

The Grand Mosque of Singapore

Two Centuries in the History of Masjid Sultan

PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
YAYASAN KEPIMPINAN PERDANA

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Yang Mulia
Tun Dr. Mathitir

Selamat Ulang Tahun
ke 100!

Semoga terus sihat
aktif & jadi
inspirasi pada
kami.

dgn ikhlas
Hadijah Rahmat
28/7/25

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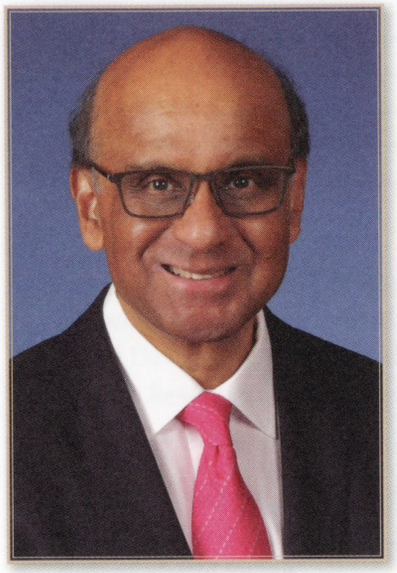
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Foreword



Tharman Shanmugaratnam
President of the Republic of Singapore

This bicentennial volume is a tribute to the living heritage that is Masjid Sultan.

For over 200 years, it has been a revered place of worship, cornerstone of the Muslim community, and more. From its beginnings, Masjid Sultan has been witness to the dramatic turns in Singapore's history, and the flows of people to the island from near and far. It stands today as a prominent testament of the country's deep multicultural inheritance.

Masjid Sultan was gazetted as a National Monument in 1975 for its cultural and historical significance. It is also a unique architectural landmark, with its two golden domes being icons of the Kampong Gelam precinct. Their bases are famously encircled by glass bottles that were contributed by ordinary folk for the mosque's construction, reflecting its venerated role in the community.

The mosque has served as a space for religious studies for all segments of the community, including the hearing- and speech-impaired. Additionally, it is a venue for Islamic forums and discourse, contributing to the community's spiritual welfare.

Today, Masjid Sultan continues to welcome local and foreign visitors from diverse backgrounds. From mass breaking of fast for charity beneficiaries of different races and faiths, to its food distribution, blood donation drives and social outreach programmes, it is a focal point for both religious and social activities, and exemplifies the multi-cultural ethos of our society.

My heartfelt congratulations to those who have contributed to this valuable bicentennial volume. I am confident of Masjid Sultan's enduring commitment to meet the needs of the Muslim community, uphold the values of mutual respect and harmony between our people, and be cherished by Singaporeans from all walks of life for many more years to come.

PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
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Dr. Nazirudin Mohd Nasir
(2020 –)
Mufti of Singapore

In Singapore, Islam has a very long, colourful and impactful history. Yet, this fact is rarely known to the world beyond our shores and is often obscured by our situation as a minority community, and the relatively very young age of our nation. It is often assumed that the Islamic faith is not one of our great stories and achievements, but not until one visits the Arab Street area and is greeted by the sheer grandeur and majesty that is Masjid Sultan, with its iconic golden domes that shimmer with pride and dignity in Singapore's hot afternoon sun.

This mosque tells a completely different but captivating story of the origins of Islam and the Muslim community on this island, one that has been textured by great agility, nimbleness, and activity. Over the 200 years of its existence, Masjid Sultan has become a national icon of a faith that progresses, a tradition that evolves, and a spectrum of contributions that endures and transcends.

In many ways, Masjid Sultan tells the story of Singapore, and particularly our Singapore Muslim community, and exudes its qualities in the best possible ways – inclusiveness, rootedness to culture and tradition, yet equipped with the courage and desire to progress and develop, and the commitment to contribute to nation and religion. There is so much that Masjid Sultan has accomplished in two centuries, and much more that it had endured with the grit and resilience of all its Imams, leaders and volunteers, to become what it is today and to stand tall as a national monument and icon.

On this blessed occasion of celebrating its bicentennial, I wish to extend our heartfelt congratulations to all its leaders, staff members, volunteers, and everyone who has become part of its remarkable story. We ask the Al-Mighty to continue to grant His blessings to this beloved house of His and to all those who work hard to protect and preserve it, witnessing the faith and commitment of all who are drawn to it in seeking God's love, mercy and acceptance.

Congratulations once again on this remarkable achievement.

PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
YAYASAN KEPIMPINAN PERDANA

Foreword



Hj Mohamed M.S Patail
(1991 –)
Chairman of Masjid Sultan Board of Trustees

Masjid Sultan's bicentennial is a celebration of faith, perseverance, and community spirit. This iconic mosque has stood at the heart of Kampong Gelam for two centuries, evolving alongside the nation while remaining steadfast in its mission to serve the Muslim community.

As trustees, we carry the responsibility of safeguarding Masjid Sultan's legacy. The transition from royal patronage to community trusteeship in 1879 was a defining moment that ensured the mosque's sustainability through self-governance. The unwavering dedication of our past trustees, Imams, and leaders has enabled Masjid Sultan to maintain its financial independence, religious leadership, and historical prominence.

One of the most significant aspects of this book is its revelation of newly discovered colonial-era documents that validate key milestones in the mosque's history. From its establishment as a wakaf property to the defence of its independence in 1909, these records reinforce the mosque's pivotal role in shaping the Muslim experience in Singapore.

Looking ahead, the trustees remain committed to preserving Masjid Sultan's heritage while ensuring its continued relevance to future generations. May this book serve as a reminder of our shared responsibility to uphold the legacy of Masjid Sultan, fostering faith and unity in our ever-evolving society.

PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION
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Abdul Salim bin Ahmed Ibrahim
(2023 –)
Chairman of Masjid Sultan Mosque Management Board

It is an honour to witness and commemorate Masjid Sultan's 200-year history—a journey that encapsulates the resilience, dedication, and unwavering faith of our Muslim community. This bicentennial book is a testament to the collective efforts of generations who have devoted themselves to maintaining this sacred institution.

Managing a mosque with such a profound legacy comes with immense responsibility. Masjid Sultan is not merely a place of prayer; it is a hub for religious learning, social outreach, and interfaith dialogue. Its role extends beyond the Muslim community, welcoming international and local visitors from all walks of life to appreciate the beauty of Islamic traditions and Singapore's multicultural fabric. Throughout its history, Masjid Sultan has weathered challenges—from economic downturns to shifts in urban development—yet it has continued to thrive. Its adaptability is evident in its ability to balance heritage conservation with modern needs, ensuring that it remains accessible and relevant to future generations.

This book is a celebration of Masjid Sultan's past, but it also serves as a guide for its future. As we turn the pages, let us be reminded of our duty to uphold its legacy, ensuring that it remains a beacon of faith, knowledge, and community for centuries to come.

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Jawi:

"Sesiapa yang membina masjid dengan tujuan mencari keredaan Allah, Allah akan membinakannya sesuatu yang serupa di taman-taman syurga."

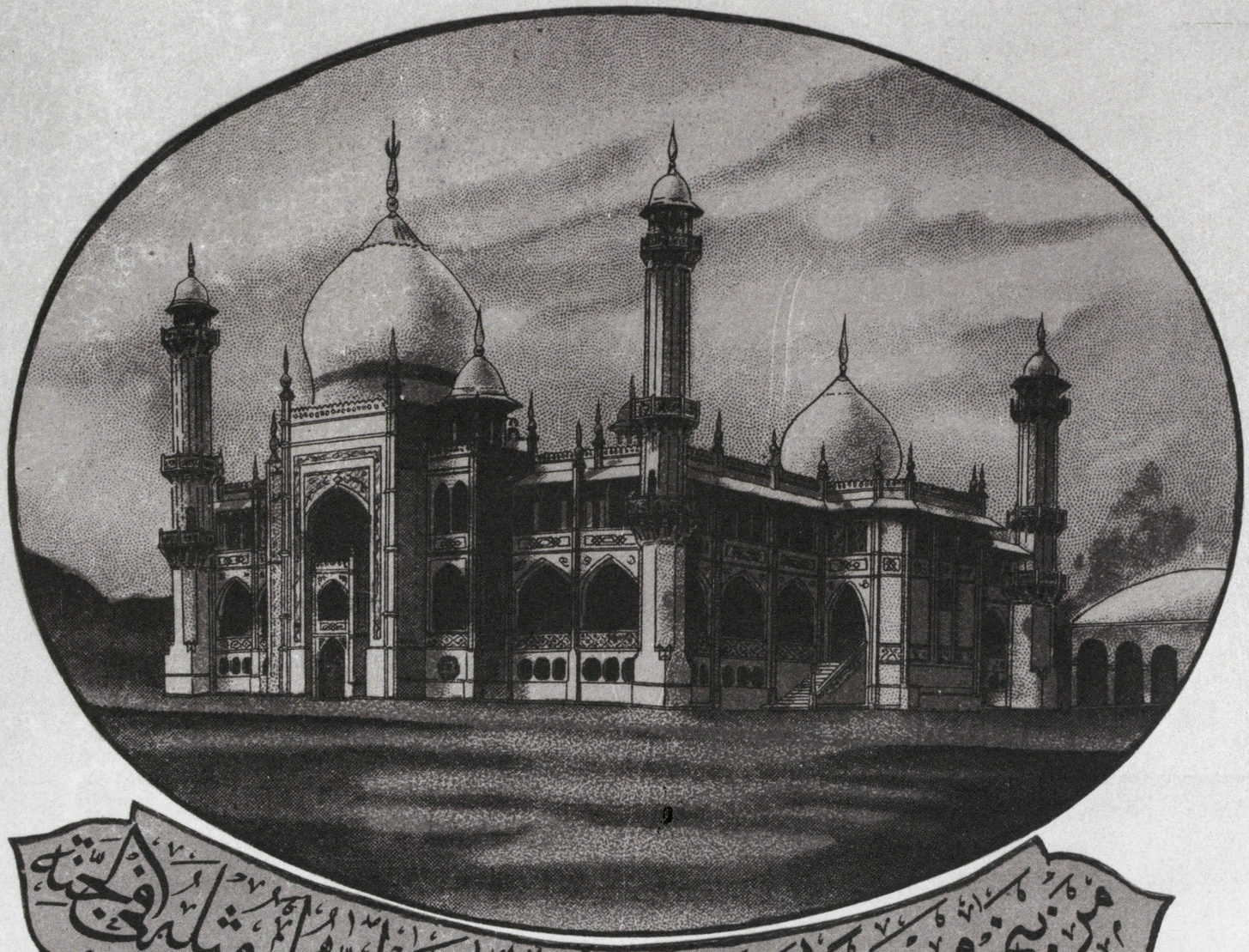
– *Hadith Sahih.*

مَنْ بَنَى مَسْجِدًا ابْتِغَى بِهِ وَجْهَ اللهِ بَنَى اللهُ لَهُ مِثْلَهُ فِي الْجَنَّة

Literal rendition of the hadith in English:

"Whosoever builds a mosque, seeking thereby the countenance of Allah, Allah will build for him a similar one in the heavenly gardens."

– *Al-Bukhari, Sahih §450; Muslim, Sahih §533*



من بنى مسجدا يبتغى به وجه الله بنى الله له مثله فى الجنة

مسیاف عما عونکن مسجد سمات کران برهار فکن کریضان الله سبحانه ای کن معکن یا کنی ادشرک با السکران ای سامقام رفیع کیجا کنایت



Masjid Sultan:
The Grand Mosque of Singapore

For over two centuries, Masjid Sultan has stood as a spiritual anchor and cultural landmark in the heart of Singapore's Kampong Gelam. This bicentennial edition unveils not only the mosque's storied past but also fresh, revelatory insights that challenge long-held assumptions — shedding new light on its founding, leadership, and enduring legacy.

Among the most compelling discoveries in this book is the revelation that Masjid Sultan's origins date back to 1819, not 1824 as widely believed. Sultan Hussain Shah, acting with remarkable foresight, personally commissioned the mosque's first wooden structure using his own means, establishing a place of worship for the nascent Muslim community even before Raffles' financial contribution. This crucial finding reframes the mosque's origin story as one of indigenous initiative.

Also brought to light is the 1879 Trusteeship Indenture, a colonial-era document that records the historic transition of Masjid Sultan's governance from royal hands to a community-led trustee model. This marked a defining moment in the mosque's autonomy and legal standing.

Perhaps one of the most surprising discoveries is that Masjid Sultan was the first known mosque in Singapore—and possibly the world—to install an electrical loudspeaker system for the call to prayer. This pioneering use of technology not only amplified the azan but symbolized the mosque's longstanding tradition of embracing innovation while preserving its religious essence.

Blending archival records, rich narratives, and diverse perspectives, this is more than a commemorative work—it is a critical re-examination and celebration of a living institution.

مسجد سلطان
MASJID SULTAN
ESTD. 1819

9 789819 418374

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