

THE FOREIGN ARCHITECTURAL INFLUENCES ON MELAKA STYLE TRADITIONAL MOSQUES

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ABSTRACT

Sacred architecture is a clear reflection of each region's history, culture, and identity and is considered as an especial domain in architectural studies. Mosque as the symbol of Islamic art and architecture positions a place of importance between artists and scholars worldwide. Although numerous materials have been documented about various mosques' regional typologies, the Southeast Asian mosque style has been surprisingly neglected. Since the advent of Islam in Southeast Asia during the 13th-15th centuries, numerous traditional mosques with distinctive architectural form and ornamentation, very different from what is known as a mosque in Middle East or Indian subcontinent, were erected in the region. Due to the unique geographical position of the area the powerful role of Melaka during the 15th -18th centuries, various ethnic groups from different cultures have been always presented in the Straits of Melaka. Melaka scenery has been formed as a result of one special attribute of local entities; being receptive to new notions and ideas, as long it does not interfere strongly rooted local beliefs. Melaka style traditional mosque architecture shows foreign influences from great civilizations in east and west while still introduce an authentic style of Southeast Asian mosque. This study tries to provide a discussion about Hindu-Buddhism and Chinese influences on Melaka traditional mosques by comparing the architectural appearance of the mentioned cultures and three selected traditional mosques in Melaka. Through interpretation of the gathered evidence, this study indicates that Hindu-Buddhist architectural characteristics profoundly influenced the Melaka style mosque in form, while the Chinese influence in appearance of certain architectural elements and ornamentation is discernible.

Keywords: Melaka style mosque, Hindu-Buddhist influence, Chinese Influence

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 20th century, many scholars have been intrigued by the significance, aesthetic values and philosophical meanings of the most notable symbol of Islamic architecture;

mosques. Although Islam was introduced to Southeast Asia between the 13th, 14th and the 15th centuries and since then numerous mosques were erected throughout the region, but yet the Islamic architecture of this region remains little-known and poorly documented probably because these mosques have followed local building traditions and climatic conditions and do not resemble Islamic architecture of Middle East (Vlarseas, 1990; O'Neill, 1994; Michell, 1995). Among all the materials and records about mosques architecture and typology, there are few scholars who have mentioned Southeast Asian mosques architecture. Frishman & Khan, for instance, in the “The Mosque, History, Architectural development and Regional diversity” have acknowledged Southeast Asian mosque as one of the seven regional mosque typology, which represents one of the fascinating architectural styles in mosque design. Figure 1 illustrates Frishman’s regional mosque typology.

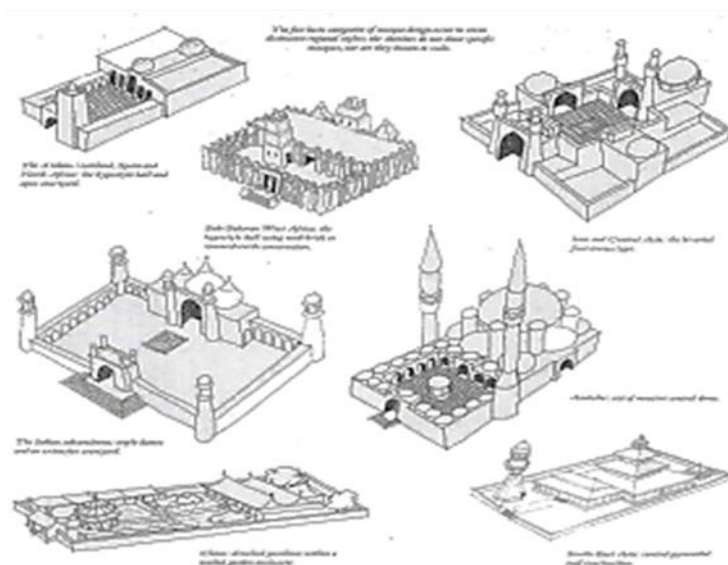


Figure 1: *Frishman's Regional Mosques Typology*
(Source: Frishman & Khan, 2002)

As a result of strongly rooted and extremely vital pre-Islamic culture in the region, traditional mosques in Melaka have wisely inspired from local traditions and environmental consideration rather than unfitting imitations from Middle Eastern architectural features. Different features in Southeast Asian

mosques such as Minaret, Dome, Prayer hall, Iwan and Mihrab, which are the most predominant elements in Middle Eastern mosque architecture, have been altered or completely removed in Southeast Asian mosques due to the influence of domestic or foreign cultures (Ghafar, 1999). The initial perusal on available records about Southeast Asian traditional mosques indicates the profound influence of Hindu-Buddhist architecture on these mosques. Southeast Asia architecture has adopted certain features from Hindu-Buddhist architecture, absorbed them and developed its own way of architecture, which illustrates a reflection of Hindu-Buddhist architecture beside the indigenous architecture of Southeast Asia (Ryan, 1971; Chen, 1998).

Melaka, the centre of trade and commerce and linkage between east and west between 14th and 18th centuries (De Witt, 2010), and the starting point of Islam's development in Peninsular Malaysia (Moor, 1986), not only demonstrates the most staggering examples of Southeast Asia Mosque style but also has progressed further and established the Melaka Mosque style movement (Chen, 1998). Traditional Mosques in Melaka, similar to Southeast Asian mosque design strongly resemble local architectural styles. Although Melaka style mosques share same basic forms in plan and roof with other Southeast Asian mosques, they show signs of features from Chinese influences. However, there is no study with the focus on the influence of Chinese architecture on Melaka style mosques that distinguishes these mosques from other traditional mosques in Southeast Asia.

In order to study traditional Islamic architecture in Melaka into deeper layers it is essential to get acquainted with various foreign cultures, which have influenced Melaka style mosque in different ways. This paper attempts to provide relevant materials concerning Melaka historical and architectural background. Austronesian heritage, Hindu-Buddhist architecture in Southeast Asia, Chinese architecture in Peninsula, and Southeast Asia mosque architectural style are the discussions, which form the literature review section of this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Austronesian Heritage

Austronesians, the descendants of whom form the basic population of Malay Archipelago, were the last group of various ethnic immigrants who reached Southeast Asia (Blust, 1985). They spread from the Southern costs of Chinese mainland to Southern seas at some time between 4500 and 4000 BC and reached Sumatra, Malaya and Vietnam prior to 1000 BC (Bellwood, 1985). Linguistically, certain parts of Southeast Asian continent and most of the insular Southeast Asia belonged to the Austronesian world, covering the area more than a half way around the globe from Easter Island in the eastern pacific to Madagascar off the southeastern coast of Africa (Blust, 1985). Consisting around 1300 languages, they are spoken by the people of Madagascar, the Malay Peninsula, Malay-Indonesian archipelago, Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia (Waterson, 1997; Chen, 1998; Bellwood, 2006). Since the early days, the Austronesian had been active participants of the maritime trade and made contacts not only with India and China but had sailed far to the Middle East and east coast of Africa (Wheatley, 1976).

Research concerning the indigenous architecture in Southeast Asia, draws certain analogies between architectural practices found in different parts of this region and despite their diversity, existence of recurring physical characteristic in these buildings indicates one shared provenance from thousands years ago: “Austronesian world” (Waterson, 1990). The evanescent nature of main material used by the Austronesian make it hard for archaeologists to reassemble the structure, however, some findings have enabled experts to penetrate into some physical characteristic of Austronesian traditional architecture (Chen, 1998). The most prominent of these physical characteristics are the pile foundation or the raised floor supported by timber piles or stilts; saddle-backed roof with the ridge-line extends beyond the gable walls, and application of elaborated carpentry and decorative features (Waterson, 1990).

Interaction with India & Hindu-Buddhist Architecture in Southeast Asia

The first indigenous Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in Southeast Asia appeared between the 3rd BC and the 3rd AD centuries, which means from the beginning these newly emerging states already had connections with India, as archaeological evidence both in India and Southeast Asia proves that trading contact between the two region was established as early as the 2nd century BC (Andaya, 2008). Indian penchant for gold, aromatic woods and spices attracted them to Southeast Asia lands. The vitality of two-way trading activities resulted in a rich relationship between two regions, which in Southeast Asia gradually metamorphosed into cultural and religious interactions where traders and missionaries played an important role (Fisher, 2006). Although countless Indian merchants and missionaries visited Southeast Asia lands since early time they never settled permanently in large scale in the region (Ryan, 1963; Munoz, 2006).

Indians who sailed overseas to Southeast Asia brought with them the ideas, beliefs and practices of Hinduism and Buddhism (Harrison, 1967). Born in India in the 5th century BC, Buddhism spread during the first millennium to Southeast Asia, which was followed later by its rival Hinduism (Fisher, 2006). The influence of Hindu-Buddhist culture did not fundamentally change the practices and beliefs of Southeast Asian people; yet Indian influence did bring enrichment to local traditions (Harrison, 1967; Ryan, 1971). For over fourteen centuries Southeast Asia witnessed the rise and fall of numerous indigenous Hindu or Buddhist kingdoms, which were modeled after the Indian concept of royalty and practiced either of or mixture of both (Ryan, 1963; Munoz, 2006).

As Southeast Asian lands were brought into contact with Hindu and Buddhist cultures, its architectural methods and styles gradually changed (Ryan, 1971). The spread of major Indian religions to Southeast Asia during the first centuries of the Christian era caused numerous Hindu or Buddhist temples to be constructed throughout the region (Dumarcay, 1986). These structures are classified into two fundamental types: the candi (the mausoleum or tomb temple), and the true shrine (meru tower) (Santoro, 1973). Through archeological excavations on Hindu-Buddhist temples in Peninsular Malaysia, it is postulated that

these structures were square cella raised on a simply compacted base with supporting pillars below the roof (Dumarçay & Smitties, 1998). Figure 2 represents an attempted reconstruction of an Indian temple in Peninsular Malaysia. Southeast Asian architecture that developed prior to the advent of Islam shows strong Hindu-Buddhist influence, however it still possesses its own identity, unique local characteristics and evolved its own technology that distinguished them from Indian architecture found in the Subcontinent (Meyer, 1965).

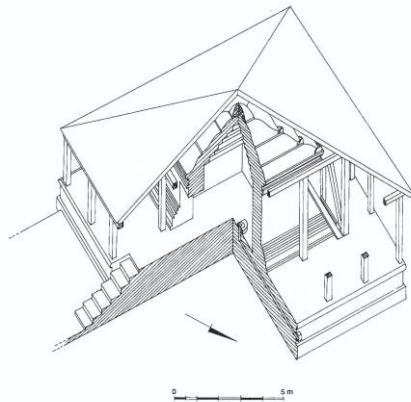


Figure 2: *An attempted reconstruction of Candi Bukit Batu, Kedah*
(Source: Dumarçay & Smithies, 1998)

Advent of Islam

Although Islam was known in Southeast Asian lands since the advent of the religion in her homeland in the 7th century it is impossible to pinpoint where and when Islam actually began to spread its root due to the fact that Southeast Asia extends over such a vast territory encompassing many thousands of islands (Al Faruqi et.al., 1986). However, evidence and written records state that it was after the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries when indigenous kingdoms and commoners accepted the new religion as their spiritual savor and noticeable Islamic practices started to be held within the region (Ryan, 1971; Michell, 1995). The first documented evidence in the presence of Islam in Peninsular Malaysia goes back to the discovery of Arabic inscriptions on an engraved stone in the eastern coast of Terengganu, which is dated back to the 14th century (Alijah, 2001).

Southeast Asian receptive entities embraced Islam akin the way they had absorbed Hindu and Buddhism thousands years ago, gradually and peacefully. Islam like the other foreign cultures did not completely change Southeast Asia and went through a metamorphosis before become accepted and appear in Southeast Asian culture, art and architecture. Traditional mosques in Southeast Asia demonstrate an astonishing example of Islamic architecture between various typologies since they represent a perfect integration of various foreign ideas, Southeast Asia indigenous traditions and Islamic beliefs. Although certain adjustments were applied into Southeast Asian traditional architecture to redesign them based on mosque requirements, these adjustments did not fundamentally change the indigenous architectural characteristics of Southeast Asian architecture (Michell, 1995).

Although traditional mosques, erected throughout Southeast Asia, demonstrate various variations they also show some distinctive shared characteristics. Centralized columned prayer hall, which is square in the plan, centralized tiered pyramidal roof, raised above the ground on stilts, ceremonial gateway, absence of minaret are of the most distinctive characteristics of Southeast Asian traditional mosques (Chen, 1998). Although there are many scholars with different views most of them believe that the best and oldest preserved examples of Southeast Asia traditional mosques is Demak Mosque (see figure 3) in Java (Chen, 1998; Nasir, 2004

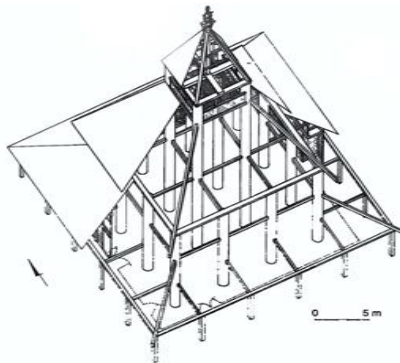


Figure 3: *An attempted reconstruction of original form of Demak mosque, Indonesia*
(Source: Dumarçay & Smithies, 1998)

Melaka Kingdom

Although the first historical evidence of Islam in Peninsular Malaysia can be seen near the mouth of Terengganu River the spread of Islam into the interior and to the north of Malay peninsula was a result of the powerful patronage and influence of Melaka Kingdom (Vlatseas, 1990). Sumatran prince, Paramewara, founded Melaka at the late 14th century and soon after due to its strategic location, the port became one of the most famous trading centers in Southeast Asia (Moor, 2004). Simultaneously Chinese emperor from Ming Dynasty changed China's trading policies and decided to continue commerce activities with west through sea routs rather than Silk Road and sent his envoys to visit Southeast Asia ports such as Melaka (Dumarcay & Smithies, 1998). AS a result of strong ties between Melaka and the royal court of China during this period first cultural assimilation between to region appeared (Bunce, 2002).

Islam became the state religion of Melaka during the Sultan Muzaffar Shah reign in the mid-15th century (Lloyd, 1986). Under the powerful leadership of Melaka Muslim rulers, the port became the favorite trading center for the Muslim merchants from Middle East and Indian Subcontinent, and the center of Islamic missionaries (Zakaria, 1994). Melaka flourished, and in its peak of prosperity is described as the most prosperous trading ports with the greatest number of wholesale merchants and abundance of shipping that can be found in the whole world (Barbosa, 1921). Rapidly growing Melaka became the center of Islamic propagation and played a very important role not only in the Islamization of Java, but also the whole archipelago (Rauf, 1987; O'Neill, 1994; Alijjah, 2001). However, the gradual spread of Islam did not seem to have affected the traditional architecture of the region where basic Austronesian morphology remains (Gunawan, 1998).

Since the establishment of Islam in Melaka in 15th century and its distribution to Peninsula, great number of mosques has been erected in the region (Vlatseas, 1990). Traditional Melaka style mosques, following Southeast Asia traditional mosque design, consist of a modest centralized columned prayer hall, which is axial and symmetrical in the plan and the entrance to this space is usually from the opposite end in the direction of qibla, but supplementary entrances may also be introduced from the

sides (Lim, 2001). Two or three-tiered pyramidal roof known as *meru*, is crowned with a carved pinnacle and covered by clay tiles. The inward curved ridges are pronounced with upward projected ends (Nasir, 2004). In contrast to other mosques in Southeast Asia Melaka style mosques were not erected on slits but sit on a podium (Chen, 1998). The early traditional mosques did not have minaret and used traditional ways to call for pray such as a drum and taboo. In later practices, a pagoda-like tower constructed to function as a minaret and became of monumental elements in Melaka style mosques.



(a)

(b)

(c)

Figure 4: (a) *Kampung Hulu Mosque*, (b) *Kampung Keling Mosque*, (c) *Terenggera Mosae. Melaka* (Source: Author, 2012)

Interactions with Chinese

Historical records indicate that initial interaction between China and Southeast Asia was extremely limited (Andaya, 2001). The early contacts mainly happened by individual merchants and pilgrims from China visiting Southeast Asia (Wang, 1992). Buddhist missionaries and monks from China who intended to reach India, the motherland of Buddha, were providing themselves with spiritual experiences at first in Southeast Asia (Wang, 1992). However, the earliest Chinese individual merchants and pilgrims did not make any permanent appearance in the Peninsular, and these contacts made no cultural influence on Southeast Asian people (Munoz, 2006; Tan, 2005). Southeast Asia, referred generally as *Nan Yang* (Southern Ocean) between Chinese, did not attract much attention from them. It was only after the 15th century that condition changed. Melaka was founded

in the late 14th century and simultaneously Emperor Yongle of Ming Dynasty decided to expand maritime trades so sent his envoys to Southeast Asian islands (Moor, 1986). Admiral Chen Ho, the Muslim Chinese, visited Melaka several times between 1403-1433 in order to establish strong economic and political connection with Melaka Kingdom. Parameswara visited China three times between 1411-1419 (Hoyt, 1993). In 1409, China and Melaka kingdom signed an alliance, whereby China protected Melaka against Siamese and Majapahit invasions (Lim, 2006).

Increasing trade activities between China and Melaka since the presence of European in Southeast Asia from early 16th century attracted numerous Chinese merchants from southern China, who had to stay in Melaka for at least five months waiting for seasonal monsoon winds to change and take them back to their homeland, so they set up second home in Melaka (Vlatseas, 1990). The offspring of inter-marriage between Chinese merchants and local girls are called baba and Nonya (Tan, 2005). The babas were Chinese in religions and practices, Chinese and Western in architecture and Malay in language, customs (Khoo, 1996). Melaka probably had the oldest Chinese presence in the Malay Archipelago (Lim, 2001). It was only after the mid-19th century that numerous Chinese labors from Southern China migrated to the Peninsula (Pan, 2006).

Whether merchants or labors, Chinese migrants in Melaka can trace their origins back to the coastal provinces of Southern China (Andaya, 2001). These Chinese migrants remained faithful to their homeland religions and beliefs and constructed buildings inspired by their own traditional style from Southern Chinese architecture (Cheng, 1998). The underlying ideas of Chinese architecture in the Peninsula are the courtyard, ornamented roof, visible structural components and the application of color (Kohl, 1984). The other main architectural characteristics or elements in Chinese examples in Peninsula are three-section gable roof, curved roof ridge, and cantilever eave corners (Lim, 2001:93-94). The unique hybrid identity of Chinese in Peninsula displayed itself beautifully in Straits Chinese architecture in various forms and functions such as temples, pagodas, kongsi or clan houses, terrace houses and shophouses.

In Melaka, the Chinese temple mainly is influenced by Southern China style (Khoo, 2001). Instead of the imperial

double-hipped roof of northern China, temples in Melaka have a gable roof in 3 sections following the southern China's style. The middle section is usually raised and inward curved ridges and raised copings that separate the roof sections are profusely ornamented (Kohl, 1984). The corners of roof eaves are curved upward, and dragons, Phoenix and other religion or symbolic figures of colorful ceramic pieces decorate the ridges (Yean, 1992).



Figure 5: *Cheng Hoo Teng Temple, Melaka*
(Source: Author, 2012)

Pagoda is the best example of Chinese narration from Indian-Buddhist architecture, which is inspired from both Indian stupa and Chinese multi-storied watchtowers in military construction (Wong & Chang, 1982). Pagodas found in Malaysia vary in size and structure but mostly are of the tower-style pagoda. The most widely publicized pagoda in Malaysia is the Ban Po Shu Pagoda of the Ten Thousand Buddha on the grounds of the Kek Lok Si Temple complex in Penang. (see figure 6).



Figure 6: *Ban Po Tha Pagoda, Penang*

(Source: Flickr.com)

METHODOLOGY

The influence of different cultures and religions in a region on its architectural development and subsequently on its Mosque design style is inevitable (Bandyopadhyay & Sibely, 2003). Melaka style architectural studies verify this notion since the influence of foreign cultures in these mosques is evident. To analytically justify the idea that Melaka style traditional mosque has been influenced by various cultures and to architecturally detect these influences Historical-Comparative Research Method with the focus on Causal Explanations of History has been applied. To fulfill this method several phases should be carried out: searching for evidence, collecting and organizing the evidence in the actual flow of time and relevance, evaluation, analysis and interpretation, and finally providing a narrative (Nueman, 2003).

In this paper, primary and secondary data have been collected from different sources. Literature review is the process in which secondary evidence has been collected. Secondary data concerns the historical and architectural background of Southeast Asia from the early days until the modern era; Austronesian heritage, Interaction with Indians and Chinese as well as Hindu-Buddhist and Chinese architecture in Peninsula, the advent of Islam and Southeast Asia traditional mosque style, and finally Melaka Kingdom and Melaka style mosque architecture are the main discussions that literature review focuses on. To enrich the data collection, three Melaka style mosques as case studies have been chosen. The findings from the fieldwork are considered as primary data. Melaka traditional mosque's identification is conducted by visit to Melaka Islamic Religious Department, PERZIM, and Melaka Historic City Council. Through these visits and interviews, over 60 mosques were spotted. To classify these mosques into traditional and modern style various websites have been visited such as websites of Portal Masjid Negari Melaka, PERZIM and IslamGrid. Among the 60 mosques in Melaka, 28 mosques have been classified as traditional mosques. This paper focuses on the earliest traditional mosques in Melaka, erected during the Dutch colonization, which are Kampung Hulu Mosque, Kampung Keling Mosque, Terengkeru Mosque.

This paper tried to analyze, evaluate and interpret findings from primary and secondary sources and provide the best feasible

comparison between relevant data in order to achieve results. Qualitative method has been applied for data obtainment, as it suited the best to achieve related material. Qualitative method as data collection technique requires the studied employment and collection of an array of experiential materials such as historical, observational, and visual texts, cultural texts and productions, and also case study, artifacts, interviews and personal experience (Denzin, 2005).

FINDING ANALYSIS, EVALUATION & INTERPRETATION

From literature review and fieldwork, it is indicated that pre-Islamic cultures and architectural styles in Melaka have been regenerated as some ideas in traditional mosques and in some cases even reshaped some principal elements in mosque architecture. The historical review on Melaka shows various foreign interactions between Southeast Asia and different regions such as India, China and Europe. Each of these interactions happened in different pace, time and approaches. Among the foreign influences on Melaka style mosques, Hindu-Buddhism and Chinese impacts have gained the attention of this paper due to prolong and potent effects of these ancient civilizations on Melaka. Hindu-Buddhism since the beginning of Christian era and Chinese culture since the foundation of Melaka Kingdom in the 15th century started to enrich already vital culture and architecture of the region and have been absorbed, adapted and applied in later practices. This section presents descriptions on findings from primary and secondary data collection and tries to provide the best feasible comparisons to show various foreign architectural influences on Melaka style mosques in terms of form, ornamentation and appearance of special elements.

HINDU-BUDDHIST INFLUENCE

Melaka style mosques following Southeast Asian traditional mosque style show strong Hindu-Buddhist architectural influence due to long and powerful domination of Hindu and Buddhism in Southeast Asia's lands since the beginning of Christian era until prior to the advent of Islam in the region. These foreign cultures

have affected Melaka style mosques in basic and fundamental characteristics; however, Hindu-Buddhist influence has not dominated Melaka style mosques since Islamic beliefs and requirements have been perfectly fulfilled in mosque design while indigenous Southeast Asia constructional technique has wisely applied in these mosques.

Melaka style traditional mosque is an evolution of Hindu-Buddhist structures, which were introduced from India and further developed in Southeast Asia. The Melaka style traditional mosque derived its form from the buildings' typologies that existed during the previous Hindu-Buddhist era. Melaka style mosques are clearly inspired by strong regional and cultural forces originated from Hindu-Buddhist shrines and temples, which were erected in the region for about a millennium. The Hindu-Buddhist structures have been adopted and adapted by the local builders when they erected the new mosque, since Islam did not come with a prescribed form from its house of worship. Traditional mosques in Melaka share the same square and symmetrical plan and multi-tiered pyramidal roof that can be detected in Hindu or Buddhist structures in Southeast Asia.

Tiered Pyramidal Roof

The most significant architectural element in Melaka style traditional mosque is its two or three-tiered pyramidal roof. Instead of covering the building with the Middle Eastern dome Melaka style mosques present a unique form in roof design. The multi-tiered pyramidal roof is known as *meru* in Java, *tumpang* roof in Peninsular Malaysia and in some parts of Indonesia and *atap limas bertingkat* in Sumatra. Although there are many speculations about the origin of this type of roof, most of the scholars believe that the tiered pyramidal roof or *meru* is an inspiration from Hindu-Buddhist sacred architecture and resembles *meru* tower, which were practiced in Southeast Asia for a millennium.

Meru tower (see figure 8) in Hindu-Buddhist practices, which is used for offerings, comprises a raised box-like altar, containing statue and topped by multi-tiered roofs and sometimes decorated with reliefs. Furthermore, the extensive use of radiating beam in

the construction of the pyramidal roof was originated from the Indian subcontinent (Dumarçay, 1991).

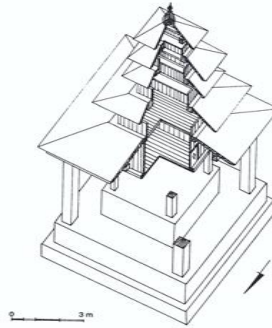


Figure 7: *The meru tower, Southeast Asia,*
(Source: Dumarçay & Smithies, 1998)

Square Floor Plan

The earlier mosques erected in Southeast Asia followed domestic typology; however, this adoption did not last long and an overwhelming preference grew for the typology of Hindu-Buddhism shrines, temples and pavilions erected in the region prior to the advent of Islam in Southeast Asia. Southeast Asian builders realized that a square plan of Hindu-Buddhist shrine and pavilion is more suitable for forming an Islamic prayer-hall as both functions as a house of worship and can be easily extended to all the four directions. Melaka style mosque possesses a square plan inspired from strong regional and cultural forces instead of duplicating typical rectangular or hexagonal plan from Middle East.

Although Melaka style mosque was erected under strong influence of Hindu-Buddhist typologies in the region, it still fulfills Islamic requirements. For instance,

Melaka style mosques are oriented toward Mekka in contrast to Hindu-Buddhist structures, which were oriented to the cardinal points and also the appearance of entrances in three facades of north, south and east while the west wall is designated as qibla wall.

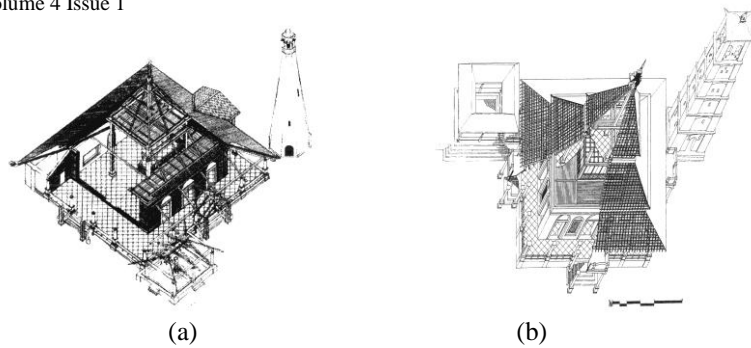


Figure 8: Tiered Pyramidal Roof (a) Kampung Hulu Mosque, (b) Kampung Keling Mosque, Melaka (Source: Tajuddin, 2003)

CHINESE INFLUENCE

Unique Melaka traditional mosque style shows an overall impression of Chinese presence. During the time when most of the traditional mosques in Melaka were erected, Chinese tradition and art have already taken roots in the port. Although the richness of indigenous Malay heritage did not permit Chinese architecture to dominate Malay architectural characteristics, but the close interconnection and prolonged contacts between two realms and races made Chinese architectural language woven in Malay architectural soul. Melaka as the primary center for Chinese settlements in Peninsula significantly portrays the reflection of Chinese architecture in the local architectural scene. Besides the Chinese buildings in Melaka, which follow the exact architectural traditions from their homeland China (mainly Southern China), other constructed buildings in the city also reflect signs of Chinese architectural elements that enrich Melaka scenery. Chinese architectural influence is discernible in Melaka style mosque's roof ornamentation, appearance of pagoda-like minaret and mimbar design.

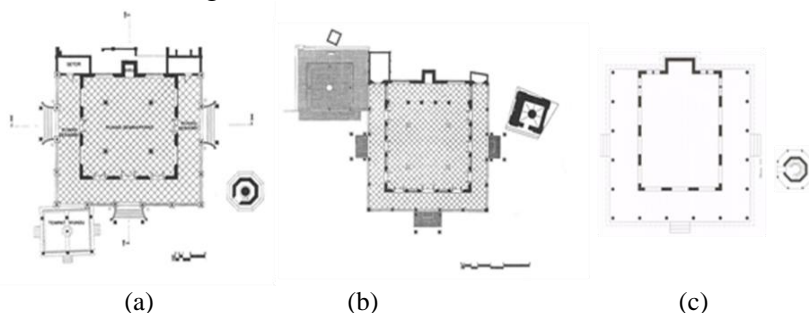


Figure 9: Square plan of (a) Kampung Hulu Mosque, (b) Kampung Keling Mosque, (c) Terengkeri Mosque, Melaka (Source: Tajuddin, 2003)

Ornamentation

Although the roof form in Melaka style traditional mosque is an inspiration from Hindu-Buddhist architecture, these mosques bear additional elements and characteristics in terms of ornamentation and material, which are analogous to Chinese ornamental characteristics. Thus, the inspiration from Hindu-Buddhist architectural language in the roof remains only in morphologic concepts. Comparison between Chinese practices and Melaka traditional mosques reveal fascinating analogies in decorative features and certain applied materials in roof design and construction. However, since in Islamic culture use of animal and personage motifs are forbidden, the carvings and decorations in Melaka style mosques are mainly in floral motifs. Although Chinese in the Peninsula built their buildings inspired from Southern Chinese Melaka style mosques show signs of features from Northern Chinese architecture. The application of the crown on the apex of the building, pronounced ridges, and projected roof eaves are of ornamental characteristics in Chinese architecture, which regenerate in Melaka style traditional mosques.

Crown: It is true that the majority of Chinese temples in Peninsula resemble Southern Chinese architecture and do not present crown but interestingly Melaka traditional mosques show the influence from National Chinese architecture by introducing a celebrated crown at the apex of each mosque. These crowns are elaborately carved in floral motifs.



Figure 10: *The Crown- (a) Kampung Hulu Mosque, (b) Kampung Keling Mosque, (c) Terengkeri Mosque, Melaka*
(Source: Author, 2012)

Ridge: Another decorative feature in roof design, which has gotten influence from Chinese architecture, is the pronounced ridge. Both National Chinese and Southern Chinese architecture provide numerous examples of ornamented roof ridges but with different decorative motifs and techniques. It has been suggested that the roof ridge in traditional mosques “takes the image of the dragon” (Abdullah Bin Mohamed, 1978: 11).

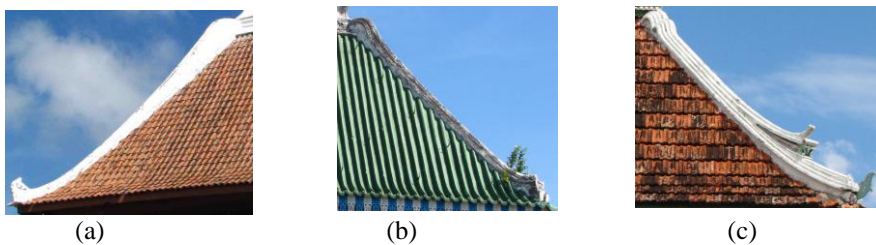


Figure 11: *The Ridge-* (a) *Kampung Hulu Mosque*, (b) *Kampung Keling Mosque*, (c) *Terenggera Mosque, Melaka*
(Source: Author, 2012)

Eave Corner: Eaves in classical Chinese architecture are known not only for their aesthetic qualities but also for their functional purposes to emphasize unity, while Chinese temples in Melaka as similar to Melaka style mosques introduce eaves and corner eaves that are restricted to decorative and symbolic purposes. As a result of comparison between Classical Chinese eave corners, Chinese eave corners in Peninsula and Melaka traditional mosques, it can be said that eave corner in Melakan Islamic architecture is a simplified variation of Southern Chinese and Chinese architecture in Peninsula.

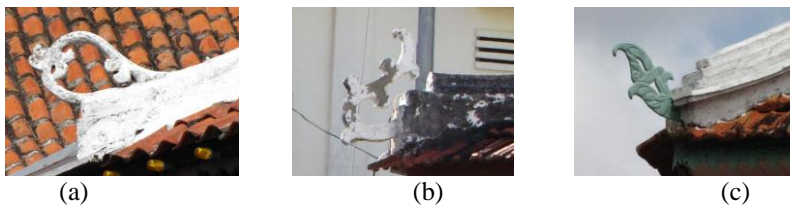


Figure 12: *The Projected Eave Corner-* (a) *Kampung Hulu Mosque*, (b) *Kampung Keling Mosque*, (c) *Terenggera Mosque, Melaka*
(Source: Author, 2012)

Minaret

The Islamic monument of Minaret has undergone a fascinating metamorphosis in Melaka traditional style. It is not uncommon in Melaka traditional style that a mosque lacked this monument while the one that has a minaret represents it in a very different way from Middle Eastern style. Melaka style minarets evoke tower-style or close-eaves style Chinese pagodas. However, Melaka style minarets alike the other architectural elements in this style do not represent Chinese architectural influence without a process of absorption and integration. These minarets similar to the roof bear ornamental elements of the crown, pronounced ridge and projected eave corner.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 13: *The Minaret- (a) Kampung Hulu Mosque, (b) Kampung Keling Mosque, (c) Terenggera Mosque, Melaka*
(Source: Author, 2012)

CONCLUSION

Melaka was the prime city where disseminated Islam to Peninsular Malaysia under her powerful Muslim kingdom. Thus, it is natural that a number of early Malay mosques were found in this historic port. Melaka style mosques, akin to Southeast Asia traditional mosque style followed local building traditions and climatic conditions instead of replicating traditional mosques' elements from Middle East. The early traditional mosques, erected in Melaka, were similar to traditional Malay houses and palaces in style and material; however, with foreign cultural and technical influences, Melaka style mosques faced major alterations in their appearance. Melaka style mosques bear

numerous traces of Hindu-Buddhist, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, and British inspirations while distinctive Islamic architectural elements from Middle East such as dome and minaret do not feature in these traditional mosques.

Melaka traditional mosque style holds unique identity, which differs from traditional mosque style in other Malay states due to its unique historical background. This historical city not only demonstrates the most staggering examples of Southeast Asian traditional mosques but also established the Melaka style mosque movement. Alike to Southeast Asian traditional style, Melaka style mosques demonstrate a potent influence in fundamental characteristics and basic form from Hindu-Buddhist structures, which were erected in the region prior to the advent of Islam in Southeast Asia while due to close historical contacts between Melaka and China from the 15th century onwards these mosques, moreover, show Chinese influences in ornamentation and appearance of certain architectural elements such as the minaret. It can be concluded that Hindu-Buddhist architecture has influenced Melaka style mosques in shape of the roof, which is known as meru and in the square and symmetrical plan of the main prayer hall. Chinese architecture has inspired Melaka style mosques in ornamentation applied on the roof such as crown, pronounce ridge and projected eave corner. Furthermore, the appearance of pagoda-like minaret and profusely ornamented minbar, which is a resemblance of imperial Chinese sedans and furniture making are of Chinese architectural and interior design influences.

Notwithstanding the preference for Middle Eastern and Mongol mosque styles during the recent decades and the decline in occurrence of Southeast Asian traditional mosque style, it is still the most cherished style in Melaka. The question of the value of an architectural specimen is closely related to questions concerning its preservation and restoration. Since Melaka style mosques are continually exposed to natural and human forces, they cannot maintain their original conditions forever. As a result, the preservation and restoration of Melaka style traditional mosques as cultural assets become the most important discussion. Since these mosques are products of hybrid architectural designs and ideas, to preserve their utility, beauty, strength and sacredness, it is vital to detect different cultural influences in

these mosques carefully in order to maintain the identity and pristine in preservation and restoration process.

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