

The Usefulness of Main Prayer Hall of Masjid *Agung* Islamic Center of Lhokseumawe, Aceh - Indonesia

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Abstract. Spatial design of masjids is typically the result of duplicating or replicating typology considered appropriate by the Muslim community. Often, this approach results in a massive centralized main prayer space that is underutilized and may contradict fundamental Islamic principles derived from the Quran and *Hadith* (canonical sayings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). This article attempts to reveal the utilization of the main praying hall at Masjid *Agung* Islamic Center (MAIC) of Lhokseumawe. Further, this study challenges the MAIC in light of the Islamic principle of ‘avoiding exaggeration’. Observation was conducted over 30 days alongside an exploration of values and principles guiding Islamic Architecture according to Quran and Hadith. Findings show the utilization of the main prayer hall of MAIC averaged 3.24% on a daily basis and 3.26% for *Shalah* (ritual prostration performed five times a day); clearly, a sign of wasted space. Results of this study are expected to stimulate discussion in the area of design and planning of Islamic Architecture toward a wiser design, particularly in Aceh Province of Indonesia.

Keywords: masjid, main prayer hall, avoiding exaggeration, waste of space, simplicity

1. Introduction

Masjid *Agung Islamic Centre* (MAIC) of Lhokseumawe is situated in the center of the city on a land area of 33,748.47m². Today, the masjid building itself occupies an area of 16,475.80m². Inside, there is a main space with an area of 3,558.33m² dedicated for conducting the prayer. Other rooms are provided, such as a secretariat, imam’s room, meeting hall, ablution area and office units. Administratively, MAIC is located in Banda Sakti district of Lhokseumawe. The district covers 112.40 hectares with a population of 80,769 people. The population is spread over 18 gampongs (villages) with a gender ratio of 100 women to 99.66 men. Other than MAIC, there are 13 other masjids spread across the gampongs in Banda Sakti district. For an approximation, if an area of 0.72m² (0.6x1.2m) is used for performing shalah, then the main prayer hall of MAIC is able to accommodate 4,942 people for that activity.

Many hadiths explain the numerous ways masjids were used during the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, particularly the Masjid al Haram in Mecca and Masjid al Nabawi in Medina. The Hadith literature, describing the behaviour and attitude of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ constitute a normative reference for the individual Muslim in all aspects of life, including when designing and using space within a masjid. Narratives of the social life around the Kaaba, which is now the center of the Masjid al Haram, illustrate

