

SACRED SPACES AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: MOSQUES, MADRASAHS, AND INFORMAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN COLONIAL PLANTATION LANDSCAPES OF PANGALENGAN

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ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini mengkaji masjid dan madrasah sebagai lingkungan pembelajaran berbasis komunitas dalam lanskap perkebunan kolonial di Pangalengan, Bandung, Jawa Barat. Sistem perkebunan kerap diasosiasikan dengan eksploitasi ekonomi, namun penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana komunitas Muslim mengembangkan praktik pendidikan lokal melalui ruang-ruang religius yang terintegrasi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan historis-archeologis dan poskolonial, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana ruang-ruang sakral tersebut berfungsi sebagai pusat pendidikan Islam nonformal dan informal. Selain sebagai tempat ibadah, masjid dan madrasah memfasilitasi transmisi nilai-nilai etika, kedisiplinan, kohesi sosial, serta pengetahuan keagamaan di kalangan pekerja perkebunan dan keluarganya. Proses pembelajaran tidak terbatas pada pengajaran terstruktur, tetapi juga terbentuk melalui praktik komunal, rutinitas ritual, dan interaksi antargenerasi dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa institusi ini membentuk pedagogi berbasis komunitas yang berakar pada budaya lokal, sekaligus mendorong moderasi, ketahanan sosial, dan saling pengertian. Studi ini mengajukan konsep “lanskap pembelajaran sakral,” yang menegaskan peran ruang religius dalam membentuk sistem pendidikan berbasis komunitas serta relevansinya bagi pengembangan pendidikan Islam kontekstual pada masa kini.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam; ruang sakral; masjid dan madrasah; lanskap perkebunan; warisan budaya; pembelajaran informal

ABSTRACT

This study examines mosques and madrasahs as community-based learning environments within the colonial plantation landscape of Pangalengan, Bandung, West Java. Although plantation systems are often associated with economic exploitation, this study highlights how Muslim communities developed localized educational practices through religious spaces embedded in everyday life. Employing a historical-archaeological and postcolonial approach, this study explores how these sacred spaces functioned as centers of nonformal and informal Islamic education. Beyond their primary role as places

of worship, mosques and madrasahs facilitated the transmission of ethical values, discipline, social cohesion, and religious knowledge among plantation workers and their families. Learning processes extended beyond structured instruction, emerging through communal practices, ritual routines, and intergenerational interactions in daily life. The findings reveal that these institutions fostered a community-based pedagogy rooted in local culture while promoting moderation, social resilience, and mutual understanding. This study proposes the concept of a “sacred learning landscape,” emphasizing the role of religious spaces in shaping community-based educational systems and underscoring their relevance for the development of contextual Islamic education in contemporary settings.

Keywords: *Islamic Education; Sacred Space; Mosque and Madrasah; Plantation Landscape; Cultural Heritage; Informal Learning*

INTRODUCTION

In Muslim societies, mosques and madrasahs have long functioned as integral components of community-based learning, serving not only as places of worship but also as centers of social and cultural education. The presence of these institutions in the context of the colonial plantation landscape in Pangalengan, Bandung Regency, West Java (Figure 1) demonstrates how religious spaces contribute to shaping the embedded Islamic educational practices in everyday life. The plantation landscape, structured through colonial production and control systems, also becomes a site of cultural interaction where local forms of religious learning emerge and transform. Within this framework, this study introduces the concept of a “sacred learning landscape,” as outlined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2012), understood as a spatial and socio-cultural configuration in which religious spaces are embedded within plantation environments and function as dynamic spaces for community-based learning.

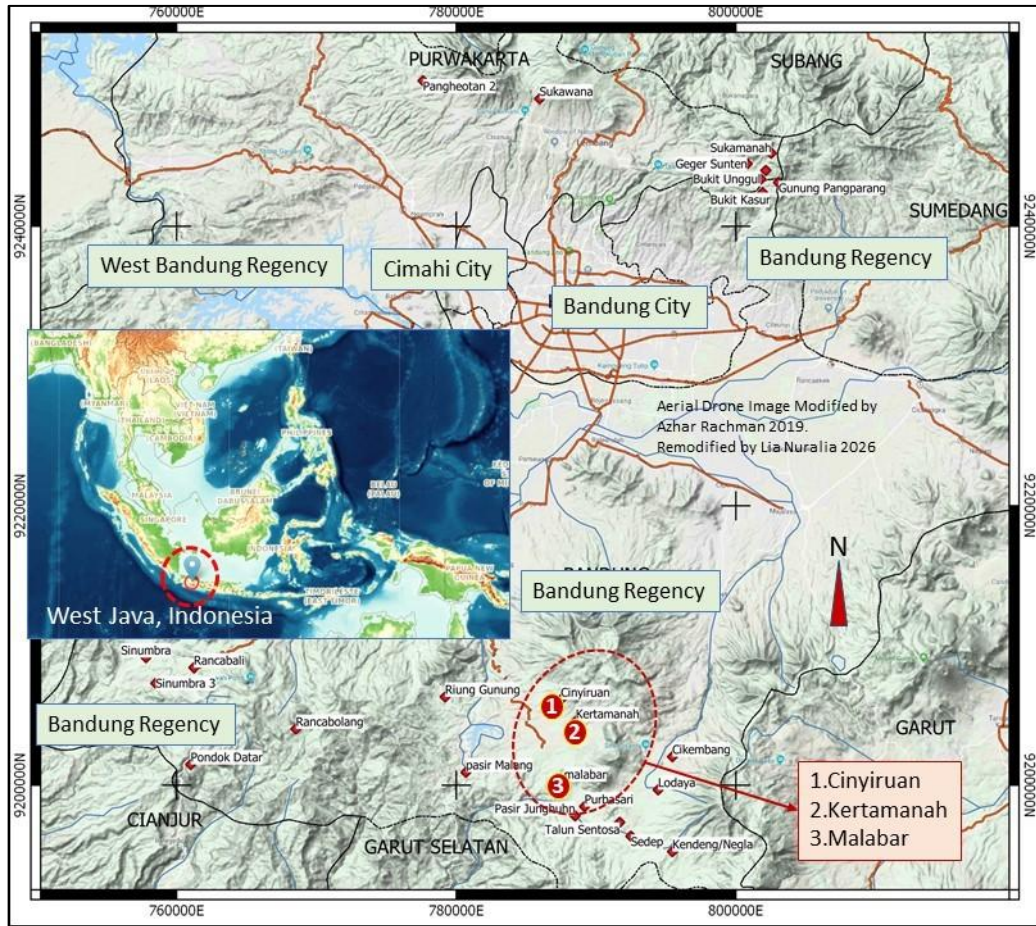


Figure 1. Location of Cinyiruan, Kertamanah, and Malabar Plantations in Pangalengan, Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia (Base map from OpenTopoMap/Street, modified by Lia Nuralia 2026) (Source: Drone Aerial Photograph. Modified by Azhar Rachman 2019; Revised by Lia Nuralia 2026)

This perspective is reinforced by postcolonial theory, particularly the concepts of hybridity and the “Third Space” proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994), which explains that colonial encounters generate an in-between space where identities and cultural practices are continuously negotiated and transformed. This framework can be further deepened through Said’s perspective, especially his concept of Orientalism, which reveals how colonial power operates through knowledge systems that construct the “Orient” as the inferior Other. Within this combined perspective, mosques and madrasahs are understood not only as religious institutions but also as hybrid spaces where Islamic knowledge, local traditions, and colonial spatial orders intersect, while also functioning as epistemic negotiation and resistance sites against colonial representations.



Figure 2. Location of Mosques and Madrasah in Cinyiruan, Kertamanah, and Malabar (Malabar Plantation under PTPN I Regional 2) (Base map from Google Earth, modified by Lia Nuralia 2026); Photographs sourced from the Author 2019 and various materials 2026)

This study examines the presence of both tangible and intangible cultural heritages within the colonial plantation landscape. The objects of analysis include historic buildings, plantation landscapes, and historical sources, such as archival documents, photographs, and old maps, complemented by field observations and interviews with plantation communities and surrounding residents. Geographically, the research focuses on colonial plantation areas in Pangalengan District, Bandung Regency—particularly Malabar (Malabar, Kertamanah–Cinyiruan) under PTPN I Regional 2 (Figure 2)—which have developed since the early twentieth century during the Dutch colonial period and continue to function today. This study uses a qualitative approach that integrates cultural landscape analysis and social practices to understand how sacred spaces operate in everyday life and how they mediate the relationship between colonial spatial structures and local knowledge systems.

Previous studies have examined colonial plantation landscapes as spaces shaped by economic production, power relations, and technological systems. Research by Lia Nuralia et al. (2026; 2025) highlights social hierarchies manifested in spatial segregation, settlement zoning, and architectural differences, while Budiman et al. (2025) demonstrate that water and energy infrastructures functioned as part of colonial technopolitical strategies to control resources. In the context of

Islamic education, studies by Oby Ara Afima (Afima, O.A., Fazli, M., & Roza, 2025) show that Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren and madrasahs persisted as adaptive responses to colonial pressures, while Monika Savira Rachmawati (Rachmawati, 2021) emphasizes the role of mosques as community-based non-formal Islamic educational institutions. However, these studies remain limited to aspects of production, control, or internal institutional dynamics and have not specifically linked religious spaces with learning practices within colonial plantation landscapes. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining mosques and madrasahs in the colonial plantation landscape of Pangalengan as part of a “sacred learning landscape,” conceptualized as religious spaces that facilitate community-based informal Islamic learning while also serving as arenas of hybridity, negotiation, and cultural resilience within a postcolonial perspective.

Based on this background, the study is formulated around several main research questions: (1) What are the characteristics of religious spaces—namely, mosques and madrasahs—in the colonial plantation landscape of Pangalengan? (2) How do these spaces function as mediums for community-based learning? (3) How do non-formal and informal Islamic educational practices develop within the plantation’s social and historical context? Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyze the role of mosques and madrasahs as part of a sacred learning landscape and to understand their contribution to shaping a contextual and sustainable system of Islamic education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the role of sacred spaces within the colonial plantation landscape, focusing on mosques and madrasahs as sacred learning landscape components (Creswell, 2014).

The research was conducted in the colonial plantation area of Pangalengan, specifically in Malabar (Malabar, Cinyiruan, Kertamanah) (PTPN I Regional 2). The data sources include historic buildings, plantation landscapes, archival documents, photographs, old maps, and information from local communities. To understand spatial conditions and community-based learning practices, data were

collected through document analysis, field observations, and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014).

The analysis was conducted qualitatively using an interpretative approach involving data reduction, categorization, and interpretation (Miles et.al, 2014), guided by cultural landscape perspectives (Sauer, 1925) and postcolonial theory (Said, 1978), as well as the concepts of hybridity and the Third Space proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994), to reveal the functions of mosques and madrasahs as spaces of cultural negotiation, knowledge production, and resistance within the sacred learning landscape.

DISCUSSION

Nurul Jannah Mosque and the Madrasah of Diniyah Takmiliah in Cinyiruan

Masjid Jami Nurul Jannah in Cinyiruan (Figure 3) is a relatively recent structure built around the 1960s, following the damaged of workers' housing after the destruction of the old settlement. Architecturally, the mosque features a flat roof and a concrete minaret, with plastered brick walls, a solid foundation, and a raised floor approximately 40 cm above ground level, indicating a more permanent construction than the earlier mosque, which adopted a *tajug* roof typology and utilized wood, bamboo, and dried leaf roofing materials. Nevertheless, key elements of the prayer space, such as the mihrab, mimbar, and veranda, have been retained. Spatially, its location at the center of the "Jejer Sapuluh" workers' housing complex (No. 1, Figure 4). Meanwhile, the former mosque was situated outside the workers' housing complex, along the road at the outer edge of the settlement (No. 1, Figure 5). This spatial shift reflects a transformation from external accessibility toward internal community integration, which can be understood as part of a *sacred learning landscape* (UNESCO, 2012). This transformation also illustrates a hybrid third space in which colonial legacies and local practices are negotiated (Bhabha, 1994), while simultaneously reflecting a shift in power relations within a postcolonial context (Said, 1978).



Figure 3. Nurul Jannah Mosque in the “Jejer Sapuluh” Workers’ Housing, Cinyiruan (Photograph by the Author, 2019; modified by Author 2026)



Figure 4. Location Map of Nurul Jannah Mosque (1) and Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah (5), Cinyiruan (Source: Drone Aerial Photograph). Modified by Azhar Rachman (2019) and revised by Lia Nuralia (2026)



Figure 5. Archival Photograph of the Mosque (1) in the Cinyiruan Plantation Settlement and the Approximate Location of the Madrasah Building (5) (Source: Documentation of Kertamanah Plantation Workers in Cinyiruan & Scanned by Lia Nuralia 2019; Modified by Lia Nuralia 2026)



Figure 6. The Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliah, Cinyiruan_Kertamanah (Photograph by the Author, 2019; modified by Author 2026)

Within the sacred learning landscape framework proposed by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2012), the Masjid of Nurul Jannah functions not only as a place of worship but also as a community-based learning center. Activities such as Qur'anic

recitation, religious instruction, and social interaction among workers constitute a landscape of collective and participatory learning embedded in everyday life. Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Cinyiruan (Figure 6) further reinforces this role, which is located across from the workers' housing complex. The madrasah occupies a former colonial-era *sinder* residence situated along the roadside within what was once the plantation's administrative complex, now transformed into an open ميدان featuring the Cinyiruan Centenary Monument (1855–1995). The building retains the characteristics of a domestic dwelling, indicating a functional adaptation with minimal architectural alteration. The madrasah remained active until around the 2000s before being abandoned, marking a shift in the practices of community learning.

The relationship between the mosque and the madrasah can be understood through the concept of *third space* introduced by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994), as a hybrid space where colonial legacies, local traditions, and modern influences intersect. This hybridity is evident in both architectural form—the combination of traditional veranda elements with modern concrete construction—and spatial function, particularly in the transformation of the *sinder* house into a religious educational facility. Such a space operates as a negotiation site where workers' identities are shaped in an in-between position, neither fully colonial nor entirely local.

From a postcolonial perspective, as articulated by Edward W. Said (Said, 1978), this transformation reflects a shift in power relations and knowledge production. The reappropriation of a colonial official residence into a religious learning space signifies a symbolic inversion of spatial meaning—from a colonial authority marker to a community-based knowledge production site. However, the persistence of the building's physical form and landscape elements, such as the tennis court, indicates that colonial traces are not entirely erased but are instead continuously negotiated within a new socio-cultural context.

Al-Ikhlas Mosque in Kertamanah

The Al-Ikhlas Mosque (figure 7) is located at the center of the Kertamanah workers' residential complex (figure 8), separated from the administrator's house

(7), which stands on a different plot of land, yet is relatively close to the new factory (1) and the former factory (now a warehouse) (2). Its accessibility is excellent, as it can be easily reached from various directions on foot. The qibla orientation serves as the primary principle in the mosque's spatial arrangement, with all elements directed toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Its strategic location facilitates children's participation in Qur'anic learning and enables men and women to engage in religious and community activities. Furthermore, the relationship between the mosque and its surrounding open spaces—such as the المسجد courtyard, the football field on the eastern side of the complex, plantation roads, tea fields, and other social facilities—appears well integrated, harmonious, and mutually supportive.

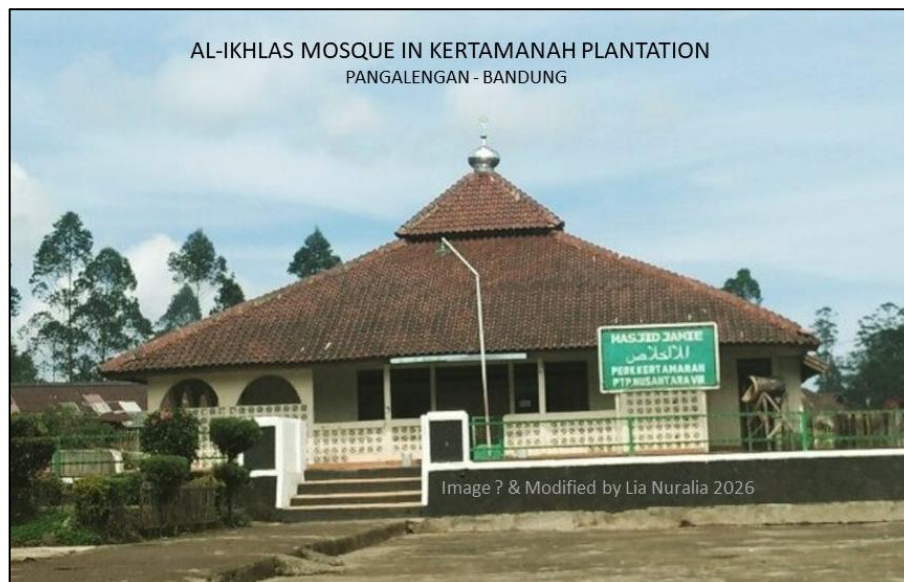


Figure 7. Al-Ikhlâs Mosque in Kertamanah. Image? Modified 2026

The Al-Ikhlâs Mosque functions as a **community center for workers**, as indicated by its central location within the settlement and its easy accessibility from various directions. However, its separation from the administrator's house also reflects a **boundary of power relations**, meaning it serves as a center for workers, but not within the overall spatial hierarchy of the colonial plantation. This mosque adopts the *tajug* roof typology, a pyramidal form symbolizing sacredness in Javanese architectural tradition. Its main architectural elements include the *mihrab*, *mimbar*, and *serambi*, while the minaret is not a dominant feature. The building primarily uses brick and concrete, with possible wooden elements, reflecting

modern construction techniques. In terms of scale, it is classified as a **Jami mosque**, serving as a center for the workers' community's religious and social activities.

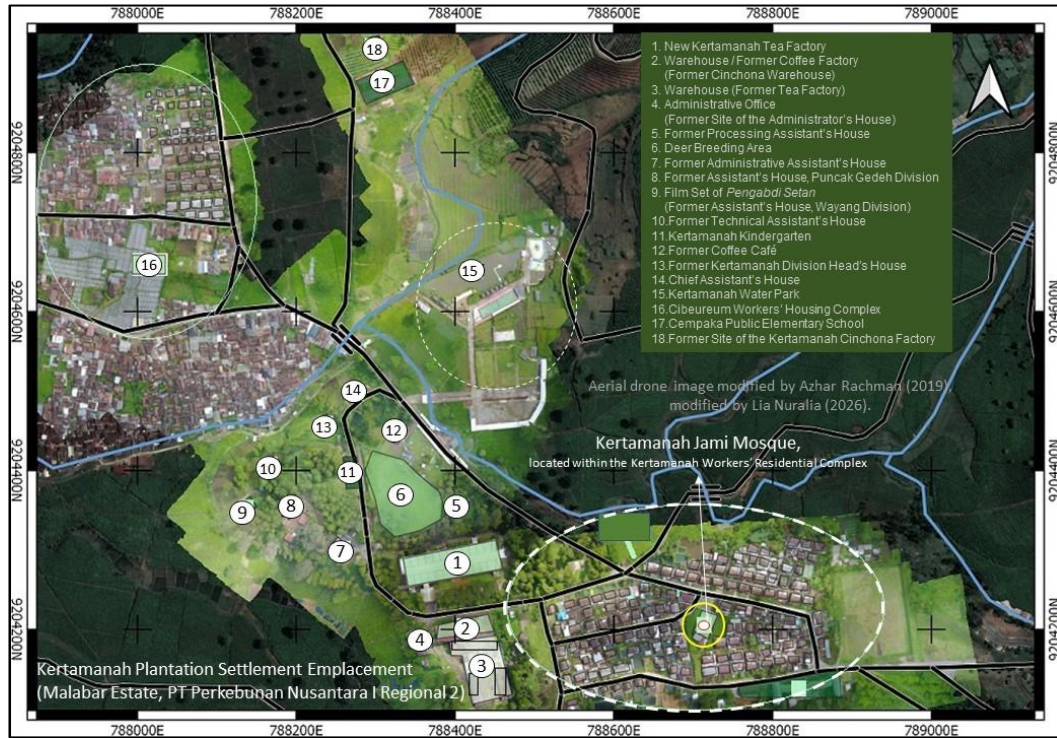


Figure 8: Location map of the Al-Ikhlash Mosque in the plantation workers' housing area, Kertamanah, Malabar Estate (PTPN I Regional 2) (Source: Drone Aerial Photograph. Modified by Azhar Rachman, 2019; revised by Lia Nurallia, 2026)

The Al-Ikhlash Mosque represents **cultural hybridity** through the fusion of local Sundanese architecture with colonial influences. This is evident in the use of the *tajug* roof and spatial elements, such as the *serambi* (veranda), which reflect local traditions (Handinoto, 1996; Sulmayo, 2000; Kusmarini, Y., Sachari, A., Isdianto, 2007), while the use of brick and concrete materials, along with construction techniques, indicates the adoption of modern technologies during the colonial periode (Nas, 1986; (Kusno, 2010); Colombijn, F. and Coté, 2014). This hybridity is not merely physical but also reflects cultural adaptation and negotiation processes within the colonial context, in line with the concept of the *third space* proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994) and the relationship between knowledge and power articulated by Edward Said (Said, 1978).

The Kertamanah Jami Mosque symbolizes the presence of Islam within the colonial system, where most plantation workers were Sundanese Muslims (Geertz, 1960; Ricklefs, 2007). Sundanese communal culture shaped everyday life while also serving as a survival strategy and a form of cultural resistance to European colonial dominance (Koentjaraningrat., 1985; Hefner, 2000). In this context, the mosque can be understood as a *third space* as proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994)—a site of identity negotiation—as well as a *counter-space* against colonial hegemony, in line with Edward Said’s (Said, 1978) critique of power relations.

The mosque functions not only as a space for daily ritual worship—such as the five daily prayers (performed individually or in congregation) and Friday prayers—but also as a space for education through Qur’anic study groups and informal madrasah activities. In addition, it serves as a social space for community deliberation, particularly for plantation workers and surrounding residents. Women’s study groups, children’s Qur’an learning, and social discussions among men contribute to the formation of a collective identity. The plantation community itself is characterized by relatively uniform occupations, regulated working hours under plantation management, and social interactions shaped both within the community and with neighboring populations.

Al-Khoiriyah Mosque in Malabar

Al Khoiriyah Mosque in Malabar (figure 9) is a mosque building located within the workers’ residential area of the Malabar Plantation, particularly in the emplacement of Afdeling North Malabar (2019). The building is estimated to have existed since the colonial period (1890s) and has undergone continuous modifications and renovations into the postcolonial era, in line with the plantation worker community’s ongoing production activities and social life.

Spatially, the mosque is embedded within the workers’ settlement structure (figure 10) and is situated near several significant elements, such as an old house known as the “Rumah Hitam” of Malabar (2.), as well as other social facilities, including a communal open space in the form of the PB PASI Pangalengan Athletic Stadium (4) and the newly built Jami Annuriyah Mosque (3). In addition, within a

relatively close distance from the settlement complex, the mosque is connected to the SMP Negeri 2 Pangalengan area, which occupies the former site of the old Malabar Tea Factory complex and the wet quinine bark processing warehouse (5). This spatial connectivity extends to the Wisma Malabar complex owned by PTPN I Reg. 2 and to the Bosscha House, the former residence of the Malabar Plantation Administrator (6).

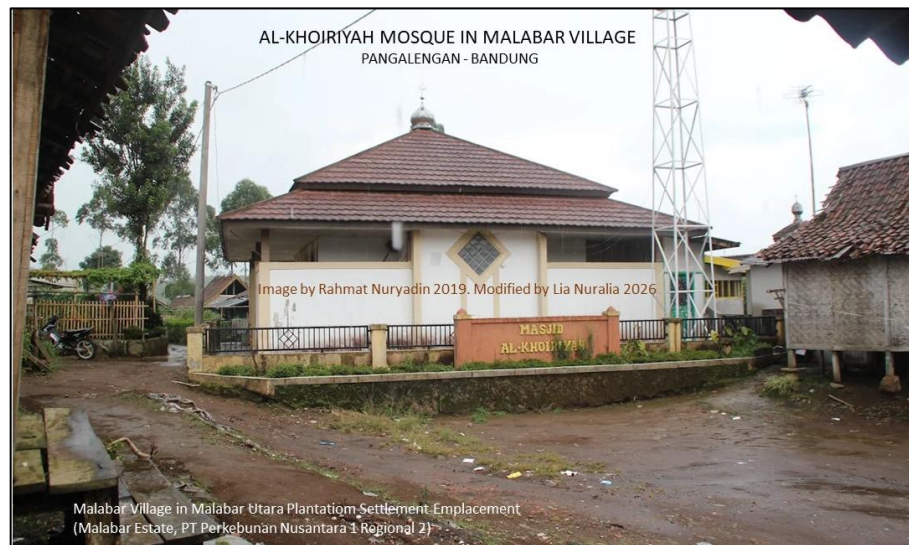


Figure 9. Al-Khoiriyah Mosque in Malabar (Documentation of Rahmat Nuryadin 2019). Modified by Lia Nuralia (2026)



Figure 10. Location Map of Al-Khoiriyah Mosque in the Plantation Workers' Housing Area, South Malabar, Malabar Estate (PTPN I Regional 2) (Source: Base Map of Google Earth & Modified by Lia Nuralia 2026)

This spatial configuration indicates that the mosque functions not only as a center of religious activities but also as a crucial node within the plantation environment's social network and communal space. Its presence within the workers' settlement demonstrates an integration of sacred space with the everyday life of laborers, differing from the typical colonial spatial pattern that tends to segregate functions based on social hierarchy. From a postcolonial perspective, this condition can be interpreted as a form of spatial negotiation between colonial power structures and the everyday practices of the local community, as argued by Edward W. Said (Said, 1978) regarding power relations that shape the representation and production of space in colonial contexts.

Within the framework of the *sacred learning landscape* (UNESCO, 2012), the Al Khoiriyah Mosque in Malabar can be understood as part of a learning environment that is inseparable from its social and material context. The interconnection between the mosque, settlement, open spaces, and educational facilities suggest that learning processes occur contextually and are integrated into the landscape of everyday life. Thus, learning does not occur solely within the building but also through the relationships between interconnected spaces.

Furthermore, the concept of the "third space" proposed by Homi K. Bhabha (Bhabha, 1994) helps to explain the position of the mosque as an intermediary space between local traditions and colonial/modern influences. In this context, the mosque becomes a hybrid arena in which religious practices, social interactions, and learning processes unfold dynamically. Activities such as Qur'anic recitation, Islamic instruction, and religious discussions not only reproduce religious values but also shape the worker community's collective identity through ongoing cultural negotiation processes.

Therefore, the mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also as a medium for the reproduction and transformation of religious and social values. The relationship between the mosque, the settlement, and its surrounding supporting facilities forms a sacred learning landscape that enables Islamic educational practices to continue beyond formal institutions while simultaneously reflecting the dynamics of hybridity and power relations in both colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Sacred Learning Landscapes: Spatial Configuration and Socio-Religious Practices in Plantation Mosques

The mosques are situated within a spatial system controlled by colonial power, as it is located within the plantation estate, specifically in the workers' residential cluster (Cribb, 1993). The construction of the temple was financed by the plantation company as a religious facility for the workers, yet it originated from the workers' community's initiative. Plantation owners and managers—who were predominantly Dutch—allowed workers a degree of freedom to practice their culture and religion as part of broader strategies of labor control and social management (Breman, 1989; Stoler, 1995). This policy was essentially intended to maintain workers' comfort, encouraging them to remain within the plantation environment and continue working for the company's interests (Elson, 1994; Knight, 2013).

Plantation workers follow the company's regulated working hours, with work activities interspersed with times for religious practice. The colonial labor system operated on shift-based divisions according to job type (Breman, 1989; Knight, 2013). For example, in tea plantations, work was organized into morning, afternoon, and evening shifts: morning for tea picking in the fields, afternoon for processing in the factory, and evening for sorting and packing in designated facilities, followed by distribution carried out by another group of workers until night (Griffiths, 2010; Clarence-Smith, 2003).

After completing their work, the workers returned home and engaged in domestic activities such as tending vegetable and fruit gardens, cultivating rice or dry fields, raising fish in freshwater ponds, and keeping livestock around their homes or on unused land. These activities reflect patterns of subsistence and household economy commonly found in plantation societies (Scott, 1985). Beyond religious practices, workers consistently performed religious practices and participated in social-religious activities as part of their daily routine. Such practices not only fulfilled religious obligations but also functioned as forms of community-based learning and social cohesion (Hefner, 2000; Geertz, 1960).

In particular, mosque-based worship and participation in Qur'anic study groups constituted important regular activities, strengthening religious practice and enhancing knowledge that contributed to improving the quality of everyday life (Azra, 2002; Bowen, 1993). The condition within the colonial plantation workers' housing reflects a duality of space, namely, between **production (colonial economy)** and **spiritual (local community) spaces**. The space of production is evident in the structured labor system, shift divisions, and economic activities controlled by the plantation company, illustrating colonial dominance in regulating workers' time, labor, and living space as part of a broader system of production and exploitation.

In contrast, the workers' community manages the spiritual space through religious practices, Qur'anic study groups, and socio-religious activities centered around the mosque. This space functions as a site for the formation of identity, solidarity, and meaning beyond the logic of colonial production.

From a postcolonial perspective, this duality can be understood as a form of negotiation between domination and agency. Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space, the spiritual space is not entirely separate from the colonial structure but constitutes a hybrid space where workers construct cultural and religious identities under the pressures of the production system. In the framework of Edward Said, the organization of production space reflects colonial power relations, whereas spiritual practices can be interpreted as forms of cultural resistance that negotiate such dominance.

Mosques and madrasahs were constructed in colonial plantations alongside plantation production activities and the establishment of workers' housing. Initially, these buildings were constructed generally constructed using natural materials, making them non-permanent structures. Over time, they undergo various physical transformations, including changes in form, materials, and spatial expansion. The mosques and madrasahs that exist today have largely experienced significant modifications, although many still retain their original functions.

Traces of older buildings that are no longer in use can still be found, although their conditions have changed, particularly in terms of materials. One example is the mosque in the "Jejer Sapuluh" housing complex in Cinyuruan. The

current mosque is a post-independence structure that has been relocated from its original site, as indicated in the old map of the Cinyiruan plantation settlement (see Figure 5).

Based on the interview data, the present “Jejer Sapuluh” housing complex consists of houses rebuilt around the 1960s, and the mosque was likely constructed during the same period, positioned at the center of the workers’ residential complex (interview with Mr. Ahmad, Workers of the Kertamanah Plantation in Cinyiruan, 2019).

Learning in plantation mosques and madrasas takes place through Qur’anic recitation, religious instruction, and theological discussions, involving teacher–student relations as well as interactions among workers, in both formal (madrasas) and informal (halaqah and evening study circles) settings (Jajang, plantation worker of Kertamanah in Cinyiruan–Pangalengan, 2019). These study circles are generally simple and community-based, held in mosques, small prayer houses, or workers’ homes in the late afternoon or evening, using oral methods such as memorization, collective recitation, and sermons (Malabar–Banjarsari, 2019). Such activities are collective and participatory in nature, involving religious teachers (ustadz), Islamic scholars (kyai), workers, and their families (wives and children), reflecting a relatively inclusive form of community-based education rooted in everyday experience (Lave, J., & Wenger, 1991; Geertz, 1960; Bowen, 1993; Azra, 2002).

The learning materials in mosques and madrasas primarily cover religious knowledge, including Qur’anic literacy (reading and writing, translation, and interpretation), fiqh (practical Islamic jurisprudence applied in daily life), and akhlak (morality, etiquette, and ethics based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet) (interview with Ahmad, workers Kertamanah Plantation in Cinyiruan, 2019). In addition, they include social and life knowledge, such as solidarity, discipline, and work ethics, as well as practical knowledge relevant to plantation life (Geertz, 1960; Azra, 2002; Bowen, 1993). This practice reflects a dynamic interplay between control and autonomy, where the mosque functions as an alternative space beyond direct colonial supervision while also accommodating the rhythms of plantation labor and enabling forms of cultural resistance (Scott, 1985; Said, 1978; Wolf, 1982). Spatially, the proximity of mosques to workers’

settlements—even their integration within residential compounds—and their high accessibility make them collective learning spaces with strong social and religious legitimacy, thus playing a crucial role in shaping social ethos and community identity (Lefebvre, 1991; Nuralia, L et.L. 2025).

The lived experience of learning in mosques shows how education is embedded in plantation workers' everyday lives. Learning typically occurs after working hours, aligned with rest periods after shift-based labor, especially in the late afternoon and evening when workers gather (Ahmad, chief foreman of Kertamanah Plantation in Cinyiruan, 2019). In this context, the mosque becomes a relatively calm and reflective space among the rigid colonial plantation structure and the physical demands of labor. The learning process is understood not only as a knowledge transfer but also as a means of building collective identity, strengthening solidarity, and fostering a sense of togetherness among plantation workers. Thus, this experience highlights the strong social and emotional dimensions of learning in both past and present plantation life.

From the perspectives of cultural landscape studies and postcolonial theory, the community-based learning approach understands learning practices in mosques and madrasas as social practices. These practices take place through interactions among workers that are spatially embedded and shaped by power relations with plantation authorities, both direct (foremen, head foremen, supervisors) and indirect (section heads, administrators, and managers). In this regard, Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the *third space* positions the mosque as a space of identity negotiation and hybridity, while Edward W. Said emphasizes that knowledge production is inseparable from power's colonial structures. Consequently, community-based learning in religious spaces functions as a means of producing and reproducing knowledge that strengthens the collective identity of workers while also representing forms of cultural adaptation, resistance, and hybridity that sustain local (Sundanese) culture within the plantation landscape (Scott, 1990; Azra, 2002).

The mosque becomes a space for the production and reproduction of knowledge, values, and collective identity through several interconnected mechanisms. First, the mosque hosts Qur'anic recitation, religious instruction, sermons, and theological discussions as a site of knowledge production. In these

non-formal and informal learning processes, knowledge is not only transmitted in a one-way manner but is also negotiated through interactions between *ustadz*, *kyai*, and congregants. Second, as a space of value reproduction, routine activities such as congregational prayer, evening study circles, and ritual feasts instill values of solidarity, discipline, work ethics, and communal togetherness, which are continuously repeated and reinforced in plantation workers' daily lives. Third, the mosque serves as a social meeting point that brings together workers and their families, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening religious and cultural identity amid colonial structural pressures. This process is dynamic, shaped by lived experience, religious practice, and social relations, making the mosque not only a place of worship but also a central space of social and cultural life that plays a crucial role in sustaining plantation communities.

Based on the concept of sacred learning landscapes, mosques and madrasas function not merely as sites of learning activities but also as part of a spatial system that integrates religious practice, social life, and everyday experience within the plantation environment. In this landscape, learning processes—through religious instruction, social interaction, and collective rituals—take place contextually, following the rhythms of work and workers' lives and are closely connected to residential areas and production activities. The production of knowledge, the reproduction of values, and the formation of collective identity are not separate processes but are embedded within a sacred space. This sacredness provides legitimacy and depth to learning practices, making them a unified spiritual, social, and cultural experience. Within the colonial context, this sacred learning landscape also functions as a negotiation site—indeed a counter-space—among worker communities that build agency, maintain local (Sundanese) values, and articulate forms of adaptation, resistance, and hybridity in response to dominant colonial power structures. Thus, the sacredly learning landscape demonstrates that plantations' educational practices educational practices in plantations are contextual, adaptive, and grounded in everyday social networks.

Non-formal and informal education practices developed adaptively as part of plantation workers' daily lives. Learning occurred in mosques and madrasas through Qur'anic recitation sessions, Islamic classes, and informal activities such

as *halaqah* and family-based learning. *Halaqah* is an informal Islamic learning practice conducted in small, circular groups led by an *ustad* and *kyai*, involving interactive and continuous study, discussion, and transmission of religious knowledge. Meanwhile, family-based learning among plantation workers refers to informal education within the household, where family members—especially parents or elder figures—instill religious teachings, ethics, and social norms through daily habits, advice, role modeling, and shared religious practices. This process is not structured like formal schooling but is embedded in everyday routines that shape attitudes, behavior, and solidarity within plantation worker communities (Bowen, 1993; Lave, J., & Wenger, 1991), generally occurring in the late afternoon or evening after work (Geertz, 1960; Azra, 2002).

These learning methods are simple and contextual, rely on memorization, oral instruction, and direct practice, and are not bound by a formal curriculum (Bowen, 1993). The social networks of plantation communities sustain them, with key roles played by *kyai*, *ustadz*, senior workers, and women (mothers) in family-based education. Together, these practices form an inclusive and dynamic system of CBL. Thus, education in plantation settings reflects adaptation to colonial structures and demonstrates the strength of social networks in producing knowledge, values, and collective solidarity (Scott, 1985; Wolf, 1982).

Plantation workers' lives were embedded in a hierarchical and tightly controlled structure—from administrators, *sinders*, supervisors, and foremen to laborers (coolies or workers)—which regulated working hours, settlement patterns, and social mobility. In West Javanese plantations, which were almost entirely Sundanese, these conditions were relatively eased in practice, as cultural homogeneity facilitated everyday interaction. However, ethnic diversity often fragmented communities in other plantation contexts (Wolf, 1982; Scott, 1985). Islamic education in mosques and madrasas functioned as a social cohesion space that transcended hierarchical boundaries through more egalitarian religious learning and interaction (Geertz, 1960; Bowen, 1993). Historically, these practices show both continuity and transformation: during the colonial period, education developed independently and flexibly due to limited access to formal schooling, whereas in the postcolonial era, it became increasingly institutionalized and integrated into the

national education system, although community-based learning practices have persisted (Azra, 2002). Thus, mosques and madrasas function not only as centers of knowledge transmission but also as mediums for the formation of solidarity and collective identity within broader social change processes.

Education practices in mosques and madrasas occupy an in-between position of control and autonomy, developing relatively independently at the level of plantation workers and enabling them to construct knowledge and identity grounded in religious values outside colonial institutions (Scott, 1985; Lefebvre, 1991). Within Edward W. Said's framework, this reflects the relationship between knowledge and power, while Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the *third space* views the mosque as a hybrid space for negotiating identity. In this sense, the mosque is understood as a liminal space where identity, values, and meaning are continuously negotiated between colonial structures and local culture. The colonial plantation context, it is not only a place of worship but also an arena of interaction between indigenous workers, Islamic values, local Sundanese traditions, and colonial labor systems through practices such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic study sessions, and madrasa education. This process produces both social solidarity and a hybrid adaptive collective identity, positioning the mosque as a space of knowledge production and identity negotiation within the colonial landscape (Bhabha, 1994).

Based on this understanding, education in this context lies along a spectrum between adaptation to the rhythms of plantation labor and cultural resistance through the strengthening of solidarity and local values. The proximity of mosques and madrasas to workers' settlements, administrative offices, and production facilities indicates that learning practices are embedded within the plantation industrial landscape. This spatial condition creates an alternative space that connects working life, social relations, and religious practice into a single dynamic cultural landscape.

Learning in mosques and madrasas transmits religious values (Qur'an, creed, and worship), social values (solidarity, discipline, and work ethics), and cultural values (local traditions and distinctive religious practices), which together shape the collective identity of workers within a multi-ethnic environment (Geertz, 1960; Azra, 2002; Scott, 1985). Simultaneously, learning experiences—typically

occurring after working hours—position the mosque as a “pause space”: a calm, safe, and reflective environment amid labor pressures, where workers construct meaning, strengthen social relations, and restore their spiritual dimension (Tuan, 1977; Lefebvre, 1991). Thus, learning functions not only as knowledge transmission but also as a social and existential experience that reinforces the resilience and identity of the community.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that mosques within plantation landscapes function not only as spaces of worship but also as significant informal learning environments for worker communities. Three main patterns were identified through a comparative analysis: spatial reorganization in Cinyiruan, hierarchical structure in Kertamanah, and spatial networks in Malabar. These patterns reveal that learning practices are closely intertwined with spatial configurations and the social relations that shape them.

From a postcolonial perspective, the mosque emerges as a space that reflects and transforms the dynamics of power and culture within plantation landscapes. It operates not merely as a religious facility but as a socio-cultural arena where knowledge is produced, negotiated, and transmitted through both formal and informal interactions among community members.

The novelty of this research lies in its approach that connects the study of sacred spaces with informal learning practices within plantation landscapes, a context that has previously been examined predominantly from economic or architectural perspectives. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of understanding sacred spaces as integral components of dynamic learning landscapes, particularly in societies shaped by colonial and postcolonial histories.

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