



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Visual & Performing Arts*

Harmonization of traditional Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic ornaments at the Great Mosque of Demak, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The Great Mosque of Demak, located in Central Java Province, is a historical milestone legacy of the early spread of Islam in Indonesia (15th century). In addition to being a place of worship, the Great Mosque of Demak is also the center of religious activities for Muslims today. The Great Mosque of Demak has unique ornamental elements. This study aims to find a systematic explanation of the harmonization of the diversity of traditional Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic ornaments at the Great Mosque of Demak. Data was collected using observation, interview, and document tracing methods. The study used a qualitative approach with the iconographic analysis method (pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconological interpretation). The results of the study show that the ornamental elements of the Great Mosque of Demak are a combination of Hindu-Buddhist traditional ornaments and Islamic traditional ornaments. Diversity elements of traditional Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic ornaments are harmonized with wisdom so that their values and meanings do not conflict. This wisdom occurs because of the historical background, the process of spreading Islam culturally, and the tolerant attitude of its supporting community.

KEYWORDS: harmonization, Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, mosque, ornament, traditional

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Introduction

Culture is present in society through the manifestation of physical, mental, and social facts. Physical facts are in the form of material objects (artifacts) created by humans. Mental facts are in the form of the complexity of ideas, value systems, norms, and regulations that bind the lives of society. Social facts are behavior in living together and in society (Wilson, 2021). One of the material objects, manifestations of physical culture, is ornamental art in buildings. Traditional buildings (architecture) and their ornamentation are representations of the environment and culture that adapt to the lives of the supporting community. The most important historical heritage artifacts of the spread of Islam in Java (Indonesia) in the 15th century were mosque buildings (Tjandrasasmita & Lee-ninioja, 2018).

Regarding culture, the development of Javanese-Islamic cultural traditions did not close itself off from the influence of pre-Islamic culture (Hindu-Buddhist). The spread of Islam in Java used cultural elements, including traditional arts, as its media (Restian et al., 2024). One of the cultural heritage mosques, a historical milestone of the early Islamic civilization in Indonesia, is the Great Mosque of Demak. In the 15th to 16th centuries, the Great Mosque of Demak became the official mosque of the Demak Sultanate led by Sultan Patah. The Great Mosque of Demak has unique architecture and ornamentation that combines pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural traditions. Ornaments are decorations deliberately added to beautify parts or the whole object. Ornaments have three main functions: aesthetic, practical, and symbolic (Sunaryo, 2022).

The pre-Islamic period was marked by the rule of the Majapahit Kingdom (13th-15th centuries) and the previous period. Majapahit was a Hindu-Buddhist kingdom that once ruled the archipelago, the largest kingdom in the history of Indonesian civilization (Munandar, 2020; Pigeaud, 1985). During the Majapahit Kingdom, the tradition of ornamental art was applied en masse to Hindu and Buddhist temples. The temple panels contain relief ornaments, stories, and messages from Hindu-Buddhist religious values (Lee-ninioja, 2018). The typical ornaments of Hindu temples are statues of gods and goddesses, niches, and peak decorations. In contrast, the typical ornaments of Buddhist temples are Buddha statues, niches, lotus flowers, and stupas. Ornaments on Hindu and Buddhist temples include antefixes, flowers, vines, animals, *kala-makara*, flower garlands, geometric shapes, and pilasters.

Ornaments are an essential element in Islamic art and architecture. Art objects, buildings, and religious objects are complete with various ornaments such as geometric motifs, epigraphy, calligraphy, arabesques, and sometimes animal figures (Fatemeh et al., 2017; Kamal et al., 2020). Artistic decoration (ornament) is the essence of Islamic art, mainly as a reminder of monotheism (Al-Faruqi & Al-Faruqi, 1986). The mosque building is the main object of applying traditional Islamic ornaments. The leading spirit of traditional mosque ornaments is transcendental, a reminder of *tawhid* (the Oneness of God) (Alashari, 2021).

Islamic tradition ornaments consist of writing, architecture, geometric figures, and nature. Writing ornaments (calligraphy) have the potential to evoke control and power. Beautifully written ornaments are not merely to be read but to create an impression of beauty before reading and understanding them. Architectural ornaments are architectural figures that become ornamental elements. Geometric figure ornaments become material wealth and technical regularity with the charm of beauty, thought, psychic involvement, and freedom. Natural ornaments are ornaments with the central theme of plants and animals that evoke growth and movement, natural life, but in dreamlike and unreal figurations that enhance the visual impact (Grabar, 2019).

This study aims to find a systematic explanation of the harmonization of traditional Hindu-Buddhist ornaments and traditional Islamic ornaments at the Great Mosque of Demak. From a cultural perspective, this study has urgency as an effort: (1) to preserve (inherit) traditional ornaments as cultural products; (2) to document, disseminate, and internalize the values of traditional ornamental wisdom for today's civilization; and (3) to strengthen cultural awareness that is in harmony with the spirit of diversity (multicultural).

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. Data collection methods use observation, interviews, and document tracing. Observation to collect primary data, ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak, and related elements stored in the Great Mosque Museum of Demak. Interview to collect data on informants' opinions and supporting communities regarding the research targets. Document tracing to collect data in the form of documents related to the research targets stored in the secretariat of the mosque or museum management. This study uses the triangulation of data sources and triangulation of data collection methods to obtain credible data. Triangulation

of data sources by cross-checking data from one source with another source. Triangulation of data collection methods by cross-checking data from one technique with data from another.

The analysis uses the iconography method. Iconography can stimulate mental activity in interpreting meaning so that its manifestations correlate with the cultural scope (Drainville, 2018). The iconography approach follows a pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconological interpretation. This approach also analyzes the value of subject matter in three domains: primary natural subject matter, conventional subject matter, and intrinsic meaning or content (Taylor, 2020). The pre-iconographical description step, or the primary realm of natural subject matter, is factual and expressive. The presentation identifies pure forms, namely the configuration of the ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak that represent natural and artificial objects in their relations as events. The iconographical analysis step, or the conventional subject matter realm, connects the motifs and artistic compositions of the Great Mosque of Demak ornaments with stories, allegories, and history that carry conventional meanings. The iconological interpretation step corresponds to the realm of intrinsic meaning or content, interpreting the principles underlying the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the community supporting the ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak in finding symbolic meaning.

Results and discussion

The Great Mosque of Demak is located in Demak Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. Walisanga built this mosque, and it became the official mosque of the Demak Sultanate from the mid-15th century to the mid-16th century (Florida, 1995). Walisanga is the term for a type of Islamic religious dissemination council in Java that consists of nine *wali* (Javanese: “wali” means spreader of Islam, “sanga” means nine). The members of Walisanga are Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati (Sunyoto, 2017).

Based on documents from the Demak Grand Mosque Museum, the construction of the Demak Grand Mosque took place in three stages. In the first stage (1466 AD), the building was still a Glagahwangi Islamic boarding school under the care of Sunan Ampel. In the second stage (1479 AD), the building was developed into the Glagahwangi Kadipaten Mosque (under the rule of the Majapahit Kingdom). In the third stage, the early period of the Demak Sultanate, the mosque was developed with a three-tiered pyramid-shaped roof. It became the Demak Sultanate Mosque (separate from the Majapahit Kingdom).

The current condition of the Great Mosque of Demak still exists and is used as a place of worship and a center for religious activities for Muslims. The Great Mosque of Demak is a cultural heritage area crowded with visitors from various regions daily (Figure 1). Based on monograph data (<https://s.id/uedAX>), the average number of visitors to the Great Mosque of Demak reaches more than 50,000/month. The management authority of the area has built a museum to store and display artifacts related to the historical heritage of the Demak Sultanate and the Great Mosque of Demak. *Sengkalan* (a type of chronogram) marks the period of its construction. The *sengkalan* that marks the period of the founding of the Great Mosque of Demak is in the form of the Bulus Inscription located inside the *mihrab* (where the imam leads prayers). The *sengkalan* implies the message “*sarira silent kiblating gusti*”, marking the year 1401 (S) or 1479 AD.



Figure 1. Great Mosque of Demak
(source: <https://s.id/MAD19>)

Architecture of the Great Mosque of Demak

For Muslims, the mosque's architecture is not just a statement of form and structure but also plays a role as a cultural institution, a reflection of the value and social system that originates from the lifestyle of the supporting community (Azab, 2018). The mosque reflects the character of Islamic civilization, which is an institution in the community's life system. In the history of the development of Islamic architecture, the mosque is the most important manifestation of material culture.

The main construction of the Great Mosque of Demak is a wooden structure with the most prominent visualization in the form of a three-tiered roof (stacked pyramid), with a *mustaka* ornament at the top, without a dome element (Figure 2). The roof structure of the Great Mosque of Demak is the architectural roof structure of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, as seen in the image of one of the reliefs of the Jajaghu Temple (Figure 3). The Jajaghu Temple is a sacred Hindu-Buddhist syncretic religious building during the Singasari Kingdom (13th century) (Budi, 2004; Kempers, 1976). The architectural style of the Great Mosque of Demak is also the traditional architectural style of the Wantilan. The Wantilan is a large hall with a tiered pyramid-shaped roof (Figure 4). The Wantilan is an integral part of religious buildings in the traditional architecture of the Hindu-Balinese community (Davison, 2003). The conformity of the architectural form of the Great Mosque of Demak with the architectural imagery on the reliefs of the Jajaghu Temple and Wantilan-Balinese shows the continuity in the process of harmonization of pre-Islamic architecture at the Great Mosque of Demak.



Figure 2. The Great Mosque of Demak in the 1800s
(Source: Demak Great Mosque Museum document)



Figure 4. Wantilan, Hindu-Balinese religious building
(source: Davison, 2003)

Ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak

Ornaments are decorative arts attached or become a single object to beautify. Ornaments are essential elements in a single architectural unit. As a work of art, ornaments have practical, aesthetic, and symbolic functions. Practical functions relate to ornaments as structural elements. Aesthetic functions relate to aspects of beauty. Symbolic functions relate to cultural values or meanings for the supporting community. One form of ornament may have one or more functions.

The characteristics of Islamic ornaments in architecture refer to the rules absorbed from the ideality of the Qur'an: abstraction, modular structure, successive combination, repetition, dynamic, and complexity. The

rule of abstraction avoids figurative motifs and encourages stylization and denaturalization models. The modular rule relates to spatial arrangements and modules. The rule of successive combination combines small modules to form larger modules in stages, from simple to complex. The rule of repetition repeats ornamental motifs, elements, and modules. The dynamic rule relates to the psychological impression of dynamic visualization from various points of view. The rule of complexity relates to physical details as a manifestation of universal and infinite values (Al-Faruqi & Al-Faruqi, 1986).

The ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak are the actualization of the idea of traditional Islamic art with its various variants. Islamic art uses the philosophical foundation of Islamic aesthetic values. Islamic art expresses the value of beauty according to the Islamic view of nature, humans, and life towards a perfect meeting between truth and beauty (Ambary, 1998). Islamic art is an aesthetic expression that originates from the essence of Islamic values (*tawhid*), which brings awareness to transcendental ideas. Islamic art views the holy book of the Qur'an as the provider of the most noble and primary elements (Al-Faruqi & Al-Faruqi, 1999). The following analysis divides the ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak into five categories, as in Table 1. The further analysis uses an iconographic approach with the flow of presentation of the first paragraph: pre-iconographical description, 2nd paragraph: iconographical analysis, and 3rd paragraph: iconological interpretation.

Table 1. Classification of ornaments analyzed

ornaments classification	place	traditional background
mustaka	roof top	Hindu-Budhist
main room:		
calligraphy	main room	Islamic
arabesque	main room	Islamic
Surya Majapahit	main room	Hindu
Saka Majapahit	veranda	Hindu-Budhist, Islamic
Lawang Bledheg	main door	Hindu-Budhist-Chinese
Bulus Inscription	mihrab	Hindu
	room	

Mustaka Ornament

In Javanese tradition, *mustaka* means head. *Mustaka* also means the ornament at the top of the roof of traditional buildings, including mosques. The *mustaka* of the Great Mosque of Demak currently installed is a replica made of copper weighing 250 kilograms, measuring 240 cm high, 140 cm long, and 140 cm wide. This replica *mustaka* replaces the original terracotta *mustaka*. Overall, the visual structure of the roof of the Great Mosque of Demak consists of three pyramid-shaped layers and a *mustaka* at the top.

The *mustaka* ornament of the Great Mosque of Demak has three functions at once. The aesthetic function adds to the beauty of the roof of the building, the practical function becomes a unified roof structure, and the symbolic function manifests the community's cultural values. The peak has additional decorations of Arabic calligraphy "Allah" (Figure 5). The existence of this *mustaka* ornament is related to the historical aspect of the Hindu-Buddhist ornamental tradition that had long developed before the spread of Islam. The construction of the Great Mosque of Demak continues the Hindu-Buddhist ornamental tradition.

Philosophically, the *mustaka* is the most essential part of the human body, so in Javanese ethics, the head becomes a symbol of honor. The supporting community associates the three-tiered roof structure and *mustaka* ornaments with the teachings of Javanese Islam in achieving spiritual perfection. The three roof layers symbolize *syariat-tarekat-hakikat* levels. The *mustaka* symbolizes the highest level of piety, *makrifat* (Rahayu, 2020; Woodward, 1999). The lowest roof symbolizes the level of *syariat*, the lay religious community with the most significant number. The middle roof symbolizes the *tarekat* level with a smaller proportion of numbers. The top roof symbolizes *hakikat* with an even smaller proportion of numbers. Only extraordinary people can achieve the level of *makrifat* piety. This symbolic meaning is an effort to harmonize through adapting pre-Islamic values in Islam.

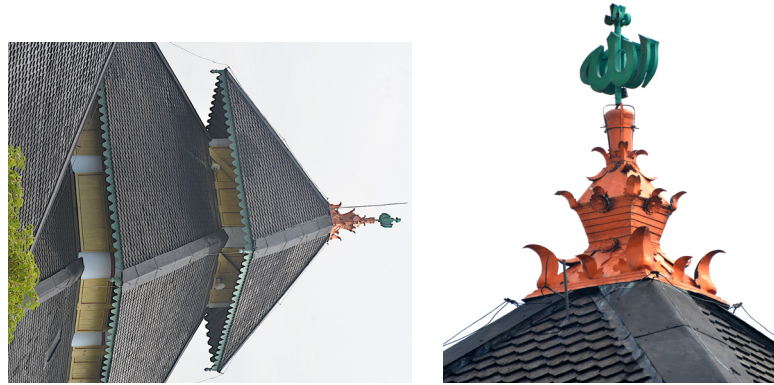


Figure 5. *Mustaka* ornament on the roof peak
(source: author's document, 2024)

Ornaments in the Main Room

The Great Mosque of Demak consists of three rooms: the main room (*liwan*), *pawestren*, and veranda. *Liwan* is the most important room, a sacred area where male worshipers pray and pray. The place for female worshipers is in the *pawestren* room, while the veranda is open at the front. Figure 6 shows that this main room has traditional Islamic ornaments (Arabic calligraphy, arabesque) and Hindu-Buddhist ornaments (Surya Majapahit). These ornaments are displayed harmoniously on the walls and partitions.



Figure 6. Ornaments in the main room
(source: <https://s.id/414Pf>)

Calligraphy Ornaments

Calligraphy is a visual art with the main object of writing or alphabet. Arabic calligraphy is the most essential form of Islamic cultural tradition, and it has spread to various regions and developed over the centuries. Among all categories of Islamic art, Arabic calligraphy is the most important, most appreciated, and respected art among Muslims (Alashari, 2021). Arabic calligraphy ornaments have spread to regions with a heritage of Islamic cultural traditions, including Java. In the upper partition of the Great Mosque of Demak's main room is an Arabic calligraphy ornament, "Allah," and below is the Arabic calligraphy, "Muhammad." Arabic calligraphy about the ninety-nine noble attributes of Allah adorns the bottom of the skylight. Javanese calligraphy adorns the back wall. The Javanese calligraphy contains notes about the construction of parts of the mosque.

Calligraphy is an art that is glorified among various Islamic fine arts because it is the primary medium for preserving the holy book of the Qur'an. The calligraphy ornaments in the main room of the Great Mosque of Demak have aesthetic and symbolic functions. The aesthetic function of the calligraphy ornaments is to beautify the room. The arrangement is harmoniously combined with arabesque ornaments and Surya Majapahit ornaments so that they appear to attract attention. The symbolic function of calligraphy in the main room of the Great Mosque of Demak is related to the messages and cultural values of the community.



Figure 8. Arabic calligraphy “Bashar” and calligraphy with geometric elements
(source: author’s document, 2024)

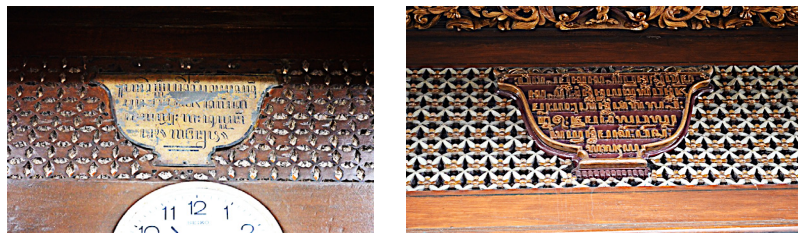


Figure 9. Javanese script calligraphy
(source: author’s document, 2024)

Arabic calligraphy ornaments of “Asmaul Husna” and others complement the calligraphy of “Allah-Muhammad” (Figure 7). Calligraphy ornaments with geometric elements (Figure 8) add visual variation. These calligraphy ornaments contain symbolic meaning as the transcendence of the greatness and perfection of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad towards the belief in the oneness of Allah, as the Creator and the Sustainer who determines everything in the universe. Reading these Arabic calligraphy texts for the congregation of the Great Mosque of Demak can strengthen *tawhid*, the core of Islamic belief. The existence of Javanese script calligraphy (Figure 9) shows the adaptation of traditional Islamic (Arabic) art forms into Javanese cultural values as an effort of harmonization.

Arabesque Ornaments

Among the most famous Islamic ornaments is the arabesque, an endless pattern of several types of structural repetitions in many types (Al-Faruqi & Al-Faruqi, 1986). In its further development, arabesque became an Islamic art tradition that included two ornaments: stylized plants and geometric interweaving. The arabesque pattern consists of many united and interwoven units flowing in all directions. The prohibition of representational depictions of human figures in the early days of Islamic art encouraged the development of arabesque ornaments (repeating geometric patterns) for various purposes (Kamal et al., 2020). The arabesque ornament displayed on the wall of the main room of the Great Mosque of Demak looks simple, with a circular pattern with geometric lines of woven rope knots, endless without a beginning. A five-star motif is in the middle of the circle (Figure 10).



Figure 10. One of the arabesque ornaments at the Great Mosque of Demak
(source: author’s document, 2024)

The arabesque pattern in the Great Mosque of Demak looks very simple. The elements are geometric motifs; there is no complexity in combination with other motifs, such as vines or leaves. The rhythm of the geometric lines in the arabesque flows without angles, ending or beginning, forming an infinity pattern. This arabesque ornament has an aesthetic function to beautify the room and a symbolic function related to the community's cultural values.

Arabesque symbolizes cosmic order that creates illusions and images in the observer's mind. In Islamic art, symbols like this reflect truth in a particular language because sacred art is symbolism (Kamal et al., 2020). The community supporting the Great Mosque of Demak calls it the *oyot mimang* motif (Javanese: “oyot” means root, and “mimang” is a *Eugenia uniflora* tree, which is considered sacred). This term is related to a myth believed by the local community. Someone walks towards a specific destination, but the person gets lost, goes around in circles on the road, and cannot find their destination; the community believes it is because they are affected by *oyot mimang*. The philosophical meaning is that if a Muslim feels lost in living his life, he does not have a clear goal (symbolized by infinity lines). The best way is to return to the circle's center, unlimited power, namely the power of Allah (symbolized by five stars). Such an interpretation is an effort to harmonize by adapting Islamic (Arabic) culture into Javanese cultural values.

Surya Majapahit Ornament

One of the ornaments with a Hindu tradition that adorns the main wall of the Great Mosque of Demak is Surya Majapahit (Javanese: “*surya*” means sun). Surya Majapahit is a visual symbol of the Majapahit kingdom. Surya Majapahit is shaped like a sun emitting rays, forming an eight-pointed star. Compared to Surya Majapahit, which comes from the ruins of Hindu-Majapahit temples, Surya Majapahit at the Great Mosque of Demak does not have details in the circle (Figure 11). The colors used are black and gold with a green background.



Figure 11. Left: Surya Majapahit at the Great Mosque of Demak
(source: author's document, 2024)
right: Surya Majapahit at Hindu-Majapahit temples
(source: Trowulan Museum document)

In Hindu-Javanese beliefs, Surya Majapahit is a manifestation of a *mandala* (circle) depicting the guardian deities of the eight cardinal directions and one central point, Dewata Nawasangha (Adisukma, 2019). The Surya Majapahit ornament has an aesthetic function and a symbolic function. The existence of Surya Majapahit is a sign that the area was once under the control of the Majapahit Kingdom. In the historical dimension, this confirms that the Majapahit Kingdom controlled the territory of the Demak Sultanate. The Demak Sultanate was a continuation of the Majapahit Kingdom because the first sultan of Demak, Sultan Patah, was a descendant of the last king of Majapahit, Brawijaya V, with the mother of a Champa Princess (Rosa & Fatma, 2020).

In addition to being a *mandala* depicting the existence of guardian gods in Hinduism, Surya Majapahit also symbolizes two sacred teachings of universal value: *hastagina* and *hastabrata*. *Hastagina* is the spirit of Javanese society based on the eight noble of Hindu-Javanese: empowering oneself; being persistent in the struggle; being thrifty; careful in observing a phenomenon; having mature calculations; having curiosity; preventing excessive hopes; and being severe in achieving original ideals (Adisukma, 2019). The Demak Regency Tourism Office interprets the Majapahit Sun at the Great Mosque of Demak as a symbol of *hastabrata* (eight leadership traits): the nature of the earth, providing a place for life; the nature of the sun, being a source of energy; the nature of the moon, being a source of light in the darkness; the nature of the ocean, having a broad heart; the nature of the stars, having a sense of respect; the nature of the wind, prioritizing the interests of the wider community (egalitarian); the nature of fire, being firm and straightforward; and the nature of water, having a

sense of humility and not being arbitrary (Team, 2023). The values of *hastabrata*, originating from the Hindu tradition, do not conflict and are harmonious with Islamic values.

Ornaments on Saka Majapahit

Saka Majapahit has eight main pillars (*saka*) on the veranda, the front open space connecting the outer gate with the main door of the Great Mosque of Demak (Figure 12). All pillars have the same material, size, and carved ornaments. The carved motifs are a combination of creeping plants (tendrils), *patran* (fern shoots), *tumpal* (triangle), and lotus petals, decorating the bottom, middle, and top. The ornaments on the four sides of the bottom are in the form of lotus petal motifs, the middle part is a *patran* motif, and the top part is a tendril and *tumpal* motif.



Figure 12. Saka Majapahit, eight pillars on the veranda
(source: author's document, 2024)



Figure 13. Ornaments of Saka Majapahit on the bottom, middle, and top
(source: author's document, 2024)

The name “Saka Majapahit” serves as a reminder that the eight pillars are historical artifacts, a legacy of the Majapahit Kingdom. As stated by a mosque manager, Saka Majapahit originated from the pillars of the Majapahit palace hall. The last king of Majapahit gave it to Raden Patah as the Duke of Glagahwangi. After the Duchy of Glagahwangi became the Demak Sultanate, Saka Majapahit eventually became the pillar of the hall of the Great Mosque of Demak. The motifs characteristics of the *patran*, lotus petals, and tendrils (Figure 13) show that the ornaments are in the classic Majapahit style. Motifs similar to Saka Majapahit ornaments have decorated many Hindu-Buddhist temple reliefs and continued during the early development of Islam. These ornaments have an aesthetic function as well as a symbolic function.

The Saka Majapahit ornament is a harmonious blend of lotus petal motifs, *patran*, and *tumpal* filled with tendrils. The lotus icon in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition is one of the attributes of the statues of the gods and goddesses. The lotus symbolizes the beginning of the creation of life, birth, and fertility. The lotus also symbolizes the combination of truth, purity, and beauty (Halim, 2017). *Patran* and tendrils symbolize hope, gentleness, tolerance, and the cycle of life. The visualization of *patran* and tendrils is in the form of repeating curved lines (spirals) that depict beauty, gentleness, peace, and happiness. The *tumpal* motif is a geometric decoration of repetition of isosceles triangles. The Javanese call it the *pucuk rebung* (the baby bamboo shoot) motif, symbolizing fertility and repelling evil spirits. The supporting community harmonizes values by interpreting the Saka Majapahit ornament as an artifact of cultural heritage and historical continuity to appreciate and preserve it.

2.4. Lawang Bledheg ornament

Lawang Bledheg (Javanese: *lawang* means door, *bledheg* means thunderclap) is the name of the main door of the Great Mosque of Demak. Lawang Bledheg is a pair of door leaves made of wood, measuring about 220 cm high and about 160 cm wide. Due to its age, the original Lawang Bledheg was damaged and became a Great Mosque Museum of Demak collection. The original Lawang Bledheg ornament (Figure 14) contains at least ten motifs: (1) *tumpal*, (2) rock and sky-cloud, (3) crown in the shape of a stupa, (4) *camara*, (5) tendrils, (6) dragon's eye with details of Surya Majapahit, (7) dragon's head, (8) fire spray, (9) lotus flower, and (10) flower vase. Visualizing the motifs on the Lawang Bledheg ornament shows detailed carving techniques. The base uses a uniform red color, and in the motif parts, there is a color polish using the gradation technique. The current door uses a replica (Figure 15).

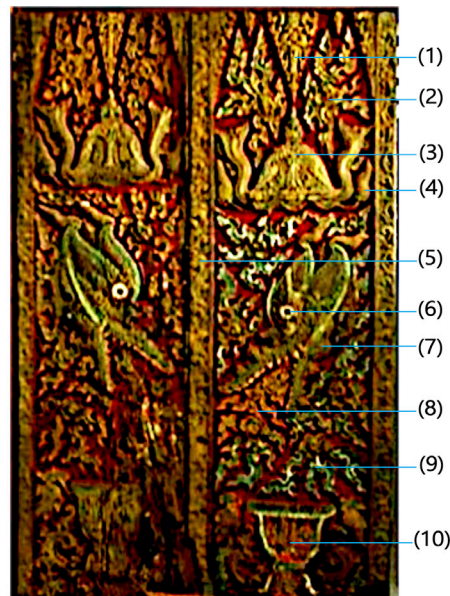


Figure 14. The original Lawang Bledheg
(source: collection of the Great Mosque Museum of Demak)



Figure 15. The replica Lawang Bledheg
(source: author's document, 2024)

The origin of the name “Pintu Bledheg” refers to one of its ornamental motifs in the form of a dragon’s head. The dragon is a mythological animal in Chinese cultural traditions that also developed in Javanese cultural traditions. The local community connects the dragon’s head motif with the myth of Ki Ageng Selo’s supernatural powers, who were able to catch thunderclap (Javanese: *bledheg*). Ki Ageng Selo’s real name was Kyai Ngabdurahman, a highly respected Islamic spiritual figure. Ki Ageng Selo was a descendant of the Majapahit King who lived during the Demak Sultanate. With his supernatural powers, Ki Ageng Selo caught lightning, which then transformed into a dragon. Ki Ageng Selo visualized the dragon’s head as an ornamental motif on the door leaf and then

handed it over to the Sultan of Demak. The Sultan of Demak made the door leaf the main door of the Great Mosque. Because of that background, the local community called it Lawang Bledheg.

A fascinating phenomenon, Lawang Bledheg ornaments have a variety of motifs with a pre-Islamic cultural tradition background (Hindu-Buddhist, Chinese). As visualized in Figure 14, the motifs of dragon heads, coral, fire bursts, and sky-cloud are the continuity of Chinese cultural traditions. Other motifs such as *tumpal*, stupa-shaped crowns, *camara*, tendrils, Surya Majapahit, lotus flowers, and flower vases are the continuity of Hindu-Buddhist traditions. Based on the documents of the Great Mosque Museum of Demak, the Lawang Bledheg ornament is a *sengkalan* containing the message “naga mulat salira wani,” which is equivalent to the year 1388 (S) or 1466 (M). The year 1466 (M) marked the establishment of the Great Mosque of Demak before it became the official mosque of the Sultanate. The ornament’s alignment with the Hindu-Buddhist tradition’s background uses a model of maintaining the form and adjusting its meaning according to or not contradicting Islamic values.

Bulus Inscription Ornament in Mihrab

One of the unique ornaments is the Bulus Inscription ornament attached to the inner wall of the *mihrab*. *Mihrab* is a small niche (space) located at the very front of the mosque, where the imam leads congregational prayers. *Mihrab* is the most sacred place in the mosque. The Bulus Inscription is attached to the front wall of the *mihrab* room. The Bulus Inscription is an ornament with a *bulus* motif, a type of turtle (*Amyda cartilaginea*). A butterfly-shaped porcelain ornament is attached to the middle of the Bulus Inscription. As seen in Figure 16, the visualization of the *bulus* motif shows the head facing up, the tail down, two legs to the left, and two legs to the right.

The turtle icon plays a vital role in mythology in various cultural areas. Using the *bulus* motif has become a tradition in the ornaments of Hindu-Buddhist temples in Java, both in the form of two-dimensional reliefs and three-dimensional statues. This tradition originates from Chinese culture, including Java, which spread to Southeast Asia. The visualization of the Bulus Inscription in the mihrab room of the Great Mosque of Demak is in the form of an outline that gives a flexible impression, no details, and does not show the plasticity of the form realistically. Adding Champa porcelain decoration in the middle (Figure 16) strengthens the aesthetic appeal. In addition to having an aesthetic function, the Bulus Inscription has a symbolic function related to specific meanings.

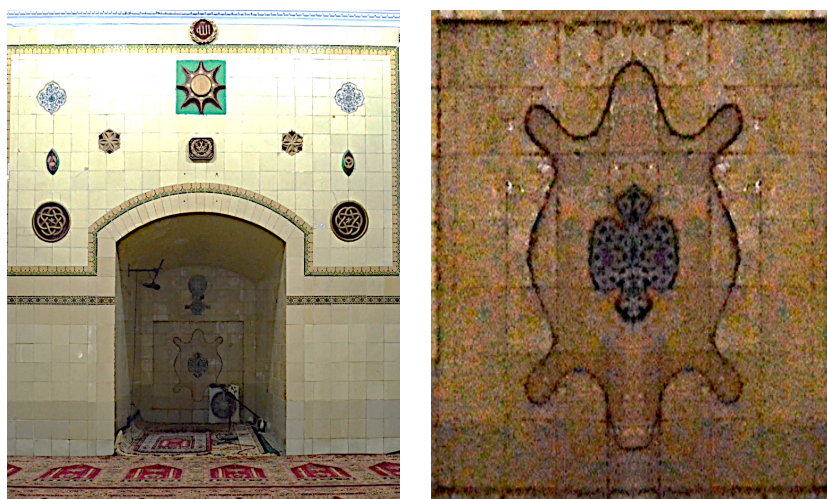


Figure 16. Ornaments of the Bulus Inscription
(source: author’s document, 2024)

Hindu-Javanese mythology considers giant turtles (*bulus*) as the incarnation (avatar) of the God Vishnu, the Guardian and Preserver of the universe. In contrast to this symbolic meaning, the community supporting the Great Mosque of Demak interprets the Bulus Inscription with a Javanese metaphor: “*bulus*” (*mlebu sarana alus*). The meaning of the language is to enter sincerely, giving a message to Muslims to enter the mosque and worship with complete sincerity. The Bulus Inscription is also a *sengkalan*, a year marker that implies the message “*sarira sunyi kiblati Gusti*,” the same as 1401 (S) or 1479 (M). The year 1479 (M) was when the Great Mosque of Demak became the official mosque of the Demak Sultanate. In Javanese, “*sarira*” means

person, and “*sunyi*” means calm, “*sarira sunyi*” means a person who is calm, serene, and sincere. “*Kiblati Gusti*” means spiritual-religious, worshiping God. Every Muslim who performs prayer must always face the Qibla (Kaaba). The supporting community harmonizes the ornaments of the Bulus Inscription by taking the form of pre-Islamic motifs, changing the meaning according to Islamic values.

Conclusion

The Great Mosque of Demak is an early milestone artifact of Islamic civilization in Java (Nusantara), which has unique architecture and ornamentation. Architectural elements such as a tiered pyramid roof with a mustaka ornament at the top are evidence of the strong influence of pre-Islamic traditions (Hindu-Buddhist). The ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak are a harmonious blend of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic traditions. These ornaments have three functions: practical, aesthetic, and symbolic. A chronogram of Lawang Bledheg and Bulus Inscription, which are pre-Islamic traditions, also strengthens the evidence of the influence and continuity of Hindu-Buddhist traditional ornaments on the Great Mosque of Demak. Various elements of traditional Hindu-Buddhist ornaments and traditional Islamic ornaments complement each other. The supporting community has the wisdom to harmonize the diversity of meanings of Hindu-Buddhist traditional ornaments so that they are in harmony or do not conflict with Islamic values. They maintain the form and adapt or replace its symbolic meaning.

The harmonization of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic traditions in the ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak occurred due to three main backgrounds. First, the historical background reveals that the Great Mosque of Demak was once the Mosque of the Demak Sultanate. The Sultan of Demak has a lineage from King Brawijaya V, the last king of the Majapahit Kingdom (Hindu-Buddhist). Culturally, the Demak Sultanate (Islam) continues the Majapahit Kingdom (Hindu-Buddhist) and continues the old traditions. Second, the pattern of spreading Islam in Java by Walisanga used a cultural approach, internalizing pre-Islamic Javanese culture as its media. Third, the community supporting the Great Mosque of Demak has an attitude of tolerance and appreciation for diversity (multicultural spirit).

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Disclaimer Statement

This manuscript was developed based on part of the dissertation research data entitled “Cultural Values in Traditional Ornaments of the Great Mosque of Demak” with promoters: (1) Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jazuli, M.Hum., (2) Dr. Syakir, M.Sn., and (3) Dr. Muh. Ibban Syarif, M.Sn. in the process of completing a doctoral program at the Art Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia.

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Conceptualization, S. S., M. J., and S.; methodology, S. S., and M. I. S.; validation, M. J. and S.; formal analysis, S. S., M. I. S., and S.; data collection and analysis, S. S., M. I. S., and S.; resources, S. S.; preparation of the original draft, S. S. and M. I. S.; review and editing, M. J. and S.; visualization (layout), S. S. and M. I. S.; supervision, M. J. and S. All authors have carefully read and approved the published version of the manuscript.

Glossary of Terms

<i>asmaul husna</i>	: ninety-nine names, noble attributes of Allah
<i>bledheg</i>	: thunderclap, lightning
<i>bulus</i>	: a type of turtle (<i>Amyda cartilaginea</i>)
<i>camara</i>	: attributes of Hindu god statues, shaped like a duster
<i>hastabrata</i>	: eight noble qualities of a leader, based on Hindu-Javanese values
<i>hastagina</i>	: eight spirits of Javanese society based on eight noble Hindu-Javanese values
<i>kala</i>	: god of time, temple ornament (above the gate) in the form of a mythological creature that repels evil and disaster
<i>lawang</i>	: door or gate
<i>liwan</i>	: main room of the mosque (place for male worshippers)
<i>makara</i>	: sea dragon, a temple ornament paired with <i>kala</i>
<i>mandala</i>	: circle, in Hindu mythology, the <i>mandala</i> is used as a model to describe the pattern of distribution of power influence
<i>mihrab</i>	: a small room is at the very front of the mosque, where the imam leads the prayer
<i>mimang</i>	: a tree considered sacred by traditional Javanese society (<i>Eugenia uniflora</i>)
<i>mustaka</i>	: head, roof peak ornament of traditional Javanese buildings
<i>oyot</i>	: root
<i>patran</i>	: fern shoots
<i>pawestren</i>	: place for female worshipers in the mosque
<i>sengkalan</i>	: Javanese chronogram, writing or images to mark the year numbers
<i>sunnging</i>	: traditional graded coloring technique
<i>tawhid</i>	: core values of Islamic lessons (monotheism)
<i>tumpal</i>	: ornamental motif in the form of an isosceles triangle
<i>wali</i>	: noble figure, spreader of Islamic teachings
<i>wantilan</i>	: traditional building with a tiered roof model, a place for Hindu-Balinese religious rituals

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