

## Qur'anic Calligraphy in Mosque Spaces as Aesthetic Reception: A Living Qur'an and Phenomenological Study

Wildan Zulza Mufti  
[\\*wildazul@gmail.com](mailto:wildazul@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This study examines Qur'anic calligraphy in mosque spaces as a form of aesthetic reception within the framework of Living Qur'an studies. Focusing on three mosques in Jember Regency, East Java – Masjid Jami' Al-Baitul Amin, Masjid Raudhotul Muchlisin, and Masjid Jami' Al-Falah Mangli – this research explores how Qur'anic verses are visually presented, interpreted, and experienced by mosque congregants. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation. The findings reveal that Qur'anic calligraphy functions not merely as decorative ornamentation but as a multidimensional medium encompassing theological authority, aesthetic expression, and social meaning. Congregational reception varies from symbolic reverence and visual appreciation to deeper reflective engagement, shaped by individual religious knowledge and cultural context. Using Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, the study demonstrates that Qur'anic calligraphy embodies objective, expressive, and documentary meanings that collectively articulate Islamic identity and spiritual values within communal worship spaces. This research contributes to Living Qur'an scholarship by highlighting the significance of aesthetic practices in shaping contemporary Muslim religious experience.

**Key words:** Qur'anic Calligraphy; Living Qur'an; Islamic Aesthetics; Mosque Space; Religious Education

### Published by:



**OPEN ACCESS**  
This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

### Journal History:

Submitted: April 2024

Accepted: June 2024

Published: July 2024

DOI:

**How to cite:** Mufti, W. Z. (2024). Qur'anic Calligraphy in Mosque Spaces as Aesthetic Reception: A Living Qur'an and Phenomenological Study. (n.d.). *Handam: Journal of Islamic Calligraphy*. 1(2). 108-121



## INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an occupies a central position in Islamic civilization as the primary source of guidance, spirituality, ethics, and cultural expression. Beyond its function as a sacred text recited and interpreted for normative religious practice, the Qur'an has continuously inspired diverse forms of reception among Muslim communities. These receptions manifest not only through hermeneutical engagement—such as interpretation, translation, and exegetical scholarship—but also through social, cultural, and aesthetic practices that reflect how the Qur'an is lived, experienced, and materialized in everyday life (Shihab, 2007; Yusuf, 2007). One of the most prominent and enduring forms of this lived engagement is the aesthetic reception of the Qur'an, particularly through Arabic calligraphy displayed within mosques.

Islamic calligraphy represents a unique artistic tradition in which textual sacredness and visual beauty converge. Within Islamic thought, the Qur'an is frequently described as the first and most perfect artistic manifestation of Islam, not in the sense of human literary creation, but as a divine articulation whose linguistic and aesthetic qualities set the standard for Islamic art (Asy'ari, 2007; Jinan, 2010). Consequently, calligraphy emerges as a visual medium that preserves the sanctity of the Qur'anic text while simultaneously expressing artistic creativity, spiritual devotion, and cultural identity. In mosque architecture, Qur'anic calligraphy is not merely decorative; it functions as a symbolic, didactic, and spiritual element that shapes the religious atmosphere and influences the perceptions of worshippers.

The presence of Qur'anic verses as calligraphic ornamentation in mosques is a widespread phenomenon in Muslim societies, including Indonesia. However, this phenomenon cannot be understood as a purely aesthetic or architectural choice detached from its social and religious context. Rather, the selection of specific verses, calligraphic styles, and spatial placement reflects a complex interplay of theological considerations, cultural traditions, institutional visions, and communal interpretations (Akbar, 1995; Sirojuddin, 1985). In many cases, Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques embodies broader meanings related to dakwah (religious propagation), moral instruction, spiritual motivation, and the articulation of collective religious identity.

From the perspective of Living Qur'an studies, the use of Qur'anic verses as mosque decoration constitutes an important site for examining how sacred texts are received, reinterpreted, and recontextualized within lived social realities. Living Qur'an research shifts the focus from textual exegesis to the ways in which Muslim communities interact with the Qur'an in practical, symbolic, and experiential dimensions (Mansyur, 2007; Juneidi, 2015). This approach emphasizes that the Qur'an is not only read and interpreted but also displayed, heard, memorized, internalized, and materialized in various cultural forms. Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques thus represents a tangible manifestation of the Qur'an's presence in everyday religious life.

Scholars have identified three broad modes of Qur'anic reception: hermeneutical reception, socio-cultural reception, and aesthetic reception (Lukman, 2015). Hermeneutical reception focuses on understanding the meanings of Qur'anic texts through interpretation and scholarly analysis. Socio-cultural reception highlights ritual practices and communal functions of the Qur'an, sometimes independent of direct textual comprehension. Aesthetic reception, meanwhile, emphasizes beauty, artistic expression, and sensory engagement with the Qur'an. Calligraphy clearly

belongs to this third category, although in practice it often overlaps with the other two modes, as visual beauty can stimulate reflection, remembrance, and moral awareness.

In the Indonesian context, mosque calligraphy has developed through historical processes of cultural acculturation, local artistic traditions, and Islamic educational networks. Previous studies have examined the historical development of Islamic calligraphy in Indonesia, its stylistic variations, and its role in mosque decoration (Somad, 2006; Hakim, 2011). Other research has focused on the aesthetic values and symbolic meanings embedded in specific mosques or regions (Soraya, 2011; Jinan, 2010). While these studies provide important insights into the artistic and historical dimensions of mosque calligraphy, fewer studies have systematically explored how congregants perceive, interpret, and respond to Qur'anic calligraphy as part of their lived religious experience.

Understanding congregational reception is crucial because mosque calligraphy ultimately functions within a communal space intended for worship, reflection, and social interaction. The meanings generated by Qur'anic calligraphy are not fixed solely by the intentions of calligraphers or mosque authorities; they are also shaped by the perceptions, knowledge, and spiritual sensibilities of worshippers. Some congregants may engage deeply with the meanings of the verses, while others may primarily appreciate their visual beauty or symbolic presence without fully understanding the textual content. Still others may express ambivalence or critique regarding the use of sacred texts as decorative elements. These diverse responses highlight the need for a phenomenological approach that foregrounds lived experience and subjective meaning-making (Hajaroh, 2011; Hasbiansyah, 2008).

This study focuses on the phenomenon of Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques located in Jember Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Jember represents a socially and culturally diverse region where Islamic traditions intersect with local cultural practices and contemporary urban development. The mosques selected for this study – Masjid Jami' Al-Baitul Amin, Masjid Raudhotul Muchlisin, and Masjid Jami' Al-Falah Mangli – exhibit varied architectural styles, calligraphic forms, and institutional backgrounds. These mosques provide a rich empirical context for examining how Qur'anic calligraphy functions as a form of aesthetic reception and how it is interpreted by different segments of the Muslim community.

The central concern of this research is not merely to catalogue calligraphic styles or identify the verses displayed, but to analyze the underlying meanings, motivations, and receptions associated with Qur'anic calligraphy in mosque spaces. Specifically, the study seeks to address three interrelated questions: (1) What types and styles of calligraphy are used in mosques in Jember Regency, and why are these styles chosen? (2) Which Qur'anic verses are selected for calligraphic display, and what considerations underlie their selection? (3) How do mosque congregants perceive and respond to Qur'anic calligraphy within the mosque environment?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of Living Qur'an scholarship by illuminating the aesthetic dimension of Qur'anic reception in contemporary Indonesian Islam. The study also engages sociological perspectives on meaning-making, particularly Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, which distinguishes between objective meaning, expressive meaning, and documentary meaning in social action (Baum, 1999). This framework allows for a

nuanced analysis of how Qur'anic calligraphy operates simultaneously as a textual object, an artistic expression, and a cultural symbol embedded within specific social contexts.

Furthermore, this research contributes to discussions on Islamic aesthetics by examining how beauty, spirituality, and religious function intersect in mosque decoration. Islamic art is often characterized by its avoidance of figural representation and its emphasis on calligraphy, geometry, and ornamentation as vehicles for expressing divine unity and transcendence (Wahib al-Jaburi, 1994; Syauhan, 2001). Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques exemplifies this aesthetic philosophy while also serving practical religious functions such as remembrance (dhikr), moral exhortation, and communal identity formation.

In practical terms, the findings of this study are expected to offer insights for mosque administrators, religious educators, and Islamic artists regarding the role of calligraphy in enhancing spiritual engagement and religious understanding. By highlighting congregational responses, the study underscores the importance of aligning aesthetic choices with educational and spiritual objectives. More broadly, this research affirms that the Qur'an, when manifested as visual art within communal spaces, continues to function as a living source of meaning that shapes religious consciousness, cultural expression, and social interaction in Muslim societies.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences and meanings associated with Qur'anic calligraphy in mosque spaces. A qualitative methodology is particularly appropriate for this research because the phenomenon under investigation involves subjective interpretations, aesthetic perceptions, and socially constructed meanings that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Moleong, 2013; Sugiyarto, 2015). By prioritizing depth over breadth, this approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how Qur'anic calligraphy is perceived, experienced, and interpreted by mosque congregants within their natural religious environment.

The research is situated within an interpretive paradigm, emphasizing the understanding of social reality as constructed through human interaction and consciousness. Phenomenology is adopted as the primary methodological approach, as it focuses on uncovering the essence of lived experiences and the meanings individuals ascribe to particular phenomena (Hajaroh, 2011; Hasbiansyah, 2008). In this study, phenomenology facilitates an in-depth exploration of how mosque congregants encounter Qur'anic calligraphy as both a visual and spiritual presence, and how these encounters shape their religious perceptions.

In addition, this research is informed by the Living Qur'an framework, which examines the manifestations of the Qur'an in everyday Muslim life beyond textual interpretation (Mansyur, 2007; Juneidi, 2015). The Living Qur'an perspective allows the study to analyze Qur'anic calligraphy as a form of aesthetic reception, highlighting how the sacred text is embodied, displayed, and experienced within communal worship spaces. This framework complements the phenomenological approach by situating individual experiences within broader cultural and religious practices.

The study utilizes a multiple case study design, combining field research and document analysis. Case study research is suitable for investigating complex social phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly defined (Arikunto, 2006). The selected cases – three mosques in Jember Regency – are treated as distinct yet comparable sites that collectively illuminate patterns and variations in the use and reception of Qur'anic calligraphy.

Field research enables direct engagement with the physical settings, social interactions, and religious practices associated with mosque calligraphy. Document analysis, meanwhile, supports the interpretation of visual and textual data, including inscriptions, architectural plans, institutional documents, and related written materials (Mustakim, 2015). The integration of these methods enhances the credibility and richness of the findings through methodological triangulation.

The research was conducted in three major mosques in Jember Regency, East Java: Masjid Jami' Al-Baitul Amin, Masjid Raudhotul Muchlisin, and Masjid Jami' Al-Falah Mangli. These mosques were selected purposively based on several criteria: (1) the presence of prominent Qur'anic calligraphy as interior decoration, (2) their active role as communal worship centers, and (3) their diverse architectural and organizational characteristics. Jember Regency provides a culturally heterogeneous context in which traditional Islamic practices intersect with modern religious expressions, making it a suitable setting for Living Qur'an research (Anshari, 2017).

Data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consisted of observations, in-depth interviews, and visual documentation conducted within the mosque environments. Key informants included mosque administrators (takmir), religious leaders, calligraphers involved in mosque decoration, and congregants with varying educational and religious backgrounds. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of diverse perspectives relevant to the research questions.

Secondary data included books, academic journals, institutional guidelines, and archival materials related to Islamic calligraphy, mosque architecture, and Living Qur'an studies (Akbar, 1995; Sirojuddin, 1985; Shihab, 1996). These sources provided theoretical and contextual grounding for data interpretation.

Three primary data collection techniques were employed. First, participant observation was conducted to examine the spatial placement, stylistic features, and contextual use of Qur'anic calligraphy within mosque interiors. Observations focused on how calligraphy interacts with architectural elements and worship practices, as well as how congregants visually and behaviorally engage with it.

Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out to elicit participants' perceptions, interpretations, and emotional responses to Qur'anic calligraphy. This interview format allowed for flexibility while ensuring consistency across cases. Interviews explored participants' understanding of the verses displayed, their aesthetic appreciation, and their views on the appropriateness and function of calligraphy in mosque spaces.

Third, documentation involved photographing calligraphic inscriptions and collecting relevant written materials. Visual data served as important analytical

resources for identifying calligraphic styles, thematic content of verses, and patterns of aesthetic presentation.

Data analysis followed an interpretive phenomenological process. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and visual materials were systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. The analysis was guided by phenomenological reduction, which involves bracketing preconceived assumptions to focus on participants' lived experiences (Hajaroh, 2011). Meanings were then categorized into thematic clusters related to aesthetic appreciation, textual understanding, spiritual impact, and social function. To deepen sociological interpretation, the findings were further analyzed using Karl Mannheim's framework of meaning, distinguishing between objective meaning (textual and canonical interpretations of Qur'anic verses), expressive meaning (individual motivations and perceptions), and documentary meaning (broader cultural and institutional significance) (Baum, 1999). This analytical strategy enabled a multidimensional understanding of Qur'anic calligraphy as a religious, artistic, and social phenomenon.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Forms and Styles of Qur'anic Calligraphy in Jember Mosques

The findings of this study reveal that Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques across Jember Regency exhibits a diversity of forms, styles, and aesthetic orientations. The most commonly used calligraphic scripts include *Khat Tsuluth*, *Khat Naskhi*, and, to a lesser extent, *Khat Diwani*. These scripts are predominantly applied to interior mosque walls, mihrab areas, domes, and entrances, serving both decorative and symbolic purposes. The preference for these styles reflects a combination of aesthetic considerations, religious tradition, and practical readability.

*Khat Tsuluth* emerges as the dominant style in monumental spaces such as domes and mihrabs. Known for its elongated vertical strokes and balanced curvature, *Tsuluth* is widely regarded as the most majestic and expressive script in Islamic calligraphy (Sirin, 1993; Wahib al-Jaburi, 1994). Mosque administrators and calligraphers interviewed in this study emphasized that *Tsuluth* conveys a sense of grandeur and sacredness appropriate for central worship spaces. This finding aligns with earlier studies suggesting that *Tsuluth* is often chosen to visually represent divine transcendence and spiritual elevation (Syauhan, 2001; Jinan, 2010).



**Figure 1. Display of calligraphy of Quranic verses on the walls of the Al-Baitul Amien Mosque**

In contrast, *Khat Naskhi* is frequently used for inscriptions placed at eye level, particularly on walls surrounding prayer halls or near entrances. Its relatively simple and legible form makes it suitable for congregants who wish to read and reflect upon the verses displayed. The use of Naskhi reflects an implicit pedagogical orientation, where calligraphy functions not only as visual ornamentation but also as a medium for textual engagement (Akbar, 1995; Sirojuddin, 1985). This dual function underscores the interconnection between aesthetic reception and hermeneutical awareness within mosque environments.

The limited use of *Khat Diwani* is typically confined to decorative panels or supplementary inscriptions. While Diwani is appreciated for its intricate and flowing composition, its dense structure often prioritizes visual beauty over readability. As such, it is perceived as less suitable for conveying Qur'anic messages intended for communal contemplation. This selective use suggests that aesthetic considerations are negotiated with functional and religious concerns, rather than pursued in isolation.



**Figure 2.** The calligraphy display in the left dome of the mosque (where the male congregation is located) which is written QS At-Taubah verse 11 using Khat Diwani Jaly

### **Selection of Qur'anic Verses: Themes and Considerations**

The analysis of Qur'anic verses displayed in the mosques reveals recurring thematic patterns. The most frequently selected verses pertain to divine unity (*tawhid*), piety (*taqwa*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), moral conduct, and the sanctity of mosques. Verses such as “*Innamā ya'muru masājidallāhi man āmana billāhi wal-yaumul ākhir*” (Qur'an 9:18) and “*Fa idzkurūnī adzkurkum*” (Qur'an 2:152) appear prominently, reflecting the central religious functions of mosque spaces.

Interviews with mosque administrators indicate that verse selection is often guided by normative religious understanding rather than systematic exegetical analysis. Verses are chosen for their perceived relevance to worship, moral exhortation, and communal identity. This pragmatic approach resonates with Living Qur'an scholarship, which emphasizes that communal engagement with the Qur'an frequently operates at the level of symbolic meaning rather than detailed textual interpretation (Mansyur, 2007; Juneidi, 2015).

At the same time, the selection of verses also reflects an awareness of the mosque as a moral and educational space. Verses emphasizing discipline in prayer,

humility before God, and ethical conduct serve as constant visual reminders for congregants. This function aligns with Quraish Shihab's observation that the Qur'an, when presented contextually, operates as a source of moral consciousness embedded within everyday life (Shihab, 1996; Shihab, 2007).

From the perspective of congregants, Qur'anic calligraphy is predominantly perceived as a source of visual beauty and spiritual atmosphere. Many participants described calligraphy as enhancing the serenity (*khushu'*) of the prayer environment, creating a sense of sacred presence even before textual meaning is consciously processed. This finding supports the argument that aesthetic reception does not necessarily depend on linguistic comprehension but operates through sensory and emotional engagement (Lukman, 2015; Jinan, 2010).

However, the depth of engagement varies significantly among congregants. Those with religious education or familiarity with Qur'anic Arabic tend to articulate more detailed interpretations, linking visual forms to theological meanings. Conversely, congregants without such backgrounds often interpret calligraphy symbolically, associating it with Islamic identity and reverence rather than specific textual content. This divergence illustrates the layered nature of Qur'anic reception, where aesthetic appreciation may precede or even substitute hermeneutical understanding.

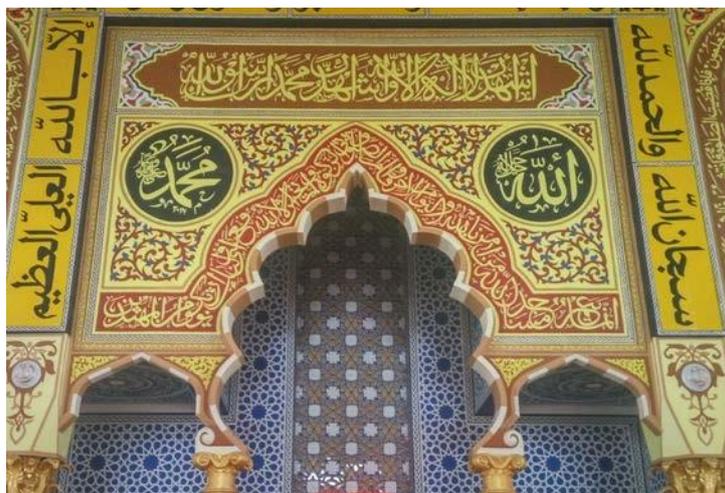
Interestingly, several participants acknowledged that while they do not fully understand the verses displayed, the presence of Qur'anic calligraphy still evokes feelings of respect and spiritual mindfulness. This phenomenon reflects what Yusuf (2007) describes as socio-cultural reception, in which the Qur'an functions as a marker of sacredness and communal belonging independent of textual comprehension.

### **Calligraphy as Dakwah and Cultural Identity**

Beyond individual perception, Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques serves broader social and cultural functions. Mosque administrators consistently emphasized the role of calligraphy as a medium of *dakwah bil hal*—religious propagation through action and visual presence. The display of Qur'anic verses is intended to silently invite reflection, reinforce Islamic values, and assert the mosque's religious identity within the public sphere.

This function becomes particularly salient in urban contexts, where mosques compete visually with commercial and secular architecture. By incorporating prominent Qur'anic calligraphy, mosques assert their distinctiveness as sacred spaces rooted in Islamic tradition. This aligns with sociological perspectives that view religious symbols as instruments of identity formation and boundary maintenance within pluralistic societies (Gazalba, 1987; Baum, 1999).

From Mannheim's framework, Qur'anic calligraphy embodies objective meaning through the canonical text of the Qur'an, expressive meaning through the intentions and aesthetic preferences of mosque authorities, and documentary meaning through its role in articulating communal religious identity. The convergence of these layers demonstrates that calligraphy functions as more than an artistic artifact; it is a social text embedded within cultural narratives and institutional visions.



**Figure 3. Display View of the mihrab with various Arabic calligraphy**

A recurring theme in participant responses concerns the balance between beauty and sacredness. While most congregants appreciate aesthetic enhancement, some express concern that excessive ornamentation may distract from worship or risk instrumentalizing sacred text as mere decoration. These concerns echo classical Islamic debates on ornamentation and humility in religious spaces (Asy'ari, 2007).

Nevertheless, the majority view suggests that when implemented thoughtfully, calligraphy enhances rather than detracts from spiritual focus. This consensus indicates a shared cultural understanding that beauty, when aligned with religious purpose, is an integral component of Islamic worship spaces. As articulated by Islamic aesthetic theory, beauty (*jamal*) is inseparable from truth (*haqq*) and goodness (*khayr*), forming a holistic vision of religious life (Martono, n.d.).

### **Multilayered Meanings of Qur'anic Calligraphy: A Sociological Perspective**

To further understand the role of Qur'anic calligraphy in mosque spaces, this study employs Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge as an analytical framework. Mannheim distinguishes between three levels of meaning: objective meaning, expressive meaning, and documentary meaning (Baum, 1999). Applying this framework reveals that Qur'anic calligraphy in Jember mosques operates as a multilayered cultural phenomenon, simultaneously functioning as sacred text, artistic expression, and social symbol.

At the level of objective meaning, Qur'anic calligraphy represents the canonical text of the Qur'an, whose meanings are grounded in Islamic theology and exegesis. Regardless of aesthetic form, the verses displayed retain their normative religious authority. Congregants generally acknowledge this authority, even when they are unable to articulate detailed interpretations of the text. This indicates that the sacred status of the Qur'an transcends linguistic comprehension and is embedded within collective religious consciousness (Shihab, 1996; al-Qattan, 2013).

However, the objective meaning of Qur'anic verses is rarely accessed through systematic exegetical engagement within mosque spaces. Instead, meaning is mediated through visual presence and symbolic association. This supports Living Qur'an scholarship, which argues that everyday engagement with the Qur'an often prioritizes experiential and affective dimensions over textual analysis (Mansyur, 2007;

Juneidi, 2015). In this sense, calligraphy becomes a gateway through which the Qur'an enters the sensory and emotional realm of communal worship.

Expressive meaning emerges through the intentions, motivations, and aesthetic preferences of mosque administrators, calligraphers, and patrons. Interviews reveal that decisions regarding calligraphic style, verse selection, and placement are shaped by personal religious convictions, artistic taste, and institutional objectives. For some mosque leaders, calligraphy is intended to cultivate spiritual reflection and moral awareness; for others, it serves as a marker of prestige and architectural excellence. These expressive meanings reflect the subjective dimensions of religious practice, where individual agency intersects with collective norms (Gazalba, 1987).

Notably, expressive meaning also varies among congregants. While some individuals experience calligraphy as a profound spiritual reminder, others engage with it primarily as an aesthetic background to worship. This diversity underscores the phenomenological insight that meaning is not inherent in objects but emerges through lived experience and interpretation (Hajaroh, 2011; Hasbiansyah, 2008). Qur'anic calligraphy thus functions as an open text, inviting multiple readings shaped by personal history, religious education, and cultural context.

Documentary meaning refers to the broader cultural and social significance of Qur'anic calligraphy as an expression of communal identity and historical continuity. In the mosques studied, calligraphy serves as a visual affirmation of Islamic presence within the public sphere of Jember Regency. It communicates continuity with classical Islamic artistic traditions while simultaneously adapting to local cultural aesthetics. This dynamic reflects processes of cultural acculturation that have long characterized Indonesian Islam (Hakim, 2011; Somad, 2006).

### **Living Qur'an and Aesthetic Practice in Mosque Spaces**

From the perspective of Living Qur'an studies, Qur'anic calligraphy exemplifies how the Qur'an is lived, embodied, and materialized within everyday religious environments. Rather than functioning solely as a text to be read, the Qur'an becomes a visual and spatial presence that shapes religious experience. The mosque, as a communal locus of worship, amplifies this function by integrating calligraphy into architectural design and ritual practice.

The findings indicate that aesthetic reception plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between congregants and the Qur'an. Visual beauty attracts attention, fosters emotional resonance, and creates a contemplative atmosphere conducive to worship. Even when textual comprehension is limited, the presence of Qur'anic calligraphy encourages reverence and mindfulness. This supports arguments that aesthetic engagement constitutes a legitimate and meaningful mode of Qur'anic reception, rather than a superficial or secondary practice (Lukman, 2015; Jinan, 2010).



**Figure 4. Calligraphy images in *Naskhi* (elongated) and *Tsulul* styles on one of the mosques in Jember**

Nevertheless, the study also reveals tensions inherent in aesthetic reception. Concerns about over-ornamentation and potential distraction highlight the need for balance between beauty and functional spirituality. These tensions reflect broader debates within Islamic thought regarding the role of art and decoration in religious life (Asy'ari, 2007). The resolution of such tensions often depends on contextual sensitivity and communal consensus rather than rigid doctrinal prescriptions.

The findings of this study have several implications for Islamic aesthetics and contemporary mosque design. First, they underscore the importance of intentionality in the use of Qur'anic calligraphy. Aesthetic choices should be guided not only by visual appeal but also by consideration of textual relevance, spatial context, and congregational reception. When these elements are aligned, calligraphy can enhance both the beauty and spiritual function of mosque spaces.

Second, the study highlights the pedagogical potential of Qur'anic calligraphy. By selecting verses that resonate with communal needs and providing contextual explanations—through sermons, educational programs, or visual annotations—mosques can bridge the gap between aesthetic appreciation and textual understanding. This approach aligns with broader efforts to integrate religious education into everyday worship practices (Shihab, 2007).

Finally, the research contributes to sociological discussions on religion and art by demonstrating how aesthetic forms serve as sites of meaning-making and identity formation. Qur'anic calligraphy operates as a cultural language through which Muslim communities articulate values, continuity, and belonging within changing social landscapes.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques in Jember Regency as a form of aesthetic reception within the Living Qur'an framework. Through a qualitative phenomenological approach, the research has demonstrated that Qur'anic calligraphy functions not merely as decorative art but as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing theological authority, artistic expression, and social meaning.

The findings reveal that the selection of calligraphic styles and Qur'anic verses is shaped by a combination of aesthetic, religious, and institutional considerations. Congregational responses vary in depth and interpretation, reflecting diverse levels of religious knowledge and aesthetic sensibility. Nevertheless, Qur'anic calligraphy consistently contributes to the creation of a sacred atmosphere that enhances spiritual engagement, even when textual comprehension is limited.

By applying Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, this study has shown that Qur'anic calligraphy embodies objective, expressive, and documentary meanings that collectively situate it within broader cultural and social contexts. As a Living Qur'an practice, calligraphy exemplifies how the Qur'an continues to shape Muslim life through visual, spatial, and sensory dimensions.

In conclusion, Qur'anic calligraphy in mosque spaces represents a dynamic intersection of text, art, and society. Recognizing and critically engaging with this intersection offers valuable insights for scholars of Islamic studies, mosque practitioners, and artists alike. Future research may further explore comparative contexts or examine the impact of digital media on contemporary forms of Qur'anic aesthetic reception.

## REFERENCES

- Ahimsa-Putra, H. S. (2012). The Living Al-Qur'an: Beberapa perspektif antropologi. *Walisono*, 20(1), 256–272.
- Akbar, A. (1995). *Kaedah menulis dan karya-karya master kaligrafi Islam*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Firdaus.
- Al-Jaburi, Y. W. (1994). *Al-khatt wa al-kitabah fi al-hadharah al-'Arabiyyah*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami.
- Al-Qattan, M. K. (2013). *Studi ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an* (M. Mudzakir, Trans.). Jakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Litera AntarNusa.
- Amrullah, Y. (2017). *Manhaj taqlidy Hamidy dalam pengembangan kaligrafi Al-Qur'an: Studi di Sekolah Kaligrafi Al-Qur'an (SAKAL) Jombang, Jawa Timur* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). IAIN Jember, Indonesia.
- Anshari, Z. (2017). *Sejarah Masjid Jami' Al-Baitul Amin Jember: Mengurai peran dan kontribusinya*. Jember, Indonesia: Superior.
- Arikunto, S. (2006). *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktik*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Rineka Cipta.
- Asy'ari, M. (2007). Islam dan seni. *Hunafa*, 4(2), 169–174.

- Baum, G. (1999). *Agama dalam bayang-bayang relativisme: Analisis sosiologi agama Karl Mannheim tentang sintesa kebenaran historis–normatif* (A. M. Chaeri & M. Arow, Trans.). Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Tiara Wacana.
- Fanani, M. R. (2015). *Kajian Living Qur'an ayat-ayat pengobatan dalam kitab Sullam al-Futuhat karya KH. Abdul Hannan Maksum* (Unpublished master's thesis). IAIN Tulungagung, Indonesia.
- Gazalba, S. (1987). *Masyarakat Islam: Pengantar sosiologi dan sosiografi*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Bulan Bintang.
- Hakim, A. (2011). Akulturasi budaya bangunan masjid tua Cirebon. *Suhuf*, 4(2), 289–314.
- Hajaroh, M. (2011). Paradigma, pendekatan, dan metode penelitian fenomenologi. *Jurnal Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta*, 629.
- Hasbiansyah, O. (2008). Pendekatan fenomenologi: Pengantar praktik penelitian ilmu sosial. *Mediator*, 9(1).
- Jinan, M. M. (2010). Kaligrafi sebagai resepsi estetik Islam. *Suhuf*, 22(2), 142–156.
- Juneidi, D. (2015). Living Qur'an: Sebuah pendekatan baru dalam kajian Al-Qur'an. *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 4(2), 169–190.
- Lukman, F. (2015). Epistemologi intuitif dalam resepsi estetis H.B. Jassin terhadap Al-Qur'an. *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 4(1), 37–55.
- Mansyur, M. (2007). *Metodologi penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Teras.
- Moleong, L. J. (2013). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Rev. ed.). Bandung, Indonesia: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Mustaqim, A. (2015). *Metode penelitian Al-Qur'an dan tafsir*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: CV Idea Sejahtera.
- Pedoman penulisan karya ilmiah. (2013). Jember, Indonesia: STAIN Jember Press.
- Shihab, M. Q. (1996). *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*. Bandung, Indonesia: Mizan.
- Shihab, M. Q. (2007). *Membumikan Al-Qur'an*. Bandung, Indonesia: Mizan.
- Sirin, M. al-D. (1993). *Hat san'atimiz: Shun'atuna al-khattiyah, tarikhuha, lawazimuha, wa adawatuha, namadzijuha*. Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Taqaddum li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr.
- Sirojuddin, D. (1985). *Seni kaligrafi Islam*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Pustaka Panjimas.
- Somad, A. (2006). *Sejarah perkembangan seni kaligrafi Islam di Indonesia: Studi kasus kaligrafi dekorasi di Masjid Al-Azhar Kebayoran Baru Jakarta* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia.
- Sugiyarto, E. (2015). *Menyusun proposal penelitian kualitatif: Skripsi dan tesis*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Suka Media.
- Syauhan, A. (2001). *Rihlah al-khatt al-'Araby*. Damascus, Syria: Author.
- Ulum, K. (2009). *Pembacaan Al-Qur'an di lingkungan Jawa Timur* (Unpublished master's thesis). UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

- Yunus, M. (n.d.). *Kamus Arab-Indonesia*. Jakarta, Indonesia: PT Mahmud Yunus Wadzuriyah.
- Yusuf, M. (2007). Pendekatan sosiologi dalam penelitian Living Qur'an. In M. Mansyur (Ed.), *Metode penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis* (pp. xx-xx). Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Teras.