

## The Symbols of Inculturation and Interfaith in The Demak's Great Mosque

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### Abstract

*This research presents a reinterpretation of the Lawang Bledheg ornamentation found in the Great Mosque of Demak, Central Java, Indonesia. The study explores the profound connections between architectural ornamentation and the message conveyed in the referenced Quranic verses through an interdisciplinary approach combining aesthetic and symbolic analysis. By conducting on-site observations, examining historical records, and analyzing Islamic artistic conventions, the research unveils the symbolic meanings embedded within the Lawang Bledheg ornaments. The findings demonstrate that the ornaments represent a fusion of local Javanese artistic traditions and Islamic influences, creating a unique cultural synthesis. The research also highlights the symbolism of unity, tolerance, and religious harmony depicted through the motifs, patterns, and decorative elements of the Lawang Bledheg ornament. These symbols resonate with the themes present in Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136, emphasizing the inclusive nature of the Great Mosque of Demak as a sacred space. By shedding light on the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the Lawang Bledheg ornamentation, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the mosque's cultural significance, encourages interfaith dialogue, and inspires contemporary*

*architectural designs. The findings enrich art history, architecture, and religious studies, offering valuable insights into the intricate relationship between art, spirituality, and cultural heritage.*

**Keywords:** Reinterpretation, Lawang Bledheg, QS Ali Imron, Ornament, Cultural Heritage

## Introduction

The *Lawang Bledheg* gate is a significant architectural element of the great Demak mosque, showcasing intricate and symbolic ornamentation. However, the specific meanings and interpretations behind these ornaments about the referenced verses of the Quran have not been extensively explored. By examining the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation and its connection to Surah Ali Imran, this paper aims to shed light on the potentially more profound meanings and conceptual relationships embedded within the design. Understanding these connections can provide valuable insights into the historical and cultural context of the mosque, as well as the religious symbolism expressed through its architecture.<sup>1</sup> The paper aims to contribute to art history, Islamic architecture, and religious studies. It seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis bridging the gap between ornamental design, textual interpretation, and religious symbolism, thereby enriching our understanding of the mosque's significance and

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<sup>1</sup> Salura, P., Clarissa, S., Reginaldo, & Lake, R. (2020). Reflecting the Spirit of Modern-Indonesia through Architecture: The Icono-Symbolical Meanings of Jengki Architectural Style Case Studies: Bandung Polytechnic of Health Building and Bumi Sangkuriang Meeting Hall in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. *Journal of Design and the Built Environment*, 20(2):13-26. doi: 10.22452/JDBE.VOL20NO2.2

connection to Surah Ali Imran.

For several reasons, it is necessary to research the reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation about Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136. The Great Mosque of Demak is an essential cultural and historical site in Indonesia. Researching the ornamental design helps to preserve and document this valuable cultural heritage for future generations. Ornamental architectural designs often hold symbolic meanings and reflect the beliefs and values of a community. Investigating the symbolism behind the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation can provide insights into the mosque's construction's religious, social, and cultural contexts.

Surah Ali Imran is a significant chapter of the Quran, and understanding its verses about the mosque's ornamentation can offer new insights into the interpretation and application of religious texts in architectural design. Researching the connection between Islamic scripture and architectural ornamentation fosters dialogue and understanding between different communities, promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue. The reinterpretation of traditional ornamentation can inspire contemporary architectural designs incorporating cultural and symbolic elements.<sup>2</sup>

This research can be a foundation for creating innovative and meaningful designs reflecting tradition and modernity. Overall, research in this area is essential to deepen our understanding of the historical, cultural, and religious significance of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in the Great Mosque of Demak, providing valuable insights for academia,

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<sup>2</sup> Supatmo & Syafii. (2019). Nilai Multukultural Ornamen Tradisional Masjid-Masjid Warisan Para Wali di Pesisir Utara Jawa. *Imajinasi: Jurnal Seni*, 13(2), 1-14.

preservation efforts, and the broader community.<sup>3</sup>

The relevance of researching the reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in connection to Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136 lies in its interdisciplinary significance and potential impact in various domains.<sup>4</sup> This research contributes to art history and architectural studies by examining the symbolism and aesthetic aspects of the Lawang Bledheg ornamentation. It enhances our understanding of Islamic architectural traditions and their integration with religious texts, shedding light on the cultural and historical significance of the Great Mosque of Demak. The exploration of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation about Surah Ali Imran offers insights into the interpretation and application of religious texts in architectural design. It deepens our understanding of the interplay between religious beliefs, artistic expression, and sacred spaces, providing a broader perspective on the relationship between faith and architecture.<sup>5</sup>

The Great Mosque of Demak is an important cultural heritage site in Indonesia. By researching and documenting the symbolic meanings of its ornamentation.<sup>6</sup> This study contributes

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<sup>3</sup> Radiusman., Novitasari, S., Nurmawanti, I., Fauzi, A., & Simanjuntak, M. (2021). Ethnomathematics: Mathematical values in Masjid Agung Demak. AIP Conference Proceedings, 2331(1):020031. doi:10.1063/5.0041639

<sup>4</sup> Sunarsa, S. (2019). Tafsir theory; study on al-Qur'an methods and records. (teori tafsir; kajian tentang metode dan corak tafsir al-qur'an). *Al-Afkar: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2(1):247–259. doi:10.31943/AFKAR\_JOURNAL.V3I1.67

<sup>5</sup> Supatmo. (2016). Keragaman Seni Hias Bangunan Bersejarah Masjid Agung Demak. *Imajinasi: Jurnal Seni*, 10(2):107–120. doi: 10.15294/IMAJINASI.V10I2.8805

<sup>6</sup> Rezazade, H. (2021). Visual and Structural Analysis of Fractal Geometry in the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque Ornaments (Isfahan-Iran). *International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development*, 11(1):71-82. doi: 10.30495/IJAUD.2021.16769

to preserving and promoting cultural heritage, ensuring the continued appreciation and understanding of this architectural masterpiece. Investigating the connections between the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation and Surah Ali Imran promotes interfaith dialogue and understanding. It highlights the shared artistic and spiritual values across different religious traditions, fostering greater appreciation and respect for diverse cultural and religious expressions. The reinterpretation of traditional ornamentation can inspire contemporary architectural designs incorporating cultural and symbolic elements. By uncovering the meanings and symbolism behind the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation, this research provides a foundation for architects and designers to create meaningful and contextually rich architectural works that bridge tradition and modernity.

The research aims to bridge the gap between art history, architecture, and religious studies, fostering interdisciplinary connections and dialogue. The goal of exploring the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation and its connection to Surah Ali Imran is to create a space for collaboration and exchange of ideas among scholars and researchers from various disciplines. The research aims to inspire and inform contemporary architectural design. The goal of uncovering the symbolic meanings and reinterpretations of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation is to inspire insights for architects and designers seeking to incorporate cultural and symbolic elements into their contemporary works. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to contribute to knowledge, preservation, and appreciation, enabling a deeper understanding of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation, its connection to Surah Ali Imran, and its broader significance within the realms of art, architecture, religion, and cultural heritage.

## Method

The following methods are employed to research the reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in connection to Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to gather relevant information on the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation, the Great Mosque of Demak, Surah Ali Imran, and related scholarly works. This helps establish a foundation of knowledge and identify existing interpretations and research gaps. The researcher also visited the Great Mosque of Demak to observe and document the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation firsthand.

Second, the iconographic and symbolic elements within the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation should be analyzed.<sup>7</sup> At this step, the research will identify and interpret the motifs, patterns, and decorative elements present, considering their potential connections to the themes, messages, and symbolism in Surah Ali Imran. Here, the researcher would compare and analyze similar ornamental designs in other Islamic architecture or artistic traditions to identify potential influences and contextualize the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation within a broader cultural and artistic framework.

Third, exploring the Great Mosque of Demak's historical and cultural context and construction. By exploring historical records, architectural documentation, local narratives, and cultural practices, we can understand the socio-cultural milieu in which the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation was created.<sup>8</sup> Fourth,

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<sup>7</sup> Ashadi. (2020). Pendhapa Natabratan: Symbolic Meaning of the Javanese House in Demak, Indonesia. *International Journal of Architecture Arts and Applications*, 6(3):39-. doi: 10.11648/J.IJAAA.20200603.12

<sup>8</sup> Sayida, E. F. (2020). Syal Bermotif Dengan Inspirasi Pintu Bledheg Masjid Agung Demak Dengan Teknik Printing (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Mercu Buana Jakarta).

the findings from the Quranic analysis, iconographic and symbolic analysis.<sup>9</sup> Comparative analysis, and historical context should be integrated to develop an interpretive synthesis. Identify the potential connections and meanings between the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation and Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136, considering cultural, religious, and historical considerations.

## Result and Discussion

### A Brief History of the Lawang Bledheg

According to the story from various versions and manuscripts, the *bledheg* door was made by Ki Ageng Selo.<sup>10</sup> Lightning or *bledheg* struck the rice fields, causing villagers in the fields to save themselves. However, Ki Ageng Selo continued to hoe the rice fields. Suddenly, lightning appeared from the sky to strike Ki Ageng. Lightning is said to take the form of an older man. He immediately caught the lightning. By Ki Ageng Selo, the lightning was tied to the *Gandrik* tree.<sup>11</sup>

He went to Demak the next day, and "*bledheg*" was presented to Sultan Trenggana in Demak. Sultan Trenggana placed "*bledheg*" in a strong iron grate in the middle of the square. Many people came to see the "*bledheg*" meaning. At that time, an older woman came with a jug of water. The water was given to the "*bledheg*" grandfather, who drank it. After drinking, there was a deafening roar. At the same time, the "*bledheg*" grandfather and grandmother disappeared, while the iron bars

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<sup>9</sup> Beranger, B., Lin, H., & Sisson, S. (2018). New models for symbolic data analysis. *Advances in Data Analysis and Classification*. 17(3). pp. 659 – 699.

<sup>10</sup> Sabiq, F. (2021). *Karakteristik Dan Mitos Masjid Agung Peninggalan Kerajaan Islam Di Jawa*. Penerbit Adab.

<sup>11</sup> Munnah, S., Nuha, S., Wardani, L., Fatmawati, L., & Kanzunnudin, M. (2023). Analisis Nilai Budaya terhadap Cerita Rakyat "Lawang Bledheg" di Masjid Agung Demak. *Jurnal PENDAS* (Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar), 5(1), 1-8.

that held the "bledheg" grandfather were shattered. A lightning image was made on a carved piece of wood the size of a mosque's door to commemorate this incident. Then, they handed it over to Ki Ageng Selo. Ki Ageng Selo happily accepted it and installed it at the front door of the Demak mosque.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Iconographic and Symbolic Analysis of the *Lawang Bledheg* Ornaments**

Supatmo<sup>13</sup> states that the identified motifs, patterns, and decorative elements and the potential symbolic meaning of *Lawang Bledheg* are connected with Surah Ali Imran. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis comparing the ornament with a particular verse in the Quran would be valuable. According to Maleki,<sup>14</sup> the comparative analysis highlights similarities or influences from other Islamic architectural designs or artistic traditions. The cultural and artistic connections contribute to interpreting the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation.

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<sup>12</sup> Ramadhana, D. & Dharoko, A. (2018). Ruang Sakral Dan Profan Dalam Arsitektur Masjid Agung Demak, Jawa Tengah. *Inersia*, 14(1):13-25. doi: 10.21831/INERSIA.V14I1.19491

<sup>13</sup> Supatmo. (2018). Ikonografi Ornamen Lawang Bledheg Masjid Agung Demak. *Imajinasi: Jurnal Seni*, 12(2):105-116. doi: 10.15294/IMAJINASI.V12I2.17469

<sup>14</sup> Shishavan, M.K. & Maleki, R. (2018). Comparative Study of Symbol: Iranian Contemporary Architecture and Seljuk (Case Study: Tombes). *International Journal of Architecture and Urban Development*, 30(8):33-50.



**Figure 1.** The Lawang Bledheg Ornament



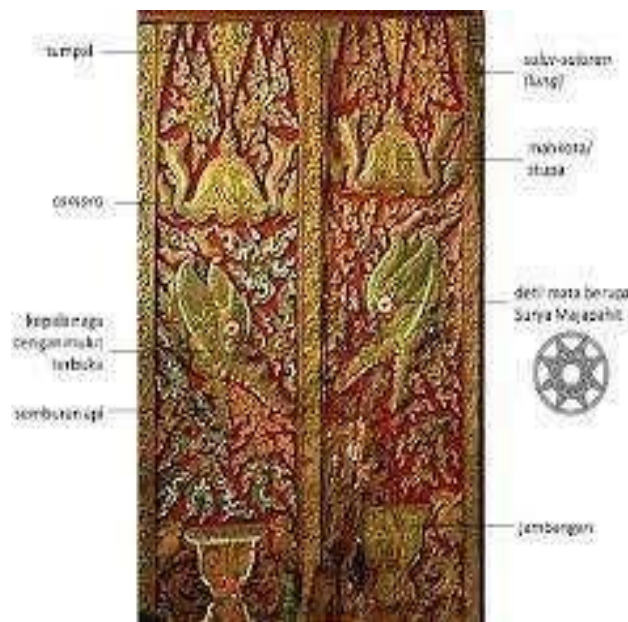
The crown carving on *Lawang Bledheg* at the Great Mosque of Demak has several symbolic meanings that can be interpreted depending on the context of local culture, history and traditions. The following are some common meanings associated with the carved crown symbol. The crown is often associated with a symbol of power and authority. As a symbol of rulership or leadership, the crown represents authority and high status. In *Lawang Bledheg*, the crown carving means that a mosque is a holy place respected and governed by the ruler or leader, represented by the crown symbol. The crown is also often associated with nobility or the royal family lineage. In some traditions, the crown is used to identify members of the royal family or descendants of the nobility who have certain inheritance rights and privileges.

The crown carving on *Lawang Bledheg* can refer to the status or lineage of the royal family related to the history of Demak.<sup>15</sup> Crowns are often seen as a symbol of nobility and

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<sup>15</sup> Pataruka, M. (2018). 'Ngalab berkah' pada ruang ritual tradisi dan

splendour. In *Lawang Bledheg*, the carving of a crown can symbolize the glory and majesty of religion, showing the greatness of Allah and His presence in the mosque. The crown can also represent the majesty and greatness of the kingdom or community associated with the mosque. Crowns can also have spiritual meaning and refer to spiritual awakening. The crown is often associated with a higher spiritual level, increased self-awareness and inner enlightenment. In *Lawang Bledheg*, the carving of a crown can symbolize efforts to achieve a higher spiritual awareness and achieve spiritual awakening through worship and devotion to God.



The stylized plant tendrils on *Lawang Bledheg* have several symbolic meanings that can be interpreted. The following are some common meanings associated with carving tendrils:

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religi masjid agung Demak. *Jurnal Arsitektur Zonasi*, 1(2):87–95. doi: 10.17509/JAZ.V1I2.12394

Plant tendrils are often associated with balance and sustainable life symbols. Plants naturally grow and develop with their strength and vitality. In *Lawang Bledheg*, the carving of plant tendrils can refer to harmony and balance in life and the importance of maintaining harmony with nature and the environment. The tendrils often symbolizes prosperity and fertility. Lush and diverse plants are a symbol of nature's abundance and fertility. Carving of plant tendrils on *Lawang Bledheg* can depict hopes for prosperity, abundance of fortune, and fertility in people's lives.

The tendrils can also symbolize peace and tranquillity. In nature, plants are often associated with a calming atmosphere and provide peace. Carving of plant tendrils on *Lawang Bledheg* can reflect the desire to achieve inner peace, peace of mind, and harmony in relationships with God and fellow human beings. Plant tendrils are often associated with the symbol of growth and development. Like a plant that grows orderly and orderly, the carving of plant tendrils on *Lawang Bledheg* can illustrate the hope for spiritual, intellectual and emotional growth that continues to develop. The tendrils of plants can also symbolize resurrection and immortality. In the plant life cycle, they can represent the ability to revive and continue through regeneration and reproduction. Carved tendrils on *Lawang Bledheg* may refer to belief in life after death and spiritual immortality.

The dragon head symbol on *Lawang Bledheg* has several symbolic meanings that can be interpreted. The following are some common meanings associated with the dragon head symbol. Dragon heads often symbolize strength and toughness. In various cultures, the dragon is considered a mythical creature that has extraordinary strength and is a symbol of courage. The dragon head on *Lawang Bledheg* can reflect the desire for strength and toughness in facing life's challenges. In some

cultures, dragons are also considered protective beings. Dragon heads are often depicted with fearsome teeth, giving the impression of strength that can protect against danger and threat. The dragon head symbol on *Lawang Bledheg* can symbolize protection and security for those who cross it.

In some traditions, the dragon is seen as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. The dragon head is often associated with deep understanding and peace of mind. In *Lawang Bledheg*, the dragon head symbol can refer to spiritual wisdom and higher understanding. The dragon head can also symbolize fun and creativity. In some mythological stories, dragons are associated with beauty and wonder. The dragon head symbol on *Lawang Bledheg* can describe the hope for fun and creativity that inspires in everyday life. In many cultures, dragons are considered beings connected to the supernatural and spiritual realms. The dragon head can symbolize the aspiration to reach a higher level of spirituality and experience transcendence.

The bowl symbol for *Lawang Bledheg* also has several symbolic meanings that can be interpreted. The following are some common meanings associated with the bowl symbol: The bowl is often associated with the symbol of purity and beauty. The bowl of the vase is a place to put fresh flowers, symbolizing the beauty of nature and life. This symbol reflects the desire to attain a state of purity and beauty both physically and spiritually. Flowers placed in a vase often give the impression of coolness and serenity. The bowl symbol on *Lawang Bledheg* can symbolize the desire to achieve peace of mind and a peaceful inner state. The bowl of the vase is also often used in religious ceremonies to purify oneself and contemplate life. This symbol can describe efforts to cleanse the mind and heart from negative things and deep reflection on spiritual values. Flowers placed in a vase are often seen as a symbol of happiness and joy. The bowl

of the vase *at Lawang Bledheg* can symbolize the hope for happiness, joy and a life full of blessings. The bowl of a vase can also symbolize acceptance and openness to the goodness and beauty surrounding you. This symbol teaches the importance of accepting and appreciating the beauty of nature and the good things that are given in life.

### **Lawang Bledheg Ornament through the Lens of Surah Ali Imran Verse 133-136**

Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136 describe the nature of pious people who get a great reward from Allah SWT. The following is the understanding of these verses. Verse 133: "Have hasten to seek forgiveness from your Lord and get a paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth prepared for those who are pious." This verse invites Muslims to immediately seek forgiveness from God and try to lead a pious life. Those who are pious will receive a vast paradise, covering the entire heavens and earth, as a reward for their piety and goodness.

Verse 134: "(namely) those who spend, both in the field and in the narrow, and those who hold back their anger and forgive (mistakes) of others. Allah loves those who do good." This verse describes the characteristics of a pious person. They tend to be generous and give alms both when they are in spacious and narrow circumstances. They can also control anger and forgive other people's mistakes. Allah SWT likes people who do these good deeds.

Verse 135: "And (also) those who, when they commit abominable deeds or wrong themselves, immediately remember Allah, then ask forgiveness for their sins, and who else can forgive their sins besides Allah? They also do not continue their actions sin, while they know." This verse describes the response

of pious people when they commit evil deeds or wrong themselves. They immediately remember Allah, ask for forgiveness for their sins and realize that only Allah can forgive them. They do not continue their sinful acts because they know their mistakes.

Verse 136: "Their reward will be forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow, they will abide therein. That is the best reward for those who do good deeds." This verse states that the reward for pious people is forgiveness from Allah SWT and paradise covered by the rivers that flow in it. They will live in that heaven forever. That is the best reward for those who do good deeds.

Understanding from Surah Ali Imran's Verses 133-136 underscores the importance of piety, good deeds, charity, controlling emotions, forgiving, asking for forgiveness, and avoiding evil deeds. These verses guide Muslims in living a pious life and achieving great rewards from Allah SWT. This understanding is related to the historical and cultural context of the Great Mosque of Demak. The historical records, architectural documentation, or local narratives provide insights into the purpose and significance of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation (Alamsyah, nd)—integrating the different analyses to develop an interpretive synthesis. The cohesive interpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in connection to Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136, considering the cultural, historical, symbolic, and textual dimensions. This includes visual representations such as diagrams, illustrations, or photographs to support the findings and interpretations visually.

The research reveals that the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation incorporates specific motifs and patterns that symbolize themes, resonating with the messages conveyed in

Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136. Some of the elements in the architectural symbols of *Lawang Bledheg* that align with the messages or values contained in the verses of the Quran Surah Ali Imran Verses 133-136 are as follows. The crown in *Lawang Bledheg* can be interpreted as a symbol of those who spent in free and narrow times, as mentioned in verse 134. The crown represents generosity and generosity by the value of giving in the verse. The tendrils carved in *Lawang Bledheg* can symbolize those who do good, as mentioned in verse 134. The tendrils symbolize growth and life and are symbols of good deeds and spiritual growth associated with piety. The dragon head in the *Lawang Bledheg* carvings can be interpreted as a symbol of people who can control their anger and forgive, as mentioned in verse 134. The scary dragon head symbolizes one's ability to control negative emotions and forgive others. The bowl in *Lawang Bledheg* can be interpreted as a symbol of people who can forgive other people's mistakes, as mentioned in verse 134. The bowl is a symbol of kindness, generosity and forgiveness.

In the entire *Lawang Bledheg*, through these elements, one can find a connection with the messages and values contained in the verses of the Quran, Surah Ali Imran Verses 133-136. *Lawang Bledheg* symbolically describes the qualities emphasized in the verse, such as spending, holding back anger, forgiving, doing good, and begging for forgiveness. Through the interpretation of these symbols, *Lawang Bledheg* becomes a visual representation that depicts the spiritual and moral values taught in the verses of the Koran (Bahodirjonovna, 2019). The study uncovered that the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation draws inspiration from Javanese artistic traditions, blending them with Islamic artistic conventions. This finding would highlight the fusion of local and Islamic influences in the mosque's design.

The concept of the Gate to Heaven describes how pious

people will receive forgiveness and enter heaven. This concept is represented in *Lawang Bledheg's* design, which depicts a gate that symbolizes heaven's entrance. In its design, *Lawang Bledheg* can be realized as a gate that presents visitors with a spiritual and transcendental atmosphere. These verses emphasize the values of piety, such as spending, holding back anger, forgiving, doing good, and begging for forgiveness. In *Lawang Bledheg's* design, these values can be symbolized through architectural elements that reflect generosity, spiritual growth, emotional control, and the ability to forgive. The ornaments in *Lawang Bledheg* can represent the concept of the verses. For example, through carvings depicting crowns, vines, dragon heads, or vases, one can create symbolic visualizations of the messages and values contained in the verses of the Koran. In *Lawang Bledheg's* design, creating an atmosphere that inspires and provides a spiritual experience for visitors was important. The use of the proper lighting, materials with aesthetic and artistic value, and spaces that provide calm and concentration can be part of the concept that represents the spiritual messages in these verses.

The research identifies the *Lawang Bledheg* gate as a significant architectural element that demarcates the transition from the outer world to the sacred space of the mosque. Its design could be found to evoke a sense of spiritual elevation and awe for worshippers entering the mosque. The study reveals historical records and cultural narratives that shed light on the construction of the Great Mosque of Demak and the purpose behind the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation. This finding would provide insights into the socio-cultural context and the aspirations of the builders. The research identifies specific verses, themes, or symbols from Surah Ali Imran that are directly reflected in the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation. These findings would demonstrate a deliberate integration of Quranic symbolism into



the architectural design.

The research findings on reinterpretation of the Lawang Bledheg ornamentation in connection to Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136 hold several essential implications and meanings. The findings suggest that the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation harmonizes local Javanese artistic traditions and Islamic architectural conventions. This highlights the cultural exchange and integration between religious and artistic influences, reflecting the region's multicultural heritage. The identified motifs and patterns in the ornamentation and the connections to Surah Ali Imran indicate a symbolic representation of unity, tolerance, and religious harmony. These findings emphasize the inclusive and egalitarian nature of the Great Mosque of Demak as a place of worship and community gathering.

The architectural and symbolic elements of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation signify the transition from the secular world to the sacred space of the mosque.<sup>16</sup> This finding highlights the spiritual significance of the gate, creating a transformative experience for worshippers as they enter the mosque to engage in prayer and contemplation.

### ***Lawang Bledheg* and the Symbol of Interfaith**

The reinterpretation of the ornament and its connections to Surah Ali Imran offer opportunities for interfaith dialogue and understanding. These findings promote mutual respect, dialogue, and cooperation among diverse communities by recognizing the shared symbolic language and values between religious traditions. The findings can serve as a source of inspiration for contemporary architects and designers. By understanding the

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<sup>16</sup> Azza, M.A.R. & Anisa. (2019). Kajian Arsitektur Simbolik Pada Bangunan Masjid. *Purwarupa: Jurnal Arsitektur*, 3(3):213-220.

symbolism and integration of cultural and religious elements in the *Lawang Bledheg* ornament, contemporary designs can draw upon these insights to create meaningful and contextually rich architectural works that bridge tradition and modernity. The research findings highlight the cultural, religious, and symbolic significance of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in the Great Mosque of Demak. They provide a deeper understanding of the interplay between art, architecture,<sup>17</sup> and religious texts, contributing to cultural preservation, interfaith dialogue, and the appreciation of the mosque as a symbol of unity, spirituality, and cultural heritage.<sup>18</sup>

The consequences or implications of the findings from the research on the reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in connection to Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136 can be far-reaching and impactful in various domains. The research findings contribute to the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage. By uncovering the symbolic meanings and historical context of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation, the research helps safeguard the cultural significance of the Great Mosque of Demak and its architectural elements for future generations—the reinterpretation of the ornamentation and its connections to Surah Ali Imran foster interfaith understanding and dialogue. The findings provide a platform for discussions on shared values, symbolism, and spiritual significance across religious traditions, promoting harmony, respect, and cooperation among faith communities.

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<sup>17</sup> Astakhova, E. (2020). Architectural symbolism in tradition and modernity. IOP Conference Series Materials Science and Engineering, 913(3):032024-. doi: 10.1088/1757-899X/913/3/032024

<sup>18</sup> Nurul, U. (2019). Too Many Meanings: Contestation of Lawang Sewu as a Heritage Tourism Attraction. Gadjah Mada Journal of Tourism Studies, 1(2):55-63. doi: 10.22146/GAMAJTS.V1I2.47475

The findings inspire contemporary architects and designers seeking to create meaningful and culturally rooted architectural designs. By understanding the integration of cultural and symbolic elements in the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation, architects can draw upon these insights to create contemporary designs that bridge tradition and modernity. The research deepens the appreciation and understanding of the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation. By uncovering the symbolism, motifs, and patterns, the findings enhance the artistic appreciation of the architectural elements, allowing for a richer interpretation of the visual and aesthetic aspects.<sup>19</sup> The research findings can have broader socio-cultural impacts, fostering a sense of pride and identity among local communities. By highlighting the cultural heritage and significance of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation, the findings contribute to preserving local traditions and reinforcing cultural identity.

The research findings can attract attention and interest from tourists and scholars alike. The reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation enhances its appeal as a cultural and historical attraction, promoting tourism and cultural exchange, thereby contributing to local economies.<sup>20</sup> The research findings make valuable contributions to academic knowledge and scholarship in art history, architecture, religious studies, and cultural heritage.<sup>21</sup> The reinterpretation adds new

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<sup>19</sup> Purbadi, Y.D., Lake, R.C., & Arinto, F.X.E. (2020). The Symbolic Regionalism on The Architectural Expression Design of Kupang Town Hall. *Journal of Design and the Built Environment*, 20(3):71–84. doi: 10.22452/JDBE.VOL20NO3.5

<sup>20</sup> Fitriani, R. & Wilardjo, S.B. (2018). Sadar wisata, kemenarikan fasilitas, jarak, pengaruhnya terhadap minat berkunjung kembali pada objek wisata masjid agung jawa tengah di kota semarang. *JWM: Jurnal Wawasan Manajemen*, 5(3):259-272. doi: 10.20527/JWM.V5I3.121

<sup>21</sup> Senoprabowo, A., Laksana, D.A.W, & Putra, T.P. (2020). Inovasi

insights and perspectives to existing literature, paving the way for further research and exploration in related areas. Overall, the consequences or implications of the research findings extend to cultural preservation, religious understanding, architectural practice, artistic appreciation, socio-cultural impacts, tourism, and academic contributions. These implications have the potential to positively impact communities, foster dialogue, and contribute to the broader understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage and religious symbolism.

Several aspects still need to be discovered, and further research is required regarding the reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation in connection to Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136. The historical context of the construction of the *Lawang Bledheg* gate and its ornamentation remains to be fully explored. Research is needed to uncover historical records, architectural documentation, and cultural narratives that provide insights into the intention and purpose behind the ornamental choices.

Different interpretations of Surah Ali Imran verses 133-136 exist within Islamic scholarship. Further research could explore how these variations in interpretation may affect the understanding and reinterpretation of the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation about the specific verses.<sup>22</sup> The influences and cultural references incorporated into the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation still need to be explored. Research could delve into the cultural and artistic influences that shaped the design,

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Ornamen Masjid Agung Demak Untuk Motif Batik Kontemporer Khas Demak. *Ars: Jurnal Seni Rupa dan Desain*, 23(2), 118-127. doi:10.24821/ars.v23i2.4097

<sup>22</sup> Marlion, F.A. & Wijayanti, T.Y. (2019). Makna Ayat-ayat Perumpamaan Di dalam Surat Ali Imran. *An-Nida*, 43(2):1-19. doi: 10.24014/AN-NIDA.V43I2.12320

including local Javanese traditions, Islamic artistic conventions, and potential cross-cultural influences. The role of the *Lawang Bledheg* gate within the religious and ritual practices of the mosque is not extensively documented.<sup>23</sup> Further research could explore the practical significance of the gate and its potential connections to specific religious ceremonies or practices. By conducting further research in these areas, scholars and researchers can uncover additional layers of meaning and understanding related to the *Lawang Bledheg* ornamentation and its association with Surah Ali Imran, contributing to a more comprehensive interpretation and appreciation of this architectural feature.

## Conclusion

The interpretation of the meaning of *Lawang Bledheg* architectural symbols from this research is as follows. The Bledheg door is considered a symbol of the door to heaven. The Quran's verses of Surah Ali Imran (133-136) stress the importance of seeking forgiveness from God and doing good deeds. *Lawang Bledheg* is believed to represent the symbolism of heaven's door, which symbolizes a reward for those who are pious and do good deeds. *Lawang Bledheg* is also interpreted as representing the characteristics of pious people. Ornaments on doors, such as crowns, dragon heads, vases, and vines, have a symbolic meaning related to the behaviour and characteristics described in these verses. For example, a crown represents a person who is generous and spends, a dragon's head represents a person who can withstand anger, a vase represents a person who

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<sup>23</sup> Andriani, R., Rohiim, I.A., Jannah, A.Z., Balqis, F.R., & Samudro, H. (2019). Integrating Islamic Aspect for Achieving Local Wisdom Principles Design in Roof Shape of Mosque, Case Study: Demak Mosque. Proceedings of the International Conference on Green Technology. 9(1):79-83.

can forgive, and the tendrils represent a person who does good.

*Lawang Bledheg* is also considered a symbol of inculturation and tolerance. In its construction, this door combines various architectural elements from various cultures, such as Java, India, China and Majapahit. At that time, *Lawang Bledheg* symbolized efforts to unite cultural and religious differences within a framework of tolerance and unity. *Lawang Bledheg* is also considered a symbol of religion and spiritual power. The story of Ki Ageng Selo, which is related to the creation of this door, both in the rebellious and lightning versions, gives the door a mystical dimension and supernatural power. This gives *Lawang Bledheg* a deep spiritual meaning for the local community.

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