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The Acculturation of Chinese Culture in The Design of Masjid Kampung Hulu

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Abstract

The history of Chinese contribution to the design style of the old mosques in Malaysia has proved the existence of the Chinese community in Malay society. The acculturation in the context of this study is focused on the cross-interaction between Chinese culture and Malay culture that meet and influence each other. The purpose of this study was to understand the elements of Chinese culture that influenced the architecture and design style of the mosques. This study focuses on Masjid Kampung Hulu in Malacca. The history of the acculturation of Chinese culture in this unique mosque is not much known to the public. Therefore, this study was conducted to enrich and expand the intellectual information in aspects of traditional Malay architecture, especially the acculturation of Chinese culture on old mosque in Malacca. For this study, a qualitative research method was adapted with cultural studies and exploratory data approaches to gain an understanding of the unique design style of the mosque. The findings of this study reveal a clearer picture of the development of the architecture of earlier Islamic societies in the Malay world. Aspects of Chinese cultural acculturation can be seen in the design of pyramid roofs, roof crowns, decorations and towers. The findings of this study revealed a clearer picture of the development of the architecture of previous Muslim communities in the Malay world. Therefore, it is hoped that this study can provide an integrative picture of the development of mosque architecture in Malaysia and Malacca and can be used for further development of ideas that will benefit future researchers.

Keywords: Malacca Traditional Mosque, Acculturation of Chinese Culture, History, Theory, Morphology-Physical

Introduction

A mosque is a place of worship for Muslims, and it is the heart of Islamic life. Following the spread of Islam, mosques were built as places of worship throughout the world. However, mosque as an institution has a larger and more varied function in the world of Islamic education. The effects of migration of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. to Medina saw the start of the mosque as a major contributor to the development of education and became a most important institution. According to Mustari and Jasmi (2008), Prophet Muhammad SAW.

established the Quba 'Mosque, the al-Mirbad Mosque, and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, which has been made the centre of Islamic education.

The use of a mosque as an educational institution other than a place to perform special worship activities is by the moral and social inspiration of the Muslims (Omar et al., 2019). The appearance of mosque institution as an educational centre was a shift resulting from the conflict of the main functions of the house, which is the right of the individual and somewhat less suitable as an institution opened to public meetings. In this regard, Zaimeche (2001) argued that the most important and effective place of learning is the mosque because studying in it can revive the sunnah and eliminate heresy, and at the same time the laws of Allah SWT. can be learned and practised.

The mosque can provide necessities and requirements for Muslims as it is a public meeting place for people from all walks of life. Along with the spread of Islam and the expansion of its colony after the death of Rasulullah SAW., the mosques grew rapidly as an educational centre. In line with these efforts, mosques have been erected throughout the newly erected Islamic territories, including territories once ruled by the Roman and Persian empires (Dougherty, 1996). The function of the mosque, according to Islamic terminology, is to be a centre for all religious and community activities, especially in matters related to worship activities and Islamic education (Omar et al., 2019; Dougherty, 1996).

Among the earliest mosques are the Grand Mosque or Al-Haram in Mecca, Nabawi Mosque in Medina, Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, Kufah Mosque in Iraq, and Basrah Mosque and Amru bin al-As Mosque in Fustat in Egypt. In the early stages, the mosque institution was introduced as an educational centre, and maintaining other functions with the educational structure was informal (Tamuri et al., 2012). However, it has become a more systematic centre of education when there is a place of study established in connection with the mosque known as al-Suffah.

The shape of the building often symbolises ideas about nature and the surrounding environment, manifested in various forms, both original and borrowed. In terminology, mosque comes from the Arabic word *sajada* or *sujud*, meaning to prostrate, which is normally perceived as worship, therefore, indirectly, the mosque is a place of prayer, or a place to worship Allah SWT. According to Abd Hamid et al (2015), in principle, the main purpose of establishing a mosque since its inception until now has remained unchanged, which is a place to carry out Islamic teachings, from public worship to Friday prayers as well as *da'wah*, generally serving the multi needs or resources of the community that can improve the quality of life.

The history of the earliest mosques in the Malay World is inseparable from that of Islam itself. When and how Islam first arrived in Southeast Asia have remained as a topic of discussion up to this day. The Malay world or *Nusantara* refers to the world of islands. The term Nusantara although interchangeable is used to describe the Southeast Asian countries covering modern-day Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the southernmost part of Thailand, the Philippines, and Brunei. Islam is believed to have a strong foothold in the 13th century AD following the emergence of several Islamic kingdoms such as Pasai and Perlak around the Straits of Malacca. Marco Polo, a Venetian merchant, explorer, and a writer, who travelled through Asia along the Silk Road between 1271 and 1295 AD on his return voyage to Europe through the straits of Malacca visited Perlak on the Northern coast of Sumatera in 1292 AD, wrote that many inhabitants of Perlak had been converted to Islam by foreign merchants at that time. Meanwhile, Ibn Battuta, a Medieval Moroccan Muslim traveller and an Islamic scholar who sailed through the Strait of Malacca to China between 1345 - 1346 wrote that the

ruler of Samudra Pasai was a Muslim who performed his religious duties with enthusiasm. Islam continued to spread in most of the Malay Archipelago and replaced the collapse of the Hindu-Javanese empire of Majapahit. There is also physical evidence to support the earliest existence of Islam in this region with the discoveries of tombstones and stone inscribed with writings in *Jawi*. Generally, there are many theories about the spread of Islam to the Malay World, which include the famous Arab, Indian, and China theories. Nonetheless, each has played an important role in the spread of Islam throughout the region.

The earliest mosques in the Islamic world carried a special significance with Muslims throughout the world and inspired them to strengthen their faith and belief in Islam. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW., the mosque has become the most important and influential institution in Islam. The design style of a mosque can generally give us an idea of the period and region in which it is found. To discuss the design style of the traditional mosques of Malacca, it is also important to discuss the history of the acculturation of Chinese culture and the special relationship between Malay-Chinese that made it possible for the acculturation to the design style of traditional mosques in Malacca.

Hence, an understanding of this background enables comprehension of cross-cultural relationships associated with the design style, and the various intellectual contexts which have been debated.

Research Objective

The objective of the study is to describe an overview of the history of Masjid Kampung Hulu in Malacca. The second is to analyze the design style of the Masjid Kampung Hulu. The third is to discuss the cultivating of Chinese culture in the Masjid Kampung Hulu.

Literature Review

Concepts of Acculturation and Culture

Culture is generally described as a diverse pattern of human behaviour. In each society, tribe, or nation, cultural practises, traditions, and human values are different from other groups. A culture that belongs to a group of people forms characteristics that makes it different from other groups. Therefore, culture has a major role in shaping the identity of society and it is a part of the evolution of human life. The process of acculturation occurs when several cultures interact intensively for a certain period, and each culture slowly changes or adapts to the new situation, resulting in a new cultural breed. Various factors lead to the concept of acculturation such as colonisation, migration, trade, and tourism. In contrast to the concept of assimilation, the process of acculturation does not result in the loss of the identity of the recipient community or national-origin group. Around the world, there are frequent encounters of acculturation that leads to the process of copying and imitating. The concept of acculturation is easily accepted when it involves a physical item beneficial to society, such as mosques. Non-material cultural elements such as ideology and thought are more difficult for people to accept. Around the world, there is often acculturation that leads to the process of imitation. Acculturation and adaptation are now well understood, enabling the development of policies and programs to promote successful outcomes for all parties (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation can be seen in languages, religions, beliefs, social organisations, societies, knowledge systems, art, and architecture. Acculturation can be described as the degree to which an individual adopts certain values, beliefs, cultures, and practises in a new culture (Guarnaccia & Hausmann-Stabile, 2016). Spielberger (2004) define acculturation as a

process that is concurrent with cultural and psychological changes that take place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their members. At the group level, acculturation involves changes in social structures and institutions, while at the individual level, acculturation involves changes in behaviour. Schwartz et al (2010) noted two important understandings related to the concept of acculturation. The first is the concept of acculturation, which tries to understand the various phenomena produced by groups of individuals who have different cultures when they enter a new culture, resulting in changes to the original cultural pattern. Based on this concept, acculturation is distinguished from cultural change and distinguished from assimilation. Acculturation is seen as part of a broader concept of the problem of cultural change. The second is the concept of acculturation, which begins with the relationship between two or more cultural systems. In this context, acculturative change is understood based on cultural change. This may be due to non-cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic changes. Based on this concept, acculturation encompasses changes that may not be directly related to cultural problems, such as ecological problems.

Acculturation, according to Schumann (1986), is also a culture contact that is a two-way process: influencing each other between two groups that have a relationship, or what Mariscal & Morales (2015) called transculturation designated as a reciprocal relationship between cultural aspects. The interplay between the two cultures results in cultural change. According to Berry (2010), acculturation includes phenomena that are produced when two groups of different cultures begin to make a direct contact, which is followed by the adaptation of the original cultural pattern of one or both groups.

There are several acculturation strategies described by Berry (2005), namely assimilation strategy, separation strategy, integration strategy, and marginalisation strategy. Assimilation strategy occurs when individuals do not want to maintain their cultural identity and prefer daily interactions with other cultures. The opposite is the separation strategy. The separation strategy occurs when individuals live the values that exist in their original culture and at the same time, avoid interacting with others. The integration strategy is realised when a person has an interest in maintaining his original culture while building daily interactions with other groups.

Research Methodology

For this study, a qualitative research method was used with cultural studies and exploratory data approaches to gain an understanding of the unique design style of Masjid Kampung Hulu. Different stages were involved in the process to get answers through data collection, organisation, evaluation, and interpretation. To fill the gap of knowledge, several literature studies were carried out involving different sources from historical and architectural books, journals, dissertations, thesis, and articles on various topics.

Finding and Discussion

Masjid Kampung Hulu

Masjid Kampung Hulu (MKH) is one of the oldest mosques in Malaysia. It is located at Bandaraya Hilir Melaka and was built in 1728 (Kadir et al., 2019) during the Dutch occupation. Apart from serving as a place of worship, this mosque also served as a centre for the spread and education of Islam, especially during the Dutch colonial era. It was formerly located in a fishing village inhabited by Malays, but now the location at the busy intersection area of Jalan Masjid Kampung Hulu and Jalan Masjid is dominated by Chinese merchants. The mosque

construction was commissioned by the Dutch through Shamsuddin Bin Harun (Kadir et al., 2019), the son of a Chinese Muslim *Kapitan* appointed by the Dutch as the representative of the people in Malacca at that time to oversee the construction of the mosque. His name is etched on the bronze carving plaque that can be seen at the entrance of the mosque. The plaque is proof that Masjid Kampung Hulu is the second oldest mosque in Malaysia after Masjid Kampung Laut in Kelantan.

Harun who worked for the Dutch was of Chinese descent and was originally born and raised in China. Harun left his homeland when he was young following a fight that ensued between his family members. He set sail to the Malay Archipelago by boat and not long after, the boat he was on was severely hit by a storm and sank near the Straits of Malacca. However, he was saved from certain doom by a Malay muezzin and later became the foster child and was married to the muezzin's daughter. Datuk Harun later became actively involved in trade and religious activities and became one of the most famous merchants in Malacca for his generosity in donating for religious purposes (Yusof et al., 2014).

The effort was later continued by his son Shamsudin who often endowed land to build religious centres. The total cost of construction of the Masjid Kampung Hulu was about half a million ringgit and symbolised his contribution to the early development of Islam in the region (Kadir et al., 2019). The location of the mosque is further away from the busy area, reflecting that its patrons were from a higher class of the society. Although the mosque had a relatively large area, some issues occurred throughout the years causing several spaces of the mosque such as the ablution area, the tower, and the fence to be narrowed into a smaller space.

It is believed that Shamsudin deliberately planned for the mosque to be designed with Chinese influence in the decoration, the pagoda-like minaret, and the archway just to show that Chinese culture and Islam can intermingle harmoniously through the artistic aspects of the mosque (Arbi, 1971). Kampung Hulu Mosque showcases one of the best examples of architectural influences of hybrid Malay-Chinese tradition.

The mosque has a three-tiered roof that is supported by four main pillars (*tiang seri*) made of precious ironwood (*ulin* or *belian*). The roof is decorated with a carved roof crown (*mahkota*) at the top, a similar feature that can be seen on many traditional mosques of Malacca. The roof crown is also known as *kepala som* (Nash, 1998), *hiasan kemuncak* (PERZIM, 1993), and *mahkota atap* (Nasir, 2004). In the neighbouring country of Indonesia, the roof crown is also known as *mustaka* and *puncak* (Nasir, 2004). It is said that the use of roof crown on traditional mosques of Malacca was influenced by the Chinese from Guangzhao and Fujian when they migrated to Southeast Asia (Kohl, 1978). Through PERZIM's record, it is also stated that the roof crown of Masjid Kampung Hulu was imported from China (Kadir et al., 2019).

Design Style of Masjid Kampung Hulu

Some studies show that the old mosques in Malacca were mostly built using *ulin* or *belian* wood with thatched roofs (Nash, 1998). The use of hardwoods or ironwoods, which are durable and readily available in the region, is a characteristic found in many earliest mosques in the Malay world. It was widely used in the main structure of the buildings, main pillars and even walls. Masjid Kampung Hulu is not an exception. It was once a mosque made of timber before it was rebuilt into a concrete building in 1892. The construction of MKH made full use of the materials available in the district of Malacca at that time. At first glance, MKH looks like the other earliest mosques in the Malay world, with its pyramidal roof, and a tower.

The roof consists of three layers of roof narrowing upward, also known as *Meru* roof or *atap tumpang*. Each end of the roof ridge is decorated with ornamentation like the ones

found in Chinese temples (Abdul Kadir et al. 2019). There are different arguments about the octagonal minaret. Some agree with the pagoda look, and some agree that it resembles a lighthouse. There is a spiral staircase to ascend to the upper part of the minaret. The octagon-shaped minaret is at the right corner of the mosque foyer. This tower is a place where muezzin makes the call to prayer. The walls of the tower are built of stone or concrete and there is a spiral staircase that leads to the top part of the minaret.

The square plan of MKH consists of the main prayer hall, hall of mihrab, pulpit, verandah, and pool of ablution. Concrete walls are separating the prayer hall and the porch or veranda. The prayer hall and the veranda are both carpeted. The main pillars that can be seen in the prayer hall are made of *belian* wood and each has a base made of concrete. The main pillars have the same function as the other pillars in the mosque with a pyramidal roof, which is to support the top roof of the mosque. The pillars are straightforward in form with no ornamentation compared to the other parts of the mosque. The other 12 pillars are located around the veranda areas, and their function is to support the second and third layers of the mosque roof.

There are many non-uniform decorative lights in the interior of this mosque. The lighting is essential to brighten the interior because the natural colour of the roof material makes the interior looks darker without light fixtures. A Victorian chandelier is centred in the mosque, and according to the mosque management, the chandelier was a gift from the British government (Yusof et al., 2014)

There are five doorways to get inside the prayer hall. Three of the doorways are situated opposite the wall where the niche is located and the other two are located on the east and west side of the prayer hall. There are six window frames at Masjid Kampung Hulu decorated with wood carvings around the walls, separating the prayer hall and the three verandas. The ablution pool is located next to the mosque. It is square and has three steps on the three sides, and it is still used to this day by mosque worshippers who believe that the water inside the ablution pool has healing power, even though there is a presence of a modern water pipe system for taking ablution in a separate area. A Palladian column is centred at the ablution pool, probably a fountain in the yesteryears. An old well is situated at the corner outside the mosque. A cemetery complex is located at the back of the mosque, and it also houses the tomb of the late Sayyid Abdullah Al-Hadad, a famous religious figure in Malacca and some consider him a saint. The same feature can be found at old mosques throughout the Nusantara, which has a cemetery complex within the mosque's compound where it houses the tombs of revered Muslim figures, missionaries, and respected religious leaders.

The main entrance or the archway to MKH is a separate structure of the mosque. It has two levels where the upper level houses the *beduk*. *Beduk* was used in the olden days to signal a call for prayer. Kampung Hulu Melaka Mosque has its uniqueness that is still maintained. The mosque can accommodate around 100 to 200 for daily prayers, and it can accommodate up to 400 worshippers during a special celebration. It is one of the most visited old mosques in Malacca and is still standing on its original site until today.

The Foundation

The foundation of the mosque measures about 16.9 m long and 15.3 m wide with a floor area of 259 m². The mosque was built on a raised ground. It has three verandas on the side of the prayer hall. The veranda is lowered 5 cm from the prayer hall.

Main Prayer Hall

The main prayer hall is square and is 13.3 m x 13.3 m in length and width. It can accommodate up to 100 to 200 worshippers at a time. The scale of the prayer hall is in line with the history of this mosque as a community mosque. It has a red-carpet finish for the flooring. The original floor under the carpet is installed with white marble, and still in pristine condition and would likely last longer. There are four main pillars with a circumference of 22.5 cm x 22.5 cm each, supporting the pyramidal roof. The decoration of the main pillars is kept minimal. The pillars are supported with a concrete base.

Veranda

The mosque has several verandas surrounding the prayer hall. The width of each veranda from the fence to the wall of the prayer hall is 3.2 m. The length of the left and right veranda is 16.7 m. Each of these verandas has a stairway leading to the prayer hall. The floor is also carpeted similarly to the main prayer hall. The wrought iron balustrades separated the verandas and the outside area of the mosque. The balustrades were installed in between the 12 Palladian-style pillars surrounding the verandas. The height of each balustrade is 0.4 m. The verandas were built with the aims to accommodate an excessive number of worshippers during a special event such as the Eid celebrations.

Pulpit

The pulpit or mimbar of Masjid Kampung Hulu is one of the most beautiful pulpits that remains in its original form. The pulpit is a carved wood raised platform elaborately decorated with various motifs such as floral and geometric motifs. The pulpit holds a dome-shaped roof, complete with a small crown at the top of it. It has a short stairway that leads to the place where the Imam delivers a sermon after Friday prayer. It is located to the right of the *mihrab*, which marks the direction of the qiblah for prayer. There is an arch opening at the front which measures about 2.2 m in height. The Imam walks up the steps and either sits or stands on the minbar while addressing the congregation. The pulpit is painted with gold, red, and green.

Decorative Elements

The most outstanding carvings can be seen on the pulpit where piercing and relief carving was used. The carving is inspired by plant sources such as a leaf, stalk, flower, fruit, and tendril of a lotus, plum, and motifs of nature such as the '*awan larat*' or meandering cloud. An ornate calligraphy carving can be seen at the arch of the door head. The arch of the window head is also beautifully carved with floral motifs using piercing technique, which provides lighting and ventilation to the internal part of the mosque.

Wall Elements

The main wall on which the niche is located uses white tiles measuring 10 cm x 10 cm. The doorway of the *mihrab* is curved and slightly lower in height compared to the main door of the mosque. The other walls of the mosque are cement-rendered and painted white. The walls have windows and doorways that are made of wood and carved with different motifs. The two windows located at the front are different from the rest with its distinctive looking diamond shape or a rhombus. The carvings look similar to the carvings in traditional Malay houses in Malacca. Wood carving is the art of decoration that is synonymous with the Malay community. It is a creative expression of Malay in various categories such namely weapons,

daily utensils, transportation, traditional games, architectural components, and agricultural tools (Zumahiran et al., 2020).

Ceiling Elements

Looking up from the prayer hall, some part of the roof structure can be seen. There are wooden panels covering the third layer of the roof, and at first glance it looks like the mosque has a second floor. There is a small gap between the roofs that provides ventilation to ensure a constant and decent amount of air movement throughout the internal part of the mosque. The typology of such roof system can be found not only in Malacca's old mosque, but also in Java old mosques (Mahyuddin et al., 2017). The main poles supporting the first layer of roof are clearly visible from the prayer hall. There are many non-uniform light fixtures installed at the ceiling around the main prayer hall, believed to be antiques and gas-powered in the old days.

The Roof

The main feature of the mosque is the three layers pyramidal roof adorned with roof crowns at the top and roof ridge decorated with carvings at each of the curved ends or known as *sulur bayur*. There are clerestory windows between the first and second layers of the roof with ornamented panels made of wood and plaster. The use of clerestory windows in between the roofs is one of the most prevailing ornamental methods in Chinese architecture (Zhong et al., 1986). Four main columns can be seen inside the main prayer hall and the function is to support the first layer of the roof, and there are twelve supporting columns to hold the second and third layers of the roof. The supporting columns made of concrete are located around the verandas.

The Minaret

The octagonal shape minaret is located separately from the main building. The minaret looks similar to a lighthouse, and some say it resembles a Pagoda. Originally, Masjid Kampung Hulu doesn't have a minaret. The minaret is a later addition to the mosque, the same with most of the earliest mosques in Nusantara (Ahmad et al., 2012). The walls are made of brick, and there is a spiral staircase inside the minaret that led to the top part where a muezzin makes a call of prayer.



Figure 1.1: Front Image of MKH
Source: Baharudin, 2017.



Figure 1.2: Mihrab of MKH
Source: MQA Hakim. 2010



Figure 1.3: Prayer Hall of MKH
Source: MQA Hakim. 2010.



Figure 1.4: The Ablution Pool of MKH
Source: MQA Hakim. 2010.

The Acculturation of Chinese Culture in Masjid Kampung Hulu

Looking at the early development of the history of Chinese carpentry in Malacca, the entry of design elements from China can be seen through two main phases, namely around the 15th and 18th centuries. The first phase occurred during the reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D) and the Malacca Sultanate era (1409-1511 A.D), while the second phase occurred when the Dutch conquered Malacca in the 1641 A.D. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, the development process involving Chinese carpentry in Malacca stagnated due to the Portuguese occupation of Malacca (Lee, 2016).

The influx of Chinese carpentry influence that took place in the first stage occurred as soon as the Malacca government established diplomatic relations with the Chinese government. During the Sultan of Malacca's first visit to China, the Chinese government sent some Muslim Chinese craftsmen and upon their return to Malacca, mosque buildings began to be erected (Suyurno, et al., 2017).

According to Armani et al. (2014), the tiles used in the early stages of mosque construction were brought specifically from China. The development of Chinese architectural design also increased during the reign of Sultan Mansur Syah in 1426 (Ahmad et al., 2015) where the migration of Chinese to Malacca brought along their distinctive architectural design and structure, which can be seen in some of the old mosque's roof and minaret. This type of

construction was then practised in the construction of buildings erected in the city of Malacca (Ahmad et al., 2015).

However, the mosques that were built in the city during the heyday of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca were destroyed by the Portuguese, while the prototype of this mosque was still used as a guide to build mosques after the fall of the Portuguese in Malacca in 1641 (Suyurno et al. 2017). The second phase of the entry of Chinese carpenters in Malacca took place when Malacca was under Dutch rule. The Dutch saw the Chinese community as a secret call that could guarantee the Dutch's position to survive longer in Asia after beginning to realise that the British threat could shake their power.

The Chinese community in Malacca mostly worked as builders and carpenters. They were also the first craftsmen to work and use bricks in the construction of buildings (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019). To succeed in this political guaranteed mission, the Netherlands imported Chinese workers from Batavia (Jakarta) through the East India Company based in Java to help in the process of economic development and carpentry in Malacca (Suyurno et al., 2017). These migrating Chinese communities began to introduce Chinese architecture in their carpentry.

As a result, the architecture of the mosque began to grow rapidly. Chinese carpentry skills also influenced the formation of original construction methods and architecture (Ismail & Hassan, 2017) in Malacca in the 18th century. The components introduced were roof crowns, sulur bayur, and portal that is unique and easy to identify (Armani et al., 2014). Usually, the craftsmen involved in this construction introduced a new form of construction and the form was assimilated with traditional architecture. These Chinese craftsmen played a role in the construction of the place of worship and the design of the building was adapted from the remnants of buildings found in Southern China during the Qing Dynasty (Baharudin & Ismail, 2016).

Among the reforms introduced was the use of ceramic tiles to replace the roof made of coconut leaves, roof crowns to decorate the top of the roof mosque, and the use of bricks to replace the original forms made of wood or other materials. The tower was also introduced as one of the most important features in the construction of the mosque (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019). The Chinese populations in Malacca grew rapidly and their role was also very important in development activities when Malacca was under Dutch rule (Ismail & Hassan, 2017).

The presence of the Chinese community in Malacca was warmly welcomed by the Dutch and their skills were also recognised (Ebrahimi & Yasin, 2018). Chinese skills were considered so high that a Malay leader sent a letter to the British governor asking for some Chinese craftsmen to assist in carving the royal tombstone (Bahaudin, 2018). This shows the importance of Chinese influence in Malacca's building history.

Pyramidal Roof

In keeping with the title given to the decoration at the top of the mosque, various interesting shapes can be seen on the roof showing the creativity of the builders who combined Islamic teachings and the cultural heritage of the local community that has long existed in their lives.

Generally, each crown of the roof of a mosque has a rectangular base section. This is to ensure the stability of the crown connected to the roof section. In general, the crown of the roof of a traditional mosque in Malacca consists of several main features such as it is located at the top of the mosque, it is pyramid-shaped, its base is square or rectangular, it is layered, and has decorations.

The old mosques in the state of Malacca have a pyramidal roof arranged in layers (also known as meru roof). The tier comes in two or more tiers supported by main pillars. Apart from being referred to as the overlapping roof of the mosque design found in Melaka, it is also referred to as a pyramid-roofed mosque (Abdul Kadir & Suyurno, 2018).

The name is given based on the shape of the roof, which has a large base at the very bottom and is narrower at the top (Suyurno, et al., 2017). As in Figure 1.5, Masjid Kampung Hulu is still considered as part of meru roof design since the shape of the roofs is pyramidal shaped.

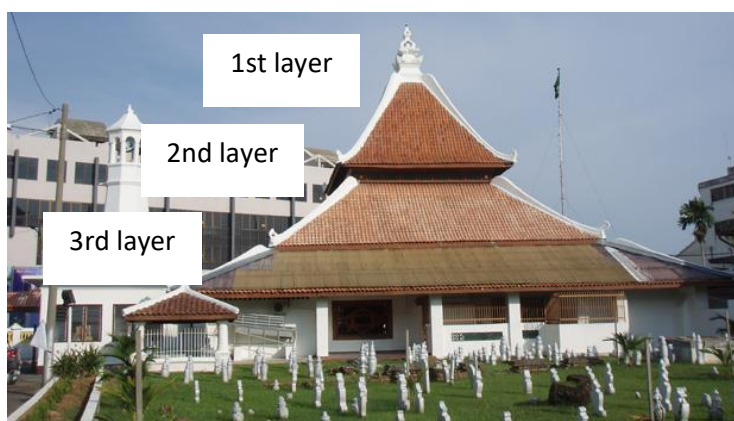


Figure 1.5: Masjid Kampung Hulu with Three Tiers Pyramidal roof

Source: Attamimi, 2017.

Two main theories debate the influence of this meru roof. The first theory was pioneered by (Pijper, 1947; Stutterheim, 1948). They projected that the pyramid roofs were from Hindu cosmology influence and this architecture was influenced by Balinese architecture in Java. During the pre-Islamic era, buildings with meru roof in Nusantara were considered the sacred buildings of the gods. The shape was then slowly adopted on mosque buildings as a peaceful transitioning process from Hindu-Buddhism to Islam. This opinion is similar to Armani and Arbi (2014), in which they described the early architecture in the Malay world already had its own unique identity before Islam. Masjid Kampung Hulu use meru-shaped roof and has multiple tiers overlapping roof. The logical thinking of the construction of the old mosque with this meru roof is that it took consideration of the local tropical climates where the overlapping roof doesn't collect water when it rains and the higher roof acts as a natural vent to cool down the prayer hall when the weather is warmer.

According to Ismail and Hassan (2017), this type of roof got a very strong Hindu-Buddhist cultural influence that took place in the 7th to 14th centuries. It is said that the peak of the roof resembled a mountain or Meru that is regarded as a living god by Hindu, while the Malay community perceived the ancestral roof as their Malay rulers. The second theory was projected by Graaf (2004); Lombard (1996) who argued that the construction of this layered roof was from the strong Chinese influence on the ancient mosques in Java because of its pagoda-shaped roof.

Evidence that can be linked to this theory is that many dominant Chinese traders settled on the North coast of Java while spreading the teachings of Islam (Armani & Arbi, 2014). According to Abdul Kadir et al (2017), the feature of this pyramidal roof is taken from Chinese and Japanese carpentry. This layered roof design style is unknown in the Middle East.

The style and design of the pyramidal roof the shape of these mosques is taken from the architecture practised during the Ming Dynasty.

The result of the migration of the Chinese community to Southeast Asia has brought together the pyramidal roof design with some modifications to suit the environment of the Malay world. Looking at the design of this Malaccan style mosque, one of the most important features of the roof design of this mosque is its pyramidal roof with decorative elements such as *sulur bayur*, and the top of the roof is decorated with a roof crown. The pyramidal roof under this study also has clerestory windows with decorative panels in different materials such as ceramic tiles, wood, plaster, and glass, the same with decorative elements that can be found in Chinese temples. Therefore, this study agrees with the second theory where the influence of this pyramidal roof design came from China because the important features found in the mosques of Malacca have similarities with the houses of worship and residences of the Chinese community.

However, differences can be seen in the size of the main prayer space where each mosque still retains a square shape, similar to the first mosque developed by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. and the mosques found in the Arab world in general. Some of the old mosques in Malacca also have a square shape main prayer space and is fitted with a meru roof. It is different from the space inside a religious building in China which is rectangular in shape and is fitted with a pyramidal roof.

Based on the findings during the field study, some similarities can be seen in the meru-roofed mosque with the roof found in Chinese houses of worship such as the layered roof shape, the roof crown as the main decoration at the top of the mosque, and *sulur bayur* or decorative elements at the end of the roof. This Chinese roof design spanned almost 2000 years and its influence spread all over China long ago. When the pyramid-shaped roof was introduced in the Malay world, it had undergone several modifications to suit the current situation, the nature, and public acceptance, particularly in Indonesia and Malacca.

Roof Crown

The decoration on the top of the roof of the mosque is better known as the roof crown and usually it is made of ceramic. Besides being known as roof crown, it is also known as *mustoka*, *buah buton* by the people of Kelantan, or *buah gutong* by the people of Terengganu. This decoration can only be found in the old mosques in the Peninsula, especially in Malacca, and it is also found in temples in China. The origin of the making of this roof crown comes from the province of Canton and Fukien, China. Utaberta et al. (2012) believes that the roof crown in Malacca Mosque has a Chinese influence.

When the Chinese migrated to Malacca, they introduced this roof crown as a component in the construction of buildings and then absorbed it into the construction of mosques (Suyurno et al., 2017). This component later became one of the most important features that were eventually considered as the symbol and identity of the old mosque in Melaka. The manufacture of roof crowns is usually produced using ceramics. The use of ceramics at that time was considered a luxury because ceramics (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019) was a very valuable commodity, besides having its charm. There is a possibility that the whole roof crown was produced in China and shipped to Malacca before being installed at the top of the roof. This is because there is no collective record stating the presence of a ceramic or pottery industry around Malacca at that time to enable the entire production of a roof crown to be done fully by locals in Malacca. According to Ma (2009), Hui community, the Chinese Muslim in China has a very distinct artwork on porcelain and ceramics. Vases in all shapes and sizes,

and household items were typically Chinese in style and design, adorned with Islamic ornaments and inscriptions. The artworks were usually gifted to dignitaries of Muslim countries. In China, there is a ceramic industry in Jingdezhen, Southern China, that was established as early as the 6th century CE, though it was named after the reign name of Emperor Zhenzong, in whose reign it became a major kiln site around 1004. By the 14th century, it had become the largest centre of production of Chinese porcelain, which it has remained, increasing its dominance in subsequent centuries (Vainker, 1991). This shows that the ceramic or pottery industry in China had developed and matured long ago, and the country has a countless ceramic industry all over the country, which makes it possible for the theory of ceramic import ware to be found in Malaysia, and the possibility of some of the ceramic elements of decoration in old mosques of Malacca had travelled far from China before being installed at the mosques.

The application of the roof crown in the mosque building can further highlight the greatness of the mosque style due to its high value (Ahmad et al., 2015). Roof crowns made of ceramic were very durable and able to withstand Malaysia's hot and humid tropical climate. The crown of this ceramic roof used to go through a series of long firing processes, and it was fired at a high temperature that hardened the clay and changed to its final shape. Therefore, the use of Chinese ceramics roof crown not only can highlight the appearance of the mosque as an attractive worship building, but its durable aspect can save costs compared to other roof crowns made of different materials such as wood and plaster.

The motifs that are frequently used in the decoration are flora motifs (such as lotus), and nature motifs (such as the meandering cloud). The shape of the roof crown in the mosque is also like a pyramid, which is large at the bottom and smaller at the top. The uniqueness of the roof crown is seen in its intricate pattern as well as the durable material. The design of the roof crown in the 18th-19th century in Malacca had a certain uniqueness and became an identity to the traditional architecture of the mosque in Malacca. Each roof crown has its design, some of the roof crowns consist of a layer of decorative element, some have a decoration of up to five layers as can be seen in the Masjid Kampung Hulu (Figure 1.6.).

The first layer starts from the base of the crown and the design gets smaller at the top. The roof crowns found in the study show a resemblance to a stupa and are decorated with lotus petals at some of the layers.



Figure 1.6: Roof Crown of Masjid Kampung Hulu

Source: Nurfarahhana et al (2019)

Sulur Bayur

In each mosque with a meru roof, there is a *sulur bayur*, which is the ornamentation at the end of the roof ridge. Other names of *sulur bayur* are *sulur bayung*, *sayap layang-layang*, *sayap ayangan*, *ekor itik*, *anjong balla'*, and *som* (Utberta et al., 2012). According to Abdul

Kadir et al (2019), several mosques in Malacca have patterns with Chinese carvings and decorations, and they are very noticeable and usually can be seen at the ends of the roof and the top of the mosque. The decoration of *sulur bayur* can also be seen in Chinese temples (Ahmad et al., 2015). Those buildings show roof ridges with delicate and fine sculptures of mythical creatures such as dragons, phoenixes, and zodiac animals, and sometimes a combination with florals can be seen. This type of ornamentation on the roof ridge got influenced by Chinese architecture, brought by the Chinese community who came from Guangdong and Fujian provinces, and this ornamentation style began to flourish in Malacca and were produced in many patterns and shapes at that time. Among the motifs used are animals, birds, flowers, fish, insects and gods, and the roof ridge were usually made using mortar, marble, and porcelain chips (Armani et al., 2014). However, the *sulur bayur* in Malacca old mosques are much simpler and mostly consist of geometrical patterns, vegetal ornamentation, and calligraphy since the portrayal of figurative representation of animals and human figures is forbidden in Islam to uphold the holy image of the religion.

“He who creates pictures in this world will be ordered to breathe life into them on the Day of Judgment, but he will be unable to do so.” Hadith, Sahih Muslim (818-875)

To simplify the exaggerated roof ridge decoration in Chinese architecture, the artisans created a design with no element of excessive appearance. Overall, the design and pattern of the roof ridge found in China can be divided into three forms: first, the roof ridge that ends with an arch, and second, the roof ridge that ends with a geometric decoration (straight and curved lines, shapes that result from geometric abstract carvings, and some influenced by nature), and third is a roof ridge that ends with a ceramic sculpture (Abdul Kadir et al., 2017). This category includes images of humans, plants such as pine trees and natural elements such as clouds, mountains, and waves. All these motifs have their meanings depending on the interpretation (Armani & Arbi, 2014). The *sulur bayur* of Masjid Kampung Hulu (Figure 1.7), looks like a flora motif and the shape is curved inward. According to Ahmad Zakaria & Abd. Rahman (2012), the motif resembles a swirling motion of waves.



Figure 1.7: Sulur bayur of Masjid Kampung Hulu

Source: ekstasicinta.blogspot.com. 2012.

The Minaret

In the olden days, a torch pin was installed at the top of the tower and a flame was lighted to indicate that it was time for prayers or to announce something important. It also functioned as a lighthouse for the seafarers to navigate their way along the Straits of Malacca. The towers were built with features displayed following the instructions of locals and they are different from other districts. Each district or country built the towers with their creativity with a

combination of Islamic design and local culture (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019). The mosque towers in each country are built differently following the conditions, climate, and topography (Baharuddin & Ismail, 2016). The tower in Malacca old mosques was usually a later addition to the mosque, long after the final construction of the mosque had been completed. The minaret also housed a *beduk*.

In the early stages, the traditional mosques in Malacca used *beduk* to inform that it was time for prayer. *Beduk* was also used to call the village community for a gathering for easier communication when the head of the village wanted to convey information. In the early 19th century, the minaret was introduced and began to be built on many traditional mosques in Nusantara, and the feature was different from the other mosques throughout the world. Mosques in Malacca that have pyramid-shaped roofs were usually combined with the uniqueness of a Chinese minaret that resembled a pagoda (Sojak et al., 2019).

According to Abdul Kadir et al (2017), this pagoda-shaped tower was built by the Chinese who were specially brought from China through the order of the person who was responsible for the construction. Many view the Chinese pagoda as an inspiration for the construction of mosque towers in the archipelago, including Malacca (Mohd Sojak et al., 2019). In addition, the influence of this pagoda-shaped tower originated from the Tang Dynasty and was brought into Malacca by the Chinese community living in South China. (Armani & Arbi, 2014). The octagonal minaret of Masjid Kampung Hulu (Figure 1.8) is located at the northern side of the mosque, with a staircase inside which leads to the top. The minaret is covered with a roof, and it has eight semi-circular arched openings at the top part of it.

The minaret of Masjid Kampung Hulu resembles a lighthouse. There is a mosque in Guangzhou, China where the minaret also served as a lighthouse, hence its name The Luminous Tower Mosque (Rosey Ma@Luo, 2009). It is considered as one of the oldest mosques in the world to have originally been built over 1,300 years ago.



Figure 1.8: The Minaret of Masjid Kampung Hulu

Source: mediapermata.com.bn. 2021.

The Wall and Archway

The mosques in the Malay Archipelago initially did not have a wall or gate. The use of the wall in mosques was first introduced during the Dutch rule in (1641-1824) and the

construction of walls in mosques in Malacca was the result of carpentry from China. The wall of the mosque is simple and usually modestly decorated. One of the main reasons the mosque has walls is to keep the mosque safe from unexpected things. For this reason, bricks or concrete were chosen because it provided a strong barrier to the mosque. According to the management of the mosque, the gate is a divider of space from the hectic atmosphere outside, so it provides a calm atmosphere inside the mosque that allows the congregation to pray and meditate peacefully.

The archway of Masjid Kampung Hulu (Figure 1.9) shows a combination of different architectural styles. It is a combination of European, and Chinese styles and the archways show no strong sign of Islamic architecture, Malay, or Hindu-Buddhist architecture (Armani, 2014). The archway of Masjid Kampung Hulu shows an influence of a *paifang* or a traditional style of Chinese architectural arch or gateway structure. The archway of Masjid Kampung Hulu has two levels. The upper level of the archway housed a *beduk*. The *beduk* is no longer used because a loudspeaker has replaced its function. The archway of Masjid Kampung Hulu represents an interesting example of Chinese influence through the decoration on the archway's roof which shows a resemblance to the decoration found in Chinese temple around Malacca. Decorative elements can be seen on some part of the wall structure especially on the upper part of the wall. The decorations are almost similar to the decorative elements found on the roof ridges of the mosques.



Figure 1.9: The Archway of Masjid Kampung Hulu

Source: Baharudin, 2017.

Conclusion

From the study above, it can be proven that there is a cultural relationship between the Chinese and the Malays that causes cultural acculturation to the architecture and decoration of the Masjid Kampung Hulu. The influence of Chinese cultural elements on the mosque is clearly visible on the pyramidal roof, roof crown, the minaret, the archway, the decorations, and motifs such as the *sulur bayur* which can be traced back from the traditional Chinese architecture and craftsmanship. The Chinese community played a major role in the field of carpentry in Malacca. The migration of the Chinese community to Malacca brought the heritage of Chinese architecture and craftsmanship to the region. The acculturation effect to the design style of the old mosques in Malacca clearly showed that Islam is universal, and it can be accepted as part of the lives of Muslims if it does not violate sharia. The arrival of Chinese in Malacca has led to the acculturation of distinct influences to the design style of

Masjid Kampung Hulu. It can be said that the design style was influenced by the people who were responsible for its construction, be it the funder, architect, builder, artisan, or supervisor.

To future researchers who will conduct a study on the acculturation of foreign culture in historical mosque, it is recommended that the study shall be continued in a more detailed manner, such as using mixed-method research to collect more comprehensive data. The focus is to investigate the involvement of the Chinese on old mosques of Malacca in terms of architecture and ornamentation. It is important to explore the meaning of these influences to get a further understanding of the revolution of the design style of the mosques, as well as acculturation that happened in the region. Therefore, it is equally important to expand these studies beyond Malacca, including other countries such as ASEAN countries and China. A cross-sectional study can be done on the early mosques in certain regions to reveal the similarities and differences of design styles to find out where they came from to better understand the influence of the Chinese in the early mosques of the archipelago, especially in Malacca. Detailed and comprehensive documentation of this historical building needs to be taken seriously because history is something related to the past and is obtained through the physical evidence that remains. The history and Chinese influence on the architecture of buildings in Malaysia will recall the development of the country's history through events and remnants of historical monuments that can still be seen today.

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