

A Study of Symbolism and Religious Architecture: Kong Fuk Miao Temple and Jamik Mentok Mosque from a Religious Studies Perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the symbolism and religious architecture of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque and their influence on the spiritual experience and religious identity of the community in Mentok. Using qualitative research methods, including observation, interviews, and literature study, this research reveals that the symbolic elements in the architecture of both places of worship not only serve as aesthetic decorations but also contain deep spiritual and cultural meanings. This symbolism reinforces religious values and serves as a medium for communicating religious teachings that have been passed down from generation to generation. In addition, the architecture of both places of worship plays an important role in creating a solemn atmosphere for worship and strengthening the social bonds and religious identity of the community that uses them. The existence of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque also reflects the values of tolerance and harmony among religious communities in Mentok. This study emphasizes the importance of preserving religious symbolism and architecture as an integral part of the cultural and spiritual heritage of society in order to maintain the continuity of religious experience and identity amid social dynamics and modernization.

Keywords: Symbolism, Religious Architecture, Kong Fuk Miao Temple, Jamik Mentok Mosque, and Religious Studies

Kajian Simbolisme dan Arsitektur Keagamaan: Kuil Kong Fuk Miao dan Masjid Jamik Mentok dari Perspektif Studi Agama

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji simbolisme dan arsitektur keagamaan pada Kuil Kong Fuk Miao dan Masjid Jamik Mentok serta pengaruhnya terhadap pengalaman spiritual dan identitas keagamaan masyarakat di Mentok. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan studi literatur, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa unsur-unsur simbolik dalam arsitektur kedua tempat ibadah tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai dekorasi estetis, tetapi juga mengandung makna spiritual dan kultural yang mendalam. Simbolisme ini memperkuat nilai-nilai keagamaan dan berperan sebagai medium penyampai ajaran-ajaran religius yang diwariskan dari generasi ke generasi. Selain itu, arsitektur kedua tempat ibadah tersebut memainkan peran penting dalam menciptakan suasana khushyuk bagi pelaksanaan ibadah serta memperkuat ikatan sosial dan identitas keagamaan masyarakat yang memanfaatkannya. Keberadaan Kuil Kong Fuk Miao dan Masjid Jamik Mentok juga mencerminkan nilai-nilai toleransi dan harmoni antarumat beragama di Mentok. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pelestarian simbolisme dan arsitektur keagamaan sebagai bagian integral dari warisan budaya dan spiritual masyarakat guna menjaga keberlanjutan pengalaman dan identitas keagamaan di tengah dinamika sosial dan modernisasi.

Kata kunci: Simbolisme, Arsitektur Keagamaan, Kuil Kong Fuk Miao, Masjid Jamik Mentok, Studi Agama

Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country with a rich diversity of religions and cultures. The existence of various places of worship from different religions reflects pluralism and religious tolerance in society (Hefner, 2011). The city of Mentok, as one of the cities in West Bangka, has two very important and historic places of worship, namely the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque. These two places not only function as centers of worship, but also as symbols of the religious and cultural identity of the local community (Sari & Putra, 2019).

The Kong Fuk Miao Temple is one of the oldest temples in Mentok and is the center of religious and social activities for the Chinese community. The architecture of this temple is rich in symbolism that reflects Taoist and Confucian teachings (Liu, 2022). Meanwhile, the Jamik Mentok Mosque is a historic mosque that is the center of Islamic activities in Mentok. The architecture of this mosque combines traditional Malay and Islamic elements that are rich in symbolic meaning (Rahman, 2018).

A study of symbolism and religious architecture is important in order to understand how places of worship function not only as physical spaces, but also as a medium for communicating religious and cultural values (Eliade, 1959). Symbolism in religious architecture plays a role in strengthening religious identity and providing spiritual experiences for religious adherents (Tuan, 1977). Therefore, understanding the symbols found in the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque can provide deep insights into the religious practices of the Mentok community.

Previous studies have highlighted the architecture of mosques and temples separately, but comparative studies between the two in the local context of Mentok are still very limited (Chen, 2022; Abdullah, 2016). In addition, social and

cultural developments in Mentok, which are influenced by interactions between religious communities, have given rise to new dynamics in the preservation and interpretation of religious symbols (Suryani, 2020). In the context of religious studies, the approaches of symbolism and religious architecture can help reveal how religious values are articulated visually and spatially, and how this influences daily religious practices (Geertz, 1973).

The Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque are also important objects in the study of religious pluralism and tolerance, given the physical proximity and social interaction between communities of different religions in Mentok (Hefner, 2011). The architecture of these two places of worship not only reflects aesthetics, but also the philosophy and theology underlying each religion, so that this study can enrich interfaith understanding (Nasr, 1987). This research is also relevant in the context of preserving cultural and religious heritage, given that these two buildings are part of local history and identity that need to be preserved (UNESCO, 2010).

In religious architectural studies, symbolism is often expressed through elements such as building shapes, ornaments, colors, and spatial arrangements that have special meanings in religious traditions (Kostof, 1995). For example, in the Kong Fuk Miao Temple, the use of dragons, phoenixes, and cloud motifs symbolizes luck, strength, and harmony in Chinese beliefs (Liu, 2022). Meanwhile, in the Jamik Mentok Mosque, the dome, minaret, and Arabic calligraphy symbolize the oneness of God and the beauty of Islamic teachings (Rahman, 2018).

This study will also examine how these symbols are understood and experienced by the community of worshipers, thereby illustrating the relationship between symbols, space, and religious experience (Tuan, 1977). In

addition to the symbolic aspect, the architecture of these two places of worship also reflects adaptations to local geographical and socio-cultural conditions, which demonstrate the cultural and religious dynamics in Mentok (Sari & Putra, 2019).

Apart from the symbolic and architectural aspects, it is also important to examine how these two places of worship play a role in the social and religious life of the Mentok community. Places of worship often become centers of social activity that strengthen relationships between community members (Putra & Sari, 2021). The Kong Fuk Miao Temple not only functions as a place of worship but also as a center for cultural and social activities of the Chinese community, such as Chinese New Year celebrations and ancestral worship rituals that are rich in symbolic meaning (Liu, 2022). Similarly, the Jamik Mentok Mosque is the center of religious activities for Muslims, including recitation of the Quran, Islamic holidays, and social activities that strengthen solidarity among the community (Rahman, 2018).

This study will also highlight how the architectural symbolism of these two places of worship contributes to shaping a profound religious experience for worshippers and visitors (Eliade, 1959). Religious experiences triggered by symbols and places of worship can strengthen faith and emotional attachment to religion and community (Tuan, 1977). In the context of religious pluralism in Mentok, the geographical proximity of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque demonstrates tolerance and respect between religious communities (Hefner, 2011).

This study will also examine how architectural symbols can become a medium for interfaith dialogue that strengthens social cohesion and reduces the potential for conflict (Suryani, 2020). Religious architecture rich in symbolism

also functions as a tool for religious education, where visual elements teach religious values and teachings to the younger generation (Nasr, 1987). In the Kong Fuk Miao Temple, for example, dragon and phoenix ornaments are not only decorations, but also contain moral and spiritual messages that have been passed down from generation to generation (Liu, 2022). Meanwhile, at the Jamik Mentok Mosque, Arabic calligraphy and geometric motifs contain the meaning of monotheism and the perfection of God's creation, which is the basis of Islamic teachings (Rahman, 2018).

This study will also examine how social change and modernization affect the preservation of symbolism and architecture in both places of worship (Sari & Putra, 2019). Modernization and urbanization often pose challenges to the preservation of cultural and religious heritage, including the risk of losing symbolic meaning due to changes in the function and form of buildings (UNESCO, 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand how the Mentok community maintains and adapts religious symbolism and architecture to remain relevant to the times (Chen, 2022).

This study will also examine the role of the government and religious institutions in the preservation and development of these two places of worship as cultural and religious heritage (Putra & Sari, 2021). In addition, this study will look at how the participation of local communities in maintaining and caring for religious architectural symbols can strengthen a sense of belonging and community identity (Hefner, 2011). From a religious studies perspective, religious symbolism and architecture are concrete manifestations of religious beliefs and practices that can be analyzed to understand the spiritual and social dynamics of religious communities (Geertz, 1973). Thus, this study is not only descriptive but also analytical in revealing the deeper meanings contained in the

symbols and architecture of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque (Eliade, 1959).

This study is expected to contribute academically to the fields of religious studies, religious architecture, and religious pluralism studies, as well as serve as a reference for the preservation and development of local culture (Chen, 2022). By understanding the symbolism and architecture of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque, the community can better appreciate diversity and strengthen tolerance among religious communities in Mentok (Hefner, 2011). Therefore, this study is very important as an effort to document, analyze, and appreciate the religious heritage in Mentok, while strengthening interfaith dialogue through a shared understanding of the symbols and architecture of places of worship.

Result and Discussion

Symbolism in the Architecture of Kong Fuk Miao Temple and Jamik Mentok Mosque Reflects the Religious Values of the Mentok Community

Research shows that the design of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple is rich in symbolic meaning, reflecting the spiritual principles of Taoism and Confucianism accepted by the Chinese community in Mentok (Liu, 2022). Elements such as the dragon, phoenix, and cloud patterns that decorate the temple are not just for visual appeal, but also symbolize luck, strength, and balance.

An interview with the Religious Site Guardian from the Bangka Barat Regency Culture and Tourism Office, Ce Mewin, revealed that every aspect of the architectural design holds significant spiritual meaning. For example, the naga is seen as a supporter and bringer of good luck, while the phoenix symbolizes resurrection and immortality (Ce Mewin 2024).

In addition, the use of red and gold colors in traditional places of worship carries symbolic meanings. The color red represents courage and happiness, while gold symbolizes prosperity and purity. In the context of Jamik Mentok Mosque, the design includes deep symbolism connected to Islamic principles. The mosque's domed roof, which is round in shape, symbolizes unity and the oneness of God. The minaret serves as a call to prayer for the community and also marks the presence of Islam in Mentok. Arabic calligraphy adorning the mosque walls contains verses from the Quran, reinforcing the values of monotheism and piety.

Interview with Fahmi, the mosque keeper from the Culture and Tourism Office of Bangka Barat Regency, emphasized that mosque architecture is not just about aesthetics, but also serves as a medium to strengthen spiritual bonds and religious identity among Muslims in Mentok (Fahmi, 2024).

Field research also shows that the Mentok community interprets the architectural symbols of the two places of worship as a representation of their religious and cultural identity. This strengthens a sense of togetherness and solidarity within each community. At the Kong Fuk Miao Temple, a series of rituals and celebrations held in this richly symbolic space emphasize traditional values such as respect for ancestors and social balance. At the Mentok Jamik Mosque, architectural symbols play a role in carrying out religious practices and activities that teach values like faith, patience, and care for others.

Ferhad Irvan, the head of the Cultural Affairs Department in Bangka Barat Regency, explained that the two places of worship serve as symbols of tolerance and harmony among religious followers in Mentok, even though they come from different religious traditions (Ferhad Irvan, 2024).

This study also shows that symbolism in architecture serves as a way to express religious values that are not only understood by the mind, but also deeply felt emotionally and spiritually by the community. At the Kong Fuk Miao Temple, the symbols of the dragon and phoenix are not just seen as signs of good luck, but also as reminders of the importance of keeping balance between humans and the environment. Meanwhile, at the Jamik Mentok Mosque, calligraphy and geometric patterns convey teachings about order and the perfect creation of God, which form the basis of moral and ethical behavior in Islam.

An interview with Bambang Haryo Suseno, the Secretary of the Cultural Affairs and Tourism Office of Bangka Barat Regency, highlights that symbolism in architecture helps strengthen understanding of religious teachings and deepen the spiritual experience during worship (Bambang Haryo Suseno, 2024).

This study also notes the adaptation of symbolism in architecture within the local context of Mentok, such as the use of materials and patterns that fit the environment and local culture. This suggests that religious architectural symbolism is flexible and can communicate with the social and cultural evolution of the community.

An interview with Dayni, a cultural officer from the Department of Culture and Tourism of Bangka Barat Regency, showed that they view symbolism in architecture as an essential cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and understood (Dayni, 2024). However, some respondents also expressed concerns about modernization, which could potentially reduce the symbolic meaning and authenticity of religious architecture. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of maintaining religious symbolism and architecture as part of the cultural and religious identity of the Mentok community.

Studies show that the meaning behind the architectural design of Kong Fuk Miao Temple and Jamik Mentok Mosque serves as a way to strengthen the moral and ethical values in the daily lives of Mentok residents. For example, the dragon decorations in the temple teach about courage and wisdom, while the calligraphy in the mosque reminds Muslims of the importance of being honest and patient.

Interviewing influential individuals, Zainal found that these symbols are not only interpreted literally but also serve as important elements in customs and traditions passed down through generations, thereby strengthening social and religious relationships (Zainal, 2024).

In addition, the architectural designs of these two places of worship reflect a harmony between humans and nature, as well as the surrounding environment. The Kong Fuk Miao temple uses plant and animal motifs that symbolize natural harmony, while the Jamik Mentok Mosque incorporates spatial arrangements that support natural airflow and lighting, creating a comfortable atmosphere for worship. This shows that symbolic meaning in religious architecture goes beyond spiritual dimensions and also includes ecological aspects, highlighting the importance of maintaining balance between humans and the environment.

Interviews with the younger generation of Enggal and Charles, who are the second generation to use the place of worship, show that they have a deep understanding of the symbolic values. However, they also face various difficulties in preserving traditions amidst modern changes and global influences (Enggal and Charles, 2024). Some of the people interviewed shared that religious education and community activities at the mosque and temple greatly help them understand the meaning behind the architectural symbols, making them feel more connected to the cultural and religious heritage they possess.

This study records the collaboration between the Chinese and Muslim communities in Mentok to preserve both places of worship, showing the principle of religious tolerance and mutual respect. In this context, architectural elements serve as a cultural bridge that strengthens communication and cooperation between communities, and they are part of the shared identity of Mentok's diverse society. However, the study also identifies challenges in preserving architectural elements, particularly due to limited funding and technical understanding in restoring historical buildings, which can threaten their authenticity and symbolic meaning.

In conclusion, the symbols found in the architecture of Kong Fuk Miao Temple and Jamik Mentok Mosque clearly reflect the religious values of the local Mentok community, strengthen the identity of this group, and serve as significant means for spiritual experiences and interfaith relations. Therefore, this study suggests the importance of support from the government, academia, and the general public in preserving and developing the religious symbolism and architecture of Kong Fuk Miao Temple and Jamik Mentok Mosque as cultural and spiritual heritage that holds value for future generations.

The Architecture of Two Places of Worship Influences the Spiritual Experience and Religious Identity of the Community

The study shows that the design of Kong Fuk Miao Temple and Jamik Mentok Mosque plays an important role in shaping the spiritual experience of worshippers and visitors. The physical elements and symbolic features create an atmosphere that supports religious activities and encourages spiritual reflection. Inside Kong Fuk Miao Temple, the spacious layout combined with traditional decorations such as dragons and phoenixes adds a sense of

sacredness and helps visitors feel respect and focus during worship.

In an interview with Ce Mewin, the Temple Guardian from the Bangka Barat Regency Cultural and Tourism Office, it was highlighted that the building design was intentionally created to direct the congregation's focus towards spiritual values such as harmony, balance, and respect for ancestors (Ce Mewin, 2024).



Documentation with the temple guard Ce Mewin

Meanwhile, the Jamik Mentok Mosque has a magnificent dome and tall minarets, creating a space that reminds people of God's greatness and oneness, which is central to the spiritual experience of Muslims. The layout of the space inside the mosque, which emphasizes simplicity and order, also facilitates worshippers to concentrate more on their prayers, reducing distractions and creating a calm atmosphere.

An interview with Fahmi, a mosque caretaker from the West Bangka Regency Culture and Tourism Office, confirmed that the mosque's architecture is not only about aesthetics but also serves as a medium to strengthen the spiritual bonds and religious identity of Muslims in Mentok (Fahmi, 2024).

Field research found that the spiritual experience felt by worshippers is greatly influenced by architectural elements such as lighting, color, and ornaments that have deep symbolic meaning. At the Kong Fuk Miao Temple, the use of red and gold colors not only beautifies the building but also

evokes a sense of enthusiasm and happiness that supports the atmosphere of worship. Meanwhile, at the Jamik Mentok Mosque, the dominant colors of white and green symbolize purity and peace, which strengthen the spiritual experience of the congregation.

An interview with Ferhad Irvan, Head of Culture at the West Bangka Regency Culture and Tourism Office, revealed that they feel more connected to religious teachings through existing architectural symbols, which help them understand and appreciate religious values more deeply (Ferhad Irvan, 2024).

In addition, the architecture of these two places of worship also plays a role in shaping the religious identity of the community. The Kong Fuk Miao Temple is a symbol of pride for the Chinese community in Mentok, expressing their cultural and religious heritage. The Jamik Mentok Mosque is also a center of identity for Muslims, strengthening a sense of togetherness and solidarity through religious and social activities that take place there. This study found that religious architecture functions as a visual medium that communicates the values and history of the community, thereby strengthening the sense of belonging and emotional attachment to places of worship.

An interview with Bambang Haryo Suseno, Secretary of the West Bangka Regency Culture and Tourism Office, revealed that the existence of these two places of worship has become a symbol of tolerance and harmony among religious communities in Mentok, which is reflected in mutual respect and preservation of the buildings (Bambang Haryo Suseno, 2024).

In the context of religious pluralism, the architecture of these two places of worship is clear evidence of how religious values can coexist harmoniously within a single community. The study also notes that the spiritual experience triggered by religious architecture is not only individual

but also collective, strengthening social bonds and community identity.

At the Kong Fuk Miao Temple, communal rituals performed in this symbol-filled space strengthen solidarity and a sense of togetherness among members of the Chinese community (Liu, 2022). At the Jamik Mentok Mosque, congregational prayers and regular recitations are important moments that strengthen social relationships and the religious identity of Muslims (Rahman, 2018).

An interview with Dayani, a cultural official at the West Bangka Regency Culture and Tourism Office, revealed that they view architecture as an important part of cultural and spiritual heritage that must be preserved and maintained (Dayni, 2024). However, several respondents also expressed challenges in maintaining the spiritual meaning of architecture amid rapid social change and modernization. This study also found that the preservation of religious architecture requires support from various parties, including the government, community, and academics, in order to maintain spiritual values and religious identity.

An interview with community leader Zainal emphasizes the importance of educating and socializing the symbolic meaning of architecture to the younger generation so that they can understand and appreciate this heritage (Zainal, 2024).

In addition, the study notes innovations in architectural preservation, such as the use of digital technology to document and disseminate information about the symbolism and history of places of worship. This helps to broaden the understanding and appreciation of the general public of the spiritual and cultural values contained in religious architecture.

The study also shows that religious architecture plays a role in creating sacred spaces that allow worshippers to experience spiritual transformation and closeness to God. At the Kong Fuk Miao

Temple, this sacred space is realized through the layout of the altar and ornaments that direct the attention of the congregation to their ancestors and revered deities. At the Jamik Mentok Mosque, sacred space is created through the orientation of the qibla, the layout of the mihrab, and the use of calligraphy that reminds the congregation of the presence of Allah.

Interviews with Enggal and Charles, two young people who use both places of worship, reveal that their spiritual experiences are greatly influenced by the atmosphere and architectural symbolism, which help them feel calm and focused during worship (Enggal and Charles, 2024).

This study confirms that religious architecture is not merely a physical building, but also a medium that connects humans with the spiritual and social dimensions of religious life. Thus, the preservation and understanding of the architecture of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque are very important for maintaining the sustainability of the spiritual experience and religious identity of the community in Mentok.

Conclusion

The symbolism in the architecture of the Kong Fuk Miao Temple and the Jamik Mentok Mosque clearly reflects the religious values of the Mentok community. Symbolic elements such as ornaments, colors, and spatial arrangements not only serve as aesthetic decorations, but also contain deep spiritual and cultural meanings. These symbols reinforce religious identity and serve as a medium for communicating religious values that have been passed down from generation to generation.

The architecture of these two places of worship plays an important role in shaping the spiritual experience and strengthening the religious identity of the community in Mentok. The design of the space, the symbolism, and the atmosphere created support solemn worship practices and

strengthen social bonds among community members. Furthermore, this religious architecture also serves as a symbol of tolerance and harmony among religious communities in Mentok, strengthening social cohesion and interfaith dialogue.

This conclusion confirms that religious architecture and symbolism serve not only as physical structures, but also as important mediums for spiritual experiences and the formation of religious identity within the community. Preservation and understanding of these aspects are crucial for maintaining the sustainability of cultural and spiritual heritage in Mentok.

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