A Hadith Evaluation on the Identity, Design, Location and Space Planning Of Modern Mosques in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to re-organize and analyses the Prophetic Hadith in giving an alternative approach for the designs of modern mosques in Malaysia. The research has been done by collecting traditions in the collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim which are then elucidated and formulated as a reference-framework for handling various issues and confusion in the making of designs of modern mosques in Malaysia. This research consists of documentations and analysis of the collections of the Prophetic traditions concerned in illuminating various issues and problems on the designs of mosques in Malaysia and the world. Hopefully, through this research in this paper we can understand the utilization of the Propetic Tradition as one of the main alternative approaches and reference frameworks in bringing out modern mosque designs in Malaysia for the present and the future.

INTRODUCTION

The Use of Prophetic Hadiths Concerning the Design of Mosques:

In writing this paper the object is to identify values contained in the prophetic hadith which can be used as guidance in making mosque designs. The selections of the traditions are from the collections of al-Bukhari and the Sahih of Muslim; this is by reason of the fact that both collections contain traditions of high degree of authenticity and reliability. The collection of al-Bukhari is the one with the most high degree in authenticity among the six famous books of prophetic traditions. It is also regarded as a major reference work in Islam after the Qur’an; as for the collection of the Sahih of Muslim it is regarded as the second in ranking after that of Sahih of al-Bukhari. The soundness of a tradition is the primary consideration because such traditions are proof-texts and basis in determining a legal ruling, decisions and others. Apart from that, this research discusses the issue of determining the identity and design in visible external form of mosques and the solution thereby in accordance with the traditions which are sound as reference points in establishing the strength of the discussion. The research, in this paper also discusses the choice of locations and the position of mosques so as to be in harmony with the needs of Islamic society by referring to previous social needs in relation to the functions of mosques and its surroundings which may help in social development towards the enhancement of such functions of mosques and maximizing such functions. Due to the limitation of spaces some issues like Specialization on Use of Space and its Planning, The Congregation And Mosque Users, The Issue Of Security And Safety Of The Mosque And Individuals Therein and The Economy And Management will not discussed in this paper.

Identity and Design:

Malaysia has experienced the problem of identity in the design of mosques because there is failure of Muslim thinkers- according to Tajuddin [5] - to translate the suitable approach in contemporary modern era in mosque designs. If we examine the Prophetic Traditions (peace and blessings be upon him) we will find that there are a number of traditions which contain similar meanings covering this issue of identity which can be used as useful guidance in the making of mosque designs. For deciding the image and design of the form of

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mosques in any locality it must be considered that that design and image should symbolize or reflect one cultural identity of the local situation. By reflecting or symbolizing the cultural identity of that society, and then by the same token that will be a landmark for the area. Such a step is seen as necessary to be taken seriously by all concerned in the building of a mosque; and it should be remembered that to be proud about something which does not rightly belong to oneself is a form of ‘deceit’, as indicated by the following Prophetic Tradition:

"Whoever feels satisfied with what is not given to him is like the one who puts on two attires of falsehood."

In connection with the building of a mosque, the important issue which is also discussed is the high cost of building it, to the extent that sometimes it almost reaches a figure which can be considered as superfluous extravagance [7]. Such excessive spending of wealth can be avoided if the extra elements which are merely ornamental in nature and do not constitute a function in that building is avoided and in its place is taken something which is simple in nature. This is in conformity with the Islamic life style like the one which is practiced by the Messenger of Allah –peace and blessings be upon him- as indicated in the following prophetic traditions:

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Muhammad bin Ziyad: I have heard Abu Hurairah saying: “When I saw a man, an officer of the government of Bahrain drawing along his long attire on the ground, with the cloth on the dust, I said: the amir has arrived, the amir has arrived, the Messenger of Allah, has Allah sent you unto all mankind?”. The Prophet replied “In the name of Allah, Has Allah commanded you to fast the month of Ramadhan?” The Prophet replied “Yes, by Allah.”. “The man then asked “In the name of Allah, has Allah commanded you to take zakat from the rich to be given to the poor?”. The Prophet (pbuh) replied “By Allah, that is true”. Then the man asked “Has Allah commanded you to perform the five obligatory daily prayers?”. The Prophet (pbuh) replied “By Allah that is true”. Then the man asked “Has Allah commanded you to be given to prayer was not made from

From the tradition above, we know that situation of the Messenher of Allah (pbuh) when he was among his Companions in the mosque with no distinctive difference from others as a man, whereas he was sent as a messenger from Allah, in fact the atmosphere manifested equal status of everyone. His mode of behaviour which was simple without special distinctive apparel showing his importance, while he was reeling among his Companions, without having a throne, all of this shows that simplicity is an important value in every aspect of human life; and this is also true in relation to the building of mosques.

In avoiding wasteful spending and the practice of simplicity and moderation in the building of mosques, elements which are purely ornamental in nature without functionality should be avoided. As an example we can see the minaret which is normally found especially in most of the mosques in Malaysia and in the world in general. The function of minarets is supposedly to be a structure as a place in the muezzin will make the call to prayer. However, during the time of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) the call to prayer was not made from
minarets, but on the highest roof in the locality, as explained by K.A. Creswell [2]. With the present modern situation there is no necessity for the use of minarets for making the call for prayer because this is substituted by the call being made through the use of the loudspeaker. Therefore the use of minarets in designing mosque architecture is no more suitable as stated by Gazalba [4] However, it is seen as practical for it to be used as landmark for indicating the presence of mosques in a locality as suggested by Tajuddin [5]. The origin about the azan is for making the call reach the people so that the daily obligatory prayers are being performed when the time comes. The origin of the azan is as stated by the following Prophetic tradition:

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar (May Allah be pleased with them): When Muslims (that is the Companions) arrived in Madinah, they congregated for performing the obligatory prayers, and they made use of the calculation of time in doing so. At that time the azan as method of calling to prayer had not yet been introduced. One day a person suggested the use of bells, as done by the Christians, some others suggested the use of the trumpet just like the horn as used by the Jews. It was ‘Umar who for the first time suggested the call (so that people come to prayer; then the Messenger of Allah himself ordered Bilal to proclaim the azan (calling people to prayer).

In the building of mosques there is a need for the use of architectural language which is suitable with the attribute of attracting people’s interest for inviting them to perform the obligation well. This is seen as needing attention concerning the design of the fence and the image of the whole mosque. The design of the fence should give the indication that it is inviting the people to enter the mosque compound. This can be done either by building low fence or by making its compound separate by planting certain trees together with an attractive landscaping; this is something different from what is found in most mosques in this country which has high fences making people have a slight feeling of fear from going near. This should be avoided and appropriate lessons should be drawn from the tradition of the Prophet (pbuh) concerning the fact that mosques in his time had no fence and people could freely enter them and go out at any time without discrimination because of social status, position and age. The tradition is the following:

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas (May Allah be pleased with them): One day I was riding a female mule, at that time I was on the verge of reaching the age of a matured person. The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was performing his prayer at Mina. There was no wall in front of him, and I passed by in front of some rows of people praying. I allowed the mule to go, then I entered the row [of people praying], and none objected to that.

As a religion which is perfect and total in covering all aspects of the life of its followers, it is simple, and tolerant in its rules in most matters. The same goes with the building of mosques in which the religion does not create difficulties for the believers making them acquire vehicles for bringing them to mosques like cars and so on, because mosques are situated far from their homes. What is reiterated here is that most things which are complicated in human life start from the human self which likes to create innovations and do different things. Difficulties in spiritual deviations or in doing certain activities has mated man to run away from such duties as stated in the prophetic tradition as the following:

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Anas –may Allah be pleased with him- : From the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) “Make things easy, do not make things difficult [for people], give glad tidings [unto them] do not scare them”.

From this Prophetic tradition it is found that difficulties faced by people in doing certain things may cause them to avoid them. From this it can be concluded that the positioning of mosques should be a matter of serious consideration so that people will not find it difficult for them to go to mosques [for doing their religious duties].

Position and Location:

Concerning the issue of the position and location of the mosques, it can be observed that in relation to most mosques in Malaysia it seems that this issue is not emphasized especially in relation to those which are built in the towns, this seems also to be the case with mosques built in the interior. Mosques should be located in places which are frequented by people and not in places which are isolated from areas populated by them so that they are encouraged to go to mosques for activities which are also other than those of spiritual nature; these are in the form of various social activities which are so much needed now. During the time of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) mosques were not built in places which are difficult to be visited by people and isolated from them. This is clear from the following Prophetic tradition:

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Abu ‘Amir (May Allah be pleased with him): From the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) “When the Prophet entered the mosque, he went straight to the entrance and said: ‘Who is the person who is responsible for building this mosque?’ When the Prophet entered the mosque, he went straight to the entrance and said: ‘Who is the person who is responsible for building this mosque?’”

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Being Near To Residential Areas Of People And Their Activities:

The location for the mosque is encouraged to be near the habitations of people and their settlements. This is so as to make it easy for people to come to the mosque especially for the five obligatory daily prayers and for other necessary activities. When the call to prayer is sounded inviting people to prayer then that would make people conscious of their duties so that they would promptly go to the mosque to perform their prayer. It is an obligation upon anyone who hears the call to prayer from their homes or any other place so that he would go to

From the above Prophetic tradition it can be understood that in the time of the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) mosques were not built in isolated places causing difficulties upon people to visit them, even though the place might have been endowed with good source of water needed by travelers and domestic animals. The position and location of mosques were matters which were emphasized since the time of the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h), and he together with his Companions would make efforts to get the best and the most suitable locations for building mosques; they would not hesitate to sacrifice anything of their belongings [for this]; in fact as mentioned in Prophetic traditions they dug up the graves of the polytheists, leveled the ground, and cut down date-palms so as to prepare the foundation for mosques.

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Anas –may Allah be pleased with him–: When [Prophet] Muhammad (p.b.u.h) arrived at Madinah, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) would make his she camel kneel down and he would dismount in the city in the midst of the tribe called Bani ‘Amr bin ’Atf. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) stayed therein for fourteen nights. Then people from the tribe of Banu Najjar were sent (to guard the security of Prophet) (p.b.u.h) and they came carrying with them their swords. It is as if I have just looked at the Prophet (p.b.u.h) sitting on the camel together with Abu Bakar behind him and all the (members) of the people of the Bani Najjar around the Prophet (p.b.u.h) dismounting in the courtyard of the house of Abu Ayub. Prophet Muhammad loved prayer so much and whenever the time for prayer comes then the Prophet (p.b.u.h) would forthwith perform it, even in a place where the sheep is kept. Later the Prophet (p.b.u.h) ordered that a mosque should be built, while meeting some of the people of the tribe of al-Najjar, saying to them ‘O people of the Najjar! What is the price of your land?’ They replied ‘No! By Allah! We do not hope any payment for this land, except from Allah the Most High’. Anas added: there was therein the graveyard of the polytheists, and some uneven land, and there were some date palms. The Prophet ordered that the graves of the polytheists be dug up, the uneven land be levelled, and the date palms be cut down (we all did w

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (Allah be pleased with them): ‘Truly the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) stopped at Dhu-Hulaijah while performing his “umrah. When doing the pilgrimage he stopped under the Samurah tree in the place where there are mosques in Dhu-Hulaijah. On his return from jihad, pilgrimage, or “umrah, he would go down the low ground which was on the way. On reaching the low ground or valley, he would make the camel kneel down at the rivulet at the eastern bank of the valley, then he would rest until dawn”. There was no mosque built from stone at the place, and there was also no mosque on the hillock. There was a piece of land there which was in the river and that was used as place for prayer by Ibn ‘Umar; in its lower ground there was sand. The Messenger of Allah has performed his prayer there. Then the sand there was drawn away from there by water until the place used for prayer by Ibn ‘Umar was covered by water.

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the mosque to perform the prayer without being hampered by any excuse as long as he is able to do so as is clear from the following Prophetic tradition:

"Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: 'We were doing our prayer together with the Messenger of Allah (pbuh); then he heard the voice of some people quarrelling. After the prayer was done, the Prophet said, 'What has happened?' They replied 'We were doing our prayer in a hurried manner'. The Messenger said 'You must not perform the prayer in a hurried manner. You should come in a calm manner, then follow the prayer of people praying before you and then complete the remaining part of the prayer'."

When the mosque is situated in an area where people meet for their activities, like an area in which there are offices, and peoples’ residences, such a situation will encourage people to go to the mosque for congregational prayers. In that case there is no more necessity for having small and uncomfortable prayer halls in business premises and offices. Such an issue has been mentioned by the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) concerning the excellence of doing congregational prayer in mosques as compared to praying alone at home or in prayer halls in business premises, offices and so on, as is clear from the following Prophetic tradition:

"Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: 'Doing congregational prayer (has the merits of) twenty-five spiritual degrees as compared praying alone at home or doing the prayer in business premise; this is so because when anyone makes an ablution in a complete manner then goes to the mosque with the intention of doing the prayer, for every step taken in the journey to the mosque Allah will reward the person spiritually, and He will forgive him his sins until he enters the mosque. When he is in the mosque he performs the prayer and when he sits down for the (congregational) prayer the angels would ask God for his forgiveness, and the angels would be saying 'O Allah, have mercy on him, forgive him, as long as he is in that state waiting for prayer (as long as) his ablution is not nullified'."

For mosques which are close to commercial centres, offices and markets where people go for their various activities, people would certainly go there for their prayers as well as for other daily activities needed by present-day modern society, and this would be in conformity with what is being indicated by Mohamad Tajuddin [5]. For taking care of such needs it is necessary that various facilities which are attractive to people are made available together with making the mosque as the main location especially for times of prayer. In the same way during the time of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) there was mosque around markets and business centres which were focal points of convergence of people like the one shown in the following tradition:

"I asked Anas 'How many people took their ablution O Abu Hamzah (Anas bin Malik)?' He replied ‘They were about three hundred persons’.

The above tradition narrates an event presenting the miracle of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in the background of a mosque near the market. It is found that the mosque was built near the market at that time for facilitating people in performing their devotions as well for going about doing their business at the market. The
location of the mosque near the market, a commercial centre and residential area needing many points of entry for facilitating movements of people entering from every direction. The indication for the measure of routes for the public according to the Prophetic tradition (Sahih Muslim, hadith number 971, 525) is as follows:

اعانة شأنه: نمر ان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "إذا اختلفت في الطريق حل عرض وامرأة تغزل.

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him): "When you have differences concerning the path-way (road), then broaden it until seven cubits."

The measurement of seven cubits is equal to ten and a half feet. Such breadth is recommended in case there arise quarrels concerning the path way used by the public; however there is no clear indication about this issue in relation to residence or mosque.

Specialization on Use of Space and its Planning:

This section contains traditions which portray various activities to be found in the mosque and its compound and the possibility of such space for business, treatment facilities for the ill, for exercises, and for studies. Among the use of space seen as suitable for utilization to be made available being: lots for shops of moderate sizes for rent for people doing business, who are interested in doing so in the mosque compound. The category of business should be related to the needs of Muslim society like items for purification, equipment and attire for prayer, the Qur'an, and such like items. Additionally other shops are also needed like those selling food, like cafés, and so on. Apart from these there can be also places frequented in present day society like banks, post offices, counters selling tickets, and others of similar nature [7]. In the time of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) there were business activities in the compounds of mosques as is clear from the following tradition:

عن عمر بن الخطاب: يقال: يا رسول الله! لو أشرفت مثل هذه، فليس لها يوم الجعيم، والقول إذا

meaning: It is narrated on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar: Umar bin Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) saw silk robe (long coat) sold at the front door of the mosque and he said to the Prophet, "I want you to buy these clothes to be worn on Fridays and when receiving ambassador that meet you."

The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "The garments are worn by people who just do not get on the Day of Judgement."

Later on, similar garments were presented to the Prophet (pbuh) and he gave one of them to "Umar bin Al-Khattab who said, "O Prophet! You give these clothes to me though Uglah clothing (clothes of a silk merchant who sells clothes at the door of the mosque) but you never forbid me from wearing it." The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "I give it to you not to wear." And Umar was gave it to his non-muslim relative to wear it.

Besides establishing business oriented activity around the mosque, it is necessary to have treatment clinics especially for women and children. The existence of these clinics will provide health awareness to the public. At the time of the Prophet P.B.U.H there was place for treating those wounded in war, as stated in the following Hadith

عن عائشة: يا رسول الله! كنت أنبيث: أصيبت يوم الخنق في الأكبر، فضررب النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم خيمة في المسجد، ليسته من قريب، قلم برعهم، وفي المسجد خيمة من بني عامر، إلا الدم ليس إليهم، فقالوا: يا أهل النجه، ما هذا النبي بأنثى من قبلكم، فإذا سندي ذو جرح، دم، فاستفهموا

Meaning: It is narrated on the authority of 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her): One day at the time of the Battle of the Trench the artery in the arm of Sa’ad (bin Mu’az) was wounded and the Prophet built a small tent in the mosque for [people] attending to him. There were other tents belonging to the people of the tribe of Ghiffar and blood came from the tent of Sa’ad creeping towards the tent of the people of the tribe of Ghiffar. They cried, "O people of the tent, What is it coming from your tent?" Sa’ad suffered a lot of loss of blood and passed away in that tent.

Room for giving funeral baths also should be made available in the mosque; its position should be far from the place for making ablution, so that people are reminded of death and they realize their spiritual situation, when looking at the room for funeral baths. It is encouraged that funeral prayers are performed in mosques so as to provide remembrance of death to the public and the family of the deceased. There are traditions giving awareness about this, as the following:

عن عائشة: يا رسول الله! كنت أنبيث: أدا متوفى سعد بن أبي وقاص رضي الله عن ازواج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن يموها بجانته في المسجد فيصلون عه: فوفوا به على حجره يصبين عليه، أخرج به من باب التجانز الذي كان إلى المقاعد، فقبلهم أن الناس عابوا ذلك وقالوا: ما كانت الجزائر يدخل بها المسجد فلغ ذلك عائشة، فقات: ما أسرع الناس التي أن يعبوا ما لا علم به! عابوا عليه أن يمرتجأة في المسجد وما صلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم على سبيل يبضيء إلا في دخول المسجد.

Meaning: "It is narrated on the authority of 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her): When Sa’ad bin Abi Waqqas (may God be pleased with him) passed away, the wives of the Prophet (pbuh) presented the view that the funeral prayer for the body of Sa’ad bin Abi Waqqas be done in the mosque (of the Prophet) so that they also would be able to perform the prayer; so the Companions performed the prayer therein. So the funeral of Sa’ad was placed near their rooms, and the prayer was done. The funeral thereafter was brought out through..."
the door made for funerals leading to the place of seating [for the people]. Then news came about that people criticized the act. This came to the ears of ‘Aisyah, so she said “It is so fast that these people criticize something which they do not know?? They criticized us for bringing in the funeral into the mosque, whereas the Messenger of Allah (pbro) prayed the funeral prayer of Suhail bin Baidha in the mosque”.

The above tradition narrates the event in which the wives of the Messenger of Allah (pbro) requested that the funeral prayer for Sa‘ad bin Waqqas be done in the mosque, but that was criticized by some people. From this event we can get the lesson that the room for the funeral should be suitable in relation to the prayer space for women. The room for the funeral should not be through the space similar to the one through which people could go to the praying hall for women, in fact the hall for the funeral prayer should be near the prayer hall for women.

Conclusion:

Based on the evaluation and interpretation done on the materials of the Prophetic Tradition it is found that mosques of that time were not limited in their activities only to one which was spiritual in nature involving only spiritual devotions, but there was the function of having various activities generating development of the Muslim society itself. The effectiveness of the function in that time can be observed in the spread of the Islamic religion itself in the whole world, even though then his mosque was made of trunks of date-palms with the roof from palm leaves. Behind the success of the Messenger of Allah (pbro) at that time there is the example to be followed by contemporary Muslim society to developed the institution and enhance its functions to the maximum as a focal point of the movement of contemporary Muslim society by fulfilling the spiritual and physical needs of people. With the availability of the mosque playing its important role hopefully the Muslim society would develop well and realize its unity thus becoming a respected society looked upon with respect by people and at the same time getting the Good Pleasure of its Creator.

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