

## The Building of A'Famosa Malacca on The Ruins of The Grand Mosque of Melaka – Based on Historical Records (Pembinaan A'Famosa Melaka di atas Runtuhan Masjid Agung Melaka – Berdasarkan Rekod Sejarah)

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### ABSTRACT

*Melaka Sultanate Kingdom through its long centuries ruling must have majestic civilisation as lots of historical records by Europeans voyagers mentioned the great and powerful kingdom of Melaka during the Melaka Sultanate Empire - especially its Grand Mosque. Despite the many records of the mosque, its existence was still doubtful and questionable because there was no clear or obvious physical evidence that can be used as a basis support to the legitimacy of its existence. Thus, this study aims to uncover and identify historical evidence which state the validity of the its existence. The scope of this study focuses only on the physical building (which is believed to be historical evidence) of the Grand Mosque that historically believed was once built at the foot of Melaka Hill next to Melaka River. The method focused on this paper is through historical sources, previous studies as well as relevant scientific records. This research stated that the mosque indeed exists in historical writing and drawings, and was a square in geometry that fits in the philosophy and basic design of a mosque which after Portuguese conquest - a fort was built on its ruins that known as A'Famosa. In conclusion, the Grand Mosque of Melaka once existed and mentioned in both historical records and drawings where later the famous A'Famosa Fort was built on its site and ruins. This study can be a catalyst for continuous and deeper research in the future on the original site and design of Grand Mosque.*

*Keywords: Grand Mosque of Melaka, ruins, A'Famosa*

### ABSTRAK

*Kerajaan Kesultanan Melaka melalui pemerintahan berabad-abad lamanya mempunyai tamadun yang megah kerana banyak catatan sejarah oleh pelayar Eropah menyebut kerajaan Melaka yang besar dan berkuasa semasa Empayar Kesultanan Melaka - terutamanya Masjid Agung Melaka. Walaupun terdapat banyak rekod mengenai masjid tersebut, kewujudannya masih diragui kerana tiada bukti fizikal yang jelas atau nyata yang boleh dijadikan asas sokongan kepada kesahihan kewujudannya. Justeru, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mendedahkan dan mengenal pasti bukti sejarah yang menyatakan kesahihan kewujudannya. Skop kajian ini hanya tertumpu kepada bangunan fizikal (yang dipercayai bukti sejarah) Masjid Agung Melaka yang menurut sejarah dibina di kaki Bukit Melaka bersebelahan Sungai Melaka. Kaedah yang difokuskan kepada kertas kerja ini adalah melalui sumber sejarah, kajian lepas serta rekod saintifik yang berkaitan. Penyelidikan ini menyatakan bahawa Masjid Agung Melaka sememangnya wujud dalam penulisan dan lukisan sejarah, dan berbentuk geometri segi empat sama yang sesuai dengan falsafah dan reka bentuk asas masjid, yang mana selepas penaklukan Portugis - sebuah kubu dibina di atas runtuhannya dan dikenali sebagai A'Famosa. Kesimpulannya, Masjid Agung Melaka pernah wujud dan disebut dalam kedua-dua rekod sejarah dan lukisan di mana kemudiannya Kubu A'Famosa yang terkenal dibina di atas tapak dan runtuhannya. Kajian ini boleh menjadi pemangkin kepada penyelidikan yang berterusan dan mendalam di masa depan terhadap tapak dan reka bentuk asal Masjid Agung Melaka.*

*Kata kunci: Masjid Agung Melaka; runtuhan; A'Famosa*

## INTRODUCTION

Mosques are an important element in Islamic cities, not only from the context of worship but also the institution of mosque generates other activities, whether implemented inside the building such as prayers, learning and community discussion or meeting. Around the mosque there are also active business activities that are widely described as markets in *Sulalatus Salatin* and Portuguese document records (Pintado 2012). Early Malay settlement also had market or *bazaar* business or 'suq' as in Islamic cities in the Middle East like in the state of Terengganu, Kelantan and other Malay states as Malay Muslim kingdom had already existed in the 14th century. During this era, Islamic principles were assimilated into the culture and way of life in the Malay community. The state of Kelantan itself during the reign of Sultan Mansur (1890-1899) has made Islamic law and law as the basis of government administration until the state is known as *Serambi Mekah* (Mecca's close acquaintances) to indicate the closeness of the Islamic principles applied there as in Mecca (Siti Norlizaiha Harun, 2009). Melaka, as a coastal city similar to Kelantan and Terengganu, was built on the basis of the same Islamic elements and principles which in turn built a pattern of settlement centered at the mouth of the Melaka River and aligned along the coast.

As a society that practices the teachings of Islam, the interpretation of hadith is seen as important to understand the function of the mosque. The interpretation mentions that the mosque is a place where people gather (for various activities), water and soil as the basic source for purification before worship, the mosque has special features (pulpit, row, etc.), and finally the mosque has no special form (Ahmad Shuib Yahya and Faisal Zainuddin, 2007). It is usually rectangular in shape and has a tiered roof and a minaret. This square plan is synonymous with the design plan of mosques around the world by taking the basis of concepts such as the first mosque built which is the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and the shape of the Kaaba in Mecca (Suharjanto, 2011). In the community and the people of Malay geography, the mosque is usually built in open areas that many passersby and nearby water resources or river to ease the Muslims purification, ablutions and other activities cleaned up before worship.

## METHODOLOGY

In an effort to prove the existence and design of the Grand Mosque of Melaka, various aspects and methods were conducted to find the most suitable matches and comparisons that accurately or almost accurately describe their design and reinforce therefore prove its existence.

The remains and plans of the Melaka City now since the British era will be the basis of its existence. Hence, the backdrop of slow and historical history of the Melaka City from the time of the Dutch government and subsequently the Portuguese will be made to seek the city's proof and the earliest design of Melaka City. Later, the historical records of Malacca Malay Town from Malay and Nusantara, Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch sources will be depicted in the Malacca Malay City design. As a reinforcement, the philosophy of urban design in the Malay World is highlighted as well as presenting the comparison between the Malay contemporary archipelago and the Malacca Malay Town

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### PORTUGUESE DRAWINGS ON THE CONQUEST OF MELAKA 1511

Figure 1 below was about the arrival of Diego Lopez de Sequiera's entourage to face the Sultan of Melaka in 1508. After some time, the arrival of the suspicious Portuguese entourage has caused them to be attacked by the Treasurer of Melaka and several ships have sunk (Nordin Hussin, 2010). The Portuguese who survived the attack were captured and placed in the Melaka prison. One of them was Roy de Araujo who was an informer who gave important information about Melaka to Alfonso de Albuquerque before he led his armada to conquest Melaka. Based on the drawing, there are several elements that can be clearly interpreted. The elements that will be discussed are the elements of nature, physical character and the cultural pictorial of the society at that time. FIGURE 1. Harbor and coastal of Melaka City Complex during Melaka Sultanate ruling.

The drawing illustrates the number of ships anchored from the front of the Melaka government administrative complex of *Bukit Melaka* (Melaka Hill) to the *Upeh* coast. This shows how large and vast the sea and coastal areas of Melaka were to cater ships and provide space for trading activities. Such capacity would certainly require large and systematic management and ports along the coast of Melaka especially from *Upeh's* coastal area (northern part of the palace complex) to *Air Leleh's* coastal area (southern part of the palace complex). The topography of Melaka depicted in this sketch focuses on the government complex or the city of Melaka. The area is flat along the coast with many buildings. Behind those buildings there is a small hill that is most likely Bukit Melaka, which is where the palace of Melaka was built based on various historical records. In addition, Melaka is surrounded by mountains and hills behind it.

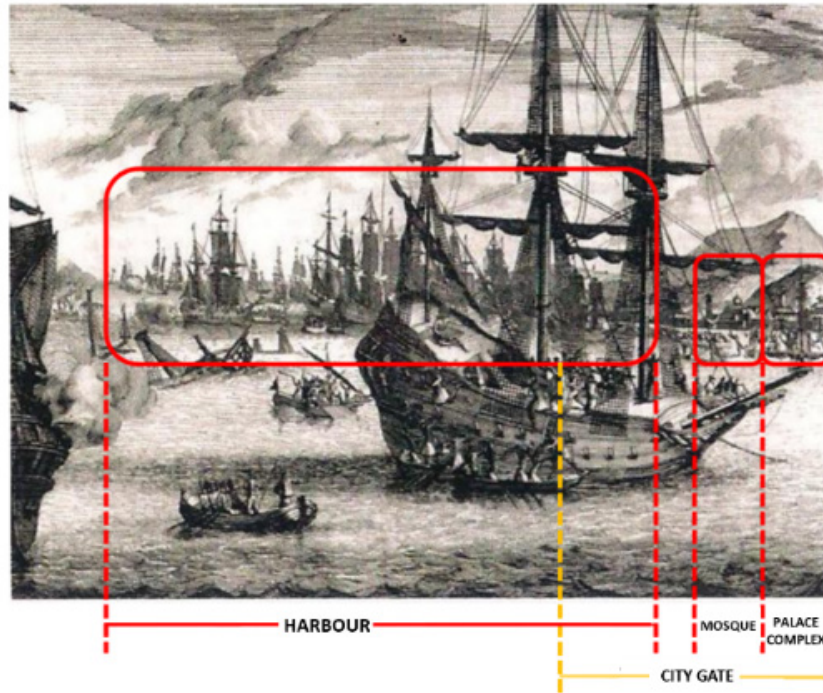


FIGURE 1. Harbor and coastal of Melaka City Complex during Melaka Sultanate ruling.

*Sumber* : Twee on gelukkige scheeps-togten na oost-indien van Jorge De Mello, in het Jaar 1507 en Jorge D'Aguiar, in het Jaar 1508. Beyde in het Portugys beschreven uyt de egte hand-schriften der reysigers op ordre des Konings van Portugaal door Joan de Barros Raads-Heer en History schrijver van die majesteyt, University of Lisbon.

This sketch shows stone wall not far from the coastal area. The long stone wall separates the coast area from the city. This was probably one of the walls that surround the Melaka state government administrative complex, or perhaps the whole town. There were various types of buildings behind the walls consists of various multi-storey buildings and different roof designs. These diversity and differences usually indicate the diversity and functional differences of a building. There were some buildings that were built three storeys or possibly three storeys of roof on a single storey building, as three-storey roof is a common roof in the archipelago with philosophical values behind it. The sketch also shows tower or minaret buildings, possibly that the building served as a lookout tower for the use of the *Syahbandar* (administer of sea activities) to observe port and trade activities, or for the use of the *Laksamana* (admiral) to observe and any suspicious activity at sea.

There was also a sketch of a tower with some prominent building next to it, which very likely a mosque based on the shape of the dome and minaret that resembles mosque buildings in the Middle East. Moreover, the very prominent position and design corresponds to one of the records collected by Tom Pires from the historical records and narration of the Portuguese who settled in Melaka after the capture of Melaka:

“Raja Mansur Syah built a beautiful mosque that was once located where the famous Kota Melaka now exists and that is the most beautiful in the region.”

This statement also shows the position of A’Famosa during the Portuguese period which was built on the ruins of Great Mosque of Melaka (*Masjid Melaka*), in accordance with another historical record in the Portuguese Document on Malacca recorded by the Alfonso’s assistant that said: “... Alfonso de Albuquerque is now busy building a fortified city, where a mosque once existed, and named it ‘Famosa.’”

The important thing to note in this sketch was the atmosphere during the attack that took place at sea. There were various types of small ship or Malay boat assault to capture or sink the Portuguese’s ships that can be seen from small ships or boats that were around the Portuguese ships. Based on the soldiers’ outfit in the boats or small vessels, they were more likely identified as Malay soldiers and Java’s mercenaries. Apart from boats and small ships’ offences, there were also attacks carried out by Melaka from the coastal mainland. There were cannons lined up on the beach with the lines of soldiers on the beach surrounding bonfires-likely to launch attacks on Portuguese ships at sea. There were lot of ships at sea that seems to be involved or intervened in the attack as the focus of small ships and boats of Malay and Javanese in this sketch centered on a large ship in the middle of the sketch. There

were several ships that sank around the large ship that most likely were sinking Portuguese ship.

The interesting thing in this sketch is that there was someone on the highest deck of a Portuguese ship that looks like he is drawing or sketching something in the crowded and noisy conditions of the attack. In close observation, certainly the individual might be a painter or artist that record or sketch on time events because there was what looks like a checkered drawing tool with him. The tool was a grid of drawings or grid paper that usually used by artists or painters to draw and depict a picture more accurately in terms of scale and overall picture of the subject or event. This tool can speed up the drawing process, so it is suitable in situations where attacks and noise occurred.

Thus, it is likely that the individual was the official history author, recorder, or painter of the Portuguese ship. This was because the Portuguese who had just embarked on their first voyage farther East from India brought with them authors and painters who wrote or sketched everything that happened during their voyage. They were considered important because the results of their notes and drawings became references and new knowledge to be brought back to their country and presented to their king before this knowledge was further disseminated to other expeditionary entourage as well as to the common people. Usually, the historical record is the same or corresponds to the drawing or sketch made during the expedition - that was, the original/real picture when the drawing or sketch was made. This suggests that these Portuguese paintings

and sketches at that time were most likely accurate, clear, true, and depicted the real situation. While, it is unlikely that during the attack that had sunk many of their ships, the painters who were envoys and important people in the expedition had time to paint dramatically with the fact of an inaccurate picture of the current situation as this historical material in turn became evidence to be brought back to their country. for reference and record to the king.

#### FIRST PAINTING OF A'FAMOSA

There are several Portuguese records stating that the A'Famosa Fort was built in a short period of time. This was also stated by Macgregor through his study published in his book, 'Old Johore' which was also published in the Journal of the Historical Society, 1962/3 –

*“Work of the fortress was begun in September 1511 and completed in the following January.”*

According to the statement, the Portuguese constructed A'Famosa in about four months since September 1511 and was completed around January 1512. To rebuild an administrative city on land and cities that had been destroyed was quite impossible or excessive even with abundant labor resources without a source of raw materials for the city itself, let alone the surrounding residences. This is also acknowledged by some historians such as Yusoff Hashim (2010).

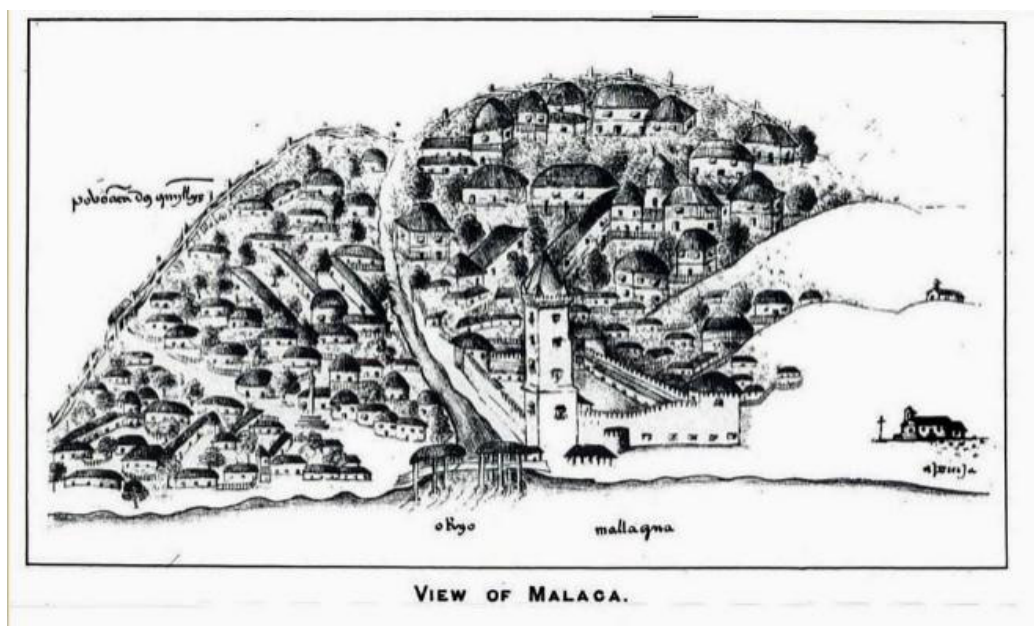


FIGURE 2. Gaspar Correia's first painting of A'Famosa in his atlas - Lendas Da India around 1512.

According to the sketch, A'Famosa was first built by the Portuguese in rectangle shape. It was located at the foot of

Melaka Hill and at the estuary of the Melaka River which was also near the bridge that spans the Sungai Melaka River. A'Famosa in this painting has a tower that is relatively as high as six stories in the corner of the fort near the bridge. While the bastion at the other three corners of the city is a two-storey building. This painting also depicts the city of Melaka at that time. The bridge spanning the Melaka River has roofs at both ends. There was a road that divides the Upeh/Tengkera area (right side of the diagram) towards the bridge. There was a fence around the settlement

in Upeh and a densely populated area in Yler (Hilir) behind Melaka Hill. This painting also depicts Melaka Hill as less populated than other areas and looks 'empty'. The buildings in the Upeh area appear to be of the same height, which was one-storey while the Hilir area has various building heights but more of two-storey buildings. The building materials of A'Famosa were of stone or brick plastered on the exterior. While other buildings consist of various types of building materials as follows:



FIGURE 3. From left to right- wood buildings, wood-stone buildings, wood-clay buildings, and stone buildings.

Referring to the location of the fort, it was very much in line with the statement of W.Irwin (2006) in the previous paragraph in addition to the writings of Damiam de Goes (1566) who stated:

“They and the others got at one end of the bridge next to (the hill’s foot) where the mosque and the sultan’s palace were, and Alfonso D’Albuquerque, as well as the royal flag were at the other end (of the bridge) ...”  
Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 2012 edition.

The position of this fort-city according to the paintings and historical records refers to A'Famosa Fort which is the first city built by the Portuguese in just four months after capturing Melaka. The rectangular shape of Fort A'Famosa Fort coincides with the historical records about the position of A'Famosa on the site of the Great Mosque of Melaka. Evidence of the historical record from Damiam de Goes (1566) as a confirmation-

“... Alfonso D’Albuquerque is now busy building a fortified city, where a mosque once existed, and named it ‘Famosa’

(Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 2012 edition, 11: 6, para 25, 2012 edition).

Because it was built on the site of the Great Mosque Melaka which was a rectangular shape designs such as the prevalence of mosques in the Malay world and the archipelago of the era, the A'Famosa was originally built in the quadrangular rubble and ruins of the Great Mosque Melaka after the success of Portuguese colonization.

The existence of a six-storey lookouts tower on A'Famosa Fort also correspond with the design height of mosques’ minarets in the Malay world. The bastions in the other three corners of the fort, which are two storeys high, also reflect the original height of the Great Mosque Melaka. In accordance with the following statement;

“This king Mansur Syah (Mamsursa) built a beautiful mosque that was once located where the famous fort city of Melaka now exists and that is the most beautiful in the region.” - Tom Pires (1512).

“There is a large mosque built of stone cubes (blocks), and also small buildings and tombstones are also built of stone.”-Gaspar Correia (1512).

Therefore, the beautiful and large mosque building should be strong, taller than most other buildings around it, also built and decorated with all the beauty that exists in Melaka as a symbol of the greatness of the mosque and Melaka Sultanate Kingdom. These statements and the first painting of A'Famosa Fort illustrate the truth that the existence of A'Famosa Fort is on the site and ruins of the Great Mosque Melaka.

Bridge with roofed constructions at both ends show the importance of the function and design of the bridge as the heart of the main route and area of active commercial activity. This is because, it is a surprise for a bridge to have its own roof unless the bridge is important and plays various other roles besides the link between the two banks of the land. According to Ma Huan’s writings in 1403 in Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan’s book:

“On this river the sultan built a bridge, on which twenty stalls were built for the sale of various commodities”.

This shows that the bridge has become an area and route of active business activities, therefore surely its infrastructure has been upgraded well a century later. Creating a covered bridge infrastructure shows the wisdom of the leader and the strength of the structure that still survive despite much damage during the war whereas it shows the integrity of the bridge to be immortalized in the earliest paintings of the A’Famosa.

A clear path towards splitting Upeh area to the bridge and into the Hilir and Melaka Hill shows that the route is the main street or road in Upeh-Melaka Hill-Hilir, most likely been around since the era of the Melaka Sultanate. The description of this path is consistent with the study of George Cho and Marion W.Ward (2006) that mentioned;

“On the coastal area, the authorities provide safe warehouse space to store goods, and transactions are done in small huts and shops that line both roads up close to the coast and the bridge that since the beginning of the Melaka empire, crossed the mouth (estuary) of the Melaka River and connecting the two parts of the city of Melaka.”

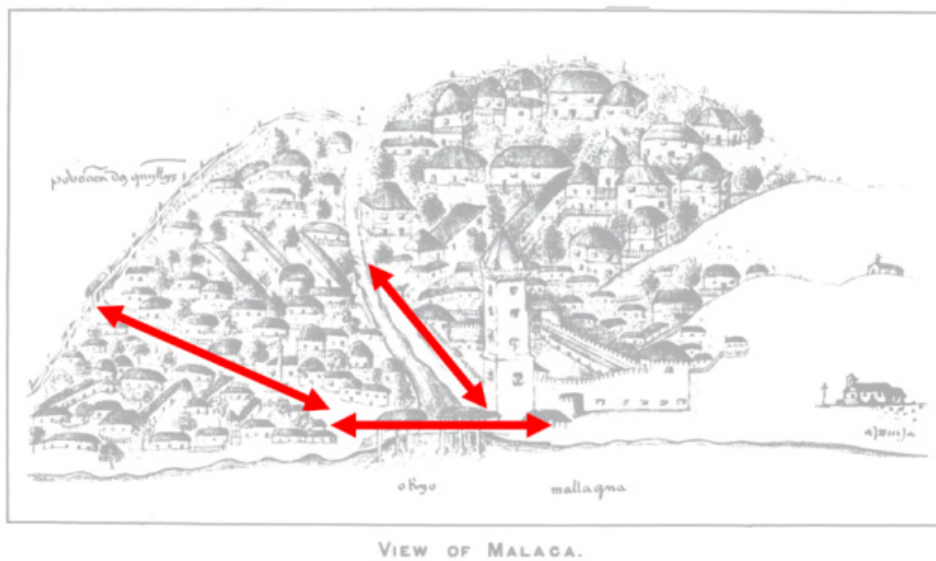


FIGURE 4. The circulation (in arrow) of the main road route in Melaka City extracted from the first drawing of A’Famosa Fort

*The position of the road that divides Upeh which (close to the coast and the bridge) probably refers to the route which is clearly the main route and the occurrence of many business activities as also emphasized by Tom Pires (1512) - «because in Melaka they sell on every street and the road.»*

The image of the fence in FIGURE 4 that encloses the entire Upeh and Hilir settlements is likely to show the boundaries of the Portuguese settlements or the early boundaries of the earlier cities. However, referring to the painting, the fence is the farthest boundary drawn about the city of Melaka in the early days of the Portuguese occupation and there are no other details after the fence area. This illustrates the emphasis on the focus of the painting which wants to depict the city of A’Famosa and Bandar City in detail.

The Melaka Hill area which looks ‘empty’ or has a low population density was probably because the Portuguese find it easier to live in a flat area compared to

a hilly area which certainly makes it difficult to go up and down the hill for any business. Apart from that, the Melaka Hill area was empty without any buildings probably because the Melaka palace which was burned during the Portuguese occupation on Melaka was located on and around the hills of Melaka Hill. This also shows the differences in the selection of the location for government administrative and settlement.

“They climbed the hill where the sultan once resided ... decided to defend themselves by burning the sultan’s palace and the houses of the prince, and his top administrators.” (Portuguese Documents on Melaka, 114, De Castanheda (1547), para 242).

The average and numerous building heights in the Upeh area indicated that the Upeh area had a dense settlement population. While, the average height of various buildings and mostly two storeys in the Hilir area showed that there had a denser settlement population. This

difference also showed that Upeh was a settlement area whilst Hilir was a settlement area which also an administration or government area. It was synonym with the record in the Sejarah Melayu and information recorded by Roy de Araujo that stated it was a settlement area for most citizens and merchants. Meanwhile, the Hilir area was the settlement area of the Sultan's family, government officials and their families as well as important traders who were the ambassadors of their respective countries. That made Hilir more compact and denser with wide range of building heights as a continuation from the Melaka Sultanate Kingdom even after the conquest of Portuguese to Melaka houses and buildings. In addition, the Portuguese records did not mention that they burned or destroyed all the houses and buildings in Melaka City before rebuilding A'Famosa Fort city from the beginning.

A'Famosa in Portuguese records was described as a building that uses stone material as a whole as it was built of stone from the ruins of mosques and tombstones as well as granite from Upeh Island. This is in accordance with the historical records contained in the Portuguese Documents of Malacca (2012 edition);

“A Famosa was partly built from the old tombstones of the ancient kings that were planted below the surface of the earth, and from the stones of mosques that have been demolished.” - Castro Soares, 1512, n.17.

“The stones, granite, were taken from the tombstones of the dignitaries, from mosques and from other buildings.”  
- de Castanheda, 1547, para 259)

A description of the building materials diversity that found in the earliest drawings of A'Famosa Fort showed Melaka City before the Portuguese colonization had a construction system and architecture that used local building materials which adapted to building designs that meet the needs and social status of building owner. This is in accordance with the information given by Roy de Araujo to Alfonso de Albuquerque who stated that there are roughly 10 000 houses in Melaka City and 500 of them were built entirely of stone while others were built with a mixture of stone and wood, wood and clay or just wood (Eredia's description of Malacca, 1997). The statement and preliminary drawings of A'Famosa showed that the two main buildings in the Melaka City were partly remains of buildings during Melaka Sultanate era.

With careful observation, the first painting of the City of A'Famosa shows a different design that is common in subsequent sketches in the Portuguese and Dutch eras. Later sketches and drawings of the city highlight the hexagonal design of Kota Melaka and the alignment of the city according to the surrounding terrain - Kota Melaka was built in a hexagonal shape according to the shape of the terrain and the pentagonal land area between Sungai Melaka and Sungai Air Leleh which is its border. As a comparative example, Kota Melaka A'Famosa which was first built by the Portuguese as in the drawing above is different from the last drawing of Kota Melaka A'Famosa which was painted more than a century later below, which is before the Portuguese handed over the rule of Bandar Melaka to the Dutch. The city of Melaka A'Famosa has been enlarged to cover almost all the land in Hilir and the boundaries of the painting details have been extended beyond the Upeh and Hilir areas.

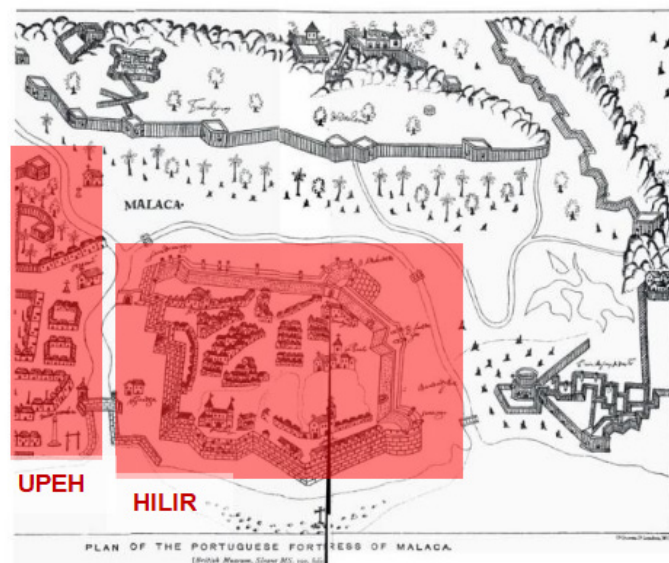


FIGURE 5. Painting of the city of A'Famosa in the Portuguese era before the Dutch rule.

Sumber: *Livro do Estado da India Oriental*, oleh Pedro Barreto de Resende, 1646; British Library, Sloane MS 197)

In conclusion, this first painting shows the design of A'Famosa was in a rectangular shape because it was built on the site of the Great Mosque of Melaka. This rectangular design is actually more synonym with the Malays' philosophy as well as basic plan of a mosque. Rectangular design has been a tradition of buildings in the Malay world region since the fourth century BC through to the next centuries after the fall of Melaka to Portuguese whether in Johor, Brunei and other Malay states. This is consistent with the philosophy and design of the administrative city or fort of Malay and Islamic city throughout the region at that time. However, the rectangular city design was not synonym with the design Portuguese's city or fort built around the world in their colonial expeditions (Kosman K.A., Mokhtar N.A., 2019).

#### A'FAMOSA WAS BUILT ON THE SITE OF MELAKA GRAND MOSQUE

There are many Portuguese's records about the Great Mosque of Melaka - the mosque was a beautiful, spacious and strong building made of stone and granite, the roof was made of palm leaves and has various items or tools made of wood in it, it was located between the bridge that spans the Melaka River and the Melaka Palace, also this mosque was the place where the Portuguese army spent the night after they managed to capture Melaka and most importantly, on the ruins of this mosque was built the city of A'Famosa.

“Because the sun has already set, the Governor gave the order to retreat to the mosque, which is made of stone, which is a strong building. There, Joao de Lima spent the night with some nobles and four hundred other soldiers. There is a large mosque built of stone blocks, as well as smaller buildings (than the mosque) and tombstones are also made of stones ... “-Notes by Gaspar Correia (1511) in *Lendas of India*.

“Then the mosque was set on fire. The roof, the palm leaf roof, was engulfed in fire and many wooden items were destroyed inside.” (Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 2012 edition, 1: 4 of Castanheda, 1547, para 174).

Since the mosque was functional so it was located close to the palace and its size was in accordance with the power of the Melaka Malay Empire and buildings such as this should reflect the identity of its design and materials in construction which symbolize the position and height of Islam and Melaka as a very luxurious trading center. According to the *Sejarah Melayu*, or other Malay records (hikayat) therewith, or external sources such as from Portuguese, it was an obvious factor that luxury and wealth

is not something that can be denied in the Melaka Malay Sultanate. Therefore, it is very appropriate to state that the Grand Mosque of Melaka is one of the important buildings that has its own architectural character and may be very luxurious or very beautiful as stated by Tom Pires (1512) in his note *Suma Oriental* that capturing the beauty of the Grand Mosque of Melaka once magnificent before being destroyed by the Portuguese.

The position of the mosque can also be known based on some Portuguese records that mention about it in the Portuguese Document on Malacca 1509-1511. In chapter 11, Damiam de Goes (1566) stated the location of the mosque and the nearby bridge as in the next note as follows:

“... the bridge ... and the nearby mosque ... They and the others got at one end of the bridge next to (the cliff) where the mosque and the sultan's palace were, and Alfonso D'Albuquerque, as well as the royal flag were at the other end (of the bridge) ... ”

In the same chapter, Fernao Lopes de Castanheda (1547) also narrated the location of the mosque near the bridge –

“The sultan was very confident of his army ... and his elephants were gathered close to the bridge and the mosque. The Governor tried to build another defensive fence on the bridge in the mosque area, but was unsuccessful due to repeated attacks from the enemy.”

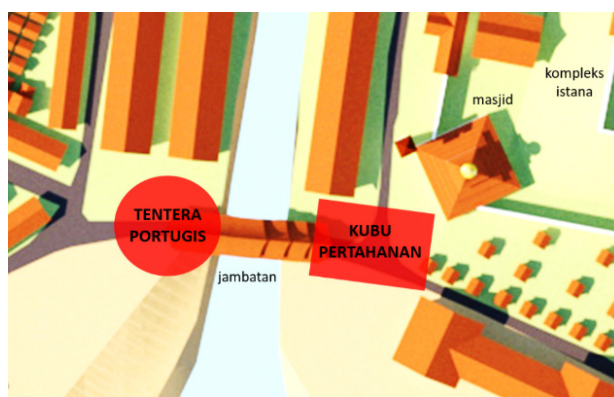


FIGURE 6. Grand Mosque of Melaka's position according to Portuguese war records.

In the same chapter as well, Damiam de Goes (1566) clearly narrated the connection of the mosque's location with the A'Famosa Fort which indeed surprising-

“Alfonso D'Albuquerque is now busy building a fortified city, where a mosque once existed, and named it 'Famosa.’

Reference sources of Portuguese notes and sketches are acceptable because they clearly describe the position of the mosque which was one of the important infrastructures



of Melaka City in the urban landscape of Melaka Malay Kingdom during its ruling. Based on these records, the location of the Grand Mosque of Melaka was built at the foot of Bukit Melaka (Melaka Hill), which was the residence of the Sultan as part of the Melaka Palace Complex. The exact location is at the mouth of the Melaka River near the Melaka bridge and the location of this mosque was exactly on the site of A'Famosa Fort. Even the A'Famosa Fort was built from building materials that was obtained from the ruins of mosques and other religious buildings and symbols such as tombstones.

After successfully conquering Melaka, Albuquerque had ordered the Portuguese army to build fortified city on the site of the Grand Mosque of Malacca for the purpose of defense from the threat of other Islamic powers. These notes are further reviewed by Graham W.Irwin (2006) and summarized as follows:

“A'Famosa was built by the forced labour of 1,500 royal slaves, who were conscripted by Albuquerque after he had defeated and put to flight their master, the Sultan. With a

disregard for Muslim susceptibilities typical of the time, the Christian Portugese erected their fortress on the ruins of the Great Mosque of Malacca and constructed it, in part at least, out of stones taken from Malay religious buildings and from the graves of former Malay sultans. Because of the marshy nature of the site, the foundations had to be dug to the depth of a war lance.”

The findings of Irwin's study above prove some significant figures with the first painting of A'Famosa after the Portuguese conquest of Melaka. First, the Portuguese built the first original (unmodified) A'Famosa Fort of Malacca on the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Melaka (as Tom Pires and other Western authors referred to as 'The Great Mosque of Malacca'). This is in line with the square design plan that is synonym with the construction of mosques around the world from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to the present. With careful observation, the basic plan below obtained from Alfonso de Albuquerque's war journal seems to be similar to the basic plan of a mosque.

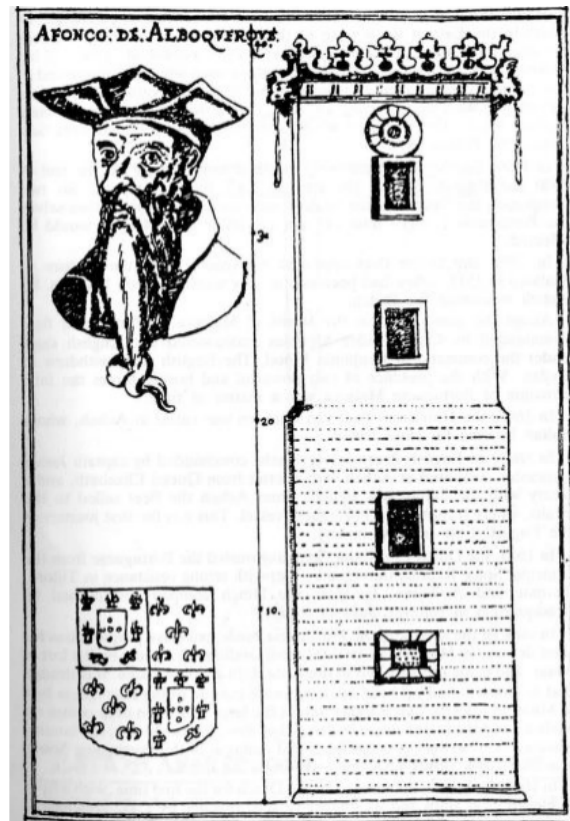


FIGURE 7. The first plan of A'Famosa built by Alfonso after the conquest of Melaka in 1511. The space in the red box resembles the space of a mosque 'mihrab' – a small space for imam's position when leading the people to pray  
 Sumber : MJ Pintado - *Eredia's Description on Malacca, 15<sup>th</sup> century*.

Basically, the mosque has a spacious space as a prayer hall. In addition, a tower (minaret) was built at the front-right side of the mosque. The minaret's original function is to chant the call to prayer calling Muslims to perform prayers. In the foremost part of the prayer hall, there is a special small space either in the shape of a hemisphere or a square that is used as 'mimbar' or a place for the imam (leader) to lead the prayers. This gives the most striking resemblance - the position of the small space in the foremost part of the Fort A'Famosa is similar to the place of imam and the position of the 'mimbar'. Meanwhile, the lookout tower built by the Portuguese was similar to the position and construction of the mosque's minaret that was built on the right side of the building facing the Qibla.

In comparison, the first plan of Fort A'Famosa Melaka is very similar to the basic design plan of mosques in the

archipelago around the 15th century such as the Kampung Hulu Kelantan Mosque, Demak Grand Mosque and Paloh Mosque. Based on the floor plan and cross section of the mosques, there are some special features that formed the mosques in the archipelago of the 15th century era. First, the floor plan of the mosque in the Malay Archipelago is a rectangular open plan. This is consistent with the philosophy of the ancient Malay identity and community's rectangular mosque. Second, a minaret is part of the mosque's design and its position is on the side of the mosque. Third, there is a small special space at the front of the prayer hall that serves as a place for the imam when leading a prayer. Fourth, from the cross section of the mosque, the roof is a multi-storey roof design or commonly known as meru roof - a roof design that is very common in the archipelago's mosque buildings.



FIGURE 8. Plan and cross section of the Kampung Hulu Kelantan Mosque built around the 15th century  
Sources : Mohd Azam Shah Yaacob NSTP, 2017.

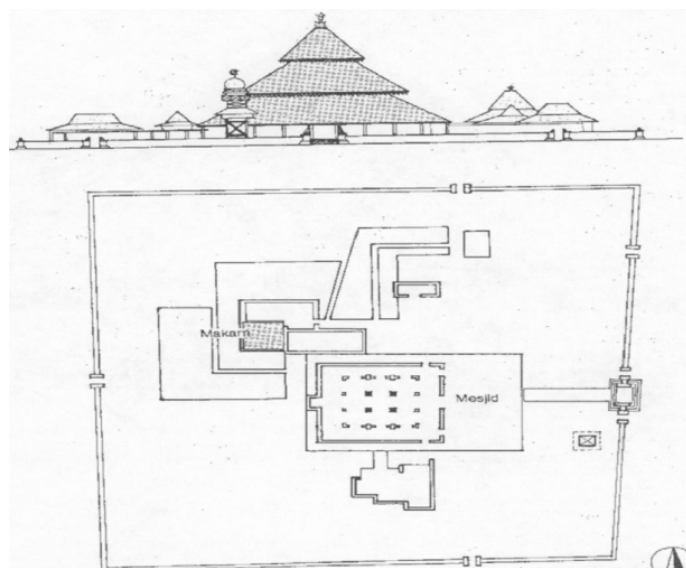


FIGURE 9. Plan and facade of the Great Mosque of Demak built in the 15th century  
Sources : Fawaid, Achmad & Zamroni, Zamroni, Baharun, Hasan (2019)



FIGURE 10. Plan and facade of the Paloh Mosque built around the 15<sup>th</sup> century  
Sources: Abdul Halim Nasir, ATMA.

The first plan of Fort A'Famosa meets the first to fourth features. The similarity between the first plan of Fort A'Famosa and the floor plan design of 15<sup>th</sup> century mosques in the Malay Archipelago is undeniable. This similarity exists probably because the fort was not only built on the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Melaka, but also use the ruins and its design as part of the fort. This is possible because the fort was built very quickly that only took about three to four months to construct the big fort, with easy

access to local building materials which was from the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Melaka, and other stone and religious buildings. This also very much coincides with the 'Portugal exquisition' mission which seeks to eliminate evidence of Islam in the countries it has colonized. When the Portuguese administrative city was built on the ruins or the original construction of a mosque or religious building, surely the effect of its existence was also 'buried' or 'embedded' under the new construction and eventually the originality disappeared from history or physical image.

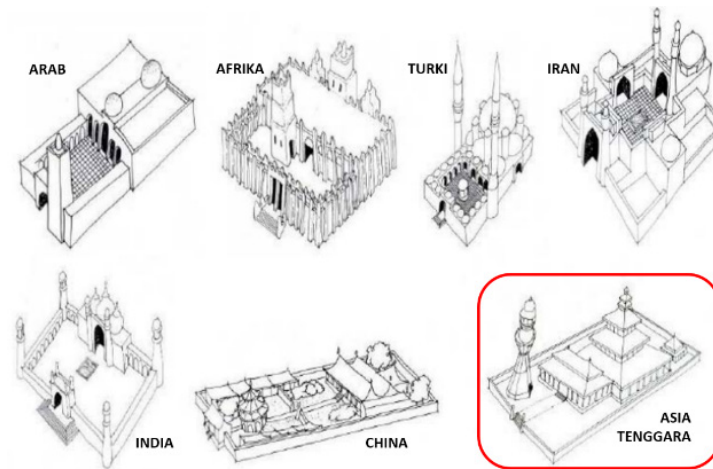


FIGURE 11. Similarities between the plan of Fort A'Famosa and the basic plan of a mosque in Islam. The plan of Fort A'Famosa in a square/rectangular shape and the construction of its lookout tower that resembles the basic plan of a mosque and minaret in the archipelago.

From Figure 11 it clearly shows that the design of mosques in Southeast Asia has its own character. The characteristics can be seen as very different from the characteristics of mosques in other countries or continents. The plan of the mosque in Southeast Asia is rectangular, with a big open space of prayer hall, has a minaret, and *meru* roof. This special feature highlights the architectural character of the mosque in the Malay Archipelago which only specifically found in the area. This feature can also be seen in the similarity of the first plan of Fort A'Famosa.

Based on the above comparison sketch which states the salient features between the two, then, it is very relevant with Portuguese records stating that A'Famosa was built on the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Melaka thus make it a true statement and not a fabrication of Portuguese authors let alone by *vizurai* (governor) Portuguese themselves; Albuquerque. Obviously, first sketches or drawings of Fort A'Famosa has some prominent characteristic that is similar to the basic mosque plan design in Malay Archipelago. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that the Fort A'Famosa was built by the Portuguese on the original site

of the Grand Mosque of Melaka, with its original physical ruins. That is why the design of Fort A'Famosa looks like a 'ruin' or a 'continuation' to the design of the mosque.

In the study W.Irwin Graham (2006), extracted from 'Berigt Commissaris Justus van Schouten, there are statement of Melaka feature before the arrival of the Portuguese, about the built of earthworks and reinforced with logs of wood as follows:

"The first fort built at Melaka was constructed by Malays. It consisted of a system of earthworks, surmounted by wooden stockades and, by the early sixteenth century, was well provided with guns. Within its defence line lay the royal palace of the Melaka sultans. During Alfonso d'Albuquerque's attack of 1511 these Malay work were much damaged, though traces of them could still be seen in 1641."

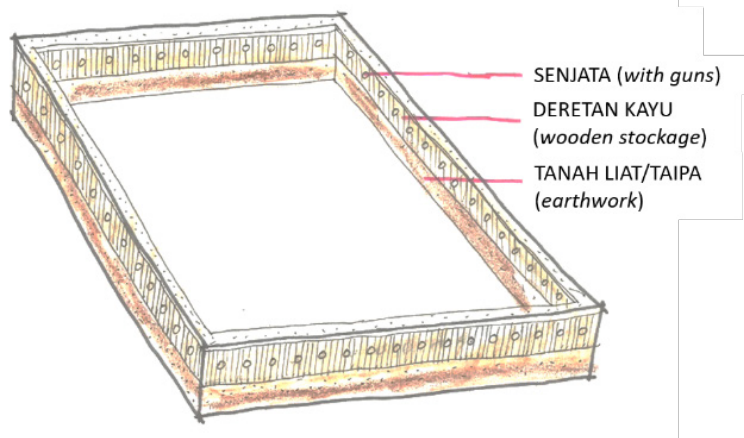


FIGURE 12. Overview of the first fort city of Melaka by Graham W.Irwin.

In his further study in 2007, he added important information in describing the characteristics of A'Famosa in the Portuguese era as follows:

"A'Famosa was square in plan, with walls eight feet thick. It was built on the left or southern bank of the Malacca River, close to the estuary. At its northwest corner rose a tall donjon or keep, known to the Portugese as a toree de menagem or 'tower of homage'."

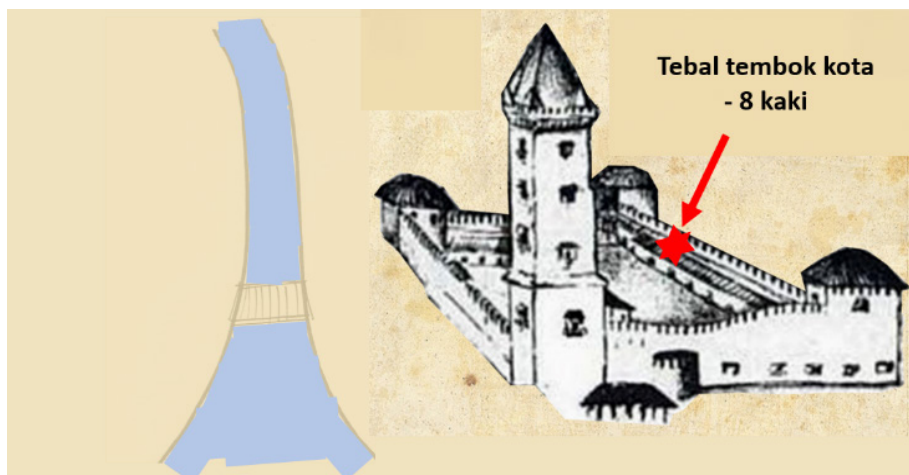


FIGURE 13. Depiction of the wall thickness of A'Famosa according to Graham W.Irwin.

Secondly, the building materials of the Portuguese City of Melaka or Fort A'Famosa were built from the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Melaka and stones taken from religious buildings throughout Melaka, in addition to the tombstones of the previous sultans. This clearly shows how many religious buildings (in this context -Islam) there were in Melaka until its destruction or ruins can be used as the

basis of building materials without much dependence on material sources from outside to develop a strong Portuguese fort city of Melaka in the construction time of about four months only. Meanwhile, in order to eliminate other Islamic evidence in Melaka, the tombstones of the previous sultans were also used in the construction which proves the many and strong tombstones to be used in the construction of the fort city.



FIGURE 14. Laterite stone in a past cemetery in Kampung Duyung Melaka which has suffered from weathering erosion that made the color darker but the original texture of the stone is still the same. This stone is widely used in the construction of Fort A'Famosa during the Portuguese era.



FIGURE 15. The city of Melaka in the Portuguese era used lots of laterite stone that preserve thus retaining the original texture and color of laterite rock.

In another Portuguese record, Godinho de Eredia (1631) told of the position and character of the Portuguese city of Melaka (A'Famosa) as follows:

“The fortress of Malacca was not built on top of the hill because it was preferable to place it at the foot, right on the sea, where it could easily be reinforced in time of war.”

The statement of Correia (author and secretary of Alfonso de Albuquerque, 1512) also seems to explain the position of the Fort A'Famosa that was built on the site of the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Melaka, which was built at the foot of Melaka Hill, next to the mouth of the Melaka River for the convenience of people to gather and worship as well as close to sources for water purification.

There are few records of Portuguese clearly state the Portuguese city of Melaka (A'Famosa) and its relationship with important institutional building or the ruins of the city of Melaka, also construction materials used as follows –

“There is a big mosque built of stone cubes, and also small buildings and tombstones are also built of stone.”  
(Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 11: 3 Gaspar Correia, 1512.)

“The governor ordered a retreat to the mosque, which was built of stone, which is a sturdy building.”  
(Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 11: 4 Gaspar Correia, 1512.)

“Alfonso D'Albuquerque is now busy building a fortified city, where a mosque once existed, and named it 'Famosa.' (Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 11: 6 de Goes, 1566.)

“The stones, granite, were taken from the tombstones of the royals and officials, also from mosques and other buildings.” (Portuguese Documents on Malacca, 11: 4 de Castanheda, 1547.)

Based on the details stated in the records, interpretation can be made about some of the physical character features of the Grand Mosque of Melaka at that time. Most importantly, it is clearly stated that Fort A'Famosa was built on the site of the mosque and even used its building materials after the damage due to the war. Therefore, it can be identified that the earliest floor plan design of Fort A'Famosa which is rectangular in shape is the original plan of the Grand Mosque of Melaka; with, or no major changes made by the Portuguese to it. In addition, the building materials used to build Fort A'Famosa were the result of the ruins of the mosque as well as other mosques and tombstones of kings and officials. Thus, it can be identified that the physical character of Grand Mosque of Melaka was a building built of stone, as it was a strong building and Fort A'Famosa built on its ruins by the Portuguese in a short period of about four months. In fact, according to Graham W.Irwin (2006), Fort A'Famosa has a tall tower as an observation tower which is most likely the ruins of Grand Mosque of Melaka's minaret which was rebuilt based on its position and its similarity in other mosques around Malay Archipelago.



FIGURE 16: Kota A'Famosa was built from the ruins of the grand mosque of Melaka, mosques and other stone buildings, tombstones of sultans and magnates and granite as building materials.

According to Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar (2015) in his study of Ming Dynasty palaces, there are prominent local and Islamic elements in the construction of mosque's roof end. At the end of the roof, there are the inscriptions 'Bismillah', 'Allah' and 'Muhammad'. This may be because there was short period where muslim governed the Ming Dynasty government is Muslim or might be the government is flexible with Islamic symbolism or writing. Because of the close relationship between the Melaka Sultanate and the Ming Dynasty, thus, most likely the same ornament elements could also be curated on buildings and structures in Melaka as Islamic region at that time. Perhaps that is why the Portuguese had to destroy the Islamic evidences in Melaka after their conquest.

In addition, the results of his study argue, Islam came to Malay Archipelago from China. This is because the early mosques for in Melaka, Kelantan and Aceh have two or three storey roof - similar to the concept of pagoda in China with different local characteristic. This might coincidence as Malay characteristic design already built on administration or religious buildings as in Sriwijaya before Islam. Therefore, most likely mosques during the era of the Malacca Sultanate had both Malay dan Chinese influence and design characters. The characteristics of the mosque minaret have the same characteristics as the mosque tower or Chinese pagoda which has holes or openings throughout the construction of the tower. This feature differs from towers in Europe or in Arabia because their construction has no holes or openings in their towers. The likely of two major characteristic that can be identified on the construction of mosques during the era of the Melaka Malay Sultanate of Malacca is a multi-storey building roof and minaret has openings around the tower.

## CONCLUSION

Based on historical records and previous studies, two things can be stated clearly. First, Kota Melaka Portuguese A'Famosa was built on the ruins of the Grand Mosque of Malacca. Portuguese records stated that Albuquerque clearly built the famous A'Famosa on the site and ruins of Melaka Grand Mosque. Second, the Grand Mosque of Melaka was part of Melaka Malay City's complex that consisted of Palace Complex and other administration buildings - as it was customary and practiced in the construction of Islamic cities around the world at that time. This explains why the A 'Famosa could be built in a short time but still stands out as a city of Portuguese defense and administration. Based on this evidence, the compound of Melaka City complex was much grander than the A'Famosa because the fort was only built on the 'ruins' of the Grand Mosque of Melaka.

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