



Proceedings

International Symposium on Religious Literature and Heritage

*"Empowering Civilization through
Religious Heritage"*



15-18 September 2015

Jakarta

Published by:

Center for Research and Development of
Religious Literature and Heritage
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all we express our thanks to God by uttering *Alhamdulillah* for publication of this proceeding. This Proceeding consists of 72 selected papers which are sent to International Symposium on Religious Literature and Heritage (ISLAGE) held on 15-18 September 2015 in Jakarta. There are two kinds of papers included in this proceeding: 48 presented papers in the Symposium and 24 contributed papers of those who are being as participators during the symposium. The content of this proceeding is divided into five categories, referred to the subthemes of the symposium. Those are religious manuscripts, religious contemporary literature, religious social history, religious art and culture, and religious archaeology and inscription.

This International Symposium is a bi-annual symposium held by Center for Research and Development of Religious Literature and Heritage. The theme of this year symposium focuses on: "Empowering Civilization through Religious Heritage". This is to promote understanding of the Indonesian legacies, particularly deal with the religious literature and heritage, and to gain the world-wide experiences in developing it on the one hand. This meeting, on the other hand, will provide a scientific forum as a medium of scientific dialogue amongst scholars for the sake of mapping the problems and constructing the development models of religious literature and heritage. Both of the above objectives are based on the institution's main work and mission that is to conduct researches and development in the field of religious literature and heritage (cultural legacies) comprising of holy scripture, religious manuscripts, contemporary religious literatures, and heritage consisted of religious history, archaeology, local culture, and other religious legacies.

Preparing to this proceeding as it is now in our hand, we undeniably face many challenges encountered. Praise be to God, that with His compassion we have the ability and capacity to solve with. He also has granted all related people who have attention to the Symposium to participate, to write their abstracts and papers to be published in this proceeding, to layout, and to be readable for everybody.

In this opportunity, we extend our very special thanks to our minister, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin. Without his permission and support, this symposium and proceeding will be nothing. We are also grateful to Prof. H. Abdurrahman Mas'ud, Ph.D, our beloved head of Agency for Research and Development and Training. He wished to let us performing this great event and to publish this proceeding, and to spend his time for consulting various aspects to succeed the process of this event. Our deep-felt gratitude is to all of those who have intensely endeavour their participation to succeed this event and make this proceeding reachable and useful for those who tend to read it.

Last but not least, we have devoted our accomplishments to produce this proceeding, and good luck for the reader. Our great expectation is that this proceeding will be useful for its readers.

Jakarta, August 31, 2015

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TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF RUMOH ACEH: UNDERSTANDING ACEHNESE RELIGIOSITY THROUGH SEMIOTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Current heated debate about the truest Islam between traditionalist and modernist Muslims of Aceh does not yet dissolved as much literature on Aceh has, to date, not sought consensus about the nature of Acehese Islam. A great deal of much previous anthropologic research into the nature of Indonesian piety has found syncretism of Indonesian religiosity, which to some extent corresponds with traditionalist Muslims' worldview. Based on semiotic analysis of Rumoh Aceh sculptures and its architecture, in this paper, I, contrarily, argue that modernist Muslims' worldview has become, in some area of Aceh, the system of their artwork and has shaped Acehese culture. This argument is justified by the findings of this work, which confirms Salafist position on art, in which Salafist artistic perspective is expressed throughout Rumoh Aceh architecture, such as the nature of its sculpture, shape, and structure. Both traditional Muslim theology, which is grounded in Ash'ariate theology and modern Muslim theology, which is rooted in Salafist teaching, are mainstream theologies in Islamic religion. Both perspectives have great influence on every aspect of Muslim life, including culture and artwork. This paper is aimed to provide some evidences and new perspective on the discourse of religiosity in Aceh particularly, which responds to global dispute between both different groups.

Keywords: Rumoh Aceh, Salafist, Ash'arite, Islamic Art, Sculpture

Introduction

Acehese culture pays particular attention to its connection to Syiah theology. There are relatively few studies in the area of Acehese arts, which investigate critically Acehese cultural identity and ideology. This study found that Rumoh Aceh confirms the plurality of Acehese culture, where Salafist perspective on arts dominate the features of Rumoh Aceh in some phase and in other phase of Acehese history reflects the spirit of traditionalist Muslims.

Based on the analysis of the architecture of Rumoh Aceh, I argue that the dispute between different groups of Acehese Muslims, in particular between traditionalists and Salafists, is motivated by the ignorance of Islamic teachings rather than inspired by the nature of Islam itself. This argument is justified by the architecture of Rumoh Aceh and many other Acehese cultural artefacts. This work has found that many cultural markers of both Acehese traditionalists and Salafists are the being and becoming of those different groups. Those markers, which are the communality and identity of them, are having neither essentialist meaning, nor divine character of Acehese religiosity and Piety. Rumoh Aceh has confirmed that religiosity in Aceh is still always on going process of islamisation and reformation. The dialectical relation between locality, by which traditionalism stands, and divinity, which is advocated by salafist, is indicated that process of being and becoming.

This work is undertaken by considering Barthes' procedure of semiotic analysis (Barthes, 1972, 1982). I analysed distinctive features of Rumoh Aceh, such as its shape and sculpture and interpreted the features by using thematic analysis. To understand the nature of the dispute between both sides, I concern to pay attention on hidden meanings from manifest features of Rumoh Aceh sculptures (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Krippendorff, 2004; Riffe, Lacy, & G.Fico, 2008; Wodak & Krzy*zanowski, 2008).

This work has significant contribution to bring new light of understanding the dispute between modernist Muslims and traditional Muslims in Aceh particularly, which has attracted attentions from many local researchers and global intellectuals. Numerous studies have attempted to explain the nature of Acehnese religiosity. Several literature informs us that Acehnese religiosity has sunni and salafist nature, which is indicated from their historical artefacts (Muhammad, 2015) and the nature of Shari'a implementation (Salim, 2004). Other local culturists views that Acehnese religiosity has local distinction, which is contrast to global Islam (S. Hurgronje, 1906; Umar, 2007). As many of the previous studies on religiosity of Indonesia demonstrates syncretism of Indonesian religiosity.

A Glance to Acehnese Culture and Religiosity

Aceh is one of Indonesian provinces where is situated in the tip of Sumatra island. There are approximately 4 million people living in the tensest endeavour of self-determination society in Indonesia. Aceh has 23 regencies namely Meulaboh, Blangpidie, Jantho, Calang, Tapaktuan, Aceh Tamiang, Takengon, Kutacane, East Aceh, North Aceh, Lhokseumawe, Bener Meriah, Gayo Lues, Siglie, Meureudu, Sinabang, Bireun, Nagan Raya, Banda Aceh, Lhokseumawe, Rekap, Sabang and Subussalam (Government, 2009)¹.

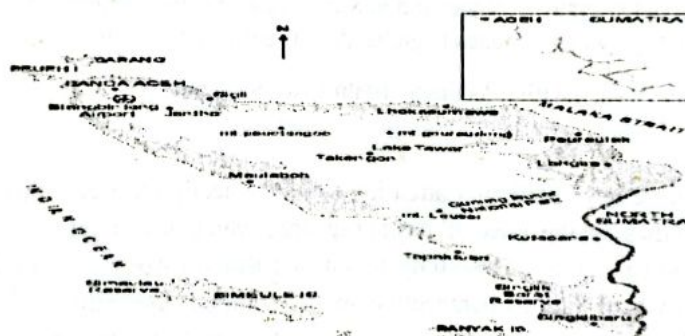


Figure 1 the map of Aceh

Acehnese society is comprised of multiple ethnics and cultures. The majority of Acehnese are either Malayo-Polynesian origin, Arabic and Indian background, or Chinese ancestry. There are eight major cultures: Alas, Aneuk Jamee, Gayo, Kluet, Pulau (Island groups), Singkel, Tamiang, and 'ethnic Acehnese'. The latter comprise around 90 per cent of the total population and are defined by their Islamic background and distinct Acehnese dialects. There are also clusters of Batak, Chinese, Javanese and Minangkabau in the region (Smith, 1997, p. 14).

Islam is a religion of nearly all of the Acehnese. It influences abundantly Acehnese culture which overlaps all of the Acehnese life matters. This powerful Islamic penetration to Acehnese way of life due the prolonged historical convert of Islam which is known as the first place where Islam was introduced in the entire Southeast Asia (Aceh Timur (Indonesia) & Majelis Ulama Daerah Istimewa Aceh., 1980; Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2006; M. Said, 1981; Smith, 1997).

With various new waves of *Da'i* groups, Islam was started to be converted by Acehnese in the early 8 CE which was covered sparsely some small community of the Acehnese Hindu-Buddhism society. Next two centuries, the number of Muslims had become majority of some regions, such as Peurelak and Samudra Pasai and they established Islamic kingdoms wherein the Islamic teaching centred. It is clear from the literature that the Islamic religion is accepted by local people peacefully and friendly (M. Y. Harun, 1995; Ibrahim, 1991; Ismail, 1993; Latif, 1992; H. M. Said, 1981; Zainuddin, 1961).

Based on this prolonged Acehnese historical development, Acehnese cultural identity has been accumulated and sedimented into several practices, which are celebrated by Acehnese people through their routine life. They can be summed up into some sameness traits among Acehnese society namely: Acehnese and sub-Acehnese languages, strong believe in Islamic religion, *Seuneujoh* (death ritual), *Maulid* (the ceremony of Prophet Muhammad's birthday), *Seudati* dance, *Saman* dance, and the ways to welcoming guests (AcehInstitute, 2008).

There is a dialectic development of Acehnese cultural identity in its history which in some phases, traditions dominated over other traits, and at other time, Islamic values overshadow all the mentioned aspects. In short, the identity of the Acehnese has developed differently from time to time in their history (Bowen, 2007). Among many various identities, Islam (Andaya, 2001; Reid, 2004, 2009; Salim, March 2004) traditions and custom (Graf, Schroter, & Wieringa, 2010; C. S. Hurgronje, 1985, 1996), and nationalism (Aspinall, 2009; Lombard, 2006; T. H. d. Tiro, 1984; T. H. M. d. Tiro, 1979) had become the most dominant in several stages of the Acehnese identity history.

Most Acehnese historians believe that the time when King Iskandar Muda reigned over the Acehnese kingdom in 18 CE was the greatest time. In this time, the idea of Acehnese identity had started to mature and had been accepted by many different groups in the region. Based on Gramsci's theory, it is considered that the time is the Acehnese historical bloc by which this pinnacle era will trigger the Acehnese consciousness of their existence in the present time.

The peak of the Acehnese kingdom in history has left a good past memory in every Acehnese people. That historical memories of the Acehnese greatness civilisation have continually triggered the Acehnese people to preserve their heritages which are considered as the worth pride of their cultures (AcehInstitute, 2008; M. J. Kartomi, 2004; Reid, 2006). There are many arts of Acehnese people, which are their cultural pride, such as *Seudati* dance, *Saman* dance, *Likok pulo* dance and *Hikayat*.

Seudati Dance is a dance that originated from the province of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (Indonesia). *Seudati* derived from the word *Syhadat*, which means witness / testify / recognition of no god but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad the messenger of the God. This dance also includes categories of Tribal War Dance or War Dance, which evoke the spirit of his verse always Acehnese youth to rise up and fight against colonialism. Therefore, this dance had banned the Dutch colonial era, but now this dance is allowed to return and become the National Arts of Indonesia. The performance of the *Seudati* dance can illustrate the points of attaining cultural awareness and collectivity. In the performance of *Seudati* for instance, the audiences along with dancers can benefit the Islamic teaching through the dance's lyric, in the same time; they attain the tradition that represents by the *Seudati* performance and the social gathering for the dance helps to develop the sense of local collectiveness.

Likewise *Saman* Dance, it is one of the most famous dances which is originated from Acehnese highland; Gayo. *Saman* lyrics use Arabian language, Aceh and sub-Acehnese language as well. In the past time, *Saman* dance was usually performed to celebrate important events in

tradition and the society in Aceh. Besides, the dance is always performed to celebrate the birth of Muhammad Prophet. In fact, the name of Saman was given from one of famous Islamic Scholar in Aceh, Syech Saman. This dance which is performed at least by 10 dancers is a very well media to advancement of the Acehnese cultural consciousness. Firstly, the dance was created and developed from a the performance of *zikri* in Sufi ritual by Syekh Saman. This obviously illustrates the dance is a part of religious activities. Likewise, this dance can be regarded as the tradition for the people gathering, ruminating and mesmerizing their collectiveness. Similarly, the lyric, singing, and the philosophy of the dance teach the audience the importance of collectiveness and unity.

In the same tone, Likok Pulo dance is the Acehnese dance which was composed around 1849, it was created by an Arabian migrated to Aceh for the Islamic proselytizing purpose. The dance depicts the way their barking onto the beach, describing the wind, wave, tree and surroundings. In the later time, the dance has developed to more complex and functioned for the people attaining the Islamic knowledge in its lyric, communal awareness and as the media for political campaign as well.

Hikayat is an Acehnese long poem or epic. The name is derived from Arabic language, which means "telling story". This art is considered as the greatest and the most amount of the Acehnese arts. The hikayat is created based on oral tradition which is initially memorized by the authors and then followed by the audiences. Acehnese Hikayat contains different aspects of the local life, such as local personal lives, battles, religious event and so forth. Undoubtedly, the Hikayat plays a great role in developing the communal religious beliefs by integrating the locality with the Islamic universal teachings. In addition, Hikayat also integrates the local traditions with external cultures. For this reason, the hikayat was so popular (Acehpedia). Similar to other arts, Hikayat plays a great role to evoke the spirit of ethnicity and communal historical consciousness through heroic battle stories, uphold morality, raising collectiveness from the historical.

Islamic Arts: Against Anthropomorphism and Zoomorphism

A considerable amount of literature has been published on arts (al-Fārūqī, 1973; Dewey, 1959; Hasjmy, 1983; Kartomi, 1983; M. Kartomi, 2004; Mirsa, 2013; Mwenesi, 1998; Said, 2008; Tung, 2013). However, there are few studies on Islamic studies. In 1986, the publication of 'Cultural Atlas of Islam' had a major impact on Islamic arts. Al-Faruqi has proposed convinced definition of Islamic arts, which he postulates that Islamic arts are the expression of Quranic worldview and ideology. He, further, proposes several principles and characters of Islamic arts that differ to Muslim arts (Al-Faruqi, 1973).

This study is an attempt to unearth the relation between the artwork with the religiosity of a community. Similar to religion, arts are the necessity for a society; where there is no society exists without arts. The reliability of art to be considered as a source of knowledge is debatable. Many scholars, such as Langer (1957) and Eisner (2007) argue the crucial role of artwork as a valuable source of knowledge. According to Eisner (Eisner, 2007, pp. 10-11), this is possible for several important reasons; firstly arts can be seen as texts, where qualitative nuances can be found. This nuance brings an awareness and understanding of human experiences. Secondly, arts can evoke empathy feeling that arts do not only give knowledge, but arts also contribute live experience. Finally, arts also create fresh view and perception on an object, which make the knowledge derived is stronger and impression.

In Islam, arts are inevitable. However, ulama have different perspective on arts. The views on art are divided into two groups of ulama. The first category of ulama has strict view on arts, which

postulates principles and foundations of Islamic arts. They establish that Islamic arts are only compatible with those foundation and principles. Every art that is founded on those principles, are, therefore, Islamic arts, regardless its geography, ethnicity and locality. This view believes in universality of Muslim arts.

Ismail Faruqi is one of the leading ulamas of this category. In his seminal book on arts; “Cultural Atlas of Islam”, he is of the opinions that (Al-Faruqi, 1986; al-Fārūqī, 1973) Islamic arts are derived from Al-Quran, Islamic arts, therefore must conform with al-Quran. There are three levels that are indicated the Islamic Arts. Islamic arts should be the instrument to teaching tawhid and Islamic teachings. Secondly, al-Quran is a pattern of Islamic arts and finally, Al-Quran is the icon of Islamic arts, such as calligraphy and reciting al-Quran prescribing *Tajwid* and singing in accordance with the code of *qiraah*. He views that Islamic arts are the instrument of Islamic ideology, which is based on al-Quran teaching.

Grounded in al-Quran, there are six principles of Islamic arts; abstraction, successive combination, sophisticated, dynamic, modular structure and repetition. Those principles of Islamic arts establish anti-naturalistic model of artwork, which reject any realistic creation of arts, such as the artistic embodiment of animals, and human beings. Faruqi emphasises that the rejection of animal form of artwork (zoomorphism) and human forms (anthropomorphism) is vital and the principle of *tawhid*. Therefore, any animal form of artwork is non-Islamic and is against Quranic/*tawhid* arts.

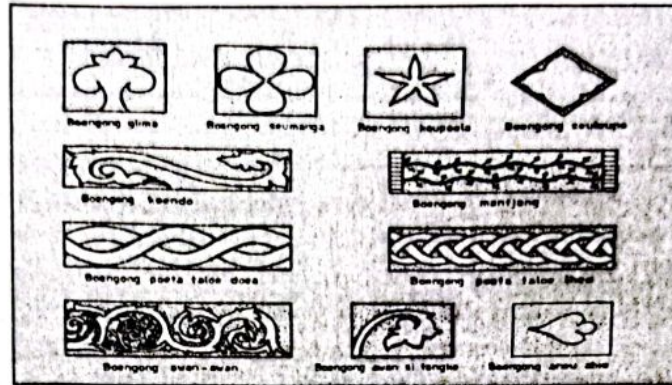
The second group of Ulamas has contrast opinions to the first one. They view that Islamic arts are basically flexible and inclusive to any artwork. They simply view that Islamic arts are the artwork that is produced and developed by Muslims and is shared commonly by Muslim communality. They, therefore, believe the particularity of Muslim arts. For instances, they see that Moroccan Muslim arts are unique to Egypt Muslim arts, as Acehese Muslim arts are different to Javanese Muslim arts. This idea of arts is supported by many *sufistic* view on Islam and belong to traditionalist Muslims. Areas where significant differences between the first group and the second one are that the first necessitates distinctive characters and principles for Islamic arts that give the boundary between Islamic arts and non-Islamic arts, whereas the second one do not prescribes this boundary.

Rumoh Aceh Sculpture

Rumoh Aceh is Acehese traditional house, which is made from wood and has unique structure. It is the pride of the Acehese people. Rumoh Aceh, however, is about to seek its extinction. Now, Rumoh Aceh is hardly found in Acehese cities, towns and villages. There are several Rumoh Aceh seen in Pidie and perhaps, Pidie has the most Rumoh Aceh compared to the other parts of Aceh. I cannot find any Rumoh Aceh in West Aceh, except the one on Seulanteui (see image 5). Rumoh Aceh, ancient grave stones and old mosques are some of many sources of Acehese sculptures, which are still founded in present Aceh. Rumoh Aceh is the most particular one, since its features are more dynamic and adaptive to cultural development and shift of Acehese reality. Rumoh Aceh sculpture vividly depicts the shift of Acehese culture and its change relating with their religiosity and way of life. However, Very little was found in the literature on the question of Rumoh Aceh sculpture and its relation to religiosity.

Kreemer’s work on Acehese history demonstrates us the basic shapes and forms of Acehese sculpture are flowery shapes and forms. Acehese forms and shapes differ from leaf design, which is proposed by Faruqi in a number of important ways. Firstly, although several forms are developed from tree leaves, all shapes are called by flower names in Aceh. Secondly,

the Acehnese adopt and develop the artistic shapes and forms of the three leaves are all from the



Acehnese origin.

Figure 2. The figure indicates the basic artistic forms and shapes, which are developed from tree flowers and leaves, taken from Kreemer in Yatim, 1988: 91

However, if it is observed the shapes and forms in detailed, those flowery shapes and forms that are shown in Kreemer and Yatim's work (1988) on "Batu Aceh" are essentially identical to the salafist perspective on arts, which are generally elucidated by al-Faruqi as mentioned above.

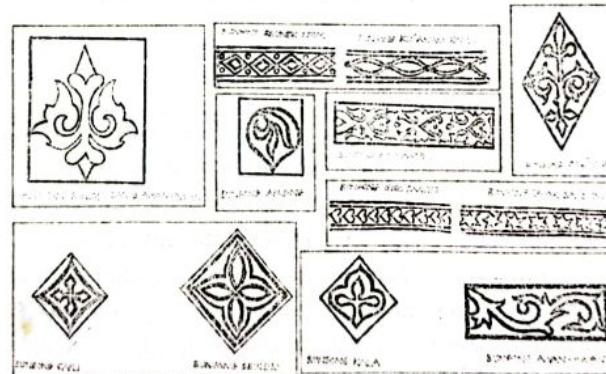
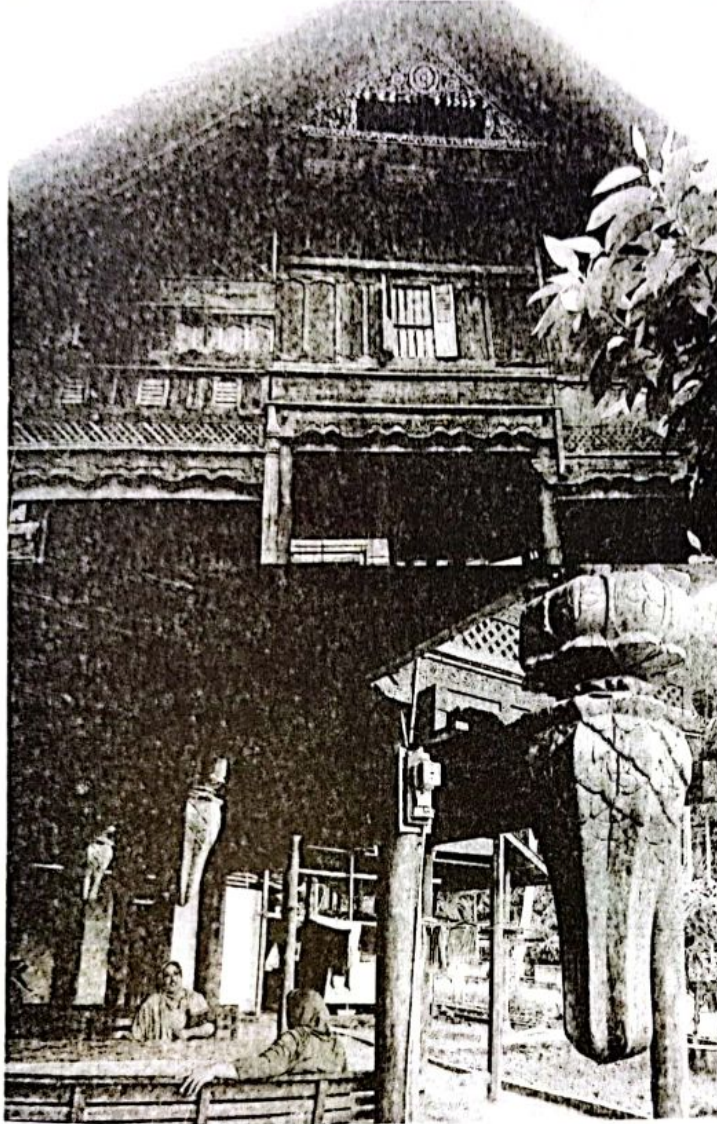


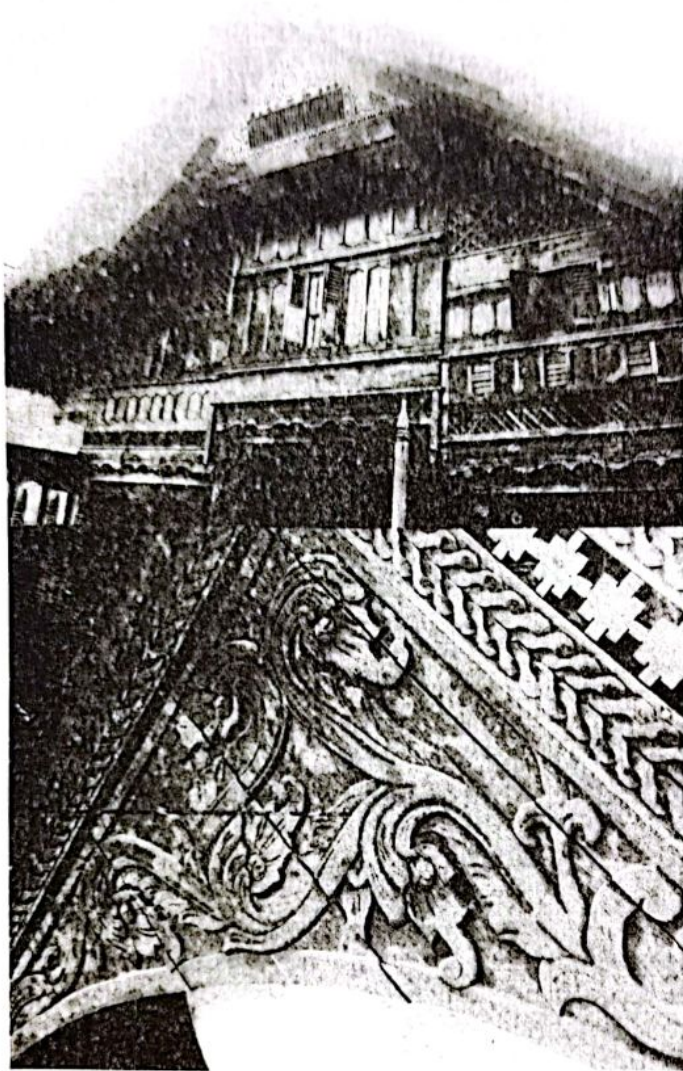
Figure 3 the pictures show basic sculpture of Acehnese arts, which are inspired by local leaves and flowers, such as awan-awan flower, Glima flower, tanjong flower

Those flowers and leaves belong to local places. These indicate that Acehnese has developed their arts based on local context, which is consistent with salafist principles/code on arts as discussed above.

Before and During Colonial Era

There are relatively few historical studies in the area of Acehnese sculpture during colonial era. Kreemer's work might be seen one of well documented source in the colonial era. Acehnese sculpture are adopted and developed from trees, such as trees' flowers, trees' leaves, and calligraphy. The pictures below are of Rumoh Aceh Tgk Chick Awe Geutah sculptures that presented as an example of pre-colonial category of Rumoh Aceh.





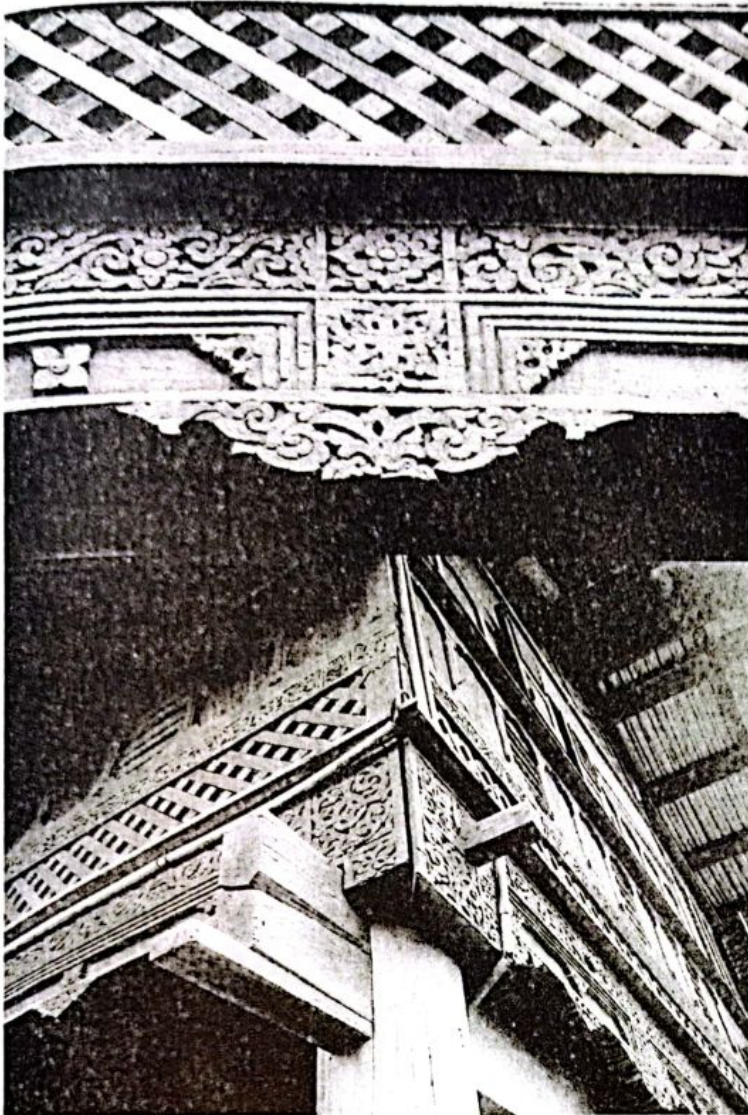
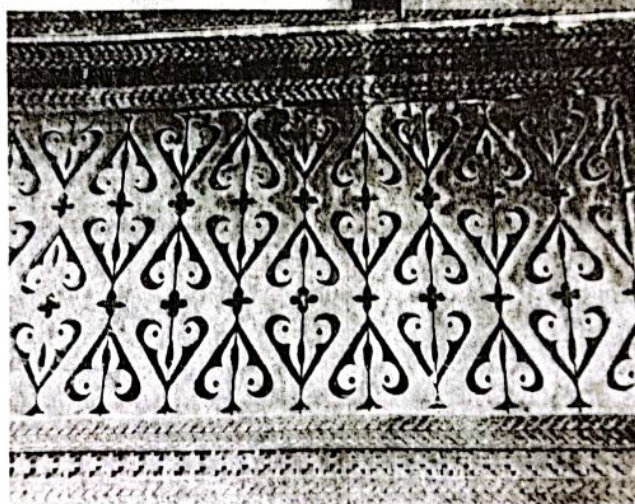


Figure 4 the six images above are the sculpture of Tgk Awe Geutah Rumoh Aceh. This is the earliest and the oldest Rumoh Aceh that still exist.

Little is known about Tgk Chick Awe Geutah. Many local sources inform us that Tgk Awe Geutah was one of Acehnese scholars and ulama (Taqiuddin 2012, Bawarieth 2013). Several reports have shown that he lived during 18th century. I am more convinced to Taqiuddin's view on the life and existence of Tgk Chick Awee Geutah Rumoh Aceh.

Old Mosque Beuracan, Meureudu



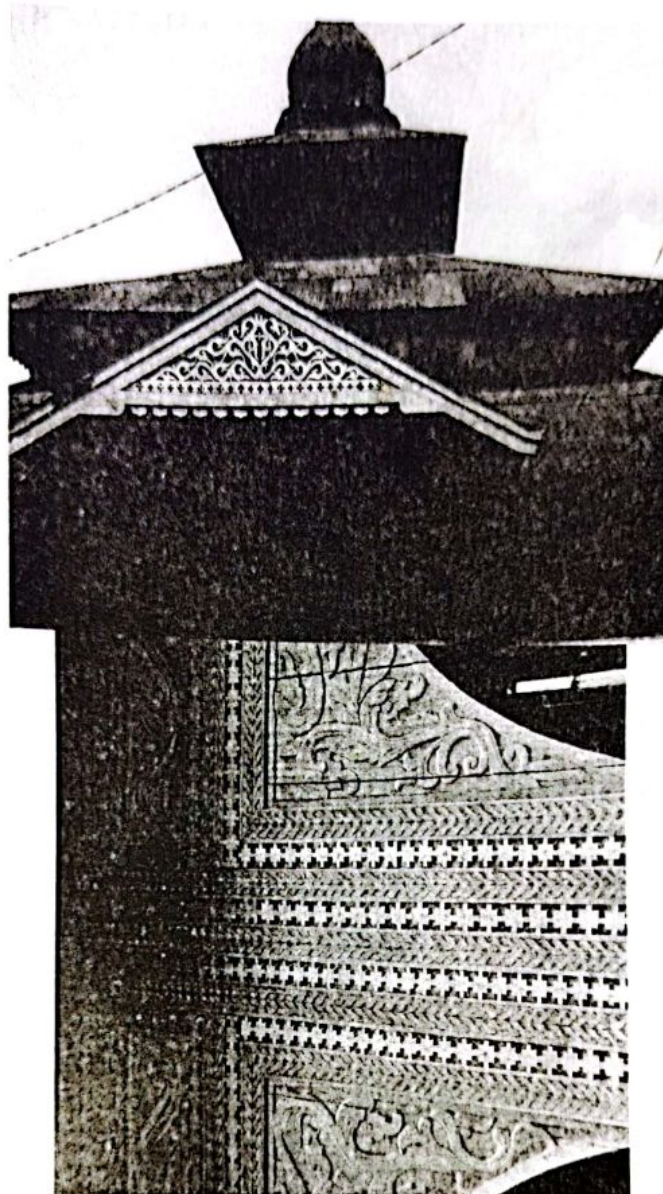


Figure 5. Four pictures above are the sculptures of Old Mosque Beuracan Meureudu. The images show that there are almost no difference between the shapes of sculptures in Awee Geutah Rumoh Aceh and this old mosque

Rumoh Aceh, Cut Meutia and Rumoh Aceh Cut Nyak Dhien are two reliable examples of Rumoh Aceh sculpture in Acehese colonial era.

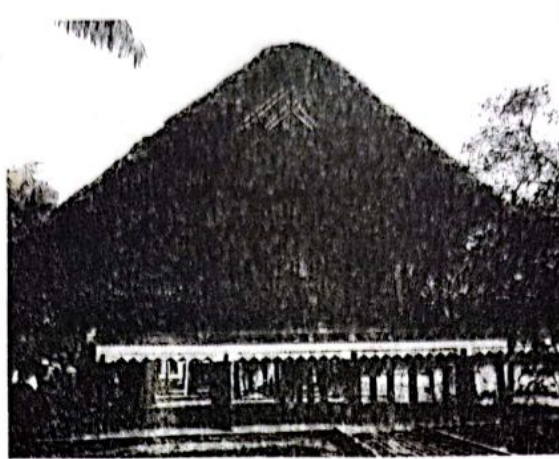
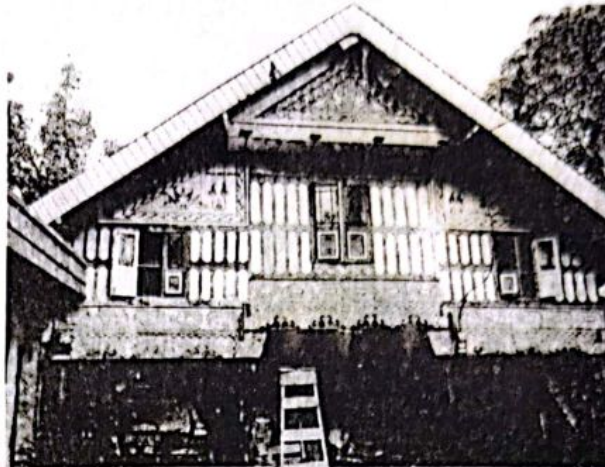


Figure 6 Rumoh aceh Cut Mutia

Little is known about the role of the Dutch in shaping and developing the Acehnese sculpture during colonial era. Several interviewees said that the Dutch has little role to the sculpture of Rumoh Aceh. Nurdin, for instance, said that rumoh was initially has no specific painting. The Dutch had painted Rumoh is used built for national exhibition, and it is belonged to Museum Aceh. Rumoh Aceh Cut Mutia also had some renovation and restructuring which makes it different from common Rumoh Aceh. Regarding the sculpture, it, however, is still the same. In short, the pattern and shape of Rumoh Aceh sculpture are basically similar to the sculptures on mosques and the Acehnese gravestones, which were shown by Kreemer and Yatim, which are believed the earliest and basic sculptures of the Acehnese.

Rumoh Aceh in 20 Century

In contrast to the previous time, the sculpture of Rumoh Aceh in 20 Century had significant change. The pictures bellow show that there are many animal forms in rumoh Acch. I found pigeons, flying horse (buraq), water duck, and tapak entei as the shift and development of



Acehnese sculpture in rumoh Aceh.

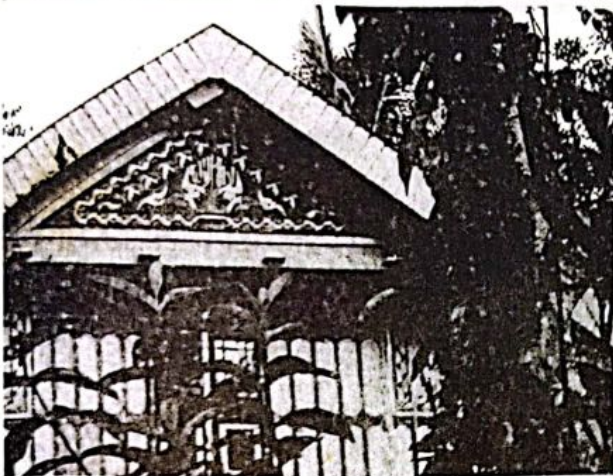


Figure 7 the image of Rumoh Aceh in Peudada, which is shown the sculpture of pigeon on the top of the house

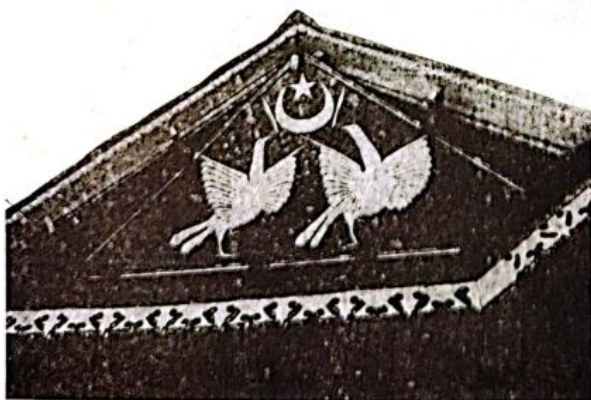


Figure 8 Rumoh Aceh with Pigeon at Seulantuci, Meulaboh

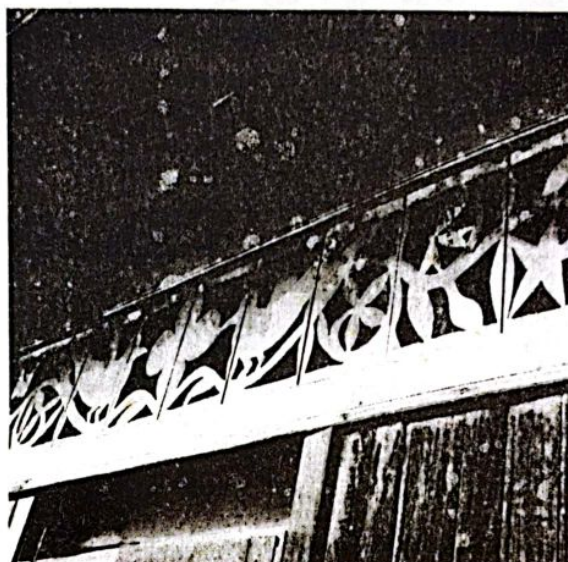


Figure 9 Rumoh Acch in Pidie with Pigeon sculptures



Figure 10 Rumoh Aceh with duck sculpture

The above Rumoh Aceh were built during the era 1930s to 1970s. The sculptures indicate the shift of Acehnese sculpture, where contravenes to the principles of Islamic arts as proposed by al-Faruqi.

The Flux and Reflux of Acehnese Religiosity

It might be seen as ridiculous attempt to understanding the discourse of religiosity of Aceh through the windows of arts, such as Acehnese sculpture. I believe that research on arts can provide us great pictures of human experiences, in particular, it can depicts us a "tale" of historical experiences of a community, such as their religious experiences, piety, and conflicts. Peirce told us that arts are the instrument for representation. Although arts is unable to provide us an objective knowledge since arts cannot represent of an object precisely, arts, however, have a great use to bring valuable sources for discussion and reinterpretation of a research object. Regarding this view, Eisner states about Peirce's opinion on researching arts as follow:

If, however, one takes the view that the dominant function of arts in research is not necessarily to provide a precise referent for a specific symbol connected by a conventional interpretant, but rather to provide an evocative image that generates the conditions for new telling, questions and for fruitful discussion (Eisner, p: 9).

In additions, art expressions have immense contributions to provide us historical knowledge. Langer (Susanne K. Langer, 1958) views that knowledge can be classified into discursive and non-discursive knowledge and accordingly, Eisner (Eisner, 2007) sees that knowledge is might be related to a matter of 'know how' and 'know that'. Arts have great contribution to knowledge. According to Eisner, arts have several contributions to knowledge. There are firstly, providing a nuances of social situations, secondly, bringing emphatic feelings, thirdly giving fresh perspective to the objects and finally the arts let the audiences experience that knowledge (Eisner p.: 10-11).

Analysing the pattern and form of Rumoh Aceh mentioned above, this paper professes the view that Acehnese arts have underpinned the Acehnese religiosity. As explained by al-Faruqi, Acehnese has become the instrument for Islam to engage Muslims with Islamic application and

evoke the spirit of Islam. The Acehese arts is the expression of Acehese religiosity which is inspired from their interpretation of religious texts. Accordingly, Acehese arts are considered as the core of the Acehese cultural identity in which aesthetically always accommodate all of the Acehese different identities. It can be explored by analysing the elements of Acehese art. In doing so, we can hypothetically classify the Acehese art into the traditions group, Islamic teaching genre, earning livelihood group, ethnic groups and so forth. This can be described as the

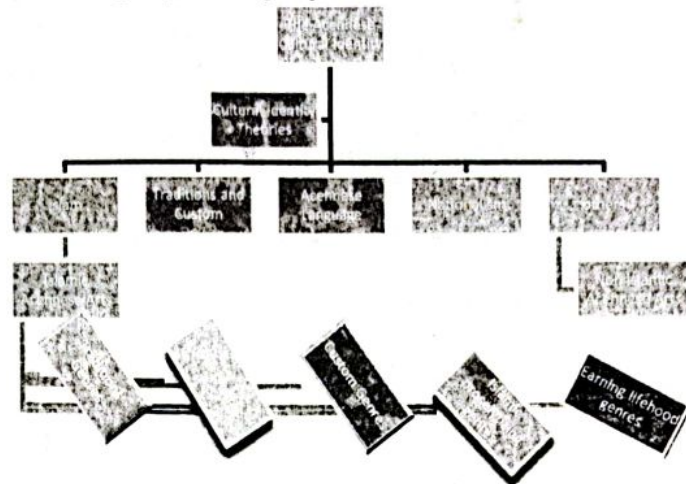


chart indicates below.

Figure 4: the elements of Acehese Art and the Acehese cultural identity

Analysing the shift of 20 century features of Rumoh Acehese sculpture, it indicates the shift Acehese religiosity. Before this time, Acehese sculpture was greatly influenced by the view of Salafist understanding of arts, whereas this period, the traditionalist view had dominated on artwork in Aceh. Historically, Acehese cultural development goes through different phases, when there are, some time, tensions between local values and Islamic values; the traditions and customs, Islamic education and secular one, local patriotism and Indonesian nationalism, as well as external cultures (Duhuri, 2008, 2009a; Reid, 1979, 2005; Siegel, 1969). However, the Acehese art has always been the anchor for the unity of the Acehese community.

Other Acehese arts are playing the same role, e.g., Acehese songs, Acehese visual arts: painting, calligraphy and handicraft and so forth. Kartomi (2004, pp. 43-44) argues that Acehese ideas of identity are always, of course, in a state of flux as a result of changing social, artistic and cultural experience. Women, men, children, animist mystics, Muslim leaders, former aristocrats, government officials, artists, soldiers and other groups within the community have their own coloring of that sense of identity. However, most seem to agree, for example, that making, playing and listening to musical instruments as well as dancing and other public representational systems serve to articulate the cultural memory and sense of identity; only few-if any-religious leaders subscribe to Wahabi² bans on musical instruments and dance.

Even more, the Acehese art has been a media being used as a uniting factor. In war conditions, Acehese art had become a great weapon to evoke the spirit to struggle against the Dutch, such as *Hikayat Perang Sabii (the epic of the holy war)*¹ (R. Harun, 1982; PanteKulu & Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah., 1980). In the current time, the Acehese art have flourished again sparking attentions from Acehese people from towns and cities. They begin to invite the traditional dancers to dance in most occasions, such as wedding ceremony, the celebration of Prophet Muhammad Birth day and so forth.

Conclusion

This paper shows that the Acehese piety and religiosity are continuously changing and adapting to meet local culture and to retain its Islamic nature, in one phase Acehese locality dominates over Islamic universality, in other phase Islamic Sunni overshadows locality. This finding is confirmed by some previous work on Acehese culture and religiosity (Andaya, 2001; Duhri, 2009b; Schröter, 2011). The evidences for this flux and reflux are based on the shift and the development of Rumoh Aceh sculptures, when in pre-colonial era, Salafist view controls the artwork of Acehese sculpture and in the 20th century, traditionalist perspective has taken over the influence on the sculpture artwork.

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¹ For detail, see the figure 1

² It seems that the reason Wahabi does not appreciate the artistic performances due to the belief that practices are forbidden in according to the Islamic teaching.

³ Hikayat Perang Sabi; the holy war epic is a narrative work explained the virtue of holy war and how the warriors will be awarded for their martyr deeds.