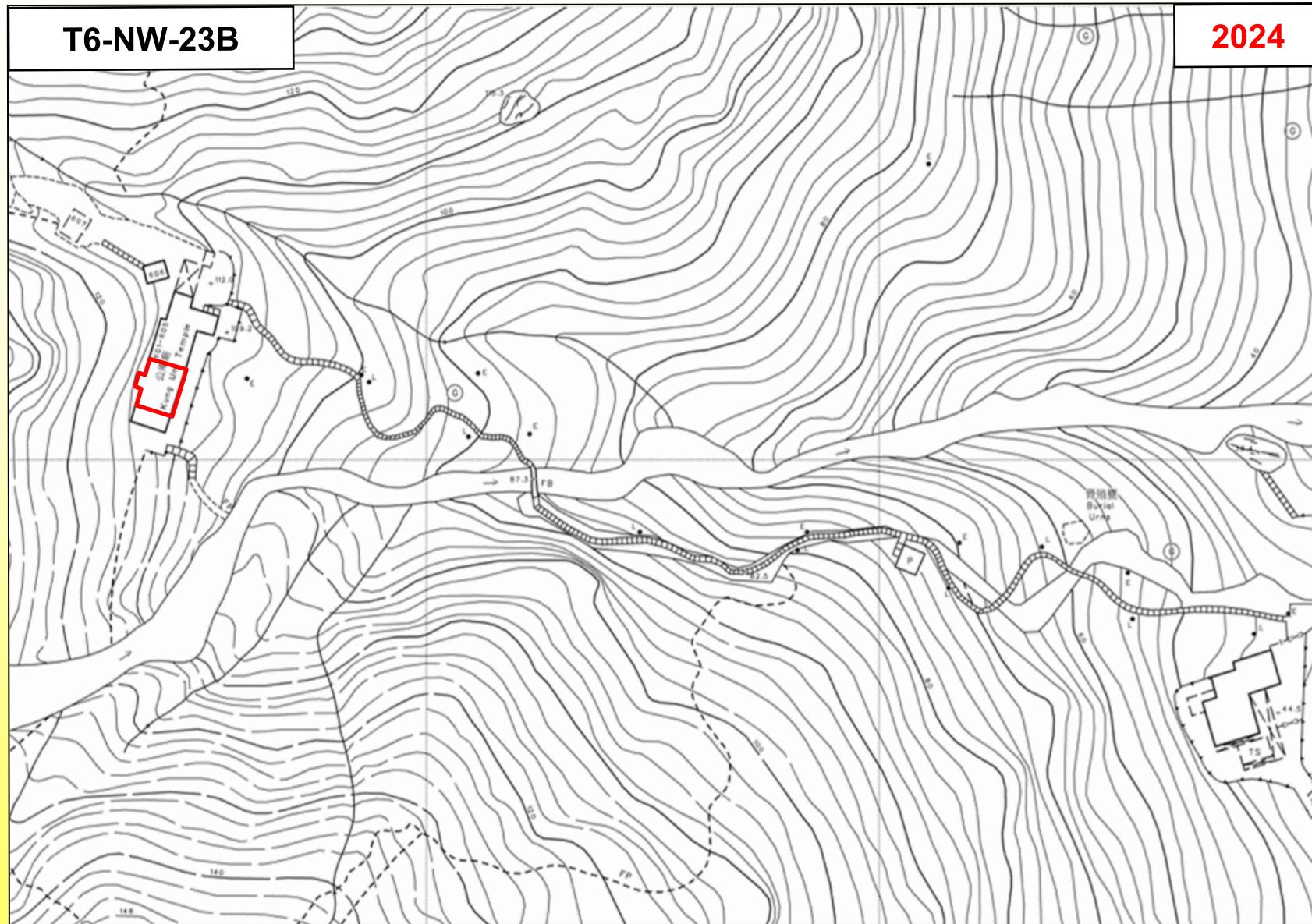


N187

新界元朗公庵禪師寺
Kung Um Temple, Yuen Long, N.T.

擬議三級歷史建築
Proposed Grade 3



只用於識別位置，並非確實範圍 For identification of location only, not exact boundary

約建於1920年代
Probably built
In the 1920s



公庵禪師寺正面
Front elevation of Kung Um Temple



公庵禪師寺內部
Interior of Kung Um Temple

Located on a hillside near Pak Sha Tsuen (白沙村) overlooking Shap Pat Heung (十八鄉) in Yuen Long, the Kung Um Temple (“the Temple”) is dedicated to *Chanshi* (禪師) (an honorific title given to a Buddhist monk), who is revered as a deity in the area’s local traditions. The Temple is jointly owned by Wa Fung Tong (華封堂) of Shan Ha Tsuen (山下村) and Chung Shing Tong (忠勝堂) of Lam Hau Tsuen (欖口村), where most of the villagers bear the surname Cheung (張). It signifies the deep-rooted connection between the two villages and reflects the religious belief they share.

**Historical
Interest**

The legend of *Chanshi* originates from local folklore and dates back to the middle of the Qing dynasty. The local villagers are said to have discovered the body of a woodcutter surnamed Cheung, who lived in the area, in a stone cave on the hill. His body showed no signs of decay even though he had died some time before. Believing that the gods had blessed the woodcutter and made him into an immortal, the villagers therefore offered worship to him.

The exact construction year of the Temple cannot be traced. According to the land records, however, the lots where the Temple stands were purchased by the villagers of Shan Ha Tsuen and Lam Hau Tsuen at auctions in 1919 and 1929 respectively, which suggests it was built sometime in the 1920s. Based on the stone inscription at the entrance of the Temple, when a Taoist Zhang Jiuyang (張九陽) was responsible for its upkeep from 1922 to 1929, a series of works were carried out to improve access to the Temple and accommodate the increasing numbers of *Chanshi* followers coming to worship there. These works included the construction of the Wui Sin Bridge (會仙橋) in 1926 and the erection of the ancillary buildings on either side of the Temple which were completed in 1930, and were made possible by the generous support of various donors, including Sir Robert Ho Tung and the Chun Yuen Pawn House (晉源押) in Yuen Long Market. The Temple underwent further renovation in the 1950s, which was funded by donations from the local community of Yuen Long.

Over the years, the Temple has served as an important place of worship and a meeting venue for the villagers of Shan Ha Tsuen and Lam Hau Tsuen. They consider *Chanshi* to be their guardian and celebrate his birthday (禪師誕) every year at the Temple on the 21st day of the seventh lunar month. Furthermore, villagers of Shan Ha Tsuen hold a lantern lighting ceremony (點燈) at the Temple in the first lunar month to celebrate the arrival of newborn boys. In addition, the Temple is known as an auspicious location to pray for rain. It is recorded

that prayers were successfully offered in 1924, 1929 and 1963, with the subsequent rains helping to alleviate the droughts of those years.

Built on an elevated platform, the Temple is a rectangular structure with an extended area jutting out at the rear elevation. The Temple is a one-hall grey brick structure. Its walls and pillars support a pitched roof made of reinforced concrete. On top of the entrance's granite door frame is a lintel with the Chinese characters “禪師寺” (“*Chanshi* temple”), above which is a pediment featuring decorative mouldings and a radiating pattern. Upon entering the hall, the altar can be seen at the center. The extended area at the rear is in fact a small structure connected by a flight of steps on the right. Originally a cave beneath a boulder, this is the place where it is believed the villagers first worshipped *Chanshi*. Kept as a niche when the Temple was built, it houses a small ceramic statue of the deity.

The Temple is built in the architectural style of vernacular brick houses that are commonly found in rural villages in the New Territories. Despite several renovations, the Temple's original layout and design have been retained. Its ornamentation is minimal except for the pediment on the front elevation. Nevertheless, the Temple's origins and its dedication to a single folklore deity give it added significance.

The generous support provided for the extension and renovation works as well as the ongoing worship that takes place at the Temple testify to the strong ties between the Temple and the local community. Not only does the Temple stand as an embodiment of the community's religious faith, but its significance is also reflected in the name of the mountain, Kung Um Shan (公庵山), on which it is situated and of the nearby thoroughfare Kung Um Road (公庵路).¹

The Temple and the nearby Wui Sin Bridge (Grade 3) hold significant group value, as they continue to serve the community and bear witness to the religious activities performed at the location. The Cheung Ancestral Hall (張氏宗祠) (declared monument) in Shan Ha Tsuen, as well as the shrine (神廳) and the Yan Shau Tong (仁壽堂) at Lam Hau Tsuen (both Grade 3) also have group value with the Temple, as they reflect the traditional customs of the villages.

Architectural Merit

Authenticity & Rarity

Social Value & Local Interest

Group Value

¹ The naming of “KUNG UM ROAD” was published in the Gazette on 28 June 1991. See Notification No. 2215 dated 28 June 1991, *Hong Kong Government Gazette*.

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