

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE PROTAGONIST'S ROLE OF UBUDIAH MOSQUE

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Abstract

One of Malaysia's most recognisable structures is the stately Ubudiah Mosque. It is considered one of the world's most beautiful mosques. Built in 1913 and completed in late 1917, the Ubudiah Mosque is one of the oldest mosques in Malaysia and it is one of the most prominent tourist attractions in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The Ubudiah Mosque was gazetted as historic built heritage and it is one of the 79 heritage sites in Perak protected under the National Heritage Act 2005 [Act 645]. Economically, the mosque helps to grow numerous local businesses and boosts the tourism industry in Kuala Kangsar and Perak as a whole. The purpose of this study is to capture Ubudiah Mosque's protagonist role in its community development activities. This study employs the qualitative single case study method with an oral history methodology. This study used this method to undertake a thorough assessment of historical material for the Ubudiah Mosque and to record interviews between a narrator (research team members) with personal experience of historically significant events and a knowledgeable interviewee. Combinations of religions and social activities held at the mosque, such as prayers, seminars, Quran classes, community service, breaking fast together during Ramadhan, community work, and so on, were seen as the protagonist role of Ubudiah Mosque in the study. Furthermore, the presence of the Ubudiah Mosque as a social attraction (for both local and foreign visitors) adds to the economic development of the city and state. This article provides a summary of the study findings, which is based on extensive literature and historical documents that show how mosques around the world have played successful roles in community involvement, participation, and growth through their empowering determination.

Keywords: Community, Development, Socio-Economic, Ubudiah, Mosque.

INTRODUCTION

Mosque or "masjid" is defined as a place of prostration or "sajda" in Arabic term. A mosque is often portrait as a center for Islamic development, it is the core of Islamic civilization and

it is the proliferation of values among Muslims. Many view mosques, as a spiritual food center, a hub for the care of holy verses, a midpoint for problem solving and an Islamic welfare center. As explained by Mellor and Rinnawi (2016), muslim Friday prayer and sermon play an important role in social change because it serves two purposes: 1) as a regular Muslim gathering event and 2) provide an opportunity to influence, persuade, and encourage congregants for social and economic improvements. The word of mosque is taken from “the root word sajada or suju, meaning to prostrate, which is normally viewed as worship. Worship in Islam is upholding and implementing the revealed law of Allah – the Shari’ah” (Belteshazzar, 2017).

The institution of the mosque in Islam plays a role in developing the local community since the time of the Prophet SAW. The mosque is not only a center of worship for Muslims, even being a community center that provides a variety of needs society. In addition to collecting zakat, wakaf and alms, the mosque should also be a place to distribute the funds to those who need. With this, the surrounding community will feel more secure and close to the mosque. Mosques are widely acknowledged as being one of the most important tourist attractions. Mosques of various styles and purposes have been built around the world as the Islamic population has grown (Kessler, 2015).

Throughout decades, the roles of mosques still vary and in Malaysia, it is related to the Malay culture and tradition. According to Musahadi (2018), the functions of mosques have fluctuated and related to the political, social, and financial conditions of the time. Most of the mosque in Malaysia is related with the Malay culture and tradition. Ubudiah Mosque is known as an iconic building in Perak state especially in the district Kuala Kangsar. As an iconic building, the significant roles of the mosque are important to identify in order to understand how it contributes to local and state development. As states by Musahadi (2018), one must understand how mosque duties arose, transformed, and reintegrated after lengthy periods of dormancy in order to comprehend the many activities of the mosque today in both historically Islamic and non-Islamic countries. Poor management in mosque affects their effectiveness in continuing their functions to visitors. According to Arastes (2014), there are three main reasons that make mosque management problematic; being conventional and reluctant to accept the needs of today’s societies, there is no guideline for Islamic management of mosque pattern, and lack of requirement model of mosque administration management.

Thus, this study is to determine the stimulus roles of Ubudiah Mosque on its community religious growth, social advancement, and economic progress for better management and as an iconic community centre in the district Kuala Kangsar. This paper aims to examine the significant roles of Ubudiah Mosques in the district Kuala Kangsar, the states of Perak, Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative single case study method is used in this work, which employs an oral history approach. This study used this method to undertake a thorough assessment of historical material for the Ubudiah Mosque and to record interviews between a narrator (research team members) with personal experience of historically significant events and a knowledgeable interviewee. With this approach, with the goal is to explore an in-dept understanding of the Ubudiah Mosque protagonist’s role in its community socio-economic and religious development (Yin, 2014) hence to also add to the historical record of this iconic religious institution.

Research Objectives: The study seeks to achieve its general objective of understanding the protagonist’s role of Ubudiah Mosque in its community development by focusing on the following specific objectives:

- i. To determine the stimulus roles of Ubudiah Mosque on its community religion growth.
- ii. To investigate the influence of Ubudiah Mosque on its community social advancement.

- iii. To determine the impact of Ubudiah Mosque on its community economic progress.

The data was collected using interviews and observations. For the purpose of the study, semi-structured interview was conducted by a narrator (research team members). This semi structured form of interviewed session applies the oral history technique. Recorded interviews between a narrator with personal experience of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer are frequently utilised in performing historical research. This technique aims is to collect, clarifies and adding to the historical record. Individuals can tell their tales in their own words, with their own voices, and based on their own knowledge of what happened and why it happened through oral history (Hajek, 2014). This study has the fullest intention to carefully preserve the audio sound recordings for future references.

There are four main questions extracted from this semi-structured interview;

- i. What is the role of Ubudiah Mosque on its community religion growth.
- ii. What is the influence of Ubudiah Mosque on its community social advancement.
- iii. What is the impact of Ubudiah Mosque on its community economic progress.

The three main roles of place of worship and mosque was adopted in designing the research questions for data collection. The constant comparative approach was also utilised to analyse the study data because it can be applied with any qualitative data gathering method, such as interviews, observation, and written sources, among others (Glaser 1965).

Three main roles of place of worship and mosque; social, religion and economy will be the vital focal of this study. These three roles contribute further as a framework in sustaining the roles of Ubudiah Mosque in the District of Kuala Kangsar, State of Perak Malaysia.

Comparison is also the main principle of the process of analysis in other qualitative research traditions (Boeije, 2002). This study identifies the major themes and the sub themes in the research to precede coding process. Coding is essential in qualitative data analysis research. These identifiers codings, along with the position of the appropriate portion of text, are recorded in the software so that the researcher may find all of the information related to a certain issue (Patton, 2002). The process is employed in this study to compare each data set obtained from each interviewee while considering their function, organisation, and any specific guidelines offered. The comparison's goal is to see if the data and responses to the research questions are consistent and different (Siti Khairunnisa, Mcleod and Moss, 2017). Triangulation will be proposed to assess the consistency of responses data to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Research field work: The project was completed in 12 months with the following indicated as the activity's durations for every section of the research project: This section is an integral part of the manuscript for this section reinforce the purpose, findings, and implications of the research.

Data collection and analysis section will require comprehensive emphasis due to the steps needed to be taken upon conducting oral history approach. Sequence for Oral History Research are as states below:

- i. Formulate: formulate a central question or issue.
- ii. Plan project: consider such things as end products, budget, publicity, evaluation, personnel, equipment, and time frames.
- iii. Conduct background research.
- iv. Interview - process interviews and *interview tracking
- v. Evaluate research and interviews and cycle back to Interview
- vi. Organize and present results: Reporting & Store materials archivally.

* Interview Tracking – interview Tracking is a mechanism for keeping track of each interviewee's stage by keeping a file for them. All papers and recordings are archived. On the front of the file is a list of stages for tracking progress, which can be ticked off as they are done.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Studies on the critical roles and functions of a mosque and its impact of its community has always been a vital revelation. Numerous studies have derived from such an undertaking, as history of mosques and its community development. Whether it's from the point of religion growth, social advancement or economic progress, many studies show that a mosque is an integral institution that cords members of a community together, and in many situations, it helps them to grow physically and spiritually. The finding presents data taken from interview session with five prominent (P) of Ubudiah Mosque and thirty respondents (R) who are randomly selected from the Kuala Kangsar district.

Community Religion Growth

The original purpose of a mosque is to serve as an institution where Muslims can initiate and undertake activities that cover all ranges of their life endeavours. From the establishing and seeking the pleasure of Allah to the managing all of the affairs of the ummah (Muhammad Hisyam, 2015). In short, the fundamental objective of a mosque is to provide a venue of formal worship for daily and Friday prayers, as well as all forms of Quranic recitations and ceremonies (The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, 2020). In many Islamic countries around the world, local governments have control over a mosque administration by appointing its official's administration team, and the content of the khutbah during Friday prayers, in order to direct and control the nature of Islamic debate in society. Local preachers are frequently treated as government employees, and are urged to speak about religious matters such as fasting, praying, and respect and obedience to those in positions of authority rather than current political issues.

In an Islamic contemporary view, mosque is now more than just a place of worship but also a center of integrated and community development. According to Hillenbrand (2004) and Tajuddin (1998), mosque is described as the principle religious institution of Islam. Meanwhile, Musahadi (2018) stated that mosque is frequently described as a place to organize activities which are intended to follow the teaching of Allah S.W.T. In Muslim community, mosques play importance function for community development. Various religious activities conducted by local mosques create togetherness and strong relationship among the community members. By attending religious activities, community members are continuously increase their skills, knowledge which would be an added advantage for the community to keep abreast with fast demanding change (Azfahanee & Kamrudin, 2020).

Furthermore, Azfahanee and Kamrudin (2020) stated that mosque leaders as well as the officers from the Islamic Religious Office should have frequent discussion on any matters arising to mosque management to make sure the sustainability of mosques as one of community development center for Muslim. The community participation social activities as well as religious activities conducted by local mosques would have an indirect change towards the behaviour of the community.

In a more advance role of a Mosque, it is seen as a training centre of all Islamic teaching values. According to Mahmud, Rawshon, & Rahman (2011) statement, it is important to bring all Islamic experts together in the mosque to share their expertise in various subjects. As a result, it can assist Muslims in learning about a wide range of Islamic perspectives and ideas. As a result, assisting people in living in peace and harmony is important.

The protagonist's role of Ubudiah Mosque was seen by many religious activities for the surrounding community. Religious activities such as religious talks, congregational prayers, Al-Quran recitation classes are common activities and are often organized by mosque committee members as mentioned by P1 and P3. According to P3, Religious

activities are seen to be more active during the month of Ramadhan such as tarawikh prayer and recitation classes. Religious program and activities organized by Ubudiah Mosque were attended by all groups regardless of Sultan and surrounding communities. Although Ubudiah Mosque is now called a historic mosque and being the center of foreign tourist visits, it does not hinder its function as a mosque and contribute to local community.

Community Social Advancement

One of the protagonists of a place worship is to provide social and charity work for people near the place. According to Gallet (2016), churches have been developed to create an emotional of sense of belonging between human and His Creature, often referred to as social capital. The term jama' is a common word used in mosque. Jama' means gather (Belteshazzar, 2017). Mosque is a place for Muslims to gather and its roles as a centre of authority for the Muslims. As stated by Musahadi (2018), a mosque is frequently referred to as a location where any actions aimed at following God's guidance can be carried out. As stated by Al-Krenawi (2016), mosques offer "educational, political welfare, and conflict resolution services in times of dispute between groups, families, couples, and individuals". A study conducted by Kurnia, Fitriyani and Hudaya (2018) showed that Mosques are conducting many activities related to education for children to adult. The educational activities conducted by the local mosques are Qur'an educational garden, learning activities, as a library and Qur'an interpretation classes.

In the context of Ubudiah Mosque, Adnan Abdul Rahman (2018) mentioned that people in district of Kuala Kangsar uses Ubudiah mosque as a platform to gather and actively engaged with programmes prepared by the mosque committee such as Jumuah prayer, seminar and communal work. Thus, Ubudiah mosque has proven to help to approach social relationship between people despite their religion. In addition, tourists, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, have recently began to pay attention to mosques (Moghavvemi et.al, 2020). . It helps the community to increase their economy level by acting as mosque tourism. In Malaysia, mosque roles are beyond its traditional functions. In many situation, Malaysian Mosque works as a medium for government Islamic society policies transforming institute (Mohamed Adil et al., 2013).

As one of the most iconic buildings in Malaysia, all respondents agree that the Ubudiah Mosque attracts many local and international tourists. The structure of the building and the historical value contributes to the social attraction. Furthermore, prayers, seminars, Quran classes, community service, breaking fast together during Ramadhan, community work, and other religious and social events are held at the mosque. P1 also added that there is a religious school facing the mosque which also encouraged more activities in the mosque with the presence of the students of the school. The advantage of cooperation in doing such activities can creates a positive spirit among members of the community, especially to ensure that a task can be carried out effectively and it can enliven the atmosphere in the mosque. Ubudiah Mosque also actively engaged between Sultan and people specifically in the district of Kuala Kangsar and the state of Perak despite all religions. All respondent also agreed that the social engagement between Sultan and visitors shows the function of the Ubudiah Mosque is not only as religious worship, but also as a place to ensure people actively interact to enhance the social growth development locally.

Community Economy Progress

Mosque tourism is a subcategory of religious tourism, and the advancement of tourism in Muslim countries necessitates the promotion of renowned mosques as primary tourist destinations (Mansor et al., 2015). The greatness of the iconic mosque able to attract tourist. Over the course of seven decades, Norhanim Abdul Razak (2019) discovered that two significant mosques featured prominently in tourism brochures are Zahir Mosque and Ubudiah Mosque.

The greatness of the mosque is expected to develop the Muslim economy and make Muslims has great power in economy. According to Ahmad Rafli et al., (2017), mosques had

ventured into social entrepreneurship and economic activities mainly to create new source of income for surrounding community in fact this will encourage entrepreneurial activities among small entrepreneurs within their vicinity. The economic activity of the mosque is through the introduction of mosque cooperatives, the allocation of real estate and fixed assets to be rented by the Muslim community, small entrepreneurs, and others (Joni Tamkin et al., 2011; Fidlizan et al., 2014). Up to now, mosques have organized various economic activities such as Friday bazaar programs, Ramadan bazaars, mosque shop lots, food and beverage kiosks, vehicle washing centres, mosque clinics, hall rental and the organization of paid courses.

The mosque is also involved in investment activities on its valuable economic assets such as accumulated fund investments into cooperative investment schemes. In addition, mosques also operate oil palm or rubber plantations on vacant land owned by mosques, rent sites for telecommunication towers, rent party equipment, run homestay businesses, hall rental and so on which also have economic value for generating additional income to the mosques (Ahmad Rafli, 2016).

The Resolution of the Second National Seminar on Mosque Management (2006) highlights eight decisions urging the Mosque Management Committee to enhance the development of mosques as a Muslim community and the socio-economic for the development of Islam. Omar (2008) urged the mosque management team to strengthen their bond and engage in relevant activities to promote the mosque as an economic, knowledge, and communal hub.

The National Heritage Department has gazetted five major attractions of Kuala Kangsar as a tourism product and an icon to tourist destinations. The iconic destinations are Masjid Ubudiah Bukit Chandan Mosque, Bukit Chandan Memorial Palace, Makam Diraja and Warriors, Victoria Railway Bridge and Big School Building Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK). Based on this statement, it shows that the strong influence of Masjid Ubudiah could increase the number of visitors to this royal city. The potential of the Royal City as a tourism product is high due to cultural factors, arts, heritage as well as artistic activities recorded as among the five the main reason for attracting tourism activities (NEA 1999).

Study by Zurinah, Habibah & Hamzah (2020) showed that the number of Masjid Ubudiah visitors was high, even though, at that time the Ubudiah Mosque was under construction and modifications. According to the Muslim tourists, they do not miss the opportunity to perform prayers in the space provided as a pillar of worship. While non-Muslim tourists also they get the opportunity as well as to see the unique architecture and the original design of the mosque. There were several activities going on at that time such as Quran Recitation Class and Umrah and Hajj course in the morning while religious talk in the afternoon after Asr Prayer.

The function of the mosque is not just for worship alone, instead it has a wider scope. Apart from enlivening the mosque in the form of spirituality, muamalat and economic activities can also be carried out to increase funds and can be invest for all mosque activities without having to rely on entirely on the government. There are many programs and activities can be implemented to improve the economy of mosques in Malaysia. In fact, there are mosques have provided facilities such as homes, stalls, shops, cafeterias as an entertainment and economic centres and at the same time become the best service centres for the community.

The local community in Kuala Kangsar agreed that the existence of the Ubudiah Mosque increases and boost the economy in terms of the presence of tourists. The Ubudiah Mosque is one of the heritage products with high quality architectural value for tourism industry. The tourist witnessed the uniqueness of the building and architecture the mosque. Apart from that, the existence of this Ubudiah Mosque is also one of the reasons for the survival of small businesses that sell various types of souvenirs and stalls. Hence, these activities can improve living standards and the lives of people in Kuala Kangsar.

In the context of the Ubudiah Mosque, the economic activity related to the social activity improve the functions of the Ubudiah Mosque. Based on the finding from thirty

respondents, it shows that the mosque introduced economic activity by supporting local hawkers to sell local dishes outside the most area especially during Jumaah prayer and during Ramadhan month. However, in terms of the Ubudiah Mosque management, P1 and P3 mentioned no direct result of implementing the business transaction in the mosque, but the economic activity was made through the allocation of fees charged to the religious and social activities like seminars, drawing competition, etc. P3 also stated Ubudiah Mosque received financial supports from the state Government of Perak, Perak Islamic Religious Department and the Tourism of Malaysia. It shows that the government departments are responsible in supporting the financial of mosque development in Malaysia. As one of the iconic buildings in the district of Kuala Kangsar, the establishing of the Ubudiah Mosque as a social attraction (local or international visitors) contributes to supporting the economic local and state growth development.

CONCLUSION

A mosque is an institution that rooted in Islamic culture. Nonetheless, this institution offers an engagement platform to everyone to participate in building new cohesive community despite of the vary religion or ethnicity of its community. Often the role of mosques is both promoting the sense of community and reshaping the relationship between surrounding its domains. Ubudiah Mosque was built in 1913 by Sultan Idris Murshidul Al-Adzam Shah and was designed by an English named Arthur Benison Hubback. For the past 100 years, Ubudiah Mosque has played a key role in shaping every day's life of Kuala Kangsar District community in the State of Perak. The mosque is the symbol of pride for the people of the state of Perak and Malaysians. Most importantly, this study will allow us to understand the function of the mosque as the centre for all activities in the community. The participation of the community in social activities as well as religious activities would have an indirect change towards the behaviour of the community. Hence it is vital to study the protagonist's role of Ubudiah Mosque in its community development locally and internationally.

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