Abstract

Architecture academics, historians and traditionalists relished in the nostalgic past of old traditional timber masjid architecture making a comeback to our rural landscape currently sprinkled with colonial, mughal-Indonesian, Sayuk, hybrid and contemporary masjid architecture in Malaysia. Through community work, opportunity that allows KAED team to design and construct this dream through means eagerly spread in front of us, a journey was made with Allah's grace to a village of Belukar Luas, Kelantan. The objective was to extend an existing little masjid of Indian remicke from a 200-300 jamaah capacity to additional 500 jamaah with Imam's office, Sultan's room, new entrances, new toilets, ablutions separate for different gender, disable friendly, elderly friendly, child friendly, women friendly and others. The vital mission was to accomplish the practical function of capacity then the intangible function of shaping the masjid to be in harmony with its natural surroundings of green rice fields, blissful hills and farming activities - a sustainable scene. Whilst listening to the Masjid committee's demands and expectations, the team embarked on literature review of traditional masjid of the region with case studies and visits to nearby oldest raised timber masjid of the country the Masjid Kampung Laut. Contemporary traditional masjid was added on the visit list knowing very well that “modern” means “contemporary and comfortable” with selected spaces identified as needing a new feel. Several designs were drawn based on the “old” masjid using scale and proportion as well as experimenting on the building material and construction method. Cost and skills on the part of the contractor were the biggest hurdle and challenge in realising the dream. Cost cutting exercise participated by the Masjid committee, the contractor and the consulting team reduces the original design in an attempt to economise with much apprehension. Outside philanthropist and local qariahs donated to the construction in kinds and cash. The findings of the whole exercise, apart from costs, the changes to design concepts, availability of material and local craftsmen, was the local acceptance as the paramount factor to the shaping of the masjid as it complete its phase. A job is done but not without its constraints and unexpected outcomes. The objective of the project is realised in the physical entity space for the additional 500 jamaah. Findings made on the journey from theory to practice met through contemporary changes that may have occurred during the establishment of the “old” grand masjid as well. No literature mentioned explicitly on its mode of construction or cost per se, but perhaps knowing the kindred spirit of the scholars then, accepting the phenomena of the unforeseen as destiny, could be a contributing factor to the “how” and help to introduce the serene architecture of traditional masjid today, wahalaum

Introduction

The ideal of theory and the honesty of reality are always in constant battle in architecture where ideas, ideals, needs expectations, perceptions, acceptance and resources are not always in a balance. The Masjid Al Falah extension project, for which KAED had the opportunity to be involved from initiation to completion, became a welcome ground to test the theory of perception and acceptance in reliving the traditional masjid architecture of the old Malay world versus the existing adopted architecture of the Middle Eastern, Indian and Eclectic west, while facilitating the functional capacity requirements of the community.

The objective in undertaking the tasks were two folds:

1. To produce the facility to meet the functional requirements of the Masjid Committee with additional space for 500 jamaah (practical functional reality-tangible) - and, at the same time
2. To test the acceptance of the traditional "Nusantara" masjid architecture from current indianised form.

Methodology

The project was initiated in two prongs to meet the above objectives simultaneously. As there were no project brief for the masjids but simply verbal requirements by the Masjid Committee, the team, carried out

(i) a quick research through :-

- Interviews on the masjid committee while conducting site analysis; getting feedback and further data from meetings with the relevant authorities and stake holders of the project; carried out case studies of the local masjid available in the locality from traditional ancient to contemporary vernacular; and conduct literature review on the subject matter from quality of space, meaning of form, method and construction details; and,

(ii) Design development through :-

- producing alternative drawings, sketches as well as a model for communicating ideas and proposals; draw out construction drawings for construction, coordinate with other specialist drawings and structural system and the mechanical and electrical requirements, and managed construction through periodical supervision, till handing over, upon completion.

Analysis & Findings

The processes were analysed and in a nut shell drew the following findings:

The working model makes the best communication tool to transmit information among consultants and the stakeholders, holders as drawings and sketches were subjected to different understandings of perceptions.

The idea of traditional masjid for the community met no rejection by the community, who had no preference to type of masjid as long as it can serve the functions stipulated and aesthetically pleasing. Bridging theory and practice met challenges of cost, craftsmen, building material as well as awareness in female gender in the team, apart from exposing the real situation of community; capacity of the builder chosen by the community.

The project opens avenue to questions and issues in realities to theory in reality, especially in working with the community with mixed background and exposures, without a project brief. The project had met its objectives of capacity to the community’s delight and perception of the architect in scale, colour, material and ornamentation, that warmed the qariahs. The shaping of the architecture to ideal standards on real foundation for sustainability, still remain elusive due to limited resources in funds, skilled craftsmen, material and while at the same time, needed to meet the concept of comfort and contemporary aesthetics as expected by the same community, on the ideals of the iiium 2012.

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References


