

CHAPTER III

WOOD CALLIGRAPHY CARVING FOR JEPARA SOCIETY LIFE

A. General Description of Jepara

1. Geography

Jepara¹ is one of the 35 regencies in Central Java province that is renowned as “the City of Carving” and also the hometown of Indonesia’s heroine of the national women’s liberation movement, Kartini². It is located between 5°43’20, 67” up to 6°47’25, 83” south latitude and 110°9’48, 02” up to 110°58’37, 40” east longitude. This region is surrounded by sea of Java at westside and northside, the eastside part is bounded by the Regency of Kudus and Pati, but the southside part is bounded by the Regency of Demak.

¹ *Jepara* originally comes from *Ujungmara* or *Jumpara* that means a merchant settlement which trades to all over area (*haventjes der klein handelaars*). It was born on 09 April 1549, as noted by Tome Pires – a Portuguese pharmacist – in “*the Suma Oriental: an Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan*”, Jepara known in the XV century (1470 AD) as a small trading port the newly occupied by 90-100 people and is led by Aryo Timur and was under the rulership of Demak. But According to the book “*A New History of the Tang Dynasty (618-906 AD)*” noted that in the year 674 AD a Chinese traveler named I-Tsing never visited the country Holing or kaling or Kalinga is also known as Java or Japa and believed to be located in Keling, Jepara eastern today, and led by a woman named Queen Shima king who was known to be assertive. See *Jepara in Figures 2008/2009* (Jepara: Central Board of Statistics and Regional Development Planning Board of Jepara Regency, 2009), p. xxxvii-xi. Or see also Ricklefs, M.C.. *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1300, 2nd Edition*. (London: McMillan, 1991). p. 38

² Kartini is a pioneer for women’s rights and emancipation in Java. She was born on April 21, 1879, in Mayong, Jepara and was died on September 17, 1904. Kartini’s legacy is found in the many letters she wrote to friends, such Mrs. Ovink-Soer, Stella Zeehandelaar and Rosa Abendanon in Holland.

In her Dutch letters that was published by Mr J. H. Abendanon – the Minister for Culture, Religion and Industry in the East Indies – in 1991, its *Door Duisternis tot Licht: Gedachten Over en Voor Het Javanese Volk* (From Darkness to Light: Thoughts about and on Behalf of the Javanese People), Kartini wrote about her views of the social conditions prevailing at that time, particularly the condition of native Indonesian women. The majority of her letters protest the tendency of Javanese Culture to impose obstacles for the development of women. She wanted women to have the freedom to learn and study. See Monash Asia Institute, *Letters from Kartini: An Indonesian Feminist, 1900-1904*, and *On Feminism and Nationalism: Kartini's Letters to Stella Zeehandelaar, 1899-1903*, in, (http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/mai/Gradpost/gp_9.3web.pdf), was retrieved on December, 29th, 2009.

The area of Jepara regency that consists of 29 islands is recorded about 100.413,189 ha with elevation range from 0 m up to 1.301 m of sea level. The vast district is Keling that is about 23.175,804 ha, but the smallest district is Kalinyamatan that is about 2.369,804 ha.³ Although Jepara is regency with high population density that is about 1.086 persons per km², but Jepara still has forest (28.028, 07 ha), rice field (21.597, 430 ha), plantation (25. 845, 25 ha) and fishpond area (25. 845, 25 ha) which are fairly large.

2. Social Religion

Peace and harmony condition has been longing for all believers. Likewise for Jepara believers, in making peace and harmony condition, they live in high tolerance. It can be looked from variety of prayer places that located side by side peacefully. Actually there are about 4.546 units of prayer places on Jepara. Most of them (96, 90%) are Mosques and *Mushallas* and the rest (3, 10%) are churches, *viharas* and temples.⁴

Susenas of 2008 noted that population of Jepara is about 1.090.839 persons. In term of sex, there are about 548.953 (50, 32%) males and 541.886 females (49, 68%).⁵ Most of them are Muslims, that is about 96, 66% and the rest is Christian 2, 40%, Hindu believers (0, 24%) and Buddhist believers (0, 70%).⁶ Hence, Islamic value is felt so strong in Jepara. In every important event Jeparans can not apart from Islamic rituals that show their high loyalty and obedience to God, such as *tahlilan*,⁷ *slametan*,⁸ *kabumi*⁹ and others.

³ *Jepara in Figures 2008/2009. op. cit. p. 3-4*

⁴ *ibid*, p. 115

⁵ The distribution of population is distributed proportionally. The Tahunan district has most populated (96.535 persons or 8, 85%) and the Karimunjawa district has less populated (8.87 persons or 0, 80%)

⁶ *ibid*, p. 115-116

⁷ *Tahlilan* is comes from *hallala- yuhallilu- tahlilan*, means reciting *la ilaha illallah* or prayer that structured and determined, such Qur'anic verses, *istighfar*, *shalawat*, and *tasbih* that pointed to pray spirit of people who was died.

Besides that, wood calligraphy carving, a creativity that inspired by Islamic value – the Qur'an and Hadith – also growing up rapidly in Jepara, It gets a great place in Jepara society hearts. It has become a part and parcel of life in Jepara. Beside carving and selling to others, part of them also adorn their mosques, offices, schools and houses with it. It is not only art that handled down from old generation that able to give satisfaction for the maker and the gazer artistically, but also increase income for Jepara society and government economically.

3. Social Culture

Culture¹⁰ and religion¹¹ are two different terms, but both are organically linked with or related to each other. Color or characteristic of culture is influenced by religion, and in the contrary the understanding of religion is influenced by culture. Clifford Geertz in “*Religion as a Cultural System (1988)*” note that religion and culture are intimately related to and isolated from each other, even religion has to be looked as a culture system it self. Religion is a system that can change a structure of society, even build

⁸ *Slametan* is taken from Arabic word *salamah* means peace or safety. It is usually called by *banchakan* or *kenduren*. It is held on all occasions of life crises or of communal cyclical events in order to ensure prosperity and peace for the community. It is also held on all sorts of occasions when well being and equilibrium have been disturbed to restore them, such as in the case of disease. In theory all participants enjoy the same ritual status, each person contributing equally to the spiritual power of the event. The *slametan* therefore serve to shape a harmonious community (*rukun*) which is the prerequisite to effectively invoke the blessing of gods, spirits and ancestors.

⁹ *Kabumi* is annual thanks giving ceremony that performed by farmers or fishermen.

¹⁰ Culture is a shared, learned, symbolic system of values, beliefs and attitudes that shapes and influences perception and behavior, an abstract “mental blueprint” or “mental code”. Culture refers to the following ways of life, including but not limited to language, arts & sciences, thought, spirituality, social activity and interaction. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/culture>).

¹¹ It is often said that religion is something so individual, so elusive and diverse that is defies definition. Basically, it is defined as a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices pertaining to supernatural, sacred or divine power, or as the sum total of answers given to explain humankind's relationship with the universe. In *The Rationalization of Society*, Max Weber define religion as the worship of divine entities, with priests, a cult, and a system of beliefs, and Emile Durkheim in *The Science of Society as Moral Order* notes religion is a unified system of beliefs (states of opinion) and practices (modes of action) relative to sacred things. While, J. Milton Yinger and Knight Dunlop formulate religion as an institution, system of believe and practice that is prepared by society in facing problem that can not be solved by other institutions. See Deflem, Mathieu, “*Classical Sociological Theory: A Review of Themes, Concepts, and Perspectives*”, (<http://www.mathieudeflem.net>, 1999). was retrieved on October, 21st 2009.

character of society. Moreover, one of functions of religion for society is transformative function. It changes the old values that bequeathed by previous generation with new values that more humanist and ideal that finally will bore new structured society. Likewise Islam, it also plays similar transformative function. Islam is receptive, selective, digestive, assimilative and transmissive to general culture. In “*the Religion of Java (1960)*” Geertz note that in Java’s culture, Islam, Hindu and native animist traditions all claimed a place in the social system, trough its symbols, ideas, rituals and customs, the influence of religion to be present in every crevice and corner of Javan life.¹²

Islam in Jepara – as a part of Java – also transforms culture. It can be looked at many social ceremonies and artifacts. For example the *Sradda* ceremony, it is thanksgivings (*selametan*) for three days, seven days, 100 days and 1000 days previously were traditions carried out by Javanese people when members of their families had passed way. Before arriving Islam, usually they fill the whole night by staying awake, eating, gambling, and drinking, but after Islam arriving, the form and eating was maintained by Islamic scholars (*Ulama’*), and the wrongdoings were replaced with Islamic things, such as reading sentences of *tahlil*. While the foods were

¹²Geertz defines religion as “(1) a system of symbols which acts to 2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by 3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and 4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that 5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic”. See L. Pals, Daniel, “*Seven Theories of Religion*” (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 244.

Geertz seemed to have learnt from Max Weber who insisted that sociology should be looked at in terms of interpretation of meanings. This Geertz takes to mean his semantic anthropology in which people’s lives are full of symbols and their actions are symbolic that need to be interpreted. Beside that Geertz also study about religion from semiotic tradition of Ferdinand de Saussure who reveals the meaning of symbol in linguistic tradition firstly. For Geertz, symbol is a vehicle to express a certain conception. So religion is a symbol that stores certain conception. Symbol of religion has two modes, modes for reality and modes of reality. The modes for reality show the existence of religion as a system that can form society into certain cosmic order, while the modes of reality show that religion is a system that influenced by society and their surrounding. See Gertz, Clifford, *Religion as Cultural System*, in ([http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic152604.files/week_4/Geertz_Religion as a Cultural System.pdf](http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic152604.files/week_4/Geertz_Religion_as_a_Cultural_System.pdf)). was retrieved on October, 21st 2009.

replaced with rice of “*tumpeng*” indicating *tauhid*, and everyone coming back from the *tahlilan* would bring “*brekat*” (blessing or “*berkah*”).

*Lomban Festival*¹³ that is done by Jepara fishermen as praise to God for His blessing all along year is also a proof of transform function of Islam. In this festival, there is interesting program, that is Gulf war. It is the war that uses *kupat lepet*¹⁴ and *kolang-kaling* (fan palm fruit) as its missile. Before starting the war, Jepara government officers float (*nglarung*) the offerings (*sesajen*) that consist of buffalo head, *dekem* (crouched chicken), *jajan pasar* (snack’s market), *arang-arang kambong* (fried rice), *kembang telon* (three kind’s flowers) and others that were prayed by Islamic scholar (*Ulama*’) before, and during floating the offerings always escorted by strains of *Kebo Giro Gamelan* and *Shalawat* (psalmody to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH). After Gulf war finished, visitors usually amused by traditional dances, such *Gambyong* and *Langen Beken*.¹⁵

The transform function of Islam also can be looked at medallions and panels in mosque and grave of Mantingan that resembles medallions in Panataran temple. Both just differentiated by material and design only. Mantingan medallion is created from white stone (*tufa*) and designed in circle and arch that filled by combination of leaf spiral motif (*floriate*), meander and stilation of animal in Arabic calligraphy (*memet*). While

¹³ Lomban is taken from “*lomba-lomba* or *lelumban*” means have fun. Lomban festival is done every year on 8 Syawal (*ba’da kupat*) in Kartini beach. “*Slomporet Melayu*” ed 12&17 August 1893, noted that this festival has been done in more of 1 century. The procession is no different with lomban festival in this time, it is done from Jepara Gulf till Kelor Island (Kartini beach-now), see *Pesta Lomban di Jepara* (<http://www.jeparakab.go.id>), was retrieved on January, 20th, 2010.

¹⁴ Kupat Lepet is food that made from rice that is wrapped in fine young coconut leaf. In Java language Kupat is abbreviation of “Ngaku Lepat” means admitted mistake, whereas lepet means Luput or mistake.

¹⁵ see *Pesta Lomban di Jepara* (<http://www.jeparakab.go.id>), was retrieved on January, 20th, 2010.

Panataran's medallion is created from river stone (*andesit*), and designed in circle that filled by animal carving naturally.¹⁶

Beside above, as Javan, Jepara society hold on Java's philosophies in their life, one of them is "mangan ora mangan seng penting kumpul" that has meaning eat or not eat, the important is gathered. Thus, based on that's philosophy, social value system that runs in the middle of Jepara society is still colored by communal system. Togetherness and family atmosphere among citizen are still respected and run well. It is reflected in social traditions, such as wedding ceremony (*unduh mantu*), circumcision ceremony (*unduh nyunat*), and mutual cooperation in building house (*nyambat ngadekan*) or moving of house (*nyambat alihan*).

4. Social Economic

Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) notes that Jepara economy is walk on industrial,¹⁷ agriculture,¹⁸ plantation,¹⁹ fishery,²⁰ livestock²¹ and tourism sector.²² But as its notation "The City of Carving", wood carving

¹⁶ Kusen, "Relief Dua-Sisi Mantingan Sebagai Data Kesenian Masa Transisi Hindu-Islam di Jawa Tengah Abad XVI", in Archeology Scientific Meeting V; Book IIA: Indonesian Archeology Discourse. (Jakarta: United of Indonesia Archeologist, 1989). p.132

¹⁷ According to Trade and Manufacturing Services data, there are about 7.648 industrial companies with varieties scales in Jepara. It is consisting of Wood furniture (3.821), Wood craft (157) and Rattan craft (352), Weaving Troso (250), Monel Kalinyamatan (184), Poltery and Tile Mayong (733), Cigarettes (100), Foods (1.280), Convection and Embroidery (871).

¹⁸ Jepara is agriculture district with rice as its staple crop and corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, peanut, soybean and mung bean as its second crop.

¹⁹ Jepara plantation product is divided into Annual commodity (coconut and kapok), Seasonal commodity (cotton, clove, coffee, cacao, cashew, sugar cane, pepper and rubber) and Horticulture commodity (durian, rambutan, kedondong, mango, papaya, banana, star fruit, jackfruit, orange and pineapple).

²⁰ Jepara that has beach line along 72 km with catching sea area a proximally 1.500 km² has big potency in fishery sector, either shore or fresh water fishery. Such as Kerapu, Teripang and Windu shrimp that most is placed in Genting, Nyamuk, Parang and Kembar Island.

²¹ Jepara livestock is divided into big cattle and small cattle. The big cattle contains horse, cow and buffalo, but the small cattle contain sheep, pig, goat, and avian (bird, chicken and duck).

²² Jepara Government develops *Nature Tourism* : Sejuta Akar lake, Songgo Langit Waterfall, Tritip & Manik cave, Bandengan , Bondo , Empu Rancak, Kartini , Pungkruk and Teluk Awur beach, Karimun Jawa, Mandalika and Panjang Islands. *Cultural Tourism* : Jepara Anniversary, Flame war, Jembul Tulakan, Baratan and Lomban festival. *Religion Tourism* : Hian Thian Siang Tee Temple, Mosque and Mausoleum Mantingan. *History Tourism* : Portuguese Fortress, Kartini Museum, Regency Hall and Hermitage Sonder.

becomes unique pledge of Jepara economics. It is spread on close to Jepara sub district entirely,²³ except Karimunjawa. Most of Jepara society involve in the wood industry. They produce wood calligraphy carving, sculpture, antique, home and garden furniture in any design that the customer wants. They concentrate in the small and medium enterprises in villages. Many associated enterprises include the transportation, packing, shipping of the furniture, these too employ a number of the population. Even most of the largest firms are indigenous or European. Elsewhere in Indonesia, Chinese Indonesian firms dominate manufacturing.

According to Association of Indonesian Furniture and Handicrafts (ASMINDO) Jepara, in 2008 furniture and carving of Jepara was marketed in 110 countries and 248 firms. Amount of enterprise is 3.821 units and absorbs 50.668 employees. The production grade is reach Rp. 1, 2 billion, with infestation over Rp. 164 million. While, the export value reaches about US\$ 109.886.544, 23 or it experiences of increasing equal to 5, 51%. Thus, the trade has brought considerable prosperity to Jepara well above the average for Central Java.²⁴

B. The Existence of Wood Calligraphy Carving in Jepara

1. The Origin of Wood Calligraphy Carving in Jepara

Calligraphy is a primary form of art for Islamic visual expression and creativity. It is given pride of place on all kinds of objects, objects of everyday use as well as entire wall surfaces, mosque furniture, the interiors and exteriors of mosques, tombs, and al-Ka'ba, the most famous sanctuary of Islam. Like wise for Jepara society, calligraphy get a high place in their

²³ Jepara breaks down into 16 districts (Kedung, Pecangaan, Kalinyamatan, Welahan, Mayong, Nalumsari, Batealit, Tahunan, Jepara, Mlonggo, Pakis Aji, Bangsri, Kembang, Keling, Donorojo, Karimunjawa).

²⁴ *Jepara in Figures 2008/2009. op. cit. p.*

hearts, it is carved on wood and stuck on their houses walls, mosques, schools and offices. It was being known since Islam arrived in Jepara.

Wood calligraphy carving is taught in Jepara firstly by Tjie Hwio Gwan.²⁵ He was beginning to teaching Jepara society when Sultan Hadlirin (1536-1549)²⁶ asked him to decorate Mantingan mosque that built in 1559. Firstly, he used white stone (tufa) of the site old of Hindu temple as material of carving²⁷, but after along time tufa is so difficult to be found in Jepara, so he changed it to teak wood that easy to be found.²⁸ Because of his skill, Jepara society gave him a nick name “*Sungging Badar Dhuwung*” that’s mean who make beautiful carving.²⁹

Wood calligraphy carving that created and developed by Tjie Hwio Gwan indicated merger of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic carving. Basically both are same, both created for religious purpose (means of worship). But because of thought of each religion is different, so do its visualization of

²⁵ Tjie Hwio Gwan is a Chinese who became foster father and teacher of Sultan Hadlirin. He comes to Jepara with his brother – Thae Ling Sing – to look for his foster son – Tjie Bin Thang / Sultan Hadlirin – when political conflict and war happened in China. After arriving at Jepara, he was appointed as vice regent by Sultan Hadlirin, whereas Thae Ling Sing becomes a partner of Sunan Kudus in missionary endeavor, he most known as Kyai Telingsing.

²⁶ There are various versions about Sultan Hadlirin origin. Community Jepara mention its real name is Win-tang, a Chinese merchant who had an accident at sea. He was stranded on the coast of Jepara, and then sits under **Sunan Kudus**. Another version, Win-tang comes from Aceh. His real name is Prince Toyib, son of Shah **Sultan Mughayat** king of Aceh (1514-1528). Toyib traveled to China and became the adopted son of a minister named Tjie Hwio Gwan. Win-tang name is spelled Java to Tjie Bin Thang, the new name Toyib. Win-tang and his adopted father then moved to Java. There Win-tang Kalinyamat founded the village, so he was known as the Prince Kalinyamat. He managed to marry the daughter of the regent of Jepara Retna Kencana, so that his wife was later dubbed the Queen Kalinyamat. Since then, Prince Kalinyamat a family member holds the Sultanate of Demak and Prince attend. Prince and Queen Kalinyamat govern together in Jepara. He then was called “*Sultan Hadlirin*” and throned as ‘*Adipati Jepara*’ until he passed away and finally was buried beside the Mosque which he had built. In the graveyard area, his wife, and his vice regent - Tjie Hwio Gwan – also Abd al Jalil (Syeikh Siti Jenar) was buried.

²⁷ Hayati, C, *Ratu Kalinyamat: Biografi Tokoh Wanita Abad XVI dari Jepara*, (Jepara: Jepara Regional Government, Central Social Culture Research, Undip and Jeda Research Institution, 2007). p.90.

²⁸ At that time, teak wood was easy be found at Jatiserat, it is about 200m north of Belakang Gunung, borders area between Mulyoharjo and Bandengan.

²⁹ Haryadi, Kus, *Macan Kurung Belakang Gunung*, (Jepara: Pemerintah Kabupaten Jepara, 2010), p.14

works. Hindu-Buddhist carving more put forward icons of creature life – human and animal – naturally, such statue or reliefs in temple, whereas Badhar Dhuwung carving more avoid even omit icons of creature life. He carves creature life obscurely. He stilitate it in Arabic calligraphy form, that called by *memet* carving. It can be found at Mantingan grave and mosque wall.



Tjie Hwio Gwan (Sunggir Badhar Dhuwung) carving on Mantingan Mosque
(Courtesy of Tourism Information Jepara. tjic_jepara@yahoo.co.id)

Furthermore, wood calligraphy carving was developed by Queen Kalinyamat (1549-1579)³⁰ and continued by R.A. Kartini (1879-1904). Kartini encouraged local craftsmen to produce carving in many designs and forms. She encouraged them to develop small and saleable products. They not only produced wood calligraphy carving, but also little boxes, picture frames and chess set. Unpainted screens and duplicated and modified European classic furniture's (Baroc and Rococo) in turn are also carved in

³⁰Queen Kalinyamat has a great contribution in enculturating calligraphy and wood carving which is now become the highest contribution for economic in Jepara. Its motive is Majapahit wood carved motive mixed with Chinese motive, since Pangeran Hadirin used to study there. Queen Kalinyamat is very powerful and rich. Under her leading, Jepara become a prosperous country, well known and strength. She made Jepara rapidly grow not only as the main commercial port in Java Island, but also as naval basis either. It was not excessive if Portuguese called her as "*De Krange Dame*", meaning " A Grave-Strong Women", and a Portuguese writer, De Ceuto called her in his book "*Da Asia*" as "*Rainha De Jepara, Senora Pade Rosa De Rica*" that means the Queen of Jepara is very powerful and rich.

teak, mahogany, and ebony in this region. She bought it to Semarang and Batavia (Jakarta) and also gave it to her friends in abroad as souvenirs. She also allowed Jepara carve art in *Nationale Tentoonstelling voor Vrouwenarbeid*, Pameran Nasional Karya Wanita in Den Haag, so that Jepara wood carving is famous, not only in Nusantara but also in Holland and others. To appreciate Kartini's struggle in developing Jepara wood carving, Jepara government built "*Openbare Ambachtsschool*", a trade school with furniture and carves department on 1 July 1929 that nowadays it is known as Senior Industry High School.³¹

In its later development, wood calligraphy carving is developed by H. Mudzakir, a famous Jepara calligrapher. He started to carve wood calligraphy carving on 1967. In the beginning, he carved in *Thuluth* style which has monumental characteristic and appropriate for decoration purpose, but after getting good enthusiastic from public when he allowed his wood calligraphy carving in Calligraphy Exhibition in Semarang (1970), he invited his neighbors to carve in other styles (*Diwani*, *Naskhi* and *Khufi*). And finally, from year to year, wood calligraphy carving more and more developed. It is had spread to entire Jepara, even national and international. It is displayed in line shops along Tahunan Street. It most has produced in Kecapi, Mulyoharjo, Kawak and Jambu, and exported to Malaysia, Brunei, Saudi Arabia and Middle East.³²

2. Wood Calligraphy Carving in Jepara Society Life

Calligraphy is a highest art in Islam that get high place in most of Muslims hearts. It is be adorned and stuck on entire wall surfaces, include houses, mosques, schools, offices, tombs, even on cars. The form and style are so various. It can be painted or drawn on paper, canvas or leather, or

³¹Gustami, S.P, *Seni Kerajinan Mebel Ukir Jepara*, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999). p. 114, or see also Chaniago, Ira, *Raden Ajeng Kartini - A Pioneer of Women's Education in Indonesia*, (University of New England Website, http://www.une.edu.au/unepa/Gradpost/gp_9.3web.pdf). was accessed on December, 10th 2009.

³²Interview with H. Mudzakir in his house at Jl. Pemuda No. 94 Jepara, on 23th November 2009.

carved on stone, mosaic, metal, ceramic or wood. Although it is debatable, most of Jepara Muslims carvers believe that carve imitation of creature life, either human or animal is forbidden in Islam.³³ Even, God will ask a responsibility to give spirit from whoever carves it in Judgment Day later.³⁴ So for solving this problem, Jepara Muslims carvers decide to left things

³³In early Islam, Arabian just delivered from their ancestor faith that is embracing idol. In order to make them don't back to their old faith, Islam forbids them to make and have sculpture or figural images. Islamic leaders such al Tsauri, Malik, Abu Hanifah and Imam al Nawawi said that making sculpture or figural images is a big sin and forbidden hardly, because it resembles Allah creatures and a possible implication of idolatry, as the Qur'an and Hadith says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ لِأَزَرَ اتَّخَذُ أَصْنَامًا لِهَيْبَةِ، إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (الأنعام: 74)

“And remember when Ibrahim say to his father Azar: Is it wonder to you to make idols as your God? Actually I look at you and your clan was in real losing (6:74)”.

حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ مُقَاتِلٍ ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ، أَخْبَرَنَا مَعْمَرٌ ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ ابْنَ عَبَّاسٍ ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا يَقُولُ : سَمِعْتُ أَبَا طَلْحَةَ يَقُولُ : سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ : لَا تَدْخُلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ بَيْتًا فِيهِ كَلْبٌ ، وَلَا صُورَةٌ تَمَاتِيلٌ . فِي رِوَايَةٍ أُخْرَى قِيلَ وَلَا جُنُبٌ .

“Narrated to me ibn Muqothil, narrated to me Abdullah, narrated to me Ma'mar, from az Zuhri from Ubaidillah ibn Abdillah, actually he hears that Ibn Abbas says: I hear Abu Tholhah says: I hear the Prophet PBUH says: Angels doesn't enter into home that there are dog, picture and sculpture. But in other hadith said and also impure person.”

See Bukhori, *al Jami'asShohih*, (Kairo: Dar a Sy'ab, 1987), v. 4, p. 138, or see also al Baihaqi, *Sunan al Baihaqi*, (Mecca: Dar al Baz, 1994), v. 1, p. 201, al Nasa'i, *Sunan an Nasa'i*, (Halb: Maktab al Mathbu'at al Islamiyah, 1986), v. 1, p. 141, Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abi Dawud* (Beirut: Dar al Kutub al 'Araby), v. 1, p. 90 and v. 4, p. 72, Muslim, *Shohih Muslim*, (Beirut: Dar al Afaq al Jadidah), v. 6, p. 157, or Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal*, (Kairo: Muassasah al Qurthubah), v. 4, p. 29.

But lately Contemporary Islamic scholars such Muhammad Abduh and Syekh Muhammad al Thahir have opinion that Islam forbid his followers to create and have sculpture or figural images is caused by implication of idolatry or polytheism, not caused by badness of sculpture or figural images itself. Creating sculpture, carving idol, drawing or painting figural images is allowed for art or beauty purpose only. They base their opinion on Allah says:

يعملون له ما يشاء من محاريب وتماتيل (سبأ:13)

“Jinns made for Sulaiman AS whatever he want, multistoried buildings and idols (34:13)”.

إِنِّي أَخْلَقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفِخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ (ال عمران:49)

“I make for you what came from soil that is form as a bird than I blow it, so it becomes a bird by Allah permission (3:49).

See Shihab, M. Quraisy, *Wawasan Al Qur'an:Tafsir Maudhu'I atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1994). p. 393-394, and see also Isa, Ahmad Muhammad, “*Muslim dan Tashwir*” dalam M.Abdul Jabbar Beg, (ed), *Seni di dalam Peradaban Islam*, trans. Yustiono and Edy Sutrisno, (Bandung: Pustaka, 1988), Printd. 1, p. 44.

³⁴حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ الْمُنْذِرِ ، حَدَّثَنَا أَنَسُ بْنُ عِيَاضٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ نَافِعٍ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عَبَّاسٍ ، رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَصْنَعُونَ هَذِهِ الصُّوَرَ يُعَذَّبُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُقَالُ لَهُمْ أَخْبِرُوا مَا خَلَقْتُمْ .

“Narrated to me Ibrahim ibn Mundzir, narrated to me Anas ibn 'Iyadl from 'Ubaidillah from Nafi', actually Abdullah ibn Umar RA narrated to him that actually the Prophet PBUH said: who make this picture will be punished in hereafter and will be said to them “revive what you have made”.

See Bukhori, *al Jami'al Shohih*, (Kairo: Dar a Sy'ab, 1987), v.7, p. 215.

that contradicted with Islamic teaching and defend or develop things that appropriate with it. To channels their desire in carve creature life or sculpture, they carve it in imperfect form. They scratch their neck sculpture and disroot its genitals, as done by Kawak and Gudang Sawo carvers. But part of them prefers to disguise it in *memet* carving or Arabic calligraphy carving. They carve it on teak, mahogany, ebony and others. According to them, wood calligraphy carving is not forbidden in Islam, but it is recommended and supported by the Qur'an and Hadith.

Based on observation result, most of Jepara industrialists prefer to splash around in wood calligraphy carving industry is based on economic purpose. Most of them produce wood calligraphy carving just for making a living or meeting their prime needs. They produce wood calligraphy carving that will give them profit for their daily life directly. They produce it based on buyer or customer order. The kind of verse, style and size are determined by customer, buyer or market. It is go well with Andi,³⁵Suroso,³⁶and Sutrimo³⁷ avowals. They produce wood calligraphy carving just to meet their family needs. They do not understand about calligraphy comprehensively, evenless the meaning or message of verses that carved.

In writing, calligraphy industrialist usually order to calligraphers (*al khotthoth*) who expert in calligraphy writing rules and understand about message or meaning of verses that they written. According to them, calligraphy is visual form of the Qur'an. Thus, as same as the Qur'an, wood calligraphy carving should be treated with enormous reference. Before

³⁵ A calligraphy industrialist who has ANDI CALLIGRAPHY enterprise that located on Kawak, NA 04 CA I, Pakis Aji, Jepara.

³⁶ A calligraphy industrialist who has MEGA CALLIGRAPHY enterprise that located on Wonorejo, NA 12 CA III, Jepara.

³⁷ A calligraphy industrialist who has TRIMO CALLIGRAPHY enterprise that located on Kawak, NA 05 CA I, Pakis Aji, Jepara.

sketching or writing, usually they take ablution, and during sketching process, they keep their purity.³⁸

Meanwhile in carving, usually calligraphy industrialist hand it over to carvers who expert in it but so do them. Most of them, carve calligraphy just for making a living without understand about the meaning of verses that they carved. Jumadi, Mariyono, Jami'an and Joko³⁹ admit that they carve just based on guidance or rules of carving. They know what kind of verses that they carved, but they do not understand about the meaning or purpose of it. But differ with his friends, Ismanto and Widodo⁴⁰ admit that they choose to carve wood calligraphy carving based on their soul summon to get blessing of God trough immortalize Allah words in beauty. They hope their work can suggest who gaze it to thank to Allah grace, and lately inspire them to comprehend and practice what is carved on wood in their daily life. They have opinion that the form of wood calligraphy carving that scratched trough any points is a symbol or expression of art that make eye and heart fairly quivered. Whoever gaze it will feel peace and fall in love immediately. It saves souls trough its beauty. It moves the very depth of the soul of even those Muslim who do not know Arabic and do not comprehend the message of what written. It is all the same to Nur Ali,⁴¹ Maghfur⁴² and Imam Sofyan⁴³ admission. They admit that after occupying their selves in wood calligraphy industry, they get many blessings from God. Although his

³⁸ Interview with Hariri (a calligrapher) in his house at Jl. Sukarno Hatta NA 03 CA III, Kauman, Tahunan, Jepara, and Sholichan (a calligrapher) at Jl. Slentreng No. 04 NA 03 CA XIII on December, 20th 2009.

³⁹ They are Nur Ali, Andi and Mr. Trimo carvers.

⁴⁰ Ismanto is one of Nur Ali carvers who expert in carving sculpture before carving calligraphy. He blew off after studying Islam with a teacher (KH. Murtadlo) in 2006.

⁴¹ A calligraphy industrialist who has BERKAH CALLIGRAPHY enterprise that located on Jambu, NA 25 CA III, Mlonggo, Jepara.

⁴² The owner of MR. AL HIKMAH shop that located on Jl. Sukarno Hatta NA 05 CA III, Kauman, Tahunan, Jepara.

⁴³ The owner of LATIF JATI shop that located on Jl. Sukarno Hatta NA 05 CA III, Kauman, Tahunan, Jepara.

earning per month is not too much, but they and family feel peace of mind and fairly satisfied.

Beside carve, produce and sell to others, part of Jepara society also stick wood calligraphy carving on their houses walls. They get it from gift of friends, carve by themselves, buy in calligraphy shops or order to calligraphy industrialist directly. They do not stick it in any old way, but they have certain purposes, that is for life style, showing their identity (faith and grade) to others, fitting out and beautifying their house, and begging Allah blessings and protecting their houses from illness or evil eye.

H. Syafi'i, one of Tahunan citizens assert that he sticks wood calligraphy carving for beautifying their house and showing to others that he is a Muslim. He does not care about the kind of verse. The important for him is the price is reached (cheap), what is carved on wood is Arabic, and the form, style and design are beautiful and suit with his house.⁴⁴ Differ from Syafi'I, Mr. Zaky Mubarrak stick Yasin chapter and "*My Lord! Forgive me and my parents and him who enters my house believing, and the believing men and the believing women (71:28)*" on front of door just for life style. He sticks it just following his environment. In fact, most of his neighbors stick it on their houses wall. For him, the kind of verses is not important. The important for him is the design is so beautiful, lux and elegant.⁴⁵

Whereas Hj. Alfiyah Masrurotun S. Pdi admit that she stick "*whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will make for him an outlet, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not (65: 2-3)*" for begging Allah blessing, and also the verses of the Throne (Ayat al Kursi (2: 255)) for protecting her family (the inhabitants) from illness or evil eye. She asserts that before sticking both verses, her shop is slack of customers and her youngest son

⁴⁴ Interview with Syafi'I in his house that located at Jl. Sukarno Hatta NA 03 CA III, Kauman, Tahunan, Jepara, on January, 10st 2010.

⁴⁵ Interview with Zaky Mubarak in his house that located at Jambu Barat, NA 40 CA VIII, Mlonggo Jepara.

(Mekki al Madani) often sick and cried caused by his frightened. But after sticking both, her youngest son always looked happy and her shop often visited by customer.⁴⁶ For begging peace and safety from Allah, either for the inhabitant or who enter her house, Hj. Luluk Wafikhiyah stick “*Please enter with peace and safety (15:46)*”. She assert that during stick it on their houses wall, both feel comfort, peace and secure.⁴⁷

Moreover, H. Mamik stick “*This is an outcome of my Sustainer’s bounty (27: 40)*” on his houses walls to ward off any evil intention (be it robbery or envy) and “*And actually Kafir are really almost derailing you with their eyes when they hear the Qur’an, and then say: Actually Muhammad is a crazyman (68:51)* for stimulating well sell (*penglaris*). He sticks it based on his teacher (Kyai) guidance. According to him, before sticking those verses on his house wall, his house often robbed (4 times in 1 year), but after sticking it, his house is quite and secure, and his restaurant is so crowded.⁴⁸

Generally most of wood calligraphy carving that stuck by Jepara society on their house are used *Thuluth* style, the readable and suitable style for ornament or decoration purpose. But beside that, *Naskhi*, *Khufi* and *Diwany* also became choice. Whereas the words that used are:

1. Allah-Muhammad, and the profession of faith in Islam (*syahadatain*)



Syahadatain in Thuluth

⁴⁶ Interview with Hj. Alfiah Masrurrotun (wife of Drs. H. Ahmad Barowi TM, M. Ag, third vice rector of INISNU Jepara) in her house at Bulungan, NA 07 CA V, Pakis Aji, Jepara, on January, 10th 2010.

⁴⁷ Interview with Hj. Luluk Wafikhiyah in her house that located at Jl. Raya Jepara- Bangsri Km. 12 Mlonggo, Jepara, on January 11st 2010

⁴⁸ Interview with H. Mamik, the owner of MDAH MURI restaurant that located at Jl. Raya Jepara- Bangsri Km. 15, NA 01 CA XIII Bangsri, Jepara, on January 10th 2010.

2. Asmaul Husna



Asmaul Husna in Thuluth style

3. Surah Al Fatihah



Surah al Fatihah in Thuluth and Naskh style

4. Surah Al Iklash



Surah Al Iklash in Khufi and Thuluth style.

5. Surah At Thalaq: 2-3



"Whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will make for him an outlet, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not (65:2-3)" in Thuluth.

6. Ayat Kursi, The verses of the throne (2:255)



Ayat Kursi in Thuluth style