

N249

九龍油麻地上海街176及178號德生大押

Tak Sang Pawn Shop

Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street,

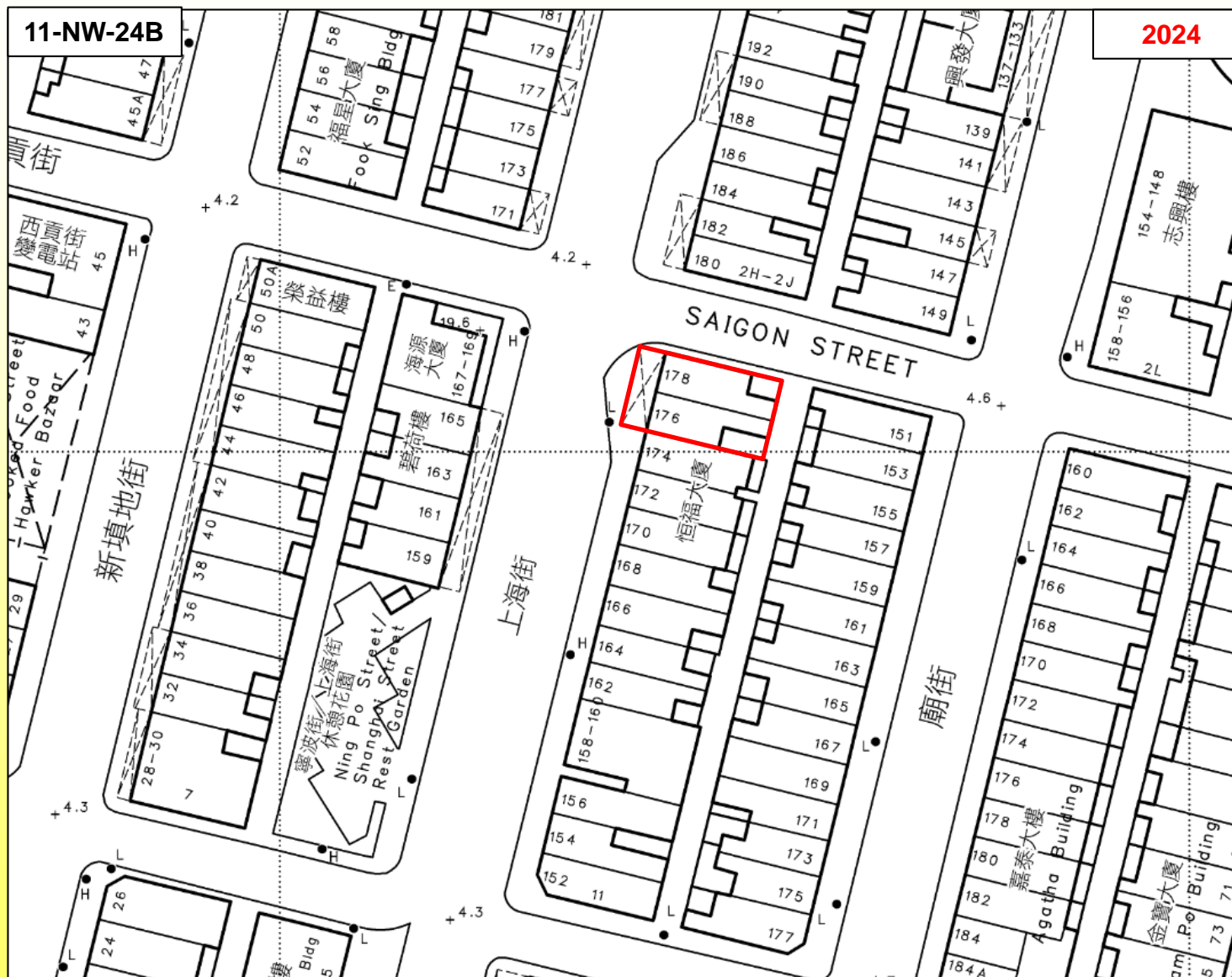
Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

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九龍油麻地上海街176及178號德生大押
Tak Sang Pawn Shop, Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

擬議三級歷史建築
Proposed Grade 3

約建於1940年
Built around 1940



擬議評級範圍
Proposed grading
boundary

只用於識別位置，並非確實範圍 For identification of location only, not exact boundary

N249

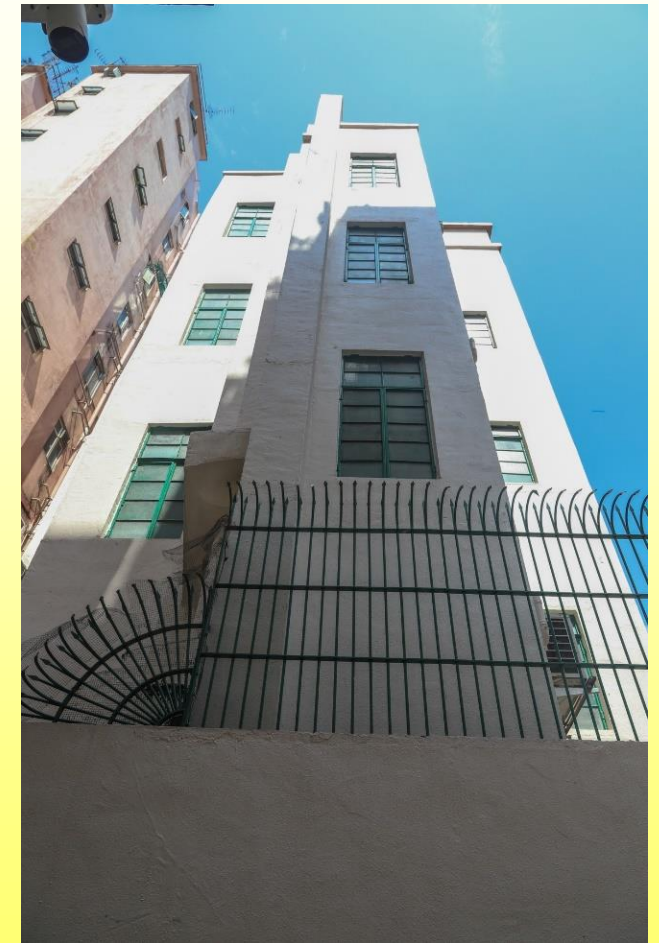
九龍油麻地上海街176及178號德生大押
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正立面
Front Elevation



側立面 (面向西貢街)
Side Elevation (Facing Saigon Street)



背立面
Rear Elevation

Historic Building Appraisal

Tak Sang Pawn Shop, Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Situated at the junction of Shanghai Street and Saigon Street is a pair of *Historical Interest* pre-war shophouses occupying two buildings – Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street – where Tak Sang Pawn Shop started its business in the early 1940s. Shanghai Street was originally known as Station Street due to the then nearby Yau Ma Tei Police Station, which was a local landmark in the area before its relocation. It was renamed Shanghai Street in 1909,¹ as it was one of the busiest streets on Kowloon Peninsula at the time, with the new name intended to invite comparison with the hustle and bustle of the city of Shanghai.² Tak Sang Pawn Shop is a *ngat* (押), at the time the smallest type of pawnbroker and now the only kind that still exists in Hong Kong.³

It is believed that the buildings at Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street were built around 1940, as there is a figure “1940” in red on the parapet of the roof of the buildings and it is known that the pawnshop itself had opened for business by 1941 at the latest.⁴ Land documents show that Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street were acquired in May 1940⁵ and December 1939⁶ respectively by Ko Fook Sun (高福申), the son of businessman Ko Ho Ning (高可寧), who had been dubbed “the king of pawnbrokers”. In addition to running the family business, Ko Fook Sun was also a philanthropist who made an extensive contribution to the field of education. He was the founding president of Wah Yan College Past Students’ Association (華仁書院舊生會), a position he held for 12 years.⁷ He also made generous donations that helped establish Pun U Association Primary School (番禺會所學校)⁸ and sponsored scholarship at a tertiary institution.⁹ From 1956 onwards, the pair of

¹ Government Notification No. 184, *The Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 19 March 1909, p. 173, from Hong Kong Government Reports Online.

² 梁濤：《九龍街道命名考源》（香港：市政局，1993年），頁31。

³ 徐振邦：《香港當舖遊蹤》（香港：三聯書店（香港）有限公司，2020年），頁3。

⁴ 《港澳商業分類行名錄》（香港：港澳商業分類行名錄出版社，1941年），頁7。The directory first included Tak Sang Pawn Shop in 1941.

⁵ Land Registry Office. Memorial No. UB165334, 7 May 1940.

⁶ Land Registry Office. Memorial No. UB163940, 29 December 1939.

⁷ “Prequel”, *Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School*, <https://www.puwy.edu.hk/OurSchool/page/History> (accessed on 4 July 2024).

⁸ Ibid. Ko Fook Sun made donations to establish Pun U Association Primary School, which was opened in 1963. In 1971, this primary school collaborated with Wah Yan College to become a feeder school to the College and was renamed Pun U Association Wah Yan Primary School (番禺會所華仁小學).

⁹ Ko Fook Sun is the donor of “Ko Ho Ning Scholarships” for the United College students of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. “Scholarships and Financial Aid”, *United College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, https://www.uc.cuhk.edu.hk/tc/?site_section=scholarship-new&s=&scholarship_type%5B%5D

buildings were registered to the Ko family-owned Foo Shing Loan and Mortgage Company Limited (富成按揭有限公司).¹⁰ Although the exterior of the buildings is inscribed with the name of the pawnshop, the ground floor and cockloft at No. 176 Shanghai Street have not been used for the pawn business since the 1960s and were instead let to different tenants over the years;¹¹ of these, a tailor shop¹² occupied the premises for the longest period.

The buildings at Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street are four storeys high. Three columns on the ground floor support a verandah that extends to form a covered walkway at street level. The top two floors are slightly set back from the building footprint. The openings of the verandah at the front and side elevations are enclosed by green metal grilles, which were probably installed to protect the buildings from burglars. The two buildings share the same rooftop, access to which is provided by the staircase near the rear elevation of No. 178 Shanghai Street. There are minor differences in height between the verandah openings of No. 176 and those of No. 178 Shanghai Street, and also between the ceiling slabs of the top floor of the buildings. It can also be observed that the two buildings differ slightly in their layouts, with the rear part of No. 176 Shanghai Street set back slightly.

Architectural Merit

The exterior of the buildings is decorated with four plastered plaques bearing the shop's name. Three of them are on the first and second floors of the front elevation and feature the characters “德生大押” in red on a white background with a green border. The other plaque is located on the second floor of the side elevation with the characters “德生押” written on it. Other than that, the buildings are characterised by a simple design with minimal decoration on the exterior. The upper part of the side elevation is finished with plaster marked out with brown horizontal band courses to provide contrast. A total of 15 windows can be seen on the side elevation facing Saigon Street, with the vertical row of three windows towards the back of the building installed at a slightly lower level than the others. It is believed that a staircase is located there. The interior of the pawnshop features a tall timber “shy screen” (遮醜板), which blocks the view of passers-by into the interior to protect customers' privacy. The counter of the pawnbroker is at a higher level with patterned barriers for security.

5D=academic (accessed on 9 August 2024).

¹⁰ The Land Registry. Land Register of K.I.L. 6541 and K.I.L. 6526.

¹¹ The Land Registry. Land Register of K.I.L. 6541.

¹² “Man Wah Tailor - Shop Description”, *HK Memory*, <http://www.hkmemory.org/old-shops/en.html> (accessed on 13 August 2024).

A comparison with old photos shows that the pair of buildings underwent quite a number of changes between 2016 and 2019, particularly on the ground floor. The brick cladding tiles on the exterior of the side elevation and front entrance as well as the supporting columns have been replaced by a layer of modern tiles. New characters made by machine now spell out the shop's name on the columns on the ground floor. The double doors at the side entrance, which were previously made of metal and featured the shop name painted in red,¹³ have been replaced by brown timber double doors, while the narrow concrete window eaves above the windows on the side elevation have been removed. The interior of the shop on ground floor has been extensively refurbished with new wall and floor tiles as well as new metal barriers at the counter. It is believed that the Ko family standardised the style of their pawnshops during this period. The plaques bearing the shop name look different today when compared with photos from the 1950s,¹⁴ but it is uncertain when this change was made. The exterior of upper floors has otherwise been kept largely in authentic condition. Urban development has seen a marked decline in the number of remaining pawnshops that were built before the Second World War, especially those established in pre-war shophouses where all the floors were dedicated to the business.

***Authenticity
& Rarity***

Having operated at the corner site for more than 80 years, Tak Sang Pawn Shop stands as a significant witness to the development of Yau Ma Tei district, where its distinctive appearance, with the plastered plaques bearing its name, has made it a local landmark.

***Social Value
& Local
Interest***

Standing on the oldest street in Yau Ma Tei and Mong Kok,¹⁵ Nos. 176 and 178 Shanghai Street and the built heritage in the vicinity, including Tin Hau Temple (Declared Monument), Tung Wah Museum (originally the Main Hall Building of Kwong Wah Hospital, Declared Monument), Yau Ma Tei Police Station, Yau Ma Tei Theatre, Yau Ma Tei Wholesale Fruit Market (all Grade 2), and No. 578 Canton Road (Grade 3), reflect the daily lives of the Chinese community in the decades either side of the Second World War. Other remaining pre-war pawnshops owned by the Ko family include Nam Cheong Pawn Shop in Sham Shui Po (Grade 3) and Tak Wing Pawn Shop in Central (Grade 3), which were built in the 1920s and 1940s respectively.

Group Value

¹³ A photo of the side entrance on the North elevation of No. 178 Shanghai Street taken by the Antiquities and Monuments Office in 2015.

¹⁴ Cheng, Po-hung. Photograph of the junction of Shanghai Street and Saigon Street taken around 1955. Personal collection.

¹⁵ 梁濤：《九龍街道命名考源》（香港：市政局，1993年），頁31。

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