



Global Advanced Research Journal of Arts and Humanities (GARJAH) Vol. 2(4) pp. 075-078, September 2013

Available online <http://garj.org/garjah/index.htm>

Copyright © 2013 Global Advanced Research Journals

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The new architecture of mosque design to express the modernity of Moslems

**Yuke Ardhiati**

Magister Design Program, Faculty of Fine Art and Design, Trisakti University of Jakarta Jl. Kyai Tapa No. 1 Grogol, Jakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: [yuke\\_ardhiati@yahoo.com](mailto:yuke_ardhiati@yahoo.com)

Abstract

The new paradigm in the mosque's design was invented to express the of "architecture stage" as one new idea of contemporary Architecture, Art, and Culture. This idea is represented by the monumental and spectacular work of Zaha Hadid and Norman Foster in Mecca. On other side is the work of Ridwan Kamil in Indonesia, he created the 'new architecture' simple mosque design to express modernity of Moslem without the dome as the of building's crown. The idea of "architecture stage" is usually visualized by the Ruler through his ideology of his architectural work which is created by his architects. This study is based on Grounded Theory Research by Glaser and Strauss by way of phenomenological observations in both works. The result of this study reveals 'new mosque architectural designs to express the modernity of Islam' by way of unique processes having the qualities of architectural presence.

**Keywords:** Architecture stage, modernity of the moslem, new mosque architectural design.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a shift of paradigm of 'beauty' in Architecture and Art design which replaces Western standards. The first is artifacts which represent the facade or the surface of architecture, art and culture through the good looks of the container's 'form' or its decorative elements. The 'beauty' in architecture is represented by the pillars', the roof's or the wall's decorations. They emerge as 'the aura' in the material's beauty in the artifacts. This beauty relates to the Plato's aesthetic theory as the ideals of God's beauty imitated by humans.

The beauty in Indonesian is similar to say the beautiful women as in Eastern standard does not refer only physically or visually like in the West, but also the

emergent beauty from the inside, i.e. their souls and personality. This beauty is also applied in Islam to express the beauty of her behavior. Islam teaches that 'beauty' comes through gentleness, calmness and patience. Inner beauty may be found through acts of good spirituality. One way of finding the inner beauty is by submitting herself to God with good behavior without prejudice. The nature of her lovely heart is expressed by the harmony of her face, acts and personality. Thus, the beauty of mosque's design is represented by the harmony of Indonesian standards and the Architect's concept.

## Literature Review

From the beginning *ka'ba* is the *qibla* - the central orientation of *Moslems'* prayer, located in the center of the area. After the King built *Masjid Al-Harram* to border the *ka'ba*, *Moslem* orientation still has the cubicle as the central point in an open space inside a circular arcade. After the *Moslems* finish the seven *Tawaf*, they pray in the area surrounding the *ka'ba*. This time signs a unique moment of the mingling of Men and Women when the sounds of *Azhan* reverberate as an invitation to prayer. Spontaneously all *Moslem* men and women would take their place to pray at their spot in the orientation of the *Ka'ba* as *qibla*. Then, it is not considered 'haram' while it never happened during worships in mosques. In Islam, in worship, men and women are separated by hijab. The mingling of Men and Women only happen in that arcade-open space around *ka'ba*.

Domes and minarets, built as pairs, are known as the classical architecture design of mosques in the world which are influenced by Arabic culture. A mosque is a building in which *Moslems* worship God. Throughout Islamic history, the mosque has been the center of the community and towns are built around this pivotal building. Nowadays, especially in *Moslem* countries, mosques are found on nearly every street corner, making it a simple matter for *Moslems* to attend the five daily prayers. In the West, mosques are integral parts of Islamic centers that also contain teaching and community facilities. Mosques come in all shapes and sizes; they differ from region to region based on the density of the *Moslem* population in the area. *Moslems* in the past and even today have made use of local artisans and architects to create beautiful, magnificent mosques.

There are however, certain features that are common to all mosques. Every mosque has a *mihrab*, a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca; the direction towards which *Moslems* pray. Most mosques have a *mimbar* - or pulpit from which an Islamic scholar, called Imam, deliver a sermon or speech. Other common features include minarets, tall towers used to call the congregation to prayer.

The tall minarets are highly visible and are closely identified with mosques. Normally there is a large rectangular or square prayer area. It often takes the form of a flat roof supported by columns or a system of horizontal beams supported by architraves. In other common mosque designs, the roof consists of a single large dome on pendentives.

There are usually separate prayer areas, with separate entrances for men and women.

Mosques have developed significantly over the past 1400 years. Many have courtyards containing decorative pools and fountains, which originally supplied water for ablution before prayer. Nowadays however, more private bathroom and toilet facilities are provided. Originally

simple structures with earthen floors, now, mosque floors are usually covered with plush carpet. They are more often than not decorated with straight lines of geometric designs that ensure *Moslems* stand in straight rows to perform their five daily prayers.

There are never any images of life or statues in mosques, for in Islam it is forbidden that such things are kept or displayed. At times, the interior walls of the mosque are decorated with verses from the Quran in Arabic calligraphy, or with intricate geometric designs. The patterns are made from a variety of materials including mosaics, stucco, stone, ceramics, and wood. The more classical designs are referred to as arabesque, and they take the form of a radial grid in which circle and star shapes are prominent. Designs can be both two, and three-dimensional. More often than not, even in arid desert countries mosques are cool, serene havens. When a person enters a mosque he or she would have left the hustle and bustle of the material world and retreated into a calm shelter or sanctuary. Mosques are houses of worship. Men are expected to pray all five daily obligatory prayers in a mosque, in congregation. Although women are welcome to pray in the mosque it is more praiseworthy for them to pray in their homes. Nonetheless, *Moslems* are permitted to pray anywhere, excluding filthy or impure places such as toilets or in graveyards.

*Masjid* is the Arabic word for mosque. However, while the term mosque has come to mean a building specifically for prayer the word *masjid* has retained several layers of meaning. In the very literal sense, *masjid* means place of prostration. The Arabic word comes from the root "*sa-ja-da*" meaning to prostrate. When a Muslim's forehead touches the ground, he or she is close to God. Prayer establishes the connection between the believer and his Lord and prostration symbolism complete submission. Many people have incorrectly stated that the word mosque is not a translation of the word *masjid*.

They claim that the word mosque comes from the word mosquito and attribute it to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of 15th century Spain. However, the words mosque and mosquito are totally unrelated.

A mosque are strict and detailed requirements in Sunni figh for a place of worship to be considered a *masjid*, with places that do not meet these requirements regarded as *mussallas*. There are stringent restrictions on the uses of the area formally demarcated as the *masjid* (which is often a small portion of the larger complex). Many mosques have elaborate domes, minarets, prayer halls. Mosques originated on the Arabian Peninsula, but are now found in all inhabited continents. The mosque serves as a place where *Moslems* can come together for *salah* or prayer as well as a center for information, education, and dispute settlement. The *Imam* leads the prayer.

This comparative study is based on two monumental mosque masterpiece projects of Islamic artifacts in Mecca, Arab Saudi and in Bandung, Indonesia. First is the well-known project of 'Master Plan of Mecca City 2012' of King Abdullah. Zaha Hadid and Norman Foster re-interpreted the holy site of *ka'ba*. They have changed and will continue to change the role of this site as the main Islamic heritage site surrounding Mecca. Mecca is a forbidden city for Non-Moslem designed as the largest facility for Islamic Hajj and Umroh.

## METHODS

The study is based on visual investigation as a phenomenological research in 2009 to Mecca by visiting the *Kaba'* and its surrounding and by *Master Plan of Mecca City 2012*. By investigation, it was found that the *ka'ba* would become just a tiny part of the City. Based on phenomenology investigation through Grounded Theory research a paradigm shift was found in the architecture design of the mosque. The finding is that the building express the idea of 'architecture stage' as the modernity of *Moslem's* spirit. The contemporary architecture is also reflected in Islamic contemporary idioms and icons in architecture design, art, and culture. They re-interpret the Great Allah by building the monumental and spectacular architectural works by inserting the architect's dreams and ideologies.

Referring to Grounded Theory, the observations from 2001 to 2009 show that the activities surrounding *ka'ba* were similar to great drama theater through their circling movement around the *ka'ba*.

During their seven circling movement, they voice '*Asmaul Husna*' as a hundred names to the Glory to God, saying: *Subhanallah, Allahamdulillah, Allahu Akbar*. All of that show a perfect drama in architecture. The movements of *Tawaf* resemble the mystical movements of water turbulence or the movements of *Rumy* dance. Their movements form a real space which they do without their knowing. The circular pattern expresses a perfect form as they mean to find their wholeness with God.

The research questions in this study are now: Does Mecca still supported to *Moslems* to find their holy ritual in *Haj* or *Umroh* in the new city of Mecca post 2012 or to provide more tourism facility? Does *ka'ba* still have the pure beauty of *Moslems'* movement to find God in a crowded city in 2012?

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Zaha Hadid and Norman Foster, were the fortunate Architects to re-interpret Mecca to be The Magnificent City. Though *ka'ba* looks like just a small dot surrounded

by high rise buildings and sculptural artifacts, it still has the role as the central point of a heritage artifact. Because of the existence of *Abraj Al Bait*, the look-alike of Britain's Big Ben, it then becomes the 'new orientation' in 'Master Plan of Mecca City 2012'. Yet, *ka'ba* as the Prophet Ibrahim's heritage is simply a cubicle building with a structure of black stone and covered by black velvet '*Kiswah*' measuring 11m x 11m x 11m, it is the center of orientation for *Moslem* prayers of the world. It is also the *Moslem* orientation to '*Tawaf*' a counter-clockwise circling of *ka'ba* in *Haj* or *Umroh* ceremonial procession.

Even before Hadid and Foster re-interpreted Mecca, the area surrounding *ka'ba* has been renovated many times. The first was by the Saudi's Kings, Saud Bin Abdul Aziz and Faizal Bin Abdul Aziz in the period from 1955 to 1973. It added four more minarets, refurbished the ceiling, and replaced the ground with artificial stone and marble. Also, *Al-Safa* and *Al-Marwah* are included inside 'Masjid Al-Haram' by way of roofing. During the renovation, unfortunately, many historical features built by the Ottomans, particularly the support columns, were demolished.

The second renovation, under King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz between 1982-1988, added a new wing and an outdoor prayer area to the Masjid. The new wing which is also for prayers is accessed through one of the King Fahd Gates.

The third extension between 1988–2005 built more minarets, a King's residence overlooking the Masjid and more prayer areas in and around the Masjid. These developments have taken place simultaneously with those in Arafat, Mina and Muzdalifah. This third extension has also resulted in 18 more gates, 3 more domes corresponding in position to each gate and the installation of nearly 500 marble columns. Other modern developments include the addition of heated floors, air conditioning, escalators and a drainage system.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In Mecca, Zaha Hadid and Norman Foster's work absolutely changes the historical site into a Giant City in a big scale. Even though their work was very prestigious, it is one tragedy to the heritage site of *Kaba'*. Hadid and Foster extended the area of pilgrim of Mecca both horizontally and vertically, thus *Kaba'* looks like one small black dot in a big scaled city! They change the mindset of *Moslems* from one of simplicity and humility into one of glamorous *Moslem* fashion by spectacular Islamic events. All things surrounding Mecca become 'a Baroque of *Moslem'* full of splendor, glamour, and superfluous; counter-productive to Islamic simplicity.

In Hadid and Foster's work, the *ka'ba* has degraded as a holy artifact to become a low level position with the presence of tall skyscrapers in the area. The holy ritual

procession surrounding the *ka'ba* or 'Tawaf' has become a merely attractive scenery from the skyscrapers. With around billions of *Moslems* in their white ritual clothes, it has the look of 'a drama'. Hadid and Foster work in Mecca may be the one of tragedy of heritage site of Kaba' as Prophet Ibrahim heritage.

In Indonesia, Ridwan Kamil shows his architectural design work of mosques through a simple design. It is a new phenomenon in Mosque design. In Kota Baru Parahiyangan Bandung, Indonesia, a simple mosque is located. He and his team built a new 'form' mosque of *Masjid Ar Isra'*. It takes the very same form as *ka'ba*. His mosque is a simple cubicle building without any colouring or decorative material. It has a look of a contemporary mosque building. Kamil also reduces the dome '*kubah*', the crown of a mosque.



**Figure 1.** (a) Zaha's work in Mecca; (b) Skyscrapers surrounding *Ka'ba*



**Figure 2.** (a) Masterplan Mecca City 2012 by Zaha Hadid; (b) The Giant Big-Ben and the small *Ka'ba*

Inside, in the center of the building, is located the *mihrab* as *Imam* lead the *Moslems* to pray. *Imam* as the Leader is positioned in front of all. The *mihrab* design is without a wall. Ridwan Kamil's design of the *mihrab* directly communicates with the outdoor landscape and the nature. This is an open space design of *mihrab*! The position of *mihrab* is in the middle right, directly adjacent to the inside pond. At the edge of *mihrab*, there is positioned a bronze globe sculpture with a carved calligraphy of *Allah*. Referring to Ridwan's design, *Imam* and *Jamaah* can stand and look toward the mountains as the visual orientation from inside the mosque.

The panoramic hill provides the background for the calligraphy sculpture located in front of the *Imam's* space. Filling the mosque without any ornament, Ridwan Kamil chose a variety of nature's materials like white rock, water, natural lighting, and metal calligraphy in the lamp cover. The natural beauty is revealed when the sun shines in the morning and afternoon. The light shines through the gaps / niches on the mosque's walls.

In his work, Ridwan Kamil, expresses Allah's Glory in a quiet manner. He creates the way of *Moslems* to glorify Allah by praying in front of God's natural beauty so all *Moslems* who pray there feel contemplative. *Al-Irsad* represents the beauty in a quite simple building. The modernity of Islam is displayed by its simplicity. But, the building still expresses Islam traditions of bordering the pilgrim woman / *hijab* using a low partition of about 120 cm. Thus, the woman *jamaah* is locked in a semi-enclosed area environment, losing their opportunity to witness the natural beauty enjoyed by the men. By this design, the women can't see the open space *mihrab* and the calligraphy sculpture directly.

His design seems to distinguish classes although Islam believes in the equality, with only the '*glorious aqla*' as the distinguishing trait. But, the beauty of the equality should be made possible to be appreciated by all *jamaah*. The realities in Ridwan Kamil's mosque design is counterproductive to the ideas of Soekarno, the first President of Indonesia. In 1939 he criticized and rejected *hijab* as a physical prayer barrier of men and women. Soekarno said *hijab* as a 'form of slavery'. Referring to Soekarno, the equality is in all aspects, not only in mosques.

Ridwan Kamil in his modernity still sticks to traditions like *hijab* to women. By this study, another articulation of Islamic beauty in architecture was found. Hadid and Foster echo the majesty through the glamorous, juxtaposed Haj and Umrah rituals as a destination of tourism with the super modern skyscrapers. Meanwhile, Ridwan Kamil expresses his love for Allah through the natural beauty during *Moslems* prayers. Both phenomena of Islamic architecture above have led us to re-interpret 'beauty' in mosque architectural design. Both architects' works reflect the idea of "architecture stage", one kind of



non-material architecture which is present in mosque architectural design.

This idea was planted in the process of becoming architectural material/ building. This idea carries the *imprint bearer* of the Architect's/ ruler's dream/ ideology who realizes his/her architectural works. Such idea toward the architectural form is similar to characteristic of *khora* (Ardhiati, 2013). *Khora* or *Chora* is a Greek term to express a 'concept of space', designated by Plato in *Timaeus* (Perez, 1994; Derrida: 1995). The similar characteristic of imprint-bearer and the idea of 'architecture stage' is called the process of architecture presence.



**Figure 3.** (a) Ridwan Kamil's Siteplan of Al-Irsyad Mosque  
(b) The 3D of the Modernist Mosque



**Figure 4.** (a) The Facade of Al-Irsyad Mosque  
(b) The 3D of the interior



**Figure 5.** (a) Al-Irsyad Mosque. (b) Sculpture Calligraphy in front of Mihrab with panoramic.

## CONCLUSIONS

Both mosques' architectural designs enrich contemporary architecture as a science. Western architects, represented by Hadid and Foster, express the *Moslems'* modernity by glamorous and fashionable architecture, similar to Baroque, as counter-productive to Islamic simplicity pattern. On the other hand, Eastern architects, represented by Ridwan Kamil, express the modernity of *Moslems* by the quiet and simple design. Both of Architects' works inspire the development of 'architecture stage' which may be applied to other worship buildings.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Ridwan Kamil, Mr. Asikin Hasan and Mr. Pohan Ristanto for helping me to prepare the paper.

## REFERENCES

- Derrida, Jacques. *On The Name*. California: Stanford University Press, 1995
- Glaser, Barney G and Strauss, Anselm L. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Copy Right 1967. London: Adline Transaction. 2010
- Groat, Linda and Wang, David. *Architectural Research Methods*. Canada: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2002
- Perez, Alberto-Gomez, and Parcell Stephen (ed). *Chora 1,2,3: Intervals in The Philosophy of Architecture*. London: Mc Gill Queen's University Press, 1994

Plato (*Transl.*). *The Republic Of Plato*: Second Edition. United States of America: Basic Books A Division of Harper Collins Publisher. 1991  
Ricouer, Paul. Thompson, John B (ed). *Paul Ricouer Hermeneutics and the human sciences. Essays on language, action and interpretation.*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.1983

Strauss, Anselm L. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987  
Strauss, Anselm L. *Basics of Qualitative Research Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.* California: Sage Publications.1990