

TRANSNATIONAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: VERNACULAR ISLAMIC COSMOPOLITANISM AS A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how transnational Islamic movements contribute to the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia through religious mobility, intellectual exchange, and socio-cultural adaptation. Employing a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, the study analyzes three influential Islamic currents in the region: Traditional Islam represented by pesantren and Sufi networks, Jamaah Tabligh as a transnational missionary movement, and Islamic Reformist movements emphasizing religious purification and educational modernization. Data were gathered from academic literature, institutional documents, historical sources, and socio-religious studies concerning Indonesia, Malaysia, and Southern Thailand. The findings indicate that Islamic cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia emerges not through the erosion of local identities but through the continuous negotiation between global Islamic influences and local cultural traditions. Traditional Islam promotes cosmopolitanism through cultural accommodation and inclusive religious authority, Jamaah Tabligh through transnational missionary brotherhood, and Islamic Reformist movements through educational advancement and global intellectual engagement. This study proposes the concept of Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism, a distinctive Southeast Asian model that integrates global Islamic solidarity with local cultural ethics, moderate religious authority, and flexible communal identities, highlighting the region's unique contribution to contemporary global Muslim civilization.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana gerakan Islam transnasional berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan komunitas Muslim kosmopolitan di Asia Tenggara melalui mobilitas keagamaan, pertukaran intelektual, dan adaptasi sosial-budaya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif-analitis untuk menganalisis tiga arus utama Islam yang berpengaruh di kawasan tersebut, yaitu Islam Tradisional yang direpresentasikan oleh jaringan pesantren dan tradisi sufistik, Jamaah Tabligh sebagai gerakan dakwah transnasional, serta gerakan Islam Reformis yang menekankan purifikasi ajaran dan modernisasi pendidikan. Data penelitian diperoleh melalui kajian literatur akademik, dokumen kelembagaan, sumber-sumber historis, dan berbagai studi sosial-keagamaan yang berkaitan dengan perkembangan Islam di Indonesia, Malaysia, dan Thailand Selatan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kosmopolitanisme Islam di Asia Tenggara tidak terbentuk melalui pengikisan identitas lokal, melainkan melalui proses negosiasi yang berkelanjutan antara pengaruh Islam global dan tradisi budaya lokal. Islam Tradisional membangun kosmopolitanisme melalui akomodasi budaya dan otoritas keagamaan yang inklusif, Jamaah Tabligh melalui persaudaraan dakwah lintas negara, serta gerakan Islam Reformis melalui kemajuan pendidikan dan keterlibatan intelektual global. Penelitian ini menawarkan konsep Kosmopolitanisme Islam Vernakular sebagai model khas Asia Tenggara yang memadukan solidaritas Islam global dengan etika budaya lokal, otoritas keagamaan moderat, dan identitas komunal yang fleksibel, sekaligus menegaskan kontribusi unik kawasan ini terhadap perkembangan peradaban Muslim global kontemporer.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Transnational Islamic movements have become one of the most significant phenomena shaping contemporary Muslim societies in the era of globalization (Hidayah et al., 2024). The increasing mobility of religious actors, the expansion of Islamic educational networks, the circulation of religious knowledge through digital media, and the intensification of cross-border interactions have transformed the ways in which Muslims construct religious identities and social belonging beyond the framework of the nation-state. Scholars argue that transnational Islam should not merely be understood as the movement of religious ideas across borders, but also as the formation of social, intellectual, and cultural networks that connect Muslim communities within a broader global Islamic sphere (Roy, 2004). These developments have generated new forms of religious engagement that transcend territorial boundaries while simultaneously reshaping local expressions of Islam in different socio-cultural contexts (Vertovec, 2009). Consequently, transnational Islamic movements have emerged as important actors in negotiating the relationship between local traditions and global Islamic discourses in the contemporary Muslim world (Mandaville et al., 2009).

Southeast Asia occupies a unique position within this global Islamic landscape due to its long history of religious mobility, commercial exchange, and intellectual interaction with the wider Muslim world. Historical studies demonstrate that Muslim scholars from the Malay-Indonesian archipelago established extensive connections with the Middle East through pilgrimage, trade, and educational activities, creating transregional networks that facilitated the transmission of Islamic knowledge and authority (Putra et al., 2025). These networks contributed not only to the spread of Islamic teachings but also to the formation of distinctive Islamic traditions characterized by cultural accommodation and social inclusivity (Hefner, 2000). Unlike many regions where Islamic revivalism has often been associated with exclusivist tendencies, Islam in Southeast Asia developed through continuous interaction with local cultures, producing diverse forms of religious expression that remain deeply rooted in indigenous social structures (Kersten, 2015). As a result, Southeast Asia has increasingly been recognized as a significant center of Islamic intellectual and cultural production within the contemporary Muslim world (Aljunied, 2017).

The emergence of cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia cannot be separated from the historical and contemporary influence of transnational Islamic movements. The concept of Muslim cosmopolitanism refers to a form of religious consciousness that combines commitment to Islamic values with openness toward cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and global engagement (Aljunied, 2017). Cosmopolitan Muslim communities are characterized by their ability to maintain strong religious identities while simultaneously participating in broader social, intellectual, and cultural exchanges beyond ethnic, national, and sectarian boundaries (Abdi, 2023). In Southeast Asia, such cosmopolitan orientations have been shaped by various Islamic actors, including traditional pesantren networks, Sufi orders, reformist organizations, and missionary movements that facilitate interactions between local Muslim communities and global Islamic currents (Hefner, 2000). These interactions have contributed to the emergence of Islamic worldviews that emphasize moderation, pluralism, and social coexistence without abandoning religious commitments (Aljunied, 2017).

Several transnational Islamic movements have played particularly influential roles in shaping Muslim communities across Southeast Asia. Traditional Islam, represented by

pesantren-based institutions and Sufi networks, has historically functioned as a bridge connecting local religious traditions with broader Islamic intellectual currents (Azra, 2004). Jamaah Tabligh has established extensive missionary networks that promote religious mobility and transnational Muslim brotherhood through cross-border preaching activities (Noor, 2012). Meanwhile, Islamic Reformist movements have fostered educational modernization, intellectual renewal, and global connectivity through their engagement with contemporary Islamic scholarship and international organizational networks (Kersten, 2012). Despite their doctrinal and organizational differences, these movements share a common capacity to facilitate interactions between local Muslim communities and global Islamic discourses, thereby contributing to the formation of cosmopolitan social and religious spaces throughout the region (Jong, 2026).

Recent scholarship has increasingly examined the role of transnational Islamic movements in shaping religious identities, educational institutions, and socio-political developments across Southeast Asia. Studies conducted by Aljunied (2017) highlight the significance of Muslim cosmopolitanism in understanding Southeast Asian Islamic experiences within global contexts. Research by Kersten (2015) emphasizes the intellectual dynamism of contemporary Islamic thought in the region and its engagement with global religious debates. Similarly, Husni et al (2026) demonstrates how Indonesian Muslim organizations negotiate global Islamic influences while maintaining local religious traditions (Arfan et al, 2025). Other studies have explored the transnational dimensions of Jamaah Tabligh, Islamic educational networks, and reformist organizations in facilitating cross-border religious interactions (Noor, 2012). However, most of these studies focus either on transnational Islamic movements or Muslim cosmopolitanism as separate analytical categories rather than examining their interconnected relationship.

This situation reveals a significant gap between empirical realities and existing theoretical explanations. Empirically, Southeast Asian Muslims increasingly participate in transnational religious networks through education, pilgrimage, migration, digital communication, and organizational affiliations. These interactions have produced diverse forms of religious engagement that combine local cultural identities with global Islamic consciousness. Nevertheless, existing scholarship continues to be dominated by perspectives that associate transnational Islam primarily with political Islam, revivalism, radicalization, or identity contestation (Mandaville et al., 2009). Consequently, insufficient attention has been given to the constructive role of transnational Islamic movements in fostering cosmopolitan values, intercultural understanding, and inclusive Muslim identities. The limited integration between studies of transnational Islam and Muslim cosmopolitanism has restricted scholarly understanding of how global Islamic networks contribute to the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining how transnational Islamic movements contribute to the making of cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia through the interaction of religious mobility, intellectual exchange, and socio-cultural adaptation (Putra et al, 2019). Unlike previous studies that focus on individual movements or specific national contexts, this research comparatively analyzes Traditional Islam, Jamaah Tabligh, and Islamic Reformist movements as interconnected actors within broader transnational Islamic networks. The study argues that cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia emerge not through the erosion of local identities but through continuous negotiation between global Islamic imaginaries and localized cultural traditions. Through

this perspective, the research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between transnational Islam and Muslim cosmopolitanism in the contemporary Southeast Asian context.

The novelty of this study lies in the introduction of the concept of *Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism* as a theoretical framework for understanding the distinctive character of Southeast Asian Muslim communities. This concept refers to a form of cosmopolitanism that integrates global Islamic solidarity with local cultural ethics, moderate religious authority, and flexible communal belonging. By highlighting the role of transnational Islamic movements in producing this unique form of cosmopolitanism, the study challenges Middle Eastern-centric assumptions that often dominate discussions of transnational Islam. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to broader debates on Islam, globalization, and cosmopolitanism while demonstrating Southeast Asia's distinctive contribution to contemporary global Muslim civilization (Aljunied, 2017; Kersten, 2015; Azra, 2004).

B. METHODH

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytic approach to examine the role of transnational Islamic movements in shaping cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia (Snyder, 2019). A qualitative approach was selected because it enables a comprehensive understanding of the social, intellectual, and cultural dynamics that emerge from interactions between global Islamic networks and local Muslim communities. The research focused on three influential Islamic currents that have significantly contributed to the development of Islam in Southeast Asia, namely Traditional Islam represented by pesantren-based and Sufi-oriented networks, Jamaah Tabligh as a transnational missionary movement, and Islamic Reformist movements emphasizing educational modernization and religious renewal. These Islamic currents were selected because they represent different modes of engagement with transnational Islamic discourses while maintaining strong connections with local socio-cultural contexts. The study aimed to analyze how these movements facilitate religious mobility, intellectual exchange, and socio-cultural adaptation in the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim communities across Southeast Asia (Paul & Criado, 2020).

The data for this research were collected primarily through library research and document analysis. Sources included academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional publications, historical records, conference proceedings, and previous studies related to transnational Islam, Muslim cosmopolitanism, Islamic movements, and Southeast Asian Islam. In addition, organizational documents, historical archives, and reports concerning the development of Islamic networks in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Southern Thailand were examined to identify patterns of religious mobility, intellectual circulation, and transnational connectivity. The collected data were subsequently organized into thematic categories, including transnational religious networks, Islamic educational exchanges, missionary activities, cultural adaptation, and cosmopolitan Muslim identities.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive, interpretative, and comparative techniques to identify the characteristics and contributions of different Islamic movements in shaping cosmopolitan Muslim communities (Munn et al., 2018). The analysis focused on examining how Traditional Islam, Jamaah Tabligh, and Islamic Reformist movements negotiate the relationship between global Islamic imaginaries and localized cultural

traditions. Particular attention was given to understanding the emergence of cosmopolitan values such as inclusivity, moderation, intercultural engagement, and transnational solidarity within Muslim communities. To strengthen the validity of the findings, data triangulation was undertaken by comparing information obtained from various academic sources, institutional documents, and historical accounts. Through this analytical framework, the study develops the concept of *Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism* to explain the distinctive Southeast Asian model of Muslim cosmopolitanism, characterized by the integration of global Islamic consciousness with local cultural ethics, moderate religious authority, and flexible communal belonging.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transnational Islamic Movements in Southeast Asia: Historical Trajectories and Contemporary Dynamics

Transnational Islamic movements in Southeast Asia should not be understood merely as contemporary products of globalization but rather as phenomena rooted in long-standing historical processes of religious mobility, intellectual exchange, and cross-cultural interaction. Since the seventeenth century, Muslim scholars from the Malay-Indonesian world have traveled extensively to the centers of Islamic learning in Makkah and Madinah to pursue religious education, perform the pilgrimage, and establish scholarly networks with prominent ulama (Putra et al, 2019). These interactions facilitated the circulation of Islamic knowledge, religious authority, and intellectual traditions across regional boundaries. The resulting transregional networks became important channels through which Islamic ideas, practices, and institutions were transmitted throughout Southeast Asia. Consequently, the foundations of transnational Islam in the region were established long before the emergence of modern nation-states and contemporary forms of globalization (Francis Laffan, 2003).

The historical connections between Southeast Asia and the broader Muslim world contributed not only to the transmission of religious knowledge but also to the diffusion of diverse intellectual and socio-religious currents. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the increasing movement of pilgrims, students, and scholars between Southeast Asia and the Middle East accelerated the circulation of reformist Islamic ideas throughout the region. Intellectual currents associated with figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Rida influenced debates concerning religious reform, educational modernization, and Muslim responses to colonialism and modernity. At the same time, traditional Islamic institutions, including pesantren networks and Sufi orders, maintained strong connections with the scholarly communities of the Hijaz. The interaction between reformist and traditionalist orientations generated a dynamic Islamic landscape characterized by intellectual diversity and institutional adaptation. These developments laid the groundwork for the emergence of multiple forms of transnational Islamic engagement in Southeast Asia (Noer, 1973).

The contemporary phase of transnational Islam has been significantly shaped by globalization, technological advancement, and the expansion of global communication networks. Developments in transportation and digital communication have transformed the scale and intensity of interactions among Muslim communities across national borders.

Religious organizations, educational institutions, and Islamic activists increasingly utilize digital platforms to disseminate religious knowledge, build transnational communities, and strengthen ideological networks. As a result, the production and circulation of Islamic discourses are no longer confined to traditional religious institutions or geographical locations. New forms of religious authority have emerged through online platforms, enabling broader participation in religious debates and facilitating direct engagement with global Islamic conversations. These transformations have expanded the reach of transnational Islamic movements and diversified the actors involved in shaping contemporary Muslim identities (Ahmed et al., 2025).

In Southeast Asia, transnational Islamic movements operate through multiple channels, including educational exchanges, missionary activities, organizational networks, migration, and digital media. Islamic boarding schools, universities, religious organizations, and diaspora communities serve as important intermediaries connecting local Muslim populations with global Islamic networks. Cross-border educational programs, international conferences, and transnational religious gatherings have facilitated the movement of ideas and the formation of intellectual communities that transcend national boundaries. Meanwhile, digital technologies have enabled Muslims to access religious knowledge from diverse sources across the world, thereby intensifying interactions between local and global Islamic discourses. These developments demonstrate that transnational Islam functions through both formal institutions and informal social networks that continuously reshape religious life in the region (Rohim et al. 2026)

The findings of this study indicate that three major Islamic currents have played particularly influential roles in shaping the contemporary landscape of transnational Islam in Southeast Asia: Traditional Islam, Jamaah Tabligh, and Islamic Reformist movements (Bustamam, 2008). Each of these currents possesses distinct organizational structures, theological orientations, and strategies of engagement with global Islamic networks. Traditional Islam develops transnational connections through pesantren networks, Sufi traditions, and scholarly exchanges that have evolved over centuries. Jamaah Tabligh constructs extensive international networks through missionary mobility and the practice of *khuruj*, which facilitates interaction among Muslims from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Islamic Reformist movements, on the other hand, promote transnational connectivity through educational modernization, organizational cooperation, and the utilization of digital communication technologies. Despite their differences, all three movements contribute significantly to the integration of Southeast Asian Muslim communities into broader global Islamic networks (Hoesterey, 2022).

The analysis further reveals that transnational Islamic movements in Southeast Asia do not necessarily lead to the homogenization of religious identities, as often assumed in some globalization theories. Instead, the process of Islamic transnationalization is characterized by continuous negotiation between global religious influences and local cultural traditions. Islamic ideas originating from global networks are selectively interpreted, adapted, and localized according to the social realities and cultural contexts of Southeast Asian Muslim societies. This process demonstrates that local actors are not passive recipients of external influences but active participants in shaping the meanings and practices of Islam within their respective communities. Consequently, transnational Islam

in Southeast Asia should be understood as a dynamic process of interaction, adaptation, and cultural exchange rather than a simple transfer of religious ideologies from one region to another (Takoro, 2018).

Traditional Islam and the Construction of Inclusive Cosmopolitanism

Traditional Islam has played a fundamental role in shaping the religious, intellectual, and cultural landscape of Southeast Asia through its long-established networks of pesantren, ulama, and Sufi orders. Unlike the common perception that traditional Islamic institutions are inward-looking and resistant to change, historical evidence demonstrates that they have consistently participated in transregional exchanges of knowledge and religious authority. The development of pesantren networks in Indonesia, pondok institutions in Malaysia, and traditional Islamic schools in Southern Thailand facilitated the circulation of scholars, texts, and religious ideas across different regions of the Muslim world. Through these interactions, traditional Islamic communities developed a distinctive form of religious engagement that combined adherence to classical Islamic scholarship with openness toward social and cultural diversity. Consequently, Traditional Islam became one of the most significant foundations for the emergence of cosmopolitan Muslim identities in Southeast Asia (Dhuhri, 2025).

The cosmopolitan character of Traditional Islam is closely linked to the historical mobility of Southeast Asian ulama within global Islamic scholarly networks (Ricci, 2010). For centuries, Muslim scholars from the region traveled to Makkah, Madinah, Cairo, and other centers of Islamic learning, where they interacted with scholars from different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. These experiences not only enhanced their religious knowledge but also exposed them to diverse interpretations of Islam and various intellectual traditions. Upon returning to their home societies, these scholars transmitted both religious knowledge and broader perspectives on social coexistence, cultural accommodation, and intellectual pluralism. As a result, the scholarly networks of Traditional Islam became important channels through which cosmopolitan values were introduced and localized within Southeast Asian Muslim communities (Rawanitas et al., 2025).

Pesantren institutions constitute one of the most important vehicles through which Traditional Islam promotes inclusive cosmopolitanism. Historically, pesantren have functioned not only as centers of religious education but also as social institutions that facilitate interaction among students from different ethnic, regional, and socio-economic backgrounds. Within these educational environments, students are exposed to diverse perspectives while being trained in classical Islamic disciplines rooted in moderation and ethical responsibility. The educational philosophy of pesantren emphasizes respect for differences, communal solidarity, and the importance of maintaining harmonious social relations. Such values encourage students to develop a broader understanding of Islamic identity that is compatible with cultural diversity and social pluralism. Through these educational processes, pesantren contribute significantly to the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim worldviews grounded in local traditions (Siswanto & Fakhruddin, 2022).

Sufi traditions have also played a crucial role in fostering cosmopolitan orientations within Traditional Islam. Throughout Southeast Asian history, Sufi networks connected local Muslim communities with broader transnational spiritual communities extending across the Indian Ocean and the Middle East. The teachings of Sufism generally emphasize universal ethical principles such as compassion, humility, tolerance, and spiritual brotherhood, which facilitate positive engagement with cultural and religious diversity. Many Sufi orders operating in Southeast Asia adapted Islamic teachings to local cultural contexts without compromising core religious principles (Arnel, 2024). This flexibility enabled Islam to spread peacefully among diverse populations and contributed to the development of inclusive religious identities capable of accommodating social differences. Consequently, Sufi traditions became important foundations for the growth of cosmopolitan Islamic values within Southeast Asian societies.

The inclusive nature of Traditional Islam is further reflected in its approach to cultural accommodation. Rather than perceiving local customs and traditions as obstacles to religious authenticity, traditional Muslim scholars often integrated cultural elements into Islamic practices through processes of adaptation and reinterpretation. This approach allowed Islamic teachings to become deeply embedded within local social structures while maintaining their universal religious significance. In many Southeast Asian societies, religious ceremonies, educational practices, and community rituals illustrate how Islamic principles coexist with indigenous cultural traditions. Such patterns of accommodation have enabled Traditional Islam to function as a bridge between local identities and global Islamic values. This ability to negotiate between universality and particularity represents a central characteristic of cosmopolitan religious engagement (Samsul Hady et al., 2025).

The role of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) provides a contemporary example of how Traditional Islam contributes to the construction of inclusive cosmopolitanism (Mimar & Seva, 2024). As one of the largest Muslim organizations in the world, NU promotes religious moderation, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence within plural societies. Through concepts such as *Islam Nusantara*, NU emphasizes the compatibility of Islamic teachings with local cultural traditions while simultaneously engaging with global issues such as interfaith dialogue, democracy, human rights, and social justice. Its extensive educational and social networks enable the dissemination of inclusive religious values among millions of Muslims across Indonesia and beyond. Through these efforts, NU demonstrates that Traditional Islam can actively participate in global conversations without abandoning its cultural and historical roots (Hannase et al., 2024).

The findings of this study indicate that Traditional Islam constructs cosmopolitanism not through the rejection of local identities but through their creative integration with broader Islamic values and global intellectual exchanges. The interaction between pesantren networks, scholarly mobility, Sufi traditions, and moderate religious organizations has produced a form of cosmopolitan Muslim identity characterized by inclusivity, cultural openness, and ethical engagement with diversity. This model differs from secular understandings of cosmopolitanism that often require the weakening of religious commitments. Instead, Traditional Islam demonstrates that strong religious identity can coexist with openness toward cultural plurality and global interconnectedness. Such a

perspective provides important insights into the distinctive pathways through which cosmopolitan Muslim communities have emerged in Southeast Asia.

Jamaah Tabligh and the Construction of Transnational Muslim Solidarity

Jamaah Tabligh is one of the most influential transnational Islamic movements in the contemporary Muslim world. Founded by Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi in India in 1926, the movement has expanded extensively across various regions, including Southeast Asia. Unlike Islamic organizations that focus on political activism or institutional reform, Jamaah Tabligh concentrates on missionary activities, spiritual renewal, and the revitalization of individual religious practices. Through its simple, non-political, and brotherhood-oriented approach, the movement has successfully established global networks connecting Muslims from diverse ethnic, cultural, and national backgrounds. Consequently, Jamaah Tabligh represents an important manifestation of transnational Muslim communities that transcend the boundaries of nation-states (Marzuki et al., 2025).

The transnational character of Jamaah Tabligh is particularly reflected in the practice of *khuruj*, a missionary journey undertaken by its members to different regions and countries for specific periods (Hasanah et al., 2025). This activity serves not only as a means of religious propagation but also as a mechanism for fostering global Muslim solidarity. Through *khuruj*, participants interact with Muslims from various social and cultural backgrounds, creating a collective awareness of Islamic brotherhood beyond national and ethnic boundaries. Such religious mobility strengthens identities that extend beyond local affiliations and connect individuals to a broader global Muslim community. Therefore, Jamaah Tabligh plays a significant role in cultivating transnational piety grounded in the concept of the *ummah* as a universal religious community.

In Southeast Asia, Jamaah Tabligh has experienced significant growth in Indonesia, Malaysia, Southern Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore (Baskara, 2020). Its expansion has been facilitated by flexible missionary networks operating through mosques, prayer halls, and local religious communities. Continuous missionary activities create spaces where Muslims from diverse social and cultural backgrounds interact within a shared religious framework. As a result, Jamaah Tabligh not only develops global missionary networks but also fosters relatively egalitarian and inclusive religious communities. Membership and participation are based primarily on shared spiritual commitments rather than ethnicity, social class, or nationality, allowing the movement to transcend many conventional social boundaries.

Nevertheless, the cosmopolitanism promoted by Jamaah Tabligh differs significantly from liberal cosmopolitanism rooted in secularism and global citizenship. Its cosmopolitan orientation is based on religious solidarity emerging from shared faith and collective religious practices. Openness to diversity is not achieved through the weakening of religious identity but through the strengthening of Islamic identity as the foundation of cross-cultural brotherhood. In this sense, Jamaah Tabligh demonstrates that cosmopolitanism can develop through religious and spiritual pathways without diminishing commitment to Islamic teachings. This form of religious cosmopolitanism

highlights the close relationship between religious mobility, global solidarity, and the formation of transnational Muslim identities (Mandaville et al., 2009).

The findings of this study indicate that Jamaah Tabligh contributes significantly to the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim communities through its global missionary networks, religious mobility, and transnational brotherhood. Through *khuruj* and continuous interaction among Muslim communities across different countries, the movement creates social spaces that encourage the development of global Islamic consciousness while preserving local cultural identities. Therefore, Jamaah Tabligh can be understood as an important actor in the formation of Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism, a distinctive Southeast Asian model of cosmopolitanism that integrates global Islamic solidarity with diverse local social and cultural experiences (Noor, 2012).

Islamic Reformist Movements, Educational Modernity, and Global Connectivity

Islamic reformist movements have played a crucial role in shaping transnational Islamic networks and cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Emerging in response to colonialism, modernity, and the perceived stagnation of Muslim societies, these movements sought to revitalize Islam through educational reform, rational inquiry, and a return to the foundational sources of the religion. Influenced by reformist thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, organizations such as Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, Persatuan Islam (Persis), and Al-Irsyad promoted a vision of Islam that emphasized intellectual renewal, social progress, and institutional modernization (Nur Mufidah et al., 2025). Through these efforts, reformist movements established strong connections between local Muslim communities and broader global Islamic discourses, facilitating the circulation of ideas, educational models, and religious practices across national boundaries (Burhani, 2016).

One of the most significant contributions of Islamic reformist movements lies in their transformation of Islamic education. Unlike traditional educational institutions that primarily focused on classical religious sciences, reformist organizations introduced modern curricula integrating religious studies with science, technology, and contemporary knowledge. Schools, universities, and educational foundations established by reformist movements became important platforms for producing Muslim intellectuals capable of engaging both local and global challenges. This educational orientation enabled Muslim communities to participate more actively in global intellectual exchanges while maintaining a strong commitment to Islamic values. Consequently, educational modernization became a central mechanism through which reformist movements fostered cosmopolitan outlooks among Southeast Asian Muslims (Hefner, 2009).

In addition to educational reform, Islamic reformist movements have utilized organizational networks and digital technologies to strengthen global connectivity. The expansion of international conferences, academic collaborations, student exchanges, and online religious platforms has facilitated the formation of transnational intellectual communities that transcend geographical boundaries. Through these networks, reformist actors engage with contemporary issues such as democracy, human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and global Muslim solidarity. The ability to connect local

concerns with global debates has enabled reformist movements to become influential participants in shaping modern Islamic thought and public discourse within and beyond Southeast Asia (Kersten, 2015).

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic reformist movements contribute to the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim communities by promoting educational modernity, intellectual openness, and global engagement. Their cosmopolitanism is characterized by a willingness to interact with diverse ideas, institutions, and social realities while maintaining a commitment to Islamic principles. Rather than isolating themselves from global developments, reformist movements actively participate in transnational networks that facilitate knowledge exchange and social cooperation. This orientation has produced a generation of Muslims who are capable of navigating both local and global contexts, thereby strengthening the integration of Southeast Asian Islam into broader global conversations (Hefner, 2009).

Islamic reformist movements represent an important dimension of Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia. By combining religious reform, educational advancement, and global connectivity, these movements demonstrate that cosmopolitan Muslim identities can emerge through active engagement with modernity rather than through the abandonment of religious commitments. Their experience illustrates how global Islamic consciousness can be articulated through locally grounded institutions and social practices, contributing to a distinctive Southeast Asian model of Muslim cosmopolitanism that is both intellectually dynamic and culturally rooted (Risa Alivia & Kombang Tua Siregar, 2025).

Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism: A Distinctive Model of Southeast Asian Muslim Communities

The analysis of Traditional Islam, Jamaah Tabligh, and Islamic Reformist movements demonstrates that the relationship between transnational Islam and cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia cannot be adequately understood through dominant theoretical frameworks that equate globalization with cultural homogenization. Much of the existing literature on transnational Islam has been heavily influenced by Middle Eastern experiences, often portraying global Islamic movements as forces that standardize religious practices and weaken local cultural identities (Mandaville et al., 2009). However, the Southeast Asian experience reveals a markedly different trajectory. Rather than producing uniform religious cultures, transnational Islamic movements in the region have interacted with local traditions through processes of negotiation, adaptation, and reinterpretation. Consequently, cosmopolitan Muslim communities emerge not from the displacement of local identities but from their continuous engagement with global Islamic networks and ideas.

The findings further indicate that different Islamic movements contribute to cosmopolitanism through distinct yet complementary mechanisms. Traditional Islam cultivates cosmopolitanism through scholarly mobility, cultural accommodation, and inclusive religious authority embedded within pesantren and Sufi networks. Jamaah Tabligh constructs transnational solidarities through missionary mobility and the formation of a global religious brotherhood that transcends ethnic and national boundaries.

Meanwhile, Islamic Reformist movements generate cosmopolitan orientations through educational modernization, intellectual openness, and participation in global knowledge networks. Although these movements differ in organizational structure, ideological orientation, and modes of engagement, they collectively facilitate the emergence of Muslim identities that are simultaneously local and global. This convergence suggests that cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia is not the product of a single movement but rather the outcome of multiple and overlapping transnational Islamic processes.

A significant implication of this finding is the need to reconsider prevailing assumptions regarding the relationship between religion and cosmopolitanism. Classical cosmopolitan theories frequently assume that cosmopolitan consciousness develops through the weakening of particularistic identities, including religious affiliations (Driezen et al., 2021). The Southeast Asian case challenges this assumption by demonstrating that strong religious commitments can coexist with openness toward cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and global interconnectedness. In this context, Islamic identity functions not as a barrier to cosmopolitan engagement but as a resource that facilitates ethical interaction across social and cultural differences. The experience of Southeast Asian Muslim communities therefore expands contemporary cosmopolitan theory by illustrating how religious traditions themselves can become vehicles of cosmopolitan formation.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework for understanding the distinctive configuration of transnational Islam in Southeast Asia. Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism refers to a form of Muslim cosmopolitan consciousness that emerges through the articulation of global Islamic solidarity within localized cultural, social, and historical contexts (Lin, 2017). Unlike universalist models that prioritize cultural convergence, this concept emphasizes the coexistence of multiple identities, the accommodation of local traditions, and the preservation of cultural diversity within broader Islamic networks. It highlights how global Islamic ideas are selectively appropriated, translated, and embedded into local realities through the agency of Muslim actors and institutions. As such, Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism represents neither a rejection of globalization nor a surrender to it, but a creative process of localization through which global and local dimensions are continuously reconciled.

Theoretically, the concept contributes to contemporary debates on transnational Islam by offering an alternative perspective to both homogenization and fragmentation theses. It demonstrates that transnational religious movements can generate forms of global connectivity without necessarily erasing local cultures or producing rigid universal identities. Empirically, the Southeast Asian experience illustrates how educational institutions, religious networks, missionary mobility, and digital connectivity collectively facilitate the formation of cosmopolitan Muslim communities that remain deeply rooted in their cultural environments. Consequently, Southeast Asia should not be viewed merely as a recipient of global Islamic influences but as an active producer of innovative models of Muslim cosmopolitanism. This distinctive contribution positions the region as one of the most important contemporary laboratories for understanding the evolving relationship between Islam, globalization, and cosmopolitan modernity.

D. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that transnational Islamic movements have played a crucial role in shaping cosmopolitan Muslim communities in Southeast Asia through religious mobility, intellectual exchange, educational transformation, and socio-cultural adaptation. The findings reveal that Islamic cosmopolitanism in the region does not emerge through the erosion of local identities but through the dynamic interaction between global Islamic networks and local cultural traditions. Traditional Islam contributes through cultural accommodation and inclusive religious authority, Jamaah Tabligh through transnational missionary networks and global Muslim brotherhood, and Islamic Reformist movements through educational modernization and intellectual openness. Collectively, these movements have produced Muslim identities that are simultaneously rooted in local cultures and connected to global Islamic discourses.

The principal contribution of this study is the formulation of the concept of Vernacular Islamic Cosmopolitanism, which refers to a distinctive Southeast Asian model of cosmopolitanism that integrates global Islamic solidarity with local cultural ethics, moderate religious authority, and flexible communal identities. This concept challenges assumptions that transnational Islam necessarily leads to cultural homogenization and instead demonstrates how global Islamic influences can be creatively localized within diverse social contexts. Therefore, Southeast Asia should be understood not merely as a recipient of global Islamic ideas but as an active producer of innovative forms of Muslim cosmopolitanism that contribute significantly to contemporary global Islamic civilization.

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