TRADITIONAL
SHOPHOUSES

BUILDING
TYPOLOGY

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Aerial view of Lebuh Armenian & Lebuh Acheh

INTRODUCTION TO HERITAGE & CONSERVATION WORKSHOP 2017

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ORIGIN OF SHOPHOUSE

• Origin in Southern China but adapted with distinctive regular facades and five-footways.

• 19th century - constructed of timber with attap. Great fires in George Town in 1813 and 1826 outlawed attap roofing

• Stamford Raffles was largely responsible for this prototype (Jon SH Lim)

• Legislation creating five-footway in 1887
ORIGIN OF SHOPHOUSE

• A shophouse is a vernacular architectural building type that is commonly seen in areas such as urban Southeast Asia. This mixed-use building form characterises the historical centres of most towns and cities in the Southeast Asia region.

• Shophouse form is defined as a 2 or 3 storey row house which usually has a shop on the ground floor and living quarters above (Patricia T Fels)

• Terrace house – similarly styled house exclusively residential – setback from the streetline and has a private front court.
SHOPHOUSE TYPOLOGY

- 19\textsuperscript{TH} Century shophouses were built back to back and without firebreaks.
- Terraced townhouses houses in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century in the Seven Streets precinct were exclusively residential and setback up to 40 feet from the street line with the front court.
TRADITIONAL SHOPHOUSE LAYOUTS: URBAN GRAIN OF GEORGE TOWN
BUILDING TYPOLOGY

• Long and narrow – 80-200 feet long, 12-20 feet wide
• Series of airwells/skywells – let in light, air and rainwater
• Roof form, gable walls, gable ends
• Five foot way, arcaded walkway linking the entire row, semi-public space, shelter from rain
  - Traditional bamboo blinds for shade
  - Air vents, removable timber, folding metal door/collapsible metal gate
Airwell configurations

- Central courtyard layout
Airwell configurations

• Side courtyard layout
Airwell/courtyard

- The rear courtyards are usually where the household chores are performed.
- Washing and food preparation are done here, such as in coffee shops.
- Rainwater from the roof gutter collects at the central airwell which delays the discharge of rainwater to the drains.
Airwell/courtyard

• In shophouses, the airwell serves as sleeping space for the workers or male family members
• The rear open yard usually has a cement water tank with enclosure for bathing.
BUILDING TYPOLOGY

• Facade – symmetrical arrangement of doors and windows about a central axis.
• Long and narrow plan – front room for receiving visitors/commercial use; inner room beyond the timber screen/side of courtyard is for family use; space after the airwell is used for dining; kitchen is usually at the rear.
• Floor levels – generally raised above road level, with the floor of the air wells/courtyards lowered about 6 inches.
2 – 3 storey shophouses
Townhouses with fore court
Importance of symmetry
Verandah way
Floor tiles
Wall tiles
SHOPHOUSE ELEMENTS

Gable wall ends

Windows

Verandah way
Elements and materials: Floors

- Granite – heel stones, thresholds, lower steps of staircase, edging of five-foot ways
- Terra – cotta tiles
- Tessellated tiles
- Encaustic tiles
- Coloured cement tiles
- Mosaic tiles
- Terrazo tiles or in-situ
Elements and materials: Walls

• Soft burnt clay bricks 2 to 4 inch thick
• Lime or *chunam* plaster
• Shanghai plaster
• Portland cement plaster
• Wall tiles
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENANG SHOPHOUSE

Architecturally, the shophouses and townhouses in the Historic City of George Town can be grouped into six categories, depending on their façade designs. The seven groups are:

- Early Shophouse Style 1800 – 1850’s
- Early Transitional Style 1840 – 1900’s Southern Chinese
- Early Straits Eclectic Style 1890 – 1910’s
- Late Straits Eclectic Style 1910 – 1940’s
- Art Deco Style 1930 – 1960’s
- Early Modern Style Post war
BUILDING ENSEMBLES

Premises no. 71-83, Carnavon Street

Premises no. 2-14, Cannon Street

Premises no. 2-12, Ah Quee Street

Premises no. 1-15, Cannon Square
REFERENCES

http://penangshophouse.com.my
http://gtwhi.com.my


