

Historic Building Appraisal

Lam Ancestral Hall

No. 157 Shan Pui, Shap Pat Heung, Yuen Long

The Lam Ancestral Hall (林氏家祠) in Shan Pui (山貝), Yuen Long is a *Historical Interest* family ancestral hall built by the Lams whose founder is Lam Siu-yuen (林兆元), the 13th generation ancestor of the Lam clan moving from Tai Wai (大圍) some 200 years ago when he found that the area around the village was good for fish cultivation. It was not known when the ancestral hall was built, probably 100 years ago. Apart from being used for ancestral worship and dealing with village affairs, it was used as classrooms for village children of a school called Yan Hing School (仁興學校) in the 1930-60s. 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.

The ancestral hall is a two-storey building in Qing (清) vernacular design *Architectural Merit* having a two-hall-one-courtyard-two-chamber layout. The three-bay divided layout has an open courtyard between the main and entrance halls. The mezzanine floor occupies the side chambers only. The building is supported by concrete columns and walls topped with flush gable pitched (硬山式) roofs of timber rafters, purlins and clay tiles. The floors are either screeded or with ceramic tiles. Its external and internal walls are painted or plastered. Above its recessed entrance is the name board of the building and the ridges are decorated with moulding of geometric pattern, auspicious fruits, flowers, dragons, unicorns and others. Wall and gable friezes are with mouldings and paintings of floral, flowers-and-rocks and landscape motifs.

It is an ancestral hall to witness the history of the village. It has some built *Rarity & Built Heritage Value* heritage value.

Heavy plastering and concrete strengthening made to the building in and out *Authenticity* have very much diminished the authenticity of the building.

Offering of incense to the ancestral hall was made by the Lams in turn called *Social Value, & Local Interest* *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 have their names registered in the Yi Shing Temple (二聖

宮) 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.