

## The Art of Mosque Calligraphy and its Development in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Known as khat, or the art of beautiful writing, calligraphy is one type of Islamic art that has gained popularity among Muslims. These beautiful carvings serve as a reminder of God's existence and a display of beauty. The history of the development of Islamic calligraphy art from the time of Daulah Bani Umayyah to its development in Indonesia is the main topic of the research. The research uses descriptive qualitative analysis, namely the library research method. The results of the discussion show that the development of Islamic calligraphy art actually began since the time of the Prophet and Khulafaur Rasyidin, continuing through the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Post-Abbasid periods. During its development, various styles of writing or khat emerged. In Indonesia, the art of Islamic calligraphy has developed through a long journey, involving the Pioneer Force, the Pesantren Force, the Painter and Breaker Force, and the MTQ (Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an) Cadre Force.

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### INTRODUCTION

The role of writing or script in everyday life is very large. Human life is always surrounded by written material, whether at home, starting from the moment you wake up, on the street, at work, and even now on gadgets that can always be seen anytime and anywhere. It is impossible to imagine a life where writing did not exist. Because every day humans are faced with writing either to read or to write themselves for various purposes (Rosita, 2018). Since the beginning of human existence, there has always been a tendency to express thoughts and turn them into art. This is especially true of God's Word. Each religion creates its own artistic characteristics, such as Islam, which places the focus on the Word and turns it into an artistic creation. The art of Islamic calligraphy originates from the teachings of the Islamic religion itself, which was initiated by the sacred text, the Al-Quran (Teparić, 2013). Art is beauty. It is an expression of human spirit and culture that contains and expresses beauty. It is born from the deepest side of humans, driven by the artist's tendency towards the beautiful, this urge is a human instinct or nature that is bestowed by Allah on His servants (Eka Safliana, 2008).

Calligraphy in various literatures is often understood as the art of beautiful writing, namely writing according to the rules or conventions of writing, or painting letters intended as written decoration. In Indonesia, the development of calligraphy is not limited to certain types of writing, there is Arabic, Chinese, Javanese, Japanese calligraphy, and so on. Each has its own particularities and characteristics according to its history and

culture. At least every type of calligraphy owned by people from various regions has a beauty function and is a means of displaying metaphysical messages expressed in their culture (Farkhan Mujahidin, 2017). The art of calligraphy has something unique and full of aesthetics. In Islamic art there are beautiful values, whoever has taste and soul, perhaps every human being will appreciate art, including Islamic art in the form of calligraphy, Arabic writing, which is sometimes written in the corners. Mosques, prayer rooms and even calligraphy exist in Mecca. It is an aesthetic heritage from Arab culture that must be appreciated and interpreted deeply (Kiom & Hakim, 2020).

The Islamic religion, through the Qur'an itself, really appreciates art, through the Qur'an which becomes a guide for human life to know Allah and indirectly invites us to see the beauty of the entire universe that He created. The beauty of God's word. Apart from that, art must also comply with Islamic law. What laws in Islam must be known so that all our good deeds are accepted before Allah (Lestari et al., 2021) Historically, the Koran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. As a medium for conveying His message in human language. Moreover, the wisdom of the revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic is none other than so that people can appreciate and understand the beauty and majesty of the Qur'an. Apart from that, later people will be able to understand the teachings of monotheism and apply them in life, which are sourced from the Al-Qur'an and Hadith. Another miracle of the Qur'an includes the beauty of the language structure, both in terms of mantiq, balaghah, ma'ani and bayan. Until no poet was able to imitate it. Apart from grammar, the superiority of the Al-Quran lies in the beauty of the Arabic script of its sentences, even texts written in Arabic script by Arab poets are not as beautiful as the grammar of the verses of the Koran. As well as connections between letters, sentences between sentences, and connections between sentences that can form a complete paragraph. Moreover, only one letter among the many verses of the Koran has a very broad meaning and different definitions. These advantages have been shown in many Islamic studies.

At this time, experts are still wondering about a comprehensive study of the history, function and significance of ornaments in Islamic architecture, especially in mosques. The organizations of ornament, which include vegetal, geometric, epigraphic and figural or even a combination of two or more of these elements require some evaluation and elaboration. Most of the time, these ornaments would reflect local traditions with a mix of foreign influences, depending on the geographical area of the particular Islamic world. Islamic ornament is an element that stitches architecture and religion resulting in a calm, understandable, structured and deeply spiritual Islamic art and architecture. Ornaments in Islamic architecture have several functions. Among these functions are providing a weighting effect on the structure and creating articulation and non-limitation in space. Humans are considered to be a reflection of the innate beauty of the Almighty who created the universe. Beauty in Islamic art and civilization, to put it mildly, is a wide scope to cover and this includes an appreciation of symmetry, balance, and also the expression of a sense of the all-encompassing force of life in accordance with Islamic aesthetic principles (Kerlogue, 2004).

The importance of the art and architecture of the Islamic medieval period lies not only in the fact that it was a time when so many of the ethnic, literary, religious, social, and artistic features of traditional Islam were created, but it is also important to recognize that the period was more or less contemporary with the Romans and Europe. Like most issues raised by scholars of Islamic art and architecture, the question of the growth and character of Islamic architectural ornamental design has never been discussed in its entirety and depth. The concept of decoration in Islamic art is flexible, does not depend on shape, material and scale, changing the overall atmosphere of the space. Over the centuries of development of Islamic calligraphy, these traditional educational methods, whether requiring face-to-face instruction or from a teacher to a group of students, gave rise to a complex genealogical system that traces the lines of authoritative transmission of calligraphic instruction (Simonowitz, 2010).

## **METHOD**

The method used by the author in compiling this journal is a qualitative method, namely the library research method by exploring reading literature in the form of journal articles with the theme of the history of Islamic calligraphy art and its development in Indonesia. According to Strauss and Corbin, qualitative research is an experiential approach for researchers to discover and understand hidden things behind facts which are sometimes difficult to understand satisfactorily for researchers, whether about community life, history and social activities. The data in this research is by searching books and references such as journals, theses and other relevant literature. The data collection technique in this research is to collect data by reviewing the study object that you want to solve, and data analysis in this study uses descriptive analysis (Rahmat, 2009).

## RESULTS

Writing Islamic calligraphy is an art in exploring and popularizing Arabic writing which is known globally (Ariesta & Maulana, 2018). According to Grabar, before discussing in more depth certain ornaments in Islamic art, it is important to classify the transformation of visual forms from religious understanding and opinions. This classification would be evidence of civilization with some symbolism or communal motifs in ornaments and also a benchmark in measuring the technological level of Muslim societies around the world. Ornaments on mosques may differ from one region to another. For example, the way Malaysians decorate their mosques is different from the Arabs, but there should be little influence from their origins because they all come from the same religion and community, namely Islam. This is the main symbolic meaning in Islamic art that explains unity in diversity (Oleg Grabar, 1983).

One of the motifs of traditional Islamic buildings is to make the lives of adherents and users fit into the built environment, so that they are interconnected in a strong and harmonious way. Preserving the Islamic faith and increasing the implementation of Islamic Sharia in mosques must be the main points. With the role of mosques in the fields of religion and education, both must go hand in hand with the needs of society in an effort to maintain an acceptable level of basic human welfare needs, namely beauty with motifs and ornaments that will welcome anyone who enters the physical environment in question. These include complex geometric patterns that clearly depict the infinity of Allah SWT (Othman & Zainal-Abidin, 2011). Geometry in Islamic art and architecture creates basic patterns in design. The unique intertwining of lines brings a variety of patterns that show the most amazing imagination and inventiveness. Doubling geometric patterns of architectural elements at different scales in one plane also helps to avoid sharp contrasts and a clear definition of scale and surface. Equipped with basic geometric guidelines, geometric figure motifs appear in the form of flowers or plants. These figures vary across Islamic territories, differentiated by geography and chronology. It can also be said that the overall pattern of Islam is a combination of various different styles. These styles are sometimes adapted and absorbed from well-known classical examples from various cultures.

For example, countries in the Middle East will apply motifs such as scrolls of tendrils and other plants that appear in Al-Janna as mentioned in the Koran. Countries in Indonesia will use traditional motifs taken from local plants such as jasmine and cotton. However, currently there are several adaptations of Middle Eastern motifs and geometric patterns in contemporary mosques in Indonesia.

### Mosque Ornaments

The importance of the art and architecture of the Islamic medieval period lies not only in the fact that it was when so many of the ethnic, literary, religious, social and artistic features of traditional Islam were created, but it is also important to recognize that the period was more or less contemporary with Roman and European architecture. Like most issues raised by scholars of Islamic art and architecture, the question of the growth and character of Islamic architectural ornamental design has never been discussed in its entirety and depth. The concept of decoration in Islamic art is flexible, does not depend on shape, material and scale, changing the overall atmosphere of the space. According to Grabar, before discussing more deeply into specific ornaments in Islamic art, it is important to classify the transformation in visual form of religious understanding and opinion. This classification will be evidence of civilization with some symbolism or communal motifs in ornaments and also become a benchmark in measuring the technological level of Muslim societies throughout the world. Ornaments in mosques may differ from one region to another.

### Calligraphy

Historical records regarding Islamic dynasties in South Asia are numerous, especially those relating to the central authority in Delhi. A number of sources, mostly in Persian, record the deeds of sultans and emperors (Siddiq, 2005). Calligraphy which can be defined as the art of writing beautifully with a pencil, brush or special equipment on paper or or similar materials by arranging the spaces between letters according to significant aesthetic and design rules is an important part of the visual arts. Calligraphy carries distinctive aesthetic values from different geographies, different languages and cultures with Chinese writing in Far Eastern culture, Arabic writing in the Middle East in Islamic culture and Latin in Western culture (Turgut, 2014).

Regarding the art of calligraphy, calligraphy is actually one of the Islamic arts that receives a lot of attention from Muslims. Basically, calligraphy is the art of beautiful writing (khat) taken from the Koran and named after the place (where it appeared); Makki, Madanī, Anbarī and Baghdadi. The art of calligraphy is found in almost all types of languages and scripts. Likewise, Arabic calligraphy emerged when the Arabic script became known to the Arab community, although it still has simple shapes and motifs. At the beginning of the seventh century (the beginning of the development of Islam), writing had little development in Arab society. Simple (primitive) writing existed on the Arabian Peninsula, proven by archaeological finds (eg inscriptions on stones, pillars, etc.). However, his friends did not practice writing Arabic much. Most poetry and prose are simply memorized and read in their original form. Poetry was a major interest of the Arabs.

Calligraphy allows skilled practitioners to interact with the Qur'an involving constant reinterpretation, rearrangement, and re-performance of the Divine Word. (Senay, 2017)

Arabic writing began to develop after Islam appeared in Arabia in the 6th century AD. According to Oloan Sitomorang, Arabic writing began on date palm leaves, stones, bones, sheepskin, and so on. To record revelations in the form of holy verses from the Koran as explanations of Islamic teachings revealed by Allah to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. In subsequent developments, the Al-Quran manuscripts were written using Khat letters/scripts as their manuscripts, which were printed in Germany for distribution to Muslim countries outside Arabia. This cannot be separated from the emergence of calligraphy artists who create khat-khat using good calligraphy writing techniques. (Patriani, 2017). Khat, literally meaning "line", linguistically Khat means "the art of measured and beautiful writing" using the Arabic alphabet. (Siddiq, 2005). The art of painting has experienced uneven development and growth in Islamic countries. Therefore, in Islamic art, especially in the field of painting, Islamic legal experts discuss the prohibitions or halal and haram of painting living creatures (tashwir), such as painting or depicting humans and animals. Oloan Sitomorang explained that there is a hadith of Rasullullah which prohibits the making of images (shuwar) and statues (tamatsil), because it can cause harm (immoral acts) and can associate partners with Allah SWT, besides that whoever creates images or paintings of Allah's living creatures, then he needs to give life to the objects he creates.

#### A. The Development of Calligraphy in Arabic

##### 1. The Period of the Prophet and Khulafaur Rashidin

The history of the emergence and development of calligraphy in the Islamic world is in sync with the birth and development of Islamic teachings in Arabia (Kusdiana, 2012). Before Islam came to the Arab nation, the population still did not understand how to read and write. Even though the Angel Gabriel repeatedly ordered the Prophet Muhammad SAW to read, the Prophet Muhammad still could not read. Likewise, the Arab population before the arrival of Islam, the population at that time did not know Arabic letters, and the Arab people preferred the method of passing it from one person to another without a note. The method they use is the process of hearing a sentence spoken by the person they are talking to and then conveying it to another person, and during the period of ignorance the Arabs made Arabic only literature.

During the time of Muhammad SAW and Khulafaur Rasyidin (Abu Bakar As-Shiddiq, Umar bin Khatab, Uthman bin Affan, and Ali bin Abi Talib), at this time calligraphy designs were still ancient, and the khatkufi style was one of the most prioritized khat in Al-Mushaf -Qur'an, this khatkufi was used until the end of Khulafaur Rasyidin's reign. In Islam learning to write is a lesson that must be learned, because writing has been explained in Surah Al-Qalam, in Surah Al-Qalam it says about the pen, and the function of a pen is for writing, with this some historical literature says that in Mecca there were seventeen men and seven women who could write, and some other literature says that at that time there were twenty-four writers who were capable of writing, then The Prophet ordered the Badr prisoners of war to teach the Muslims to write. So with this, Ali bin Abi Talib became someone who was skilled at writing. At this time the khat that are developing are khatal-hairi, al-anbari, and Kufi (Fitriani, 2011)

##### 2. Umayyad Period (661-750)

The Umayyads were founded in 661 AD, this caliphate lasted from 661-750 AD. The enforcer of the Umayyahs was Mu'awwiyah bin Abu Sufyan who became the first leader of the Umayyahs. The development of calligraphy art continued to develop in the era of the Umayyad dynasty (661-750) in Damascus. In this era, calligraphy increasingly developed, but Islamic artists began to feel dissatisfied with the Khatkufi style of calligraphy art that had been presented since the time of Khulafaur Rasyidin. Some of the calligraphers who emerged to identify the work of this period were calligrapher Quhrab Al-Muharrir, he created four calligraphy models, namely Thumar (taken from the name of the thumar tree), Jalil (graceful), Nishf (half jalil from half thumar), and Tsuluts (one third), and Tsulutsaini (two thirds) (SARIF, 2016)

Initially, calligraphy began according to the name of the city where writing was developed. There are three main styles of writing that are known in Mecca and Medina, namely Mutsallats (triangular), Mudawwar (round), and Ti'im (a pair composed of a triangle and a circle). Of these three writing styles, only two are prioritized, namely the Muqawwar style which is characterized by softness, flexibility, and the Mabsut style which is characterized by stiffness and thick strokes, so that from these two styles other styles were born, namely Mail (italicized), Masyq (enlarged), and Naskh (inscriptive). During the Umayyad period the leading writing style was the thumar writing style which was created on the basis of direct orders from the caliph Muawwiyah, and thumar became the official writing of the Umayyad Daulah government in Damascus. People's passion for calligraphy is growing and gaining the center of attention. The reign of Caliph Ma'mun was the peak of the development of calligraphy and the growth of calligraphy continued to grow and continued in the following years in various Islamic regions.

### 3. The Development of Calligraphy in Indonesia

Many of the anxieties, aspirations and fantasies attached to Al-Qur'an calligraphy do not only occur in the Muslim community in Indonesia or other countries (George, 2009). Islam spread in many places in Indonesia. Evidence of the existence of Islam is not only visible from its followers, which have the largest number of followers in Indonesia. Archaeological evidence of Islamic heritage, namely a combination of Islamic culture and local culture in the form of cultural products with an Islamic pattern, namely buildings (in the form of mosques and tombs) and calligraphy art. In Indonesia, calligraphy was one of the first forms of Islamic cultural art to be discovered, and even marked the arrival of Islam in Indonesia. Evidence of the Kufic calligraphy style that developed in the 11th century is on the tombstone of Fatimah bint Maimun in Gresik (died 495 AH/1082 AD) and several other tombs in the 15th century. In the 18th – 20th centuries, calligraphy became one of the creative activities of Indonesian artists which was realized in various media such as wood, paper, metal, glass and other media. This also includes writing the Al-Quran manuscript using imported pure paper. Many great scholars at Islamic boarding schools have pioneered how to write the Koran since the end of the 16th century, although not all scholars or students have the ability to write beautiful calligraphy, and this is true. Due to the difficulty in finding leading calligraphy teachers at the beginning of the 20th century and the lack of textbooks that discussed the rules of calligraphy writing.

One of the pioneers of the new generation of Islamic boarding schools which emphasizes its character in handwritten religious books or books found in Indonesia, is D. Sirajuddin AR, who also wrote calligraphy books and transferred his work into calligraphy paintings. In subsequent developments, calligraphy was not only limited to beautiful writing, but also began to develop in relation to fine arts, especially painting. In this context, calligraphy becomes a habit, but not an escape for painters who hesitate to draw life. From an artistic perspective, the advantage of calligraphy is its writing style in the form of geometric patterns and rhythmic curves that are flexible and easy to vary. The appearance of painterly calligraphy first appeared on a national scale around 1979 at the first national calligraphy painting exhibition in Semarang. In Indonesia itself, where the majority of the population is Muslim, it also plays an active role in the development of the art of calligraphy. This is proven by the increasing number of calligraphy artists who do beautiful and charismatic work abroad every year. These are the pioneer generation period, the Islamic boarding school generation period, the painter and battering ram period, and the MTQ cadre period. (Khotimah, 2023).

#### a) Pioneer Force Period (1201-1900 AD)

The beginning of the period of this phase was when calligraphy was discovered in a tomb that came from outside. Furthermore, in 1701-2000 AD, calligraphy artists began to expand the writing media they had. The khatat (writers) wrote on paper, wood, and metal as well as other tools. In this period calligraphers had a tendency to write calligraphy in the form of animate creatures (Hasnawati & Huzairin, 2020). Arabic script in this period was used for Malay or Indonesian manuscripts called Pegon. In 1601-1700 calligraphers drew works of animate elements with the names of Allah or pronunciations of the Koran, for example calligraphy paintings with wayang faces but decorated with Arabic writing inside, and works like this are usually found in Java.

#### b) Islamic Boarding School Force Period (1900-2000)

In this period, calligraphy became one of the lessons taught in Islamic boarding schools, of course guided by educators who were experts in the field of calligraphy. Calligraphy lessons in Islamic boarding schools are accompanied by lessons in the Koran, fiqh, Sufism, monotheism, and others. At the start of learning calligraphy, it is taught to be very simple and not yet valuable as beauty, just learn the rules about writing Arabic letters first. The tools used at that time were very simple, such as ink from cauldron charcoal or lamp smoke, and written on limited paper, it was very simple at that time, and now in modern Islamic boarding schools today, students when writing calligraphy use special khat pens or shaped pencils. To write calligraphy beautifully. From 1970 to 2000, Islamic boarding schools have produced khat writers, who prioritized writing mushafs, religious books, and mosque decoration, by combining the styles of khat tsulut, naskhi, diwani jail, farisi, kufi, and riq'ah. One of the promoters at that time was Azhari Noor from Padang (the first dector of the Jakarta Grand Mosque). The tradition of decorating mosques with Arabic calligraphy belongs to the modern era, because from historical data on the development of ancient mosques in Indonesia there were very few works of this calligraphy in ancient mosques until the 16th century 1501-1600 AD (Sirojuddin, 2014).

#### c) Painter and Breaker Force Period (1970-1980 AD)

At this time, the art of calligraphy began to attract the attention of the Indonesian people, initially people who cared little, now some people are fascinated by the beauty of calligraphy which reads the words of Allah. Calligraphers and artistic artists were increasingly persistent in producing calligraphy. Calligraphy during this period was promoted by Prof. Drs. H. Ahmad Sadali and Prof. Drs. Abdul Djalil Pirous is known as a painter of Al-Qur'an (Arabic and Javanese) calligraphy with modernist abstract beauty. In the 70s, Ahmad Sadali and Abdul Djalil Pirous began to rise to build an Islamic painting art, and Abdul Djalil Pirous, as a painter, was also active in helping organize a national Qur'an reading competition in Aceh, as well as being a spokesperson for a magazine. -magazines and newspapers so that people appreciate them (Suparman, 2018). Calligraphy artists use their time to deepen the flexibility of the Arabic script, at which time the calligraphic figures are

clarified to improve their work. The fame of this generation began to appear in the exhibition of national Islamic calligraphy paintings at the national MTQ (Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an) in Semarang (1979) and the world Islamic mass media conference exhibition at the Jakarta court hall in 1980 which was attended and continued by the actors -next cast (Sirojuddin, 2014).

d) Period of the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an Cadre Force (1981-Now)

This period is the last generation which is still developing, in fact its presence is always eagerly awaited by the community, namely the MTQ (Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an) which is contested every year at regional to provincial levels and even internationally. Regarding this MTQ, there are several competitions including a calligraphy art competition. Many members of the public, especially students, took part in this calligraphy competition so that a cadre of Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an was formed and winners of calligraphy works. It was during this time that people were very intense in participating in MTQ, so that experts in beautiful Arabic writing were born who could create very stunning decosari and mushaf writings.

The beautiful and intricate designs that can be found on art objects in every region, and in every century of Islamic history, fulfill four special and important functions, namely reminder of Tawhid, material transfiguration, structural transfiguration and beauty. The role of Islamic decoration varies. They can be spiritual, educational, social and psychological. Mosque interior decoration has both negative and positive impacts. Positive impacts should be a guide for mosque decoration in the future. Meanwhile, the negative impacts must be studied well and as far as the function of the mosque is concerned, they must be avoided. Decorations have been inseparable from mosques since they began in the history of Islamic architecture. This is a characteristic feature of mosques. Mosque architecture has decorations on the interior, especially those decorated with carvings and motifs. Decorations are not prohibited in Islam, but must be done well so as not to cause negative impacts such as being wasteful, arrogant and so on (Kassim et al., 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Calligraphy is a very beautiful Islamic art and is very popular with the public. In every Arabic writing, calligraphy has a very beautiful meaning in the form of the names of Allah and verses of the Koran which have a very complete meaning. The history of calligraphy records that calligraphy was present since pre-Islamic times and then developed over several periods, namely the time of the Prophet and the Rasyidin khulafaur, the Umayyad Daulah period, the Abbasid Daulah period, and the Post-Abbasid period. Initially there was one khat style, namely the Kufi khat style, but during the Umayyah and Abbasid periods there were developments in other khat styles, because at that time some people did not like the Kufi style, various types of khat styles were born, namely naskhi khat, diwani khat, jali khat, khat tsuluts, khat farisi, khat riq'ah, and others, so that from khat-khatini there are also developments. The development of calligraphy also developed in Indonesia through several periods, namely from the pioneer generation, the Islamic boarding school generation, the painter and battering ram generation, and the MTQ (Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an) cadre generation, with the development of calligraphy in Indonesia so that calligraphy was used to decorate the interior walls of mosques.

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