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THE MAHKOTA OF THE MELAKA TRADITIONAL MOSQUES: 
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INTRODUCTION

Melaka had been recognized as a World Heritage City by UNESCO in 2008. Based on UNESCO's website, Melaka (along with George Town), the historic city of Malaysia have developed over 550 years of trade and cultural exchanged between East and West in the Straits of Malacca. With its government buildings, churches, squares and fortifications, Melaka demonstrates the early stages of this history originating in the 15th century Malay sultanate and the Portuguese and Dutch periods beginning in the early 16th century. The two towns constitute a unique architectural and cultural townscape without parallel anywhere in East and Southeast Asia. Based on previous history, it shows that the development and style of arts, culture and architecture are resulted assimilation of foreign countries such as Portuguese, Dutch and British. For an example, the Melaka traditional mosque, there are a lot of assimilation of Chinese, Sumatran and Indians influence on the architecture itself. The mosque has its own unique identity compare to other mosques in Malaysia.

The architectural of the mosques in Malaysia does vary in style than can be classified (Mohamed Tajuddin, 2007):
- Traditional Vernacular
- The Colonial
- The Moorish Style
- The Modern Vernacular
- The Modernistic Expressionism
- The Post-Modern Revivalism

The word vernacular mosque derives from Dr. A. Ghaffar Ahmad (1999) when he stated and classified style of mosque architecture such as traditional or pyramidal roof mosques in Melaka are vernacular mosque. There are two types of vernacular mosque, the first is the three tiered pyramidal roof form and the second is the double tier pyramidal roof form. The three tiered roof is also known as atap tiga tingkat (Nasir Rahman, 1998)

Islam has already arrive in Malay-Archipelago since 16th century and started with Indonesia. Malay-Archipelago or Melaka Melaka is a group of island located between South East Asia and Australia. Including Malaysia, Indonesia and Philipines. According to Abdul Halim Nastar (1995), Islam spread to the east by the traders and missionary after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Most of missionary came to Malay-Archipelago where non-architecture expert started delivering Islam using residential-shaped mosque as a religion place. Most design of an early mosque in Malay-Archipelago was very similar with residential architecture with hira shaped roof and layered (ter known as bentung or pecah empat or pyramidal roof.
In 1511, Portuguese had conquered and annihilated all Islamic government authority in Melaka. Melaka sultanate palace had been destroyed and replace with the church. Design of vernacular mosque in Melaka is pyramidal roof which is similar with Indonesian mosques especially in Java and also Masjid Kg Laut in Kelantan (Nash Rahmat, 1988). On the early stages, Melaka vernacular mosque built without minaret until foreign influence exist. According to Hamim Nais 1995, after Melaka was conquered by Portuguese, most of the Malay escape from Melaka but only several of them still stayed in Kota Melaka and build a new mosque at Bukit Peringgit. Based on the statement show, Melaka still have a mosque which was built in the Portuguese era.

According to the PERZIM sources, there are 56 mosques in Melaka which had been gazette by the PERZIM as buildings that have exceeded 50 years of age. Only 52 from 56 mosques are pyramidal roof or bumbung minu. There are five mosques which had been built in from 1700 to 1800 such as Masjid Peringgit, Masjid Kg Hulu, Masjid Tengger, Masjid Pengkalan Rama and Masjid Kg Kling.

Pyramidal roof become an icon of architectural style in Malay-Archaeology. According to Kamarnuddin Mohd Ali (1997), the Malay vernacular mosque was designed without characteristic domes, and instead they were typically dominated by the high pitch roof forms that were common in the tropical region.

Each of traditional mosques in Melaka has a mahkota which can define as a decoration which can be seen on the top of Malay-Archaeology pyramidal roof (Abdul Hamim Naisir, 1995). Mahkota can be defining as the top structure in a pyramidal roof structure. According to Kamus Dewan Fourth Edition, mahkota means title or tiara. The word Tiara means a jewelled ornamental band worn on the front of a woman’s hair (Oxford Dictionary online). Mahkota also have a different name such as jemelok, buton in Kelantan and Puncak Masjid for general use in Malaysia.
The findings showed each of the mahkota have different design and decorative motifs and the majority of mahkota are worn by the Melaka traditional mosques use floral images as motifs. Then it is followed by cosmography motifs. The relation between Malay and floral cannot be separated in their daily life. According to Tan Sri Datuk Wira Abdul Aziz Tapa, (18 July 2010), floral symbolised softness, which relates with the Malays who have been less with characteristically polite, fair-spoken and courteous from our ancestors.

Each of floral symbolised different meaning and it also relates with the Malays who loves to allegorical or in Malay words berias. Based on that, it can be proof by the existing of writings such as pantun, panbashah, syair, seloka and simpanan bahasa, which can be found in Malay literature. Each of this literature was use as a medium of symbol, representation and also criticism from the author to teach life lesson to the society.

Majority of mahkota were triangular shape and vertically oriented which the top of mahkota are smaller than the base and each of mahkota have a similar three tier of level.
1. Top tier
2. Middle tier
3. Base tier

REFERENCES


