

## VISUAL VARIETIES IN THE ISLAMIC ART

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**Abstract:** Islam came as rahmatan lilalamin, meaning mercy to all in the universe. The Islamic view applies in all contexts and content. This means that any context in the world can't escape from the Islamic point of view. For example the art context, trade, marriage, life, social, and others can't be separated from the study of Islam. In the art context, it has a study inside Islamic view, especially named Islamic Art. If we discuss about Islamic art, it can't be separated from Islamic law itself. Islamic law governs all things, one of which governs also the arts (visual). Visual form of expression can be seen as works of Islamic art that represent the Islamic law itself. The creator of the work of Islamic art can be called a Muslim artist, although this remains controversial. The diversity of the visual manifestation of the work of Islamic art is the result of diversity of interpretation of oral traditions from the prophet (hadith) and verses contained in the Qur'an. These are the cause of the diverse looks of the works of Islamic art thousands of centuries ago to the present day, for example, calligraphy, arabesque ornaments, mosque architecture, abstract painting, stylized painting and others. This paper attempts to explore and examine the question of "why" the form of Islamic art is very diverse? What is the conceptual behind the works of Islamic art that are so diverse in the first period to the present day.

*Keywords: Diversity, Law, Visual art, Islam.*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This introduction is specifically made to discuss about Islamic art. First of all we will explain about the visual arts in general. From the Art history literatures, Staging of periods of art began in prehistoric times to the present era and beyond. The basis of this is staging/periods were based on the artifacts found that then, were researched or studied to make a conclusion. Pre-history was the era before men know how to write. While, history started when men had already familiar with writing systems. Before history, the artifacts were found only in the form of stone tools and bones. In the context of Indonesia, the beginning of the era of history was around the 4th century when an inscription was discovered with the date from that era.

However, the classification of primitive man with antiquity tools supporting their survival in the form of stone axes and also tools from the bones, by modern man concluded as descendant of primate. From the shape and function as an art objects of antiquity made such claim objected and denied by a scientist named Harun Yahya. The reason is that the human form since the first known existed up until now is normal and an intelligent human. According to him, the staging of the period are not with the term mentioned by the western scholars, namely:

1. Prehistorical Period
2. Ancient Civilization Period
3. Middle Age Period
4. Renaissance Period
5. Modern Period
6. Post Modern Period

According to Harun Yahya the appropriate staging is to divide it according to the days of the prophets sent by God since the prophet Adam (pbuh) up to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and based on the relics and artifacts from the antiquity match with the period of the prophet which the

artifacts were found, such as the pyramids in Egypt was parallel with the era of prophet Musa (pbuh).

The author, within this article do not focus on the staging as mentioned above, however, the author concentrates on the history of Islamic art and its wide variety of visual, and also the concepts of works that became the background of its creation.

Islamic art, along with its diverse variations could be view, from historical point of view, according to the study began in the era of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) up to now and beyond. The era of the prophet Muhammad could be said to have begun in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. Prophet Muhammad is the last Prophet sent by God for all human kind. He gave the glad news and warnings to the human kind.

Islam means peace. Islam is mercy to all the worlds. Life in this world can't be separated from the rules or laws. For Muslims, the rules and the laws derived from the holy book, Qur'an and from the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) or Hadith. Both of these laws are Muslims hold for the truth.

At the beginning of the life in the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) era, Muslims can confirm or interact with the Prophet Muhammad about the law and others. Answers received by people who live with Muhammad is 100 % valid truth, because the saying of prophet Muhammad (pbuh) according to the Muslim point of view should be 100% truth. Sources of law received from Muhammad certainly serve as the basis to act and do and decide solution of a problem.

During his life, Prophet Muhammad once advised his people in order to uphold the two heritage so as not to be in lost, two heritage in question, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet. Al - Qur'an by Allah is kept on its authenticity until the final day. Hadith of the Prophet from generation to generation have been collected and recorded until later times.

However, the early life of the Prophet up until the present age (21<sup>st</sup> century) has been passed about 14 centuries ago. During the 14 centuries, there have been many changes in the character of the era. Changes as result of various events that are either constructive or destructive.

With the distance between the current lives with the life of the Prophet Muhammad, raised a variety of ideas in the form of commentaries or false hadiths. This resulted in chaos in the midst of society, pretending that they equally defend the truth in each party.

Diversity of thought also lead to diversity in all fields, one of which is visual diversity in the world of Islamic art which will be the discussion of this study.

## **2. Diversity Visual Arts inside Islam**

Each author read a catalog or a discussion about Islamic art always feel the diversity of thought and of sources of law as work background. This is a little confusing to grasp which one is the most valid. In the current era, we could not figure out "who" is right but that can be validated is the "which" one is right, because the truth is only in Allah and His Apostle side.

Within Islam, it is clearly mentioned the pillars of Islam, which is *syahadah*, prayer, fasting, zakat and hajj. The five previously stated are the Five Pillars of Islam and in the category of big worship, the orders are directly from God / Allah through the angel Gabriel, then conveyed to His Apostles, and then presented by the apostle to the mankind. This is the characteristic of Islam that differ Islam with the other religion. Five things mentioned above is absolute, can't be increased or reduced. If the five are given a plus/minus, then apply the *bid'ah*. *Bid'ah* is innovation of worship or inventions without a clear basis in the area of obliged worship.

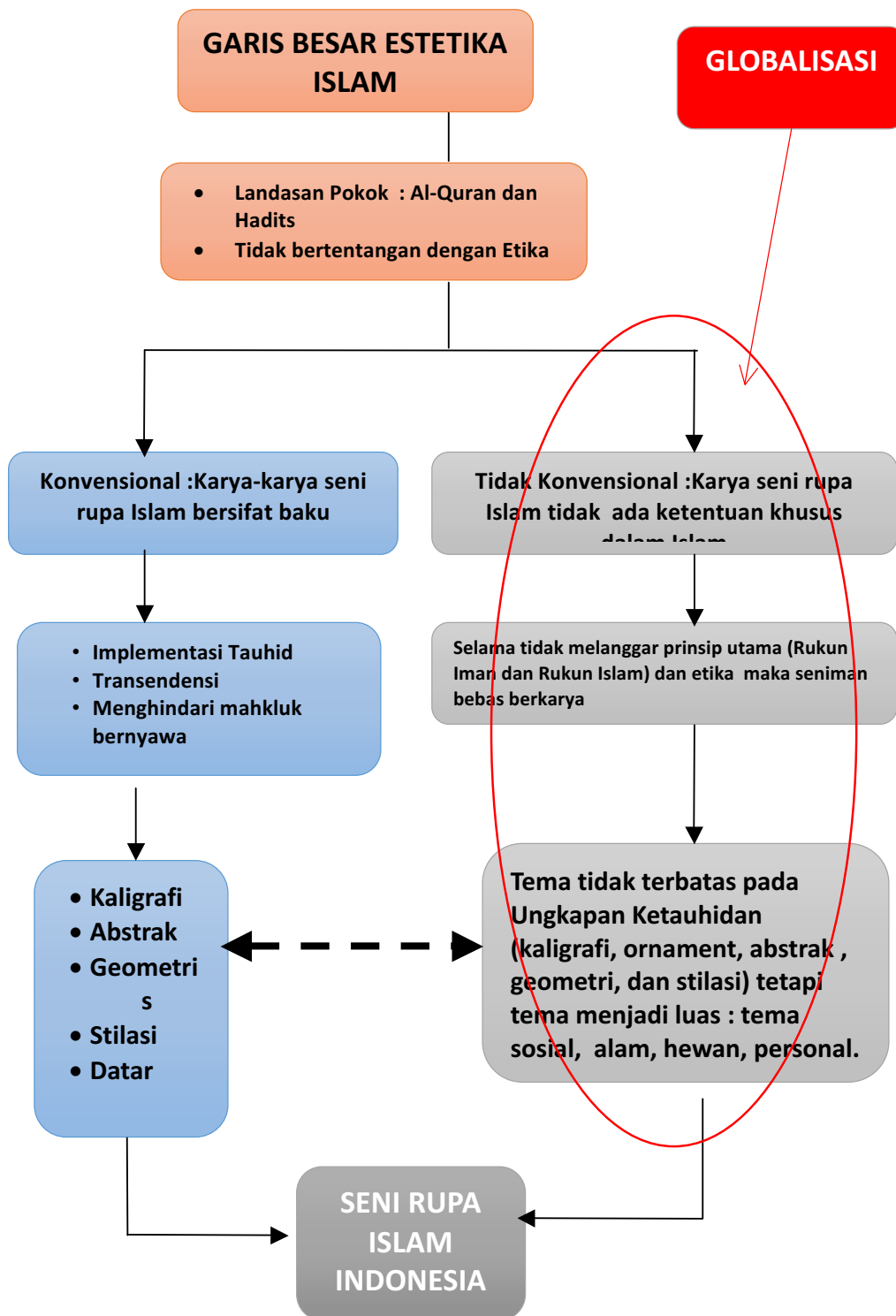


Figure 1 the School of Thought diversity causes Diversity of Fine Arts Work within Islamic Art

Source : Exclusive, 2016

In the context and content of Islamic art as mentioned in the beginning that the art is not included in big worship. Art in the Qur’anic context, is not mentioned explicitly, it applies also for the rules of art. Art as a form of expression / expression of feelings. The hadith says "any form that was done depends on his intention" God also says "I depend on my servants prejudice".

The Qur'an also told about the kingdom of Solomon that was adorned with statues, and also told that Jesus makes sculptures of birds from clay and then with the permission of Allah the statues of birds could then fly (alive). If then Muslim artist create a masterpiece without any intention of associating partners with Allah, therefore, it is no problem, even though, one that knows one's intention is only Allah.

Islam also doesn't want things that are too complicated or complex, Islam is present to provide convenience and clear rules, does not intend to create intricate and difficult things. Therefore, in Islamic art appears unique variety of visual forms, even come to a very contemplative ways.

In today's contemporary era, in which national borders no longer exist, the mixing of cultures could be described well as devastating tsunami waves. Mutual influence between countries already inundated one another, resulting in extraordinary cultural acculturation that could be seen in the diversity of the works of Islamic art in the world.

The diversity of thought and interpretation coupled with the globalization, gave extraordinary diversity that resulted in a distinct form of visual works in Islamic art. Diversity could be seen from the themes depicted or expressed in the works, such as calligraphy, abstract, geometric, stylized, flat, theme of humanity, nature, personal, and others.



Figure 2 the work of Islamic Arts entitled *Last Journey* by Gabriel



Figure 3 calligraphy scene by Agus Bakul



Figure 4 by Tisna Sanjaya entitled “tubuh 5 waktu”

### 3. CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, visual diversity in the art, are due to the diversity of thinking in interpreting Islamic laws that were derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Visual diversity shown by the artist's works of Islamic art in a variety of themes.

The themes are not only limited to *tawheed* but widespread and very broad, such as in social themes, nature themes, abstract, contemporary themes and others. Calligraphy, abstract, and ornaments are not limited to the *tawheed* themes. While the visual manifestation of scenery, mountains, trees are the theme of nature, and people reciting the Qur'an representing social themes.

In the contemporary era, both researchers and curators did not question the variation of these themes. The era of rapid change impacting on the more open interaction between cultures within the planet. Postulates as the foundation of any work can also be accountable so that development of the visual manifestation of Islamic art is not unstoppable.

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