

Utilization of Islamic Archaeological Sites as a Foundation for the Development of Islamic Tourism in the Communities of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar

**Ida Hasanah¹, Fitriani², Irwan³, Septian Fatianda⁴, Muhammad Nur⁵,
Lisa Agustina⁶, Fahmi Arfan⁷, Rumaída⁸, Cutnyak Meutia Maulida⁹**

Corresponding Author: idahasanah@serambimekkah.ac.id

Abstract: *This paper discusses the utilization of Islamic archaeological sites as a basis for the development of Islamic tourism in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. Although this region is rich in Islamic historical heritage, tourism development is still focused on several main sites. This study examines the potential, challenges, and strategies for developing lesser-known Islamic archaeological sites. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were obtained through literature review, observation, and interviews. Findings show significant potential in the studied sites but highlight challenges related to management, public awareness, and infrastructure. Collaborative efforts are needed to ensure sustainable Islamic tourism development.*

Keywords: *Islamic Archaeology, Development, Islamic Tourism, Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar*

1. Introduction

Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar are two regions that possess a long history in the development of Islamic civilization in the Indonesian archipelago. As the center of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate, which flourished from the 16th to the 20th century, these regions have left numerous Islamic archaeological remains that serve as evidence of past greatness (Tjandrasasmita, 2009). These remains not only reflect the cultural and historical identity of Aceh but also hold great potential for the development of Islamic tourism destinations in the region (Ibrahim, 2006).

At present, Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar are known both nationally and internationally as leading Islamic tourism destinations in Indonesia (Adistira, 2022). The presence of major tourism icons such as the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque, which serves as both a place of worship and a cultural symbol with its grandeur of Islamic architecture, strengthens this image (Mahfudhah & Taher, 2022; Azzahra & Nasution, 2018). Similarly, the Indrapuri Mosque and the Kandang Meuh Tomb Complex have become main destinations for historical and religious tourism (Kurniawan Lubis, 2023; Handayani, 2019). However, the development of Islamic tourism in these two regions remains focused on a few major sites. In fact, there are other Islamic archaeological sites that possess high historical, cultural, and religious value but have not been optimally managed, such as the Raja Jalil Tomb Complex and the Tuha Lueng Bata Mosque in Banda Aceh, as well as the Tuha Bueng Sidom Mosque in Blang Bintang District, which bear witness to the spread of Islamic teachings in the hinterlands of Aceh Besar (Irfana, 2022).

The limited management of sites outside the main destinations has become one of the obstacles in strengthening Islamic tourism in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar. In fact, optimizing the management of these sites could enrich the variety of destinations, increase tourist appeal, and support regional economic development based on Islamic culture and history (Timothy, 2009).

Theoretically, the development of tourism based on Islamic archaeological sites is not only an effort to preserve cultural heritage but also contributes to improving the economic welfare of the community (Hmood et al., 2018; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009; Duhari, 2021). Aceh Qanun No. 8 of 2013 on Tourism emphasizes that tourism is part of the preservation of regional history and culture. Based on the theory of cultural heritage significance, archaeological sites hold educational, religious, social, and economic values, and serve as cultural identity. These values must be preserved and utilized sustainably, one of which is through the development of the sites into Islamic tourism attractions (Suantika, 2012).

The results of this study show that Islamic archaeological sites in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar—specifically the Tuha Lueng Bata Mosque, the Tuha Bueng Sidom Mosque, and the Raja Jalil Tomb Complex—possess highly important historical, religious, architectural, and social values. The Tuha Lueng Bata Mosque once served as a center for deliberation among Acehnese resistance figures, but it has now undergone changes in function that threaten its authenticity. The Tuha Bueng Sidom Mosque continues to function well as a place of worship and community center, with well-preserved traditional Acehnese architectural features. Meanwhile, the Raja Jalil Tomb Complex, which has been designated as a cultural heritage site, reflects the history of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate while also containing a rich variety of floral and calligraphic ornaments.

2. Method

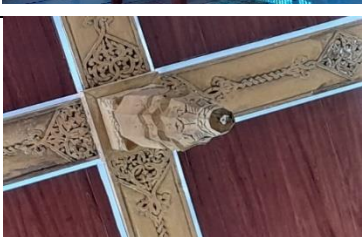
This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection includes observation of archaeological sites, interviews with community leaders and stakeholders, and documentation studies. Data were analyzed through reduction, verification, and interpretation to identify site potential and formulate development strategies.

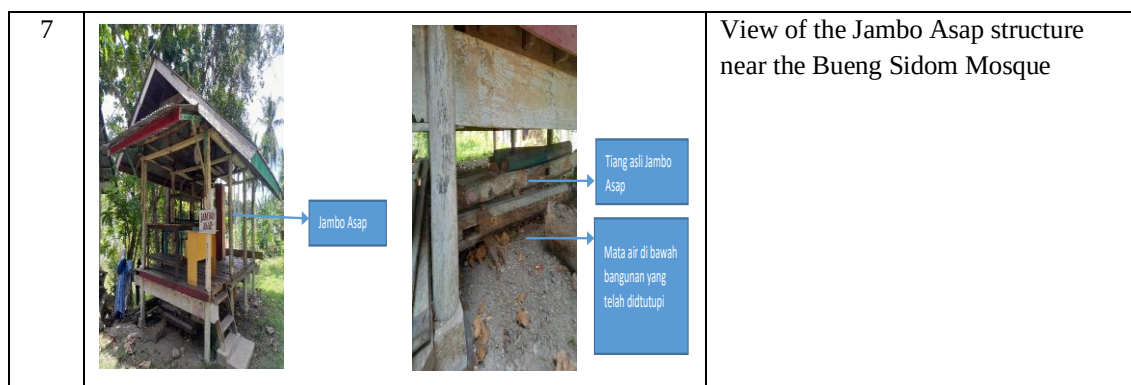
3. Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis show that each Islamic archaeological site examined possesses distinct yet complementary values within the historical, architectural, and socio-religious context of Acehnese society. The Tuha Lueng Bata Mosque reflects the historical value of resistance against colonialism while also illustrating its current condition marked by functional changes, indicating weak attention toward site preservation. The Tuha Bueng Sidom Mosque serves as an example of successful community efforts in maintaining the religious and social functions of the site while preserving traditional Acehnese architecture rich in symbolism. Meanwhile, the Raja Jalil Tomb Complex contains the historical value of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate and showcases the richness of floral and calligraphic carvings, signifying the high aesthetic achievements of Islamic culture in the past.

Further analysis emphasizes that the three sites have not been optimally utilized in the development of Islamic tourism. The challenges faced include limited infrastructure, low collective awareness among the community and stakeholders, and the absence of integrated site management strategies within regional tourism policies. In terms of opportunities, the three sites can serve as the basis for developing community-based Islamic tourism through an approach that positions local communities as the main actors in site management. Additionally, integration with regional Islamic tourism programs, digital promotion, the utilization of local cultural attractions, and the revitalization of site functions have the potential to strengthen the role of these sites as centers of education, religious activity, and tourist attraction.

Analytically, this study demonstrates that the utilization of Islamic archaeological sites is not only an effort to preserve cultural heritage but also a sustainable development strategy capable of enhancing historical awareness, strengthening local identity, and providing economic and social benefits to surrounding communities. Below are photos related to the research:

No	Picture	Explanation
1		Tumpal motif with floral ornaments inside
2		Raja Jalil Tomb Complex
3		Tuha Gampong Batoh Mosque
4		The mosque roof, windows, and lower structure
5		View of the pillars inside the mosque
6		View of the banana-heart carving and engraved motifs



4. Conclusions

The study concludes that Islamic archaeological sites in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar hold strong potential for developing sustainable Islamic tourism. Yet, limited management, public awareness, and infrastructure hinder their optimization. Integrated strategies involving community participation and governmental support are essential for strengthening Islamic heritage-based tourism.

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