

# The Meaning and Function of Mosque Ornamentation in *Guci Rumpong*: A Study of Aesthetics and Cultural Islamic Symbolism in Aceh

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## Abstract

The existence of ornaments in traditional Acehnese mosques is often viewed merely as decorative elements, yet they hold the potential for deeper meanings and functions. This study aims to examine the meaning and function of the ornamentation in the *Guci Rumpong* Mosque in Aceh, focusing on the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom. Using a descriptive-interpretive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation and document study, then analyzed semiotically to reveal layers of symbolic meaning. The findings reveal that traditional motifs such as *Lhee Sagoe* (triangle), *Pucok Reubong* (bamboo shoot), and *Oen Ranup* (betel leaf) function as complex cultural texts. These ornaments symbolically convey Islamic principles, including *tauhid* (monotheism), cosmic harmony, spiritual growth, and social cohesion, while also serving as a “visual curriculum” for moral and religious education. Therefore, it is concluded that traditional Acehnese mosque ornaments operate as an active synthesis of art, religion, and culture. The implication of these findings underscores the importance of preserving this architectural heritage, not only as a safeguard of cultural identity but also as a relevant medium for values education in response to modernization. This study contributes to the discourse on Nusantara Islamic architecture by positioning ornamentation as a means of knowledge transmission and reinforcement of collective identity.

## Article History

Received: 12-07-2025

Revised: 10-12-2025

Accepted: 16-12-2025

## Keywords

Mosque  
Ornamentation,  
Cultural Symbolism,  
Islamic Aesthetics,  
Cultural Identity,  
Aceh, Indonesia.

## Introduction

Islamic architecture in Indonesia not only demonstrates technical advancements in construction but also serves as a dialectical space between Islamic values and local culture (Laksmiyanti et al., 2023; Moser, 2012; Novrial & Siregar, 2021). Within this context, mosque ornamentation plays a role beyond mere aesthetics; it functions as a visual language that records the worldview, spirituality, and value systems of the communities that support it (Asif et al., 2019; Naz & Ahmad, 2025; Sojak et al., 2019). Ornamentation not only beautifies the building but also

conveys moral and symbolic messages that connect the space of worship with the socio-cultural life of Muslims (Irsyada & Jeremiah, 2025; Supriyadi & Widiyastuti, 2024). However, with the influx of modernization and globalization in architecture, many mosques have lost their local distinctiveness (Allahham, 2019; Asfour, 2016; Azzahrah et al., 2023). Ornaments that were once rich in meaning have increasingly been reduced to decorative elements detached from their symbolic context. This shift illustrates a change in aesthetic orientation, moving from religious and cultural significance to purely visual form, where beauty is no longer understood as a spiritual expression but rather as a product of taste and global architectural style.

At the same time, the local wisdom that once formed the soul of Islamic artistic expression is gradually overshadowed by impersonal and homogeneous universal aesthetics (Alashari et al., 2019; Fina, 2018; Meerangani et al., 2025). This situation raises concerns about the erosion of the cultural identity of Islam in the Nusantara, particularly in Aceh, a region known as the first gateway of Islam in Indonesia, with a strong tradition of religious architecture. In such a context, the study of the meaning and function of mosque ornamentation becomes essential to understand how art and architecture can play a role in maintaining continuity between spirituality, aesthetics, and local cultural identity amid changing times. Studies on mosque ornamentation in Indonesia have, until now, been dominated by formalistic and typological approaches. Many studies focus on analyzing shapes, patterns, and motifs of ornamentation without considering the social context and symbolic values underlying them. In Islamic architecture, beauty does not stand alone but is always related to religious meaning and the belief system of the society that builds it.

However, studies examining the interconnection between ornamentation, spiritual meaning, and cultural identity remain limited. From a review of various literatures, at least three major trends emerge in previous research. First, studies emphasizing geometric analysis and visual aesthetics as representations of the principles of universal Islamic beauty (Naz & Ahmad, 2025; Rashdan & Ashour) Second, research focusing on the material aspects and techniques of ornament-making within the framework of Islamic architectural heritage preservation (Kharazmi & Sarhangi, 2016; Lebanese American University & Kaouk, 2021; Zahro' et al., 2023). Third, studies discussing ornamentation as part of efforts to conserve historical buildings without addressing its symbolic and spiritual dimensions (International Educational Corporation et al., 2025; Pranajaya & Dwijendra, 2021; Usman et al., 2025). These trends indicate that the dimension of meaning and function of ornamentation has not been explored in depth, especially in the context of local Islamic cultures such as Aceh, which has distinct

artistic and spiritual traditions. Thus, research that highlights the role of ornamentation as a bridge between Islamic aesthetics and local culture becomes highly relevant to fill gaps in the academic knowledge of Islamic architecture in Indonesia.

This study emerges from the need to reconsider the position of mosque ornamentation not merely as architectural decoration but as a medium for expressing Islamic values and local cultural symbolism. In this regard, *Guci Rumpong* Mosque in Peukan Baro District, Pidie Regency, serves as an interesting case, as it is one of the historic mosques in Aceh that preserves rich ornamentation with deep philosophical and religious meanings. These ornaments demonstrate a combination of Islamic aesthetic principles, emphasizing harmony, order, and beauty, with Acehnese local symbols that depict the identity of the community. This study seeks to answer three main questions: first, how the shapes and motifs of ornamentation in *Guci Rumpong* Mosque reflect Islamic aesthetic principles and Acehnese local wisdom; second, what symbolic functions and moral messages are contained within these ornaments; and third, how the visual expression of these ornaments contributes to constructing the cultural identity of Acehnese Muslims. Through these three questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how ornamental art not only serves to beautify mosques but also functions as a means to shape and preserve spiritual values and the cultural identity of Muslim communities in Aceh. Therefore, this research has not only academic value but also significant social and cultural relevance in understanding the relationship between religion, art, and culture.

This study is based on the argument that ornamentation in traditional Acehnese mosque architecture represents a harmonious synthesis between Islamic aesthetics and local culture. Ornaments are not merely cosmetic additions but manifestations of spirituality expressed through visual forms. In the context of *Guci Rumpong* Mosque, ornaments such as floral motifs, geometric patterns, and Acehnese symbols, like *Bungong Meulu*, *Awan Sietangkei*, *Pucok Reubong*, and *Taloe Ie*, represent the relationship between humans, nature, and God. These motifs not only possess aesthetic value but also convey moral messages about monotheism, purity, and the orderliness of Divine creation. Thus, ornamentation serves as a means of spiritual teaching, integrating religious values with the local identity of Acehnese society. Furthermore, this study argues that beauty in Islamic architecture is not merely measured by grandeur but by the work's ability to foster spiritual awareness and strengthen the human connection with the Creator. From this perspective, mosque ornamentation functions as a cultural text containing religious and historical narratives of its community. Therefore,

understanding the meaning and function of the ornaments at *Guci Rumpong Mosque* means re-reading the cultural identity of Acehnesse Islam, which has developed through a long dialogue between religion, tradition, and art. Amid the currents of modern Islamic architecture, which tend to be uniform, this study aims to reaffirm the importance of locality and spiritual value in preserving the authenticity of Nusantara Islamic architecture.

## Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-interpretive method to explore the deeper meanings and functions embedded in the ornaments of the *Guci Rumpong Mosque*. This approach is appropriate for uncovering complex cultural realities through the interpretation of visual symbols and the values they represent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research focuses on Islamic aesthetic principles (Burckhardt, 2009; Nasr, 1987) and Acehnesse cultural symbolism (Geertz, 1973) as manifested in the mosque's architectural elements. Data were collected through triangulation, comprising literature review, field observation, and in-depth interviews. The literature review examined theories of Islamic aesthetics, Nusantara vernacular architecture (Tjandrasasmita, 2009), and previous studies on Acehnesse carving traditions (Ismail, 2010). Field observations were conducted systematically at the *Guci Rumpong Mosque* in Peukan Baro District, Pidie Regency, focusing on documenting the forms, motifs, materials, colors, and placement of ornaments on the mosque's structural elements. Visual data were captured through photography and detailed field notes (Rose, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) were conducted with five key informants selected purposively, including mosque administrators, community leaders, and local cultural experts. The profiles of the research informants are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**  
Profiles of Research Informants

Informant Code	Role/Position	Interview Date	Interview Focus
R1	Mosque Administrator	March 3, 2025	Function of ornaments and spatial aesthetics; visual balance and air circulation
R2	Mosque Administrator	March 4, 2025	Symbolic meaning of <i>Oen Ranup</i> and <i>Awan Sion</i> motifs; simplification of ornamental forms
R3	Mosque Administrator	March 3, 2025	Spiritual meaning of the <i>Pucok Reubong</i> motif; relationship between nature, humans, and spirituality
R4	Community Leader	March 5, 2025	Moral and cultural interpretation of geometric motifs; local wisdom values

R5	Traditional Elder	March 5, 2025	Social and visual educational functions of ornaments; preservation of cultural values
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Source: Develop by authors, 2025.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Visual and narrative data were integrated and analyzed interpretively (Geertz, 1973) in relation to Islamic aesthetic theory and Acehese cultural symbolism. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key patterns revealing how the ornaments express Islamic spirituality and local cultural identity. Through a hermeneutic interpretation that considers the socio-historical context of Aceh, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the mosque's ornamental traditions.

### **A General Overview of Mosque Ornamentation in Indonesia: Between Islamic Aesthetics and Local Traditions**

The ornamentation of mosques in Indonesia is not merely decorative but serves as a medium of cultural expression that reflects the syncretism between universal Islamic aesthetics and the diverse local cultures of the Indonesian archipelago. This phenomenon underscores that Islamic architectural art in Indonesia is inseparable from the historical, social, and cultural contexts of each region. The diversity of ornamentation demonstrates how local communities interpret Islamic teachings through the lens of pre-existing traditions and aesthetic values while simultaneously constructing a unique religious identity. Mosque ornamentation acts as a bridge connecting spirituality, aesthetics, and cultural symbolism, reflecting a balance between adherence to Islamic principles and respect for local artistic heritage.

In Java, for instance, floral motifs such as lotus flowers, vines, and leaves are characteristic of mosque ornamentation. These motifs initially developed from the Hindu-Buddhist art tradition that had long been present in the archipelago and were later transformed in the context of Islam. This adaptation did not merely replicate old patterns but reinterpreted their symbolism to align with the principles of tawhid and Islamic teachings in general. The lotus flower, for example, is often associated with purity and spiritual enlightenment in Hindu-Buddhist traditions. In the Islamic context, this motif symbolizes the purity of the heart and the oneness of God, emphasizing an individual's spiritual awareness in relation to the Divine (Supriyadi & Widiyastuti, 2024). In addition to floral motifs, local traditions such as Sekaten, originating from the Islamic Kingdom of Demak, have shaped the character of Javanese mosque ornamentation. Sekaten, initially a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth,

incorporated elements of pre-Islamic Javanese rituals and art, including gamelan music and handcrafted decorations. In mosque architecture, this influence is reflected in ornamental patterns that combine geometric and organic aesthetics, creating harmonious artistic expressions. This transformation demonstrates the Javanese community's ability to integrate cultural heritage with Islamic principles, resulting in an aesthetic that is visually appealing and philosophically meaningful (Karim & Raya, 2022).

In West Sumatra, mosque ornamentation displays a different approach, dominated by geometric patterns and the pucuk rabuang motif, a symbol related to spiritual ascent and the pursuit of knowledge. The pucuk rabuang typically features symmetrical forms inspired by nature, such as plant buds or upward-pointing triangles. This motif symbolizes the spiritual aspirations of Muslims to continuously learn and enhance both faith and moral character. This concept aligns with Islamic principles emphasizing knowledge as a path to spiritual perfection. Mosques in West Sumatra, particularly the Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi Grand Mosque, exhibit a combination of traditional Minangkabau carvings and Arabic calligraphy, complementing each other to create sacred spaces imbued with moral, philosophical, and aesthetic meaning. The architecture of these mosques exemplifies cultural and religious syncretism, where local aesthetics and Islamic values coexist harmoniously (Rahmat et al., 2025).

In Kalimantan and Sulawesi, mosque ornamentation often emphasizes fauna and ethnic motifs reflecting the region's biodiversity and rich local culture. These motifs are not merely decorative but carry symbolic meanings aligned with tawhid, the harmony between humans and nature, and environmental stewardship. For example, patterns of birds, fish, or endemic plants are employed to highlight the connection between God's creation, humans, and the universe. Ornamentation in this context also affirms local cultural identity in religious practice, demonstrating that Islam in these regions adapts to symbolic expressions of the local community without compromising its core values (Sahal et al., 2024; Undergraduate Study Program of Biology, Biology Department, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Mulawarman University, 75119, Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia & Yuliatin, 2023). In Kalimantan, the ecological wealth, including tropical forests and endemic flora and fauna, inspires mosque decorations, enriching visual aesthetics while emphasizing ecological consciousness consistent with Islamic perspectives on the stewardship of nature (Undergraduate Study Program of Biology, Biology Department, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Mulawarman University, 75119, Samarinda, East Kalimantan, Indonesia & Yuliatin, 2023)

A cross-regional analysis shows that mosque ornamentation in Indonesia functions as a complex cultural narrative. No region interprets Islam homogeneously; rather, each adapts religious practices to local characteristics. This process represents a dialogue between local artistic traditions and Islamic teachings, where local aesthetic values are not erased but transformed and adjusted to convey relevant religious messages. Mosque ornamentation becomes a medium for expressing faith through shapes, colors, and symbols while preserving distinctive cultural identity. Regional approaches to mosque ornamentation also carry educational and social dimensions. Ornamentation is not merely visual embellishment but a symbolic communication tool conveying Islamic values and local cultural history. Geometric patterns, for instance, are often employed to teach principles of order, balance, and unity in God's creation. These patterns can be read as visual guidance for worshippers to contemplate the order of the universe and the spiritual discipline promoted in Islam. Likewise, motifs of local flora and fauna not only beautify worship spaces but also remind communities of their moral responsibility to maintain environmental balance and honor ancestral traditions (Irsyada & Jeremiah, 2025).

From a historiographical perspective, mosque ornamentation in Indonesia records a long process of acculturation spanning centuries. From Hindu-Buddhist influences in Java to Minangkabau aesthetics in West Sumatra, from ecological symbolism in Kalimantan to ethnic motifs in Sulawesi, each ornament preserves traces of interaction between Islam and local cultures. This phenomenon demonstrates that Islam is not a homogeneous force that eliminates local identity but rather a dynamic system of values capable of interacting creatively with diverse cultural contexts. This syncretism has served as an adaptive strategy enabling the peaceful and creative spread of Islam across Nusantara (Irsyada & Jeremiah, 2025). Moreover, mosque ornamentation carries profound symbolic dimensions. Every motif, color, and form functions communicatively, conveying philosophical, moral, and religious meanings. For instance, repetitive geometric patterns in calligraphy or carvings symbolize divine eternity and order, while motifs of flora and fauna emphasize the interconnection of humans with God's creation. In many cases, ornamentation also reflects spiritual and moral aspirations of the community, such as piety, wisdom, and the pursuit of knowledge. Thus, mosque ornamentation is not only aesthetic but also a medium for visual and spiritual education (Irsyada & Jeremiah, 2025; Rahmat et al., 2025)

Overall, mosque ornamentation in Indonesia represents a tangible manifestation of the complex relationship between religion, culture, and local identity. The artistic expressions of mosques reflect how Muslim communities in

Nusantara assert their faith while valuing local traditions and aesthetics. Through ornamentation, religious practice is localized without losing the universal meaning of spirituality, faith, and devotion to God. The interaction between local artistic traditions and Islamic principles creates a dynamic cultural landscape, allowing integration of diverse influences while fostering authentic and rich religious identity (Irsyada & Jeremiah, 2025) Thus, the study of mosque ornamentation in Indonesia provides broad insights into how Islam interacts with local cultures, how visual symbols convey spiritual values, and how communities use art to express faith and cultural identity simultaneously. Mosque ornamentation is not merely an aesthetic feature but also a reflection of history, philosophy, and social values that shape the identity of Muslim communities in Nusantara. Each mosque serves as a microcosm of historical journeys, cultural interactions, and spiritual experiences, demonstrating that Islamic art in Indonesia is a meaningful space of dialogue between tradition and faith.

## **Forms and Motifs of Guci Rumpang Mosque Ornaments: Representation of Islamic Aesthetics and Acehese Local Wisdom**

### *Placement of Ornaments on the Door and Wall Sections*

At the entrance of Masjid Guci Rumpang, there is a combination of traditional Acehese motifs, namely Oen Ranup (betel leaf), Awan Sion (single cloud), Lhee Sagoe (triangle), and *Pheut Sagoe* (diamond). These ornaments function not only as aesthetic decorations but also as natural ventilation for air circulation within the mosque. The Oen Ranup motif combined with Awan Sion is applied to the *Binteh* (walls), creating a light visual effect while reinforcing the symbolic meaning of respect and sanctity. The walls of the mosque are surrounded by repeated betel leaf and triangle motifs. However, the motifs have been simplified; some are no longer complete and are only partially shaped. As expressed by R2: *"This simplification of the forms does not diminish their spiritual meaning. The triangle still symbolizes Iman, Islam, and Ihsan, while the betel leaf signifies respect and unity for every congregant entering"* (R2, 2025, interview, March 4).

As a connector between motifs, vertical straight-line profiles are carved in an openwork pattern surrounding the entire mosque wall. This technique combines openwork carving and low-relief carving, creating a rhythmic and harmonious impression. According to R1: *"These vertical carvings provide visual balance and rhythm while facilitating the flow of light and air within the mosque, making congregants feel comfortable during worship"* (R1, 2025, interview, March 3). The ornamentation was crafted manually using traditional wood chisels, resulting in natural imperfections along the edges of the carvings and tool marks, which enhance the authenticity and traditional aesthetic. The dominant colors, deep red

or reddish-brown resembling terracotta, are characteristic of Acehese architecture. These colors not only strengthen the visual appearance but also emphasize the warm and harmonious symbolic value. R4 emphasized: *“The color and shape of these motifs make the mosque feel lively and humble, yet still sacred. Each motif carries a spiritual message understood by the local community”* (R4, 2025, interview, March 5).

Thus, the ornaments at the entrance and walls of Masjid Guci Rumpong not only enhance the beauty of the building but also convey profound symbolic meanings: Oen Ranup represents respect and unity, Lhee Sagoe emphasizes spiritual stability, Pheut Sagoe signifies cosmological balance, and *Awan Sion* implies fertility and the connection between humans and God. This aligns with the understanding of the local community and mosque administrators, who stress that Acehese traditional ornaments serve as a visual medium to express religious and cultural values harmoniously.

**Figure 1**

Ornamentation on the Entrance Terrace of Guci Rumpong Mosque



Source: Diana, 2025.

**Figure 2**

Ornamentation on the Mosque Walls: Right Side, Left Side, and Front Side



Source: Diana, 2025.

The Oen Ranup (betel leaf) motif is frequently used in traditional Acehese architecture, including decorative elements of mosques. The carving of this motif

is executed using the openwork carving technique, where certain parts of the wood are hollowed out to form a symmetrical pattern. This technique creates a light, airy visual effect that enhances ventilation or decorative panels in the building. The carvings are done manually using traditional wooden chisels, as indicated by the natural imperfections along the edges and tool marks. The dominant color is a deep red or reddish-brown, typically brick or terracotta, common in many traditional Acehese buildings, including mosques. This color serves not only an aesthetic purpose. The pointed and curved details of the elements give a dynamic and balanced impression, reflecting the relationship between humans, nature, and spirituality.

**Figure 3**  
Diamond-Shaped Ornament (*Pheut Sagoe*)



Source: Diana, 2025.

The peut sagoe motif in the form of a diamond is typically applied to the pillars or walls of traditional Acehese mosques. This motif takes the shape of a reddish-brown diamond set against a white background. Placed on a square surface (usually on a pillar or wall), it stands out visually due to the color contrast. The technique involves applying paint or plaster onto a cement or wall surface. It is not carved as openwork but rather painted or formed with a simple raised plaster (relief). The motif features deep red or reddish-brown colors against a white background. This color contrast emphasizes the shape of the motif, adding visual appeal to the mosque's structural elements.

**Figure 4**  
Triangle Ornament (*Lhee Sagoe*)



Source: Diana, 2025.

The triangular carved ornament (*Lhee Sagoe*) is carved on reddish-brown wooden material. This ornament is part of the traditional decorative elements in mosque buildings, particularly those with Acehnese architectural styles. The motif consists of a series of triangles repeated in a row (repetitive). Each triangle appears to harmonize with other geometric shapes such as diamonds and elongated vertical lines, creating a visually harmonious and symmetrical rhythm. The carving is executed using chisel techniques on the wooden surface. The edges of the ornament appear sharp and clean, demonstrating the craftsman's skill in working with geometric motifs. The neat cuts reflect the use of sharp tools and high precision. The reddish-brown color of the wood gives a warm and natural impression, and it also allows the ornament to stand out visually when exposed to light.

### ***Placement of Ornaments on the Roof and Eaves (Roof Edges)***

The roof of Masjid Guci Rumpong is dominated by plant-inspired motifs, particularly Pucuk Reubong (bamboo shoots). This motif is crafted using openwork carving (*ukir tembus* or *kerawang*), allowing light and air to pass through the wooden gaps while enhancing both aesthetic and functional value. Among these organic ornaments, there are also geometric motifs, namely Lhee Sagoe (triangle) and Pheut Sagoe (diamond), arranged harmoniously to create a visually stable and balanced rhythm. The design of the roof ornaments has undergone development and simplification, making them more harmonious with the surfaces they adorn. The diamond motifs are arranged separately, while the Pucuk Reubong motif dominates the center, emphasizing growth, regeneration, and leadership, in line with traditional Acehnese symbolic meanings. According to R3: *"The Pucuk Reubong is placed at the center of the roof to show the balance between nature and humans, as well as a symbol of continuous spiritual growth"* (R3, 2025, interview, March 3). As a variation and visual reinforcement, the entire roof is surrounded by triangle motifs (*Lhee Sagoe*), which not only enhance the appearance but also unify the ornaments harmoniously with other areas. R1 added: *"The triangles along the edges of the roof provide visual rhythm and emphasize spiritual stability, making the building appear solid and balanced, both structurally and symbolically"* (R1, 2025, interview, March 3).

The arrangement of these ornaments demonstrates the harmony between aesthetics, symbolism, and structural function, where organic motifs reflect values of life, growth, and regeneration (*Pucuk Reubong*), while geometric motifs (*Lhee Sagoe* and *Pheut Sagoe*) emphasize stability, balance, and cosmological order. R5, a local resident, emphasized: *"These ornaments are not merely decorations; each motif carries meaning understood by the community, and their*

presence makes the mosque feel alive and full of spiritual significance" (R5, 2025, interview, March 5).

**Figure 5**  
Ornaments on the Roof and Eaves of *Guci Rumpong* Mosque



Source: Diana, 2025.

**Figure 6**  
*Pucok Reubong* Ornament on the Roof of *Guci Rumpong* Mosque



Source: (Diana, 2025).

The *Pucok Reubong* (*bamboo shoot*) ornament is an organic type of ornament, representing a plant form resembling a conical bamboo shoot. The shape of the shoot is a modification of a triangle, with inward curves added. These shapes are then arranged repetitively, creating a sense of order, stability, and symmetry. Each element starts from a single lower point and expands upward, resembling the tip of a shoot beginning to unfurl. The ornament is carved using the openwork carving technique (*kerawang*), allowing light and air to pass through the gaps. The natural reddish-brown wood color gives a warm, natural impression and integrates harmoniously with traditional wooden architectural elements.

**Figure 7**

*Pucok Reubong* Ornament on the Eaves of Guci Rumpong Mosque



Source: (Diana, 2025)

This ornament is located on the roof of the mosque and serves not only as decoration but also plays a role in ventilation and natural lighting inside the mosque. This motif is commonly found in traditional buildings and old mosques in Aceh, as it reflects both local and spiritual values simultaneously.

#### ***Placement of Ornaments on the Ceiling of Guci Rumpong Mosque***

The ceiling of Masjid Guci Rumpong is adorned with Oen Ranup (betel leaf), Awan Sion (single cloud), and Lhee Sagoe (triangle) motifs. These ornaments function not only as aesthetic elements but also serve as natural ventilation, allowing air and light to circulate within the mosque interior. The Oen Ranup motif, combined with Awan Sion, is applied to the Binteh (wall panels) and lattice walls, decorating the perimeter of the room with repetitive, symmetrical patterns. However, the motif shapes on the walls have been simplified; some motifs are no longer complete and appear halved, giving a modern visual impression while retaining the traditional Acehnese symbolic meanings. The motifs are connected by vertical straight-line profiles carved using the openwork (ukir terawang) technique, surrounding the entire mosque walls. This carving technique emphasizes a light, perforated visual effect while creating a balance between aesthetics and ventilation function.

According to R2, a mosque administrator: *“The betel leaf and Awan Sion motifs on the ceiling are not merely decorative. Their simplified forms still convey messages of unity, balance, and order. In addition, the openwork carving helps air circulation, making the room feel cool”* (R2, 2025, interview, March 4). In line with this, R4, a local resident, added: *“Each motif has a meaning. For example, the triangle (Lhee Sagoe) reminds us of the three important pillars in Islam: Iman, Islam, and Ihsan. So even though the motif is not complete, the message is still conveyed”* (R4, 2025, interview, March 5). Beyond symbolic and aesthetic functions, the use of low-

relief and openwork carving techniques demonstrates the skill of local craftsmen. The natural imperfections along the edges of the carvings reinforce the traditional and authentic impression of the ornaments, while the reddish-brown wood color adds warmth and blends harmoniously with the mosque's interior elements. R3 emphasized: *"The use of manual carving with traditional chisels shows high craftsmanship. These ornaments are not merely decorative; they integrate with the building structure, enhancing both aesthetics and the spiritual function of the space"* (R3, 2025, interview, March 3)

**Figure 8**

Ornaments on the Ceiling of the Mosque and on the Upper Support Pillars



Source: (Diana, 2025)

**Figure 9**

*Oen Ranup* Ornament on the Ceiling of the Mosque and on the Upper Support Pillars



Source: (Diana, 2025).

The *Oen Ranup* (betel leaf) ornament is located on the mosque ceiling and the upper support pillars. The *Oen Ranup* motif features shapes resembling betel leaf petals or water droplets, arranged repetitively and symmetrically. Between the main motifs, there are small round or oval openings that enhance the openwork effect (*kerawang*). This ornament is crafted using the openwork carving technique (*kerawang*), allowing light and air to pass through the gaps, making it functional as ventilation while also serving as a decorative element. The primary material is dark or reddish-brown wood, reinforcing a warm and natural impression within the mosque interior. Located on the ceiling and atop the support pillars, this ornament has a dual function: beautifying the mosque's interior while visually strengthening the architectural structure

**Figure 10**  
Ornaments on the Mosque Ceiling



Source: (Diana, 2025).

*Bungong Seuleupok* (Lotus Flower) is located at the left end of the motif, depicting a lotus flower blooming outward. The lotus is often used as a symbol of purity and spiritual enlightenment, as it can grow cleanly above murky water. Its shape is pointed and elongated, resembling leaf tips or sharp, layered petals. *Bungong Meulu* (Jasmine Flower) is situated in the center of the motif, integrated with the main pattern. *Bungong Meulu* has shapes resembling open petals, symbolizing fragrance and the strength of local identity, reflecting the natural wealth and the historical significance of spices in Aceh. *Awan Meucanek* (Flowing Clouds) is found at the lower part of the ornament, shaped like dynamic curling tendrils. This cloud motif adds a sense of movement and liveliness, symbolizing nobility and sanctity, as well as a spiritual connection to the sky or God (R3, 2025, interview, March 3).

The ornament is crafted using the openwork carving technique (*kerawang*), allowing air and light to pass through its gaps. The material is made of wood painted in golden hues, enhancing a majestic and sacred impression within the mosque interior. The background is sky blue, creating a contrast that emphasizes the beauty of the carving.

**Figure 11**  
Ornaments on the Mosque Ceiling

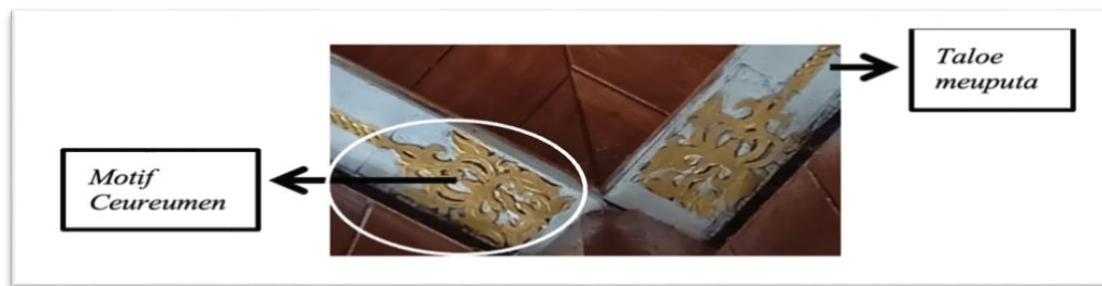


Source: (Diana, 2025).

The carved ornament on the ceiling of Guci Rumpong Mosque combines three traditional Acehese motifs: *Taloe Ie*, *Seulanga*, and *Awan Sietangke*. This ornament is made of wood, carved, and painted gold, with a sky-blue background that creates a beautiful visual contrast and enhances the sacred impression. *Taloe Ie* (water rope) is located in the center of the ornament, forming an interwoven pattern resembling flowing ropes or water. *Bungong Seulanga* (ylang-ylang flower) appears as floral decorations on the sides of the main ornament, shaped like flower petals. *Awan Sietangke* (single branch cloud) motifs are positioned at the ends of the carving, curving like stacked cloud clusters. The ornament employs the openwork carving technique (*kerawang*) on wood, demonstrating high precision. The gold color, symbolizing grandeur and luxury, combined with the sky-blue background, enhances visual beauty and emphasizes the shape of the ornament.

**Figure 12**

*Ceureumen* and *Taloe Meuputa* Motifs on the Mosque Ceiling



Source: (Diana, 2025).

The *Ceuremen* (mirror) ornament is an inorganic type of ornament formed from a series of *Taloe* patterns and *Awan Meucanek*. It is carved on wooden beams located on the mosque roof, serving as support against wind pressure and for the roof structure (*bara*). On the *Ceuremen* beams, the ornament fills empty spaces, similar to other parts of the structure. The *Taloe Meuputa* (twisted rope) ornament is also an inorganic type, consisting of a series of straight and curved lines forming a rope-like spiral pattern. The base features alternating curved lines with two-strand and three-strand twists. The ornament is created using the openwork carving technique (*kerawang*), allowing air and light to pass through its gaps. The material is wood painted in golden hues, enhancing a majestic and sacred impression within the mosque interior (R4, 2025, interview, March 3). The background is sky blue, creating a contrast that highlights the beauty of the carving.

## Symbolic Function and Moral Messages of Ornaments: Aesthetics as a Spiritual Language

Masjid Guci Rumpong, located in Gampong Guci Rumpong, Peukan Baro Subdistrict, Pidie Regency, is not merely a place of worship but a complex visual discourse, where each ornament carries deep symbolic meanings and moral messages. The ornaments that adorn the walls, ceilings, pillars, and roof of the mosque function not only as aesthetic decorations but also as a medium of symbolic communication, conveying Islamic values as well as Acehnese local wisdom. From a cultural semiotic perspective, each motif can be viewed as a sign, with the signifier being the visual form of the ornament and the signified representing the moral, religious, and social meanings embedded within it, as elaborated by Barthes (1977) in his analysis of cultural signs (Aditiawarman & Dwi Avinta, 2023; Jadou & Ghabra, 2021; Shabrina et al., 2022). For example, the Lhee Sagoe motif (triangle), applied repetitively on the walls and ceilings of the mosque, represents the primary Islamic trilogy: Iman, Islam, and Ihsan. Visually, this motif communicates principles of unity, order, and the spiritual journey of humans toward God, while also reinforcing the concept of cosmic balance underlying the Islamic cosmology in the Nusantara. This geometric pattern demonstrates how Islamic art is not merely a formal expression but a medium for the internalization of spiritual values, in line with Burckhardt's (2009) perspective that Islamic art integrates aesthetics and morality into a unified whole. (- & Kusuma, 2024; Taşpınar, 2017; Waluyo, 2018).

Furthermore, the Pheut Sagoe motif (diamond shape), characterized by its four symmetrical sides and strategically placed on the mosque walls, reflects the balance of the universe, the four elements (earth, water, air, fire) and the four cardinal directions, reminding humans of the order of Allah's creation. From a semiotic perspective, the diamond shape functions as a symbolic sign that collectively constructs ethical and cosmological understanding within the religious experience of the Acehnese community. This pattern communicates the value of *mizan*, or balance, between humans, nature, and God, which serves as a fundamental principle in Islamic philosophy (Aditiawarman & Dwi Avinta, 2023; Jadou & Ghabra, 2021; Shabrina et al., 2022). This concept of balance also emphasizes the principle of social order, as the arrangement of geometric patterns reinforces the importance of living in harmony with divine law and maintaining social cohesion.

Beyond geometric motifs, floral ornaments such as *Bungong Meulu* (jasmine flower) and *Bungong Seuleupok* (lotus flower) add moral and spiritual dimensions. *Bungong Meulu*, with its neatly arranged and fragrant petals, serves as a metaphor for the purity of heart and sincerity of intention in worship,

aligning with the concept of *tazkiyatun nafs* in Sufism, which emphasizes the purification of the soul. Its presence in the prayer space functions as a visual reminder of the importance of sincere intentions and spiritual honesty, demonstrating that aesthetics not only gratifies the senses but also educates the heart. Meanwhile, *Bungong Seuleupok*, which grows above murky waters yet remains clean, symbolizes resilience and spiritual growth, teaching worshippers to remain steadfast in faith despite worldly temptations. These motifs illustrate how ornamentation can serve as a medium for ethical and spiritual learning through representations of nature, consistent with an ecological aesthetic approach, which posits that floral forms in traditional Islamic architecture symbolize the relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator (Bingöl et al., 2024; Jamaludin et al., 2023; Omer, 2012).

The Pucok Reubong (bamboo shoot) motif adds another philosophical layer to the mosque's ornamentation. Its upward-pointing form emphasizes the meaning of progressive spiritual growth, in line with the concept of *taraqqī* in Islamic tradition, which refers to the continuous advancement of one's spiritual station (*maqam*). From a Peircean semiotic perspective, the bamboo shoot can be interpreted as an iconic sign because its shape resembles a young bamboo shoot growing upward, and as an indexical sign because it indicates humanity's aspiration to draw closer to God. This symbolism also carries a moral message about leadership regeneration and social responsibility, reminding the community of the importance of preparing a righteous and knowledgeable next generation, in accordance with the mosque's role as a center for community and spiritual development (Bingöl et al., 2024; Knudsen et al., 2016; Sánchez-Ovcharov & Suárez, 2024).

The social aspect of these ornaments is clearly manifested through the Oen Ranup (betel leaf) and Taloe Meuputa (intertwined rope) motifs. Oen Ranup, traditionally used in the *peusijuek* ritual, represents hospitality, unity, and respect within Acehnese society. Its presence on the mosque's ceiling and supporting pillars emphasizes that the mosque functions as an inclusive space, where worshippers are welcomed as part of the Muslim community. Meanwhile, Taloe Meuputa, with its pattern of interwoven ropes, symbolizes the importance of maintaining social bonds, unity, and cooperation. These social values align with the concept of *ukhuwwah islāmiyyah*, which underscores brotherhood and solidarity within the Muslim community, demonstrating that the ornaments are not merely aesthetic but also ethical in fostering social cohesion. Divine transcendence is evoked through cloud motifs such as *Awan Meucanek* and *Awan Sietangkei*, carved on the mosque ceiling against a sky-blue background.

These cloud motifs serve as a visual reminder of God's greatness and human limitations.

From the perspective of symbolic theology, clouds function as a symbolic sign connecting the prayer space with the heavens, reinforcing the concept of *tanzīh*, the sanctity of God and acknowledgment of His majesty (Captari et al., 2022; Maevskaya\* & Aga, 2024; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). The aesthetics here extend beyond mere visual appeal; they serve to cultivate the attitudes of *tawakkul* (trust in God) and humility, fostering a holistic and emotional religious experience for worshippers. The symbolic and moral functions of the ornaments in *Masjid Guci Rumpong* reinforce the idea that Islamic art is not free-form expression, but a form of visual worship aimed at educating and guiding. From a semiotic perspective, these ornaments act as a medium of aesthetic *da'wah*, whereby Islamic values, morality, and Acehnese cultural identity are subliminally internalized by the community. This aligns with Al-Faruqi's (1982) view that Islamic art must integrate aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality, ensuring that the experience of beauty is inseparable from moral and religious learning (Permatasari, 2015). In the Acehnese context, this strengthens the collective religious identity as the "Veranda of Mecca," where mosque ornaments function both as a means of preserving philosophical and cultural values and as a medium for spiritual education.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that the ornaments in *Masjid Guci Rumpong* possess a multilayered function: they represent Islamic values, serve as instruments for moral education, act as symbols of cultural identity, and function as a medium for preserving the philosophical traditions of the Nusantara. Each motif, geometric or organic, becomes part of a visual curriculum that internalizes values of piety, submission to God, and social harmony. The aesthetics of the ornaments are not an end in themselves but a means to unite the community through a visual and emotional religious experience. This illustrates that Islamic art in Aceh embodies a living and holistic form of worship. Through these ornaments, *Masjid Guci Rumpong* functions as a spiritual and aesthetic laboratory, where visual beauty and moral meaning converge to create a religious experience that educates, inspires, and strengthens the collective consciousness of Acehnese Muslims.

## Conclusion

Based on the study of the ornaments in *Masjid Guci Rumpong*, it can be concluded that traditional Acehnese mosque ornaments serve far beyond mere decorative elements. The most significant finding of this research reveals that ornaments such as *Lhee Sagoe*, *Pucok Reubong*, and *Oen Ranup* function as a

visual language representing a harmonious synthesis between universal Islamic values and Acehnese local wisdom. Each motif embodies profound philosophical and spiritual meanings related to tauhid (divine unity), cosmic balance, spiritual growth, and social cohesion. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding that traditional mosque architecture operates as a medium for moral and spiritual education, while simultaneously serving as a bastion for preserving cultural identity amidst the pressures of modernization that threaten local distinctiveness. From an academic contribution perspective, this study enriches the field of Islamic architectural studies and cultural anthropology by positioning mosque ornaments as multilayered cultural texts.

The semiotic approach applied in this research successfully reveals how visual symbols function as a means of subliminally internalizing religious and social values. However, this study has limitations in terms of the scope of respondents and has not conducted a comparative study with other traditional Acehnese mosques, so caution is needed in generalizing the findings. Future research opportunities include comparative studies of traditional mosque ornaments across various regions of Aceh, exploration of young generations' perceptions of this architectural heritage, and examination of the transformation of ornaments in the context of contemporary Islamic architecture. Therefore, this study not only underscores the importance of reinterpreting mosque ornaments as a living cultural heritage but also lays a foundation for further research that can enhance our understanding of the dynamics of art, religion, and culture within Muslim communities in Indonesia.

### **Acknowledgment**

The author(s) would like to express sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their valuable time, insightful comments, and constructive suggestions. The critical feedback provided has significantly contributed to enhancing the clarity, depth, and academic rigor of this article. The author(s) remain grateful for the reviewers' commitment to academic excellence and their generous contribution to the refinement of this work.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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