

Islamic Aesthetics in the Carvings of the Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, Padang, West Sumatra



Suryanti¹, Sumadi², Hartitom³, Mega Kencana⁴, Indra Irawan⁵, Yandri⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Institut Seni Indonesia Padangpanjang, West Sumatera, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: This study explores the aesthetic significance of the wood carvings in the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, located in Padang, West Sumatra. The mosque's intricate decorations exemplify Islamic artistic traditions and provide a unique perspective on how Islamic aesthetics are preserved and transformed in regional Indonesian architecture. This research highlights the relationship between Islamic art, cultural identity, and regional adaptation. The objective is to understand the symbolic meanings, materials, and methods used in the carvings and their connection to broader Islamic aesthetics. Using qualitative research methods, including field observations and document analysis, this study examines the motifs, symbolism, and techniques incorporated into the mosque's carvings. Findings reveal that the carvings exhibit influences of traditional Minangkabau motifs intertwined with Islamic themes, such as geometric patterns and floral designs, that symbolize unity, faith, and the transcendence of the divine. These elements are not merely decorative but hold spiritual and cultural significance. The study concludes by affirming the role of Islamic art in cultural identity preservation and the importance of recognizing the synergy between local traditions and global Islamic aesthetics. The recommendations include further exploration of the intersection between local and Islamic art traditions to promote cultural heritage awareness and education.

KEYWORDS- Minangkabau, masjid, carvings, identity, culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque in Padang, West Sumatra, exemplifies the fusion of Islamic architectural principles with local cultural features. The architectural style, particularly the elaborate wood carvings adorning the mosque, exemplifies a fusion of Islamic art and Minangkabau traditions. The mosque functions as a spiritual hub for the local Muslim community and represents the cultural identity of the Minangkabau people, known for their exceptional woodcraft and intricate geometric designs (Gullick, 1987). The Minangkabau culture, characterized by its matrilineal structure and distinctive traditional arts, has profoundly influenced the mosque's beauty, establishing it as a cultural monument in the region. The amalgamation of Islamic art and Minangkabau traditions has not garnered extensive academic scrutiny, especially concerning the role of these wood carvings in the discourse of Islamic architecture in Southeast Asia (Varga, 2020). Researchers like Hillenbrand (2000) have highlighted the significance of regional variances in Islamic architecture, positing that these influences enhance the comprehension of Islamic art, as exemplified by this mosque.

Islamic art, renowned for its geometric accuracy, calligraphy, and abstract portrayal, overcomes geographical limitations by highlighting universal themes of divine beauty and spiritual unity. Nasr (1987) contends that Islamic art primarily seeks to convey the divine through abstract forms, with geometric patterns, arabesques, and floral motifs representing the boundless essence of Allah. These forms serve not only a decorative purpose but also aim to convey a sense of the eternal and transcendent, with repetition and symmetry symbolizing divine order (Nasr, 1987). Islamic art has not been static in its pursuit of abstraction; it has evolved to accommodate local situations, especially in Southeast Asia. Hillenbrand (2024) asserts that the amalgamation of Islamic creative principles with regional cultural aspects has resulted in a unique manifestation of Islamic art in Southeast Asia, wherein local traditions are intricately integrated into the overarching aesthetic. In Indonesia, this synthesis is seen in mosque design, which incorporates indigenous elements alongside Islamic symbols, resulting in a hybrid architectural style that reflects both faith and culture. The adaptability of Islamic art facilitates a localized manifestation of spiritual values while maintaining alignment with the overarching principles of Islamic aesthetics (Hillenbrand, 2024).

The Minangkabau region, home to the mosque, exhibits a remarkable amalgamation of native traditions and Islamic art. The Minangkabau are recognized for their architectural and ornamental utilization of wood, a tradition firmly rooted in their cultural

past. Vickers (2005) asserts that Minangkabau architecture is defined by its unique roofs and elaborate carvings, which fulfill both aesthetic and symbolic functions. These carvings frequently embody the cosmology and societal ideals of the community, symbolizing the equilibrium among nature, society, and the deity. The amalgamation of traditional elements with Islamic art, notably through wood carvings at the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, illustrates the expression of regional identities within Islamic architectural paradigms. According to Said (2003), the use of local symbolism in religious edifices facilitates the development of architecture that is both spiritually significant and culturally relevant.

The mosque's wood carvings, including intricate geometric patterns and symbolic themes, offer a visual story that links the region's Islamic identity to its indigenous cultural values. These carvings function as decorative components and symbolize the spiritual and cultural life of the Minangkabau society. According to Berger (2004), the symbolism in Islamic art frequently communicates spiritual ideas that transcend the visual, fostering a dialogue between the sacred and the cultural. The elaborate designs of the mosque's wood carvings embody Islamic ideals of symmetry and abstraction, alongside the cultural importance of the Minangkabau people's cosmological perspective (Berger, 2004). Notwithstanding the mosque's artistic importance, the academic discussion over the function of these carvings within the wider framework of Islamic art is still constrained. Although numerous studies have examined the overall aesthetics of Islamic architecture in Southeast Asia, there is a paucity of research on the specific influence of local traditions on the evolution of Islamic creative expressions (Salamah, 2011). The Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque presents a significant case study for the convergence of Islamic and indigenous cultural expressions, a topic that remains insufficiently examined. Schimmel (1992) contends that the interaction between Islamic and indigenous art traditions is crucial for comprehending the dynamic evolution of Islamic art worldwide.

It is a monument to the harmonious merging of Islamic craftsmanship and Minangkabau cultural traditions that the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque stands as a tribute to. An excellent example of how regional adaptations of Islamic art contribute to a distinctive architectural character that is both spiritually significant and culturally resonant is this mosque, which features elaborate wood carvings. This mosque serves as an essential example. Through an examination of the significance of these carvings, the purpose of this study is to provide light on the ways in which regional customs contribute to the development of the Islamic creative discourse all over Southeast Asia. As Hadi (2018) points out, it is vital to have a grasp of the regional adaptations of Islamic art in order to have a proper appreciation for the diversity and richness of Islamic architecture as well as its evolution across the world. In spite of the fact that these carvings play a significant role in the architecture of the mosque, there has been very little research conducted to investigate their cultural value and explore how they are connected to the larger Islamic creative history. The incorporation of Minangkabau motifs, which include beautiful floral and geometric patterns, into Islamic architecture is a classic example of the connection between Islamic artistic forms and the expression of local cultural traditions. The carvings throughout the mosque feature aspects that are not only beautiful but also serve to express spiritual teachings. These sculptures draw on the symbolism that is prevalent in both the Minangkabau culture and the Islamic culture. It is especially important to understand how regional identity is portrayed via religious building, and this interaction between local art and Islamic art is extremely crucial and important. The combination of Islamic aesthetics and indigenous designs helps to cultivate a sense of belonging and continuity, which in turn reinforces the notion that Islamic art, albeit being universal in its spiritual messages, is capable of adapting to regional circumstances and local values.

The objective of this research is to fill a vacuum in the existing academic literature by concentrating on the wood carvings that are found in the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque. These carvings are considered to be an essential component of the mosque's architectural identity. The purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which these carvings act as a medium for communicating cultural values that are both Islamic and Minangkabau. Additionally, the study will investigate the manner in which the carvings, which are characterized by intricate designs and symbolic themes, are reflective of the larger aesthetic conversation that exists between Islamic art and indigenous traditions in Southeast Asian countries. In doing so, the purpose of this research is to contribute to a more in-depth knowledge of the function that the mosque plays in the maintenance and change of Islamic aesthetics within the setting of the Minangkabau. These three primary goals are the primary objectives of this study: first, to investigate the aesthetic value of the wood carvings and their role in shaping the overall architectural identity of the mosque; second, to investigate the significance of Islamic motifs and their interaction with Minangkabau influences; and third, to identify the methods, techniques, and symbolism that are embedded within these carvings. Through the execution of this analysis, the research will be able to offer vital insights into the ways in which regional art forms contribute to the larger Islamic creative legacy, as well as the ways in which these cultural expressions impact the aesthetic evolution of religious building in Southeast Asia.

The aesthetic development of religious buildings in Southeast Asia is influenced by these cultural expressions throughout the region. Because of the elaborate use of geometric patterns, arabesques, and calligraphy in Islamic art, which combined reflect a profound spiritual connection to the holy, Islamic art has been revered for a very long time. A number of academics, including Nasr (1987), have investigated the ways in which these components function as symbolic representations of divine unity, with an emphasis on abstraction rather than figurative portrayal. The Islamic belief in the ineffability of God is reflected in this concept,

which states that visual forms are utilized to portray the transcendent character of the divine. As a result, direct images of living beings are avoided. Therefore, Islamic art is strongly established in a tradition that strives to invoke the divine through harmonious patterns and designs that represent infinity and the unity of creation, rather than focusing on the material world (Nasr, 1987). This legacy has been passed down from generation to generation ever since it was first created. It is important to note that the universal principles of Islamic art have been subjected to regional variations, particularly in Southeast Asian countries. Hillenbrand (2024) asserts that these geographical variances are evidence of a fascinating synthesis of the aesthetics of the local culture with the creative traditions of Islam. Islamic art in Southeast Asia, and more notably in Indonesia, has been distinctively impacted by indigenous cultural influences. This has resulted in the development of distinct artistic forms that combine Islamic motifs with native patterns and symbols. The most obvious manifestation of this hybridization may be seen in architectural constructions such as mosques, which combine elements of traditional Islamic architecture with styles from the surrounding region to produce a unique visual identity. Hillenbrand (2024) highlights the fact that these modifications are not only ornamental but rather serve to weave together religious, cultural, and historical narratives. This is a reflection of the various ways in which Islamic art has been accepted and modified in various regions of the world.

This fusion of Islamic and local traditions is most obvious in the architectural forms of mosques in Indonesia. The incorporation of indigenous patterns such as floral motifs, batik designs, and even specific kinds of wood carving indicates the merging of local culture with Islamic principles. In addition, mosques in Indonesia are known for their distinctive architectural styles. These mosques, such as the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque in Padang, serve as cultural emblems where Islamic art meets the identity of the local community. They provide a distinctive interpretation of Islamic aesthetics within the context of Southeast Asian culture. Local cultural aesthetics have the potential to enrich and modify the larger Islamic artistic legacy, as demonstrated by the mosque's wood carvings, which combine Islamic geometric patterns with native Minangkabau designs. Not only does the combination of Islamic and regional elements not only improve the visual appeal of these structures, but it also helps to deepen the relationship between the local Muslim community and their cultural history. A rich and diversified aesthetic language that resonates with the distinctive historical, cultural, and spiritual context of the place is offered by Islamic art, which, despite being anchored in universal principles, allows for innovation and local interpretation. This is a reflection of the dynamic nature of Islamic art.

II. METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach to thoroughly investigate the intricate wood carvings at the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque. By utilizing both fieldwork and document analysis, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how these carvings embody the integration of Islamic art principles and the cultural traditions of the Minangkabau people. Fieldwork, involving on-site observation and photography, allows for a direct engagement with the physical environment of the mosque. Such engagement is crucial for capturing the nuances of the carvings, their placement, and how they interact with the architectural design of the mosque. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative field research is vital for collecting detailed data from natural settings, which allows the researcher to better understand the context and meaning behind the studied phenomena. Additionally, on-site observation helps identify how light, space, and materiality influence the perception of the carvings, offering insights that are difficult to capture through secondary sources alone (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Document analysis plays a significant role in this research, as it helps contextualize the carvings within the broader traditions of Islamic and Minangkabau art. A review of the existing literature on Islamic art traditions, particularly in Southeast Asia, allows for a comparative analysis of the mosque's artistic elements with regional and global Islamic architectural practices. According to Hillenbrand (2000), the study of Islamic art in Southeast Asia reveals how Islamic principles, such as the avoidance of figural representation and the use of abstract forms, have been adapted to local cultural contexts. Through document analysis, this research will examine historical texts, architectural records, and previous studies on Islamic art to understand the broader trends and influences that have shaped the mosque's design. Furthermore, examining the Minangkabau cultural heritage, particularly their architectural style and symbolism, provides crucial insights into how local traditions have been incorporated into the mosque's aesthetic. Gullick (1987) emphasizes that Minangkabau architecture, particularly its ornate wood carvings, represents a deep connection to the region's cosmological and societal values, which are also reflected in the mosque's design.

Additionally, document analysis will involve a review of relevant scholarly works that focus on the intersection of Islamic and indigenous art forms. Researchers like Nasr (1987) have discussed how Islamic art, while rooted in a universal aesthetic tradition, is often shaped by local cultural influences. In Southeast Asia, these influences are reflected in the way indigenous patterns and motifs are integrated into religious and architectural designs. In Indonesia, where a rich cultural diversity exists, this blending of Islamic and local elements is particularly evident in mosque architecture, where Islamic geometric patterns often coexist with traditional motifs. As Hillenbrand (2024) points out, Southeast Asian mosques often feature a hybridization of artistic forms that simultaneously maintain the sacred symbolism of Islamic art while embracing local aesthetics, offering a unique

Islamic Aesthetics in the Carvings of the Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, Padang, West Sumatra

interpretation of religious identity. By studying these sources, this research aims to shed light on how the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque represents a specific case of this broader phenomenon.

Fieldwork also involves the documentation of the mosque's carvings through photography, which not only helps capture the visual aspects of the carvings but also aids in the spatial analysis of how they interact with the architecture. According to Geertz (1973), visual ethnography is a powerful tool for understanding cultural and symbolic meanings in art and architecture. Photography allows for a precise record of the carvings' design, enabling the researcher to analyze them in detail later. This method aligns with the work of scholars like Ruggles (2015), who emphasizes the importance of visual documentation in the study of architectural and artistic heritage. The use of photography also facilitates comparison with other regional mosques, providing a broader understanding of the aesthetic practices in Islamic architecture across Southeast Asia. Moreover, the combination of fieldwork and document analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the carvings' artistic and symbolic significance. By examining the mosque through both visual and literary sources, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how Islamic art and Minangkabau traditions coexist in the mosque's design. According to Said (2003), the integration of local cultural elements in religious architecture is not only an aesthetic decision but also a cultural assertion that reflects the community's religious and social identity. This approach is especially important for understanding the role of the mosque as a cultural landmark that bridges the gap between faith and local traditions, creating a visual and symbolic dialogue that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. The findings from this qualitative approach will contribute to the scholarship on Islamic art and architecture in Southeast Asia by providing a case study of how local traditions are integrated into the religious and architectural landscape. As Vickers (2005) notes, Southeast Asian mosques are often sites of hybridization, where Islamic and indigenous art forms converge to create a unique architectural identity. By focusing on the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, this research aims to explore how such hybridization occurs at the intersection of Islamic principles and Minangkabau cultural practices.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The carvings that can be found in the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque are a witness to the merging of traditional Minangkabau designs with the universal motifs that can be found in Islamic art. The carvings are more than just a decorative element; they are a representation of a more profound and symbolic language that reflects not just the Islamic identity of the region but also its cultural history.



Figure 1. Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque

From the perspective of Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), the field of semiotics, which is the study of signs and symbols, provides a prism through which we are able to interpret the meaning that is embedded within these carvings. According to Saussure's theory, signs are made up of a "signifier" (the shape or image) and a "signified" (the meaning or notion that is associated to the image). The beautiful flower themes that are frequently seen in Minangkabau culture are more than just a representation of the natural

Islamic Aesthetics in the Carvings of the Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, Padang, West Sumatra

beauty of the world; they also reflect the concept of creation, fertility, and the interconnectedness of all life. These themes, when positioned within the framework of the mosque, transcend their local meanings and take on additional layers of significance that are associated with Islamic spirituality and the divine. The sculptures in the mosque are a rich location for semiotic research because, according to Saussure's theory, meaning is produced through the interaction between signs and the environment in which they are utilized (de Saussure, 1916).

As an additional point of interest, the semiotic theory developed by Charles Peirce in 1931, which differentiates between iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs, can be utilized to analyze the carvings of the mosque in order to comprehend the deeper spiritual meanings that they represent. In the design of the mosque, the floral and geometric patterns function as symbolic signs, reflecting abstract ideals such as oneness, spirituality, and the boundless nature of the divine by virtue of their geometric and floral patterns. For example, the recurrence of geometric patterns, which is a characteristic feature of Islamic art, might be seen as a sign of divine infinity, highlighting the unlimited essence of Allah. (Peirce, 1931) The concept of symbolism that Peirce developed sheds insight on the way in which these patterns transcend the realm of visual aesthetics and become vehicles for conveying metaphysical concepts. In addition to this connection with Islamic art principles, the usage of these geometric elements, which are prevalent in Islamic art and architecture throughout Southeast Asia, further reinforces the alignment. The incorporation of these patterns into the design of the mosque exemplifies the cultural syncretism that results from the combination of Islamic and local Minangkabau aesthetics. This suggests that the mosque serves as a visual bridge between the identity of the local community and the spirituality of Islam.

Another essential component that expresses the cultural identity of the Minangkabau people while simultaneously adhering to Islamic artistic principles is the selection of wood as the material through which the carvings are crafted. In his theory of myth, which was published in 1967, Roland Barthes claims that tangible objects can have numerous layers of cultural significance. One could consider the usage of wood in the carvings of the mosque to be a "mythical" component that establishes a connection between the mosque and the customs of the community. In his argument, Barthes asserts that the usage of materials frequently brings with it ideological and symbolic connotations that are formed by culture. In the instance of the mosque, the selection of wood, which has historically been an essential component of Minangkabau architecture, functions as a cultural signifier, evoking a sense of the local heritage and identity. The material, on the other hand, is in accordance with the spiritual and artistic ideals of Islam, which forbid the depiction of individuals who are alive. Therefore, the carvings do not violate Islamic prohibitions on figural representation; rather, they adhere to the Islamic tradition of avoiding direct depictions of animate forms while still conveying profound spiritual and cultural meaning (Barthes, 1967). This is accomplished through the use of abstract geometric patterns and floral motifs.

The mythological perspective that Barthes takes can also be utilized to interpret the carvings on the mosque as a type of cultural narrative at the same time. These carvings are not only beautiful; rather, they are infused with a narrative that conveys the values and beliefs of the Minangkabau people while simultaneously asserting their identity as practitioners of Islam. This dual function, which is both aesthetic and communicative, is illustrative of the greater role that art plays as a vehicle for the construction and expression of cultural identity. Symbolism and art are key instruments for the negotiation of cultural identity, according to Hall (1997). This is because they enable the expression of both individual and collective ideals during the process of cultural identity negotiation. Carvings in the mosque serve as a visual language that expresses the integration of local Minangkabau culture with greater Islamic principles. This is accomplished through the use of geometric shapes. The concept that the myths that are constructed through art and symbolism serve to maintain social structures and cultural identities, ultimately affecting how societies perceive and interpret themselves, is consistent with the viewpoint of Barthes (Barthes, 1972).

Interlocking squares, circles, and arabesques are some examples of the geometric designs that are reflective of the spiritual principles that are associated with Islam. These forms, as stated by Nasr (1987), are said to give a feeling of divine order, highlighting the infinite and unchanging nature of Allah. Islamic art is characterized by the use of geometric patterns that are symbolic of the structure of the universe. The recurrence of these patterns is intended to reflect the eternal and cyclical nature of existence. The mosque's carvings, which include these same geometric designs together with local Minangkabau influences, are a good example of how this theme resonates. The fusion of these patterns shows a confluence of spiritual and cultural identities, in which the geometric patterns of Islamic art find a local representation in the traditional art forms of the Minangkabau people. This convergence is suggested by the similarities between these patterns. As a result of this integration, the larger narrative of how Islamic art is not simply imported into Southeast Asia but rather is adapted and modified by local traditions, so contributing to a specific regional aesthetic, is brought to light (Nasr, 1987).

Furthermore, the carvings in the mosque are a reflection of the larger concept of syncretism in Islamic art. Syncretism is the process by which regional artistic traditions can be combined with Islamic principles to produce distinctive forms of cultural expression. Hillenbrand (2000) asserts that Islamic art has, for a very long time, proven the ability to adapt, incorporating aspects of local cultures while still keeping its spiritual character. The Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque is a prime example of this syncretism. The carvings on the mosque's walls serve as a cultural artifact that combines Minangkabau design

Islamic Aesthetics in the Carvings of the Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, Padang, West Sumatra

principles with Islamic patterns. This integration results in the creation of a hybrid aesthetic that symbolizes both worldwide Islamic principles and local Minangkabau cultural identity. As a result, the mosque is a fascinating example of how art can transcend cultural and religious boundaries while still keeping its spiritual integrity (Hillenbrand, 2000).

This research shows the mosque's position as a cultural and spiritual symbol by applying a semiotic approach to analyze these carvings. The fusion of Islamic and Minangkabau art indicates a larger interaction between local and global traditions, and this research highlights the mosque's role as a cultural and spiritual symbol. The carvings on the mosque are not merely decorative components; rather, they function as a visual language that conveys deeper meanings, so establishing a connection between the spiritual realm and the cultural history of the Minangkabau people. As a result, these carvings are a reflection of the mosque's distinctive function in Southeast Asian Islamic architecture. This is because the mosque is a place where local cultural expressions and Islamic art principles interact to produce an artistic identity that is both different and significant. This mosque, which is well-known for its unusual roof design that is reminiscent of the traditional Minangkabau rumah gadang (home), is a potent emblem of the fusion of Islamic art and the cultural identity of the local community. The style of the mosque is a reflection of the architectural traditions of the Minangkabau people. These traditions are typified by sweeping, curved rooflines that resemble buffalo horns, which is a cultural motif that symbolizes strength and tenacity. This roof design, which dominates the skyline, is a reflection of the cultural history of the region. It also serves to reinforce the connection between the identity of the Minangkabau people and their Islamic faith. When it comes to the architectural influences of Islam, the mosque incorporates several aspects that are common to Islamic architecture, including symmetry, the utilization of geometric patterns, and an emphasis on abstraction. For the purpose of representing Islamic ideals of unity and the boundless essence of Allah, the geometric designs that are carved into the wood and the shape of the building serve as symbols. As a result, the aesthetics of the mosque become a visible reflection of the cultural and spiritual values that are there. By incorporating native Minangkabau themes into this sacred space, a one-of-a-kind cultural syncretism is created. This syncretism allows for the preservation of regional identity without sacrificing the principles of Islamic aesthetics.

The architecture of the mosque can be interpreted as a system of signals that conveys both religious and cultural meanings if we look at it through the semiotic lens, which was addressed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce. A prominent sign that acts as a representation of the Minangkabau culture is the roof, which is characterized by its distinctive shape. In the meantime, the geometric patterns that are carved into the wood serve as symbolic signals that depict abstract Islamic ideals such as the divine and the infinite. The combination of these components results in the formation of a composite cultural language. This language is characterized by the interaction of signs and symbols from the Minangkabau and Islamic worlds, which conveys more profound meanings concerning faith, identity, and legacy. In addition, the mosque's wood carvings play a significant part in bridging the gap between contemporary Islamic aesthetics and the cultural values of the local community. The meanings of these carvings are not merely beautiful; rather, they are symbolic in nature, representing concepts such as oneness, spirituality, and the boundless essence of Allah. As can be observed in the elaborate designs of the mosque, Islamic themes, such as arabesques and geometric patterns, are combined with floral patterns that are representative of the Minangkabau culture. The group's religious beliefs and cultural identity are reflected in these designs, which are not just decorative but also part of a wider symbolic language that was developed by the community. The artistic language of the mosque is therefore a weapon that serves the purpose of articulating the junction of Islamic cultural values and local cultural values. Because it bridges the gap between local customs and Islamic spirituality, the design of the mosque creates a particular aesthetic conversation that promotes both the spiritual experience and cultural knowledge. This interplay between local symbols and universal Islamic themes is visible in the mosque's architecture. In addition to its physical grandeur, the mosque is significant architecturally because it serves as a meeting point between the local and the world. It is a place where the Minangkabau culture and Islamic ideas merge together in a seamless manner to form a cohesive vision. A tribute to the power of architectural expression in conveying cultural values, spirituality, and identity, the mosque stands as a testament to this power.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the wood carvings that are utilized in the construction of the Syekh Ahmad Khatib al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque represent a beautiful marriage of Islamic aesthetics and the traditional history of the Minangkabau people. The spiritual core of Islam as well as the distinctive cultural character of the Minangkabau people are both expressed through these exquisite carvings, which serve not only as decorative elements but also as potent symbols. Through the use of a visual language that combines local traditions with the universal principles of Islamic art, they offer a one-of-a-kind picture of the phenomenon of cultural syncretism. These carvings, by virtue of their design and execution, communicate the convergence of regional aesthetics with the larger Islamic architectural identity. In doing so, they reassert the mosque's function as a cultural and spiritual beacon in Padang. Increasing our understanding of how local cultures interpret and adapt Islamic art could be facilitated by conducting additional research into the regional variants of Islamic aesthetics that exist across Indonesia. An examination of the similarities and differences between these adaptations would provide a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which Islamic aesthetics

Islamic Aesthetics in the Carvings of the Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, Padang, West Sumatra

impact and shape cultural identity. In addition, it is of the utmost importance for the local communities and cultural institutions to make the preservation of these one-of-a-kind art forms a top priority. This is because these art forms are essential in protecting not just the cultural history of the Minangkabau people but also the wider Islamic architectural traditions that are prevalent in the region. By preserving these sculptures, we ensure that future generations will continue to engage with and enjoy the rich blend of cultural and spiritual values that is expressed in the design of the mosque.

REFERENCES

- 1) Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of semiology*. Hill and Wang.
- 2) Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies*. Hill and Wang.
- 3) Berger, S. (2004). *The art of Islamic civilization: Architecture and the symbolic function of geometry*. Thames & Hudson.
- 4) Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- 5) de Saussure, F. (1916). *Course in general linguistics*. Philosophical Library.
- 6) Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- 7) Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- 8) Gullick, J. M. (1987). *The architecture of Southeast Asia: A cultural history*. University of Singapore Press.
- 9) Hadi, S. (2018). Regionalism in Islamic architecture: The Minangkabau example. *Journal of Southeast Asian Architecture*, 42(3), 151–172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsa.2018.02.005>
- 10) Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage Publications.
- 11) Hillenbrand, R. (2000). *Islamic art and architecture: From the 7th to the 20th century*. Edinburgh University Press.
- 12) Hillenbrand, R. (2024). *Islamic art and architecture*. Edinburgh University Press.
- 13) Hillenbrand, R. (2024). The Islamic art of Southeast Asia. In *Southeast Asian Islam* (pp. 234-262). Routledge India.
- 14) Nasr, S. H. (1987). *Islamic art and spirituality*. SUNY Press.
- 15) Peirce, C. S. (1931). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Vol. 2). Harvard University Press.
- 16) Ruggles, D. F. (2015). *Islamic gardens and landscapes*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 17) Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism and the architecture of the Islamic world*. Routledge.
- 18) Salamah, A. (2011). The evolution of Islamic architectural forms in Southeast Asia. *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 15(2), 99-113. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004181456_007
- 19) Schimmel, A. (1992). *Islamic art: Its spiritual dimension*. Harper & Row.
- 20) Vickers, A. (2005). *Minangkabau: Cultural symbols and traditions of West Sumatra*. Indonesia Heritage Pres



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.