

Historic Building Appraisal
Nos. 21-24, Lane 5, Shan Pui
Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long, N.T.

Shan Pui (山貝) is in the south of Nam Sang Wai (南生圍), Yuen Long, *Historical Interest* facing a large piece of fishing ponds in the old days. The village was founded by Lam Siu-yuen (林兆元), a 13th generation member of the Lam clan, who moved from Tai Wai (大圍) village in its south some 200 years ago. The Lam Ancestral Hall (林氏家祠) probably built around 1900 is in the eastern part of the village. Most of the houses in the village are on the west of the ancestral hall. Six rows of houses were built in the village against a hill facing the ponds in the north. The row of four houses, Nos. 21, 22, 23 and 24, was on the last row with the hill at their back. They were probably the oldest buildings built by the Lams when they first settled in the village. Siu-yuen started by rearing ducks in the ponds in front of the village. The row of houses has been left vacated since the 1960s and is dilapidated.

The row of four connected houses is on the west of the ancestral hall facing north like the others. The houses are Qing (清) vernacular buildings each *Architectural Merit* having a one-hall-one-courtyard plan. It is constructed of green bricks and stone with its walls to support its pitched roof of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. A cooking stove and a bath corner is respectively on the left and right of the open courtyard in front of the hall. The living room is in front of a bedroom at the hall. A cockloft is above the bedroom also for use as a bedroom. The lintel is of granite. Above the stone lintel of the entrance of each house is a projected eave with plastered mouldings of bamboo, lotus and floral patterns.

It is a row of four residential houses to witness the earlier settlement of the Lams in Shan Pui. *Rarity*

It has some built heritage value.

Built Heritage Value

The houses are not maintained properly. It has not its authenticity kept.

Authenticity

It has group value with the Lam Ancestral Hall and a number of village houses in the village. *Group Value*

The Lam Ancestral Hall is in the southeast of the row of houses. It was used as the classrooms of a school called Yan Hing School (仁興學校) for teaching village children in the 1920-50s. The school was named after Lam Siu-yuen's grandfather Lam Yan-hing (林仁興). It was then used as classrooms of a kindergarten in 1967-68. Martial arts classes were organized in the open space outside the hall for villagers until the 1960s. Offering of incense to the ancestors at the ancestral hall was made by the Lams in turn called *lun gung pai* (輪更牌) in the morning and at dusk until the mid-1970s but discontinued when more and more clansmen moved out of the village. Dim Dang (點燈) ritual is still held at the hall. The names of the new born baby boys of previous year will be registered in the Tai Wong Temple (大王古廟) of the Yuen Long Kau Hui (元朗舊墟) and lanterns of the boys will be lit up at both the hall and the temple.

*Social Value,
& Local Interest*