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## ART AND ENTERTAINMENT IN ISLAM<sup>1</sup>

Misri A. Muchsin<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*The implementation of Islamic law, art, and entertainment has gained a various highlight. However, art in Islam have shown its glorious identities and progress. Islam, through its preaching of the main source, Al-Quran, really values the art. Allah has encouraged the people to observe the universe, which is created beautifully and harmoniously. In Aceh, the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) of Aceh Province formed a team or a special committee consisting of 21 experts to arrange a treatise, especially those relating to the art of music, dance and singing. As the result, they had resulted a book published by MUI of Aceh province with the title How Islam Honors Art. The book has examined the art about types and sources in Islam broadly and completely. Consequently, the work of the expert team had led to the placement of the dynamics of art and entertainment in Aceh historical episodes and had brought some influences in the later period.*

### مستخلص

وقد اكتسب تنفيذ الشريعة الإسلامية، والفن، والترفيه تسليط الضوء على مختلف. ومع ذلك، والفن في الإسلام وقد أظهرت الهويات لها المجيدة والتقدم. الإسلام، من خلال الوعد لها من المصدر الرئيسي، آل القرآن، تقدر حقاً الفن. وقد شجع الله الشعب لمراقبة الكون، والذي يتم إنشاؤه

<sup>1</sup>This article is a fundamental from the presentation summary of discussion – XII of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) of Aceh, on 18 Muharram 1435 H/22 November 2013 M, with the theme, “Seni Budaya dan Hiburan lainnya dalam Pandangan Syariat Islam”.

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بشكل جميل ومتناغم. في آتشييه، تشكيل مجلس العلماء الاندونيسي (MUI) من مقاطعة اتشييه فريق أو لجنة خاصة تتألف من 21 خبيراً لترتيب أطروحة، وخاصة تلك المتعلقة فن الموسيقى والرقص والغناء. نتيجة، فإنها أدت كتاب نشرته MUI من إقليم اتشييه مع العنوان كيف الإسلام يكرم الفن. درست الكتاب فن حول أنواع ومصادر في الإسلام على نطاق واسع وبشكل كامل. ونتيجة لذلك، قد عمل فريق الخبراء أدت إلى وضع ديناميكية الفن والترفيه في اتشييه الحلقات التاريخية وكان قد جلب بعض التأثيرات في فترة لاحقة.

**Keywords:** *Art, Islamic Law, Culture, Entertainment*

## A. Introduction

Culture (*tamaddun, al-Tsaqafah*) is part of Islam. It is a human product; the result of human's activity, creation, feeling, taste resulted through the process of thinking and learning. Culture is only can be defined as the Result of humans' thinking and learning whereas humans' products and activities without thinking and learning in the daily life cannot be defined as culture. Moreover, if the creation come from other creatures besides human being, it is really cannot be referred to culture.

Based on its forms, culture is a physic-material form which is its existence can be seen, felt and touched, such as buildings, computers, candies, etc. In addition, culture in a non-physics or non-material form is dealing with arts, ideas, life patterns, cultures, rules, blue print of buildings or cities, etc.

Art or aesthetics is generally a form of non-physical culture, and a part of culture in which at one side it is as a complement to the perfection of human life.<sup>3</sup> Islam has shown its progress and identity marvelously. How Islam has risen up and down in a long phase of history in the Acehnese society that tried to implement Islamic Syari'at with its development aspect will be elaborated in the next parts.

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<sup>3</sup>Art in classification has been accepted more by public-experts, as mentioned by Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi. It is one of the seventh element of universal cultures or aspect integral of one culture arrangement. The seventh elements are religion system, knowledge system, language system, economy system/life skill, technology system, social system, and arts. Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, (1999: 6).

## B. Implementing the Islamic Shari'ah in Aceh

In the historical perspective, the application of Shari'ah law in the government and Acehnese society in Aceh is not a new issue, but it had been implemented intensely since the days of the empire of Sulthan. Consequently, the Sulthan had implemented *hudud law*<sup>4</sup> as the implementation of Islamic Shari'ah. The law could be implemented because it was supported and involved the kings directly.

In fact, the history showed and recorded that the Sulthan Alaidin Ri'ayat Shah II al-Qahhar had been sincerity supported and urged the implementation of 'murder law' (Arabic *qishash*) to his son, Abangta that found guilty to kill someone and to break laws and the socials rules (Ali Hasjmy, 1983: 43, and Yusuf Adan, 2005: 46).

Similarly, Sulthan Iskandar Muda Meukuta Alam (rules 1606-1636 M), at his last life and power, had ordered to punish his own son, Meurah Pupok with a dead penalty as an implementing Islamic Shari'ah because he was found his son committed adultery. Meurah Pupok committed adultery with an army officer's wife. The officer went to a battle then when he came home found his wife committing adultery with Meurah Pupok, a prince of Acehnese Darussalam Kingdom.

Seeing the husband of the wife who had been adultery back from the battlefield, Meurah Pupok escaped and the husband directly killed his wife with a sword in his hand. He was not only satisfied with killing his wife, he then with his father in law tried to chase Meurah Pupok. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in catching Meurah Pupok instead he reported this case to Sultan Iskandar Muda as the father of Meurah Pupok. As the result, Sulthan Iskandar Muda ordered a *qadhi*; a law minister, Seri Raja Panglima Wazir Mizan to investigate the case.

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<sup>4</sup>*Hudud* law based on QS Al-Baqarah: 178, means: O ye who believe! The law of equality is prescribed to in cases of murder: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman, but if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude, this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord. After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty.

The investigation approved that Meurah Pupok admitted that he had committed adultery with a young officer's wife. From the proof, Sultan Iskandar Muda ordered to execute the *hudud law*, (a dead penalty) to his own son. Based on the information received, when people were wondering about Sultan's willingness to decide a dead punishment to his son, Sultan Iskandar Muda recited a prose, Hadist Maja. "*Mate aneuk meupat jeurat, gadoh hukom ngo nadat pat ta mita.*" (When our child passed away, we still can find his tomb but when our cultures and rules lost, where do we can find it?).<sup>5</sup>

Sultan Iskandar Muda was the top leader in the Acehese Kingdom. He was responsible to carry out Islamic Shari'ah, as *hudud law* even to his son. He was success to apply out Islamic Shari'ah (QS: An-Nur: 2)<sup>6</sup> based on his faith and sincerity. Finally, in this case Sultan Iskandar Muda proved himself to be a great king who bowed and carried out Syari'ah Allah SWT.

### C. The Implementation of Shari'h Law in term of Cutting Hands in Aceh

From a tourist witnesses, Caspar Schmalkalden (2005: 148) from Germany who had ever been a rent soldier for a trade mission of VOC under a leader, Joachim Rudolfs Von Deutecom reported: Remarkable was a thief, who for repeated offenses had lost both hands and feet, but was able to walk, stand, dance, even to throw his stick into the air and catch it. Moreover Casper Schmalkalden reported a statement of an Acehese who had ever stolen four times and he was cut his hands and feet off four times too. He wrote:

*Four times thievery brought me great misfortune  
For it, my hands and feet were cut off  
Now I go out on the street and ask great and small  
To help me in my need* (Mary Somers Heidhues, 2005: 167).

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<sup>5</sup>The term Hadih Maja is rules, prose or sentences containing social and cultural values and lessons. It is a part of Acehese fundamental lives. It can be advices, lessons, satires, and critics. Safwan Idris, (1977: 1); and Misri A. Muchsin, (1998: 1).

<sup>6</sup>Q D. An-Nur verse 2, means the woman and the man who are guilty of adultery or fornication, flog each of them with a hundred stripes: let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by God, if ye believe in God and the last day: and let a party of the believers witness their punishment.

The witnesses of the tourist showed that he was surprised and admired about the Acehese people in the era of Sultanah Tajul Alam (ruled 1641-1675 M). He admired the thief who had already received a punishment that despite being four times stealing and causing his two arms and two legs cut off, but he was courage and patient in running his rest life. Besides, the thief still had a skill to perform a stick and a sword like a normal fighter. He was able to turn the sword around, threw up and grasped it again.

Acehnese people now are about 4, 2 million and the majority is Muslims and it becomes a part of Indonesia. Indonesia is not a religious state however the people must possess a religion. In fact, because Aceh is a province of Indonesia, it must bow and follow Indonesia jurisprudence. The result of conflict for 32 years and the earthquake that followed by Tsunami on December 26, 2004, has made Aceh to be granted by Indonesia government to apply Islamic Shari'ah completely all over Aceh.

The fact cannot be denied that there was a serious and good will from Indonesia government by legitimating the regulation (UU) RI no. 44 year 1999. The legislation was meant to establish a special service for Aceh with an autonomy right in the sector of religion, education, cultures and art.

The legislation of autonomy in practicing religion became a fundamental foundation for the Aceh governor, Abdullah Puteh to declare a comprehensive "kaffah" application about Islamic Shari'ah in Aceh on 1 Muharram 1423 H/ 23 March 2002 M. By declaring this Islamic Shari'ah, it was becoming a new history phase for Muslims in Aceh particularly in the effort to implement the Islamic Shari'ah. It is a common thing that there has been 'jealous action' from the other provinces to demand Islamic Shari'ah too. On the other hand, there were people who worried that if the Islamic Shari'ah is formally legalized, it would bring Indonesia to become an Islamic country later.

Beyond the assumptions and worries from a part of Indonesia people about implementing Islamic Shari'ah in Aceh, the regulations had been legislated on the regulation (UU) No. 10 in 2002 about implementing

Islamic Shari'ah judicature, UU no 11 in 2003 about implementing Shari'ah in the scope of faith, worship, and Islamic preaching, UU no.12 in 2003 about prohibition of alcohol and all its kinds, UU no. 13 about gambling, UU no.14 in 2003 about adultery, and UU no.7 in 2004 about charity.

The implementation those regulations, of course, have given some benefits to Acehnese people. They feel comfortable and get a fair legislation when they break God laws. Acehnese Muslims also get a protection from all evil deeds because a definite sanction or uqubat will be given to its breakers.

#### **D. Art in Islam**

Along with the application of Islamic Shari'ah, how the position of arts and entertainment are, whether it was given a free space when it is implemented. Therefore, it should be understood that art is an expression of the human spirit and culture that contains and involves the beauty. Islamic art is an expression of the beauty, about nature, life and man that led to the perfect arrangement between truth and beauty. Muhammad Quthub (1993: 120) mentioned that Islamic art is a form of sign that illustrates the beauty, with the beautiful "language" and in accordance with the spark of nature."

Islam, through the main source of its preaching, Al-Quran, is value the arts. Allah encourages the humans to observe the universe that has been created in balance and beautifully. The Quran mentioned in Surah (Qaf): 6: "Do they not look at the sky above them?- how we have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it." The sky is made by Allah not only as hifzah, but also as a beautiful painting. (Look the meant of Surah Ash-Shaffat: 6-7; and Fushilat: 12).

Mountain with its strength, the night with its silence, the sun with its position, even scenery cattle when brought home to roost and when released into the grazing areas, revealed by Allah, lakaum fihaa jamal, (QS. An-Nahl: 6), is a very beautiful sight to humans. According to M Quraish Shihab, the meaning of the verse is to allow human in describing the beauty of the nature in accordance with their personal feelings. This means

that art can be triggered by an individual or group in accordance with their preferences according to their cultural community, without being given the tight constraints except what Allah has ordered.

Furthermore, the issue that should be discussed is why sculpture especially making a live creature statue is forbidden? In Quran, we find some verses mentioning about statues: the verse of Al-Ambiya: 51-58, Saba: 12-13; Ali Imran: 48-49; and Al-Maidah: 110. From these verses, we are able to understand that the statues were made as the facility to be worshiped by the polytheism a long time ago (*jahiliyah* era). And this is the reason why sculpture is forbidden. So it is not because there is an impiety in the statues. It is clear that because the statues are created and used as a facility to be worshiped by the polytheism so that sculpture was forbidden for Jahiliyah society (Quraish Shihab: 1995: 4-5).

Then *ulama* of Ahlu As-Sunnah and Syiah forbid placing a live creature in the context of religious manners. Consequently, figural arts cannot be placed in the mosque buildings. Meanwhile, figural arts in other religions and other nations had become a deep artistic inspiration. Consequently, outside of Islam, animated painting figure has been a luxurious painting of the palace and the merchant (Mulyadi, 2002: 309).

In fact, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi interpreted this issue as "Spoiled History" of Muslims, so that, arts have been ignored by Muslims for a long time (Hartono, 1999: 7). Arts are often forbidden so that Muslims lose their creativities that this factor, finally, led them easily to adopt western secular arts.

### **E. Art Classifications**

According to Acehnese *ulama*, as what Sidi Gazalba summarized about many kinds of arts, which can be seen and classified periodically.

1. In Greece era, Rome in the middle century, arts are divided into two parts based on society classes; vulgar arts and liberal arts. Vulgar arts are the arts done by slaves or hard workers as carpenters, blacksmith or servants. These arts are appropriate to low class societies. But liberal arts are the arts done by independent citizens, not slaves or porters.



2. In the XVIII century, arts are differentiated from fine arts and useful arts. The meaning of the arts is the same as the above explanation. The group of fine arts includes paintings, sculptures, music, dancing and poetry.

For the next century, arts are differentiated from major arts and minor arts. Major arts are the same as fine arts. Minor arts are including furniture, porcelain, carpets, jewelry, gold, silver, leather craft and copper craft.

Besides those mentioned above, there is a group of “adorn art” which is placed between fine arts and useful arts. The art is created to gain the benefits only, such as handicrafts that have direct advantages for living. Moreover, in the aspect of usages, fine art brings “beauty” so that it is convenient and is sold in the market.

#### **F. Fine Art and Its Classifications**

According to Oswald Kulpe, cited by Sidi Gazalba (1988: 86-88), fine arts can be divided into absorbing senses called visual arts, medium sense called auditory arts, and the sight elements called visual auditory arts.

1. Visual art divided into:
  - a. Two dimensions, covering lines, lights, colors, shapes and movement:
    - 1) Without movement: Painting art and drawing;
    - 2) With movement: Film art and fire works.
  - b. Three dimensions:
    - 1) Without movement: Carve art;
    - 2) With movement: Dancing and pantomime (without music).
  - c. Integrated surfaces and shapes: Character building and gardening.
2. Auditory Art:
  - a. With the intonation:
    - 1) From a single tool: Violin, piano, etc
    - 2) From heterogenic tool: Musical group symphony and band
  - b. With word:
    - 1) Rhythm: Poetry
    - 2) Without rhythm: Prose
  - c. Integrated Intonation and word: songs art

3. Visual-Auditory Art

- a. With movement and intonation: Choreographic art
- b. With movement, visual and word: Drama art
- c. With movement, visual, word and intonation: Musical drama

Based on kinds of intonation and medium, fine arts divided into:

1. Rhythm static

- a. With medium determining rooms:
  - 1) Inanimate object, example, stone; building art;
  - 2) Animate object, example, tree; landscape.
- b. With material which is determining time: sculpture;
- c. With material which is determining surface: painting art.

2. Dynamic rhythm

- a. With movement in a rooms: dance art;
- b. With voice: Literature arts, rhythm and music art;
- c. With movement in a surface: pictures focused: film.

The details of art divisions with the branches above will be a guidance for the Ulama in Aceh to discuss with. This matter has been discussed in a forum of MUI of Aceh for several times. As the result, there is no a quietly differences from the development of modern art so that art divisions can be as the bridged and as a guidance nowadays.

### **G. Art Development in Islam History in the Archipelago**

One of the Islamic arts building achievement which has the highest rank in the archipelago is the ancient mosques that have special designs and patterns compared to the mosques in other countries. The special designs of the art buildings were caused by an inherent factor toward the meaning of mosque and there is no guideline in Al-Quran and Hadist about how to build a mosque except its direction about position towards *kiblat* (Uka Tjandrasasmita, 2009: 237). Recently, the art to build mosque in the archipelago is very different from one to another, including in Aceh. The art to build Acehnese mosque has a combination art from Arab and Spain, as we can see in Masjid Raya Baiturrahman. In addition, there are some art

stories as built by *Yayasan Muslim Pancasila* which is the combination between Hindu and Islam, as we can see in an elderly mosque in Indrapuri. There are some more interesting mosques in Aceh to be intention, such as the mosque with domed tower of *Kopiah Meukutop* that tends to build many more in Aceh.

Furthermore, the carve in stone tomb, mosques, and other buildings with various written calligraphy (*naskhi, tsulutsi, riq'i, farisi, diwani, kufi*, etc) has become natural treasure art in the archipelago. The Acehnese were able to carve gravestones with its central area at Deah Geulumpang, Peukan Bada Meuraxa and Kampung Pande. Besides, these areas were able to export gravestones abroad. They also have a famous skill in shaping gold, silver and iron (Othman, 2006). Thus, it is not surprising, if some days, we heard that in the area of Kampung Pande was found gold and silver coins. Previously, there were also broken carved stones around Polda Aceh on Cut Meutia Street that had been found.

#### **H. Resolution MUI Aceh about Art**

Related to the issue in the society, the MUI of Aceh Province in 1970 had ever determined about a law of art based on Islam version. The MUI Aceh Province formed a team or a special art committee with 21 experts. They have a duty to arrange one paper, especially dealing with music art, dance art and singing. The team was led by Tgk. H. Abdullah Ujong Rimba with two vices, namely Prof. A. Hasjmy and Drs. Ismuha. They had written a book published by MUI of Aceh with the title *How Islam Honors Art*. The book has been studied comprehensively and completely about kinds of art and its source in Islam. It was quoted by Sidi Gazalba that the team or the committee made a conclusion as follows:

- 1) The function of arts is for entertainment;
- 2) The arts are permitted in religion (*mubah*), except the arts that are bad and dangerous;

- 3) Dances, singings, and music are a part of arts is allowed in law/permitted, both regionally and domestically, and can be watched, except they are bad and dangerous;
- 4) Men and women in this case have the same right to take advantages from the art;
- 5) On special occasions, festival days, wedding, circumstance event, welcoming honor guests, etc are allowed in law/permitted.

The conclusion on the second point, "Art is basically permitted (*mubah* in Islamic law), except bad arts," is emphasized. Bad art means inspired and adjusted to Quran in Luqman verse: 6, "But there are among men, those who are purchase idle tales, without knowledge to mislead men from the path of Allah and throw ridicule (on the path), for such there will be a humiliating penalty."

According to the history, there are two opinions about the background of this verse was sent down. First, dealing with Nadhar bin Harits in Mekah, when a Quraisy man told him that Muhammad peace be upon him (saw) explained about concepts in Islam, then Nadhar bin Harits laughed cynically. Then he also narrated to his friends stories of Parsi King. He said "In fact, my story is better than Al-Quran, Muhammad." Second, the background of this verse was because a Quraisy man bought a female singer, then because of her singing, some people did not want to listen to the Hadist of the prophet Muhammad saw.

Lahwal Hadits, which is interrelated as jokes or not useful singing can break faith and morals of Muslims. This reason is used to refuse art by some *ulama*. This is a fundamental reason to confront the art although according to some *ulama* that confronting the art is not quietly right.

According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, using the verse above to refuse art is not exactly right. This is for the reason that Allah SWT does not blemish entertainment and plays. But Allah SWT faults a useless speaking to astray people from His guidance and Allah SWT prohibits the people who make His guidance as jokes. Thus, according to the priest, the meaning of the sins is not because of the plays or its plays' form.

Al-Qardhawi (2005: 12) contradicted statement about art because in his opinion, arts are similar to the trades that it is legal to do. In this case, it is

adjusted to Divine message of the Quran in Al-Jumuah verse 11: "But when they see some bargain or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it, and leave you standing. Say: The blessing from the presence of Allah is better than any amusement or bargain! And Allah is the best to provide (for all needs)".

From the above explanation and many Hadists especially from Aisyah RA narrated that it was clear that art is needed by human. Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya 'ulumuddin*, of *Sima'* book. Juz 2, page 1152-1153, mentioned, "Whoever knows the treatment for the heart and the way to use it for the truth, surely all must entertain the heart with art and entertainment will be an effective medicine which is not denied" (Al-Qardhawi, 2005: 11).

According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi things that are dealing with art and entertainment will be forbidden if they are over and beyond limitation (Al-Qardhawi, 1998: 17-18). It means that one must not neglect from remembering Allah or breaking Islamic law, either clothing, shapes, kinds of entertainment etc.

## **I. Islamic Art and Muslims Art**

Islamic art is an expression of the existence of beauty that related to the nature, live and man that led to a perfect relation between truth (Allah SWT) and beauty (Quraish Shihab, 1995: 7). Muhammad Quthub (1993: 120) mentioned Islamic art is the art that describes this shape, with a beautiful "language" and adjusts it to natural tendency. Meanwhile Sidi Gazalba (1988: 132) directly differentiated that Islamic art is not only the artists are Muslims but also their creations adjusts to Islamic Concepts.

The tendency of art that was not based on an Islamic principle and concept in Muslims countries is mainly caused by colonialism in every corner of the world in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The descend of Muslim's politics power since the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made western cultures grasped that it finally had influenced Islamic cultures systematically and widely. Consequently, many Muslims forgot or at least accidentally fail to remember Islamic concept in thinking and creating the art. They

tended to adopt and develop western cultures with a secular characteristic that the art is for worldly interest only.

## **J. Conclusion**

To gain back an Islamic spirit towards Muslim nowadays, it needs to take some actual steps to leave the art that is not based on Islamic concept, including the art that have accidentally adopted by Muslim's artists.

1. Motivate Islamic art for the young Muslim generation, especially in Aceh because it has applied Islamic laws. To promote *rebana*, *nasyid*, *rabbaniwahid*, *saman*,<sup>7</sup>*didong*, *rapaigeleng*, *ratepmeusrukat*, *likokpulo* etc. It is to make a balance and if possible, to break down a secular art power that has influenced and nominated Muslim society for five centuries.
2. Develop the capacity, quality and quantity of Muslim arts foundations so that they are able to compete with other arts foundations. Sanggar Seni Seulawet, Sanggar Seni Tamaddun, Kande with its artist Rafli et al., Tikar Pandan, etc. They are continuous to move and to focus on singing, music and dancing. As theories and practices, we need to build and open the art schools and art institutions such as "Acehnese Art Institutions" or in another word, "Islamic art Institution." In this institution, we will arrange Islamic vision and mission, such as its curriculum, and syllabus. Thus, both software and hardware would be completed. We have target to reach back Acehnese golden arts history. These ideas are not impossible, because Aceh had been glorious with some arts works, such as *Ruba'i Hamzah Fansuri* until the voice art of *Azan* and the bell of the church of Ali Hasjmy, and the sculpture (wood and stone); as seen on Acehnese houses, grave stones with its carving and calligraphy.
3. To develop a calligraphy art, particularly, it needs to have "a calligraphy work shop", so that this place can be an effective training

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<sup>7</sup>Saman dancing which is from Gayo Luwes has got an International dance award in 2012 and has been taught at some schools and universities in Java.

and teaching facility. And it is the time for offices, schools, and other society institutions as well as the Acehese houses to design and beautify their places with Acehese Islamic Calligraphy. Consequently, the atmosphere of Acehese Islamic arts is spreading lively and exists in Acehese people.

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