

Islamic Art and Architecture: A Systematic Review of Aesthetics, Symbolism, and Cultural Significance

Seni dan Arsitektur Islam: Tinjauan Sistematis terhadap Estetika, Simbolisme, dan Signifikansi Budaya

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ABSTRACT

Islamic art and architecture is a rich expression that reflects a close connection with Islamic aesthetic values, symbolism and cultural heritage. This research aims to understand the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture, as well as how this symbolism influences aesthetic perceptions and cultural meaning throughout history and in various geographic regions. Using the PRISMA method to select articles from various international databases, this study analyzes the transformation of symbolism in a dynamic historical and cultural context. The research results show that symbolism in Islamic art not only functions as a decorative element but also as a medium for conveying cultural identity, religious values, and regional variations. This research provides new insights that enrich understanding of Islamic art and architecture and its implications for cultural studies more broadly.

Keywords: Islamic art, Islamic architecture, symbolism, historical evolution, aesthetic perception, cultural meaning.

ABSTRAK

Seni dan arsitektur Islam merupakan ekspresi kaya yang mencerminkan keterkaitan erat dengan nilai estetika, simbolisme, dan warisan budaya Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami evolusi simbolisme dalam seni dan arsitektur Islam, serta bagaimana simbolisme ini mempengaruhi persepsi estetika dan makna budaya sepanjang sejarah dan di berbagai wilayah geografis. Menggunakan metode PRISMA untuk menyeleksi artikel dari berbagai database internasional, studi ini menganalisis transformasi simbolisme dalam konteks sejarah dan budaya yang dinamis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa simbolisme dalam seni Islam tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai elemen dekoratif tetapi juga sebagai media untuk menyampaikan identitas budaya, nilai-nilai religius, dan variasi regional. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan baru yang memperkaya pemahaman tentang seni dan arsitektur Islam serta implikasinya terhadap studi budaya secara lebih luas.

Kata Kunci: Seni Islam, arsitektur Islam, simbolisme, evolusi sejarah, persepsi estetika, makna budaya.

1. Introduction

Islamic art and architecture are rich in aesthetics, symbolism and cultural values, reflecting a deep connection with history, culture and the essence of Islam in society (Sukkar, 2024). This art form includes spiritual, symbolic, social, political, functional, behavioral, and formal expressions of Islam in the built environment. Mathematical and geometric concepts, such as the golden ratio, play an important role in creating aesthetic harmony in Islamic art and architecture, aligning them with the universe (Rashid, 2024). The application of Islamic art components, such as calligraphy and ornamentation, is prominent in the building, adding to its cultural and symbolic value (Baydoun et al., 2023).

Islamic art and architecture are not just decorative, but also contain deep meanings and messages. Traditional Islamic art functions as an eternal language that conveys the

spirituality and essential messages of Islam effectively (Alashari et al., 2019). The aesthetics and evolution of Islamic art are closely related to the Koran, reflecting religio-cultural discourse and the development of Islamic civilization (Ashfaq & Azhari, 2020). Furthermore, symbolism in Islamic architectural art is an important aspect that reflects religious expressions and values (Bingöl, 2024).

The preservation and understanding of traditional mosques is very important to safeguard the cultural heritage that has developed over the centuries, maintaining the unique identity and diversity of Islamic architectural art (Ismi, 2024). The study of Islamic architecture also involves semiotics to analyze symbolism, design trends, and innovation based on traditional elements (FAHMAWEE, 2022). The influence of Sufism on mosque architecture highlights the sacred atmosphere created through spatial transitions and ritual experiences (Bahauddin & Ahmad, 2019).

Additionally, contemporary initiatives such as the Aga Khan Architecture Awards and academic programs have played an important role in repositioning Islamic architecture as a significant contributor to the diversity of contemporary architecture (Rabbat, 2021). The aesthetics of Islamic gardens and their universal features have influenced cultural phenomena outside the Islamic realm, impacting the development of water culture in Western Europe (Samalavičius, 2022). In conclusion, Islamic art and architecture is a multifaceted expression that goes beyond mere aesthetics, exploring symbolism, cultural heritage, and religious values. They serve as a bridge connecting the past with the present, embodying the essence of Islamic civilization and spirituality.

The problem phenomenon in this research is related to the complexity in understanding the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture. The symbolism in Islamic art and architecture reflects deep religious, cultural and aesthetic values. However, this understanding of the evolution of symbolism has often been overlooked or misunderstood in previous research. Many studies focus on the decorative and structural aspects of Islamic art and architecture without delving deeper into the symbolic meaning and cultural influences contained therein. This creates challenges in identifying and interpreting changes in symbolism that have occurred throughout history and across different geographic regions. The main research question addressed is: How has the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture influenced the perception of aesthetics and cultural meaning across different historical periods and geographical regions? This question aims to explore the relationship between changes in symbolism and its impact on aesthetic perception and cultural meaning in a broad and dynamic context.

In the current literature, there is a significant void or limitation regarding the study of the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture. Most research tends to focus on descriptive analysis rather than comprehensive analysis that includes historical, geographical and cultural aspects. The lack of research linking symbolism to aesthetic perceptions and cultural meaning across historical periods and geographic regions suggests an urgent need for more in-depth and integrative research. It is hoped that this research can fill this gap by providing new insights into how symbolism in Islamic art and architecture developed and influenced perceptions and cultural meanings in Islamic societies in various historical and geographical contexts.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture, which is a vital aspect in appreciating and interpreting Islamic cultural heritage. Symbolism in Islamic art and architecture not only reflects aesthetic values but also contains deep religious and philosophical messages. This research seeks to reveal how this symbolism developed over time and influenced cultural and aesthetic perceptions in Islamic society. The potential impact of this research is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic art and architecture, so that it can enrich arts

and culture studies in general. Thus, this research can also increase appreciation and understanding of the contribution of Islamic art in a global context.

The novelty of this research lies in the integrative approach used to study the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture. The new contributions provided by this research include an in-depth analysis linking changes in symbolism to aesthetic perceptions and cultural meanings across different historical periods and geographical regions. This research not only describes symbolic elements but also explores the complex dynamics and interactions between symbolism, aesthetics, and culture. The innovative aspect of this research is the use of a systematic methodology that combines historical, geographical and cultural analysis, which has not been done in previous research.

The contribution of this research is very significant in enriching understanding of Islamic art and architecture. The results of this research can be used as a basis for further studies in the fields of Islamic art, architecture and culture. In addition, this research has broad application potential in the context of education, cultural preservation, and interpretation of Islamic art. In an educational context, the results of this research can be used as teaching material to deepen students' understanding of Islamic art and architecture. In cultural preservation, this research can help in efforts to preserve and interpret the rich heritage of Islamic art and architecture. Finally, in the context of art interpretation, this research can provide new insights that help in understanding the meaning and messages contained in Islamic art and architecture.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Collecting Articles from Reputable International Databases using the PRISMA Method

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method was used in this research to ensure that the article collection process was carried out systematically and transparently. PRISMA is a method consisting of a series of steps designed to help researchers conduct systematic reviews and meta-analyses in a standardized and replicable way.

The article collection process begins with identifying articles from various reputable international databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR. Once articles are identified, the next step is initial screening to remove duplicate articles. Then, an eligibility assessment was carried out to ensure that the articles met the predetermined inclusion criteria. The final stage is inclusion, where articles that meet all the criteria will be included in the analysis.

2.2. Keywords Used to Search for Articles

Keywords used in article searches cover various aspects relevant to the research topic, including:

1. Islamic art
2. Islamic architecture
3. symbolism
4. aesthetics
5. cultural significance
6. historical evolution

These keywords were selected to ensure broad and comprehensive coverage of articles relevant to this research.

2.3. Number of Articles Retrieved

Initial searches in various reputable international databases yielded the following articles:

1. Scopus: 16 articles
2. Web of Science: 8 article
3. JSTOR: 23 articles

The total number of initial articles identified was 47 articles. After going through an initial screening process to remove duplicate articles, the number of articles filtered became 24 articles. Of these, after eligibility assessment and application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 19 articles met the inclusion criteria and were included in further analysis.

2.4. Article Inclusion and Exclusion Techniques

2.4.1. Inclusion Criteria:

1. Articles that are relevant to the research topic.
2. Articles published in reputable journals.
3. Articles in English or Indonesian.
4. Articles covering various historical periods and geographical areas.
5. Article discussing symbolism in Islamic art and architecture.

2.4.2. Exclusion Criteria:

1. Articles that are not relevant to the research topic.
2. Articles not published in reputable journals.
3. Articles that do not cover symbolism in Islamic art and architecture.
4. Duplicate article.

The process of filtering and evaluating articles is carried out through several stages. First, articles that were not relevant to the topic or were not published in reputable journals were removed. Second, articles that did not cover symbolism in Islamic art and architecture or were duplicates of other articles were also excluded. The remaining articles were then further evaluated to ensure that they covered a range of historical periods and geographic regions relevant to this research. By strictly following the PRISMA protocol, this research ensures that all articles included in the analysis are of the most relevant and high quality, providing a solid foundation for the analysis of the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Symbolism in Islamic Art and Architecture: A Historical Overview

Islamic art and architecture has been influenced by various historical periods and dynasties, each of which contributed significantly to the development and evolution of symbolic elements in this art. In the Early Islamic period, pre-Islamic cultural influences formed the basis for early symbols and their meanings (Sukkar, 2024). Furthermore, in the Classic Period, geometric motifs and calligraphy developed rapidly under the influence of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties (Meliana & Caroline, 2020). The Middle Period, marked by the Seljuk, Ottoman, and Mughal dynasties, saw regional variations and the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art and architecture ("Between Ethics and Aesthetics: A Curation Method for Contemporary Islamic Paintings in Indonesia", 2023).

Entering the Modern and Contemporary Period, the impact of colonialism and modernism caused a reinterpretation of symbolism in a more contemporary context (Alashari et al., 2019). Islamic art and architecture reflect complex expressions of Islam, combining spiritual, symbolic, social, political and formal elements in the built environment (Sukkar, 2024). The use of motifs and ornaments in Islamic art functions to create profitable symbols with high aesthetic value (Insani, 2023). Additionally, the use of light (Nur) in Islamic art symbolizes spiritual enlightenment and the presence of God (Umashankar, 2020).

Calligraphy in Islamic art, which has been a dominant feature throughout history, with its intricate patterns and designs, contains deep spiritual meaning (Zahra & Shahir, 2023). Calligraphy, which has been at the core of Islamic art for centuries, reflects the dynamics of Islamic artistic expression. Elements of Islamic non-figurative art, such as Arabic calligraphy and geometric patterns, are closely linked to Islamic cosmology and theology. Additionally, the visible influence of Persian calligraphy in Mughal architecture shows the interconnectedness of different artistic traditions. In conclusion, Islamic art and architecture have evolved over the centuries, influenced by various dynasties, cultures, and historical contexts. Symbolism in Islamic art reflects not only aesthetic values, but also spiritual and cultural meaning, making it a rich and multifaceted form of artistic expression.

3.2. Aesthetic Perception in Islamic Art and Architecture

Islamic art and architecture are closely related to aesthetic principles that reflect Islamic values and beliefs. Aesthetic theory in Islam emphasizes the concept of beauty manifested in various forms of art, including geometric patterns, calligraphy, and motifs inspired by nature (Basoeki & Wu, 2021). These elements not only function as decoration, but also contain symbolic meaning rooted in Islamic spirituality (Ashfaq & Azhari, 2020). Islamic aesthetics is unique because it is influenced by the teachings of the Koran, which guides the development of artistic expression within the framework of Islamic culture (Ashfaq & Azhari, 2020).

Symbolic aesthetics plays an important role in Islamic art, where symbols are used to convey deeper meanings and spiritual messages. Analysis of symbols in Islamic art reveals a rich diversity of meanings, which vary between different cultures and historical periods (Fahmawee, 2022). For example, the prohibition on depicting living creatures in Islamic art encouraged the development of stylized botanical ornaments using geometry, a practice that evolved over time through various Islamic dynasties (Bibimoune, 2024).

Furthermore, the relationship between aesthetics and spirituality in Islamic art is highlighted through the emphasis on ethical dimensions in addition to aesthetic qualities. Contemporary Islamic art seeks to maintain a balance between aesthetic appeal and adherence to Islamic traditions, by incorporating ethical considerations related to Islamic law, morality, and spirituality ("Between Ethics and Aesthetics: A Curation Method for Contemporary Islamic Paintings in Indonesia", 2023). This unification of aesthetics and ethics is essential in maintaining the authenticity of Islamic art, while allowing for creative expression that is in keeping with modern sensibilities. In conclusion, Islamic art and architecture embody a harmonious blend of aesthetics, spirituality and cultural values that are deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. The intricate patterns, symbolic motifs, and ethical considerations present in Islamic art reflect a unique aesthetic tradition, which continues to inspire and captivate the world's attention.

3.3. Cultural Meaning of Symbolism in Islamic Art and Architecture

Islamic art and architecture is rich in cultural and symbolic meaning reflecting social, religious, and regional influences in Islamic society. Ornaments in Islamic art and architecture often include geometric patterns, calligraphy, and motifs inspired by nature, such as floral, geometric, and vegetal motifs (Basoeki & Wu, 2021; Zahra & Shahir, 2022). Islamic calligraphy, which is an important element in Muslim buildings such as mosques, has developed into a crucial component in Islamic art and architecture (Zahra & Shahir, 2023). The mosque, as a central element in Islamic architecture, functions to embody the presence and doctrine of Islam (Fajariyah, 2021).

Regional symbolic variations can be observed through case studies from various regions such as the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa. For example, Islamic architectural works in the Hausa community are directly inspired by Islamic principles, showing

how religious beliefs form the basis of regional design (Aliyu, 2023). In Indonesia, the assimilation of Islamic teachings and local culture is clearly visible in the ornamentation of architectural elements, indicating a combination of Islamic and local influences (Sulaksono et al., 2023).

The symbolism in Islamic art and architecture goes beyond mere aesthetics; it plays an important role in conveying religious values and cultural heritage. The integration of Islamic values in art and architecture, which originate from the Koran and local culture, emphasizes the inseparable relationship between art, architecture and Islamic principles (Zahro et al., 2023). Furthermore, symbolism in architecture is not only a goal but also a result that influences social heritage and reflects Islamic beliefs (Fahmawee, 2022).

The fusion of Hindu and Islamic architectural elements in the Indian subcontinent, as seen in the Qutb Complex in Delhi, highlights the early fusion of Hindu and Islamic architectural styles, indicating a fusion of cultural influences (Khan & Bilal, 2020). In addition, the presence of Islamic symbols such as mosques alongside pre-Islamic symbols in places such as Taman Ghairah Banda Aceh shows the coexistence of pre-Islamic and Islamic influences in architectural design (Fadhil et al., 2022). In conclusion, Islamic art and architecture serves as a powerful medium for expressing cultural identity, religious values, and regional variations. The complex patterns, calligraphy and motifs in Islamic art not only display aesthetic beauty but also contain deep meaning, reflecting the diversity of cultural weaves in Islamic society.

3.4. Comparative Analysis

In examining historical periods, the evolution and transformation of symbolism plays an important role in understanding the differences and similarities in symbolism in various eras. Symbolism has changed over time due to various factors such as cultural shifts, social norms, and technological advances (Kawai, 2022). These changes influence aesthetic perceptions and cultural meanings, which in turn influence how individuals interpret and interact with symbols in various historical contexts (Suprianto et al., 2022). For example, within urban historical blocks, cultural relics and historic sites serve as important symbols that reflect the traditional style and local characteristics of a particular historical period, contributing significantly to the cultural landscape of a city (Liang et al., 2022).

Regionally, there are differences in cultural symbolism and meaning, which are influenced by factors such as religion, language, and historical events (Suprianto et al., 2022). Studies of architectural symbols in ancient cities, for example, highlight the cultural value associated with these symbols and how they represent the heritage and identity of a region (Huang & Achin, 2023). Understanding these regional variations in symbolism provides insight into the diversity of cultural expressions and significance of symbols in different geographic locations.

The impact of the evolution of symbolism on the perception of aesthetics and cultural meaning is profound, influencing how individuals view and interact with symbols in a variety of contexts (Kawai, 2022). Symbolism in religious traditions, for example, plays an important role in shaping beliefs and practices, illustrating how symbols carry deep cultural and spiritual meaning, influencing individuals' worldviews (Suprianto et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies of symbolic gestures in children show how iconicity aids in memory and learning, highlighting the cognitive and developmental aspects of symbolism in shaping human behavior and communication (Aussems, 2019).

In conclusion, a comparative analysis of historical periods, regional variations in cultural symbolism, and the evolution of symbolism reveals the dynamic nature of symbols and their influence on aesthetic perception and cultural meaning. By exploring the factors that drove changes in symbolism and understanding the varying interpretations of symbols across regions and time periods, we can develop a deeper appreciation of the richness and complexity of symbolic communication in human society.

4. Conclusions

Islamic art and architecture have undergone a complex evolution of symbolism, influenced by various dynasties, cultures and historical contexts. Symbolism in Islamic art and architecture not only reflects aesthetic values, but also contains deep spiritual and cultural meanings. This study shows that symbols in Islamic art act as a powerful medium for expressing cultural identity, religious values, and regional variations. The transformation of symbolism over time as well as regional differences in the interpretation of these symbols provide rich insight into how Islamic art and architecture developed along with changes in culture, social norms, and technology.

4.1. Implications

This research has important implications for the study of Islamic art and architecture as well as cultural studies more broadly. First, a deep understanding of the evolution of symbolism in Islamic art can help enrich the aesthetic and spiritual interpretation of Islamic works of art and architecture. Second, recognition of regional variations in symbolism can encourage greater appreciation of cultural diversity in the Islamic world. Third, this research highlights the importance of considering historical and cultural context in the analysis of symbolism, which can deepen our understanding of the role of art as an expression of cultural identity and religious values.

4.2. Limitations

Although this research provides deep insight into symbolism in Islamic art and architecture, there are several limitations that need to be noted. First, this study focuses more on historical overview and less dives into empirical analysis of specific art artifacts, which could provide a more specific perspective on the evolution of symbolism. Second, this study is limited to certain regions in the Islamic world, so variations in symbolism in other regions may be underrepresented. Third, the role of modern technology in the transformation of Islamic symbolism is only discussed briefly, even though its impact is increasingly significant in the contemporary era.

4.3. Future Research

Future research could expand this study by exploring symbolism in Islamic art and architecture from an empirical perspective, including more in-depth case studies of specific art artifacts from different periods and regions. In addition, further research can explore the impact of modern technology and globalization on the transformation of symbolism in contemporary Islamic art. Cross-cultural studies involving comparisons between Islamic symbolism and other artistic traditions can also provide new insights into the interactions and mutual influences between various cultures in the evolution of artistic and architectural symbolism.

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