



The Divergence Between Prophet's Masjid and Present Masjid: an Architectural Essay

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Abstract

Basically, functional aspect in masjid can easily understand that there are divergence phenomena between the present masjid compared to the physical appearance and function of the Prophet's Masjid in the beginning. The objective of study is to reveals the existence of the Prophet's Masjid regarding the process and physical description of the masjid through *hadith*, *sirah nabawiyah* and related references as a guideline for comparative thinking on the present masjid. Critical descriptive research method is used as an analytical instrument to assess present masjid by adopting the idea of function in architecture knowledge and collaborate with the idea of social values as a reflection of the paradigm of Muslims towards the present masjid. Discussion find out that the people's perspective on present masjid tends to be statically trapped in the shape, form and visuals from the legacy of Islamic civilization after the time of the Prophet's Muhammad PBUH.

Keywords: Divergence, Present Masjid, Prophet's Masjid.

1. Introduction

Masjids are a place of worship for Muslims in all around of the world. The physical and social existences of masjid observed have been generated base on different approaches, depend on the perception, perspective, and paradigm of local Muslims people. Moderately the existences of present mosques have become diverse and deep-rooted to such culture. Most of the present mosque designs are still trapped in the precedent of design approach based on Islamic civilization, which usually presenting the grand scale building with very expensive construction costs [1].

Referring to the life history of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH or *Sirah Nabawiyah*, clarify that the mosque is not only function as a place to perform prayers (*solah*) alone, but also as a school (*madrrasah*) for Muslims to obtain Islamic thought, as a place to manage and taking care of the people needs for their social life and concurrently function as a government building. The embodiment of Islamic thought faultlessly implemented in Prophet's Masjid during the time [2].

In the present time, masjid as superlative objects have divergences in the way how do people design and utilize it, compared to masjid during Prophet era's. The space in masjid tend to turn into an exclusive space just for *solah*, *tausiyah* and other ritual activities. It describes that the value of a masjid which exemplified by Prophet Muhammad PBUH going to decline. Behave from this phenomena, the only way back to find the original value of masjid are by referring to Qur'an and Hadith. Architectural knowledge can be a supplementary instrument to reveal the past and original space arrangement, structure and aesthetic value along with activities. Parallel to that, the study on the existence of the present masjid need to carried out as an effort to approaching the reflection of the past Prophet's Masjid in a way to restoring the Muslim point of view regarding the understanding of masjid itself.

This research was inspired by the term *ascesis* as "an exercise of oneself" [5] [6], the aim is to study how deep the history itself provides freedom of thought that allows someone to think differently. There are two major questions to be answered in this study, firstly, according to the *Sirah Nabawiyah*, it is stated that Islam is the last heavenly religion that came from God to the last Prophet Muhammad PBUH as the most perfect and complete religion ever. However, in present masjid, the embodiment of perfection itself is look to be limited as a place for rituals only. Secondly, is the visual luxury can improve the quality of life of the Muslims based on the dogmatic agreement of Islamic thought on the presence of the masjid as the center of people's lives. These two questions are really important in an attempt to reveal the phenomena of present masjid. The focus of discussion is not looking on the process of design and construction of present masjid, but more on the discussion of the usage of space in the masjid as critical topic that defines the field of practice.



2. Literature Review: The Beginning of Prophet's Masjid

The term 'masjid' mentioned 28 times in the Quran [7]. The word masjid is from Arabic, meaning a place for prostration. Then it turned into a masjid which represent a specific building provided uses for the five time obligatory daily prayers for Muslim as mentioned in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Jin, verse 18: *'the masjid actually belongs to Allah, therefore do not worship anything other than Allah'*. Hadith Rasulullah in Bukhari and Muslim through Jabir bin Abdullah, Prophet Muhammad PBUH said *'that the earth has been made for me (and my ummah) as a masjid and a place to sanctified your soul'*. The term masjid that mean a place of prostration meant by Allah SWT was further clarified by the Prophet is placed in the earth. Associated with the 'earth' [7], the masjid is not just a place for prostration and sanctify space, but also means as a place to conduct all human activities that reflect obedience to Allah SWT.

On September 27, 622 AD [2], Prophet Muhammad PBUH arrived in Yatrib (Medina), his camel stopped and roared on the expanse of land belongs to Abu Ayyub Al Anshari. Then Prophet bought the land and start to construct a humble building as a masjid, later people name it as Prophet's Masjid. Prophet Muhammad PBUH was directly involved in construction process as to encouraging the people. He did certain works such as: lifting and moving the mud bricks, stones and rocks, dismantling graveyard, leveling buildings on construction land and cutting trees [8]. The construction process begins by layering stones on the two edges of the main door, mud-bricks layering, date palm leaves as the roof and date palm trunks as pillars, the floor is made from sand and small pebbles [9]. The length and width of the building towards the Qibla and other sides is the same, around one hundred cubits long, (equal to 45 meters long), two meters high un-roofed perimeter wall, the foundation around three cubits deep and three door access on the right, left and rear side. For ninety years this masjid had no artificial light, the darkness of the night was driven away by burning the leaves of the palm trees around it [10] [11]. It simply understands that the Prophet's Mosque was built popularly by using with common local knowledge and technique that create a humble spatial composition and physical form which is suitable and familiar to local people. The size of land fulfilled by various activities that can be flexibly used as ritual activities, dwell activities and socio-religious activities.

3. Research Methodology

Descriptive qualitative method is used in this study by taking social critique technique to reveal the treatment given by the Muslims in the present masjid. Meanwhile the visual images and ideas were obtained from scholars and researchers who tried to illustrate the physical of the Prophet's Masjid which was manifested by Islamic thought. This will use as indicators to compare the phenomena later in the analysis. Lily H. Chi's thoughts on architectural 'functional' criticism (wrapped by chora: detail of reference [3]) through discussion by questioning the existence of the Modern Mosque on its function for the development of the quality of Muslims is used as critical analysis tool. To clarify the social reality of Muslims is translated through the social deconstruction proposed by Derrida [4]. He argues about the three faces of truth surveillance, i.e.: sans savoir, sans voir, sans avoir.

The sequential explanations of the combination from factual ideas and opinions in this study is expected to increase the population of anti-visual architects who prioritize the masjid as the strength of the social structure of Muslims rather than privileging visual admirers who seem to regard the masjid as a religious stage.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Physical Anti-visual on the Prophet's Masjid

At the beginning of the establishment of the Prophet's Masjid in year 1 Hijriyah, it was believed that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH had known and understood the culture that characterized the aesthetic. However, Figure 1 shows that the value of aesthetic was not appeared at all in the physical building of the masjid, by the time it was first established [12].

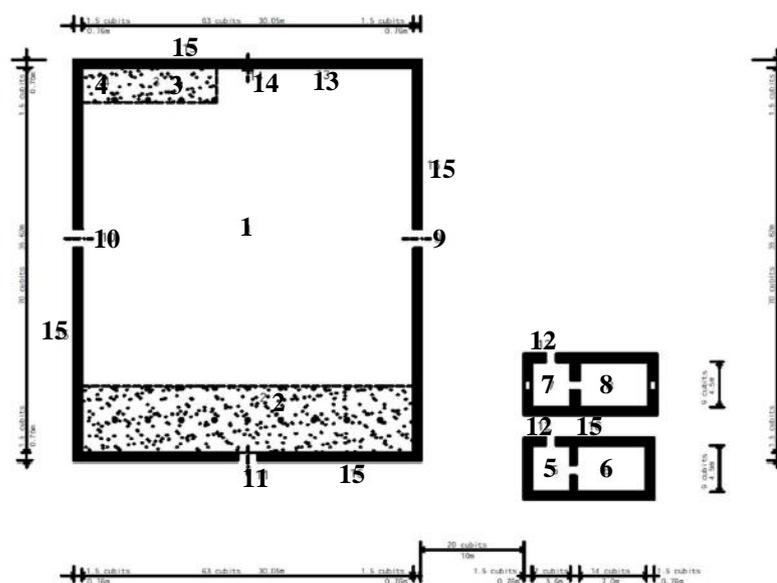


Fig 1. The first edition of the Prophet Mosque in 1st Hijrah

Table 1. Legends of the Prophet Mosque

1. Main Sourtyard (uncovered)	2. South Suffah with palm-trunk columns
3. North Sullah with palm-trunk columns	4. Space for The Prophet SAW
5. Entry (Hujratiha) of wife Sawdah bint Zamah RA	6. Room (Baytiha) of wife Sawdah bint Zamah RA
7. Entry (Hujratiha) of wife Ayesha bint Abu Bakr RA	8. Room (Baytiha) of wife Ayesha bint abu Bakr RA
9. Bab al Rahmah / Al Nabi (gate)	10. Bab Al Jibril
11. Gate to south wall	12. Door openings
13. Qibla Wall	14. Qibla Stone
15. Enclosing Walls-Brick up to total 7 cubits (3.5m)	16. Laneway between Baytiha

The masjid has no permanent roof, only certain space which were functioned as *musolla*, *suffah* and prophet's house covered by roof constructed by using local date palm leaves. Figure 1 indicate that the inner court yard dominantly used as a multi-purpose open space for various social activities for people. This court yard was the widest part of any other space within the masjid.

4.2. The Character and Functionality of the Prophet's Masjid

Lily H. Chi [3] reveals the difference between architectural works and works of art (sculptures). According to her, architectural works tend to be monologues and having four functional ideas, namely: building functions that are responsive to the public aspect, having comprehensive tendencies that are not specific, room character values that are in accordance with practical implications and character limitations for the sake of the integrity of usage.

The inner court yard function as a place for social activities is the largest part of other spaces that are responsive to public aspects, even if compare with the prayer hall (*musolla*) (Figure 1, no. 13 and 14). The masjid was not only a place for prayer, but in the early stages it also functions as a place for communal gatherings and as a place for court meeting under the supervision of the imam. The hypostyle hall, which is usually rectangular with a short axis toward the mihrab, is entered from an open courtyard surrounded by arcades. This page will also be used for prayers if the congregation is large [13].

The Prophet's Masjid prioritizes comprehensive aspects rather than specific aspects, this can be seen in the provision of facilities for housing for families and people in need. This is a reflection of Islamic teachings that the quality of the people is prioritized over the physical form of the building as an approach to a good life, welfare, providing convenience and alleviation of suffering, and the generation of prosperity within the scope of rahmatan lil'alamiin [14].

The multipurpose character values in the spaces of the Prophet's Masjid were the evidence of the process of the existence of the people to be growing in a better direction. It is not a homolog of activity, a far segregation between worship and life will have implications for the practice of a single life that can weaken the values of Islamic thoughts themselves in the lives of the people [15].

The physical existence of the Prophet's Masjid did not have a specific character, instead the character of the people is used as the existence of thoughts in achieving victory. Various activities and community problems related to the religion, science, social politics, and socio-culture were also discussed and resolved at the masjid itself [16]. So that at that time the masjid was able to become a center of Islamic culture development, masjid act as a pace for critical discussion, recital Quran, and learning Islamic knowledge in particular, and general knowledge in general.

4.3. The Practice of Establishing a Masjid in Present Time

Changes in the existence of the role and function of masjids happen in present time, which can actually be observed in the widespread construction of masjids in Indonesia by emphasizing the architectural value of masjid without any emphasis on efforts to serve the people [16]; Prioritizing symbols vertically, weak relationships horizontally.

As an evaluation instrument, the virtual physical form of the early establishment of the Prophet's Mosque is needed as an analytical guide of assess the extent to which a present mosque is used of the physical existence of its building. The initial change to the Prophet's Mosque when it first experienced expansion was the prostration room, namely by taking the public space to all-part sides of the area while the Prophet's mosque area as a whole had no expansion (the area was still fixed when the Prophet's acquired the land for the first time). With this expansion, the capacity of public space to carry out activities that address the problems and the progress of the people in having an area is reduced. Nevertheless, public space is still maintained as one of the spatial arrangements that must exist in the area of the Prophet's Mosque.

The oldest and unique architectural elements in the masjid were dome and minaret [17]. The dome act as roof to cover the main prayer hall in the masjid. Meanwhile, the minaret is the highest place that was created to make it easier for the muazzin to recite adzan, to call people for prayer as well as a sign of prayer time begin. The presence of domes and minarets that did not exist before at the beginning of the construction of the Prophet's Masjid (figure 2(a)) in the present time it seems to become the main requirement and focus in masjid's design and leads to wrong hereditary tradition in constructing a masjid.

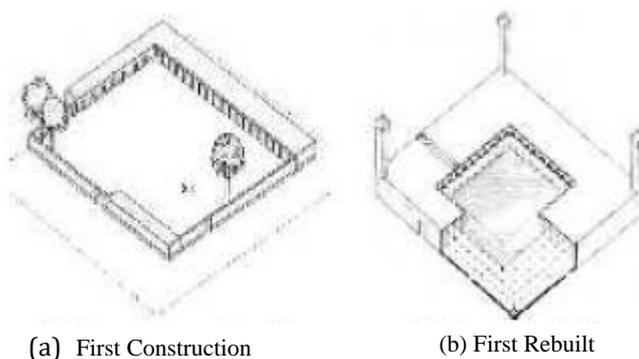


Fig 2. First transformation Nabawi Mosque fisik form



Fig 3. Mock up model of the Prophet Mosque in Madinah.

4.4. The Value of Present Masjid and Prophet's Masjid

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH, through various hadiths, explicitly explain that a Muslim is not an individual who stands alone and seeks faith and piety for himself. A Muslim is a part of his society so he needs to fight for the good and welfare of his community [18]. How do Muslims perceive the present masjid as the substance of the existence of the Prophet's Masjid on a social life reality value proposed by Derrida based on architectural functions according to Lily H. Chi.

Derrida expresses three ideas on the principle of the value of people's perception in a meaning, first is *sans savoir* (not knowing) describing that a form is not always perceived as a totality; have no authority. Second is *sans avoir* (not having) means that truth is evaluated from its authoritative confession. Third is *sans voir* (not seeing) implies limited senses and vision of the value of the truth [19].

Refer to the functional concept described by Lily H Chi's, if the functionality of masjid ignores the public aspect then the objective to improving the social life quality will not achieve. In present masjid, the existence of open space at the Prophet's Masjid has shifted by the exclusive large main prayer hall for worship space. This reflect to the *sans savoir* value of the Prophet's Masjid was formed in the beginning. The present people is trapped and covered by the present physical form of the Prophet's Masjid which has been changed a lot gradually in its visual aspect.

Mostly the present masjid tends to prioritizes specific aspects only (as a place of worship) instead of comprehensive aspects, has referred to the value of *sans avoir*, because people do not have complete knowledge yet about the objective of life which has been exemplified by Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Therefore, the spaces created in the present masjid tend to focus on ritual services which are almost at the point of dogmatic perception. The spatial value of the present masjid focused towards the character of ritual worship which refers to the truth of *sans voir*. The people's perception of the masjid is focused on the ritual aspect only. Meanwhile, most of the people understand there are many more values of worship beside the *solah*, such as learning, trading, help other people, etc.

Due to the perception of the value of dogmatic usage in present masjid, then the limitations to the usage appear and this situation reflect to *sans savoir*. The design of masjid it seems to ignore the guidelines exemplified by Prophet Muhammad PBUH and only referring to the shape, form and symbol. It is rare to find a present masjid design that refers to the truth values of the Prophet's Masjid.

Practicing Islam inevitably means the creation of a comprehensive culture and civilization which bear the imprints of Islamic values, teachings and principles, more in some aspects than in others, yet covering all. Islam signifies not only a set of prescribed rituals, but also comprehensive articles of faith, philosophy, ideology, culture, civilization and the totality of life's systems: personal, family and societal. The subject of architecture is no exception to this. Islamic beliefs shape the ways in which the Muslims build [20].

According to Hillenbrand [21], Islamic architectural references in form, function and meaning define parts of mosques, minarets, madrasas, mausoleums. This explains that the mosque is an object as an extension of the symbol of the glory that once existed in a certain area that characterizes aesthetics. The public's perception of the physical existence of the Modern Mosque is still strongly influenced by the forms of the mosque derived from that civilization. This activity continues to repeat itself into a tradition that seems difficult to eliminate because the process of building a Modern Mosque tends to be built with tribal significance [22].

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the absorption of present masjid towards the Prophet's Masjid in the social realm of Muslims aspect is currently still weak. Masjid should have a mandate to build a worldwide view regarding how ideally Muslims need to behave in masjid design and management, which was exemplified by Prophet Muhammad PBUH [22]. The mosque is a place to sow everything that have a benefit value for people, both in lively world and the hereafter reflected by its management. In fact, the function of a present masjid seems does not have an ideal role to help the development of the Muslims and Islamic civilization [23].

The people's perspective on present masjid tends to be statically trapped in the shape, form and visuals from the legacy of Islamic civilization after the time of the Prophet's Muhammad PBUH and His four (4) noble companions. This phenomenon can be change for the better, if the present masjid that are rapidly continues to grow, can reflect the activities that are able act as an oasis for people to live as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Masjid as an institution should focus on providing flexible space and place, also giving balanced attention between vertical worship activities to God and horizontal relationship to the people. The study identifies that the image of the present masjid is a reflection of the quality of today's Muslim perception, especially in Indonesia, which tends to prioritize quantity over quality.

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