

The Great Mosque of Palembang as Living Religious Heritage: Sacred Space, Institutional Transformation, and Local Islamic Identity

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Abstract

Historic mosques in Indonesia are increasingly recognized as religious heritage sites whose meanings are shaped by shifting political and institutional contexts. Yet scholarship has largely concentrated on architectural preservation and contemporary religious functions, leaving long-term institutional transformations across successive political regimes underexamined. This study investigates the historical transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang as a sacred space and living religious heritage, spanning the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate through contemporary Indonesia. A qualitative historical methodology was employed, integrating heuristics, source criticism, historical interpretation, and historiography. Data were drawn from historical literature, academic publications, Dutch colonial records, government documents, and visual materials from the KITLV Digital Collections. The findings reveal three distinct institutional transformations. During the sultanate period, the mosque functioned as a nexus of religious authority and political legitimacy, deeply embedded within royal governance structures. Under Dutch colonial administration, its political role was systematically curtailed through bureaucratic supervision and deliberate depoliticization, though it persisted as a symbol of Islamic identity and community solidarity. Following Indonesian independence, the mosque was incorporated into a modern state religious governance framework and progressively redefined as both a formal religious institution and a protected cultural heritage site. This study argues that sacred space is not inherent but historically constructed and continuously renegotiated through the interplay of religious authority, political power, collective memory, and social transformation. These findings advance scholarship on sacred space theory, religious heritage governance, and historical institutionalism within Southeast Asian Muslim societies.

Keywords: *The Great Mosque of Palembang; Sacred Space; Religious Heritage; Local Islamic Identity; Institutional History.*

Abstrak

Masjid-masjid bersejarah di Indonesia semakin diakui bukan hanya sebagai tempat ibadah tetapi juga sebagai situs warisan keagamaan yang maknanya telah dibentuk oleh perubahan konteks politik dan kelembagaan. Namun, studi tentang masjid-masjid bersejarah sebagian besar berfokus pada pelestarian arsitektur dan fungsi kontemporer, sementara transformasi jangka panjangnya di berbagai rezim politik masih kurang dieksplorasi. Artikel ini mengkaji transformasi historis Masjid Agung Palembang sebagai ruang sakral dan warisan keagamaan yang terus hidup dari Kesultanan

Palembang Darussalam hingga Indonesia kontemporer. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan historis kualitatif, studi ini menerapkan heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Data dikumpulkan dari literatur sejarah, publikasi akademis, catatan kolonial, dokumen pemerintah, serta materi visual dari Koleksi Digital KITLV. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa masjid tersebut mengalami tiga transformasi kelembagaan utama. Selama periode kesultanan, masjid berfungsi sebagai pusat otoritas keagamaan dan legitimasi politik yang terintegrasi dengan pemerintahan kerajaan. Di bawah pemerintahan kolonial Belanda, peran politiknya berkurang melalui pengawasan administratif dan kebijakan depolitisasi, meskipun tetap menjadi simbol penting identitas Islam dan kohesi masyarakat. Setelah kemerdekaan Indonesia, masjid menjadi bagian dari sistem tata kelola keagamaan modern dan secara bertahap didefinisikan ulang sebagai lembaga keagamaan formal serta warisan keagamaan yang dilindungi. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa ruang sakral dibangun secara historis dan terus dinegosiasikan melalui interaksi antara agama, otoritas politik, memori kolektif, dan perubahan sosial. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada kajian tentang ruang sakral, warisan keagamaan, dan institusionalisme historis dalam masyarakat Muslim di Asia Tenggara.

Kata Kunci: *Masjid Agung Palembang; Ruang Sakral; Warisan Religius; Identitas Islam Lokal; Sejarah Institusional.*

Introduction

Sacred spaces have emerged as a significant subject in contemporary scholarship on religious heritage, particularly within interdisciplinary frameworks spanning history, anthropology, cultural studies, and heritage research. From an anthropological perspective, sacred spaces are understood as cultural constructions shaped by collective beliefs, rituals, social practices, and historical experiences. In many societies, sacred spaces function not merely as physical sites for religious practice but as social and symbolic arenas that reflect the dynamic interplay between religion, authority, collective memory, and community identity (Rech, 2023). Places of worship frequently embody historical experience, institutional power, and cultural values transmitted across generations, rendering them dynamic sites in constant dialogue with social change (Liutikas, 2023; Peng & Sirisuk, 2024). In the contemporary period, accelerating urbanization, state intervention, heritage conservation policies, and modernization pressures have transformed numerous religious sites into contested spaces where sacred values, public interests, and institutional regulations intersect.

Within the Muslim world, mosques have historically served not only as places of worship but also as centers of education, social interaction, political legitimacy, and Islamic identity formation at both local and regional levels (Putra et al., 2025). The mosque thus represents a sacred space that mediates between spiritual practice and broader social and political realities. In Southeast Asia, historic mosques frequently illustrate the interaction between Islamic traditions, local culture, and political authority, thereby becoming important symbols of collective identity and historical continuity. The Great Mosque of Palembang stands as one of the most significant Islamic institutions in South Sumatra. Established during the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, the mosque historically operated as both a religious institution and a symbol of Islamic sovereignty and political legitimacy (Cahyani

et al., 2025). Its strategic location near the royal center reflected the intimate relationship between spiritual authority and governance, while its architectural and cultural features embodied the confluence of Islamic principles, Malay traditions, and external influences within the broader regional Islamic landscape (Purwanti & Ali, 2024).

Previous studies on mosques as sacred spaces and religious heritage have generally emphasized architectural transformation, religious tourism, and contemporary functional adaptation. Merina & Pratama (2025), for example, demonstrated how the Seribu Pintu Mosque in Tangerang transformed into a multifunctional religious-tourism space through negotiations among religious interests, economic demands, and state policies. Similarly, Sofiana & Naufal (2023), examined ancient mosques in Aceh as living heritage sites, emphasizing how architectural modifications attempted to balance historical preservation with contemporary functional needs. Other studies have addressed mosque preservation and modernization within cultural heritage management frameworks. Despite this body of work, existing scholarship continues to prioritize architectural preservation, religious tourism, and contemporary mosque functions. Few studies have examined how historic mosques underwent long-term institutional transformation across successive political regimes and governance systems. Moreover, research on historically significant mosques outside Java remains comparatively limited. Consequently, the relationship between sacred space, institutional change, political authority, and the construction of local Islamic identity remains underexplored within the broader field of Indonesian Islamic heritage studies.

The Great Mosque of Palembang provides a distinctive case for addressing this gap because its historical development spans three major political contexts: the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, Dutch colonial rule, and contemporary Indonesia. Examining the mosque across these periods enables a deeper understanding of how sacred space, political authority, institutional transformation, and religious heritage have interacted over time. Preliminary historical evidence indicates that the mosque experienced three major institutional transformations: as a center of royal religious authority during the sultanate era, as a religious institution subjected to colonial administrative supervision during the Dutch period, and as a formal religious institution and protected heritage site in contemporary Indonesia.

This study analyzes the historical transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang as a sacred space and a site of religious heritage across three periods: the sultanate era, the Dutch colonial period, and contemporary Indonesia. Specifically, it examines how political change, institutional restructuring, and social dynamics shaped the evolving meanings, functions, and symbolic position of the mosque within local Muslim society. Accordingly, this study addresses three central questions: (1) how has the Great Mosque of Palembang transformed historically as a sacred space; (2) how did political and

institutional changes affect the mosque's functions and meanings; and (3) how does the mosque function as living religious heritage and local Islamic identity in contemporary society?

This study argues that the Great Mosque of Palembang should be understood not merely as a historical religious building but as a dynamic sacred space whose meaning and institutional role have been continuously reconstructed through the interplay of religion, political power, collective memory, and social change. By integrating the analytical perspectives of sacred space theory, religious heritage studies, and historical institutionalism, this study adopts a longitudinal approach that links institutional transformation to the formation of local Islamic identity. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on architecture, tourism, or contemporary functions, this research foregrounds the long-term historical evolution of the mosque across successive political regimes and institutional configurations. The research contributes to the broader discourse on religious heritage and sacred space in Southeast Asian Islam by demonstrating that mosques are living institutions of religious heritage whose significance is continually negotiated across diverse historical and political contexts.

Literature Review

Sacred Space in Religious Studies

The concept of sacred space occupies a central position in religious studies, cultural geography, and anthropology, as it illuminates how particular sites acquire spiritual, symbolic, and social meaning within human societies. According to Eliade (1959), sacred space is distinguished from profane space through the quality of religious experience it affords, serving as a symbolic center that connects believers with transcendent reality. Mosques, churches, temples, and shrines therefore function not only as places of worship but also as expressions of religious identity and social order. Contemporary scholars, however, challenge the view that sacredness is fixed or permanently separated from secular activities. Many places of worship today host weddings, educational programs, cultural events, and religious tourism activities, demonstrating that sacredness is continuously negotiated through social practices and collective meanings. Sacred space should therefore be understood not only as a transcendent religious category but as a socially and historically constructed phenomenon, shaped by the interactions among religion, culture, political power, and community practices. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding historic mosques, whose sacred significance persists despite changing social and institutional functions.

Contemporary scholars, however, challenge the view that sacredness is fixed or permanently separated from secular activities. Lefebvre (1991) argues that space is socially produced through power relations, social practices, and institutional processes. From this perspective, sacred space is a socially constructed phenomenon continuously shaped by historical dynamics, political authority,

and collective interaction. Sacredness is therefore not inherent in physical structures alone but emerges through rituals, symbols, social memory, and institutional practices that reproduce meaning across time. In the context of mosques, sacred space is continuously negotiated through religious activities, political authority, community participation, and modernization. Mosques therefore function not only as religious spaces but as social and political arenas where identity, legitimacy, and authority are constructed, maintained, and contested within changing historical contexts.

Religious Heritage and Living Heritage

Within heritage studies, religious buildings are increasingly conceptualized not merely as architectural monuments but as living heritage embedded in ongoing social and religious practices. Smith (2006) argues that heritage is not simply an object inherited from the past but a cultural process through which societies construct meaning, identity, and collective memory. Heritage thus involves continuous negotiation between historical preservation, institutional authority, and contemporary social needs. Similarly, Harrison (2013) emphasizes that heritage should be viewed as a dynamic process continuously reproduced through social interaction and cultural practice rather than as static historical remains. From this perspective, religious heritage encompasses both material and immaterial dimensions, since sacred sites are sustained not only through physical conservation but through ritual continuity, collective memory, and active community participation.

The concept of living heritage is particularly relevant to understanding historic mosques in Southeast Asia. Unlike museums or inactive monuments, functioning mosques operate as active centers of worship, education, and communal interaction. Miura (2022) explains that heritage management in Southeast Asia frequently encounters tension between preservation ideals and modernization pressures, especially in active religious sites. Likewise, Hemel et al. (2022) and colleagues argue that religious heritage involves continuous negotiation between sacred values, state regulation, conservation policy, and community religious practices. Consequently, mosques cannot be treated solely as historical artifacts, since their significance fundamentally depends on the continuity of worship and the lived experiences of religious communities. Modernization, spatial expansion, and infrastructural adaptation therefore become unavoidable processes that simultaneously preserve and transform the sacred meaning of religious heritage.

Historical Institutionalism and Religious Institutions

Historical institutionalism offers a valuable analytical framework for examining how institutions evolve through long-term historical processes and interactions among political power, norms, and social structures. According to Thelen (1999), institutions generally change incrementally through processes of adaptation, layering, and reinterpretation rather than through sudden transformation.

This perspective underscores that institutional arrangements are powerfully shaped by historical trajectories that constrain and channel future patterns of development. Similarly, Pierson (2004) emphasizes the concept of path dependency, which explains how decisions and institutional arrangements formed in earlier historical periods continue shaping later institutional outcomes. Once established, institutions tend to reproduce specific patterns as social actors adapt their behavior to existing structures and norms.

In addition, Mahoney & Thelen (2010) explains that institutional continuity and change often emerge through interactions between political power, historical contingency, and social agency. Institutional transformation thus occurs not only through formal policy changes but through gradual shifts in meaning, authority, and social practice. In the context of religious institutions, mosques can be understood as dynamic institutions whose functions and symbolic roles evolve alongside changes in political regimes and governance systems. The transition from the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate to Dutch colonial rule and subsequently to the modern Indonesian state significantly altered the institutional position of the Great Mosque of Palembang. Although the mosque consistently retained its religious function, its political role, administrative structure, symbolic authority, and relationship with the state underwent gradual transformation in response to changing historical and institutional contexts.

Method

This study employed a qualitative historical approach within an interpretive paradigm to analyze the Great Mosque of Palembang as a sacred space and living religious heritage that underwent transformations in meaning, function, and institutional position across successive historical periods. The interpretive paradigm holds that sacred space is socially and historically constructed through the interactions among religious practices, political authority, institutional arrangements, and collective memory.

A qualitative historical approach was adopted because it enables contextual, interpretative, and longitudinal examination of the relationship between religion, political power, institutions, and society over time. The Great Mosque of Palembang was chosen as the focus of this study because it represents one of the oldest Islamic institutions in South Sumatra and historically functioned as the religious center of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate. Its continuity across the sultanate period, Dutch colonial rule, and contemporary Indonesia provides an important case for examining the long-term transformation of sacred space and religious heritage in Southeast Asia.

This study primarily relied on secondary historical sources, including scholarly books, journal articles, research reports, local histories of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, colonial

administrative records, and government regulations concerning religious institutions and cultural heritage. Academic works on the history of Palembang, Islamic institutions, sacred space, and religious heritage were used to reconstruct the historical development of the mosque and its changing institutional roles. In addition, the study utilizes visual and archival materials from the KITLV Digital Collections, including image collection no. 782098 depicting the early structure of the Great Mosque of Palembang and image collection no. 917264 documenting worship activities in 1935. These visual sources were employed to examine architectural continuity, spatial changes, and the symbolic representation of the mosque across different historical periods. Source selection was purposive, based on thematic relevance, academic credibility, historical significance, and contextual relevance to the socio-cultural milieu of Palembang.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and literature review techniques. Historical documents, academic publications, archival records, visual materials, and policy documents were systematically identified, collected, classified, and analyzed in relation to the themes of sacred space, religious heritage, institutional transformation, and local Islamic identity. The collected data included information concerning the historical development of the mosque, architectural changes, institutional restructuring, religious practices, colonial intervention, heritage preservation, and the role of the mosque within the broader socio-political context of South Sumatra.

Data analysis followed the stages of the historical method consisting of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Irwanto & Sair, 2014). The heuristic stage focused on identifying and collecting relevant historical sources. Source criticism was conducted through both external and internal criticism to assess the authenticity, credibility, consistency, and historical context of the collected materials. Particular attention was devoted to colonial records, which were critically examined by accounting for the political interests, administrative objectives, and colonial viewpoints embedded within these sources. To mitigate potential bias, information derived from colonial sources was systematically cross-checked against local historical accounts, academic studies, and other corroborating materials. The validated data were subsequently interpreted through the conceptual lenses of sacred space, religious heritage, and historical institutionalism to understand how political regimes, institutional arrangements, and social dynamics shaped the transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang.

The historiographical stage focused on constructing a systematic analytical narrative explaining the interaction between religion, power, institutional change, and collective identity throughout the mosque's historical development. To enhance analytical validity, this study employed conceptual triangulation by comparing multiple theoretical perspectives and findings from previous studies related to sacred space, heritage studies, and institutional transformation. Through this approach, the

Great Mosque of Palembang is understood not merely as a historical architectural monument but as a dynamic living religious heritage continuously redefined through negotiations among sacred values, political authority, community practices, and processes of modernization.

Result

The Historical Transformation of the Mosque as Sacred Space

The Great Mosque of Palembang ranks among the oldest and most historically significant religious institutions in South Sumatra, embodying the intricate relationship between religion, political authority, and spatial dynamics since the pre-colonial era. It functions simultaneously as a site of worship and as a symbol of political legitimacy and local Islamic identity. The mosque's historical evolution reflects the socio-political transformations experienced by the Palembang community across three distinct periods: the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, Dutch colonial rule, and contemporary Indonesia (Suradi, 2022).

Figure 1.
The Building of the Great Mosque of Palembang, Built Between 1738/1753

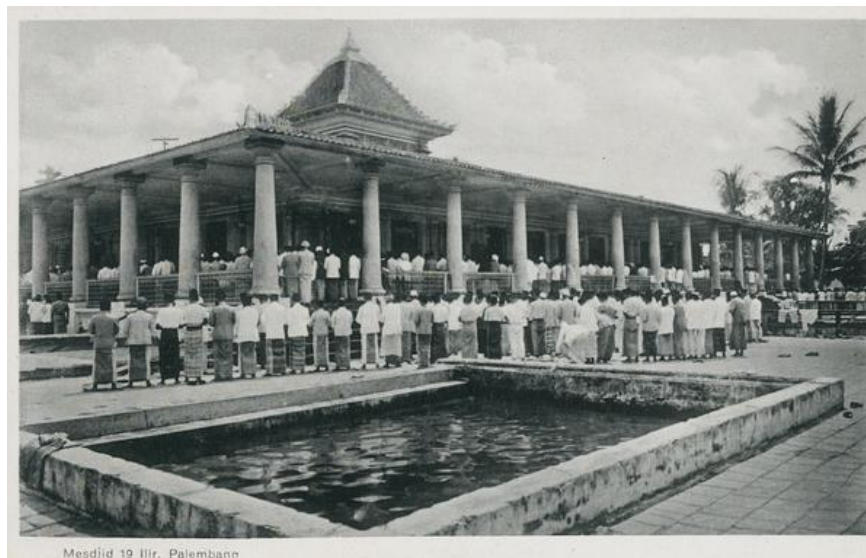


Source: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:782098>

The Great Mosque of Palembang was established and developed during the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate as an integral component of the sultanate's religious and political order. Historical accounts contained in local chronicles, particularly *Hikayat Palembang* and genealogical narratives of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, indicate that the construction and maintenance of the mosque were closely associated with the sultan's efforts to legitimize political authority through Islamic institutions and symbols (Pudjiastuti, 2006). As the principal congregational mosque of the sultanate, it served not only as a center of worship but also as a venue for religious ceremonies, royal proclamations, and rituals that reinforced the alignment between Islamic authority and royal

governance. Strategically positioned near the royal palace and the Musi River, the mosque formed a sacred-political landscape that articulated the integration of religion and state authority within the Malay-Islamic polity of Palembang (Maryamah et al., 2025). This spatial arrangement demonstrates how religious architecture was employed to express both spiritual legitimacy and political sovereignty in the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate.

Figure 2.
People Worship at the Great Mosque of Palembang, 1935



Source: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:917264>

The sanctity of the mosque was reinforced not only through religious rituals but also through its symbolic function as a locus of political legitimation (Rofiq et al., 2025). The sultan or his representatives regularly attended Friday sermons, appointed religious leaders, and presided over Islamic celebrations. These practices, documented in manuscript sources and local oral traditions, consolidated the mosque's status as a sacred space that simultaneously integrated spiritual and political dimensions.

The mosque also functioned as a hub for Islamic education and the transmission of religious knowledge. It served as a venue for Qur'anic recitation, the study of Islamic texts, and scholarly discourse. The continuity of these practices deepened the mosque's sanctity as a dynamic sacred space in which religious knowledge and social authority were interwoven within the sultanate's institutional framework (Helmy, 2021).

Substantial changes followed the dissolution of the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, which resulted from Dutch military campaigns and colonial political intervention in the early nineteenth century. Colonial archives — including reports from the Palembang Resident and Dutch East Indies administrative documents — indicate that this political transition directly affected the mosque's

institutional status. No longer directly patronized by local Islamic authorities, the mosque was brought under a more formalized system of colonial administrative supervision (Haroon, 2021).

Throughout the colonial period, the Dutch administration generally maintained mosques as religious institutions to ensure social stability within Muslim communities, while simultaneously restricting their political influence. Colonial religious policies and urban planning regulations progressively marginalized mosques from centers of administrative authority (Ningsih et al., 2023). In this context, the mosque's sacredness was reconfigured: its political significance was diminished, while its role as a center of communal religious life was maintained.

In Indonesia's contemporary post-independence period, the Great Mosque of Palembang underwent further recontextualization within the national framework. The Great Mosque of Palembang served as both a site of worship and a symbol of Islam and local religious identity acknowledged by the state. The mosque's physical modernization during this period reflected the efforts of both the state and the community to adapt its functions to the evolving needs of its congregation. Structural expansions, spatial reorganization, and infrastructural improvements were undertaken to accommodate worship and broader socio-religious activities. Nevertheless, this modernization carried significant implications for the character of the sacred space, requiring ongoing negotiation between historical and symbolic values on the one hand and contemporary functional and aesthetic demands on the other (Fikriyati, 2023). Concurrently, the mosque was formally designated as a site of religious and cultural heritage. This designation introduced a new dimension of heritage management, in which the mosque is simultaneously treated as an object of preservation and an active site of worship. The interplay between heritage preservation imperatives, ongoing religious functions, and broader public interest continues to shape the mosque's sacred character in the contemporary period (Ajar, 2025).

The Great Mosque of Palembang exhibits significant continuity in fundamental religious practices, preserving its sanctity as an active site of worship, while discontinuities emerge in the institutional and symbolic dimensions due to shifts in power structures that shape the mosque's interpretation and administration. This trajectory underscores the fundamentally dynamic and historically contingent nature of sacred space, shaped by the interplay of religion, political power, and social change. Accordingly, the Great Mosque of Palembang must be understood as a religious heritage whose significance transcends architecture, with the historical-institutional dimension essential to understanding its enduring role in local Islamic identity and broader debates on sacred space in Southeast Asia.

Institutional Changes and Mosque Functions Across Political Regimes

In Indonesian Islamic history, mosques cannot be understood merely as places of worship; they function as social institutions deeply embedded with political, cultural, and symbolic significance (Formichi, 2022). Since the earliest spread of Islam across the archipelago, mosques have served as hubs for community development, the transmission of religious knowledge, and the articulation of authority (Karimullah, 2023). The institutional existence of mosques has been consistently intertwined with the prevailing political structures of each era — whether a sultanate, a colonial administration, or a modern state.

From a socio-historical perspective, mosques have served as vital mediating structures between the transcendent values of Islam and the socio-political realities of Muslim communities. Their roles have evolved in tandem with shifting power dynamics (Winarti & Al-Obaidi, 2025). This dynamic reveals that mosques are historically adaptive institutions whose significance and functions are shaped by the interactions among political actors, religious authorities, and lay communities.

The Great Mosque of Palembang exemplifies this dynamic. This mosque is one of the oldest and most important in South Sumatra. It serves as a site of worship and a symbol of authority, collective identity, and Islam's enduring presence in Palembang. The relationship among the mosque, the ruling authority, and the community constitutes an institutional framework that has evolved incrementally and contextually across historical periods (Said et al., 2023).

The historical institutionalism approach helps explain the evolving role of the Great Mosque of Palembang as the result of long-term interactions between political authority, institutional arrangements, and social practices. According to this framework, institutions rarely undergo abrupt transformation; instead, they tend to preserve established patterns while adapting incrementally to changing historical conditions through adjustment, reinterpretation, and institutional layering (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Thelen, 1999). This framework is particularly useful for understanding the historical trajectory of the Great Mosque of Palembang, whose institutional role evolved across different political regimes without losing its core religious function. During the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, the mosque served as an integral component of royal governance and functioned as a symbol of the close relationship between religious authority and political power. Under Dutch colonial rule, its political influence was reduced through administrative supervision and depoliticization policies, although it continued to serve as a center of Islamic identity and community life. Following Indonesian independence, the mosque was incorporated into a modern bureaucratic framework and gradually redefined as both a formal religious institution and a protected site of religious heritage. These changes demonstrate that the transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang comprised not a series of abrupt institutional ruptures but a gradual process shaped by

shifting political contexts, administrative structures, religious functions, and heritage governance over time.

The Sultan of Palembang functioned as both an administrative authority and a religious leader possessing spiritual legitimacy (Amalia & Hudaidah, 2022). This dual role reinforced the mosque's status as a nexus of religious authority and political legitimacy. Friday sermons, Islamic celebrations, and public religious rituals served as important mechanisms for reinforcing the sultan's authority within the Muslim community of Palembang. Throughout the sultanate, the Great Mosque of Palembang functioned as a hub for socio-religious activities. The mosque facilitated religious instruction, deliberations among local elites, and a range of social activities that strengthened community cohesion (Soli et al., 2022). Consequently, the mosque operated as a public religious space that integrated spiritual, social, and political interests.

This relational pattern is characteristic of patrimonial authority, in which religious institutions fall within the ruler's direct sphere of influence and contribute to the stability of the political order. Mosques did not operate as independent entities; rather, they were integrated into the broader palace governance structure. The governance of mosques, the appointment of religious scholars, and the formulation of religious policy were all regulated by political elites within the sultan's circle (Sarkissian & Waincott, 2023). This configuration effectively blurred the boundary between religious authority and political power. Religion functioned not merely as a system of belief but as a symbolic instrument for sanctifying political authority. The mosque thus served as a conduit linking temporal power with spiritual legitimacy, providing a robust religious foundation for the sultan's rule (Capilla, 2020).

The arrival of Dutch colonial forces fundamentally altered these power dynamics. The colonial administration introduced a modern framework of governance that emphasized the formal separation of religion and politics (Dwicahyo, 2021). This policy was part of a broader social control strategy intended to reduce the risk of religiously inspired political opposition. Through administrative regulations and stringent oversight of religious activity, colonial authorities redefined mosques primarily as sites of worship, severing their formal connection to broader socio-political roles (Sheline, 2019). The Great Mosque of Palembang was formally designated as a religious institution, subject to colonial regulations and government oversight.

Nevertheless, colonial efforts to depoliticize the mosque were only partially successful. The Great Mosque of Palembang maintained its symbolic significance as a hub of local Islamic identity. Local communities and religious leaders continued to regard the mosque as a sacred space symbolizing the preservation of Islamic tradition in the face of colonial subjugation. The mosque served as a venue for negotiations between colonial authorities and local religious leaders. Religious scholars and

mosque administrators developed adaptive strategies to preserve the symbolic autonomy of Islamic practice, even within the constraints of colonial authority (Wiryomartono, 2023). These negotiations demonstrate that the mosque retained considerable cultural and symbolic leverage even under colonial rule.

This pattern exemplifies path dependency as theorized by Thelen (1999), institutions tend to preserve established arrangements even when structural pressures for change are substantial. The mosque did not entirely conform to colonial requirements but adapted incrementally while preserving its historical significance. Consequently, during the colonial era, the mosque underwent an ambiguous transformation in its institutional function. Although officially classified as a religious institution, it continued to function as a site for the production of meaning, collective identity, and symbolic resistance to colonial authority.

Following independence, the establishment of the modern Indonesian state introduced a new institutional framework grounded in legal and bureaucratic rationality. The mosque was no longer governed by royal patronage but administered through a formal religious governance structure involving the state, principally the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This transition signified a shift from patrimonial authority to rational-legal institutional governance. Mosque management became more standardized across institutional, financial, and socio-religious dimensions. The state actively defined the mosque's function as a hub for community development and religious education (Muh Alfian Hayadi et al., 2023).

The institutional transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang demonstrates how the mosque continuously adapted to changing political regimes and socio-religious contexts. The changing institutional position and functions of the mosque across historical periods can be summarized as follows.

Table 1.
Institutional Changes and Mosque Functions Across Historical Periods

Historical Period	Institutional Position	Main Functions of the Mosque	Political and Social Context
Palembang Darussalam Sultanate	Central religious institution under royal authority	Center of worship, Islamic education, political legitimacy, royal ceremonies, and community gatherings	The mosque functioned as an extension of sultanate authority where religious and political power were institutionally interconnected
Dutch Colonial Period	Religious institution under colonial supervision	Center of worship, limited religious education, preservation of Islamic identity, and community solidarity	Colonial depoliticization policies reduced the mosque’s political role while maintaining limited religious functions
Early Indonesian Independence	Symbol of Islamic continuity and regional identity	Religious education, social mobilization, Islamic	The mosque became an important symbol of

		celebrations, and community consolidation	postcolonial Islamic identity and social cohesion
Contemporary Indonesia	Formal religious institution and protected religious heritage	Worship activities, religious tourism, heritage preservation, educational activities, and public religious events	Modernization, state regulation, and urban development transformed the mosque into both a living religious institution and cultural heritage asset

Source: Processed and interpreted from historical archives, academic publications, and KILTV visual documentation.

Table 1 illustrates that although the institutional structure and political role of the mosque changed significantly across different regimes, its function as a center of Islamic religious life remained relatively persistent. This continuity indicates the mosque's adaptive capacity as both a sacred institution and a socio-political space.

However, the mosque's state administration generates ongoing tensions. Community autonomy and the authority of local religious leaders are not entirely superseded; rather, both must be negotiated within the parameters of formal state policy (Whyte, 2024). In this context, the mosque functions as an arena where community religious practices and formal institutional regulations continuously intersect. It serves as a site of ongoing negotiation among the state, religious authorities, and local communities. According to Foucault (1980), power is not exercised in a linear manner but is distributed and negotiated through quotidian social practices, including within religious contexts such as mosques.

The evolving role of the mosque — from a bastion of traditional authority, to a symbol of cultural resistance under colonialism, to a formally governed religious institution within the modern Indonesian state — illustrates that mosques are historically dynamic and contextually embedded entities. This transformation is nonlinear, arising from a complex interplay among power structures, institutional policies, and the agency of local actors, collectively shaping the mosque's historical trajectory.

The Mosque’s Role as Religious Heritage and Local Islamic Identity

The Great Mosque of Palembang functions simultaneously as an active religious institution and a dynamic cultural heritage site whose significance is continually reinterpreted by its community. Its existence illustrates that religious spaces carry significance that transcends their spiritual function, encompassing historical, cultural, and collective identity dimensions that remain in constant negotiation (Effendi & Arifi, 2023).

In Indonesian Islamic history, historic mosques such as the Great Mosque of Palembang serve as pivotal symbols of the continuity of Islamic traditions across the centuries. Such mosques not only

document the evolution of local Islamic history but also embody the persistence of religious values, practices, and authority within an ever-changing social context (Gholam & Fekry, 2023). The Great Mosque of Palembang is intrinsically linked to the historical processes that shaped the interplay among religion, culture, and power in Palembang. From the sultanate era to the contemporary period, the mosque has functioned as a locus where collective memory, religious practice, and local Islamic identity converge, generating both historical depth and contemporary relevance (Ali & Yanto, 2020).

The Great Mosque of Palembang, as a religious heritage site, is not merely a historical relic but an institution that continues to play an active role in the community's social practices. Central to the daily lives of Palembang's Muslim community, the mosque's heritage value resides in its ongoing social and religious function rather than exclusively in its historical age or architectural form (Maryamah et al., 2024). The heritagization of the mosque occurs through complex social, cultural, and institutional processes. Heritagization involves not merely the formal designation of a structure as historically significant but also the community's collective recognition of the mosque as a symbol of identity and an irreplaceable center of religious life (Fernández-Álvarez et al., 2022).

In contrast to heritage sites preserved in museum contexts as static artifacts, the Great Mosque of Palembang retains its character as a living religious institution. Congregants continuously engage with the mosque through worship, religious education, and communal activities, perpetuating its heritage through everyday practice. From a heritage studies perspective, this demonstrates that the significance of a religious site is shaped not only by tangible elements such as architectural form and historical age but equally by its relationship with the sustaining community and the continuity of its sacred function (Ma, 2023). The Great Mosque of Palembang holds its heritage significance due to its ongoing role in the social and religious interactions of its congregation.

The mosque's heritage designation also involves the active participation of state agencies and religious authorities. Through preservation policies, building restoration programs, and the promotion of local Islamic historical narratives, the mosque has been positioned as a significant representation of Islamic history in South Sumatra and a symbol of regional religious identity. Nevertheless, this process of heritagization is neither linear nor exclusively top-down. Formal state-led preservation initiatives frequently encounter the dynamic and contextually situated character of community religious practices (E. van den. Hemel et al., 2022). In this context, the mosque serves as a venue for negotiation between the interests of institutional preservation and the religious requirements of the congregation.

As a living religious heritage, the mosque experiences ongoing tension among the imperatives to preserve sacred values, maintain its worship function, and accommodate the pressures of modernization. The mosque has undergone repeated renovation and structural modification in

response to urban modernization in Palembang, an expanding congregation, and evolving social needs. Such changes are necessary to ensure the mosque remains functionally relevant as a public place of worship that effectively serves its congregation. At the same time, modernization poses a potential threat to the historical and symbolic significance embedded in the mosque's original structure as an expression of local Islamic cultural heritage (Al-Tamimi & Pankina, 2024).

This tension reflects a fundamental dilemma in the governance of historic religious sites across Southeast Asia, where the imperatives of sacred value frequently come into conflict with contemporary functional and aesthetic demands (Miura, 2022). The mosque must therefore reconcile the conservation of traditional architectural character with the requirements of comfort, accessibility, and contemporary religious infrastructure. In this sense, the mosque operates as a mediating space between historical legacy and contemporary exigency. The sanctity of the mosque is sustained not merely through the preservation of its physical structure but through deliberate, contextually sensitive adaptation that enables continued operation without sacrificing symbolic significance (Husni, 2024).

The mosque exerts significant influence on the formation of local Islamic identity by embodying Islam as a tradition intricately interwoven with Palembang's cultural milieu. It serves as a mediating structure that articulates the relationship between Islam, as a global religious tradition, and its distinctive local cultural expressions in Palembang. The mosque's architecture, spatial organization, and religious practices embody a synthesis of universal Islamic principles and distinctly local Palembang cultural customs (Lestari & Hudaidah, 2023). This synthesis reflects the broader pattern in which Indonesian Islamic identity is constituted through processes of localization and sustained interaction with indigenous cultural traditions. The mosque serves as a pivotal center for religious engagement, contributing significantly to the collective historical consciousness of Palembang's Muslim community and to the perpetuation of religious tradition. It functions as a symbolic locus connecting the historical, contemporary, and future dimensions of Muslim communal life in Palembang (Rakha Agusti Amanullah & Hudaidah, 2025).

The Great Mosque of Palembang serves as both a site of worship and a venue for expressing the collective memory of the Palembang Sultanate's grandeur, the colonial experience, and the evolution of Islam within the contemporary state. In this context, the mosque serves as a distinctive identity marker that distinguishes Palembang Islam from Islamic expressions in other regions of Indonesia. The Great Mosque of Palembang is a sacred space in Southeast Asia whose significance is perpetually redefined (Sakai, 2020). In the context of the anthropology of religion, sacred space is characterized by both its physical confines and the practices, symbols, and social interactions that transpire within it.

The Great Mosque of Palembang plays a significant role in the construction and reproduction of local Islamic identity by embodying the historical interaction between Islam, Malay culture, political authority, and regional traditions. Rather than representing a purely religious identity, the mosque reflects a distinctive Palembang Islamic identity that emerged through centuries of interaction among local, regional, and transnational influences. This identity is visible in several interconnected dimensions. First, the mosque's architectural features blend Islamic design principles with Malay, Chinese, and colonial influences, reflecting Palembang's cosmopolitan character as an important trading and political center in Southeast Asia. The multi-layered architectural form demonstrates how Islamic traditions were localized within Palembang's cultural environment without losing their religious significance.

Second, the mosque's historical connection to the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate continues to shape its symbolic authority. As the principal mosque of the sultanate, it functioned not only as a place of worship but also as a symbol of Islamic sovereignty and royal legitimacy. Although the political authority of the sultanate has long since dissolved, this historical legacy remains embedded in collective memory, continuously reinforcing the mosque's status as a symbol of Palembang's Islamic heritage.

Third, local Islamic identity is reproduced through the continuity of religious practice. Regular Friday prayers, Islamic education, Qur'anic studies, religious celebrations, and major public gatherings sustain the mosque's role as a center of religious life and communal solidarity. These practices connect contemporary Muslim communities with traditions preserved since the sultanate era, fostering a sense of historical continuity and shared religious identity.

Finally, the mosque functions as a site of collective memory that links the experiences of the Palembang Sultanate, Dutch colonialism, and modern Indonesia. Through preservation initiatives, the promotion of historical narratives, and its formal designation as a protected heritage site, the mosque has become an important locus for local communities to remember, interpret, and transmit their Islamic heritage. Local Islamic identity in Palembang is therefore not merely derived from religious belief but is continuously produced through the interplay of architectural symbolism, historical memory, religious practice, institutional continuity, and heritage preservation. The mosque thus serves as a living embodiment of how Islamic identity is sustained and renegotiated across shifting historical and political contexts.

Table 2.
Religious Heritage and Local Islamic Identity in the Great Mosque of Palembang

Aspect	Historical Manifestation	Contemporary Transformation	Implication for Local Identity
Sacred Space	The mosque served as the spiritual center of the Palembang Sultanate	Continues functioning as the primary Islamic religious center in Palembang	Reinforces the historical continuity of Islamic identity in South Sumatra
Religious Practices	Friday prayers, royal religious ceremonies, Islamic education	Expanded religious activities, public sermons, and mass Islamic gatherings	Preserves collective religious memory and communal solidarity
Architectural Symbolism	A combination of Malay, Islamic, Chinese, and colonial influences	Renovation and modernization while retaining historical elements	Reflects multicultural Islamic heritage and regional cultural identity
Institutional Authority	Closely connected to the sultanate's political legitimacy	Integrated into modern state religious administration	Demonstrates the adaptation of Islamic institutions to changing political systems
Religious Heritage	Symbol of Islamic sovereignty and sacred authority	Protected cultural and religious heritage site	Strengthens awareness of local Islamic history and heritage preservation

Source: Synthesized from historical records, heritage studies, and institutional analysis conducted in this research

As shown in Table 2, the continuity of religious practices, architectural symbolism, and institutional authority has contributed significantly to the preservation of local Islamic identity in Palembang. The mosque therefore operates not merely as a historical artifact but as a living sacred space continuously reproduced through community practices and collective memory.

The Great Mosque of Palembang illustrates how mosques in Southeast Asia often serve as central hubs of Muslim communal life. Its sanctity does not detach it from social life; rather, the mosque functions as a site where religion, culture, and social realities converge and mutually reinforce one another. The Great Mosque of Palembang, as a religious heritage and emblem of local Islamic identity, illustrates that the preservation of mosques is intrinsically linked to the surrounding social and religious practices. The process of heritagization, the tensions between sacredness and modernization, and the mosque's influence on local Islamic identity collectively underscore that it is not merely a historical artifact but a dynamic institution that actively constructs Islamic meaning at both local and regional levels in Southeast Asia.

Discussion

The Great Mosque as Dynamic Sacred Space

The findings establish that the Great Mosque of Palembang must be understood as a dynamic sacred space whose meanings and functions have been continuously reconstituted through shifting political, institutional, and social configurations. While Eliade's (1959) conceptualization positions sacred space as a symbolic center connecting religious communities with transcendent reality, the

Palembang case demonstrates that sacredness is sustained not solely through formal religious status but through an institution's capacity to adapt across successive political regimes without forfeiting its symbolic authority. Liutikas (2023) and Helmy (2021) similarly argue that sacred spaces derive their enduring significance from the capacity to mediate between religious communities and broader socio-political environments. Throughout the sultanate, colonial, and post-independence periods, the mosque retained its centrality for local Muslim communities despite profound transformations in political authority and institutional governance. This finding extends scholarship on sacred space by demonstrating that sacred continuity can coexist with, and indeed depend upon, institutional transformation.

This trajectory further resonates with Lefebvre's (1991) argument that space is socially produced through the exercise of power and social practice. The Palembang case, however, reveals a more layered process in which sacred space is simultaneously shaped by royal authority, colonial intervention, state regulation, and community participation. Foucault (1980) similarly emphasizes that spatial configurations are never politically neutral but are produced through the exercise of power over social institutions and symbolic meaning. Rather than functioning as a passive object of political control, the mosque served as an active arena where diverse actors negotiated religious authority, collective memory, and local identity. Its sacred character was continuously reproduced through religious ritual, Islamic education, communal celebration, and daily social practice, enabling the institution to sustain legitimacy even when its formal political role was curtailed during the colonial period. Said et al. (2023) observe a comparable dynamic in their study of contested sanctity in mosques, demonstrating that sacred legitimacy is frequently reproduced through community practice rather than formal institutional sanction alone.

This pattern distinguishes the Palembang case from comparable studies of historic mosques in Java, which predominantly emphasize architectural conservation and state-managed heritage (Wiryomartono, 2023), and from mosques in Aceh, where institutional identity is strongly bound to regional Islamic autonomy and post-conflict memory (Sofiana and Naufal, 2023). The Great Mosque of Palembang instead illustrates how a former royal mosque navigated the collapse of a sultanate, colonial depoliticization, and postcolonial bureaucratic incorporation while preserving its symbolic centrality to local Islamic life. The mosque thus represents a distinctive form of institutional resilience in which sacred authority endured across repeated transformations in political structure.

Negotiation Heritage and Modernity

The transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang illuminates the complex negotiation between the preservation of religious heritage and the pressures of modernization. While heritage studies scholarship frequently foregrounds the protection of historical authenticity (Smith, 2006; Harrison,

2013), the Palembang case demonstrates that the sustainability of religious heritage depends not only on the conservation of physical fabric but equally on the continuity of religious practice and active community engagement.

The mosque has retained its social significance not because its original architectural form has been comprehensively preserved but because it continues to function as a living center of worship, religious education, and communal life. These findings advance heritage scholarship by demonstrating that the value of religious heritage is produced through the dynamic interaction between material conservation and the ongoing social reproduction of sacred meaning, a point similarly observed by Hemel et al. (2022) in their analysis of competing and converging claims of religious heritage.

The Palembang case further challenges the tendency within heritage discourse to frame modernization and preservation as inherently opposing processes. Successive renovations, spatial expansions, and administrative reforms were undertaken to accommodate growing congregational demands, urban development pressures, and evolving religious needs. While such interventions modified aspects of the mosque's historical fabric, they simultaneously enabled the institution to remain socially relevant and functionally effective. Ajar (2025) similarly notes that effective conservation of historic mosques requires balancing the management of tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage, rather than prioritizing physical preservation alone. Rather than signifying a decline in authenticity, these purposeful adaptations illustrate how living religious heritage can endure through selective transformation. Effective heritage stewardship in active religious institutions therefore requires a carefully negotiated balance between conserving historical character and ensuring practical functionality, a dimension underrepresented in existing Southeast Asian heritage literature, which predominantly focuses on architectural conservation (Al-Tamimi and Pankina, 2024; Winarti and Al-Obaidi, 2025) or religious tourism development (Merina and Pratama, 2025).

The Palembang Mosque also reflects a distinctive pattern of heritage transformation in a post-sultanate and postcolonial context. The mosque navigated the collapse of royal authority, colonial administrative reorganization, and the emergence of the modern Indonesian state without relinquishing its central role in local Islamic life. This institutional resilience distinguishes it from heritage sites whose significance is primarily constructed through formal state conservation programs (Miura, 2022). In Palembang, heritage preservation has been sustained through enduring communal attachment, with the mosque functioning as a symbol of religious identity and shared historical memory, as much as through formal regulatory frameworks. Fernandez-Alvarez et al. (2022) and Rech (2023) similarly argue that the long-term vitality of religious heritage depends on reconciling

institutional conservation with the spiritual and communal dimensions of living sacred sites. Ma (2023) further demonstrates that community engagement constitutes a foundational mechanism in the revitalization of religious heritage, particularly in contexts where formal state conservation frameworks are limited. The case thus demonstrates that the long-term preservation of sacred heritage depends not solely on conservation policy but equally on the capacity of religious institutions to adapt to changing political and cultural circumstances while maintaining their symbolic authority.

Institutional Transformation and Islamic Identity

The historical transformation of the Great Mosque of Palembang offers significant contributions to historical institutionalism by illuminating how religious institutions evolve through sustained interactions among political authority, institutional structures, and social change. While historical institutionalism generally holds that institutional change proceeds through gradual adaptation rather than abrupt rupture (Thelen, 1999; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010), the Palembang case reveals that continuity and transformation are not simply compatible but mutually constitutive within a single institution. Across three distinct political regimes, the mosque experienced substantial shifts in governance, political function, and administrative control, yet its position as a central symbol of local Islamic communal life remained remarkably resilient. This finding indicates that institutional continuity is sustained not necessarily through stable organizational structures but through the persistence of symbolic legitimacy and shared religious commitment.

The Palembang Mosque also refines the concept of path dependency as elaborated by Pierson (2004). Institutional patterns established during the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate continued to shape subsequent developments despite the collapse of royal authority and successive transitions in political order. Critically, however, path dependency should not be conflated with institutional rigidity. Prior institutional legacies instead provided a generative framework within which new political actors and administrative systems reinterpreted the mosque's role and incrementally adapted its functions. The mosque thus exemplifies a process of adaptive continuity, in which historical legacies remained formative while new institutional arrangements were layered onto existing configurations, consistent with the layering mechanisms identified by Mahoney and Thelen (2010) in their comparative analysis of institutional change.

The findings further underscore the indispensable role of social agency in institutional transformation. Changes in the mosque's functions were not determined solely by state policy or political regime but were equally driven by religious leaders, mosque administrators, and local communities, who continuously reproduced its religious significance through worship, education, and communal practice. Karimullah (2023) similarly demonstrates that mosques sustain their social

relevance primarily through the active reproduction of religious and educational functions by community actors. Sarkissian and Wainscott (2023) further highlight how religious affairs institutions serve as mechanisms of political control that simultaneously create spaces for community agency within formal governance structures. Even during the colonial period, when formal political influence was systematically constrained, the mosque persisted as a symbolic center of Islamic identity and communal solidarity, consistent with patterns documented by Haroon (2021) in his study of colonial mosque governance in South Asia. Institutional resilience thus derived not only from formal organizational structures but from the sustained participation of social actors who reproduced the mosque's legitimacy across successive historical contexts.

This case also advances broader scholarship on Islam in Southeast Asia (Formichi, 2022). Against a body of literature that treats Islamic identity primarily as a product of state policies, religious movements, or contemporary political dynamics, this study demonstrates that local Islamic identity can be sustained through the long-term institutional continuity of religious sites. The mosque served as a space where historical memory, Islamic tradition, and regional cultural identity were continuously negotiated and reproduced across political transformations, reflecting the role of Islamic institutions in sustaining communal identity in Palembang documented by Suradi (2022) and Cahyani et al. (2025). In contrast to Javanese historic mosques, predominantly analyzed through heritage conservation frameworks (Wiryomartono, 2023; Fikriyati, 2023), or Acehnese mosques, closely associated with regional autonomy and Islamic legal implementation (Sofiana and Naufal, 2023), the Great Mosque of Palembang represents a former royal mosque that adapted to successive political regimes while preserving its symbolic centrality within local society. This trajectory highlights how institutional longevity, rather than political dominance alone, can constitute a foundational mechanism for the construction and reproduction of local Islamic identity, a finding that resonates with Sheline's (2019) analysis of mosque-building as a form of identity construction in Muslim-majority societies.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its integrated application of sacred space theory (Eliade, 1959; Lefebvre, 1991), heritage studies (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2013; Hemel et al., 2022), and historical institutionalism (Thelen, 1999; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Pierson, 2004) to demonstrate how a historic mosque can simultaneously function as a religious institution, a heritage site, and a symbol of collective identity. The findings affirm that institutional transformation does not necessarily diminish religious significance. On the contrary, gradual and contextually responsive adaptation may strengthen a religious institution's capacity to remain socially and symbolically meaningful across changing historical and political circumstances. This longitudinal perspective underscores the importance of examining mosques not merely as historic buildings or heritage assets but as evolving socio-religious institutions embedded within the broader historical processes of state

formation, colonialism, modernization, and heritage construction in Southeast Asian Muslim societies.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the historical development of the Great Mosque of Palembang has been characterized by an enduring interplay between continuity and transformation across successive political regimes. During the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, the mosque functioned as a nexus of religious authority and political legitimacy, deeply embedded within royal governance structures. Under Dutch colonial administration, the institution's political role was systematically curtailed through bureaucratic oversight and deliberate depoliticization policies, yet it persisted as a vital center for preserving Islamic identity and collective memory. Following Indonesian independence, the mosque was incorporated into a modern state religious governance framework and progressively redefined as both a formal religious institution and a protected cultural heritage site. Across these transitions, the mosque continually adapted to shifting political and institutional contexts while sustaining its symbolic centrality within local Muslim society. These findings affirm that sacred space is not a fixed or inherent property of religious sites but is historically constructed and continuously renegotiated through the interplay of religious authority, political power, collective memory, and social transformation.

This study advances scholarship at the intersection of sacred space theory, religious heritage studies, and historical institutionalism by demonstrating how a single historic mosque can simultaneously function as a religious institution, a heritage site, and an enduring symbol of local Islamic identity. The case of the Great Mosque of Palembang extends existing scholarship on Southeast Asian Islamic heritage by establishing that institutional continuity is sustained through gradual adaptation and contextual responsiveness rather than through structural rigidity or political dominance. Unlike studies that focus primarily on architectural preservation or contemporary religious functions, this research foregrounds the analytical importance of examining long-term interactions among political authority, institutional change, collective memory, and religious practice in order to understand the historical trajectory of Islamic institutions. The concept of adaptive continuity, as illustrated by the Palembang case, offers a productive analytical lens for comparative studies of religious institutions that have navigated colonial encounter, postcolonial state formation, and the increasing formalization of heritage governance across the Muslim world.

In terms of practical implications, the findings offer substantive guidance for heritage policy and institutional management by emphasizing the need to balance historical conservation with the ongoing religious and social functions of living heritage institutions. Effective stewardship of sacred sites requires recognition that their significance derives not solely from material fabric but from the

continuous reproduction of religious practice, communal memory, and institutional legitimacy. This study is nonetheless primarily grounded in historical literature, archival sources, and visual documentation from the colonial and postcolonial periods, and therefore does not fully capture the contemporary perceptions and lived religious experiences of community members. Future research would benefit from incorporating oral history methodologies, ethnographic observation, and systematic comparative analyses of historic mosques across Southeast Asia to further elucidate the relationship between institutional transformation, religious heritage governance, and the formation of local Islamic identity in Muslim-majority societies.

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