

MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE MOSQUES IN BANGKOK

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Abstract

This study is focused on the cultural aspects of the mosques in Bangkok which were influenced from the multicultural background of Muslims from Persia, India, Arab, Cham, Java, and Malaysia.

The critical factors such as the ethnic group, Bangkok urban culture, and Islamic culture, local and foreign architectural character along with the history of multicultural group of Muslims in Bangkok have been studied through the architectural character of the mosques in Bangkok. The data collected from 172 mosques have been categorized to be analyzed along the developing process through the chronology.

The information from the interview and survey reveals that socio-cultural factor was the most prevalent influence that affects the concept and the architectural character of the mosques among other related factors such as the development of the lifestyle, government policy, socio-cultural factors, technology and the environment.

Multicultural Aspects through the Design Development stages of the Mosques could be categorized as 1) Traditional Period 2) Transitional Period 3) Revision of Muslim

Identity and 4) Fundamentalism and Quest for New Style.

Introduction

Muslims regard mosques as the secular and religious center of society, as seen in the Quran. Like any Muslim community around the world, the most important thing for a Muslim community settling in Bangkok is to construct a mosque as a place for *Ibadat* 'God worship'. Islamic belief encompasses the full range of secular and religious society in a holistic unity. Thus, mosques are regarded not only as the religious center but as a community center for Muslims to practice their daily life in accordance with God's commands.

"O you who have believed, when the *adhan* is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah (Friday), then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.

And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed.

(Quran 62: 9–10)

Islamic belief has influenced the development of Islamic architecture all around the world. However, there are other sets of influences that impact the development of mosques: local factors such as local lifestyle, urban development, local policy, local belief, and local culture and the external factors such as foreign policy, national commercial policy, and a country's foreign policy. Since there are no rules restricting mosque design, several cultural

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aspects have inspired a number of architects and craftsmen to develop the mosque concept under their unique belief in the power of God.

Bangkok was established as the new capital of Siam in 1782 for a diversity of people, such as Siamese, Chinese, Mon, Khom, and *Khaek*,² which included Muslim. Muslims in Bangkok originally came from several countries in different periods. They have lived in the kingdom in harmony with the believers of other religions under the rule of the Siamese monarchy. The king, as a great religious patron, has taken care of Siamese subjects belonging to different religions.

The image of Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin period was based on traditional Siamese culture, mainly based on Buddhist and Brahman cultures, which were different from Islamic beliefs. To maintain their beliefs, the Muslims accepted Siamese culture, adjusting it to ethnic Islamic culture from their countries. Cultural diversity in the architecture of Bangkok has been expressed, particularly in terms of religious buildings. Traditional Siamese-style mosques with decorations influenced by Islamic architecture in the early Rattanakosin period were the expression of culture through the language of architecture.



Figure 1: King Rama IV positioned as the religious supporter
The murals under the Anantasamakhom Palace dome
(Source: Committee for the Rattanakosin bicentennial celebration 1982: 254)

² *Khaek* in Thai culture means a foreigner from countries to the west of Thailand, excluding Farang. *Khaek* are both Muslim, such as Cham, Java, or Malay, and non-muslim, such as Brahma, Armenan, or Sikh. Information from an interview with Julispong Chularatana on July 12, 2005



Figure 2: The former Kadi Charoen Phat

Since the reign of King Rama V (1868–1910), social reform has caused dramatic changes for Siamese people, including Muslims in Bangkok. International contact has also given more opportunity for people from different ethnic backgrounds to express the cultural heritage of particular groups. The local architectural styles from several countries have been applied to the mosques to express the identity of the mosques worship community.

However, the ethnic aspect became less prominent when pride in being Siamese became stronger. The various architectural styles of the mosques in Bangkok displayed particular design characteristics, rather than the expression of cultural identity, due to many factors, such as government policies, economic conditions, social factors, utilization of technology, intercultural impact, tradition, geography, climate, natural resources, and ethnic Thai culture.

In general, the religious philosophy and the function of the mosque that initiated the character of each mosque derived from multicultural background, while the local and international influence accelerated the

developing process. The diversity of architectural styles developed in a holistic way, which created the particular style of the mosques in Bangkok.

The architectural influence, concept, and characteristics of the mosque are studied and classified through the significant changes in order to understand multicultural aspects through the development of the mosques from 1782–2002. The classification of four major periods,³ relating to the world history of Islamic architecture, Islamic architecture in Bangkok, Bangkok architecture, and Muslims in Bangkok will clarify the whole picture of Islamic architecture, with particular respect to the mosques in Bangkok.

Historical and cultural background (Muslims in Bangkok)

Islamic culture was introduced to the southern part of Siam, exclusively Pattani, through by Persian and Indian merchants over a number of centuries. Islam flourished in Pattani which later became a part of Siam during the reign of King Rama I (Jitmoud 1988: 107–109).

As for the people in the capital of Siam, Islam came first via Persian merchants and later with Indian, Javanese, Malaysian,⁴ Cham, and Chinese people (Chalayondecha 1996: 23–34, Jitmoud

³ The classification is based on the development of mosques in Bangkok (Raksamani 2004), the development of Bangkok architecture (Horayangkura 1993, Tiptus 1996), and the development of Islamic Architecture (Hattstien 2000).

⁴ Especially from the former Pattani territory.

1988: 165–206). Nonetheless, Islamic influence on Siamese art and architecture is not evident until the Ayutthaya period. In the reign of King Narayana the Great of Ayutthaya (1656–1688), the relationship between Siam and the Safavid Empire (1501–1736), which was an international commercial center, flourished greatly. The King of Siam supported Persian trade in Siam and encouraged the presence of Persian nobles in the Siamese court. Persian art and architectural styles were adopted in the creation of art in Siam, including the design of an important building in Lopburi: Phra Narai Racha Niwet Palace.

The international policy changed after the reign of King Narayana the Great. Furthermore, the decline of the Safavid Empire gradually weakened the relationship between the two countries. The connection with Chinese and European countries became more important, instead. During this period, Muslim officers still played an important role in the Siamese government. Persian arts, representing Islamic art, maintained their popularity among the Siamese people, but they no longer enjoyed royal patronage.

In the Ayutthaya period, Thonburi was regarded as Ayutthaya's seafront town, or port of entry, and named Thonburi Si Maha Samut.⁵ There was already a Muslim community, the Kadi Yai or Ton Son mosque community, which had a close relationship with the Muslim community in Ayutthaya. The word *Kadi*,⁶ derived

from a Thai word referring to a local Buddhist religious building (กุฏิ, ฼กัฏฐิ), was applied to some of the early mosques in Bangkok.

After the end of Ayutthaya period in 1767, people from Ayutthaya fled their hometown, migrated toward Thonburi, and joined the local community there, which had been a multireligious and multicultural town. The area around the Royal Palace of King Taksin the Great became the refuge for people from Ayutthaya, such as the local Muslim community near Ton Son Mosque (Kadi Yai) for both Sunni and Shiite Muslims and the Buddhist communities around Hong Rattana Ram temple and Moli Lok Ya Ram temple. The town gradually expanded and later became the new capital of Siam, known as Thonburi.⁷

In 1782, after the Thonburi period, Bangkok, on the east side of the Chao Phraya, was established as the new capital of Siam. In the Rattanakosin period, the Kingdom of Siam⁸ centered around the Chao Phraya, situated between two foreign cultural centers: Burma and the Khmer Kingdom. The social structure of Siam, based primarily on Buddhist and Brahmanist cultures, differed significantly from Islamic belief (Gilquin 2005: 7–8, 24–25).

In the early Rattanakosin period, Bangkok, as the new capital of Siam, was the political and economic center, attracting a number of highly skilled businessmen,

⁵ On early maps, Thonburi is called Bangkok, with various spellings, such as *Bancoc*, *Bancok*, *Banckok*, *Bankoc*, *Banckock*, *Bangok*, *Bancocq*, *Bancock*, and *Bangkok*.

⁶ The use of the word *kadi* or *kudi* with the name of an early mosque can be found in

Bangkok and Ayutthaya province (Ton Son Mosque 2001: 168–169).

⁷ Information from an interview with Patana Langpu-te on October 16, 2001

⁸ The former name of Thailand

officers, and craftsmen who could be promoted to be court officials. Muslims from several ethnic and religious groups in Bangkok were involved and recognized as contributing to the development of the new capital. Muslim communities were located in a certain part of the city because of the sociopolitical policy. The different languages and social roles were the main obstacles in the communication among ethnic groups of Muslims in Bangkok, including Cham, Javanese, Malaysian, Persian, Arabian, Indian, etc., who came to Bangkok for different reasons and at different times.

The soldiers joining the royal army were called *Asa Cham* and were rewarded with property for the settlement of their community at Ban Khrua. The businessmen and the officers migrating from Ayutthaya, such as the Persian and Indian Muslims, settled along the main transportation line of the Chao Phraya, the Bangkok Yai and Bangkok Noi Canals, which comprised the commercial zones. Malaysian Muslims taken from their homeland after the wars with Siam were located in suburban areas such as Nong Chok, Min Buri, and Thung Khru (Kulsirisawas 2002: 95–101, Jitmoud 1988: 165–206).

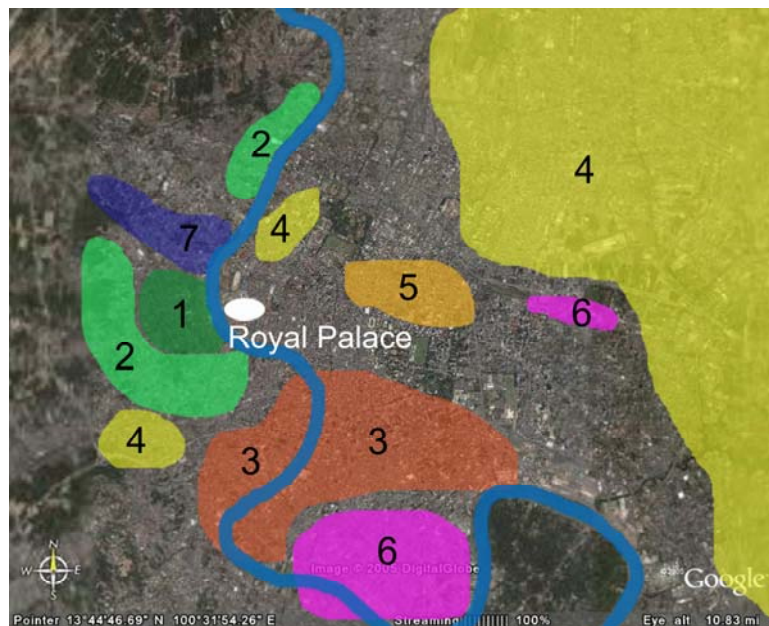


Figure 3: Bangkok map showing the settlement of Muslim people from several countries.
1) Local Muslim 2) Persian 3) Indian 4) Malaysian 5) Cham 6) Javanese 7) Arabian
(Source: Modified from the original map of Google Earth)

From the Ayutthaya period to the early Rattanakosin period, Chularajmontri was a title bestowed by the king on one person selected from the Persian Shiite Muslims who was accounted the Islamic religious leader in Siam.

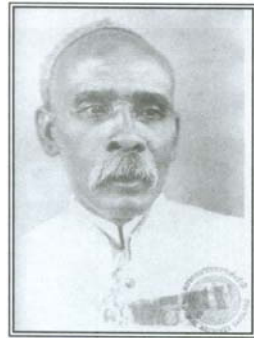


Figure 4: Phraya Chularajmontri
(Sin Amat Chula)

(Source: National archives of Thailand)

He was the highest Muslim officer and was also in charge of the old Siamese Western Maritime Affairs Ministry known, as *Krom Tha Khwa* which dealt with the nation's trade and foreign affairs with countries to the west (Chularatana 2003). Each community had a mosque as a community center with an *imam* as the leader in both religious and secular affairs. All the diverse ethnic communities of Muslims in Bangkok were under the responsibility of the Chularajmontri.

Such diversity of ethnic groups is not an obstacle for relationships among Muslims. The unity and equality of Muslim under the power of God is reflected in the Quran.

O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most

righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.

(Quran 49:13)

Islamic architecture in Bangkok

Islamic architecture, under the influence of Islamic tradition, covered a range of secular and religious architectural styles. It can be traced from the Prophet Mohammed's mosque in Medina,⁹ constructed in 622 C.E., to other buildings such as tombs, palaces, forts, schools, and domestic houses. The most important building type in an Islamic community is the mosque,¹⁰ literally a place of prostration. Functionally, as mentioned before, the mosque is a Muslim community center for practicing the daily life according to God's commands, especially *Ibadat* 'God worship'. Spiritually, Muslims regard the mosque as the house of God.¹¹

Since there was no strict rule for the design of mosques, the mosque that Prophet Mohammed built in Medina was regarded as a prototype for the mosques in several places. His simple lifestyle, based on concepts of Islam, was reflected in the style of this mosque.

⁹ During the migration to Medina in the year 662 C.E., the Prophet had constructed Quba Mosque before the Prophet's mosque in Medina. However, the Prophet's mosque was regarded as the prototype of the mosque in the history of Islam.

¹⁰ The word mosque is derived from Arabic *masjid* by way of French *mosquee* based on the Egyptian dialect *masqid*.

¹¹ "In house (i.e., mosques) which Allah has ordered to be raised and that his name be mentioned (i.e., praised) therein; exalting him within them in the morning and the evenings" (Quran 24:36). "The most beloved places to Allah are the mosques" (Hadith no. 241).

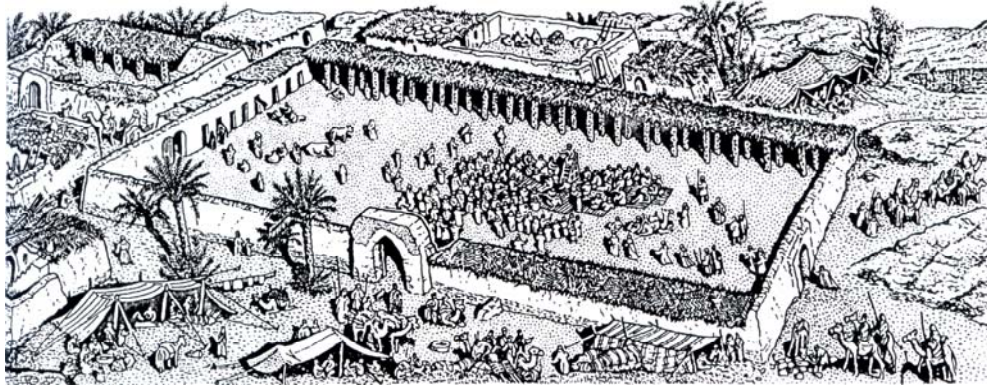


Figure 5: Imaginative reconstruction of the Prophet's house and mosque in Medina

(Source: Bianca 2000: 59)

With the great expansion of Islam after the Prophet's time, Islamic architecture was developed in several empires which already had strong cultural backgrounds, such as Persia, Byzantium and several local dynasties in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Under the influence of Islamic culture, the new Muslim communities established mosques as community centers, while the governors constructed mosques as city centers. Some existing religious buildings were adapted as mosques, while new ones were built according to the concept of the Prophet's mosque. Although the concept of Islam is clear and unique, still other factors, such as local beliefs, local traditions, local cultural background, climate, technology, socio-political influences and foreign influences cause each Muslim community to develop their particular culture (Raksamani 2004).

In history, the strong belief of Muslim people in several Islamic empires generated the various characteristics Islamic architectures, such as Ottoman

architecture in Turkey, Safavid architecture in Iran, and Mughal architecture in India. These then inspired other Islamic architectures around the world, including Bangkok. Such developments ceased after the end of some Islamic empires, such as the Safavid (1736), the Mughal (1857), and the Ottoman Empires (1922). New countries that emerged from the dissolved empires developed their own local identities. The concept of Islamic architecture varied to serve the changing requirements.

As for Muslims in Bangkok, they belonged to various ethnic groups migrating to the city at different times for different reasons. They formed a minority group among the majority Buddhists and the followers of other religions. The interpretation of aspects of Islam varied according to the multicultural background of the people in Bangkok. Apart from the influence of Islam, the important development of mosques was based on the advancement of Bangkok, especially in the first period of Rattanakosin. In the reigns of King Rama I through King Rama IV (1782–1868), several ethnic groups,

including Muslims, lived together peacefully in Bangkok by royal consent. In spite of their ethnicity, Muslims in the early Rattanakosin period were dominated by Siamese culture, especially with respect to their architectural style. Several Muslim communities built their mosques according to the traditional Siamese housing style known as *Ruean Thai* (เรือนไทย). In the meantime, those who were under aristocratic patronage preferred to imitate temple or palace styles to indicate the superiority of their mosques. The hierarchical exclusivity or *thanasak*, of architecture in Bangkok limited popular design. Traditional architectural elements, such as the hornlike finial on the roof ridge known as *Cho Fa* (ช่อฟ้า) symbolized royal buildings and temples and certain architectural elements carrying specific meanings were reserved for Buddhist religious buildings. Muslim people, therefore, sought new styles to represent the identity of their mosques. Then, during the reign of King Rama V (1868–1910), social reform brought about dramatic changes for the Siamese people, including the Muslims in Bangkok. Mosques in Bangkok have been changing in the wake of world events and the new social policy up to the present day.

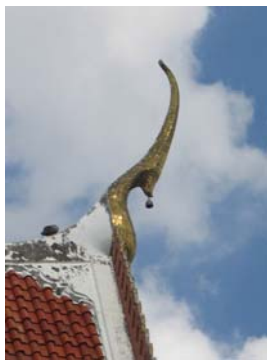


Figure 6: *Cho Fa*, A traditional element on the top of a temple roof

Multicultural aspects in the design development stages of the mosques

Traditional period

In the early Rattanakosin period, Muslims in Bangkok belonged to several ethnic groups from several countries all living under the power of the King of Siam through the Chularajmontri. The King gave them the right to express their culture in their community. Mosques were the symbol of the Islamic identity and power of each Islamic community. In Bangkok, the limited information concerning Islamic art and architecture and its relevant technologies was reflected in the adaptation of local architectural features that did not conflict with Islamic beliefs about the form and other elements of mosques. That is the reason why the early mosques were called *kadi*, derived from the *kudi* or *kuti* or 'Buddhist monk residence' (Ton Son Mosque 2001: 168–169).



Figure 7: The *mimbar* from the former Ton Son Mosque

In the age of Ayutthaya (before 1767), there was already a Ton Son Mosque or Kadi Yai community at Thonburi Si Maha Samut, the seafront town of Ayutthaya. As people in Bangkok had little opportunity to learn about Islam from preceptors or sheiks, they learnt about Islamic culture from Muslims in Ayutthaya and Muslim merchants and businessmen from overseas. Hence, Ton Son Mosque was constructed in a local housing style suited to a simple lifestyle.

In 1768, after the end of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, King Taksin the Great founded Thonburi and established it as the capital of Siam. The royal palace on the west bank of the Chao Phraya was located between the Buddhist and Muslim communities. Several ethnic groups of people migrating from Ayutthaya increased the settlements of both religions' communities. As a result, Ton Son Mosque was enlarged several times to serve the extended community.¹²

Ton Son Mosque was constructed as a traditional Thai teak house with the raised floor, woven bamboo strip wall, and tiled roof. The building size is about 6 x 8 meters with an 8 x 4 meter terrace in the front. The mosque looks like the sermon hall in a Buddhist monastery. (Ton Son Mosque 2001: 172)

Unlike most introductions to the history of Islamic architecture in Islamic countries, the description of mosques in Bangkok in the early Rattanakosin period usually begins with reference to traditional Thai architecture. In 1782, King Rama I founded the Rattanakosin dynasty and relocated the Royal Palace to the east side

of the Chao Phraya. Bangkok, the new capital of Siam, was laid out according to ideal model of Ayutthaya, leading Bangkok architectural design concepts to be similar to those of Ayutthaya. The city plan was also reflected the concept of *chai yaphum* or 'good location' by locating support services and Muslim communities around the Royal Palace (see the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary 1987: 1–5). In the reigns of King Rama I through King Rama III (1782–1851), the mosques in Bangkok were inspired by local Bangkok architecture combined with Arabian decoration. As Muslims from Ayutthaya fled to Thonburi to escape the Burmese wars, they lived in harmony with Muslims, in the local communities. Muslims from foreign countries were attracted to the city of Bangkok for several reasons. Although there were images of art works and architecture from Mecca, the center of the Islamic world, on wood planks in Ton Son Mosque, the local design still maintained its influence over the mosques in Bangkok, such as Ton Son (Kadi Yai), Bang Luang (Kadi Khao), and Ban Khrua (Ya-mi-ul-koi-ri-yah) Mosques.



Figure 8: A plank from the mosque in collapsed Ayutthaya
(Source: Sorayut Cheunpakdee)

¹² Information from an interview with Patana Langpu-te on October 16, 2001



Figure 9: The former Ban Khrua Mosque
(Ya-mi-ul-koi-ri-yah)
(Source: Umar Dumrileart)



Figure 10: The former Ton Son
Mosque (Kadi Yai)
(Source: Sorayut Cheunpakdee)



Figure 11: Bang Luang Mosque
(Kadi Khao)

In this period, Muslim government officials played an outstanding role in the

court and could support the building of mosques in their own community. While the soldiers from the royal army in Ban Khrua community built a mosque with a brick construction wall and a hip-tiled roof, the government officials from Ton Son community constructed a new mosque that was architecturally superior to the common mosques. Traditional Thai forms imitating Bawon Sathan Wang Na (Ton Son Mosque 2001: 177) were amalgamated with Arabian decorative elements representing the community's socio-political status. Therefore, the mosques in Ban Khrua, Ton Son, and Kadi Khao communities looked like temples or palaces. However, the traditional Bangkok architecture had strict rules regarding the use of symbols such as the ฐานนารูป *thananurup* and ฐานนารูปศักดิ์ *thananusak* of the architectural style indicating the social status of the owner, and these rules limited the development of mosque styles. King Rama III warned Ton Son Mosque to remove the ช่อฟ้า *Cho Fa*, a traditional element on the top of temple roof that indicates their high status. That event was the sign for Muslims to seek a new representative style.

Transitional period

During King Rama IV's reign (1851–1868), European countries began to expand their power all over the world. Siam recognized the need for a strategy to deal with this situation and to accelerate national development. One of the most practical ways to be acknowledged by other European countries was to adapt to European standards. The influence of European architecture was strengthened and became tangible in Bangkok during the reigns of King Rama V and King Rama VI. European construction

technologies offered more opportunities to build the advanced Islamic architectural forms.

During the reign of King Rama V (1868–1910), Muslims from several countries became Thai people who were proud to be Muslim rather than being attached to own “ethnic concern”.¹³ The Thai language became the medium for communication among different ethnic groups. With the idea of *ikwat* ‘brotherhood’,¹⁴ Muslims in Bangkok from several ethnic groups related to and connected with each other as a network. They started an exchange of differences and developed a kind of cultural unity.

The Muslim communities became stronger and had more potential to develop their own communities and mosques. The new national strategy provided more opportunities for Muslims in Bangkok to build their mosques and, thus, to claim their own identity. The multicultural concept was represented in the international architectural style of the mosques in three ways.

First, Islamic architecture reflected the differences among the ethnic groups. The Malaysian mosque, influenced by European colonial style, was brought to the mosques in the Malaysian community such as Sai Kong Din (Kamalul-Islam) Mosque. The traditional Javanese style had been constructed in the form of Jawa mosques. These architectural styles can be adopted easily because the architectural criteria in the countries of origins, such as

geography, natural resource, building materials, and construction techniques, are quite similar to those in Bangkok.



Figure 12: The former Sai Kong Din Mosque (Kamalul-Islam)
(Source: Sai Kong Din Mosque)



Figure 13: Jawa mosque.

Second, Islamic architecture represents membership of Islamic Nations. In this period, there were three architectural styles of the most renowned Islamic kingdoms: the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires. These have been preserved worldwide in the formal design of congregational mosques.

Among most Muslims in Bangkok, the architectural styles from the renowned Islamic kingdoms have been popular as a means of representing the sentiment of Islamic brotherhood and being a part of the Islamic Nation. Distinguished examples are

¹³ Information from an interview with Winai Sama-un on July 11, 2006

¹⁴ “The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy” (Quran 49:10).

the Darul-Abidin Mosque and Kuwatil-Islam Mosque. Darul-Abidin Mosque imitates the Ottoman style of the minarets of Haram Mosque in Mecca.¹⁵

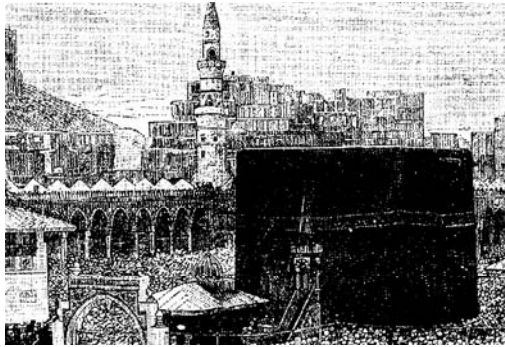


Figure 14: The influence of Ottoman architectural style on the Haram Mosque (Source: Hattstein 2000)



Figure 15: The influence of Ottoman architectural style on Darul-Abidin Mosque (Trok Chan)

¹⁵ In this period, Mecca was a part of Ottoman Empire. Mecca is the location of Haram Mosque where Kabah is located and is thus the center of Islamic religious rites including the Hajj pilgrimage (Dorduncu 2006). Information from an interview with Ari Prani on May 17, 2008

Kuwatil-Islam Mosque, a center of the Indian and Malaysian Muslim communities, was built by artisans from India based on Mughal mosques. Though it was a small mosque whose architectural details were adapted to local factors in Bangkok, Mughal details such as traditional Mughal arches were used selectively.¹⁶



Figure 16: Kuwatil-Islam Mosque (Tuek Daeng)

Third, European architecture with Islamic elements represented high social status. With merchants and businessmen playing more important roles than government officials, foreign civilization became more meaningful than traditional architecture. These businessmen apprehended the similarity of the elements in the European-influenced architectures of Bangkok and in Islamic architecture and incorporated these elements into the mosques. The timber merchant community, Bang Or, built a new European-influenced mosque with two Arabian domes on top of the towers in the front of the building, to represent high social status, replacing the earlier mosque with its local style.¹⁷ An Indian Bohra

¹⁶ Information from an interview with Nawin Sasanakul on May 9, 2008

¹⁷ Information from an interview with Adul Yotasamut on April 1, 2008

businessman with a good relationship to the royal office constructed Seifi mosque (Tuek Khao) in a Venetian Gothic architectural style.

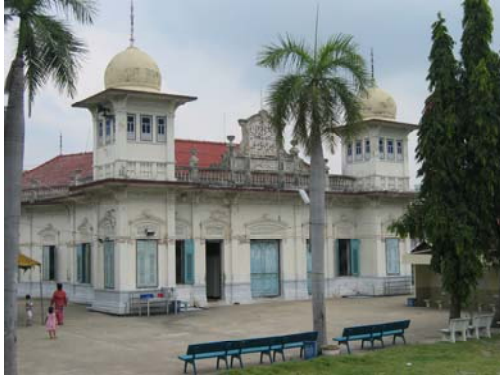


Figure 17: Bang O Mosque



Figure 18: Bang O Mosque and the timber merchant community in the past
(Source: National Archives of Thailand)



Figure 19: Seifi Mosque (Tuek Khao)

In addition, during the reign of King Rama VI, Mecca, the center of the Islamic world, was a part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman style influenced the design of mosques in Mecca, which then affected mosque styles throughout the world, including Bangkok.¹⁸ Muslim communities in general used Ottoman architectural styles, elements, and signs as an idealized Islamic architectural model for mosques such as the Darul-Abidin (Trok Chan) and Bang Utis (Mae Bang) Mosques.



Figure 20: The Ottoman coat of arms

¹⁸ Information from an interview with Abdullah Karimion May 28, 2008



Figure 21–22: The Ottoman coat of arms on the facade of Bang Utis Mosque (Mae Bang)

When the Ottoman Empire declined and finally collapsed in 1922, Mecca remained the center of the Islamic world.¹⁹ Although Islamic empires had no power over other parts of the world, the Mecca and Medina architectural styles, nevertheless, inspired the design of mosques all over the world as they were the architectural styles of the Holy Land.

¹⁹ Mecca became a part of Saudi Arabia in 1932.

In this period, mosque forms combined foreign architecture and the changing style of Bangkok architecture. Although the traditional Thai architectural style became less popular, the former Royal mosque Ansorissunnah (Bangkok Noi), designed by the Royal Architect Prince Narisara-nuwattiwong, employed a combination of traditional Thai architectural style and Islamic architectural elements. The mosque was built in the form of Thai temple with Thai-style, *Sum Bantalang* windows, which resemble the pointed-arch windows of Arabian architecture. This mosque was the last in Bangkok built in the traditional Thai architectural style before the Revision Period.

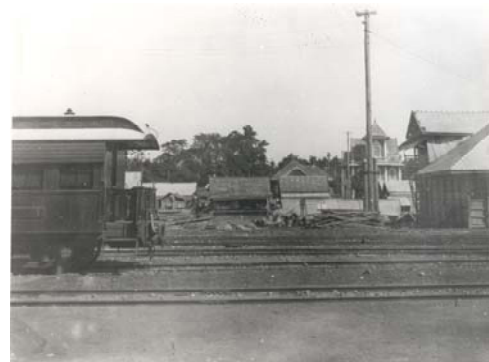


Figure 23: Ansorissunnah Mosque (Bangkok Noi), The former Royal Mosque (Source: National Archives of Thailand)

Revision of Muslim identity

During the reigns King Rama VII and King Rama VIII (1925–1946), the concept of the mosques in Bangkok was revised as a result of wide religious study. Compared to Buddhist temples, a mosque had no restriction on its architectural elements. The concept of simplicity is suggested in the Hadith: “The earth has been made for me clean and a place of worship” (Hadith no. 257).

The concept of functional use for *ibadat* was stressed. The use of a “luxurious building with ravishing decoration” representing the idea of the House of God was revised. The concept of the Islamic community center was regarded as the most important aspect for mosque design.

The revolution in Siam in 1932 and the concomitant economic crisis generated a new lifestyle and architectural concept. M. P. Pibunsongkhram made Thailand adopt nationalism, emphasizing the ideal of “equality and unity.” This meant that the different ethnic cultures were suppressed and all manifestations of culture, including architecture, should show the unity of Thai culture. This movement met with resistance; however, the Muslims solved the conflict by compromising, returning simple designs in place of the ravishing Arabic style.

In this period, almost all Islamic territory became European colonies with relatively insignificant roles on the worldstage. There was little connection between Bangkok and Islamic countries, except for Mecca and Medina, which Muslims visit for the Hajj pilgrimage.

Mosques in Bangkok were less inspired by those in Islamic countries. However, the wealthy Muslim communities such as the timber merchants from Bang Or, supported the construction of mosques in several communities, such as Ban Khrua Mosque (constructing a new entrance hall) and Jakkaphong and Mahanak Mosques (providing materials and craftsmen).



Figure 24: The entrance hall of Ban Khrua Mosque (Ya-mi-ul-koi-ri-yah)
(Source: Ban-Khrua mosque)



Figure 25: Jakkaphong Mosque



Figure 26: Mahanak Mosque
(Source: Mahanak Mosque)

European-style government buildings in Bangkok also inspired Muslim craftsmen and the builders of the mosques. They took the European elements and forms of the predecessor mosques and applied them to the mosques in a simple, less decorated style. That concluded the concepts of adaptation of local and international culture.



Figure 27: The former office of the Department of Public Works
(Source: Committee for the Rattanakosin Bicentennial Celebration 1982: 184)



Figure 28: The former office of the Water Works authority
(Source: Committee for the Rattanakosin Bicentennial Celebration 1982: 368)



Figure 29: The former office of the Department of Postal Service
(Source: Committee for the Rattanakosin Bicentennial Celebration 1982: 367)

Fundamentalism and the quest for a new style

During the reign of King Rama IX (1946–present), there has been rapid development in many fields, especially science and technology. Muslim society was alert to both the religious and secular aspects of this development. Religious students graduating from Arab countries and professional students graduating from universities in Thailand and foreign countries have become Muslim scholars who have played an outstanding role in Muslim society. King Rama IX has been concerned with the Muslim people in Bangkok as well as with the followers of other religions. He asked the Chularajmontri to translate the Quran into Thai for educational purposes. Knowledge of Islam has become available to Thai Muslims in a practical way since then.

During this period, the Islamic countries that were formerly European colonies

were liberated, and many of them became very wealthy from oil ventures. International Islamic organizations such as the Muslim World League (1962) and the Islamic Conference Organization (1970) were established and generated connections between Muslims in foreign countries and those in Bangkok.

Islamic precepts were reinterpreted, replacing former precepts, which had been adapted to local beliefs. However, symbolic expression was needed to represent these new concepts. Architects placed more importance on Islamic principles and design theory than had previous architectural styles and forms. This new generation of architects began to study architecture from the Islamic dynasties of the past, such as the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman, and adapted it to the local context. Furthermore, construction methods developed rapidly in line with the emergence of industrialization in Bangkok. The new architects graduating from architecture departments have gradually replaced the traditional craftsman. All these factors have brought about the development of mosques in diverse styles.

In this period, mosques in Bangkok can be classified into two categories:

First, there are the Modern-Style Mosques. After the age of colonization, several Muslim countries needed to undergo a spiritual and physical revival in order to cope with the speed of material development in the world. While some Muslim groups returned to their conventional ways of life, many have applied modern technology in accordance with the Islamic way. Modern studies in diverse fields have been introduced. The forms of modern mosques are the result of modern architectural design, subject to the

conditions of each mosque and based on local study and a systematized design process. Islamic creeds and historical evidence have also been studied and adapted to modern structures, materials, and construction.

These changes have affected mosque construction in Bangkok both directly and indirectly. The direct impact has been the introduction of the typical design of Arab mosques seen by Thai Muslim scholars who have studied abroad and Hajj pilgrims. The other impact is the conceptual phenomenon. Muslims in Bangkok receive a modern education along with their religious studies. Islamic principles are studied along with the formation of modern theory in architecture. Scholars in the field of religious study are applying notions from the Koran to religious rituals in people's everyday lives. Furthermore, the world Islamic organization Robitah has implemented a set of regulations providing guidance for the construction of modern mosques. Muslim architects are studying new architectural concepts as well as research in the area of the Islamic study to build mosques that accord with Islamic principles.

Modern-style mosques are designed on the basis of research into several aspects, such as function, locality, technology, historical context, and religious principles. The appearance of these mosques is more innovative than conservative. Examples of this category are Darul-Ihsan Mosque and the Thailand Islamic Center.



Figure 30: Darul-Ihsan Mosque



Figure 31: Thailand Islamic Center

Second, there is the Neoclassical Mosque. Globalization causes people to seek their identity. A modern-style mosque that was popular in the past no longer meets particular contemporary requirements. However, only the development based on materialism is not suitable for the changing social context. The new designs for mosques in Bangkok have tried to present the Islamic Nation in a new way. The forms, decoration, and composition of mosques in the past have been adapted to the new construction technologies and building processes. In other words, this category of mosques follows in the line of Historical Postmodernism, to borrow Charles Jencks' term, where historical elements are employed in mosque design in a symbolic way. Examples of the

mosques in this category are Hidayatul-Islam Mosque (Sam-In) and Yami-ul Islam Mosque (Bang Ma Khuea).



Figure 32: Hidayatul-Islam Mosque (Sam-In)



Figure 33: Yami-ul Islam Mosque (Bang Ma Khuea)

This category of mosques adopts multinational architectural elements. While Sam-In Mosque adopted its architectural style from Malaysian mosques, Bang Ma Khuea Mosque got its inspiration from Russian onion domes. Those forms have been studied and applied to each particular community's needs. Furthermore, mosques need to represent Islamic architecture in general, a difference from the design concept during the Transitional Period, which emphasized the individuality of each nation.

Conclusion

Sociocultural factors have had the most significant influence on the concept and style of mosques among other related factors, such as the development of lifestyle, government policy, technology, and the environment. Multicultural aspects of the Muslims in Bangkok have been expressed via mosques in several ways. Multicultural aspects in the design development stages of the mosques could be categorized as follows.

Traditional Period (before 1851)

The traditional Siamese-style mosques with decoration from Islamic architecture in the early Rattanakosin period were the expression of the identity of the Muslims in Bangkok.

Transitional Period (1851–1925)

There was more opportunity for people from different ethnological backgrounds to express cultural heritage of each particular group. Local architectural styles from several countries were applied to the mosques to express their different identities.

Revision of Muslim Identity (1925 – 1946)

Muslims in Bangkok created their own identity by conserving their architectural legacy and adapting innovations to serve local and religious requirements.

Fundamentalism and the Quest for a New Style (1946 – present)

Muslims in Bangkok have turned to the basics of their religion rather than to local traditional beliefs. Islamic principles and design theory have become more important than the previous ethnic architectural styles and forms. The new architectural style represents the identity of global Islamic culture rather than any particular ethnic culture.

Muslims in Bangkok profess Islam as the religion that unifies both the secular and the spiritual aspects of life. Islamic architecture responds to changing requirements such as sustainability, appropriate technologies, environmental care, energy conservation, and disaster protection. Such issues should be addressed through contemporary approaches rather than simply through the expression of historical images of Islamic architecture as in the past. Muslims in Bangkok are looking for mosques that can serve the needs, of the different Muslim communities, the spirit of Islam, the people needs and especially the multicultural background of the Muslim communities in Bangkok.

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