

The Architectural Style of Masjid Agung At-Taqwa, Kutacane, Southeast Aceh (2016-2023)

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Abstract This article aims to discuss the architectural style of the At-Taqwa Great Mosque in Kutacane, Southeast Aceh, during the period of 2016 to 2023. The study follows a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach. The research method used in this study is historical research. Data collection was conducted through interviews and observations. The results indicate that Islamic architecture is a captivating style that exemplifies the beauty of each building. Each detail contains a symbolic element with a significant meaning. An architectural work takes the form of a building, commonly referred to as a cultural symbol and also considered a work of art. Likewise, the architectural works within the At-Taqwa Great Mosque building combine styles from various local and international influences, resulting in a stunning work of art.

Keywords: Architecture, Mosque Kutacane, Southeast Aceh

Abstrak Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membahas gaya arsitektur Masjid Agung At-Taqwa Kutacane, Aceh Tenggara pada tahun 2016-2023. Artikel ini merupakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan ialah metode penelitian sejarah. Pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh berdasarkan hasil wawancara, dan observasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa arsitektur Islam merupakan salah satu jenis arsitektur yang menampilkan keindahan pada setiap bangunannya. Tiap detailnya yang mengandung unsur simbol dengan makna yang berarti. Sebuah karya arsitektur dalam bentuk bangunan, biasa disebut sebagai suatu simbol kebudayaan (kultural) dan juga karya seni. Begitu pula dengan karya arsitektur yang terdapat pada bangunan Masjid Agung At-Taqwa, yang menggabungkan gaya arsitektur nya dari beberapa gaya lokal dan juga internasional, sehingga dapat menciptakan suatu karya seni yang indah.

Kata kunci: Arsitektur; Masjid Kutacane; Aceh Tenggara



INTRODUCTION

According to Marcus Polio Vitruvius (1486), architecture comprises strength/durability (*firmitas*), beauty (*venustas*), and utility/function (*utilitas*). Francis DK Ching (1979) argues that architecture forms a connection that unifies space, form, technique, and function. Amos Rapoport (1981) defines architecture as the spatial environment where humans reside, which goes beyond the physical realm and also involves fundamental cultural institutions. These institutions encompass the organization of social and cultural life within a community, influencing and being influenced by architecture. According to JB. Mangunwijaya (1992), architecture is defined as *vastuvidya* (*wastuwidya*), which means the science of building. Within the concept of *wastu*, the organization of the land, buildings, and traffic (*dhara*, *veshya*, *yana*) is also considered.

The 1970s marked a crucial moment for the development of the discipline of architectural history on the international stage. During this period, there was a gradual and systematic shift in the focus of architectural history studies, transitioning from art schools to leading architecture schools in various universities worldwide. This shift was accompanied by changes in research approaches, methodologies, and the writing of architectural history. (Wirjomartono and PaEni, 2009).

Considered as one of the oldest arts in the world, architecture has existed since prehistoric times and has been found in nearly every corner of the globe. Initially, architecture emerged from the human need for shelter against harsh weather conditions. Over time, architecture has evolved to fulfill both the physical and metaphysical needs of society, addressing the physical and spiritual aspects of individuals. The beauty of architectural forms can satisfy emotional and intellectual desires while also inspiring contemplation. Understanding the forms of architecture can be achieved through a framework that illustrates how traditional concepts manifest in society. (Fanani, 2009).

Islamic architecture is a form of architectural design developed by Islamic architects or building experts during the Islamic era. Over time, Islamic architecture has evolved into a manifestation of culture. As human skills in construction continue to advance, architecture has transformed beyond its mere physical utility and has become an integral part of cultural expression. Islamic architecture has contributed diverse types of buildings that serve the needs of the community. Islamic architecture in various parts of the world has developed in accordance with local traditions while adhering to Islamic principles. When buildings respond to their surrounding environment, they blend seamlessly with the area, avoiding a sense of foreignness. Islamic architecture allows for a better understanding of the rich heritage of Islamic civilization.

One of the most commonly encountered architectural achievements of Islam is the Mosque. The significant role of the mosque in the development of culture, civilization, and knowledge deserves attention from all parties. From a historical perspective, the mosque is not

merely a building without meaning; it encompasses numerous important philosophical values that greatly contribute to the development of human civilization. The mosque plays a significant role in shaping the history of human civilization. It stands as a witness from a different era, representing the glory of civilization and the progress of knowledge. (Hasyim, 2011).

Based on the brief descriptions provided above, the research problem for this study can be formulated as follows: How has the architectural style of the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa in Kutacane, Southeast Aceh, evolved between 2016 and 2023?

METHOD

This research aims to introduce the architectural style of the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa in Kutacane, Southeast Aceh, from 2016 to 2023 to the wider community and enhance awareness of the importance of preserving local culture. The study adopts a qualitative approach with a historical method. Therefore, the researcher employs four stages of the historical method, namely heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography, in this study. (Daliman, 2018). For the heuristic stage, the author collects all data sources related to the architecture of the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa in Kutacane, including both oral and written sources. The next stage involves verification or criticism of the sources found by the author. After critically evaluating and verifying the data sources, the author proceeds with interpretation and analysis. The final stage involves writing based on the data obtained from the field research.

The data collection techniques used in this study include observation, interviews, and document analysis. For this research, the researcher conducted direct observations of the architectural style of the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa in Kutacane, Southeast Aceh, from 2016 to 2023. Interviews were conducted in an open-ended manner to provide an opportunity to obtain detailed information. Additionally, the researcher analyzed relevant documents related to the mosque.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Islamic Architecture

Islamic architecture reveals a complex geometric relationship, hierarchical forms, and ornaments, all of which carry deep symbolic meanings. It is considered one of the crucial elements

contributing to the development of human civilization. Moreover, its evolution varies across different regions, adapting to the changing local culture and traditions. Islamic architecture is closely associated with mosque architecture. To truly witness and appreciate Islamic architecture, one should pay attention to the intricate forms of the mosque.

Islamic architecture is a type of architecture that showcases beauty in each of its structures. Every detail carries symbolic elements with significant meanings. One easily observable meaning is the admiration for the beauty and grandeur in architecture, reflecting our surrender to the magnificence and greatness of Allah, the Almighty Ruler of all things. (Fikriarini, 2011).

A Brief Overview of Southeast Aceh

Local culture represents the distinct characteristics or traits of a region. The knowledge obtained from various aspects of life is reflected in order to provide guidance to individuals and foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of the culture and traditions within a community. Moreover, this aims to enhance the understanding and broaden the perspectives of students and the general public regarding the local culture of the Alas tribe. (Nisa and Supriyanto, 2016) This cultural research aims to investigate the significance of archipelagic insights and local wisdom in education.

Southeast Aceh is one of the regencies located in the province of Aceh, Indonesia, with its capital city being Kutacane. As a part of the Bukit Barisan mountain range, it is no surprise that this region is situated in a mountainous area with an approximate elevation of 1,000 meters above sea level. The regency of Southeast Aceh is also inhabited by various ethnic groups, resulting in a rich diversity of cultures in the area. The word "alas" itself can be interpreted as a place, or in the Alas language, it means "mat." (Rahayu, 2020). Just like any other ethnic group, the Alas tribe also has their own language used in daily life, known as the Alas language (commonly referred to as Cekhok Alas). This language is part of the linguistic family of the Kluet tribe in Southeast Aceh Regency, which shares similarities with the language spoken by the Alas tribe. (Raseha, Ramdiana, and Supadmi, 2018).

In essence, the region of Southeast Aceh is renowned for its rich natural tourism potential. Consequently, there are numerous natural tourist destinations in this area. One notable example is the Alas River, which is widely recognized and attracts both local residents and incoming tourists. This popularity stems from the river's reputation as an exhilarating river sports destination. Moreover, there are several other captivating natural attractions that draw the attention of tourists, such as waterfalls in Ketambe and many more. One of these attractions is the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa, known for its architectural style that delights anyone who sets eyes upon it. The architectural style of the mosque is predominantly influenced by the local culture of

the Alas tribe. Being considered an exceptional work of art, it is no wonder that the mosque attracts a large number of visitors.

The Architecture of the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa in Kutacane



The picture of the Grand Mosque At-Taqwa in Kutacane at night.

Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/8X3qndsX6Zp7zYU7>

The Grand Mosque At-Taqwa is located in the town of Kutacane, Babussalam district, Southeast Aceh regency. This mosque has become an iconic symbol of pride for the people of Tanah Alas due to its beautiful and captivating architectural design. The mosque was designed and constructed by the late Mr. Hasanuddin B MM, former Regent of Agara, and Mr. H Ali Basrah Spd, MM, former Vice Regent.



Pictures of the differences between the past and present mosques

source : https://www.kompasiana.com/aljohan/605aadae32c4763447b0b12/kutacane-napak-tilas-perjalanan-31-tahun-lalu?page=2@page_images=4

The mosque was initially constructed in 1956. It was built through a collective effort with the local community and was eventually completed in 1962. The mosque has undergone three major renovations (demolition and reconstruction from scratch). The current renovation, which is the third one, commenced in 2009 and lasted until 2016. It was officially inaugurated on April 8, 2016, by the Chairman of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (DPR RI), Dr. H. Ade Komarudin, M.H.

This mosque covers an area of 2,675 square meters, situated on a land area of 12,230 square meters, and is designed to withstand earthquakes up to an 8 on the Richter scale. In terms of capacity, it can accommodate around 4,000 worshipers inside the mosque and approximately 2,000 outside. The construction of the mosque incurred a total budget of approximately 72.9 billion IDR. This funding includes various other amenities such as internet access, sound systems, various calligraphy artworks, decorative interior and exterior lighting, fountains, etc. The interior flooring of the mosque utilizes Laxmi Red Granite, imported directly from India, while the exterior uses Black Gold Granite.

What makes this mosque unique is its incorporation of the distinctive patterns of the Alas ethnic group, which sets it apart from other mosques. Overall, the mosque follows a minimalist concept, combining elements of European, Middle Eastern, and local/Alas architectural styles. (Mr. Hendra Syahputra, ST, as the Head of General Affairs and Personnel)



Picture of the At-Taqwa Kutacane Grand Mosque from Ahmad Yani Square



Picture of the Aerial View of At-Taqwa Kutacane Grand Mosque

The physical structures within the mosque complex comprise the following: one main mosque building, four minarets, five main domes, fifteen accompanying domes, two ablution buildings (for males and females), two gateways, one mini-market building, one UPTD (Local Government Unit) office building, one residence for the Grand Imam, one residence for the muezzin, and one guest house for visiting worshipers/tourists. This mosque is situated in the heart of Kutacane city and directly faces Ahmad Yani Square, which is also a popular tourist destination in Kutacane. Therefore, it is not surprising that many local residents and tourists pass through and visit this mosque.

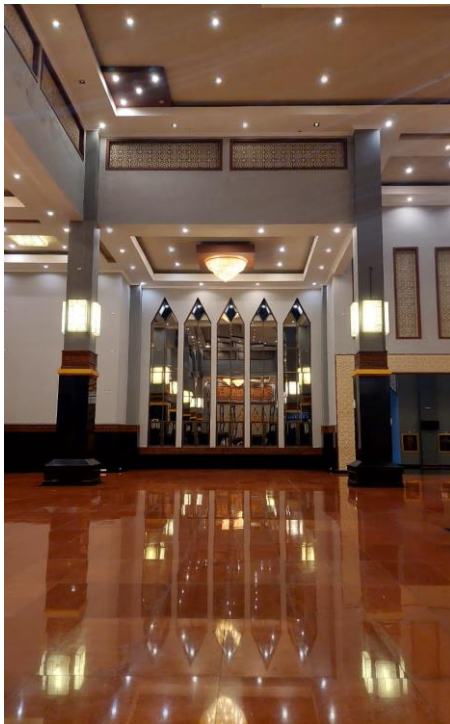
The exterior of the dome adopts architectural styles from the Middle East, featuring a majestic semi-spherical shape. Resembling a half-circle with a curved and pointed surface that tapers upwards, the mosque's dome is also adorned with a golden color to enhance its grandeur and prominence. Not only does the dome exhibit these characteristics, but the minaret of this mosque is also said to showcase European influences.

Source : <https://images.app.goo.gl/xX8mtvsvAk9vtopR6>



From inside the mosque, we can observe the beautifully adorned and magnificent dome, embellished with stained glass windows depicting the names of Allah and Muhammad. The stained glass and patterns adorning the dome draw inspiration from European architectural styles, reminiscent of historical buildings found in France, Spain, and other countries. Meanwhile, the centrally placed luxurious chandeliers and the minimalist-style pulpit contribute to an overall sense of grandeur. The opulent impression is further enhanced by additional surrounding lights that accentuate the dome, creating a truly majestic atmosphere.

Picture of the dome from inside the mosque



Not only do the stained glass windows and patterns on the dome incorporate European architectural styles, but the windows of Masjid Taqwa also follow the same influence, typically featuring large and elongated windows. This window style is commonly seen in European cathedrals. The interior of the mosque utilizes mirrors instead of traditional windows. Additionally, the pillars that serve as the foundation of the mosque draw inspiration from Middle Eastern architectural styles. Upon observation, these pillars resemble those found in the Nabawi Mosque, with decorative lighting fixtures and Quran holders located at their base. It is worth noting that Masjid Agung At-Taqwa does not have conventional doors.

Picture of pillars and windows from inside the mosque



Picture of the place of ablution at the At-Taqwa Great Mosque

The ablution area of this mosque adopts architectural styles from the Middle East, featuring seating arrangements next to each faucet. This design facilitates the process of performing ablution, particularly for the elderly, pregnant women, and individuals with physical limitations or health conditions. The ablution area resembles those found in Arab mosques such as the Masjid al-Haram and the Masjid Nabawi.

What makes Masjid Agung At-Taqwa unique are the ornaments found on the mosque's structure. These ornaments are derived from the distinctive patterns of the Alas cultural heritage, which represents the majority ethnic group in Kutacane. Moreover, each of these ornaments carries its own meaning, according to Mr. Selamat Sejahtera, ST, the architect of Masjid Agung At-Taqwa.

Pucuk Khebung (Bamboo Shoot) Motif



Pictures of Mesikhat ornaments at the At Taqwa Great Mosque

The pattern of the Pucuk Khebung motif symbolizes the shape of a bamboo shoot, resembling an isosceles triangle that looks like a pyramid. The meaning embedded in the Pucuk Khebung motif is that the higher or larger a person becomes, the more humble they should be. In this context, individuals are characterized by being free from arrogance, pride, greed, and vanity. The essence of the values contained in the Pucuk Khebung motif reflects the firm principles and strong faith of the Alas ethnic community.

Bunge Ketile (Kates Flower) Motif

The Bunge Ketile motif in Alas society represents unity within diversity. Although the Kates flower comes in various shapes and sizes, it remains part of the same family, symbolizing the unity of the Alas community. This motif serves as a marker of social cohesion within Alas society, emphasizing that despite differences in age, social status, and other aspects, they are still one.

Putekh Tali (Twisted Rope) Motif

The Putekh Tali motif depicts a twisted rope, derived from the basic form of a rope. This motif symbolizes unity and strength. Just like a rope, the more twisted strands it has, the stronger it becomes in bearing weight. The message conveyed is the importance of maintaining unity and strength as individuals in facing and resolving societal challenges with integrity, fostering a peaceful community.

Tampuk Gete (Mangosteen Fruit) Motif

True to its name, the Tampuk Gete motif is derived from the stacked arrangement of mangosteen fruits, transformed into an artistic ornament in the Mesikhat tradition. The motif resembles the shape of the flower found within the mangosteen fruit, with a central circular shape surrounded by oval forms. This represents societal grouping and also signifies leadership. In the past, the people of Southeast Aceh chose their leaders through deliberation using the tampuk/tangke method. Each region has its own tangke, which refers to the lineage of a particular group. For the Alas ethnic community, this motif represents diversity and togetherness. Despite being different (tangke), they remain united within one entity and share a common purpose.

Embun Bekhangkat (Drifting Clouds) Motif



The Embun Bekhangkat motif depicts the form of drifting and ever-changing clouds. The motif consists of wavy lines with a centralized focus resembling alternating expanding circles. The value conveyed by this motif relates to a social message, emphasizing that every human being holds equal status in the eyes of the creator. Regardless of wealth, poverty, physical appearance, or beauty, all are regarded equally by the divine. Similar to the nature of dew that provides water to plants, it does so selflessly without seeking anything in return.



On the outside of the minaret of the mosque, there is also a Tampuk Gete Motif ornament (mangosteen fruit)

The triangular shape depicted above represents the Pucuk Khebung (Bamboo Shoot) motif, while the wavy motif in the center represents the Embun Bekhangkat (Drifting Clouds) motif.

On the exterior of the mosque, we can observe shapes resembling isosceles triangles, which represent the Pucuk Khebung (Bamboo Shoot) motif, as well as flower-like forms representing the Tampuk Gete (Mangosteen Fruit) motif. However, it is noticeable that these ornamental patterns are adorned with five different colors: red, yellow, green, black, and white. These five colors are distinctively associated with the traditional attire and architecture of the Alas ethnic group. These basic colors serve not only as decorative elements but also carry significant meanings. The color red symbolizes courage, yellow signifies grandeur and triumph, green represents fertility, black symbolizes leadership, and white symbolizes purity. (Kafri, 2018).

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CONCLUSION

The mosque was initially built in 1956. It was constructed through collective efforts with the local community, and the construction was finally completed in 1962. What makes this mosque unique is its incorporation of the distinctive patterns of the Alas ethnic group, which likely sets it apart from other mosques. In essence, this mosque follows a minimalist concept that combines elements of European, Middle Eastern, and local Alas architectural styles. Aside from the European and Middle Eastern architectural influences, the local architectural style drawn from the Alas culture carries its own meanings and messages within each pattern. These include: (1) The Pucuk Khebung motif, which signifies that the greater one becomes, the more humble they should be. (2) The Bunge Ketile motif, representing unity within diversity in the Alas community. (3) The Putekh Tali motif, symbolizing unity and strength. (4) The Tampuk Gete

motif, signifying diversity and togetherness within the Alas society. And finally, (5) the Embun Bekhangkat motif, conveying a social message that every individual holds an equal standing in the eyes of the creator.

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