

Sunggingan on Islamic Javanese manuscript: The Acculturation of Javanese and Islamic Cultures

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Abstract—Islamic Javanese manuscript is one of the Javanese heritages in ancient time, which is decorated with a very beautiful *sunggingan*. *Sungging* art as the aesthetic expression is believed as a synthesis form between Islamic art and the tradition of pre-Islamic Javanese Culture. As a form of culture, *sungging* art is not only a decoration to beautify the manuscript, but it has meaning, and also reflects the elements of Islamic and Javanese Culture. The research aims are (1) to find the forms and meanings of *sungging* art on Javanese manuscripts, it is believed as a synthesis between the elements of pre-Islamic and Islamic Javanese cultures; and (2) to find the changes that happen on the forms and meaning of *sungging* art on Islamic Javanese manuscripts which is caused by acculturation. The result of the research shows: (1) *Sunggingan* at Islamic Javanese manuscripts consists of recurring shapes and *gapuran*, which has meaning as a visual gate to the text in the manuscript. The forms and meanings of *sunggingan* on the manuscript are the synthesis result of the Javanese culture and Islamic elements which become an identity of the manuscript; (2) *sunggingan* on the Islamic Javanese manuscript has form and meaning changes which are caused by acculturation of the Javanese Culture and Islamic elements.

Keywords—islamic javanese manuscript, culture, identity

I. INTRODUCTION

The manuscript of Javanese literature is one of the cultural heritages of the archipelago. Most manuscripts are decorated beautifully and diversify. *Sungging* art (*Sunggingan*), its forms, types, and meanings are influenced by the pre-Islamic elements, remembering that most of the Javanese literature is influenced by the thought of pre-Islamic time [1]. *Sungging* art as an aesthetic expression is believed as a synthesis form of Islamic and pre-Islamic art tradition [2].

Sungging manuscript art, as an art form, has a close relationship with the sense needs of expression of beauty. Therefore, the forms, types, and meanings are unique in each culture, it is related to the needs and the fulfillment to other needs [3]. As a culture product, *sungging* art is not an only decoration to beautify the manuscript, but it has a meaning that is related to the manuscript contents, it also reflects the values of a certain society.

Sungging art on Javanese manuscript which is copied from Islamic time is important to discuss as an effort to describe one of the aesthetic expression forms of Javanese art. It is believed to be a valuable reference for manuscript study and art tradition in Indonesia. Therefore, the study

tries to describe the acculturation of Javanese and Islamic cultures of *Sungging* art on Islamic Javanese manuscripts.

The purposes of the study are to (1) find the forms and meanings of *sungging* art of Islamic Javanese manuscripts, it is believed as a synthesis between the Javanese cultural elements of pre-Islamic and Islamic times. (2) find the changes which happen on the forms and meaning of *sungging* art of the Islamic Javanese manuscripts which is caused by acculturation.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research tries to answer the acculturation problems between Javanese and Islamic culture in *Sungging* art on Islamic Javanese manuscript. The research uses aesthetic, anthropology, semiotics and history approaches. A research process is a form of cycle. The implementation is divided into three steps, they are investigation, exploration, and checking the research result [4]. The object of the research is the Islamic manuscript (XVI-XIX century), collections of Sono Budoyo Museum Yogyakarta. The main data source is *sungging* art, which data collection used is observation. A second data source is a resource person as a key one who knows well his culture [5]. Third data sources are documents and research notes [6]. Data validity uses triangulation of sources and methods. Data analysis uses the theory of aesthetics, culture defusion, history, and semiotics. Data analysis is put down in a comprehensive and systematic framework. The steps of the framework are data reduction, data preparation and making conclusions.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Since the middle of 18 century, the writing of literature manuscript in Java has rapid development. The writing of Javanese literature in this time covers: (1) the literature writing has a source from ancient Javanese manuscripts, and (2) the new literature writing uses new Javanese language [7]. The literature Javanese manuscript writing is most influenced by two outside sources, they are India and Islamic tradition manuscripts.

The outstanding Javanese manuscripts which are most copied in the Islamic time are romantic Javanese manuscripts [1] or in the form of epic, such as a story of Yusuf Prophet, Musa Prophet, and Muhammad Prophet. And the story of the adventures of Amir Hamzah, Iskandar (Alexander)

Agung, and other figures. Amir Hamzah story, which is known as Serat Menak in Java, is a very wellknown story.

The Javanese manuscripts, especially ones which are made in palace area, are the manuscripts which tell the life of the prophets, muftis, kings, or the Islamic hero, such as: *Serat Anbiya*, *Serat Tapel Adam*, *Serat Asmarupi*, *Serat Tajusalatin*, and *Serat Menak* which are decorated or given very beautiful *sunggingan*. *Sunggingan* becomes a very interesting and exclusive visual element in each manuscript [9].

Sunggingan on manuscripts, it is also called *rerenggan*, is a decoration with frames text on manuscript page [10]. *Sunggingan* is an art to beautify the text by drawing, ornamental letters, or ornaments placing in the edge of the page, or medallion containing geometrical and floral design [11] [12]. *Sungging* art often applies in two facing pages (frontispieces), it is called *wadana* (face). *Sungging* art on Javanese manuscript covers: punctuation, frame (enframing) and textual gate (textual gateway), rubrication, and calligraphy.

Sungging art or illumination develops in the Islamic world since VIII century, and it becomes an important art in the development of Islamic aesthetics [12]. *Sungging* art on Islamic Java manuscripts also adopts *sungging* art tradition or illumination in the Islamic world. *Sungging* art in Javanese manuscripts, mostly the manuscripts written by the kings or nobility orders, becomes interesting visual objects [13]. *Sungging* art on Javanese manuscript reaches the peak of development in Yogyakarta palace, it is marked by the number of manuscripts decorated with very beautiful *sunggingan*, it is called *wadana* or *rerenggan*. *Wadana* means *pengarep* or face, and *rerenggan* means decoration [14]. *Sunggingan* is meant as a paint [15], which is placed on the front of the manuscript or the front of pupuh. Thus, the beginning of pupuh as a mark of a new page.

Sungging manuscript art in Yogyakarta was developed by Sultan Hamengku Buwana II [13]. In this time, A handbook, it is written by Suryanegara, has been produced for the writers to decorate the manuscripts. The handbook explains the variety of *wadana*, *pada* (bait separator sign) and *pada pupuh* (song separator sign).

As an art, *sungging* art is a sensory form created by the maker. The form is called outer form which expresses a certain feeling [16]. *Sungging* art can be seen as a combination of outer form and feeling on a certain value of the spiritual dimension. To understand the aesthetics value and meaning of *sungging* art, it is needed to observe the structure to understand: (1) the characteristic of art elements; (2) unsure organization or design principles; and (3) the respond to the arts [17].

The ornament is a main component forming *sunggingan*, and the main unsure of ornament formation is a motif. The motif which is arranged repeatedly becomes a pattern, and it will become ornament if it applies to an object [18]. Based on the types, a motif in *sunggingan* art is grouped into six types, they are (1) geometrical motif; (2) floral motif; (3) fauna motif; (4) human or giant motif; (5) Natural object motif; and (6) technological object. These motifs originated in the variety of Javanese ornaments, and it had applied since pre-Islamic time. The interesting one is the emergence of humans and animals in *sunggingan* which occurs because

the representation of humans and animals has known in all of Java for centuries [13].

Ornamental motif as an element of *sunggingan* is formed by the main elements such as lines, fields, *tekstur*, and colour which have roles in determining forms and motif character, and it is compiled referring to design principles. Each motif is placed referring to its roles, they are as main motif, supporting motif, and filling motif which is called *empan papan* in Javanese aesthetics [19]. Generally, motifs are compiled repetitively in a symmetrical pattern or cover up so that it looks regular and harmonious. It is related to the structural objective that all of the creating ways is harmonious, it is the satisfaction of a sense of beauty [18]. Motifs in *sunggingan* manuscripts are realized through stylization to create ornamental or decorative forms which have similarities with *sunggingan*.

Sunggingan on Islamic Javanese manuscript consists of decorations of frame, punctuation, and rubrication. Frame decoration shapes are (1) recurring shapes which have a square basic pattern, it is called *wedanarenggan*; and (2) gateway or temple resembling the shape of a temple which is called *wedana gapuran*. Frame decoration is placed on double facing pages, single page, and on text verses. Punctuation decoration is the decoration found on punctuation (*pepadan*) on the text.

Sunggingan is a visual representation, which consists of variety motifs, which represents meaningful signs, or it is symbolic, which represents conventional symbols [20]. Ornament motif such as lotus, life tree, garuda, peacock, snake or naga, fish, and elephant, they are symbolic motif which is sourced from pre-Islamic time [21][22][23]. Similarly, the colour such as green, red, blue, grey, orange, purple, pink, white, and golden yellow are also symbolic.

The *sunggingan* form such as recurring shapes (*wedana rerenggan*) and gates (*wedana gapuran*) become a gateway to the sacred text. Denotatively, *sunggingan* on Islamic Javanese manuscripts which are recurring shapes or *gapuran* is an ornament framing text. Connotatively, *sunggingan* on manuscript means the light of texts or gateway to sacred or noble inside which is represented as *gapura* or *gapuran*.

Since the beginning of its growth, Javanese literature has been influenced by foreign which causes cultural acculturation [7]. Acculturation causes the changes of manuscript tradition in Java, or it causes various cultural events such as: (1) the addition of new cultural elements (addition); (2) cultural element combinations (syncretism); (3) local cultural destruction (deculturation); (4) foreign cultural element rejection; and (5) A desire to return to cultural authenticity [25].

The changes that happen on Islamic Javanese manuscripts are marked by the *sungging* art addition, which is adopted from Islamic art. In pre-Islamic tradition, manuscript decoration realizing in the form of drawing illustration resembling decorative *beber puppets* which are used to clarify the content or text. *Sungging* art has changed shapes that adjusting to the ornament art tradition in Java. The ornament which comes from ornamental art of Javanese tradition in pre-Islamic time does not have many changes. The change happened in the surface and Islamic outer layer does not much influence in old value [26]. In the beginning, *sunggingan* shape on Islamic Javanese manuscript refers to

sunggingan on mushaf Al Qur'an and then appears shapes that resemble gates (*gapura*), which is called *wadana gapuran* in the Javanese manuscript. Beside that, the use of fauna motifs which roots from pre-Islamic ornamental arts. They are motifs of garuda, peacock, elephant, snake and fish, and also humans and giants.

They show that *sunggingan* as Islamic art is integrated into the tradition of Javanese manuscript without eliminating the characteristic of Javanese culture but adding or enriching Javanese art. In acculturation process, ornament which is the outer part of Javanese culture and ornament meaning which relates to existence of philosophy or the faith. Artists or *penyungging* adjust the ornamental art elements in pre-Islamic time to the need, which cause the changes in *sunggingan* since at the beginning of Islamic time in Java. The changes are not only in the shapes but also in *sunggingan* meaning. In the previous, *sunggingan* means as a light on text, which means to give light to the sacred text. However, *sunggingan* has symbolic meaning, that is as gate away to the sacred texts.

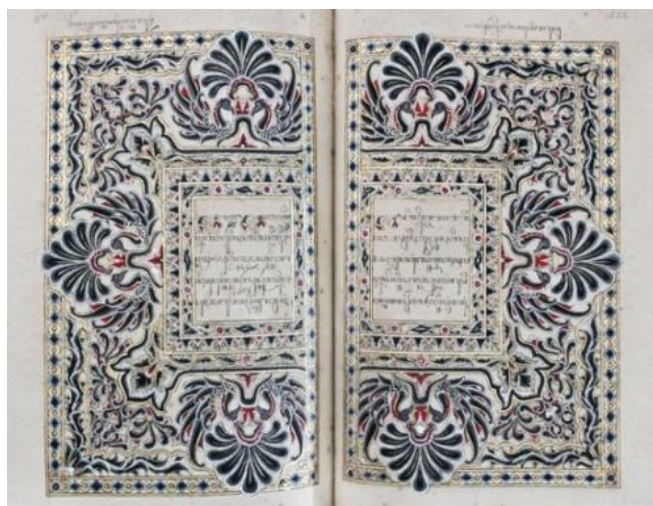


Fig. 1. Frame decoration in the form of *Wadana renggan* on page 1231-1232 *Serat Ambiya* manuscript HB V Scriptorium. *Sunggingan* consists of four layers with decoration motif of peacock and flora motif such as leaves and flowers. (Sonobudoyo Museum Documentation)



Fig. 2. Frame decoration in the form of *Wadana gapuran* on page 37-38 *Serat Ambiya* manuscript HB V scriptorium. *Sunggingan* is

decorated with peacock and dragon motifs as main motifs (Sonobudoyo Museum Documentation)



Fig. 3. *Sunggingan* on mushaf Al Quran from Surakarta copied by Ki Atmaparwita in 1797-1798 Widya Budaya collection, Kasultanan Palace of Yogyakarta

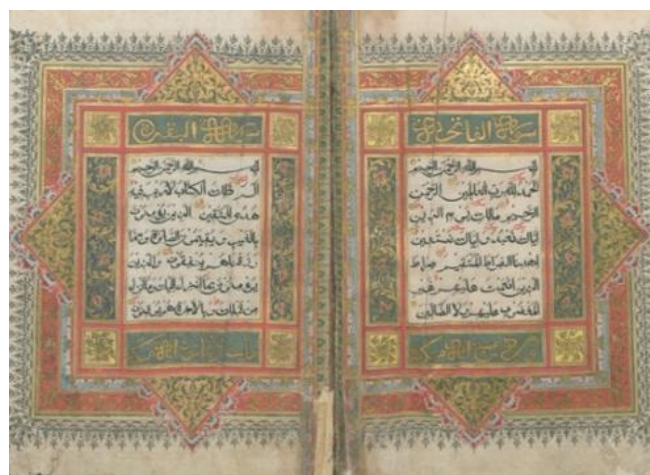


Fig. 4. *sunggingan* on mushaf Al Quran from Yogyakarta, Widya Budaya collection of Kasultanan Palace of Yogyakarta

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it concludes that: first, Javanese manuscripts produced in Islamic time are decorated with very beautiful *sunggingan* shaping recurring forms and *gapuran*. *Sunggingan* as an art contains main ornamental elements, they consist of the motifs of floral, fauna, humans, and panorama and technological objects. Motifs are displayed symmetrically and it has decorative style resembling *sunggingan* on leather puppets (*wayang kulit*). *Sunggingan* in Islamic Javanese manuscripts are symbolic signs which use is adjusted to text content, so that each *sunggingan* has different motifs. *Sunggingan* in Islamic Javanese manuscripts contains symbolic meaning, that is visualization symbolic related to the story of the text and the gate to sacred text.

Second, acculturation of Islamic and Javanese cultural elements causes the changes of *sunggingan* of mushaf Al Qur'an, and then the shape of gate (*gapura*) which is called *wadana gapuran* appears, and also the use of fauna and humans motifs. The changes also occurs in *sunggingan*

meaning, at first it means text light but then it becomes symbol as an entrance orgate to sacred text [1].

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