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ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITION OF HERITAGE MASJID IN NEGERI SEMBILAN

Siti Azira Abd Rahim¹, Noor Hayati Ismail², Nurul Syala Abd Latip³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment

UNIVERSITI SAINS ISLAM MALAYSIA

¹ Faculty of Engineering and Quantity Surveying

INTI INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Abstract

In a Muslim community, the mosque or masjid is considered to be important because they have served as key locations for religious gatherings and centres for political and social activities in the community since the dawn of Islam. A heritage masjid in Malaysia is classified as having traditional architecture, which includes a distinctive style and material that represents the local people's customs and culture. Traditional architecture in Negeri Sembilan is in jeopardy as a result of rapid urbanization. Its abandonment might lead to the disappearance of its information, documentation, and features due to a change in design and materials. Whether as a consequence of natural calamities or human invasion, architectural heritage is constantly under risk. Therefore, preservation and conservation are essential stages in the life cycle of a historic property. Heritage masjid are important to protect, because it depicts the authenticity and workmanship of local villagers in an age before modern technology. The objective of this paper is to evaluate the current condition of heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan. This research employed on-site observations and includes a comprehensive review of the literature approach on various documentation. This paper concludes with a discussion of how these findings will contribute to the improvement of the current situation and the preservation of the functional aspects of Negeri Sembilan heritage masjid.

Keywords: Heritage Masjid, Masjid Condition, Heritage Building Conservation

¹ PhD Candidate at University Sains Islam Malaysia. Email: azirarahim.usim.phd@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The masjid is very important to Muslims and can be considered as the heart of Islamic life. It functions as the sacred place where Muslim do prayers and act as a centre for education and information. In addition, Muslims use masjid for events during Islam's holiest month of Ramadhan. They are also known as places for social welfare and also for dispute settlement. In the modern era, intelligent architecture contributes a great deal to influencing the evolution of heritage building into a modern design building. Focusing on the evolution of masjid, we can find that nowadays, masjid are built with considerations of cheaper cost and modern designs to match the new era.

Norwina (2018) stated that the Islamic religion reached mainland Asia through the Silk Route and the Malay Archipelago via sea route used by merchants from the Muslim Middle East and China. Masjid architecture is significantly influenced by Islamic architecture as brought in by Arab merchants. The masjid's architecture then merged with the local culture, creating a distinct character especially in Negeri Sembilan that can still be seen today, such as the structure and the roof. The majority of communities in Negeri Sembilan are Muslim, as reflected in the number of masjid around the state.

In Islam, the masjid serves to provide a platform for various religious activity (Mizanur et al., 2010). A heritage masjid is one which has been preserved for current generations and will be passed down to future generations. The historical importance of the heritage masjid is its original and distinctive design, which may display the local culture's features (Kartina et al., 2017). The initiative to conserve heritage buildings began several years ago, and as such it has only been in the past decade that significant progress has been made. The formation of the National Heritage Department in 2006, as well as the National Heritage Act 2005, have contributed to this progress (Harun, 2011). The purpose of this study is to highlight the actual situation of the architectural disappearance and ignorance towards Heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan. We must acknowledge that the masjid is a sacred place which should be maintained and regularly visited, as stated in Al-Quran:

“The mosques of Allah shall be visited and maintained by such as who believe in Allah and the Last Day, who establish regular prayers and pay the zakat and fear none but Allah. It is they who are on the true guidance”

(Surah Tauba 9:18).

Thus, the issue of abandoned masjid in society is a crucial one which calls for proper conservation. Nur et al., (2020) stated that the diverse sources of information, financial resources, society contribution as well as psychological support are all necessary in the preservation endeavour.

RESEARCHBACKGROUND

All over the Malay Peninsula, the masjid is a symbol of the Malay kingdom's greatness. Kartina et al., (2017) mention that the masjid's main characteristics include a large prayer hall, a minaret, a roof design, a *mihrab*, a *mimbar* (pulpit), and an ablution area. Fielden, (2003) stated any building over 100 years old is labelled as a heritage and historic building. According to the Negeri Sembilan State Government, Negeri Sembilan has a multiracial population of over one million inhabitants, with 61.5 percent of the Muslim community making up the majority. According to Jabatan Hal Ehwal Negeri Sembilan (JHEAINS), there are more than 300 masjid in Negeri Sembilan. 10% of these can be categorised as heritage masjid, which are more than 100 years old, as shown in the table 1.

Table 1: Heritage Masjid in Negeri Sembilan

Negeri Sembilan's District	Heritage Masjid in Negeri Sembilan over 100 years	
Rembau	Masjid Kariah Padang Lebar	1800
	Masjid Kariah Selemak	1844
	Masjid Kariah Astana Raja	1885
	Masjid Kariah Chengkau Ulu	1870
	Masjid Kariah Sawah Raja	1898
	Masjid Jamek Tanah Datar	1900
	Masjid Kariah Batu 17 Chembong	1900
	Masjid Kariah Tanah Air Hitam Chembong	1900
	Masjid Kariah Tanjung Berangan	1900
	Masjid Kariah Penajis	1900
	Masjid Kariah Bongek	1901
	Masjid Kariah Legong Ulu	1902
	Masjid Kariah Pekan Pedas	1910
Kuala Pilah	Masjid Kariah Kg. Jerjak	1905
	Masjid Kariah Kuala Talang (Tuan Tulis)	1907
	Masjid Kariah Kg. Parit	1909
	Masjid Kariah Kampung Gachong	1914
Seremban	Masjid Jamek Dato' Bandar Haji Ahmad Rasah	1800
	Masjid Jamek Dato' Klana Petra Sendeng,	1840
	Ampangan	1840
	Masjid Lama Lenggeng	1900
Port Dickson	Masjid Jamek Bandar Seremban	
	Masjid Kariah Lukut	1872
	Masjid Kariah Linggi	1884
Jempol	Masjid Kariah Kg. Chuah	1890
	Masjid Tuanku Puan Chik Kampung Serting Ilir	1905
Jelevu	Masjid Warisan Kariah Kuala Dulang	1850

Source: Negeri Sembilan Islamic Affairs Department (JHEAINS)

A New Straits Times article by Intan, (2020) depicted several heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan to show the uniqueness of architecture styles around that area. However, masjid have also disappeared or lost authenticity over times. Aziz et al., (2018 & 2019) declared that some of heritage masjid were being ignored and replaced with new architectural designs, without making any effort to maintain the heritage building.

Kartina et al., (2017) stated that a few studies and efforts have been undertaken to conserve heritage buildings. Conventional methods are still being used to conserved heritage buildings. In addition, the novel concept of Historic Building Information Modelling (HBIM) has been introduced by various researchers in order to protect this national property. Muhammad et al., (2020), declared that digitalizing using Building Information Modelling (BIM) data documentation can be utilise to preserve such cultural assets. However, the exploration and adoption of HBIM still new in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

The selection of Negeri Sembilan is based on the uniqueness of the design characteristic of the masjid that relates to their custom and culture. The study adopted in this research was a qualitative method by applying a case study approach to evaluate the current conditions of heritage masjid which affect their functions and societal responsibility in Negeri Sembilan. Seven districts have been explored and a thorough analysis of the on-site observations and a document review, was conducted in order to evaluate the current condition of heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan. The document reviews included a content analysis of secondary data gathered from various sources, including peer-reviewed academic journal articles, conference proceedings, textbooks, governing organisations, and PhD theses. The data for on-site observation were analysed using content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



The current conditions of Negeri Sembilan Heritage Masjid




Based on the findings, there are more than 25 heritage masjid as listed by JHEAINS in Negeri Sembilan that have been around for more than 100 years. Some of the abandoned building components are still sturdy, and the materials can be restored and maintained. However, many of the heritage masjid seem to have been neglected for a long time, with little effort taken to address the situation.


The research shows that a few buildings have been abandoned, and some of the features and important components disappeared or were dilapidated as a result. Several buildings are being refurbished and maintained; however, the changes in their originality have resulted in comprehensive changes in the building's appearance. A few have been neglected and replaced by a larger masjid

near the old masjid's location. Based on the observation, Kuala Pilah district is the area that shows the highest concentration of the historically significant heritage masjid in decay. Other districts show a different condition based on the community interference to take action to maintain the significance character of the masjid. A few heritage masjid have been identified in Negeri Sembilan, and their current conditions are shown in table 2.

Table 2: The observation of the current condition of Heritage Masjid in Negeri Sembilan

Heritage Masjid/ Location	Aged	Characteristics	Conditions	Visual/ Images
Masjid Lama Kg. Pelangai, Kuala Pilah	111 years	The masjid has total of 20 pillars including 4 main pillars with the two-tier roof. The ceiling has five 'Buah Buton'. Decoration of 'tetupai' at the front column. The crossed ornamentation at the entrance for sun penetration. Timber structure, on stilts, concrete stairs. and using 'tanggam' techniques.	The building was abandoned and dilapidated. Some part of the wall, door, windows and flooring were gone missing.	 

<p>Masjid Lama Parit Istana, Mukim Terachi, Kuala Pilah</p>	<p>225 years</p>	<p>The masjid has total of 16 pillars with the two-tier roof. The four main pillars was carved with floral motive by four tribes (Biduanda, Sri Lemak, Tiga Nenek Acheh and Anak Acheh). The ceiling has five ‘Buah Buton’. Timber structure, on stilts, concrete stairs. and using ‘tanggap’ techniques.</p>	<p>The new masjid was built on 1967 which is located next to the old masjid. The old masjid left abandoned and dilapidated. Some parts of the wall and flooring are missing.</p>	
<p>Masjid Lama Kg. Kuala Serdang, Tanjung Ipoh, Kuala Pilah</p>	<p>113 years</p>	<p>The masjid has total of 20 pillars including four main pillars with two-tier roof. Timber structure, on stilts, concrete stairs and using ‘tanggap’ techniques. A small dome at the roof peak and the ceiling have one ‘Buah Buton’.</p>	<p>The new masjid was built in front of the old masjid. The masjid has been conserved and well-kept by the inheritor (Puan Kathom binti Zainal Abidin).</p>	
<p>Masjid Tua Kampung Tengah (Tanjung Beringin), Kuala Pilah</p>	<p>129 years</p>	<p>Four main pillars in the prayer hall with the two-tier roof. The exterior pillars that help to support the building was</p>	<p>Recognized by The Department of National Heritage. The building were</p>	

		carved with 'Jawi' and floral motive.	abandoned and dilapidated.	
Masjid Jamek Dato' Bandar Haji Ahmad Rasah, Seremban	221 years	Located under the major highway. The concrete structure, dome roof, building on the ground with few steps to the main hall. The green tiles (original features) on the walls. Perigi and Makam.	The original area is being conserved and refurbished with new features. Some of the original elements were maintained. The building has been extended a few times.	
Masjid Jamek Dato' Klana Petra Sendeng, Ampangan, Seremban	181 years	The concrete structure, the two-tier roof, building on the ground with few steps to the main hall. Four main concrete pillars and small dome at the roof peak.	The original area is being conserved and refurbished with new features. Some of the original elements were maintained and extended a few times.	

<p>Masjid Tuanku Puan Chik Kampung Serting Ilir, Bahau, Jempol</p>	<p>116 years</p>	<p>Concrete and timber structure, four original main pillars, the dome with one-tier roof, building on the ground with few steps to the main prayer hall.</p>	<p>The original area was refurbished with additional new features. The four main pillars were maintained and the building extended and changed names a few times.</p>	
<p>Masjid Lama Kampung Terusan, Kuala Pilah</p>	<p>191 years</p>	<p>The masjid has four main pillars with two tier roof and dome on top. Timber structure, elevated concrete floors with stairs. The ceiling have one 'Buah Buton'. Perigi and Kolah.</p>	<p>The new masjid was built beside the heritage masjid. The heritage masjid was on going conservation.</p>	

Several abandoned heritage masjid were discovered in Kuala Pilah, as shown in table 3. Five buildings were not listed because they were no longer in use as places of worship. Some of the masjid have been abandoned, while others have been converted into storage areas. This demonstrates the poor condition of social interactions between communities in that area, causing the abandonment of heritage masjid. An important finding to highlight in this research is that Masjid Parit Istana is the oldest heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan (226 years old) but it has been neglected and become dilapidated over time.

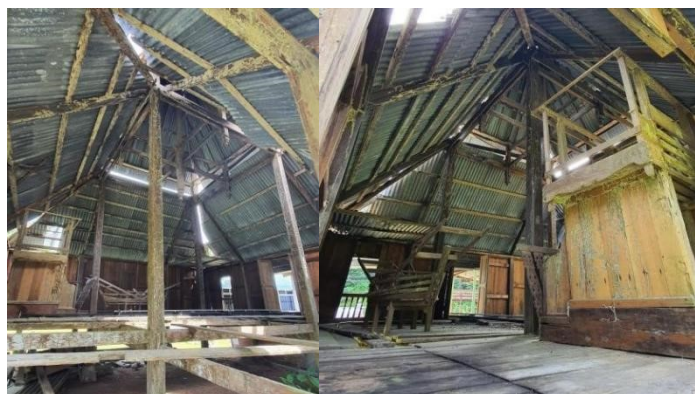


Figure 1: The special features of heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan (four crafted main pillars and ‘Buah Buton/Bergantung’). (Source: Author, 2021)

Table 3: The heritage masjid requires a proper conservation

Masjid location	Heritage masjid	Aged
Kuala Pilah	Masjid Lama Parit Istana	1796
	Masjid Lama Kg. Terusan	1830
	Masjid Tua Kampung Tengah (Tanjung Beringin)	1892
	Masjid Lama Kg. Kuala Serdang	1908
	Masjid Lama Kg. Pelangai	1910



Figure 2: The very dilapidated state of Kampung Pelangai heritage masjid. (Source: Author, 2021)

Based on the overall observations, the current conditions of the heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan can be placed into four categories, as shown in table 4.

Table 4: The current condition categorization of Negeri Sembilan heritage masjid

Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4
Abandoned masjid with no function (left decayed)	Conserved with different function	Renovation and the extension (Preserved original area)	Renovation and extension (No preservation and total change of design)



Figure 3: The oldest heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan (Masjid Parit Istana) built in 1796. (Source: Author, 2021)

Projected heritage masjid for conservation

The heritage masjid in the Kuala Pilah area has the most critical need for conservation. A total of four heritage masjid have been abandoned and become dilapidated. The buildings will lose its authenticity over time and need to take proper action for conservation.

Table 5: The visual assesment of abandoned heritage masjid

Heritage Masjid	Visual Assessment	Conservation efforts
Masjid Lama Kampung Pelangai, Kuala Pilah	Very dilapidated, the architectural significance still can be seen. The structure remains strong, need major conservation. .	Full supports from community and authorities to show the effort to conserve the building.
Masjid Lama Parit Istana, Mukim Terachi, Kuala Pilah		
Masjid Tua Kampung Tengah (Tanjung Beringin), Kuala Pilah		

Masjid Kampung Lama Terusan, Kuala Pilah	Same design but replaced the whole building using new materials. No preservation of the original materials. No proper guidelines to preserve the original and the authenticity of the Masjid.	On going conservation. 90% completed.
Masjid Lama Kampung Kuala Serdang, Tanjung Ipoh, Kuala Pilah		Have been conserved by Negeri Sembilan Tourism Board and other authorities.

CONCLUSION

The heritage masjid in Negeri Sembilan has unique characteristics and still can be seen today. The world continues to change and evolve. Some things have been brought forward and upgraded, but some disappeared without a trace. The special design of the crafted main pillars, the traditional and regional influences in roof design, as well as the features of ‘buah buton/bergantung’ are reflected the original style and characteristics. Thus, it needs to be preserved and well-kept for future generations. Further contributions are required for conservation efforts to protect our national assets.

This research develops an essence of appreciation to our national heritage property and values. The desire to understand the disappearance of heritage masjid has brought forth the spirit to create awareness of the importance of cultural artifacts that are architecturally significant and historically important for future reference. Therefore, there is a need to explore more heritage masjid in various states in Malaysia. The conservation of cultural heritage is a value to contribute in sustainable planning development of the future. The urgency to conserve and preserve will protect and maintain the authenticity of the building which the life cycle will lasting for more than hundred years.

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