

Multicultural Manifestations of Menara Kudus Mosque Pre-Islamic Traditional Ornaments, in Central Java

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Abstract. The historical heritage of the spread of Islamic culture on Java by Walisanga is mainly in the form of mosque buildings. One of them is the Al-Aqsa Mosque or Menara Kudus Mosque, in Central Java. The Menara Kudus Mosque has a unique architectural and ornamentation of the continuation of pre-Islamic (Hindu-Buddhist, Chinese) cultural traditions. This study aims to describe, analyze, and interpret the form of the traditional Menara Kudus Mosque to explain the manifestations of the multicultural values of the supporting communities. Based on the characteristics of the research objectives, the analysis is carried out with an iconographic approach, namely a series of pre-iconographical description; iconographical analysis; and iconological interpretation. The results showed that the aesthetic diversity and symbolic meaning of Menara Kudus Mosque ornaments originated from the values of pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural traditions which were harmoniously and continuously combined. The existence of mythological figurative ornaments, Kala Bintulu patterned ornaments, medallion patterned tendrils, patchwork ornaments, and Surya Majapahit patterned ornaments strengthens that understanding. These symptoms are manifestations of the value of tolerance for cultural diversity and multicultural messages that are lived in by the supporting community.

Keywords: ornament, Menara Kudus Mosque, multicultural

1 Introduction

Artifacts of the early historical heritage of the development of Islamic culture in the archipelago are generally in the form of architectural art. The main building legacy that can be found up to now is a mosque. Mosque buildings and their ornaments, in Islamic culture, are not merely a matter of formation or structure, but also an embodiment of an ideal idea originating from a value and social system, as the identity of the life style of the supporting community. The function of building art and its ornamentation is not only to fulfill worldly needs (profane) but also to fulfill the needs of religious (sacred) spiritual needs [1].

Sacred buildings, mosques and ornamentation, is one of the artifacts as well as important archaeological data in the historical dimension of the early development of Islamic civilization in the archipelago. The entry of Islam in Java at the same time brought new cultural values to the people of the period. Islamic culture that developed in the culture of Javanese society was also inseparable from the dynamics of mutual influences from one culture to another. The dynamics lead to multiculturalism, a combination of various cultural elements without removing

the elements of original culture (inculturation). Multiculturalism that occurs is a series of lengths and crossings of various Islamic cultural entities with pre-Islamic [2].

One of the art of historic sacred buildings, which until now still receives a lot of attention from supporting communities, is the Menara Kudus Mosque in Central Java. Based on the inscription attached to one wall near Mihrab, it is known that the mosque was named Al-Aqsa which was founded by Sunan Kudus, the leader of the spread of Islam. The community is more familiar with this mosque with the name Menara Kudus Mosque. This name was given because the phenomenon of the embodiment of the tower building is very similar to the embodiment of the Hindu temple. In the Sunan Kudus mosque buildings there is a visual diversity of ornaments characterized by the art of pre-Islamic (Hindu-Buddhist) and Islamic traditions.

Studies on multiculturalism in Indonesia have been conducted by several researchers. The study entitled "Implementation of Multicultural Education in Indonesia, Expectations and Reality" states that the implementation of multicultural education in Indonesia is still experiencing many challenges from various dimensions, but the growing awareness of the Indonesian people, the existence of cultural plurality is a very valuable investment [3]. Another study entitled "Multiculturalism and Indonesian Identity Strategy in Indonesian Literature Study" explained that ideas and understandings of multiculturalism have been carried out in a real and natural way by Indonesian people in various regions [4]. In a historical study entitled "Indonesia: from Pluralism to Multiculturalism" it was emphasized that in the long journey of the Indonesian people, society had undergone a social cultural pluralism, respected and upheld the diversity of cultural entities, and found momentum in the direction of multiculturalism, ideologically, in the reform era the leadership of President Adurrahman Wahid [5]. From the religious dimension, the study entitled "Revitalizing The Sunan Kudus Multiculturalism in Responding Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia" concluded that (1) Sunan Kudus, according to Walisanga's mission, had succeeded in "Islamizing" Javanese society with a cultural approach by prioritizing the condition of the local community; (2) Sunan Kudus successfully builds a social system of society in a democratic manner by promoting tolerance between communities of different religions; and (3) the spirit of multiculturalism of Sunan Kudus is a cultural capital in strengthening democratic societies that can be reconstructed in the educational value system to respond to radicalism (in the name of) Islam.

This study aims to describe, analyze, and interpret the form of the traditional Menara Kudus Mosque to explain the manifestations of the multicultural values of the supporting communities. This research has urgency (1) as an effort to conserve traditional values that are relevant to be perceived and embodied in the cultural and social arts of the humanities; and (2) as the basic spirit for strengthening the development of contemporary art and social arts and culture based on tolerance, pluralism and multiculturalism for supporting communities and various stakeholders.

2 Method

This type of research is qualitative research. Qualitative research tries to understand symptoms as part of a comprehensive system, which contains detailed explanations related to the scope of the problem. Qualitative research as a research procedure that produces descriptive written or oral data from people and observed targets. Data collection is done using techniques (1) observation, (2) document tracking, and (3) interviews. Observations are directed at the aesthetic elements of the visual object of Menara Kudus Mosque ornaments in Central Java.

Document search is carried out related to data in the form of documents both visual documents such as photographs (graphics) and written data stored by the manager or other related parties. Interviews were conducted to collect data from the speakers. The analysis of this study uses Panofsky's iconographic approach. This analysis is in the form of a series of: (1) pre-iconographical description, identifying the aesthetic elements of the object, configuration of visual elements, and material that represents objects, relationships that occur in objects, and identification of the quality of ideas expressed through object observation. At this stage the visual characteristics that appear on the object are described; (2) iconographical analysis, analyzing a series of iconic objects by paying attention to functions and historical events related to the background of social situations that occur in the supporting community; and (3) iconological interpretation, interpreting meaning by considering various phenomena or object phenomena as representations and symbols of ideas, beliefs, and cultural values of society as multicultural manifestations.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Menara Kudus Mosque ornament as the embodiment of physical culture

Culture can be understood as a form of the overall knowledge, beliefs, and values possessed by humans as social beings, which contain a set of models of knowledge or systems of meaning, which are woven together in a symbol that has been transmitted historically. The knowledge model is used selectively and collectively by the people supporting the culture to communicate, conserve, and connect various knowledge, and act and act in order to fulfill the necessities of life [6]. Culture is present through three manifestations, namely the system of ideas, physical objects (artefact), and behavior or social systems (activities) [7] The existence of Sunan Kudus Mosque ornaments is a manifestation of physical culture (artifacts) that has historical value. Based on the inscription on the walls of the mosque, during the Demak Sultanate, Ja'far Shodiq (Sunan Kudus) built a city which until now was named Kudus and founded the Al-Aqsa Mosque (956 H / 1549 AD), in the city. Al-Aqsa Mosque is now better known by the community as the Menara Kudus Mosque. After his death, Sunan Kudus was buried next to the mosque, so the tomb of Sunan Kudus and Al-Aqsa Mosque (Menara Kudus Mosque) were on one site.

Islamic ornamentation has a non-physical function (meaning) which serves to remind the unity and absoluteness of God (tawhid), the transfiguration of material, the transfiguration of structure, and the meaning of beauty (aesthetically). Ornamentation is essentially concretization of the aesthetic value of Muslims to create an atmosphere and condition of awareness of divine transcendence, and become the core of the spiritual affirmation and artistic creations of Muslims with their environment. Ornaments in the style of Islamic art emphasize the appearance of abstraction and denaturalization. The nature is related to the problem of media and technique (transfiguration) which is able to keep concentration away from oneself or worldliness, but brings reflection to the value of monotheism. Transfiguration of the structure means that ornaments function as cover or coating on the details of the construction and structure of the work. Personal aesthetic meaning, only becomes one part of the overall meaning of Islamic ornamentation. In its development, Islamic ornamentation experienced diversity because of the influence of ethnic, racial, regional cultural tastes [8]. The presence of ornament does not merely fill the empty part of an object or work, but has certain functions, namely (1) pure aesthetic functions, (2) symbolic functions, and (3) construction technical functions. An aesthetic

function is a function of ornamentation to beautify the appearance of objects that are decorated so that they become works of art. This function can be seen in the product of craft or craft objects. This aesthetic function sometimes exceeds the practical function of the product. The symbolic function of ornaments is generally applied to products of ceremonial objects or religious objects of faith or faith. In its development, the symbolic function of this ornament has increasingly lost its meaning. The technical function of ornamental construction has a structural role to support, sustain, connect or strengthen construction [9].

Various types of ornamental art (ornaments) found in the Menara Kudus Mosque include wood carvings with Arabic calligraphy motifs, vines (tendrils), lines and geometric (tumbled) fields, kurvilinear, webbing, and so. Besides that, it was also found stone carvings in the form of medallions with vine motifs, infinity patterns of a kind of simple arabesque, also there were some figurative ornaments (animate creatures) like animal motifs (imaginative-mythological). The appearance of ornaments in the Menara Kudus Mosque building portraying Sunan Kudus's business shows the openness of Islamic teachings, which at that time was a new value for the community. The effort to combine various elements of old (pre-Islamic) arts and elements of new arts (Islam) was expressed in the form of physical culture.

3.2 Ornaments attened with pre-Islamic traditions

¹²Ornaments on the Menara Kudus Mosque building site have a variety of shapes, types, styles, and traditional background characteristics. Ornaments characterized by the pre-Islamic tradition became a separate multicultural phenomenon so this discussion focused on some of the intended ornaments.

3.2.1 Ornament figurative motifs of animals

At the bottom of the leaf the main gate to the tomb of Sunan Kudus there are figurative ornaments with animal motifs. The figurative ornament is in the form of two twin animals, facing each other on both halves of the door with wood. Anatomically, the animal's figure is like a rabbit or a deer (mouse deer), but has wide wings like a wing, and a horn in the upper head. The tail of the animal resembles a rabbit's tail, has a coat, has four legs which one of its front legs is raised, and has a beard. The animal also has the attribute of a wide necklace around its neck. Around the animal there is a picture of thick bush plants. The pattern of drawing figures is very different from the general pattern of depicting other ornamental motifs, with denaturalis, non-iconic (non-figurative) patterns. The motif as a sheep animal figure but this identification seems to be inappropriate because it is visually more like a forest rabbit. The animal figure is an imaginary (mythological) animal, which in the Hindu-Buddhist ornamental art tradition is illustrated in *tantri* or *jataka* story reliefs (a kind of fable). Such figures of imaginary animals often appear on the walls of the foot of the temple. These animals are moon animals, forest rabbits (hare). The embodiment was inspired by animals around the mountain with its forest, because the temple is a replica of Mahameru (mountain). Temple relief is seen as a metaphor for depicting wilderness around humans, the road to heaven. On the way to heaven, around the moon, beasts of guard surround the palace of the gods. Hare is one of the guard animals. Hare often appears in the stone *sungkup* relief (part of the building) of the Singasari style temple, which is a distinguishing feature of the ancient Mataram style temple. If in the ancient Mataram temple reliefs on the container's stone in the form of Padma flowers with eight petals, then on the Singasari style temple the stone reliefs of the hood are in the form of hare animals. In some of the stone reliefs of the Majapahit temple, hare is often depicted with a rider and in the sun

circle (Surya Majapahit). Depiction of hare has symbolic meaning as the moon and sun (*chakra*). The hare motif was also found on the walls of the Surawana temple in East Java [10].

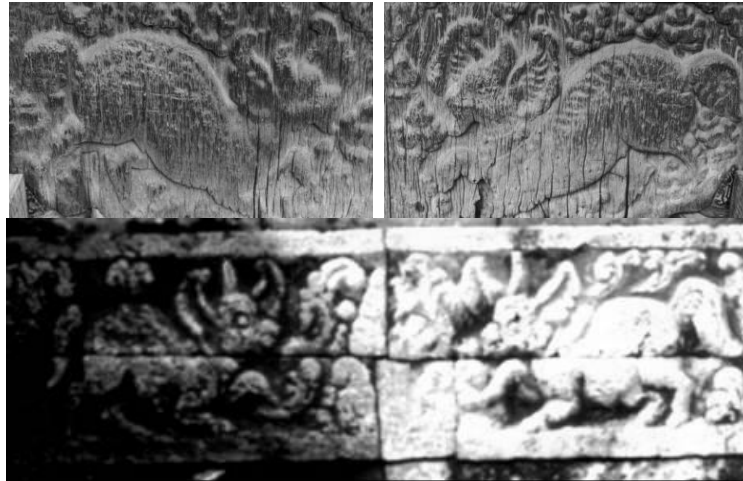


Figure. 1. above: ornamental animal motifs on the building site of Menara Kudus Mosque in Central Java, **below:** ornamental animal motifs on one of the Surowono temple panels in East Java.

3.2.1 Patterned ornaments Kala

Patterned ornaments when numbering 16, lined up 2x8 on padasan (tub for *wudlu*), functioned as an ornament of *wudlu* water shower, next to the main building of the mosque. The shape of the padasan is stylistic and decorative. Kala is an imaginary creature (mythological). In Hindu-Buddhist mythology, when described as a giant doorkeeper who is believed to be a giver of good strength and repellent evil forces. Local people refer to the motif as *kedhok* (mask). The creature at that time had a big nose, three eyes (two left-right eyes and one full eye in the middle), patterned like ukel. Solichin Salam connects the eight showers of ablution water with the teachings of the supplication or the eight ways of virtue. Astasanghikamarga is the teaching of the Buddha which was first given to his students at Benares (India), consisting of true knowledge, right decisions, right words, right actions, right work, right effort, right meditation, and true contemplation (pure, sublime). In principle in Islamic teachings, the function of padasan is a place of purification (ablution) for worshipers who want to perform prayers. Islamic teachings strongly prioritize cleanliness (purity), so that ablution becomes a prerequisite for prayer. Aside from being a medium of purification physically, ablution has the meaning of purifying oneself spiritually, symbolically washed limbs are the ones most often used to sin. Thus every person who will enter the Sunan Kudus mosque must be in a state of inner and outer holiness. A soul that flares up in various worldly activities will be calm after being washed with the coolness of the padasan water [11].



Figure. 2. Kala ornaments on *Padasan Menara Kudus Mosque*

3.2.3 Surya Majapahit Ornamental

The Surya Majapahit ornament is found on several tombstones of the princes and the family of Sunan Kudus located near the cupola of the tomb of Sunan Kudus. Surya Majapahit is an eight-star shape with a round circle in the center, depicting the sun (solar) with its light beam. Surya Majapahit is a symbol of the Majapahit Kingdom. The most common form of Surya Majapahit consists of images of nine deities and eight beams of sunlight. The circle in the middle displays nine Hindu gods called Dewata Nawa Sanga. The main gods in the middle are arranged in the position of eight wind direction and one in the middle. These gods are arranged in positions: Middle-Siwa, East-Iswara, West-Mahadewa, Nort-Wishnu, South-Brahma, East-Sambhu, Northwest-Sangkara, Southeast-Mahesora, Southwest-Rudra. The other companion gods are located in the outer circle of the Sun and are represented as eight sun rays: East-Indra, West-Baruna, Nort-Kuwera, South-Yama, Northeast: Isana, Northwest-Bayu, Southeast-Agni, Southwest-Nrtti [12].

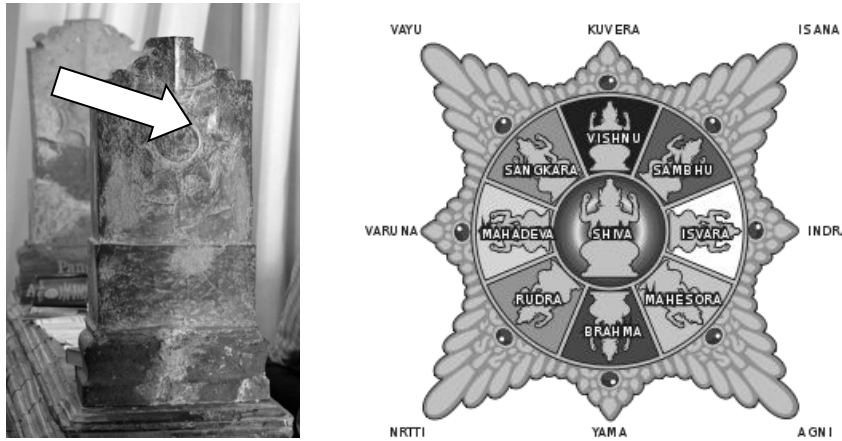


Figure. 3. left: Surya majapahit motif on the headstone of Prince Teroeng on the site of Menara Kudus Mosque, **right:** The Surya Majapahit diagram displays the layout of the Hindu gods in the nine directions of the main wind

The existence of Surya Majapahit ornaments at the Sunan Kudus tomb complex shows the existence of a close cultural bond between Kudus which became the territory of the Demak Sultanate as an Islamic kingdom at that time and Majapahit as a Hindu Kingdom. The spread of Islam by Sunan Kudus did not necessarily get rid of pre-Islamic (Hindu) traditions and arts that had developed before. The tradition of ornamental art symbolic of pre-Islamic belief doctrine is maintained and respected, even applied to Islamic decorative arts. In the tradition of the Hindu belief system, the symbolic and philosophical nature of Surya Majapahit is not merely an ornament, but is a manifestation of the order of the highest beliefs and beliefs of Hinduism about the existence of gods. This is in sharp contrast to the basics of the beliefs and beliefs of the doctrine of Islam (pillars of Islam and pillars of faith) which do not recognize the existence of gods.

3.3 The multicultural dimension of the supporting community

Multicultural language can be understood as a condition or condition of society with diversity (multi) culture. In a sociological perspective, multiculturalism is closely related to the characteristics of society, therefore an understanding of multiculturalism is positioned with a multicultural society. In the scientific repertoire, the term multicultural is distinguished into several simpler expressions, such as plurality (plurality) matching the existence of things that are more than one, diversity (diversity) shows the existence of different, heterogeneous, and which cannot be equated. In the online encyclopedia it is written that multicultural society (multicultural society) is a society consisting of many cultures and between supporters of culture respect one another. Multicultural society is a society that adheres to multiculturalism, which is a notion that assumes that different cultures have an equal position. A multicultural society is a society consisting of several types of cultural communities with all their strengths, with little difference in conceptions about the world, a system of meanings, values, forms of social organization, history, customs and habits. Thus it can be affirmed that multicultural is a term used to describe the nature, condition, or condition of society which emphasizes acceptance of diversity, and various kinds of cultures that live and develop in people's lives concerning aspects of values, norms, systems, traditions, their habits, beliefs, and politics [13]. In the perspective

of multiculturalism ideology is an ideology that recognizes and glorifies differences in equality both individually and culturally [14]. Multiculturalism includes ideas, perspectives, policies, attitudes and actions, by the people of a country, which are diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, religion and so on, but have aspirations to develop the same national spirit and have the pride to maintain that plurality.

Basically, the art and culture support community is associated with the ornament of the Menara Kudus Mosque complex, a multicultural society. The diversity of ideas originating in various traditions, beliefs, and beliefs in the ornamentation of mosque buildings and the tombs of Sunan Kudus, a spreader of Islam (guardian) that is upheld by its teachings, is accepted and appreciated from the past to the present. Pre-Islamic ornaments are maintained continuously and combined with Islamic characteristic ornaments in harmony. The multicultural dimension that forms tolerance towards diversity and difference is not only manifested in physical culture but also in mental attitude and social behavior. The traditional Kudus community, even though it is Muslim, up to now sacrificing slaughter especially eating beef as a manifestation of a multicultural society that highly respects and upholds tolerance there is a Hindu religious community to practice the teachings of Sunan Kudus.

4 Conclusion

Ornaments in the building of the Menara Kudus Mosque have a symptom of the diversity of forms, styles, and traditions of trust that lie behind it. The motifs in ornament are in the form of tendrils, geometric, curvilinear, living creatures (figurative), Arabic calligraphy and so on which are derived from ideal ideas (values) guided by the supporting community. Ornaments with these motifs are harmoniously integrated and complement each other. The aesthetic embodiment of the Menara Kudus Mosque's art ornament, which includes aspects of the decorative motif and its patterning, style of expression (style), and reference to its embodiment is the continuation of the pre-Islamic (Hindu-Buddhist) ornamental art tradition. Ornaments of the Menara Kudus Mosque are embodiments of physical culture (artifacts) that reflect the phenomena (phenomena) of traditional cultures during the early development of Islam in Java as well as manifestations and become symbolic statements about the ideal ideas of (multicultural) cultural diversity of the supporting communities. In the perspective of value conservation, the multicultural value is very relevant and urgent as one of the basic spirits of the development and development of contemporary cultures and a form of concern for the traditions of the past culture as well as an effort to document and disseminate media for supporting communities.

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