

The conceptual framework of Islamic art in the establishing style of art illumination in Malay manuscripts

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Abstract. Style is used to identify and understand concept such as in communication, values of life, religion and society, and forms existed based on a certain recommendation. This paper is focusing on the style of the Malay manuscript (al-Qur'an) which stands as a symbol of knowledge for the Malay scholars as well as an important source of understanding the intellectual and literary heritage of Malaysia. For developing the Islamic concept on the interpretation of the artwork, three appropriate and relevant theories have been selected. The four methods chosen are based on the aesthetic concept by Zakaria Ali and the theory of art appreciation in Islamic art by D'zul Haimi Md Zain, Nor Azlin Hamidon and Wan Samiati Andriana. The significances of the paper is to enhance the system and structure of vocabularies for Islamic art and Malay traditional art, aligns with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal.

Keywords: Style, Islamic art, illumination, Malay manuscript, al-Qur'an.

1 Introduction

Style is a particular kind, sort, or type concerning form, appearance, or characteristic mode of action or manner in acting. It is a specific procedure by which something is done, such as a characteristic of a particular period, place, person, or movement. According to Collins's dictionary, the style is the general way it is done or presented, which often shows the people's attitudes. The style for the product is called a design, and for art, it is a particular style with a specific characteristic, period, or group of people. The American art historian Meyer Schapiro (1998) defines the style as a constant form and sometimes elements, qualities, and expressions that persist in individual art or collections. A style is an essential object of inquiry, and he studies his internal correspondence, life history, and the problems of formation and change. He also uses the style as the date and places criteria of the work and as a tool for tracing the relationship between the art school.

Art historians speak of several different kinds of artistic styles. Period style is referred to the characteristic art of a specific time, usually a distinct culture. Regional style is the term art historian used to describe variations in style tied to geographies such as object's date, or place

of origin, which can significantly determine its character. (Ernst Gombrich, 2009). Meanwhile, Islamic art according to Lois Lamy Al-Faruqi (1985), generally the Islamic breakthrough in the arts was the result of the desire to give aesthetic expression to the proclamation, *La ilaha illa Allah* (There is no god but God). Tawhid is the peculiarly Islamic variety of monotheism which differs in emphasis as well as in essence from the monotheism of any other religion.

Manuscript (abbreviated MS for singular and MSS for plural) was, traditionally, any document that is written by hand or, once practical typewriters became available, typewritten as opposed to being mechanically printed or reproduced in some indirect or automated way. The art of illumination is a bit late blooming compared to the field of calligraphy. Due to decoration does not demand to be developed together with the text of the verse. (Martin Lings, 1976). Illumination is a word from Latin, namely *illuminare* or *illuminatio* which means intends to enlighten, radiance or provides a space with the higher levels of light.. These words refer to embellishing the ornaments in manuscripts with nature pigments, colors or the glowing elements such as gold and silver. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). The word manuscript is derived from the Latin words *manus* means hand and *scriptus* from scribe means written by hand (Christopher De Hamel, 1986). The materials used in decorating the manuscript are paper two types of material: parchment and paper, the tools for scribes such as pen from quill or reed. Common ink iron-gall from oak or nut with the Arabic gum. (Cyntia Karnes, 1998). The colors applied such as a dye from vegetables and most important is the gold leaf (Khan Academy, 2015).

For Islamic illumination is the use of gold to paint with geometric patterns or vegetal patterns or biomorphic patterns to adorn the pages of manuscript such as Al-Qur'an, Miniature books, Literary texts and letter. These decorations also also known as Islimi, Nebati, and Arabesque. Their compositions are as ubiquitous (David Wade, 2006) and emphasis the infinity modular patterns (Lois Lamy Al-Faruqi, 1985). Illuminate means adding light, shine or shimmer. Illumination is the art of applying gold or adding light. The term illumination in the Arabic is called Nur, Turkish and Persian languages called as Tezhip, Tathhib or Tazhib. (Esra Ahmal, 2017). The Turkish term for illumination is *Tezhip* which means 'to gild' and is derived from the Arabic word *dhahab* meaning gold. (Jeea Mirza, 2016).

It rarely seems to find the illuminated process in the books of astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Most of the decorating activities for manuscripts are focused on religious texts. Must include the presentation of illuminating the ornaments with elements of gold or silver. The Al-Qur'an literally means perfect reading. The Al-Qur'an according to the term is the word of Allah SWT. That was delivered by Jibrail with direct revelation from Allah SWT. to the Prophet Muhammad, and which was accepted by Muslims from generation to generation without any change. The Al-Qur'an must be read correctly according to the meaning of *makhraj* and the character of the letters, also understood, practiced in daily life with the aim of what is experienced by the community to live the Al-Qur'an both textually, orally or culturally (Drs. Mudzakir AS, 2006). The Qur'an is a text consisting of 114 *surah* or chapters. It has 6616 verses and 77 934 words and represents 323 672 letters. This holy book was revealed in Makkah and Madinah and in several surrounding areas. Thus, the *surah* is classified as *surah Makiyyah* and *Madaniyyah*. Except for the first few revelations revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by astonishing event, each revelation has the context of the current situation to be conveyed. (Ismail and Lois Lamy Al-Faruqi, 1986).

2 Methodology

This research aimed to establish the components of ornamentation found in the Al-Qur'an also this study is to exemplify systematically the significance of art illumination by introducing with several situations that are related to the development of in Malay manuscripts. The specialization of this study is enhancing the components of the ornaments in the manuscript of the Al-Qur'ans from the National library or Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Kuala Lumpur (PNM). Mostly, al-Qur'ans from the Malay Archipelago has their own distinctive characters of pattern which is well known all over the world.

The area of study was spearheaded by D'zul Haimi Md Zain in 2007 through his research about *Ragam Hias*. Then followed by Annabel Teh Gallop, she was very active in writing articles and books according to the codicology aspect of the Malay manuscript. Then, Ali Akbar, who was significant, focused on a manuscript in Indonesia. D'zul classified the illumination of the Malay world Qur'an through a particular group such as Sulur and Tebar Layar. Meanwhile, Annabel Gallop expanded his research on the specific characteristics of style that lead to the particular district areas such as Acehnese, Java, Banten, Sulawesi, and East Coast. Although Ali Akbar has identified the calligraphy found in the Qur'an is distinctive artistic style, but still have other components of particular patterns need to be discover and establish.

This paper purposely to explain the working procedure for developing the research about the style of art illumination in Malay manuscripts. This procedure is divided into three main sections. The first is the development of framework for research design. The second is the list of process to develop the research and the third is the consideration of design method for analysis the Islamic artwork especially in Malay world. The aim of the research design is to provide a study plan that allows an accurate assessment of the cause and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study carried out a fully qualitative procedure.

3 Result and Discussion

Islamic art is the product of human hands, disciplined through awareness and this is not transcendent. However, it is limited by the transcendent value defined beginning with infinity by the better values of seen, and taken later merged with it. Both of these knowledge are proceeds from theoretical deduction rather than from observation or experience, means merging with humans is impossible. The greatness of Islamic art is the same as Islam itself. Humans always aspire and try to recognize the distance between Him with the high reality and surpassing the ordinary (Zakaria Ali: 2012).

3.1 Approaching the concept of style in Islamic art

Ismail al-Faruqi stated that the basis of artistic creativity in Islamic civilization must be based from the context of Qur'an. This is called Quranic Culture because of its definition, structure, purpose and method of achieving the aims of Islamic culture. All this is produced through the art of decreasing the revelation of Allah to the Prophet Muhammad then conveyed and taught to humanity. Without revelations about the original principles, the culture might not be awakened. According to him, Islamic art in its relation to the Qur'anic statement must be seen from the point of view of language as it touches on formalistic aspects, movements, forms and sounds. The interpretation is based on three main levels; i) The Qur'an is a definer of Tawhid or transcendence, ii) The Qur'an as an artistic model, and iii) The Qur'an as an artistic iconography

In 2008 D'zul Haimi Md Zain develop the method of appreciation because of the challenges faced by the Muslims. Most appreciation and interpretations seldom made are so cliché because they are from non-Muslims. Therefore, D'zul Haimi has briefly developed four basic processes of work, which are imitating, denaturalization, stylization and abstraction. He stated Muslim artists must first practice *Syhadah* before expressing or manifest their actions. Each of these cases and actions must rely on the understanding of the *Tawhid*. To accomplish all these four processes, the artist must prove his obedience and conformity as a Muslim.

3.2 The developing of Islamic concept on the interpretation of artwork

For developing the Islamic concept on the interpretation of the artwork, three appropriate and relevant theories have been selected. The three theories chosen are based on the aesthetic concept by Zakaria Ali and the theory of art appreciation in Islamic art by Nor Azlin Hamidon and Wan Samiati Andriana. The choice of the three frameworks is based on certain factors. The process of gaining the knowledge and producing an artwork by Nor Azlin, through her study of Islamic calligraphy in contemporary Malaysian art, is a study of the evolution, development, origins of calligraphy, and hidden forces that influence the production of her products. This study is analyzed according to a historical approach. The contemporary style of calligraphy is peeled off in a contextualist way. According to Nor Azlin, Panofsky's theory is a theory that debates the study of the ideas and essence of the content of art. It is an empirical study.

The philosophy of Iconography is a philosophy of humorist or humanism based on Western epistemology and theology. It is undeniable that Western Iconological theory has been adopted and established as a theoretical framework by art historians worldwide. This theory is also applied in the debate on Islamic art. Islamic scholars practice it in Islamic studies without making any changes to its original theoretical framework. She made a comparison between al-Ghazali's Islamic concept and Panofsky's Iconic theory. She points out there are some basic concepts in Panofsky's theory are different from Islamic concepts. She defined her framework as the History of Muslim Art Tradition rather than the History of Islamic Art Tradition. Islamic art is far more challenging than 'Muslim Art.' In essence, labeling as an Islamic art means that every aspect of production from idea to end must be directed against Islamic theology, law, and principles. Means, Muslim art can incorporate contextual conditions or, artist's intention, and personal expression, as not all works of art, have the same direction as the end goal of the artistic activity of Tawhid unity.

Meanwhile, Wan Samiati Andriana has proposed a process of obtaining understanding in art appreciation from four processes in the Islamic art. The first stage is Describing Physical

Aspect. It is a level of visualization. This stage is also known as 'Imitation of Physical Nature,' which is the process of imitating physical properties, which is the natural physical character being the first reference in developing a work of art. The second stage is regulating of interpretation (command interpretation), identifies and makes interpretations of the subject matter and themes to be more explicit and descriptive. Interpretation will be based on controlling the media, form, materials, techniques, and functions. The third stage is to produce 'abstract' in physical form. This level, explains the understanding of the artist in applying ideas, themes, and concepts to art. Here, the concept of beauty advocated by Islamic artists is a manifestation of seeing the work's greatness, not as a process of worship, especially on the physical form of work. The fourth stage is the case of intention. It is a sign heartwarming guide to determine whether the action leads to good and beneficial or too useless and unjust acts. This intention is a heart training activity. It is not involved in the verbal activity of the tongue. Indeed, discretion is something that is implied, unreadable,

Malay aesthetics or art, it is closely related to Malay culture which involves universal cultural elements namely life view, art, artifacts, traditional ceremonies, medicine, Malay laws and regulations. The Malay way of life is fundamental about themselves which is used as a guide to achieve a meaningful life. This view serves as a means to provide retaliation and explain the problem of the existence of human life and the universe created by Allah SWT. So, to understand the Malay way of life, it must be associated with Islam, and a system of belief that is rooted and grew for so long before Islam entered the Malay coast and made the religion of Islam a grip on their lives.

Zakaria Ali suggested the pure and diluted dichotomy of art appreciation. An analysis on art works should be based not only from the formalistic aspect, or art as the art form but also to identify its importance and role in society. art, tradition, culture and, heritage, one should also consider its context, tradition, and culture of the society. Malay art adhere to six basic principles of Malay aesthetics as explained by Zakaria Ali. These are such as Subtle (*Berhalus*), Useful (*Berguna*), Unity (*Bersatu*), Contrast (*Berlawan*), Symbol (*Berlambang*), and Meaning (*Bermakna*). The function of items influences the artist to fulfill the desire in art and its function. Malay art should be interpreted as part of efforts to respond Malay artists, understand, interpret and respond to the related problems. In the Malay world, the principles of art and aesthetics is the result of blending or a combination of the art of the Islamic world and the world at large, as well as the ideas of artists, creators of art, and public support for the art itself.

The Islamic art and the art from Malay world are sociocultural and these elements able to strengthen the cultural identity of Islamic societies, as well as being part of the continuity of Islamic culture in general. Islam provides direction or guidance, that each Islamic region, may only form a subtle and creative culture for the universal contribution of Islamic culture.

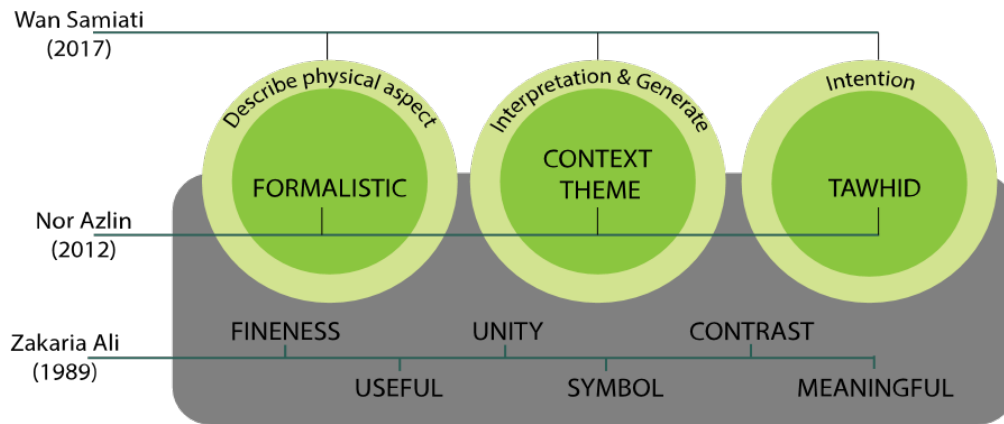


Fig 3.1. The appreciation of Islamic Art in the Malay world. The components of Art Appreciation Mapping from Wan Samiati, NorAzlin and Zakaria Ali.

From the figure 3.1 above shows the mapping and structure of the components appreciation of Islamic art based on the six aesthetic principles by Zakaria Ali, as well as the four principles forward by Nor Azlin Hamidon and Wan Samiati Andriana Wan Muhamad Daud. Hence, the component of process in acquiring comprehension and appreciation of art in the Malay world especially in Islamic art has been develop and generated in the table 3.2 below by providing structure of acquiring comprehension and appreciation of Malay Qur'an Illumination.

3.3 An appreciation of Illumination in Malay manuscripts

Based on the concept and process of appreciation of Islamic art has been contributed by several Muslim scholars, also through the process of gaining understanding and appreciation of Islamic art that has been issued by Zakaria Ali, Nor Azlin Hamidon and Wan Samiati Andriana. Then a framework for the appreciation of Islamic art in the Malay world can be developed.

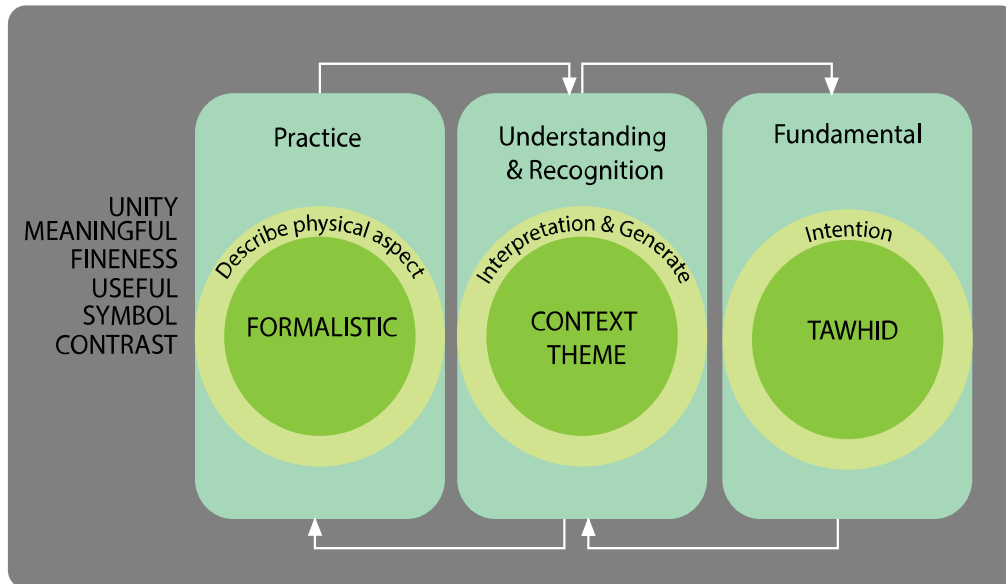


Fig 3.2. The process of acquiring comprehension and appreciation of style in art illumination.

From the figure 3.3 above the process is divided into three main levels. The first level is practice. The second level is understanding and recognition, and the third level is fundamental. For the first stage, this element is known as Practice. This stage is indispensable because it supports the core strength of the creativity of the Muslims in the Malay world. Training and accomplishment skills. Continuing with the consistent good practices and quality skills, the artwork will be grant with the ideal and magnificent outcome. Therefore, determining and guiding the level of quality from artists in training and proficiency is through two sets of analysis. There are two sets of studies needed by Malay artists when developing Islamic artwork. They are required to have the ability and expert for these two sets. Firstly is the set of materials or tools, and secondly is the modules for the techniques.

The expertise of Islamic Malay artists is not merely proficient in making arts and crafts but needs to be wise and knowledgeable in the science of the recipe, such as the ingredients and equipment. For set one, the set of materials or tools, the Malay artists learned and trained to recognize, understand, and make experiments on materials for artwork. The source of ingredients is from nature. Through the information and guidance of their master, the artist can know about manners and procedures for getting those materials. This practice is a procedure and the traditional custom that artists must obey. This procedure applied repeatedly, the implementation of activity is studied adequately to acquire skills, and the most important is to maintain the efficiency of the procedure The artists focus on the illumination procedure which is the materials used to decorate the Qur'an. The *mudhahib* or the illuminator of the manuscript understand the materials and equipment needed for develop an illuminations and decorations. Materials and equipment used such as a paper, pen, brush, black ink, color, and a ruler. Usually the equipment used by artists is specifically for themselves. The size of the equipment is

adjusted according to their body ratio. With special personal equipment, it is unable to produce good and perfect works of art.

The second set is the modules for techniques, The artists acquired to study and practices the knowledge from the qualified masters. Before handling sketches and developing the artwork. They are trained to think wisely about the visual symmetry principles of the Malay tradition. Need to be alert and sensitive to interact with the natural life cycle procedures. The idea and production of making artwork must be well prepared. Need to set-up the proper team including with their Master and selected teacher. The reason is the idea of making the artworks is under the patronage and supervised by the royal family. This stage is known as Understanding and Recognition. This level is to acquire the power of identification and comprehending the relation of particulars procedures, skill, erudition, and experience. Thus, a set of Producing Rules Activities and Contemplation Orderly was developed. The evolution of Islamic art traditions that follow their teachings means that in terms of creative expression, artists and craftsmen are guided by certain principles in their activities. The craftsmen, created the artwork passionately using their creative energy and knowledge to excel.

Nature has adorned into the traditional Malay artworks. The artist imitates the sources from nature, then apply the knowledge understanding by composing the design and decoration. The motif develop into a pattern and exquisite composition. The refined style of the motif is to bring out the beauty and reflect the solidity and skill of an artist. In producing evolving creative expression arts and Islamic art traditions, Malay Artists are guided by certain principles. There is no denying for the certain aspects of the field of art are prohibited or discouraged. So, in that case, it seems like Islam has restricted the freedom of the artists to express their artistic genius. Do not see restrictions on that formation as blocking the freedom to producing artwork. Traditionally, the same Shariah has not hindered creativity among Islamic artists. The wisdom of Islamic art has created new forms of art expression. This is where creativity lies. The meaning of Islamic upbringing in that regard actually opened up a new space elsewhere, for the art of Islamic art to be revealed. At this second stage, the artists have equipped themselves with certain principles. There are four main basic components they need to provide for themselves. The first component is the understanding of the knowledge and lessons found in the Qur'an. The second component is the guidance of the practices from the Prophet Muhammad called *sunnah*. The third component is practicing the requirement from five pillars in Islam called as *Rukun Islam*, and the fourth component they must comprehend the meaning with pillars of faith. These four components are blended and harmonized with the culture and customs of the Malays. The work developed is based on the symbolism, intuition, or inspiration of the perfection of Islam. Interpretations are based on media control, materials, techniques, and functionality.

The artist's are able to synthesize the artworks and even evaluated. They are proficient in setting themes, principles, and modules in which the content is combined and supplemented with creative elements. The Artists also able to compose, modify, and complete the module of activities. This process is carried out continuously so that the subject is no longer questioned about its original appearance. These set of rules activities are distributed into two main areas, namely explicit and implicit activities . Both, functions simultaneously and are unseparated within. These two activities are connected and the artists used perfectly. Artists will ensure the formation of their work through the process of beginning or birth so that the process of ending or closing. At least that startup process needs to be established. The process of equilibrium or the concept of *Tumpal* needs to exist and is a priority. The goal is to stabilize tension and control

the resistance. The intellectualism of Islamic artists in science is based on their understanding of religion, philosophy of life, and cultural origin. Everything should be in a well-organized and complete sequence. Full of manners and morals. (neatly, methodically arranged or well-organized sequence). It requires concentration and reflection or deep reflective thought contemplation. At the end of the process, artists do not tag on their artworks. There is no name to glorify the work of an artist. They choose to reject the honor because it is an act of devotion.

The third stage is Fundamental which is an area controlled the state of emotional quality. Having a deep insight understanding knowledge and thought. This final stage is the stage of keeping pace, remembering, and returning. back to the awareness of remembering and glorifying the Tawhid. This process of remembering is carried out continuously so that the heart will reside in the awareness of the eternal God. In each of these practices, all cases carried out are in a state of caution and awareness. This emphasis is made to draw the audience to the concept of Divine transcendence. When reciting the remembrance, the purpose of this sentence must always be in the heart of a person to direct his delicate feelings towards God solely. The consolidation is very important in the philosophy of Malay Muslims. This signifies the stages of man's search for God through mystical routes. This process expresses the wisdom feelings of subjective spiritual experiences of Malay artists. The importance of intention is that all actions lead to good things and benefits. Knowledge and understanding of this principle need to be taught as it is an underlying principle of Islamic art. Intrinsic and extrinsic understanding of art should be taught and practiced from one generation to the next. Therefore, under the influence of Islam which emphasizes human relations with God and their relationship with society. Malay traditional arts are not only enriching spiritually and socially integrated, but also psychologically compelling. The element of expression penetrates or enters the subject of thought, but its expression navigation control is guided and controlled by God. It seems that the artists are in a disciplined atmosphere. The formation of artwork needs to go through certain principles. The goal is to avoid feelings of passion and excessive desire. The element of expression penetrates or enters the subject of thought, but the navigation control of its expression is guided and controlled by God.

4 Conclusion

For developing the Islamic concept on the interpretation of artwork, three appropriate and relevant theories have been selected. The three theories chosen are based on the aesthetic concept by Zakaria Ali and theory of art appreciation in Islamic art by Norazlin Hamidon and Wan Samiati Andriana. The choice of the three frameworks is based on certain factors. The process of acquiring comprehension and appreciation of Malay Quran. The Illumination through the the process is divided into three main levels. The first level is practice. The second level is understanding and recognition and the third level is fundamental. For first stage, this element is known as Practice. This stage is indispensable because it supports the core strength of the creativity of the Muslims in the Malay world. Training and accomplishment skills cannot be overlooked. Continuing with the consistent good practices and quality skills, the artwork will be grant with the ideal and magnificent outcome. For second stage, this element is known as Understanding and Recognition. This level is to acquire the power of identification and comprehending the relation of particulars procedures, skill, erudition, and experience. Thus, a set of Producing Rules Activities and Contemplation Orderly was developed. The evolution of

Islamic art traditions that follow their teachings means that in terms of creative expression, artists and craftsmen are guided by certain principles in their activities. The craftsmen, created the artwork passionately using their creative energy and knowledge to excel. Then, third stage is Fundamental which is an area controlled the state of emotional quality. Having a deep insight understanding knowledge and thought. This final stage is the stage of keeping pace, remembering, and returning. Back to the awareness of remembering and glorifying the Tawhid. This process of remembering is carried out continuously so that the heart will reside in the awareness of the eternal God. In each of these practices, all cases carried out are in a state of caution and awareness.

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