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Eclecticism in Architecture of *Masjid Bandaraya Kuching*, Malaysia

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Abstract. The eclecticism approach is unconsciously applied in the design process by selecting elements considered as the best elements from different architectural styles or eras to produce a new distinctive building model commonly applied by architects in design. Nowadays, the combination of various architectural elements from different styles into one building is often created, especially in Malaysia. In this research, the author focuses on the design of mosques in Kuching. Throughout history, the *Masjid Bandaraya Kuching* (known as *Masjid Bahagian Kuching* by the locals) has undergone four (4) stages of transformation process since it was first built in 1840 A.D until the latest changes that took place in 1968 A.D. This study aims to reveal the eclecticism approach applied in every stage. Qualitative method is applied in this research by examining the photographs from the archives and analysing the longitudinal timeline and cases through the history of Kuching, literature and observations concerning the *Masjid Bandaraya Kuching* to understand the initial forms and changes that have occurred from the past to the present. The analysis takes into account both comparative and contextual analytical techniques to represent a close interpretation. Findings indicate that the building of *Masjid Bandaraya Kuching* has been transformed through the traditional eclecticism as well as radical eclecticism approach.

Keywords. *traditional eclecticism, radical eclecticism, transformation, masjid*

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, that before the colonialization, the architecture identity of mosques (*masjid*) in Southeast Asian region was very distinctive and reflected the origins of the indigenous characters of its people conforming to their environmental and social interests. Nowadays, these identities are slowly diminishing because of the influence of the foreign perceptions and thoughts that interfere with the thinking of the architects especially from Western countries as well as the influence of the Islamic conceptualization of images of domes and arches from the Middle East and Southern Asia.

The beginning of mosque architecture development in Southeast Asia was closely related to the process of Islamization of the locals in this region. Scholars argued that the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia was brought by Muslim traders from the Arabian Peninsula since the 7th century, but there is no sufficient evidence to support such statements. Based on historical records, Islamization began in the late 12th century, when *ulama* from various places in the Arabian Peninsula wanders in Southeast Asia [1]. The *ulama* from Demak (Central Java-Indonesia) in 1498 spread Islam in South Kalimantan, formerly known as Banjarmasin [1]. At the end of the 15th century, the Sultanate of Brunei accepted Islam and then spread it throughout their territory, including Sarawak [1]. In the mid-19th century, the

