

A Study on Decorative Motifs of Paloh Mosque *Mimbar* in Perak

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DOI: 10.47750/pnr.2022.13.S09.690

Abstract

This study focused on identifying the decorative motifs in the *mimbar* mosques in Perak before the independence era. The *mimbar* is where the preacher delivers his usual serm before Friday prayers. *Mimbar* can liken the throne because of the higher position of the Imam who leads the prayers in the mosque. The first *mimbar* in Islam was made of date palms and had only three steps. Most *mimbar* in Malaya are constructed using strong wood materials, and the size of the mosque determines the height of the design. This study shows a lack of research on the motifs of *mimbar*; thus, the objective of this study is to identify the motifs has been found on the *mimbar* concentrated in the Paloh Mosque only. This study used a qualitative method that uses interviews and observations. Based on Al-Ghazali's theory, it is more toward the oneness and oneness of God. Thus, this research will help future generations obtain information on the design and meaning found in the motifs in Malaysia and can be a reference material for developing mosque architecture motifs in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Mimbar*, Motif, Mosque, Decorative

Introduction

The architecture and design of buildings are constantly changing around the world. These developmental change factors are due to conditions involving environmental elements. Human life in this world is in line with the growth of nature and man. The natural environment also plays a role in affecting human behavior that shapes culture. Thus, culture can help humans produce architecture and design that is constantly evolving in line with the development of human thought. The Islamic approach in Malay culture has various methods in spreading Islam, namely values and practical practices, into the Malay world. Islam and its historical angle spread through Persian Arabia, India, China, and the Malay Archipelago traders. Through these international relations, the impact on the development of Islam, including intermarriage, moral values, leadership attitudes, and ideas of thought, are influences and cultures absorbed into Malaya. Islam spread to the Malay Archipelago before the existence of the Malacca Malay Empire. It shows that the spread of Islam has been going on in the region for the past 500 years. Due to the relatively widespread expansion of Islam, there were many influences on the design of old buildings and ancient mosques. Peninsular has been visited by Islamic preachers who come from various places. The teachings of Islam have spread and influenced the elements of Islamic design. They bring cultural aspects from their origin country and then absorb and adapt to local influences. The beauty of the interior and exterior design of the mosque looks attractive due to the local community at that time. Each mosque displays the values and culture practiced by a community of outside influences. The earliest mosques after the 15th century have shown

numerous Hindu architectural elements after the arrival of Islam (Abdul Halim Nasir, 1995). According to Zainudin and Norhayati (2012), they also use their cultural aspects in the mosques they build. As a result of cultural diversity, various types of decorative mosque *mimbar* designs was created.

The designs and motifs that appeared in the Malay world symbolize the maturity of society in ancient times. Each type of motif has its meaning. Its decorative motifs are based on philosophy, legend, and history. These symbols exist in visual design, and some do not. These visual symbols are usually decorative forms and colors. The visually invisible characters usually involve the religious ritual activities of the local community. The basic pattern motif repeated according to the position's suitability. According to Othman (2000), a 'motif in the art of wood carving means a piece of jewellery carved in two or three dimensions, then arranged and composed into a specific pattern or decorative pattern.' These motifs are carved in the mosque's *mimbar*, mihrab, doors, windows, walls, and ceilings.

Problem Statement

The lack of research on mosque *mimbar* motifs in Malaysia is due to the rapid development today. The development of wood carving in the Malay world was no longer used as a decorative design on doors, palaces, mosques, and houses as artistic and aesthetic art and local culture and society's spirit, symbol, and philosophy. Due to the lack of documentation in this research, the historical heritage of the past has been forgotten. According to Syarifah Fatimah Zubir (1980), society now lacks an understanding of the symbols and meanings associated with artistic elements from traditional handicrafts such as wood carving. Thus, understanding the meaning of wood carving art greatly influences sculptors and spectators, especially art maker, in understanding the actual value of motifs and patterns. In this case, motifs and designs are also processed from analogy related to natural elements that become abstract to make the artwork more beautiful (Yahya, 1995).

Literature Review

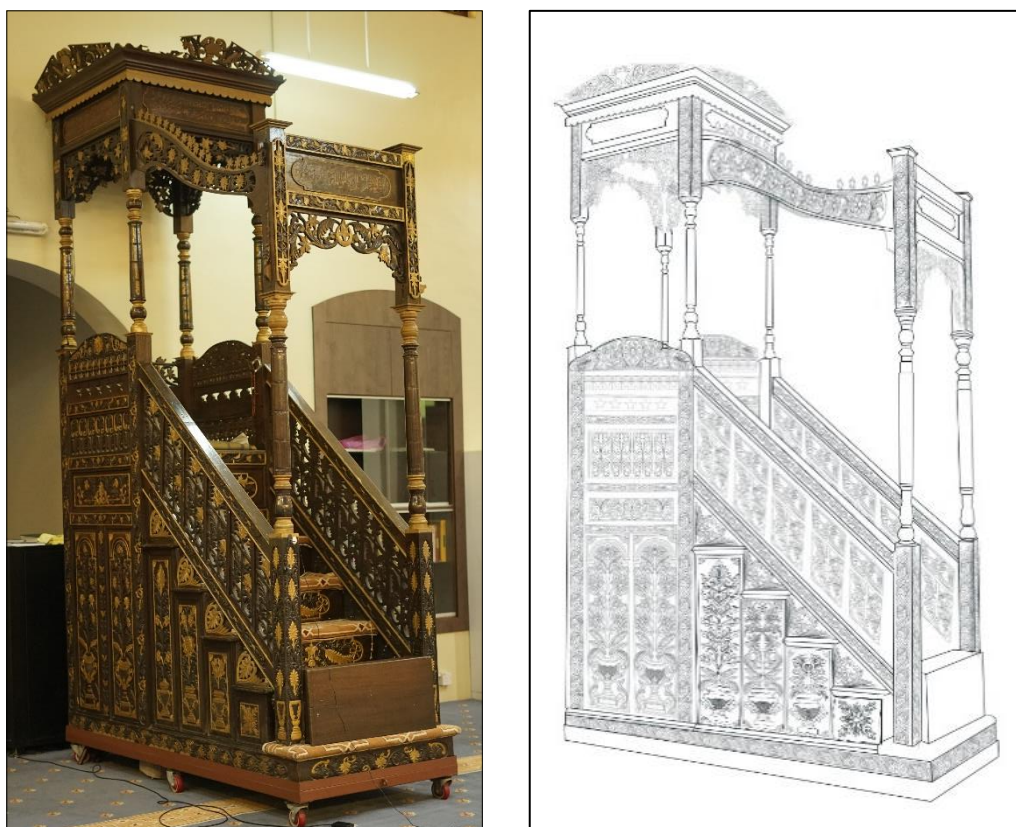
The concept of Islamic thought requires several essential aspects that determine the worldview of Islamic civilization. According to Prof Syed Naquib Al Attas, he has interpreted Islamic civilization is a state that reaches a level of refinement in life by having a noble culture for the whole society. The existence of Islam in the Malay world has succeeded in shaping the new world of the Malay community in the region. In Islam, the *mimbar* is where the preacher delivers a sermon. The first *mimbar* in Islam was built by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who delivered his sermon while leaning on a palm tree pillar in a mosque in Medina. The *mimbar* is a three-step platform (Himatu Mardiah, 2015). This situation changed to 6 when Marwan bin Hakam realized that more and more people were coming to hear Rasulullah give his sermons. The height of the *mimbar* depends on the width of a mosque. According to Frishman (2002), the definition of a *mimbar* is usually placed to the right of the mihrab and consists of stairs of varying heights. The *mimbar* is usually in front of the prayer hall of the mosque. The *mimbar* is used to deliver sermons, especially on Friday prayers, Hari Raya Aidilfitri and Hari Raya Aidiladha.

There are two types of decorative designs that have been used to decorate mosques, namely wood carvings and calligraphy. Decorative designs of wood carvings are usually located at the head of doors, windows, hallways between the hall and verandas, *mimbars*, and roofs. Wood carvings also consist of a single pattern or a complete pattern. Single pattern motifs indicate independent, unbound, and interconnected styles: Flora, calligraphy, cosmos, material nature, and geometry elements. The movement of the entire pattern is not much but convoluted and has a frame. The complete pattern combines all the elements in one complete engraving form. This pattern emphasizes the elements of flora with stems, leaves, flowers, and fruit. These wood carving elements consist of living things, elements of the cosmos, calligraphy, and flora. The cosmos has inspired Malay carvers to create designs featuring sun, moon, and star motifs, sometimes seen adorned by *mimbars* in mosques. The arabesque '*awan-larat*' is another commonly used Malay motif in decorating the design of the *mimbar*. Plants are widely featured in Malay woodcarvings because of their close association with daily life. Various parts of plants and trees, including leaves, roots, creepers, fruits, flowers, and branches, appear. Among other popular motifs are

'ketam guri', 'sulur bayung', bamboo shoots, 'bunga matahari'(sunflower), and sulur kacang. The design emanated from a hidden central seed (which represents God) and sprouts identical curling foliage branching out left and right (which shows God's creations in pairs). For generations, the Malay world views were constricted by thoughts and beliefs.





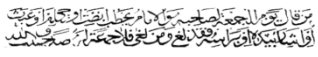









Data Analysis and Finding

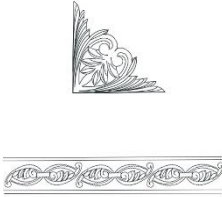
Figure 1: Paloh Mosque *Mimbar*, Perak



Based on the carving symbols shown to illustrate the cultural and historical significance of making pulpits. There is an arrangement of the foliage, the flowers, and decorations. The cosmology element is also found intersecting within the space. It shows the height of knowledge and skills of the Malays in making this pulpit. Looking at the design of the pulpit, it certainly portrays invaluable talent, skills, and knowledge of the craftsmen. The form and symbols are not meant for its physical appearances, but it was built for the society to understand its implicit meaning. It shows the concept of intimacy, delicateness, unity and completeness. Means, it is a transforming process of understanding allegorical and symbolism. The sense of beauty involves the implicit meanings and its philosophy. Basically, the designs of the pulpit give a meaningful impact to society. Within the transcendental space, they focus on exploring spiritual and psychological eloquent questions of humans' well-being and flourishing. Spirituality is an important component in the healing and protection of the mind. The spiritual tradition contains a wide variety of appreciation, practices and beliefs that can be analysed for therapeutic benefits.

Table 1: Motifs of Paloh Mosque *Mimbar*

Actual Photo	Tracing Outline	Motif
		<p>Flora Motifs</p>  <p><i>Daun Sesayap</i></p>
		<p>Calligraphy Motif - Khat Thuluth</p>
		<p>Flora Motifs</p>  <p><i>Bunga Matahari</i> <i>Bunga Kemboja</i> Acanthus leaf</p>
		<p>Flora Motifs</p>  <p>Acanthus leaf Acanthus leaf</p>
		<p>Flora Motifs</p>  <p><i>Bunga Matahari</i> Acanthus leaf</p>



Flora Motifs



Acanthus leaf Acanthus leaf



Flora Motifs

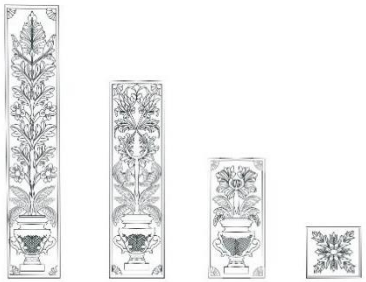


Acanthus leaf leaf Acanthus

Cosmos Motifs



Moon / Star
















Flora Motifs

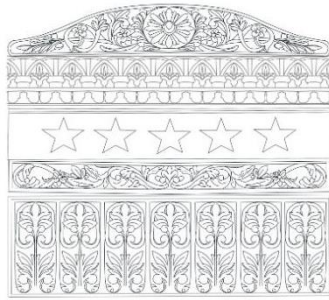


Bunga *Bunga*

Matahari *Matahari*



 	  	<p><i>Matahari leaf</i> <i>Matahari leaf</i> <i>Bunga Matahari</i></p> <p>Still Life Motif</p>  <p><i>Vase</i></p> <p>Flora Motifs</p>   <p><i>Bunga Matahari</i> <i>Acanthus leaf</i></p>  <p><i>Acanthus leaf</i></p> <p>Flora Motifs</p>   <p><i>Acanthus leaf</i> <i>Acanthus leaf</i></p> <p>Flora Motifs</p>   <p><i>Bunga Matahari</i> <i>Bunga Matahari</i></p>
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Still Life Motif



Vase

Flora Motifs



Bunga Matahari
Acanthus leaf

Matahari leaf



Bunga Kemboja

Cosmos Motifs



Star

Flora Motifs



Sakura leaf / Acanthus
Kemboja

Bunga

Flora Motifs

		 <p data-bbox="986 322 1150 353"><i>Bunga Tanjung</i></p> <p data-bbox="1222 322 1406 353"><i>Bunga Matahari</i></p>
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Table 2: Classification of Paloh *Mimbar* Motifs

Flora Motif	Cosmos Motif	Calligraphy Motif	Still Life Motif
<i>Bunga Matahari</i>	Moon	<i>Khat Thuluth</i>	Vase
<i>Bunga Kemboja</i>	Star		
<i>Bunga Sakura</i>			
<i>Bunga Tanjung</i>			
<i>Daun Sesayap</i>			
<i>Matahari Leaf</i>			
Acanthus Leaf			

Discussion

The results of the studies that have been conducted by researchers found that there are various types of motif at Paloh Mosque *mimbar* like flora motif, calligraphy motif, still life motifs and also cosmos motif. Types of local plants that are processed into carved motifs. The flora motif that have been found in this *mimbar* is *Bunga Matahari* (sunflower), *Bunga Kemboja* (frangipani), *Bunga Sakura* (cherry blossom), *Bunga Tanjung* (mimusops elengi), *Daun Sesayap*, Matahari leaf and Acanthus leaf. Moon and Star are the most often Cosmos motifs that have been used on wood carving and the repetition of still life motifs are vases. Calligraphy motif that have been carved in this *mimbar* is Khat Thuluth. It is shown that Islam was spread in Malay world since 18th century. Flora and calligraphy motifs are most widely used because they are in line with Islamic teachings that prohibit the use of figurine-shaped motifs. The results of the study also found that the motives used were selected from plants around the area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, history and religion have a considerable influence on the daily lives of its people. The two are related to each other and cannot be separated because history cannot be made without the influence of religion, and religion cannot flourish without history. From an architectural perspective, history shows how the concept of architecture works in and is assimilated with local culture and shapes the evolution of architecture only due to cultural clashes. For religion, philosophy and religion eventually become an important part of building a monument or building. Similarly, in the architecture and decoration of the Malay world, for the sake of changes that occur due to the effects of circulation and religion, the source of Malay architecture is unique because it is taken from various cultures. It started with architecture influenced by Hindu-Buddhist elements and then gradually transformed into architecture according to Islamic references and eventually changed the concept of western architecture. This needs to be protected to ensure that the excellence of Malay Architecture is preserved forever.

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