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The Importance of Islamic Art in Mosque Interior

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Abstract

Mosques, as symbol of Islamic architecture must play an important role in reflecting the superiority of Allah the Almighty. There are many ways in making it successful and one of them is through the high quality of aesthetic value. Aesthetic value in Islamic art and architecture is normally portrayed by the highest degree of motifs and ornamentation. Contemporary mosque designers normally focused on the majestic looks of the exterior part of the mosques and leave the manipulation of the interior space to the users. There are scholars who said that mosques should act as community development centre, some decided on the uniqueness of traditional Malaysian architecture and some believed that mosques must have domes and minarets as symbols of Islamic architecture. This paper realized on the aesthetics and beauty of mosque interior that fulfils the psychological needs of human beings: that is to be inside a beautiful ambience. Ornamentation should be taken as part of mosque components and not as mere decorations done after-thought or filling in the gap. The main objective of the paper is why is it important to focus the ornamentation towards mosque interior so that ornamenting the mosque will not be done uncontrollably and unnecessarily.

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1. Introduction

At some point this time scholars are still wondering on comprehensive study of the history, function and significance of ornamentation in Islamic architecture especially in mosques. The organizations of the ornamentation, which covers vegetal, geometrical, epigraphic and figural or even a combination of two or more of these elements are in need for some evaluation and elaboration. Most of the time, these ornaments will reflect local traditions with a mixture of foreign influences, subject to the geographical area of the particular Islamic world. Islamic ornamentation is the very element that sews architecture and religion resulting serene, intelligible, structured and highly spiritual of Islamic art and architecture.

Ornamentation in Islamic architecture mentioned by Grube (1978), serves several functions. Among the functions are giving the effect of weightlessness to the structure and creating articulation and non limitation to the space. Here, Grube (1978) looks at the physical functions of Islamic ornamentation. Seralgedin (1996) though, sees ornamentation as glue in uniting the Muslims with their architectural forms and decorations. Nevertheless, both of the renowned scholars seemed agreeable that the ornamentations which give sense of being inside a place with the articulation and embellishment of the interior are inspiring and notably assets to Islamic art.

Human is regarded as a reflection of the innate beauty of the Almighty who had created the universe. Beauty in Islamic art and civilisation, to elaborate is a wide scope to be covered and this includes the appreciation of symmetry, balance, and also the expressions of sense of all-pervading life force were compatible with Islamic aesthetic principle [1].

2. Ornamentation of Mosque

The importance of the Islamic medieval period art and architecture rests not only in the fact it was the time when so many of the ethnic, literary, religious, social and artistic features of traditional Islam was created, but also significant to recognize that the period is more or less contemporary with Romanesque and Gothic Europe. Like most of the problems posed by Islamic art and architecture scholars, the question of the growth and character of Islamic architectural design of ornamentation has never been discussed in entirety and deeply. The concept of decoration in Islamic art is flexible in nature, independent of form, material and scale, transforming the whole space ambience. According to Grabar [2], before going deeper into certain ornamentation in Islamic art it is important to classify the transformations in visual forms from the religion understanding and opinion. The classification will be the evidence of civilization with some communal symbolism or motifs in the ornamentation and also the yard stick in measuring the technology level of the Muslim community around the globe. Ornamentation in mosque could be different from one region to another. For example Malaysian way of ornamenting their mosque is different from the Arabs, but there should be a little if not much influence from the origins as they all come from one religion and community that is Islam. This is the main symbolic meaning in Islamic art that explains unity in diversity.

3. Characteristics of Islamic Ornamentation

One of the motives of Islamic traditional buildings is to make the life of believers and users correspond to their built environment, thus inter-relate strongly and harmoniously Mortada [3]. Preserving Islamic faith and enhancing the application of *Syari'ah* in mosques should be the major point. With the mosque roles in religious and education, they should come hand in hand with the needs of the society in the effort to maintain an acceptable level of the basic needs of human well-being; that is beauty with the existence of motifs and ornamentation that will welcome anybody who enters the physical environment concerned. The first characteristic of Islamic ornamentation puts strength in the infinity of patterns. This includes intricate geometric patterns which clearly portray the infinity of Allah the Almighty.

Geometry in Islamic art and architecture creates basic patterns in design. Unique interlacing lines weaved carrying various patterns showing the most amazing imagination and inventiveness [4]. The multiplication of any geometric pattern of architectural element on a different scale in one plane also helps avoid sharp contrast and clear definition of scale and surface.

Fitted on top of the geometrical basic guidelines, comes the motifs of geometrical figures that would come in floral or vegetal figures. The said figures vary throughout the Islamic regions, differentiate by geography and chronology. It can also be said that the whole of Islamic patterns represents a combination

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