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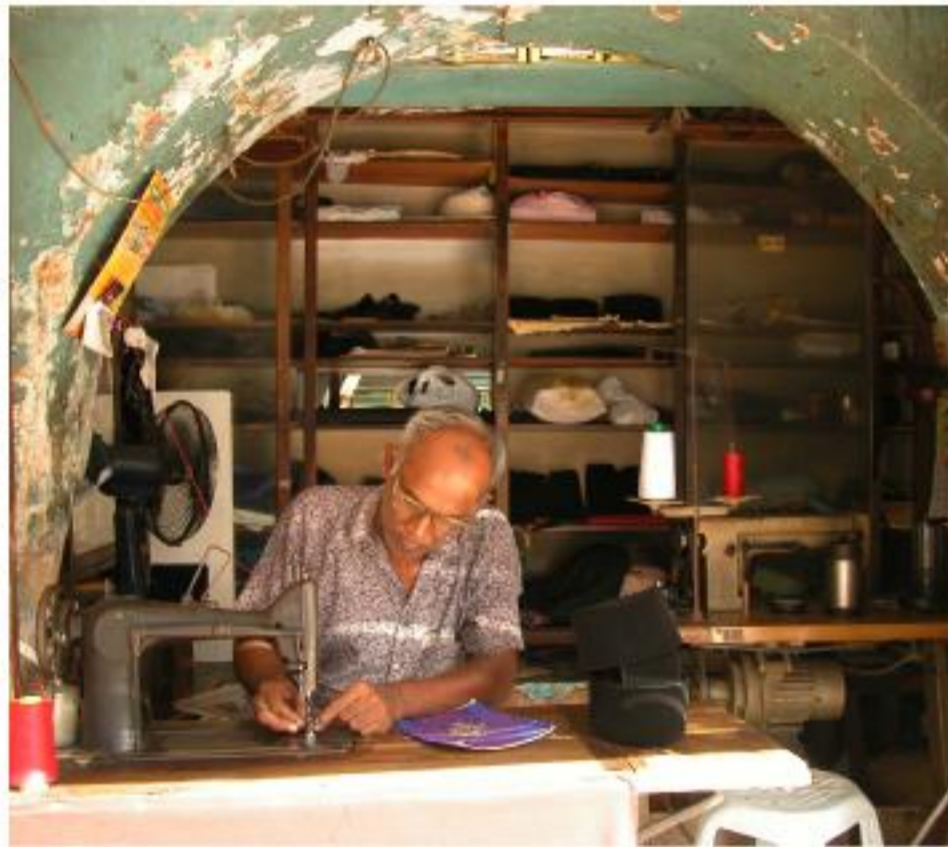
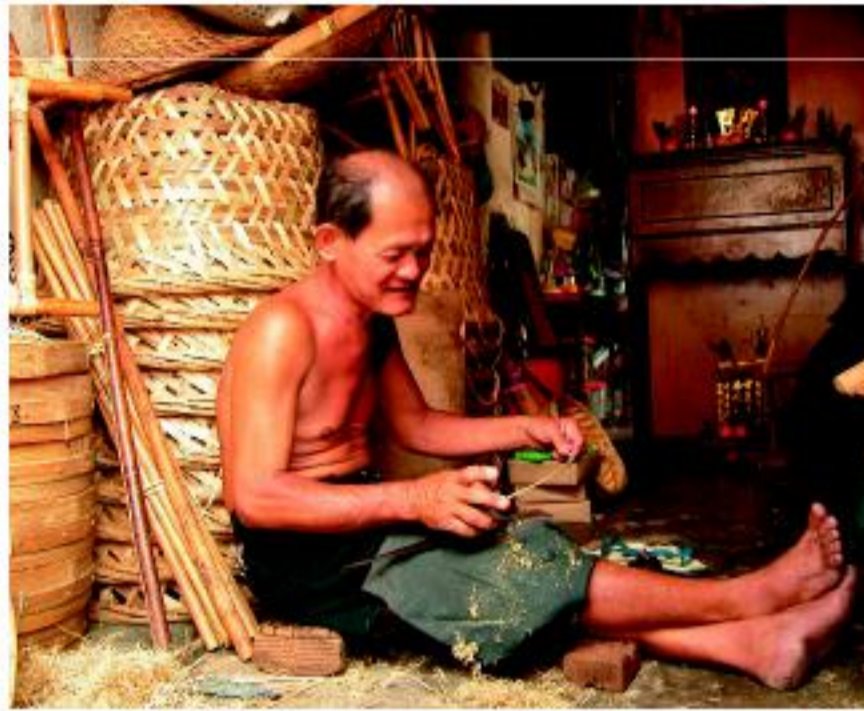


The Penang Shophouse Series

# KOTA KITA



George Town in 1798



## 延续传统的灯火

李亚福 一名传统手工艺匠，数十年来在头条路门牌 42 号的“大吉祥”宝号的灯笼店前，以双手制作闽南式传统“姓氏灯笼”。如今，“大吉祥”已成为檳城唯一姓氏灯笼制作宝号，也相信是全国唯一制作非玩赏姓氏灯笼的店号。

李亚福的先父李有然来自中国福州，创立“大吉祥”，他也是檳榔嶼福州会馆创办人之一。据李亚福说，二次世界大战前，檳城还存在约三间制作姓氏灯笼的店号。

可是由于业务的单元性，再加上灯笼制作发展有限，最终导致关门下场。若非其父在大吉祥制作灯笼时，也兼做裱画及彩联，或许早已步上关门后尘。李亚福：“单靠从事灯笼，相信我们也必须关门。”

李亚福在家中排行老大，可是祖传手艺并非其人生目标，所以他在毕业后，有 10 年光景在外闯荡找出路。他全马走遍了，最后还是倦鸟知还，他与姊妹们在父亲过世后承继家中祖业。可是命运弄人，李亚福的儿子却在 20 岁时因血癌撒手人寰，使他大受打击，意志消沉，决定放弃祖业。而家里兄弟姐妹也拒绝承继祖业。

他表示灯笼在数十年前还相当普及。由于时代的演变，再加上现代组屋的兴建方式，不再适宜高挂灯笼。只有宗祠组织及庙宇还会选择挂上灯笼。一般人只会在大节日时才大红灯笼高高挂。由于灯笼不再普遍，所以更新灯笼的次数也减少，这个行业的衰败是可预见的。

现今全国仅剩檳城的“大吉祥”及马六甲有人制作灯笼。“大吉祥”不同于马六甲的灯笼制作店的是，后者只卖供玩赏用途的灯笼，一对灯笼喊价上千令吉，然而却也有好奇的外国游客订制灯笼，带回国欣赏，还会要求画上中文译名。

在“大吉祥”，一对灯笼约卖 5 至 6 百令吉，“大吉祥”一个礼拜也只能制作一对的灯笼。订单除了本地也包括台湾、星加坡、印尼及欧洲等地。李亚福选择白天在头条路与其老伴干活，平时早上 11 时活动至傍晚 6 时，再把活儿带回家继续至凌晨。

自从他的儿子病逝后，他无奈关门承接这门手艺。他认为这种传统手艺虽有保留价值，可是不易糊口。

他称头条路在光大发展计划前是檳城最繁忙的街道，所有的大旗鼓、花车游行都会途经。可是物换星移，在发展洪流下，这间灯笼制作宝号的传统生意，亦寥寥无几。



## RED LANTERNS

by Chua Chang Wee

Lee Ah Hock, a traditional craftsman, runs a shop named 'Tua Keat Siang' or Great Auspiciousness at 42 Magazine Road. It is believed to be the only shop in Malaysia making traditional lanterns with Chinese family names inscribed on them.

Lee's late father came from Fuzhou in Fujian, China, and was one of the founders of the Fuzhou Association in Penang. Lee remembers that before the war, there were three shops making these lanterns but only his father's shop has survived. This is due to his fore-sight in expanding the business to include banner-making and mounting of Chinese scroll paintings.

Lee is the eldest son in the family and has four sisters. In the beginning he did not take up the lantern-making trade. Instead he chose to be a salesman after high school. However,

his sales were not as good as expected. After ten years, he returned home and inherited his father's business together with other family members.

Over the years the demand for lanterns in Georgetown dwindled due to the relocation of many Chinese residents from shophouses to apartments. These apartments lacked space in front of doorways to hang big lanterns. Nowadays, the orders mainly come from temples and Chinese clan houses. Lee commented that there are some shops in Malacca making similar lanterns, but it is not uncommon to find English names inscribed on these. They have high price tags as they are targeted at tourists.

In Tua Keat Siang the price for the traditional lanterns range between RM500 - RM600. In the old days, he and his wife worked from 11 am - 7pm in their shop and brought the unfinished work home. They could turn out a pair in a week.

Lee said that his only son has passed away therefore there is no one to inherit the trade. So he intends to end the business. He added that although this unique trade is worth preserving the long working hours and low returns may turn away those who want to make a living from it.

Perhaps, the quick pace of urban redevelopment around Komtar has made it difficult for traditional trades to survive and has destroyed many heritage buildings in the process.



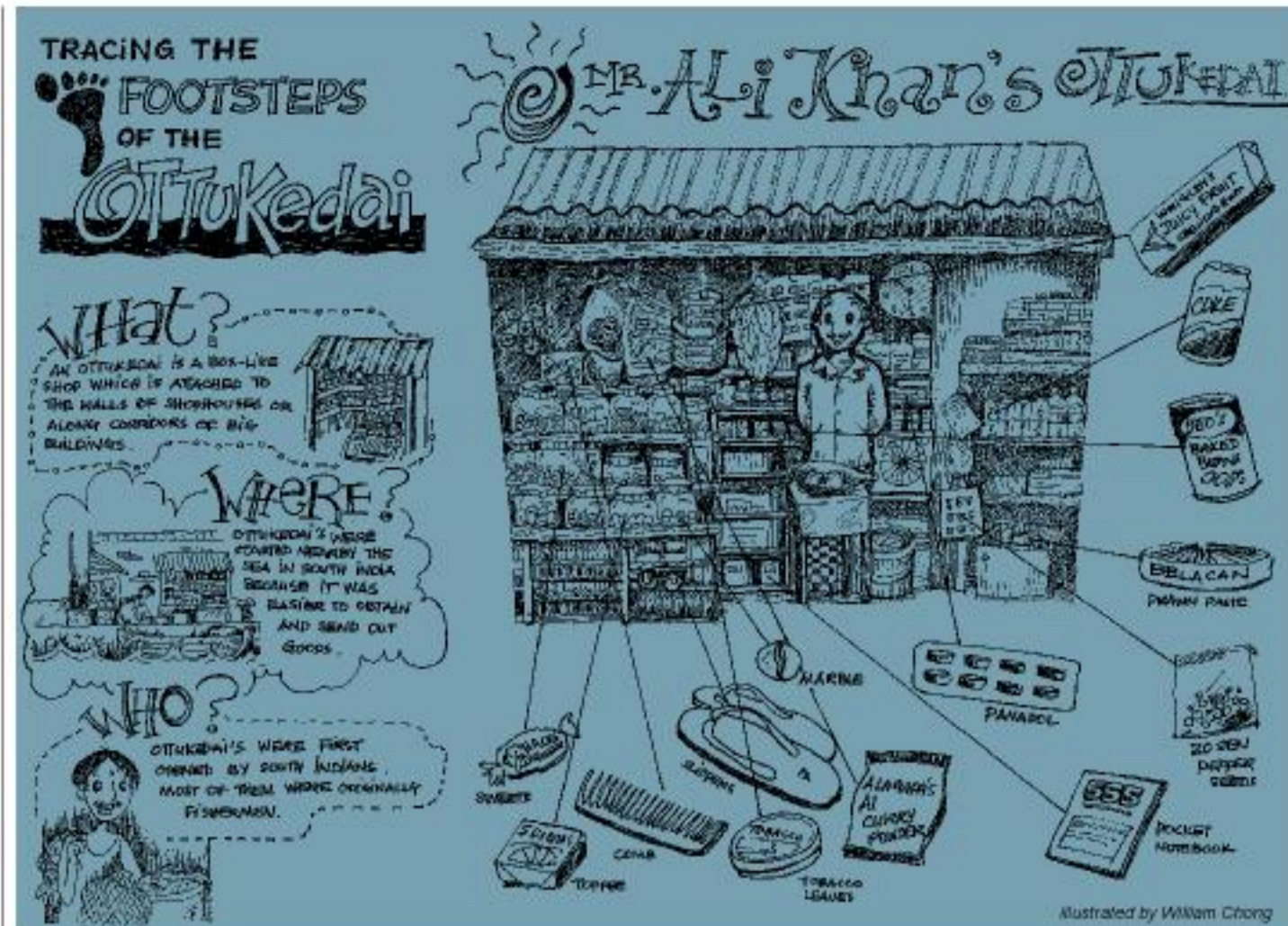
PEN HERITAGE CONSULTANCY SDN BHD

arts~ED ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS



# The Legend of YU CHAR KUIH

by Choong Qian Yi and Lee Ee Wei



## HAND-CARVED SIGNBOARD

by Tee Hor Yean



Kok Ah Hwa, a second generation traditional wooden signboard maker in Penang, is located at 41, Queen Street. Aged 62, he may be the last signboard maker using traditional carving tools. For almost 50 years, Master Kok has laboriously carved artistic Chinese calligraphy on the wooden signboards. The trade was handed down from his late father Kok Ying Chow, a master craftsman from Guangdong, China who started the business some 70 years ago.

## 'ANAK-ANAK KOTA' Heritage Education Program

by Ho Sheau Fung & Janet Pilla

Down some of the narrow alleys and side streets of innercity George Town, we can still find rare traditional craftsmen, the last of their kind, still making goods or preparing food the old fashioned way, as their ancestors did before them.

Between 2001-2003, several groups of school children living around the historical enclave of innercity George Town conducted research on these traditional craftsmen and their trades. The children aged 10 to 16 years, were part of a Heritage Education Project entitled "Anak-anak Kota".

This program is co-ordinated by the Arts Education Working Committee under the Penang Educational Consultative Council, with support from Penang Heritage Trust and Pusat

Oblivious to the latest trends and fashions in signboard making, Master Kok chooses to remain faithful to an old trade that demands fine hand skills and tremendous focus and concentration. This does not attract young people who prefer modern jobs. Liew Kah Mei, aged 21, however, is a young person who is the exception to the norm.

She met and apprenticed with Master Kok when working as a volunteer on a heritage education project. She often turned up at the shop with small sized wooden boards persuading him to impart his knowledge of carving to her.

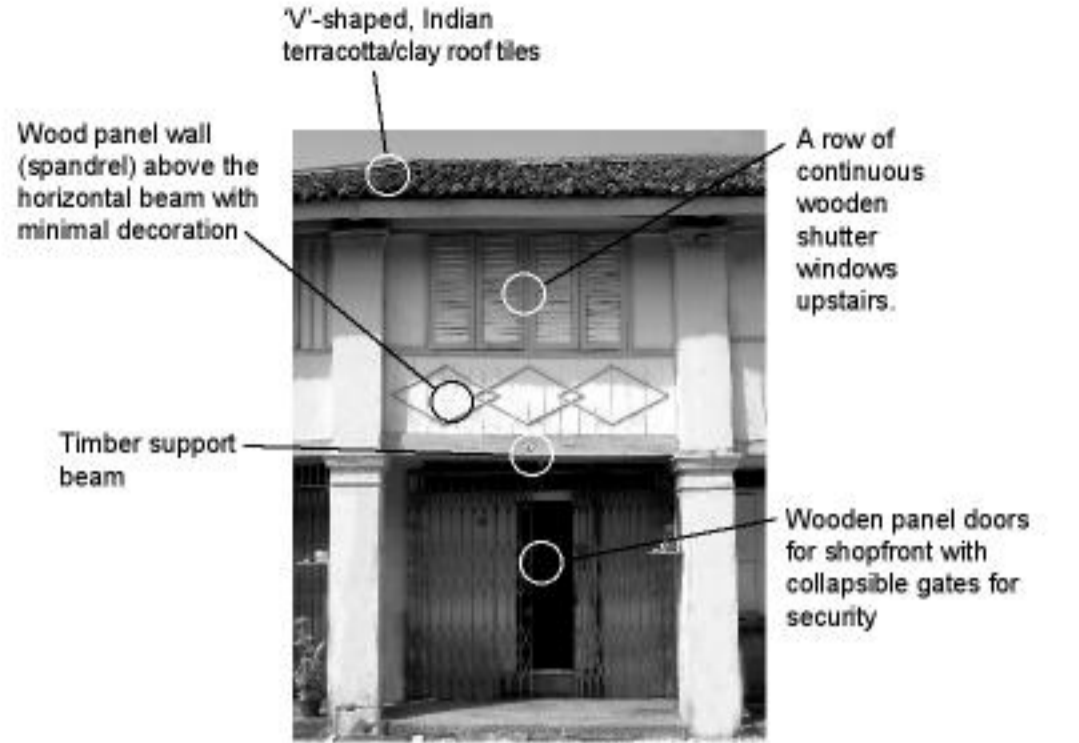
Liew has always enjoyed traditional handwork. Perhaps the influence came from watching her father, a traditional goldsmith at work. She likened craftsmanship to a world of its own, where one immersed oneself in work within an enclosed workshop in self-imposed isolation.

Acknowledging that signboard carving is practically a dying trade, Liew said that she would not pursue it as a profession but rather as a hobby for self-satisfaction. In pursuing her interests, she also had her share of frustrations such as objections from her parents, tight school schedules, exam preparations and so forth, but her sense of mission to safeguard a traditional art keeps her going.

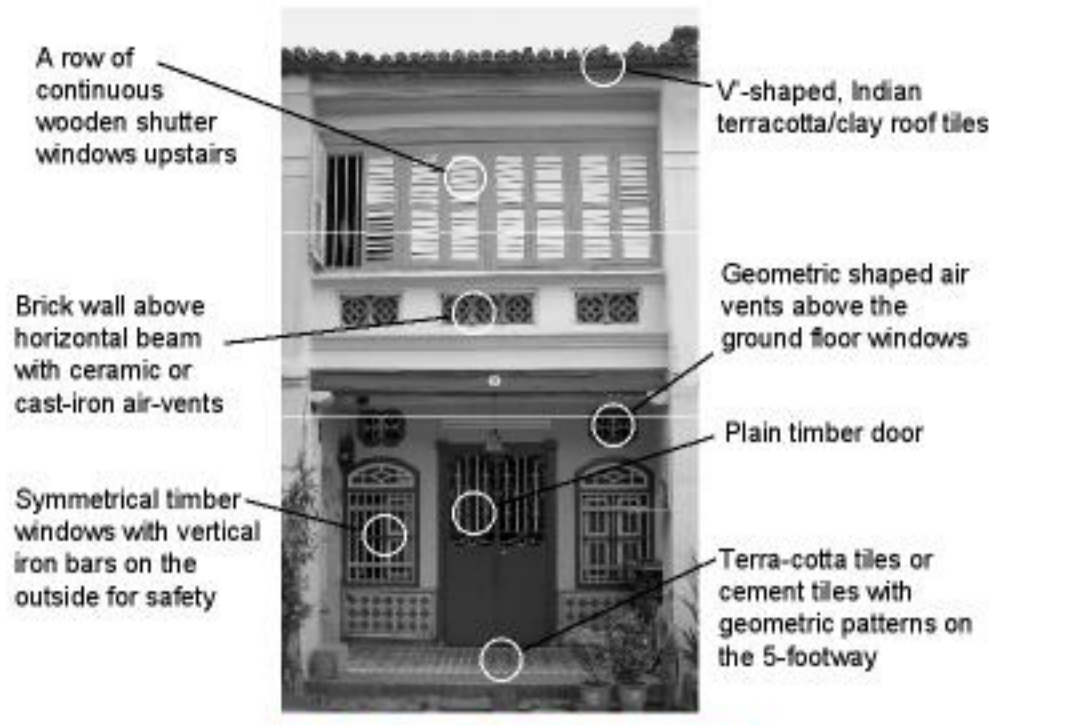
It is difficult to keep the signboard carving art alive among younger artists and to maintain the trade as it is. Perhaps we are fighting a losing battle trying to retain that which has been left behind by our ancestors. Alternatively, sharing the knowledge, passing it down to the next generation through training and education, and allowing innovations in design, could be possible solutions for its survival.



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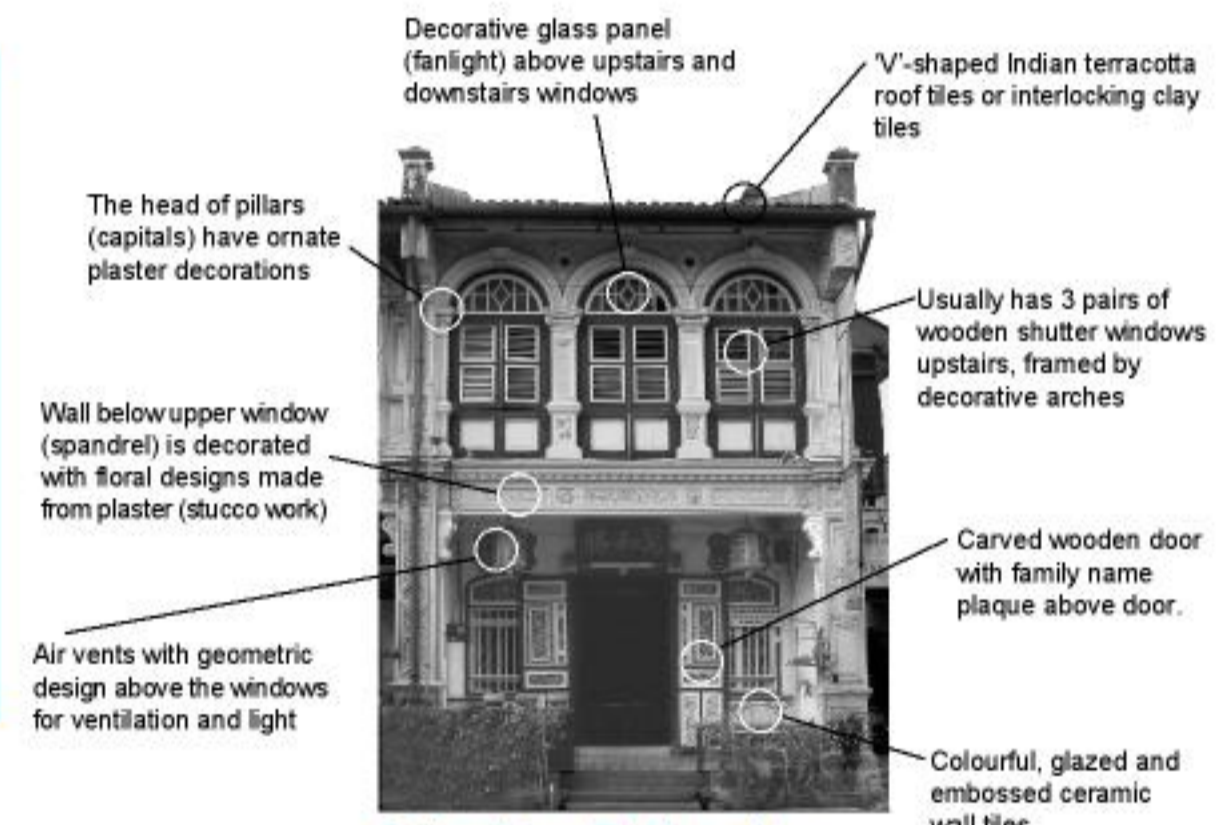


**Early Shophouse**  
1800's - 1850's  
Low, squat, simple two storey terrace house

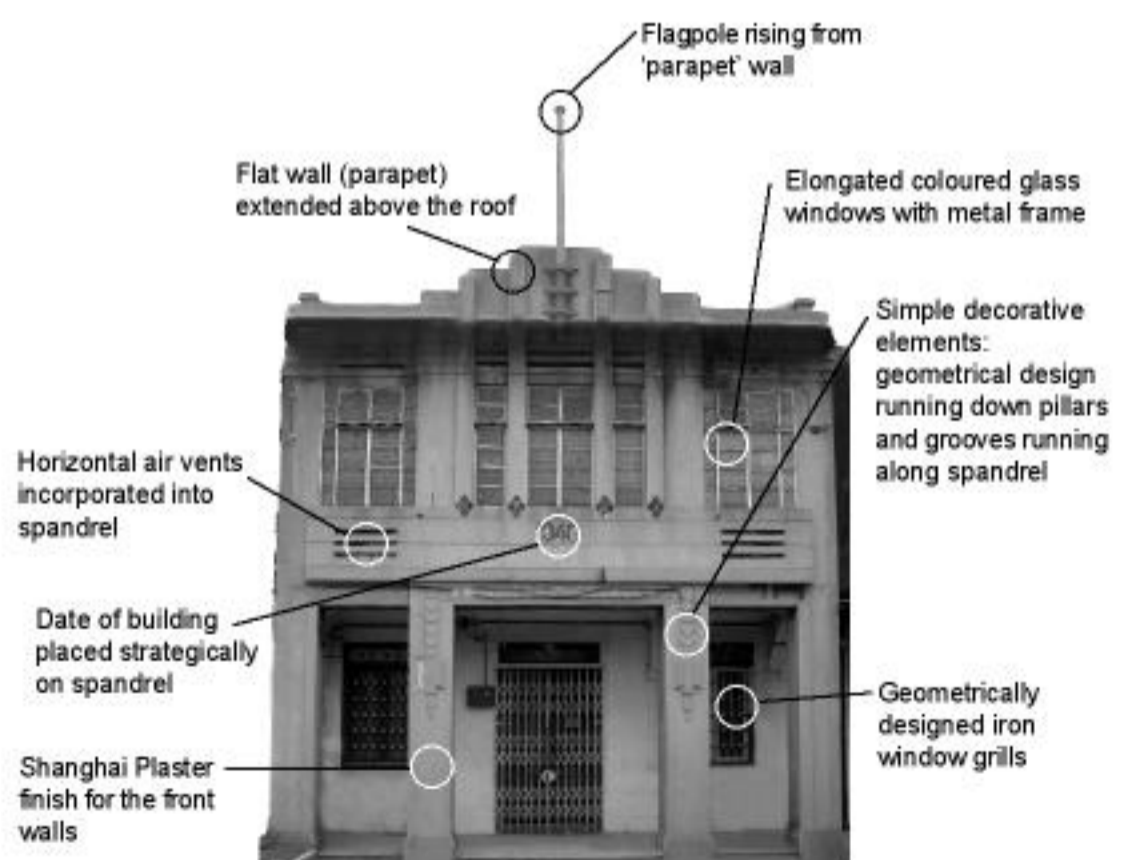


**Early Traditional Shophouse**  
1850's - 1890's  
Tall and slim two storey terrace house

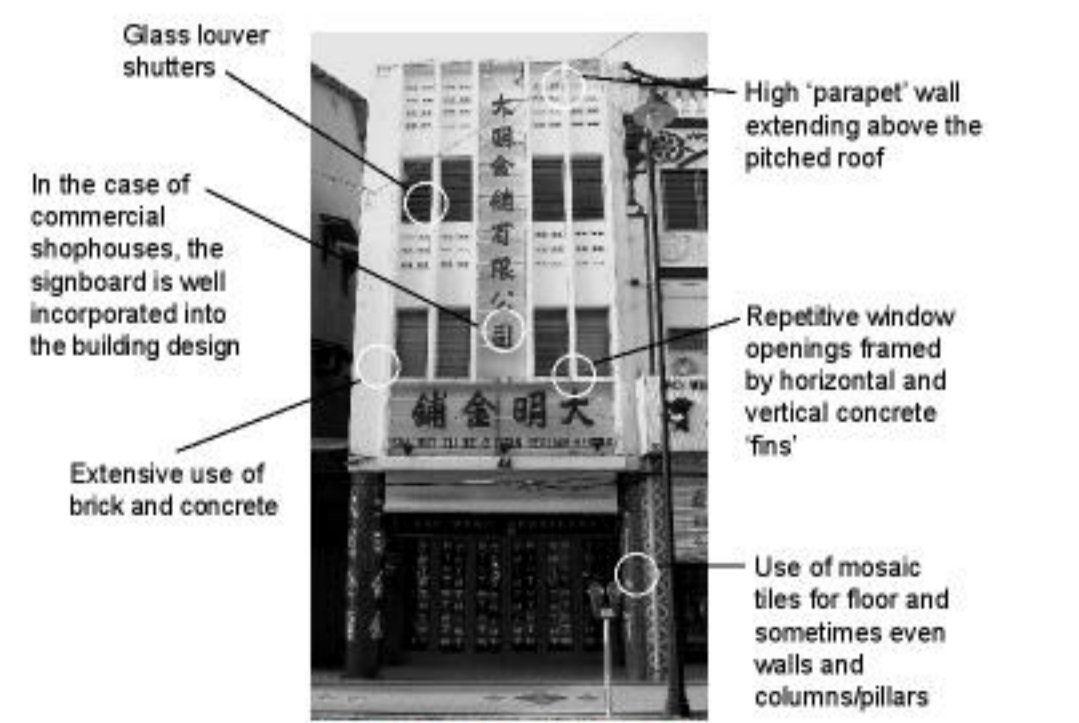
Can you identify the styles of shophouses you see around you?



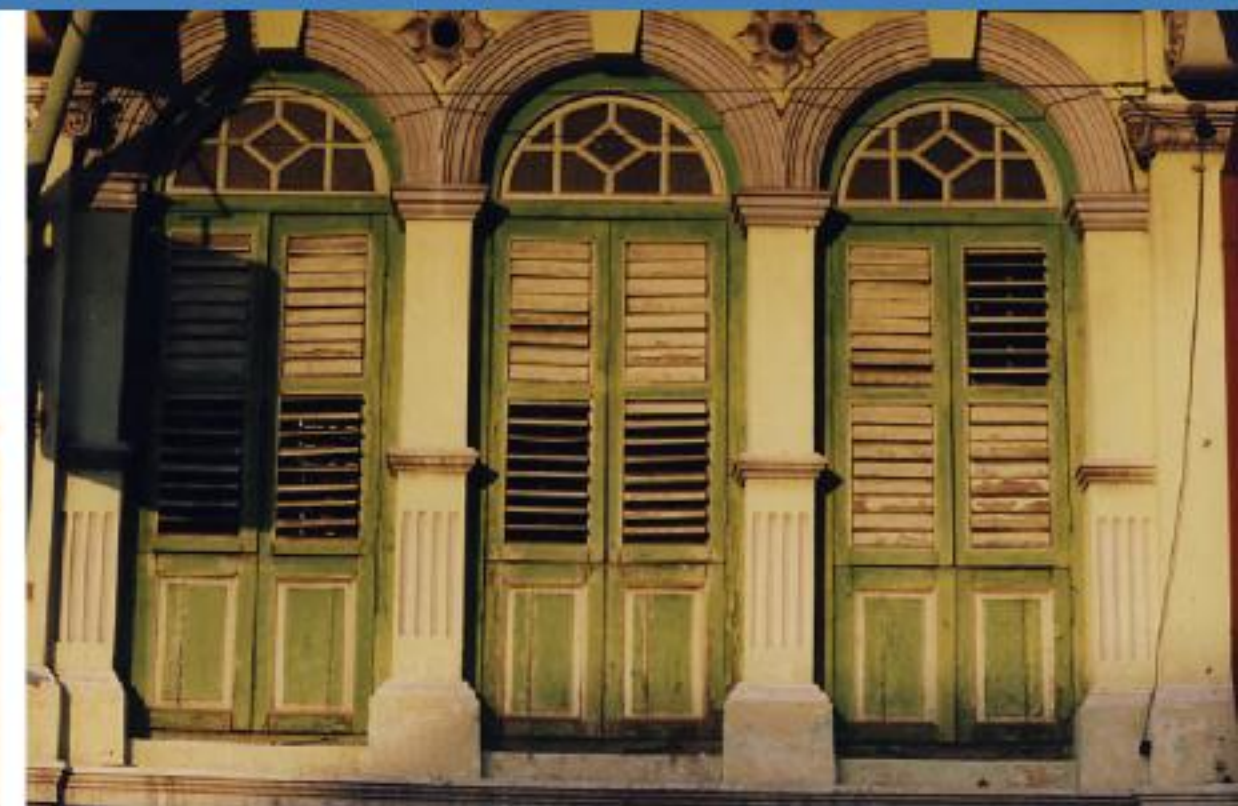
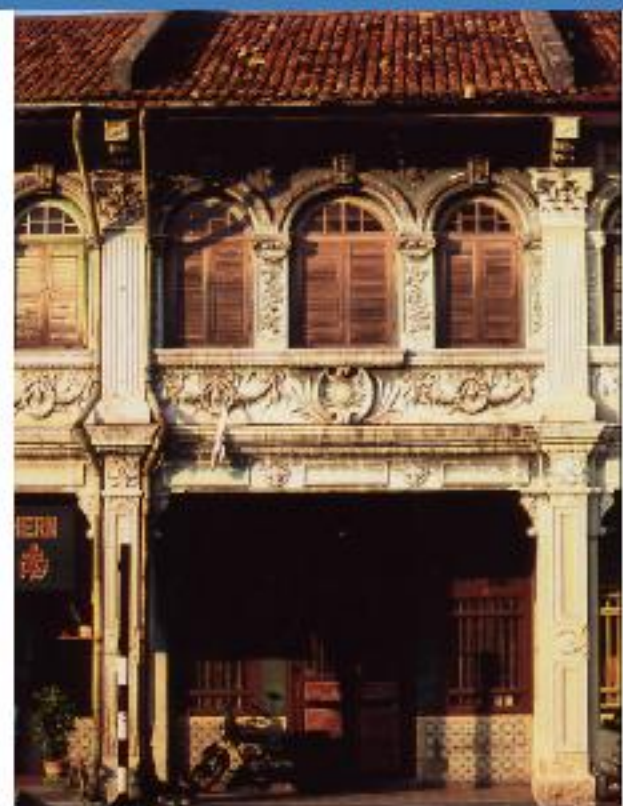
**Straits Eclectic Shophouse**  
1890's - 1940's  
Colourful and elaborately decorated two or three storey terrace house



**Art Deco Shophouse**  
1930's - 1960's  
Two storey building emphasising horizontal and vertical lines



**Early Modern Shophouse**  
1950's - 1970's  
Two or three storey building with clean horizontal and vertical lines and a lot of plain wall



LOOK & LEARN  
TAK TENGOK TAK ERTI



# LOOK AND LEARN ABOUT THE SHOPHOUSE

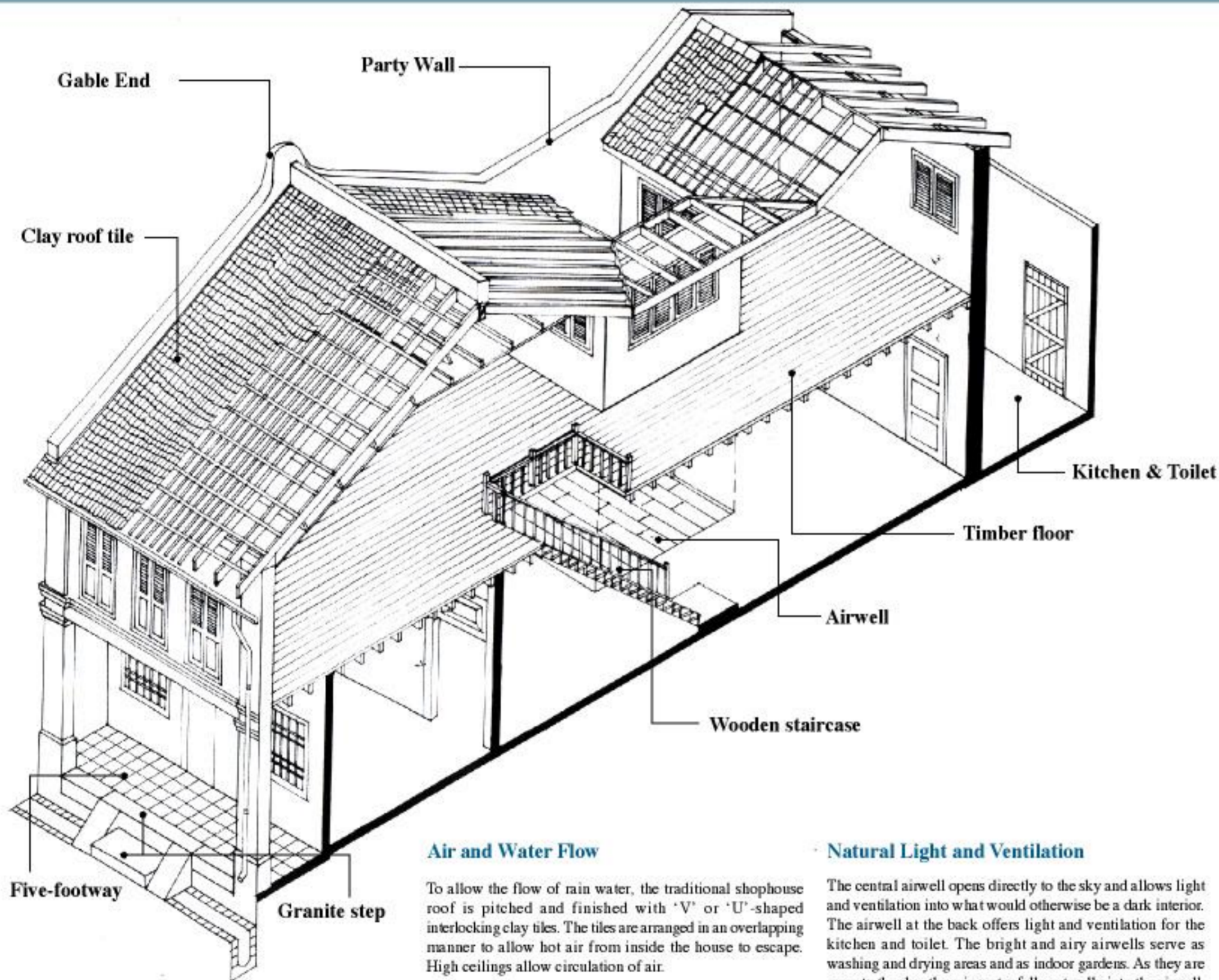
## What Is A Shophouse?

Those of us who grew up in George Town, have probably lived in a shophouse before. The shophouse is an urban terrace house characteristic of Asian towns in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The shophouse may be used as dwelling quarters or more commonly incorporate a shop or business premise on the ground floor while the family resides on the top floor. This was very ideal for small scale family-based businesses as family and relatives could live as well as work in the same building, providing both convenience and security.

Shophouses are built in rows and these rows are arranged blocks within a grid of roads and back lanes. Each row is fronted by a continuous five-foot way while each house is linked to each other by a 'party' wall.

A shophouse is usually two or three storeys high and is long and narrow. Special features are terracotta roofs, thick party walls and internal air wells. The attractive facade is made up of a door flanked by windows on either side on the ground floor and shuttered windows upstairs.

George Town has the greatest number of traditional shophouse rows in the Southeast Asian region. The preservation of the traditional houses and the traditional trades operating within these shophouses gives Georgetown a special character that attracts visitors and tourists. Shophouses in Penang will continue to be functional and liveable if they are properly maintained and cared for. The future of Georgetown as a heritage city depends on the correct conservation of the traditional features of the shophouse.



### Air and Water Flow

To allow the flow of rain water, the traditional shophouse roof is pitched and finished with 'V' or 'U'-shaped interlocking clay tiles. The tiles are arranged in an overlapping manner to allow hot air from inside the house to escape. High ceilings allow circulation of air.

Earlier shophouses without gutters allowed water to flow off the roof into open drains cooling the air with a curtain of water. Gutters and down pipes on later shophouses, made of galvanised iron, helped to discharge water from the pitched roof. Often this water is carried by a drainage system running through the house that helps to cool the house.

A shared 'party' wall separates one house from the next. The party walls protrude about 30 cm above the roof acting as a noise and fire breakers. They also take the weight of beams the upper floor and roof.

The walls are made of clay bricks and lime mortar and are painted over with lime wash. Since old buildings do not have water proofing, the lime mortar and limewash which allow moisture to evaporate are more suitable than modern cement and paint.

### Natural Light and Ventilation

The central airwell opens directly to the sky and allows light and ventilation into what would otherwise be a dark interior. The airwell at the back offers light and ventilation for the kitchen and toilet. The bright and airy airwells serve as washing and drying areas and as indoor gardens. As they are open to the sky, the rain water falls naturally into the airwell.

As the upper floor projects over the 5-foot way in front of the house, it provides a sheltered and cool walkway for pedestrians as well as a semi-public space for residences' social activities.

The pavement and lower floor uses plain terracotta tiles or cement tiles decorated with geometric patterns, both of which are very cooling to walk on. Granite slabs are used to edge the 5-foot way, with an additional granite piece placed across the open drain as a step. The granite edge serves to demarcate and protect the semi-private 5-footway from the public road.

## Key Elements of a Shophouse

In Malay, Chinese and Indian culture the basic elements of wind, water, fire and earth are often linked to creation, body functions, health, living environment etc. One of the exciting aspects of the traditional shophouse design is how it harmonises the elements of heat, light, water and air flow to minimise the problems of a tropical climate and provide maximum comfort, health and happiness for its residents.

# Nasi Kandar

by Shazwan Mustafa Kamal

Indian Muslims, commonly referred to as Mamak, (meaning Uncle in their native language), were enterprising migrants who decided to venture into the spice trade and food business.

The spice traders concentrated themselves in the Market-Penang-Queen Street enclave, an area that is now popularly known as Little India. This is where the local populace obtain their steady supply of spices. These spices were, and still are, imported from India. As the Indian migrant population grew, a number of these Indian Muslims seized the opportunity to sell authentic Malabari cuisine or what we call nasi kandar.

"You have to be strong as an ox to balance the kandar on your shoulders," quipped Hajjah Fatimah bt M.K Sheikh Ibrahim, a gutsy, energetic woman in her 50's who has been in the food and catering business since her childhood days, her speciality being nasi kandar dishes. According to Hajjah Fatimah, it took real stamina and perseverance to balance a pole on the shoulder with two large baskets suspended at either end, containing rice and side dishes. This was how the mamaks used to shunt themselves from one place to another to sell their staple food.

With a kandar, the mamaks were able to cart their food and park themselves anywhere they liked, especially at places that could attract lots of customers. At times they would sell their food along five-foot ways or in front of small food shops or eateries. Just like our modern-day hawkers, they used to venture into residential areas or even kampungs to sell their food. "It was a difficult life", continued Hajjah Fatimah, "as these nasi kandar vendors were constantly on their feet".



Courtesy of Penang Museum

"The original nasi kandar meal is a very simple one", she said. The nasi kandar vendors usually served fish curry to the customers and the preferred choice was usually the

Warisan. The project was aimed at increasing the awareness of children on their living and built heritage.

Some children apprenticed the traditional trader while others created illustrated brochures describing each trade, its history and the traditional work process. The information collected was used by the children to create illustrated brochures on each craftman as seen on this page.

The children's research also produced two trail maps for tourists; one on Endangered Trades and the other on Traditional Foods. These walking trails which take approximately two hours each, are very useful for tourists who want to get a glimpse of the living culture that is almost extinct in Penang.

Other children were guided by experts to study and appreciate the architecture of the Penang shophouse. However, the interesting aspect of the Anak Anak Kota Program was that they used an artistic medium such as photography, painting, drama or graphic design to document what they saw. The children's documentation of heritage was reproduced in the form of postcards, a calendar, drama performances and even in traditional signboards.

selangat fish, because of its affordability. Customers also had a choice of boiled egg or fried beef. No vegetables were served except, of course, boiled ladies-fingers, which usually accompanied the fish curry.

The hot steaming rice and curry was served in a plate lined with daun pisang (banana leaf), which gave the meal a sweet aroma. With a chuckle, she said that they also had take-aways those days, not using styroform though, but daun pisang to pack the hot steaming rice and a kole (tinned mug) to contain the curry.

The rice itself was cooked in a most unusual way as it was boiled in tembaga (copper) containers. Kapur sirih and salt were added to the boiled rice to help enrich the colour and texture of the rice, apart from making it tastier.

Curries were cooked using traditional herbs and spices. Sometimes, when a wet curry paste was preferred, the spices that were washed would be ground with a little water using a batu-giling or grinding stone. As blenders were not in style then, the grinding was carried out by nearby shops. One such quaint grinding shop, which has been serving ever since the Japanese occupation, is discreetly tucked away in Market Street.



When the grinding business first started, all the work had to be done manually as grinding machines were not readily available. Twenty years later, the very first grinding machines were imported from India, China, and England. During the early days, Malay, Chinese and Indian nationals purchased various spices from the spice grinding shop. This included the ever-famous nasi kandar vendors.

The nasi kandar vendors depended on the spice traders, and the grinders depended on the nasi kandar vendors. Theirs was a symbiotic relationship and a closely-knit community as they needed to depend on each other to survive in this faraway land. As Hajjah Fatimah recalled, the networking was simply amazing. The symbiosis is also alive, for just as Allgapa Mills began with a small machine on Queen Street and grew into big business, the innocuous the Nasi Kandar hawker has transformed into a nationwide chain.



# AIS TINGKAP

by Joshua Tan



"Sherbat" is a sweet, red-coloured, flavoured drink chilled with shaved ice. In Penang, many refer to this drink by its location in Tamil Street where it was sold through a window in the wall.

The Malay term "Sherbat" which originates from the Indian term "Sharbat" is probably adapted from the western term "Sherbet". Literally meaning "Fragrant Herbs" Sharbat originated from the Middle East and has since been adopted by many eastern cultures using local ingredients to cater to local taste.

In 1928 Abdul Azeez moved his sherbat business from Sri Lanka to Penang. In 1931 his son Seemi Mohammad and his wife moved to Penang as well to help their father run the business. Now, grandson Abdul Azeez and his brother run this family business in Tamil Street in the hub of Chowrasta Market.

Although Seemi Mohammad maintains most of the original Indian recipe, the drink has undergone some changes. While the grandfather used 25 different herbs and ingredients, the grandson, Abdul Azeez, now uses only a few, imported by local Indian sundry shops on Tamil Street. In the old days, "Ais tingkap" was sold for a mere 10 cents! Today it costs RM2.00!

## Evolution of the ice-shaving machine

### BEFORE WWII



### 1960's - 1970's



### 1980's - PRESENT DAY

"THE ELECTRIC ICE GRINDER"



Illustrated by William Chong