

Analyzing architectural and cultural elements of Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim, Muar, Johor

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received July 06, 2023 Received in revised form Dec. 03, 2023 Accepted February 06, 2024 Available online April 01, 2024</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Heritage Historical Javanese culture Mosque Traditional cultural elements</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Nuralyia Natasha binti Shahridzal School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia Email: natasha.nuralyia@student.usm.my ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6165-2132</p>	<p><i>The Sultan Ibrahim Mosque serves as the Muar neighborhood's 'Jewel' is situated conterminous to the Sultan of Johor's Palace located by the Muar River. Despite Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim's being a heritage structure in Muar with the influence of Victorian architecture combines with local influence, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the traditional Javanese cultural elements with tangible and intangible material culture resulted in the knowledge that contributes to the mosque's character and its function in the community. The objective is to analyze and identify the cultural fundamental features of the mosque that exhibit Javanese influences and to explore the mosque's role in fostering interfaith discussion and community outreach, as well as how it affects the social and cultural fabric of the community. A theoretical framework based on cultural studies and heritage studies, that include cultural construction, cultural transmission, and heritage management. To focus on the study to identify the possible advantages of preserving and promoting the cultural components of this mosque, such as fostering religious dialogue, improving cultural tourism, and enhancing the feeling of cultural identity in the community. Methods for this research include thematic analysis and anthology on the case study site to gain and gather more information. The findings of this study will provide Javanese traditional cultural elements of this mosque valuable perceptivity. This study can increase the sense of cultural identity in the community and foster greater social cohesiveness.</i></p>

Introduction

Muar district is in the northwest Johor state, Malaysia. The district includes Tangkak's minor district as well as Muar City. The town played a strategic role as a trading centre and as a gateway to the Malay Peninsula. The British developed Muar as an administrative centre and further expanded its commercial activities. The presence of Javanese people in Muar, Johor, can be traced back to historical migrations and cultural exchange between Java and Malay Peninsula. (Tun 2012) The Dutch encourage the migration of

Javanese people to other parts of their colonial territories to work on plantations and other industries (Tun 2012). Masjid Jamek Muar also known as Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim was the first name given in conjunction with the construction of the mosque and it is the oldest mosque in the Muar District. This can require becoming familiar with the local customs associated with the traditional cultural components that have changed over time. This mosque is squared-shaped and has a roof with five ridges (*bumbung perabung lima*). This mosque combines conventional Western influence with

local influence. The architecture of this mosque has a Victorian influence. The addition of fascia boards inspired by bamboo shoots and the moon and star symbol on the tower, which was the official insignia of a mosque at that time, are examples of some local architectural influences. Ionic columns and Doric columns, two different types of columns, were utilized in the construction of this mosque. Minor adjustments have been made to the ionic column to accommodate the mosque's design, including the installation of the moon and star. To provide the mosque's interior with a diversity of looks, arches are used as a decorative element. One of the oldest mosques that have a great Javanese architectural style is Demak Great Mosque located in Central Java. It is a classic excellent example of a traditional Javanese mosque that was believed to be built by Wali Songo (Bocah tajir 2018; Pariwisata 2021).

There is a lack of in-depth analysis of the traditional architectural and cultural elements of tangible and intangible resulting in the knowledge of the cultural elements that contribute to the mosque's character and its function in the community. The term traditional cultural expression refers to the work of indigenous people and traditional communities. The cultural elements review a community's cultural and social background and contain characteristic elements of a community's heritage (Singh and Associates 2012). The architectural character of any heritage buildings is one of the crucial aspects that need to be assessed to maintain the sustainability of the building's preservation and significantly affect the visual perception of the building. (Rosrinda Roslan 2018). Defined 'cultural heritage significance' as cultural heritage having aesthetic, archeological, architectural, cultural, historical value (Rosrinda Roslan 2018). The existence of the culture as a system of activities is a social activity that individuals in a social pattern. This system consists of human activities that interact and communicate continuously with each other. This cultural entity is concrete, can be photographed and can be seen. Cultural elements can provide insights into the local heritage and Islamic influences in the region. Therefore, using traditional elements in architecture helps to recognize the traditional characteristics and culture (Peng and Shin 2013).

Based on cultural studies and heritage studies. These two fields include cultural construction, cultural transmission, and heritage management.

Cultural construction should be conducted adhering to the principle of "overarching and guiding", "materialization and enrichment", and "specificity and characteristic" (WANG Lian-sen 2016). Cumulative cultural transmission led to a cultural evolution process with great adaptive value (Castro and Toro 2010). In addition, the findings highlight the significance of the experientially based approach to the management of heritage sites (Porja, Reichel, and Cohen 2011).

Literature review

Javanese culture

The Johor population aggregated from several sub-ethnic Malays. The largest percentage is the Javanese origin (Jandra et al. 2016). According to the history, they came to Johor as part of the suggestion and efforts by Temenggong Daing Ibrahim (1810-1862) (Tun 2012). However, not all of them were coming from the marhein, or farmer-origin, Javanese from the Java Island. There are from the well-educated Islamic teacher, preacher as well as farmers. The main reason to bring the Javanese and Chinese workers or coolies to operate the Gambir plantation was through the *kankar* system which he introduced (Jandra et al. 2016). The Javanese is one of the longest dwelling ethnics in Johor. At the beginning, most of Johor, Selangor, and Perak. The first site was believed to be around Padang, Parit Jawa, Muar (Jandra et al. 2016). The Javanese community in Muar Johor has a distinct socio-cultural identity shaped by their Javanese culture and the local Malaysia context. As in Johor, Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim have the committee responsible for overseeing the management and operations of the mosque. Since the beginning, the process of Islamization has indeed shown a high appreciation of local wisdom or culture (Arif 2015). The development of Islam in Indonesia is marked by the existence of a mosque. Mosques can also be understood with a building that represents the physical aspects of Islamic culture. Demak is one of the centres of the spread of Islam on the island of Java, the historical evidence that is still strong today is the great Demak Mosque (Andriani et al. 2019).

Mosque in community

The social organization within the cultural elements refers to the structure, roles and relationships that exist within the mosque community and the site context. Conceptually, mosque play many roles and functions in every

aspect of life during the era of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (Nizaita 2019). Contrary to popular public conception, the role of the mosque in the lives of Muslim is multifaceted and serves as the centrepiece from which most of the socialization, across variety formal and informal networks, occurs (Ameera 2014; Al-Ghazali 2018). Inherent multiculturalism in Indonesian culture provides a strong foundation for interfaith activists in responding to cultural and religious differences (Jamaludin 2020). The dual effect situation shapes recommendations like enhancement of the multidimensional use of the mosque, strengthen the community service role of the mosque, and developing design of modern mosques to fulfil Muslim requirements with 21st century measures and endorse Islamic values through architecture (Kareem 2012). The study indicate that the mosque can carry out social roles and functions well as a centre for community religious activities (Sutriyono 2021). Mosque act as place for performing salah, having meetings or discussion, proposing opinions or complaint regarding the community (Nizaita 2019). The mosque can be the centre of activity of all community groups its activities are not limited to religious activities only but cover other social (Syakirin 2018). The findings show that through time visionary management has turned the mosque in terms of its activities and design in context towards its urban setting as well as into inclusivism within the social structure (Kevin 2018). Mosque can facilitate and serve the society better by harnessing network of mosque, which guide to the developing Islamic city (Ammar 2015). In addition to the functional roles, mosque architectural elements could be used as identity elements of the Islamic city, microclimatic modifiers, and linking tools between the past and the present (O. Asfour 2016). This study suggests immersing both social and cultural bases surrounding the mosque for a sustainable reform effort (Musahadi 2018).

Cultural elements

Our tribal traditions, which demonstrates the diversity of ethnic heritage, brings forth the legacy of obtaining and inspiring the preservation of a variety of cultural elements, including traits, attitudes, values, traditions, beliefs, customs, practices, social norms, landscape, religion, arts and literature, handicraft, sculpture, language, and idea for a century or decade (Kalvie 2021). In the age of innovation and multiculturalism the

elements of culture play important roles. With the various developments in this era of modernity in culture, numerous changes, and advancements in the elements of culture (Kalvie 2021). Although culture and elements of culture are two distinct concepts, they are still inextricably intertwined. It is quite challenging for one to live without the other because they have been blended into one another. They seek to maintain the culture by favorably responding, supporting, and generating one another (Culture and Capisinio 2021). It is noted that culture in the value aspect is a kind of social mechanism that allows a person to navigate the right (socially approved) decision (S. Petrova 2021). In Malaysia, there are many heritage buildings with architectural and historical significance influenced by several architectural styles (N. H Salleh, A. G Ahmad 2009). A well-maintained heritage building enhances the quality of life for everyone in the community, contribute to generation and provide a source of local pride and sense of place (Forsyth 2007). According to Nelson (1982) there a three-step approach that can be used by anyone to identify the architectural character of the heritage building which are by identifying the overall visual aspects, the character at close range and style of the interior spaces, features and finishes.

Methods

The research is extracted from the scope of anthropology (Abdel-Hadi 2012). 'Cultural anthropologists' concentrate on the symbolic forms that individuals use to communicate how they see themselves as well as the cultural frameworks that have an impact on regional cultural frameworks that exist. One significant aspect of cultural anthropology is the focus on symbolic forms, which include language, rituals, art, and other expressive mediums that communities employ to communicate their self-perception and navigate the cultural framework. The contribution to the theoretical framework and debates within the discipline. It develops concepts and models to understand and analyze culture, social systems, identity formation, and other key aspects of human societies.

Thematic survey is a qualitative research method used in identifying, exploring, and interpreting patterns, themes, and meanings within the dataset. This method will provide a






systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data and to gain deeper research of this paper. This research will focus on an inductive approach which allows themes and patterns to emerge from data rather than imposing preconceived notions or theories. The iterative process includes where the researcher will move back and forth between the data, emerging themes, and the overall research question. Engaging in thematic analysis recognizes the perspective, biases, and preconceptions that may influence the interpretation of the data. These key principles involve acknowledging and reflecting on these to maintain a balanced and unbiased analysis.

Case studies

Socio-culture encompasses various components that shape culture's unique

characteristics and contribute to overall cultural heritage. Identifying the possible advantages of preserving and promoting this cultural element of this mosque and the fabric of the community, such as encouraging religious tolerance, enhancing cultural tourism, and strengthening the community's sense of cultural identity. The Javanese elements of culture can be observed in various aspects. Table 1 shows each of the element's overview to analyse and identify in-depth the traditional Javanese cultural elements resulted in the knowledge that contributes to the mosque's character and its function in the community. By examining each element in table 1, it can provide a deeper understanding of this research:

Table 1. Criteria and selection of Mosque

List of Mosque	Criteria of selection			
	Age of the Mosque	Related to the Javanese community	Importance to the Javanese community	Johor Malay Sultanate
1. Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim, Muar, Johor 	15 February 1925 98 years old	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Masjid Batak Rabbit, Teluk Intan, Perak 	1885 138 years old	No	No	No
3. Masjid Jamek Sultan Hishamuddin Sabak Bernam, Selangor 	11 Agustus 1989 34 years old	Yes	Yes	No
4. Masjid Kampung Tebuk Mufrad, Sabak Bernam, Selangor. 	1914 109 years old	Yes	Yes	No
5. Masjid Abbasiyah, Bagan Datoh, Perak. 	1903 120 years old	Yes	Yes	Yes

Results and discussion

Based on the table, the architectural and cultural components refer to the various elements that constitute a culture and contribute to its distinct identity. The selection of the mosques in the case study for the research refers to the fact that the current number of Javanese population origin is quite large in that specific area of Selangor and Perak other than Muar, Johor. These elements encompass a wide range of tangible and intangible aspects of culture. The first element of culture stated is architecture. Javanese mosque architecture often showcases a blend of Islamic and Javanese influence architectural styles. Based on the case studies, there are a few mosques that have a Javanese element. The influence of Javanese architecture that most the architect refers to is the Demak Great Mosque as it is mainly the focal point on the design of roofs of all mosques except for Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim and Masjid Jamek Parit Jawa and Masjid Jamek Sultan Hishammudin. The main room of Demak Grand Mosque has a square floor plan with three layers of roof. The dominance of the three layers of the roof is the uniqueness of this Demak Mosque and according to the Javanese community, tajug roof was used for sacred buildings such as mosques (Ashadi, Antariksa, and Salura 2015). The mosque refers to Demak Mosque as a reference for the architecture of the mosque can be related to the surrounding of the local community of Java. The construction of the Javanese mosque using local materials and local craftsmanship techniques. Traditional local materials such as teak wood, stone, and terracotta tiles are commonly employed in mosque construction. Skilled artisans incorporate traditional Javanese wood carving and stone carving techniques, adding intricate motifs and patterns to the mosque's exterior and interior.

Cultural practices and customs practices find expression within the mosque. For instance, during special occasions or Islamic holidays such as Awal Muharram, the local community of Javanese Muslims will gather to celebrate it at the mosque. All mosques in the case study mostly will have this cultural practice tradition. Other activities would be incorporated with the traditional Javanese cultural performances, such as wayang kulit (shadow puppetry) as part of mosque events and celebrations. These elements of cultural performance will add a distinct

Javanese flavor to the religious gatherings and create a sense of cultural continuity.

The elements of the culture of spiritual practices and rituals often integrate with Javanese Muslims in that specific area based on the case study. For example, the community may engage in spiritual practices like meditation or recitation of specific prayers, alongside traditional Islamic prayers, as a means of connecting with their Javanese cultural heritage and expressing their spirituality.

Local community involvement as a social organization serves as crucial community centers where various social, educational, and cultural activities take place. These activities may include religious study groups, traditional arts and crafts classes, cultural performances, and community development programs. The mosque becomes a hub for fostering community cohesion and preserving Javanese cultural traditions.

The findings of this study show that even though the mosque was built in an area where there are mostly Javanese ethnic groups community, but the cultural elements show that there is no exhibit of Javanese architectural elements in this Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim. This refers to a hybrid element which means a combination of different elements in cultural. As for the Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim and Masjid Jamek Parit Jawa, the architecture of the mosque is influenced by the Western style and Middle Eastern style. Refer to the [picture](#) as a reference:





Figure 1. Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim

Conclusions

The analysis of Javanese cultural elements in Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim, Muar has shed light on the rich cultural heritage and architectural uniqueness of the mosque. The integration within the Islamic context creates a distinct identity for the mosque, reflecting the local Javanese

community's traditions and values. These are several recommendations that can be made further enhance and celebrate the Javanese cultural elements within Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim.

Preservation and maintenance of the architectural features that highlight aspects of Javanese culture are essential. This includes multi-tiered roofs, intricately carved wooden panels, and ornate decorations. To preserve longevity and prevent deterioration, efforts to do some regular inspection and conservation should be undertaken. Another recommendation is to further enhance the element of Javanese culture through cultural education and interpretation. To organize educational programs and guided tours that provide educational with insights into Javanese cultural elements present in the mosque. Engage knowledgeable individuals, such as local historians or cultural experts, to offer detailed explanations about the significance and symbolism behind the architectural features and decorations. This will help visitors appreciate and understand the Javanese tangible and intangible material culture. This research becomes essential and necessary to capturing a clearer picture of how people and cultural heritages migrated and become part of Malaysian society (Azmi and Ismail 2016). Furthermore, another advocacy is to host cultural events and festivals at the mosque. These activities will tend to invite the local community to visit the Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim. These events can showcase traditional Javanese performing art based on the Islamic approach to a wider audience. It also provides an opportunity for intercultural exchange and promotes a sense of community cohesion. Supporting research initiatives that delve into the history and cultural significance of the Javanese cultural elements in this mosque. Documenting and recording these findings will contribute to the academic understanding of the Javanese culture within the broader context of mosque architecture in Malaysia.

These suggestions and recommendations can help Masjid Jamek Sultan Ibrahim develop into a thriving cultural center that not only serves as a place of prayer but also highlights and celebrates the diversity of Javanese culture. The mosque will continue to be a point of pride for the local community while encouraging visitors from other places and backgrounds to study and appreciate more about it.

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Author(s) contribution

Nuralyia Natasha binti Shahridzal contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and reRoslan Talibvisions.

Hakimi bin Ahmad contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.