

AN EVALUATION OF THE EARLIEST THOUGHT AND PHILOSOPHY ON MOSQUES IN MALACCA

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study discusses architectural thought and philosophy that focus on traditional mosques in Melaka in the 18th century. Amongst the oldest and most famous mosques in Melaka are the Peringgit Mosque (1720 AD), Kampung Hulu Mosque (1728 AD), Tengkeri Mosque (1728 AD) and Kampung Keling Mosque (1748 AD).

Methodology: In this study, the qualitative methodology focusing on research was used where the analysis of documents and observations were conducted.

Main Findings: The finding of this study revealed that the architectural philosophy shows human relationships with nature are based on the divine concept. The architectural features also illustrate the philosophy of human life and the beauty of the architecture illustrates the height or level of values in individuals. The beauty of the mosque is highlighted through the motifs in the mosque's decorations which have no contradiction to Islamic values.

Applications of this study: This study involved two historical mosques in Melaka, which are the Tengkeri Mosque (1728 AD) and Kampung Hulu Mosque (1728 AD).

Novelty/Originality of this study: These mosques have been directly influenced by the characteristics of Islamic, Chinese and Indian architecture; in the context of building structures, designs and decorations. This study showed that although the Islamic community was influenced by external elements, they were an open-minded community and willing to accept and adapt to such influence.

Keywords: *History, Architecture, Traditional mosques, Melaka, Thought and philosophy, Design, Decoration.*

INTRODUCTION

Architecture plays an important role in a building including a mosque building. The architecture of a mosque has its own philosophy with its external influences and historical background ([Ahmad & Mujani](#), 2016). Therefore, in this study, the authors chose two Melaka traditional mosques, namely the Tengkeri Mosque (1728 AD) and Kampung Hulu Mosque (1728 AD); as the focus of the study was mosques in the 18th century AD. Both the mosques have architectural features and these can be seen from the structures, designs, and decorations which also show that they have their own philosophies in their construction. In addition, architecture at that time was influenced by outside countries such as India and China; and the Islamic community could accept foreign architecture. This proved that the Islamic community at that time were open-minded in accepting other country's way of designing and constructing buildings as long as the mosques' features are not contrary to Islamic values ([Ahmad & Mujani](#), 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kavalam Madhava [Panikkar](#) Panikkar (1963) in his writing, 'Studies in Indian History', presented a cursory view of Chinese and Indian architectures and historical backgrounds. Both of these architectures begin with a place of worship which is constructed using certain elements. In his writing, he described the cultural situation of the Indian community and only a few aspects of Indian architecture.

Next, in the writings of [Lip](#) (1953) entitled 'Chinese Temple and Deities', the place of worship of the people of China, including Buddhist and Taoist, was explained. Her writing also displayed the architectural forms of the worship community building of China. Her writing was numerous quoted by researchers in research on the architecture of China.

Another book, 'Chinese and Indian Architecture' ([Wu](#), 1963), discussed the architecture of China and India which started hundreds of years ago. From the point of the history of architecture in India, the city of Mohenjo-Daro portrays the development of a city which includes a full line of stores, markets, and shops. In addition, the worship building architecture describes Hinduism and the esthetical value of Indian architecture. While the architecture in China, on the other hand, is not lacking certain elements of value which include the use of the roof, walls, and buildings. Therefore, it is hoped that this writing can help other authors in their own review relating to the architecture of China and India.

Similarly, according to Abdul Halim [Nasir](#) et al. (1984), the exterior and interior of the mosque building are still bounded by the influence of the local environment, customs and culture. However, the author focused largely on mosques in Java and Sumatra compared to the mosques in Malacca. The same writer also gave his views in his book titled 'Mosques in

Peninsular Malaysia' where he talked about a few backgrounds of the mosques found in Malaysia in general. However, this book gives a general description of the entire mosque building but does not elaborate on all mosques in Melaka.

Another book titled 'Bentuk-Bentuk Bangunan Masjid Kunci Memahami Kebudayaan Melayu' by Abdullah Mohamed (1978), the forms of old mosques in the context of divinity and experience are explained. Amongst the examples that are given in the book are the Kampung Laut Mosque in Kelantan and the mosques in Melaka such as the Masjid Peringgit Mosque and Kampung Hulu Mosque. This book also takes into account the implicit meaning behind the design of the dome of a mosque as a symbol of certain privileges. However, the writer only pointed to the design of the dome which holds the concept of Islamic Tassawuf. Hence, this book has helped some researchers in exploring their studies especially in aspects of the design of the mosque building.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the qualitative method was used focussing on methods of data collection and data analysis. Both the formulation is more suitable to be used as a review of the materials and to be examined by using data. Data collection was used in setting up the research and observations, this was followed by the method of content analysis to analyse data. Observations helped the authors to see a mosque, especially its building structure, design, and decorations. A mosque can be seen as a religious building by using the photography method. The use of this method allowed the authors to make clarification and study the mosque in depth. In this study, two mosques were selected namely the Tengkeria Mosque and Kampung Hulu Mosque. Both mosques have a distinctive privilege in their architecture and in their role as the center of Islamic development in the 18th century AD. The Tengkeria Mosque is one of the earliest mosques in Melaka built in 1728 AD. The mosque is located on the Tengkeria Road and was originally a Portuguese army fort. The mosque has its own uniqueness in the building structure, design, and decorations. The characteristics of architecture resemble the Kampung Laut Mosque in Kelantan and the Demak Mosque in Java. The Kampung Hulu Mosque was also built in 1728 AD located in the heart of Melaka City. It was built by Dato Aroom bin Shamsudin, who was the first Malay Imam in Melaka (Mujani et al. 2012a). The mosque has a three-story roof known for its rooftop roof and a pagoda tower.

RESULTS

The thoughts and philosophies of the Indian architecture described in this study are based on the findings found in the mosque's architecture (Ahmad et al., 2019). This can be explained further through the roof crown design. It was discovered that both mosques have the 'Sirih Junjung' roof design which later became the custom and cultural symbol of the Malay community in weddings and engagements. Using place of worship design in weddings and engagements is also practice or custom of the Hindus hence how the mosque architecture was influenced (Nair, 2002). Secondly, the mosque's roof or known as 'Meru' was adapted from the Javanese Hindu where it has similarity to the temple building in Java. Third, the gateways at both mosques have similarities with the shape of the gate at a Hindu worship temple. Fourth, the use of the walls on both mosques to separate the areas of the mosque with other areas. The use of the walls has the same artistic characteristics of indigenous worship in India and Malaysia. Lastly, in terms of decorations, the elements of the pulpit, pole series and also the gate using ferns, and sunflower motifs, show the adaptation of Hindu influence. Obviously, these motives are adopted in the Muslim community society as a symbol of uniqueness and originality and its relationship with the environment (Mujani, 2012a).

In addition to being influenced by Indian thoughts, the mosque's architecture is also influenced by philosophy from China. For example, the tower design of the two mosques resembles a pagoda which is considered a building of the majesty of the Chinese. Therefore, the Muslim community than could accept the influence that came from China without any resistance or obstacles from the Muslim scholars or 'Ulama'. In fact, the architect of the mosque was also one amongst the Chinese Muslims who came from China. The involvement of the Chinese architect in helping to build the mosque not only in sharing his expertise but also proved brotherhood as a symbol of life (Mujani et al., 2012b). The universal features of mosques' design became the symbol of pride amongst the Islamic community which consists of various ethnicities (Ismail & Mujani 2012).

DISCUSSION

The discussion on the construction of mosques must include the philosophy and characteristics of Islamic architecture. In Islamic countries, the mosques are built based on their own philosophies as these place of worship are directly related to humans and their relationship with Almighty Creator. The identity and culture of the Islamic community at that time can also be seen through the style, layout, design, and decoration of the tower or minaret building, dome, prayer hall, etc.

Ishtiaq Hussain Quresyi's (1962) in his writing outlined the main features of the first Islamic architecture where it emphasized the wide space for the inclusion of light into the building. This is in line with the common function of the mosque that is, it has to have large prayer room and courtyard, able to hold the entire male population of a town and can provide comfort to the Muslim community during their worship. Second; the furnishings of the mosque. The use of decorative materials in its furnishing is also very important such as calligraphic inscriptions of quotations of Quran verses and Hadith (Ahmad et al, 2017). The application of the writing is very effective and harmonizes human life (Mujani, 2012b). Third, the male and female solitary space are separated to ensure the comfort of both groups to perform worship.

Next, the mosques' building designs are in line with the local climate of a country. Then, the architecture also characterizes the feelings, tranquillity, and comfort of its inhabitants. Sixth, the building must be developed in a state of sadness and beauty and with no wastage. Lastly, the building security should be emphasized on and the building is safe to be used over a period of time. This is evident through the fact that there are mosques in the archipelago and the Middle East which are still intact and standing to this day. Roofs and domes are also major complements and symbols which depict the features of Islamic architecture that need to be maintained.

Based on the above characteristics, it can be seen that Islamic architecture is not in contrast to the values of Islam. The architecture of the mosque claims that human institutions should be established through the remembrance of Allah who created 'Tauhid' (Mujani, 2012c). This can be referred to the concept of the divine and nature at a five-story crown roofing, namely, the first floor which represents the nature and the knowledge of God. The second floor represents the invisible and unseen, the third floor represents the invisible, the fourth floor represents the real nature and lastly, the fifth floor which represents the perfect human (Mohamed, 1980).

CONCLUSION

Through these two mosques, there are thoughts and philosophies that are worth reflecting upon; specifically looking at the architecture of the mosque. The mosque towers, décor, walls, and roof designs are amongst the overall parts of the mosque which are influenced by another foreign country. The influence of China and India in 'penetrating' the mosque's construct and design has proven that Islamic societies had open minds and were able to accept existing designs which emphasized on the concept of humanity and human relationships as well as the environment. At the same time, this proved the existence of universal unity, regardless of ethnicity as suggested by Islam.

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