



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**COMPARISON STUDY OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN
ELEMENTS IN MAJOR ETHNICS OF MALAYSIA**

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**COMPARISON STUDY OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN ELEMENTS IN
MAJOR ETHNICS OF MALAYSIA**

KARTHIGAYAN S/O PASUPATHY

This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of bachelor of Applied Arts with Honors
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ENDORSEMENT

The project entitled '**Comparison Study of Architectural Design Elements in Major Ethnic of Malaysia**' was prepared by [Karthigayan s/o Pasupathy] and submitted to the **Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a **Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honors (Fine Arts)**.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to identify the gist of architectural design elements in major ethnics of Malaysia. Furthermore, the result of this research will be applied in making personal work of art. Consecutively to achieve this objective, the researcher will try to answer a few questions such as, ethnical architectural to remain current and being appreciated, with full of meaning and to feel proud of existing ethical architectural inheritance which resembles custom, culture, tradition and theology.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian ini, adalah untuk mengenal pasti intipati elemen senibina rekabentuk di kalangan etnik utama di Malaysia. Dalam pada itu, keputusan kajian ini akan digunakan untuk tujuan penghasilan karya seni. Sehubungan dengan itu, untuk mencapai objektif, pengkaji cuba menjawab beberapa persoalan, usaha untuk mengekalkan senibina etnik serta menghargai keunikan yang tersirat, dan melahirkan perasaan bangga terhadap kewujudan khazanah senibina etnik, yang mencerminkan kebudayaan, tradisi, adat dan teologi.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Comparison study of architectural design in major ethnic of Malaysia.

Architecture is the soul of a nation, where by it represents one of the main attribute of a civilization, custom, tradition, culture and *theology*¹ through heritage symbol of culture which is the identity of the major ethnics in Malaysia initially.

Heritage of architectural *elements*² and tradition still exist but rarely people of Malaysia it self knows to describe the rudiments of that architectural. The Cambridge Dictionary of American English defines architectural design elements as particles that being bound together to create a *structure*³, as an example from another Oxford Dictionary stated that architectural is a combination of arts and *science*⁴ which manipulates structure, space and *aesthetic*⁵.

Moreover that architectural which represents the major ethnics in Malaysia that authentically reflects heritage symbol and through much research held that, the *Islamic Mosque* for the Malays who are Muslim, *Chinese Temples*⁶ for Chinese who are Taoist and *Hindu Temples* for those who are Indian becomes much more significant for this research.

In the sense of those buildings legitimately has the zenith influence among these major ethnics in their custom and tradition. However, it is crucial for the researcher to enlighten the tremendous hidden meaning of those architectural elements to society as it may lose its useful and expensive heritage symbol of culture, if no one takes the attempt in order to use, teach, appreciate and preserve that momentous architectural, one fine day it may extinct.

Succinctly, comparison study here is done discretely so that the true identity of the architectural elements is revealed. However in concurrent, via better understanding of various ethnical heritages architectural elements and their significance could help to unite the nation with better understanding and to substitute respect among themselves.

1.2 Architectural design elements.

Architectural elements are the unique details and component parts that are position together, which can be observed in any architectural style of houses, buildings or structures. However these elements consist of numerous important structures which are used to support the building other than inculcating the space and aesthetic value.

Moreover on behalf of occurrence, the roof or dome, vaults, steps, beams and poles are vital in a particular architectural and are usually common in any architectural, but in the distribution of space and aesthetic it thou subsequently may vary. Likewise, in this research the basic design elements from the ethnical architectural will be the main hub, for instance the erecting of poles, arches, chambers and exacters.

1.3 Work statement.

The main scope of this research is to study precisely the architectural and design structure element which belongs to those major ethnics in Malaysia. However the main intention is to those building design elements that consist of structure, *space*⁷ and artistic aesthetic value.

On the other hand, buildings which reflect theology and other heritage culture are also taken into consideration. First and foremost, the research is to find the gist of architectural which influences those major ethnics in every day life and inculcating them into the newly drawn work of art, where by those gist of architectural design elements becomes just an inspiration but questions the derivation of identity.

The researcher also uses *semiotic*⁸, and metaphors in simplifying the design. This will include planning and sketching the new architectural design elements and testing it with experimental prototype models, before been implemented, the righteous media will be chosen to fulfill this task.

Moreover this work of art is anticipated as a result, which will be in two dimensions or three dimensions. Hence that, the observant will be able to interact and feel the space, structure and other fundamentals of *art*.⁹ Especially, the ample texture that the architectural design element sculpture will bare, perhaps ideologies designed to make the researcher as an outsider who evaluates the architectural essentials. Moreover, it may vary accordingly to the streak of research till the end.

1.4 Objective of sculpture work.

The researcher's objective is to formulate anxiety, where by the observant query what is it all about, architectural in major ethnics of Malaysia and to create interest among Malaysians in particular, perhaps all throughout the world in common.

While the researcher hopes that this ethnical architectural to remain current, and being appreciated with full of meaning. In addition to that, is to feel proud of their ethical architectural inheritance which resembles their custom, tradition, culture and *theology*.¹⁰

The intimacy between wonderful meanings in architectural and major ethnics in Malaysia had provoked the researcher to acquire a mission, and to pass over all the knowledge being attain to the younger generation, as they will feel proud and able to portray their identities to others, furthermore this will bring better understanding and unity among Malaysians ultimately.

With full of zeal and enthusiasm the researcher anticipate that sculpture kind of art work is much more closer to architectural, in the sense of translating architectural design elements into a work of art. Moreover sculpture which has structure, space and aesthetic relates the similarities in architectural, in other words, a new media which is so called architectural design elements in sculpture.

CHAPTER TWO

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Definition of Architectural design elements in major ethnics of Malaysia.

What Architectural means? In order to understand architectural design elements, one has to understand what architectural is all about. Architectural means a combination of arts and science which needs manipulation of structure, space and aesthetic value. Meanwhile elements here refer to the vital structure like roof, rooms and beams and within the particles that becomes part of the building.

However the major ethnics of Malaysia here by refers to *Malay*,¹¹ *Chinese*¹² and *Indian*¹³ other then the other ethnics which are minor in majority, which makes Malaysia as a multi racial country. This architectural design elements comparison study is done only focusing on these three major ethnics.

The fundamental of this comparison study covers the basic design of those architectural design elements. For an example like the roof, pole, beams, cells and so on. Including the motive and design that contributes support to the architectural structure or becomes part and puzzle of the architectural elements.

Other than that, the researcher has identified the ultimate building architectural design that indisputably represents the ethnical custom, tradition, culture and theology. The *Masjid*,¹⁴ *Sultan Sallahuddin Mosque*, Shah Alam Selangor, Malaysia is the focus architectural of the researcher as it will represent Malay. Furthermore the *Khoo Kongsi* (one of the oldest Chinese temple in Malaysia) from Georgetown, Penang is the Chinese temple to represent the Chinese. Finally to represent Indians, *Sri Kandaswamy Temple (South Indian Temple)* in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur is the base of this study.

Nevertheless, the comparison study of architectural design elements in this research is done disjointedly, as it is to avoid confusion on the design elements and to have better understanding about the ethnics, as the main objective is to appreciate the exquisiteness of those architectural design elements and their meaningful structure.

2.2 Architectural as a spiritual guideline in life.

Architectural building which resembles religion can be ultimately influential within one's life, moreover this architectural plays a major role in their ideology, and way of life, according to;

Michael Clark (2005), In Oxford Concise Dictionary of Art Terms, published by British Museum press stated that “(surrender to god) art produced in the service of Islam, the monotheistic religion revealed to the prophet Muhammad (d.632) in Early 7th century Arabia, which quickly spreader through much of Eurasia and Africa to become one of the major world religions. Islamic visual arts are decorative, colorful and in the case of religious art, non-representational. The Koran regulated every detail of the lives of the faithful but gave few precise rules for the arts apart from banning the production cult images”.

This infect cannot be denied, as it is true, in each and every ethnic, this guideline of spirituality influence their way of life and their architectural. In Islamic architectural, mosques evolved significantly over the next 1,000 years, acquiring their now-distinctive features and adapting to cultures all around the world.

On the other hand, the Hindus had modified the temple structures in their homes and personalized it accordingly with an air well, which is to replace the *Garba Giragha* and they placed a small pedestal with the *Basil Plant (Tulasi¹⁵ or Vishnu Priya)*. The Chinese people had adapted the *Yin and Yang* concepts into their homes too, whereby they seek *Feng Shui* advice and build their homes accordingly. In a whole, this shows architectural design elements in major ethnics, really reflects their custom, tradition, culture and theology which is a fraction of their way of life.

2.3 Malay, Chinese and Indian architectural analysis.



Figure 1: Location map of Islamic Mosque at Shah Alam (Selangor).

(Source: From the Tourism Board of Malaysia)

Above is the location map, of the *Sultan Sallahuiddin Mosque*, Shah Alam Selangor, Malaysia. About 25 kilometers to the West of the country's capital, Kuala Lumpur long ago was known as *Sungai Renggam*, and it was well known only for rubber and palm oil estates. Later the same area was identified as *Batu Tiga* prior to Malaysian independence, and has been a center of rubber and palm oil trade for centuries. Its current name was chosen by the state Sultan of Selangor, *Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah*, after his late father *Sultan Alam Shah*.

Frequently, it is referred to as the “Blue Mosque” for this blue aluminum dome decorated with *Koran* verses. The *Minarets* are the tallest in the world at 142.3 meter high. Reputed to be the largest in Southeast Asia, the *Moorish design* of the mosque, looks outstanding in setting serene lakes and architectural fauna.



Figure 2: Location map of Chinese Temple at Lebu Acheh (Penang).

(Source: From the Tourism Board of Malaysia)

The above figure is the map of Penang, which shows the exact location, of the *Khoo Kongsi Temple* in Penang. The *Khoo Kongsi* clan temple is one of the best examples of Chinese temple architectural and craftsmanship in Southeast Asia. Build in 1906, the temple displays fine stone carvings, wood carvings, and paintings on wood and as well *fresco* paintings. The *Khoo Kongsi* is a clan association of *Khoos* belonging to the *Leong San Tong* (Dragon Mountain Hall), *Sin Kang Village*, in *Hokkien* (Fujian) province. A museum in the temple basement illustrates the history of the *Khoo Kongsi*.

The *Khoos* were among the wealthy straits Chinese traders of 17th century Malacca and early Penang. Established in 1851, the clan complex resembled a miniature clan village. The clan elders organized their own tribunal, school, and money-lending and welfare system. The temple overlooks granite - paved square with the *Kongsi Office*, the theater building and other clan dwellings on the other three sides.



Figure 3: Location map of Hindu Temple in Scott Road (Kuala Lumpur).

(Source: From the Tourism Board of Malaysia)

There is also the *Sri Kandaswamy Temple* which is a famous *Sri Lankan Tamil* or *Ceylonese Tamil Temple* at Scott Road. It is huge, and showcases the rich *Sri Lankan Tamil Architectural* and has become one of the famous tourist attractions in Kuala Lumpur. This is the particular location where the Hindu temple in Scott Road named *Sri Kandaswamy Temple* which is located in Brickfields. However Brickfields is a small to medium sized housing area (or administrative zone) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Furthermore is known as Kuala Lumpur's *Little India* due to the high percentage of Indians living there.

Brickfields got its name from the word “brick”. The area was the centre for brick making in the early days when the whole area was a clay pit with cows grazing everywhere. Brickfields produced one of the best bricks as good quality bricks are made from clay. Despite its proximity to Bangsar, there is a vast difference between the two neighborhoods. There is a lot of history to Brickfields, as it is one of the pioneer settlements in Kuala Lumpur. Indeed it is interspersed with old colonial structures, all through the whole stretch of Jalan Tun Sambanthan.

2.4 Architectural design elements as a subject to create an art work.

The magnificent architectural design which represents the major ethnics of Malaysia, consist great importance within, and not many among Malaysians really know how to construe and value them. The researcher here stand firm on this opinion and took a noble initiative, to study the chosen architectural design elements form major ethnics of Malaysia, that resembles their heritage symbol.

While this study were taking place, the researcher found that all those architectural design elements were meaningful, and intend to take the forms and shapes whereas even the significant meaning as an inspiration, in order to create an work of art. Being anxious to know, why the sculpture is entitled “*Astonishment / Wonderment*”, the vigilant will surely enquire and think further by scrutinizing the work of art, in order to attain answers on those architectural design elements. In other words, this is a new method to create interest, teach, construal and appreciate the fabulous architectural in Malaysia and to discern other people’s custom and tradition.

CHAPTER THREE

SYNTHESIS

3.1 Gist of Malay, Chinese and Indian architectural in Malaysia.

3.1.1 Gist of Islamic architectural which represents the Muslim Malays in Malaysia:

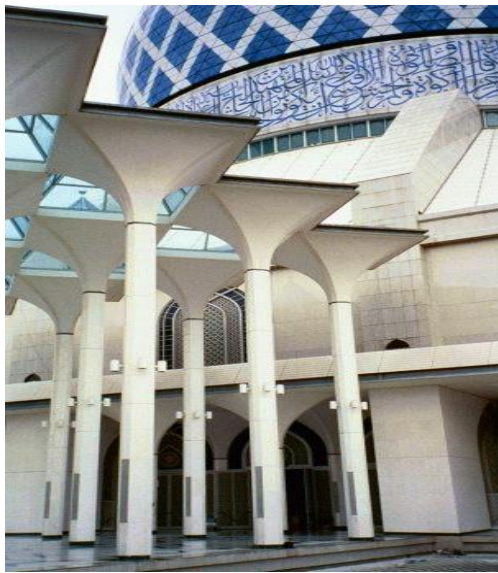


Figure 4: The interior pillars of Shah Alam Mosque.

Figure 5: An example of Islamic Geometry.

(Source: Personal capturing)

The main objective in Islamic architectural is to remind a sense of tranquility, harmony, and humanity. Originally magnificence and enrichment were not the main endeavor. However it was only as a later expansion, arising from the contribution of creative artists and builders that a new dimension appeared. As spirituality created thought patterns, color and *Calligraphic*¹⁶ design based on quotations from the *Koran*¹⁷ (*the holy bible of Muslims*).

All such patterns and graphic design was directed to the emotional of feelings and serenity and to the parse of *Allah* (*name of god in Islamic version*). The numerous works of Islamic art that's exists are evidence to the influence of this tradition in the field of architectural and also *Cryptogram*¹⁸ of the complete obedience of the self to the will of *Allah*, the almighty.

The revelation in the *Koran*, set out by the prophet *Muhammad*, brings home to an individual the divine oneness of *Allah*. Every Muslim is requiring being moderate, just and humble and totally submissive before *Allah*. Muslims are remained over and over again that while they enjoy the pleasure of life they are forbidden all access by *Allah*.

In the conduct of life the quest is for moderation of humanity which is incompatible with extra range and lavish expenditure in buildings. It was in the spirit that the first true Islamic architectural took shaping the mosque built in *Basra* in AD635. It was made simply delineating the boundary of a plot of land more or less square in shape with a fence of reeds.

The Islamic Museum (2005) stated that the Islamic architectural has influence of the five pillars of Islam which is The Testimony of Faith (Shahadah) - the declaration that there is none worthy of worship except Allah (Arabic: God) and that Muhammad (PBUH) is His messenger. Ritual Prayer (Salat) - establishing of the five daily Prayers. Obligatory (religious) almsgiving (Zakat) - which is generally 2.5% of the total savings for a rich man working in trade or industry, and 10% or 20% of the annual produce for agriculturists.

This money or produce is distributed among the poor. Fasting (*Ramadan*) - refraining from eating, drinking or engaging in sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset during the month of *Ramadan*, the ninth month in the Islamic lunar calendar. The pilgrimage to *Mecca* (*Hajj*) - this is done during the month of *ZulHijjah*, and is compulsory once in a lifetime for one who has the ability to do it.

If the Muslim is in ill health or in debt, he or she is not required to perform *Hajj*. However the gist of the Islamic architectural doesn't abstain to the mosque only but to Malay people homes too, which has similar concept of ideology but elements being used differ accordingly, as to the Malay society's convenience. Moreover the Muslim Malay peoples culture, tradition, custom and cosmology goes along with this gist of Islamic architectural concepts.

3.1.2 Gist of Taoist architectural which represents the Taoist Chinese in Malaysia:

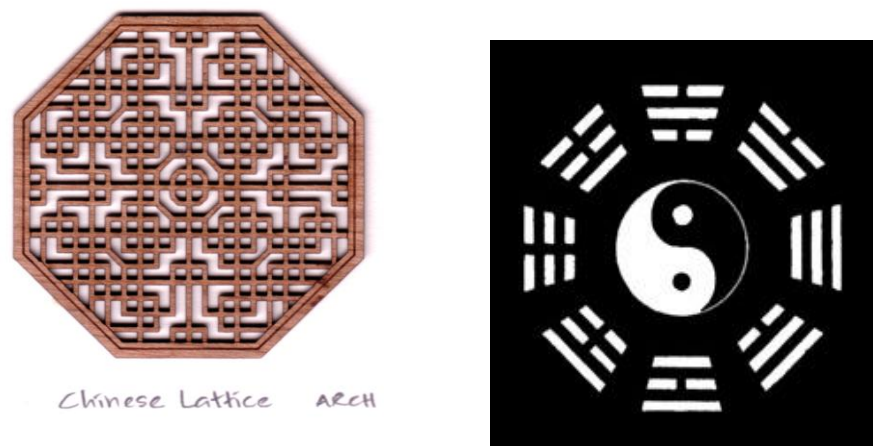


Figure 6: The Chinese Yin and Yang.

(Source: Chinese Geometry)

In Taoist, the traditional symbol representing the forces of *Yin and Yang*¹⁹. The concepts of *Yin and Yang* originate in ancient Chinese philosophy and metaphysics, which describes two primal opposing but complementary forces found in all things in the universe.

Yin is sad, the darker element, is passive, dark, feminine, downward-seeking, and corresponds to the night; *Yang*, is happy, the brighter element, is active, light, masculine, and upward-seeking and corresponds to the day; *Yin* is often symbolized by water, while *Yang* is symbolized by fire.

The pair probably goes back to ancient *Agrarian religion* which it exists in *Confucianism*,²⁰ and it is prominent in *Taoism*²¹. Though the words *Yin* and *Yang* only appear once in the *Tao Te Ching*,²² the book is laden with examples and clarifications of the concept of mutual arising.

The concept is a fundamental principle of traditional Chinese architectural. *Yin* and *Yang* are equally important, unlike the typical dualism of good and evil as the Chinese tradition to follow *Feng Shui* in order to build Chinese temple architectural. One possible derivation for the *Tajitu* symbol is as a sort of calendar.

Tao Te Ching (1336) said that the “Ancient Chinese scholars would place an 8 foot pole in the ground and measure the position of the shadow at different points in the year. The top of the symbol shows the summer solstice, where the shadow is shortest, and the bottom winter, where the shadow is longest. The positions of the two dots mark the solstices, the point of the year at which Yin begins to give way to Yang and vice versa”.

Feng Shui, a special Chinese tradition in architectural, usually links the whole process from site selection, designing, construction and interior and exterior decorating in ancient times. *Feng Shui* combines the trinity heaven, the earth and humans, and seeks harmony between selected site, orienting, natural doctrine and human fate.

It repulses human deconstruction of nature and stresses cohabitation with the environment, which is regarded as perfect and occult. In Malaysia a *Feng Shui* practitioner, or a diviner, usually applies theories as *Yin Yang*, *Sixiang*, *Wuxing* and *Bagua*, based on the principle of heaven and the earth in harmony, to select an optimum place for burial site or accommodation.

According to Wong Hua (2006) one of the Chinese temple architect. “Qi²³, deemed as the basic elements of the physical world in ancient Chinese philosophy, is the essence of Feng Shui. The art of Feng Shui advocates there is a certain field, sort of like magnetic field, termed as Qi field. An auspicious Qi field is what Feng Shui practitioners seek while an evil one is what they strive to avoid. There are five elements- Long (Dragon), Xue (cave), Sha (sand), Sui (water) and Xiang (orientation). They are used to avoid evil Qi and gain auspicious Qi”.

In order to keep *Qi* of the heaven and earth in harmony in the construction of a new structure, earth vein should not be spoiled. The best orientation is a building with its face facing river or a lake in the South and back against a hill in the North. Most of the Chinese temples in Malaysia primarily, were build according to the guidance of the *Feng Shui*, which was the main principle used to select locations based on their environmental surroundings.