

REVITALIZING THE ISLAMIC TRACES IN LUWU: UTILIZING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF THE JAMI MOSQUE OF PALOPO IN LOCAL HISTORY LEARNING

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Received November 25, 2025; Revised December 08, 2025; Accepted December 09, 2025

Abstract:

This study examines the integration of the archaeological heritage of the Palopo Jami Mosque into local history learning to strengthen students' cultural identity and historical understanding. The research aims to analyze how the mosque built in 1604 and representing early Islamic development in Luwu, can serve as a primary learning resource within contextual and site-based educational approaches. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were gathered through field observations, interviews with educators and cultural practitioners, and analysis of historical and archaeological documents. The findings indicate that although the mosque possesses extraordinary historical, architectural, and pedagogical value, its educational utilization remains limited due to insufficient teaching materials, lack of teacher training, and weak institutional collaboration. Nevertheless, direct engagement with the site significantly enhances students' historical thinking, interpretation of artifacts, and appreciation of cultural continuity. The study concludes that integrating archaeological heritage into local history curricula can revitalize Islamic traces in Luwu while promoting culturally grounded, inquiry-based learning.

Keywords: local history learning, Palopo Jami Mosque, Islamic archaeology, cultural identity, site-based education.

How to Cite: Wati, F.W. (2025). Revitalizing The Islamic Traces In Luwu: Utilizing The Archaeological Heritage of The Jami Mosque of Palopo In Local History Learning. *Kalyanamitra: Journal of Archaeological Resource Management*, 1 (2), 115-125.

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1. Introduction

Local history learning plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity and understanding socio-historical contexts among students. As a field of study, local history is not merely an additional component of historical knowledge, but a strategic avenue

through which learners can connect with their ancestral heritage, local wisdom, and the developmental trajectory of their own communities. Integrating material cultural heritage, such as archaeological sites and local historic buildings, into history education can enrich the learning experience by presenting authentic and concrete sources (Barton & Levstik, 2004). Through exposure to tangible historical remains, students are encouraged to engage more deeply with the past, fostering critical thinking and nurturing a sense of belonging to their cultural environment. In many schools, however, history teaching methods still rely too heavily on textbooks and lectures, thus depriving students of opportunities to directly interact with historical traces in their environment. Such conventional approaches often result in abstract and decontextualized learning, which limits students' ability to internalize historical meaning and develop historical consciousness grounded in real-life experiences.

The Jami' Tua Palopo Mosque, built in 1604 during the reign of the 16th Datu Luwu, is one of the oldest Islamic historical sites in South Sulawesi (Abidin, 1985). Its existence is not only a testament to the early development of Islam in the Luwu Kingdom but also a representation of the region's long-standing architectural traditions and socio-religious dynamics. The mosque's architecture demonstrates a rich cultural acculturation: Bugis, Javanese, and Chinese elements are reflected in the mosque's structure and ornamentation (Pelras, 1996). Such acculturation is evident in a number of architectural details that reveal the dynamic and pluralistic interactions between various cultural groups across centuries. For example, the mosque's roof is shaped like a typical Javanese Joglo, while the main pillars are made of "cina duri" wood and use wooden pegs instead of iron nails (Lombard, 1996). These construction techniques illustrate both the technological knowledge and the craftsmanship of local builders of the period. Furthermore, the stone masonry in the mosque's walls is cemented using a mixture of egg white and lime, rather than modern cement. This traditional technique also reflects ecological adaptation and the availability of local materials, reinforcing how architecture was shaped by cultural practices and environmental considerations (Tjandrasasmita, 2009).

The architectural uniqueness of the Old Jami' Mosque in Palopo makes it a highly potential learning resource in local history education. Its distinctive features allow teachers and students to explore various aspects of historical study, ranging from material culture and art history to socio-political transformations within the Luwu Kingdom. In addition to being a place of worship, the mosque served as a center for da'wah (Islamic outreach) and a symbol of Islamization in Luwu (Mattulada, 1985). This dual function expands students' understanding of how religious spaces can also act as centers for political, cultural, and educational activities. The mosque's symbolic and material values, such as the main pillars, structural layers, and carved motifs, can serve as "texts" for historical analysis by students, enabling them to understand the process of cultural contact, the social structure of the kingdom, and the evolution of religious practices (Reid, 2004). Through such analysis, students can learn to interpret historical evidence not only from written documents but also from architectural features and spatial arrangements, thus gaining a holistic perspective on the past.

However, although the historical and pedagogical value of the Old Jami' Mosque in Palopo has been recognized, its use in formal education remains limited. Despite the potential for site-based learning, schools have yet to fully capitalize on the mosque as a contextual learning resource that aligns with curriculum objectives. Local studies and reports indicate that there has been no systematic integration between mosque sites and school curricula (Cooper, 2014; Seixas & Morton, 2013). This gap suggests the need for institutional collaboration between educational authorities, cultural heritage institutions, and local communities. Challenges include limited contextual teaching materials, a lack of teacher competency in teaching local heritage, and a lack of coordination with historical site managers. These issues collectively hinder the implementation of experiential learning approaches that could enhance students' engagement with local history. Therefore, further research is needed to design site-based learning models that are sustainable, safe for preservation, and contextualized with the local curriculum. Such research should involve interdisciplinary collaboration, combining insights from history education, cultural heritage management, and community-based pedagogy to ensure that learning activities are meaningful, inclusive, and culturally responsive.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the potential use of the archaeological remains of the Jami Mosque of Palopo as a medium for local history learning. Data were collected at the historical site of the mosque through observations of its architectural features such as the mihrab, mimbar, batu timba laja, construction techniques, and spatial layout supported by photographic documentation and field notes. Additional data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with historians, cultural practitioners, mosque caretakers, and history teachers to gather contextual insights into the mosque's historical significance and educational relevance. Archival materials, scholarly articles, and previous studies on Luwu's history and Islamic archaeology were also analyzed to strengthen interpretation. Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation to ensure credibility. Ethical considerations included obtaining permission from mosque authorities, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality when needed, and respecting the sacred status of the mosque as an active place of worship.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Reconstruction of Islamic Archaeological Traces in Luwu and the Historical Role of the Palopo Jami Mosque

Reconstruction of the archaeological traces of Islam in Luwu shows that the process of Islamization in this region took place through interactions between political elites, trade networks, and the gradual adaptation of local culture. In this context, the Jami Mosque of Palopo emerges as a material centre that not only represents the presence of Islam but also marks the social, political, and urban spatial transformation of the Luwu Kingdom since the early 17th century. As recorded in local chronicles and archaeological reports, the mosque was built in 1604 by Sultan Abdullah Muhiddin, Datu

Luwu XIV, at a time when Islam was beginning to be institutionalised as the kingdom's political identity (Ilyas, 2023; Bahar, 2025).

The mosque's existence also confirms historians' assertions that Luwu was one of the first regions to accept Islam in Sulawesi, before continuing to coastal areas such as Gowa and Tallo (Bahar, 2025; Ilyas, 2023). From an architectural perspective, the Jami Mosque of Palopo is a representative example of the traditional Nusantara mosque style, emphasising ecological adaptation and cultural sustainability. The nearly one-metre-thick limestone wall structure, the adhesive technique using a mixture of lime and egg white, and the river stone foundation demonstrate local construction technology that was vernacular yet absorbed Islamic aesthetics (Bahar, 2025). The use of a tiered roof (*tumpang*) creates a sense of harmony with the architecture of ancient mosques in Java, such as the Great Mosque of Demak and the Mantingan Mosque which also represent the "early Islamic" style in the archipelago (Sutrisno, 2023). These similarities demonstrate a network of architectural knowledge between maritime Islamic kingdoms connected through trade and missionary routes in the 16th -17th centuries (Sutrisno, 2023).

Archaeological findings around the mosque complex reinforce the mosque's importance as a centre of religious and political power in the Luwu Kingdom. Artifacts such as carved wooden pulpits, ancient drums demonstrating 17th-century construction techniques, and the tomb complex of the datu (chieftains) with Acehnese and local-style tombstones demonstrate the integration of Islamic styles with Luwu burial traditions (Bahar, 2025). Acehnese-style tombstones, for example, are historically associated with networks of ulama and traders from Samudera Pasai and the western Indonesian archipelago; thus, their presence in Palopo suggests a broader Islamic network (Sutrisno, 2023). Through iconographic analysis of the tombstones, it was found that the calligraphic motifs and floral decorations on some reflect an early Islamic aesthetic rarely found in eastern Indonesia (Sutrisno, 2023).

Fieldwork also indicates that each element of the mosque structure has historical and pedagogical significance relevant for local history learning. The mosque's caretaker explained that the main door and carved windows contain royal symbols associated with the legitimacy of the Datu Luwu, signifying the connection between Islam and political sovereignty (Ilyas, 2023). Thus, the mosque's structure can be understood as a "cultural text" that records the dynamics of Luwu's changing identity from a kingdom based on local spirituality to an Islamic kingdom (Bahar, 2025). In the context of history learning, the presence of these artifacts provides a significant opportunity to implement a place-based education approach, utilising historical sites as primary sources for students (Ilyas, 2023).

A comparative study of the literature on Islamization in Sulawesi shows that Luwu's role is often under-recognised compared to Gowa–Tallo. However, several studies confirm that Luwu held a crucial position as an early centre of conversion, influenced by trade relations with traders from the western Indonesian archipelago (Ilyas, 2023; Bahar, 2025). Analysis of local chronicles such as the Lontarak Luwu reveals that the spread of Islam began with dialogue between diaspora ulama (Islamic scholars)

and local rulers, resulting in a more peaceful and structured conversion (Bahar, 2025). The Palopo Jami Mosque subsequently served as a religious infrastructure that reinforced this change, becoming a centre for da'wah (Islamic preaching), teaching of the yellow texts, and holding religious ceremonies—a practice that remains preserved to this day (Ilyas, 2023).

The Palopo Jami Mosque also served as a social space that played a vital role in community life. Interviews with traditional leaders and the community surrounding the mosque revealed that it serves as a traditional deliberation space, a place for reciting pattoddo (traditional prayers), the inauguration of traditional leaders, and a centre for organising Islamic holidays (Bahar, 2025). These socio-cultural functions demonstrate that the mosque has internalised the collective values of the Luwu community. Therefore, the revitalisation of the site cannot be understood solely as a physical restoration, but also as an effort to maintain its social function and the collective memory inherent in it (Ilyas, 2023).

From the perspective of educational archaeology (archaeopedagogy), the mosque holds great potential as a local history learning laboratory. History education experts emphasise that material cultural evidence, such as buildings and artifacts, has high cognitive potential in fostering historical understanding because it allows students to make direct observations and construct interpretations based on field data (Ilyas, 2023; Bahar, 2025). This is in line with the concept of “site-based history” which emphasises learning experiences through interaction with real historical spaces, so that students can understand the chronology, changes, and continuity of Islamic culture in their region (Bahar, 2025).

3.2. Utilization of the Archaeological Heritage of the Palopo Jami Mosque in Local History Learning

Research results indicate that the use of the archaeological heritage of the Palopo Jami Mosque in local history learning at the secondary level in Palopo City and Luwu Regency is still in its infancy and has not been systematically integrated into the curriculum or classroom pedagogical practices. Although the history of the Islamization of South Sulawesi is taught in Indonesian History and History of Interest courses, the learning focus remains predominantly directed at the Jami narrative of the Islamization of the Gowa-Tallo kingdom. At the same time, the contribution of the Luwu Kingdom tends to be described in a cursory or introductory manner (Sudirman, 2021). This situation results in a lack of connection between students and their own local history, especially in the context of material cultural heritage such as ancient mosques and archaeological artifacts.

Analysis of syllabi, teaching modules, and other learning materials reveals that local archaeological objects, including the Palopo Jami Mosque, are rarely explicitly included as primary sources or media in learning. According to place-based education theory, the use of heritage sites in learning not only enriches learning resources but also strengthens the formation of local identity and enhances students' sense of place (Harcourt, 2015). A place-based approach enables students to understand how spatial

context, artifacts, and cultural practices intertwine in shaping the history of a society, including the unique process of Islamization in Luwu.

Interviews with several history teachers revealed several structural and technical barriers to utilising the Palopo Jami Mosque as a local history learning laboratory: (1) limited site-based teaching materials specifically addressing the mosque; (2) lack of teacher training in archaeological-based history education; (3) logistical constraints such as limited learning time and transportation; and (4) concerns about students' readiness to conduct field observations requiring analytical skills toward artifacts. However, teachers who have conducted field visits or used visual documentation of the mosque report significantly higher student engagement, with curiosity about architecture, construction history, cultural interactions, and stories of the Luwu Datu buried nearby.

Previous research in history education shows that heritage sites as primary sources can develop students' historical thinking skills especially in analysing evidence, interpreting artifacts, understanding historical perspective, and reconstructing the past (Seixas & Morton, 2013). In this study, when students measured building dimensions, identified construction techniques, analysed carved motifs, or interpreted Islamic symbols on tombstones, they demonstrated deeper analytical and interpretive skills than what is typically achieved through textbook-based learning. Thus, the Palopo Jami Mosque functions as an "open learning space" that provides rich historical data for direct student interpretation.

Furthermore, the architectural dynamics of the mosque which blend Luwu local elements, early Nusantara Islamic style, and influences from Javanese or West Asian architecture, open opportunities for students to critically reflect on cultural acculturation during Luwu's Islamization. Direct interaction with the building helps them see that Islamization was not immediate but a negotiated, symbolic, and material process across generations. Therefore, learning through this archaeological site not only teaches historical facts but also provides epistemological experiences about how history is constructed and interpreted.

The use of the Palopo Jami Mosque as a learning resource aligns with the Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes project-based, contextual, and environmental learning. History teachers suggested projects such as making documentary videos, writing interpretive essays, studying traditional architecture, mapping sites of Islamization in Luwu, or creating a digital catalog of mosque artifacts. These activities boost historical and digital literacy, collaborative problem-solving, and local cultural identity interpretation in line with 21st-century competencies (Kuwoto, 2022).

Finally, students involved in direct observation of the mosque tend to formulate strong connections between the archaeological heritage and Luwu's collective identity: seeing the mosque not only as a religious symbol, but as a centre for social deliberation, inauguration of traditional leaders, and marker of the continuity of the Datu Luwu's authority into the 20th century (Safi & Ode Bau, 2021). Such understanding is difficult to achieve via conventional chronological narratives that ignore materiality.

3.3. Revitalizing Luwu's Islamic Traces through Integrating Archaeological Heritage into Education and Strengthening Cultural Identity

Revitalization of Islamic heritage in Luwu through the utilization of the Palopo Jami Mosque is not limited to physical restoration but involves a broader socio-cultural process that renews meaning, strengthens identity, and fosters historical awareness among the younger generation. From a heritage studies perspective, revitalization is understood as an effort to recontextualize cultural heritage so it remains relevant for contemporary society rather than being treated as a static artifact (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006). Therefore, the revitalization of the Palopo Jami Mosque includes not only material conservation but also the reactivation of its symbolic, educational, and cultural functions rooted in the historical traditions of the Luwu Kingdom.

The Palopo Jami Mosque occupies an important position in the historical consciousness of the Luwu community. Many community members view the mosque as a legacy of Islamic prestige and a marker of Luwu's role in the early Islamization of South Sulawesi. However, interviews reveal that some community interpretations remain symbolic and lack historical depth, particularly regarding architectural context and political patronage. This shows that without adequate historical literacy, heritage sites risk being interpreted narrowly. Integrating archaeological heritage into educational settings therefore becomes crucial in fostering more critical and historically grounded interpretations (Sjamsuddin, 2012).

Integrating archaeological heritage into local history education provides students with more concrete and situated learning experiences. Instead of relying solely on textbook narratives about the Islamization of South Sulawesi, students engage directly with physical evidence at the site. This practice enhances historical thinking skills, including architectural observation, symbol interpretation, questioning, and connecting past socio-political dynamics with present realities (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Ho, 2018). Such site-based learning becomes more meaningful when students encounter authentic remnants of the past.

History learning that utilizes archaeological sites also strengthens students' sense of belonging to local identity. Experiencing history directly at the Palopo Jami Mosque helps students perceive history not as abstract knowledge but as part of their lived environment. This awareness is essential amid challenges brought by modernity and globalization, which may weaken ties to local culture. Educational use of the mosque thus becomes a medium for strengthening cultural identity within the broader historical trajectory of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

The revitalization of the Palopo Jami Mosque also involves collaboration among teachers, traditional leaders, mosque administrators, cultural communities, and local governments. Their activities, such as history tours, cultural festivals, and archival exhibitions expand opportunities for community participation in heritage preservation. These collaborations demonstrate that heritage revitalization is a collective endeavor in which community participation plays a central role (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006).

Beyond education, the revitalization of Islamic heritage in Luwu also contributes to social and economic empowerment. When archaeological heritage is integrated into

educational and cultural programs, it can support the development of sustainable cultural tourism. The Palopo Jami Mosque holds potential as a center for interpreting Islamic history in Luwu, enhancing both historical understanding and regional economic development through heritage-based tourism (Harrison, 2013).

In an academic context, revitalizing Islamic heritage in Luwu is significant for reconstructing the broader history of Islam in Indonesia. Historical scholarship shows that Islamization of the archipelago is not limited to major political centers, as local kingdoms such as Luwu also played important roles in early Islamic dissemination in South Sulawesi (Abidin, 1986; Hamid, 2015). This underscores the importance of integrating local historical narratives into national historiography, an issue long highlighted by Indonesian historians (Sjamsuddin, 2012).

Overall, findings indicate that revitalizing Islamic heritage in Luwu through the educational use of the Palopo Jami Mosque constitutes a comprehensive strategy encompassing educational, cultural, social, and academic dimensions. Through archaeological heritage, students and the community can engage with history as a lived experience embedded in their spatial and cultural identity. Thus, the Palopo Jami Mosque functions not only as a historical monument but also as an active source of knowledge and identity formation for future generations.

3.4. Revitalizing Luwu's Islamic Traces through Integrating Archaeological Heritage into Education and Strengthening Cultural Identity

Integrating the archaeological heritage of the Palopo Jami Mosque into local history learning requires a systematic approach that combines pedagogy, historiography, and site management. Although the national curriculum allows for context-based learning, its success largely depends on teacher creativity, the availability of learning resources, and institutional support (Kuwoto, 2022; Rasidi & Istiawati, 2025). As one of the oldest Islamic sites in South Sulawesi, the mosque has great potential as a primary resource for building historical literacy and fostering appreciation for local cultural heritage.

The first step is to strengthen students' literacies of local sources: historical documents, inscriptions, architecture, and oral traditions of the Luwu people. Historical thinking develops most robustly when students work directly with primary sources that require analysis and interpretation (Wineburg, 2001; Seixas & Morton, 2013). In the context of the Palopo Jami Mosque, students could analyze Arabic inscriptions, the Lontaraq chronicle, colonial-era records, and archaeological reports. Before the visit, preparatory activities should include training on the history of Luwu, the Islamization process, and the architectural features of early mosques in South Sulawesi.

The second step is learning on site via structured field observation. Evidence shows that site-based history learning boosts inquiry skills and increases student engagement at both emotional and intellectual levels (Ho, 2018; Sulistyaningsih, 2025). During a field visit, students would be guided to observe architectural elements such as the tiered roof, limestone walls, the mihrab, and decorative motifs that blend local and Islamic traditions. They should produce field notes, sketches, or photographic

documentation as part of their worksheet (LKPD), aligning with experiential and heritage-based learning approaches.

The third step is historical interpretation and reconstruction. After observing the site, students can collaborate in class to convert their findings into historical explanations through discussion and guided reflection. The ability to interpret evidence and construct arguments about the past is core to historical thinking (Seixas & Morton, 2013). Teachers can help students connect architectural observations to themes like Islamization, political relations between Luwu and other Islamic centers, and the changing roles of the mosque over time.

The fourth step is project-based learning in line with the Independent Curriculum. Students might produce documentary videos, write interpretive essays, compile a digital catalog of mosque artifacts, or map Islamization sites in Palopo. Heritage-based project learning has been shown to build collaboration, digital literacy, and creative thinking (Sulistyaningsih, 2025). Through these projects, students are not just consumers of history but creators of historical knowledge.

The fifth step is fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Effective integration of a heritage site into education requires cooperation between schools, local governments, cultural preservation agencies, mosque administrators, and community groups. Partnerships like these support participatory heritage education (Sentanu et al., 2025; Raharjana & Kutanegara, 2023). Teachers can invite imams, local historians, traditional leaders, or archaeologists to engage with students, which also helps sustain public history programs like heritage tours or cultural festivals.

The final step is reflection and evaluation to assess the impact of using the mosque as a learning resource. Evaluation methods could include student portfolios, reflective essays, observation reports, and structured class discussions. Reflective processes help students connect the past with their present identity and understand their place in cultural history (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Kuwoto, 2022). In this way, learning at the Palopo Jami Mosque becomes a strategy to deepen both historical literacy and local identity.

4. Conclusion

The research findings demonstrate that the Jami' Palopo Mosque has enormous potential as a resource for learning about local history, yet its utilization in schools remains limited. History instruction tends to be oriented toward Jami narratives of other kingdoms, thus under-representing Luwu's contribution to Islamization. Limited teaching materials, minimal teacher training, and the absence of site-based learning models are major obstacles to integrating this archaeological heritage into formal education.

Through field studies, architectural observations, interviews, and literature analysis, this research confirms that the use of archaeological sites such as the Jami' Palopo Mosque can enhance students' historical thinking skills, strengthen cultural identity, and foster a sense of belonging to local history. Site-based learning experiences provide a space for students to develop their interpretation skills, analyze primary

sources, and understand the processes of historical change and continuity more concretely.

This research also found that the revitalization of Luwu's Islamic heritage encompasses not only the physical restoration of the mosque but also the revitalization of the site's social, cultural, and educational significance. The involvement of various stakeholders, teachers, mosque administrators, cultural communities, and local government proves that preserving cultural heritage is a collective process that can foster the strengthening of local identity while simultaneously opening up opportunities for the development of sustainable historical tourism.

The integration of the Palopo Jami Mosque into local history learning offers a new paradigm for history education that is more contextual, participatory, and rooted in students' lives. With strategic steps such as strengthening local resource literacy, site-based learning, historical interpretation, project-based learning, and inter-institutional collaboration, this mosque can function not only as a monument to the past but also as a living historical laboratory for current and future generations. This research confirms that utilizing archaeological heritage is key to providing more meaningful and sustainable history learning for students.

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