

Textual Form and Community Reception of Qur'anic Calligraphy at Syuhada Mosque in Gampong Lamgugob

Feni Alfionita

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: fenialfionita00@gmail.com

Abstract: Qur'anic calligraphy in mosques is often examined in terms of its visual form, aesthetic value, and religious function, while the relationship between textual completeness, Qur'anic context, and community reception has received less attention. This study examines 17 instances of Qur'anic calligraphic inscriptions at Syuhada Mosque in Gampong Lamgugob, Banda Aceh. It employed a descriptive qualitative field study based on observation, photographic documentation, field notes, and in-depth interviews with 11 informants selected through purposive and snowball sampling. The inscriptions were classified as complete or partial and analyzed using *munāsabah*, understood as thematic correspondence among Qur'anic passages, and *siyāq*, or textual context. Community responses were interpreted through exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception. Eight complete inscriptions were grouped into three thematic clusters concerning worship and mosque life, religious guidance and moral responsibility, and divine sovereignty. Nine inscriptions contained selected parts of verses. Detailed analysis of Q. al-Nahl [16]: 90 and Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18 showed that the displayed fragments retained intelligible propositions but narrowed the semantic scope of the complete verses. Verse selection was shaped by theological themes, aesthetic and spatial considerations, consultation among mosque administrators and craftspeople, and the incorporation of Jepara-style carving. Congregants' responses reflected exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception, although the evidence did not permit a numerical ranking of their prevalence. The findings indicate that mosque calligraphy is best examined through the relationship among textual selection, material presentation, and community reception.

Keywords: *Community reception; Living Qur'an; Mosque calligraphy; Qur'anic context; Qur'anic inscriptions*

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A. Introduction

Qur'anic calligraphy occupies a distinctive position in Islamic visual culture because it presents scripture simultaneously as readable text, artistic composition, and a visible marker of religious identity. Arabic writing—commonly referred to as *khatt*, or calligraphic script—developed into one of the principal forms of artistic expression across Muslim societies. Its importance cannot be separated from the central position of the Qur'an and the cultural authority attached to its written form.¹ In Islamic architecture, Qur'anic inscriptions are therefore not merely decorative additions. Their wording, placement, scale, and visual treatment shape how sacred texts are encountered within a religious space.²

The mosque is among the most prominent settings in which this relationship between scripture and visual form becomes apparent. Qur'anic verses may appear on walls, domes, pillars, prayer niches, doors, and pulpits, where they can serve aesthetic, devotional, educational, and symbolic purposes. Because these inscriptions are integrated into spaces of worship, their significance extends beyond the calligrapher's technical skill. They can direct attention to particular teachings, reinforce the identity of the mosque, and influence the ways in which congregants experience the religious environment. In the Indonesian context, mosque calligraphy also frequently incorporates local materials, carving traditions, and ornamental preferences. Studies of Minangkabau mosques, for example, demonstrate that the functions and meanings of calligraphy are shaped by the religious and cultural conditions of the communities in which it is displayed.³

This social use of Qur'anic text can be examined through the field of *Living Qur'an*, understood here as the study of how Muslim communities receive, employ, and transform the Qur'an within everyday practices and cultural settings. Rather than restricting analysis to the textual meaning of scripture, this approach examines the relationship between the Qur'an and the communities that engage with it.⁴ Qur'anic reception can accordingly be considered in exegetical, aesthetic, and functional terms. Exegetical reception concerns the interpretation or understanding of the text; aesthetic reception concerns responses to its visual, literary, or performative beauty; and functional reception concerns the purposes for which the text is used in religious and social life.⁵

¹Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Islah Gusmian, "Kaligrafi Islam: Dari Nalar Seni hingga Simbolisme Spiritual," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 108–132, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2003.411.108-132>.

²Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture*, 2 vols. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981).

³Siti Aisyah, Lukmanul Hakim, Yulniza Yulniza, and Mohd Rohaizat bin Abdul Wahab, "The Locality of Calligraphy in Minangkabau Mosques: An Analysis of Its Function and Meaning," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023): 89–124, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v21i1.1111>.

⁴Ahmad Rafiq, "The Living Qur'an: Its Text and Practice in the Function of the Scripture," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22, no. 2 (2021): 469–484, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2021.2202-10>.

⁵Ahmad Rafiq, "The Reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia: A Case Study of the Place of the Qur'an in a Non-Arabic Speaking Community" (PhD diss., Temple University, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.34944/dspace/3421>.

These categories provide a relevant framework for examining mosque calligraphy because an inscription may be read for its meaning, appreciated as visual art, or experienced as a spiritual and educational element of the worship space.

Previous Indonesian studies have established several important dimensions of Qur'anic calligraphy. Kumalasari and Baihaqi examined the motives underlying the production and use of Qur'anic ornaments at the Jami' Al-Mukhlisin Mosque in Lamongan, showing that calligraphy could function as decoration, religious communication, and an encouragement to study the Qur'an.⁶ Setiadi similarly analyzed Qur'anic calligraphy at the Nurul Imam Mosque as a form of *Living Qur'an*, emphasizing the practical functions and social motives associated with its production.⁷ Jannah's study of Syaiful Adnan's paintings concentrated on the aesthetic reception of the Qur'an through contemporary calligraphic art.⁸ Other studies have focused on the meanings and locality of mosque calligraphy,⁹ as well as the architectural application of Kufic-style ornaments.¹⁰ Collectively, this literature demonstrates that Qur'anic calligraphy cannot be reduced to a decorative object: it is also connected to religious motivation, cultural identity, architectural function, and community reception.

Nevertheless, these studies have generally examined aesthetic form, production motives, architectural application, or social function as separate issues. Limited attention has been given to the relationship between the textual form of an inscription and the way congregants receive it. In particular, previous research has not sufficiently distinguished between inscriptions that reproduce a complete verse and those that display only part of a verse. This distinction matters because a selected phrase may remain grammatically intelligible while conveying a narrower message than the verse in its full textual setting. The concepts of *munāsabah*—the thematic and structural relationship among Qur'anic passages—and *siyāq*—the linguistic and situational context of an expression—make it possible to examine whether the displayed wording retains, narrows, or redirects the meaning produced by its surrounding context.¹¹ The question is therefore not simply whether a calligraphic fragment is visually attractive or religiously familiar, but how its selection affects the message made visible in the mosque.

⁶Aidah Mega Kumalasari and Nurun Nisaa Baihaqi, "Motif Ornamen Kaligrafi Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an: Studi Living Qur'an di Masjid Jami' Al-Mukhlisin Jabung Lamongan," *Al-Misbah (Jurnal Islamic Studies)* 9, no. 2 (2021): 100–114, <https://doi.org/10.26555/almisbah.v9i2.5137>.

⁷Yudi Setiadi, "Kaligrafi Al-Quran sebagai Ornamen Masjid: Studi Living Quran di Masjid Nurul Imam," *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 13, no. 2 (2019): 165–189, <https://doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v13i2.6404>.

⁸Imas Lu'ul Jannah, "Resepsi Estetik terhadap Al-Qur'an pada Lukisan Kaligrafi Syaiful Adnan," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir di Nusantara* 3, no. 1 (2017): 25–59, <https://doi.org/10.32459/nun.v3i1.14>.

⁹Siti Aisyah et al., "Locality of Calligraphy," 89–124; Saskia Soraya, "Nilai dan Makna Kaligrafi Arab pada Masjid Al-Atiq: Analisis Estetik," *Students E-Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012).

¹⁰Ima Siti Latifah and Cherry Darmawan, "Penerapan Ornamen Motif Kaligrafi Khuffi pada Masjid Jami Al-Irsyad," *DIVAGATRA: Jurnal Penelitian Mahasiswa Desain* 1, no. 1 (2021): 61–69, <https://doi.org/10.34010/divagatra.v1i1.4870>.

¹¹Salwa M. S. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (London: Routledge, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203014486>.

This issue is evident at Syuhada Mosque in Gampong Lamgugob, Syiah Kuala District, Banda Aceh. The mosque contains 17 Qur'anic calligraphic inscriptions: eight reproduce complete verses, while nine display selected portions of verses. The inscriptions are distributed across different parts of the mosque and incorporate Arabic-Islamic calligraphy alongside Jepara-style woodcarving. Their presence raises three connected questions. First, how are complete and partial Qur'anic passages selected and arranged within the mosque? Second, how can the relationship between the displayed wording and its Qur'anic context be evaluated through *munāsabah* and *siyāq*? Third, how do mosque administrators, craftspeople, and congregants understand and experience these inscriptions?

Accordingly, this study analyzes the textual patterns, contextual integrity, and community reception of Qur'anic calligraphy at Syuhada Mosque. It classifies the 17 inscriptions according to whether they reproduce complete or partial verses; examines their thematic and contextual relationships through *munāsabah* and *siyāq*; identifies the theological, aesthetic, and cultural considerations associated with their selection; and investigates their exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception among congregants. The study contributes a text-and-reception approach to mosque calligraphy by bringing the wording of the inscriptions, their architectural and cultural setting, and their reception within the mosque community into a single analytical framework. It does not assume that every partial inscription distorts its source verse; instead, it evaluates each selected passage in relation to its textual context and the meanings attributed to it by the community.

B. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative field study to examine Qur'anic calligraphic inscriptions and their reception within a specific religious setting. A qualitative design was appropriate because the study sought to interpret the textual form, placement, production considerations, and meanings attributed to the inscriptions rather than measure their effects statistically.¹² The research was conducted at Syuhada Mosque in Gampong Lamgugob, Syiah Kuala District, Banda Aceh. Field data were collected from December 2025 to January 2026.

The primary data consisted of field observations, photographic documentation, field notes, and in-depth interviews with 11 informants. Informants were selected purposively and, where necessary, through snowball sampling because they possessed direct knowledge of the mosque, the production of its calligraphy, or congregants' responses to the inscriptions. They included mosque administrators, a former *imeum chiek* (the mosque's senior religious leader), a calligrapher, an ornament maker, and congregants. Informant roles were treated as qualitative categories rather than numerical subgroups. Initials were used to protect the informants' identities.

¹²John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018).

Observation focused on 17 calligraphic inscription instances located in different parts of the mosque. The unit of analysis was each visible inscription rather than each unique Qur'anic verse. This distinction was necessary because Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18 appeared twice in different forms: once as a complete verse and once as a partial inscription. During the observation conducted on December 6, 2025, each inscription was documented and classified according to its surah and verse, textual completeness, and relevant visual or material characteristics. Interviews were used to obtain information about the mosque's history, the process of selecting verses, aesthetic and spatial considerations, the incorporation of Jepara-style carving, and congregants' responses to the inscriptions.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the observational data were reduced into an inventory of the 17 inscription instances. Second, the displayed wording was compared with the corresponding complete Qur'anic verse and coded as either complete or partial. Third, complete inscriptions were grouped according to thematic relationships, while the partial inscriptions were examined through *siyāq*, or textual context, to determine which elements of the original verse were retained or omitted. Fourth, interview materials were organized according to the production considerations and the three reception categories adapted from Ahmad Rafiq: exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception. Data reduction, display, comparison, and conclusion drawing followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña.¹³

Interpretive claims were examined by comparing the inscription inventory and photographs with interview accounts and the relevant Qur'anic passages. The analysis distinguished direct field evidence from the researcher's textual interpretation. Interview responses were analyzed thematically rather than used to quantify the relative prevalence of each reception category.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Research Setting: Syuhada Mosque in Gampong Lamgugob

Syuhada Mosque is located on T. Lamgugob Street in Gampong Lamgugob, Syiah Kuala District, Banda Aceh. According to BA, a former *imeum chiek* of the mosque, the present institution developed from the earlier Lamnyong Mosque in *Mukim Kayee Adang*. The mosque was reportedly destroyed during the Aceh War and rebuilt in 1920 through an initiative led by the religious scholar Abu H. Hasan Kruengkalee.¹⁴

In 1989, the mosque and two graves associated with local martyrs were relocated to Gampong Lamgugob because of the Krueng Aceh expansion project. Construction at the new site began in 1990, and the mosque became fully operational in 1996. Local religious and community leaders subsequently adopted the name Syuhada Mosque to commemorate the martyrs buried within the mosque complex. This historical account is based on an informant's testimony and should therefore be understood as the mosque

¹³Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014).

¹⁴BA, former *imeum chiek* of Syuhada Mosque, interview by the author, January 18, 2026.

community's institutional memory rather than as an independently verified archival history.

The mosque occupies a site of approximately 6,111 square meters, with a building area of approximately 1,400 square meters. Its location near the district office, the Darussalam university area, and Lamnyong Market brings together congregants from different social backgrounds. In addition to the five daily prayers and Friday prayer, the mosque hosts Qur'anic education, scholarly *halaqah* or study circles, *tahsīn* or Qur'anic recitation improvement, and *tahfīz* or Qur'anic memorization activities. These activities provide the institutional context in which the calligraphic inscriptions are encountered.

2. Inventory and Classification of the Inscriptions

Field observation documented 17 calligraphic inscription instances. Eight reproduced complete verses, while nine displayed selected parts of verses. The count refers to physical inscription instances rather than unique verses because Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18 appears in two different forms.

Table 1. Classification of Qur'anic Calligraphic Inscriptions at Syuhada Mosque

No.	Surah and verse	Complete	Partial
1	al-Taḥrīm [66]: 6		✓
2	al-Naḥl [16]: 90		✓
3	al-Isrā' [17]: 78	✓	
4	al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13		✓
5	al-Baqarah [2]: 43	✓	
6	Āl 'Imrān [3]: 104	✓	
7	al-Baqarah [2]: 255	✓	
8	al-Taghābun [64]: 13		✓
9	al-Baqarah [2]: 144		✓
10	al-Mā'idah [5]: 90	✓	
11	al-Isrā' [17]: 84		✓
12	al-'Ankabūt [29]: 45		✓
13	al-Isrā' [17]: 1	✓	
14	al-Tawbah [9]: 18	✓	
15	Āl 'Imrān [3]: 103		✓
16	al-Tawbah [9]: 18, second variation		✓
17	Yāsīn [36]: 21	✓	

Source: Field observation, December 6, 2025.

This classification supplies the descriptive foundation for two related analyses. The first concerns thematic relationships among complete inscriptions. The second concerns the contextual implications of displaying only selected parts of a verse. The

distinction is analytically important because a fragment may remain meaningful while conveying a narrower proposition than the complete verse.

3. Complete Inscriptions and Thematic Coherence

The eight complete inscriptions can be organized into three thematic clusters. These clusters represent the researcher's interpretation of relationships among the displayed verses; they do not by themselves demonstrate that the inscriptions were originally planned as a formal thematic sequence.

The first cluster concerns ritual worship and mosque life. It consists of Q. al-Isrā' [17]: 78, Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 43, and Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18. The verses respectively concern prescribed prayer, prayer and almsgiving within communal religious practice, and the characteristics associated with those who maintain mosques. When displayed together in a mosque, they form a coherent movement from religious obligation to communal practice and responsibility for the worship space.

The second cluster concerns religious guidance and moral responsibility. Q. Āl 'Imrān [3]: 104 calls for a community that invites others to what is good, Q. Yāsīn [36]: 21 directs listeners to follow messengers who seek no material reward, and Q. al-Mā'idah [5]: 90 prohibits intoxicants, gambling, idols, and divining practices. The relationship among these verses is not one of direct textual succession. Rather, it is a thematic association between the responsibility to promote good, the moral credibility of religious guidance, and conduct from which believers are instructed to refrain.

The third cluster comprises Q. al-Baqarah [2]: 255 and Q. al-Isrā' [17]: 1. Both direct attention to divine sovereignty and power, although they do so in different ways. The first describes God's knowledge, authority, and sustaining power, whereas the second recounts the Prophet's night journey as a manifestation of divine power. Their placement within the mosque reinforces a theological orientation centered on divine greatness.

These relationships are consistent with *munāsabah*, understood in this study as thematic and structural correspondence among Qur'anic passages. Nevertheless, the analysis does not claim that verses from different surahs form a new textual unit equivalent to their original Qur'anic contexts. El-Awa's account of Qur'anic textual relations demonstrates that coherence depends on linguistic, structural, and thematic connections that must be argued rather than assumed.¹⁵ In the present case, the relationship is primarily thematic and architectural: the mosque setting brings separately revealed verses into a shared visual field.

4. Partial Inscriptions and the Reduction of Context

Nine inscription instances contain only part of their corresponding verses. The analysis considers both *siyāq lughawī*, or linguistic context, and the broader situational context in which each inscription is displayed. This subsection presents a detailed textual analysis of two documented examples, Q. al-Nahl [16]: 90 and Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18. The

¹⁵Salwa M. S. El-Awa, *Textual Relations in the Qur'an: Relevance, Coherence and Structure* (London: Routledge, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203014486>.

conclusions are therefore confined to these two cases and are not generalized to the remaining partial inscriptions.

The first example is Q. al-Naḥl [16]: 90. The displayed portion retains the command to act with justice and benevolence. In the complete verse, this positive command is followed by the prohibition of indecency, wrongdoing, and aggression. Al-Ṭabarī's discussion similarly treats the verse as a comprehensive statement combining positive moral obligations with prohibitions.¹⁶ The inscription therefore preserves an intelligible moral proposition but narrows the verse by omitting its prohibitive component. This is better described as a reduction of contextual scope than as either complete preservation or fundamental distortion.

The second example is the partial form of Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18. The displayed fragment associates the maintenance of mosques with belief in God and the Last Day. The complete verse also refers to prayer, almsgiving, and fear of God alone. Al-Ṭabarī's interpretation connects mosque maintenance with this broader configuration of belief and religious practice.¹⁷ The fragment does not reverse the proposition of the complete verse, but it places greater emphasis on belief while leaving its practical indicators unstated.

The principles of *waqf* and *ibtidā'*—appropriate pausing and resumption in Qur'anic recitation—are relevant because the location of a textual break can affect syntax and meaning.¹⁸ Nevertheless, a permissible recitational pause does not by itself establish that an inscription reproduces the full contextual meaning of a verse. The safer conclusion is that the two documented fragments retain understandable propositions while narrowing the scope of the complete verses.

SH, the calligrapher, explained that partial verses were selected partly because of visual composition and the dimensions of the available space. The interview account also indicates an effort to avoid ending an inscription at a point that would produce an obviously misleading meaning.¹⁹ This suggests practical awareness of semantic boundaries, although the available evidence does not establish that a formal method of *siyāq* analysis was used during production.

5. Theological, Aesthetic, and Cultural Considerations

The selection and presentation of the inscriptions reflect three overlapping considerations. The first is theological. Many of the displayed verses concern worship, divine sovereignty, moral conduct, religious guidance, and the maintenance of mosques. This pattern corresponds to the institution's identity as a site of worship and as a memorial

¹⁶Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 17 (Mecca: Dār al-Tarbiyah wa al-Turāth, n.d.), 279–280.

¹⁷Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 14 (Mecca: Dār al-Tarbiyah wa al-Turāth, n.d.), 167–168.

¹⁸Ismail Albayrak, "English Qur'ān Translators' Responses to Pausing Signs, Al-Waqf Wa Al-Ibtidā'," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 3 (2021): 14–35, <https://doi.org/10.55831/ajis.v6i3.373>.

¹⁹SH, calligrapher of Syuhada Mosque, interview by the author, January 26, 2026.

space associated with local martyrs. The theological orientation is therefore visible in the subjects selected for permanent display.

The second consideration is aesthetic. Field documentation identified *thuluth*—a classical, cursive Arabic calligraphic script—as the dominant style. Its extended vertical forms and curved strokes make it suitable for large architectural inscriptions. Fadā'ili describes *thuluth* as a prominent script in the classical calligraphic tradition and discusses its visual proportions and architectural applications.²⁰ In Syuhada Mosque, the use of this script supports visibility and visual prominence. It should not, however, be assumed that aesthetic form automatically produces a particular spiritual effect; that question must be assessed through congregants' reported responses.

The third consideration is cultural. The Arabic inscriptions are incorporated into Jepara-style woodcarving. AS, who worked on the ornamental elements, described this combination as a conscious attempt to integrate Arabic-Islamic writing with an Indonesian carving tradition.²¹ Similar research on Minangkabau mosques demonstrates that mosque calligraphy can acquire localized forms and meanings through its materials, motifs, and cultural environment.²² In Syuhada Mosque, the combination does not alter the wording of the Qur'anic text, but it affects how that text is materially presented and culturally situated.

6. Decision-Making by Mosque Administrators and Craftspeople

Interviews with mosque administrators and craftspeople indicate that the selection of verses involved consultation among religious figures, mosque administrators, and the calligrapher. Considerations included the relevance of a verse to the function of a particular space, its compatibility with the mosque's religious identity, and its suitability for the available visual field.²³

The informants did not report a written policy governing the use of complete or partial verses. Instead, they described an informal expectation that a verse should not be divided at a point likely to create an obviously misleading reading. This finding is important because it reveals both an existing form of interpretive caution and an institutional limitation. The mosque community exercised deliberation, but the decision-making process was not supported by a documented protocol for checking textual context, pausing conventions, or interpretive consequences.

The absence of a written protocol does not mean that the inscriptions were selected arbitrarily. It indicates that theological, aesthetic, and spatial judgments were negotiated

²⁰Habībullah Fadā'ili, *Atlas al-Khaṭṭ wa al-Khuṭūṭ*, trans. Muḥammad al-Tūnajī (Damascus: Dār Ṭallās, 1993), 30–32.

²¹AS, maker of the calligraphic ornaments at Syuhada Mosque, interview by the author, January 21, 2026.

²²Siti Aisyah, Lukmanul Hakim, Yulniza Yulniza, and Mohd Rohaizat bin Abdul Wahab, "The Locality of Calligraphy in Minangkabau Mosques: An Analysis of Its Function and Meaning," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023): 89–124, <https://doi.org/10.31291/jlka.v21i1.1111>.

²³SH, calligrapher of Syuhada Mosque, interview by the author, January 26, 2026.

through consultation rather than formalized textual criteria. This distinction helps explain why complete and partial inscriptions coexist within the same architectural setting.

7. Congregants' Reception and Analytical Implications

The available interview summaries reveal three recurring forms of reception. These are interpreted through Ahmad Rafiq's distinction among exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception.²⁴ His broader formulation of the *Living Qur'an* also emphasizes that Qur'anic reception develops through relationships among scripture, practices, knowledge, and the communities that transmit them.²⁵

Table 2. Forms of Congregational Reception Identified in the Interview Material

Reception mode	Evidence from interviews	Interpretive boundary
Exegetical	Some congregants, particularly those with religious education, connected the displayed verses with worship and Islamic moral teaching.	The qualitative evidence does not establish how widely this interpretation was shared among congregants.
Aesthetic	Congregants associated the inscriptions with beauty, calm, solemnity, and the religious atmosphere of the prayer space.	These are reported experiences; they do not demonstrate that calligraphy independently caused greater concentration in worship.
Functional	The inscriptions were regarded as visual reminders, sources of curiosity about verse meanings, and elements that marked the mosque as a sacred space.	The interview responses indicate perceived functions but do not establish measurable changes in knowledge or behavior.

Source: Author's analysis based on interviews with congregants at Syuhada Mosque, January 2026.

Exegetical reception appeared when congregants related the wording of an inscription to religious teachings or everyday worship. This form of reception depended partly on the ability to read Arabic or recognize the displayed verse. The evidence therefore suggests variation in interpretive access rather than a uniform understanding among congregants.

Aesthetic reception concerned the visual and affective experience of the inscriptions. Interview summaries associated the calligraphy with beauty, calm,

²⁴ Ahmad Rafiq, "The Reception of the Qur'an in Indonesia: A Case Study of the Place of the Qur'an in a Non-Arabic Speaking Community" (PhD diss., Temple University, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.34944/dspace/3421>.

²⁵ Ahmad Rafiq, "The Living Qur'an: Its Text and Practice in the Function of the Scripture," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22, no. 2 (2021): 469–484, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2021.2202-10>.

solemnity, and an atmosphere appropriate to worship. This finding resembles Jannah's analysis of aesthetic Qur'anic reception, in which calligraphic form becomes a medium through which scripture is visually encountered.²⁶ In the mosque setting, however, the aesthetic response is inseparable from architecture, lighting, placement, and the religious function of the space.

Functional reception appeared in descriptions of calligraphy as a visual reminder and as an invitation to learn the meanings of the displayed verses. This finding is consistent with research at the Jami' Al-Mukhlisin Mosque, where Qur'anic ornaments were connected to religious communication and interest in studying the Qur'an.²⁷ It also resembles Setiadi's finding that mosque calligraphy can express practical and socially attributed functions of scripture.²⁸

The interview material reflects all three modes of reception, but the thematic analysis was not intended to quantify their relative prevalence. Aesthetic and functional responses were more extensively represented in the interviews, whereas exegetical reception appeared among congregants with relevant linguistic or religious knowledge.

This distinction contributes to studies of mosque inscriptions by connecting three levels of analysis. At the textual level, complete and partial inscriptions differ in the amount of Qur'anic context they reproduce. At the production level, theological objectives interact with aesthetic, spatial, and cultural considerations. At the reception level, congregants may encounter the same inscription as text, visual form, or religious reminder. Qur'anic inscriptions in architecture have historically operated through this interaction between word, location, and visual presentation.²⁹ Islamic calligraphy likewise carries artistic and spiritual associations without ceasing to be written language.³⁰ The case of Syuhada Mosque shows that these dimensions need to be examined together rather than treated as interchangeable.

²⁶Imas Lu'ul Jannah, "Resepsi Estetik terhadap Al-Qur'an pada Lukisan Kaligrafi Syaiful Adnan," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir di Nusantara* 3, no. 1 (2017): 25–59, <https://doi.org/10.32459/nun.v3i1.14>.

²⁷Aidah Mega Kumalasari and Nurun Nisaa Baihaqi, "Motif Ornamen Kaligrafi Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an: Studi Living Qur'an di Masjid Jami' Al-Mukhlisin Jabung Lamongan," *Al-Misbah (Jurnal Islamic Studies)* 9, no. 2 (2021): 100–114, <https://doi.org/10.26555/almisbah.v9i2.5137>.

²⁸Yudi Setiadi, "Kaligrafi Al-Quran sebagai Ornamen Masjid: Studi Living Quran di Masjid Nurul Imam," *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 13, no. 2 (2019): 165–189, <https://doi.org/10.21043/hermeneutik.v13i2.6404>.

²⁹Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Shereen Khairallah, *The Image of the Word: A Study of Quranic Verses in Islamic Architecture*, 2 vols. (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981).

³⁰Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); Islah Gusmian, "Kaligrafi Islam: Dari Nalar Seni hingga Simbolisme Spiritual," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 41, no. 1 (2003): 108–132, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2003.411.108-132>.

D. Conclusion

This study identified 17 instances of Qur'anic calligraphic inscriptions at Syuhada Mosque in Gampong Lamgugob: eight reproduced complete verses, while nine displayed selected parts of verses. The complete inscriptions could be organized into three thematic clusters concerning ritual worship and mosque life, religious guidance and moral responsibility, and divine sovereignty. These relationships demonstrate thematic correspondence among the displayed texts, although they do not establish that the verses constitute a formal textual sequence comparable to their positions in the Qur'an.

The detailed analysis of Q. al-Nahl [16]: 90 and the partial form of Q. al-Tawbah [9]: 18 indicates that both fragments retain intelligible propositions while narrowing the semantic scope of the complete verses. This conclusion is confined to these two cases. The remaining seven partial inscriptions require individual assessment based on their wording, textual context, and stopping points.

The selection and presentation of the inscriptions were shaped by theological themes, aesthetic and spatial considerations, consultation among mosque administrators and craftspeople, and the incorporation of Jepara-style carving. Congregants' responses could be interpreted through exegetical, aesthetic, and functional reception. The evidence supports the presence of these three modes but does not permit a numerical ranking of their prevalence. The study therefore contributes to *Living Qur'an* scholarship by showing that mosque calligraphy can be examined through the relationship among textual selection, material presentation, institutional decision-making, and community reception.

This single-mosque study did not quantify the distribution of reception modes among individual informants. Future research should examine each partial inscription in greater textual detail and compare calligraphic practices across several mosques. Mosque administrators and calligraphers may also consult specialists in Qur'anic interpretation when displaying partial verses and provide brief translations or contextual explanations where appropriate.

Declarations

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AI Use Declaration: DeepL was used solely to assist with English-language editing and the improvement of academic readability. All machine-assisted revisions were critically reviewed, verified, and approved by the author, who remains fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, citations, interpretations, and integrity of the manuscript.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the author upon reasonable request, subject to the confidentiality and privacy of the informants.

Ethical Considerations: This minimal-risk qualitative study involved adult informants. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and

the informants' identities were protected through the use of initials. No identifying personal information is reported in the manuscript.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all informants prior to data collection and participation in the study.

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