

Melaka Malay Kampung Rim Mosque: Conserving Traditional-Designed Mosque in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT--- *This paper shows how the unique architecture of Kampung Rim mosque can be appreciated. The scope covers a study of the design elements and architectural features that are unique to the mosque within the Nusantara. This research stated on the approach in creating this structure is different compared to most of the existing mosques currently and previously being built around the state. The concept of neo-archipelago idea to have the Chinese Buddha features in a Muslim mosque was unique.*

Expectations for this study is to reveal the noble efforts of the local Government bodies as well as the mosque committee members involved in maintaining old buildings such as this mosque can indirectly preserve the cultural arts of the local Malays who are the largest ethnic in Malaysia. Efforts should also be given to maintain old buildings; not only religious buildings but also other building types; in the effort to ensure local arts and cultural heritage still exist and can be appreciated by future generations.

Keywords--- mosque conservation, traditional mosque, Malay mosque, heritage

1. INTRODUCTION: KAMPUNG RIM MOSQUE SITE AND RECONSTRUCTION DEVELOPMENT

The mosque of Kampung Rim is located at the edge of the main road leading to the village of Rim towards Nyalas from Jasin town. The mosque is surrounded by the villager's houses of Kampung Rim and being built in 1934 and completed in 1936. There is bus stop right in front of the mosque. According to the interviews carried out with villagers, the mosque site was originally owned privately and donated later on to the public. Encik Jeni bin Haji Husin is the original owner of this property. He is a native of this village. When there is a public demand to build a mosque for villagers usage, he had agreed the land been endowed for the mosque site. The mosque was built on request of the Muslim majority of the people. Costs incurred by the construction of the mosque's own residents on the basis of donations from the public.

Kampung Rim mosque is a mosque used to conduct religious activities such as prayer time congregational *Fardu-Ain* class and reading the Quran and so on for the villagers of Kampung Rim. These activities are carried out in the building of the mosque only. Through time, the activities becoming more and more active and more activities are carried out and the people join these activities. The demand for more space grew, especially for *Fardu-Ain* classes obligatory and reading the Quran. This has led to the addition of an adjacent building used for the class of *Fardu-Ain* and Al-Quran reading classes.



Through times, Kampung Rim residents become increasingly high in the standard of living. Once a quiet street; now busy with the passage of vehicles like cars, motorcycles, public buses and the like. This results in a noise of these vehicles that have an impact on this village mosque as it's located at the edge of Kampung Rim's main street. Therefore, the adjustment is made in order to overcome this problem is for the comfort of the mosque by the villagers. At first; the mosque has no door on its verandah which is also used for prayer. Now, there is a glass door that was added to overcome this problem. Besides the mosque also has changed with the addition of a concrete wall at the verandah portion and it is used for women.



Figure 2: (a) Kampung Rim mosque as it is now after going through several renovations as shown at this 90's photo; (b) The addition for Islamic teaching classroom within mosque compound

An interview with Tan Sri Aziz Tapa a veteran politician and well-known historian who lived in the village, it is well known to public that the mosque is often experienced modification when the need arise.



Figure 3: (a) Glass door addition to overcome the street noise problem; (b) Kg Rim mosque recent photo looking from Jasin-Nyalas main road (source: e-masjid/portal Masjid Negeri Melaka portal)

2. ANALYSIS OF STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS OF KAMPUNG RIM MOSQUE.

From the analysis, it was found that Kampung Rim mosque has architectural heritage mosque featured; more towards the Nusantara architecture features. Like the nearby Kampung Air Baruk mosque (see Fig. 4), in terms of suitability to the climate, the tiered roof of Kampung Rim mosque and the opening around the building's facade on the original design simplifies the process of ventilation. Besides the rise in the mosque roof has a little advantage compared Masjid Kampung Air Baruk. Natural lighting is obtained from this multilevel roof system. Orientation also facing the *qiblah* of common principles used in the construction of all mosques. Here is the buildings metric data analysis of the said mosque. This mosque is shaped like a tiered-roof building which has a roof of a rise. It is an example of a building which brings an element of mosque architecture found in Malacca Town historic area by the coastal part of the state. See Fig 3 (b) shows the Kampung Rim mosque as it is now.



Figure 4: (a) Original photo showing Kampung Air Baruk mosque; (b) Kg Air Baruk mosque recent photo looking from Jasin-Kesang main road (source: kg air baruk blog portal)

2.1. Plan and Building module

The mosque plan shape is a square shaped and surround by each facade porch on the facade facing the Qiblah except tailored to the roof shape. There are certain principles of this plan which is rectangular in shape. Kampung Rim mosque is measuring about 20 meter in length and width. The height is about half-scale of the height of normal building. The building module analysis showing this mosque is composed of five compartments (five bays) and not attached to any other building. Porch is the first and last compartment and the other part is the second compartment to four is the prayer hall.



Figure 5: (a) Series of columns located left and right of the mosque's interior; (b) 'Belian' columns with decorative bright colored tiles

From the early analysis, the basic foundation used for this building is the base paths type. This conclusion was made by observation of this type of building and the beginning of the study (precedent study) in the building that has the same structure as the building like the nearby Air Baruk mosque.

2.2. Wall and Column

Basic building materials for the wall (foundation wall material) and wall material used is from the concrete base of the brick outer plaster. In addition, there are certain parts that are decorated with patterned tiles can be found on the wall. Tile materials are commonly available for the construction of the houses can be found where the shop selling tiles are also available in Jasin town.

Kampung Rim mosque privileges can be said on the pillars. That four 'belian' pillars (the term for columns that support the roof of every mosque in Nusantara). Fig 5 (b) shows highly decorated with patterned tiles that support the tiered roof. In addition there are many columns located at the verandah portion of the mosque as in Fig 5(a) and Fig 6 (a). According to an interview with Tan Sri Aziz Tapa, for each pillar; there is individual being as contributors. These pillars are simpler decoration than the 'belian' columns. Except for 'belian' columns, the others only had base decorated with patterned tiles. Figure 8 shows one of a kind decorative tile pattern on the base of the pole.



Figure 6: (a) Group of column located at the back verandah supporting the roof structure; (b) Decorative tile located at the base of the column

2.3. Part of the Open area

There is an open porch on the mosque facade around the sides and front. It is surrounded by few columns, as in Fig 7(a). However, the porch of this mosque also now not all remain open. There are certain has been covered with concrete wall and that is now a place for worship used for women. In addition there are buildings constructed later as the toilet, religious classes and located at the back of the mosque as shown in Fig 7(b).



Figure 7: (a) Verandah area use for muslimah; (b) Toilet and additional wudu' area at the back of the mosque

2.4. Roof

This type of *Meru* roof for Kampung Rim is suitable to the climate as the roof facilitate ventilation and lighting. The interior is decorated with wooden loop as shown in Fig 8 (a). Kampung Rim mosque has no under roof ceiling structure for its tiered roof. Like many traditional mosques located at the other part of Melaka State, there are decorative roof which is known as *sulur bayung* at each corner of the roof and at the top most part of the tiered roof. However there have been some modifications made that removes real uniqueness of the mosque.



Figure 8: (a) Internal view of the *Meru* Roof; (b) Roof portion of the mosques having modifications as seen from the main road in this 90's photo

2.5. Window

For the window (Fig 9(a)) at Kampung Rim mosque, there is no singularity in the architecture feature. This is because the shape of the windows with semicircular elements of stained glass and glass lattice windows of modern forms that are commonly used today by fine homes can be found in this mosque. According to physical observation on the window; the original window that has changed in meeting current market trend with no exciting finish. The floor is made of concrete floor with the interior finishing of the internal part mostly covered by carpet include the porch and the main prayer space

2.6. *Mihrab*

The *mihrab* where the imam leading the congregational prayer normally indicated by the domed like volume which also indicated the direction of the *Qiblah*. However in Kampung Rim mosque, the *mihrab* is not having the domed-like effect and it is not clearly visible. The Kaaba direction only can be best pictured during the prayer that indicates the orientation of the mosque's *mihrab* in front of the imam during the prayer congregation done while facing the *Qiblah*. Besides the mosque *mihrab* position; one can be ascertained there with full window (full height window), which provides natural lighting to this space in the mosque wall facing the *Qiblah*. In addition, the position of the pulpit also helps to identify the location of the sanctuary.



Figure 9: (a) Kampung Rim mosque's typical window; (b) *Mihrab* area in front of the mosque's *mimbar*.

2.7. *Mimbar*

For the pulpit (where the sermon priest) this mosque has huge ceiling height. Its design is of a modern design that is made of concrete and decorated with modern tiles. No special architectural feature symbolizes the Nusantara mosque identity indicated by this pulpit. It is positioned in front of the prayer room facing the *Qiblah* and the positioned is somehow fixed (see Fig 9 (b)).

2.8. *Main door gate*

The mosque gates originally made of concrete building materials. The roof is a flat roof made also of concrete. Fig 10 (a) shows the main door at the mosque in the old photograph of the original gate. However, modifications have occurred that caused this gate lose its identity and replaced with concrete gates that open widely to highlight the main door. Roof structure has also changed to the corrugated metal roof. From the observations, the modification done to the original porch on the main road due to the expansion of Kampung Rim mosque and additional new main glass door with concrete wall has been erected facing the main road.



Figure 10: (a) Old photo showing the original front porch main entrance; (b) Recent photo showing metal gate installed after the glass door at main entrance

2.9. *Tower*

One of the features of this Kampung Rim mosque is the mosque minaret tower which is a key component of the mosque. One of the use of the tower at Kampung Rim mosque is to put a sound system that azan can be heard from the distance. The tower is made of concrete structure and there is a simple geometric shaped with the ornament punch through it. The tower is square and features eight joining dome at the top. It is supported by a number of groups of columns order located around the verandah area. Photo at Fig 11 (b) show an involved cluster pillars to support the structure of the tower.



Figure 11: (a) Kampung Rim mosque's tower; (b) Group of column supporting the tower

2.10. Crown

The crown is the most special details for every traditional Melaka Mosque. Like other traditional mosques in Malacca that it consists of three floors ridge; the crown's dome is one of the art works the Malays who contributed into the religious building. Each level represents a certain level submission to ALLAH. The Kampung Rim mosque's dome is also made of the same concrete materials such as the nearby Kampung Air Baruk mosque. But there is a difference in design pattern according to its creator tastes. If seen carefully, this crown shape that resembles a dragon has been modified and unique. This also indicated that the design of this mosque is affected by Buddhism influence as for the design of its crown.



Figure 12: (a) The crown of Kampung Rim mosque; (b) *Perabung/sulur bayung* of the mosque.

2.11. Ridge/*sulur bayung*

Ridge is a decorative or fine finish for the Malay Archipelago roof Mosque type. It is also known as *sulur bayung*. *Sulur Bayung* for Kampung Rim mosque is similar in the form to other traditional mosques in Melaka. For this Kampung Rim mosque, its *sulur bayung* also made of concrete and the carving shapes are more crisp and clear. It shapes inspired the creation of this *sulur bayung* taken from a type of wild plants by the river. It also can describes as from a person during the fist while doing last *tahhiyat* There are also sources that say that this is one sign of the influence of Buddhism on the mosque of this kind. This can be seen against the pattern that resembles a dragon that has been modified.

3. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS FINDING

Finding of this analysis can be summarized that Kampung Rim Mosque had several special architectural features as well as the design of interior space. However, the uniqueness of this mosque can be unnoticed after its components have undergone extensive renovation cause the beauty of its architectural features and structural forms have been lost.

4. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Conclusions from this research found that Kampung Rim mosque has a distinctive architectural beauty and has big potential to be preserved by the conservation body. Conservation project will allow the architecture of Kampung Rim mosque back to its original state and can be appreciated on its retention of original form. With typical mosques around the world to make the dome as the main element, the Mosque of Kampung Rim is a unique show with no dome. Its design is more akin to the influence of Chinese Buddhism. The oriental influences on its architectural design show the kind of traditional Malay mosque which still can be found around this particular region. This mosque must be retained to its original form as to highlight the uniqueness of the vernacular mosque architecture heritage for future generations to admire.

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