



## The Functional Reception of Qur'anic Calligraphy at the Grand Mosque of Nurul Islam in Palangka Raya



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### Abstract

Nurul Islam Grand Mosque, recognized as the first and oldest grand mosque in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, is distinguished primarily by its extensive Qur'anic calligraphy that adorns nearly the entire interior, including the walls and ceiling. This study investigates the functional reception of the calligraphy, focusing on the selection of specific Qur'anic verses and the rationale behind their inclusion. Employing a qualitative methodology with a descriptive-analytical approach, the research is grounded in Qur'anic reception theory, particularly the concept of functional reception. Data were collected through fieldwork involving observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the verses featured in the mosque are those frequently recited and memorized by Muslims in daily practice, such as Surah Yāsīn, Al-Wāqī'ah, and Al-Mulk. The functional reception is manifested in the curatorial decision to present these verses as calligraphy, thereby enabling visitors to engage with the surahs or verses without the need to consult a mushaf, in addition to serving an ornamental purpose. Furthermore, the calligraphy contributes to the mosque's unique aesthetic identity, distinguishing it from other mosques. However, issues related to the legibility of certain calligraphic elements have elicited criticism, suggesting that the mosque's administration should address these concerns appropriately.

### Abstrak

Masjid Raya Nurul Islam merupakan masjid raya pertama sekaligus tertua di Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah. Keunikan utamanya terletak pada hampir seluruh bagian interior yang dihiasi kaligrafi Al-Qur'an, mulai dari dinding hingga plafon. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelaah bagaimana resepsi fungsional terhadap kaligrafi tersebut, ayat-ayat apa yang dipilih, serta alasan pemilihan ayat. Metode yang digunakan ialah kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, berlandaskan teori resepsi Al-Qur'an, khususnya resepsi fungsional. Riset ini bersifat lapangan dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ayat yang ditampilkan pada Masjid Raya Nurul Islam adalah ayat-ayat yang umum dibaca dan dihapal oleh umat Islam sehari-hari seperti QS. Yasin, QS. al-Waqi'ah, QS. al-Mulk dan lain-lain. Adapun bentuk resepsi fungsional kaligrafi Al-Qur'an terlihat pada pemilihan ayat yang dituliskan menjadi kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam, di mana ayat-ayat yang dituliskan selain dijadikan hiasan juga memudahkan pengunjung yang ingin membaca surah-surah atau ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tanpa harus mencari di dalam Al-Qur'an. Selain itu, dengan kaligrafi tersebut Masjid Raya Nurul Islam memiliki daya tarik tersendiri yang membedakannya dengan masjid lain. Di sisi lain, keberadaan tulisan yang kurang terbaca memunculkan kritik yang patut dicermati oleh pengurus masjid.

### Keywords:

Qur'anic Calligraphy;  
Nurul Islam Grand  
Mosque; Functional  
Reception

### Kata kunci:

Kaligrafi Al-Qur'an;  
Masjid Raya Nurul  
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## Introduction

Qur'anic calligraphy in Indonesian mosques transcends mere visual decoration; it constitutes a cultural-religious practice that integrates sacred text, visual art, and the worship experience of congregants<sup>1</sup>. At the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, nearly every interior surface is adorned with verse ornaments, creating a profound devotional environment. The selection of Surahs Yasin, Al-Waqi'ah, and Al-Mulk reflects not only their liturgical prominence but also their attributed performative efficacy in enhancing dhikr, promoting tranquility, and evoking eschatological reflection. In contrast, the Darussalam Grand Mosque exemplifies an interaction between local architectural forms and Middle Eastern aesthetic traditions through its deliberate choices of script styles, colors, media, and patterns. These cases demonstrate that calligraphy operates as a visual language that mediates revelation and quotidian religious habitus<sup>2</sup>. It directs visual attention, shapes emotional responses, embellishes sacred space, and reinforces the mosque's public identity. Accordingly, calligraphy warrants scholarly attention not merely as ornamentation but as a curatorial mechanism that shapes religious experience, enriches Qur'anic literacy, and fosters reverent attentiveness.<sup>3</sup>

The urgency of this research stems from two interrelated dynamics. First, the installation of calligraphy has become increasingly prevalent in conjunction with the expansion of Islamic creative industries and the renovation of houses of worship. Second, mosque management requires a clear theological and educational foundation to ensure that aesthetic elements transcend mere decoration. In practice, the selection of Qur'anic verses, script styles, composition, and placement often relies on tacit knowledge, oral traditions, or the preferences of artists and contractors. Consequently, the intended meaning and function of the calligraphy risk being diminished, while curatorial accountability is weakened. The reception of these calligraphic works by congregants also varies: some engage by reading, memorizing, and reflecting upon the texts; others appreciate the visual patterns aesthetically; and some interpret them as symbols affirming the religious legitimacy of the building. These differing responses influence the mosque's socio-religious role, ranging from enhancing spiritual engagement and Qur'anic literacy to shaping the atmosphere of worship.

Numerous studies have been conducted on mosques in Palangka Raya, including research on the Darussalam Grand Mosque as a center for da'wah activities<sup>4</sup> and investigations into the accountability of its financial management<sup>5</sup>. However, to date, no study has explicitly focused on the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque as the primary subject of research or examined its association with mosque calligraphy. The most closely related studies concerning Nurul Islam include those by Nada Meylani and Sri Hidayati et al., which explore partnership patterns between RA Al-Muslimun Nurul Islam and parents<sup>6</sup>, as well as the implementation of thematic learning at Madrasah Diniyah Al-Muslimun Nurul Islam<sup>7</sup>. Additionally,

<sup>1</sup> Siti Aisyah et al., 'The Locality of Calligraphy in Minangkabau Mosques: An Analysis of Its Function and Meaning', *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023): 89–124, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v21i1.1111>.

<sup>2</sup> R. Othman and Z.J. Zainal-Abidin, 'The Importance of Islamic Art in Mosque Interior', *Procedia Engineering* 20 (2011): 105–9, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2011.11.144>.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Fawaid and Ahmad Bakir Sultoni, 'Aesthetics and Reception of the Qur'an in The Calligraphy of Mosques in Probolinggo Indonesia', *MUŞHAF Jurnal Tafsir Berwawasan Keindonesiaan* 3, no. 1 (2022): 44–70, <https://doi.org/10.33650/mushaf.v3i1.4672>.

<sup>4</sup> Budianor, 'Masjid Sebagai Pusat Dakwah Islam (Studi Tentang Aktivitas Dakwah Islam di Masjid Raya Darussalam Palangka Raya)' (Skripsi, IAIN Palangka Raya, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Iyah, 'Akuntabilitas Pengelolaan Keuangan Masjid Berdasarkan PSAK 45 Tentang Pelaporan Keuangan Organisasi Nirlaba (Studi Pada Masjid Raya Darussalam Palangka Raya)' (Skripsi, IAIN Palangka Raya, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Nada Meylani, 'Kemitraan Sekolah Dan Orang Tua Dalam Pembelajaran Di RA Al-Muslimun Nurul Islam Palangka Raya' (Skripsi, IAIN Palangka Raya, 2022).

<sup>7</sup> Sri Hidayati et al., 'Implementasi Pembelajaran Tematik Di Raudhotul Athfal Al-Muslimun Kota Palangka Raya', *Al-Mudarris (Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam)* 1, no. 2 (2018): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.23971/mdr.v1i2.1020>.

research on mosque design and construction has addressed the redesign of the Darussalam Grand Mosque<sup>8</sup>, alongside studies that consider mosques as centers of civilization, such as the role of Jami Al-Ikhlâs Mosque in the dissemination and establishment of Islam in Mandomai Village, Kapuas Regency, from 1903 to 2018<sup>9</sup>. Calligraphic decoration has also been examined in studies of calligraphy at the Al-Falah Grand Mosque and Jami' Baitul Amanah Mosque<sup>10</sup>, as well as investigations into the locality of mosque calligraphy art in Minangkabau<sup>11</sup>. Despite this body of work, none has specifically treated the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque as the central focus of research.

This study seeks to elucidate the mechanisms of functional reception within calligraphic art, specifically identifying the verses employed and the rationale underlying their selection. It articulates several key interdisciplinary research questions. From a functional perspective, it investigates the expectations of administrators and congregants regarding the roles of calligraphy whether devotional, educational, identity-forming, or aesthetic and examines how these functions are manifested in quotidian worship practices. From a textual-curatorial standpoint, the study explores which verses or surahs are selected, the theological and pedagogical principles guiding these choices, and the logic governing their spatial arrangement in relation to hierarchical positioning, qibla orientation, and focal viewpoints. Regarding reception, the research analyzes how congregants of varying ages, educational backgrounds, and levels of worship engagement interpret the calligraphy, identifying factors that facilitate or impede engagement, as well as the consequent effects on reverence and meaning-making. Methodologically, the study also evaluates how design elements such as legibility, contrast, proportion, and compositional rhythm and materials including paint, wood, metal, and mosaic impact reception. Additionally, it assesses the integration between da'wah curricula and educational programs with calligraphic curation, and undertakes a heuristic comparison with sites in Surakarta and Samarinda to delineate patterns of Arab-local hybridization. These inquiries are operationalized through field-based metrics, including frequency of visual attention, the ability to recall dominant verse themes, and the elicitation of practices such as murāja'ah and dhikr.

This study employs a qualitative methodology aimed at comprehensively understanding social issues within holistic, complex, and detailed social or natural contexts<sup>12</sup>. Three data collection techniques are utilized: observation, interviews, and documentation. Consistent with Patton's framework, observation is regarded as a fundamental and longstanding method in qualitative research and social sciences inquiry. This observation is conducted through direct fieldwork focused on research subjects embedded within the community. Interviews are employed to gather information pertinent to the research questions, including the selection of verses, their functions, meanings, and the aesthetics of calligraphy. Documentation entails the examination of records related to calligraphic works and mosque activities, supplemented by field documentation collected during the study. The theoretical framework guiding this research is Ahmad Rafiq's "Functional Reception" perspective, which is applied to analyze how the performative function of Qur'anic verses is manifested through calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Mosque.

<sup>8</sup> Galang Rahmadhani, 'Redesain Masjid Raya Darussalam Di Palangka Raya' (Skripsi, Yogyakarta, Universitas Atma Jaya, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Siti Aula Diah, 'Masjid Sebagai Pusat Peradaban (Peran Masjid Jami Al-Ikhlâs Sebagai Pusat Penyebaran Dan Pembinaan Islam Di Kelurahan Mandomai Kabupaten Kapuas Periode 1903-2018)' (Skripsi, IAIN Palangka Raya, 2019), <http://digilib.iain-palangkaraya.ac.id/2195/>.

<sup>10</sup> Al Wardah Sa'adah, 'Pesan Al-Qur'an Dalam Kaligrafi Masjid (Studi Pemahaman Jama'ah Atas Kaligrafi Masjid Besar al-Falah Dan Masjid Jami' Baitul Amanah)' (Skripsi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Siti Aisyah et al., 'Lokalitas Seni Kaligrafi Masjid di Minangkabau, Analisis Fungsi dan Makna', *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v21i1.1111>.

<sup>12</sup> Albi Anggito and Johan Setiawan, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (CV. Jejak, 2018), 9.

The central argument of this article posits that mosque calligraphy functions as a performative reception of the Qur'an rather than serving solely an aesthetic purpose. When Qur'anic verses are selected with intentional functionality, proportionally arranged, and strategically positioned, the sacred text is activated in a manner that directs visual attention, evokes devotional emotions, facilitates internalized vocal repetition, and cultivates an atmosphere of reverence. The effectiveness of this process hinges on three critical factors: the selection of texts that align with worship objectives, the design of calligraphy to ensure legibility and focus, and the development of an educational ecology within the mosque that imparts meaning<sup>13</sup>. Drawing on Ahmad Rafiq's<sup>14</sup> concept of "Functional Reception," calligraphy is conceptualized as a medium through which the text actively engages congregants, transforming the mosque space into a lived environment of devotion rather than a mere exhibition of signs. The interplay between global and local aesthetics necessitates a productive hybridization, wherein Middle Eastern scripts are integrated with Nusantara colors, patterns, and materials.

This study makes a theoretical contribution by expanding reception discourse from textual interpretation to encompass visual-spatial reception. Methodologically, it integrates design audit techniques with worship practices. From a practical perspective, the article proposes principles for curating spatial zones, establishes parameters of legibility, aligns spatial design with the da'wah calendar, and introduces educational guides augmented by technology, such as QR codes linking to concise tafsir. The originality of this research is demonstrated through its focus on the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque and its heuristic comparison with the mosques in Surakarta and Samarinda<sup>15</sup>, which collectively elucidate patterns of Arab-local hybridization to inform sustainable planning, renovation, and management of mosque spaces.

## Result and Discussion

### *Nurul Islam Grand Mosque in Palangka Raya: Historical Background, Renovation Efforts, and the Identity of Its Worship Space*

Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is one of the oldest mosques in Palangka Raya that located at Jl. General A. Yani, District. Pahandud, Palangka Raya City, Central Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. It has stood for 56 years since it was built in 1967.<sup>16</sup> It was built because the oldest mosque in Palangka Raya, the Nurul Hikmah mosque, was no longer able to accommodate the increasing number of worshippers from time to time. A year later, in 1968, the mosque could be started to use. At the beginning of its operation, the mosque still used a coconut frond roof and was still floored with dirt. Now, Its age is about 55 years. The performance is also changing from times to times. According to the chairman of the takmir, the mosque building has undergone three renovations to date. The first renovation was in 1979, the second renovation was in 1989 just before the National MTQ and the last renovation was carried out starting in 1998. The initial building of the mosque has been completely lost because from the first renovation until now the mosque has always been fully renovated with nothing remaining from the pillars, walls,

<sup>13</sup> Umi Wasilatul Firdausiyah and Hasan Abdul Wafi, 'Spiritual Message of Al-Qur'an Calligraphy in Raudhatul Mukhlisin Mosque Jember', *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 23, no. 1 (2022): 195–218, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2022.2301-10>.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmad Rafiq, 'The Reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia: A Case Study of the Place of the Qur'an in a Non-Arabic Speaking Community' (Temple University, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Layla Nurina Kartika Iskandar et al., 'Penerapan Elemen-Elemen Arsitektural Dan Interior Masjid Timur Tengah Pada Bangunan Masjid Baitul Muttaqien Samarinda, Kalimantan Timur (Kajian Dalam Perspektif Ilmu-Ilmu Desain)', *Jurnal Seni Dan Reka Rancang: Jurnal Ilmiah Magister Desain* 3, no. 2 (2021): 215–44, <https://doi.org/10.25105/jsrr.v3i2.9429>.

<sup>16</sup> Pathur Rahman, 'Dibangun 1967, Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Miliki Kapasitas 1.000 Jamaah', *BorneoNews.Co.Id*, 2023, <https://www.borneonews.co.id/berita/296085-dibangun-1967-masjid-raya-nurul-islam-miliki-kapasitas-1-000-jamaah>.

floor to the roof. Uniquely, the ceiling of the mosque is decorated with calligraphy.<sup>17</sup>

The location of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is very strategic because it is directly opposite the largest market in the city of Palangka Raya, so this mosque is a central place of worship for traders and immigrants. This mosque has a large space so it is claimed to be able to accommodate approximately 1,000 worshippers. The area of the mosque is 50 by 50 meters with a courtyard area of 70 by 20 meters.<sup>18</sup> Today the mosque can now accommodate five thousand worshippers who come to worship. The interior of the two-story building is filled with calligraphy and ornaments of the Quranic verses. Any information about the mosque's programs and agendas is also conveyed with the loudspeakers so that the people around are able to hear. Even in today's internet era, the mosque also broadcasts its preaching activities through YouTube channels. It has 23 administrators, who regulate the course of worships and maintain the security. It has developed with its growing congregation. From only about hundreds of people, worshippers attending the mosque have reached thousands of people.<sup>19</sup>

The Nurul Islam Grand Mosque has 23 mosque administrators, both managing the conduct of worship and maintaining the security of the mosque. The Nurul Grand Mosque is experiencing development along with its congregation which continues to grow. From only around hundreds of people, the congregation at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque has reached thousands. The characteristic of the Raya Nurul Islam Mosque is in the form of calligraphy of Quranic verses that fill all parts of the mosque. In the study of the Qur'an this is included in the study of the Living Quran. There are several social theories that can be used in the study of Living Quran, one of which is the reception theory initiated by Ahmad Rafiq in his study on "The Reception of The Qur'an in Indonesia A Case Study of The Place of The Qur'an in a Non-arabic Speaking Community", the reception theory is divided into three models, namely exegesis reception, aesthetic and functional.<sup>20</sup> This research uses functional reception to find out how functional reception is in calligraphy and what verses and what is the reason for the verses used in mosque calligraphy.

### **Calligraphy Writing Process at Nurul Islam Mosque Palangka Raya**

Etymologically, the term from the Arabic word al-khatt,<sup>21</sup> which is understood as an Islamic art form of writing that conveys divine messages<sup>22</sup> and reflects the soul's inward response to kalām Allāh<sup>23</sup>. This conceptualization is significant, as the practice of fine writing predates Islam, with the Arab visual-textual tradition providing a cultural foundation for the emergence of religious calligraphy. Early evidence of this tradition is found in elegantly inscribed literary works displayed on the walls of the Ka'bah, such as the al-Mu'allaqāt,<sup>24</sup> an annual pre-Islamic custom. During this period, writing skills were confined to select groups, as the majority of the population, including the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)<sup>25</sup>, were illiterate. The veneration of beautiful writing, initially a cultural phenomenon, evolved into a religious art

<sup>17</sup> E.L, 'Dahulunya Lahan Masih Semak Belukar, Bangunan Beratap Pelepah Kelapa', KaltengPos, 20 April 2022, <https://kaltengpos.jawapos.com/berita-utama/20/04/2022/dahulunya-lahan-masih-semak-belukar-bangunan-beratap-pelepah-kelapa/>.

<sup>18</sup> Rahman, "Dibangun 1967, Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Miliki Kapasitas 1.000 Jamaah", BorneoNews.co.id,.

<sup>19</sup> Wawancara dengan Parkan, Bincang Sejarah Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya, tanggal 23 March 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Faila Sufatun Nisak, 'Pola-Pola Resepsi Al-Qur'an Dalam Tradisi Dan Kehidupan Masyarakat Pesisir Demak' (Skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2020).

<sup>21</sup> D. Sirojuddin AR., *Seni Kaligrafi Islam* (PT. Remaja Rosdakarya, 2020), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Rispul, 'Kaligrafi Arab Sebagai Karya Seni', *Tsaqafa* 1, no. 1 (2012): 6.

<sup>23</sup> Nurul Hidayah Puji Lestari et al., 'Urgensi Seni Rupa Kaligrafi Dalam Pendidikan Islam', *Palapa* 9, no. 1 (2021): 128.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Zuhri, 'Sejarah Perkembangan Kaligrafi Arab Pada Masa Pra-Islam Sampai Kodifikasi Al-Qur'an (250-940 M)' (Skripsi, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017), 19.

<sup>25</sup> Yanti Ziska et al., 'Analisis Wacana Kritis Konsep Plagiat Dan Buta Huruf Nabi Muhammad Dalam Geschichte Des Qoran Karya Theodore Nöldeke', *Al-Munir: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 1 (2023): 85, 1, <https://doi.org/10.24239/al-munir.v5i1.126>.

form and ultimately became the foundation of Arab-Islamic calligraphy in later periods. Divine messages were aesthetically arranged to enhance the spiritual experience of believers. This legacy subsequently influenced the standardization of script styles, the selection of media, and the placement of Qur'anic verses within worship spaces, thereby fostering a more sustained devotional experience for congregants.

In the process of making calligraphy of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque, there are several parties involved, including the chairman, management, local worshippers and calligraphers. Calligraphy writing in the mosque is certainly done based on certain motives, among which are; *First*, beauty. It is the most important reason behind a calligraphy writing. This can be noticed from the interview with Parkan, the head of Nurul Islam Mosque management:

*"Alasan utama kami dalam pembuatan kaligrafi adalah keindahan atau estetika masjid, kami menyadari bahwa kaligrafi merupakan hal yang berkaitan erat dengan masjid yang mana jika di dalam masjid ada kaligrafi maka akan menimbulkan perasaan yang sangat berbeda dibandingkan dengan masjid yang tidak menggunakan kaligrafi."*

*"Our main reason for making calligraphy is the beauty or aesthetics of the mosque. We realize that calligraphy is a thing that is closely related to the mosque in which if there is calligraphy in the mosque it will cause a very different feeling compared to mosques that do not use calligraphy."*<sup>26</sup>

Parkan, as chairman of the mosque takmir, believes that if a mosque is decorated with calligraphy, its beauty will increase. This was also conveyed by Murjani Siddiq as a calligrapher at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque.

*"Pertamkali saya dipanggil untuk membuat kaligrafi oleh H. Anwar Isa sebagai ketua masjid saat itu meminta saya untuk membuat kaligrafi yang indah di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam."*<sup>27</sup>

*"The first time I was called to make calligraphy by H. Anwar Isa as the chairman of the mosque at that time asked me to make beautiful calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque."*

Based on the explanation above, it is known that the background for writing calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is to beautify and beautify the mosque, this is supported by the opinion of Parkan as head of the mosque's takmir. The *second* factor behind making calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is the wanting to boast the mosque. Boasting the mosque with calligraphy is another reason mentioned by Parkan. It is undeniable that the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is one of the great mosques, so if written with calligraphy it will further add to the beauty and grandeur of the mosque. *"Kaligrafi dibuat untuk memegahkan masjid, itulah kenapa kami menghiasi hampir setiap bagian yang ada di dalam masjid."* (Calligraphy is made to boast the mosque, that's why we decorate almost every part of the mosque).<sup>28</sup> Parkan said that mosques need to be boasted not only with building architecture but also with calligraphy which is very closely related to the Qur'an. This is the reason why almost every part of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is filled with calligraphy.

The *third* factor is to liven up the atmosphere of the mosque. Another reason for making calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is the lively atmosphere of the mosque. With calligraphy, anyone who enters it will certainly be fascinated and amazed by its beauty. This is very different compared to mosques that are not decorated with calligraphy. When compared, it will be obvious that the mosques with calligraphy will feel more serene. This is clearly mentioned by Murjani Siddiq as the author. "the worshipers asks for calligraphy using the verses such as Yasin, al-Rahman etc. comfortable for them to see." ("The management of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque asked me to make calligraphy

<sup>26</sup> Parkan, 'Bincang Sejarah Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 23 March 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Murjani Siddiq (60 tahun), penulis kaligrafi, di Palangka Raya tanggal 24 Oktober 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Parkan, 'Bincang Sejarah Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 23 March 2022.

with verses that are commonly read like QS. Yasin and Ar-Rahman and other surahs so that it can be easily read and understood by the pilgrims.")<sup>29</sup>

This statement was confirmed by Parkan that it is true that the verses used are verses or surahs that are often read and heard by the congregation.

*"Ya memang benar bahwa kaligrafi yang ditulis menggunakan surah-surah yang sering dibaca dalam pengajian, tujuannya agar masyarakat lebih mudah membaca. Jadi, selain indah maka dengan adanya kaligrafi ini suasana masjid menjadi lebih hidup."*<sup>30</sup>

*"Yes, it is true that calligraphy is written using surahs that are often read in recitations, the aim is to make it easier for people to read. So, apart from being beautiful, with this calligraphy the atmosphere of the mosque becomes more lively."*

Masjid Raya Nurul Islam has two types of calligraphy written by two different teams of artists. The first calligraphy is found in the dome of the mosque, first built in 2001 by a team consisting of 3 people, namely Lukman, Supri and Syafaruddin.<sup>31</sup> Then after more than ten years, calligraphy was made by different authors. The second calligraphy was first made in 2015.<sup>32</sup> Initially, the calligraphy writing was to be done on the ceiling of the mosque, but because in 2015 the ceiling of the mosque still did not meet the standards for calligraphy writing, Murjani Siddiq asked that calligraphy writing in the mosque be postponed first because it was feared that the calligraphy would not last long. Then the mosque committee suggested writing calligraphy in another part first, namely the front wall on the second floor.<sup>33</sup>

The part of the mosque that was first inscribed with calligraphy decoration by Murjani Siddiq was the front wall of the second floor, writing using four surahs namely Yāsin, ar-Rahmān, al-Wāqiah and al-Mulk. After the four surahs were completed, it was continued with the writing of the shahada and *asmāul husnā* surrounding the edge of the second floor. After *asmāul husnā* calligraphy was completed, then the mosque committee asked to make calligraphy similar to the design of the kaaba door. This design is located at the back of the preaching pulpit by imitating the design of the Kaaba door as a whole. Calligraphy writing continued by making calligraphy on the ceiling of the first floor starting with the front just above the pulpit of the sermon. Calligraphy in this section has a diameter of approximately six meters with a circular design, inside it is filled with various kinds of ornaments, verses and different types of writing.

The next calligraphy making will continue with a team of two people starting from the first floor ceiling to the present.<sup>34</sup> After the calligraphy making on the front is complete, calligraphy making continues to cover all the ceilings of the first floor with a total of 26 ceilings surrounding the inside of the mosque. The ceiling diameter is about 2-3 meters. The calligraphy making on the ceiling of the first floor uses three main designs and 26 different types of surahs and verse pieces. These three designs then were redeveloped with a variety of different ornaments and colors, so that even though it only uses three designs, when viewed as a whole, there is no similarity in design.<sup>35</sup>

After all the ceilings of the first floor were finished, calligraphy was continued on the second floor of the mosque, which was right in the middle around the dome. The calligraphy in this section looks quite large, consisting of eight ceiling plots, each of which has a diameter of 4 meters. The total diameter of the central calligraphy circle reaches more than 32 meters. This fairly large calligraphy uses many types

<sup>29</sup> Murjani Siddiq, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 2022.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Parkan (50 tahun), ketua takmir masjid Raya Nurul Islam, di Palangka Raya tanggal 24 Oktober 2023.

<sup>31</sup> M Syafaruddin, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 25 April 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Murjani Siddiq, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Murjani Siddiq, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 2022.

<sup>34</sup> Murjani Siddiq, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 2022.

<sup>35</sup> Murjani Siddiq, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 2022.

of writing and longer surahs. This section of calligraphy has two main designs that face each other, even though the calligraphy in terms of coloring does not look the same. Writing calligraphy in the middle takes the longest among the others, this is because the location is quite high and difficult to reach.

The second floor has a total of 27 ceiling plots. Of the 27 plots, 24 ceilings are written with calligraphy and 2 ceilings are left empty because of their location right above the stairs. The calligraphy on the ceiling of the second floor is divided into three parts, namely the right part consists of 5 ceiling plots, the left consists of 5 ceilings and the back consists of 10 ceilings. Until 2022, there are 4 calligraphies that have not been completed and are still in the process. The calligraphy design on the second floor still uses the same three designs used on the first floor. Making calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque took a long time, from 2015 to 2022 and the calligraphy making is still continuing in the future.<sup>36</sup> The length of the calligraphy process is caused by various reasons, including the busyness of the writers and lack of funds.

### ***The Functional Reception of Calligraphy Art at Nurul Islam Grand Mosque, Palangka Raya***

This study reveals that the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque features a diverse array of calligraphic forms that adorn nearly the entire interior of the mosque. The calligraphy present is primarily decorative, incorporating a variety of designs, ornaments, colors, script styles (khath), and verses. The calligraphic works are predominantly rendered in green and are created manually using traditional tools. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the calligraphy within the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque, further investigation is required into the specific designs, ornaments, colors, script types, and verses employed, as well as the ways in which both calligraphers and worshippers engage with and interpret these inscriptions. The color palette of the calligraphy is chiefly dominated by green, gold, and blue, supplemented by hues from the primary, secondary, and tertiary color spectra. Additional supporting colors include black, white, red, yellow, orange, and purple. These colors are further enhanced through combinations of black and white, resulting in a blend of traditional tones such as maroon and light cream.

The results of interviews and observations indicate that three types of khat are employed in the calligraphy of the Nurul Islam Mosque, specifically Khat Tsulus, Khat Kufi, and Khat Diwani Jali. Khat Tsulus appears 39 times, Khat Kufi 25 times, and Khat Diwani Jali 6 times. Regarding the types of khat, the findings reveal that these three styles are utilized in the mosque's calligraphic inscriptions. In the initial section, two types—Tsulus and Kufi—are predominantly used. The selection of these khat styles is influenced by their ease of writing and adaptability to the writing surface. For instance, Khat Tsulus is favored due to its flexibility in form, allowing it to be rendered in varying lengths and shapes to suit different media, while also conveying a sense of completeness and aesthetic fullness.

Khat Kufi represents the second category of khat frequently employed in calligraphic works at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque. In this context, Khat Kufi appears twice: in the first calligraphy piece by Syafaruddin and the third by Murjani Siddiq. This style of khat is characterized by its ease of creation and adaptability to the shape of the writing column. However, due to its lack of distinctive character, the script can appear sparse. To address this, the author incorporates floral stem ornaments at the top and bottom of the text, thereby enhancing the visual fullness and solidity of the composition. The aesthetic appeal of Khat Kufi lies primarily in its compositional arrangement and color dominance. The script is meticulously arranged and shaped into a square form by adjusting the medium, which contributes to its visual harmony. Additionally, the use of a dominant golden yellow hue imparts an elegant impression and establishes a cohesive relationship between the design elements and the calligraphy.

<sup>36</sup> Murjani Siddiq, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 2022.

The calligraphic inscriptions at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque encompass a substantial number of verses, specifically 51 distinct surahs. These surahs are inscribed in their entirety, from the opening to the concluding verse. To facilitate the organization and application of the calligraphy within the mosque, the verses have been categorized according to the stages of their creation. The overall calligraphy is divided into five sections, with the first section encompassing the central dome and the entire middle wall on the mosque's second floor. This section features five calligraphic panels surrounding the central wall. The verses selected for this section predominantly consist of surahs and verses frequently recited by worshippers. According to an interview with Parkan that the verses taken are that often read such as suras Yāsin, Al-Mulk and other short surahs such as Al-Lail, Ash-Shams, Al-Humazah and so on. In this section the verse used consists of long surahs such as surah Yāsin, in addition to the writing *asmāul husnā* and the writing of the verses is presented in the table below.

**Table 1.** Verses used in the first part of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque

| No | Surah        | Verse |
|----|--------------|-------|
| 1. | Yāsin        | 1-83  |
| 2. | Ar-Rahmān    | 1-78  |
| 3. | Al-Mulk      | 1-30  |
| 4. | Al-Wāqiah    | 1-96  |
| 5. | Al-Bāqarah   | 255   |
| 6. | Asmāul Husnā | -     |
| 7. | Shahada      | -     |

The *second part* includes the front wall of the first floor and the ceiling in front of the pulpit of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque, there are three calligraphies used. The verse used consists of surah al-A'ala, in addition to the writings *asmāul husnā*, dhikr, tawhid, shahada and the names of the prophets. In order to better understand the verses used, we formulate the verses used in more detail in the table below.

**Table 2.** Verses used in the second part of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque

| No | Surah                | Verse |
|----|----------------------|-------|
| 1. | Al-A'ala             | 1-19  |
| 2. | Creed                | -     |
| 3. | Tawhid               | -     |
| 4. | Dhikr                | -     |
| 5. | Names of 25 Prophets | -     |

The *third* section covers the entire ceiling of the first floor. In this section there are 26 calligraphy in addition to that in the pulpit. The verses used consist of surah Al-Fatihah, selected short suras juz 30 and surah An-Nur. In order to better understand the verses used, we formulate the verses used in more detail in the table below.

**Table 3.** Verses used in the third part of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque

| No. | Surah      | Verse |
|-----|------------|-------|
| 1.  | Al-Fātihah | 1-7   |
| 2.  | Al-Ikhlās  | 1-4   |
| 3.  | Al-Falaq   | 1-5   |

|     |             |         |
|-----|-------------|---------|
| 4.  | An-Nās      | 1-6     |
| 5.  | Al-Lahab    | 1-5     |
| 6.  | Al-Kāfirun  | 1-6     |
| 7.  | An-Nasr     | 1-3     |
| 8.  | Al-Kausar   | 1-3     |
| 9.  | Al-Maun     | 1-7     |
| 10. | Al-Quraysh  | 1-4     |
| 11. | Al-Fil      | 1-5     |
| 12. | Al-Ankabut  | 45      |
| 13. | An-Nur      | 37      |
| 14. | Al-Humazah  | 1-9     |
| 15. | Al-'Asr     | 1-3     |
| 16. | At-Takasur  | 1-8     |
| 17. | An-Nur      | 56      |
| 18. | Al-Qāri'ah  | 1-11    |
| 19. | At-Tawbah   | 128-129 |
| 20. | Al-'Adiat   | 1-11    |
| 21. | Al-Zalzalah | 1-8     |
| 22. | Al-Alaq     | 1-19    |
| 23. | Thaha       | 14      |
| 24. | Ad-Duhā     | 1-11    |

The *fourth* section covers all the calligraphy on the central ceiling of the second floor surrounding the central dome of the mosque. The verse used in writing calligraphy in the fourth part consists of 8 surahs taken from the middle surah in juz 30. In order to better understand the verses used, we formulate the verses used in more detail in the table below.

**Table 4.** Verses used in the fourth part of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque

| No. | Surah       | Verse |
|-----|-------------|-------|
| 1.  | Al-Insyiqaq | 1-25  |
| 2.  | Al-Lail     | 1-21  |
| 3.  | Al-Gasyiyah | 1-26  |
| 4.  | At-Thariq   | 1-17  |
| 5.  | Al-Alaq     | 1-19  |
| 6.  | An-Nisa     | 1-3   |
| 7.  | Al-Buruj    | 1-22  |
| 8.  | Ash-Shams   | 1-15  |

The *fifth* section consists of the entire ceiling of the second floor surrounding the central part of the mosque. In this section, calligraphy is divided into 3 sides, namely the right side there are five calligraphy, the left side consists of five calligraphy and the back side has nine calligraphy. The verse used in the fifth part consists of selected verses. Unlike the previous one that used a short surah in juz 30, this section takes a snippet of verses outside of the other juz. In order to better understand the verses used, we formulate the verses used in more detail in the table below.

**Table 5.** Verses used in the fifth part of the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque

| No. | Surah        | Verse |
|-----|--------------|-------|
| 1.  | Ibrahim      | 52    |
| 2.  | Al-Qadr      | 1-5   |
| 3.  | Al-Mu'minun  | 84-87 |
| 4.  | Al-Baqarah   | 128   |
| 5.  | Ibrahim      | 31    |
| 6.  | Al-Ahzab     | 71    |
| 7.  | Al-Baqarah   | 201   |
| 8.  | An-Nabā      | 40    |
| 9.  | Al-Jumu'ah   | 9-10  |
| 10. | Al-Munafikun | 9     |
| 11. | Al-Imran     | 62    |
| 12. | Al-Hajj      | 54    |
| 13. | Al-Isra'     | 80    |
| 14. | Al-Munāfikun | 10    |
| 15. | An-Nabā      | 31-35 |

Turning to functional receptions, in this case all calligraphy contained in the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque is positioned as an object that can give birth to certain attitudes or behaviors in the social life of the community.<sup>37</sup> The functional reception in the use of Qur'anic verses as decoration or calligraphy in Nurul Islam mosque shows that the verses written are not only used as decoration, but also make it easier for people who want to read suras or verses of the Qur'an without having to search for the Qur'an. This is as stated by Parkan:

*"Ayat yang digunakan tentu bagus karena memang seluruh ayat al-Qur'an itu bagus. Ayat juga ditulis dengan baik sehingga dapat terbaca jama'ah yang datang dan dapat dibaca ketika duduk santai, Itulah mengapa di bagian depan didahulukan dengan surah yāsin."*

*"The verse used is certainly good because indeed all verses of the Qur'an are good. The verse is also well written so that it can be read by the pilgrims who come and can be read when sitting relaxed. It is why at the front it takes precedence with surah yāsin."*<sup>38</sup>

Other opinions were also conveyed by Nanang:

*"Ayat yang digunakan bagus karena menggunakan ayat-ayat yang biasa didengar, meski ada sebagian yang sulit dibaca tetapi dengan mengetahui sebagian kata maka akan langsung tahu ini surah apa begitu."*

*"The verse used is good because it uses verses that are commonly heard, although some are difficult to read but by knowing some words you will immediately know what this surah is."*<sup>39</sup>

In addition, with the calligraphy written on the mosque, it becomes a special attraction and adds to the splendor of the mosque, so that it can attract Muslims to come to worship at the mosque while

<sup>37</sup> Farida Nur Afifah et al., 'Resepsi Fungsional Surah Al-Quraisy : Pembacaan Surah Al-Quraisy Dalam Pengobatan Fide' Pada Komunitas Madura Di Kampung Parit Waklijah Kalimantan Barat', *Mafatih* 3, no. 1 (2023): 152–53, <https://doi.org/10.24260/mafatih.v3i1.1830>.

<sup>38</sup> Parkan, 'Bincang Sejarah Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 23 March 2022.

<sup>39</sup> Nanang, 'Fungsi Setiap Kaligrafi yang Ada di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam', 11 March 2022.

enjoying its beauty. It is as stated in the interview with Parkan:

*"Jama'ah pedagang maupun pendatang yang singgah selalu takjub akan keindahan dan kemegahan karya kaligrafi disini."*

*"Pilgrims of traders and migrants who stop by are always amazed by the beauty and splendor of calligraphy works here."*

This opinion was later corroborated by Nanang in the previous interview who said that calligraphy gives the impression of luxury to the mosque. this opinion was also corroborated by Alfian Mahfudz:

*"Ketika saya pertamakali masuk masjid disuguhkan. dengan kaligrafi segitu banyaknya saya kagum, saya kira yang lain juga berpendapat demikian".*

*"When I first entered the mosque, I was served. With such calligraphy I am amazed by so much, I think others think so too".<sup>40</sup>*

But on the other hand, there are some opinions which say that it is confusing for pilgrims to be able to read the written verses. Unreadability is a calligraphy problem in the Nurul Islam mosque. This is as stated by Alfian Mahfudz:

*"Jenis tulisan yang digunakan saya juga tidak mengerti, jika saya berpendapat tentu tulisan yang ada indah dengan dibentuk melingkar dan saling menumpuk seperti itu, tapi jujur ada beberapa saja dari tulisan tersebut yang dapat saya baca."*

*"The type of writing used I also don't understand, if I think of course the writing is beautiful by being shaped in a circle and stacked on top of each other like that, but honestly there are only a few of these writings that I can read."<sup>41</sup>*

This opinion was later corroborated by Syafaruddin:

*"Jenis tulisannya ada tiga ya, Naskhi, Kufi dan Diwani jali, bagus tulisannya bisa dibentuk menyesuaikan kolom apapun. Sama, saya juga biasanya memakai salah satu dari ketiga ini untuk jenis kaligrafi dekoratif karena dapat mengisi kolom secara penuh."*

*"There are three types of writing, Naskhi, Kufi and Diwani jali. Good writing can be formed according to any column. Equally, I also usually wear one of these three for this type of decorative calligraphy because it can fill the column in full."<sup>42</sup>*

On the other hand, Syafaruddin also criticized that calligraphy was not conceptualized correctly, with that much calligraphy there was no need to use complicated designs. He said

*"Yah seperti yang saya bilang tadi, seluruh kaligrafi jika dilihat dari segi warna juga lumayan, tetapi saya kira untuk kaligrafi sebanyak itu tidak cocok jika disajikan dengan warna yang banyak bisa bikin pusing sebagian jama'ah."<sup>43</sup>*

*"As I said earlier, all the calligraphy in terms of color is also quite good, but I think that much calligraphy is not suitable if it is presented with lots of colors, it can make some of the congregation dizzy."*

Visually, there are some letters that physically require painstaking reading even though they are normal. Especially when the writing pattern is in an oblique or vertical position. The writing pattern of Tsuluts, for example, tends to be written overlapping so that for some people who are not used to it, it will be difficult to read it. Based on the results of interviews with Nanang, it was found that:

<sup>40</sup> Alfian Mahfuz, 'Resepsi Masyarakat terhadap Seni Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 11 June 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Alfian Mahfuz, 'Resepsi Masyarakat terhadap Seni Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 11 June 2019.

<sup>42</sup> M Syafaruddin, 'Sejarah Pembuatan Kaligrafi di Masjid Raya Nurul Islam Palangka Raya', 25 April 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with M. Syafaruddin (45 tahun), Ketua Dewan Majelis bidang Khat Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah, di Palangka Raya tanggal 21 Agustus 2023.

*"Banyak yg bertanya kepada saya terkait apa saja ayat yang ditulis karena memang ada jenis huruf yang susah dibaca jama'ah. Saya juga tidak luput dari kesulitan itu, terlebih pada kaligrafi yang melingkar butuh waktu bagi saya untuk dapat membacanya."*

*"Many people ask me about what verses are written because there are types of letters that are difficult for the congregation to read. I am also not free from this difficulty, especially the circular calligraphy that takes time for me to read."*

The design of the Kaaba door was replicated in its entirety, as was the design on the ceiling at the top of the pulpit. This replication was undertaken at the request of the mosque chairman, Anwar Isa, who desired that the front of the mosque resemble the Kaaba door. His intention was to create a distinct visual impression, allowing worshippers to feel as though the Kaaba was directly before their eyes. This explanation was provided by the calligrapher when initially commissioned to produce the Kaaba calligraphy.

*"Desain kaligrafi pintu ka'bah dibuat karena H. Anwar Isa ingin seakan-akan ka'bah terasa dekat dengan para jamaah, sehingga dibuatlah kaligrafi dengan menurunkan pintu ka'bah secara utuh."<sup>44</sup>*

*"The calligraphy design of the kaaba door was made because H. Anwar Isa wanted it as if the kaaba felt close to the worshippers, so calligraphy was made by lowering the door of the kaaba as a whole."*

Based on the calligrapher's presentation, the researcher subsequently compared it with field data and confirmed that the design was indeed created to evoke a sense of closeness to the Baitullah. It is undeniable that the Kaaba serves as the Qibla, the direction of prayer for Muslims worldwide; therefore, the calligraphy positioned in front of the imam enhances the worshippers' perception of proximity to the Kaaba.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the calligraphy within the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque serves a dual purpose: it attracts both local residents and visitors, and it facilitates the religious practices of congregants. The selection of surahs and verses displayed such as Yasin, Al-Waqi'ah, and Al-Mulk, enables Muslims to engage with texts commonly recited in daily devotion without the need to open a mushaf, thereby rendering its devotional function tangibly present within community life. Beyond this practical aspect, the study reveals functional and philosophical dimensions of the mosque's calligraphic ornaments that have hitherto been little known to the public. These findings hold broader significance for the advancement of the social humanities and the religious ecosystem, as calligraphy clearly operates as a medium of Islamic outreach, an enhancer of the worship space's aesthetic and symbolic image, and a vehicle for Qur'anic literacy. Calligraphy is not merely decorative; rather, it functions as a curatorial instrument that interlinks revealed text, spatial design, and worship experience, thereby affirming the mosque's role as a site of learning and social interaction.

The study demonstrates that public reception of the written Qur'an is notably robust. This is evidenced by the widespread presence of calligraphic works, which function not only as decorative elements but also as mediums that facilitate daily Qur'anic reading, enhance dhikr, and promote engagement with the text's meaning. The field findings raise further inquiries regarding the community's aesthetic reception of calligraphy at the Nurul Islam Grand Mosque, particularly from the perspective of the khattāt (calligraphers) as visual designers and curators of textual content. Additionally, questions arise concerning the extent to which local wisdom informs the selection of script style, color, material, and placement, and how these factors influence legibility and devotional focus. Future research agendas

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Murjani Siddiq (60 tahun), penulis kaligrafi, di Palangka Raya tanggal 24 Oktober 2023.

might include assessments of legibility metrics, analysis of congregants' gaze patterns, and exploration of the relationship between verse curation and da'wah and educational initiatives. Moreover, the study presents opportunities for collaboration with designers, educators, and researchers to develop evidence-based technical guidelines, incorporate QR codes linking to concise tafsir, and enhance routine maintenance practices to preserve visual quality and deepen the religious significance.

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