



## NEGLECTING CLASSIC WORSHIP SPACES: MASJID, MEUNASAH, AND BALEE E BEUT IN ACEHNESE SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

The neglect of traditional religious architecture, such as the *Tuha* Mosque, *Meunasah*, and *Balee e-beut*, is a significant and concerning phenomenon in Acehneese society. Rapid modernization and the massive influence of global media have been a force in this neglect. The purpose of this study is to conduct a thorough investigation on the reasons behind the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship. The qualitative approach involved a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature and a number of direct observations of architectural sites and interviews with cultural figures. The research findings reveal that the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship is the result of many complex and interconnected factors. Society's preference for Middle Eastern architectural styles and the strong currents of modernization have been important forces underlying the neglect of classical worship spaces. At the same time, the scarcity of goods and materials appropriate to the needs of classical architecture and the skills of carvers (*utoh*) have become objective realities that have caused classical architecture to be unable to be rehabilitated, let alone to be built. In line with this alarming condition, it is urgent to take concrete steps in the form of initiatives to promote appreciation of local wisdom and classical cultural identity, a commitment to applying a cultural identity-oriented approach in the construction and preservation of new houses of worship.

### Keywords:

Classic House of Worship; Cultural Modernization; Globalization of Values; Local Identity; Neglect of History

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship is a significant problem. Aceh's classical houses of worship, including *Tuha* mosques or *masjids*, *Meunasah* (worship place), and *Balee beut* (Place of Quran study), have important cultural and historical value [1]. The neglect includes indifference to maintenance, changes in building function, and structural damage. Buildings that were previously revered and considered sacred are now left abandoned. Some have even been converted into warehouses, losing their spiritual essence to the point of being discredited. The existence of serious damage to some of Aceh's classical houses of worship, including structural damage, threatens the sustainability of places of worship. Thus, the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship is a serious problem that threatens Aceh's cultural and historical heritage.

Research on the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship has so far ignored the perspective of local wisdom. Studies on respecting local cultural values are not seen to play a role [2]. This includes an increase in the number of buildings left abandoned, changes in function, and unaddressed structural damage. Three trends that can be identified from the literature, considering the cultural shift framework, include: (1) the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship ignores the perspective of local wisdom, showing a lack of attention to the knowledge

and values held by [3], [4], (2) the damage and neglect of buildings – there is an increasing number of buildings left abandoned and changes in function [5]–[7], and (3) the link between local views and culture; the importance of local views in appreciating the diversity of local cultures [8]–[10]. From this trend, it appears that cultural perspectives have not been accommodated in existing studies even though emic perspectives are needed for a thorough understanding of abandoned classical worship buildings.

This paper aims to fill the gap of previous studies that ignored the perspective of local wisdom in the construction of new worship spaces and the impact of the neglect of Aceh's classical worship spaces. Previous studies tend to prioritize modern perspectives and pay less attention to the views of traditional communities that are rich in local wisdom. More specifically, this paper shows three evidences of the neglect of houses of worship. First, Aceh's classical worship spaces (*Tuha* Mosque, *Meunasah*, and *Balee Beut*) are neglected. Second, Aceh's classical houses of worship experienced a change in function: from *meunasah* to warehouse; Third, Aceh's classical worship space experienced a change from Islamic heritage, which initially had a high value in Acehnese society, slowly became less valuable and abandoned as time passed by. The classical worship space is less appreciated, with a decrease in value, in line with the emergence of new modern buildings as a worship space. The answers to these questions can provide a deeper understanding and awareness of the local wisdom values that the Acehnese people hold dear and also pave the way for formulating development concepts that are rooted in a distinctive cultural identity.

Classical buildings are buildings built [11] on old regulations that become historical markers of a place. In some literature, some classical buildings are used as historical heritage monuments [12], [13]. Classical buildings have several characteristics, including 1) building materials that are difficult to find in the present era, 2) special traditional techniques in building design, and 3) building structures that have distinctive characteristics. Meanwhile, traditional construction methods have many shortcomings, such as a lack of digitalization technology and information management, weak cooperation, and an inability to evaluate the effectiveness of building reconstruction [14]. This is in line with the old community that built a building with strength that has a high risk of vulnerability with a survival rate of no more than ten years [15]. The role of community associated with the city's rich intellectual past includes a literary tradition of translating classics along with a spiritual geography made of connections and relationships between places [16]. Thus, the disconnection between buildings, communities, and memories impacts the centrality of lost histories and communities.

This paper argues that the main factors in the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship are the influence of media, modernization, and the scarcity of ornamental motif carvers. The impact of global media, film, the internet, and shifting cultural values has changed the way people view and prefer Aceh's classical worship spaces. Globalization has played an important role in changing people's views towards a new architecture that reflects the rich Middle Eastern culture, often promoted in the global media. In addition, the scarcity of traditional goods and materials used in the construction of Aceh's classical houses of worship, wood for instance, and the lack of expertise in traditional carving (*utoh*), are also major factors in the changing architectural preferences. This argument provides an initial framework for explaining the phenomenon of neglect and further analyzing the factors influencing changes in the preferences of Aceh's classical houses of worship, including mosques, *Meunasah*, and *Balee beut*.

## 2. METHODS

The existence of classical architecture in Acehnese society, such as mosques, *Meunasah*, and *Balee e Beut*, is crucial and, it is in line with the destruction and extinction of cultural heritage. Classical architecture is culturally and historically significant to Aceh's identity. The issue of the examined neglect reveals a disorientation in society towards local cultural values that carries the risk of losing spiritual essence. Understanding the forms and root causes of this neglect is a basic step in addressing the deterioration of historical buildings. The formulation of concrete solutions to preserve and rebuild these historical buildings needs to be preceded by careful research.

This research adopts a qualitative approach focused on case studies to deeply understand the phenomenon of neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship (*Tuha* mosque, *Meunasah*, and *Balee e beut*). The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the views, experiences, and understandings of relevant individuals in the context of complex social phenomena. Proximity to the research subjects allowed for an understanding of the community's experience in utilizing worship spaces and their commitment to the preservation of classical architecture. An emic approach was favored to temporally map the community's experience and utilization of worship space.

A qualitative approach was used to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the neglect of classical houses of worship in Aceh, as well as the factors involved. This approach allows researchers to explore the complexity of the cultural context, local values, and social dynamics behind the neglected phenomenon. By using a qualitative approach, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and

reasons of the communities involved in the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship. The data obtained from this research includes narratives and oral histories that give meaning to the phenomenon. This approach allowed participants to express their views more comprehensively, enriching their understanding of the relevant social and cultural context. The findings of this research form the basis for formulating conclusions about the preservation of this cultural heritage and provide a solid basis for the analysis and discussion of the research findings. The results of these analyses are expected to make a valuable contribution to the preservation and development of Acehese culture.

The research identified several case studies of Aceh's classical houses of worship that experienced neglect. Identifying the condition of worship spaces through a case study approach is expected to gain deeper insights into the causes and impacts of neglect. In this way, the historical and sociological context of the neglect of houses of worship can be comprehensively revealed. The data for the various cases were obtained through field observations, interviews with local community members and leaders, and visual documentation of each space.

The data collected through mapping, field observations, and interviews were analyzed qualitatively. They were thematically grouped and interpreted to understand the factors causing neglect and the consequences for the existence of Acehese classical architecture. The data presentation was done through visualization and presentation of data interview. For data interpretation, restatements of visual and descriptive data were made to show patterns and trends in the condition of classical architecture and ongoing neglect.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The neglect of classical (old) houses of worship is a striking phenomenon that is easily found in various parts of Aceh. Many mosques no longer function due to their poor condition. They have been replaced by new, more modern places of worship. Three forms of neglect are widespread: some have fallen into disuse due to severe damage without conservation or are left to deteriorate; others have become dysfunctional and are no longer used as places of worship; and many older mosques have been set aside since newer places of worship are built in their place. These three forms of neglect are discussed in detail in the following sections.

#### A. ABANDONED ACEH'S CLASSICAL HOUSES OF WORSHIP (TUHA MOSQUE, MEUNASAH, BALEE BEUT)

In many places in Aceh, some mosques are abandoned because they are not taken care of and conserved as cultural heritage. Mosques are left in a state of disrepair or unrepaired even though many parts of the mosque are aging. The community has no concern for the conservation of cultural heritage, so the mosque is left to deteriorate. The building structures of some mosques are damaged due to rotting/aging wood that should be maintained. Certain parts of the mosque have disappeared so that it is no longer intact as a place of worship. Many mosques also have damaged parts, such as leaking roofs or damaged walls. The following cases show the state of disrepair in various places (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Tuha Mosque of Gampong Dayah Teungku, Kuta Baro District, Pidie Regency, Aceh Province.  
[Source: Researcher Data, 2022]

**Description:**

Figure 1a: A view of the *Tuha* Mosque of Gampong Dayah Teungku in Pidie depicting an Aceh's classical house of worship through the years, now a strangely familiar building in a forest dwelling. Figure 1b: The condition of the upper supporting timber and zinc sheets with holes. Figure 1c: A Depiction of the dried-up ablution water pool. Figure 1d: An 'overall' perspective view of the *Meunasah Tuha* of Gampong Dayah Teungku, reflecting the classic Acehnese character. Figure 1e: Wooden carvings of lesplang at the end of the house of worship. Figure 1f: Perspective view of the overall view of the *Tuha* mosque of Paloh Kambuek Gampong, exuding classical Acehnese grandeur. Figure 1g: The top of the mosque is full of tiers and supporting walls decorated with various motifs. Figure 1h: Construction of the columns and stairs of the *Balee Beut* Gampong, Baro Mosque, showing the wear and tear of some stairs in need of maintenance. Figure 1i: View of the top of the *Balee Beut* building of Baro Mosque, showing the missing part of the roof. No maintenance has been done to this building.

Overall, the images in Figure 1 describe a disturbing picture of how Aceh's classical houses of worship have been neglected, deteriorated, and fallen into disrepair over time. It is also a reminder of the importance of cultural maintenance and efforts to preserve the historical heritage of the Acehnese people.

**B. THE DYSFUNCTION OF ACEH'S CLASSICAL HOUSE OF WORSHIP: FROM MEUNASAH TO WAREHOUSE**

In many parts of Aceh, classical houses of worship are experiencing dysfunction, leaving their basic functions and designations. Classical houses of worship are no longer used as places of worship but are used for purposes other than worship activities. It is not uncommon for houses of worship to be used for something inappropriate, which is contrary to the interests of religion. Buildings that were once sacred and dedicated to religious activities have turned into warehouses. Many houses of worship are used to store agricultural products of the surrounding population. In some cases, mosques have also been used to store village equipment. Dysfunction in various forms, showing the functions transition of classical houses of worship in various places, can be described in the following sections of this paper in detail (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Dysfunction of Aceh's classical houses of worship. [Source: Researcher Data, 2022]

**Description:**







Figure 2a: *Meunasah of Tuha Gampong, Tidiek*, shows significant changes in the building structure. Wooden materials were replaced by concrete, and the stairs that used wood are now made of cement, ceramic, and iron. Furthermore, the building has changed its function from a worship space to a warehouse, where village-owned items such as tents, tables, chairs, and others are stored. Figures 2b and 2c: The condition of the *Balee Beut* of Dayah Teungku, which used to function as a place to learn the Quran, that now has turned into a storage area. Unused items are piled up inside. Figures 2d and 2e: *Meunasah of Dayah Teungku* has changed its function to become a storage room. The stacks of chairs inside indicate that the prayer room has

been converted into a storage room. Figures 2f and 2g: *Meunasah of Tuha Gampong*, Pu Uk, looks deserted, dirty, and unkempt. Goods and rubbish are piled up at the bottom of the building, indicating that the worship space has lost its original function and does not get enough attention from the local community. Figures 2h and 2i: *Tuha Mosque*, Kambuek *Gampong*, showing a quiet atmosphere, has also changed its function and become a place for storing materials and rubbish. The data in Figure 2 illustrates how the changing times, modernization, and lack of maintenance have resulted in a change of function and poor condition of these historical classics.

C. SHIFTING VALUES OF ACEH'S CLASSICAL HOUSES OF WORSHIP

In some parts of Aceh, Aceh's classical houses of worship , such as old mosques and *Meunasahs*, have been abandoned in favor of new worship buildings. Aceh's classical houses of worship that were respected and considered to have high spiritual value in the past, are now no longer considered valuable in society. New mosques are considered more appropriate as places of worship to replace classical places of worship that actually have rich historical and cultural values. The decline in the value of mosques can be seen when Aceh's classical worship buildings no longer give their proper role. Aceh's classical buildings, which are full of history are replaced with new, more modern worship buildings. The phenomenon is a reflection of how valuable cultural heritage can be marginalized and forgotten because of the changing values and needs of modern society. This tendency can be found in the fact that new mosques are built next to or alongside old mosques that no longer function. Others are built within the same village or region to replace old mosques that are no longer considered suitable for worship. The phenomenon of the decline in the value of Aceh's classical houses of worship spread across various places is examined in the Table 1 in detail.

Table 1. Aceh Classical Worship Spaces have shifted [Source: Researcher Data, 2022]

CLASSICAL HOUSE OF WORSHIP	MODERN HOUSE OF WORSHIP
	
3a	3b
	
3c	3d
	
3e	3f

Description:

Figure 3a: Overall perspective, the *Tuha Paloh Kambuek Gampong Mosque* with its majestic classical Acehese character. The *Tuha Mosque* of Gampong Paloh Kambuek is a stunning architectural marvel in Aceh. This context is expressed through Acehese cultural observers who state that:

"This classical mosque has a top pillar construction using wood material that forms a hexagon pattern and vertical and horizontal lines. This shows a strong symbolic meaning of the close relationship

between humans and the Creator. This mosque is a proof of the deep and valuable carving expertise in Aceh's cultural heritage" (KH, 35).

From the statement above, it can be seen that the interview reveals a classical mosque that features a wooden top-post construction, forming a pattern of hexagons and vertical-horizontal lines with a strong symbolic meaning of the relationship between man and the Creator. The design reflects the profound craftsmanship of carving, an integral part of Aceh's cultural heritage. By emphasizing spiritual values and traditional art, the mosque is not only a place of worship but also a tangible manifestation of a rich and proudly preserved cultural identity.

Figure 3b: The Paloh Kambuek Gampong Mosque blends modern architectural design with traditional elements and contemporary touches. The mosque in Paloh Kambuek Gampong is an example of modern architectural design that blends traditional elements with a contemporary twist. The building is dominated by the cement concrete structure that surrounds it. This context is expressed through Acehnese cultural experts who state that:

"The mosque is dominated by the cement concrete structure that surrounds it. At the top of the mosque is the moon and star symbol, which is an important icon in Islam. Loudspeakers are now installed in mosques. The main entrance of the mosque is equipped with a gate featuring a *kubah* (dome) motif (TM, 50).

From the above statement, it can be seen that the interview data illustrates that the mosque in Paloh Kambuek village shows a significant change from traditional architecture to a modern design dominated by cement concrete materials. The use of cement concrete as the main structure eliminates the wooden construction elements that previously characterized traditional Acehnese mosques, thus changing the visual and architectural feel to be more massive, closed, and rigid. At the top of the mosque, the moon and star symbol is maintained as a representation of Islamic identity, but there is no Acehnese ornaments such as carvings on the mihrab or mosque pillars, which were previously an integral part of the mosque's architectural tradition in the area. The presence of loudspeakers as parts of technological change signifies an adaptation to more effective and comprehensive worship needs but also replaces traditional methods such as manual calling for azan (Islamic ritual marking the time of prayer). In addition, the mosque's gated entrance with a dome motif indicates the adoption of more common visual elements in modern mosque architecture, displacing the diversity of local architectural forms that previously had a specific character in accordance with Aceh's cultural heritage. Thus, this mosque represents an architectural shift towards modernization that prioritizes materials and technology while at the same time potentially ignores the distinctive values of local culture inherent in traditional mosques.

Figure 3c: *Meunasah of Tuha Gampong*, Pu Uk, is a beautiful example of a Aceh's classical building that is both simple and alluring. This context is expressed through Acehnese cultural stakeholders who state that:

"The *meunasah* is surrounded by wooden materials, creating a natural and traditional feel. The walls of the *meunasah* are decorated with horizontally and vertically located motifs of dome. The low entrance is a symbol of respect" (AJ, 35).

The dome motif that adorns the *meunasah* walls is a design with a symmetrical curved line pattern that is commonly used in places of worship in Aceh. This motif of dome is also a sign of the Islamic architecture existence .

The informant's statement given in the interview illustrates the characteristics of *meunasah* that are rich in traditional elements. The buildings around the *Meunasah* neighborhood are constructed with wooden materials, giving it a natural feel and creating a traditional atmosphere. The walls of the *Meunasah* are decorated with horizontally and vertically arranged dome motif, adding an artistic and aesthetic element to the building. The low entrance is not only a physical access point but also a symbol of respect, signifying the values of courtesy and respect for places of worship. Overall, the *Meunasah* creates an atmosphere that combines traditional authenticity with artistic beauty, demonstrating the rich cultural and spiritual values within the local community.

Figure 3d: The new Mosque in Pu Uk village. The construction of the new mosque in Pu Uk Gampong is an embodiment of modern design, in contrast to the more classical *Tuha* mosque. This context is expressed through Acehese culturalists who state that:

"The mosque has a main structure made of cement concrete, a shift from the wooden material used in Aceh's *Tuha* mosque architecture. The top of the mosque has a star moon symbol, used as a religious icon, and loudspeakers. The main entrance of the mosque is equipped with a gate featuring a dome motif. The mosque's construction features many columns as parts of a modern building structure" (MZ, 40).

From the statement above, it can be seen that the construction of the new mosque in Pu Uk Gampong shows an architectural shift from the classical *Tuha* Aceh mosque to a modern design based on industrial materials. The main structure of the mosque is made of cement concrete, which has changed the character of the building in terms of aesthetics, flexibility, and visual warmth. The top of the mosque still features the starry moon symbol as a representation of Islam but without the typical ornaments such as carvings or reliefs that are common in *Tuha* Mosques, indicating a more minimalist design trend. The installation of loudspeakers is an integral part of the mosque's infrastructure. The main door with a dome-patterned gate indicates the influence of Middle Eastern architecture that increasingly dominates mosque design in Aceh. The structure of the building is also reinforced with many poles oriented towards sturdiness and construction efficiency; it is unlike the *Tuha* Mosques, whose poles are decorated with carvings of deep aesthetic and philosophical value. This transformation shows modernization efforts that prioritize efficiency, durability, and technology, but they have a risk in eliminating the distinctive characteristics of traditional Aceh's mosque architecture that are closely related to the history, culture, and identity of the local community.

Figure 3e: *The Balee e Beut*, located in Muara Indra Jaya Dayah, is an example of an Aceh's classical structure with wooden surrounds. This context is expressed through Acehese culturalists who state that:

"One of the distinctive features of the *Balee beut* is that the lower part is "grooved", giving the whole structure a special beauty. The lower part is designed as a place to relax and stay in touch, where people gather and interact socially" (MS, 33).

From the statements above, it can be seen that the interviews reveal that the *Balee beut* is characterized by its "howling," which does not only provide visual beauty but also serves as a relaxing space and a place to stay in touch. This element does not only have aesthetic value but also acts as a social interaction center where the community can gather. The design of the *Balee beut* does not only prioritize aesthetic aspects but also takes into account social functions and cultural sustainability, making it a symbol of togetherness and social interaction within the community.

Figure 3f: The building of the new mosque in the Muara Indra Jaya Dayah complex is a manifestation of modern architecture that contrasts with the previous traditional buildings. This context is expressed through Acehese culturalists who state that:

"New mosques now tend to opt for concrete and cement structures, replacing the wood that are often used in Acehese traditional buildings. The top of the mosque has a star-moon symbol made of a lightweight plate, showing modern features in its design. At the top of the gate, there is calligraphy showing the words 'Allah and Muhammad', indicating Islamic elements" (II, 40).

From the abovementioned statements, it can be seen that the interviews describe the change in construction materials in the new mosques, which have moved from traditional wood to concrete and cement, reflecting an adaptation to modern technology and a desire for sustainability. The top of the mosque features a moon and star symbol made from a lightweight plate, reflecting modern design features that remain linked to tradition. The use of lightweight materials and the symbol creates a continuity between innovation and cultural heritage in the mosque's architecture. The Islamic calligraphy on the top of the gate shows the effort to maintain religious identity in modern design, confirming that Islamic values are still recognized despite changes in materials and design. As a result, these new mosques succeed in creating harmony between modernity, tradition, and religious identity in their architectural appearance.





Figure 3. Mosque Changes in the Modern Era [Source: Researcher Data, 2025]

The transformation of mosques in Aceh in the technological era has seen a shift from traditional architecture to more modern and futuristic designs. Mosques that were once built with natural materials such as wood and palm fiber roofs are now being replaced by concrete, steel, and glass, which are more durable and easy to maintain. In addition to structural changes, technology also affects the lighting, ventilation, and acoustic systems in the mosque, automatic air conditioning, and more sophisticated sound systems to improve the comfort of worshippers. On the other hand, digitalization has also accelerated the transformation of mosque functions with the presence of electronic screens for prayer and lecture schedule information. However, these advancements have also displaced traditional mosques that are rich in local history and philosophy, raising concerns about the loss of cultural heritage that has long been part of Acehnese identity.

Thus, the overall data and discussion of interview results in Table 1 and Figure 3 show a comparison between classical and modern houses of worship. Significant changes impact the establishment of new worship buildings as a substitute for the old houses of worship.

#### D. SUMMARY

Research analyzing the abandonment of Aceh's classical houses of worship (mosque, *Meunasah*, *Balee e beut*) found significant changes in religious space. Many classical worship spaces were abandoned due to their poor condition. *Meunasah* of *Tuha* was also replaced by more modern buildings. The abandonment of Aceh's classical worship spaces found in this research includes three elements. First, mosques, *Meunasah* of *Tuha*, and *Balee e beut* are abandoned because they are not maintained and conserved. Second, the *Tuha* mosque experiences dysfunction, and third, the *Tuha* mosque experiences incredibility. From this description, the neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship is a phenomenon of marginalized cultural heritage in Acehnese society.



#### **D. 1. WEAKENING OF CULTURAL COLOURS IN WORSHIP: REORIENTATION TO MIDDLE EASTERN STYLE**

Traditional classical architectural styles are being replaced with new architectural styles. Contemporary buildings, which are becoming a new trend in places of worship, are orientated towards Middle Eastern architectural styles that reflect Islamic architectural culture and traditions. Some features, such as the large, arching domes that characterize Islamic architecture, are found in modern spaces of worship. These domes are often placed on top of the main building and decorated with geometric ornamentation or Arabic calligraphy.

Community disorientation towards Middle Eastern architectural styles is a phenomenon that arises due to three main factors, namely social factors, including changes in living patterns [17], cultural factors that change cultural values, thus, shifting identities affect the way people see and understand building designs [18], and economic factors that affect people's ability to build new places [19]. This affects people's views and preferences for Aceh's classical worship building designs.

Losing the uniqueness of local culture is one of the most important impacts. Aceh's classical houses of worship are parts of its distinctive cultural heritage. If the community switches completely to the Middle Eastern style, then the elements of Aceh's traditional culture could be endangered, impacting the sustainability of Aceh's culture and identity [20]. The disorientation of the community towards Middle Eastern styles is due to the influence of media and globalisation. Acehese society, like many communities around the world, has been widely exposed to global media and outside cultural influences. Mass media, television, film, and the internet bring images of the rich culture of the Middle East, including the luxurious and modern architectural styles of mosques. As a result, many are tempted to adopt this style as a sign of modernity and status [21].

The role of local architectural designers in this context is crucial in maintaining cultural heritage and local identity as well as promoting the sustainability of Aceh culture. Local architectural designers can ensure that traditional cultural elements are retained and elements, such as traditional Aceh forms, ornaments, and materials, are integrated into the building design. In addition, they can educate the community on the importance of maintaining their cultural identity and appreciating the uniqueness of local culture.

Therefore, the community's disorientation towards Middle Eastern architectural styles is the result of complex dynamics within Acehese society. This is a reminder of the importance of understanding social, cultural, and economic factors in changing architectural preferences and the importance of preserving and respecting distinctive cultural heritage, such as Aceh's classical houses of worship.

#### **D.2. THE IMPACT OF NEGLECT ON CULTURAL HERITAGE**

The neglect of Aceh's classical houses of worship affects not only the physical building but also the understanding of Aceh's rich identity. This can result in the removal of traditional cultural elements that have significant value in shaping local identity. Therefore, there is a need for collaborative efforts between the community, government, and other stakeholders to value, care for, and preserve this cultural heritage while keeping the door open for innovation and modernization in line with local values. This will help to maintain Aceh's rich identity while still meeting the needs and preferences of modern society.

#### **D.3. WORSHIP SPACE MODERNIZATION**

The changes in Aceh's classical houses of worship, from traditional to modern, reflect the strong impact of modernization. The transformation affects the cultural identity and characteristics of Aceh's traditional architecture. The shift in the architecture of worship spaces in Aceh is an important phenomenon to understand. It illustrates how modernization affects cultural identity and values. Acehese people are widely exposed to global media promoting modern mosque architecture, which influences their views on the design of worship buildings. In addition, changes in life values, such as a focus on daily convenience, have made modern buildings more appealing. This is seen in the shift in people's preference towards more practical and functional houses of worship. These changes illustrate how modernization can affect the way people see and understand traditional cultural values. The strong current of modernization is caused by the influence of globalization. Globalization has brought outside cultural influences to Aceh, including modern architectural trends [22].

The changes occurring in Aceh's classical houses of worship are the result of the strong impact of modernization. It reflects a shift in the cultural identity and characteristics of Aceh's traditional architecture. This shift is an important phenomenon that affects the way people see and understand traditional cultural values. Modernization, driven by the influence of globalization, has brought about changes in the architectural and aesthetic preferences of the mosque, *Meunasah*, and *Balee e-beut* buildings in Aceh. Modern buildings tend to be more minimalist and use modern materials, such as concrete and glass [23], [24]. Meanwhile,

traditional elements like wood carvings and ornaments are neglected [25], [26]. This creates significant changes in the appearance of these buildings and can affect their character and visual uniqueness. Thus, modernization is a strong current that influences how Acehnese perceive the design of religious buildings.

#### **D.4. MATERIAL SCARCITY (UTOH) OF CARVING ART FOR WORSHIP SPACES**

The scarcity of goods/materials and expertise in traditional carving has an impact on the change in people's preferences from classical worship spaces to modern worship spaces. The scarcity of materials and lack of expertise in traditional carving have become obstacles in the construction and maintenance of classical worship buildings. The scarcity of materials such as wood and the shortage of carvers (*utoh*) have made the maintenance and restoration of classical houses of worship difficult [27]. This is reflected in the shifting tastes of people who prefer materials and designs that are easier to find and work with. The scarcity of materials and the expertise of traditional carvers have played a central role in the shift of people's tastes from classical to modern houses of worship spaces. This presents a challenge to the preservation of classical houses of worship in Aceh as the cultural heritage.

In addition, the scarcity of skilled traditional carvers (*utoh*) is also a factor that influences the shift in architectural choices. The scarcity of skilled *utohs* can hinder the preservation and maintenance of traditional elements [28]. Without their presence, the beautiful wood-carved elements that adorn old mosques are forgotten and replaced by more modern and minimalist designs. The scarcity of expertise of carvers (*utoh*) is caused by a lack of understanding of heritage values. The younger generation lacks understanding and appreciation of the value of traditional cultural heritage.

On the other hand, technological advances and modern lifestyles have shifted the interest of traditional occupations like carpenters. Many young people are more interested in more technology-orientated jobs than traditional arts. Thus, the scarcity of materials and carvers has become a precondition in the shift from classical houses of worship to modern buildings in Aceh. This change creates challenges in the preservation of cultural heritage and alters the characteristics of classical houses of worship that have long characterized Aceh.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

From the data described in this article, it can be concluded that changes in architectural preferences for worship spaces in Aceh are the results of complex and interrelated factors. The three main factors that have been discussed are the disorientation of the community towards Middle Eastern styles, the strong current of modernization, and the scarcity of goods/materials and carving expertise (*utoh*).

First, the disorientation of society towards Middle Eastern architectural styles has created a shift in the cultural color of worship life. The influence of global media and changes in people's views on building design have led to an increased interest in modern buildings, reflecting Middle Eastern styles. This has led people to abandon Aceh's classical architectural traditions, which are rich in cultural values.

Second, the strong current of modernization has changed people's preferences from traditional buildings to modern buildings that are considered more practical and in line with contemporary lifestyles. This change is mainly influenced by the influence of global media, changes in life priorities, and the perception that modern buildings are more sturdy and durable. As a result, traditional buildings like Aceh's classical houses of worship are being abandoned in favor of more modern buildings.

Third, the scarcity of traditional goods/materials, such as high-quality wood and the expertise of carvers (*utoh*), has been an important precondition for the change in people's preferences. This scarcity has forced people to look for alternatives that are easier to find and more durable like the use of modern materials in building construction. In addition, the scarcity of traditional carvers threatens the woodcarving that adorns Aceh's classical houses of worship, changing the aesthetic characteristics of the buildings.

In this complexity of change, challenges and opportunities arise. The preservation of unique cultural heritage, Aceh's classical houses of worship for example, requires cooperation between different generations, innovation in building maintenance and care, as well as efforts to maintain connections with traditional values. In an era of continued globalization and modernization, preserving cultural heritage is a shared responsibility to honor the past while embracing the future.

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