



The Concept of Islamic Cosmology in the Srabad Banteng-Windu Glass Painting of Cirebon

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Abstract

The traditional art of Cirebon reflects a convergence (acculturation) of various cultural elements from different historical traditions. One such example is the Srabad glass painting, which exhibits a cosmological pattern adapted from the pre-Islamic cosmology known as *Triloka* (Three Worlds). The visual form of the Srabad glass painting combines calligraphic inscriptions with anthropomorphic figures rooted in pre-Islamic mystical traditions. The *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting, analyzed as a sample in this study, reveals the structure of *Triloka* cosmology through the use of motifs: the *Wadasan* motif as an interpretation of the underworld, the hybrid creature *Banteng-Windu* as an interpretation of the middle world, and the *Megamendung* motif as an interpretation of the upper world. This article presents a comparative study between Ibn al-‘Arabi’s concept of Islamic cosmology and the concept of the Three Worlds (*Triloka*) as reflected in the visual structure of the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting. The study employs a visual analysis method using a descriptive-interpretative approach, grounded in Islamic cosmology theory. The results indicate that the acculturation of cosmological concepts and visual elements from pre-Islamic traditions into Cirebon’s Islamic traditional arts represents an inward-to-outward adaptation process. That is, after internalizing the teachings of the Sufi order *Tarekat Sattariyah*, traditional artists expressed their understanding through artworks by borrowing visual elements from earlier, popular artistic traditions in Cirebon.

Keywords: *Islamic Cosmology; Srabad; Banteng-Windu; Glass Painting; Cirebon*

Introduction

The traditional arts of Indonesia’s archaic societies have long been recognized as one of the media used by the Wali (Islamic saints) for strategic da’wah (Islamic proselytization) efforts in the past (Febriyanti & Ayundasari, 2021). This strategic model was also implemented in Cirebon, one of the Islamic sultanates in Indonesia. Traditional art forms popular in Cirebon – such as *Wayang Kulit* (shadow puppetry), *Tlawungan* (wood carvings), glass painting, *Batik* (textile motifs), performing arts, and others – underwent a transformation: originally containing pre-Islamic (Hindu and Buddhist) concepts and

teachings, they were later infused with Islamic content centered around the doctrine of *Tawhid* (the Oneness of God). One notable example is the *Srabad* glass painting, which some communities in Cirebon believe to possess mystical-religious powers to protect its owners from various illnesses and misfortunes (*tolak bala*) (Hilman & Hasyim, 2021). The *Srabad* glass paintings are characterized by calligraphic designs forming mystical anthropomorphic figures, including hybrid animals, characters from *Wayang Kulit*, and other mythical beings. The calligraphic content typically consists of excerpts from the Qur'an, Hadith, or specific prayers from the teachings of the *Tarekat Sattariyah* (a Sufi order) (Raden et al., 2021).

Various studies on traditional artifacts from Cirebon, Indonesia, reveal a fundamental pattern: the belief in a process of cosmic creation, articulated through the traditional cosmological concept of the Three Worlds (*Triloka*) (Koesoemadinata, 2007; Effendi, 2018). Within Cirebon's Islamic religious tradition, the concept of creation is specifically referred to as *Kang Gawe* ("The Creator"), denoting God as the creator of the universe and everything within it (Muhaimmin, 2006). The concept of the Three Worlds (*Triloka*) is evident in the visual structure of the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting, featuring the *Wadasan* motif as an interpretation of the underworld, the hybrid creature *Banteng-Windu* as a representation of the middle world, and the *Megamendung* motif symbolizing the upper world. In his thesis titled *Tasawuf dan Perupa-an pada Wayang Kulit Purwa Cirebon dan Surakarta* ("Sufism and Visual Representation in Cirebon and Surakarta Wayang Kulit Purwa") (2007), Koesoemadinata identifies this three-world structure with the cosmological realms of *Nasut*, *Jabarut*, and *Lahut*. Similarly, Payandeh et al. (2024) reveal a comparable cosmological pattern in their analysis of Iranian mosques in the Isfahani style, describing the presence of the realms of *Nasut* (the temporal world) and *Malakut* (the realm of sovereignty) in architectural design (Payandeh et al., 2024). The terms *Malakut* and *Jabarut* are often interchangeably used within simpler models of the three-world structure. However, the two realms convey distinct messages: *Malakut* pertains to the inner world (soul), and *Jabarut* to the afterlife (heaven and hell).

A review of international journal literature on *Srabad* glass painting in Cirebon can be found in the work of Casta et al. (2021), who categorize *Srabad* glass paintings (pictographic calligraphy) as *doxa* glass paintings (group style) associated with the Cirebon Palace (*Keraton Cirebon*), encompassing glass paintings themed around *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry) and mosque imagery from the Islamic cultural heritage. According to Dr. Casta (Casta et al., 2021), *Srabad* paintings are pictographic calligraphy works based on Sufi (*tarekat*) symbols. Several types of *Srabad* paintings are identified, including *Srabad Macan Ali*, *Banteng Windu*, *Sayidina Ali*, *Ganesa*, *Insan Kamil*, among others (Casta, 2021). Meanwhile, Raden et al. (2021) analyzed several glass paintings identified as *Srabad* through interviews and field studies. Their analysis highlights the primary characteristic of *Srabad* paintings as anthropomorphic calligraphy and notes their function in neutralizing (purifying) malevolent forces that might disturb the owner of the painting. However, neither study specifically analyzes the cosmological patterns evident in the visual structures of the paintings; rather, they mainly describe general features that distinguish *Srabad* glass paintings from other forms of Cirebon glass paintings.

Thus, this study aims to conduct a comparison between the concept of the Three Worlds (*Triloka*) and the concept of Islamic cosmology as reflected in the visual structure of the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting. The research consists of two sets of analytical data: (1) a theoretical review of Islamic Cosmology within Islamic Philosophy through a literature study; and (2) empirical data on the physical patterns and visual elements of the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting, obtained through a combination of interviews, literature review, and direct field observations. Given the predominance of oral data over written sources in the field study, variations in the interpretation of the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* painting among informants were noted. Therefore, the cosmological analysis of the *Srabad* glass

painting serves as a reliable foundation for further research, without diminishing or disregarding the diverse interpretations provided by the informants.

Research Methodology

This article presented a qualitative visual analysis study using a descriptive interpretive method, in which data and facts were described in detail and then analyzed and interpreted clearly. In the interpretive analysis stage, the author employed a hermeneutic approach, a method used to understand texts with hidden meanings (Miles et al., 2013), as well as unique and distinctive phenomena such as traditional artifacts. The comparative research model with an interpretive-hermeneutic approach resulted in fresh and contextual analytical data relevant to the current situation. The research process began with a theoretical study of cosmology within the discourse of Islamic Philosophy, followed by an analysis of the patterns and visual structures of the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting. These patterns and structures were then examined in a comparative manner with Islamic cosmology theory.

As a comparative study, this research was not an effort of pure conservation, but rather a transformation of the understanding of the meaning of traditional artifacts through the approach of contemporary theory. Transformation entails a spirit of continuous change, reviving and adapting to the current realities of the world. Philosophically, this departure is based on the reality that nothing in the real world is stable or stagnant; everything is always moving, changing, and interconnected with everything else (Nugraha, 2012). In the visual analysis of the *Srabad* glass painting, the study utilized the self-organizing theory by Frijof Capra, specifically the trinitarian analysis (Pattern-Structure-Form) cited from his book *The Web of Life* (1996: 80-82). "The pattern of self-organization is the totality of relationships that constitute the main characteristic of living systems. This pattern can be depicted abstractly without referring to energy, physical substances, or organisms... it is an abstract pattern of relationships." Regarding structure, Capra argued: "The structure of a living system is the physical realization of the pattern. The pattern can be realized in different structures." Capra further explained, "The continuous realization of the pattern in a specific structure involves a dynamic process, the process of life. It also involves the organism's continuous self-renewal, adaptation to the environment, learning, evolution, and so on" (Capra, 1996: 80-82).

Result & Discussions

As previously mentioned, the traditional cultural concept of Cirebon adheres to a cosmocentric view, where humans are considered part of the cosmos. The merging of the microcosm and macrocosm in the spiritual teachings of ancient Javanese society represents the union of creatures with the Creator (*Manunggaling kawulo-Gusti*). This concept resembles the idea of Wahdatul Wujud or the emanation concept of Ibn al-'Arabi, which seemingly influences the teachings of the "*Tarekat Sattariyah*" in Cirebon, characterized by philosophical Sufism (Ali, 2021 and Agung, 2019). The uniformity of this acculturation pattern is grounded in a fundamental belief in the process of creation. This belief also seems to make the cosmological concept present across various cultures in Indonesia, albeit with different interpretations and forms (universal-particular). As explained earlier, the traditional cosmological concept undergoes a transformation into an Islamic cosmological concept, based on two primary sources: the Qur'an and Hadith. In the process, the cosmological concept within Islamic philosophy is translated into the emanation teachings of Wahdatul Wujud, popularized by Ibn al-'Arabi. This understanding of creation describes Allah as the singular reality, creating various beings (*maujudat*) as shadows of His existence (Nasr, 1987).

Srabad Banteng Windu Glass Painting

The Sultanate of Cirebon, as part of the Nusantara, is a unique middle area due to the blending of various ethnic communities that have arrived in the region (a melting pot). Historically, Cirebon was an Islamic sultanate located between two major cultures, namely Sunda (Pajajaran) and Java (Mataram) (Nursanty & Susilowati, 2024). Although Cirebon is currently part of West Java, its society is a mix of ethnic groups including Sundanese, Javanese, Chinese, Arabs, Indians, and others (Rosidin et al., 2025). Furthermore, Cirebon's coastal location along the Java Sea made it open to foreign influences through trade and marriage, leading to cultural acculturation (Koesoemadinata, 2007; Waluyo, 2006; Hoadley, 1988). The port of Muarajati Cirebon, one of the major hubs of the Nusantara's maritime Silk Route, is believed to be the gateway for the introduction of glass painting in Cirebon. Although this art form originated in Europe (Samuel, 2023), reverse glass painting developed in China and was subsequently exported to Europe, including countries such as Sweden, followed by England, France, the Netherlands, and to a lesser extent, Germany and Russia (van der Poel, 2022; Audric, 2022). In addition to Europe, Chinese glass painting also entered Indonesia through European trade missions and the presence of Chinese ethnic groups who had settled in Indonesia by the late 19th century (Fischer, 1994; Waluyo, 2006). According to Casta (2018) and Samuel (2022), glass painting is thought to have arrived in Indonesia in the early 19th century, reaching its peak of development between the 1930s and 1950s. Based on Fathurrohman's hypothesis, the oldest glass paintings found in Cirebon are the *Insan Kamil* and *Gunungan* paintings, dating back to 1883 CE / 1371 AH (Fathurrohman, 2002).

In an interview with the author, Casta (2022) revealed that *Srabad* glass paintings are believed to protect the owner from various dangers and diseases. Dr. Raffan Syafari Hasyim, a glass painting artist, Cirebon cultural expert, and philologist, explained the term *Srabad* as *Mingser Saking Abad*, or the shift from the *Kesanghyangan* era to the Islamic era (Raden et al., 2021). According to a discussion between Hasyim and members of the Cirebon palace as well as religious scholars in his work titled *Mitologi Lukisan Kaca Cirebon* (Hasyim, n.d.), it was agreed that *Srabad* is synonymous with *Richul Achmar* (red wind). Direct confirmation through interviews with Hasyim and Hilman (2021) stated that *Richul Achmar* is a type of plague, both physical and spiritual in nature, and the prayer recited to protect from this plague (a prayer for warding off misfortune) is called the *Srabad* prayer.

Elang Muhammad Hilman, a member of the Kacirebonan Palace and also a Mursyid of the Sattariyah Tariqa, explained that the *Srabad* glass paintings represent the artist's expression of understanding the teachings of the Sattariyah Tariqa in Cirebon (Hilman, 2021). The existential-transcendent awareness of the artist is expressed through specific themes related to the Sattariyah teachings, one of which is the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* painting (Hilman, 2021). In the creative process, the artist begins by performing special religious rituals such as fasting, meditation, *dhikr*, and others (Raden et al., 2021). The sacred knowledge gained through the *tariqa* by the artist is encoded into distinctive and unique visual forms. As a result, the visual representation of traditional art is often not easily understood by the general public, as the teachings of the *Tariqa* are essentially sacred and hidden knowledge (Hilman, 2021). The growth of the economic and tourism sector has reduced sacred art into profane art, with glass paintings becoming souvenirs symbolizing the presence of tourists in Cirebon city. On the other hand, the rejection of the assimilation of pre-Islamic cultural traditions into Islamic ritual traditions, or what is also called *syncretism*, by some Islamic groups (Widiana, 2016), has led to a reduction in the understanding of spiritual values in traditional art.



Figure 1. Srabad Banteng Windu Glass Painting by Kusdono Rastika (2021)

One local study on Srabad glass painting that provides a comprehensive analysis is the thesis by Arif Yunanto (2019) titled *Aksiologi Lukisan Kaca Srabad Cirebon: Relevansinya Terhadap Pendidikan Karakter* (*The Axiology of Srabad Glass Painting Cirebon: Its Relevance to Character Education*). In this thesis, Srabad is generally described as a depiction of creatures or objects formed with Arabic calligraphy (Yunanto, 2019: 59-60). Interviews with Opan Safari (Dr. Rafan S. Hasyim) and Natsir, conducted for this thesis, indicate that Srabad represents a form of cultural acculturation between Hinduism and Islam. This refers to the depiction of Srabad in the shape of Hindu mythological animals, which were then modified with Islamic teachings (syncretism), including calligraphy containing supplications that are believed to be answered. In the analysis of its form, the Banteng-Windu figure represents a manifestation of the Hindu mythological characters Mahesasura and Jatasura, which are popular in Javanese society.

Islamic Cosmology

In general, cosmology is the study of the universe and its components, how the universe was formed, how it evolves, and its future. For centuries, humans have observed the sky and stars, which prompted the ancient Greeks to contemplate the universe and the relationship between celestial bodies, the earth, and the sky. Advances in logic, such as the Pythagorean Theorem, fostered the belief that logical reasoning could lead to a deeper understanding of the physical world, which laid the foundation for the development of cosmology (Zhud in Payandeh et al., 2024). The ancient Greek cosmological view influenced the early development of Islamic cosmology, especially the model of nine celestial spheres by Ptolemy, which was later harmonized with the concept of seven heavens in the Qur'an. Muslim scholars such as Sheikh Tabarsi attempted to bridge this gap by interpreting the seven heavens of the Qur'an as the first seven celestial spheres of Ptolemy, while the eighth and ninth spheres were given theological meanings as "God's Footstool" and "God's Throne" (Rasol, 2017). The eighth sphere was considered the place of fixed stars and a mystical destination, while the ninth sphere was viewed as the outer limit of the universe and the cause of day and night, also believed to be the home of significant spiritual entities. Thus, Islamic cosmology at that time was a synthesis of Greek scientific knowledge and Islamic theological teachings (Payandeh et al., 2024).

Islamic Cosmology applies metaphysical principles derived from Islamic revelation to the cosmic realm, forming an understanding of the cosmos that is "Islamic" and relevant to Muslims (Burckhardt, 1987). This knowledge understands the cosmos through the truth of Islam and is influenced by worldviews, thoughts, and empirical abilities shaped by revelation and traditional interpretation. Islamic cosmology offers an understanding of cosmic reality that transcends the physical and becomes the foundation for Islamic science, including concepts of space, time, matter, energy, form, and numbers. Although rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith, Islamic cosmology also integrates ideas from various sources

such as Platonism, Hermeticism, Aristotelianism, and Indian philosophy, yet it is always internalized from a tawhidic perspective. This convergence forms the understanding that the universe is God's creation, integrated into a hierarchical structure that reflects His oneness, where every phenomenon is a sign (ayat) of God (Nasr, n.d.). Muslim cosmologists contemplate verses about the sky and the earth, particularly *Ayat al-Kursi*, which describes the vastness of Allah's power (QS. Al-Baqarah: 255; QS. An-Nur: 35), which symbolically contains the entirety of cosmology in terms of light. The universe is viewed as a manifestation or revelation from God Himself (Nasr, 1987).

Furthermore, Islamic cosmology has a correlation with the letters in the verses of the Qur'an, which serve as the foundation for deep contemplation by figures such as Jābir b. Hayyān, Ibn Sīnā, Shams al-Dīn al-Būnī, and Ibn 'Arabī. Additionally, the doctrine of the Divine Names in the Qur'an is a key foundation of Islamic cosmology, opening an understanding of the relationship between the cosmos and God, as well as the structure of the universe as a manifestation of Divine Names and Attributes. The cosmological principles in the Qur'an are further elaborated in the Hadith, which discusses the Pen (*al-Qalam*), the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lauh al-Mahfuz*), the Throne (*'Arsh*), and the Pedestal (*al-Kursi*). The Hadith, together with the Qur'an, forms the primary foundation for the development of various Islamic cosmological schools over the centuries, serving as a framework for studying and evaluating cosmological ideas from other traditions, which are then either assimilated or rejected based on Islamic principles. Various Islamic cosmological schools, from mystical to scientific, grew within the worldview established by the Qur'an, the Hadith, and its traditional exegesis (Nasr, 1987).

Sources of Influence on Islamic Cosmology

The legacy of Graeco-Hellenistic cosmology, rooted in Babylonian and Egyptian traditions, developed among the Greeks during the Hellenic and Hellenistic periods, producing various cosmological systems that were later recognized and integrated into the worldviews of various Islamic intellectual schools. The first key figure is Pythagoras, known to Muslims through early sources on Pythagoras, Plato, and neo-Pythagoreans such as Nicomachus, whose cosmological scheme based levels of existence on numerical symbols and explained cosmology through mathematics. Plato's works, particularly *Timaeus*, also had a profound influence on Muslims, with his cosmological ideas contributing significantly to certain Islamic intellectual traditions, such as the School of Illumination (al-Ishraq) (Nasr, n.d.).

However, the works of Aristotle and his school had the most extensive influence on Islamic philosophical cosmology, while the works of Greek astronomers, particularly Ptolemy, were highly influential from the 9th century onward, not only in astronomy but also in cosmology. Regarding Aristotle, his major works on cosmology were well-known and influential, especially among the Peripatetics. However, Muslim thinkers often viewed Aristotle through the lens of his Neoplatonic commentators, making Neoplatonic works essential for understanding the type of cosmology developed by Muslim philosophers. Among the influential Neoplatonic works were *Theology of Aristotle* and *The Book of Causes*. Additionally, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, widely known among Muslims through Arabic translations, played a key role not only in introducing alchemy to the Islamic world but also in significantly influencing cosmology, as reflected in the writings of prominent figures such as Jabir b. Hayyan, Ibn Sina, and Ibn 'Arabi. Indian cosmological ideas entered the Islamic world alongside the development of Indian astronomy and Hindu doctrines about cosmic cycles, as well as other cosmological ideas known to Muslim thinkers. However, the influence of these ideas was not as significant as the influence of the Persian and Graeco-Hellenistic traditions in shaping Islamic cosmological frameworks (Nasr, n.d.).

Between the 8th and 10th centuries CE, Muslim thinkers, grounded in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the worldview revealed by Islam, succeeded in integrating various cosmological ideas into a diverse set of cosmological doctrines. Nonetheless, all these frameworks were unified by a focus on *al-tawhid* (the oneness of God) and were rooted in the revelation of the Qur'an. These cosmological schemes played a

crucial role in Islamic theology and philosophy, in popular religious literature, in Islamic art (especially architecture), as well as in the development of Islamic science (Nasr, 1987).

Islamic Cosmology of Ibn al-‘Arabi

The concept of Islamic cosmology had already developed in the 4th-5th centuries AH through thinkers such as Ikhwan al-Shafa, al-Biruni, and Ibn Sina. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, these early contributions can be considered the foundation for the subsequent development of Islamic cosmology (Nasr, 1978: 50). Based on the subject of this study, the Srabad glass painting from Cirebon is an expression of the understanding of the *Martabat Pitu* teachings, which are rooted in Ibn al-‘Arabi's concept of emanation. Therefore, an explanation of Ibn al-‘Arabi's cosmological model will be central to this analysis. Over time, Ibn al-‘Arabi's concept of emanation (*Wahdatul Wujud*) was further explored by later Muslim thinkers and philosophers, including Mulla Sadra, particularly in his principle of the gradation of being (*Tasykik al-wujud*). Thus, these two philosophical concepts – emanation and the gradation of being – will form the central analysis of the cosmological concept in the Srabad Banteng-Windu glass painting.

In the history of Islamic thought, Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240 CE) stands out as the most prolific figure in writing about cosmology. His cosmological ideas encompass various streams of thought, including Hermeticism, Neopythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism. However, the core substance of his cosmology is firmly rooted in the Qur'an, making Ibn al-‘Arabi's cosmology fundamentally Qur'anic, even though he adopted concepts from neo-Empedoclean (Neo-Pythagoreanism) and Neoplatonic traditions. The breadth of Ibn al-‘Arabi's cosmological thought was further developed by his disciples and followers (Nasr, n.d.).

In Ibn al-‘Arabi's view, the cosmos is dominated by the Divine Names and Attributes, along with their theophanic interactions (*tajalliyyat*) and reflections in the 'mirror of non-existence,' which we perceive as the material world. The creation of the universe occurs through the 'Breath of Compassion' (*nafas al-Rahman*), which breathes forth archetypes (*al-a'yan al-thabita*) latent within the knowledge of God, representing further determinations of the Divine Names and Attributes. Thus, the substance of the universe is essentially the 'Breath of Compassion,' while all that exists is a manifestation (*ta'ayyunat*) of the primary reality contained within the archetypal realm. There exists a hierarchy of determinations or limitations that forms the levels of existence, which continue to descend until reaching the boundary of cosmic manifestation (Nasr, 1968).

Similar to the rhythmic breathing of a human being, which continuously inhales and exhales, the entire cosmos undergoes an ongoing process of expansion (*bast*) and contraction (*qabd*). In fact, the universe experiences destruction and re-creation at every moment, although the speed of this process makes it imperceptible to humans, who only perceive the horizontal relationships between various entities. This constant renewal is known as the renewal of creation (*tajdid al-khalq*), which bears similarities to the view of the Ash'ariyah school of thought, but is not entirely identical. In Ibn al-‘Arabi's perspective, the cosmos is a universe that is constantly renewed, where vertical causes are always present, and the freshness of creation, along with the yearning to return to the Source, accompanies every moment of existence, which, in essence, is the "Eternal Now" (Nasr, n.d.). The concept of the Eternal Now (*tajdid al-khalq*) seems to be influenced by al-Ghazali's thinking regarding the continuous re-creation of the universe by God, as articulated in his work *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), particularly in Issue 17. Al-Ghazali critiqued the philosophers who claimed that the universe contains immutable cause-and-effect principles, which implied that there was no further divine intervention (will) after creation. In Karen Harding's *Causality Then and Now: Al Ghazali and Quantum Theory*, it is revealed that al-Ghazali's concept bears parallels with subatomic reality. In quantum physics, the universe (matter) is found to be relative (Quantum Fluctuation), where the probability of its existence remaining

unchanged (stable) is greater than that of it being altered (unstable), depending on the observer. This implies that the universe is always fresh and new (Harding, 1993).

In Ibn al-‘Arabi's view, the cosmos is hierarchically structured, following the traditional pattern that begins with the Divine Essence, followed by the Divine Names and Attributes, and then extending to the realms of the supreme angels, angels, the psychic, and the physical. At times, Ibn al-‘Arabi refers to the entire universe as the ‘Divine Presence’ (*al-hadarat al-ilahiyya*), because each level of reality is, in essence, a manifestation of the Divine Presence. The five well-known ‘Divine Presences’ – *hāhūt*, *lāhūt*, *jabarūt*, *malakūt*, and *nāsūt* – are distinctive features of Ibn al-‘Arabi's cosmology. On other occasions, he elaborates a more detailed hierarchy, starting from God and culminating in humans, known as the arc of descent (*qaws al-nuzūl*). This arc of descent encompasses the First Intelligence, the Universal Soul, the Universal Realm, the Primordial Matter (*al-Habā’*), the Universal Body and Form, as well as the ‘*Arsh* and *Kursi*, followed by the manifest and observable cosmos (Nasr, n.d.).

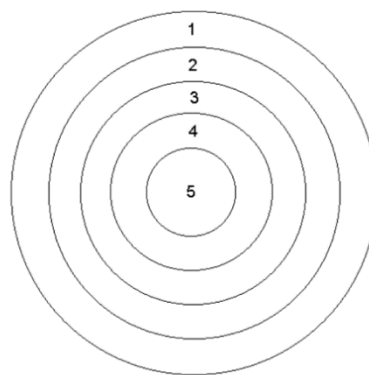


Figure 4. The Universe Scheme (Macrocosm)
(Source: Idris, 2015)

Description:

1. The Realm of Divine Essence (*hāhūt*)
2. The Realm of Divine Names and Attributes (*lāhūt*)
3. The Realm of the Substance of Angels (*malakūt*)
4. The Psychical or Subtle Realm (*jabarūt*)
5. The Physical Realm (*nāsūt*)

With the presence of humanity, the journey of ascent toward God begins actively (Nasr, n.d.). Externally, humans, as microcosms, reflect the entire cosmos. However, internally, they are the manifestation (*tajallī*) of all of God's Names and Attributes, connected to Him vertically and directly. Likewise, the cosmos as a whole is also a manifestation (*tajallī*) of God.

The diagram below illustrates that the physical aspect is considered the outermost manifestation of reality, while the spiritual dimension is the most hidden. In other words, the two cosmological diagrams of Ibn al-‘Arabi reveal that the physical universe we observe, however vast it may be, is only a small part of the greater reality that encompasses it. These two diagrams describe the process of the creation of the universe or the Divine Presence in Sufi thought. In addition to the five levels mentioned in the schema, a sixth level is sometimes added, which is the state of the universal human or al-Insān al-Kāmil (Nasr, 68: 74-75).

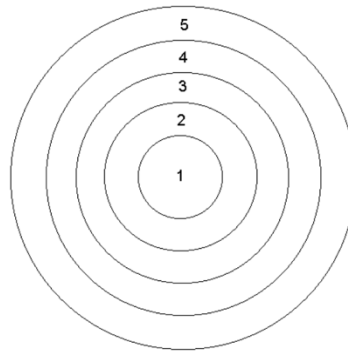


Figure 5. Diagram of the Human Universe (Micro-cosmos)
(Source: Idris, 2015)

Explanation:

5. Physical Realm (*nasut*)
4. Psychic or Subtle Realm (*jabarut*)
3. Realm of the Essence of Angels (*malakut*)
2. Realm of Divine Names and Attributes (*lahut*)
1. Realm of Divine Reality (*hahut*)

According to Nasr, the purpose of human creation in this world is to achieve a comprehensive understanding of everything and to become the Universal Human (*al-Insan al-kamil*), reflecting all Divine Names and Attributes. Before descending to the earth, humans existed in paradise as the Primordial Human (*al-Insan al-Qadim*). This state was lost after the fall, but by becoming the central being in the universe, capable of comprehending it in its entirety, humans have the potential to transcend their pre-fall condition and reach a higher status. Therefore, humans hold a central position in the world as guardians and rulers of the universe. This raises the question about the existence of God as the Creator and Sustainer of the perfect cosmos, and the relationship between the laws of nature and God's existence itself (Nasr, 68: 115-116).

Sufism is the science of purification of the soul (Lings, 1975), which views the concept of cosmology as the foundation for contemplating (*tafakur*) human existence in the universe, as well as in the presence of God. In parallel, the concept of cosmology as creation and Sufism as the science of transcendent awareness in the spiritual tradition of the archipelago is simplified into the concept of three worlds: the upper world as the reality of Divinity (creation); the middle world as the world of malakut or the world of spirit (the world of creation); and the lower world as the physical-material reality, which is the final part of the creation process. Humans are "spiritual beings" that are 'thrown' into this material world, where their existence interacts with other physical beings such as animals, plants, planets, and other physical objects. This holistic awareness will drive them to ascend to a higher state of being, namely the world of spirit or metaphysical entities. The ability to harmonize their awareness as both a material being (lower world) and a spiritual being (middle world) will allow them to discover their true essence. At this level, an individual achieves harmony between the paradoxical dualities within themselves (body and soul, *nafs* and *qalb*), which is the key to recognizing the Singular Reality in the upper world.

Islamic Cosmological Patterns in Srabad Paintings

Cosmological patterns are found across various artifacts in Indonesian traditions, reflecting the worldview of Indonesian society, which believes in the concept of creation. Their way of thinking follows a cosmological pattern, a holistic totality of all existing realities. Indonesian traditional society holds a consistent worldview, emphasizing the interconnectedness between humans, the universe, and divinity (Sumardjo, 2006: 19). This cosmological pattern is evident in the structure of the *Borobudur Temple*, which consists of *Kamadhatu* (lower world), *Rupadhatu* (middle world), and *Arupadhatu* (upper world) (luk.tsipil.ugm.ac.id). This pattern is also visible in the structure of the *gunungan* in *wayang kulit* performances, which consists of the lower part (human beings), the middle part (harmony), and the upper part (virtuous God) (Dewi, 2023). The cosmological concept of Indonesian tradition is reinforced by Prof. Jacob Sumardjo in his book *Estetika Paradoks*, where he explains that the structure of the *Gunungan* in *Wayang Kulit* resembles the pattern of the *kris*, the *stupa*, and the temples of Java. There is a three-part structure that is vertically organized: the foundation of the human world, followed by the intermediary world in the middle, and concluding with the peak as the uppermost part (Sumardjo, 2006: 21).

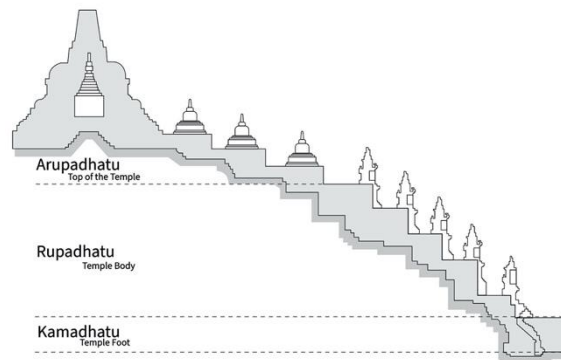
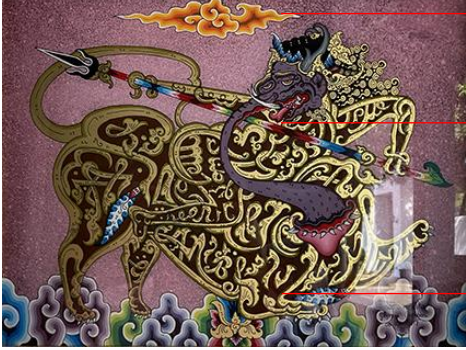
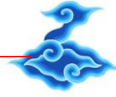




Figure 5. The Three-World Structure of Borobudur Temple (Drawn based on Source: luk.tsipil.ugm.ac.id)

Based on the visual analysis of the *Srabad* glass painting below, a cosmological pattern of three world levels is also evident. As previously explained, these three levels represent a simplification of the emanation concept in the *Sattariyah* order, specifically the teaching of *Martabat Pitu* (the seven degrees). These three levels consist of: the highest level (upper) representing the existence of God in the form of Absolute Being or Unity (*Manunggal*), the lower level being the realm of creation, which contains the paradox of the soul (middle world) and the body (lower or material world). The concept of cosmological levels (realms) in Javanese spiritual tradition, which also influences the Cirebon tradition, is translated into the term *Triloka*. In the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting, this concept of *Triloka* is depicted in the following order: the lower part or *Nasut* realm, represented by the *wadasan* motif (human realm), the middle part or *Jabarut* realm, depicted by the hybrid figure of *Banteng-Windu* (spiritual and angelic realm), and the upper part with the *Megamendung* motif representing the *Lahut* realm (existence of Allah) (Koesoemadinata, 2007: 25).

Table 1. Three Realms Concept in Srabad Glass Painting Cirebon

Srabad Banteng Windu	Image	Meaning
		The <i>Alam Lahut</i> (Divine Realm) usually uses the Megamendung motif.
		The <i>Alam Jabarut</i> (Saints Realm) is represented by the object in the painting and also conveys the purpose or meaning of the painting.
		The <i>Alam Nasut</i> (Human Nature) usually uses the Wadasan motif, symbolizing that humans must have strong faith in life in this world.

In the realms of the middle and lower worlds, the concept of paradox arises due to the act of creation by God, in the form of the duality of the soul and the body (matter). This separation serves as a test for creatures (humans) to align these dualities of existence. The presence of humans, as rational beings, makes the journey of ascent to God an active one (Nasr, n.d.). Based on this, the cosmological pattern shifts to become existential, with movement reversing from below to above. The alignment of the paradoxical duality of the soul and body (harmony) represents the highest form of existential awareness, which in Sufi teachings is referred to as *insan kamil* (the perfect human). This means that humans must actively purify their souls and make every effort to avoid contaminating them, thus creating balance or harmony between their body and soul (Jannah et al., 2023).

The pattern reflects an individual's awareness while living in the world (represented by the *wadasan* motif), strengthening their faith through acts of worship in accordance with the Sharia. It is further enriched with the Sunnah worships in Sufi teachings, centered on *dhikr* (remembrance of God) and *fikr* (contemplation) through the *Sufi* path (*Tariqa*), until awareness of the true self – the soul (represented by the *Banteng-Windu* figure) – is realized (Lings, 1975). This total awareness becomes the gateway to receiving God's grace, namely *ilmu makrifat* (knowledge of divine reality), represented by the *megamendung* motif, or the awareness of recognizing God as intimately as possible, where no boundary exists between the self and the Creator (*Tajalli*) (Faiz, 2020). Ultimately, this leads to the realization that nothing exists except the One Who Is (*Laa Ilaha Ilallah*), and creatures are merely shadows of His existence (Hilman, 2021).

A further explanation of the cosmological pattern (Triloka) as an existential pattern, the author utilizes the concept of *Tasykik* or the gradation of being in Mulla Sadra's philosophy of *Al-Hikmah Al-Muta'aliyah* (Transcendent Theosophy). A simple explanation of *Tasykik* is that Being or Existence, as a singular reality, has varying degrees of existence. Being, as a general concept, is used to explain the differences in the types of 'existence' within it. This gradation serves to distinguish the existence of God as the primary reality from His creatures (humans) as *maujūdāt* (beings). The existence of God is referred to as *Ada*, which does not require the existence of anything else, in contrast to His creatures, who all require God (the Creator) for their existence (Açıkgöç, 1993). The cosmological model of the realm levels (or *realm*) in the *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass painting illustrates the gradation of existence or *Tasykik*. In this concept of the gradation of being, the physical body (material) is created from the element of earth (soil), representing dark materiality, while the soul/spirit is made from the element of light. Therefore, this cosmological model also explains the existential movement of beings from darkness (ignorance) toward light (true knowledge).

Analysis of the Srabad Banteng-Windu Structure

As previously explained, the fundamental cultural pattern of the Cirebon tradition manifests in the form of the paradoxical duality of the existence of the soul and the body. This reflection of the paradoxical duality is also present in various entities in the universe, such as day-night, hot-cold, spirit-physical, light-dark, life-death, and so on. The structure of this paradoxical duality, which manifests in various elements and entities of the universe, forms the creative foundation of Cirebon traditional art, where the concept of visual form always contains this paradoxical structure. In general, the structure revealed from the analysis of the visual form of the Srabad glass painting is the combination of two paradoxical elements (dualism) that generate (birth) new meaning. This concept is influenced by the three-fold aesthetic pattern of the Nusantara, which is embraced by the farming and rice-planting communities. The aesthetic of the three-fold pattern always refers to the fusion of dualistic, opposing elements to give birth to new life (union). This way of thinking is influenced by the lifestyle of farming and rice-planting communities, whose activities involve cultivation (bringing life), and are highly dependent on transcendent forces to ensure the safety and smoothness of their sources of life (Sumardjo, 2006). Therefore, the structure that emerges in the visual form always consists of objects or figures with contradictory (paradoxical) characteristics and contains meanings that are spiritual in nature.

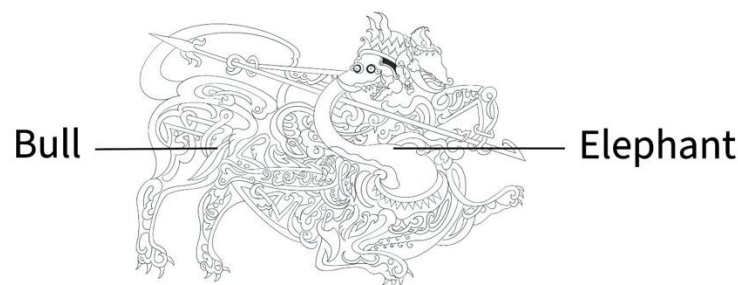


Figure 6. Paradoxical Structure in the Banteng-Windu Figure

The duality structure is evident in the existence of the *wadasan* and *megamendung* motifs, which interpret the paradox of the physical world and the world of the spirit (soul). *Wadasan* refers to the abstraction of coral rock, symbolizing the lower world (earth), in contrast with the *megamendung* motif, which abstracts clouds to represent the sky or the upper world (transcendence), sometimes interpreted as a manifestation of God's existence. The conflict between these two worlds carries a spiritual meaning, suggesting that life in this world should be used or directed toward achieving salvation in the afterlife. This duality structure is also reflected in the hybrid Banteng-Windu figure. This pattern is an extension of the vertical structure of the Three Pattern, which incorporates a horizontal structure to form the Five Pattern aesthetic (Sumardjo, 2006). The lower world (material) is a test for humans, through their intellect, to determine whether they possess a holistic awareness (spiritual and physical being), or whether they are trapped solely in the physical-material world. On a vertical level, in terms of the soul, humans are also tested through their desires (*nafsu*), and they must suppress them and align them with the heart (*qalb*). The philosophical meaning is that humans, with their physical strength and intellect, possess a great dual potential: to preserve (protect) and to destroy, in the forms of desires and the inner heart (*bathin*). Therefore, humanity's greatest task is to reconcile these dualities, not to destroy one of them (Hasyim and Hilman, 2021).

These paradoxical concepts are frequently present in both the traditional art of Cirebon and specifically in Sufism teachings. The paradoxical concept in Islam is often used to open the human mind to reflect on events and realities experienced (*taffakur*). Through contemplation, we can discover the

existence of God, such as illness (difficulty) as both a trial and a means of atonement, wealth (ease) as both a blessing and a test for those who possess it, and so on. The concept of God's attributes in Islam, as proposed by Muhammad Yusuf al-Maqassari (in Azra, 2013), reveals that Allah has two opposing attributes, such as *al-Awwal* (The First) – *al-Akhir* (The Last); *az-Zahir* (The Manifest) – *al-Bathin* (The Hidden), *al-Hadi* (The Guide) – *al-Mudhill* (The Misleader), and others. However, this dualistic-paradoxical concept must be emphasized in the oneness of God, both in His essence and His existence; it should not solely focus on one of His attributes. In essence, God is the unity of these binary oppositions of His attributes (Azra, 2013: 302).

On the other hand, this paradoxical dualism concept is closely related to the understanding of moderation in Islamic thought, which emphasizes moderate views or attitudes (*tawassuth*), justice (*al-Adl*), wisdom (*al-Hikmah*), prioritizing goodness (*al-Khairiyah*), and balance and proportionality (*i'tidal*) in practicing religion, especially when confronting human life phenomena or problems. Islamic moderation also means occupying the middle position, while serving as a solution to conflicting Islamic schools of thought, whether they lean towards the extreme right or the extreme left (Arif, 2020). The term "moderation" in its Islamic equivalent is commonly referred to as *al-wasathiyyah*, which signifies justice, a middle ground between two extremes, a standard or balanced state. In the Quran, the term moderation (*wasathiyyah*) often refers to Surah al-Baqarah, verse 143, which describes the Muslim ummah as "*ummatan wasathan*" or the middle nation, just, and chosen. Nasr (1987) also presents this concept of moderation as a balance between *tashbih* (similarity) and *tanzih* (dissimilarity), or between immanence and transcendence, where choosing one without the other can lead to serious errors. However, when taken together, they reveal the precise relationship between God and the universe. Quoting from Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, Islamic teachings contain dualism between divine elements (*rabbaniyyah*) and human aspects (*insaniyyah*), materialism (*maddiyah*) and spirituality (*ruhaniyyah*), a combination of revelation (*wahyu*) and reason (*akal*) or context, as well as a balance between the common good (*al-jamaiyyah*) and individual interests (*al-fardiyyah*). More generally, there is a balance between the doctrine of Shariah and the understanding of truth (*hakikat*) (Faiz, 2020).

Analysis of the Form of Srabad Banteng-Windu

The stage of form is the physical manifestation of the creativity of traditional artists (*material*), derived from the concepts of Pattern and Structure discussed above, or borrowing Mulla Sadra's existential terms, referring to external reality for the first and mental reality for the latter. In analyzing the form of Srabad Banteng-Windu, we cannot overlook the existence of the animal as the source of its embodiment. Looking at the visual sources from Hindu-Buddhist traditions, the use of animal figures is quite common. However, unlike Hindu-Buddhist beliefs that deify certain animals, in Islam, animals exist merely as symbols or metaphors for particular concepts.

The figure of Banteng-Windu refers to a previous study by Yunanto (2019), which briefly describes it as a reinterpretation of the Mahesasura-Jatasura mythological figure. Referring to the mythological story of the broader Javanese region, this figure is considered a powerful being that cannot die unless both figures perish simultaneously. If one of the figures is injured, the other will heal it. This figure shares a narrative similarity with the figure of Richul Achmar, previously mentioned, which is a creature sent by Allah to meet Prophet Solomon (AS) and introduces itself as the source of all diseases and their cures (Hasyim, 2021).

The figure of *Mahesasura-Jatasura* appears to be influenced by the popularity of the goddess *Durga Mahisassuramardini*, as indicated by the similarity in their names. As a Hindu mythological figure in Indian society, *Durga* was also quite popular in the *Nusantara* region in ancient times. Several field studies have documented numerous findings of *Durga* statues in Java and Bali, leading to the assumption of a connection between the two mythological figures. In Java, *Durga* statues have been found in *Saiva-*

style temples such as Gedong Songo and Dieng, the Śiva temple complex in *Prambanan* (also known as *Loro Jonggrang*), and at *Candi Sambisari*. Durga statues can also be found in Buddhist-style temples, including *Candi Singasari*. In Bali, representations of Durga are seen in both Buddhist Tantra and Śaiva forms, such as at *Pura Mas Ketel*, *Pejeng*, *Pura Goa Gajah*, *Pura Pegulingan* in Tampaksiring, and *Pura Melanting* (Calo, 2020). Other research by Santiko (1992: 19, 239) in East Java found around 76 Durga statues, while in Bali, based on Boedhijono's findings (2012), approximately 21 statues were discovered.

The assumption of the connection between the *Banteng-Windu* figure and the *Durga Mahisasuramardini* myth lies in the existence of an anthropomorphic elephant figure holding a trident. The presence of this trident is believed to be a marker referring to the figure of Durga, as it is a weapon bestowed upon her by the gods during her creation process (Calo, 2020). This fact is related to various studies on the spread of Islam in Java, particularly in Cirebon, where the Wali (Islamic missionaries) utilized popular mythological stories to facilitate the communication of Islamic teachings (ideology) to the people.

The use of animal figures in Cirebon Islamic traditional art serves as a symbolism with specific meanings corresponding to the type of animal depicted. Dr. Raffan Safari Hasyim (Safari, 2018) interprets the use of the elephant figure in Cirebon traditional glass painting as symbolizing 'ignorance.' In his explanation, Hasyim reveals that the elephant represents or symbolizes an ignorant person. The term 'ignorance' refers to the Qudsi hadith "*Man 'Arafa Nafsahu, Faqad Arafa Rabbahu*," meaning "Whoever knows himself, will know his Lord." In his further explanation, the term 'ignorance' describes human knowledge in the face of Allah's power, especially when one realizes oneself as a powerless creature before the Almighty Creator. Based on the pattern and structure of the cosmological concept in Cirebon tradition, the duality of the elephant and bull (buffalo) can be understood as a duality of potential power: one as a guardian (knowledge) and the other as possessing great destructive power (ignorance). In Sufi studies, this dualistic conflict is the struggle between the *nafs* (ego) and *qalb* (heart), where the person who is saved is the one who is able to balance them (harmony).

Conclusion

Cosmology is an inevitable aspect of human civilization, as the existence and properties of celestial objects can be seen and studied. The parallel patterns and structures of celestial bodies with the patterns and structures of creatures on Earth, including humans themselves, raise the awareness that the concept of cosmology is the gateway to humanity's great secret: the existence of the Creator. As a result, the concept of cosmology appears in various human cultures, in forms unique to the thinking and knowledge of each society. Similarly, in Islamic culture, the concept of cosmology also exists, but with a religious nuance, as it is derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Several verses of the Qur'an reflect the hierarchical structure of cosmological elements, such as the existence of Allah, the seven heavens, unseen beings, soul and spirit, humans, animals, plants, and the universe. Although the concept of cosmology may not be as popular today, its simple patterns remain evident in the form of three worlds, or what is referred to in Indonesian traditional culture as *Triloka*. The adoption of the *Triloka* concept in Cirebon's *Srabad* glass painting is existential or active, rather than merely depicting the concept of creation in a passive manner. The *Triloka* concept in *Srabad Banteng-Windu* painting encourages humans to actively understand themselves (microcosm) and their position in the universe (macrocosm) as a path to knowing the One True God (*Tawhid*).

Based on the analysis of *Srabad Banteng-Windu* glass paintings, compared with Islamic Cosmology theory, the acculturation of pre-Islamic traditions into Islamic traditional art in Cirebon is not a sudden or careless adaptation. Furthermore, the accusations of adopting old traditions (Hindu-Buddhist) into Islamic teachings or rituals (syncretism) by some fundamentalist Islamic groups should be reconsidered. The analysis shows that the use of visual content from pre-Islamic traditions (hybrid

creatures, cosmological levels, and others) is an integration process that starts from within and moves outward. This means that traditional artists, after studying and understanding the teachings of the *Sattariyah Sufi* order, expressed these teachings in their artwork by borrowing visual elements from pre-existing traditional art popular in Cirebon society.

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