

Symbolic Content of Exterior and Interior Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque Tangerang

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ABSTRACT

Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque is one of the historical and iconic mosques in Tangerang City. Its architecture is unique and full of important symbols for Muslims, because these symbols contain meanings that can provide a deeper understanding of Islam, as well as the values it contains. This makes it an interesting object of study in the field of interior design. This study aims to reveal the meaning in the symbols contained in the exterior and interior of the Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque, especially in the architectural elements found on the exterior and interior such as on the exterior (mosque shape, dome, cantilever, minaret) and interior (dome, calligraphy). The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative method. Data collection uses literature study, observation and interviews. The results of the study show that the symbols on the exterior and interior elements mean the unity of Muslims in divinity, peace, strength, defense, beauty, perfection and piety of Muslims towards the oneness and majesty of God. It is hoped that this research can be a scientific contribution regarding the symbolic meaning of the Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque architecture, especially in the field of interior design.

Keywords: Meaning; Grand Mosque Al-A'zhom; Symbolic; Tangerang

INTRODUCTION

The mosque is one of the physical buildings of Islamic culture (Frishman, 1994), which is related to worldly and spiritual elements. In this case the mosque functions as a place of religious, social and political activities. The basis for establishing a mosque is an order to provide prayer services for Muslims (Atjeh, 1955). The mosque has several commonly used components, namely the roof, pillars, pulpit, mihrab, minaret, ablution place and ornaments (Fanani, 2009). Mosques originate from Islamic culture, namely the Koran and Hadith. However, both have no provisions regarding the physical side of the building, so there is freedom of creativity in mosque architecture. Therefore, there are various types of mosque architectural creations that are in accordance with the conditions of the times, community

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culture and the environment (Wiryoprawiro, 1986). The exterior and interior of the mosque contain several elements, such as not having paintings in the form of living things, such as images of animals and humans, mosque interior ornaments using ornaments that contain Islamic teachings, such as calligraphic writing. The area in the mosque is regulated to maintain morality and behavior. The construction of the mosque must also minimize the damage to nature. In addition, the use of colors in the mosque uses colors such as brown or green which are identical to the colors of nature (Azza, 2019).

Mosque buildings have always evolved with the influence of Middle Eastern architecture. Byzantine architecture influenced mosque architecture in Indonesia, which can be seen from the use of materials, artwork, and relief carvings. The most prominent cultural acculturation in the mosque is on the roof. Sumalyo (2000) says that initially the roofs of mosques in Indonesia used overlapping roofs, then with the development of the times the roof turned into a dome roof. The concept of architectural symbolism can be seen in every mosque building. Each mosque construction is adapted to the symbol of the Middle Eastern architectural style with local cultural symbols. As Muslims have an understanding of their place of worship There have been many studies on mosques, both in terms of culture, art, architecture and interior. Previous research examined the symbolic signs visually identified at the Bandung Al-Mishbah Mosque, using the semiotic analysis method, and the result is that the symbolic signs at the Al-Mishbah Mosque have a philosophical meaning (Gunardi, et all, (2021). Research conducted through interior design science regarding the symbolic content of mosques, especially at the Al-A'zhom Tangerang Grand Mosque in Tangerang City, West Java Province. This research is important to find out the symbolic elements contained in the mosque and to find out their meaning. It is hoped that the results of this research can develop science, especially in the field of interior design.

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. Qualitative research findings emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2005). Qualitative methods are used to understand the meaning and interpretation of symbols in the elements of the Al Azhom Tangerang Grand Mosque, Tangerang City, West Java Province. Descriptive research describes phenomena that occur realistically. This research consists of systematic drawings or paintings, and the relationship between the phenomena studied (Rukajat, 2008). Qualitative and descriptive methods are used to describe in detail the exterior and interior elements of the mosque and the symbolic meaning contained therein. The research data were obtained from three sources, namely primary data and observations and interviews with the head of the mosque library and the architect profession. Secondary data, obtained from literature, such as books, journals, and articles. Data obtained from observations and interviews were analyzed

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qualitatively. Qualitative data analysis is done by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions (Basrowi and Suwandi, 2008). This is because everything that is formed is due to the factors that cause it (Joedawinata, 2008).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque is a mosque that has the largest dome roof in Asia. This mosque is a landmark of Tangerang City (Rizqa, 2021). The mosque was built in 1997 and inaugurated in 2003. The name of this mosque is taken from one of God's names, namely Al-A'zhim Qhsirin Tafdhilkan, which means Most Great, Most Great and Most Magnificent. The mosque building has 5 domes consisting of 1 large dome and supported by 4 small domes with a span width of 62.28 meters, with a pedestal height of 27.11 meters. Then it has 4 minarets with a height of 55 meters. The mosque can accommodate 15,000 worshipers (Mosque Gallery Archives, 2003).



Figure 1. Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque Tangerang
Source: Istockphoto

Analysis of exterior and interior elements at the Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque includes exteriors such as the shape of the dome, cantilever shape and minaret. Analysis of interior elements such as, the inside of the dome and wall.

1. Exterior Analysis of Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque (Dome Shape, Cantilever Shape and Minaret)

The uniqueness of the whole building of Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque has symbolic content, such as in its fortress-shaped exterior design and also in its stacked domes. The building of Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque is designed with a cantilever in the shape of a fortress, in which there is a hole in the center as a place for cannons inside the fortress (see Figure 2). The design was inspired by the city of Tangerang, which is nicknamed the City of Fortresses. The shape of the fort symbolizes strength and defense for Muslims. The symmetrical and sturdy shape of the mosque symbolizes the unity of Muslims (Mutiar, 2021).



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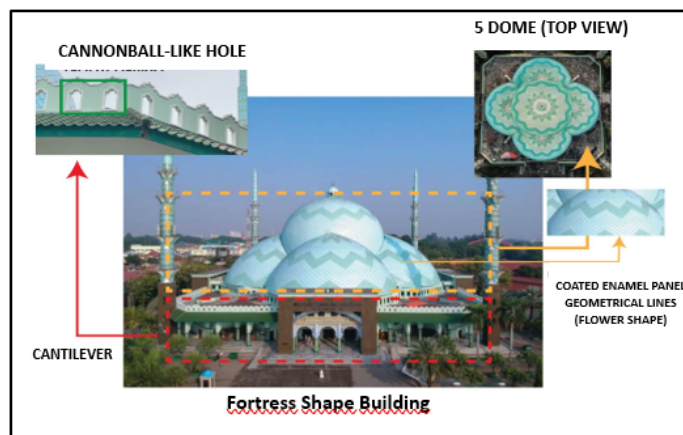


Figure 2. Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque Tangerang (Fortress Shape)
Source: Author Documentation, 2023

The dome roof is symbolic of Islamic architecture (Ikhwanuddin, 2011). The Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque in Tangerang consists of five domes, which symbolize divinity and beauty. The five domes in this grand mosque have a symbol of the five pillars of Islam, and the five daily prayers as an obligation of Muslims (Ahmad, 2021) (see figure 2). Then with the five domes, it provides a symbol of beauty that comes from the large size of the dome and looks magnificent. Then the dome is coated with an enamel coating panel patterned with neatly arranged geometric lines that give an aesthetic impression. Syoufa (2023) said the outer dome is bluish green which symbolizes the Islamic color which means peace which means that in this mosque it provides a sense of confidence and security, and also blue as the characteristic color of Banten.

The vertical minaret has a symbol of the majesty of God. The vertical tower at the time of the Prophet Muhammad had a function as a place for the muadzin to call for adhan as a call to prayer time, but at this time the tower was used as a loudspeaker and only for aesthetic beauty (Astuti, 2018). Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque has four minarets. The minaret in this mosque is a vertical minaret that symbolizes the majesty of God (see figure 3). Then the minaret has four levels that symbolize the requirements for a happy life, namely Aqidah, Akhlak, Sharia, and Ibadah (Ezra, 2022). The minaret at Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque adopts the style of Hagia Sophia, Turkey. And the tip of the minaret is shaped like a missile that adopts the style of the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Mosque, Malaysia (Miqdam, Personal Communication, 2023). The meaning of the exterior elements can be seen in Table 1.

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Table 1 Exterior Analysis of Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque

No	Eksterior Elements	Meaning
1.	Mosque Form	Unity of the Muslim Ummah
2.	Dome	Divinity, Beauty, Pillars of Islam, Peace, Safety and Confidence
3.	Cantilever	Strength, Defense
4.	Minaret	The Majesty of God, Conditions for a Happy life (Akidah, Ahlak, Sharia and Ibadah).

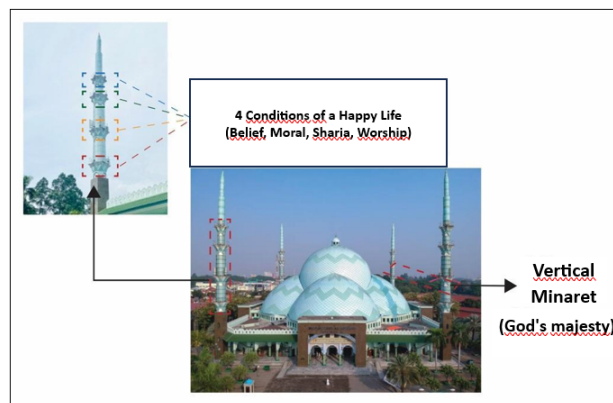


Figure 3. Minarets on Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque Tangerang
Source: Author Documentation, 2023

2. Interior Analysis of Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque (domes, walls, windows and floors)

The interior design of the Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque dome has a very detailed design. The dome is designed to look wider and more prominent than the mihrab and pulpit to symbolize the majesty of God (see Figure 4).

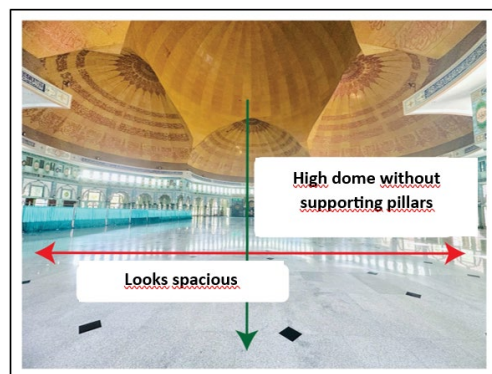


Figure 4. Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque Dome (interior)
Source: Author Documentation, 2023



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In the relationship between a spiritual principle and Islamic science, there is a consequence derived from Oneness symbolized by the meaning of "void" which symbolizes the perfection and presence of God in everything. This awareness of the relationship between the void and the presence of God in Islamic art is achieved through calligraphy, geometric patterns and arabesque patterns that have a close relationship with spiritual attitudes. This plays a positive role in Islamic art and architecture. By incorporating the value of divinity and giving meaning to the presence of God in material form (Astuti, 2018). The materials found in worship buildings must create a level of physical comfort and have consequences for human psychological comfort (Joedawinata, Ahadiat, 2008). Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque itself incorporates the value of divinity in the interior of the dome building, and also on the walls of the mosque (see figures 5 and 6). It can be seen from the calligraphic ornaments, geometric patterns, and arabesques. The calligraphy on the four sides of the dome is inscribed with verses of the Qur'an and Asmaul Husna (see Figures 5, 6 and Table 2). The presence of calligraphic, arabesque and geometric ornaments creates a sacred and majestic atmosphere. Mutiah (2012) says that mosques use calligraphic, arabesque and geometric ornaments because Islam prohibits the use of animate images such as humans and animals. There are arguments that forbid painting pictures of living things (Redaksi, 2021).

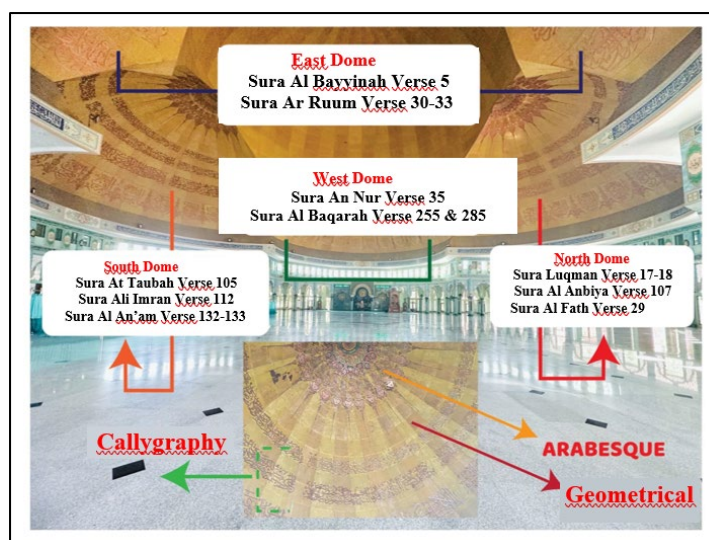


Figure 5. Geometric, arabesque, and calligraphic ornaments on the dome ceiling

Source: Author Documentation, 2023

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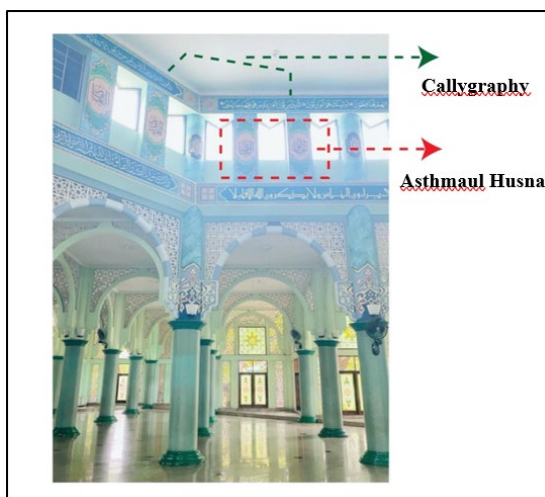


Figure 6. Calligraphic ornaments on the mosque wall
Source: Author Documentation, 2023

Tabel 2. Content on Calligraphy

No.	Interior Element	Calligraphy Content
1.	East Dome	Sura Al Bayyinah Verse 5 Sura Ar Ruum Verse 30-33
2.	West Dome	Sura An Nur Verse 35 Sura Al Baqarah Verse 255 dan Verse 285
3.	North Dome	Sura Luqman Verse 17-18 Sura Al Anbiya Verse 107 Sura Al Fath Verse 29
4.	South Dome	Sura At Taubah Verse 105 Sura Ali Imran Verse 112 Sura Al An'am Verse 132-133
5.	Wall (close to window)	Asmaul Husna

Calligraphic ornaments, arabesques, and geometric patterns on the ceiling or dome give a cool, beautiful impression, and provide visual comfort (Anggara, T, Personal Communication, 2023). With the Calligraphy on the interior of the dome to always remember God and bring to solemn worship (Miqdam, Personal Communication, 2023). So that Masjid Raya Al Azhom Tangerang stands as a beacon of Islamic spirituality. The exterior and interior can invite reflection, contemplation, and a deeper relationship with God. The charge of meaning on the exterior elements can be seen in Table 3.

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Tabel 3. Interior Analysis of Al-A'zhom Grand Mosque

No.	Interior Element	Meaning
1.	Dome	The majesty of God
2.	Calligraphy on Mosque Walls and Domes (Geometric and Arabesque patterns)	Oneness, Perfect, Divinity

CONCLUSION

The meaning of symbols found on the exterior of the mosque as seen in table 1, in the form of a mosque, namely the unity of Muslims, the dome means Divinity, Beauty, Pillars of Islam, Peace, Security and Confidence, the meaning of cantilever Strength, Defense, the meaning of the minaret is the majesty of God, the Conditions for a Happy life (Akidah, Ahlak, Sharia and Worship). The meaning of the interior in table 3, found the meaning of the dome as the Majesty of God, and calligraphy on the wall means Oneness, Perfection and Divinity..

The overall meaning is the unity of Muslims in divinity, peace, strength, defense, beauty, perfection and devotion of Muslims to the oneness and majesty of God. This meaning reflects the mosque as a space for reflection, contemplation and a deeper relationship with God with this mosque as a beacon of Islamic spirituality..

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