

REINVENTING MAJAPAHIT STYLE IN ACEH SULTANATE ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the impact of the Majapahit architectural style on the Sultanate of Aceh, drawing inspiration from the 'Majapahit Style' as defined within Balinese architecture. Studies of Aceh Sultanate Architecture reveal features resembling the Majapahit Style, suggesting a cultural and historical connection. This study examines the historical context and compares architectural and urban typologies in Majapahit and Aceh through a literature review and analysis of artefacts. It identifies two key typologies demonstrating Majapahit influence: Religious Structures and Royal Urban Landscapes. This analysis critiques the conventional narratives that categorise architectural history into discrete religious periods (Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic), highlighting the interconnections and varied histories in architecture and urban planning. The findings highlight the significance of acknowledging the cross-cultural influences that have shaped Aceh's built environment, challenging simplistic classifications based on religion or culture. This research illustrates the persistent impact of Majapahit architectural traditions on the Sultanate of Aceh particularly in the adoption of Meru-style mosques and urban planning approaches. The study emphasises the relationship between culture and religion influencing architectural expression, promoting a more profound comprehension of Aceh's built environment.

Keywords: *Aceh Sultanate Architecture; Architectural History; Majapahit Style; Religious Structures; Royal Urban Landscapes*

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INTRODUCTION

Aceh's built cultural heritage is typically depicted through historical narratives divided into distinct religious periods. In contrast, this paper's main contribution is to analyse the evolution of urban form and architectural styles across different cultural and religious periods (Hindu Majapahit twelfth to the sixteenth century and Islamic Majapahit sixteenth to the eighteenth century) to show the interrelationships and multiple influences of ideas evident in Aceh's rich history, yet seemingly unreported. Although rarely discussed, Aceh's history has a strong intercultural and multi-religious connection to the pre-Islamic kingdom. It is located at the northern tip of Sumatra and is believed to have originated around the ninth century A.D. According to Denys Lombard, an eminent Southeast Asian historian, some Arab texts in the ninth century mentioned a settlement on the northern tip of Sumatra island known as Rami, Ramni, or Lamuri. (Lombard, 2007) Lamuri is a kingdom located around the modern village of Lamreh, Aceh, which was the vassal of the Sriwijaya Empire (seventh to eleventh century). (Suprayitno, 2011) *Nagarakertagama*, the ancient manuscript from the Majapahit era, also quoted Lamuri as one of the kingdoms under the Majapahit empire. (Cowan, 1933) Hindu influences are evident due to the connection of the Majapahit Empire to Lamuri and several kingdoms in Northern Aceh, such as Pasai and Peureulak.

In his book, *Majapahit Style, Made Wijaya* (2014), an architectural writer, introduces the term 'Majapahit Style', which relates to the architectural and urban forms constructed during the Majapahit period. The styles had several influences from the previous historical period and influenced the next era, the Islamic period. Majapahit, the fourteenth-century Hindu kingdom, had a royal palace and magnificent temples in Trowulan, East Java, Indonesia. The architecture and urban form of the Majapahit Palace (*Kraton*) were designed by Raden Sepat, who was known as the great architect of the fifteenth-century Majapahit. (Wijaya, 2014) In the battle between Demak and Majapahit in 1478, Raden Sepat was arrested by the Demak Sultanate, Central Java, and detained in Banten, the western part of Java. (Wijaya, 2014) A year later, Raden Sepat was released by the Sultan of Banten and assisted Sunan Gunung Jati, the Sultan of Cirebon, in building the Demak Mosque (1479 AD), Cirebon Mosque (1480 AD) and the development of Kasepuhan Palace Cirebon (after 1480 AD). (Wijaya, 2014) When planning to build the Demak and Cirebon Mosques, Sunan Gunung Jati asked for help and prayers from all *sunan* (religious preachers) over Java. Responding to the request, Raden Fatah, Sultan of Demak, sent his architect, Raden Sepat, and two hundred assistants to help build the mosques. (Wijaya et al., 2023) In building the Cirebon Kasepuhan Palace, Sunan Kalijaga was assisted by several Majapahit architects who had embraced Islam, including Raden Sepat. (Schiffer et al., 2022) According to Wijaya, "Raden Sepat's contribution ensured many of the major elements of Majapahit style were transferred into the Islamic era in Java." (Wijaya, 2014) The style is expected to expand in other regions of Indonesia, including Aceh, during both pre-Islamic and Islamic era.

Existing studies of Majapahit architecture overwhelmingly centered on Java (especially the archaeological capital at Trowulan) and Bali as the principal heirs to Majapahit forms. For example, surveys note that Majapahit's distinctive brick temple and pavilion styles "have deeply influenced" later Javanese and Balinese architecture. (Wijaya,

2014) One recent review even lists Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, etc., as only peripherally influenced by Majapahit, noting that the kingdom's impact outside Java and Bali was insignificant. (Sulaksono et al., 2023) In practice, the literature and heritage programs (e.g., UNESCO's Majapahit site studies) document Majapahit gates, temples, and palaces in Java and draw explicit parallels with Balinese compounds. (Wijaya, 2014) Bali's traditional temples and aristocratic pavilions are often cited as living continuations of the Majapahit style, while outside Java and Bali, the stylistic links are largely assumed absent or minor.

By contrast, figures in Sumatra – and Aceh in particular – were only marginally in discussions of Majapahit architecture. Majapahit-era texts (the *Nagarakretagama*, local chronicles) did list parts of Sumatra (including "Lamuri" on the northern tip of Aceh and "Perlak" in the East Aceh) under Majapahit influence, and isolated finds (such as Majapahit-style tomb carvings in Palembang, South Sumatra) hint at its reach (Coedès and Coedès, 1996; Purwanti, 2023). However, architectural history publications generally do not take up Majapahit motifs in Sumatra. In Aceh itself, previous studies have focused on pre-Islamic Srivijayan ruins or on Islamic-era palaces, mosques, and vernacular houses – often noting only generic "pre-Islamic" Hindu–Buddhist motifs (like lotus or Meru symbols) versus later Islamic elements (Fadhil et al., 2022). The Majapahit influence is rarely referenced. One recent comparative study of old Acehese mosques did speculate that a 14th-century "entry" of Majapahit into Aceh linked those mosques to Javanese precedents (Gustama and Saliya, 2024); it even found structural similarities between Aceh's mosques and Majapahit-era Javanese wooden buildings (Gustama and Saliya, 2024). No publication had explicitly explained the influence of Majapahit architectural forms on Aceh's built heritage, including the limited pre-Islamic sites and the subsequent sultanate's architecture.

This study examines and analyses the architectural and urban form elements of the Majapahit influence present in Aceh. This study will examine the similarities and differences between Majapahit architectural traditions and the Acehese built environment. This study aims to enhance the understanding of cultural transmission and architectural adaptation across various cultures and religions historically.

METHODS

The study utilises a multi-method qualitative framework that integrates historical-interpretive analysis with typological and spatial assessments to investigate the architectural impact of Majapahit on the Aceh Sultanate's built heritage. This research design facilitates a systematic examination of the tangible and intangible elements of architectural transmission between the two traditions. The historical-interpretive analysis in this study focuses on understanding the cultural and architectural exchanges between the Majapahit Empire and the Aceh Sultanate by examining historical records, local and international, and architectural artefacts. This approach draws on the cultural history framework, emphasising the socio-political and religious contexts that shape architectural traditions. (Onay, 2015; Ricklefs, 2008) By analysing historical documents and secondary sources, the study identifies key moments of interaction between Majapahit and Aceh, particularly during the transition from Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic polities. This method also

incorporates comparative historical analysis to trace stylistic continuities and transformations across different periods. The interpretive aspect allows for a deeper understanding of how Majapahit's architectural elements—such as tiered roof structures and spatial hierarchies—were adapted in Aceh to align with Islamic principles while retaining their original cultural significance. (Feener, 2004; Reid, 2008).

The typological analysis examines recurring architectural forms and elements in religious structures (mosques and temples) and royal urban landscapes (urban forms and gardens) to identify patterns of cultural transmission. This method is complemented by urban morphological analysis, which investigates the spatial organisation of settlements influenced by Majapahit's urban planning principles. This spatial morphological analysis is commonly used in architectural history research to assess the alignment of function, area, location, and accessibility between spaces. (Paramtopo and Rukayah, 2023) For instance, this research compares Aceh's urban layouts with Majapahit's centre to highlight a shared triangular layout. Integrating typological and morphological approaches provides a comprehensive framework for documenting how Majapahit's architectural legacy was reinterpreted within Aceh's urban history.

Spatial assessment focuses on the physical dimensions of architectural forms and their integration into the surrounding environment. This method involves analysing spatial hierarchies within individual buildings and their relationship to broader urban contexts. For example, the study evaluates how Acehese mosques incorporate multi-tiered roofs—a Majapahit architecture hallmark while adapting spatial layouts to accommodate Islamic prayer practices. (Tajudeen, 2017) Additionally, spatial analysis is used to examine the placement of Taman Ghairah Garden within Aceh's urban landscape, drawing parallels with Majapahit's history of sacred bathing in the gardens, symbolising the pre-Islamic microcosmos. This approach highlights the tangible aspects of architectural transmission from Majapahit to Aceh and explores how these spatial configurations were imbued with new cultural meanings in Aceh.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical documentation demonstrates that despite the gradual Islamization of Aceh from the thirteenth century onwards, pre-Islamic architectural traditions persisted and were deliberately incorporated into Islamic structures and urban planning. Historian Ricklefs notes that during Tome Pires' visit to Sumatra from 1512 to 1515, non-Islamic states persisted despite Muslim rulers from Aceh to Palembang, indicating a complex transitional period where multiple cultural systems coexisted. (Ricklefs, 2008) The influence of Pasai in Aceh during that period was insufficient to convert the populations residing in the interior regions, allowing pre-Islamic architectural knowledge and building practices to remain embedded within local construction traditions. (Fadhil, 2020) During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, numerous local kings converted to Islam, such as Meurah Silu of Pasai, who transitioned from Hinduism to Islam and subsequently adopted the name Malikussaleh, yet the robust pre-Islamic cultural foundations ensured that aspects of the preceding culture persisted into the Islamic period, including traditions in architecture and urban planning. This cultural persistence is particularly evident in two distinct typologies

demonstrating apparent Majapahit influence: religious structures, most notably the tiered-roof mosques and community gathering spaces, and royal urban landscapes exhibiting planning principles derived from Majapahit's cosmological urban organization.

Religious Structures

The mosque and meunasah are the two places of worship in Aceh designed in the Majapahit style. The mosque is the most noticeable building in the seventeenth-century map of Aceh because the sultans concentrated on building the mosque, particularly during Sultan Iskandar Muda. (Fadhil and Nichols, 2025) In a map by Johannes Vingboons, a Seventeenth-century Dutch Cartographer from Amsterdam, the city's layout can be seen with row houses that face the street, which is visualised as a Dutch town instead of the urban character of Southeast Asia. (Reid and Ito, 1999) However, an interesting feature from this bird's eye view of Aceh City is the impression of a huge mosque with a three-tiered roof. This mosque model is widely used to represent the first generation of Baiturrahman Mosque. A sketch by Peter Mundy, an English traveller who visited Aceh in 1637, shows Baiturrahman Mosque with a square plan surrounded by walls and a four-tiered roof (Putri and Fadhil, 2023). It reminded Lombard more of a Balinese Meru than a Middle Eastern mosque (Lombard, 2007).

The central mosque, the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, is depicted in the local classic Hikayat Aceh as a mosque featuring a silver-tipped roof adorned with crystal mirrors. The information was obtained from H.J. Kreemer, a Dutch theologian, who translated the manuscript and explained the details of the structure of the first version of the Great Mosque. Kreemer explained, "The mosque can be conjecturally reconstructed as a plain-looking, imposing structure made of wood, with two side-by-side steep point roofs, covered with palm leaves. The mosque has no tower or balconies." (cited in Raap, 1994) The textual description from Hikayat Aceh, along with Peter Mundy's sketches and Vingboons' Atlas, indicates that the early Baiturrahman Mosque model was influenced by The Meru mosque, owing to its similarity to the Meru Temple. Meru is a sacred mountain in Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. This model is called a Tajug roof in Java and Bumbung Meru in Malay, characterising a mosque with a pitched hip roof and a square floor plan (Tajudeen, 2017). The Meru house of worship model is believed to exhibit significant Majapahit characteristics (Gustama and Saliya, 2024).

R. Michael Feener, a historian of Southeast Asian Islam, highlighted that during Iskandar Muda's (Aceh seventeenth century sultan) government, several pre-Islamic ideas and institutions were applied with subtle changes to symbolise his power and social status. (Daly and Feener, 2010; Fadhil and Nichols, 2025) It may be argued that the institution or building that was successful or regarded with great respect during the pre-Islamic period was maintained by tradition and associations with the past. For example, a significant historical architectural feature was the construction of a tiered roof structure for the mosque (Fadhil and Nichols, 2025; Gustama and Saliya, 2024). Astri Wright, an Art History and Visual Studies professor, believes Iskandar Muda's support for heterodox mysticism (Hindu origins) influenced his taste and political policies. Therefore, multiple-roof styles of sacred buildings were adapted to the Aceh mosques. (cited in Raap, 1994) No source suggests any other types of mosques built at that time. "This traditional form,

thoroughly familiar to the population, was one which the builders know how to build." (Raap, 1994) Besides the support of heterodox mysticism from the sultan, the limitations of the builder's knowledge of building techniques and the availability of materials can also be another reason why this style was built.

In his writing 'The Origin of the Javanese Mosque' (1963), De Graff provides details of the type of Javanese mosque in its physical form. The Javanese mosque has a square plan, surrounded by tiered roofs and ornamented tops. (de Graaf, 1963) De Graff stated that the formation of this mosque is a style found from Aceh to Ambon. (de Graaf, 1963) However, the mosques located in Sumatra have several levels that were then applied in the Java mosques. De Graff estimated that the type of Baiturrahman Mosque in Aceh was most likely to have several levels based on Peter Mundy's sketch. (de Graaf, 1963).

Indrapuri Mosque is one of the largest surviving sultanate mosques in Aceh. The mosque has the same pattern as the Majapahit-style and old Baiturrahman Mosques. The three-tiered roof mosque style is believed to have been built over one of the temples in the Hindu kingdom era of Aceh. Indrapuri Mosque represents a distinctive typology of a mosque in Aceh today, as the majority have been renovated with dome and concrete structures. However, if it refers to the seventeenth-century de Vlaming Map, the Meru Mosque typology is spread across almost every city corner. William Dampier, a traveller from France who visited Aceh in 1688, explained that every mosque he found at that time had a square plan with a square roof. (Putri and Fadhil, 2023) Several mosques remain in the interior of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, including the Old Mosque of Ulee Kareng and the Tgk Syiek Kuta Karang Mosque. Both mosques are of lesser dimensions compared to the Indrapuri Mosque (Figure 1).

The key design feature distinguishing mosques in Aceh from mosques in Java at the beginning of the Islamic era is the formation of the fortress-like wall surrounding the mosque. Reid and Ito (1999) mentioned the typology as a 'fortified mosque.' The pattern of fortified mosques is well-known in Aceh history, and each typology is considered the village's local mosque (Fadhil and Nichols, 2025). The Vlaming Map features multiple mosques characterised by two-tiered and three-tiered roofs. An example is the Pedir Mosque on the map, located in present-day Sigli, Aceh, characterised by its three tiers of roofs and surrounded by fortifications (see Figure 2).

The number of tiers on a mosque's roof is contingent upon the mosque's significance. The concept is derived from the Meru Temple in Bali, where the number of tiers can range from one to eleven, with higher tiers possessing greater spiritual importance. (Wardana, 2024) On the map, urban mosques exhibit a more significant number of roof tiers than their rural counterparts. In certain instances, rural mosques may feature many roof tiers. The significance of those rural mosques may stem from their status as a vital sacred site or their association with a prominent religious leader in those rural areas, despite their location being far from the center. (Wardana, 2024) A photograph of the Samalanga Mosque (figure 3) in a remote district of Bireuen, Aceh, dated from 1880 to 1910, showcases a five-tiered roof. The design of the Meru Mosque closely resembles that of the Meru Temple in Bali at present. (figure 4).



Figure 1. Indrapuri Mosque in Aceh Besar, Aceh, Indonesia
Source: Authors' Documentation, (2024).

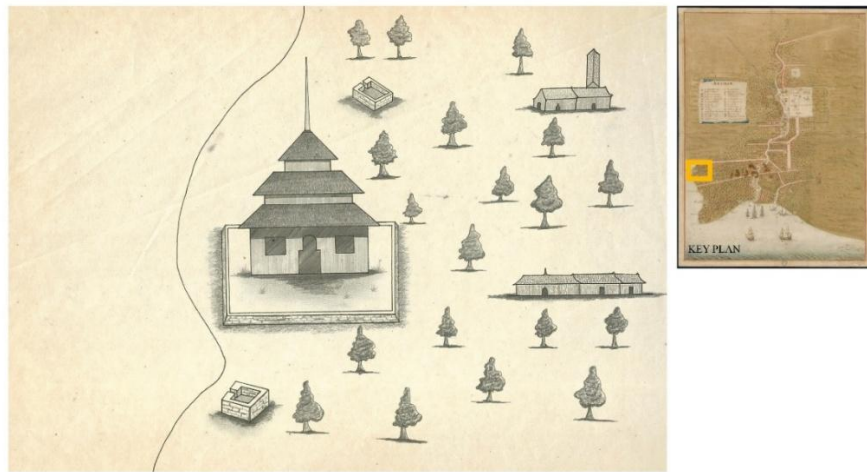


Figure 2. Pedir Mosque in the seventeenth century de Vlaming Map of Aceh. Sketch of objects by Muhammad Naufal Fadhil
Source: Fadhil & Nichols, (2025).



Figure 3. A Mosque in Samalanga, Aceh, Indonesia, around 1880 – 1910. The image was sourced from Wikimedia Commons and attributed to Tropenmuseum Netherlands. Original title: Militairen voor de moskee van Samalanga
Source: Tropenmuseum, (1880).



Figure 4. Meru Temple in Tamblingan Lake, Bali, Indonesia
Source: Veronesi, (2016).

Besides the mosque, the essential feature of Acehese Village is the meunasah. The Meunasah, a traditional Islamic architectural structure in Aceh, is a multifaceted institution deeply embedded in the socio-religious fabric of Acehese society. Functioning as a place of worship and a community hub, these structures exemplify indigenous Islamic architecture through their typologies and spatial configurations designed to accommodate religious, educational, and social activities. (Hassan et al., 2021; Mahmazar et al., 2023) Architectural analyses reveal 16 typologies of Meunasah based on facade elements like doors, columns, and roof designs, reflecting localized adaptations of broader Islamic architectural principles while maintaining Acehese cultural identity. (Hassan et al., 2021) Culturally, the Meunasah operates as a *peusapaan* (community gathering space) where village councils resolve disputes and organize communal activities, reinforcing its role as a social adhesive in Acehese villages. (Fatimahsyam, 2022; Nurdin et al., 2021) The meunasah also serves as a venue for religious activities and accommodation for single male guests visiting the village. In traditional Acehese houses, male guests typically cannot stay overnight due to the absence of a designated room or separate house for guests. Meunasah locations are typically situated within a short walking distance from residences, facilitating access for guests residing at the meunasah. Figure 5 illustrates the location of the meunasah kampung within the site plan of Lam Bunot Village, Indrapuri Aceh Besar.

Meunasah is believed to be a feature that still survives and is derived from pre-Islamic times (Figure 6). However, in line with the development of Islam, the institution was increased in function as a place to study the Islamic sciences and prayer. The meunasah function initially had similarities with a *bale* in Java and Bali as a gathering place for adult men by night (Dall, 1982). An example is the Bale Kambang in Kertagosa (Figure 7), part of the historic Klungkung Palace complex, which exemplifies traditional Balinese architecture deeply influenced by Majapahit-era Hindu-Javanese court traditions and cosmological principles. (Adiputra, 2015) This open-sided pavilion, set within a water-filled moat, functioned as a judicial and ceremonial space where royal courts adjudicated

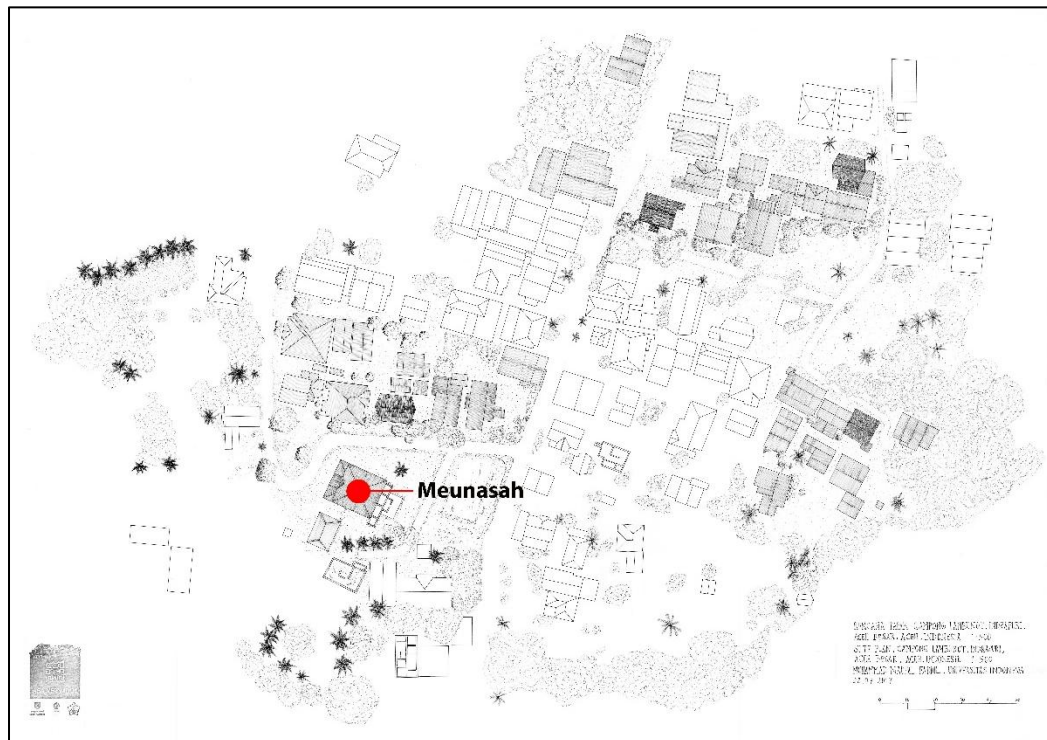


Figure 5. Siteplan of Lambunot Village, Indrapuri, Aceh Besar, shows the meunasah's position between settlements.
Source: Muhammad Naufal Fadhil, (2017).



Figure 6. A wooden meunasah building at Gampong Raya Tambo, Bireuen, Aceh, Indonesia
Source: Kamarud76, (2018).



Figure 7. Bale Kambang in Kertagosa, Bali, Indonesia
Source: Author's Documentation, (2015).

legal disputes according to Hindu law texts such as the Kutaramanawa. (Laksmi and Sita, 2013).

Royal Urban Landscapes

The 1874 Dutch map of Aceh (Figure 8) and the 1925 McLaine Pont's Map of Majapahit (figure 9) reveal striking similarities in the spatial arrangement of urban elements between both centrals. The maps exhibit a triangular layout comprising a mosque (or a temple), a market, and a square, with the palace situated south. In Banda Aceh, the mosque occupies the eastern part of the city, directly opposite the market in the west, with an open square connecting these elements. The palace, known as Dalam Daruddunia, lies south of the square, mirroring the hierarchical urban structure observed in Majapahit. This spatial arrangement aligns with broader Southeast Asian urban planning principles rooted in cosmological symbolism and hierarchical zoning (Michrob, 1987).

A comparison with McLaine Pont's map of Majapahit reveals that this triangular layout is not unique to Aceh but reflects enduring principles of Javanese city planning. In Majapahit City, the Kraton (palace) lies to the south of the square, while the market is positioned to the north, and the main temple occupies the eastern side. This arrangement demonstrates continuity in urban morphology across religious transitions—from Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic polities—highlighting how Majapahit's spatial concepts were adapted within Islamic frameworks in Aceh (Soekmono, 1995). Placing sacred spaces (mosques or temples), marketplaces, royal complexes, and public squares reflects a deliberate organisation that balances spiritual, economic, and political functions within urban centres (Kuswantojo, 2019; Susanto et al., 2020).

These findings highlighting how pre-Islamic architectural traditions influenced Islamic city planning in Aceh. The triangular layout observed in both maps signifies cultural continuity rather than rupture, challenging segmented historical narratives that

isolate Islamic architecture from its Hindu-Buddhist predecessors. This analysis highlights how Aceh's built environment embodies a fusion of traditions that transcends religious boundaries while maintaining functional coherence.

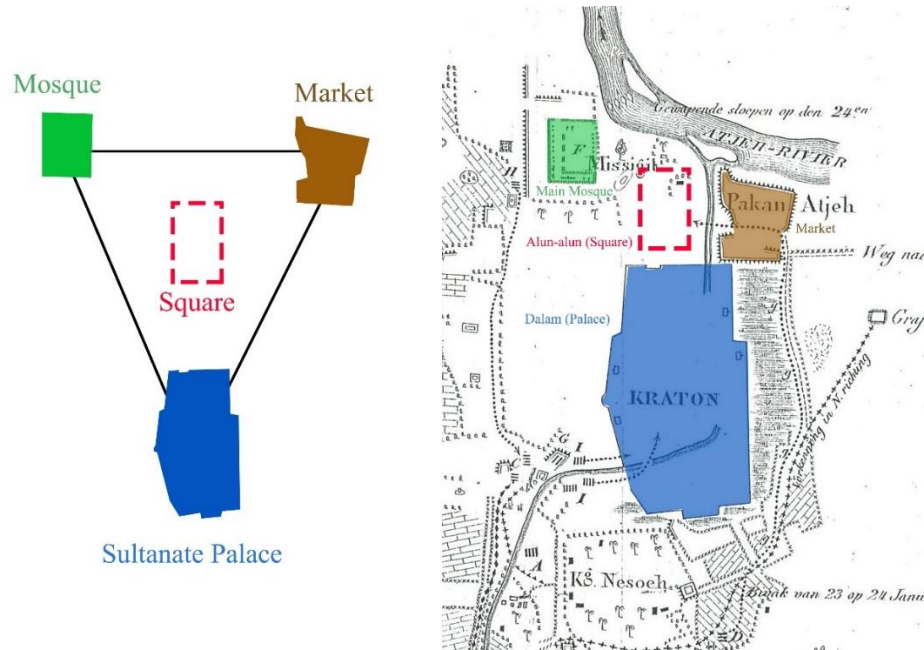


Figure 8. The triangular layout of Aceh City comprises the Sultanate Palace, Market, and Mosque, with the city square in the centre—the layout diagram by Muhammad Naufal Fadhil.

Source: Kielstra, (1885).

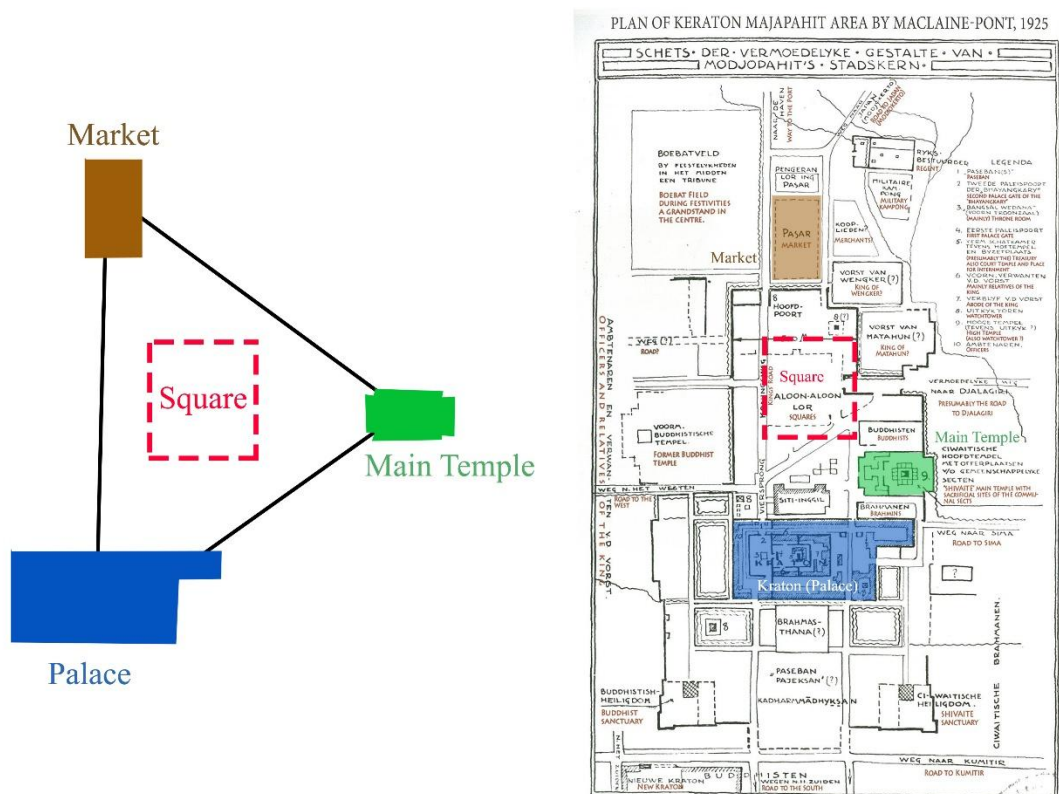


Figure 9. The triangular layout of Majapahit City comprises the King's Palace, Market, and Main Temple, with the city square in the centre—the layout diagram by Muhammad Naufal Fadhil.

Source: Wijaya, (2014).



Figure 10. The Gunongan and Kandang, depicted as white structures on the right side of the image, are located within the recently renovated Gunongan Heritage Site. The renovation eliminated the paving of the footpaths surrounding the heritage site.

Source: Authors' Documentation, (2025).

The section of Bustanussalatin's book provides a detailed description of the royal garden Taman Ghairah, which, according to Lombard, was absent from discussions on European sources (Lombard, 2007). The fascinating part of this source is the description of a mountain-like structure in the garden. "Further, to the right of the River Daru'l- 'Ishki, there is a huge square ... named Medan Khairani. Moreover, in the centre of that square is a mountain on which stands a tower, a place for sitting in state, named Gegunungan Menara Permata" (cited in Wessing, 1988). Through an article entitled 'De Stuchting van het 'Goenoengan' geheeten monument te Koetaradja' (The foundation of the 'Goenoengan' monument at Koetaradja), Djajadiningrat linked the "Gegunungan Menara Permata" with a building in Banda Aceh which is known as Gunongan (Djajadiningrat, 1916). Gunongan is an artificial mountain in Banda Aceh. Together with the Kandang (the tomb of Sultan Iskandar Thani) and Pinto Khop (the gate of the garden), the Gunongan is now part of Taman Sari Gunongan Heritage Site (figure 10), which is the only part of the Dalam that remains today (Fadhil and Fakriah, 2021). Acehnese believed that Gunongan was a gift of Sultan Iskandar Thani to his princess, Putroe Phang (The Princess of Pahang), a popular folklore circulated by the community over generations. Robert Wessing, an expert in Cultural Anthropology and Southeast Asia studies, also gives an important point of view regarding the Taman Ghairah. He analyses several sources to interpret the meaning of some objects in Taman Ghairah.

Wessing expressed his doubts regarding the design of Taman Ghairah by pointing out that Bustanussalatin did not mention in detail that Iskandar Thani built Gunongan, but he developed a Bustan (garden) in which there is Gunongan (Fadhil et al., 2022). Similarly, L E Brakel, a Dutch historian, questioned Putroe Phang's story and classified the Gunongan as a Cosmic Mountain. Lombard mentioned that Gunongan was the most contemporary form of expression of the Cosmic Mountain, and Brakel argued that the park that surrounds it, which is mentioned in the Bustanussalatin, strengthens the argument that the Gunongan

as a meru (mountain) (Wessing, 1988). Portuguese traveller João de Baross (1552) witnessed that "a great heathen temple which is famous for its gold existed in Aceh" (Dion, 1970). The mentioned object is quite similar to the Gunongan because the Bustanussalatin said that Gunongan has a peak covered with *suasa*, a mixture of gold, copper, and silver. (Wessing, 1988) If the formation of Gunongan was the heathen temple, it revealed that the object had existed before Islam became a power (before the thirteenth century) in Aceh. Wessing's article has reinforced the connection between Aceh and the Majapahit world. Although it is limited to discussing Taman Ghairah objects, Wessing's opinions provide information that previous cultures most likely influenced urban form and architecture in the seventeenth century of the Aceh Sultanate.

The concept of Taman Ghairah pertains to the bathing ritual performed by Maharaja Kutai during his visit to the King of Majapahit. In 'Upon a White Stone Under a Nagasari Tree,' Hooykaas (1957) discusses the pre-Islamic concept in Indonesia wherein the king conducted a sacred ritual while seated on a white stone beneath a Banyan Tree or Nagasari Tree. The ritual involved bathing the Queen, His Majesty Mahadewi, His Majesty Matur, His Majesty Leko, the king's other wives, concubines, and all the nobles. Their noisy play in the Banjaran Sari (flower garden) pond delighted the Queen. Following an extended bathing session, the Queen emerged from the pool alongside His Majesty and the other bathers. They proceeded to stroll through the garden, gathering various fruits and flowers at their leisure. Subsequently, the King and Maharaja Sultan convened on the White Rock beneath the Nagasari Tree in solitude, as all the nobles were instructed to proceed to the garden for fruit gathering. The king imparted to the Maharaja Sultan all the knowledge required for kingship. (Hooykaas, 1957) The story depicts flowers and fruits as components of a garden within the kingdom. Hooykaas posits that the royal princesses and nobles, while bathing and gathering flowers and fruits, may embody the angels of heaven, as this garden represents paradise. (Fadhil et al., 2022).

According to Hindu Cosmology, the variety of flowers and fruits in Gunongan Taman Ghairah may symbolise the diverse flora and fauna in the heavenly garden. The role of the angel gathering flowers may have been undertaken by women in the Daruddunya neighbourhood. Beaulieu's account indicates that the king utilised female bodyguards within the palace to meet his requirements. It is reported that 3,000 female bodyguards live inside the palace and seldom leave it. (Reid and Anggraeni, 2010).

According to Thomas Best's account, foreign guests may have bathed in the spring of the Dar-Ul Isyki River, 5-6 miles from the palace. The bathing procession resembles the one the King of Majapahit conducted to welcome his guest, Maharaja Sultan. Alongside the bathing ritual for welcoming guests, Beaulieu noted another bathing procession in the Kingdom of Aceh called Mandi Safar. (Fadhil et al., 2022) The third part of the Aceh Customary Manuscript delineates the regulations governing the ceremony and its committee, including the Mandi Safar Assembly. 'h) Majelis Syah Alam Mandi Safar. The king's bathing ceremony occurs in the month of Safar on the final Wednesday. One shahbandar is responsible for constructing the procession or its vehicle'. (Fadhil et al., 2022) Lombard suggests this bathing procession likely originated from the Hindu culture established in Aceh.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Majapahit influence on Aceh Sultanate architecture reshapes the understanding of cultural transmission and architectural development in Southeast Asia. The research illustrates that cultural boundaries are more fluid and dynamic than conventional scholarly narratives, as indicated by the documentation of specific mechanisms and manifestations of architectural influence. The enduring presence of Majapahit architectural elements in Aceh's Islamic contexts demonstrates cultural traditions' capacity to persist beyond religious and political changes via adaptation and reinterpretation.

The study's primary contribution is its critique of categorized methodologies in architectural history. This research demonstrates that Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic architecture should not be regarded as separate traditions; instead, it uncovers intricate patterns of synthesis and continuity that defy straightforward classification. This finding has implications for Southeast Asian architectural scholarship and broader theoretical frameworks regarding cultural transmission and change.

The architectural connections between Majapahit and Aceh illustrate the significant interconnectedness of Southeast Asian societies, transcending religious and cultural divides. Comprehending these connections is crucial for recognizing the complexity and richness of Southeast Asian cultural heritage while also providing insights for contemporary endeavours to reconcile tradition and innovation in architectural practice. This research offers a historical perspective on how Southeast Asian societies have maintained cultural continuity amid evolving circumstances, addressing cultural identity and heritage preservation issues. Further investigation should explore the intangible cultural values embedded within these architectural forms, and comparative studies with other regions influenced by Majapahit are recommended to broaden the understanding of its architectural legacy.

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