

The Peringgit Mosque, Malacca: Analysis on the Design of the Pulpit

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Abstract—The Peringgit Mosque, built in the 18th century during the Dutch colonial era, is one of the oldest mosques in Malacca. It is preserved as a historical legacy under the supervision of the Perbadanan Muzium Negeri Malacca (PERZIM). This article analyses the design of the pulpit that has its own advantages compared to other mosque pulpits in Malacca. In addition, this study also describes the motif and ornamentation found in the design of the pulpit. The authors use qualitative methods to focus on the analysis of documents as well as observational techniques to produce an effective study. This research found that the motifs can be categorized into “flora and fauna” and “geometry”, and its application has its own purpose in the context of relationships with human, relationship with nature and relationship with God.

Keywords—History, Peringgit mosque, Malacca, Design, Pulpit, Motif

I. INTRODUCTION

The Peringgit Mosque in Malacca is the oldest mosque in Malaysia which is still being used. The mosque is believed to have been constructed during the Portuguese colonial era and it was built using mud taken from a nearby river. Later during the Dutch era, the mosque was rebuilt in 1720. At that time, the Dutch administration gave freedom to the residents of Malacca to practice their own religion and allowed places of worship to be established. Since then, this mosque has been renovated and now remains strong and beautiful with its quality original frame structure.

One of the objectives of this study is to describe the historical background of the Peringgit Mosque, to analyze the design of its pulpit, and to identify the motifs that can be found on the mosque’s pulpit. This study uses qualitative methods which focus on data collection and data analysis. Both techniques were found to be suitable for the purpose of this study where data collection was used to set up the research and observations and data analysis was then carried out on its contents. The writers also use observational methods on the pulpit via strategic photographs. The use of this method helped the authors to make an in depth study of the pulpit design.

II. THE HISTORY OF MOSQUES DURING THE MALACCA SULTANATE

The Malacca Sultanate achieved Islamic glory in Nusantara in the 15th century. During this period, mosques were the hub of the earliest spread of Islamic teachings and played a very important role in Islamic development at that time. The mosques were built from woods and bricks. However, the design of the mosques at that time could be seen through neither visual recordings nor archaeological ruins as they were destroyed by the Portuguese in 1511AD. All buildings were destroyed except the palace. During the era of the Malacca Sultanate when Islam was growing rapidly, each ruler erected mosques in their administrative areas. The existence of the mosques can only be detected through documents and sources written by scholars.

Yusof Hashim has his own opinion regarding the position of the mosque during the era of the Malacca Sultanate. It was based on the position of the castle, which was located in the eastern part facing the rising sun. In that circumstance, the mosque was located near the castle. He was also of the view that when a person exits the Palace, the first building he would see is a mosque or a Muslim prayer room [1].

The writings of Tome Pires in The Suma Oriental prove the existence of the mosques based on the quote: “Raja Mansur Shah built a beautiful mosque in the city of Malacca and it is the most beautiful building in the area.” Similarly, the following quotes taken from Portuguese documents also prove the existence of the mosque during the Portuguese colonization; “Another squadron would attack the side of the town where the great mosque was situated, close to the house of the Sultan”; “...they and the others disembarked at one end of the bridge on the side where the mosque and the palace of the Sultan stood”; “...tomb stones of past kings who buried beneath the ground surface, and from the stones of mosque which were demolished”; “The stones, which were granite, were taken from tombstones of the noblemen, from the mosque and from other buildings”; “There was a large mosque made of stone cubes, as well as smaller buildings and tombstones were also constructed of stones”; and “The sultan was full of confidence in his army, the strongest (in the area) and his elephant, which he stationed close to the bridge and the mosque...” [2].

III. MOSQUES IN MALACCA IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Among the oldest mosques in Malacca are the Peringggit Mosque, the Kampung Hulu Mosque, the Mosque of Kampung Keling and the Mosque of Tranquerah. This proves the acceptance of Islam in Malacca and that the state has long received the influence of Islam. This is a clear indication that over time Islam has made up the identity of the architecture in Nusantara.

Traditional mosques in Malacca have a design that is different from other mosques in Malaysia. Most of the old mosques have roof uncton or more known as Meru. The Meru design uses elevated roof similar to the worship places of Hinduism and Buddhism that uses onion dome or umbrella as used by other mosques in Malaysia. The old mosques also impose drizzles or better known as crown roofing. The tower is built on the side of the mosque with a design similar to the pagoda.

The authors observe that this architecture blend has produced a form of mosque architecture known as 'the architecture of the region'. The beauty of this blend proves that there is a variety of cultures in the local community and that they accept the existing architecture from within and without. Foreign traders who came to Malacca eventually formed a community under one rule in universal harmony. Through the Islamization process occurring at the time, a medieval mosque was built by taking the elements of worship places of Hinduism and Buddhism because these cultural influences existed before the arrival of Islam. The form of the earliest mosque architecture depended on the preference of the Muslim community and guidelines from scholars to make this architecture combine the identity of the monarchies under a regional solidarity.

IV. HISTORY OF THE PERINGGIT MOSQUE

After Malacca was defeated by the Portuguese in 1511, the Malacca Sultanate was destroyed altogether and the remains of the Malacca Sultanate were based in Johor, Kampar and Riau. During the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511, Albuquerque reports mentioned a great mosque on the outskirts of the river of Malacca but not stating the mosque's architecture. The mosque was later destroyed and the building materials were used for the construction of a church on the site of the Palace of the Malacca which was destroyed. The Malays who lived near the town of Malacca had to leave their hometown and settle down in the village of Peringggit. This is where the oldest mosque in Malacca, the Peringggit Mosque, is located. It is said to have been erected by Malays who moved from the Malacca town [3].

During the Dutch era, this mosque was rebuilt in 1868 by Chieftain Abdullah. The rebuilding did not affect the original structures such as pillars, ceiling and attic space [4]. The mosque was rebuilt with stone building and roofing but the pillars remained the original. It is rectangular-shaped with three

plywood roof with tops made of coral engraved cylinders. People living near Kampung Ulu moved to the village of Peringggit and worked together to establish the mosque by means of acquiring monetary donations from the public [5].

V. ANALYSIS OF THE PULPIT DESIGN

One of the fittings that need to be there at every mosque is the pulpit which is usually located on the side of the Mihrab or in front of the Mihrab space. In the context of Islam, a pulpit is placed at the front side the mosque as a place for the imam to preach, especially on Fridays. The pulpit of the Peringggit Mosque is different from other mosque pulpits in Melaka. It was built in a fixed position and cannot be moved around and it became a part of the building structure. The pulpit was built partly of timber and partly wood and has a simpler design than the pulpits of other mosques.

The decoration is found in the pulpit and the roof at the crown [6]. The Peringggit Mosque is different from the other mosques in Melaka. The Mimbar has patterned glass with the elements of roses which can be seen on the front and on the side. One side uses the cloud motif Awan larat while the other side has no carvings of the traditional pulpit in Malacca. In terms of its size, it is a bit larger than the others because it has stone walls. In conclusion, the Peringggit Mosque's pulpit is unique because it is a combination of two types of building materials, namely wood and stone.

The simple crown is also carved along the sides into flowers of four petals that have blossomed. The Som does not have any carving while the tail is carved but maintains the basic shape of the Som. The roofs are decorated with carvings of vine plants. Carvings on the roof tops are made of stone, and the side of the carving has been reinforced with concrete to make it stronger.

VI. SUMMARY

Overall, the pulpit of the Peringggit Mosque has unique and distinctive architectural features compared to other mosques in Malaysia. In fact, the locals at the time of the mosque's construction showcased their expertise and creativity through the carvings found on the pulpit of the mosque.

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