

Exploring Wood Carving Motifs: The Minbar of ULUL Albab Mosque

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Abstract

Mosques hold significant reverence as places of worship for Muslims worldwide, serving as focal points for religious activities such as sermons and meetings. Each country exhibits distinct designs for mosque minbars, reflecting its cultural and ethnic diversity. Terengganu, a Malaysian state, showcases a plethora of unique and captivating carving motifs adorning its mosque minbars. This study aims to elucidate the carving motifs and their meanings on the minbar of the Ulul Albab Mosque in Terengganu. Employing qualitative research methodology, including interviews, observations, and analysis of primary and secondary sources, this research unveils the intricate details behind the wood carvings. The findings reveal that the minbar of the Ulul Albab Mosque in Terengganu encompasses various motifs inspired by flora and fauna, aiming to convey messages rooted in the pure values of Malay culture. These wood carvings serve as exemplars of Malay craftsmanship worthy of preservation. It is anticipated that this research will foster greater awareness among the public regarding the imperative of safeguarding cultural heritage, which epitomizes ethnic identity.

Keywords: Minbar, Motifs, Mosque, Wooden Carving, Ulul Albab Mosque

Introduction

The establishment of mosques in Malaya played a crucial role in accelerating the spread of Islam from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, beginning during the early Hijrah era. The discovery of the Inscription Stone in Gresik, Java, dated to 1082 or 1102 AD, marked the initial introduction of Islam to Southeast Asia (Mukmin, 1992). Mosque construction not only served as places of worship but also as social and educational centers for the Malay community in the region. These mosques also exemplified the integration of Islamic architectural principles with local Malay cultural elements, such as the use of wood and traditional carving arts,

highlighting the unique identity of each mosque and the designers' creativity in portraying Malay lifestyle. Under the supervision of MAIDAM (Terengganu Religious and Malay Custom Council), the development and enhancement of mosques continue to reflect the cultural and religious evolution in the state.

Mosque structures not only adhered to the principles of Islamic Sharia but also integrated elements from the local Malay environment. Wood was commonly used as the primary construction material due to its accessibility. The use of wood in mosque construction allowed for the creation of diverse designs and patterns, showcasing the intricate craftsmanship and fine arts of Malay culture. The variety of motifs and symbols in mosque designs gave each mosque a distinct identity, demonstrating the creativity of designers in depicting Malay lifestyle.

Terengganu, located on the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, is one of the states with a centralized governmental center near the coast. Centralizing state administration in one location facilitates administrative efficiency. MAIDAM (Terengganu Religious and Malay Custom Council) is responsible for all matters related to mosque and surau construction.

Terengganu, a state rich in cultural heritage and history, has a unique tradition of constructing wooden mosques. The history of wooden mosques in Terengganu can be traced back to the reign of Sultan Zainal Abidin II. One of the oldest wooden mosques in the state was constructed during his reign, with subsequent expansions of the mosque completed by the year 1319 H or 1901 AD. These wooden mosques served not only as places of worship but also as community centers and hubs for disseminating religious knowledge.

The initial construction of wooden mosques in Terengganu utilized local materials such as cengal wood, renowned for its durability. The traditional architecture of these mosques features intricate wood carvings with floral and geometric motifs, reflecting Malay-Islamic art. These mosques also have tiered roofs known as bumbung meru, a distinctive feature of mosque architecture in the region.

During the reign of Sultan Umar, the original wooden structures of several mosques began to be replaced with stone. This transition was undertaken to enhance the durability and resilience of the mosque structures. The use of stone also facilitated easier maintenance and longevity. Despite the change in construction material, traditional architectural elements and carvings were preserved to maintain cultural heritage.

The 20th century saw continued expansion and upgrades of wooden mosques in Terengganu. A significant enhancement occurred in 1972 when one of the main towers was constructed to emulate the tower of the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur. This addition not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the mosque but also symbolized the connection between traditional heritage and modern progress.

Among the notable wooden mosques in Terengganu is the Kampung Laut Mosque, one of the oldest wooden mosques in Malaysia. This mosque is renowned for its beautiful traditional architecture and long history as a center for community and Islamic education. Other wooden mosques in Terengganu are also celebrated for their architectural beauty and their vital role in the local community.

The preservation and conservation of these wooden mosques are crucial to ensuring the continuation of this cultural and historical heritage. Conservation efforts often involve skilled traditional architects and woodworkers to ensure that every element of the mosque is accurately maintained. The Terengganu Religious and Malay Custom Council (MAIDAM) plays a significant role in overseeing the preservation and construction of mosques in the state,

ensuring that each mosque continues to be a symbol of pride and cultural identity for Terengganu.

The history of wooden mosques in Terengganu reflects the evolution of architecture and rich cultural heritage in the state. From the early construction using local wood to the replacement with stone and the addition of modern elements, these mosques have undergone numerous changes while retaining their traditional identity. With ongoing conservation efforts, the wooden mosques in Terengganu will continue to stand as significant symbols of cultural and religious heritage for future generations.

The establishment of mosques in Malaya not only served as centers for the spread of Islam but also exemplified the integration of Islamic architecture with indigenous Malay elements. The wooden mosques in Terengganu, in particular, showcased a diversity of motifs and symbols that reflected the unique identity of each mosque and the creativity of designers in depicting Malay lifestyle. Under the supervision of MAIDAM (Terengganu Religious and Malay Custom Council), the development and enhancement of mosques continue to reflect the cultural and religious evolution in the state.

Research Objective

- To delineate the design intricacies of the minbar stairs within the Terengganu Mosque.
- To expound upon the wood carvings adorning the minbar of the Ulul Albab Mosque in Terengganu.
- To conduct an analytical examination of the wood carving motifs present on the minbar of Terengganu's Ulul Albab Mosque.

Literature Review

Islamic Architecture's Characteristics

Islamic architecture encompasses various types of structures, both religiously and secularly motivated, which serve as significant expressions of Islamic art. Among these, the royal palace stands as a secularly motivated edifice, holding considerable importance within Islamic architecture. Its design and construction are hailed as artistic endeavors, showcasing the architectural brilliance of Islamic civilization. Initially, mosque construction was modest, primarily limited to functional aspects. However, over time, mosques underwent significant transformations, evolving into diverse and visually striking forms. This evolution provided a fertile ground for the flourishing of artistic endeavors such as craftsmanship and calligraphy (Rahim & Zin, 1995).

Titus Burkhardt highlights the prevalence of expressions of tranquility and seclusion in Islamic architecture. These elements coexist harmoniously, without contradicting spiritual or worldly aspects. Notably, Islamic architecture emphasizes the infusion of natural light into buildings, creating spaces conducive to comfort and serenity for prayer. Indoor and outdoor ornamentation, particularly wall decoration, holds significance, with calligraphy emerging as a favored decorative motif in mosques due to its perceived efficacy and appropriateness (Yatim, 1989).

Islamic architecture is characterized by its rich diversity and distinctive features that reflect the cultural, religious, and artistic values of the Islamic civilization. Key characteristics include intricate calligraphic inscriptions, geometric patterns, and floral motifs that adorn mosque walls and architectural elements, serving both decorative and spiritual purposes. The precise geometry and symmetrical designs, often seen in arabesques and tessellations, symbolize the order and harmony of the cosmos, reflecting Islamic beliefs in divine unity and perfection.

Islamic architecture also emphasizes the interplay of light and space, with diffused light, spacious courtyards, and lush gardens creating ethereal and tranquil environments conducive to prayer and contemplation. Domes, minarets, and water elements such as fountains and pools are iconic features of Islamic buildings, symbolizing celestial realms and spiritual purification. Additionally, Islamic architecture demonstrates a sensitivity to local climate and environmental conditions, with design solutions tailored to provide natural ventilation, shading, and thermal comfort. Overall, Islamic architecture embodies a holistic approach to design, integrating spiritual symbolism, artistic expression, and practical considerations to create inspiring and harmonious built environments.

Historical Progression of Mosque Development

The development of mosques across various epochs embodies the dynamic evolution of Islamic architectural principles and their cultural significance. Emerging during the era of the Prophet Muhammad, mosques initially served as modest spaces for communal prayer and religious instruction. However, as Islam expanded its reach across diverse regions, mosques adapted to the needs and preferences of local communities, resulting in a rich tapestry of architectural styles and functions. From the grandiose mosques of the early Islamic caliphates to the intricate designs of Mughal India and the unique vernacular of Southeast Asia, each region developed its own distinctive mosque architecture, reflecting its historical context and cultural identity.

Moreover, the global spread of Islam through trade, conquest, and missionary endeavors facilitated the proliferation of mosques across continents. These mosques became not only places of worship but also centers of learning, community gathering, and social welfare. As societies evolved, mosques continued to adapt, incorporating modern innovations while preserving traditional design elements. Today, mosques serve as symbols of Islamic identity and community cohesion, embodying the enduring legacy of Islamic architecture in shaping the built environment and fostering spiritual connection.

The mosque stands as a quintessential example of Islamic architecture, originating during the time of the Prophet Muhammad to serve as a sacred space for prayer and spiritual communion with God. Beyond its primary function, mosque construction serves multifaceted roles in fostering harmony among individuals and uniting communities against external disruptions to peace and tranquility. With the global diffusion of Islam, mosques have undergone evolutionary adaptations worldwide, giving rise to smaller-scale mosques in diverse cultural contexts. In the Malay archipelago, Islam's introduction was chiefly facilitated through trade relations with Arab merchants. The economic interactions inherent in trade played a pivotal role in catalyzing the local populace's embrace of Islam. This phenomenon underscored the deep-seated bond forged between Arab traders and indigenous communities (Mukmin, 1992). Moreover, the concerted efforts of both traders and preachers further facilitated the spread of Islam, underscoring their openness to disseminate Islamic teachings (Othman, 2005). Consequently, the proliferation of mosques and the dissemination of religious education in Malaya significantly bolstered Islam's influence, enabling its rapid diffusion among the local populace.

Mosques and minbars: Architectural and Symbolic Elements

Mosques and minbars are integral elements of Islamic architecture, serving as the focal points for religious observance and communal gatherings within Muslim communities. Mosques, known as "masjids" in Arabic, function as sacred spaces where Muslims come

together to perform their prayers, engage in worship, and partake in various religious activities. Architecturally diverse, mosques typically feature a prayer hall oriented towards the qiblah, a mihrab indicating the direction of Mecca, a minbar (minbar) for sermons, and a minaret for the call to prayer. The minbar, or minbar, holds symbolic significance as the elevated platform from which the imam delivers sermons and religious teachings to the congregation, symbolizing spiritual leadership and guidance within the mosque. Together, mosques and minbars embody the spiritual and communal dimensions of Islamic worship, providing a sacred space for believers to connect with God and foster community bonds. During the era of the Prophet Muhammad, he would often occupy the highest tier of a three-tiered minbar constructed from wood. This minbar held a distinct significance as it served as the platform from which the "khatib" or preacher would deliver sermons, primarily during Friday prayers. Traditionally positioned to the right side of the mihrab, the minbar was constructed from either wood or concrete, with some featuring a small dome adorned with an oval or circular top. In contemporary times, the design of minbars has evolved beyond the traditional three-tiered structure. Philosophically, the minbar is perceived as a conduit for divine communication, symbolizing a direct link between Heaven and the earthly realm.

Islamic Craftsmanship: Bridging Artistic Expression and Spiritual Significance

Islam places significant value on carving, to the extent that the community admires it when carving motifs are arranged compositionally for decoration. The arrangement of motifs follows mathematical or measurement principles to ensure proper placement. Islamic art portrays a cohesive whole comprised of harmonious elements from various perspectives, conveying a message when observed, contemplated, or experienced. Natural elements like leaves, roots, and flowers are often arranged to suit designers' aesthetic preferences, using materials such as wood, streamlined terracotta stones, and others. Craftsmanship often intersects with literary art and does not exist in isolation, allowing for further innovation. Consequently, more structures adorned with Islamic craftsmanship are possible (Israr, 1978). Craftsmanship cannot be solely perceived as developed for artistic purposes; it also serves as a beautiful expression, exuding a pleasant atmosphere with a profound impact. All forms of beauty draw individuals closer to their creator and to one another in everyday life. Carvings incorporate empowering phrases commonly found in many designs, along with verses from the Quran, hadith, and other sources. It is customary to commence Quranic verses with phrases like "bismillahirrahmanirrahim" or "la ilaha illallah Muhammad Rasulallah." Sculpture-based craftsmanship gained popularity among the general public during the Renaissance, influencing not only Muslims but also Christians in cultivating their own artists. Several churches in Italy, such as the Milano Church, feature craftsmanship ideas, prominently displayed at the entrance and abundantly arranged in Arabic as seen in Islamic structures. This illustrates that Islamic craftsmanship has become a widespread art form, as most churches incorporate it into their rituals.

Exploring the Significance and Evolution of Motifs in Malay Arts

The essence of a motif lies in the repetition of images and intricate designs, forming a structured sequence that coalesces into a cohesive design (Ibrahim, 2007). Its development is intricately linked to the arrangement of objects, encompassing both organic and geometric designs. These motifs are systematically arranged, incorporating various design elements such as lines, shapes, values, and colors (Hussin, 2006). Through the repetition of motifs, a foundational design emerges, eventually culminating in the creation of an 'all-over pattern.'

It becomes evident that motifs serve as the cornerstone of design, providing structure and coherence to artistic creations.

In Malay arts, the presence of captivating and unique motifs is indispensable, whether adorning wood carvings or other artistic mediums. Traditional Malay motifs are categorized into two main types: decorative motifs and finishing motifs, both serving to embellish the final product. Their evolution is deeply rooted in Malay heritage, shaped by inherited traditions and customs (Nasir, 1986). Motifs play a pivotal role in defining a nation's identity and ethnicity, serving as a visual manifestation of cultural prowess and artistic mastery. They serve as distinguishing markers, showcasing the expertise and ingenuity of Malay artisans in creating awe-inspiring artworks admired by many.

Furthermore, these decorative motifs not only differentiate arts across various regions, districts, and states in Malaysia but also serve as defining features of objects and textiles produced. The evolution of such motifs underscores the meticulous creativity of earlier Malay societies, particularly evident in the intricate weaving patterns. The intricate process involved in motif creation elevates Malay weaving craftsmanship to new heights, garnering appreciation and admiration. Without delving into the complexities of weaving production, it becomes challenging to discern Malay motifs from those of other nations, highlighting the depth and richness of Malay artistic traditions. Moreover, the integration of motifs into carving designs enhances artistic appeal, rendering them more captivating and visually engaging.

Metodologi

The research methodology employs a qualitative approach focused on gaining a profound understanding of the wood carving motifs on the minbar of Ulul Albab Mosque in Terengganu. Methodological steps include conducting interviews with experts in Malay wood carving and mosque architecture, as well as visually observing the minbar to analyze carving techniques and the use of flora and fauna motifs. Primary sources such as mosque construction records and secondary sources like academic literature are used to grasp the cultural and religious contexts influencing the minbar's construction. The interpretation of data from this methodology aims to provide deeper insights into the meanings and purposes behind the utilization of these motifs in Malay wood carving art.

Finding and Discussion

Minbar Design in Terengganu's Mosques: Tradition, Functionality, and Symbolism

The minbar consists of three primary components: the head, body, and legs, each comprising multiple supporting elements. Metaphorically, the calf and thighs represent a section of the stairs, as illustrated in Table 1, emphasizing the minbar's design resemblance to human anatomy.

Table 1

Analogies between minbar design structure and human body structure

No.	Main limb	Smaller limb	Minbar Structure
1	Head	Head	Roof
2		Neck	Upper engraving (roof)
3	Body	Shoulder	Main engraving at upper part.
4		Chest	Column and empty space where khatib delivers khutbah (to see khatib clearly)
5		Stomach	Khatib's notes placeholder.
6	Leg	Buttock	Lower engraving
7		Calf/Thigh	Stairs
8		Leg	Base

The minbar's stairs are likened to human thighs or calves enabling the khatib to ascend and descend safely during sermon delivery. Historically, during Rasulullah's era, the stairs were positioned in front of the minbar facing the congregation. To accommodate the increasing number of attendees, Marwan bin Hakam increased the number of steps from three to six. This adjustment, reflecting the teachings of Islam, facilitates sermon delivery during congregational prayers.

In Terengganu's districts, new minbar stairs can range from three to seven steps. During Rasulullah's time, the stairs were positioned in front of the minbar, facing the congregation. Marwan bin Hakam, in response to the increasing number of worshippers attending Rasulullah's khutbah, extended the original three steps to six, elevating the minbar's height. This modification aligns with Islamic teachings as it accommodates the mosque's size and facilitates the delivery of sermons during congregational prayers, such as Friday and Eid prayers (Al-Qaradawi, 2000).

It has been observed that minbar steps in Terengganu typically consist of three to seven steps. However, each minbar has a different number of steps depending on the district, with some having 1, 2, or 4 steps. The number of steps built is determined by the design of the minbar in relation to the mosque's size, material, area, and width.



Picture 1. Pasir Akar Mosque's Minbar Stairs in Setiu



Picture 2. Masjid Baris Lampu's Minbar Stairs in Besut

Rasulullah's minbar featured three steps. During his sermons, he stood on the second step, facing the congregation, while sitting on the third step. Construction of the minbar was advised against being overly extravagant to avoid appearing boastful (Thahir, 2007).

Consequently, there are differences in the number and layout of steps between Rasulullah's time and modern constructions, potentially deviating from his sunnah regarding minbar design for sermon visibility.

In Rasulullah's era, minbar stairs were positioned in front, allowing him to ascend facing away from the congregation but delivering the sermon while facing them, ensuring everyone's visibility. However, recent research on newer minbars built between 2009 and 2014 indicates a shift, with most stairs positioned to the right instead of the traditional front-facing arrangement. An illustration (Picture 3) exemplifies the placement of the old minbar in Terengganu during the Prophet's time, with stairs situated in front, providing clarity on historical minbar design practices.

Wood Carvings Adorning the minbar of Masjid Ulul Albab in Terengganu

The Masjid Ulul Albab (Picture 3), formerly known as the Masjid Kayu Seberang Jertih, is situated near Bandar Jertih, Terengganu. Constructed predominantly from wood, this mosque, located near the Kelantan border, serves as a focal point for worship, particularly for the local community and travelers. It embodies the architectural and woodworking craftsmanship of traditional Malay art, which had seemingly been overlooked by authorities or designers in the construction of modern mosques. Built on a site measuring 0.2 hectares to replace an aging mosque, it took two years to complete.



Picture 3. The design of the Ulul Albab mosque in Terengganu

This mosque is renowned for its unique architectural design based on traditional Malay woodworking artistry combined with Islamic carvings. Particularly noteworthy is its construction using the traditional "tebuk pasak" technique, which eschews the use of nails. Nearly 90 percent of the wood used is cengal, with the remainder composed of nyatoh and balau woods. The mosque stands at three levels with a veranda on the second level serving as a space for prayer. Additionally, it includes facilities such as meeting rooms, guest rooms, lecture halls, prayer spaces for persons with disabilities (OKU), and a mortuary management room.

The floor is elevated from ground level to prevent water and animals from entering the mosque. Its tiered roof, shaped in a multi-tiered apex design, facilitates rainwater drainage to prevent deterioration of the wooden materials. Between the roof tiers are window spaces for air circulation and natural lighting, ensuring comfort and functionality. The second level accommodates prayer areas and a gallery, while the third functions as a library. The mosque also features two ablution areas and restroom facilities.

The entire mosque is adorned with intricately decorated walls, with the 12 main prayer room doors adorned with cloud patterns and the minbar railing featuring motifs inspired by Terengganu woven songket. Quranic verses and prayers are carved on the main mosque

entrance, while around the roof perimeter are decorative eaves adorned with wooden calligraphy.

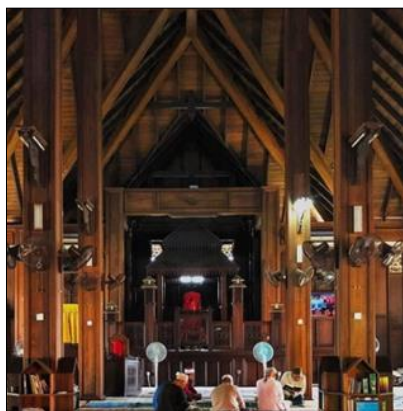
Typically, wood is used for the carving on the minbar of Masjid Ulul Albab (Picture 6). The use of wood in its development allows for the use of a wide range of spectacular designs on the wood surface. Furthermore, various themes, frequently centred on flowers, are used to embellish its surface. It adheres to Islamic principles that prohibit the use of living things as themes, such as animals.

The carving styles decorate the mosque minbar are typically inspired by the cosmos or geometric plant forms. Islam forbids the use of living objects and animals because it is considered makruh by ulama (scholars). People who practise Islam are forbidden by Islamic law from using living beings as motifs.

According to a hadith attributed to Sa'id Ibnu Hasan, "While I was with Ibn Abbas, a man walks in and says, "Yes, Ibnu Abbas!" I support myself by making arches like this with my hands. "None of what I have spoken to you is what I heard from the Prophet," Ibn Abbas replied. He states: "God will torture anyone who paints a picture until he gives the picture life, but he will never be able to do it again. The hadith makes it abundantly clear that using any type of expression in the form of living things is forbidden. In the hereafter, everyone who depicts animals will be condemned, and God will punish those who make a living doing so. As a result, Islamic craftsmen and artists restrict the usage of particular motifs in their creations (Israr, 1978).

"Typically, wood is used for carving on the minbar of Masjid Ulul Albab (Picture 4). The use of wood allows for a wide range of spectacular designs on its surface. Various themes, often centered around floral motifs, adorn its surface. These designs adhere to Islamic principles that prohibit the depiction of living beings, such as animals.

The carving styles decorating the mosque's minbar are typically inspired by cosmic or geometric plant forms. Islam forbids the depiction of living beings and animals, which is considered makruh (disliked) by scholars. According to a hadith attributed to Sa'id Ibnu Hasan, "While I was with Ibn Abbas, a man walks in and says, 'Yes, Ibnu Abbas! I support myself by making arches like this with my hands.' Ibn Abbas replied, 'None of what I have told you was heard from the Prophet.' He continued, 'God will punish every painter who creates a picture until he breathes life into it, which he will never be able to do.' This hadith clearly prohibits the representation of living beings. In the hereafter, anyone who creates images of animals will be condemned, and God will punish those who do so for their livelihood. Therefore, Islamic craftsmen and artists restrict the use of certain motifs in their creations (Israr, 1978)."



Picture 4: The Minbar of Masjid Ulul Albab is adorned with wood carvings.

Wood Carvings Motifs on The Minbar of The Ulul Albab Mosque in Terengganu

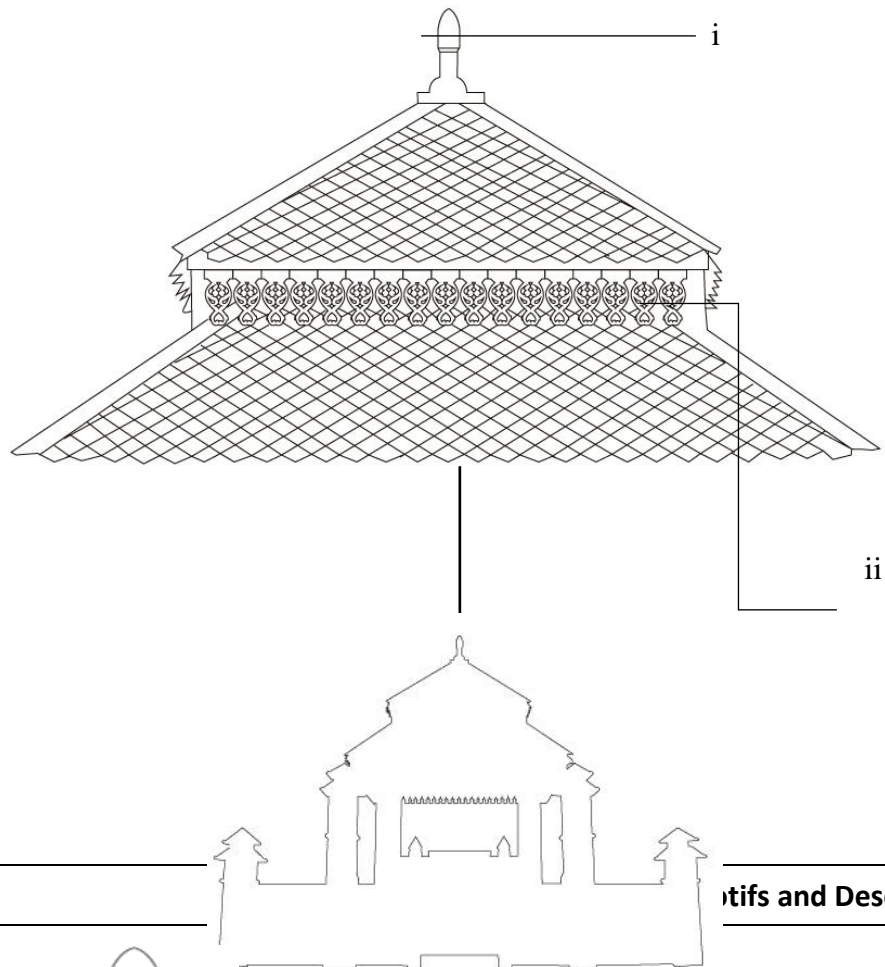
Geometric motifs are commonly found in Malay arts such as pottery, *tepak sirih*, and Keris sheaths (Teh, 1990). These motifs are typically limited to circular or pointed designs. The creation of geometric motifs in Islamic arts often involves repetition to bring them to life. They are usually combined with other decorations featuring plant motifs or calligraphy (Zakaria, 2009). Geometric motifs represent mathematically-based production. The relationship between geometric and other designs has led to various techniques for creating new motifs or constructing mosques (Rashed, 1992).

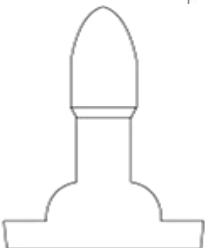

In Terengganu, the carvings on mosque minbars incorporate motifs from flowers, cosmos, calligraphy, and fauna. Calligraphy is frequently paired with floral motifs in each carving. Additionally, these motifs are sometimes created independently or in conjunction with other floral motifs. However, most carvings favor combinations, reflecting Malay society's daily life, as referenced in the saying "Tajam Tidak Menujah Lawan." This phrase is depicted in the ends and sides of plant motifs, which are connected to other leaves in the carvings, always bowing down, symbolizing opposition to conflict. Each bowing leaf represents mutual respect within Malay society.

Head of the Minbar

The head section can be divided into two essential parts located at the topmost portion of the minbar, namely the roof and the neck or neck. These two parts are known as small members found within the main member known as the head. The head section is the main structure that connects each of the other member parts. It serves as a structure that completes the formation of the other parts. In the head section, the roof plays a crucial role as it is positioned centrally among the entire design of the minbar, providing balance to the overall structure. Balance in the minbar is crucial for its stability and perfection. Most roofs are in the form of cones or triangles, where the base part is circular and gradually narrows to form a sharp edge at the tip of the cone. The size of this central roof is neither too large nor too small, allowing ample surrounding space around the cone.

The second space below the head section is the neck or neck, which functions as a support or main structure for the roof. Each part has a specific function that plays its role in the construction of a minbar that holds sentimental value to the community, particularly. Without this part, the roof would certainly not be able to stand on its own without any other support. The neck or neck is part of the structure that supports the main parts. Various types of carvings surrounding each space on the cone can also be seen in this section. The carvings in this section are also simplified to forms that are more concise and easier to produce. The size of this section is larger than the cone, which also acts as a supporting part of the cone structure. At this time, most carvings in this section are produced in geometric shapes compared to ancient times that were denser and more challenging. This section displays the main structure of carvings on the minbar that can be seen by everyone as it is at the forefront of the minbar design. In this section, it becomes the main space for the architecture of the minbar.



No.		Motifs and Descriptions
i.		<p><i>Buah Buton</i> on the roof apex.</p>
ii.		<p>The motif of <i>lebah bergantung</i> is present on the eaves or roof overhang of the minbar.</p>

The mimbar, built in the form similar to the typical rest pavilions seen in most traditional Malay house settings, is constructed and placed in front of the house as a place for family rest and gathering in the evening or otherwise. Many mosques in Terengganu are built with rest pavilions located in the mosque courtyard to provide facilities for worshippers or travelers to rest temporarily. Typically, multiple rest pavilions are built in one mosque, using moderate sizes. Upon closer inspection, these rest pavilions resemble small houses, complete with roofs

that look similar to house roofs, using the typical tiled roof used in traditional Terengganu Malay houses.

Aligned with the theme of Masjid Ulul Albab as a mosque built entirely from raw materials including wood, incorporating elements of Terengganu Malay architecture. The construction of the mimbar also involves Terengganu architectural art, evident in the design reminiscent of old Malay houses. The mimbar roof is constructed similar to house roofs, triangular and resembling a pointed Limas roof at the apex. The orderly arrangement of roof tiles facilitates the smooth flow of rainwater off the roof's surface, preventing water accumulation commonly seen on traditional house roofs. The roof tiles used are also triangular and sharply pointed at the ends, with hooks on the front, designed ergonomically to ensure each tile fits securely in place.

These tiles are hung in an orderly sequence around the entire mimbar using fine, evenly spaced wood. The finer, thinner wood visible beneath the roof is perfectly arranged to prevent any gaps or holes in the roof tiles. This meticulous and orderly arrangement prevents gaps or holes in the roof tiles. This is crucial as the roof functions to shield against sunlight, rain, and various other disturbances, similar to its function on a house, albeit adapted to the mimbar form within the mosque. Such roofing requires meticulous workmanship and high creativity, exemplified in the construction of the main mimbar roof beams using traditional Malay carpentry techniques known as pegged joints, avoiding the use of nails, a popular technique among traditional Malay carpenters.

The neck section features pierced carving motifs on the *papan pemeleh* surrounding the entire mimbar roof structure. These carvings are of uniform size, calculated to fit perfectly within the mimbar's dimensions, ensuring no part is left unembellished or lacking in the placement of these carved designs. Each carving is crafted as individual pieces of *papan pemeleh* arranged closely together. The design features intricate honeycomb motifs hanging on the eaves. This motif has long been used in Malay carving art, commonly seen on any eave of traditional Malay houses. The carving displays two distinct forms: a larger and a smaller form, both facing downwards. Simple carvings adorn the neck decoration, repeating the same motif elements to fill the entire neck space. The square shape of the mimbar, built to the same size as typical pavilions built outside mosque grounds for resting, completes the overall structure

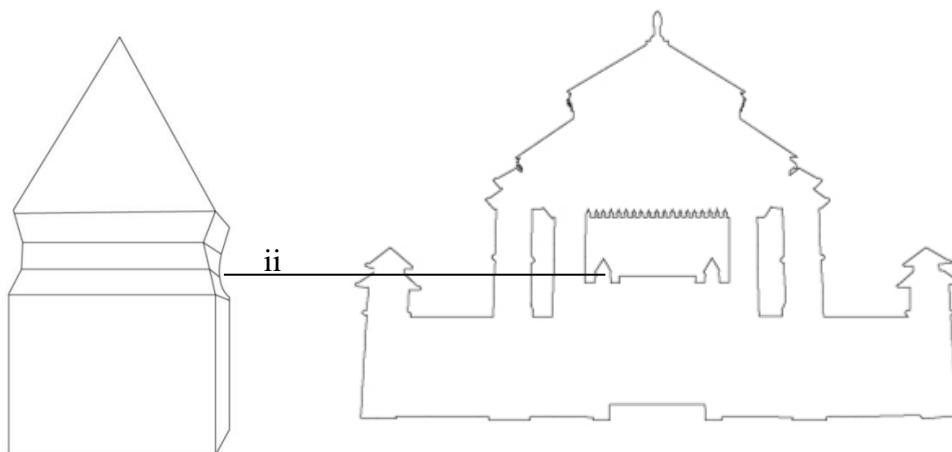
Body of The Minbar

The minbar's body can be interpreted as the central part between the human body's head and feet. This section suggests that the body is the second most important part after the head. Without the body, other limbs cannot move independently as it serves as the connector between the upper and lower parts. The body is also considered the second most crucial element after the roof. The body is divided into three chambers consisting of smaller members. Each assigned task results in a sturdy minbar in terms of structural design. The main members of the body connect to the smaller members in each section. Here, the smaller members include the shoulders, chest, and abdomen, where the body serves as a space or place that houses these smaller members along with their functions.

This can be observed in the shoulders, which function as the main location for prominent carvings on the upper part. The chest serves as a pillar and an open space with four pillars supporting the sturdy structure of the minbar. The open chest space divided into four parts — front, back, left, and right — allows the khatib (preacher) to be clearly seen while delivering the sermon. This section serves as a visible area for the public to observe the preacher during

the sermon. The abdomen serves as a place for the khatib to place sermon notes used during Friday sermons. The diagram below illustrates each part of the minbar's members, each with specific meanings and functions. Each part of the member serves different functions and uses, similar to the structure in house design.

No	Human Body	Body Structure	Structure Of The Minbar
1.	Body	Shoulder	The uppermost carved section
2.		Chest	Poles and empty space where Khatib delivers a sermon (Can see khatib clearly)
3.		Stomach	Khatib puts a sermon note



No.	Carving Motifs and Descriptions	
i	Shoulder	There are no carvings on the four pillars in this area.
ii	Chest	There are no carvings on the four pillars in this section.
iii	Stomach	

It is the only minbar in Terengganu built with the concept of a wakaf, also known as a gazebo. Wakafs are typically seen in the surroundings of mosque areas, serving as places to rest or seek temporary shelter. Observations show that every mosque in Terengganu has at least one wakaf within its premises. These wakafs are usually placed at the front entrance of the mosque to facilitate travelers to rest there. Given that the design of this minbar resembles a wakaf, the shoulder section is built open, similar to the construction of a wakaf. Therefore, the shoulder section does not feature the main carvings that typically signify a minbar, except for the main carvings on the neck section.

The neck section features four sturdy pillars that support the standing structure of the minbar. These pillars are built plain without any decorative carvings on their surfaces. This section allows the khatib (preacher) to be seen clearly, as the khatib delivering the sermon will stand in front of the minbar. Unlike other minbars, where the khatib stands inside the minbar during sermons or lectures, the khatib in this design stands in front of the minbar in a designated space. This arrangement is separate, even though it is directly in front of each other. Therefore, the area for the khatib to place sermon notes is not integrated into the minbar but built separately from the minbar's structure. It is positioned in front of the minbar, although separately attached, but located on the same platform as the minbar in the upper deck of the minbar's design.

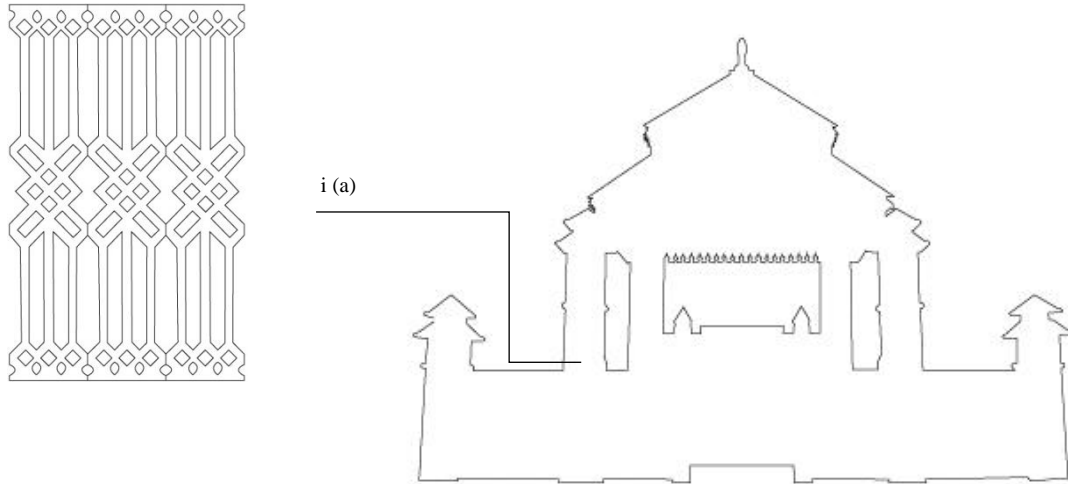
Legs of the Minbar


The feet are the lowest and final part of the human body structure. They also play the crucial role of supporting the entire structure of the minbar to ensure it remains stable and sturdy. Similarly, the feet in the human body structure have an equally important role as the feet in the minbar structure. Without strong feet, it cannot support the weight of the other parts, as the feet function as a balancer, enabling the minbar to stand firmly. The weight and stability of a minbar are also tested by the weight of the khatib who stands on it, serving as a benchmark for its resilience in standing firmly in its place.

The leg structure is divided into three parts, each playing a specific role, visible in the hips, thighs or calves, and feet. Each of these sections has distinct functions: the hips can be identified through carvings at the lower level of the minbar. The second part, the thighs or calves, is seen in the steps, providing the function for the khatib to ascend to the top level of the minbar. Although the thighs or calves are in the middle level between the hips and feet, they still function as crucial parts.

The final structure is the feet, which act as the foundation, providing strength and support to stabilize the minbar at its base. This part is the lowest in the minbar structure and is the first part of the minbar touched or stepped on by the khatib to ascend to the upper levels of the minbar. Although the feet are not highly regarded due to their position at the bottom, their function is significant compared to other parts. Without the feet, a minbar cannot stand independently. This highlights that every part of the main structure plays a vital role through its smaller parts, contributing to the minbar's stability.

No	Main body parts	Small body parts	Minbar Structure
1.	Kaki	Hips	Carving of the bottom of the pulpit
2.		Thigh/Calf	Stairs
3.		leg	Minbar site



No.	Carving Motifs and Descriptions	
i	Hips	
	a. 	
ii	Thigh/Calf	There are no carvings in this area.
iii	Leg	There are no carvings in this area.

The back of the minbar is adorned with carved wooden panels featuring openwork carvings surrounding each section of the minbar. Geometric patterns created using the openwork technique are applied to the minbar walls. The staircase of the minbar is situated in the middle section of its structure. It consists of two steps constructed with mortise and tenon joints without using any nails. The base of the minbar is built similarly to the stone bases of traditional Malay houses, where only the base touches the floor surface of the mosque, just like this minbar. The base of this mosque minbar also demonstrates the use of mortise and tenon joints to connect different parts, resulting in a minbar that stands firmly.

Conclusion

The minbar of Ulul Albab Mosques showcase remarkable craftsmanship, reflecting the precision and expertise of the artisans in creating a variety of unique and fascinating designs. The use of symbols and emblems highlights a high level of intellectual and cultural expression, emphasizing the society's values through art. Muslim artisans produce one-of-a-kind works that reveal their depth of thought, incorporating both explicit and implicit messages. This artistry demonstrates the meticulous detail characteristic of Islamic art, showcasing intricate and delicate depictions. Malay Muslim art portrays a respectful society, where messages are

conveyed indirectly rather than directly, illustrating a considerate approach towards others. This indirect communication encourages deep thought, fostering creativity and innovation within the community. At the minbar of Ulul Albab Mosque in Terengganu, the motifs are often inspired by the natural flora surrounding their environment, such as hibiscus. Traditionally, the use of living motifs, like animals, in wood carvings was avoided due to prohibitions in Islamic art. This practice underscores the cultural and religious sensitivities observed in the creation of these artworks.

This research contributes to enriching our understanding of symbolism and artistic expression in Islamic woodcarving, particularly in the pulpit of the Ulul Albab Mosque, by examining how the artist integrated geometric, floral and calligraphy motifs. It provides insight into the aesthetic principles of traditional Malay woodcarving techniques, contributing to broader art historical and aesthetic theory related to Islamic and Southeast Asian art. In addition, this study emphasizes the importance of preserving traditional crafts, supporting conservation theories and efforts to revive intangible cultural heritage. Emphasizing the importance of wood carving in Malay cultural identity, the research contextualizes the role of the pulpit in religious and social practices. It serves as an educational resource for those interested in Islamic art, architecture, and Malay cultural heritage, in addition to promoting cultural tourism in Terengganu by highlighting the value of minbar carving art, thereby fostering appreciation and support for local artists and cultural institutions. This research enhances documentation of Malay Islamic art, particularly wood carving motifs on religious artifacts, offering detailed descriptions and analyses. It provides interdisciplinary insights by intersecting art history, religious studies, and cultural anthropology, and highlights the relevance of traditional art in contemporary society. The study preserves and promotes Malay wood carving techniques, ensuring future generations retain this knowledge. It empowers the local community by emphasizing the cultural and religious significance of the minbar's carvings, fostering pride and encouraging the revival of traditional crafts. Additionally, the findings inform policy decisions and advocate for funding to support the conservation of Islamic art and architecture in Malaysia, highlighting their cultural and historical value.

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