

## Replica of the Kaaba at the Great Mosque of Palopo City as a Religious Tourism Object and Hajj-Umroh Education Space in South Sulawesi

Ahmadin

Universitas Negeri Makassar

**Corresponding Author:** Ahmadin [ahmadin@unm.ac.id](mailto:ahmadin@unm.ac.id)

---

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Kaaba, Mosque, Religious, Tourism, Palopo, Hajj

*Received :* 1 February

*Revised :* 19 February

*Accepted:* 19 March

©2024 Ahmadin: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



### ABSTRACT

The growth and development of various religious tourism objects in several countries in the world, including Indonesia, is a new spiritual excitement that is interesting to study. Although it is acknowledged that religious tourism is not a new phenomenon and has even existed for a long time, its presence as a form of urban spiritualism requires further elaboration. This research examines the presence of a replica of the Kaaba at Majid Agung Palopo City, South Sulawesi which is seen as a form of spiritual awareness. The reason is because this building does not only function as a religious tourism object, but also functions as an educational space for prospective haj and umroh pilgrims. The results of the study show that the replica of the Kaaba serves as a simulation space for the series of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, so that when it is carried out in the holy land of Mecca it will run smoothly. Apart from being guided by an experienced team, prospective pilgrims are also provided with facilities in the form of Lontar Jumrah, Tawaf and Sa'i areas. The unique design of this building makes it a religious tourism object which is always crowded with visitors, both residents of the city of Palopo and people who come from other areas

## **INTRODUCTION**

Palopo is a city located in South Sulawesi Province, with a distance of 375 km to the north from Makassar City. This city with an area of 247.52 km<sup>2</sup> is inhabited by a population of 184,681 people (BPS, 2021). The municipal government of Palopo has recorded success in the development of its city, including in the area of environmental management, achieving achievements in the form of receiving the Adipura Cup eight times. A total of three Adipura Cups were won by the city of Palopo during the leadership of M. Judas Amir who followed the achievements of the previous mayor who received the trophy five times. The mayor's strong commitment, who served for 2 government periods to develop the city of Palopo, is evident in his gaining various achievements in both the physical and spatial development of the city as well as the development of human resources through education and training.

The success narrative of the Palopo City government is not only limited to that, but also includes the tourism sector. Referring to the Determination of the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan for the City of Palopo (2021-2025), it is targeted that by 2030 there will be 250,000 domestic tourists and 1,800 foreign tourists. The tourism potential of the city of Palopo is predicted to be promising, marked by the development of culinary centers and public spaces. In addition, the Palopo city government is also developing religious tourism as one of the attractions for tourists (Fisu et al., 2022).

In the second term of mayor Judas Amir's leadership, he initiated the construction of a Replica of the Kaaba in 2021. This building, which is in the Grand Mosque of Palopo City, has a shape and ornament resembling the Kaaba in the holy land of Mecca. The presence of this building with religious nuances adds to the attractiveness of the beauty of the Great Mosque of the City of Palopo, thus further motivating residents to visit and perform prayers. In its further development, the Great Mosque as one of the interesting religious tourism icons of this city, is increasingly in demand by residents, both local and from other regions. The function of the mosque has also experienced development, apart from being a place to carry out the five daily prayers, it has also become a religious tourism object, a public space, and a space for religious education.

The three functions of the replica of the Ka'bah as a religious tourism object, public space, and religious education space, are interesting to study sociologically with a historical approach. Interesting questions about the existence of this replica of the Ka'bah, namely what conditions and religious social situations underlie its construction? Furthermore, what functions of public space are available and can be used in the activities of residents in this place and what about its function as a space for religious education, especially for prospective haj and umroh pilgrims? These questions are interesting if they are related to the process of symbol reproduction and the meanings attached to it. In the context of tourism, it is related to its strength as a city icon that attracts the attention of tourists to visit it.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to facilitate understanding of the study of the existence of the Replica of the Ka'bah at the Great Mosque of Palopo City, it is necessary to explain some understanding of the related concepts. The concept in question is the meaning of religious tourism, public space, and religious education space. This conceptual review refers to several relevant research results and studies..

### **The Meaning of Religious Tourism**

In an article about the form of religious tourism, it is explained that religious tourism is a form that is motivated exclusively by religious reasons. It is considered one of the oldest forms of tourism and a worldwide phenomenon of religious history with its various forms. Judging from the aspect of the time of visit, it is known as short-term religious tourism to the nearest pilgrimage center. In addition, there are also long-term religious tours that require several days or weeks to make pilgrimages which are usually called national and international pilgrimages. It can even be differentiated based on defining characteristics, such as the number of tour participants, transportation options, seasonal trips, and social structure (Rinschede, 1992).

In a study of religious tourism that questions its evolution, progress and future, it is explained that the study of tourism motivated by religion uses content analysis and is thematic in nature. The study approach used can be in the form of a specific discipline or interdisciplinary and even extends to various methods, themes, applications, geographic focus, and manifestations of these phenomena. In fact, the understanding of religious tourism has developed beyond pilgrimage which has led to the usefulness of a destination (Kim et al., 2020).

An interesting study is an effort to trace the phenomenon of the intersection of three fields, namely religion, tourism and education. It explains the importance of understanding the function of religious tourism as an educational experience, the changes that occur, and their cognitive, affective, and instrumental impacts. The author of this article imagines that in the post-modern era, all three have been merged into one unit in a single concept. It is described that a tourist goes in search of knowledge and spirituality that they cannot find at home, then giving rise to a growing phenomenon called educational pilgrimage. He gives the example of a young Israeli who goes on a journey, which shows that the three concepts are inseparable. A tourism activity is incomplete if it does not have religious and educational dimensions, and the same experience cannot be given to the country of origin. It is stated in this paper that half a million people have taken such trips since 1947. A great deal of data on the motivations, impressions, and reactions of those who attract them is studied as a comparison to other populations and cases (E. H. Cohen, 2006).

These three views explain that religious tourism is a form of travel or a visit to a place that is motivated by religion. In his study, there are many commonly understood definitions and various approaches that can be used both in mono-disciplines and inter-disciplines. The interesting thing from the third description is that the three concepts of religion, tourism and education must be seen as an inseparable unit in their implementation. The reason is because these tourism activities have many dimensions of interests and needs that can be obtained at

once in one place. From the concept of unity between the three concepts, the study of the existence of replication of the Kaaba as an object of religious tourism and religious education will be elaborated.

### **Mosque as Public Space**

Hanzl's research results reveal that there are three main things that need to be considered in the study of public spaces, namely physical characteristics (including distribution, shape (size), and user behavior which are determinants of social orders and currents (Hanzl, 2013). Modern public space studies no longer focus on town squares or piazzas for basic needs. Good public space is necessary for the social health and psychology of modern society. Thus, according to him, new public spaces are emerging all over the world and old public spaces are adapted to contemporary needs (Mehta, 2014).

In a research result written by Radwan explained that the Muslim community is always connected to the mosque. The existence of a mosque, according to him, is not limited as a place of worship, rituals, or social facilities and political aspects, but is a sign of ownership and identity. The broad function of the mosque is explained more deeply apart from being a place of worship, as well as a space for carrying out extraordinary social activities, such as: a series of funerals, condolences, or weddings. The function of the mosque in contemporary studies is as a building that serves many additional functions fundamentally related to people's lives (Radwan, 2021).

The mosque as a public space (A. Ahmadin, 2023) that will be discussed is also related to aspects of tourism, where the function of the mosque is not limited to being a place of worship for Muslims. The mosque, which has a garden, a large parking area, and other public facilities, is a driving force for its function as a tourist destination.

### **Religious Education**

In relation to religious education, an interesting research result explains that the cultural heritage of the Islamic religion for a thousand years and relying on spiritual reserves, is the motivation for Islamic society to continue their social life. History has proven that a collection of human institutions, constructions, and spiritual (material) resources has shaped Islamic civilization. So there is no doubt that according to him, the mosque has become the main basis of social interaction for Muslims, both social, political and cultural activities. It is even explained that the interaction in the transfer of beliefs, values, norms, and behavior as centrality in education and cultivation, becomes a model in the way of individual and social life (Afrough et al., 2018).

The importance of the role of the mosque as a basis for social interaction for Muslims, according to the results of this research, is very relevant to this study because the cultural heritage of the Islamic religion must be taught to all Muslims. The cultural heritage of the Islamic religion as per this study is the procedure for carrying out the pilgrimage in the Holy Land of Mecca. The religious education function of the Great Mosque of Palopo City, which has a replica of the Kaaba, is used as a media and simulation space for prospective pilgrims and Umrah pilgrims. The aim is as an effort to strengthen their knowledge before carrying out the actual worship.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive in nature using qualitative data to describe the background of the building of the replica of the Kaaba at the Great Mosque of Palopo City and its function as a religious tourism object and religious education space. The data collection process was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation (M. Ahmadin, 2022). Observations were made by directly observing the object of research (L. Cohen et al., 2017), both the physical building including its ornaments, as well as the social activities of the residents taking place in the mosque area. The results of observations of the conditions around the Great Mosque of Palopo City show that this place is very busy in the afternoon where many residents wait for the time to break their fast here. Data collection through interview techniques was carried out freely with several related parties including visitors. The documentation is in the form of data collection in the form of archives and official documents related to the construction of this Kaaba replica.

The next stage is data reduction, namely filtering the raw data and selecting it based on the data and information that best fits the research problem (Wildemuth, 2016). Furthermore, data categorization is made according to needs. The next step is displaying the data by creating rows and columns of qualitative data matrices to then enter the data. The final stage is drawing conclusions related to the overall data that is considered relevant as research findings.

## RESULT

The results showed that the replica of the Kaaba was built as a response to the increasing interest of the people of Palopo City to perform the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. The function of this replica is as a means of religious education in the form of a simulation room for a series of Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. In addition, the attractiveness of this building with unique ornaments makes it a religious tourism object. For a more complete explanation, see the following description.

### **Replica of the Kaaba as a Religious Education**

A The process of building a replica of the Kaaba at the Grand Mosque in the city of Palopo, was motivated by the increasing public interest in performing the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages from year to year. For this reason, the construction of a replica of the Kaaba is intended as a facility for the benefit of the community, namely as a means of simulating Hajj and Umrah. This was explained by the Mayor of Palopo M. Judas Amir during a meeting on plans for the construction of the Hajj Pilgrimage Park and the Construction of the Hajj Pilgrimage Facilities, at the Luwu Palopo Great Mosque, Tuesday 6 October 2020. In addition, the idea of building a replica of the Kaaba is also related to several cases reported by the public about experience of haj and umrah who experienced a number of problems in the holy land of Mecca (JA, *Interview*, June 15, 2023).

Based on this fact, Judas Amir built this replica as an educational space about the series of implementations of the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. Even more than that, the replica of the Kaaba will be used as a simulation site for prospective Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Thus, a number of facilities were held,

such as: the Lontar Jumrah area, Tawaf, Sa'i, and the conversion building which is located at the bottom, namely the first floor. This building, which has a shape and ornament resembling the Kaaba, was erected at the end of 2021 with the aim of being a place for guidance on pilgrimage rituals. Furthermore, this replica of the Kaaba is intended as a place for learning (preconditions) for Muslims about the conditions in Mecca when performing worship later. It is in this place that prospective pilgrims and Umrah pilgrims are trained by a team of experienced guides as a provision of knowledge and experience related to the series of worship implementation.



Figure 1. Replica of the Kaaba at the Luwu Grand Mosque, Palopo City as a Center for Religious Education and Religious Tourism

Source: [Sulsel.inews.di/Nasruddin Rubak](https://sulsel.inews.di/Nasruddin%20Rubak)

M. Judas Amir, on one occasion speaking together, said that the Replica of the Ka'bah was completely designed, including the doors. In addition, lighting is also installed, so that it looks complete. Thus, after following the pilgrimage rituals at the Replica of the Kaaba, God willing, their Umrah will be more perfect and their Hajj will be more perfect when they go to Mecca. It is further hoped that through this Kaaba Replica it can motivate Muslims to fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam, namely the Hajj (JA, *Interview*, June 15, 2023).

#### **Replica of the Kaaba as an Object of Religious Tourism**

The existence of this Kaaba Replica in its development does not only function as a place for guidance on Hajj rituals, but has transformed it into a religious tourism object. The unique shapes and ornaments in turn captivate many people and are curious to see it in person. This is evident from the large number of visitors, both residents of Palopo City itself and from the surrounding area and even coming from various places. They visited this Replica of the Kaaba

on purpose and planned or maybe just stopped by to treat their curiosity (NY, *Interview*, June 15, 2023).

Visiting the Replica of the Kaaba, we will see that there are many visitors who document its existence in this place. Generally, visitors are amazed at the uniqueness and ornamentation of this building which resembles the original Kaaba. That way, the visitors seem to imaginatively imagine their existence as if in the holy land of Mecca.

One of the visitors who claimed to have repeatedly visited the Replica of the Kaaba said that during certain seasons, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, this place is very crowded. They come not only to perform prayer services, but also to make the Grand Mosque of Palopo City a meeting place with friends, family/relatives, or relations. Many of them, after taking pictures and capturing the moments of their visit, then stay for a while and wait for the time to break their fast.

## **DISCUSSION**

In fact, religious tourism objects (Kim et al., 2020) are important public spaces for urban and rural communities with various interests. The Kaaba replica in Palopo City, South Sulawesi Province symbolically represents religious values, namely Islam, where it exists as a miniature holy land. Even more than that, the function of this place is as a training center for the Hajj and Umrah series. Based on the research results, it shows that the season with many visitors at this tourist attraction is during Ramadan, especially in the afternoon before breaking the fast. Sociologically, the spatial practices of visitors in this public space (Dodd, 2019) will vary based on interests. Apart from that, the mosque has a very large courtyard, allowing for the creation of various activities for visitors so that functionally this public space facilitates various interests, such as: facilities for worship, training centers, recreation, meetings, and others.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The construction of the Replica of the Kaaba at the Great Mosque of Luwu, Palopo City, its existence functionally has 2 meanings, namely first as a means of religious education, especially for residents of Palopo and its surroundings who have a celebration to carry out the Umrah pilgrimage and the call to perform Hajj in the current year. Second, the Replica of the Kaaba functions as a religious tourism object that makes many people curious about its uniqueness and then visit it. Finally, this replica of the Kaaba has become one of the most visited tourist icons in Palopo City.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

This research specifically examines the function and role of the Kaaba replica as a religious tourist attraction and public space, so symbolically it still requires deeper study by other researchers, especially through a semiotic approach.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank you very much to the Mayor of Palopo and all parties who provided data and information related to this research. We hope that this paper will make an important contribution to the development of other religious tourism sectors.

## REFERENCES

- Afrough, E., Khanmohammadi, K., & Qanbarinik, S. (2018). The cultural interaction of the mosque and society from the perspective of religious teachings. *Journal of Islam and Social Studies*, 6(22), 30-57.
- Ahmadin, A. (2023). Public space as a tourism object: the existence of Pakui Sayang Park in Makassar City. *Jurnal Geuthèè: Penelitian Multidisiplin*, 6(3), 220-225.
- Ahmadin, M. (2022). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. *Jurnal Kajian Sosial Dan Budaya: Tebar Science*, 6(1), 104-113. <http://ejournal.tebarscience.com/index.php/JKSB/article/view/103>
- Cohen, E. H. (2006). Religious tourism as an educational experience. In *Tourism, religion and spiritual journeys* (pp. 78-93). Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2017). Observation. In *Research methods in education* (pp. 542-562). Routledge.
- Dodd, M. (2019). *Spatial practices: Modes of action and engagement with the city*. Routledge.
- Fisu, A. A., Hafid, Z., Humang, W. P., & Natsir, R. (2022). Application of the PPP Scheme on the tourism-transportation, case study: The concept Of Palopo City Tourism. *PENA TEKNIK: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu-Ilmu Teknik*, 7(1), 35-52.
- Hanzl, M. (2013). The meaning of public spaces. *Green Design, Materials and Manufacturing Processes*. London: Taylor & Francis, 39-44. [https://www.academia.edu/4763287/The\\_Meaning\\_of\\_Public\\_Spaces](https://www.academia.edu/4763287/The_Meaning_of_Public_Spaces)
- Kim, B., Kim, S., & King, B. (2020). Religious tourism studies: evolution, progress, and future prospects. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(2), 185-203.
- Mehta, V. (2014). Evaluating public space. *Journal of Urban Design*, 19(1), 53-88.
- Radwan, A. H. (2021). The Mosque as a public space in the Islamic City-An Analytical study of Architectural & Urban design of contemporary examples. *Journal of Architecture, Arts and Humanistic Science*, 6(30), 18.
- Rinschede, G. (1992). Forms of religious tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(1), 51-67.
- Wildemuth, B. M. (2016). Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science. *Abc-Clio*. <https://publisher.abc-clio.com/9781440839054/>