THE CULTURE OF COMMUNITY DRAWING AS A SOURCE OF IDEAS IN DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION WORKS

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Abstract. The Rerajahan culture in traditional Islamic society is part of a spiritual practice that contains visual symbols with powerful religious, medicinal, and cultural meanings. The creation of this work aims to explore and re-visualize the symbolic richness of the Rajah tradition as a source of ideas for digital illustration works that are able to re-represent these spiritual and cultural values in the context of contemporary art. The methods used include literature studies on Islamic medical books, interviews with Rajah practitioners, and creative exploration through stylistic and symbolic approaches in the creation process. Bitmap-based digital drawing techniques with an emphasis on lines, pointillist, and black and white are used to strengthen the spiritual and emotional nuances of the visualized symbols. The results of the creation are three two-dimensional digital illustration works. This work demonstrates that digital illustration is not only effective as a medium for visual expression, but also as a space for spiritual education and cultural preservation. The creation of this work contributes to reviving traditional symbols into the realm of modern art that is more open, contextual, and relevant for today's generation, while bridging religious teachings and contemporary visual narratives.

1. Introduction

Mystical culture significantly influences the spiritual aspects of society, making it nearly impossible to distinguish between religious teachings and mystical culture. In Islam, tattoos are often associated with practices believed to provide spiritual protection, healing from illness, or even increasing good fortune in daily life. The spread of Islam has always been confronted with local social and cultural conditions, where tattoos serve as a medium for expressing spiritual understanding through visualization. This process creates a unique cultural dynamic in which local elements collaborate with Islamic principles, supporting the strengthening of the community's collective identity (Ayu et al., 2022).

A tattoo is a series of words or phrases believed to possess spiritual power (Ravico & Hum, 2022). Amulets function as objects or inscriptions that can provide protection and good fortune, often containing quotations from the Quran. Meanwhile, wafaq (invocations) are calligraphy or symbols depicting Islamic teachings and are used in healing practices to obtain blessings, possessing a deep spiritual dimension (Ilyas 2020, n.d.). This knowledge is crucial in the study of fine art, as exploring these symbols in digital illustration creations creates an opportunity to reintroduce and preserve their meanings without losing their essence (Fauzi et al., 2023). Through this creation, the author aims to explore and explore the visual richness of symbols in Islamic Rajah to re-visualize and translate these meanings into a contemporary art context, namely through digital illustration.

The digital illustration developed by the author from Rajah symbols has a different visual and conceptual approach than the three previous articles: (1) "Living Qur'an in Paintings" by (Faruq and Hamzah, et al., 2022), (2) "Calligraphy Artworks and Symbolism in Muslim Society" by (Rachmawanti et al., 2023), and (3) "Representation of Wafaq Art in Contemporary Visual Art" by (Ilyas, F., 2020). The three articles tend to use an analytical and informative approach that

focuses on calligraphy and its educational value in art, as well as the visual and spiritual aspects of the Wafaq symbol in contemporary visual art. Meanwhile, the digital illustrations developed by the author emphasize the exploration of visual expression, emotional atmosphere, and artistic interpretation through a stylistic and symbolic approach that focuses on the analysis of visual elements such as shape and color, which allows for the creation of interesting and powerful compositions.

Some groups argue that tattoos do not possess recognized magical powers, but rather serve as suggestions for their users, who believe they possess special powers. While societies with an inclusive understanding tend to accept symbols as a form of religious expression, more orthodox groups may reject them based on traditional interpretations of their religious teachings. These differing perspectives create diverse interpretations of the teachings of the scriptures, making the interaction between visual art and religious practice crucial for understanding the dynamics of tattoo interpretations in Islamic societies (Drajat et al., 2024). Local values can be integrated with Islamic educational teachings as long as they do not conflict with the Quran and Sunnah, creating challenges in aligning local traditions with stricter Islamic teachings (Fernando & Yusnan, 2022).

This digital illustration not only serves as a platform for conveying visual beauty but also serves as a way to preserve and reinterpret the values contained in Islamic teachings (Latif et al., 2022). Through this creation, the authors aim to explore and explore the visual richness of symbols in Islamic tattoos, translating these meanings into a contemporary art context. This aligns with research by Halim et al. (2022), which emphasizes the importance of creating a dialogue between religion and art to understand the plurality of religious practices. This work aims to provide insights and visual experiences that can stimulate curiosity and in-depth reflection on the spiritual values contained in Rajah. In line with Achmad's (2024) opinion, which emphasizes the importance of developing Islamic religious education, the resulting illustrations are expected to serve as engaging educational tools, facilitating audiences in understanding and appreciating Rajah symbols as part of a rich cultural heritage. Thus, this work is not simply a visual output, but a journey of understanding and transforming existing values into a relevant and inspiring narrative for future generations.

Through this work, the author seeks to encourage the younger generation to appreciate and preserve Rajah symbols as part of their collective identity. Arts education has been proven to be a means to a broader understanding of local culture (Firmansyah et al., 2021). By addressing this theme, the resulting work is a manifestation of the author's personality as part of a community living within the Rajah culture. This understanding is very important in the context of developing an educational curriculum that involves the community, because it can provide deeper nuances to the cultural values that underlie various social practices (Rachmawanti et al., 2023).

A digital illustration designer inspired by Rajah culture, using a stylistic and symbolic approach. The stylistic approach focuses on the analysis of visual elements such as shape and color, enabling the author to create compelling and powerful compositions. Meanwhile, the symbolic approach emphasizes the meaning inherent in each symbol, making Rajah symbols more than just aesthetic elements. These symbols possess spiritual and cultural depth that can be interpreted in various ways. By combining these two approaches, the illustration is expected to provide insight into the visual richness of Rajah symbols and create a meaningful dialogue between tradition and innovation. This work also aims to preserve cultural values while utilizing digital technology to reach a wider audience and encourage people to understand and appreciate their cultural heritage (Adon & Avi, 2023). The media used include: luster paper, 42 cm x 60 cm/A2 size. The main tools required are an iPad Pro 2020, an Apple Pencil, and the Procreate design application, using bitmap-based digital drawing techniques.

In the pre-production stage, the author developed several plans, as follows: (1) Literature

Search: The author collected literature, conducted interviews with several Rajah practitioners, and consulted journals on Rajah culture in Islamic societies. This literature collection helped the author develop ideas and served as a concrete source of data, although the conflicts raised were based on personal experience. (2) Conceptualization and Visualization: This conceptualization included selecting the subject and Rajah symbols, as well as the use of color and lines, enabling the author to create a quality work. The ideas that formed the basis of this study project were then realized in a form that retained the Rajah symbols, re-visualized through a very strong visual and emotional approach. The dominant colors in this illustration are black and white with extreme contrast. In this study project, line elements and pointillist techniques (small dots) dominate, creating dynamics in the work, with its asymmetrical and intricate layout. In the production stage, the author created the digital illustration artwork through several structured stages. First, in the initial sketching stage, the author uses the Procreate design application to create a digital sketch with a size of 3506 x 4961 px and a resolution of 350 dpi, which serves as a temporary basis before continuing with the pointillist technique. Next, in the coloring stage, the author prioritizes the line art layer above so that it remains visible, where the finished pointillist is clipped masked with black on a white background to achieve perfect color coverage. Then, the finishing stage involves refining by adding dark and light details to the visual elements, making the final work not look flat, and checking the pointillist to ensure it remains within the lines. After the production phase, post-production activities are carried out with a total check on the digital illustration work in the author's personal studio to ensure quality and detail before the final presentation.

2. Results and Discussion

Three digital illustrations have been created. These illustrations function as poster art prints, but can also be used for merchandise/album covers for metal bands, clothing brands, magazines, etc. However, the primary purpose of these works is for commercial products such as textiles, clothing, or interior design with a spooky, mystical feel. The works fully display Rajah symbols with a dark and mystical nuance full of meaning, with a portrait illustration concept.

2.1 Work 1

Figure 1: Work 1
Source: Author

Artwork Specifications

Title   : "Destruction Ritual"

Media   : Digital Printing on Paper

Technique   : Digital Drawing (Bitmap)

Size   : 42 x 60 cm

Year   : 2025

2.1.1 Work Description

This digital illustration depicts a haunting nighttime atmosphere surrounding an old house. Three figures in white robes stand in a circle in front of the house, facing a glowing rajah emanating from the ground. Leafless trees, a house overgrown with black tendrils, and skulls on the ground enhance the atmosphere of horror and dark ritual. Above the house, a large, sinister face, textured like a skull in agony, emerges from the mist, intensifying the mystical aura. Scribbled Arabic texts appear scattered throughout the composition, suggesting spiritual verses or mantras.

2.1.2 Formal Analysis

In this work, the art principles of harmony, contrast, balance, proportion, and rhythm are applied intensely and purposefully to create a powerful, dark, and symbolic atmosphere. Harmony is achieved through the visual relationship between the main objects: the old house, the robed figures, and the luminous tattoo at the center of the composition. Each element supports the other, creating a unified atmosphere that connects the physical and spiritual worlds. The vertical lines of the building, the tree vines, and the detailed strokes of the figures combine to create a visual harmony that unites the ritualistic theme. Contrast is the most obvious element, particularly the extreme use of black and white. This high contrast not only creates depth and dramatic highlights but also symbolizes the conflict between light and dark, protection and destruction, the sacred and the profane. The application of pointillist techniques to the sky and astral faces creates a subtle texture that enhances the misty, mysterious, and spiritual tension. The work's balance is asymmetrical yet stable: the visually heavy house on the left is balanced by the large figures and faces in the upper right. This forms a zigzag visual pattern that leads the viewer's eye from bottom to top, stimulating a sense of engagement with the storyline within the image. The proportions between large and small objects are carefully arranged; the dominant house reflects the scene, while the small rajah and skull provide enriching narrative details. Rhythm emerges from the repetition of organic shapes such as tree branches and the lines on the characters' clothing, providing a visual flow that is not monotonous but rhythmic, supporting the feeling of an ongoing ritual. The rajah, which is precisely redrawn from a classical manuscript source, emphasizes the authenticity of its visual culture, but in the context of digital media, the work becomes a visual artifact that is no longer static, but dynamic in a contemporary narrative. The Arabic typography that surrounds the work as a whole emphasizes the Islamic background, but its use in the context of a destructive ritual also opens up space for critical contemplation of the shifting function of sacred texts in societal practices.

2.1.3 Meaning

This work reveals the dark side of community spiritual practices, where the sacred symbol of rajah is used as a tool for curses and retribution. It conveys the message that spiritual power, if misused, can backfire. Through visual symbolism, this work serves as a subtle critique of the exploitation of religious teachings in extreme mystical practices, and simultaneously reflects on the relationship between humans, power, and belief. Thus, this work not only highlights the visual beauty of the rajah symbol but also challenges the audience to reconsider their relationship with spiritual values, both as beliefs and as meaningful cultural constructs.

2.2 Work 2

Figure 2: Work 2
Source: Author

Artwork Specifications

Title   : "Savior"

Media   : Digital Printing on Paper

Technique   : Digital Drawing (Bitmap)

Size   : 42 x 60 cm/A2

Year   : 2025

2.2.1 Work Description

This digital illustration depicts a dramatic scene in the ruins of a magnificent but damaged classical architecture. In the center, two figures in black robes stand with a mysterious and menacing aura, while another kneels before them, seemingly in submission or supplication. The robed figure wields a sword like a warrior or spiritual executioner. Skulls and bones lie on the left side, while Arabic script and rajah symbols surround the frame of the work.

2.2.2 Formal Analysis

In this work, the art principles of harmony, contrast, balance, proportion, and rhythm are applied to this digital illustration. Harmony is created through the integration of the collapsed architecture, human elements, and the symbols of the rajah. All elements appear to complement each other, and nothing feels out of place in the visual narrative. The vertical lines and curves of the pillars and the arch of the dome provide a strong structure, setting a spiritual stage for the confrontation between the two figures in the center. Contrast is a key strength of this work, particularly through the use of extreme black and white that separates the light space in the background from the deep darkness of the robed figures. This creates visual tension that aligns with the moral and spiritual conflict raised in the theme. Balance is masterfully achieved through the architectural symmetry of the two pillars on the right and left, and the central division of the central space, which focuses attention on the central point where the two figures meet. However, this balance is not rigid, as it is loosened by irregular elements such as stone ruins, bones, and the rajah scattered around the edges of the frame. The proportions between the human figures and the architecture are carefully arranged to create a monumental and dramatic impression. The human figures appear small amidst the vast destruction, reinforcing the impression of devotion or surrender before a majestic spiritual force. The presence of swords and mystical symbols provides a visual accent that evokes resistance against oppression. Visual rhythm is created through the repetition of architectural elements such as the lines of the pillars

and the pointillist patterns that fill the texture of the stone and ceiling. This rhythm is reinforced by the distribution of rajah symbols around the frame, leading the viewer's eye around the composition, then returning to the central narrative. The choice to place rajah symbols in digital format suggests a duality between traditional heritage and contemporary reinterpretation. The Arabic typography surrounding the composition also reinforces the idea that this visual field is a sacred space, a space of struggle between right and wrong, between patience and vengeance.

2.2.3 Meaning

This work represents a spiritual struggle against injustice through the power of prayer and good deeds, as the rajah symbol in this work functions as the "sword of the saints." The kneeling figure reflects humility in the struggle, while the black-robed figure symbolizes trials or evil forces that must be faced. This work serves as a visual reflection of the belief that solving major problems is not only through physical strength, but also with spiritual strength that comes from sincerity, sacrifice, and closeness to God.

2.3 Work 3

Figure 3: Work 3
Source: Author

Artwork Specifications

Title   : "Fever Cure"
Media   : Digital Printing on Paper
Technique   : Digital Drawing (Bitmap)
Size   : 42 x 60 cm/A2
Year   : 2025

2.3.1 Work Description

This digital illustration depicts a room with an ancient and gloomy feel, surrounded by cracked stone walls and dim candlelight. In the center of the composition, a person sits limply on the edge of a bed, holding his head in pain, while a dark-robed figure stands behind him in a gesture as if channeling healing energy from a glowing Rajah (a symbol of healing) located between the patient's hand and head. Skulls and Arabic symbols adorn the space, creating a mystical and spiritual atmosphere.

2.3.2 Formal Analysis

In this work, the art principles of harmony, contrast, balance, proportion, and rhythm are applied to this digital illustration. Harmony is evident in the interrelationship between space, characters, and symbols. Each visual element supports the other, creating a personal narrative of spiritual healing. The placement of objects such as the bed, table, candle, and stone wall feels unified within a consistent dark palette. The rough textures of the walls, floor, and clothing reinforce the simple and archaic context, emphasizing the patient's physical and spiritual fragility. This visual and thematic harmony reinforces the

idea that this is not just an ordinary room, but a healing ritual space. Contrasts are presented subtly but effectively, particularly in the relationship between light and dark, between candlelight and wall shadows, and between the tattoo and the dim body. The central point of light comes from the tattoo symbol in the robed figure's hand, creating a transcendental effect and becoming the center of the visual narrative. This contrast is not only aesthetic but also symbolic, representing the transition from illness to healing, from darkness to light. Balance is achieved through a dynamic, asymmetrical composition. The main character is placed slightly to the right, balanced by the candle and skull on the opposite side. The door and window, as background elements, create the illusion of depth and enrich the spatial arrangement. The rajah symbols inscribed around the frame of the work help stabilize the visual distribution and act as a kind of protective spell enveloping the main scene. The proportions between the human figures and the space are finely measured. The size of the figures and furniture provide realism, while the hunched body of the seated figure and the hunched robed figure provide dramatic dimension and a strong emotional focus. The presence of rajah symbols as small elements emphasizes the importance of spiritual power in seemingly simple physical actions. Here, proportion is used not only to construct space but also to clarify the hierarchy of meaning. The visual rhythm is created by the repetition of vertical elements such as the lines of the bricks, the iron window frame, and the gesture of the robe. This rhythm slowly draws the eye towards the central healing symbol, then back to the facial expression of the main character. The complex yet rhythmic lines reinforce the atmosphere of whispers and prayers, slowing down time as if freezing the moment of healing. In the context of digital media, the combination of lighting effects, traditional textures, and classic Arabic typography demonstrates that symbols of spiritual heritage can remain visually alive in the realm of contemporary art.

2.3.3 Meaning

This work represents a spiritual healing event as a form of compassion and knowledge in traditional Islamic culture. Rajah is not merely an amulet, but a representation of prayer and hope offered with sincerity. Beneath its dark visuals, this work conveys the belief that healing comes not only from medicine but also from genuine spiritual power, passed down through the practices and beliefs of scholars and past communities.

3. Conclusion

The creation of these illustrations successfully confirms that the Islamic rajah culture possesses a visual and spiritual richness with immense potential for development in contemporary art, particularly digital illustration. Through a process of symbol exploration, literature study, and interviews with rajah practitioners, the author successfully presents three main works: Destruction Ritual, Savior, and Fever Cure, which represent aspects of destruction, protection, and healing. Each work highlights a specific rajah symbol with special significance in traditional Islamic religious and mystical practices, then translates it into a visual form that is emotionally and conceptually powerful. The use of a stylistic and symbolic approach allows the author to not only visually reconstruct the symbol's form but also to insert narratives, atmospheres, and spiritual conflicts that exist within the societal context.

Artistically, the application of art principles such as harmony, contrast, balance, proportion, and rhythm, along with bitmap-based digital drawing techniques with a predominance of black and white and pointillist colors, reinforces the thematic message of each work. Through digital media, rajah symbols function not only as spiritual ornaments but also as a communicative and reflective visual language. The resulting works not only impact the aesthetic realm but also possess educational and cultural value. These works offer new interpretations of symbols previously considered sacred and closed, while simultaneously building a bridge between traditional heritage and modern artistic expression. Thus, this project contributes to the preservation of local Islamic-based culture, the strengthening of the community's visual identity, and a renewed perspective on religious practices within the discourse of contemporary Indonesian art.

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