

Applied Art and Design

Application and Appreciation
of Islamic Heritage in
Contemporary Context

Mandana Barkeshli



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CHAPTER ONE

THE VERNACULAR MOSQUES OF THE MALAY WORLD: CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC ASPIRATIONS

Harlina Md Sharif

Hazman Hazumi

ABSTRACT

This study looks into the spatial arrangements provided by vernacular mosques of the Malay World and how they respond to the liturgical requirements of a mosque in Islam. Through an analytical study done on the form and function of over forty selected mosques across the Island Southeast Asia, this chapter summarises the findings which demonstrate the originality and ingenuity of indigenous designs which efficiently accommodate religious requirements using local architectural repertoire.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Island Southeast Asia – historically known as the Malay World – is the region which spreads over 13,000 islands stretching around 3500 miles from the north-west tip of Sumatra to Irian Jaya. Set in between the Indian Ocean and the China Sea with mountains, jungles, rivers, sea and the humidity of the climate as part of the natural environment. It produces a wide range of spectacular languages in vernacular architecture as a result of the harmony between human beings and the environment.

The vernacular architecture of the Malay World is characterized by extended line of the roof, often with outward sloping gables supported by timber posts which form the main structural components. This structural configuration generates a unique archetypal form consisting of a rectangular or square structure raised on main wooden posts with pitched roofs often culturally identifiable to the various ethnic groups of the region. The constructional system which emphasizes the timber framing is characterized by its sophisticated jointing techniques demonstrated in the absence of nails and intelligent methods of distributing dead loads of the building. Variations are also witnessed between regions which are prone to seismic activities such as Toraja and Nias, and non-volcanic regions such as the Malay Peninsula – in which massive columns and equally massive diagonal struts are used as stabilizers in the first, while architecture of the later is distinguished for its slim and skeletal framing members (Figure 1 & 2).