

STUDY ON HOW TO PRESERVE HERITAGE COLONIAL BUILDINGS IN YANGON

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Abstract

Nowadays, one of the most interesting tourist attractions is site-seeing of Heritage Colonial Buildings. Thus, not only European countries but also Asian countries give priority to preserving heritage buildings. This paper describes how to preserve colonial buildings in Yangon. Among Asian countries Myanmar has a huge number of colonial buildings, because Myanmar had been under British Colonial rules for many years. These buildings feature as heritage colonial buildings and many tourists today that are greatly interested in them. In 1996, The Yangon City Development Committee was guided to list of colonial heritage buildings officially and 189 colonial buildings were listed. There are many organizations which are supervising 189 colonial buildings in Yangon, the number today that includes nineteen Ministries, trustee organizations and the Yangon City Development Committee. In this paper, two out of six colonial buildings which are supervised by the YCDC in Yangon are studied, namely the City Hall and the Bogyoke Aung San market which are in downtown Yangon. The City Hall building is still in use by YCDC's offices and the Bogyoke Aung San market has not changed much. The distinct feature of the two buildings is that age of both are over a hundred years without much need to make major repairs or renovation. It shows that the preservation work done by responsible persons concerned were efficient and effective. Furthermore, the preparations on future preservation of these buildings will be made in accordance with the guidance given by the government.

Introduction

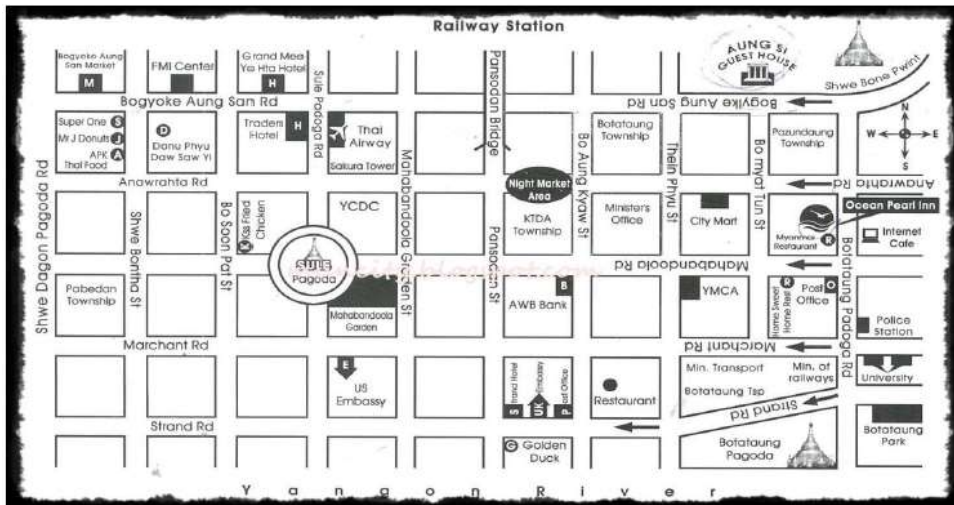
People visiting cultural and historical resources is one of the most pervasive and fast growing sectors of the tourism industry today. Heritage tourism typically relies on living and built elements of culture and refers to the use of the tangible and intangible past as a tourism resource, such as music, dance, language, religion, folkways and cuisine, artistic traditions, and festivals and material vestiges of the built cultural environment, including

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monuments, historic public buildings and homes, farms, castles and cathedrals, museums and archeological ruins and relics.

The area of study covers the downtown area of Yangon City, between Bogyoke Aung San Road on the north, Aungyatana Road on the west, Ayeyarmyaing Road and lower Pazuntaung Road on the east, and the bank of Yangon River on the south.

The downtown area of Yangon City is composed of six townships. Five townships of the downtown area, namely Lathar Township, Lanmadaw Township, Kyauktada Township, Pabedan Township and Seikkan Township are located in the western district. The other one, Botataung Township is situated in the eastern district. East to west aligned roads in downtown area are Bogyoke Aung San Road, Anawrahta Road, Mahabandoola Road, Merchant Road, and Strand Road. The North to South main alignment roads are Aungyatana road, Ayeyarmyaing Road and Lower Pazundaung Road. My study area is located in Kyauktada Township and Pabedan Township. The following map shows the locations of the Yangon City Hall and Bogyoke Market which are of interest in this study.



Source: YCDC Report 3

Figure 1: Map of the study area

Literature Review

Preserving culture heritage is as important as preserving the natural environment. While some natural realms will in fact recover from the impact of development and regenerate organically, damaged cultural heritage will not. Built heritage is a non-renewable resource that once destroyed is gone forever. This creates a unique challenge to heritage conservators and managers, who have long had to deal with throngs of tourists clambering on or vandalizing places of historic importance.

The Objectives of Preserving

Observers have identified several reasons why heritage is preserved. These include countering the effects of modernization, building nationalism and preserving collective nostalgia, improving science and education, safeguarding artistic and aesthetic values, maintaining environmental diversity, and generating economic value. While each of these is important in all parts of the world, the final point, concerning economic value is the primary motive for conserving the buildings and living past in developing regions. Preservation of the historic environment and living culture is critical in today's rapidly modernizing world and given what is known about the destructive influences of mass tourism, including mass heritage tourism, heritage protection has become a more urgent item on the agenda.

Three Approaches to Preservation

At present there are three approaches to preservation

1. To do nothing to the remaining structure beyond what is needed to stabilize and preserve it from harm;
2. To restore the building to a useful condition, but only by using modern construction methods that are as close to historically accurate as possible; and
3. To restore the building to a useful condition, but to use modern construction methods and materials and to make it absolutely clear where the old building ends and the new building begins.

Objectives of the Study

1. To obtain the list of heritage colonial buildings in Yangon.
2. To explore which organizations are supervising these heritage colonial buildings.
3. How to preserve them for longer existence and sustainability.

Research Method

There are so many types of organizations which are supervising 189 colonial buildings in Yangon. There are nineteen Ministries, trustee organizations and Yangon City Development Committee. In this paper, two out of six colonial buildings which are supervised by YCDC in Yangon have been studied. For study purposes, the descriptive research design is used and data collection is from YCDC, Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) and Government organizations through face to face interview and structured questionnaire. Some data are collected by using online e-mail. The information required in this study is obtained mainly from the YCDC and observational survey made at City Hall and Bogyoke Market respectively.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The listed heritage colonial buildings are supervised by the organizations concerned to maintain and preserve the buildings for longer standing. Most organizations are government Ministries, Board of Trustees, Yangon City Development (YCDC) and a private company. Some organizations are not supervised by any specific organizations but they are controlled by the government. Table 1 represents the name of the organizations which supervise the buildings and the number each supervises.

Table 1: Organizations concerned for colonial buildings

No.	Name of Institutions	No. of Buildings
1	Ministry of Education	33
2	Ministry of Electricity and Energy	2
3	Ministry of Health and Sports	5
4	Ministry of Commerce	3
5	Ministry of Transport and Communication	8
6	Ministry of Planning and Finance	12
7	Ministry of Defence	2
8	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	7
9	Ministry of Hotels and Tourism	2
10	Ministry of Information	3
11	Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement	3
12	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation	1
13	Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture	2
14	Ministry of Home Affairs	2
15	Trustee	91
16	Yangon City Development Committee (YCDC)	5
17	Office of the Auditor General	1
18	Max Co. {Transferred from DHSHD}	1
19	No specific organization {Under control of the Union Government}	6
Total		189

Source : Yangon City Development Committee

Heritage Laws, Rules and Regulations

The heritage list of YCDC was compiled in 1996 from lists of important, non private buildings and structures of over 50 years of Age, submitted by the townships. It prohibits demolishing and altering external appearances and requires prior permission for any other alteration or repair.

The Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Regions Law 1998 defines a cultural heritage site as an “Ancient Monuments or Site which is required to be protected and preserved by reason of its historical, cultural, artistic or anthropological value”; Ancient Monuments as those “that have existed before 1886 or that have been determined as cultural heritage”; and an Ancient site as a “place or high ground where a town or settlement of Ancient people or Ancient Monument had existed before 1886 or which is determined as cultural heritage whether it is in the process of excavation or has not yet been excavated”.

The Law Amending the Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Regions Law 2009 amended the wording to include sites “that have existed since 100 years before the date on which the department made inquiries”. These laws regulate construction, extension, destruction, alteration, renovation and maintenance of ancient monuments and monuments sites depending on their degree of importance and influence.

Installed Blue Plaques in Yangon

Blue Plaque means permanent signs installed in a public place to commemorate a link between that location and a famous person, event or landmark-serving as a kind of historical marker.

Blue Plaques are one of the most effective and visible means to celebrate Yangon’s rich history. With their direct appeal to the public, the introduction of commemorative Blue Plaques have made Yangon’s history accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

In June 2013, Royal Philips Corporation (RPC) and the YHT announced a partnership to honor key sites throughout Yangon. Royal Phillips provided a grant of US\$ 75,000 to cover historical research, manufacturing and the installation of the plaques.

The following buildings list shows installed Blue Plaques in collaboration by YCDC, RPC and YHT.

Table 2: Blue Plaques installed Colonial Buildings

No.	Date of Installation	Name of the Buildings
1.	9.8.2014	City Hall
2.	19.9.2014	Ayeyarwaddy Bank (Originally Immigration and Registration Department)
3.	1.10.2014	Armenium Church
4.	16.10.2014	Central Fire Station
5.	29.5.2015	Yangon Post Office
6.	17.6.2015	Grindley’s Bank (Myanmar Agricultural Bank)
7.	9.8.2015	Central Press
8.	18.9.2015	Lawkanatt Gallery Building
9.	11.12.2015	Government Technology Institute
10.	18.12.2015	Maharbandoola Park
11.	30.4.2016	Turquoise Mountain Foundation
12.	30.5.2016	India Embassy
13.	5.6.2016	Masimar Yayqu Ardu Church
14.	28.10.2016	Young Women Christian Association
15.	20.1.2017	Bogyoke Aung San Market

Sources: YCDC Report

The total number of blue plaque installed is 16 in number but the total number of places is 15. The difference is that double blue plaques are installed at Maharbandoola Park. Moreover, in this study only City Hall building and Bogyoke Aung San Market building are studied in detail.

Descriptive Study of City Hall and Bogyoke Aung San Market

The City Hall and Bogyoke Aung San Market are colonial heritage buildings which are controlled by YCDC and the Blue Plaques have been installed on them. The Yangon City Development Committee is responsible to preserve and maintain them for long term benefit.

The City Hall Building

In 1886, the city's municipal authority purchased Rippon Hall, a community dance hall located on the site of today's City Hall. The dance hall was converted for use as a municipal headquarters but, as the city expanded, so did the needs of the municipal offices, and additional space had to be rented in one of the top floor of the neighbouring department store, Rowe & Co. In 1903, the municipality purchased the land behind Rippon Hall to build an extension but it later became apparent that an entirely new building was needed: the original hall was condemned by the Health Department for being structurally unsound and overrun with "plague-infested" rats.

In 1930, the Municipal Committees held a design competition for which it set the oddly humble mandate of a building with "some pretensions to architectural beauty". Over 30 entries were assessed by Henry Seton-Morris, then Consulting Architect to the Government of Burma.

U Tin had made a name for himself through his elegant design for the popular Burmese Pavilion at the Wembley Exhibition held in London in 1924. Having worked in the Public Works Department and been apprenticed to an engineering firm in Mumbai, he would later be remembered as one of Myanmar's first Architects. The end result of his design for City Hall took on palatial form, featuring three-tiered pyatthat roofing and traditional Myanmar iconography such as peacocks and nagas.

This building has remained in use as the City Hall until the present day. During the 1950s, it was the city's largest auditorium and hosted weddings, concerts, and other ceremonies. In the 1970s, the National Library was housed there on the second floor.

The structure of the building is four storeys in total. The building has a length of 396 ft and width 260 ft. The flooring area on ground floor is 65,640 square feet, the first floor, 67,550 square feet, the second floor is 58,020 square feet and the third floor is 40,500 square feet. The car parking is located in front of the building. In the middle of the building there is a wide space which stands like a small park.

The building is occupied by the city's current municipal authorities, the Yangon City Development Committee. The building's exterior was for

many years a creamy tangerine colour that became stained with dark patches of mildew. In Mid-2011, it was repainted strikingly luminous lilac with a purple finish.

At the back entrance it is still possible to see the original insignia on the iron gates, which reads Municipal Corporation of Rangoon. Though local architects appreciate the building's historic significance, its architectural contribution is debatable: "it's an iconic building for us in Yangon, like the Eiffel Tower is to Paris," says architect U Sun Oo, Vice President of the Association of Myanmar Architects.

The Burmese additions were made after the basic plan had already been decided so there was no strong conceptual structure underpinning the design. In stylistic terms, it is certainly unique; I would call it 'Classical Revival', a recomposing of the old ornaments and components of Burmese palace and temple architect."

The Bogyoke Aung San Market

According to historical records, the first municipal market was established in Botataung soon after the British took control of Yangon in 1852. However, compared to private markets such as Suratee Bazaar (now Theingyi Market) established in 1853 and Bogalay Market, the municipal market was not a success. In 1876, another municipal market was opened on Strand Road, between Shwebontha Street (formely Moghul Street) and Shwedagon Pagoda Road (China Street).

If someone ask for the name of the most well-known market in Yangon, almost everyone would recommend Bogyoke Aung San market on Bogyoke road. Bogyoke Aung San market is not only an important marketplace for the city residents but also an attraction for international tourists.

In 1904, Rangoon Port Commissioners planned to extend their wharfs by linking up the Sule Pagoda wharf with the new wharf, which was being built on latta street (now latha street), but the plan was held up by a dispute with the Municipality about the plot of the market. After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was reached in 1920 that the site should be sold and the market

be relocated to Commissioner Road. The new site for the market was occupied by cinemas, theatres and an old tramway depot. The new market was built by well – known contractor A.C. Martin & Co.. Until the new market was completed, the Municipality continued to occupy the Strand site as tenants. In 1926, the new market named after Municipal Commissioner Gavin Scott was opened as Scott Market.

During the Japanese occupation, the market was renamed as Yan Naing Market after one of the Thirty Comrades, Bo Yan Naing. After independence, the name of the market was changed to Bogyoke Aung San Market to commemorate independence hero, General Aung San.

Facing the Bogyoke Aung San Market, there is the busy Shwe Bon Thar Street (formerly known as the Mongul Street), where most of Yangon's popular clinics are located. Next to the Bogyoke Aung San Market, there is the 9-storey FMI building. Some shops and some offices are located in that building. Then you can find the Grand Meeyahtar Housing, which is a nice place to stay in downtown Yangon. The Sule Shangrila Hotel is nearby the market at the corner of Bogyoke Aung San Road and Sule Pagoda Road.

The Bogyoke Aung San Market building is about two storeys which is made up of a length of 588 ft and width of 544 ft. There are two RC buildings, three depots with two and half storeys, four depots with two storeys and twelve one storey depots.

There are 1840 shops selling luxury items, handicrafts, foodstuffs, clothing, jewellery, souvenir shops, fashion and consumer goods. The market forms a square type base and therefore divided into the East wing, West wing, North wing and South wing. The shopping items are not categorized in the respective wings. Looking around and finding the most suitable item is fun. There are also traditional, Myanmar and Chinese food stalls in the market.

Bogyoke Market is one of the largest bazaars in Yangon. The market features colonial architecture and is the most popular attraction for tourists. It is famous for its colonial architecture and inner cobblestone. It offers a great variety of jewellery shops, antiques, handicrafts and clothing boutiques. It is also a place where locals come often, as they sell medicine, garments and all

kinds of food. According to the annual report of Bogyoke market, it is a significant contributor to the national economy.

Conclusion, Findings and Suggestions

Yangon can boast of one of the world's most spectacular and distinct cityscapes with a wide variety of architectural styles and historical periods. This heritage is lived in and used by a diverse range of evolving and dynamic communities. Today, this significant cultural and built heritage is at risk of being lost as a new wave of development takes its toll.

Hundreds of historical buildings had been demolished over the previous two decades; primarily the result of unregulated development and many people feared that intensified development would threaten what remained. The country's recent political reforms provide a new opportunity to protect Yangon's urban heritage before it is too late.

In Yangon, Myanmar, there is a huge drive for modernization. In many Asian cities, and throughout the world, we have seen urban landscapes transformed, often at the expense of their building traditions and picturesque pasts. At present, the government has supported improvement of Tourism Industry Sector whose objectives could not be fulfilled effectively. Not only government support but also other organizations and institutions are required to cooperate in this area for future development.

The preservation activities are done collaboratively by YCDC, YHT and private companies'. The Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) is a local NGO that was founded in 2012 amidst a wave of changes sweeping Myanmar. The Heritage of Yangon is not simply its well known colonial buildings. Rather it is the dynamic environment of both people and places that comprise the lively streetscapes, close-knit neighborhoods, and iconic views of its historic downtown area.

Yangon is at a tipping point. This city can become one of the most livable and economically profitable cities in Southeast Asia through the well planned combination of modern development and heritage conservation.

Currently the City Hall Building is used for government Offices under YCDC. It is obvious that it is one of the limitations to the preserving work.

Entrance to the building generally is only allowed to Government staff and local people concerned to do business with these departments, but entrance of foreigners/tourists is not allowed. So, removal of these departments in this building to other suitable place(s) need to be considered for maintaining and preserving heritage colonial buildings. In addition, this building should be promoted as one of the destinations just like the Colosseum in Rome, Italy. The YCDC instructed all staff to follow rules and regulations, for example, restriction of smoking in this area, protection of unnecessary heavy movements and noise pollution. Since, it had been built in 1936 there was no significant changes in the structure and regular maintenance was not in evidence.

Currently, Bogyoke Aung Market is one of the largest bazaars in Yangon. The market features colonial architecture and is the most popular attraction for tourists. It is famous for its colonial architecture and inner cobblestone pathways. It offers a great variety of jewellery shops, antiques, handicrafts and clothing boutiques. It is also a place where locals come often, to buy medicine, garments and all kinds of food sold here. Bogyoke Market looks strong enough to with stand natural disaster such as earthquake and even storms such as the cyclone Nergis. Preservation work has been carried out annually that is painting and minor repairs as required. Moreover, earthquake resistance measures by YCDC is underway.

The current heritage monument list of Yangon is based on the traditional concept of heritage conservation with emphasis on single monuments or buildings of a architectural or historical importance. Meanwhile, modern scientific concepts worldwide additionally knowledge the importance of private, community-oriented and public sites and ensembles of cultural, socio-economic or architectural importance such as traditional markets like Bogyoke Aung San Market , significant pre and post independence private downtown ensembles are ethnic clan houses, traditional shop-houses and restaurants, zayats and dhamma halls, storage buildings and jetties on the river bank. They make up the unique, authentic character of Yangon embedded in local communities and contribute to social cohesion and they are at stake. The time is ripe to set up a culturally adapted concept of

heritage conservation under transformation conditions, which emphasizes people, communities, identity, activities and daily culture.

Honestly, these will be overcome by cooperation and coordination with the people, organizations, institutions concerned and hopefully this will support in preserving Heritage Colonial Buildings properly.

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