

Mosque architecture in malaysia cultural studies essay



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A study on the design linkage for the past and present of the Mosque Architecture in this local context. Dissertation submitted in partial difference for award of B. A (HONS) Interior Architecture & Design conducted at KBU International College Malaysia In Collaboration with Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom. Year 3/September 2012 Prepared by Tiffany Yeow May Voon A0065 Contents Abstract Chapter 1 Introduction Aim & Objectives Research Methodology Literature Review Chapter 2. 1 Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 7

ABSTRACT

Malaysia stands among the countries with rich diversity of architectural and historic buildings. Malaysia's architecture today is a reflection of Asia's many styles, cultures and religions. Each ethnic having different perspectives towards god as freedom of religion that is enshrined in Malaysia. Each ethnic groups having their own places of worship making the culture richer than anywhere else in the world. The country is still remains with remarkable cultural properties such as the Masjid Jamek in Kuala Lumpur and Tengkerah Mosque in Melaka. However, Malaysia has experiences high economic growth accompanied by rapid urbanization. The developments of the high rise buildings have been insensitive to their context and have not integrated successfully with the surroundings. This causes the lack of harmony and awkward of buildings is particularly noticeable at street level. This growth affect people's aesthetic sense and it influence the architecture of the world. This paper will review on how the worship buildings are built from the consequences of a specific religion's adaptation. This was valuable in identifying the awareness which is knowing a historic building is an intrinsic

part of the built environment thus the importance is undeniable for its benefits to the society and nation.

1. 0INTRODUCTION

The diversity of cultures in Malaysia is evident in the colour spectrum of traditions, festivals and cuisines. Islam is the official religion in the country, at the same time other religions are practiced freely. Islam is regarded to pay attention to the characteristics of urban life which can be practiced on the urban settings. Not surprisingly, Islam has made a great focus on the form and design of cities and form a truly Malaysian Islamic architecture identity. Places of worship are important symbols of spiritual expression and community involvement. They are physical and social signposts of belief, and assist in defining the sense of place, community and identity. Being the most significant buildings in our towns, the buildings constitute a significant component of many people's private and public lives as well as affecting lifestyle choices. Places of worship stand as symbols of faith and hope, and spiritual values in a secular world. These buildings are familiar features of the environment and some have been recognised as part of our cultural and architectural as well as our religious heritage. In addition to their primary function as places of worship, the buildings served as a religious school, library, meeting places and community centers too. Like most cities in the developing world, Kuala Lumpur has grown at a phenomenal rate driven primarily by the need to create wealth. As Malaysia moves toward a developed status, Kuala Lumpur has experienced rapid development which has left a city that is, in many respects, disjointed and lacking in visual and physical coherence. Consequently there has been a decrease in the legibility

of the city structure together with a certain loss of historical continuum and sense of identity. Apart from that, a further looking into their influences in a smaller scale as well as in a larger scale – as this has formed an identity for Malaysia's architecture. Issues have been arguing for some time about the true identity that represents Malaysia's architecture, and this matter has recently become a main factor to consider when deciding the style of architectural decorations to be integrated into building design. A synchronised awareness by both the architects and the planners of the historical and cultural perspective of a place and its architectural precedence provides a firmer basis in the pursuit to relate new designs with the local technology and socio-economic development.

1. 1Aims & Objectives

The aim of this paper is to review the evolution of the places of worship from its earliest appearance up to its current design by some possible influences. The main concern is to elucidate clearly the different architectural styles of Muslim architecture specified on the Mosque in the country. This paper will also review on the presence of vernacular architecture as a strong sub current of modern praxis in Malaysia. Vernacular architecture has played a pivotal role in shaping architecture and in defining perceptions of modernity generated the complex and hybrid nature of Malaysian architecture. Last but not least, this paper will acknowledge on the importance of conservation activities on the places of worship in Malaysia which is a responsibility of all the communities where all have the right to establish and maintain places of worship.

1. 2Statement of Research Problem

The world is continuously changing. The rapid recent growth of the city has resulted in many exciting new developments with a wide range of architectural expression. Since then, there are conflicts between urban change and heritage and this situation is

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physically obvious in all the towns and cities in Malaysia today. Not forgetting the identity of Malaysia. The force of rapid urbanization brings in newly built intensities onto some places that demolished almost all the heritage buildings which were there before. This will affect Malaysia's urban not just architecturally and environmentally but also socially and culturally. On the contrary, there is an urgent need to develop new appropriate design linkages with the urban past and at the same time relevant to the present. Many of these places of worships are icons from the past that exists in the present that exemplify the continuity of everyday life, which celebrate Malaysia's common cultural heritage. These places of worship are a reflection of our national identity and thus should be conserved for the future. So, the hypothesis of this paper is the future of the places of worships in the country will be well conserved and well integrate with the surroundings due to the creativity are allowed for Muslim to design their mosque in order to form a new design linkages for the past and present.

1. 3 Research Methodology

1. 4 Literature Review

The building of a mosque in this day and age is to be known as a great achievement of the Muslim community. The numbers of mosques in the non-Muslim countries such as Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand has been steadily increasing due to the desperately needs of a worship place. While appreciating the quantitative increase of many new modern urban mosques, several Muslim scholars, intellectuals have expressed their concern over the issues of conservation activities of the old mosques all around the world. (Prof. Kamal Hassan, 1998) The conservation activity is everyone's responsibility in this society. The importance is undeniable which to provide

the future generations with the opportunity to witness unique and remarkable values of the remaining cultural heritage worship buildings.

2.0 The Islamic Religion

" Religion. It's given people hope in a world torn apart by religion." - Jon Stewart

Malaysia takes great pride in being a melting pot of different cultures, races and religions. As we all know, religiously divided country more likely to cause racial conflict. Despite the minor ethnic conflicts that normally exist in this society, Malaysia has largely managed to maintain harmonious co-existence between its citizens. Relations between different religious groups are harmonious and tolerant as every citizens realize it is important for Malaysians to understand the right of everyone to practice own religion with dignity and without harassment.

3.1 The Coming of Islam to Malaysia

The land of Malaysia has been the center of trade and commerce since the tenth century AD when ancient Malay kingdoms were discovered in the northern peninsular region of Malaysia. Most of these kingdoms were under Buddhist or Hindu influence. During that time, the region was highly coveted due to its geographical position situated in between the Chinese and Indian civilizations. Islam was believed to have arrived in Malaysia around the 14th century through Arab traders from the Middle-East. However, it was not until the establishment of the Sultanate of Malacca in the 15th century that Islam became the dominant religion in the Southeast Asian region. The first ruler of Malacca, Parameswara, converted to Islam after his marriage to the princess Malik Ul Salih of Pasai. It was during this period that Islam spread to all the territories of the sultanate including the majority of modern day Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra in Indonesia and northern Thailand.

Therefore, Malaysia takes great pride in its recognition as a moderate Islamic country. The Malaysian government promotes a moderate version of Islam which is meant to encourage a balanced approach to life and encourages inclusivity, tolerance and looking outwards. The qualities it values are knowledge, hard work, honesty, good administration and efficiency. This acceptance of Islam was part of a political settlement in return of which the non-Malays would obtain citizenship and the right to education in their mother tongue. The constitutional grounding of Islam however, does not affect the right of non-Muslims to practice and profess their own religions.

3. 0 AESTHETIC & ARCHITECTURE VALUE

Aesthetic and architectural value relates to the particular setting and landscaping and architectural design, style, detail and construction.

Significant events that transpire throughout the history of Malaysia play a crucial role in shaping and altering vernacular architecture. Colonization and migration contribute to the complex architectural identity of Malaysia as diverse cultural influences are introduced and imposed onto native traditions. Change is inevitable in a living society. Studies show that vernacular is continually evolving as a product of cultural regeneration. It is from the parallels drawn between the vernacular and architecture introduced by foreigners that allow for the comprehension of these new building types as well as the acceptance of alternate lifestyle. Technology has been the drive to improve construction method of early Muslim community that influence of values and perception towards Islam in the whole world until today. While appreciating the quantitative increase and aesthetic embellishments of many new urban mosques, several Muslim scholars,

intellectuals and activists have expressed their concern and reservation regarding the function of these mosques in light of pristine world-view of Islam. 3. 1The MosqueWith the majority of its population being Muslims, the mosque is a common building found in most urban and rural areas in the country. The mosque architecture in this day and age is a great achievement of the Muslim community. The varying architectural styles of the mosques displayed particular design characteristics which are reflective of many factors including ethnic culture, colonialism, technology utilization and the political environment. In the architecture of the mosque, past, present and future are unified with life and culture of society while its substance is expressed in all these aspects it displays the path of changes created in the lifestyle of Muslims. The mosque architecture is inspired by social order and its location which depends on the architects ability and initiatives. The art of mosque architecture gives a way of understanding about the relationship between Islam and local people's culture. Therefore, the architecture of mosque must meet the human's needs and play role to direct people to their predetermined aims. 1. mosque reminds the divinity substance2. mosque is a place to recite Quran3. mosque is a place to think about Quran4. the combination of calligraphy with motifs5. the mason witnesses the unity of god and the prophecy by calligraphy6. the feeling of poverty in mosque which results in the feeling of gods presence7. respecting the qibleh and creation of unity8. there appears a combination of opposites in colors the base of nature relies on. 9. introspection, hierarchy and preservation from external clamour. 10. using the special forms11. using the ancestors' arts12. avoidance from extravagancy13. the mosque entrance as an invitation3.

2Function of MosqueWith the majority of its population being Muslims, the
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mosque is a common building found in most urban and rural areas in the country. The main activity of the mosque is the performance of congregational prayers. The mosque also acts as an important education center for the formal teaching of religious education. It also serves as the administration center for the mosque officials and caters for Muslim religious celebrations. On Fridays Muslims gather at the mosque for the Friday congregational prayer that occur as a substitute to the mid- afternoon prayer. The Muslims listen to a short sermon and perform the prayer immediately after that. The Friday Prayers and the five daily prayers are the fixed daily and weekly activities in the mosque. Another type of congregational prayer occurs during the month of Ramadhan when Muslims fast in the day time for twenty nine or thirty days. The next important function of the mosque is as the center for religious education. Muslim children are usually sent to the mosque for a period of one or two hours for a certain number of days to learn to recite the Qur'an and practice the ablution and prayer rituals. The education of adults usually takes the form of formal lectures delivered in the mosque. Most of the facilities in all types of mosques have been upgraded to satisfy the growing number of prayers or users. For example, some vernacular mosques which used to have a common ablution pool have now installed rows of water outlets for the convenience of the users. Modern lighting fixtures have also replaced the traditional oil lamps. Some modern mosques have installed air-conditioning units in the prayer halls and laid modern carpets. (to be continue...)

4.0 CASE STUDY

Case Study of Tengkerah Mosque in Melaka, Malaysia. Tengkerah Mosque located in Tengkerah district, Melaka is selected as the case study. Tengkerah Mosque was built in 1728, one of the most significance and inspirational mosque in Melaka. It was the oldest mosque in Melaka but the second oldest mosque in Malaysia. The existence of Tengkerah Mosque proves that Islam was an primary religion during the Kingdom of Melaka about 600 years ago.

Image The Tengkerah Mosque in Melaka, Malaysia. Image The Tengkerah Mosque. For further information, the word Tengkerah came from Portuguese word " tranquerah" which means rampart (type of defensive wall) or a low-built fortification. The surrounding area used to be a busy suburb lying just outside the main fort of A Famosa, the Portuguese military stronghold after they conquered the city of Melaka in 1511 AD. Thus it was protected by such a rampart. However this mosque was built only after the Dutch took over rule starting in 1641. The Portuguese were very much against Islam and used to destroy every mosque they could get their hands on while the Dutch adopted a more egalitarian policy to get the Muslims to work alongside. After Portuguese was defeated, Dutch allowed the local Muslim people to build the mosque. Originally, the mosque was made of wood with a roof of palm leaves and pillars of diamond or Ulin wood imported from Kalimantan, Indonesia. Till then, the mosque is rebuilt after being destroyed by the Portuguese. Tengkerah Mosque has very strong Traditional Malaysia Mosque ornamentation in terms of architecture details. The mosque became unusual in having a rectangular shape and a three-tier roof with a pagoda-like structure built by the side. It has four central pillar made from " belian" timber which is now located in the prayer hall. The mosque was also been

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renewed twice during the year of 1890 and 1910. Part of that, Tengkerah Mosque was also a tomb for the late Sultan Hussin Shah of Johor, he was the ruler of the remnants of the Johor-Riau-Lingga empire which used to inherit the colonies of the Melaka Sultanate. He was also the one who signed the agreement with Sir Stamford Raffles to cede Singapore to the British-East India Company in 1819. He died on 5th September 1835. The Mosque Design Analysis. Tengkerah Mosque has adapted the pyramid roof form and three tier pyramidal roof form. These features were built in response to the warm and humid climate conditions in this urban city.

Pyramid roof form

Image The pyramid roof form. The designs enable rainwater to run off quickly and at the time solved the strong rays of sunlight from direct penetrate into the interior to provide shades for the prayers by the roof overhangs. The roof has overhangs provides additional shades to the windows and veranda areas from direct expose to sun light. Other than that, the pyramid roof with its slope at 45 degree induces smooth rain water flow from the roof to the lower ground level. Thus, this prevents the rain water leakages to happen within the mosque.

Three tier pyramidal roof form

Image Three tier pyramidal roof form. The Tengkerah Mosque has also adapted the tier pyramidal roof form which the tip of the pyramid to the bottom of the columns, the mosque transformed into a perfect cube. This mosque has three roof and wall segments at the ground floor, lower roof and upper roof level. The purpose is to create a series of lower and upper roof windows at the roof wall segments for air ventilation for passive cooling and <https://assignbuster.com/mosque-architecture-in-malaysia-cultural-studies-essay/>

stack effect. This roof form designs adapted the law of natural environment that warm air is lighter than cool air. So the mosque is built in a way that having a larger interior space for warm air to ventilate upward bringing in the cool air. There are also a series of windows opening in the mosque to allow the flows of the indoor warm air to outside of the mosque. This happens when warm air is pressured upward to flow out through roof windows while the cool air is pressured to flow in the mosque.

Roof Elements

5. 0Mosque Architecture in Malaysia: Classification of Styles

Since the day Islam step onto Malaysia over a millennium years ago and had made an impact on the region. The architecture styles are not always pure in form and isolated in its origin and may develop from different sources at different times. Mosques have been built in timber vernacular until the colonists came in and adopted their architectural styles in building modified to the climate conditions in the 15th century. Various types of mosques built during different periods in the Malaysian history, up to today, there are changes in the mosque architecture in Malaysia from vernacular and colonial influences to modern structures which are the most significance styles of Mosque architectural language. These unique architectural styles and motifs have heritage values, many of which are being conserved until today which has formed a true identity for Malaysia's architecture. In terms of scale and proportion, the size of the vernacular mosques is usually much smaller compared to the colonial and modern mosques. The designs of the mosque is depends on its location where we have urban and sub-urban area. Each

area have different amount of population. Due to some bigger sizes mosques, the colonial and modern mosques are classified as the District, State, Royal or National mosques by the mosque authority. As far as the elements of the mosques are concerned, the colonial mosques feature a richer vocabulary in architecture compared with the vernacular and modern mosques due to the Moorish influences and the classical styles. Most colonial mosques have distinct architectural features such as onion-shaped or top-shaped domes, turrets, classical columns, pilasters, pointed arches, keystones, pediments and plastered renderings on cornices and capitals. There have been many kinds of architectural language used in mosque designs. They are the Traditional Vernacular Styles, the Sino Electric Styles, the North Indian Styles, Modernistic and the Post-Modernistic Revivalism. 5.

1Traditional Vernacular StylesThe word traditional used in this context represents practices and ideas of Malays before the colonialist came to the country. The word vernacular denotes the availability of materials, craftsmanship and technology of the pre-colonial period.[1]There are two types of architectural styles under the vernacular mosques category, namely the traditional and regional influence, differentiate by the design of the roof. The traditional mosques usually reflect the strong influences of the Malay houses, way of life and environment. The roofs are generally a long shape gable roof while in vernacular mosques with regional influence which can be distinguished by their two or three-tiered roofs with decorative roof ridges and clay tiles.

Three tier pyramidal roof form

Image The Kampung Laut MosquelImage Kampung Tuan MosqueKampung Laut Mosque located in Nilam Puri, Kelantan and Kampung Tuan Mosque located in Kemaman, Terengganu are both used the features of three tier pyramidal roof which to be built between sixteenth and seventeenth century. From the tip of the pyramid to the bottom of the columns, the mosque is then transformed into an almost perfect cube.

Two tier pyramidal roof form

Image Papan Mosque. Image Elevation view of Papan Mosque. Papan Mosque which located in Papan, Perak has adapted the two tier pyramidal roof for to the mosque designs as shown in the image.

Gable roof form

5. 2Sino-Electric Styles5. 3North-Indian Styles5. 4Modernistic Styles5. 5Post-Modern Revivalism

6. 0The Building Conservation Activities in Malaysia

In Malaysia, conservation of heritage buildings is initiated by the government and private sector and has long been practice. The very beginning of this conservation ideas area adapted since the 1960s. Museums Department was established for the responsibility of maintenance and conservation work of heritage. The first project taken when Malaysia started to grow and rapid development resulted in construction of new buildings. At the same time, the old heritage building are being neglected in the end resulted in destruction due to lack of regulation and protection. This case was happened in Lembah Bujang in the early 70s. The conservation activities for mosque only started

at 1990s when at that time, Malaysia started to boost the tourism up as one of the economic contributor. One of the most successful conservation projects is at the Pengkalan Kakap Mosque in Merbok, Kedah. The efforts for conservation activities are now increasingly popular and then the National Heritage Department of Malaysia is established in 2006 showing the efforts from governments to appreciate the uniqueness of heritage buildings.

Among the mosque that has been well conserved under this department are the Old Mosque of Jalan Batu Uban, in Penang and the Kg. Gagu Mosque in Negeri Sembilan. This department ensures the National Heritage Act 2005 putting efforts to contribute to the heritage conservation. 6. 1