

**Reading San Ma Lou Through Its Shophouses:  
Uncovering the Socioeconomic and Cultural Layers  
of Macau (1920s–1970s)**



**Kei Ieng Ung**  
**6314759**

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 Historical Context of Macau	
1.1 The Colonial History before the birth of San Ma Lou	4
1.2 Shophouse typology in Southeast Asia	7
1.3 Early Shophouse typology in Macau	10
1.4 Development of San Ma Lou as a commercial hub	12
Chapter 2 Shophouse on San Ma Lou: Façade Styles	
2.1 Key architectural styles	14
2.2 Neo-Classical in Shophouse in Macau (1920s-1940s)	14
2.3 Art Deco in Shophouse in Macau (1930s-1950s)	17
2.4 Modernism in Shophouse in Macau (1950s–1970s)	20
Chapter 3 Analysis of the Façade Design of the shophouse and the relation to its Business Typology	
3.1 Key “businesses “of study cases housed (popular businesses during 1920s – 70s)	22
3.2 Possible Reasons for some shophouses preserving the original essence of the façade while some embracing the change of times	26
Chapter 4 Conclusion	
4.1 Shophouses as a window into the historical and cultural transformations and a reflection of the commercial development during the 1920s-70s	36
Bibliography	37

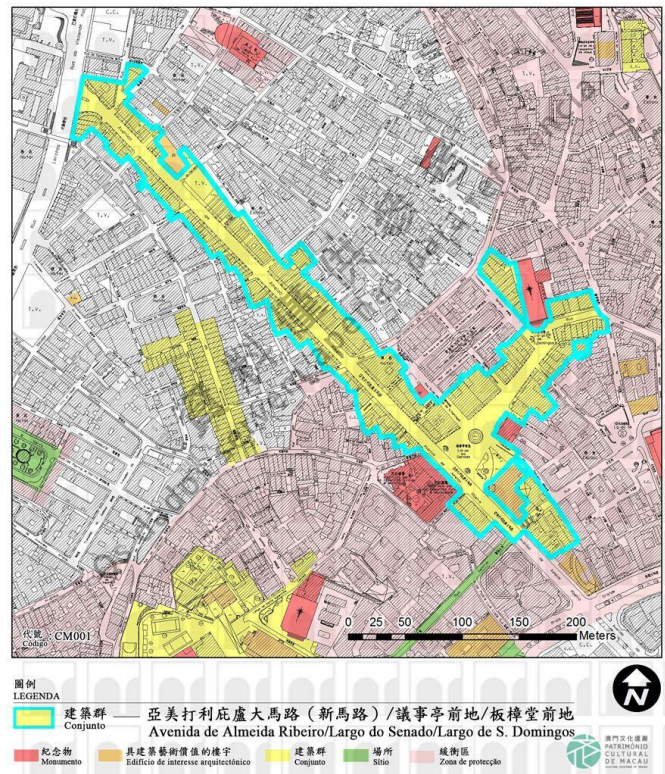
## Introduction

### A reflection of colonial history: San Ma Lou and Shophouse

When discussing the city center of Macau, one of the first places that comes to mind is Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro. Commonly known as San Ma Lou (meaning “New Road” in Chinese), it is one of Macau’s most important commercial streets. The street is characterized by its shophouses, a typical colonial mixed-use housing typology in the Southeast Asian region, lining both sides.

In the context of San Ma Lou, the fusion of Chinese and Portuguese cultures is evident not only in the architectural styles of the buildings but also in the historical significance of the road itself. Its construction connected the Inner Harbour to the Outer Harbour, marking the first official link between the Chinese and Portuguese communities. Through the growth and evolution of San Ma Lou, we can observe how a series of expropriations and urban developments reinforced Macau’s deep economic, political, and cultural ties to the global capitalist colonial system (King, 2015).

This study primarily focuses on the period from 1920s to 1970s, before the introduction of heritage protection schemes in the 1980s, which halted most new developments in San Ma Lou.



*Figure 1. Senado Square (Largo do Senado) is named for its location in front of the Leal Senado (the former Macao Municipal Council). Since the early colonial period, it has served as the urban center of Macao, surrounded by buildings in the local interpretation of Neoclassical architecture. Together with San Ma Lou (Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro), the area evokes a strong Southern European character. In terms of urban planning, this Western-style public square is located near traditional Chinese marketplaces in Largo de S. Domingos, reflecting Macao’s unique identity as a city where Chinese and Western cultures coexist and intertwine. All locations mentioned are marked within the blue boundary. Mapping from Cultural Affairs Bureau.*



## CHAPTER 1

### Historical Context of Macau

#### 1.1 The Colonial History before the birth of San Ma Lou (1550-1910)

According to Santos (1988), the Portuguese first arrived in Macau in 1553. In 1569, they established a city wall that clearly defined the regions where the two major ethnic groups, Chinese and Portuguese, lived. This segregation continued even after the wall was removed in 1863, as an invisible cultural divide persisted, with both groups continuing to reside in designated areas with clear (Pires, 1988a).



*Figure 2. Plan de la Ville de Macao et de Ses Environs aux Portugais (1781)*

*The city wall, or the red region, indicated the Portuguese territory, mainly concentrated in the southern part of the peninsula. While the Chinese were living on the north side of the city wall, which was close to the border to China.*

Before 1842, Macau was Southeast Asia's major regional trading center (Cartwright, 2021). The segregation could also be seen in the rulers of the two prominent harbors in Macau. Groder (2004) stated that the Outer Harbour (Praia Grande Bay) functioned as an international port managed by Westerners; at the same time, the Inner Harbour was designated for trade with Mainland China and primarily housed the local Chinese population.



*Figure 3. View of the Praia Grande, the international harbour (1843). Intaglio printing – steel plate, engraving, hand-coloured. Engraving by W. H. Capone, after Thomas Allom (1804 – 1872), original by Warner Varnham*



*Figure 4. the Inner Harbour waterfront, 19th century. Painting by unknown Chinese artist. The buildings with the arcade. Along the shore are fronted by Chinese junks, several large European sailing and steam driven ships from the United States, England and Portugal, according to the several flags. The version of the Portuguese flag shown was in use only between 1830 and 1910.*

However, as written in the Decennial Report (1892–1901), Macau's status as a key trading hub declined after China ceded Hong Kong to the British in 1842. Due to its geographical limitations, Macau lacked a deep-water port capable of accommodating large ships. As a result, larger cargo vessels were drawn to Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong, further diminishing Macau's prominence in regional trade(Fei, 1996).

Written in Macao 400 years (1996), on April 20, 1844, Lisbon unilaterally recognized Macau and East Timor as overseas provinces of Portugal, though the Beijing government never officially acknowledged this status.

Shortly after, on July 3, 1844, the Treaty of Mongha, the first unequal treaty imposed by the United States on the Qing dynasty, was signed in a Chinese temple in Macau. This diplomatic agreement granted the United States the same privileges in China as those Britain had secured under the Treaty of Nanking in 1842(United States, 2013). It also marked a turning point in Macau's political landscape, as power gradually shifted from Chinese authorities to Westerners, particularly the Portuguese.

Tensions escalated further when Amaral ordered the destruction of Chinese tombs during road construction. While riding outside the city gates, he was ambushed and killed by Chinese villagers in what became known as the Passaleão incident (Bridgman, 1849; Jesus, 1902).

Protocol between China and Portugal respecting the Relations between the two Countries (signed in Lisbon on March 26, 1887) and the Beijing Treaty (signed on December 1, 1887) officially recognized Portugal's "perpetual occupation and governance" of Macau. In return, Portugal pledged never to cede Macau or its dependencies without China's (黃月波 et al., 1935). Although Taipa and Coloane were formally handed over, the territorial limits between Macau and the mainland remained (Pires, 1988b).



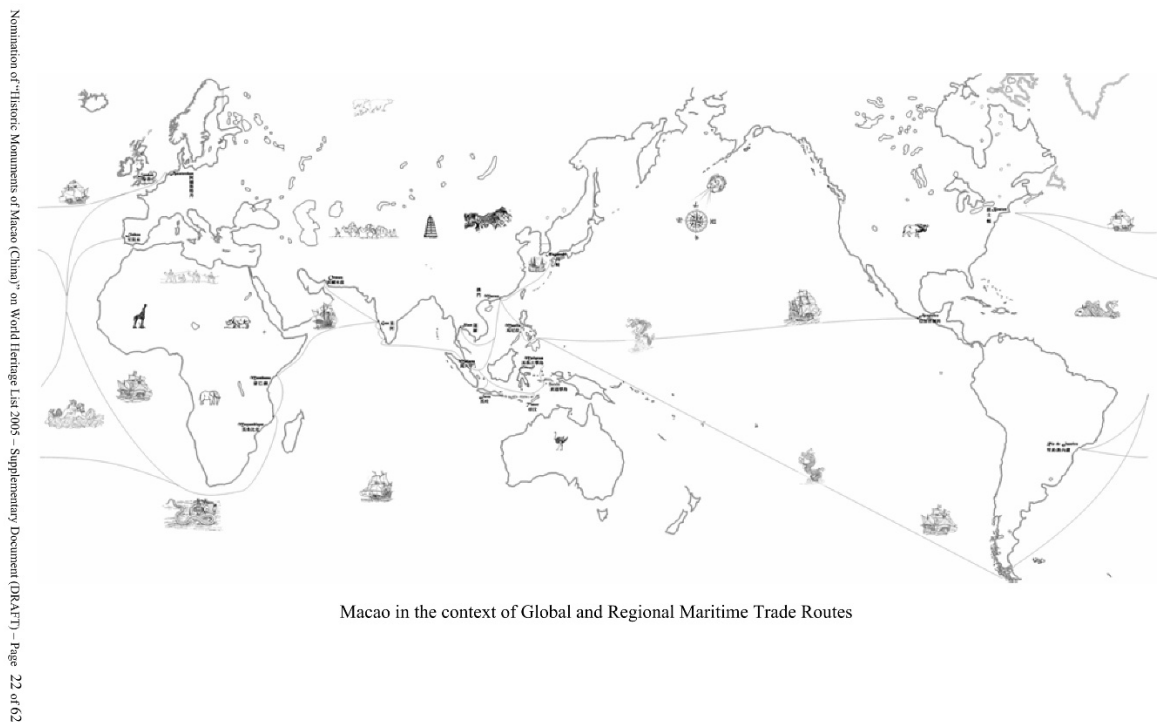
In 1914, the Portuguese governor sought to resolve the issue of the unclear border, suggesting that Portugal's support for its ally, Great Britain, then leverage to the Government of the Qing dynasty, was requested by the Portuguese to delimit Macau's territory. However, the Guangdong government resisted again. (Reis, 2016).

*Figure 5. Macao Surveyed By Capt'n Peter Heywood H.M.S. Dédaigneuse (1804). Published in 1840. Corrections to 1858.*

In 1919, taking advantage of internal conflicts within China, the Portuguese authorities in Macau initiated land reclamation projects and increased military presence. They built defensive works, anticipating potential confrontations with the Guangdong (Fei, 1996, p. 400)

## 1.2 Shophouse typology in Southeast Asia

Shophouse buildings are not exclusive to Macao. They can also be found in neighboring regions such as Hong Kong, Guangzhou, and Taiwan, as well as in Singapore and Malaysia, where their architectural influence is evident. Introduced by monsoons and merchant ships, this colonial typology has become a defining feature of prominent Southeast and East Asian trading ports (Han & Beisi, 2016).



*Figure 6. Macao in the context of Global and Regional Maritime Trade Routes Image from The State Administration of Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China.*

The shophouse is a unique architectural form that blends colonial influences with local traditions. It combines elements of classical European-style buildings, such as the narrow-fronted houses typical in Dutch architecture and the Georgian terrace houses of England, while integrating features of traditional Chinese courtyard homes, all designed with tropical functionality in mind (文], 2010). Between the 1840s and the 1960s, shophouses served as a primary mode of housing for various communities in Southeast Asia, including the Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Peranakan populations. These versatile structures accommodated residential, commercial, and storage functions and were often situated in downtown (Fahim & Mou, 2025).





Figure 7. Dutch narrow-fronted housing. Photo from The Real House.nl



Figure 8. England's Georgian terrace houses. Photo by Ed Talyor



Figure 9. Macau classic Chinese shophouse, Rua da Felicidade. Photo by unknown.

Another possible origin of shophouses begins with the British (Lou, 2016). In the 18th century, when they faced the challenging climate of southern India, particularly in Beniapukur, they adapted local architectural practices by extending eaves to create cooler covered walkways that provided shade from the sun. This design typology was subsequently integrated into colonial shophouses across Southeast Asia as the British expanded their influence in the region (龚 et al., 2019). This architectural shift coincided with broader developments in Macau, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou following the Opium Wars. Macau, one of Asia's earliest European settlements, began incorporating verandas into its local Western-style architecture by the mid-19th century.



Originally private spaces within mansions of Westerners, these verandas gradually evolved into public features as urban development accelerated.



Figure 10. A bazaar on the border between native and European parts of Calcutta. Published in *Views of Calcutta and Its Environs* by Sir Charles D'Oyly, (London, 1848). From the British Library archive, shelfmark X644.(24). *The Origin of Shophouse from India, Beniapukur in the 18th century.*

From the book *Architecture of Hong Kong, Macao, and the Pearl River Delta Region: Guangdong Qilou (Shophouse)* (林, 2006), in the early twentieth century, shophouse streets became highly popular in Macau, Hong Kong, and Guangdong, particularly along commercial streets. When the verandas connected, they created a shelter walkway allowing pedestrians and customers to walk and shop comfortably. To enhance the commercial attractiveness of the street, numerous shops would create "window displays" in their storefronts, allowing passersby to admire the merchandise while sheltering under the cool verandas, protecting them from the intense sun. Additionally, store owners often carved their shop names into the façades of the shophouses, serving a promotional function similar to that of contemporary billboards.



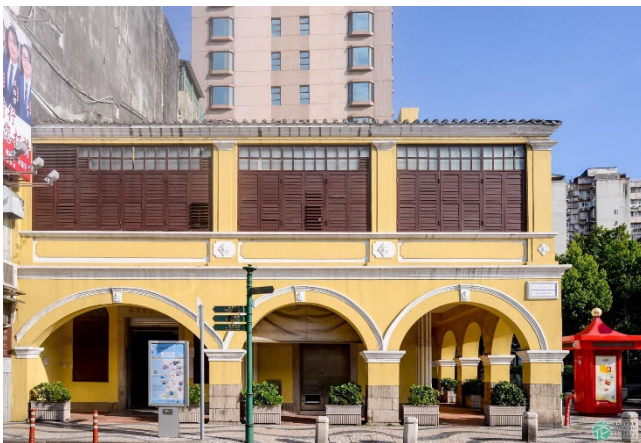
Figure 11. Shophouses in Hong Kong.

Photo from Mandy's Weblog.

### 1.3 Early Shophouse typology in Macau

As one of the earliest settlements for Europeans in Asia, Macau got the early exposure and to Western-style architecture.

Some historical buildings show that westerners had already adopted veranda designs, but these verandas were primarily private. The transition of verandas from private to public spaces occurred around the mid-to-late 19th century when the city underwent unprecedented expansion (Fernandes, 1998). During this time, Macau's architecture flourished like bamboo shoots after rain, both in quantity and style. Many newly built or renovated Western-style buildings from this era incorporated verandas, such as the “Opium Houses” and the “Holy House of Mercy” (Figure 12). This architectural “explosion” was primarily driven by new land development in Macau, particularly in the Inner Harbor area (Figure 13)



*Figure 12. Opium Houses (left), Holy House of Mercy (right), both are western-style buildings from this era incorporated verandas, built around the mid-to-late 19th century. Photos from Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau and Macao Government Tourism Office*

In a 1903 image of the Inner Harbor, buildings line the streets, and their arcades form a street with covering, offering shelter from wind and rain, making them well-suited to Macau's hot and rainy climate (Marreiros, 1984). However, today, most of the civilian arched shophouses in the Inner Harbor have disappeared with the passage of time, with only a few remaining on Rua das Lorchas and Rua Novo do Almada, preserving this early form of shophouse architecture in Macau.





Figure 13. Rua das Lorchas along the Inner Harbour in 1903, this is the time when the traditional shophouse typology started to transform, the verandas for a cooler commerce environment and signboards visible on the picture. Photo by unknown.



Figure 14. Rua das Lorchas along the Inner Harbour, approx. 1900, postcard, from the book 昔日澳門—明信片集 "The Past of Macau - Collection of Postcards" by Ho Weng Hong



## 1.4 Development of San Ma Lou as a commercial hub

### San Ma Lou: Urban Planning and Colonial Tensions

Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro (San Ma Lou), constructed between 1913 and 1918 (Instituto para os Assuntos Cívicos e Municipais, 2012; 呂, 2018) became one of Macau's most significant commercial streets, directly connecting Praia Grande to the Inner Harbor and passing by the Senate House (Rodrigues Costa, 2001). Initially controversial, its construction followed a Haussmann-style approach, cutting through the Chinese Bazaar and disrupting traditional (Burnay, 1998). Old buildings that obstructed the planned street layout were requisitioned and demolished to make way for a new road. The new road was completed in 1918, sparking a wave of architectural designs featuring reinforced concrete structures with arches. This government-imposed urban renewal sparked opposition from local Chinese residents while drawing criticism from Portuguese colonial officials, who viewed it as an integration of colonial and Chinese districts (Távora, 1983).

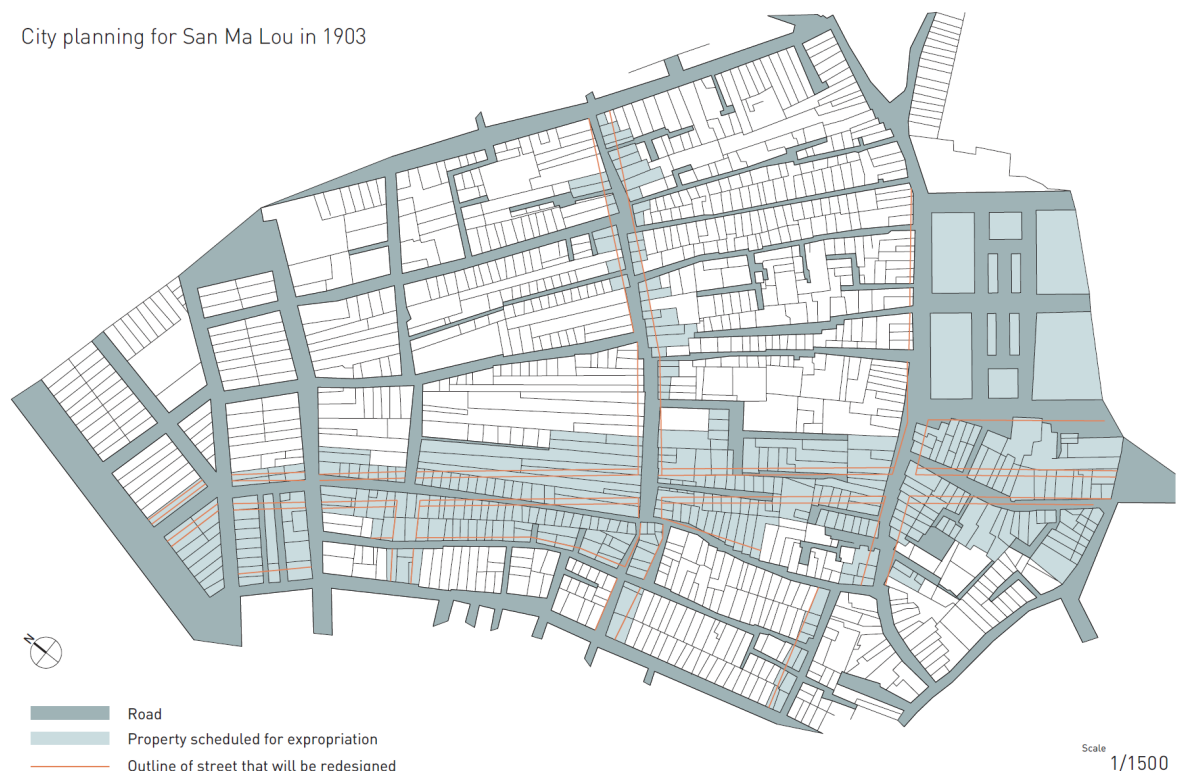


Figure 15. New Street Planning for San Ma Lou Area in 1903. Diagram drawn by author.

Information credit: The State Administration of Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China

The Portuguese government claimed that these urban planning efforts were part of "modernizing" and "beautifying" Macau. However, their initiatives often disregarded the local culture and needs of the Chinese community. Feng shui beliefs also played a role in local resistance. According to Gomes (1966), to some local Chinese, most of Macau's good fortune

depended upon a great dragon. This shape was naturally drawn on the map of the enclave, forming nine auspicious curves. The design of the avenue cut off the “dragon’s tail”. Therefore, some Chinese locals feared that the avenue's construction disrupted Macau's auspicious landscape, endangering the city's fortune, the incident highlighted the underlying tensions of colonial governance.

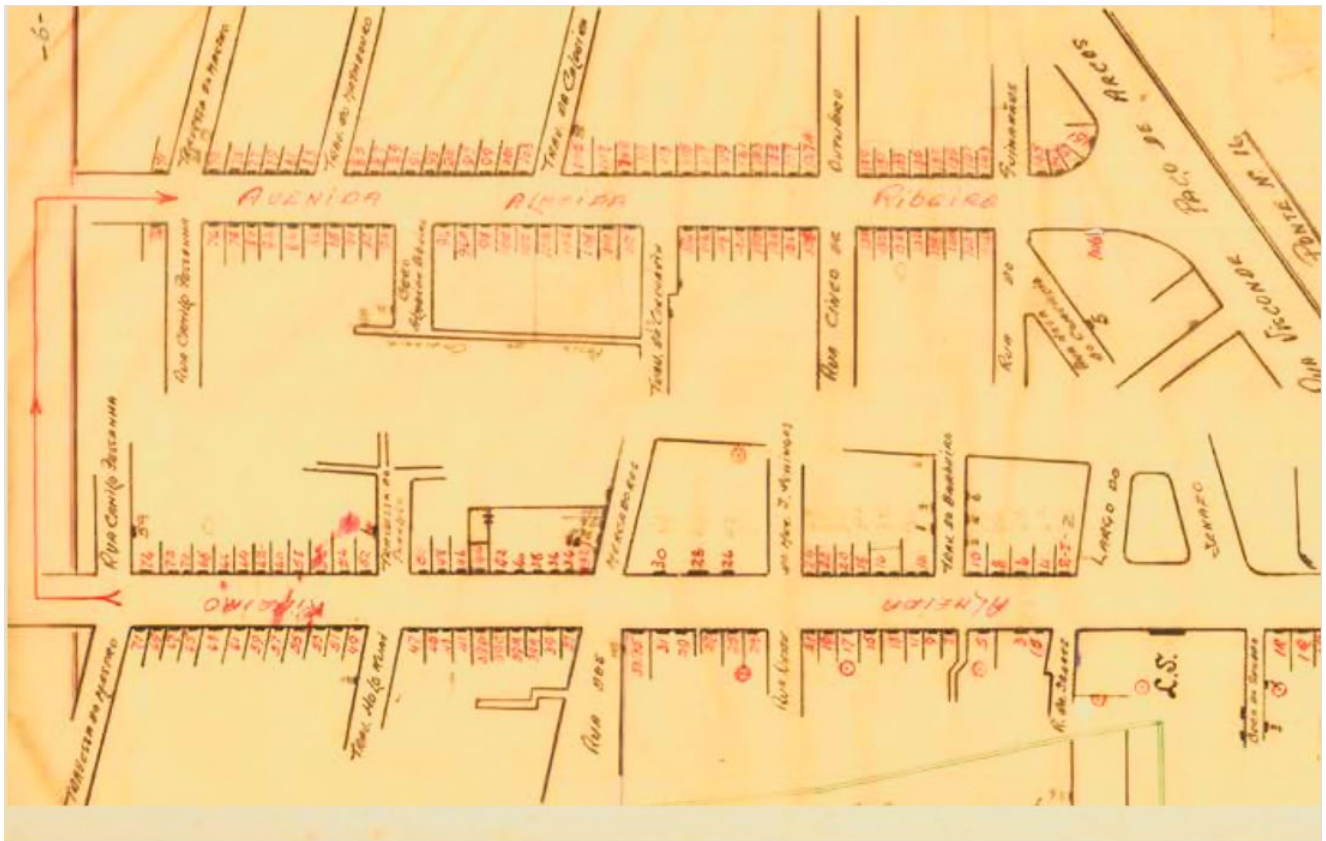


Figure 16. Drawing plan of distribution of building in numbers, 1950s, from Macau Archive

## Chapter 2

### Shophouse on San Ma Lou: Façade Styles

#### 2.1 Key architectural “styles”

The shophouse along San Ma Lou showcases architectural trends from the 1920s to the 1970s, from Neoclassical and Art Deco to Early Modernist. Over the years, some have almost the original façade they had from the start, while some buildings have experienced a modification of their decorative style. Typically ranging from three to five stories in height, the shophouses often allocate their ground floors for commercial activities.

The Neo-classical style was the by-default architectural choice for most shophouses built concurrently with the road's (S. K. Wong, 1998; 呂, 2024). The window and door frames were primarily crafted from timber in the earliest phase (呂, 2018). However, during the Art Deco period approximately between 1930s-1950s, from the archive drawings, there was a significant transition towards using concrete construction and steel frame windows, that provided greater structural support for glazing and permitted larger openings for expansive glass panels on the façade.

The façades of these buildings were designed to be structurally independent from the main skeleton of the house. This separation suggested that it allowed relatively adaptable and easy modifications to the façades over time. As a result, enhancements to the façades are often cosmetic, primarily serving decorative rather than structural purposes (S. K. Wong, 1998).

#### 2.2 Neo-Classical in Shophouse in Macau (1920s-1940s)

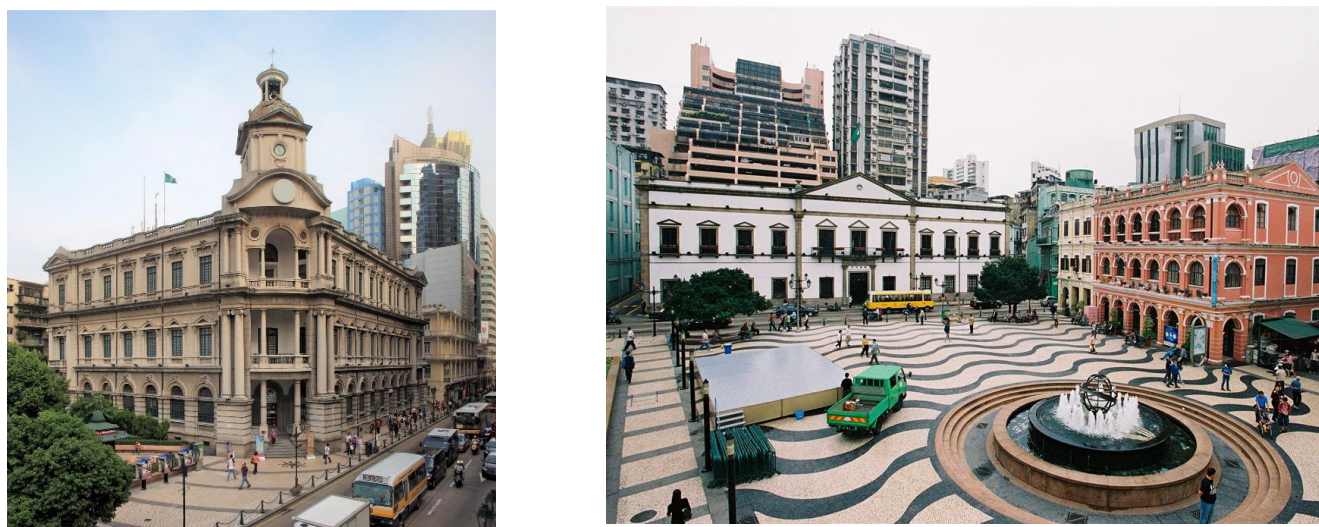
Neo-Classical shophouses typically drew upon European Baroque and Rococo styles while incorporating local motifs.

A common feature across many of these buildings is the presence of richly Corinthian or Ionic columns and fluted pilasters, which enhance their vertical rhythm and visual richness. Additionally, design elements from various periods and cultures, both Western and Eastern, are combined. Like numerous other shophouse developments in Southeast Asia during the same period, San Ma Lou adopted the Neo-Classical style at the beginning of the street, particularly in locations where historical classical buildings were already present. The façades aspire to mimic the grandeur of old, monumental buildings. The buildings surrounding San Ma Lou have strong European architectural influences. Notable examples of existing Neo-classical buildings are the Leal Senado Building, the General Post Office, and the Holy House of Mercy. Given this architectural context, it is unsurprising that many shophouses constructed along the newly



developed San Ma Lou adopted the Neoclassical style initially, resulting in a visually coherent and aesthetically refined streetscape.

Some scholars, 呂 (2024) for instance, classify this style as "Eclectic" to more clearly distinguish it from neoclassical architecture. While classical elements, like columns and Roman arches, are still present, the overall design is more unrestrained and flexible in terms of proportions and composition.



*Figure 17. General Post Office (Left). Senado Square and Leal Senado Building (Right). Photo Credit: Cultural Heritage of Macau*

Despite their roots in traditional Chinese architecture, these shophouses have successfully integrated European elements, producing a distinctive Sino-European fusion. This hybrid identity is visible in features such as friezes on the entablature, decorative window and door frames, drip-catchers within arches, slender columns at door corners, and exterior pedestals (Wagner, 2017). This style is particularly notable for its extensive use of decorative moldings, pilasters, carved woodwork, and imported glazed tiles on the façade.

The façades of these buildings typically showcase two windows on the upper levels, adorned with flat-arched or semicircular transoms (S. K. Wong, 1998). This blending of Eastern craftsmanship with Western architectural elements has led to Neo-Classical shophouses being viewed as one of the region's most expressive and vibrant architectural forms.

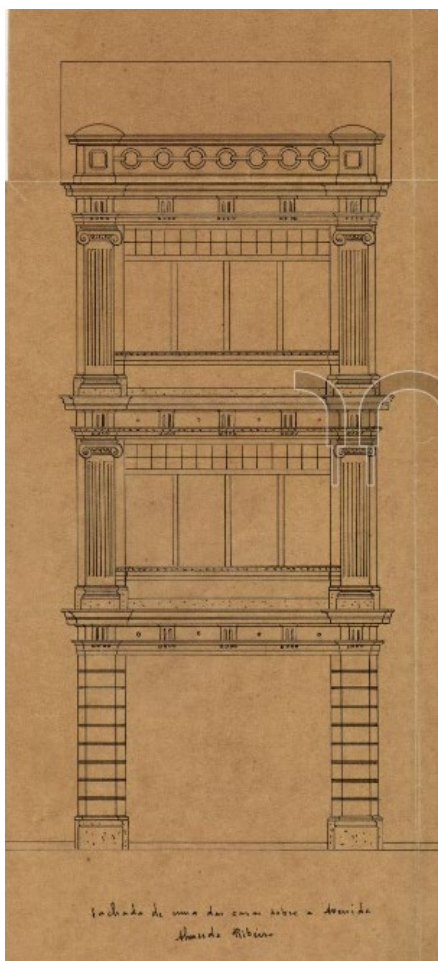


Figure 18. no. 91 facade drawing in 1915, from Macau Archive.



Figure 19. Tak Seng On Pawnshop, the original facade before it changed to Art Deco style.

### 2.3 Art Deco in Shophouse in Macau (1930s-1950s)

The Art Deco style, which gained prominence in Macao between the 1930s and 1950s, significantly impacted the new wave of urban architectural expression. Emerging from its European origins in the 1920s and 1930s, Art Deco quickly spread to colonial and major Asian cities, including Macao. In this context, it was applied to diverse building typologies, from residential structures to religious institutions like the Salesian College and civic architecture exemplified by the Mercado Vermelho, designed in 1934 by Júlio Alberto Basto.



*Figure 20. Mercado Vermelho, designed in 1934 by Júlio Alberto Basto. Photo from Hoje Macau.*

A defining characteristic of Art Deco shophouses is their understated and straightforward ornamentation, and it represented a significant stylistic shift and contrast from the elaborate designs of previous architectural eras. This style is distinguished by the geometric reinterpretation of classical architectural elements, including column orders, arches, and pediments, which are transformed into streamlined, abstract forms (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2025). Structural elements such as columns and beams are often understated and seamlessly integrated into the overall façade, resulting in visual coherence and a relatively flat façade. Another important stylistic feature is the stepped parapet and flagpole, which is commonly found in the shophouses along the streets of San Ma Lo.

In Macau, Art Deco shophouses also incorporated new construction materials sourced from various locations to embody the principles of Art Deco: structural efficiency and visual uniformity. From the archive materials, shanghai plaster was a notable choice for Art Deco shophouses on San Ma Lou during this era. At the same time, some buildings replaced





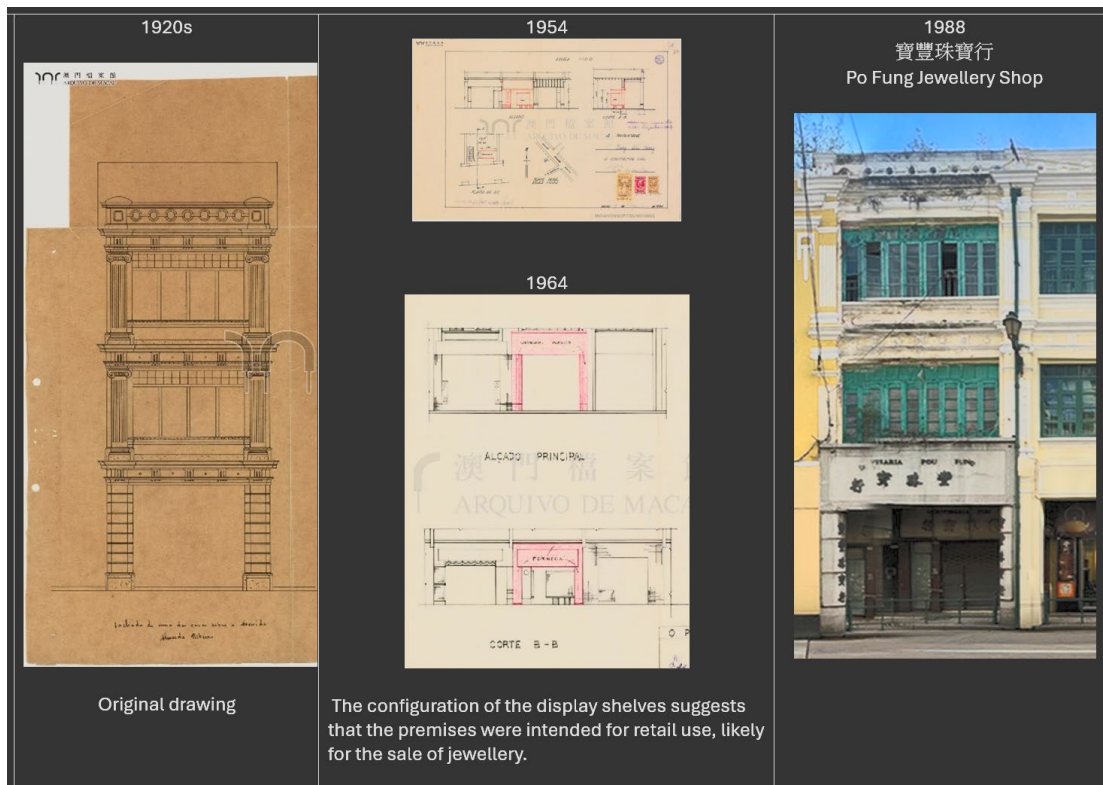


Figure 22. no.91. Although most elements of the original Neoclassical façade were retained, the lower portion of the podium was finished with Shanghai plaster (indicated in the elevation drawing), a material commonly used for aesthetic and protective purposes in commercial storefronts around the period. Drawing from Macau Archive. Photos by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)



Figure 23. Lei Kam Kei the renowned sauce brand Lei Kam Kei, famous for its seafood sauces, its building is suggested to be a mixed-style shophouse that exhibits a strong Art Deco essence, particularly evident in its pronounced vertical elements resembling “columns.” Additionally, the structure features a curved corner, a characteristic enabled by reinforced concrete construction. Photos by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)



## 2.4 Modernism in Shophouse in Macau (1950s–1970s)



*Figure 3. the former Pedro Nolasco da Silva Primary School, built in 1939. Photo from Cultural Affairs Bureau Macau.*



*Figure 4. Sir Robert Ho Tung Luso-Chinese School, built in 1951. Photo from The Heritage Society Macau.*

Modernism, often regarded as a purified evolution of earlier stylistic movements, had already reached Macao in the 1930s and 1940s. The style emphasized horizontal geometry, clean lines, and smooth, ornament-free surfaces. Notable examples include the former Pedro Nolasco da Silva Primary School and the Sir Robert Ho Tung Luso-Chinese School. Burnay (1998) stated that, in the early 1960s, a wave of Portuguese architects arrived in Macau from other overseas territories to take up government positions. Among them were Manuel Vicente, José Maneiras, and Natália Gomes.

By the 1950s, shophouse architecture in Macao began to reflect a more utilitarian aesthetic, giving rise to a style characterized by simplified, functional forms and minimal ornamentation. This design shift coincided with the economic and social conditions of the post-war period, which demanded cost-efficiency and practicality in building design.

The modernist shophouses of this era maintained similar proportions to their Art Deco predecessors but adopted a more restrained approach to façade articulation. The structure and façade became more integrated, often featuring a lime or cement flat plaster finish, with infill



walls usually made of cement. Reinforced concrete allowed for new architectural features, such as curved corner buildings. The roofs are often hidden behind the parapet wall.

Other distinctive modernist elements included vertical sun-shading fins, flat roofs, and materials like glass and steel (S. K. Wong, 1998). Expansive Steel-framed windows were commonly used and often complemented the geometric appearance of the façade. Plastered finishes further contributed to the minimalist aesthetic while offering a degree of variation and local color adaptation.



*Figure 24 No.61. Photos by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)*



*Figure 25 No. 63, Lau For Kee Pastry Shop. Photos by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)*

## CHAPTER 3

### Analysis of the Façade Design of the shophouse and the relation to its Business Typology

#### 3.1 Key “businesses “of study cases housed (popular businesses during 1920s – 70s)

##### Pastry and Seafood Product Shops

San Ma Lou was also notable for hybrid shops combining confectionery and seafood products, precursors to today's popular souvenir cake shops. These establishments offered diverse goods, ranging from traditional pastries to wine, dried seafood products like salted fish, shrimp paste, and oyster sauce.

In around 1921, the population involved in the fishing industry in Macao surpassed 60,000, constituting approximately 71% of the total inhabitants. During this period, the fishing industry was crucial to Macao's economy. This special hybrid shop would be seen nowhere else and reflect Macau's maritime heritage, which, although now diminished (Melo, 1895).

Figure 26. no. 137 Kai Chan Pastry Shop (says on the package that it also sells wine). Around 1960s.

Figure 27. Hong Hop Pastry Shop 鴻合餅食 (also sell oyster sauce, dried seafood). “蚧欄” written on the left means “clams shop”. Photo from

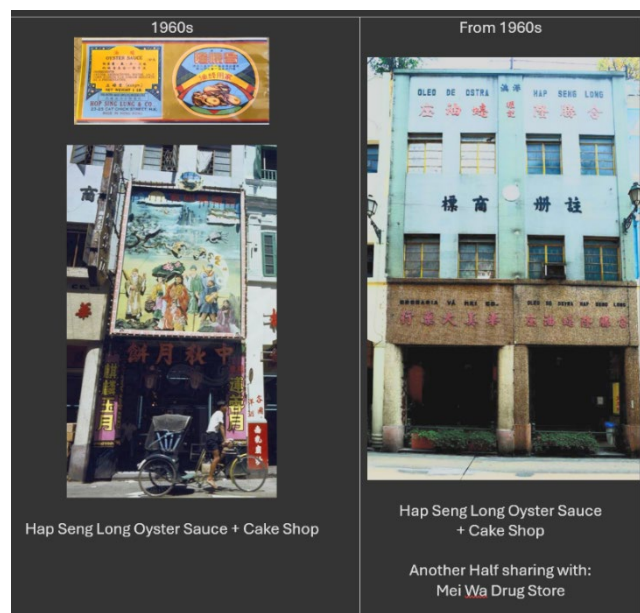


Figure 28. Yu Lee Pastry Shop 裕利餅家 (from the text and illustrations on the bag at the, says it also sell wine, oyster sauce, dried seafood)



Multiple commercial functions were often integrated within a single shophouse, occasionally operating under the same business name. It was not uncommon for a single establishment to simultaneously function as a pastry shop and a seafood product retailer, or as a pawnshop, a gold and jewellery outlet, and even a money exchange house or bank (Author, Year).

Figure 29. No. 132 Hap Seng Long Oyster Sauce/Cake Shop. The building is labelled "Hap Seng Long Oyster Sauce Shop," but a photo from the 1960s shows advertisements and Chinese signage along the facade promoting its mooncake products for the Mid-Autumn Festival. Photo from 歡樂香港懷舊谷



## Money exchange and Financial Institutions

Historically, San Ma Lou served as a financial nucleus of Macao, hosting numerous banks, money exchange houses, and pawnshops.

Around 1920 - 1940, Macao's financial landscape was quite disordered, with multiple currencies circulating, including Portuguese and Chinese dollars(鄧, 2021). The values of these currencies fluctuated unpredictably over brief periods, which contributed to the rise of exchange stores. Statistics from the Republic of China era (1912–1949) show that over a dozen large exchange stores were operating, along with several smaller establishments. Several prominent Chinese money exchange businesses operated along the avenue, including Fu Yau Money Exchange



Shop (富有銀號) and Tong Tak Money Exchange Shop (同德銀莊). During the Second Sino-Japanese War, from 1937 to 1945, the number of banks grew to six, and the total of both large and small exchange stores exceeded 300, while gold trading flourished as well(黃啓臣, 1994).

Over time, some of these institutions evolved into formal banks, such as transforming the Fu Yau Money Exchange shop into the prominent Tai Fung Bank, particularly following the Portuguese colonial administration's introduction of the "Banking Law" in the 1970s (HE, 2023).



Figure 30. The later Fu Yau Money Exchange shop, the predecessor of Tai Fung Bank. Staffs unloading money from the truck. Around 1940s. Photo from Memory Macau.

The currency exchange sector also flourished, with shops like 昌泰, 廣隆, 和泰, 新光, and 永泰 establishing a robust presence. Concurrently, pawnshops were concentrated in the same area, most notably 德成按, established in 1917 by wealthy businessman 高可寧. By 1933, the avenue had become a center for pawn trade, featuring institutions such as 長泰按, 同泰押, 巨祥押, and 公主押 (H. I. Wong et al., 1996).

## Jewellery and Gold Trade

After the conclusion of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1945 and the gradual return to societal stability, the gold and jewellery industry experienced significant growth. By the 1960s, this trade had firmly established itself in San Ma Lou. As the economy prospered, jewellery businesses flourished, catering not only to local residents but also increasingly to tourists from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and mainland China. Tourists from the mainland represented a substantial portion of the customer base, accounting for nearly one-third of the market (孔 et al., n.d.).

大豐金舖	陸昌	新馬路九十號
大陸首飾	楊成	新馬路四十八號
大華	庾振華	草堆街六十六號
天生金舖	周洪	新馬路六十號
天寶金舖	覃桂	新馬路八十七號
天盛金舖	陳壽彭	草堆街四十一號
天福金舖	李達泉	草堆街六號
正大首飾行	潘錦銓	新馬路七十六號
西盛金舖	羅文輝	草堆街五十八號
李蘇記		草堆街三十九號
和泰銀器	劉惠	龍窩街十七號
昌記		關前正街廿號
昌興	李厚光	造繩巷七號
昌盛	熊煜	草堆街卅二號
周永信	周少立	新馬路六二號
周生生總行	周君廉	新馬路一二二號
周生生金行	周少明	新馬路一一八號
周大福	黎洪	新馬路五十四號
東興金舖	熊成根	草堆街七十八號
南盛	周永康	新馬路一一六號
信生金舖	周照	新馬路一二零號
祥信金舖	梁敘銳	十月初五街一五二號
時昌象牙		草堆街二一號
桂元金行		新馬路五十八號
泰興	譚篤朝	草堆街三號A
裕昌金舖	楊熾	草堆街五十六號

Figure 31. 1962: 12 out of 33 Jewellery store in total in Macau were located on the San Ma Lou Street (from the Macau Industrial and Commercial Yearbook)

## Department Stores and Retail Trade

During its heyday, Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro emerged as a central hub for everyday commerce in Macao, with multiple department stores lining the street. These stores offered a variety of goods, differentiated primarily by the size and prominence of each business.

## Photography studios and Electronics retailers

As noted earlier, several Art Deco façades along Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro (San Ma Lou) are believed to have been influenced by the return of a new generation of locals who had studied abroad and were exposed to evolving global cultures. This convergence shaped the aesthetic direction of shophouse architecture and contributed to new forms of commercial programming.

### 3.2 Possible Reasons for some shophouses preserving the original essence of the façade while some embracing the change of times

#### Façade that does not Change much:

##### Money exchange and Financial Institutions tend to favor Neo-Classical Style

Certain industries, notably banking and currency exchange, often retain their original Neoclassical façades rather than adopting contemporary architectural styles(呂, 2024). Aside from the fact that the Neoclassical style creates a more harmonious relationship with the European Classical buildings within the neighbourhood, this may be attributed to their inherent similarities: stability, permanence, and authority—qualities that are crucial to institutions aiming to instil trust among clients, reinforcing an image of the "temple of finance" (Author, Year).

*Figure 32 No. 3 Soi Cheong General Provisioners & Exchange Brokers (1961 – 1980s)*





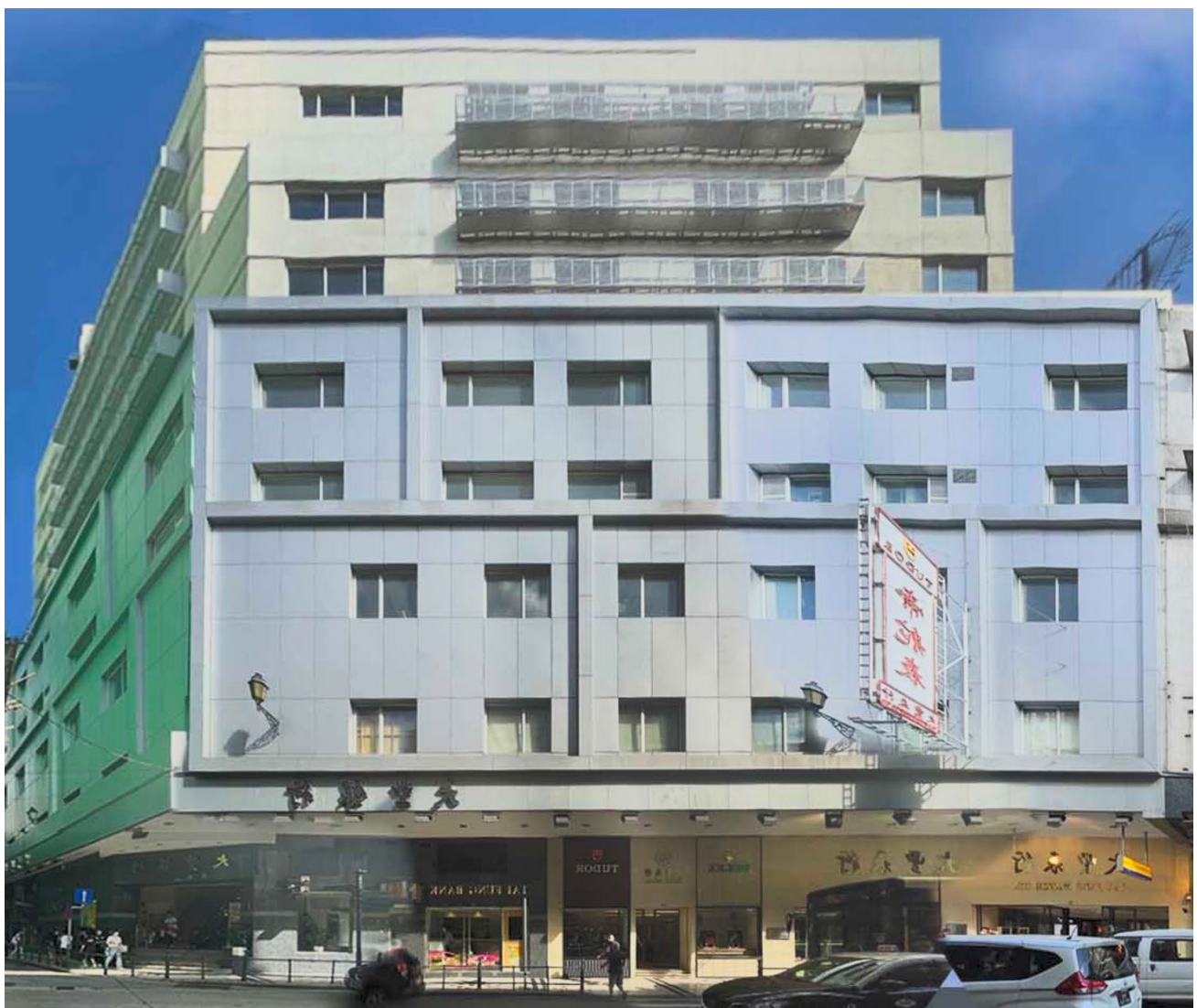


Figure 33. no. 88-92 was rented out for universal product providers, retailers, and money exchange shops when it still had its Neoclassical facade before Tai Fong Bank renovated it into a five-story building with an additional office building at the back. Drawing from Macau Archive. Antique photo from Macau Memory, Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets, and facade phot by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

## Certain industry-specific shophouses exhibit unique stylistic characteristics:

### Cake Shop

San Ma Lou's cake shops' façades reflect the artistry of their cakes, each uniquely crafted with subtle variations on a similar pastry design. While the overall architecture typically embodies the Art Deco style, the parapet walls are often tailored to showcase the shop owner's taste or the essence of the business.

For instance, the façade of No. 121-123 displays a star symbol, which likely holds a symbolic meaning related to the bakery's name, "顯記" (a possible reference to visibility or prominence). In contrast, No. 124 features an eagle symbol, likely referencing its name "英記" (the word "英" shares the same pronunciation as "eagle" 鷹 in Cantonese). These symbols are deeply rooted in the local language culture.



Figure 34 . no. 121-123 Hin Kei Cake Shop, 顯記餅家. Drawings from Macau Archive, Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets. Photos by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

Figure 35. Yeng Kei Cake Shop, 英記餅家. Drawing from Macau Archive. Photo from 中秋打卡熱點 (Happy Macau Blog)

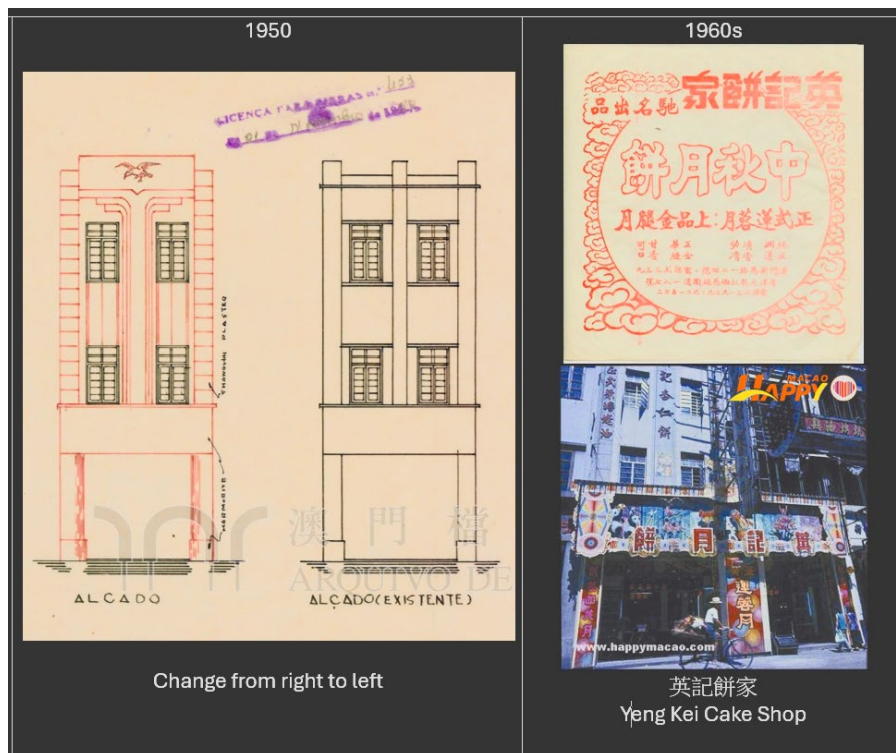




Figure 36. No. 103, From Jewellery Shop (1942) to Cake Shop (1953): The façade renovation in 1942 demonstrates that the building originally adhered to a standard Art Deco style, as evidenced by the presence of a flagpole positioned centrally at the top of the structure.

As the building's function shifted (even though remain within the retail sector), alterations were made to the façade: the flagpole was removed, and the stepped articulation of the parapet wall was replaced with a geometric, aligned articulation. Ultimately, the final façade adopts a design reminiscent of a cake mold.

Drawing from Macau Archive.

Photos by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

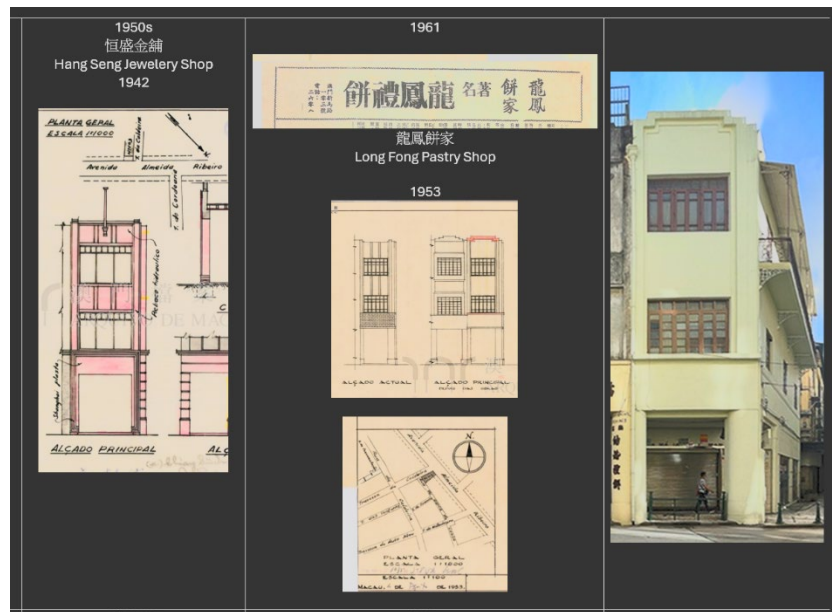


Figure 37 no.10. Chi Heung Pastry Shop. Drawings from Macau Archive.

Photos by Kevin L, Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

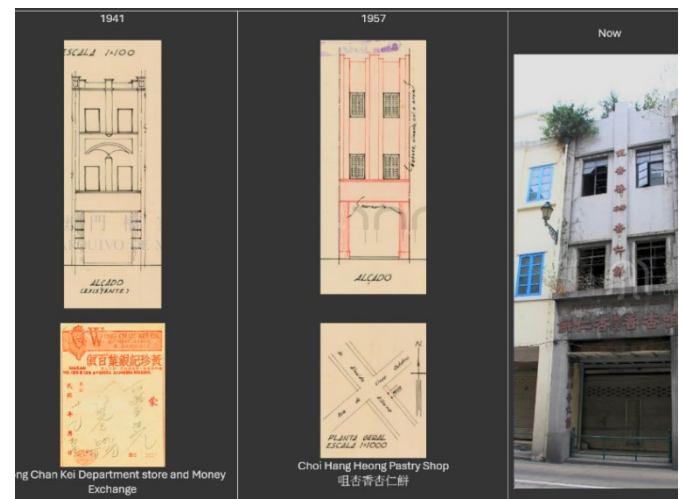


Figure 38. no.126. Choi Hang Heong Pastry Shop. Drawings from Macau Archive.

Photo from Google Map



A similar rationale applies to electrical appliance stores, although this does not apply to all such types of business in San Ma Lou.



Figure 39. no.123. Seng Kuong Electrical Appliance Store, Changed to an Art Deco Facade around the 1960s. Drawings from Macau Archive.

## Pawnshops has its unique style

Pawnshops often display a unique blend of Chinese and Art Deco architectural elements. These buildings commonly employ *Shanghai plaster* finishes, with many featuring façades clad in granite or masonry to convey a sense of solidity and permanence, qualities symbolically aligned with the Neo-classical shophouses banks on the same street. Exaggerated arch forms and arched window openings also characterize them. Such visual identity distinguishes them from other commercial typologies in the urban fabric.



Figure 40. no.73 arch window opening has a similar shape as the symbol of a "bat hanging with a coin"—a stylized image of an upside-down bat holding a coin in its mouth. According to 鄧 (2021) his symbol carried the auspicious meaning of "bringing fortune and wealth back home." The shape of iconic signage of pawnshops is also originated from it.

Drawings from Macau Archive. Photos from Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets, Facade photo by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

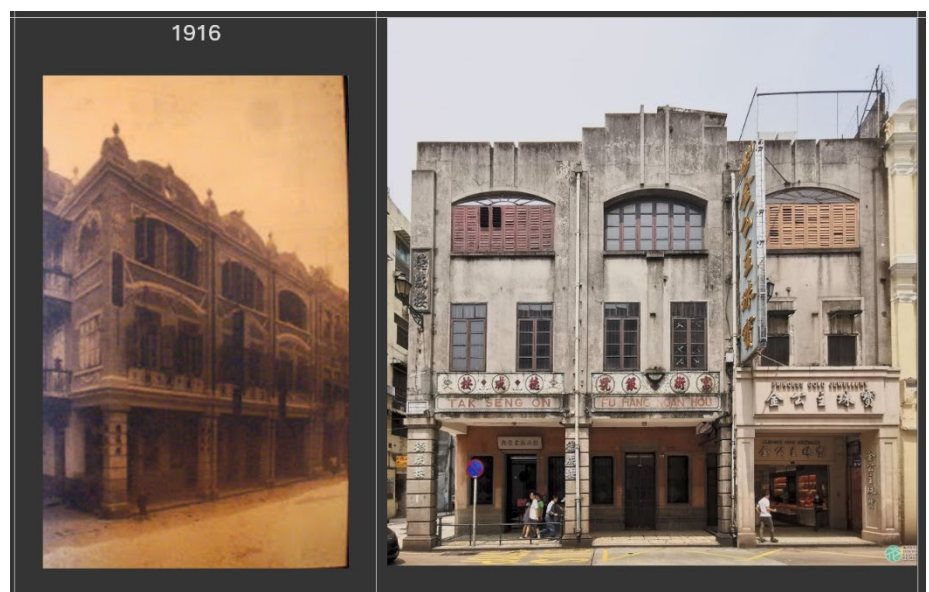


Figure 41 . Cheong Tai Pawnshop has a massive Roman-style arched doorway. The upper part of the facade is adorned with a Baroque-style pediment spirit tablet written “大地” characterized by its distinctive floral motif.

Facade photo by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)



Figure 42 . Tak Seng On Pawnshop was established when San Ma Lou was still newly built and originally designed in Neo-classical style, as seen in the photo on the left. It later renovated its facade to feature Art Deco style. Photo deom Cultural Affairs Bureau.



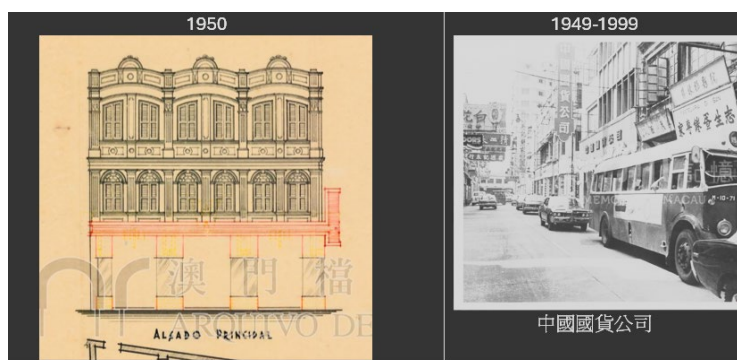


## Retail Shophouses attract their target clientele with their facades

Specific commercial industries in Macao have often adhered to prevailing architectural trends, particularly within the retail sector. Large-scale and high-end department stores managed by foreign or overseas companies frequently feature Neo-Classical style facades. This architectural choice projects a sense of formality, grandeur, and international sophistication. This indirectly reflects the image they want to project and the wish to appeal to a more affluent clientele.

*Figure 43. A notable example is the China Merchandise Corporation (No. 125–127), whose branch department store operated along Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro (San Ma Lou) from 1949 to 1999. It was a company first established in Shanghai. Drawing from Macau Archive.*

*Photo from Macaumemory.mo.*



*Figure 44 no.57 Ieng Si Department Store*

The store's shopping bag suggests that the merchandise offered was positioned toward the higher end of the market. The items depicted such as suits, Western-style dresses (洋裝), and leather bags, indicate a focus on luxury and sophistication in both product selection and branding.

*Drawing from Macau Archive. Photos from Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets,*



In contrast, local department stores tend to embrace the contemporary trends of the time. Local department stores, much like neighborhood pastry shops and other small-scale commercial establishments, more frequently embraced the stylistic trends of their time, such as Art Deco and Early Modern styles, as seen in the examples below. This tendency can be attributed to their closer integration with the local consumer community and their responsiveness to contemporary cultural shifts.

Figure 45 no.69-71 Keng Shan Department Store. Its name shares the same pronunciation as the Cantonese word "勁新," meaning "very new," indirectly reflecting the store's preference for newness and its pursuit of fashion trends.

The "KENG SAN" signage is engraved in a font that appears simplified and stylized, again aligning with Art Deco's graphic lettering. This blue stucco facade shophouse with subtle linear grooves looks as if it is clad with metal sheet board, making it more standing out from its competitions.

Drawing from Macau Archive. Photos from Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets.

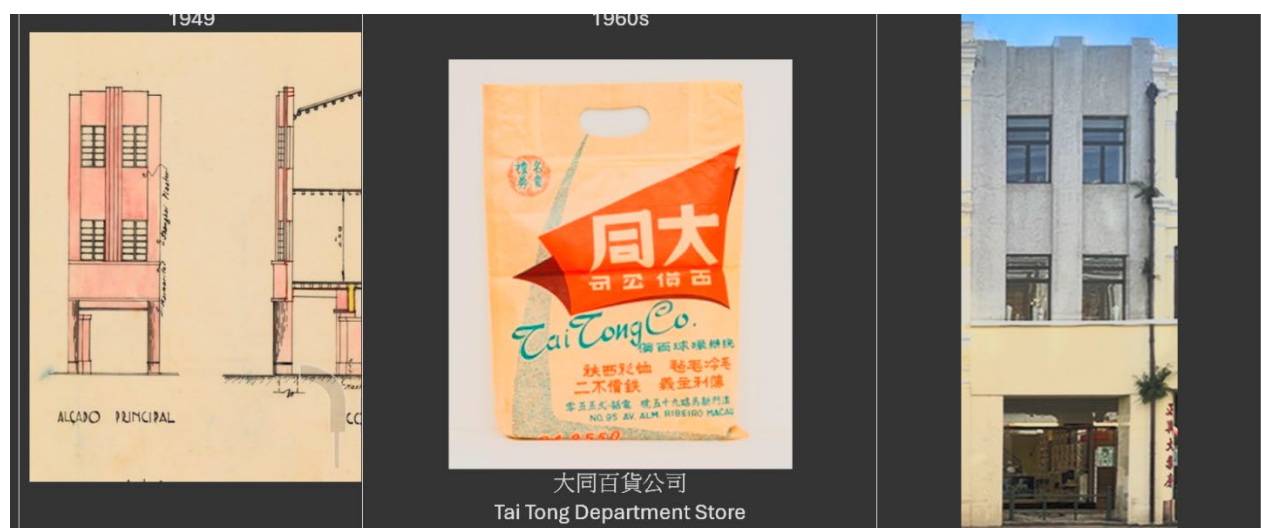
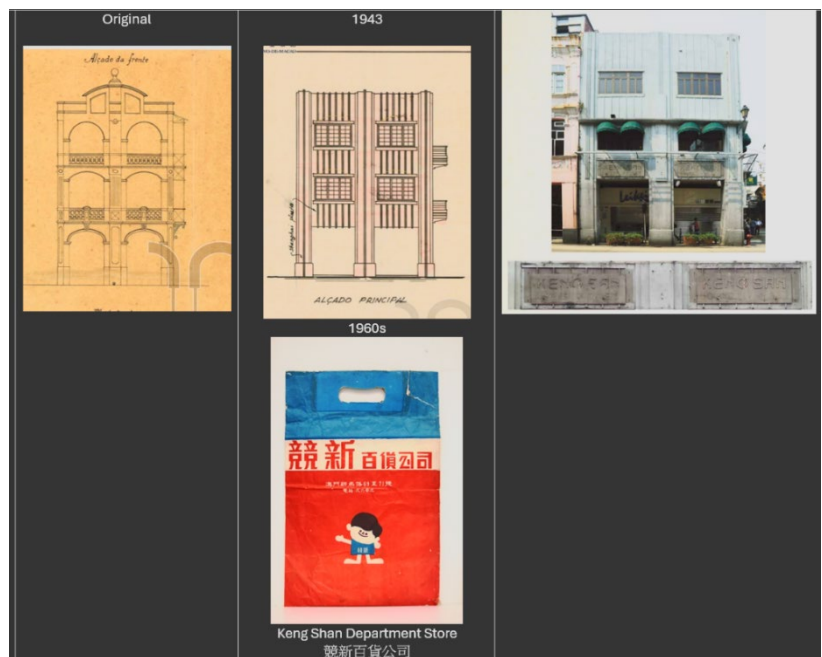


Figure 46. no.95 Tai Tong Department Store. Drawing from Macau Archive. Photos from Photos from Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets, by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

## Change of Ownership affect the change of façade style

Long Row Shophouses also typically don't change much of their façade because they are owned by the same individual or company, and they divide the long building into parts to rent out for different store uses. As a result, the relationship between the shop and the façade is not always evident (Author, Year).

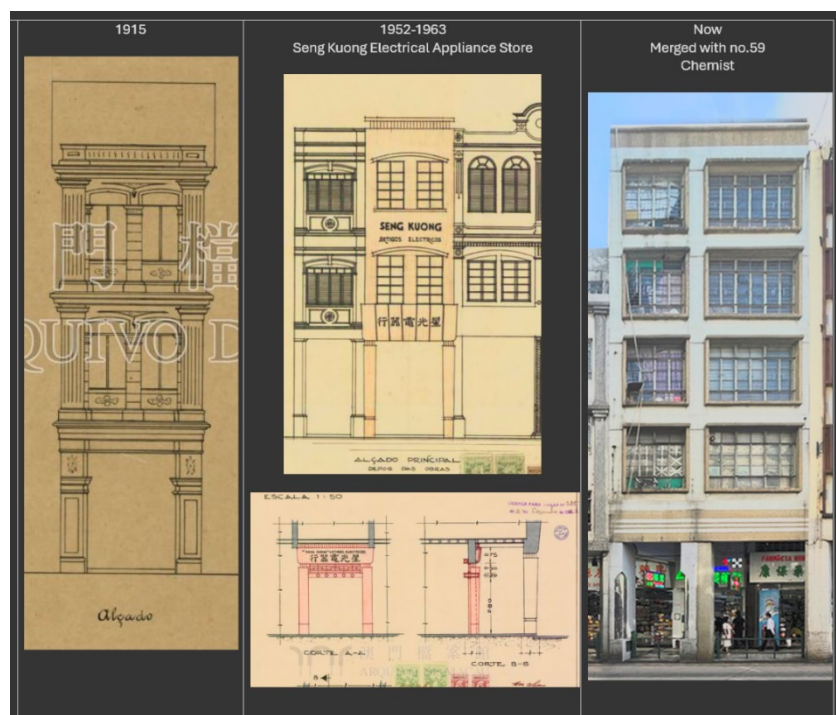


Figure 47. no.39. Long Row Shophouses normally do not have significant change. Photos from Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets. Facade photo by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)

Figure 48. Up until 1963, No. 59 and No. 61 were two separate buildings featuring distinct architectural styles. No. 61 exhibited characteristics of the Art Deco style, while No. 59 retained its original Neoclassical façade. At some point thereafter (exact year unknown), No. 61 was merged with No. 59, and the combined structure was redeveloped into a five-storey modernist building.

Drawings from Macau Archive.

Facade photo by Yan L, Li Q, Zhang Y, Zhu C. (2022)





## CHAPTER 4 Conclusion

### 4.1 Shophouses as a window into the historical and cultural transformations and a reflection of the commercial development during the 1920s-70s

The shophouses along San Ma Lou provide a tangible record of Macau's historical and cultural evolution during the 20th century and reflect the colonial influence brought by the Portuguese to Macau, from construction technology to economic development. The changing architectural styles of the shophouses along San Ma Lou, from Neo-Classical to Art Deco to Modernist, correspond directly to the commercial changes in Macau, including the rise of local entrepreneurship, connections with regional trade networks, and the influence of Western education and aesthetics.

The preservation of traditional forms in banks and pawnshops, such as Neo-Classical and hybrid Chinese-Art Deco forms, highlighted their role as stable institutions to convey a sense of stability and trust. Meanwhile, in local small-scale shops, such as cake shops and retailers, their façades often reflect staying competitive and appealing to changing tastes. The symbols on some of their façades relate to the store names in Cantonese, demonstrating a deeper connection to the local language culture. The local identity found its way to integrate into the contrasting Western culture. In this way, the shophouse acts as both a product and a reflection of Macau's unique mix of Chinese tradition and Portuguese colonial rule.

On the other hand, foreign-managed or large-scale department stores preserve grand, formal, Neo-Classical façades as a strategic means of attracting elite clientele and asserting their cosmopolitan status. Additionally, the stability of ownership among long-row shophouses influences the degree of façade preservation. Consistent ownership typically results in minimal alterations, as these owners rent out their properties rather than operate businesses themselves.

The changes of shophouse façades along Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro were not only shaped by architectural trends but also by the type of businesses they housed. The façades of these buildings were shaped not only by architectural trends but also by the type of businesses they housed; commercial strategies were embedded in them.

## References

- Bridgman, E. C. (1849). *The Chinese Repository* (Vol. 18). Canton: Printed for the proprietors; Tokyo: Maruzen Co., Ltd.  
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433082429394?urlappend=%3Bseq=9>
- Burnay, D. (1998, September). MUTAÇÕES E ARQUITECTURAS: ARQUITECTURA E COLONIALISMO EM MACAU. *Instituto Cultural de Macau*.  
<https://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/30035/2017>
- Chan, K., & 陳敬諾. (2022). Aesthetics and ideology revealed: Macau's art deco architecture (1930s-1950s) as a distinctive heritage typology. *The University of Hong Kong*.  
<http://hub.hku.hk/handle/10722/318412>
- Fahim, M. R., & Mou, I. Z. H. (2025). A Comparative Analysis Of Traditional Shophouse And Its Subsequent Diffusion In Southeast Asia. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*.  
<https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/a-comparative-analysis-of-traditional-shophouse-and-its-subsequent-diffusion-in-southeast-asia/>
- Fei, C. (1996). *Macao 400 years* (1st ed.). Pub. House of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.
- Fernandes, J. M. (1998, September). MACAU, ENTRE OS SÉCULOS XIX E XX URBANISMO E INFRAESTRUTURAS DE 1820 A 1920. *Instituto Cultural de Macau*.  
<https://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/30035/2016>
- Gomes, L. G. (1966). *Paginas da historia de Macau*. Noticias de Macau.
- Groder, J. (2004). *Migration in 20th century Macau: Political and socio-economic background*. <http://eplus.uni-salzburg.at/Abschlussarbeiten/8362585>
- Han, W., & Beisi, J. (2016). Urban Morphology of Commercial Port Cities and Shophouses in Southeast Asia. *Procedia Engineering*, 142, 190–197.
- HE Z. (2023). 澳門金融法之現代變遷 (1976 – 1999) . *Centre for Macau Studies | University of Macau*.  
<https://cms.um.edu.mo/澳門金融法之現代變遷（1976 – 1999）/?lang=zh-hant>
- Instituto para os Assuntos Cívicos e Municipais. (2012). 城市經緯: 新馬路及其周邊街道特展 = *Artéria urbana: Exposição sobre a Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro e ruas periféricas = Urban artery: Exhibition about Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro and peripheral streets*.  
[https://webpac.library.gov.mo/client/en\\_US/webpac/search/detailnonmodal/ent:\\$002f\\$002fSD\\_ILS\\$002f0\\$002fSD\\_ILS:318999/ada?qu=Exposicao&d=ent%3A%2F%2FSD\\_ILS%2F0%2FSD\\_ILS%3A318999%7EILS%7E75&ic=true&te=ILS&lm=SPV&av=0&ps=300](https://webpac.library.gov.mo/client/en_US/webpac/search/detailnonmodal/ent:$002f$002fSD_ILS$002f0$002fSD_ILS:318999/ada?qu=Exposicao&d=ent%3A%2F%2FSD_ILS%2F0%2FSD_ILS%3A318999%7EILS%7E75&ic=true&te=ILS&lm=SPV&av=0&ps=300)
- Jesus, C. A. M. de. (1902). *Historic Macao*. Kelly & Walsh, limited.  
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100328739>
- King, A. (2015). *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World-Economy*. Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315715506>
- Melo, B. P. C. de. (1895). *Jornadas pelo mundo*. Magalhães & Moniz, Editores.

Pires, B. V. (1988a). The Chinese Quarter One Hundred Years Ago. *Instituto Cultural de Macau*, II(7/8), 48–52.

Pires, B. V. (1988b, October). The Governors and Life of Macau in the XIXth Century. *Instituto Cultural de Macau*, II(7/8), 33–38.

Santos, I. (1988, October). Sino-Portuguese Relations via Macau in the 16th and 17th Centuries. *Instituto Cultural de Macau*, II(7/8), 3–11.

Távora, F. (1983). *Evolução Urbana*", em *Plano de intervenção urbanística da Av. Almeida Ribeiro*. 1–7.

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2025). Art Deco. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*.  
<https://www.britannica.com/art/Art-Deco>

United States. (2013). *Treaties Between the United States of America and China, Japan Lewchew and Siam [1833-1858] Acts of Congress, and the Attorney-general's Opinion: With the Decrees and Regulations Issued for the Guidance of U.S. Consular Courts in China*. HardPress Publishing.

Wagner, A. (2017). *Malaysian Shophouses: Creating Cities of Character*.  
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Malaysian-Shophouses%3A-Creating-Cities-of-Character-Wagner/9ca600f8cea356f3e66241684836e907affec9b3>

Wong, H. I., Ao, M. H., Tang, H. I., & Wong, M. C. (1996). Comércio de Penhor em Macau. *Revista Hong Lan Shi Di*, 5.

Wong, S. K. (1998, September). ARQUITECTURA DE MACAU: UMA MISTURA DE INFLUÊNCIAS PORTUGUESAS E

CHINESAS. *Instituto Cultural de Macau*.  
<https://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/30035/2017>

刘亦师. (2010). 从外廊式建筑看中国近代建筑史研究(1993-2009). 中国近代建筑史国际研讨会.

呂澤強. (2018, July 22). 新馬路的規劃與建築. 澳門雜誌.  
<https://www.macaazine.net/viewnews?itemid=718>

呂澤強. (2024). 從三幢酒店大樓看新馬路的折衷設計美學.  
[https://www.macaumemory.mo/specialtopic\\_0ab574c266114a8e9febecf98046e6f1](https://www.macaumemory.mo/specialtopic_0ab574c266114a8e9febecf98046e6f1)

孔麗珊, 高穎琪, 薛雪梅, 馬志麗, & 陳蓓. (n.d.). 金飾業. Retrieved April 25, 2025, from  
<https://www.macaudata.mo/macabook/book092/html/21401.htm>

林琳. (2006). 港澳与珠江三角洲地域建筑: 广东骑楼(第一版). 科學.

鄧偉強. (2021). 澳門金融. FUNDAÇÃO MACAU.  
<https://www.macaudata.mo/books/detail?bno=b001025>

黃啓臣 (with 鄭煒明). (1994). 澳門經濟四百年. 基金會.

黃月波, 于能模, & 鮑厘人. (1935). 中外條約彙編. 商務印書館.

龚滢, 过伟敏, & Siu, K. W. M. (2019). 欧洲殖民扩张背景下外廊洋式建筑溯源. 苏州大学, 11.



**Kei Ieng Ung**

**6314759**

Delft University of Technology

April 2025

AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis

Supervised by Aart Oxenaar