



*The Minister's Building, former Secretariat*

# Heritage conservation in Yangon, Myanmar

- Tangible heritage
- Intangible heritage
- Character Defining Elements
- Manage the changes

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# Why Yangon, Myanmar?

Yangon (Rangoon) is one of the few remaining Asian cities that more fully expresses the **British Colonial** imprint and the in-migration of **different Asian groups** during the **19th** and **early 20th centuries**. Since the early 1960s, and until 2010s, there has been little change in the historic core.

Though dilapidated, its rich colonial-era urban fabric had been preserved, recalling the days when Yangon was a major hub of the British empire. With Myanmar's political and economic liberalization in 2012, however, much of that heritage is under threat, as roads are widened and old buildings are knocked down for new development.



(Photo: go.hrw.com)

# Historic Yangon

## A cosmopolitan Asian city built on diverse cultural traditions

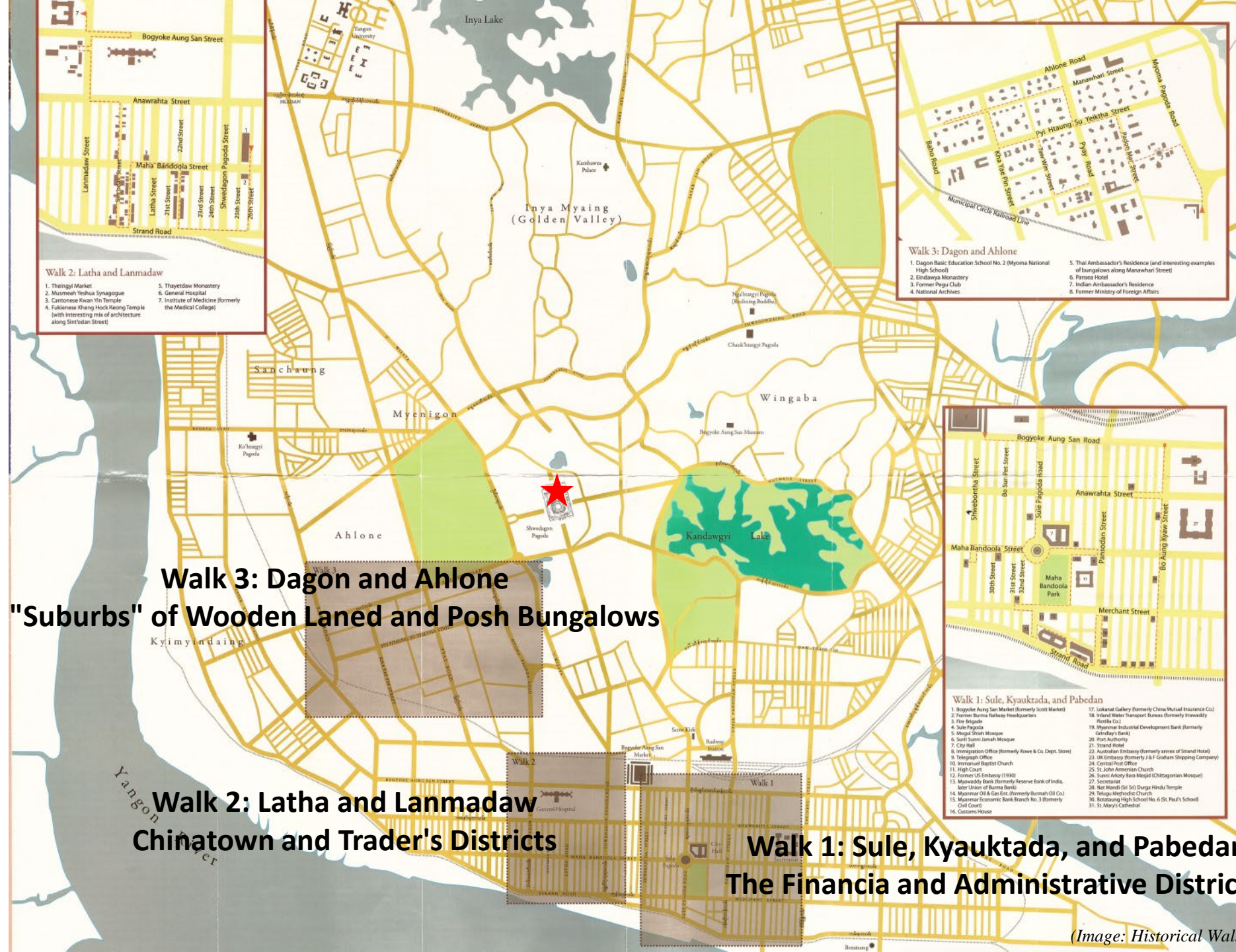
The modern city of Yangon (inaccurately anglicized to “Rangoon,” as “Y” and “R” sound alike in Burmese) was constructed on an early Buddhist pilgrimage site called Lagun or Dagon by the Mon people. Indeed, today’s Dagon Township still encompasses the hill where the Shwedagon (“Golden Dagon”) Pagoda stands. Legend traces this awe-inspiring sanctuary back to the time of the Lord Buddha, although the present 326-foot structure dates from 1774, soon after King Alaungpaya defeated the Mon and renamed the area Yan-kon (“End of Strife”) in 1755.

Yangon was little more than a village with a stockade to guard Shwedagon and two other ancient temples, Sule Pagoda and Botataung Pagoda, on islands amid marshland when the British seized the location for its potential as a river port in the Second Anglo-Burmese War of 1852. As the vicinity was largely devastated by the fighting and subject to constant flooding, the British decided to plan a whole new town with a drainage canal and a reservoir system supplied from Kandawgyi and Kandawlei (Greater and Lesser Royal Lakes) as well as Inya Lake (Victoria Lake). However, despite the use of dredged earth and rubble to raise low-lying areas more than two feet, water and sanitation continued to be problems into the 1920s.



*Shwedagon Pagoda South Gate circa 1870 (photographer unknown). On a wooded hill outside the city in those days.*





- Walk 2: Latha and Lanmadaw**
1. Theinngi Market
  2. Museum Yeshua Synagogue
  3. Cantonese Kwan Yin Temple
  4. Fakhimaw Khing Hodi Kasing Temple (with interesting mix of architecture along Sint'odan Street)
  5. Thawetdaw Monastery
  6. General Hospital
  7. Institute of Medicine (formerly the Medical College)

- Walk 3: Dagon and Ahlone**
1. Dagon Basic Education School No. 2 (Myoma National High School)
  2. Eindawya Monastery
  3. Former Paga Club
  4. National Archives
  5. Thai Ambassador's Residence (and interesting examples of bungalows along Menawhari Street)
  6. Pansoa Hotel
  7. Indian Ambassador's Residence
  8. Former Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Walk 1: Sule, Kyauktada, and Pabedan**
1. Bogyoke Aung San Market (formerly Scott Market)
  2. Former Burma Railway Headquarters
  3. Fire Brigade
  4. Sule Pagoda
  5. Mogal Shah Mosque
  6. Surti Sanni Sanni Mosque
  7. City Hall
  8. Immigration Office (formerly Rowe & Co. Dept. Store)
  9. Telegraph Office
  10. Inevitable Baptist Church
  11. High Court
  12. Former US Embassy (1990)
  13. Myanmar Bank (formerly Reserve Bank of India, later Union of Burma Bank)
  14. Myanmar Oil & Gas Co. (formerly Burma Oil Co)
  15. Myanmar Economic Bank Branch No. 3 (formerly Civil Court)
  16. Customs House
  17. Lokatal Gallery (formerly China Mutual Insurance Co.)
  18. Inland Water Transport Bureau (formerly Inlandways (North) Co.)
  19. Myanmar Industrial Development Bank (formerly Grenfell's Bank)
  20. Post Authority
  21. Strand Hotel
  22. Australian Embassy (formerly annex of Strand Hotel)
  23. UK Embassy (formerly J&F Gosham Shipping Company)
  24. Central Post Office
  25. St. John American Church
  26. Sanni Akopy Baza Mosque (Chikagonian Mosque)
  27. Secretariat
  28. Nat Mundi (St. Sri Durga Hindu Temple)
  29. St. George Methodist Church
  30. Bostawing High School No. 6 (St. Paul's School)
  31. St. Mary's Cathedral

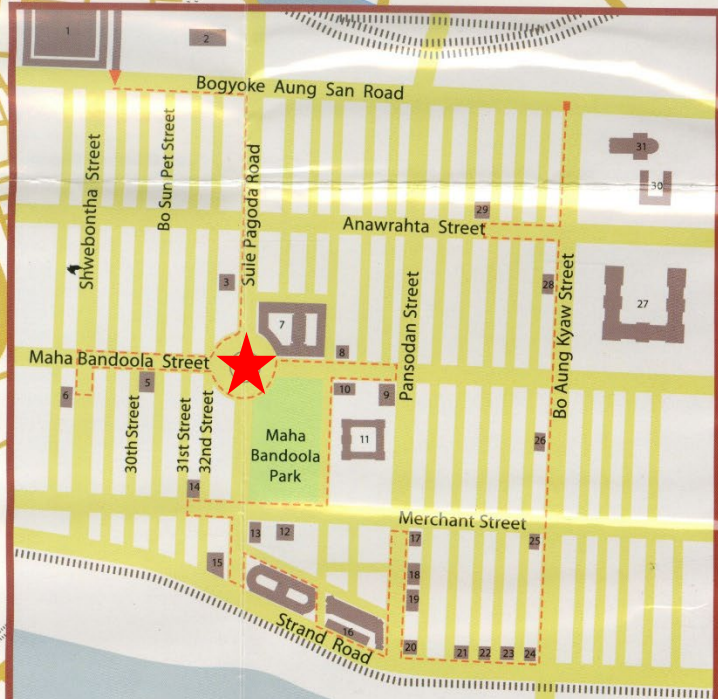
**Walk 3: Dagon and Ahlone**  
**"Suburbs" of Wooden Laned and Posh Bungalows**

**Walk 2: Latha and Lanmadaw**  
**Chinatown and Trader's Districts**

**Walk 1: Sule, Kyauktada, and Pabedan**  
**The Financial and Administrative Districts**



## Walk 1: Sule, Kyauktada, and Pabedan The Financia and Administrative Districts



### Walk 1: Sule, Kyauktada, and Pabedan

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Bogyoke Aung San Market (formerly Scott Market)                            | 17. Lokanat Gallery (formerly China Mutual Insurance Co.)           |
| 2. Former Burma Railway Headquarters  | 18. Inland Water Transport Bureau (formerly Irrawaddy Flotilla Co.) |
| 3. Fire Brigade   | 19. Myanmar Industrial Development Bank (formerly Grindlay's Bank)  |
| 4. Sule Pagoda  | 20. Port Authority  |
| 5. Mogul Shah Mosque  | 21. Strand Hotel  |
| 6. Surti Sunni Jamah Mosque   | 22. Australian Embassy (formerly annex of Strand Hotel)             |
| 7. City Hall  | 23. UK Embassy (formerly J & F Graham Shipping Company)             |
| 8. Immigration Office (formerly Rowe & Co. Dept. Store)                       | 24. Central Post Office   |
| 9. Telegraph Office   | 25. St. John Armenian Church  |
| 10. Immanuel Baptist Church   | 26. Sunni Arkaty Bara Masjid (Chittagonian Mosque)                  |
| 11. High Court  | 27. Secretariat   |
| 12. Former US Embassy (1930)  | 28. Nat Mandi (Sri Sri) Durga Hindu Temple                          |
| 13. Myawaddy Bank (formerly Reserve Bank of India, later Union of Burma Bank) | 29. Telugu Methodist Church   |
| 14. Myanmar Oil & Gas Ent. (formerly Burmah Oil Co.)                          | 30. Botataung High School No. 6 (St. Paul's School)                 |
| 15. Myanmar Economic Bank Branch No. 3 (formerly Civil Court)                 | 31. St. Mary's Cathedral  |
| 16. Customs House   |   |



Sule Pagoda Road circa 1870 (photographer unknown). Looking north to Sule Pagoda, town square on the right.

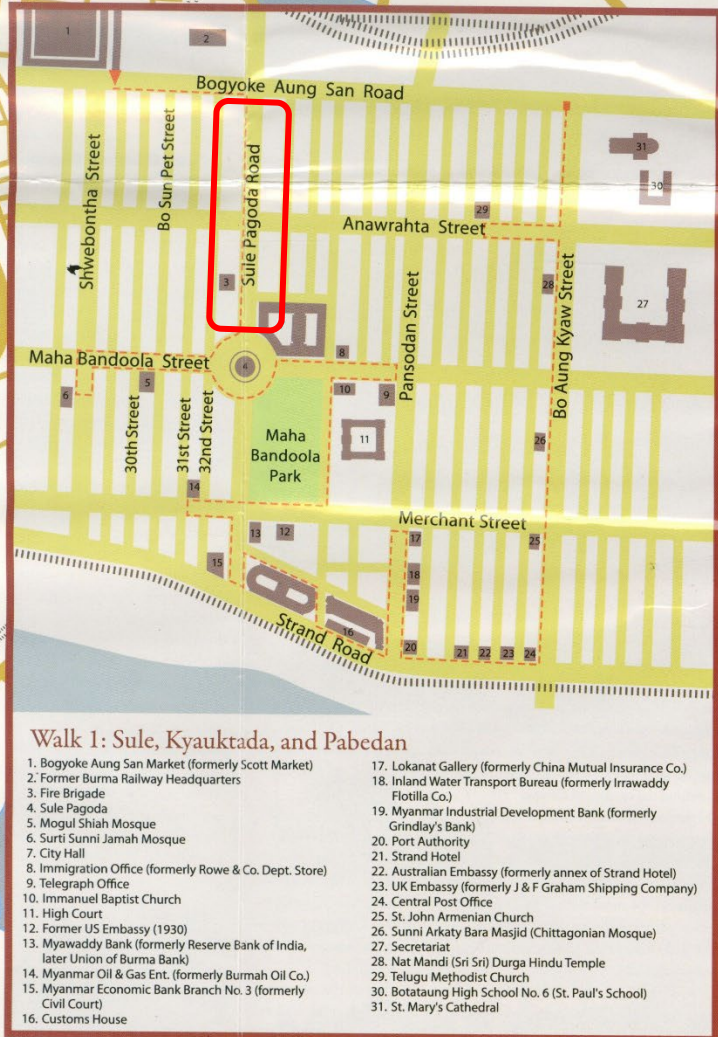


Sule Pagoda Road circa 1920 (photographer unknown). Looking south, Central Fire Brigade tower on the right.

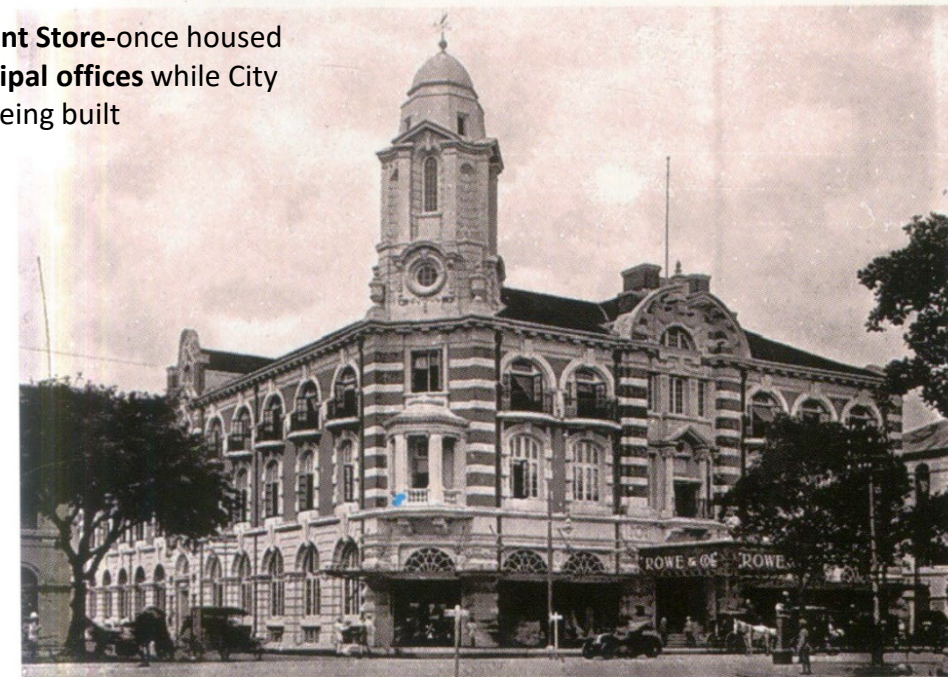


## Walk 1: Sule, Kyauktada, and Pabedan The Financial and Administrative Districts

Kyauktada and Pabedan townships to the east and west of Sule Pagoda Road boast the greatest number of “signature works” by recognized architects and engineers, although the vast majority of vernacular buildings showcase a wonderfully eclectic mix of styles, from Bengali Victorian to Eurasian art deco. Most streets are lined with row houses whose ornate stucco facades bear dates and names of past companies and community institutions. Typically commissioned by merchants between 1900 and 1940, Calcutta-trained contractors worked with local and Indian masons on building projects that followed generic “international” models of the day, combining stores and warehouses (“godowns”) at street level with employee living quarters above.



**Department Store**—once housed the **municipal offices** while City Hall was being built



Rowe & Co. Department Store.



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On the east side of the park is the **Immanuel Baptist Church (1885)**, which lost one spire in the Second World War but was rebuilt in 1952.



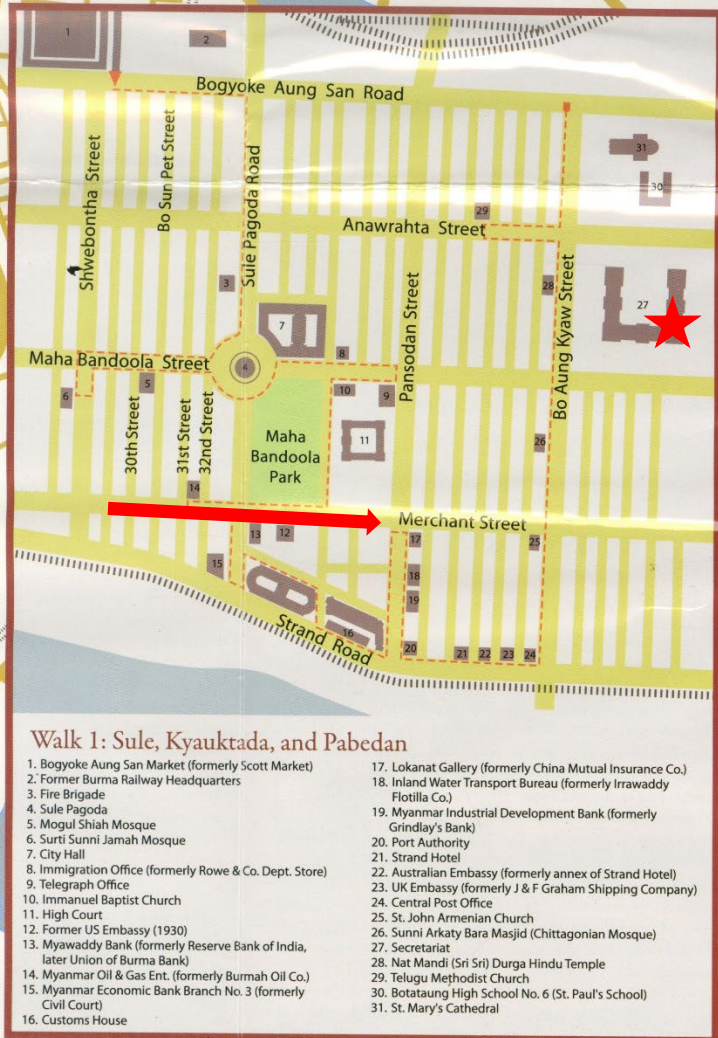
City Hall 1945 (photo: G. Hensley). Immanuel Baptist Church, in the foreground, shows bomb damage.



Riverfront circa 1930 (photographer unknown). Left to right, High Court, Customs House, and Port Authority.



## Walk 1: Sule, Kyauktada, and Pabedan The Financial and Administrative Districts

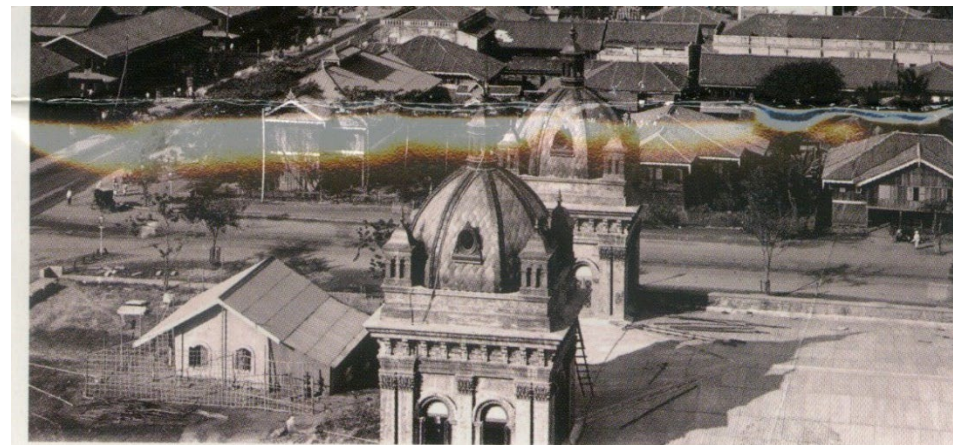


**Merchant street**, located at the bottom of the park, is where **major shipping agents and import companies** kept offices, with the US Embassy and Indian Embassy occupying two premises.



Merchant Street circa 1865 (photo: Bentley & Jackson). Looking west, Trinity Church spire left, old Catholic Church right.

**Secretariat (1905)**, is the largest single **early modern** building in Yangon



Secretariat (under construction) circa 1900 (photographer unknown). Looking west on Maha Bandoola Street.

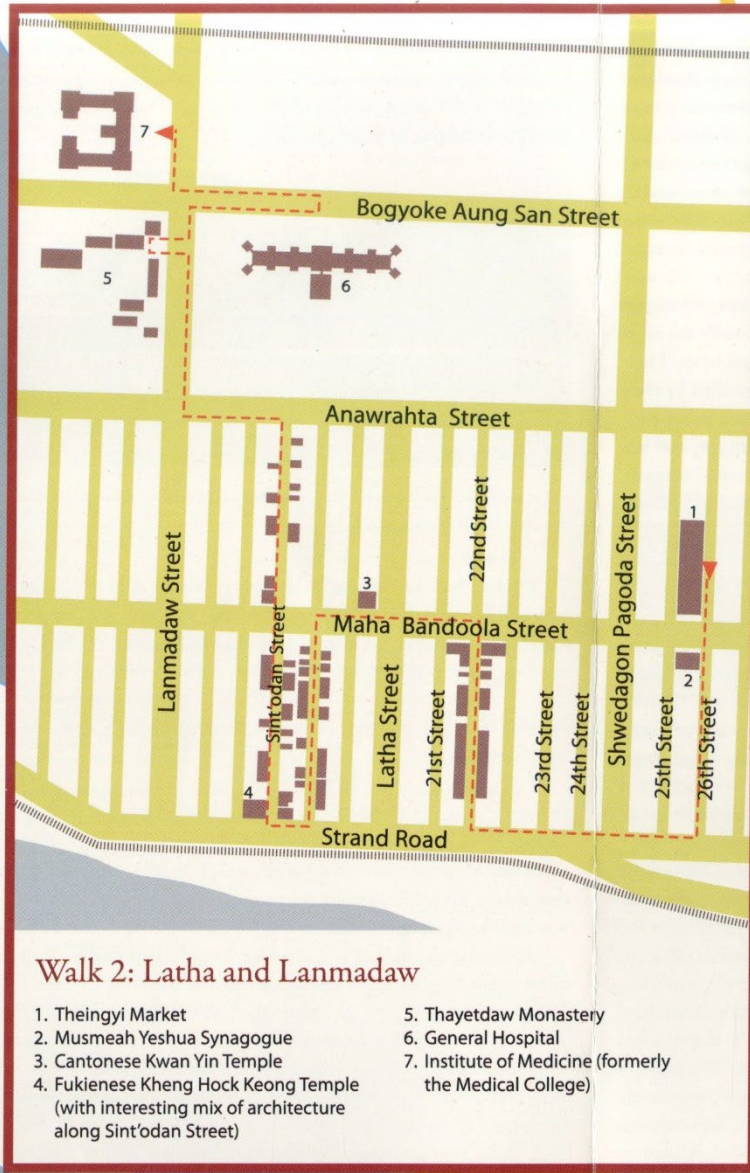


## Walk 2: Latha and Lanmadaw Chinatown and Trader's Districts

To the west of Shwefontha lie areas settled mostly by early non-European traders. In fact, even during the British colonial century it was rare to see European people in this part of town. Chinatown (Tayokdan) still bustles during night market hours, the streets lined with shophouses and clan shrines of successive diasporas. Early on, there was a “China Wharf,” with the first seafaring Fukienese and Teo Chiew probably arriving in the early 1700s, followed by Straits Chinese (Baba) and “coolies” from Canton. Locals called these Cantonese labourers “short sleeve” Chinese, as distinguished from their “long sleeve” masters—not unlike today’s terms of “blue collar” and “white collar.” In comparison, the overland Chinese influx from Yunnan is very recent.



*Fukienese Temple circa 1890 (photo: P. Klier). Dragon finials hail the rising fortunes of ancestral Fukien clans.*



### Walk 2: Latha and Lanmadaw

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Theingyi Market   | 5. Thayetdaw Monastery                                  |
| 2. Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue  | 6. General Hospital                                     |
| 3. Cantonese Kwan Yin Temple   | 7. Institute of Medicine (formerly the Medical College) |
| 4. Fukienese Kheng Hock Keong Temple (with interesting mix of architecture along Sint'odan Street) |   |

Sanchaung

(Image: Historical Walks in Yangon 2010)

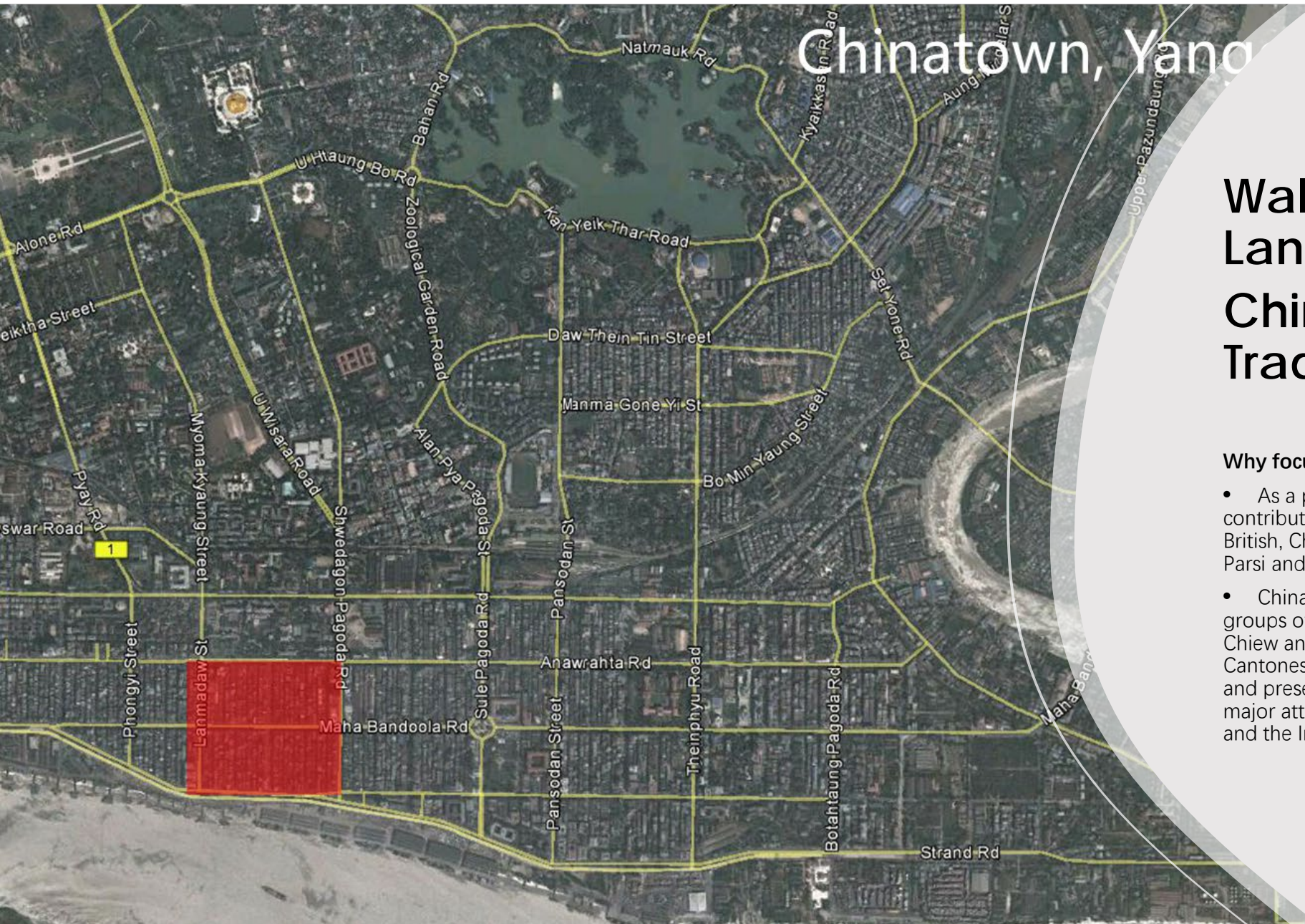


# Chinatown, Yangon

## Walk 2: Latha and Lanmadaw Chinatown and Trader's Districts

### Why focus on Chinatown?

- As a place, Yangon owes its uniqueness to the myriad contributions of distinct cultural groups – the Burmese, British, Chinese and Indians as well as, among others, the Parsi and Armenians.
- Chinatown, which reflects the influence of different groups of Chinese residents (first the Fukienese and Teo Chiew and later the Straits Chinese [Baba] and Cantonese), expresses the vibrant commercial past and present of the place. It is one of historic Yangon's major attributes, along with the British Colonial "district" and the Indian Quarter.





# Aesthetic /Architectural/ Authenticity/ Historic Value of the place & associated CDEs



Sinn O Dan Street West











## Urban streetscape

The tangible (physical environment, architecture, signage, etc.)  
and the intangible (the people and activities, etc.)

Planning control system (such as development control and  
buffer zone).

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Sinn O Dan Street West





## Walk 3: Dagon and Ahlone

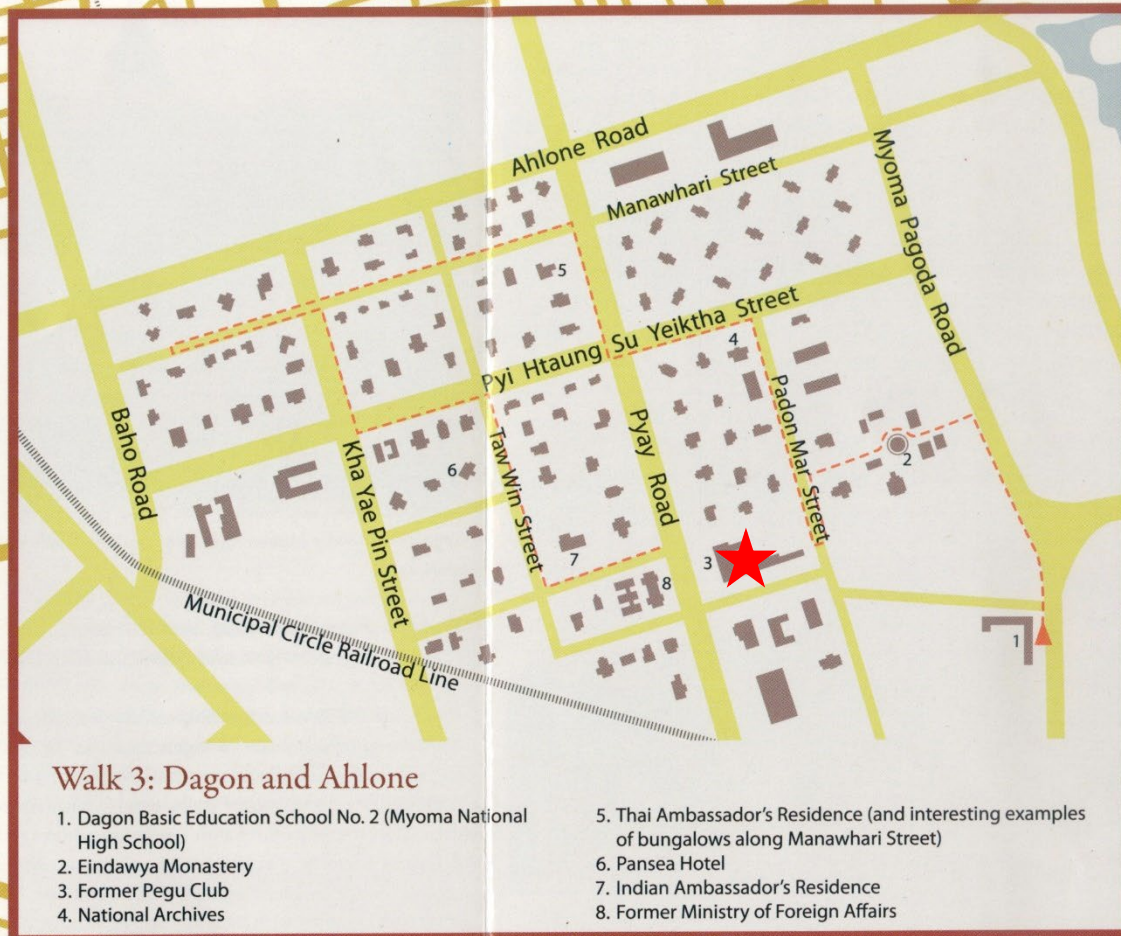
### "Suburbs" of Wooden Laned and Posh Bungalows

As the city of Yangon grew northward towards Inya Lake, affluent businessmen sought to escape from the congested downtown area to more idyllic "suburban" estates further inland (even today, upper-class Burmese shun the workaday riversides). Especially sought after from the 1880s were former Cantonment properties with views of Shwedagon in Ahlone Township, which the long-gone Minto Mansions Hotel advertised as "the most select and picturesque part of the City, away from the traffic, dust and noise." Freestanding bungalows—from the Hindi bangala for "Bengal-style"—with "gingerbread" verge-board eaves, manicured grounds, and servants' outbuildings are the neighbourhood's predominant feature.

The **Pegu Club** (1882) founded in 1871 as a civil servants' venue within the Cantonment was strictly **segregated**; not even mixed parentage Anglo-Burmese were allowed to join, although the staff was **entirely Indian**.



*Pegu Club circa 1890 (photo: P. Klier). Exclusively European, a colonial haunt such as Orwell reviled in Burmese Days.*







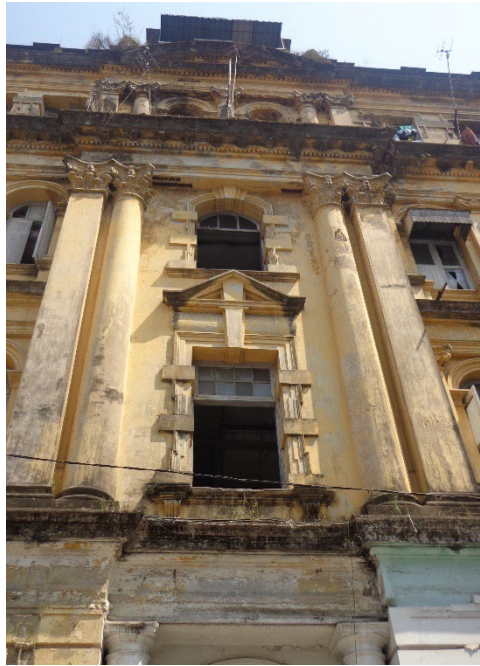
**Lokanat Gallery  
Building**  
(The formerly  
**Sofaer's Buildings**)





# Lokanat Gallery Building The formerly Sofaer's Buildings

contemporary Burmese art





# The Pegu Club



Sagawa Street, off Pyay Road,  
opposite Russian Embassy

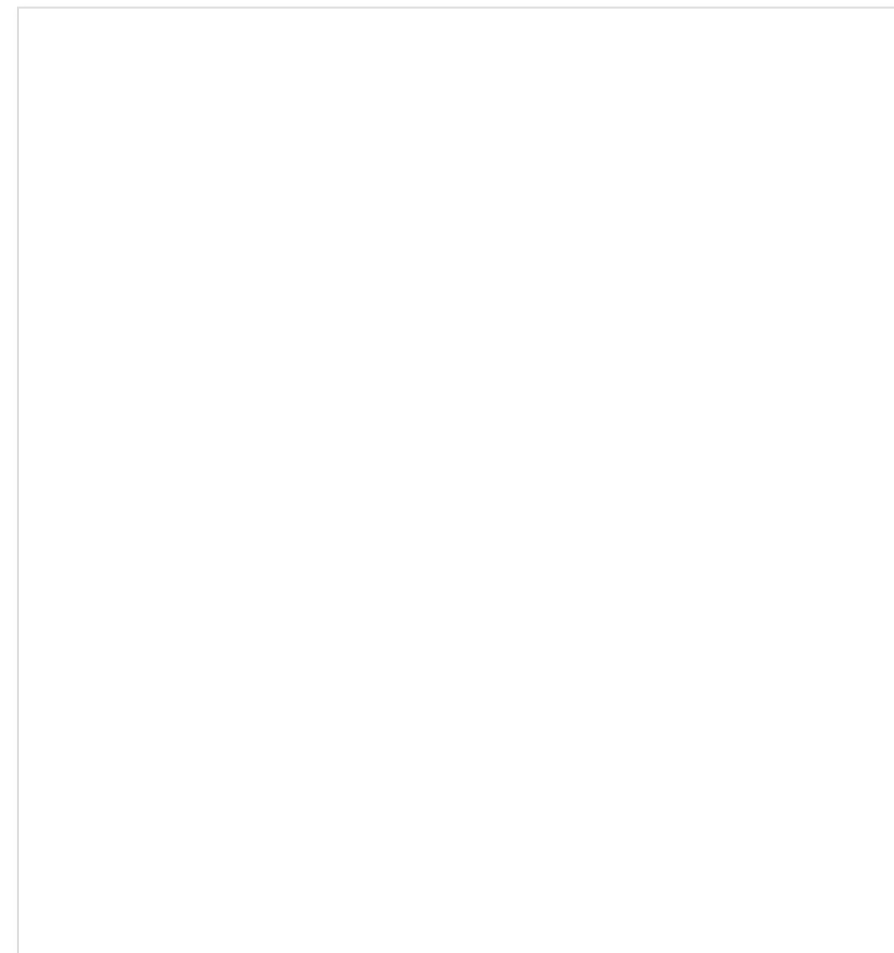


# The Pegu Club





# Waziya Cinema



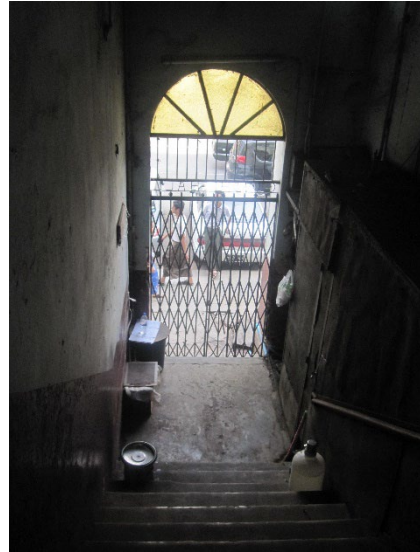


# Waziya Cinema



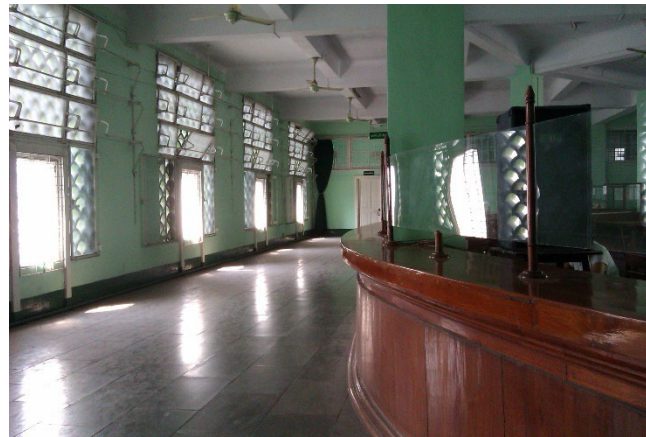


# Gandhi Hall



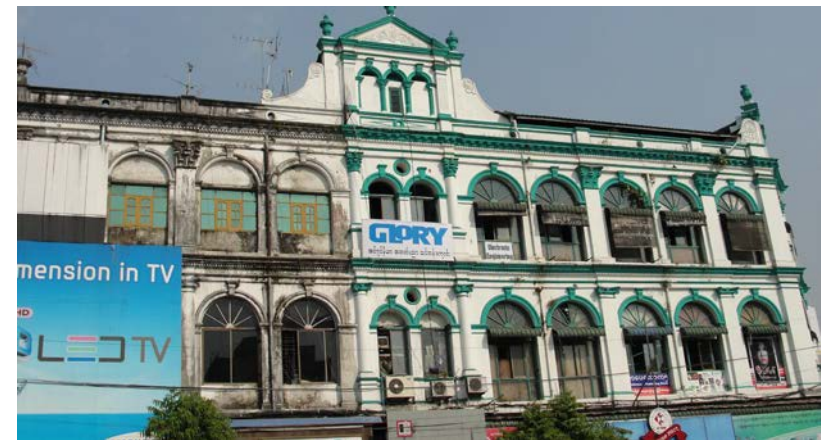


# Agricultural Development Bank



art-deco features







# Yangon Heritage Trust



an advisory one to the government and  
an advocacy one to the general public.

Founded by well-known historian and author **Dr. Thant Myint-U** in 2012 to preserve the city's unique architectural legacy, Yangon Heritage Trust is now the most authoritative local non-governmental organization in Myanmar on the conservation of urban heritage.



**Daw Moe Moe Lwin** has been General Secretary of Association of Myanmar Architects since 2009 and was Director of the Yangon Heritage Trust.





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Thanks!

