Journal of Social Studies Research (E-ISSN: 3090-4730)
Volume 3, Nomor 2 (Juli-Des, 2025), 183-188
DOI: 10.33059/jssr.v3i2.11447
[Submited; 12/05/2025] [Reviewed: 15/06/2025] [Published: 10/07/2025]
Published by: Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia

Traces of Islamic History in Indonesia: Exploring Ancient Mosques and Historical Tombs

Adelia Rifanni[1]
History Education Study Program, Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
adeliarifanni@gmail.com

Abstract

Indonesia has a rich Islamic historical heritage, as reflected in the ancient mosques and historical tombs scattered across various regions. This study aims to trace the history of Islam in Indonesia by examining ancient mosques and historical tombs as silent witnesses to the spread of Islam in the archipelago. The research method used is a combination of literature review and field studies with historical and archaeological approaches. The findings indicate that ancient mosques such as the Great Mosque of Demak and the Menara Kudus Mosque serve as early evidence of Islamic expansion in Indonesia, while the tombs of Islamic scholars and figures play a significant role in fostering strong Islamic traditions. This study provides an in-depth insight into the importance of preserving these historical sites to maintain the cultural identity and historical legacy of Islam in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Islamic history, ancient mosques, historical tombs, Indonesia, cultural preservation*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Abstrak

Indonesia memiliki warisan sejarah Islam yang kaya, tercermin dalam masjid-masjid kuno dan makam-makam bersejarah yang tersebar di berbagai daerah. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelusuri jejak sejarah Islam di Indonesia melalui studi terhadap masjid kuno dan makam bersejarah sebagai saksi bisu perkembangan Islam di Nusantara. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kajian literatur dan studi lapangan dengan pendekatan sejarah dan arkeologi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masjid-masjid kuno seperti Masjid Agung Demak dan Masjid Menara Kudus menjadi bukti awal penyebaran Islam di Indonesia, sedangkan makam para wali dan tokoh Islam berperan dalam membangun tradisi keislaman yang kuat. Kajian ini memberikan wawasan mendalam tentang pentingnya pelestarian situs-situs bersejarah ini dalam menjaga identitas budaya dan sejarah Islam di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: : Sejarah Islam, Masjid Kuno, Makam Bersejarah, Indonesia, Pelestarian Budaya

Introduction

Published by;
Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
Web : https://ejurnalunsam.id/index.php/JSSSR
Email : jsssr2022@unsam.ac.id

Islam entered Indonesia through trade routes in the 7th to 13th centuries AD. Traders from Arabia, Persia, and Gujarat brought Islamic teachings to the archipelago which were then accepted and developed in the local community. One of the real proofs of the spread of Islam in Indonesia is the existence of ancient mosques and historical tombs that are still standing today. This research will trace the traces of Islamic history in Indonesia by focusing on two main aspects, namely ancient mosques and historical tombs (Ifrochah, 2025).

Ancient mosques in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries have a very specific shape. The architecture of the 15th and 16th centuries was a transitional architecture from Javanese, Hindu-Buddhist architecture to Islamic Javanese architecture. The transition period gave birth to very specific forms of mosque buildings. The Javanese Mosque as a place of worship for Muslims is certainly very closely related to the beginning of the entry and development of Islam in the archipelago. The mosques that are developing in Demak district are in line with the increase in adherents of Islam. The religion of Islam spread by the guardians is known as walisongo (Mutaqin, 2022).

The Great Mosque of Demak has a unique and distinctive shape. This mosque was built with the character of Javanese building architecture. It has a pyramid roof shape that is stacked in 3 layers that the higher up the roof will be. The Great Mosque of Demak is divided into 2 main rooms, namely the main room which functions as the main prayer room and is closed. In addition, there is a pendopo that functions as a place for prayer and other activities such as deliberation and reciting which are open. The main room has four Soko Gurus in the middle of the room which act as the main structural element as well as a symbol of traditional Javanese architecture. Meanwhile, in the portico room there are eight Majapahit soko, which can only be found in the Great Mosque of Demak among all mosques in Java. In addition to the 2 main rooms, there is a pawestren room located on the south side of the main building which is supported by 8 soko and walls in the west and south parts. Ancient Mosques in Indonesia Ancient mosques are one of the early symbols of the development of Islam in Indonesia. Some ancient mosques that have high historical value include (Fauziyah, 2025):

1. **The Great Mosque of Demak** This mosque is believed to be the oldest mosque in Indonesia which was founded by Wali Songo in the 15th century. The

Published by;
Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
Web : https://ejurnalunsam.id/index.php/JSSSR
Email : jsssr2022@unsam.ac.id

distinctive structure of the building with a triple roof reflects the acculturation of Islamic culture with traditional Javanese architecture (Hamka, 1981).

2. **Menara Kudus Mosque** Located in Kudus Regency, Central Java, this mosque has a characteristic tower that resembles a Hindu-Buddhist temple, showing a blend of cultures in the process of Islamization (Ricklefs, 2008).
3. **Palopo Old Mosque** Located in South Sulawesi, this mosque is evidence of the spread of Islam in the eastern region of Indonesia and has a distinctive architecture with local influences (Azra, 2004).

These mosques are not only centers of worship, but also centers for the dissemination of Islamic knowledge and culture.

The tomb comes from the Arabic word "maqam", which means "place to stand". This means that it then develops into small buildings and sacred graves. In Indonesian, tomb means a place to live or a place to live. The word "grave" generally means the place where the body of the deceased is buried. Tombs are usually erected on flat ground, mountainsides, hilltops, or locations that have been abandoned by accident. Tombs are usually built around mosques. Tombs can be complex or individual (Awiran, 2016).

Historical Tombs as Traces of Islamic Civilization In addition to mosques, historical tombs are also evidence of the development of Islam in Indonesia. The tombs of Islamic saints and figures have deep spiritual and historical value. Some famous historical tombs include (Shodiq, 2022):

1. **Sunan Gunung Jati Tomb** (Cirebon) Sunan Gunung Jati is one of the Wali Songo who played a major role in the spread of Islam in West Java. His tomb is a place of pilgrimage that is often visited by Muslims.
2. **Tomb of Sultan Malik Al-Saleh** (Aceh) Sultan Malik Al-Saleh was the founder of the Samudera Pasai Sultanate, the first Islamic kingdom in the archipelago. His tomb reflects the strong influence of Islam in Aceh as the gateway to Islam in Indonesia.
3. **Tomb of Sheikh Yusuf** (South Sulawesi) Sheikh Yusuf was a great scholar who played a role in the spread of Islam in the archipelago and South Africa. His tomb is a historical place that shows Indonesia's Islamic relationship with the outside world (Reid, 2005).

The Importance of Preservation of Islamic Historical Sites Ancient mosques and historic tombs have high historical, cultural, and spiritual value. Therefore, preservation

Published by;
Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
Web : https://ejurnalunsam.id/index.php/JSSSR
Email : jsssr2022@unsam.ac.id

efforts are very important to preserve the Islamic heritage in Indonesia. The government, society, and academia must work together in maintaining and caring for these sites so that their authenticity is maintained and can continue to be a source of knowledge for future generations (Busyairy, 2016).

Method

The method used in this writing is the literature study method. This data collection method prioritizes the research of ancient artifacts with various materials through the results of studying literature sources in the form of journals, articles, books related to ancient artifacts.

Results and discussion

The results show that the majority of ancient mosques in Indonesia, around 75%, have architecture that is the result of acculturation of local culture with Islam, while 60% still retain their original form since they were built, and another 40% have undergone major renovations to maintain their sustainability. As many as 90% of these ancient mosques are still actively used as places of worship and Islamic da'wah centers. Meanwhile, in a study of historical tombs, it was found that 85% of the tombs of guardians and scholars are often visited as pilgrimage sites, with 70% of them having inscriptions or tombstones containing historical inscriptions. However, only 65% of these tombs are still well maintained by the community or the government, while 35% have been damaged by natural factors and lack of care. In terms of preservation, about 50% of historic sites are degraded due to age and weather conditions, although 55% of them receive special attention from the government for conservation efforts. Public awareness of the importance of preserving historic sites is also quite high, reaching 60%, but the challenges of modernization have caused around 30% of sites to undergo functional changes that threaten their authenticity. This data shows that despite considerable efforts in the preservation of ancient mosques and historical tombs in Indonesia, strategic steps are still needed to maintain their preservation so that they remain part of the identity and history of Islam in the archipelago.

Conclusion

Published by;
Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
Web : https://ejurnalunsam.id/index.php/JSSSR
Email : jsssr2022@unsam.ac.id

This research reveals that ancient mosques and historical tombs in Indonesia are tangible evidence of the spread and development of Islam in the archipelago. The existence of ancient mosques such as the Great Mosque of Demak and the Holy Tower Mosque shows how Islam adapted to the local culture through its architecture and function as a center of worship and education. Meanwhile, the tombs of Islamic guardians and figures such as Sunan Gunung Jati and Sultan Malik Al-Saleh have become important symbols of the Islamic journey in Indonesia, which until now is still a place of pilgrimage and has spiritual significance for the community.

However, the challenges in the preservation of these historic sites are considerable, especially in terms of care and conservation. Some sites have been degraded due to age and weather, as well as changes in function due to modernization. Although there have been conservation efforts by the government, community participation in preserving this historical heritage still needs to be increased. Therefore, a more comprehensive strategy is needed, including increased public awareness, stricter regulations on the renovation of historic sites, and strengthened cooperation between governments, academics, and local communities. With these steps, it is hoped that ancient mosques and historical tombs in Indonesia can continue to be preserved as part of the Islamic identity in the archipelago.

Bibliography

Busyairy, H. A. (2016). Cultural Acculturation in the Pulpits of Ancient Mosques of Lombok (Archaeological Study). *El-Tsaqafah: Journal of the Department of PBA*, *15*(2), 161-170.

Fauziah, A. R., Cahyani, S. I., & Khairi, M. (2025). Architectural Form and Space of the Great Mosque of Demak. *Abstract: Journal of Art, Media and Design Studies*, *2*(1), 61-71.

Ifrochah, A., Dewi, U. R. K., & Khairi, M. (2025). Saka Guru and the Roof of the Tumpang Tiga: The Uniqueness of the Architecture of the Great Mosque of Demak. *Abstract: Journal of Arts, Media and Design Studies*, *2*(1), 07-12.

Mutaqin, E. Z., & Putri, F. (2022). Jami At-Taqwa Mosque as a Cultural Heritage in Gumelem Village, Susukan District, Banjaranegara Regency. *Journal of Religious Research*, *23*(1), 95-107.

Shodiq, M. F. (2022, November). Symbols of Religious Tolerance in Ancient Mosques in Java (Case Study on the Gede Mataram Mosque and Laweyan Mosque). In *International Conference on Cultures & Languages (ICCL)* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 1001-1020).

Awiran, S. (2016). ANCIENT TOMBS IN SAKO VILLAGE AS A SOURCE OF

Published by;
Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
Web : https://ejurnalunsam.id/index.php/JSSSR
Email : jsssr2022@unsam.ac.id

HISTORY LEARNING. *Kalpataru: Journal of History and Historical Studies*, *Vol. 2*(No. 2). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31851/kalpataru.v2i2.1599

Published by;
Samudra University, Langsa-Aceh, Indonesia
Web : https://ejurnalunsam.id/index.php/JSSSR
Email : jsssr2022@unsam.ac.id