

# THE HISTORY OF THE OLDEST MOSQUES IN MELAKA AND ITS MAIN ELEMENTS

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**Abstract:** *The rapid pace of trading activities at the Straits of Melaka port had attracted many traders, including Chinese merchants. Their presence in Melaka created a space for cultural assimilation between two distinct nations, resulting in a distinct development process for mosque design and style. The aim of the study is to study the form of Chinese architecture found in the three oldest mosques in the state of Melaka. Chinese architectural influence on mosque architecture in Melaka began with the arrival of Chinese craftsmen for building construction. Since the founding of Melaka, there has been a close relationship between Parameswara and China's Ming Dynasty. Melaka's early mosques were shaped like tiered pyramids and pagoda-like towers, indicating Chinese influence. The design of the oldest mosque in Melaka, which resembles a temple, looks different from standard mosques. Accordingly, this study needs to be done to determine the cause of the difference. Among them is the Kampung Keling Mosque, a 200-year-old mosque built with the generosity of a wealthy Chinese named Shamsudin, who had converted to Islam. The mosque featured not only Chinese carvings but also internal and external Chinese elements such as towers and archways. These elements clearly indicate a harmonious assimilation of Chinese and Islamic cultures. The study's findings show that the construction of these mosques was influenced by Chinese elements, which can still be seen today.*

**Keywords:** *Elements, History, Melaka, Mosque, Oldest*

## Introduction

The oldest mosques in Melaka selected for this study are the Kampung Hulu Mosque, Kampung Keling Mosque and Tengkeria Mosque. The selection of these mosques was based on the Chinese influence that can be seen from their architecture. Apart from the local and Islamic influences, Chinese elements on mosque architecture had been apparent from old mosques built during the time Melaka was colonized. The shape of the towers and roofs of these mosques were decorated with wavy ridges, similar to the pagoda or Chinese places of worship, although the basis for these old mosques were still based on an architectural style that had long existed in the Malay Archipelago, which was the *tajuk* shape or *meru* roof with *atap tumpang* (Nasir, 1979). The mosque architecture in Southeast Asia is similarly related to the mosques in China.

Archipelago, which was the shape or meru roof with atap tumpang. The mosque architecture in Southeast Asia is similarly related to the mosques in China. The record on the construction and architecture of mosques in the Malay Peninsula, particularly Melaka prior to the time of Portuguese had been sparse (Qurtuby, 2003).

The Portuguese destroyed all the documentation that may have existed on Islam when they took Melaka from the Malays. Mosques has only been mentioned in general in the records of the Portuguese, Chinese, British and Malay and no detailed account on the architecture of mosques during the Melaka Sultanate have been found. The situation is different compared to Indonesian architecture, where the historical details of mosques construction and their uniqueness have been preserved in the archives. As such, the architecture of mosques in Malaya before the fall of Melaka cannot be specifically identified, in terms of its architectural characteristics. In Indonesia, one of the mosques that have been preserved in its Chinese architectural design and well recorded is the Demak Great Mosque, built in 1478. The mosque is located in the North Coast of Java and is the oldest centre of Islamic development in Malay and Indonesian Archipelago. It was built during the region of Raden Patah, who defeated Majapahit and established the Islamic rule of Demak (Qurtuby, 2003).

Apart from the local and Islamic influence, mosque architecture is also influenced by Chinese architectural elements. This can be seen from the old mosques in Melaka built during colonial times. The shapes of minarets and roofs are decorated with wavy ridges, similar to pagodas or Chinese temples. However, the basis of old mosques in Melaka was still based upon the architecture that has existed in the Malay Archipelago, which is the pyramidal tiered roof. The architecture of mosques in South-east Asia shares certain similarities with the mosques of China. Compared to mosques in West Asia, Europe, and India, mosques in South-East Asia have received less attention from art historian. This is due to the negative outlook that mosques of the region, which are made of timber, have less value than those made of stone. This view can be traced back to the impetus of Western orientalist and scholars who have placed the superiority of stone architecture or Monumental Architecture, referring to the Greek tradition of Europe (Yatim, 1995).

### **Methodology**

This study is a qualitative type. The researcher used two main methods to collect research data, the documentation method and the observation method. The documentation method helps researchers obtain written materials about the contribution of Chinese architecture to Melaka and how this influence can reach Melaka. Researchers also conducted an observational study on selected mosques to see the effect of Chinese architecture on the oldest mosques in the state of Melaka. To analyse the data, the researcher used a descriptive method in addition to deeply analysing the Chinese architecture found in the three oldest mosques in the state of Melaka. The selected mosques were built in the 17th century during the Dutch colonial period.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Kampung Keling Mosque Historical Background**

During the zenith of Melaka, many foreign traders chose to make Melaka their home, including Indian Muslim traders from Cambay. Some of them settled down and married the locals, resulting in the 'keling' generation in Melaka. During the time of Portuguese colonization, this ethnic group was placed in an area known as "Upeh". When the trade suffered decline, the Kelings were moved to a smaller area known as "Kampung Keling". The district is situated

near the Kampung Hulu Mosque, just about 500 metres away (Ahmad Zakaria & Nik Abd Rahman, 2011). Kampung Hulu Mosque was founded by Shamsudin Harun in 1728 while the Kampung Keling Mosque was built in 1748. The mosque was built following the tension between the Malay community and the Keling community. As such, the mosque was dominated by the Keling, who were originally Indian immigrants. When the Malays and the Keling were unable to mix, the Dutch allowed for another mosque to be built in order to prevent a long discord. However, the Friday prayer was only carried out at one mosque alternately since both cannot have the prayer at the same time (Hadi, 2012).

### **Kampung Hulu Mosque Historical Background**

Shamsudin Harun, a man of Chinese Muslim descent, built this mosque in 1728. He was a Malay lieutenant appointed by the Dutch to lead the Malays in Melaka. The name of the founder can be seen on the bronze carving at the inner entrance to the mosque. This carving has become evidence for Kampung Hulu Mosque to claim the title as the second oldest mosque in Malaysia and Melaka, at 260 years old (Zakaria & Rahman, 2011). The original site of this mosque was a fishing village populated by Malay Muslims. Its location was near the Melaka River, which was the heart of communication activities for the villagers. In the present day, the location is monopolized by the Chinese with their business activities. The mosque was the first mosque to be completely built with stone. There were also pagoda-shaped tower and pyramid roof. The mosque was also the Centre of the propagation of Islam during the Dutch colonization of Melaka. Harun, the father of Shamsudin used to be known as Tan Seek Tiong from Mainland China, and was born during the Chin (Manchu) Dynasty.

The construction of Kampung Hulu Mosque was under the responsibility of his son Shamsudin, and it was actually built much earlier, in 1670, but PERZIM had acknowledged the official date of construction to be on 1728 (Hadi, 2012). According to Arbi (1971), it had always been part of Shamsudin's plan that the mosque would be carved with Chinese motifs, with pagoda tower and Chinese archway. His intent was to show the Chinese people that Islam and Chinese culture are able to interact harmoniously through the artistic and assimilation process in the mosque. The mosque has a *meru* roof and pagoda tower on its right side. Once entering the mosque through the archway, the ablution pool can be seen on the right side. In the prayer hall, there are four main pillars supporting the roof, and they had been used since the earliest construction. PERZIM's record shows that the pyramid roof and the sulur buyur tower were imported from China. Similarly, the tiles that supported the mosque's floor came from China during the Qing Dynasty. In 2005, PERZIM Melaka declared the mosque as a Malay classical mosque with tiered roof or *meru* roof or tiga tangkup (Hadi, 2012).

### **Tengkera Mosque Historical Background**

The mosque was named Tengkera due to its location on Jalan Tengkera (Tengkera Road), in the district of Tanquerah. The name Tengkera came from the word Tengkera or Terengkera from the Portuguese word Trangquerah meaning "art-backed palisade." The mosque was built in 1728 and one of the oldest in Melaka. The mosque was constructed in the same year as Kampung Hulu Masjid, eight years after Peringgit Mosque. Most of the people living near the mosque were Indian merchants who had settled and married locals. Most of the merchants came from Pakistan, India and Gujarat (Zakaria & Rahman, 2011). The mosque combined various Melakan traditional architectural elements with foreign architecture such as English, European and Chinese. The designs are electric (eclectic?) with the pagoda tower. It has also maintained the four pillars, which function to support the *meru* roof.

## The External Components of Mosques

### Meru Roof

The mosques in this study have a roof component with a triangle base, and arranged by level. The shape of this layered pyramid roof is also known as the mosque with *meru* roof. *Meru* roof is also known as 'atap bersusun tumpang'. The number of layers is three and the final roof is supported by pillars. Another term used for this type of roof in Melaka is pyramid roof. The name came from the shape of the roof having the largest base at the bottom, followed by smaller layers to the center of the peak (Mohamad, 2002). There are two main theories discussing the influence of the *meru* roof. The first theory was forwarded by Stutterheim (1948). He believes that the layered roof was due to the influence of Hindu cosmology and this architectural design also displays influence from Bali architecture in Java.

This opinion is shared by Nasir (1979), where he describes the early architecture in Malay Archipelago as having its own influence prior to the advent of Islam. These old mosques used *meru*-shaped roof, which is also called *som pecah* roof or *tajuk* shape. He further explains that this type of mosque actually received a strong cultural influence of Hindu-Buddha from the seventh to fourteenth century. According to Wan Daud (2000), this upside-down roof is similar to the mountains or *meru*, which were considered as the dwellings of deities by the Hindus, while for the Malays, the *meru* roof is the descending place for Malay royal ancestors, while at the same time preventing water from entering the gaps between the different corners of the roof.

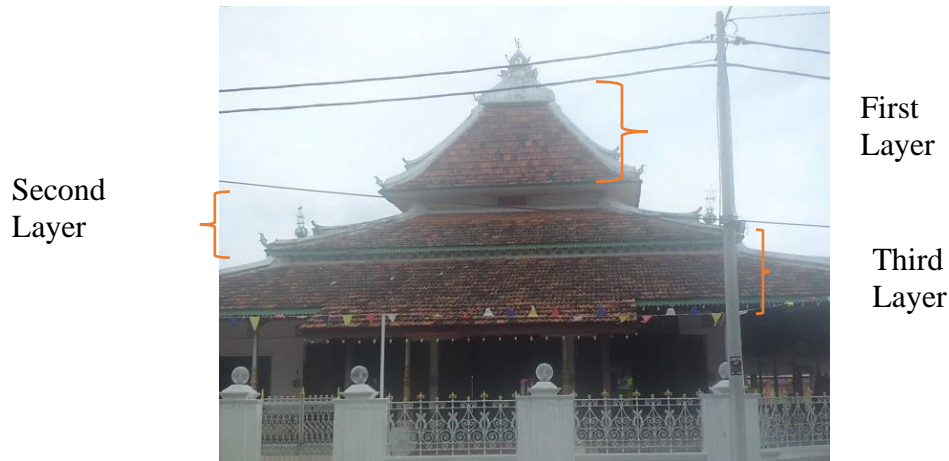
The second theory came from Graaf (1963) who claimed that the levelled roof indicated a strong Chinese influence on ancient mosques in Java based on the pagoda structure. One evident for this theory is the high number of dominant Chinese merchants who settled on the North Coast of Java while spreading Islam. According to Gin-Djih (1908), this feature of *meru* roof on mosques came from Chinese and Japanese Craftsmanship. This design of layered roof was unknown in the Middle East. Since Islam did not spread widely in Japan, he believes that this is mainly a Chinese element. The design of *meru* roof on mosques was said to have been part of Ming Dynasty architectural style. The migration of the Chinese to Southeast Asia had brought with them this roof design, with slight modification so that it becomes suitable with the Malay world (Boyd, 1962).

Based on the Melakan style mosques, it can be seen that one of the most important features is the design of the *meru* roof, with *sulur bayur* and crown roof. This study concurs with the second theory in regard to the Chinese influence on the *meru* roof, due to the similarities shared with Chinese temples and homes. However, the size of the prayer hall maintained the square design, similar to the first mosque constructed by Prophet Muhammad and other mosques in the Arab world in general. In contrast, the space in Chinese buildings is rectangular, and the *meru* roof is designed thus. While mosques in Melaka displayed a square design for its prayer space and *meru* roof.

Based on the field study, there are various similarities that can be seen from the mosques with layered *meru* roof and Chinese temples such as layered roof, crown roof as the main design for the top part of the roof and *sulur buyur* decoration at corners of the roof. For the Chinese, a roof arranged in layered pattern is a symbol of veneration. The arrangement of the roof also prevented the main hall from the sun and cold weather. This type of roof design is said to go back as far as 2000 years and it can be seen throughout China. This is a very long time, considering the fact that the Chinese civilization has been among the oldest and grandest of all



civilizations (Hanafi, 1985). When the layered pyramid roof was introduced to the Malay world, it was modified to suit the place and people of Malay Archipelago, especially Melaka. This Melakan style with the use of pyramidal roof was spread to other areas such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan. The 2000 years that it took for the style to be introduced to the Malay islands was a long one, and it came especially from China with Zheng He's voyage.



**Figure 1: The Meru Roofed Mosque Roof Has Three Levels or Roof Layers**  
(Source: Research Field)

### Crown Roof

The decoration at the top of the mosque's roof is better known as the crown and usually it is made of ceramic. It has also been called *mustoka* and *puncak* (peak). Kelantan's call it *buah buton* while among the people of Terengganu it is called *buah gutong* (Rashid, 2013). This adornment can only be seen in mosques of China and Malay Archipelago only, and most widespread among mosques in Melaka. The origin of this craft is said to be from Canton and Fukien in China. When the Chinese migrated to Melaka, they introduced the crown roof as a construction component, which was integrated into mosque architecture. This component eventually became one of its most prevalent features and considered as a symbol and identity of Melakan mosques (Kohl, 1978).

The crown roof was usually made of ceramic. At the time, ceramic was considered a luxurious material since it was valuable and has its own allure (Rochym, 1983). The use of crown roof on the building of a mosque manifested a certain air of stateliness due to the value placed on it. Ceramic-made roof was also highly resistant towards heat and rain due to the high firing process. According to Nizar (2007), Ceramic also lasts a long time, which can be attested by how the material can still be found atop of these mosques' roof. As such, the use of Chinese ceramic on crown roof of mosques contributed towards the image and attraction of these mosques. Part of the distinctness comes from various shapes of the roof their valuable meanings. The most common motif was *sulur daun* and *lotus petal*. The crown roof design during the 18-19th centuries in Melaka had its own uniqueness and specific designs which became the identity of traditional mosques of the area. Their respective designs are unique, for example the crown may vary from one layer to five layers, such as can be seen from Kampung Keling Mosque. The first layer began from the *mimbar's* base with the largest size and grew smaller closer to the top. The roof on the mosques in this study display a *stupa* shape and layered with *lotus petals* according to each layer.

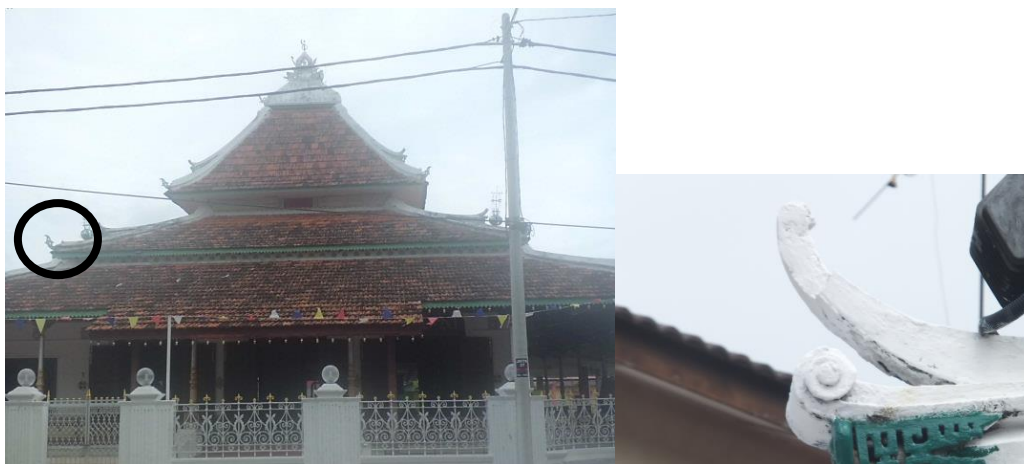


**Figure 2: Crown of the Roof of the Keling Kampung Melaka Mosque**

(Source: Research Field)

### **Sulur Buyur**

On the roof of *meru* design, it can be seen that the corners of the roof are decorated with *sulur buyur*. Arbi (1971) believes that a majority of mosques in Melaka display designs with apparent Chinese carvings and decorations, found at the ends of roofs and peaks of these mosques. *Sulur buyur* design is also seen on Chinese temples. The design had been in use since the time of Ming and Qing Dynasties. The influence of this type of adornment came with the Chinese people of Guangdong and Fujian, which eventually evolved into various designs and forms. These include animals, flowers, fish, insects and deities, made with mortar, tiles and porcelain chips (Boyd, 1962). In general, the form and design of *sulur buyur* in Southern China can be divided into three types. First, the main ridge that ends with an arch. Second, the main ridge that ends with geometric design. This category is made from three straight lines and three curves, and some are made using geometric design or inspire by nature. The third is the type where the ridge ends with ceramic sculptures. This category includes human image, plants such as pine trees and natural elements such as clouds, mountains and sea. All of these motifs have their own meaning, depending on certain interpretation (Lu, 2007). In Melaka, most of the *sulur buyur* and ridges found on mosques belong in the first and second category. The same can be said of the mosques in the following discussion.



**Figure 3: Sulur bayur shaped like a kite's tail in Tengkeria Mosque**

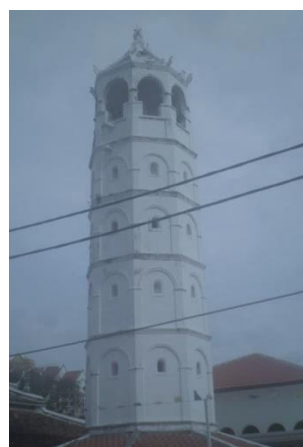
(Source: Research Field)

### Tower

The word tower comes from “nar” meaning fire. Once, fire was lit at the top of the tower to indicate the time of prayer, iftar (breaking of fast) and imsak (beginning of fast) and for important announcements. Towers are highly dependent on the local tradition and would differ with the ones from other areas. A district or country may produce their towers based on their creativity and combination of Islamic designs and local culture (Fanani, 2009). These differences can be attributed to their respective situations, climate and the contour of the land (Yatim, 1995). The towers in Melaka oldest mosque were built slightly later after the mosque themselves. In the beginning, traditional mosques in Melaka used *beduk* and *ketuk-ketuk* to inform the time for prayer. Aside from functioning as an indicator for prayer times, *beduk* and *ketuk-ketuk* were also used to gather villagers in order to convey information to them. In the beginning of 19th century, towers were introduced and built for the traditional mosques, compared to the modern mosques that had their towers built with them from the beginning.

The mosques in Melaka with pyramid roof were usually combined with pagoda-shaped tower. According to Yatim (1995), the pagoda towers were built by the Chinese who were specifically brought from China to build mosques in Melaka. Many believed that Chinese pagoda was an inspiration for mosque tower in the Malay Archipelago including Melaka. Additionally, the influence of pagoda form for towers came from the time of Tang Dynasty and was brought by Chinese who lived in the Southern part of China (Allan, 1996).

Among the best examples is the Tengkeria Mosque with its six layers pagoda tower. The topmost level has an open space or a balcony covered by a Chinese designed roof. The whole of the tower is hexagon-shaped, with six corners. Every level has designs on its wall such as arches and small sill-less windows, with exception of the highest level. Similarly, the tower at the Kampung Hulu Mosque also has a roofed balcony at the top of the tower. Yatim (1989) believes that the Craftsmen involved in the construction of the tower were supervised by a Chinese master Craftsman. This proves that Chinese architecture had been present in mosques of Melaka since the 18th century when it was still under the Dutch rule.



**Figure 4: Tengkeria Mosque Tower**  
(Source: Research Field)

### Archway

In the beginning, the mosques in Malay Archipelago had no gate or archway. The use of archways was introduced during the time of the Dutch (1641-1824) by Chinese carpenter. The archways of mosque from the central districts of Melaka (Kampung Keling Mosques, Tengkeria Mosques and Kampung Hulu Mosques) supported Chinese-influenced archways. The basis for this claim came from the fact that the designs and adornments on the archways which share apparent similarities with Chinese temples. Apart from that, the adornments were made from materials that were brought from China, such as Chinese pottery. These archways were attractively sculpted with various designs such as floral motifs and each of the archways were carved with the date of the respective construction of the mosque (Arbi, 1971).

Among the main reasons that gates were installed around the mosques was to protect the tranquility of a mosque's environment, and stone was selected for the purpose. Archways were also beautifully decorated with copious artistic and religious elements (Nasir, 1979). One common characteristics of mosque architecture is the gated area that protects its surrounding from intrusion. As such, high fences can be found around mosques. The archway can be said to act as a separating border between the hustle and bustle outside and the tranquillity of the mosque in order to enable its visitors to worship peacefully and quietly. An archway is an important component in protecting the well-being of a mosque. This is because it provides privacy to the congregation when performing their worship and other religious obligations. This component is significant in regard to people and activities outside of the mosque immediate vicinity, as an area that is marked and sheltered will indicate to a person outside of the space that it is to be respected, especially when it comes to religious matters.



**Figure 5: The Archway of Tengkeria Mosque**  
(Source: Research Field)

### The Internal Components of Mosques in Melaka

At the beginning of the 18th and 19th centuries, mosques in Melaka began to show their own unique identity and characteristics. These include the prayer hall with its four pillars, two main windows at the front of the hall and one window on each side, and the doors leading into the hall may vary from four to nine, depending on the size of the hall. Outside of the hall, at the main door and on both sides, there are areas for verandah and steps leading into the hall. The mosque is the main focus in Islamic architecture and it is one of the best symbols of the beautiful Islamic arts. The internal elements of a mosque consist of the prayer hall, mihrab (niche) and ablution pool. These components often went through changes based on the current architecture, while maintaining their roles as significant symbols in Islam (Aazam, 2007).



### Prayer Hall

The prayer is an area with a roof and open space; the size of the roof depends on the expanse of the open area. Every space in the mosque has adequate lighting and provides comfort for the individual Muslims while praying in hall (Ludin, 1995). Based on observations during the field study, the researchers of the present study note that the prayer halls of mosques in Melaka are rectangular- shaped. There are four main pillars that function as the main support for the three layers pyramid roof. The positions of these pillars are spread out and form a square shape. In each corner of the roof the eaves guide the shape of the basis of the roof that would be supported by the four main pillars (Nasir, 1979).

Usually, the space in the mosque is beautifully designed, with the use of calligraphy, khat and other adornments that display the uniqueness of Islamic arts, while providing the sense of harmony and humility once entering the hall (Yatim, 1995). According to Arbi (1971), most of the mosques of Melaka are designed with attractive Chinese carvings and sculptures in the prayer area, with interesting motifs. These motifs will be further discussed in the following sections.



**Figure 6: Prayer Hall Kampung Keling Mosque**

(Source: Research Field)

### Mihrab

Mihrab (niche) is the wall of the qibla that faces Mecca and functions as the marker for the qibla direction. Mihrab played a significant role, as when an imam was leading a prayer, his voice would be reflected since he is facing the mihrab (Yatim, 1995). The congregation was able to clearly hear the imam's voice and follow his movement. However, this function of the mihrab is no longer significant due to the use of loudspeaker, and it more like a decoration inside of the mosque. Most of the mihrabs are semi-circle and built curved into the wall of the mosque. It is observed that most of mihrabs in Melaka are six square feet in height and three-square feet in width. Imam does not actually lead the prayer while standing inside the mihrab, but rather faces it. The mihrab in Melaka is more like a porch-shape niche that extended a little from the wall that faces the qibla. As mentioned above, this shape was able to magnify the voice of the imam when loudspeakers were not yet in use. The passing of time brought with it changes in mosque architecture and design, and mihrabs in modern mosques of Malaysia are now larger and able to accommodate the imam inside (Hussin, 1984).



**Figure 7: Tengkerah Mosque Mihrab**  
(Source: Research Field)

### Mimbar

Mimbar is an ascending place for an imam to deliver his sermon. It is called ‘mimbar’ since the height of this component requires stairs to reach it. Mimbar is always placed on the right side of the mihrab and has a series of steps to its small platform, sheltered by a ornamented roof (Rochym, 1983). Philosophically, mimbar is said to be a symbol for communication of the heaven (Ludin, 1995). Mimbar in Melakan mosques have unique patterns and designs. The decorations found on these mimbars are said to be different from the ones commonly seen. Arbi (1971) believes that the mimbar at the three mosques in this study seem to share similarities with Chinese furniture in terms of carving and adornment. Visits to Chinese and Peranakan Chinese homes concur with this claim, as most of the decorations of the furniture are similar to the ones found on the mimbars. These include the combinations of different motifs such as flowers, animals, fruits, scenery, geometry and cosmos.

The involvement of the Chinese in mosque construction is rather apparent when looking at the wood carving of the mimbars and decorations on the wall. The unique carvings and adornments found on the mimbars of mosques in Melaka cannot be found elsewhere in Malaysia, most of which can be attributed to the wealth of Chinese designs. The Muslim Chinese contributors who built these mimbars did so in order to preserve their Chinese culture in the mosque space (Ali, 2010). Both images above share certain similarities such as the crown roof, sulur buyur and decorated with attractive and almost similar designs. The mimbars observed at the three selected mosques in this study use various Chinese elements including colors that are considered attractive and meaningful to the Chinese such as red, red, brown and green (Moedjiono, 2011). Chinese temples are often painted with eye-catching colors, since the meaning attributed to them are often related to the Chinese identity. Most of the mimbars in this study are more than a decade old (Hadi, 2012). Among the components found on mimbars in Melaka are:

**Table 1: The Components on Mimbar**

No.	Components
1	Crown Roof
2	<i>Kepala Som</i> (Som Head)
3	<i>Ekor Som</i> (Som Tail)
4	<i>Gunungan</i> (Mountain Terrains)
5	<i>Tiang Gunungan</i> (Pillars of Mountains)
6	Decorations of the Eaves
7	Balancing Elements Wealth
8	Stairs
9	<i>Awan larat</i>
10	Decorations at the Bottom of the Mimbar
11	The Accentuated Part of the Mimbar
12	<i>Kekasu</i>

(Source: Researcher)

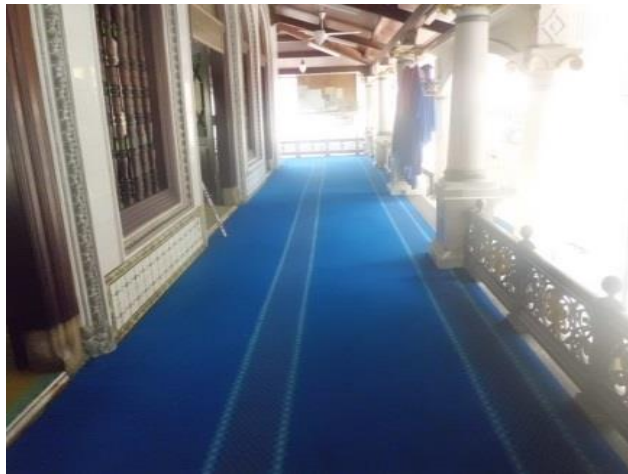


**Figure 8: Tengkeri Mosque Mimbar**

(Source: Research Field)

### Serambi (verandah)

The verandah can be seen on the both sides of the mosque. Traditionally the verandah on a mosque is not placed on the outer wall. There had been instances where the verandah actually surrounds the prayer hall of a mosque. During the time of Melaka Sultanate, the verandah was used to carry out religious learning activities. The verandah also supported the higher number of congregations during the Eid prayers, functioned as the place to pay the zakat fitrah (alms) and the space for nikah (marriage contract ceremony) (Nasir, 1995). The verandah at the mosques in Melaka is used as female prayer area since the main prayer area may only be adequate for male worshippers. During Ramadan, the tarawikh (night voluntary prayer) would also include the verandah. Additionally, the breaking of fast during Ramadan would also be held here. The congregation members also use the verandah for other activities such as discussing, resting and eating (when there is a feast) and also for other worship activities when there are more congregation members than usual (Hadi, 2012).



**Figure 9: Kampung Keling Verandah**  
(Source: Research Field)

### **Ablution Pool**

A large rectangular ablution pool is placed outside of the prayer hall near the verandah. It is usually connected to the hall through a special route. Some ablution pools may have cement stairs around them and decorated with ceramic tiles. Congregation members who come to the mosque use the pool to make their ablution before prayer. Most of the pools are rectangular-shaped. Before pools were used, Muslims would use wells as the water source for ablution. However, the ablution pools found at the mosques in this study are much more interesting with its decoration and carvings, compared to other mosques that the researchers have visited.



**Figure 10: Kampung Keling Mosque Ablution Pool**  
(Source: Research Field)

### **Conclusion**

This research successfully achieved the objectives of the study. Researchers found the contribution of Chinese craftsmen in the construction of old mosques in Melaka. The Chinese community in Melaka since the early Melaka Malay Sultanate have been in the region for the purpose of trade, marriage and diplomatic relations. Their presence can be identified during the time of the Portuguese as well though in a small number, while an influx was seen during the time of the Dutch. Architectural aspects of Chinese elements were introduced and its impact can be seen in the construction of mosques built under Dutch rule. The open-door policy



adopted by the Dutch had allowed the local people to carry out religious activities, and they were even provided with funds to build mosques.

The Chinese community who was invited to partake in the development process was responsible for the building of the mosques and the architectural components of Chinese elements were absorbed as key elements in the construction of the mosques. For example, the crown roofs, sulur buyur, pagoda-shaped minaret, *meru* roofs or pyramid-shaped roofs, archways similar Chinese archways and mimbar niches. Therefore, it can be concluded that the architecture of the oldest mosques in Melaka have accepted Chinese influence, which can still be seen in the present day. In Melaka, the form of the mosques and Musolla is unique due to the layered pyramid roof. When one look closely at the edges of the roof, one can see carving and decorations from Chinese culture. These carvings and decorations are adapted from the carvings found on Chinese idol houses.

Additionally, the mimbars were made from wood, which was closely related to the craft of Chinese furniture. The mosques of Kampung Hulu, Kampung Keling and Tengkeria are old mosques of Melaka with archways inspired by Chinese archways and adornments on the wall were made from Chinese pottery. These elements are evidence that there have been Chinese influence in mosque architecture of the region. The influence was considered significant since it was new at the time when it was first introduced and opened the space for innovative and new thoughts. Chinese influence can also be seen from shop houses, courtyards and home furniture and utilities. Chinese influence on home and private room architecture was absent since Malay homes at that time were built according to the Malay style and unique culture.

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