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## Chinese Culture Acculturation in The Design of Masjid Lama Machap

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### Abstract

The influx of Chinese people into Malaya occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The influence of Chinese culture on the architecture of old Malaysian mosques is one of the implications of their presence. Acculturation is the process by which a foreign culture enters a society. For example, the architecture of the mosque, which displays form from the acculturation of Malay and Chinese cultures, resulting in a unique form. As a result, the objective of this research is to investigate the existence of the Masjid Lama Machap (MLM) Malacca Mosque through art forms and acculturation outcomes from two different cultures. To explain this, the researcher employs a qualitative descriptive research method with a cultural focus. Written and visual data were collected using methods such as interviews and observations. The study's findings indicate that there is a distinct cultural acculturation at Malacca's Old Machap Mosque (MLM). The design of the pyramid roof, roof crown, decoration, and minaret all contribute to the incorporation of Chinese culture in this mosque. Acculturation of existing cultures does not annihilate some existing cultures, but rather complements and coexists with them. This mosque's form of acculturation is a treasure trove of local culture and architecture. Aside from that, this study can provide a clearer picture of the development of the previous Islamic community's architecture in the Malay world and is expected to serve as a reference for researchers today as they further develop ideas in architectural planning and interior design.

**Keywords:** Malacca, Traditional Mosque, Acculturation, Chinese Culture, Morphology-Physical

### Introduction

A mosque is a Muslim place of worship and the centre of Islamic life. Mosques were built all over the world as places of worship after Islam spread. However, the mosque as an institution serves a broader and more diverse role in Islamic education. The effects of the Prophet Muhammad SAW's migration to Medina saw the establishment of the mosque as a major contributor to the development of education and as a most important institution. According to Mustari and Jasmi (2008), Prophet Muhammad SAW established the Quba 'Mosque, al-

Mirbad Mosque, and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, which has since become a centre of Islamic education.

The Islamic moral and social example serves as a model for the use of mosques as educational institutions rather than just places of worship (Omar et al., 2019). The shift in the mosque's role from a place of worship to an educational hub was caused by a conflict between the house's primary goals—individual freedom and institutional openness to the public—and its suitability as the former. According to Zaimche (2001), the mosque is the most significant and productive place to learn because learning there can revive the sunnah, put an end to heresy, and learn and put into practise Allah SWT's commandments.

The mosque may meet the needs and desires of Muslims because it serves as a public gathering place for people from all walks of life. Following the death of Rasulullah SAW, the mosques gradually expanded as a centre of learning as Islam spread and its colonies grew. In support of these efforts, mosques have been built throughout the newly established Islamic kingdoms, including areas that were previously ruled by the Roman and Persian empires (Dougherty, 1996). In Islamic terminology, the mosque serves as a focal point for all religious and community activities, particularly those related to prayer and Islamic education (Omar et al. 2019; Dougherty, 1996).

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 are among the earliest mosques. The mosque institution was introduced as an educational centre in the early stages, and maintaining other functions with the educational structure was informal (Tamuri et al., 2012). However, when a study centre is established in conjunction with the mosque known as al-Suffah, it has become a more systematic centre of education.

The design of the building frequently serves as a metaphor for ideas about nature and the surrounding area. These concepts can take a variety of original and borrowed forms. The mosque is essentially a place of prayer or adoration for Allah SWT because the name "mosque" is derived from the Arabic verb "sajada" or "sujud," which means to bow down and is typically understood to be an act of devotion. According to Abd Hamid et al (2015), the primary goal of establishing a mosque has remained the same from its inception to the present: to provide a space to practise Islamic teachings, from public worship to Friday prayers, as well as da'wah, while meeting the diverse needs or resources of the community.

The Malay World's history is inextricably linked to the history of Islam and its early mosques. The origins and spread of Islam in Southeast Asia are still hotly debated topics. The Malay world, or Nusantara, refers to the universe of islands. Although the terms are interchangeable, Nusantara refers to the Southeast Asian countries of Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, the southernmost portion of Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Malaysia. Islam is thought to have gained significant ground by the 13th century AD, following the rise of many Islamic kingdoms, such as Pasai and Perlak in the Malacca Straits. Between 1271 and 1295 AD, Marco Polo, a Venetian merchant, explorer, and writer, travelled through Asia along the Silk Road and then crossed the Malacca Strait on his way back to Europe, stopping in Perlak on Sumatera's northern coast. Many of the town's residents had been converted to Islam at the time, according to Marco Polo. According to Ibn Battuta, a mediaeval Moroccan Muslim traveller and Islamic scholar who travelled to China via the Malacca Strait between 1345 and 1346, the ruler of Samudra Pasai was a Muslim who enthusiastically carried out his religious responsibilities. The majority of the Malay Archipelago saw the expansion of Islam continue after the Hindu-Javanese Majapahit dynasty fell. The discovery of tombstones and stones with

writings in Jawi provides more physical proof of the early history of Islam in this area. In general, there are several theories on how Islam entered the Malay World, including the well-known Arab, Indian, and Chinese hypotheses. Nevertheless, each has contributed significantly to the growth of Islam in the area.

The first mosques built in the Islamic world have a special significance for Muslims all over the world and served as an inspiration for them to reaffirm their commitment to Islam. The mosque has grown to be the most significant and influential institution in Islam since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. A mosque's architectural style can typically provide insight about the time and place it was built. The history of the acculturation of Chinese culture and the unique interaction between Malay-Chinese are necessary to discuss in order to understand the design style of the traditional mosques in Malacca. These factors made it feasible for the acculturation to this style. As a result, understanding this context allows for comprehension of cross-cultural relationships associated with the design style, as well as the various intellectual contexts that have been debated.

### **Research Objective**

The objective of the study is to provide a general history of Malacca's Masjid Lama Machap. The second is to analyze the architectural design of Masjid Lama Machap. The third is to discuss the cultivating of Chinese culture in the Masjid Lama Machap.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Understandings of Culture and Acculturation***

Culture is commonly defined as a wide range of human behaviour patterns. Cultural practises, traditions, and human values differ from one another in each society, tribe, or nation. A culture formed by a group of people develops characteristics that distinguish it from other groups. As a result, culture plays an important role in shaping societal identity and is part of the evolution of human life. When several cultures interact intensively for a period of time, each culture gradually changes or adapts to the new situation, resulting in a new cultural breed. Acculturation is influenced by a variety of factors, including colonisation, migration, trade, and tourism. In contrast to the concept of assimilation, the process of acculturation does not result in the recipient community's or national-origin group's loss of identity. Acculturation encounters are common all over the world, leading to the process of copying and imitating. When it comes to physical items that benefit society, such as mosques, the concept of acculturation is easily accepted. People find it more difficult to accept non-material cultural elements such as ideology and thought. Acculturation occurs frequently throughout the world, leading to the process of imitation. Acculturation and adaptation are now well understood, allowing policy and programme development to promote successful outcomes for all parties (Berry, 2005).

Languages, religions, and philosophical perspectives are just a few examples of how acculturation manifests itself in communities, social structures, knowledge systems, art, and architecture. Acculturation is the process by which a person acquires norms, values, and customs from another culture (Guarnaccia & Hausmann-Stabile, 2016). Spielberg (2004) defines acculturation as a process that occurs concurrently with cultural and psychological changes caused by interactions between two or more cultural groups and their members. Acculturation has an impact on social organisations and structures on a collective level, as well as individual behaviour. Schwartz et al (2010) mentioned two key understandings of the concept of acculturation. The first is the concept of acculturation, which seeks to understand

the various phenomena that groups of people from different cultures produce when they enter a new culture and cause changes to the original cultural pattern. This theory distinguishes acculturation from assimilation and cultural transformation. Acculturation is considered a subset of the larger issue of cultural transformation. The second concept, acculturation, derives from the link between two or more cultural systems. This context views acculturative change through the lens of cultural transformation. This could be due to non-cultural factors such as environmental or population shifts. Acculturation, according to this concept, includes changes that are not directly related to cultural problems, such as ecological issues.

According to Schumann (1986), acculturation is also a two-way process of influencing each other between two groups in a relationship, or what Mariscal and Morales (2015) refer to as transculturation, which is defined as a reciprocal relationship between cultural aspects. Cultural change occurs as a result of the interaction between the two cultures. Acculturation, according to Berry (2010), is a phenomenon that occurs when two groups of different cultures make direct contact, which is followed by the adaptation of one or both groups' original cultural patterns.

Berry (2005) describes several acculturation strategies, including assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalisation. When people do not want to maintain their cultural identity and prefer daily interactions with people from other cultures, they use the assimilation strategy. The separation strategy is the inverse of this. Individuals engage in the separation strategy when they live the values of their original culture while avoiding interaction with others. When a person is interested in maintaining his or her original culture while developing daily interactions with other groups, the integration strategy is realised.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to comprehend the distinctive design aesthetic of Masjid Lama Machap, a qualitative research methodology was applied in this study together with cultural studies and exploratory data methodologies. The process of collecting, organising, evaluating, and interpreting data included several stages in order to arrive at the answers. Numerous literary studies were conducted using a variety of sources, including historical and architectural publications, journals, dissertations, theses, and articles on a range of subjects in order to close the knowledge gap.

### **Finding and Discussion**

#### **Masjid Lama Machap (MLM)**

Masjid Lama Machap's first mosque was erected in the 16th century during the Portuguese invasion. Like many other previous mosques at that time, it was constructed of wood, but the mosque was unable to withstand the test of time. When it was being rebuilt in 1865, there were some significant improvements made that added to the design's originality. The historical close ties between Malay and Chinese are what helped shape Masjid Lama Machap's distinctive architectural style. Tok Machap, a famous Muslim trader from Indonesia, is credited with founding Masjid Lama Machap.

At that time, the Bendahara of Malacca was drawn to Tok Machap's piety and brought him to the palace to meet Sultan Mahmud Shah. Tok Machap was in charge of matters relating to Islamic instruction at the palace after being named the Royal Imam in the future. Tok Machap and his followers fled from the Portuguese army after the Portuguese attack in 1511 after Malacca had been severely defeated. After offering prayers in the vicinity of the site



where the Masjid Lama Machap was constructed, Tok Machap eventually relocated and founded the community known as Kampung Machap nearby (see "Signage," n.d., retrieved from Masjid Lama Machap fieldwork).

The crumbling mosque was replaced by the semi-concrete structure in 1865, and the current mosque was rebuilt in 1907 using the original Tok Machap design. (I. Shah. Personal communication. January 16, 2020.) Since then, Tok Machap descendants have lived in Kampung Machap, and soon after, Chinese people arrived and requested permission to settle there. The Old Machap Mosque's distinctiveness as it is seen today is a result of the friendly interaction between the Chinese and the people of Kampung Machap. Unbelievably, the Chinese regarded Tok Machap as sacrosanct, or "Kramat," and on multiple occasions, the rebuilding process was carried out using money that was primarily given by Chinese citizens.

Such Kramats (Musa, 2015) were common in the past, but worshipping is now forbidden among Muslims. When compared to the other two mosques in this study, the general description of Masjid Lama Machap is simpler in terms of design. The tomb or shrine of Tok Machap is adjacent to Masjid Lama Machap and used to be a place of worship for those who regarded Tok Machap as a sacred person and came to show their respect and gratitude to the late Tok Machap. The strange ritual activities, however, have now been prohibited by Malacca's Islamic religious council because they contradict Islamic practise.

### **Masjid Lama Machap (MLM) Design Style**

The Malaysian National Heritage Department recognised and registered Masjid Lama Machap as a national heritage property in 2008, making it one of Malaysia's official national heritage buildings. The Malaysian National Heritage Department's official plaque is hung on the mosque's west side wall. The mosque is situated near the Durian Tunggal dam reservoir. The Chinese community constructed an archway in the shape of a Chinese archway. The archway is now submerged in the reservoir, but we can still see a concrete staircase beginning beneath the water and leading to the mosque.

The mosque is square and somewhat smaller in size. A short staircase in this elevated structure leads to the mosque's main entrance. Masjid Lama Machap, unlike other traditional mosques in Malacca, has a two-tiered roof with a unique roof crown. The roof crown is simply a small dome with a crescent symbol atop it. It is less ornate and more Islamic in style.

The main prayer hall is a simple square-shaped area with visible main pillars. At the front of the mosque, there is a mihrab with a curved arch. From the outside, the niche appears to be an addition to the overall mosque structure. The decoration in the main prayer space is simple. Masjid Lama Machap does not have a minaret; instead, a beduk or drum is used to call people to prayer. Beduk is typically made of a wooden frame with cowhide or buffalo hide on only one side of the opening. The drum in Masjid Lama Machap is supported by a wooden structure. A stone inscription in Chinese writings adjacent to the drum lists the donors who contributed to the construction of this mosque. This feature is distinctive because it is not found in other old mosques in Malacca. This fact validates the notion of Chinese architectural influence on the design of the Malacca Mosque (Armani, 2014). The ablution area, like the other two mosques, is separate from the mosque. Inside the mosque compound is a gated area with tombs believed to be those of Datuk Machap, the mosque's founder, and his followers. In a separate building, the ablution area is located next to a mosque.

The decorative panels that adorn the mosque's walls are the most intriguing feature of Masjid Lama Machap. The patterns are frequently used in Chinese art objects. Furthermore, the materials used for the decorative panels differ from those used for decorations in other

old mosques. The material is made up of a type of plaster or a mixture of materials that was commonly used for building decoration during British rule. The panels were also not imported because the rendering was done on-site. The roof of the mosque is supported by twelve pillars, four on the southern side, four on the northern side, and two on the eastern and western sides, respectively. The mosque has three main entrances: one in the front, one on the east side, and one on the west side of the building. The six windows are traditional in design, with wood grilles. The veranda area of Masjid Lama Machap is not carpeted and is made entirely of ceramic tiles, as is the main prayer hall. The main building's floor tiles are square and reddish-brown in colour, with no decoration or pattern. Only the tomb area is decorated with Peranakan style tiles, not the mosque building itself. The tiles are thought to have been added later during a renovation process.

Masjid Lama Machap has undergone several renovation processes, including the removal of decorative panels, which harmed the design's originality. The restoration work fell short of highlighting the greatness of the once-glorious decorative elements.



Figure 1.1: Masjid Lama Machap (MLM)  
Source: Field work.



Figure 1.2: Main Door of MLM, Source:  
"Masjid Datuk Machap Melaka". 2017.  
Facebook.



Figure 1.3: Main Prayer Hall of MLM  
Source: Pensel patah tun teja, 2017.



Figure 1.4: Plaque on the side wall  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.5: *Beduk* at Masjid Lama Machap  
Source: Field work

### **The Acculturation of Chinese Culture in Masjid Lama Machap (MLM)**

When looking at the early development of Chinese carpentry in Malacca, the introduction of design elements from China can be seen in two major phases, namely the 15th and 18th centuries. The first phase took place during the reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) and the Malacca Sultanate era (1409-1511 A.D.), while the second phase took place when the Dutch conquered Malacca in 1641 A.D. The development of Chinese carpentry in Malacca stalled between the 16th and 17th centuries due to the Portuguese occupation of Malacca (Lee, 2016).

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

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

The mosques built in the city during the heyday of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca, on the other hand, were destroyed by the Portuguese, while the prototype of this mosque was still used as a guide to build mosques after the Portuguese left Malacca in 1641. (Suyurno et al., 2017). The second phase of Chinese carpenters' arrival in Melaka occurred during the Dutch occupation of the city-state. After realising that the British threat could shake their power, the Dutch saw the Chinese community as a secret call that could ensure the Dutch's position to survive longer in Asia.

The Malacca Chinese community was primarily made up of builders and carpenters. They were also the first craftsmen to work with and use bricks in the construction of buildings (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019). To carry out this politically secure mission, the Netherlands



imported Chinese workers from Batavia (Jakarta) via the East India Company based in Java to help with economic development and carpentry in Malacca (Suyurno et al., 2017). Chinese architecture began to be incorporated into the carpentry of these migrant Chinese communities.

As a result, the mosque's architecture grew rapidly. Chinese carpentry skills also influenced the development of unique construction methods and architecture in Malacca in the 18th century (Ismail & Hassan, 2017). Roof crowns, *sulur bayur*, and a distinctive and easily identifiable portal were introduced (Armani & Arbi, 2014). Typically, the craftsmen involved in this construction introduced a new form of construction, which was assimilated with traditional architecture. These Chinese craftsmen assisted in the construction of the place of worship, and the design was inspired by remnants of buildings discovered in Southern China during the Qing Dynasty (Baharudin & Ismail, 2016).

The use of ceramic tiles to replace the coconut leaf roof, 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 were among the reforms introduced. The tower was also introduced as one of the most important features in the mosque's construction (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019). When Malacca was under Dutch rule, the Chinese population grew rapidly, and their role in development activities was crucial (Ismail & Hassan, 2017).

The Dutch welcomed the Chinese community's presence in Malacca and recognised their abilities (Ebrahimi, 2018). Chinese craftsmanship was so highly regarded that, in a letter to the British governor, a Malay leader requested that some Chinese craftsmen assist in carving the royal tombstone (Bahaudin, 2018). This demonstrates the significance of Chinese influence in the architectural history of Malacca.

### **Pyramidal Roof**

In keeping with the title of the decoration at the top of the mosque, various interesting shapes can be seen on the roof, demonstrating the builders' creativity in combining Islamic teachings and the local community's cultural heritage that has long existed in their lives. Each crown of a mosque's roof has a rectangular base section in general. This is to ensure the crown's connection to the roof section's stability. In general, the crown of the roof of a traditional mosque in Malacca consists of several main features, including its location at the top of the mosque, pyramid shape, square or rectangular base, layered construction, and 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 Malacca, it is also referred to as a pyramid-roofed mosque (Abdul Kadir & Suyurno, 2018). The name is derived from the shape of the roof, which has a large base at the very bottom and is narrower at the top (Abdul Kadir et al., 2017). Masjid Lama Machap, as shown in figure 1.6, is still considered a *meru* roof design due to the pyramidal shape of the roofs.



Figure 1.6: Masjid Lama Machap with Two Tiers Pyramidal roof

Source: my.worldorgs.com. n.d.

The impact of this *meru* roof is debated by two major theories. Pijper (1947) developed the first theory (1948). They claimed that the pyramid roofs were influenced by Hindu cosmology and that the architecture was influenced by Balinese architecture in Java. Buildings with *meru* roofs in Nusantara were considered sacred to the gods during the pre-Islamic era. The shape was then gradually adopted on mosque structures as a peaceful transition from Hindu-Buddhism to Islam. This viewpoint is similar to that of Armani and Arbi (2014), who stated that before Islam, Malay architecture had its own distinct identity. Masjid Lama Machap 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 received a strong Hindu-Buddhist cultural influence from the 7th to 14th centuries. The peak of the roof was said to resemble a mountain or *Meru*, which Hindus regard as a living god, while the Malay community saw the ancestral roof as their Malay rulers. The second theory was proposed by Graaf (2004) and Lombard (1996), who argued that the construction of this layered roof was influenced by the strong Chinese influence on the ancient mosques in Java due to its pagoda-shaped roof.

This theory is supported by evidence that many powerful Chinese traders settled on the north coast of Java while spreading Islamic teachings (Armani & Arbi, 2014). According to Abdul Kadir et al. (2017), the pyramidal roof is inspired by Chinese and Japanese carpentry. This layered roof design is unheard of in the Middle East. The style and design of the pyramidal roof and the shape of these mosques are inspired by Ming Dynasty architecture.

As a result of the Chinese community's migration to Southeast Asia, the pyramidal roof design has been combined with some modifications to suit the Malay environment. One of the most important features of this Malaccan style mosque's roof design 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 in this study also has clerestory windows with decorative panels made of various materials such as ceramic tiles, wood, plaster, and glass, similar to decorative elements found in Chinese temples. As a result, this study agrees with the second theory, that the influence of this pyramidal roof design came from China, because the important features found in Melaka mosques are similar to houses of worship and residences of the Chinese community.

However, there are differences in the size of the main prayer space, where each mosque retains a square shape, similar to the first mosque developed by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and mosques found throughout the Arab world in general. Some of Malacca's older mosques have a square-shaped main prayer space with a *meru* roof. It differs from the space inside a Chinese religious building, which is rectangular in shape and has a pyramidal roof.

According to the findings of the field study, some similarities between the meru-roofed mosque and the roof found in Chinese houses of worship can be seen, 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 has been around for nearly 2000 years, and its influence has long spread throughout China. When the pyramid-shaped roof was first introduced in the Malay world, it had undergone several modifications to accommodate the current situation, nature, and public acceptance, particularly in Indonesia and Malacca.

### Roof Crown

The roof crown is the decoration on the top of the mosque's roof, and it is usually made of ceramic. Roof crown is also known as *mustoka*, *buah buton* by the people of Kelantan, and *buah gutong* by the people of Terengganu. This decoration is only found in old mosques in the Peninsula, particularly in Malacca, and in Chinese temples. This roof crown was handcrafted in the Chinese provinces of Canton and Fukien. According to Utaberta et al. (2012), the roof crown in Malacca Mosque has a Chinese influence.

When the Chinese immigrated to Malacca, they introduced this roof crown as a component in building construction and then incorporated it into mosque construction (Suyurno et al., 2017). This feature was later considered to be the symbol and identity of the old mosque in Malacca. Roof crowns are typically made from ceramics. Ceramics were considered a luxury at the time because they were a very valuable commodity in addition to their beauty (Abdul Kadir et al., 2019). It's possible that the entire roof crown was manufactured in China and shipped to Malacca before being installed on top of the roof. This is due to the lack of a collective record indicating the presence of a ceramic or pottery industry in the Malacca area at the time, allowing the entire production of a roof crown to be done entirely by Malaccans. According to Rosey (2009), the Hui community, a Chinese Muslim community in China, has its own style of porcelain and ceramic art. Vases of various shapes and sizes, as well as household items, were typically Chinese in style and design, with Islamic ornaments and inscriptions. Typically, the artworks were presented to dignitaries from Muslim countries. In China, there is a ceramic industry in Jingdezhen, Southern China, that dates back to the 6th century CE, though it was named after Emperor Zhenzong, during whose reign it became a major kiln site around 1004. It had become the largest centre of Chinese porcelain production by the 14th century, and it has remained so ever since, increasing its dominance in subsequent centuries (Vainker, 1991). This demonstrates that the ceramic or pottery industry in China developed and matured a long time ago, and the country has a countless ceramic industry all over the country, allowing the theory of ceramic import ware to be found in Malaysia, and the possibility that some of the ceramic elements of decoration in Malacca's old mosques had travelled far from China before being installed at the mosques. The use of the roof crown in the mosque building can highlight the style's brilliance due to its high value (Ahmad et al., 2015). Ceramic roof crowns were extremely durable and resistant to Malaysia's hot, humid climate. The clay was repeatedly burned at high temperatures for an extended period of time, giving the ceramic roof's crown its final shape and hardening the

clay. Because of their durability and ability to highlight the mosque's beauty as an appealing place of worship, Chinese ceramic roof crowns can save money when compared to other roof crowns made of other materials such as wood and plaster.

Flora motifs (such as lotus) and nature motifs are frequently used in the decoration (such as the meandering cloud). The roof crown of the mosque is also shaped like a pyramid, with a larger base and a smaller top. The intricate pattern as well as the long-lasting material distinguish the roof crown. The design of the roof crown in Malacca in the 18th-19th century had a certain uniqueness and became an identity to the traditional architecture of the Malacca mosque. Each roof crown has its own design; some roof crowns have a single layer of decorative elements, while others have up to five layers of decoration.

The difference can be seen on Majid Lama Machap's roof crown (Figure 1.7), which is modestly decorated with Islamic influence. The roof crown is a small dome with a crescent emblem on top, made of a highly corrosion-resistant aluminium composite.



Figure 1.7: Roof Crown of Masjid Lama Machap

Source: Field work

### **Sulur Bayur**

A *sulur bayur*, or ornamentation at the end of the roof ridge, can be found in every mosque with a meru roof. *Sulur bayur* is also known as *sayap layang-layang*, *sayap ayangan*, *ekor itik*, *anjong balla'*, and *som* (Utberta et al., 2012). Several mosques in Malacca, according to Abdul Kadir et al. (2019), have patterns with Chinese carvings and decorations that are very noticeable and can usually be seen at the ends of the roof and the top of the mosque. *Sulur bayur* decoration can also be found in Chinese temples (Ahmad et al., 2015). Roof ridges with delicate and fine sculptures of mythical creatures such as dragons, phoenixes, and zodiac animals can be seen on those buildings, and sometimes a combination with florals can be seen. This type of ornamentation on the roof ridge was influenced by Chinese architecture, which was brought by the Chinese community from Guangdong and Fujian provinces, and this ornamentation style began to flourish in Malacca, where it was produced in a variety of patterns and shapes at the time. Animals, birds, flowers, fish, insects, and gods are among the motifs used, and the roof ridge is typically made of mortar, marble, and porcelain chips (Armani & Arbi, 2014). The *sulur bayur* in Malacca's old mosques, on the other hand, are much simpler and mostly consist of geometrical patterns, vegetal ornamentation, and calligraphy because depicting figurative representations of animals and human figures is forbidden in Islam to uphold the religion's holy image.

“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)*. The artisans created a design with no element of excess appearance to simplify the exaggerated roof ridge decoration in Chinese architecture. Overall, the design and pattern of the roof ridge found in China can be divided into three types: the roof ridge that ends with an arch, the roof ridge that ends with a geometric decoration (straight and curved lines, shapes that result from geometric abstract carvings, and some that are influenced by nature), and the roof ridge that ends with a ceramic sculpture (Abdul Kadir et al., 2017). This category contains images of people, plants like pine trees, and natural elements like clouds, mountains, and waves. All of these motifs have different meanings depending on how they are interpreted (Armani & Arbi, 2014). Masjid Lama Machap's *sulur bayur* (Figure 1.8) resembles a chicken's comb or chicken's claw motif.



Figure 1.8 *Sulur bayur* of Masjid Lama Machap

Source: Field work

### **Decoration or Ornamentation**

The most visible influence of Chinese culture is seen in the Masjid Lama Machap's decoration or ornamentation. The majority of the mosque's ornamentation is similar to that of a Chinese temple or residential building. Flowers, animals, fruits, nature, geometry, and the cosmos are among the motifs seen, and they are similar to those seen in Chinese art, each with its own set of meanings and symbols.

The decorative panels adorning the wall of Masjid Lama Machap are unlike the decorative panels in other old mosques in Malacca, which used mostly wood materials for the panel or the mosque's ornamentation. Masjid Lama Machap's decorative panels were made of plaster or a combination of plaster, sand, egg white, crushed eggshells, lime, and water. At first glance, the panels appear to be made of ceramic, but upon closer inspection, it is possible that the panels were manufactured on-site rather than imported. During the British Colonial period, the plaster rendering technique or stucco was introduced. The original panels were brightly painted, but the colour faded over time, and numerous restoration efforts failed to restore the originality of these beautiful panels. Nonetheless, the original motifs used on the panels can still be seen, providing valuable information about the history of Chinese culture acculturation at Masjid Lama Machap.

The panel decoration in Figures 1.9 and 1.10 clearly shows the use of pomegranate motifs. Because of its bright colour and plump shape, pomegranate is considered an auspicious fruit in Chinese art, and the fruit is regarded as a symbol of good fortune.





Figure 1.9: Panel of MLM with pomegranate motif  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.10: Pomegranate motif in Chinese Art  
Source: Sheng Shi. n.d.

Peony flowers are used in some of the decorative panels at Masjid Lama Machap (Figure 1.11). Peonies have multiple layers of flower petals in a variety of colours. It is widely used in Chinese art (Figure 1.12) because it has many positive connotations, including wealth and glory.

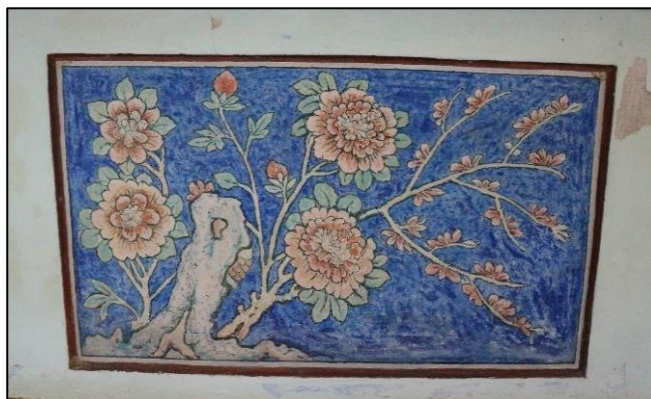


Figure 1.11: Panel of MLM with peony motif



Figure 1.12: Peony motif in Chinese Art  
Source: Peony CA. n.d.

To the Chinese community, the plum flower represents perseverance and hope. The plum flower motif (Figure 1.13) on this panel is combined with a bamboo motif (Figure 1.14) that has been depicted in Chinese art for centuries to represent moral integrity, resistance, modesty, and loyalty.



Figure 1.13: Panel of MLM with bamboo and plum blossom motif  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.14: Bamboo motif in Chinese Art  
Source: Lin, 2009

Traditional Chinese art employs decorative motifs such as flowers in vases and fruit dishes on a table, as shown in Figures 1.15 and 1.16. It has different meanings depending on the fruit, flowers, and vases used. A similar setting can be found in many traditional Chinese arts, such as a Chinese lacquer art decorative panel (Figure 1.17 and Figure 1.18).



Figure 1.15: Panel of MLM with flower vase and fruit setting on a table  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.16: Panel of MLM with flower vase and fruit setting on a table  
Source: Field work





Figure 1.17: Table setting in Chinese art  
Source: Panel 1 CA. n.d.



Figure 1.18: Table setting in Chinese lacquer art  
Source: Panel 2 CA. n.d.



Figure 1.19: Decoration on the pillar  
using peony motif  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.20: Unfinished restoration  
work of MLM  
Source: Field work

The Chrysanthemum motif has various meanings in Chinese art, ranging from auspiciousness to longevity, abundance, joy, and vitality. Figures 1.21, 1.22, and 1.23 show nine decorative elements in the shape of a semi-circular arch on top of the window and door of Masjid Lama Machap, each with a different motif. Figure 1.23 depicts a fusion of flora and fauna motifs. Bird-and-flower paintings are commonly used in Chinese art to express a harmonious relationship with nature. A figural representation, on the other hand, is uncommon in Islam, particularly in religious buildings.



Figure 1.21: Decoration using pomegranate motif at the semi-circular arch panel  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.22: Decoration using chrysanthemum motif at the semi-circular arch panel  
Source: Field work

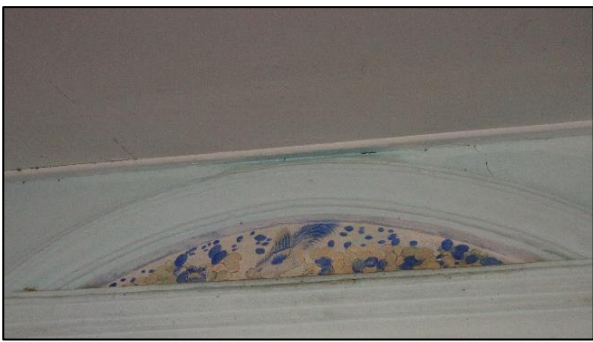


Figure 1.23: Decorative panel using bird-flower motif  
Source: Field work



Figure 1.24: The decorative panels of Masjid Lama Machap  
Source: Field work

The front wall of Masjid Lama Machap has four vertical panels, six horizontal panels on the lower part of the wall, nine semi-circular arch panels, and four vertical panels on the four columns at the front building. Vertical and horizontal panels are only installed on the front wall, while the side walls are only rendered in cement and ceramic tiles are installed on the lower wall. The columns on the east and west sides of the wall are unadorned.

The stone inscription (Figure 1.25) installed on the mosque's east side wall is perhaps its most imposing feature. Beginning with the Han period, the complete text of Classical Chinese was carved on stone so that scholars could access these important writings before the books became widely available. In ancient times, stone inscriptions were popular not only in China, but also in other countries such as India, Egypt, and Athens. A stele is a broad term for stone inscriptions found all over the world. The discovery of the stone inscription in the archipelago also demonstrates the existence of a stele since antiquity. The existence of a Chinese stone inscription is uncommon in other old mosques in Malaysia, particularly in Malacca.



Figure 1.25 Stone inscription on the side wall  
of Masjid Lama Machap  
Source: Field work

The history of Masjid Lama Machap, which was restored in 1907, is described in a sign that is engraved on a stone ("Signage," n.d., retrieved from Masjid Lama Machap fieldwork).

*"Mentioning about the act of glorifying the greatness of God and getting blessings from God, the same action is still practised from then until today which is an act to put trust in God. After obtaining guidance and blessings from God, Datuk Keramat (Tok Machap whom they refer to as Datuk Gong) was sent to Machap with the hope of bringing prosperity and keeping away all disasters or calamities that befell the people. Datuk Keramat is over 200 years old; a group of religious Chinese people have jointly managed this place. They surrendered and devoted themselves to God in the hope that Datuk Keramat could fulfil all their requests, bring blessings, and protect the locals. They also hope that Datuk Keramat can help repel all the disasters and misfortunes that befell them".*

Thanks to the sincere cooperation and volunteerism, the pavilion (referring to the mosque) was built to enable the public to fulfill their wishes, including believers from far away. The services of *Datuk Keramat* are undeniable. Yong Soh An (the person in charge of the mosque's construction) encouraged the public to donate generously, and the list of donors was inscribed on the stone. The devotees' contributions are compared to the Malay proverb "*sedikit-sedikit lama-lama jadi bukit*" until the pavilion was completed

In 1907, the villagers began fundraising to rebuild the mosque as a symbol of gratitude to Tok Machap. When the mosque was finished, the names of the donors were engraved on a stone tablet as a record. It's akin to paying homage to 'Datuk Gong' or the late Tok Machap, the founder of Masjid Lama Machap, whom the Chinese community revered as *Kramat*. Tok Machap was revered by the Chinese community in ancient times for his generosity in allowing the Chinese to settle in Machap village. The spirit of goodwill manifested itself when the two races, Malay and Chinese, coexisted in peace for centuries. At the time, the Chinese community held Tok Machap in high regard as their protector. Even after Tok Machap died, the next generation carried on the tradition. However, it became a tradition over time to



worship the spirit of Tok Machap, whom they regarded as a deity, thereby establishing the 'Datuk Gong' belief in Machap (Lew, 2016).

### Conclusion

The study's conclusions indicate that there is a cultural affinity between Chinese and Malay people that results in a cultural acculturation to the Masjid Lama Machap's construction and ornamentation. The mosque's pyramidal roof, decorative wall panels, and patterns like the sulur bayur that can be linked to ancient Chinese architecture and craftsmanship all clearly show the influence of Chinese cultural elements. In Malacca, the Chinese community was actively involved in the carpentry sector. Malacca's Chinese community immigrated from China, bringing with them Chinese artistry and architecture. According to the study's findings, Chinese and Malay people have adapted their aesthetic preferences to the structure and ornamentation of the Masjid Lama Machap because of their shared cultural heritage. The mosque's pyramidal roof, ornamental wall panels, and patterns like the sulur bayur, which can be traced back to ancient Chinese architecture and workmanship, clearly demonstrate the influence of Chinese cultural aspects. In Malacca, the Chinese community was particularly active in the carpentry industry. The Chinese community's migration to Malacca brought with it the region's tradition of Chinese architecture and craftsmanship.

It is suggested that future researchers who conduct a study on the acculturation of foreign culture in historical mosques conduct the research in a more detailed manner, such as by using mixed-method research to collect more comprehensive data. The goal is to investigate Chinese participation in the architecture and ornamentation of Malacca's old mosques. The significance of these influences must be investigated in order to gain a better understanding of the revolution in mosque design style, as well as the acculturation that occurred in the region. As a result, it is critical to expand these studies beyond Malacca to include other countries such as ASEAN and China. To better comprehend the effect of the Chinese on the early mosques in the archipelago, especially in Malacca, a cross-sectional study of early mosques in particular places can be carried out to expose the parallels and contrasts in design styles and to pinpoint where they originated. The meticulous and thorough documenting of this historical structure must be taken seriously because history is something that is connected to the past and is acquired through the tangible evidence that has survived. The history of Malaysia and the Chinese influence on architectural design will serve as a reminder of the nation's progress through historical occurrences and the remains of historical monuments that are still visible today.

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