

Study of Decorative Arts of the Masjid Agung of Palembang in Islamic Aesthetics and Cultural Cosmology

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ABSTRACT: *This research examines the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang as a representation of Islamic aesthetics and cultural cosmology. This research aims to interpret the visual forms and meanings of the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang in order to reveal the cultural cosmology values it represents. The research uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques including literature review, field observation, and in-depth interviews. Data analysis includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. The research results show that the decorative art of the Masjid Agung Palembang is the result of a cultural acculturation process between local traditions, Islamic values, and previous cultures. The influence of Islam is reflected in the transformation of motif forms dominated by non-figurative motifs such as flora and calligraphy, as well as in the shift of meaning orientation towards spiritual and monotheistic values. This research also found that the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang represents a cultural cosmology manifested through three main relations: the transcendental relation between humans and God, the socio-cultural relation between humans and fellow humans, and the relation between humans and nature. These three relations are present through various decorative motifs that contain religious, social, cultural, and ecological values. The findings of this research contribute to the development of Islamic art studies and local wisdom as symbolic media that represent the cosmological views of society.*

KEYWORDS - *Decorative Arts, Great Mosque of Palembang, Islamic Aesthetics, Cultural Cosmology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The city of Palembang is located in the eastern part of Sumatra Island with a low-lying swampy area. Its geological condition is characterised by soil types consisting of alluvial layers from sedimentation and sandy clay [1]. The strategic location on the waterway route made Palembang City a trade center from the Sriwijaya period (7th-13th century AD) to the Sultanate period (17th-19th century AD), with a flow of merchants arriving from various regions of Asia. These dynamics shaped a multi-ethnic society, including Arab, Chinese, Malay groups, as well as local communities such as Komering, Sekayu, and Ogan. Overall, around twenty ethnic groups are recorded to inhabit this area, spread from the city center to the outskirts, the interior, and the regions of Bangka and Belitung [2].

The ethnic diversity in Palembang gives rise to a unique wealth of art and culture. The Great Mosque of Palembang, as a historical building, is a reflection of various historical buildings that are hundreds of years old. Masjid Agung Palembang is the oldest and largest mosque in the city of Palembang that still exists to this day.

The architecture of the Masjid Agung has artistic value adorned with various decorative motifs on each side. The decorative motif elements make this Grand Mosque unique compared to other mosques.

The mosque, built in 1738 and completed in 1748, was such a fantastic mosque during the Palembang Sultanate that it amazed a European, Dr. Otto Mohnike, a German who came to Palembang in 1874. He said, "sie ist eine der grnssen und schonsten in Nieder" (one of the most beautiful and largest mosques in the Dutch East Indies) [3]. This mosque was previously named Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I Jayo Wikramo Mosque, commonly referred to as Masjid Sulton, but during the colonial period, its name was changed to Masjid Agung. The colonial goal was to erase symbols associated with the Sultanate (Ust. Andi, interview, 1-1-2026).

The Great Mosque of Palembang, besides being influenced by external architecture, also has local cultural influences, which are evident in the decorative elements used in the Mosque's structure, both in the interior and exterior. The decorative motifs used are typical Palembang carvings that highlight wood and golden leaf. The carvings are in the shape of flowers, leaves, and tendrils, extending from the neck of the mustaka to the entrance doors [4].

In terms of architecture, the characteristic of the Grand Mosque building is commonly referred to as a mosque with a mustaka. It is called that because the top roof is separated from the roof below it, which is supported by columns on the ground. Its shape then resembles a head and body separated by a neck. The word "mustaka" is synonymous with "head." [5]. Buya Hamka in explains the meaning of Mustaka: the first level means Sharia and human deeds. The second level means Tariqah, which is the path to achieving the pleasure of Allah SWT. The top of the third level means Haqiqat, which is the essence or reality of a person's deeds and actions. The peak (Mustoko) signifies Ma'rifat, which is the level of recognising the Most High God. The tip of the tower is conical like a tumpeng. Tumpeng or the mountain shape in the archipelago's culture has a meaning that connects humans with their God, humans with their nature, and humans with fellow humans [6].

Masjid Agung Palembang is one of the oldest and largest mosques in the city of Palembang that still exists to this day. The architecture of the Masjid Agung has artistic value adorned with various decorative motifs on each side. The decorative motif elements make this Grand Mosque unique compared to other mosques. The mosque, built in 1738 and completed in 1748, was such a fantastic mosque during the Palembang Sultanate that it amazed a European, Dr. Otto Mohnike, a German who came to Palembang in 1874. He said, "sie ist eine der grnssen und schonsten in Nieder" (one of the most beautiful and largest mosques in the Dutch East Indies) [7].

The Great Mosque of Palembang, besides being influenced by external factors in its architecture, also has local cultural influences, which are evident in the decorative motifs used in the mosque's building, both in its interior and exterior. The decorative motifs used are typical Palembang carvings that highlight wood and golden mother-of-pearl. The carvings are in the shape of flowers, leaves, and tendrils, extending from the neck of the mustaka to the entrance doors [8].

The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang not only presents a sublime aesthetic value but also represents the symbol of the greatness of the Sultanate of Palembang Darussalam, known as a power that upholds Islamic values and religious life. These findings indicate that the embodiment of decorative art in the Great Mosque of Palembang cannot be separated from the Islamic values that underlie its aesthetic aspects. Research on Islamic aesthetics shows that beauty functions not only as a visual phenomenon but also as a spiritual and moral phenomenon [9]. That religious dimension then gives rise to various concepts, ideas, practices, artefacts, and cultural icons in their various forms, including in the world of art [10]. In Islamic art, ornamentation has an additional value, not merely as a surface decoration, but serves as a reminder of monotheism (divine transcendence), the transfiguration of materials (the combination of materials and the use of ornament patterns), and the transfiguration of structure [11].

The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang also shows the continuity of culture from the previous period, namely Srivijaya. The process of adapting earlier cultural forms that visually do not contradict Islamic principles is still maintained in the realisation of the ornaments. This shows a cultural awareness in maintaining historical continuity. Decorative art becomes a medium that connects religious values with cultural heritage in a unified meaning. The interconnection between visual forms and religious, cultural, and historical

values can be understood as a relationship of appearance, which is a network of meanings that do not stand apart but are interconnected and form a cohesive structure of interpretation.

The relationship of form is woven into a more fundamental system, namely cultural cosmology. Cosmology as the root of all existing cultures, one of which is art that produces visualisations of human creativity that coexist with the existing civilization [12]. Art is a cosmos. Art is a form that contains order within its entirety. A work of art cannot be viewed as a standalone entity, but rather as a symbolic system connected to cosmological values that shape its meaning and visual structure [13].

Research related to the ornamental patterns of the Great Mosque of Palembang has been conducted, such as [14], expresses that the ornaments on the Great Mosque of Palembang are influenced by Islamic values visualised through non-figurative (aniconism) ornamentation. Its forms are more dominant in plant motifs, calligraphy, and geometric patterns. The ornaments are placed on doors, windows, pillars, mihrabs, pulpits, ventilation, and mosque walls. [13], emphasising that the ornaments on the Grand Mosque of Palembang are based on Islamic aesthetics that do not depict human and animal motifs. The motifs are more likely visualised in the form of flora, geometric patterns, and calligraphy. These motifs are combined to adorn the mosque. The purpose is not solely for aesthetic value, but it also contains the cultural and religious values of the Palembang community. [14] revealing the "rek" carving motif of the Great Mosque of Palembang is inseparable from the acculturation of previous cultures, namely Hindu and Buddhist, such as the lotus and jasmine flowers. During the Palembang Sultanate, its meaning as purity was adapted into Islamic aesthetics, which referred to divine purity, glory, and prosperity. [17] Revealing elements of cultural acculturation within the Great Mosque of Palembang reflects a blend of Malay, Chinese, and European architectural styles that shape the mosque's character.

Previous research generally places ornaments as representations of Islamic aesthetics manifested through non-figurative forms. The research also revealed that, characteristically, the ornaments of the Great Mosque of Palembang are influenced by Chinese, Arab, European, and local cultures. Several studies also reveal the existence of symbolic values related to religiosity, purity, glory, and the cultural identity of the Palembang community. These studies share similarities with this research, particularly in viewing the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang as a visual medium that not only serves a decorative function but also contains religious, cultural, and symbolic values. Another similarity lies in the object of study, which focuses on the form of non-figurative ornaments, the influence of Islamic values, and the presence of cultural acculturation in the formation of the character of the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang.

The research aims to examine the representation of cosmology as a relational form that connects aesthetic, cultural, and religious values. These values show a relationship between the macrocosm represented through natural forms, the microcosm related to the social and cultural life of the community, and the transcendental connection to the spiritual and religious values of Islam. The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang is interpreted through a hermeneutic approach to understand its meaning, value, and its connection to the cultural, religious, and cosmological context that underlies its formation.

This research aims to understand the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang, not only as a form of visual ornamentation but also as an aesthetic construction that contains a system of meaning and cosmological values. Unlike previous research that tends to focus on the descriptive identification of motifs, this study aims to examine aspects of resemblance, particularly the visual structure, the origin of forms, and the process of motif stylisation. This approach is used to trace how visual forms are constructed and organised as an aesthetic system. In addition, this research also aims to uncover the process of meaning-making in decorative arts within the framework of cultural cosmology through its connections with cultural, social, and religious values.

II. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method to understand and interpret the visual forms and meanings of decorative art at the Great Mosque of Palembang. This approach focuses on cosmological studies that contain the value of interconnectedness or relational forms as expressions of cosmological relationships, namely macrocosm, microcosm, and metacosm within the visual structure of decorative art.

This research uses a hermeneutic approach to interpret the symbolic meaning of the decorative art of the Grand Mosque of Palembang, such as aesthetic value, Islamic value, and cultural cosmology. [18] revealing that the root word of hermeneutics is in the Greek verb, *hermeneuein*, which is generally translated as "to interpret," and the noun *hermeneia* is translated as "interpretation." Hermeneutics has three directions: (1) saying, revealing, conveying. This basic direction is related to the function of "proclaiming"; (2) explaining. Explanation is viewed in the context of a more fundamental explanation or interpretation, namely the interpretation that occurs when observing an object; (3) translating, the basic interpretative process of "bringing something to understanding".

This approach is used because decorative art is understood not only as a decorative element but also as a cultural text that contains structures of meaning and symbols. In its interpretive process, this research is reinforced with a cultural cosmology framework to understand the interconnections between the macrocosm, microcosm, and metacosm represented in the visual structure of decorative art.

Nelson in [19] Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field. Qualitative research touches on the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences. Art research, like qualitative research, is conducted through field involvement, where researchers strive to capture data about art and perceptions from local practitioners "from an insider's perspective" through a process of deep attention, empathetic understanding (*verstehen*), and linking or limiting preconceptions about the topic through careful discussion [20].

Data collection techniques were carried out through literature review, observation, and in-depth interviews. The literature review was used to obtain a theoretical foundation and trace previous research related to decorative arts, Islamic aesthetics, and cultural cosmology. Observation was conducted directly on the research object to observe the visual form, structure, ornament placement, and characteristics of decorative arts at the Grand Mosque of Palembang. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants who understand the history, culture, and development of the Great Mosque of Palembang to obtain data on the meaning, symbolic value, and the relationship of decorative arts with the religious, social, and cultural aspects of the community. The interviews involved four purposively selected informants: a cultural expert from South Sumatra, a historian from South Sumatra, the manager of the Agung Mosque Foundation in Palembang, and a woodcarver from Palembang. Data collection through triangulation techniques (literature review, observation, and interviews) was reinforced by field research conducted over seven months (September 2025-April 2026).

Analysis is a reflective activity aimed at moving from data to conceptual stages [21]. This research uses the data analysis structure by Miles and Huberman (1994) in [22] which formulates three main flows in interactive analysis, namely, 1) data reduction, carried out continuously during the qualitative research; 2) data presentation, covering various types of images, networks, matrices, and narratives; 3) drawing conclusions and verification through analysis of patterns, configurations, cause-and-effect relationships, and proportions that may emerge. The interactive analysis chart can be illustrated as follows.

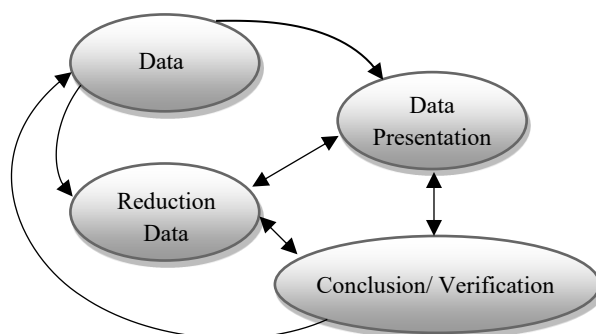


Chart 1. Data analysis flowcart of Mile and Huberman's interactive model, (Rohidi, 2011).

Through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and the repeated process of drawing conclusions and verification, this approach allows researchers to trace the interconnections between the structure of form,

ornamentation stylisation, and the symbolic meanings contained within. Furthermore, the interactive analysis model is also deemed appropriate because this research positions decorative art as a visual system that does not stand alone, but is bound by the relations of religious, social, cultural, and cosmological values that require a deep and continuous interpretive process.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Visual Characteristics of Decorative Art of the Great Mosque of Palembang

The visual character of the motif is focused on the morphological aspects, including shape, composition, pattern, and the tendency towards stylisation that occurs in each ornament. The process of stylisation shows a transformation from natural forms or certain references into more decorative and symbolic visual forms. Identification of the types of motifs, particularly those related to potential sources of ideas such as plants, becomes important to reveal the connection between visual forms and the referenced reality.

The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang features various types of motifs, such as plant motifs, geometric motifs, and calligraphic motifs. In terms of composition, the types of decorative motifs in the Great Mosque of Palembang do not stand alone, but rather are a blend of various types of motifs. The diversity of decorative motifs in the Great Mosque of Palembang is rooted in the process of cultural, political, and religious value acculturation. Its visual elements reflect the influences of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and the local culture of Palembang, with some parts, such as the window glass, being influenced by Europe. In this study, the decorative motifs of the Great Mosque of Palembang are classified into several types of motifs, such as floral, calligraphic, and geometric motifs. Each type of motif was selected from several dominant motifs.

1. Fern Plant Motif

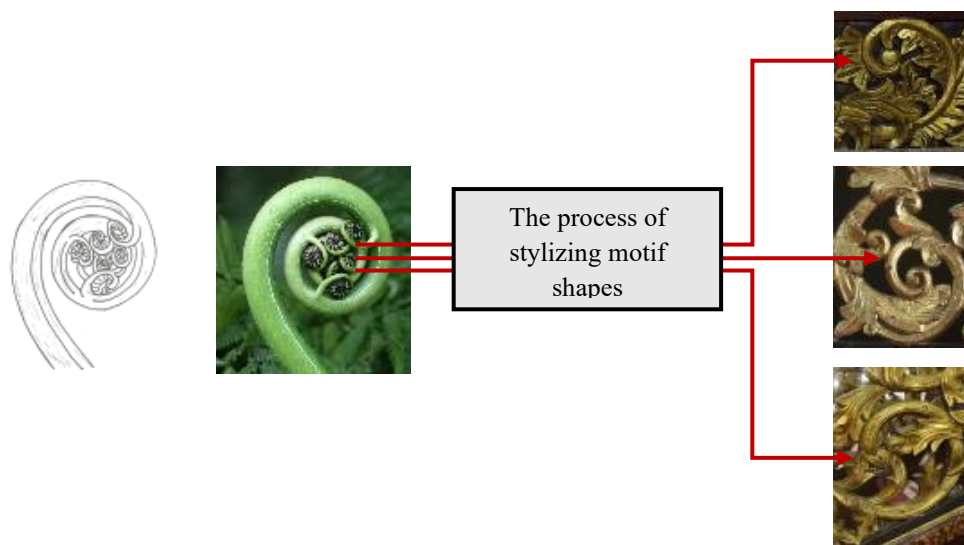


Figure 1: The process of stylising the shape of fern plants into decorative motifs.

Source: Husni, 2026

Ferns are one of the sources of inspiration in the development of floral motifs in the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang. Its presence, which is easily found in the tropical environment of Palembang, makes this plant close to the lives of the people and holds a special place in the local aesthetics. Its presence close to the community makes its form easy to adapt as an ornament.

Pakis in Latin is called *Diplazium Esculentum*. This plant belongs to the *Athyriaceae* family and is known in the archipelago as paku sayur or "pakis." This is because this type of fern can be consumed [23]. In terms of its shape, the vegetable fern consists of several leaves that grow curved from a single base point. The most prominent feature of the vegetable fern's shape is the curled tips of the young leaves, giving it an organic, soft, and ornamental appearance.

The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang shows a significant use of fern plant forms. Almost all groups of decorative motifs display the presence of the fern niche motif. Based on research findings, the fern niche motif serves as the main structure that connects various motif elements, such as tendrils, leaves, and flowers, thereby forming a cohesive visual unity. In addition to its structural role, the fern niche motif is also found at the tips of leaf motifs. This emphasises its existence as a binding element in the decorative composition of the Masjid Agung Palembang.

The shape of the motif derived from the fern plant in the image above indicates that the ornament was crafted using the typical Palembang wood carving technique, characterised by the use of golden colour as its main aesthetic feature. This motif is applied to various architectural media, including the pulpit stairs, pulpit walls, carved panels, and the mosque doors. This diverse application demonstrates the consistency of the carving style while simultaneously strengthening the visual identity of the Great Mosque of Palembang.

2. Staghorn Fern Plant

The motif of the staghorn fern is derived from the shape of the staghorn fern plant itself, which is a type of epiphytic plant that lives or attaches to tree trunks. It is called the staghorn fern because the shapes of its leaves that hang down and branch out resemble deer antlers. This type of plant is also called Simbar Menjangan, which is a plant that attaches to trees or rocks.

[23], expresses, the flora that serves as the decorative motif in Palembang carvings is the staghorn fern (*Platicerium bifurcatum*). This plant holds a very high philosophical value for the life of the Palembang community. This type of fern has two types of leaves. The first type of leaf is located at the "center" of the plant, shaped like an upright shield. Its shape causes this leaf to resemble a crown. The second type of leaf is long and hangs downwards. In the carving motif, the second type of leaf forms tendrils that fill the carving area. The plant that grows on this tall tree has a philosophy of nurturing, protecting, and providing shade to other creatures around it. Even though it grows attached to another plant, the plant does not harm its host plant.

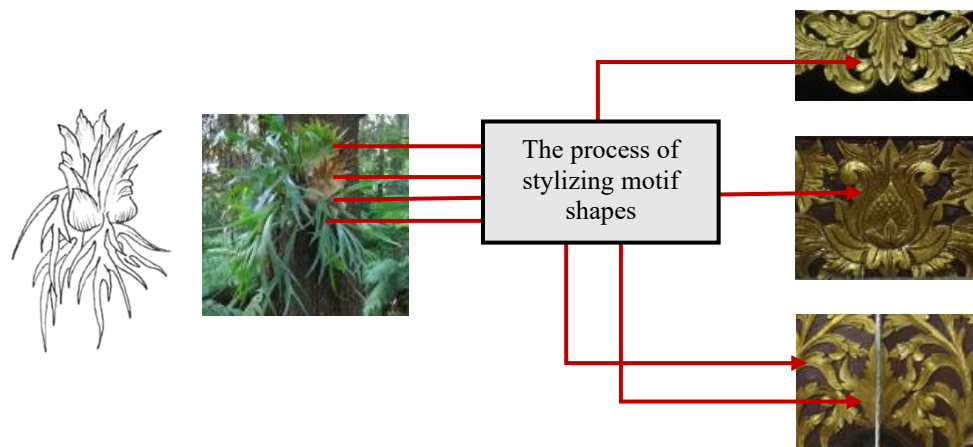


Figure 2: The process of stylising the shape of the "Antler" fern into a decorative motif.

Source: Husni, 2026

3. Jasmine Flower Pattern

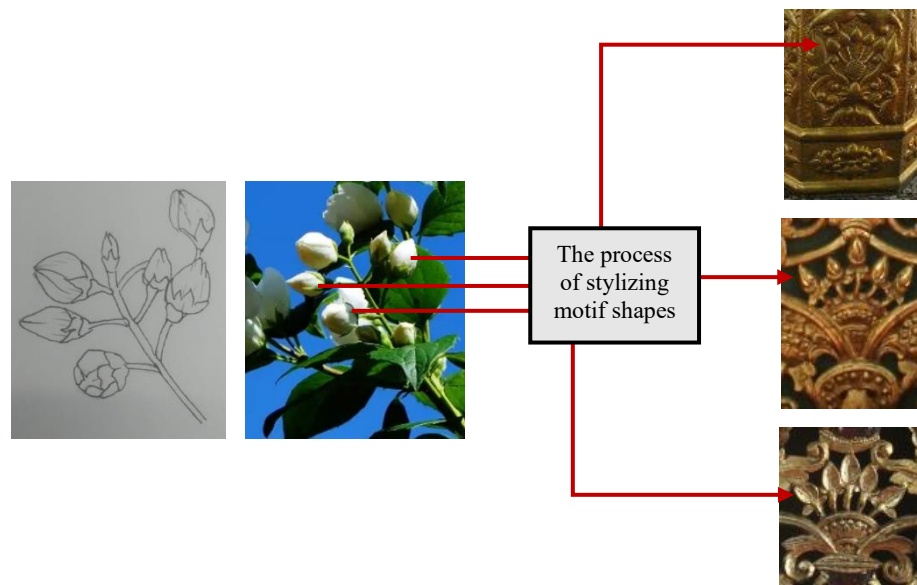


Figure 3: The process of stylizing the jasmine flower form into a decorative motif.
Source: Husni, 2026

In Malay tradition, jasmine flowers are seen as a symbol of purity, sincerity, elegance in simplicity, and humility. Its fragrance also represents purity of mind, loyalty and kindness that benefits the surrounding environment. These values make jasmine flowers not only seen as an aesthetic element, but also as a representation of the noble character that lives in the culture of the Palembang Malay community. The presence of jasmine flower motifs in the Palembang Grand Mosque shows the process of transforming local floral forms into an ornamental visual language that is in harmony with the aesthetic character of Malay Islam.

The philosophical values embodied in the jasmine flower motif extend beyond its visual beauty, reflecting the integration of local Malay wisdom with Islamic values. Rather than depicting the flower in a realistic manner, the motif is stylized into flowing ornamental forms that conform to the Islamic aesthetic principle of non-figurative representation (*aniconism*). This transformation demonstrates that ornamentation in the Great Mosque of Palembang functions not merely as decoration but also as a symbolic medium that conveys spiritual purity, moral refinement, and cultural continuity. Consequently, the jasmine motif represents the harmonious relationship between local cultural heritage and Islamic artistic values, reinforcing the distinctive visual identity of the Palembang Grand Mosque.

4. Cempako Flower Motif

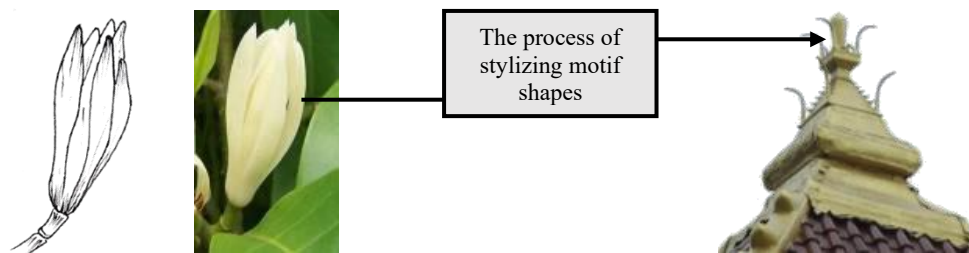


Figure 4: The process of stylizing the shape of the cempaka telok flower into a decorative motif.
Source: Husni, 2026

The motif of the cempaka telok flower at the pinnacle of the Grand Mosque Palembang is known in the Palembang decorative arts tradition as the *simbar berjurai* motif. The term *simbar* refers to a decorative form that develops and hangs down, while *berjurai* indicates an arrangement of elements that extend downward or outward gradually.

The motif of the cempaka telok flower on the *mustaka* of the Masjid Agung Palembang displays a form that is vertical, symmetrical, and has undergone stylisation. Visually, its composition is arranged in a tiered structure that narrows towards the top, resembling a crown or the tip of a tower. At the very top, there is an element resembling a cempaka flower bud with an elongated and pointed shape, while surrounding it are curved ornaments that extend outward, resembling petals or blossoming tendrils. The lower part consists of layered fields with sharp lines that create an impression of solidity and stability. The overall form does not display a naturalistic representation of flora, but rather a stylisation that emphasises decorative and symbolic aspects.

5. Fruit Plant Motif

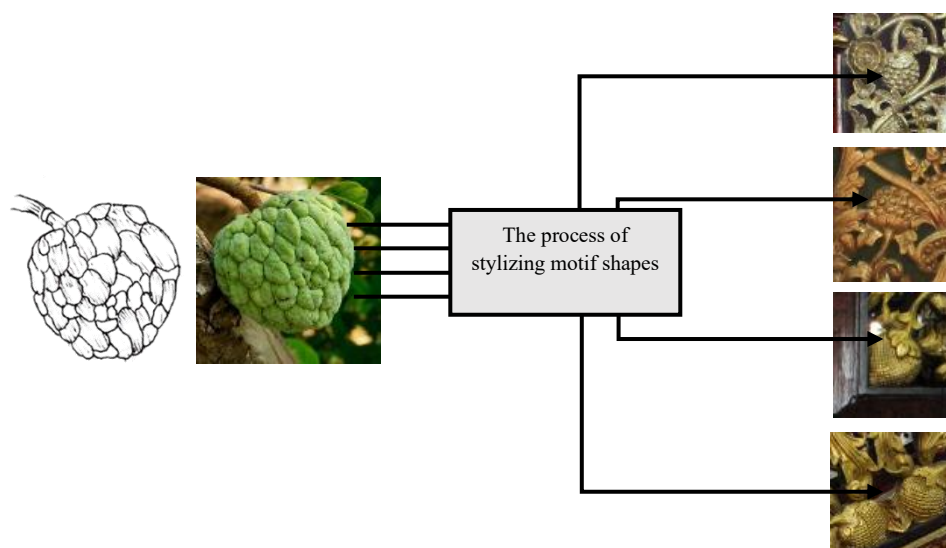


Figure 5: The process of stylizing the shape of a soursop fruit into a decorative motif.
Source: Husni, 2026

The motif of the *srikaya* fruit is one of the motifs commonly found in the decorative arts of the Masjid Agung Palembang. The *srikaya* fruit is characterised by its round to slightly elongated shape with a segmented

skin surface resembling scales or geometric protrusions arranged in a repetitive and orderly manner. The visual structure of the srikaya fruit, especially on its skin surface pattern, exhibits a strong and rhythmic form regularity, giving it high aesthetic potential to be developed into decorative motifs.

In the context of the life of the Palembang community during the Sultanate era, the soursop plant was one of the types of fruit trees commonly planted in home yards. The presence of the srikaya tree in the yard not only serves as a source of food but also as part of the residential landscape that creates a natural and cool atmosphere. The community's closeness to this plant makes the soursop fruit a part of their daily visual and cultural experience, which then contributes to the formation of the aesthetic imagination of the Palembang people.

The soursop fruit motif is also found in the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang, where this motif is integrated with other floral motifs. In the composition of the mosque's ornaments, the srikaya fruit motif often serves as the core motif, which is the main element that becomes the center of the decorative variety surrounding it. Its presence does not stand alone, but rather integrates into the ornamentation system that forms a visual unity and symbolic meaning in the mosque building.

6. Lafaz Allah Calligraphy Motif



Figure 6: Various styles of Allah calligraphy as the central decorative motif.

Source: Husni, 2026

The motif of the calligraphy of the word "Allah" in the Great Mosque of Palembang is applied using various techniques, such as wood carving, lacquer painting, and wall painting. The calligraphy of the word Allah tends to be made in circular lines with a golden colour. Almost every area contains the calligraphy of the word Allah, such as in the mihrab (the imam's place), the pulpit, windows, doors, walls, ventilation, and the mosque's drum. Generally, it is only placed in the mosque room at a higher position and is not allowed to be placed on the floor. The calligraphy of the word Allah is often paired with the calligraphy of Muhammad SAW.

7. Lafaz Muhammad Calligraphy Motif

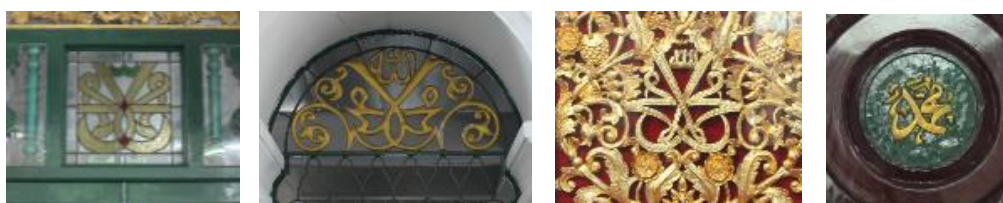


Figure 7: Lafaz Muhammad “bertangkup” is a combination of calligraphy and local culture.

Source: Husni, 2026

The calligraphic motif of the phrase Muhammad at the Grand Mosque of Palembang is made using the technique of translucent wood carving with a golden colour, stained glass technique, and metal welding technique. The motif of the calligraphic inscription of the name Muhammad is generally placed on media such as ventilation,

windows, stained glass, and pulpits. The decorative motif of the phrase Muhammad stands out as an icon of the decorative arts at the Great Mosque of Palembang. The decorative motif of the phrase Muhammad at the Great Mosque of Palembang is known as Muhammad bertangkup, which is a form of carving the phrase Muhammad arranged in a facing or symmetrical manner. The arrangement forms a harmonious and balanced visual composition as part of the character of Islamic decorative art. In addition to serving as a decorative element, this motif also represents respect for the Prophet Muhammad SAW and reinforces religious identity within the mosque space. The stylisation of Arabic letters into the distinctive Palembang carving patterns demonstrates the integration of local carving art traditions with Islamic aesthetic values.

3.2 Cultural Acculturation in the Decorative Arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang

The city of Palembang has a long history, from the Sriwijaya era (Hindu-Buddhist), the Islamic period (Sultanate), the colonial era (Dutch), to independence. Before Islam developed in Palembang, this city had already functioned as a bustling trading port and a stopover for merchants from various countries, including China and Europe [24]. The location of the Sriwijaya kingdom was also very strategic, close to the Musi River, which was a shipping and trade route between regions, making the Sriwijaya kingdom a trading port at that time Susanto in Susanti [25]. The entry of Hindu-Buddhist culture (India-China) into Palembang is estimated to have occurred since the 5th century AD through trade routes. Islamic culture is estimated to have entered Palembang in the 7th century AD, while the influence of European culture began to show growth since the 16th century AD [26]. Each of these civilisations has influenced the social, cultural, economic, political, and religious aspects of the Palembang community [27].

The ethnic diversity in the city of Palembang gives birth to distinctive arts and culture, as a form of the cultural acculturation process, one of which is evident in the architectural building of the Great Mosque of Palembang. Cultural acculturation is the mixing of two or more cultures, which meet and influence each other, marked by bilingualism [28]. One of the prerequisites for acculturation is uniformity, which is the level of similarity in the hierarchy and patterns of culture that allows new cultural values to be adopted because they are considered useful, both substantively and aesthetically. Values that are deemed relevant and beneficial to the receiving culture tend to show greater resilience and continuity [29].

According to Abdul Baqir Zein, the architecture of the Great Mosque of Palembang is a blend of three cultures: Chinese, Arab, and Malay. The architectural art of the Grand Mosque, which features tiered levels, resembles a pagoda representing Chinese culture. The hexagonal and other square shapes seen on the tower, the inner pillars, and the tower that seem to be adorned with white and green lace are characteristic of Malay Islamic architecture. Meanwhile, the mihrab flanked by two pieces of art rich in calligraphy and a pulpit resembling the Prophet's pulpit in Madinah al-Munawwarah is a heritage of Arab Islamic tradition [30].

The Chinese cultural elements that influence the architecture of the Grand Mosque can be seen in the mosque's roof and the minaret's roof, which resemble a temple, featuring eaves that resemble goat horns on each side. The Arab cultural elements are evident in the calligraphic and geometric motifs applied to the walls of the Mosque. European culture in the Great Mosque of Palembang is evident in the arched doors, tall windows, and stained glass ordered directly from Europe (the Netherlands). The local culture is reflected in the wooden carvings with a golden pearl colour that signifies glory [31].

Palembang Grand Mosque as a representation of the advancement of Islamic civilisation in the 18th century, while also becoming a symbol of cultural identity and the political glory of the Sultanate of Palembang. The beauty and grandeur reflect advanced development, as well as the integration of local architectural elements, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and European influences, one of which can be seen in the decorative arts. The Great Mosque of Palembang, besides being influenced by external architecture, also incorporates local cultural influences, which can be seen in the decorative elements used in the Mosque's structure, both in the interior and exterior. The decorative motifs used are typical Palembang carvings that highlight wood and golden leaf. The carvings are in the shape of flowers, leaves, and tendrils, extending from the neck of the mustaka to the entrance doors [32].

Erwan in [33] expresses, the influence of Islam in South Sumatra on fine arts, particularly decorative arts, aesthetically undergoes a process of renewal (acculturation) with the previous teachings (Hindu-Buddha). Islamic teachings have a significant influence on the dimensions of mysticism, spiritualism, and theologism in decorative arts. This fact can be seen in the "tendency of ornamentation" motifs in South Sumatra, which prefer flora (plants) over fauna (animals) and humans.



Figure 8: Eksterior and Interior of the Great Mosque of Palembang.
Source: Husni, 2026

3.3 Islamic Values in the Aesthetics of Decorative Art of the Great Mosque of Palembang

Aesthetics can be interpreted as elements that involve sensitivity, skill, experience, and a creative process implemented into various forms of creation, whether thematic or non-thematic [34]. Aesthetics as the epistemology of beauty is not only related to visual aspects but is also bound to the system of values and meanings that encompass it. In the context of Islamic art, beauty is understood as a representation of spiritual and religious values that form the structure of meaning in artistic works. Islam places the concept of art with elements that are subtle, beautiful, lovely, and sacred to bring salvation to humanity and draw closer to Allah SWT [35].

Islam has a prohibition against depicting living beings but does not eliminate art. Non-representational and decorative artworks are a unique dimension of Islamic art products [36]. Empirical data on the decorative arts of the Masjid Agung Palembang show that the influence of Islamic values is evident in the dominance of non-figurative ornaments in the form of floral, geometric, and calligraphic motifs that developed as a form of Islamic aesthetics avoiding realistic representations of living beings. In this context, decorative arts not only function as decorative elements but also as visual media that represent spiritual values, purity, and religiosity.

The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang reflects the ideological control within the power structure that is religiously legitimised. The sultanate and religious scholars played a role in determining the boundaries of visual representation, so decorative art is the result of a construction between aesthetics, religion, and power, and is not autonomous. Syarofie (interview, January 15, 2026) revealed that during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I, carving art flourished as a representation of power, grandeur, and prosperity. The production of carved artworks, as well as the architecture of the Limas house as the traditional house of Palembang, was regulated by the state, with the princes playing a crucial role as executors and supervisors.

The Great Mosque of Palembang not only serves as a space for religious rituals but also as a medium for representing aesthetic values influenced by Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and local culture. The form, type, and placement of decorative arts in the Great Mosque of Palembang reflect the beauty of form, order, harmony, unity, balance, and identity. From the description above, the influence of Islamic values on the aesthetics of the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang can be understood through three main aspects, namely:

1. Visual forms, the influence of Islam is seen through a selective transformation process that tends to avoid realistic representations of human and animal figures. This process gives birth to non-figurative forms in the form of floral, geometric, and calligraphic motifs that undergo stylisation into patterns of curved,

rhythmic, and repetitive lines. Plant forms are no longer visualised in their entirety, but rather simplified into decorative arrangements of tendrils, leaves, and flowers. The visual structure forms an aesthetic character that is harmonious and religious as part of the visual principles in Islamic art.

2. The meaning, the influence of Islam shows a shift in interpretation that is spiritual and transcendental in nature. The motifs that previously developed in Hindu-Buddhist culture were not completely eliminated, but rather underwent a reinterpretation of meaning in accordance with the monotheistic values of Islam. This shift did not erase the forms of the motifs that had previously developed, but adapted their meanings to align with Islamic values. This is evident in the motifs of the lotus flower and jasmine flower, both of which are interpreted as symbols of purity but have different orientations of belief. In previous traditions, purity was associated with the symbolism of deities, whereas in the context of Islam, it is interpreted as a representation of spiritual purity orientated towards Allah SWT. This shift in meaning indicates that the aesthetics of the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang are not only at the visual level but also serve as a medium for representing the religious and spiritual values of the community.
3. Cultural awareness, the aesthetics of the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang are formed through a cultural dialogue between local traditions and Islamic values, resulting in a multicultural visual character without losing its religious identity. The process demonstrates cultural awareness in preserving visual elements from previous traditions through mechanisms of adaptation and meaning adjustment in accordance with Islamic teachings. Ornamental forms such as lotus, jasmine, and simbar were not completely eliminated, but rather preserved as part of the cultural memory of the Palembang community, which has undergone religious reinterpretation. This shows that the development of decorative art in the Great Mosque of Palembang did not occur in isolation from previous cultures, but through a transformation process that maintained the continuity of historical and local cultural identity. In this context, aesthetics is not only understood as a matter of visual beauty but also as a representation of cultural awareness that connects historical values, spirituality, and community identity within the visual structure of mosque ornamentation.

3.4 Islamic Values in the Aesthetics of Decorative Art of the Great Mosque of Palembang

The relationship of the cosmological concept in the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang can be interpreted as a traditional art form derived from the spiritual and cultural understanding of the Palembang community. The calligraphic motifs reflect the vertical relationship between humans and God, as a form of reverence towards revelation and prophethood. Decorative art with plant motifs depicts the interconnectedness of humans with nature as part of the cosmic order. The decorative elements of the Great Mosque of Palembang reflect values that create harmony between the aspects of divinity, humanity, and nature within a unified belief system.

Islamic cosmology provides a conceptual foundation regarding monotheism, the order of the cosmos, as well as the concepts of ayat qauliyah (revelation) and kauniyah (signs of power, phenomena), while cultural cosmology opens up space to understand how these values are articulated in the local, historical, and social context of the Palembang community.

Cosmology in the Islamic view is the unity of the universe as a unity of divine principles, both related to the microcosm and the macrocosm [37]. Expresses, in traditional civilisations such as Islam, the sciences of cosmology integrate various natural phenomena into conceptual schemes that all reflect the principles of revelation and central ideas with numerous applications in the domain of contingency. In this way, the cosmology of traditional art processes also selects from the diversity of forms of application that align with the spirit of tradition that emerges in its soul [38].

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's perspective shows that traditional art cannot be separated from the cosmology that underlies a civilisation. In Islamic tradition, forms of art are manifestations of revealed values that connect nature, humanity, and God within a cosmic order. That perspective is relevant for understanding the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang, which features various forms of flora, calligraphy, and decorative ornaments as a result of cultural adaptation that remains orientated towards Islamic values.

3.5 Transcendental Relations in the Decorative Arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang

The transcendental relationship in the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang is reflected through various visual forms that represent the relationship between humans and God. In this context, decorative art becomes a visual representation of religious beliefs that place God at the center of life's orientation.

Table 3.1 The relationship of decorative motif meanings in the transcendental concept

No	Motif Name	Placement of Motifs	Motif Meaning
1	Lafaz Allah 	- Mosque door ventilation - Window ventilation - Mosque door leaf - Mihrab - Pulpit	- Symbol of monotheism - The transcendental relationship between humans and God. - A symbol of spiritual orientation, that all life in the universe leads to devotion to Allah SWT. - Remembering Muslims about the eternity, greatness, power and justice of God.
2	Lafaz Muhammad "Bertangkup" 	- Windows Ventilation - Mosque door leaves - Mihrab mosque - Pulpit for sermon - Pulpit for adzan - Carved panel	- Muhammad as messenger of Allah - Muhammad, a mercy to the word (mercy, compassion, and a bringer of goodness to the entire universe). - Muhammad "bertangkup" balance and harmony. The interlocking patterns symbolise cosmic harmony, the balance of life, and the complementary nature in Islam. -
3	Jasmine Flower Motif 	- Mosque mihrab - Mimbar adzan - Mosque pillars - The wall of the mustaka	- Cleansing, clarifying, and purifying, reflecting spiritual values in human life. - A transcendental meaning—specifically the concept of Divinity—representing Allah (SWT) as the Most Holy Being. - Five jasmine flower buds, signifying fundamental values within Islamic teachings: the Pillars of Islam.
4	Cempaka Flower Motif 	The pinnacle of the mosque's roof structure	- The cempako telok motif embodies the meaning of purity and nobility. This meaning has a transcendental relationship with the concept of ma'rifat, the highest level of knowing God. - Its placement at the peak of the mustaka represents the meaning of human orientation towards spiritual perfection and closeness to God.

3.6 Social-Cultural Relations in the Decorative Arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang

The socio-cultural relations in the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang are reflected through the process of acculturation and adaptation of various cultural elements that have developed in the history of Palembang society. The presence of motifs derived from local traditions as well as previous cultures indicates a continuity of cultural values that are collectively inherited. Decorative arts not only represent Islamic identity but also serve as a medium that records historical traces, cultural awareness, and social interactions of the community in building the cultural identity of Palembang.

Table 3.2 The relationship of decorative motif meanings in the socio-cultural concept.

No	Motif Name	Placement of Motif	Motif Meaning
1	Muhammad " <i>Bertangkup</i> " 	- Mosque door ventilation - Window ventilation - Mosque door leaf - Mihrab - Pulpit	- Muhammad, a mercy to the word (mercy, compassion, and a bringer of goodness to the entire universe). - Emulating the morals and behaviour of Muhammad - Harmonious and just human relationship - Inviting goodness in our shared life.
2	Jasmine Flower Motif 	- Mosque mihrab - Mimbar adzan - Mosque pillars - The wall of the mustaka	- Representation of purity, meaning self-purification and behaviour control based on values of goodness and humanity. - Representation of clarity, meaning the clarity of heart in building harmonious social relationships among humans. - The jasmine flower symbolizes moral resilience and steadfastness in upholding ethical values amid social challenges.
3	Fern Motif 	- Daun pintu - Mimbar khutbah - Mosque mihrab	- Ferns tend to grow in clusters, reflecting the values of togetherness and solidarity. - The ability of ferns to maintain moisture in their surrounding environment reflects the attitude of care and mutual benefit.
4	Motif Tumbuhan Pakis Tanduk Rusa 	- Door leaf - Pulpit - Mosque mihrab	- The ability to provide shade for surrounding plants teaches the importance of protecting, guiding, and benefiting others. - Living with other plants without harming the host conveys the meaning of being grateful and benefiting fellow humans. - Leaves that droop downwards forming tendrils reflect the meaning of togetherness, care, and the

5	Motif Buah Serikaya dan Benunu		- Mosque mihrab - Mimbar adzan - Door leaf	interconnectedness of humans in the continuity of life.
				The motif of the custard apple and the benunu fruit represents the values of welfare and prosperity, reflecting the community's hopes for a life of sufficiency, balance, and sustainability.

3.7 Relations Nature in the Decorative Arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang

The relationship between humans and nature in the decorative arts of the Great Mosque of Palembang is reflected through the dominance of floral motifs derived from various forms of plants, such as tendrils, leaves, flowers, and fruits. The presence of these motifs shows that nature is not merely viewed as a visual object, but as a source of inspiration, a cultural space, and an integral part of the life of the Palembang community that thrives in the Musi River environment. Through the process of stylisation, elements of flora are transformed into symbols that represent order, balance, and the continuity of life. In a cosmological perspective, the representation of flora in decorative arts reflects an awareness of the harmonious relationship between humans and nature, while also viewing humans as manifestations of Allah SWT's greatness. The floral motifs in the decorative arts of the Grand Mosque not only present visual beauty but also reflect spiritual values, local wisdom, and the worldview of a society that sees nature as an inseparable part of the cosmic order.

IV. CONCLUSION

The decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang has its own distinctive features as part of the local cultural identity of Palembang. In addition to providing aesthetic values to the architectural elements of the mosque, the decorative arts of the Masjid Agung Palembang also represent a system of meaning formed through the interaction between local culture, Islamic values, and the cosmological views of the Palembang community. This research shows that the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang is an aesthetic representation formed through the process of acculturation between local culture and Islamic values.

The influence of Islam is not only evident in the transformation of visual forms that tend to be non-figurative through the dominance of floral, geometric, and calligraphic motifs, but also in the shift of meaning orientation that directs cultural symbols towards the values of monotheism. The research findings reveal that the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang can be understood as a system of symbols containing constructions of religious, social, cultural, and ecological meanings. This research also shows that the values of cultural cosmology in the decorative art of the Great Mosque of Palembang are represented through three main relations, namely the transcendental relation between humans and God, the socio-cultural relation between humans and fellow humans, and the relation between humans and nature. These three relations form a cosmological view that illustrates the interconnectedness between the spiritual dimension, social life, and the natural environment in a unified meaning. This finding provides a new contribution to the study of Islamic art by positioning mosque ornamentation as a representation of cultural cosmology that reflects how society constructs the relationship between God, humans, and nature through visual language.

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