

THE HYBRID MOORISH STYLE CHARACTERISTICS IN MALAYSIA: ISTANA BANDAR JUGRA

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Over the years, many architectural styles can be seen throughout Malaysia in history and in present times. The Moorish style is one of them. However, with change come a combination of different styles which created the Hybrid Moorish style and Istana Bandar Jugra is one such historic building that possesses this style and is still standing. Istana Bandar Jugra which is located in Banting, was one of the royal palace of Selangor for the Sultan of its times. This research aims to study about the characteristics and its unique features of the Hybrid Moorish style that is found in history and in Malaysia now and how Istana Bandar possess such traits. The method of this research is focusing is done through in-depth literature review, site observations and interview, and comparison of other historic buildings throughout the world, we learnt of the characteristics that's unique to this style that is seen throughout. Through our findings in the case study, we discovered that Istana Bandar Jugra possesses such traits and can be seen throughout the building, and to preserve it, conservation strategies are applied. By this research, we revealed that Moorish architecture can be seen not only in its own architecture style but as well as one hybrid style which by example, Istana Bandar Jugra too, showcase its unique features.

Keywords: Hybrid Moorish, Architectural style, Malay traditional palace

1. INTRODUCTION

A hybrid is often defined as a thing made by combining two different elements. The hybrid exploit have mixed characteristics of its origins by manipulating their composition and value. In the context of architecture, a hybrid is the assimilation of traditional architecture influenced by the imported styles, also called the revival. Although there has been over hundreds of styles developed over time, the early historical styles such as Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Byzantine architecture contributed the most of today's existing most influential styles.

Hybrid of Moorish Architecture are found in many locale. Architects of Europe built similar with the traditional style since the builders chose

the style as an expression of admiration of Muslim culture. Moorish architecture, like every Islamic architecture, has distinctive motifs like vegetative design, rounded arches which has a distinct style derived from nature and sets its own distinct style. The Moorish architecture does not only identifies itself as only exist in the Islamic region but seen to have been spreaded across the globe in the 20th century.

During the colonial time, the British East Indian Company occupation as the successor of governmental of that time had a fascination of Moorish Architecture as a hybrid symbol of the empire back at Public Works Department in British India. So these buildings are mainly seen around Penang, Kuala Lumpur, and other British possession of the Malayan territory. The colonial

architecture was influenced by many classical styles incorporated into Moorish, thus Neo-Moorish in the Malaya is born. Starting from that, the architectural style spreaded like mushrooms for Sultanate Palaces and governmental offices of the British Colony with its hybrid feature of Moorish-style architecture. For further detail we will look into the case study of Istana Bandar Jugra.



Figure 1: The image of Istana Bandar Jugra

2. IDEA OF MOORISH ARCHITECTURE

2.1 Origin of Hybrid Moorish Architecture

Moorish or Mughal architecture design is among the many styles of Islamic design. Dated back during the Middle Ages, North African indigenous people called the Moors inhabited Iberian Peninsula and Western Mediterranean island they invaded successfully. Another word describe these people were the medieval Muslims in the 700s often called the Moorish most generally referred to someone Arab or African ancestry. They were victorious on conquering regions such as what is now Pyrenees region of France, Portugal, Sicily, south of Italy, Spain and now seen in many districts known to have Islam community. Although the Moorish Architecture has set footing in all over the world they all carry their own regional dissimilarities (Shukri, S. M., et al. (2019).

Since then, Muslim of Moorish Iberia was the assimilation of religions and cultures variation which then dominated the features and architectural style of Moorish Architecture. Majority of people under the rule of these

‘Medieval Arabs’ were mainly Christians and Jews. In today North African regions of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco and other Western Mediterranean regions, a fusion of architectural characteristics are recognizable from the significant blend of its population. The style is mostly expressive in religious buildings for example the Masjid.

Fast forward to the turn of the 20th century, the style is now known to have been influenced to many countries including Malaysia. Some of the grand buildings were designed by the British during the colonisation days back in 1795. Their opinionated of architecture theme was derived contextual from the religion of the Tanah Melayu population at large so to say the buildings are architecturally rejected from that of the vernacular. During this colonial period, the British had integrated Moorish and some of Europe classical styles and produced a somewhat a hybrid mixture of Neo-Moorish Architecture.

2.2 Elements of Hybrid Moorish Architecture

The Moorish style architecture introduce intricate details of building elements in terms of building materials, forms, and fine features of the Middle East. The architects responsible for this brought up has incorporated Westernised classical style, alongside his design. Well, like any other revival movement, the purpose was mainly about imitation of design elements, not their function. A particular emblematic feature is the horseshoe arch. The horseshoe is applied as a protector against the evil eye in North Africa. The Roman’s were the first to use it but Muslims improved its form (FTSC, 2002). Similar to the Roman’s arch, the Moorish had a tweak at their arch element with an ultra-semicircular arch (Figure 2). Following the colonial period of Malay Peninsula before independence, the British architects portray the horseshoe arches on buildings such as Bangunan Abdul Samad in Kuala Lumpur built to appeal to the Malay Ruler at the time (Figure 3).



Figure 2: Horseshoe arches of Ummayad Mosques in Damascus (top) and The Aqueduct of Roman (bottom)



Figure 3: Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad seen with decorative horseshoe arches

The bulbous, an onion-shaped domes with pointed spires of Moorish were also an upgrade of Roman architecture. Bulbous domes were used to cover large buildings in Syria after the eleventh century, following an architecture revival there and the present shape of the Masjid Al-Aqsa's

dome likely dates from this time. Significance of the dome was to symbolized the eternity sky of Heaven's above.



Figure 4: Dome of Al-Aqsa (left) and dome of



Roman Pantheon (right)

Tall minarets and high ceilings are also common features found in the modern-day Moorish architecture taken for ornamental purpose and reflective of the Moors. One of Moorish Architecture hybrid style that is still surviving to this very day is the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation. Few distinct features spotted are the circular domes with spires and archways ornamented in Islamic motifs built in the 20th century. The building imitated the Islamic Architecture but do not emulate a the purpose of a Moorish buildings in North Africa. This style is influenced by the Moghul architecture in India and other British Empire regions who came to the Malay Peninsula due respect to their Islamic faith of Sultan and locals.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology applied on this research paper consist of a total of three main methods to conduct the data collection about Hybrid Moorish Style characteristics in Malaysia. Which includes the site observations, semi-structured interviews and research analysis. So as to achieve the clarification on the various architecture styles and Istana Bandar Jugra current state and characteristics, a site visit was conducted at Istana Bandar Jugra, Banting. From the site visit, we were able to discern the preservation of the building and some key features of the building. Besides that, a semi-structured interview was conducted during the site visit to understand the routine of the workers there, restricted locations and the problems on site with the help of the local guide. The data collected on site through observations and interviews is then being gathered then filtered in order to study in depth through research analysis in terms of architectural functions, significance and treatments done over the course of time since its construction. Throughout the research analysis, a comparison of building was done through similar architectural style also being conducted to help in understanding the significance of this style in the building. Not only that, we have reviewed articles (Khazare et al. 2015), about Moorish Architecture and measure drawing reports done by others (Helsa Josephine, 2013), (Vendy William. 2015) about Istana Bandar Jugra to have better understanding of this research.

4. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The following aspects are the findings which is related to the Hybrid Moorish Style seen in Malaysia and the case study, Istana Bandar Jugra. Hence, below are how Istana Bandar Jugra show these characteristics in its building, its significance and the preservation of the Moorish style over the years.

4.1 Moorish Characteristics in Istana Bandar Jugra

Moorish Architecture started to influence the Malaysia architecture at early 20th century (early colonial times) and can also be seen through the Istana Jugra's decorations, arches and the special material use of clay and tiles to adapt to the

climate. It can be seen in Istana Bandar through its use of geometrical shape in its doors and windows, for example the carve ornament on the wall. Moorish elements such as horseshoe arches, ogee arches (Figure 6) and crenellated rooftops (Figure 5) can be seen clearly throughout the private space of the palace. Another example is the windows of the buildings, specially a double shutter casement window with louvered head has a Moorish influenced lattice design for ventilation and lighting even when it is closed. (Figure 7).

In space arrangement, the courtyards in the middle of the building are also one of the characteristics of the Moorish architectural style as it allows cooling effects to take part in the building as well as the pond or bathing area in the courtyards. This Moorish style is adapted into the building not just for the decorative and symbolic meaning, as it is of Islamic variation, but also for its uses of materials, space arrangements and tropical climate adaptation.



Figure 5: Ogee Arches



Figure 6: Crenellated rooftops



Figure 7: Lattice window

4.2 Impacts on Structure

Since its construction in 1899 and completion in 1903, Istana Bandar has seen through renovations, historical events and an abandonment period of nearly 50 years, thus leaving the building and its unique features to the hands of time. Because of that, some damage have been sustained by the building and defects are shown, including cracks on the walls, rotting floorboards and some missing windows and roof tiles. In 1980, the restoration of building was decided and completed in 1990 which was then forth used as a Tahfiz school for 2 years (1997-1999). It has been vacant until 2008 where once again restoration and conservation was conducted and now it serves as a living museum. (Figure 8)



Figure 8: (a) Construction Period (b) Abandonment Period (c) Living Museum

Some window panels have cracks in them as it is made of wood and was exposed to the elements. Meanwhile, the crenellated rooftops despite being exposed, fortunately it was preserved nicely and we can still see the unique feature it has. The Orgee arches too was preserved beautifully and despite it being an old building, it is painted as if it is new, showcasing the arch that is unique to Moorish Architecture.

4.3 Conservation Strategies of Building

While there are still some defects seen the building, such as the missing panels or roof eaves decoratives, it is still maintained carefully and efficiently. It is mostly done through preservation and restoration and if needed, replication for those that was too damaged to be preserved. Maintenance are done periodically and areas that were too damaged were off-limits for safety purposes. However through careful conservation, the architecture features in this building that showed the Moorish Architecture is well preserved.

5. CONCLUSION

British architects were fascinated with Moorish architecture and Mughal architecture. They established a hybrid style for an architectural symbol of the British colonial government under the British East Indian Company compared to the architectural style of the British government in England (Hassan, 2017). The choice of a hybrid of Moorish Islamic style and classical style in Indian soil help the British presence acceptable by the population as governing transition from the Mughal Empire in India. The orientation towards Indo-Saracenic style had affected the further development of their colonial architecture, including in the Muslim populated regions near India like the British Malaya. British colonial architects and engineers deliberately designed this hybrid architecture for many government and religious buildings in Malaya, marking a new architectural style and symbol of the British administration in this region. But later the style flourished and embellished a hybrid identity of the urban fabric of today's Malaysia.

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