

TYOLOGICAL STUDY OF TRADITIONAL MOSQUE ORNAMENTATION IN MALAYSIA-COMPARISON BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN MOSQUE

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ABSTRACT

Ornament is part of the essence of the building, growing together with the architecture and being an embellishment on the building to complement the architectural design. The Malays have built mosques with a distinctive pattern to describe the concept of divinity and naturalism moreover ensemble with the tropical climate. As a result, Malay traditional ornament comprise with understanding that clearly define the identity of its region. It symbolizes that the spread of Islamic Malay culture was manifested in the works of art of the Malays. However, development of modern mosque nowadays is well-liked of Middle East style which has given a new 'meaning' to the Islamic architecture in Malaysia. As a result, Malaysian Islamic architecture lost its identity through the diversity on the use of domes, maqsura, muqarnas and other syntax composition. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the typology and classification of ornaments in Malaysia's traditional mosque as a channel to the community towards understanding of the identity and also the framework of design thinking in ornaments particularly to the mosques in Malaysia. The report comprises the analysis of the typology and classification of ideas, theories and philosophies of Malay Traditional Ornaments focuses on the elements of mosque architecture as well comparison between traditional and modern mosque. It discusses the development and history of ornament in the Malay Traditional, concepts and philosophy that contains the idea and approach of its used in adaption of Islamic thoughts to the Malay world. Thus, it aims to initiate a comprehensive and thorough review of Malay ornamentation to the development of modern ornamentation for the future.

Key Word: Malay Traditional Mosque, Ornamentation, Aesthetic, Symbolism

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, the world faced with modernism and new technology thus a cultural district which were a main key of the creation of Islamic art has been flagged and also received a lot of reformation that are temporal. Islamic elements were gradually been abandoned (Haji Jumaat Dato' Haji Mohd. Nor, 1989). A direct ornamental approach that are straightly been taken reflect a lack of knowledge about the ideas, concepts and aesthetical

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values about Islamic ornamentation itself. In an effort of creating a Malaysian ornament identity, this paper will identify and analyze the typology, ideas and concepts specifically to the Islamic ornamentation framework in Malaysia. Our country are lacking of the uses and discussions on ornamentation elements in the national architecture (Cheah Kai Kid, 2008).

Each element on the building such as ornaments and decorations has an answer of why it was made into that because that elements carried a definition or medium of communication that are closely related with the lives of its inhabitants along with natural surroundings. Each ornament on the building varies in term of the use of materials and motifs used to describe the historical background of general area, yet it still have the same characteristics as language or dialect of the area that gives a different sound but still carried the same meaning (Mastor Surat, 2004).

The study of the built environment and its architecture must be preceded with the specific study of the culture and practices of its intended users. In other word sufficient study must be undertaken from not only the physical but also the metaphysical aspects of the creative works with man as the principal focus (Rapoport, 1982). Accordingly the word culture is always an expression of belief either in the form of spoken words of daily practices that results from the soul or roh of the locals that may or may not exist in the eye of the people as a form of manifesting their internal beliefs into the reality of everyday lives (Jacob Sumardjo, 2003).

2. THE TYPOLOGY STUDY OF TRADITIONAL MOSQUE ORNAMENTATION: AN ANALYSIS OF MOSQUE ELEMENTS

By looking at the development of mosques in Malaysia, we can see the development of Islamic culture itself, especially the background history and different timeline. Art is the emission of civilization. The great civilization achievement is reflected trough their artistic excellence, in terms of physical heritage or in form of thought (Dr. Othman Mohd Yatim, 1989).

The scope of study refers to the nine elements within a particular traditional mosque which are:

- a. Buah buton
- b. Tutup perabung
- c. Tumpu kasau
- d. Wall
- e. Main pillar (tiang seri)
- f. Window
- g. Mimbar

a. Buah buton

Other names of buah buton are tunjuk langit, buah gantung, buah bubun, tajuk rumah, selembayung, sulo bayung, tanduk buang, silang gunting, mahkota atap, mustika, mustoko, *keting belalang*, *puncak coppo*, *julang ngapak*, *gonjong*.

In the architectural terminology of the Malay traditional, buton¹ is a wood measuring about 60 cm to 100 cm mounted on the rooftop. Buton is a badge or symbol of a construction formwork, just like a gravestone on the tomb. Buton implies a sign of a building that if the buton fall or struck by lightning, it indicates that disaster will happen to the occupant.

The typology of buah buton in general can be further divided into four types² according to its shape and design which are:

i. Jenis bulat (rounded)

This type is commonly used in Kelantan and Terengganu on bumbung limas or perabung lima (hip) or pyramidal type of roofing called tumpang that is positioned in the middle and top of the roof. Commonly called buah buton in Kelantan and buah gutung in Terengganu.

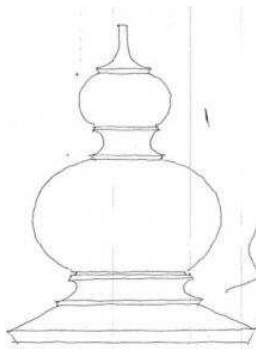


Figure 1a : Rounded buah butong shape of Kampung Laut Mosque
(Source: KALAM)

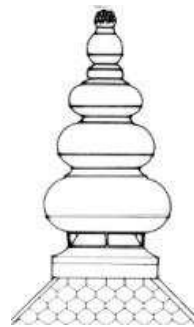


Figure 1b : Rounded buah butong shape of Kampung Tuan Mosque
(Source: KALAM)

ii. Jenis bunga (floral)

This type can be seen in old mosque around Melaka, Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia and also on the island of Java. Other names for the type are mahkota atap; in Indonesia it is also called mustika or mustoko or mustoka.

Historical findings indicate this type of tunjuk langit has its root from the mainland China³; hence, some examples have been found to use the local lotus flower bunga teratai (Nelumbo

¹ With reference to the glossary in 'Ukiran Kayu Melayu Tradisi' by Abdul Halim Nasir (1986) p.139.

² See Paper of The Traditional Malay Architecture: Between Aesthetic and Symbolism. Universiti Teknologi MARA.

³ Masjid Kampung Hulu, Melaka is one of the oldest mosque built by Chinese muslim as they migrated from China to Melaka, famous during its time as an anchorage point for merchants during 15th and 16th century. See Traditional Muslim Architecture in Malaysia, Monograph KALAM, UTM. pp.11.

Nucifera) which also adorns the top of the pagodas. This statement is further supported by Abdullah Bin Mohamed (1978:35) in his discussion on the domes of mosques in Melaka where he reiterated that the dome is originally thought of as a flower bud that is later adapted and shaped into various permutations.

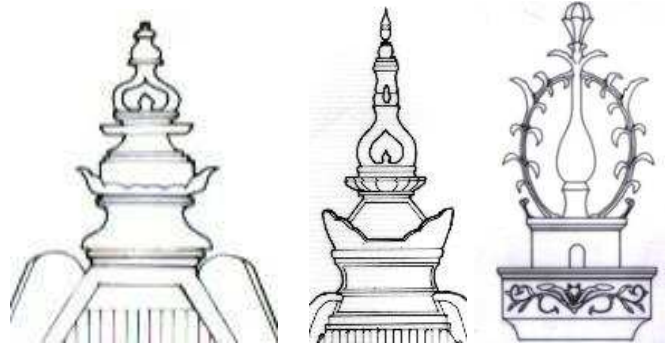


Figure 2: Three variations of the floral buah butong (from left : Kampung Hulu Mosque, Kampung Keling Mosque, Dato' Undang Kamat Mosque)

iii. Jenis batang (rod)

This type of buah butong are formed using a piece of timber in an upright position at the tip of the gable end; commonly used in houses and palaces in Peninsular Malaysia especially to the architecture of Malay houses in the state of Perak (bumbung limas) or bumbung limas potong belanda. In general this type can be further categorised into two basic types; i. hujung tajam (pointed tip), ii. hujung bulat (round tip).

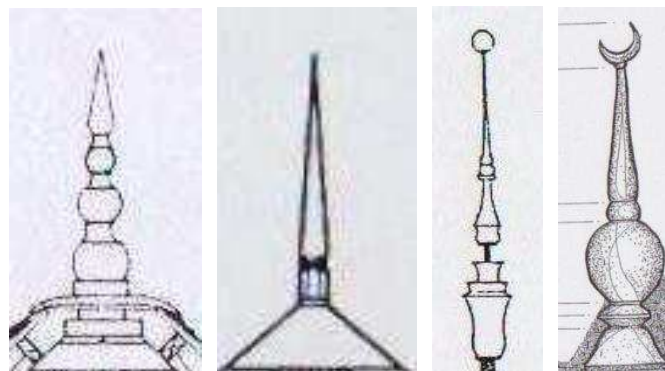


Figure 3: Four variations of the rod buah butong (from left : Kampung Jawa Mosque, Papan Mosque, Tinggi Mosque, Kampung Pantai Mosque)

iv. Jenis silang (cross)

Another type of tunjuk langit is called the jenis silang (scissors cross – fig. 4) often used on bumbung panjang type of the Malay house. This type of tunjuk langit is commonly seen as an extension of the papan layang (fascia board) in a diagonal manner on the gable end of the roof tip.



Figure 4: Scissor cross type of buah butong in Langgar Mosque, Kelantan

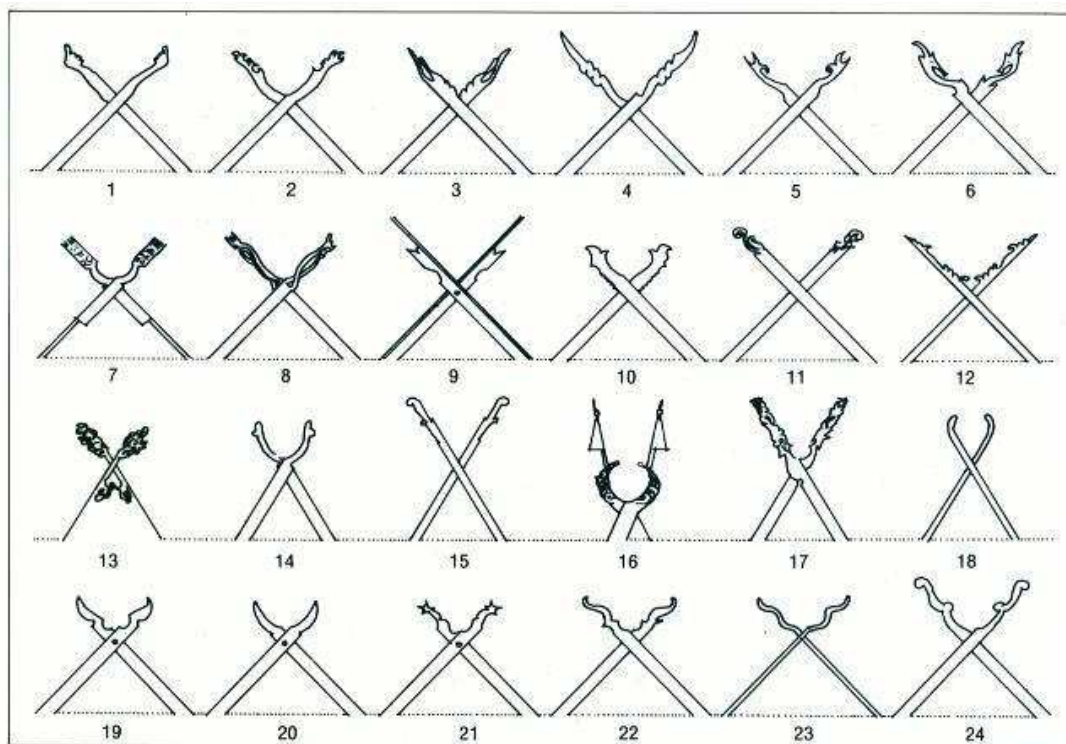


Figure 5. Design variations of the tunjuk langit jenis silang commonly found in South East Asia. Source: Roxana Waterson,(1997:11).

b. Tutup perabung (sulur bayung)

Other names are sulur bayung, sayap layang-layang, sayap layangan, ekor Itik, anjong balla', som. Tutup perabung or sulur bayung refers to a decorative element on the roof.

Abdullah Mohamed (1978) suggested, this type of decoration in the traditional Malay architecture, takes the image of the dragon (naga). Though with the coming of Islam and until

recently this form of decoration has taken a less than obvious shape; but the evolution from the imagery shape of the naga can still be seen on many architectural elements of the Malay culture. On mosques in Kelantan, Melaka and Java sisik naga and sulur bayung adorning the four corners of the roof are called som. He further reiterates that the som on the Kampung Laut mosque in Melaka has the simplest design identified as ekor itik (ducks tail) compare to soms on other buildings elsewhere.

The figurative type of sulur bayung often takes the form of the head of the mythical dragon (kepala naga or makara) clearly indicates influence of China and Hindu-Buddha. It is believed that such figurative symbols act as guardians against the evil forces and create fear on the enemies. Abdullah Mohamed (1978:43-45) added that the signs of the mythical dragon or naga as a powerful being also function as a prevention against the act of arrogance (takabbur) of the builders by the constant reminder of its presence.

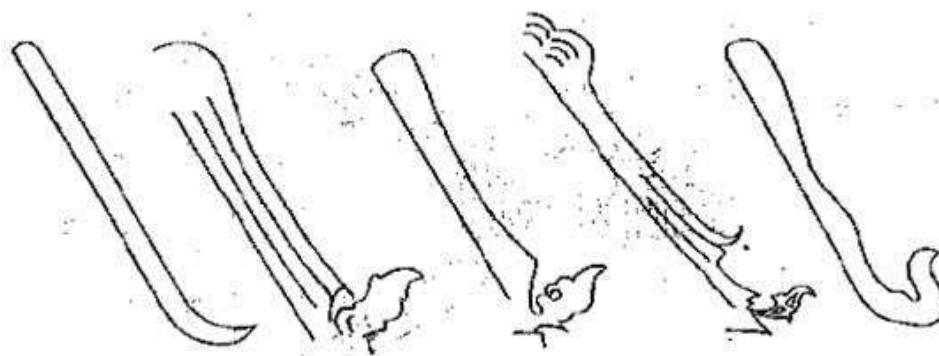


Figure 6: Five designs of the som as seen on mosques (masjid);
from left - Masjid Kampung Laut, Masjid Besar Serkam Tengah,
Masjid Peringgit, Masjid Besar Tengkerah dan Masjid
Pengkala Rama.

Source : Abdullah Mohamed.

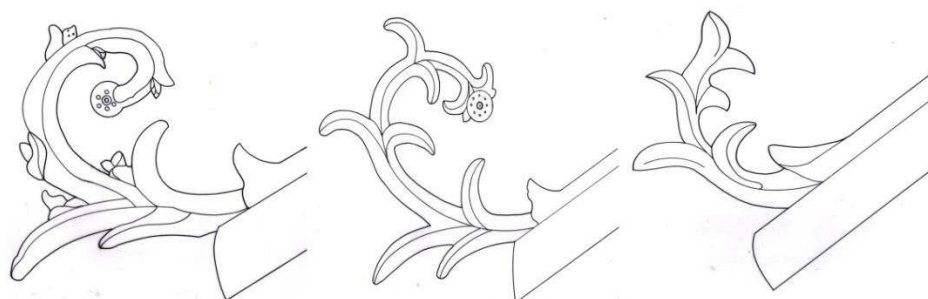


Figure 7: Three variations of the tutup perabung in Dato' Undang Kamat Mosque using the
floral motifs.



Figure 8: (left to right) Sulur bayung jenis figura and melentik respectively as used on Masjid Tengker Melaka ; jenis melingkar also called ekor itik (duck tails) used on Kampung Hulu Mosque, Melaka; jenis melingkar (ekor itik) used on a Langgar Mosque, Kelantan.

c. Tumpu kasau

Other names tumpu kasau are papan meleh, papan pator, papan cucuran atap, papan kaki atap, kening, ande-ande, papan cantik. Tumpu kasau is the horizontal decorative timber roof eaves covering the timber rafters (kayu kasau). There are at least two types of tumpu kasau which are the jenis sekeping papan (single piece type) with carvings on a single long timber piece and jenis kepingan papan bersusun (multiple pieces) with carvings on multiple timber pieces arranged side by side.⁴

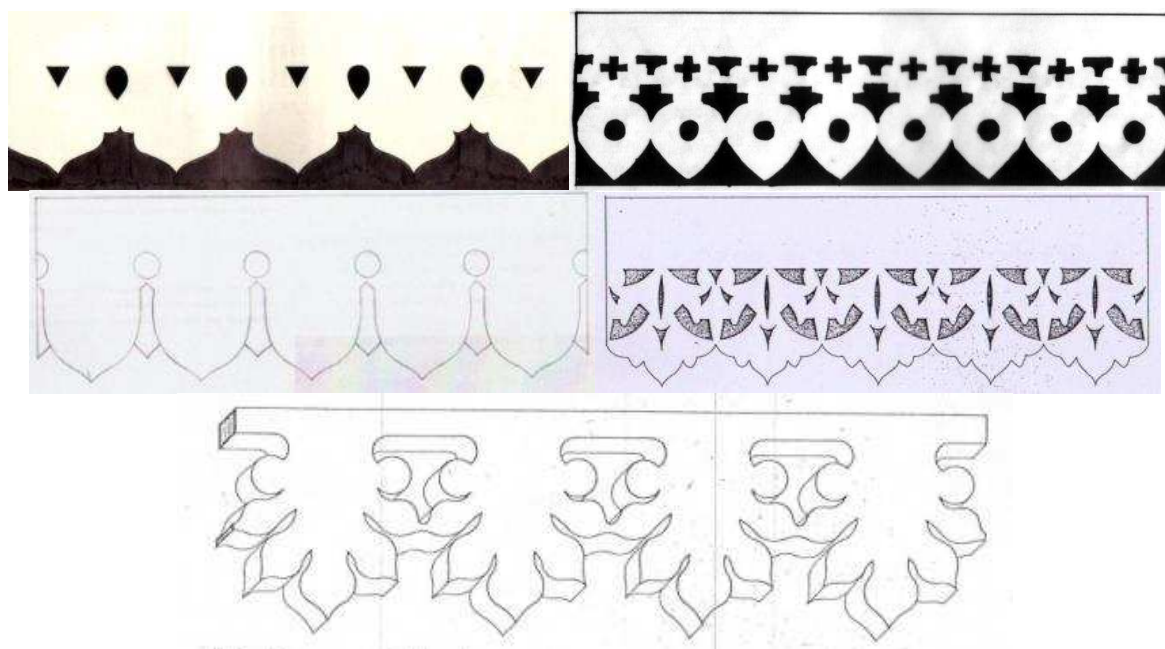


Figure 9: Five various design of tumpu kasau jenis papan sekeping (single piece type) from left; Kampung Hulu Mosque, Kampung Keling Mosque, Papan Mosque, Tinggi Mosque, Ikhsaniah Iskandariah Mosque.

⁴ see Paper of The Traditional Malay Architecture: Between Aesthetic and Symbolism. Universiti Teknologi MARA.

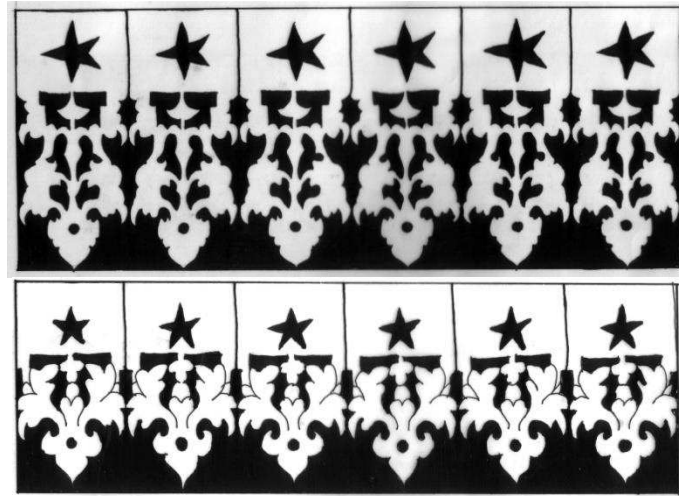


Figure 10: Tumpu kasau jenis papan bersusun (multiple pieces) at Kampung Keling Mosque.

d. Wall

There are two types of wall ornamentation; carving (jenis ukiran) and weaving (jenis kelarai).

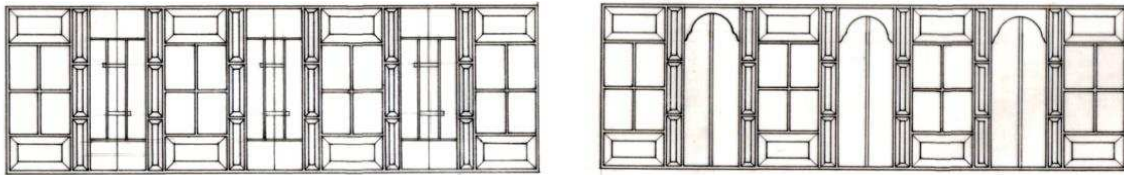


Figure 11: Janda baik wall ornamentation with ukiran jenis kumai on Langgar Mosque.

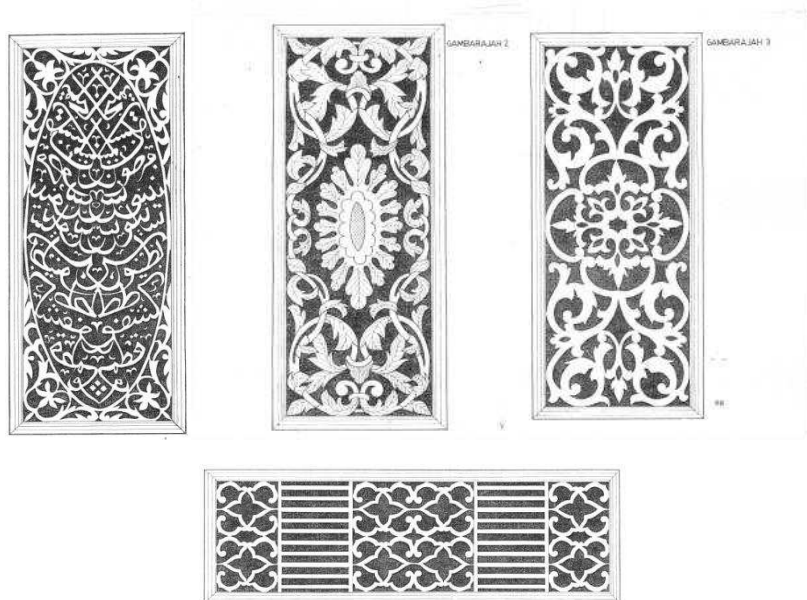


Figure 12: Wall carving with different types of motifs on prayer space at Kampung Bayas Mosque (from left); calligraphy motif, floral motifs and (below) geometrical motifs.

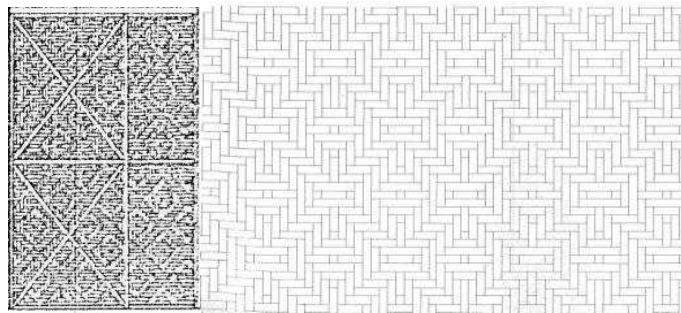


Figure 13: Kelarai (weaving) wall types at Ikhsaniah Iskandariah Mosque, Perak.

e. Main pillar (tiang seri)

In the construction of a Malay traditional house, there is a main pillar of the necessity to set up first (called as a central pillar or tiang seri). But in the construction of traditional mosque, there are four main pillars which also regarded as the backbone of the building.

There are two types of tiang seri ornamentation. Mosques in Melaka have a kind of Corinthian looks at the central pillar, while they were refined into geometrical and floral pattern. On the other hand, Malay wood carving were used to embellish the tiang seri with floral, geometrical and calligraphy motifs.

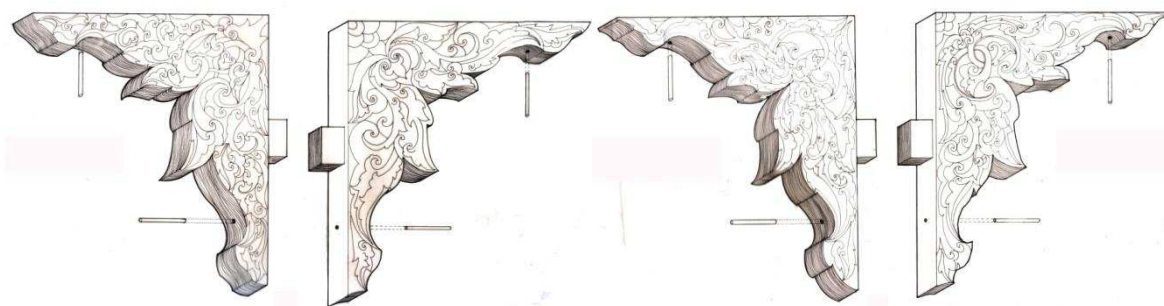


Figure 14: Few types of Malay wood carving with floral pattern ‘awan larat’ that were basically influenced from Javanese at Kampung Laut Mosque. There are 10 different patterns of tetupai (additional structure to support pillar) at this mosque.

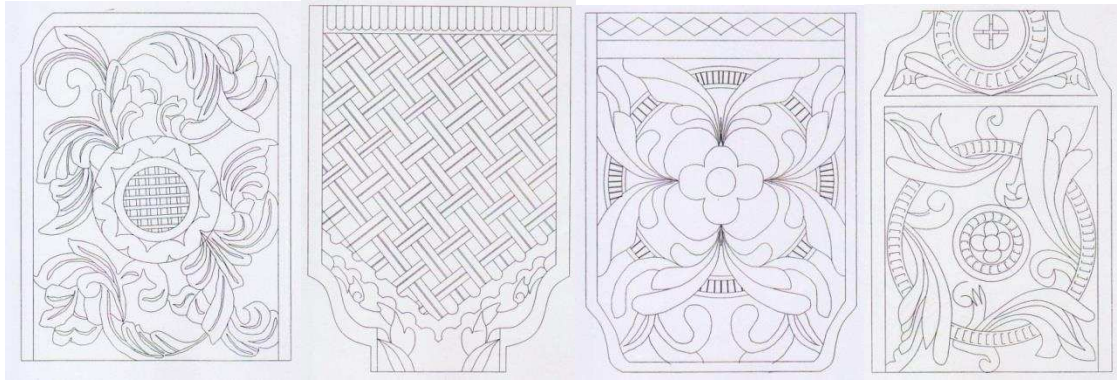


Figure 15: There are four various design on each tiang seri of Tanjung Beringin Mosque, Seri Menanti, Negeri Sembilan. Every tiang seri carving was given to different ethnic at Negeri Sembilan shows the unity of Islamic thoughts.

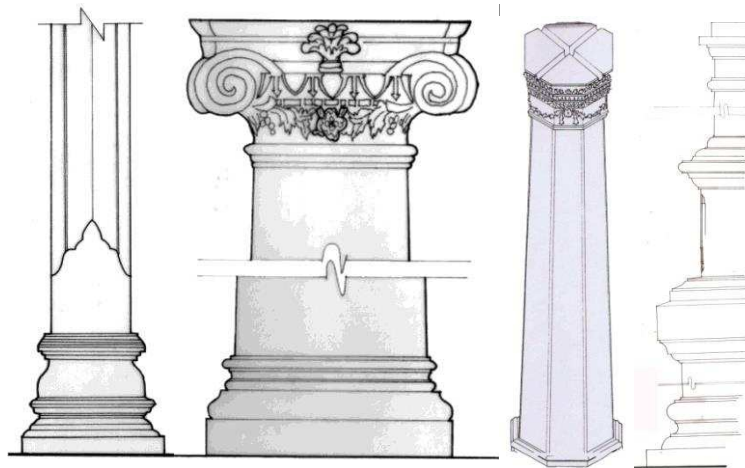


Figure 15: The colonial influence to the traditional mosque ornamentation (from left); tiang seri Kampung Keling Mosque, Corinthian pillar of Kampung Keling Mosque, Lebuh Acheh Mosque, Pulau Pinang using stucco floral pattern and tiang seri Kampung Hulu Mosque, Melaka.

f. Window

As like traditional house, most traditional mosque windows have a wooden lattice at the top or bottom of the window to give optimum air circulation in and out with the work of carvings that rich of floral and geometrical patterns. There are three types of windows ornament which are floral pattern, geometrical pattern and combination of floral and geometry.

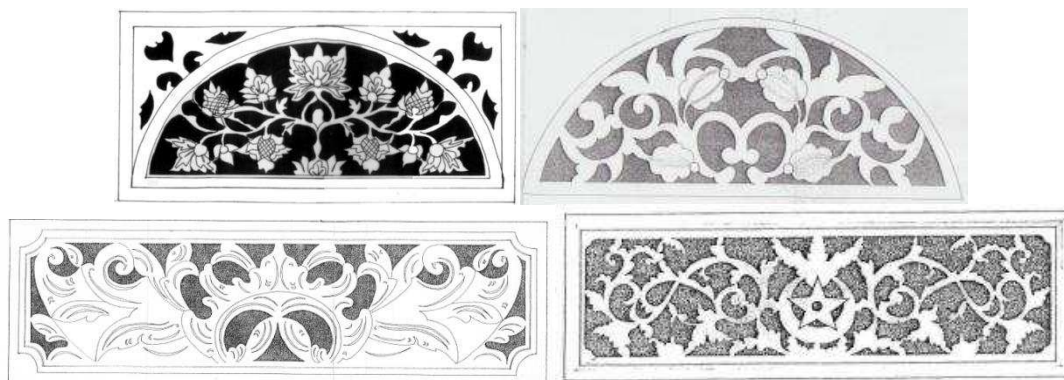


Figure 15: 4 various floral patterns of windows with ukiran tebuk timbul (from left); Kampung Keling Mosque, Melaka; Kampung Teluk Medan Mosque; Kubang Rotan Old Mosque; Ikhsaniah Iskandariah Mosque.

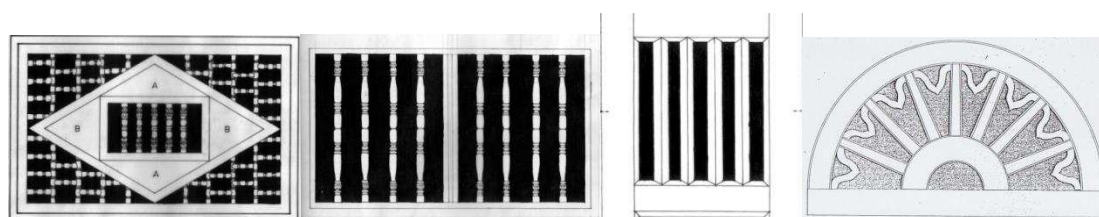


Figure 16: Sample of geometrical patterns (from left); Kampung Hulu Mosque; kisi-kisi Kampung Hulu Mosque; Kampung Tuan Mosque; and Tinggi Mosque.

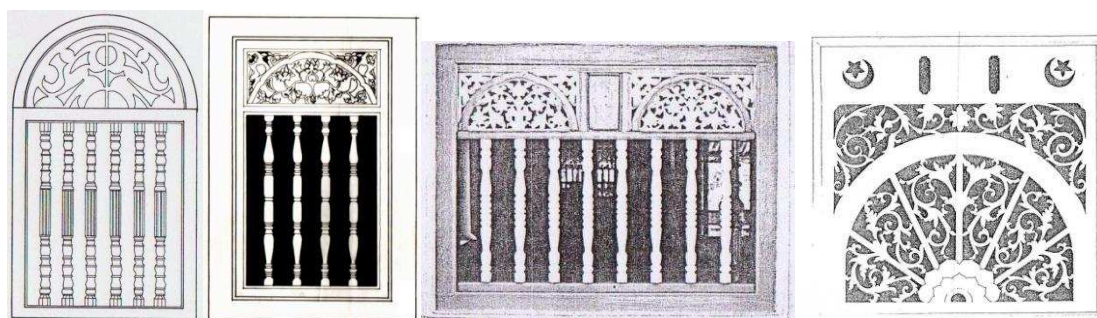


Figure 17: Combination between floral and geometrical patterns (from left); Melayu Lama Mosque, Kampung Hulu Mosque, Tengkeru Mosque and Ikhsaniah Iskandariah Mosque (with symbol of Perak state).

g. Mimbar

Each mosque usually has a mimbar which is a place where imam will deliver a speech or khutbah. Mimbar ornament in most traditional mosque have full of embellishment with calligraphy and floral pattern gives a meaning of Islamic thought also carried a message through it.

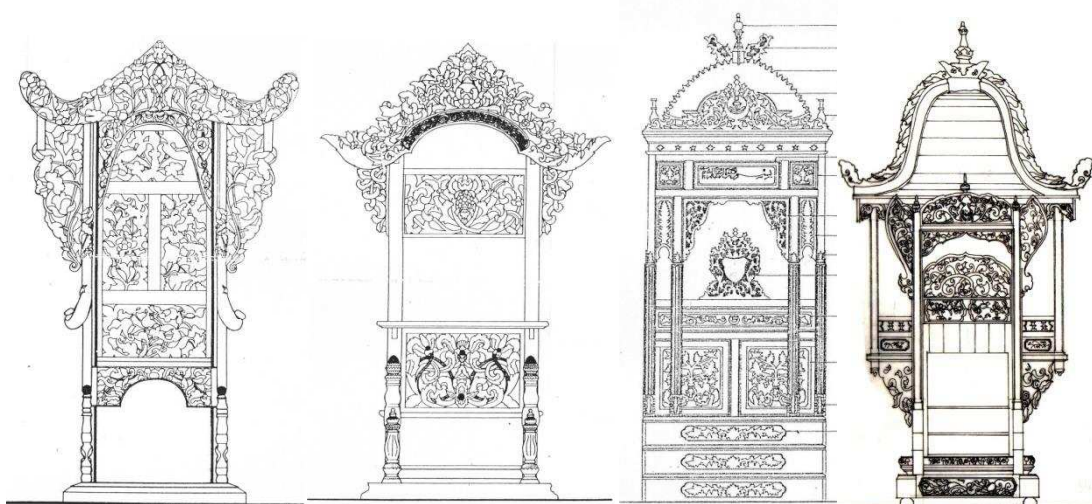


Figure 18: Various types of mimbar ornamentation that is usually full of embellishment and decorations especially carving. From left; mimbar of Kampung Laut Mosque (the mimbar crown was influenced by Javanese maidens' crown); as well as mimbar Langgar Mosque; Ikhsaniah Iskandariah Mosque with full of calligraphy and floral pattern with the symbol of Perak royal; Kampung Hulu Mosque with full embellishment of floral patterns.

3. Analysis of Islamic Thoughts into the Malay Ornamentation: Refinement of Malay Wood Carving

Carving, decoration, sculpture and symbolism were initiation to the original idea of Hindu-Buddhist beliefs, but it later been translated into the local vocabulary of motifs by using a natural resources and environment as well as animals, imaginary creatures and human sculptures (Mastor Surat,2004).

However, after the advent of Islam into Malaya, the motives of animal and imaginary creatures have been marginalized or slightly been using but with different interpretations (example: buah butong, tutup perabung). Wood carving flourished with the transformation of motives that have given a new meaning as well as deepen the use of natural elements such as plants and also the introduction to geometrical patterns and verse from the Al-Quran which is the ideas brought from the Middle East.

Malay wood carving produced trough observation and appreciation of natural resources and were enhanced with the understanding of Allah's creation. The decoration and symbolism of ancient Malay culture were laden with philosophy, thoughts, beliefs and values of its society. It is also carried a message to convey in the ornamental and Malay representation.

4. Comparison between Traditional and Modern Mosque

Most of the ornamentation in modern mosques in Malaysia takes some external elements such as the Middle East, Europe and India. However there are a number of mosques highlighted the regional nature such as the National Mosque and Sultan Mizan Mosque that can be a good sample of modern mosque ornamentation.



Figure 19: Comparisons between Putra Mosque (left) dome with influences of Middle East and (right) tiered roof of Kampung Tuan Mosque with buah butong.



Figure 20: Comparison of Sultan Mizan Mosque interior dome ornament (left) and Putra Mosque (right) to differentiate between imitation Middle Eastern elements and the use of modern concepts.



Figure 21: Comparison of Putra Mosque (left) entrance gateway with similarity of Middle East and Seberang Jerteh Mosque (right) with Malay ornamentation of pemeleh roof with the calligraphy and natural motifs.

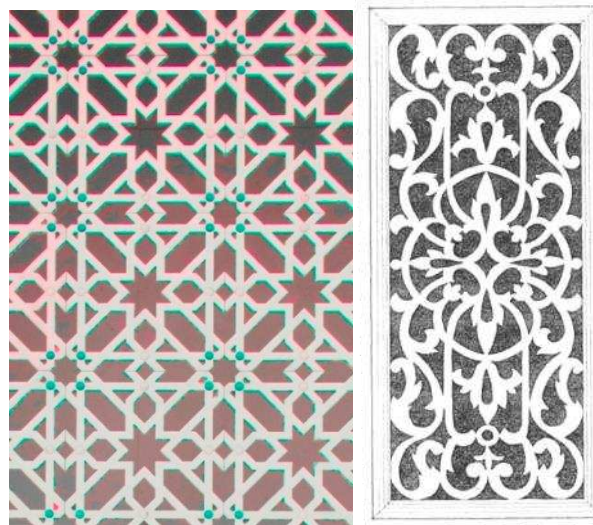


Figure 21: Comparisons between modern ornament at Sultan Salahuddin Mosque (left) and traditional (right) at Kampung Bukit Bayas Mosque. Extensive use of star to represent Islamic architecture in modern ornament, otherwise traditional ornament use more of natural and abstract in nature pattern.

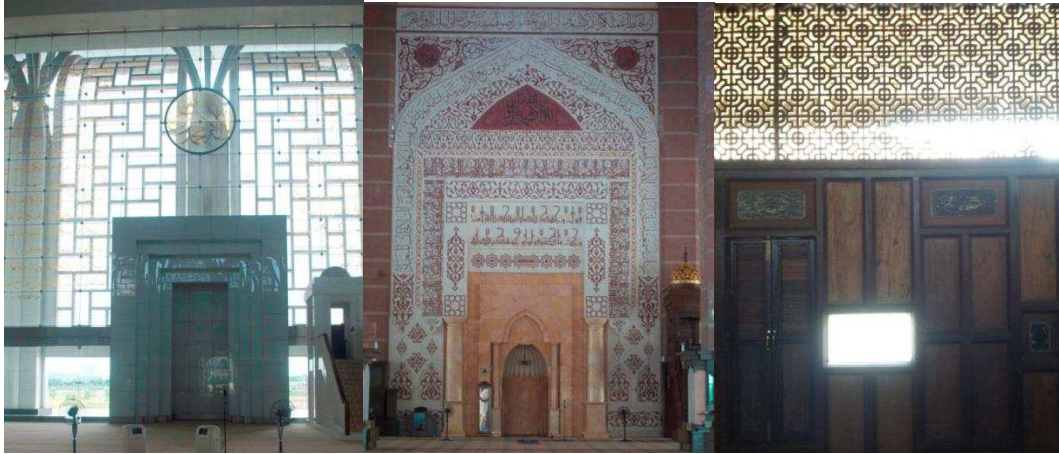


Figure 22: Comparisons between mihrab's design at Sultan Mizan Mosque (left) shows a new interpretation of mihrab design without having a muqarnas. Putra Mosque (middle) shows no difference of Middle East mosque and Kedai Mulong Old Mosque (right) shows a using of calligraphy motifs with janda berhias wall to represent Qiblat direction.



Figure 23: Shows an opening and natural ventilated prayer space by using ornamentation at Seberang Jerneh Mosque (left) and enclosed ornamentation of Middle East at prayer hall in Putra Mosque (right).

Based on the comparison between traditional and modern mosque ornamentation, modern mosques in Malaysia is no longer take traditional ornament elements. However, Putra Mosque in Putrajaya and other modern mosque have taken the example of a traditional ornament of the Middle East. This difference may be due to the basic form used from tier roof to dome which inadvertently run away from the traditional concept of the its original concept.

In term of pattern used, modern mosque extensively used a geometrical pattern of star which symbolizes Islamic pattern of Middle East since traditional ornament also has its own geometrical pattern and other natural pattern which has evolve and create its own Malaysian Islamic ornament. The identity of Islamic ornamentation in Malaysia has began since the admission of Islam into Malay Peninsula, thus it symbolize Malay Islamic culture in perpendicular to the development of Islamic pattern in Middle East.

There are three crises discussed; the crisis of identity, the crisis of contemporary spirit (spirit of the times) and the crisis of local spirit (spirits of places). Islamic architectural identity crisis in Malaysia, particularly in the contemporary mosque architecture has worsened with confusion experienced in architectural language inferiority complex of the Middle East architecture. Muslims in Malaysia should be humble based on Middle Eastern architecture, which is the home of the birth of Islam. Thus taking their architectural language considered that as an honor. However, in the Qur'an or Hadith itself never mentions that Islamic architecture in the world should emit architecture available in the birthplace of Islam.

5. CONCLUSION

This analysis on the typological of traditional mosque establish by the use and positioning of the various elements and images are in accordance with the findings of Centre of Study of Built Environment in the Malay World (KALAM), Abdul Halim Nasir (1984), Dr. Othman Mohd Yatim (1989), Professor Mohd Tajuddin (2004), Mastor Surat (2004); relating to the traditional mosque and Malay ornamentation. It has also been found that the Malay beliefs started with animism, Hindu-Buddhist and later Islam. The growth of beliefs were not changed the overall culture of Malay, but it has been refined and absorbed to the teachings presented.

The modern and post-modern discourse has been poorly understood in this region to the point that blind imitation of forms has led the way to our separating the traditional heritage into an architectural limbo (Mohd Tajuddin, 2005). Islam does not differentiate the values of the spiritual and material, in fact this is a guide that were established in Muslim soul. It approves through the art, where ornament own an identity itself according to the purity and honesty emerged in the patron (Syed Ahmad Jamal, 1929).

Thus, ornament should carry a symbolic meaning, which means the culture and way of life that are very much relates with the soul of the locals. Manifestation of art and Islamic region should be well adapted with our identity, not just merely an imitation. This study proves that the manifestation of traditional ornamentation do play an important role not only in disseminating the symbolic meaning but also representing the history, beliefs and background of the local Malays.

Overall, aspects of decorative motives may also play a role in conveying the meaning of true Islamic way of life, especially in Malaysia. Each ornament is constructed not only as a purely decorate; it has a narrative and specific delivery to the observer. Culture, way of life and beliefs of the community could be told through decorative motives, for which we are shaping our identity, not from the West or the Middle East.

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