

# Studies on Architectural Features of Mandalay Panthay Mosque

Ko Ko Naing\*

## Abstract

Panthay Rebellion was completely suppressed in Yunan. Those who survived fled to Myanmar by means of the two routes where they founded various Chinese Muslim communities in the northern regions. Some Panthays were settled in Mandalay with trade before this case. King Mindon permitted a mosque to be built on the granted that the Panthays would have their own place of worship in the capital. The characteristic features of Mandalay Panthay mosque differed from Arab and Asia Minor styles. The architectural appearance of mosque was dominated by Chinese style.

**Key Words:** Panthay migration; permitted worship; architecture of mosque; Arab and Asia Minor style

## Introduction

Prophet Muhammed emerged at Saudi Arabia in 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. He was a [prophet](#) and his teachings became be united Arab world. The spread of Islam from Arab region to the around the world by variety ways. Islamic culture flourished based on the ism. The place that arrived at Islam tried to prove their skillful motif architecture by the making of mosques. The building of mosques relied on various factors of the climate, environmental locality and ethnic tradition.

## Archaeological Setting and Background History of Panthay Mosque

Mandalay Panthay Mosque is situated 80<sup>th</sup> street between 35<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> streets in the Panthay compound of Kitsnamahi quarter. The word Panthay is derived from Pansiy, Pasi, Parsi and Persian.<sup>1</sup> Panthay means Chinese Muslim only in Myanmar. They were called Hui Hui in China. It interprets in Chinese language turn to the truth. It is said that Chinese Muslim women were skillful in art of embroidery and therefore they were also called Panthay. Within Yunnan, the Hui Muslim population seems to have flourished and expanded throughout the Yuan and Ming periods (1280–1644 CE). Certainly when Marco Polo visited Yunnan in the early Yuan, he noted the presence of "Saracens" amongst the population. Dali in western Yunnan, which was to emerge as the earliest centre of Hui settlement in the province, though other areas of significant Muslim settlement were subsequently established in north-western as well as – much later on, during the Qing Dynasty – in and around southeastern Yunnan.

The history of the Panthays in Myanmar was inseparably related to Yunnan, their place of origin, whose population was predominantly Muslim. The Chinese Muslims of Yunnan were noted for their mercantile skills. Within Yunnan, the Muslim population better than as merchants and

---

\* Lecturer, Department of Archaeology, Yadanabon University

<sup>1</sup> Dr Than Tun, *The Royal Orders of Burma AD-1598-1885 Part Ten, Epiloge, Glossary and Index*, Kyoto University, 1990, p.117 (Hereafter cited as Than Tun, *ROB*)

soldiers, the two qualities, which made them ideally suited to durable overland trade in mountainous regions, and to deserve the rewards therefrom. They might have been helped in this by their religion of Islam from its inception which had flourished as a Religion of Trade. The requirement of religion to perform Hajj pilgrimage had also helped them to establish an overland road between Yunnan and Arabia as early as the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hui Muslim and other minority of the people in Yunnan implied pressure from increasing Han Chinese migration to the province. Resentment against the Han Chinese hostility towards Qing rule, led in 1855 to the Panthay Rebellion among Muslim miners in the Qianshui region. Within two years, the center of rebellion had spread to the west of the province. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Panthay Rebellion took place in Yunnan. The local Muslims rebelled against the Qing authorities. The rebellion was caused by the discriminatory procedures adopted by the Qing authorities against the local Muslims. The Rebellion was completely suppressed and numerous Muslims were killed. Those who survived fled to Myanmar by two routes where they founded various Chinese Muslim communities in the northern regions. Before in this case, some Panthays were settled in Mandalay with trade. Many other survivors escaped to Central Asia, mostly to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Most of the Yunnan Muslim culture has been destroyed and very few of the original Yunnan Muslims are still present in the region.

Beginning from the late Konbaung period, the Panthays started to settle in the royal capital of Mandalay, particularly during the reign of King Mindon. The number of Panthay was small amount, a few of them seemed to have found their way inside the court as jade-assessors. They lived side by side with non-Muslim Chinese at *Tayoketan* (Chinatown), which had been designated by King Mindon as the residential area for the Chinese. The non-Muslim Chinese had started settling in Mandalay considerably earlier than the Panthays, there already was a Chinese community at Mandalay, with their own bank, companies and warehouses and some kind of organized social and economic life.

There were also Chinese jade-assessors in the employ of the king. Rivalry between the Chinese and Panthay jade-assessors in courting the royal favor naturally led to a quarrel between the two groups, resulting in a number of deaths. King Mindon had not given much serious thought to the religious and social differences between the Panthays and the Chinese. But after the Chinatown quarrel, the king began to see the wisdom of separating the two groups.

King Mindon granted the Panthays of the royal capital land on which to settle as a separate community, with a view to preventing further quarrels between them and the Chinese. The Panthays were given the rare favour of choosing their own place of residence within the confines of the royal capital, and they chose the site on which the present-day Panthay Compound (Chinese Muslim Quarter) is located. It was bounded on the north by 35<sup>th</sup> Street, in the south by 36<sup>th</sup> Street, in the east by 79<sup>th</sup> Street and in the west by 80<sup>th</sup> Street. This site was chosen because it was the camping ground for the mule caravans from Yunnan, which regularly came to the capital via the Theinni route. The broadminded King Mindon of Mandalay, Myanmar permitted a mosque to be built on the granted that the Panthays would have their own place of worship in the capital. Under the insufficient finance conditions, Panthays of Mandalay requested

donations from the Sultan of Yunnan (Tu-Wen-hsiu). The Sultan agreed to finance the Mosque and sent his Colonel Mah Too-tu and to supervise the project. The land was bought from Khunaywa Queen by Mah Too-tu with 80 kyats in 13 November 1868.<sup>2</sup> Mah Too-tu built the mosque in this compound. The Mosque, which is still standing, constitutes a historic landmark. It signifies the beginning of the first Panthay congregation (Jama'at) in Mandalay Yadanabon Naypyidaw. Sultan Sulaiman had already started a business enterprise (hao) in Mandalay. His company was housed in a one-story brick building located at the present-day Taryedan on the west side of the 80<sup>th</sup> Street, between 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> Streets. The hao had been carrying on business in precious stones, jades, cotton, silk and other commodities of both Chinese and Myanmar origins.

### Emergence of Mosques

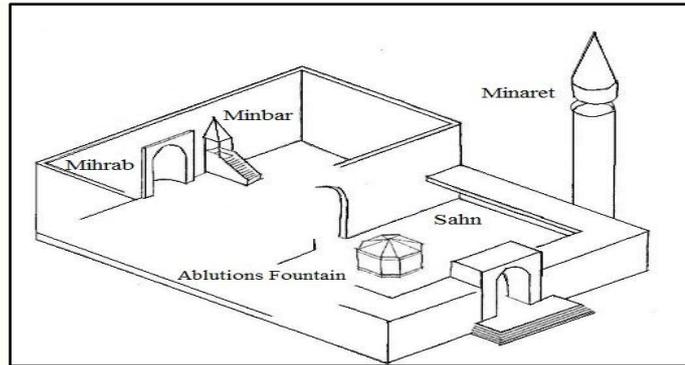
Mosque is a French word derived from the Arabic word *masjid*, meaning place of worship for Muslims. Mosques are regarded as places that people gather to pray. Prophet Muhammed appeared at Saudi Arabia in 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. According to [Islamic doctrine](#), he was a [prophet](#) and his teachings became united Arab world. The spread of Islam from Arab region to the around the world by variety ways. Islamic culture flourished based on the Islam. The place that arrived at Islam tried to prove their skillful motif architecture by making of mosques. The building of mosques depend upon various factors of the climate, environmental locality and ethnic tradition. The construction of mosque has traditionally been financed by donations obtained from people and organizations living around the place where the mosque be built or a wealthy benefactor or foundation. Nevertheless the building of mosques comprised essential four main features that a *mihrab* (niche), *minaret* (tower), *qubba* (dome) and *sahn* (courtyard).

### Features of Mosque

The [mihrab](#) is a niche in the qibla wall indicating the direction of Mecca; because of its importance, it is usually the most ornate part of a mosque, highly decorated and often embellished with inscriptions from the Qur'an. The [minbar](#) is a pulpit in the form of a staircase on which the prayer leader (imam) stands when delivering a sermon after Friday prayer. The pulpit is usually situated to the right of the mihrab and is often made of elaborately carved wood or stone. A [minaret](#) is a tall tower attached or adjacent to a mosque. It is designed so the call to prayer, issued from mosques five times a day, can be heard loud and clear throughout a town or city. Alternatively, the call may be made from the roof or entrance, and is now often projected with the aid of microphones and speakers. The minaret is also a visual symbol of the presence of Islam. Most of mosques *sahn* (courtyards) used to contain a public fountain, where believers can perform ablutions, the ritual washing of the hands, feet, and face required before prayer. In the arid lands of Arabia, water is as a gift from God, and fountains also have symbolic meaning, referring to the four rivers of Paradise mentioned in the Qur'an.

---

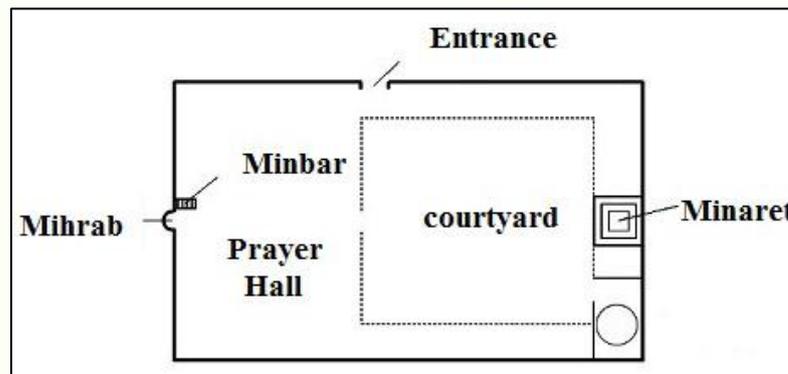
<sup>2</sup> Dr Than Tun, History of Round the Countryside, Pyi Sone Press, 2003, p. 217.



Four main features of a mosque

### Layouts of Mosque

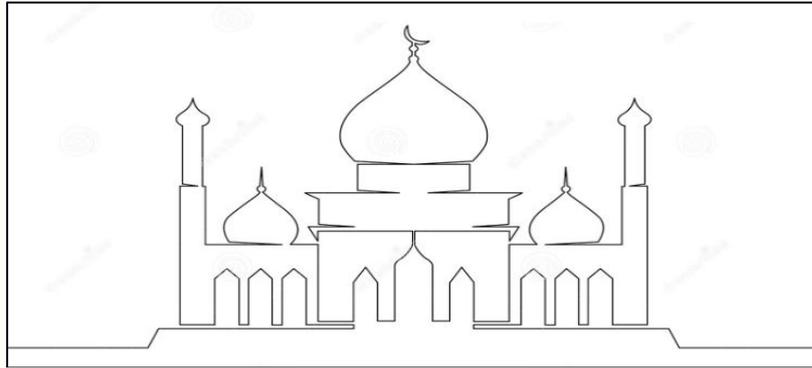
Besides, architectural features were placed in a mosque with as lay-out plan. Generally the main gate was on the side of mosque orientation to the north or east under the minaret. When enter into the mosque there firstly found courtyard or fountain for ablutions or cleansing before worship. There is a prayer hall at the west side of the centre courtyard. Mihrab is a niche in the centre of qibla wall orientation to the west referred by Mecca. This mihrab was used for place of prayer attention. The [minbar](#) is form of a staircase or preaching stage which the prayer leader stands when delivering prayer. The [minbar](#) is usually situated in the right of the mihrab and is made of carved wood or stone.



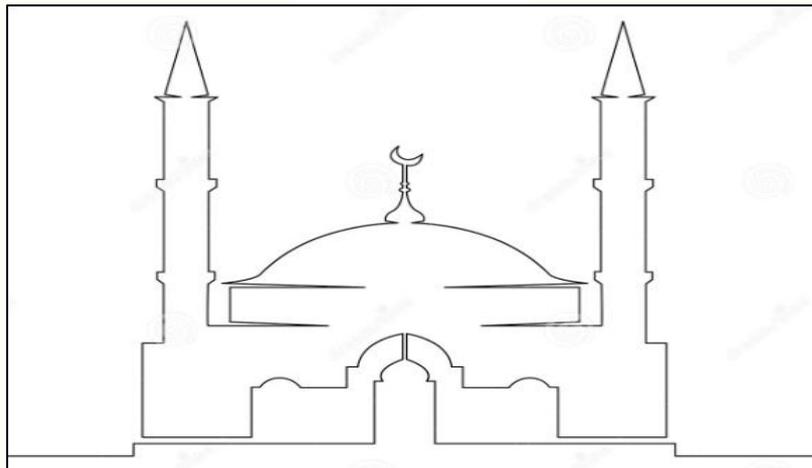
Layout plan of a mosque

### Types of Mosque

Mosques architecture depends on construction locality, environmental factor, climate condition and ethnic traditions. Basically there is two types of mosque architecture Arab style and Anatolia of West Asia style. Arab style mosques descended from Muhammed's house. The mosques were low and flat of repose style in use of space according to arid zone of Arabia and ethnic tradition.

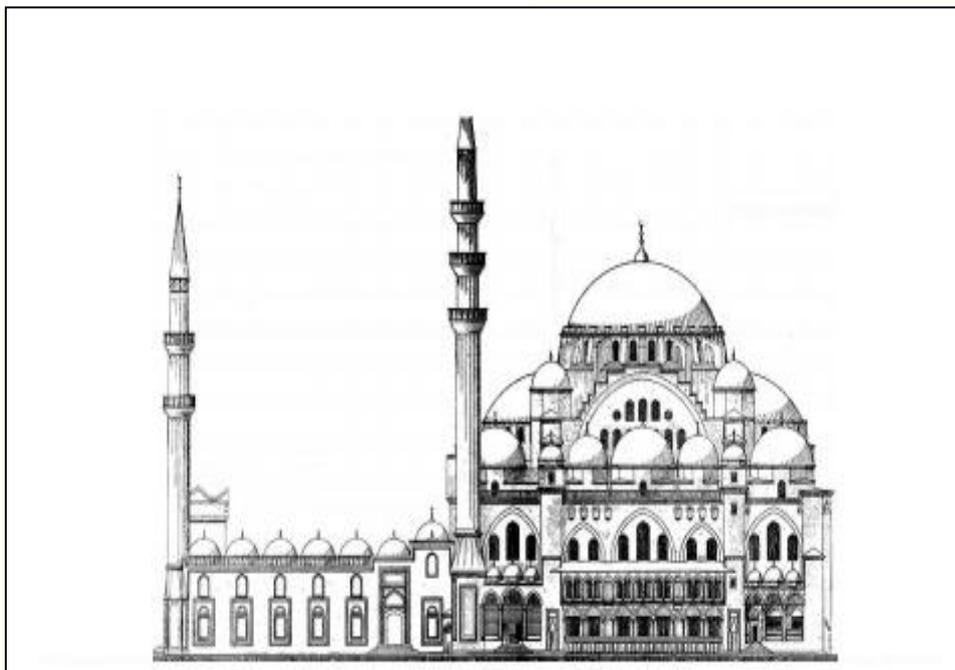


Arab Style Mosque

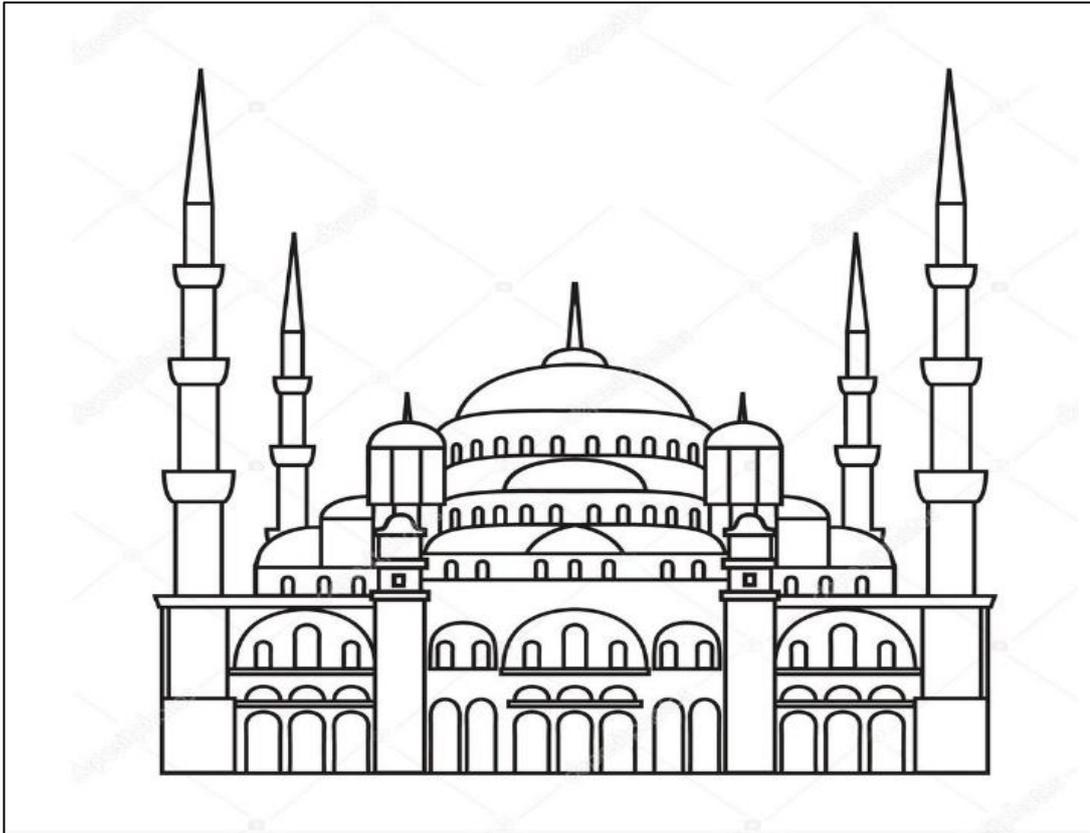


Arab Style Mosque

Other styles are Asia Minor, West Asia and Eurasia. Their mosques were influenced of Byzantine and Arab art was added in it. Therefore new art form came out. Their mosques were found in Persia, Turkey and Balkan regions. The mosques were high and wide with energetic style in use of space according to hybrid art and ethnic tradition.



Asia Minor style of mosque



Asia Minor style of mosque

#### Architecture of Mandalay Panthay Mosque

Panthay mosque was built distinctly for the above two types of Asia Minor style and Arab style. The appearance of external designs were all Chinese style and even essential minaret dominated by Chinese style tower of communal temple. Panthay mosque was continuously made of combination three buildings main prayer hall, centre courtyard and minaret building. These three buildings lies west to east. Main prayer hall is situated the edge of western side high level floor cottage building make to think two storeyed building. Mihrab is a niche in the centre of west wall orientation. The [minbar](#) is a form of a staircase or preaching stage the right of the mihrab and is made of carved wood. There is a courtyard in the centre of mosque and main gate has in this building orientation to the north. Two stair cases are way to prayer hall. Originally staircase is only one in the centre. Minaret building has eastern side of courtyard and two storeyed building. Minaret was based the floor of upper storey and perforated roof. The inside of minaret was made spiral stairs by teak pillar. The outside of minaret decorated the style of Chinese communal temple tower. There are two brick pillars at the roof edge of minaret building.



Panthay Mosque



Minaret Building



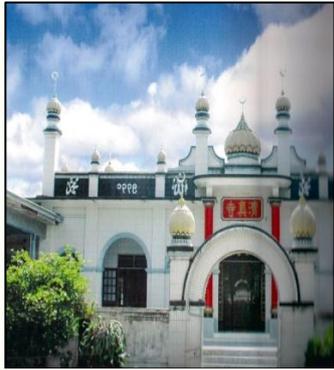
Mihrab and Minbar



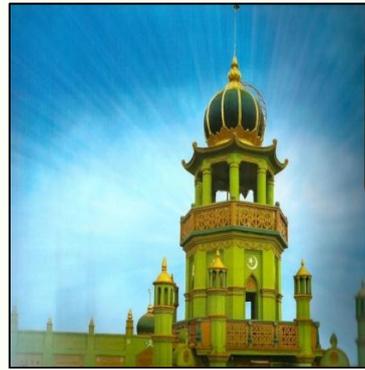
Minaret



Panglong Panthay Mosque (Wa Region)



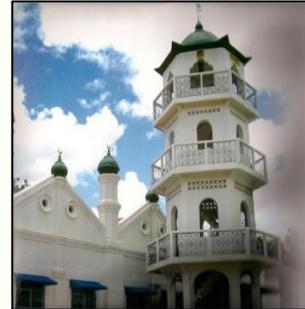
Myitkyina



Tanyang



Mogok



Kyinetung



Taunggyi



Tarchileik



Yangon

### Conclusion

Mandalay Panthay mosque was built by Colonel Mah Too-tu in 1868. Panthays were shunned by both communities. Panthays community exist isolated any other communities till the

last. Their architectural style reduced undesirable risk factors and made both side satisfactions. The characteristic features of Mandalay Panthay mosque differed from Arab and Asia Minor styles. There was no dome in the mosque. According to the workmanship of whole Myanmar 19<sup>th</sup> century Panthay mosques can be assumed to be quite Chinese styles. The 20<sup>th</sup> century mosques were be inclined to Arab and free styles. Although the mosque was Islamic structure impregnated by traditional Chinese art on form of building, minaret and roof. Therefore, Mandalay Panthay mosque was entirely influenced by Chinese traditional art.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr Si Si Khin, Pro-Rector and Dr Tin Moe Thu Zar, Pro-Rector, Yadanabon University for permitting opportunity to present this paper. And also thanks are extended to Daw Tin Tin Win, Professor, Head of Department of Archaeology, Yadanabon University for urging research. Special thanks to Dr Mg Mg Lay, Associate Professor (Retired), Department of International Relations, Mandalay University for helping research peculiar community and tradition.

### References

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| Tin Mg Kyi, Dr | ခုနစ်ရွာမိဖုရားထံမှ မြေဝယ်ပုရပိုက် ကော်ပီ   |
| Than Tun, Dr   | <i>The Royal Orders of Burma AD-1598-1885 Part Ten, Epiloge, Glossary and Index</i> ,<br>Kyoto University, 1990 |
| Than Tun, Dr   | နယ်လှည့်ရှာဇဝင် ( <i>History of Round the Countryside</i> ), Pyi Sone Press, 2003                               |

