

ASYMMETRIC HYBRIDITY: GLOCALIZATION, DETERRITORIALIZED ISLAM, AND MALAY MUSLIM IDENTITY IN PEKANBARU

Imron Rosidi 

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan
Syarif Kasim Riau

✉ imronrosidi@uin-suska.ac.id

Mhd Ismail bin Sulaiman 

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

✉ ismail80@graduate.utm.my

Irhason

Kementerian Agama Republik
Indonesia, Indonesia

✉ irhason@gmail.com

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v39i1.1046>

Corresponding Author:

Imron Rosidi 

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan
Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia

✉ imronrosidi@uin-suska.ac.id

Dates:

Received: March, 9th 2026

Revised: June, 16th 2026

Published: June, 30th 2026



This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0
International License.

Abstract

The Riau Malay people, who are identified as Muslims, have not been immune to the wave of contemporary globalisation that is shaping their way of life. This article examines the construction of Muslim Malay identity in Pekanbaru, exploring how transnational flows of Islamic knowledge interact with local Malay traditions and Indonesian national culture. This qualitative study is based on interviews and observation, analysed through the lenses of glocalisation (Robertson), global cultural flows (Appadurai) and the deterritorialisation of Islam (Roy), alongside literature on the 'conservative turn' in Indonesian Islam. The findings reveal a paradox: globalisation gives rise to a hybrid identity comprising local Malay, national Indonesian and transnational Islamic elements, whilst simultaneously intensifying Islamic identity as social media da'wah and religious activities in public spaces expand. This hybridity is asymmetrical—the religious layer is on the rise and becoming increasingly deterritorialised, whilst Malay elements persist as residual markers rather than organising centres—indicating a deterritorialised re-Islamisation: Islam is detached from local customs and re-anchored within a standardised transnational register.

Keywords: globalization; glocalization; Malay Muslim identity; deterritorialization of Islam; Re-Islamization

Abstrak

Suku Melayu Riau yang identik sebagai Muslim tak luput dari gelombang globalisasi kontemporer yang membentuk pola eksistensi mereka. Artikel ini mengkaji konstruksi identitas Melayu Muslim di Pekanbaru, dengan pertanyaan bagaimana arus transnasional pengetahuan Islam berinteraksi dengan tradisi Melayu lokal dan budaya nasional Indonesia. Penelitian kualitatif ini bertumpu pada wawancara dan observasi, dibaca melalui teori glocalisasi (Robertson), arus budaya global (Appadurai), dan deterritorialisasi Islam (Roy), bersama literatur tentang *conservative turn* Islam Indonesia. Temuan mengungkap paradoks: globalisasi melahirkan identitas hibrid dari unsur Melayu lokal, Indonesia nasional, dan Islam transnasional, namun sekaligus mengintensifkan identitas Islam seiring meluasnya dakwah media sosial dan aktivitas keagamaan di ruang publik. Hibriditas ini bersifat asimetris—lapisan keagamaan menanjak dan kian terdeterritorialisasi, sementara unsur Melayu bertahan sebagai penanda residual, bukan pusat pengorganisasi—menunjukkan re-Islamisasi terdeterritorialisasi: Islam dilepaskan dari adat lokal dan ditambahkan ulang dalam register transnasional yang terstandar.

Kata kunci: globalisasi; glocalisasi; Identitas Melayu Muslim; deterritorialisasi Islam; reIslamisasi

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has transformed the ways religious and cultural identities are constructed, expressed, and negotiated across the world. The expansion of transnational communication networks, digital media, migration, and global cultural flows has intensified interactions between local traditions and global influences, making identity increasingly fluid and contested rather than fixed and inherited (Bauman, 2001; Tytarenko, 2021). Within Muslim societies, globalization has facilitated the circulation of religious knowledge across national boundaries, exposing local communities to diverse Islamic interpretations, authorities, and lifestyles (Hoesterey, 2022; Roy, 2004). As a result, contemporary Muslim identities are increasingly shaped through interactions between local cultural traditions and transnational Islamic discourses.

These dynamics are particularly evident in Southeast Asia, where Islam has historically developed through engagement with local cultures and social contexts (Feener, 2017). Numerous studies have shown that globalization and digital media have transformed the production and circulation of Islamic knowledge in the region. Research on Indonesian Islam, for example, demonstrates how social media platforms have created new forms of religious authority, enabled the emergence of digital preachers, and facilitated the dissemination of transnational Islamic ideas (Hoesterey, 2022; Wahid, 2024). Other studies have highlighted how Muslim communities actively negotiate global Islamic influences while maintaining local cultural traditions, producing diverse expressions of religious identity rather than uniform forms of Islamization (Jouili & Moors, 2014; Kersten Ph D, 2009).

Within this broader context, Malay Muslim society offers an important case for understanding the relationship between globalization and identity formation. Historically, Malay identity has been closely associated with Islam, as reflected in the widely recognized expression that “to be Malay is to be Muslim.” Islam has long served as a central source of moral values, social norms, and cultural practices in Malay society. The principle *adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah* illustrates the historical integration of Malay customs and Islamic teachings, making Islam an essential component of Malay cultural identity (Rosidi, 2020). However, this relationship has never been static. Like other cultural identities, Malayness is continuously reconstructed through changing political, economic, and social circumstances.

Recent scholarship on Malay society has largely focused on historical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions of Malay identity. Studies have examined the role of Malay kingdoms and Islamic intellectual traditions in shaping Malay civilization (Widjayengrono, 2023), explored the ethical foundations of Malay values (Asteriani & AR, 2025), and analysed classical Malay manuscripts and literary heritage (Roza, 2017). While these studies have contributed significantly to understanding the historical foundations of Malay identity, relatively little attention has been paid to how Malay Muslims negotiate their identity in contemporary urban environments shaped by globalization and digital media. More importantly, existing studies often assume a coherent relationship between Malayness and Islam, paying insufficient attention to the diversity, contestation, and hybridity that characterize contemporary identity formation.

This gap is particularly significant in Pekanbaru, the capital city of Riau Province. As one of the major centres of Malay culture in Indonesia, Pekanbaru has experienced rapid urbanization, migration, economic growth, and digital connectivity over the past two decades (Rosidi & Yazid, 2021). These developments have intensified encounters between local traditions, global popular culture, and transnational Islamic discourses. Through social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, Malay Muslims are increasingly exposed to competing interpretations of Islam originating from Indonesia, the Middle East, and other parts of the Muslim world. At the same time, they continue to engage with local customs, cultural institutions, and community traditions. This situation creates a complex social environment in which identity is continuously negotiated rather than simply inherited.

Drawing on a constructivist perspective, this article understands identity as a dynamic and socially constructed process rather than a fixed cultural essence. It argues that Malay-Muslim identity in contemporary Pekanbaru is produced through ongoing negotiations between local cultural traditions, Islamic teachings, and global influences. Rather than generating a single and uniform Malay-Muslim identity, globalization has contributed to the emergence of multiple forms of hybrid identity that differ according to social background, religious orientation, and engagement

with digital media. This article therefore addresses two questions: (1) how do Malay Muslims in Pekanbaru negotiate their identity in the context of globalization, and (2) what forms of hybrid Malay-Muslim identity emerge from these negotiations? By answering these questions, the study contributes to broader discussions on globalization, religious identity, and cultural hybridity in contemporary Muslim societies.

Theoretically, this article departs from three complementary perspectives on globalization and identity formation. First, Robertson's (1995) concept of glocalization challenges the assumption that globalization inevitably produces cultural homogenization. Instead, global and local forces interact continuously to create new cultural configurations. This perspective is particularly useful for understanding how global Islamic discourses are localized within Malay cultural frameworks in Pekanbaru.

Second, Appadurai's (1996) theory of global cultural flows emphasizes the role of mediascapes and ideoscape in shaping contemporary identities. Through digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp, Malay Muslims increasingly encounter religious narratives, symbols, and authorities that transcend geographical boundaries. These digital flows facilitate the circulation of Islamic knowledge and contribute to the formation of transnational religious imaginaries.

Third, this study draws on Olivier Roy's (2004) concept of deterritorialized Islam. Roy argues that globalization increasingly disconnects Islamic identity from specific local cultural traditions and territorial contexts. As Muslims around the world consume similar religious content, follow the same religious authorities, and adopt comparable forms of piety, religious expressions become increasingly standardized across different societies. This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding why contemporary religious life in Pekanbaru increasingly resembles that of other Muslim communities beyond the Malay cultural sphere.

In addition, this study engages with van Bruinessen's (2013) discussion of the conservative turn in Indonesian Islam. The growing influence of scripturalist interpretations, digital preachers, and transnational Islamic discourses has encouraged many Muslims to critically reassess local traditions according to textual understandings of Islam. These developments provide an important context for understanding the changing relationship between Malay customs and Islamic identity in contemporary Pekanbaru.

Combining these perspectives, this article argues that globalisation produces not simply cultural hybridity but asymmetrical hybridity, in which Islamic elements become increasingly deterritorialised and globally standardised, while Malay cultural elements persist as local markers. The key question is therefore how global Islamic flows contribute to the re-Islamisation and partial deterritorialisation of Malay-Muslim identity in contemporary Pekanbaru.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a qualitative approach to examine how Malay Muslims in Pekanbaru negotiate their identity in the context of globalisation. The method was chosen to explore the meanings, interpretations, and social practices underlying identity formation rather than to measure variables quantitatively. (Hadžiomerović, 2023). Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to capture the subjective experiences of individuals and communities (Varpio & Artino Jr, 2015) as they interpret the relationship between Malay cultural traditions, Islamic values, and the influences of global culture. Through this approach, the study aims to reveal the complex processes through which identity is constructed, contested, and reconstructed in everyday life.

The research was conducted over four months in Pekanbaru, the capital of Riau Province, Indonesia. Pekanbaru was selected because it combines a strong Malay cultural heritage with rapid modernisation and globalisation. Its economic growth, migration, and expanding internet access create a dynamic setting for examining the negotiation of Malay-Muslim identity. As an important symbolic centre of Malay culture in Indonesia, it provides an ideal context for studying how local identity is maintained and reinterpreted in contemporary society.

The study involved twenty-two participants consisting of six religious leaders, four Malay cultural activists affiliated with Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau (LAMR), five university students, three entrepreneurs, and four community leaders. Fieldwork was conducted in several locations, including Masjid Raya An-Nur, the offices of Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau (LAMR), community religious gatherings, university campuses, and public discussion forums in Pekanbaru.

To strengthen the analysis of digital religious circulation, this study incorporated digital content analysis. Twenty-five Islamic contents from TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube (January–April 2026) were purposively selected, including short *dakwah* videos, online sermons, Islamic lifestyle content, discussions of Malay culture, and posts on global Muslim issues such as Palestine. This analysis enabled the study to examine how transnational Islamic discourses circulate and shape Malay-Muslim identity.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews involved diverse participants to capture different perspectives on Malay-Muslim identity. Using purposive sampling, participants were selected for their knowledge of Malay culture, Islamic traditions, and globalisation, as well as their involvement in community events, cultural organisations, religious institutions, or digital platforms related to Malay identity. Informants came from diverse social backgrounds and age groups, including religious officials, students, community leaders, and young professionals engaged in both local traditions and digital spaces. Interviews explored perceptions of the relationship between Islam, Malay culture, and globalisation, as well as experiences of cultural traditions, religious practices, digital media use, and identity in a globalised world.

Participant observation was conducted in various social and cultural settings in Pekanbaru, including religious gatherings, community events linked to Malay traditions, and public discussions organised by local cultural institutions. This enabled the researcher to examine how Islamic values and Malay customs are practised in everyday life, while providing insight into how individuals and communities respond to external cultural influences while maintaining their local identity.

In addition to interviews and observation, this study also utilized document analysis to complement the primary data (Bowen, 2009). Relevant documents included local government cultural policies, publications related to Malay cultural preservation, online religious content, and digital discussions about Malay identity circulating on social media platforms. The analysis of these materials helped contextualize the narratives provided by participants and provided a broader understanding of the discourse surrounding Malay-Muslim identity in contemporary Pekanbaru.

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis (Khokhar et al., 2020). This analytical method involves identifying patterns and recurring themes within the qualitative data. The analysis began with the transcription of interview recordings and the organization of field notes collected during observations. The researcher then coded the data to identify key themes related to identity negotiation, cultural continuity, religious interpretation, and the influence of globalization. These themes were subsequently interpreted in relation to the broader theoretical framework of globalization and identity construction.

To ensure credibility and reliability, the study employed several validation strategies. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing interviews, observations, and documents. The researcher also maintained detailed field notes and continuously reviewed interpretations to ensure the findings accurately reflected participants' experiences and perspectives.

Through this qualitative approach, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how Malay Muslims in Pekanbaru negotiate their cultural and religious identity amid globalisation. It moves beyond abstract theory by highlighting the lived experiences of individuals who actively engage with both local traditions and global influences in everyday life.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Voices in Globalizing Malay Society

In contemporary Malay Muslim society, Islamic voices have become increasingly visible in both public discourse and everyday social life (Weintraub, 2011). While Islam has long been embedded within Malay culture, globalization and digital communication technologies have expanded the reach of religious expression beyond traditional institutions such as mosques and religious schools. Through platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, Malay Muslims are now exposed to a wide range of Islamic interpretations and religious authorities from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Middle East, and beyond. Rather than weakening the role of religion, these developments have strengthened the visibility of Islam and contributed to the growing prominence of religious discourse in the public sphere.

One of the most significant consequences of globalization is the emergence of digital *dakwah* as a major source of religious knowledge and authority (Wahid, 2024). Interview data reveal that digital media has become an integral part of religious learning, particularly among younger generations. As one university student explained (interview with resource person, on January 22, 2026):

“Every morning, I watch short Islamic videos on TikTok before going to campus. Sometimes I follow lectures by Ustaz Abdul Somad, sometimes scholars from Malaysia. Later, when we meet friends at the mosque, we discuss what we watched online.”

This statement suggests that online religious engagement complements rather than replaces traditional religious activities, creating new connections between digital and offline religious spaces (Kersten Ph D, 2009).

The increasing visibility of Islamic discourse is particularly evident among young Malays. Religious quotations, Qur’anic verses, Islamic lifestyle content, and online lectures circulate widely through social media and have become part of everyday communication. A youth leader observed; (interview with resource person, on January 12, 2026)

“Ten years ago, young people mostly discussed entertainment online. Now many of them follow religious accounts, share Islamic reminders, and attend online lectures. Religion has become part of youth culture.”

Syahrul, a 32-year-old entrepreneur, explained:

“Twenty years ago, we learned religion mostly from the mosque or from our parents. Now we can listen to Islamic lectures every day through YouTube. Whether we are driving, working, or resting at home, religious knowledge is always available. This makes people more aware of Islamic teachings.”

Similarly, Fatimah, a university lecturer, noted:

“Social media has made religion more visible. In my WhatsApp groups people frequently share Qur’anic verses, reminders about prayer, and lectures from scholars. Religious discussions are much more common than before.”

Such developments illustrate how digital media has expanded the public presence of religion and created new spaces for the expression of Islamic identity (Ichwan et al., 2024).

Digital technologies have expanded opportunities for religious learning and have increased the visibility of Islamic discourse within everyday social life. One of the most significant drivers of this process is the expansion of global communication networks. Digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp enable Malay Muslims to access religious teachings from scholars and preachers across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Middle East, and other parts of the Muslim world. During fieldwork, many respondents mentioned regularly following online lectures by prominent Indonesian and Malaysian preachers. Kaifah, a 24-year-old student, stated (interview on January 25, 2026):

“Almost every day I watch short Islamic videos on TikTok or Instagram. Sometimes the speakers are from Indonesia, sometimes from Malaysia or the Middle East. We can

compare different explanations and learn more about Islam.”

While early modernization theories predicted that globalization would weaken religious authority and encourage secularization, developments in many Muslim societies suggest a different trajectory. Rather than diminishing religious identity, globalization has often contributed to a renewed visibility and strengthening of Islamic values in both public and private life (Jouili & Moors, 2014). This phenomenon is commonly described as re-Islamization, a process through which Islamic symbols, discourses, and practices become increasingly prominent in everyday social interactions.

Despite the diversity of religious voices available online, Malay Muslims do not passively absorb global Islamic discourses. Instead, they selectively engage with interpretations that resonate with their cultural values and social experiences. This selective appropriation reflects the agency of local actors in shaping the meaning of religious teachings within their own contexts. As Fatimah explained (interview on January 25, 2026):

“Being Malay means being Muslim. Our parents taught us that from the beginning. Now with social media we hear many Islamic lectures from different scholars, and it reminds us that Islam is the foundation of our culture.”

Similarly, Kaifah emphasized that exposure to multiple religious sources has not weakened the relationship between Islam and Malay identity (interview on January 25, 2026):

“Even though we learn Islam from many sources today, we still see Islam as part of who we are as Malays. Our traditions and religion cannot be separated.”

Observations of social media activity during the research further indicate the growing popularity of Islamic content among Malay Muslim users. Posts containing Qur’anic quotations, reminders about prayer, advice on Islamic family life, and discussions of halal consumption frequently received substantial engagement through likes, comments, and reposts. One widely shared Instagram post by a Malay Muslim account @selokariau stated: “Malay will not disappear from the earth.” and “Keep sharing. Always share the meanings and symbols that many laypeople don't understand.” These online interactions reveal how social media functions not merely as a channel for disseminating religious information but also as a space where collective understandings of Malay-Muslim identity are continuously reaffirmed. The global circulation of Islamic discourse has exposed Malay Muslims to diverse religious interpretations originating from various cultural and geographical contexts (Roy, 2004). However, field interviews suggest that exposure to global Islamic teachings does not automatically diminish local traditions. Instead, Malay Muslims actively negotiate between global religious influences and local cultural practices. Aisyah, a teacher interviewed during the research, explained (interview on January 21, 2026):

“We learn Islam from many scholars online, but we still keep our Malay traditions. Not everything from outside is suitable for our context. We choose what strengthens our faith while preserving our customs.”

Another participant, Rahmat, a community leader, observed (interview on January 22, 2026):

“Some young people become more critical of local traditions after watching lectures from the Middle East. But most people still believe that Malay customs and Islam can coexist as long as the customs do not contradict religious teachings.”

These statements indicate that re-Islamization in Malay society does not necessarily imply the rejection of local culture. Rather, Islamic teachings are frequently interpreted through existing cultural frameworks that have historically integrated religious and customary values.



Figure 1
Malay heritage that remains alive amidst modernity (Source: Instagram @selokariau, 2026)

The growing visibility of Islamic discourse can also be observed in the transformation of the public sphere. Public communication plays a central role in shaping collective values and social norms (Habermas, 1985). In contemporary Malay society, digital media has expanded the public sphere by creating new spaces where religious ideas are discussed and disseminated. Interview participants frequently referred to religious discussions occurring in WhatsApp groups, Facebook communities, Telegram channels, and online study circles. One respondent, Arif, explained (interview on January 26, 2026):

“After watching lectures online, people often discuss them in mosque gatherings or WhatsApp groups. Sometimes debates continue for days. Religion has become part of everyday conversation.”

This interaction between online and offline communication demonstrates how digital media amplifies the presence of Islamic discourse within social life. Religious messages no longer remain confined to formal religious institutions but circulate continuously through multiple communication channels.

Globalization has also intensified the sense of belonging to a broader Muslim community. Through media exposure and transnational communication networks, Malay Muslims



Figure 2.

Facebook Status on Palestine (Don't be silent while Palestine bleeds) (Source: Facebook Status of Pondok Pesantren Abu Hurairah, 2025)

increasingly perceive themselves as part of the global ummah. This was evident in social media discussions concerning events affecting Muslims worldwide, including humanitarian crises in Palestine, religious controversies, and international Islamic campaigns. One Facebook user commented on a post about Palestine:

Such expressions illustrate how digital connectivity strengthens religious solidarity beyond national and ethnic boundaries. The symbolic significance of Islam therefore extends beyond local cultural identity and increasingly connects Malay Muslims to global religious concerns.

The increasing circulation of Islamic discourse through digital media has contributed to a broader process of re-Islamization within Malay

Muslim society. Rather than weakening religious commitment, globalization appears to have intensified the visibility of Islamic symbols, values, and practices in everyday life. Participants consistently described how social media, online sermons, and digital religious communities have encouraged greater engagement with Islamic teachings and strengthened awareness of religious obligations.

This process is evident in the growing popularity of Islamic study groups, online religious lectures, Qur'anic recitation programs, and discussions concerning Islamic lifestyles. Religious content is no longer confined to formal institutions but permeates daily communication through social media feeds, messaging applications, and digital communities. Many participants reported that Islamic teachings obtained from online sources increasingly influence personal decisions concerning family life, education, consumption, dress, and social interaction.

At the same time, the expansion of digital religious authority has generated new debates concerning the relationship between Islam and Malay traditions. Several informants observed that younger generations increasingly question whether certain customary practices should be understood as Islamic teachings or merely cultural traditions. Questions such as "Is this tradition truly Islamic or simply a cultural practice?" frequently emerge in discussions influenced by online religious content. This tendency reflects a growing scriptural orientation in which local customs are evaluated according to textual interpretations of Islam encountered through digital platforms.

The questioning of local traditions does not necessarily result in their rejection. Most participants continued to regard Malay customs as compatible with Islamic teachings. Nevertheless, traditions

are increasingly expected to justify their legitimacy through religious arguments. Practices that were previously accepted because of cultural continuity are now often assessed according to their conformity with Qur'anic and prophetic teachings. Consequently, religious authenticity becomes an important criterion in evaluating local cultural practices.

These findings resonate with van Bruinessen's (2013) argument regarding the conservative turn in Indonesian Islam. While participants generally maintain positive attitudes toward Malay traditions, many increasingly evaluate cultural practices through scripturalist understandings of Islam acquired from digital religious authorities. The expansion of digital religious networks has strengthened the influence of textual and reformist interpretations of Islam, contributing to the growing prominence of Islamic discourse within public and private life. Re-Islamization in Pekanbaru therefore should be understood not merely as increasing religiosity but as the growing centrality of Islamic norms in shaping social behaviour, cultural practices, and collective identity.

Asymmetrical Hybridity and Deterritorialized Re-Islamization

Identity, as something that is constantly changing, is not a fixed entity; therefore, the identity of an individual or a group is essentially temporary and will change over time (Erikson, 1968). In this regard, the Malay-Muslim identity in Pekanbaru cannot be understood as a fixed cultural category rooted solely in tradition (Khotimah et al., 2025). Instead, it emerges as a hybrid identity shaped through continuous negotiation between local cultural traditions, Islamic teachings, and the influences of globalization. In this case, globalization creates new social and cultural spaces in which this identity is reinterpreted, rearticulated, and reconstructed. Globalization expands the arenas in which Malay-Muslim identity is expressed and negotiated. Previously, the expression of Malay identity was largely embedded in traditional institutions such as family networks, *adat* ceremonies, mosques, and local community gatherings. Today, however, digital platforms and urban cultural spaces have become equally important sites where identity is constructed.

Social media plays a crucial role in shaping how young Malay Muslims understand (Supandi, 2025) both Islam and Malay culture. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok allow individuals to access religious teachings, discuss cultural traditions, and engage with broader Muslim communities across national borders. Through these digital interactions, Malay Muslims encounter various interpretations of Islam that originate from different regions of the Muslim world. A university student, Ridwan, interviewed during the research explained (interview on January 27, 2026):

“Through social media we learn many interpretations of Islam. Some come from the Middle East, some from Indonesian scholars. But we still try to keep our Malay traditions because they are part of our identity.”

Social media functions as part of the mediascape and ideoscape where religious interpretations from different regions, especially the Middle East, become accessible to Muslims in Southeast Asia. In this context, Malay Muslims in Indonesia are exposed to multiple Islamic discourses simultaneously. The reference to learning interpretations of Islam from both the Middle East and Indonesian scholars illustrates how globalization allows religious knowledge to move beyond geographical boundaries. However, the statement also emphasizes the effort to maintain Malay traditions. This reflects cultural hybridization (Bhabha, 2012), a concept widely discussed by scholars. Hybridization refers to the blending of global and local elements to produce new cultural forms. Malay Muslim identity in this case is not replaced by global Islamic influences but rather reconfigured through interaction with them.

Globalization creates a transnational religious sphere in which local communities interact with global Islamic discourses. Instead of simply adopting external influences, Malay Muslims actively interpret these influences within the framework of their existing cultural traditions. Malay-Muslim identity continues to be grounded in the cultural philosophy that links Malay customs (*adat*) with Islamic values. Malay traditions are perceived not as separate from Islam but as expressions of Islamic moral principles within local cultural contexts. The traditional Malay maxim *adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah*, which means that customary law is based on Islamic law and Islamic law is based on the Qur'an continues to serve as a moral framework guiding how Malay society interprets cultural practices (Rosidi, 2021).

However, globalization has also introduced debates regarding the authenticity of certain cultural

traditions. Ahmad, a Muslim preacher, noted that exposure to transnational Islamic discourses, particularly through online preaching, sometimes, leads younger Muslims to question traditional practices that were previously accepted as part of Malay culture. A Malay Muslim, Rizal, in Pekanbaru explained (interview on January 27, 2026):

“Some young people now ask whether certain traditions are truly Islamic or just cultural. This question comes from what they see on the internet. But many of us believe that Malay traditions are compatible with Islam.”

Through online platforms, Malay Muslims gain access to religious knowledge produced by scholars and preachers from various countries. These digital networks facilitate the circulation of ideas related to Islamic ethics, lifestyle, and social norms. Malay Muslims regularly follow online sermons and religious discussions delivered by scholars from Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Middle East. These digital religious resources influence how individuals interpret Islamic teachings and integrate them into their daily lives. However, rather than replacing local religious authority, digital knowledge often interacts with existing religious traditions. Local religious leaders such as Muslim preachers remain influential in guiding community practices and interpreting Islamic teachings within the cultural context of Malay society.

The concept of hybridity proposed by Bhabha (2012) provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of Malay-Muslim identity in contemporary Pekanbaru. For Bhabha, cultural identity is not a fixed essence inherited from the past but is continuously produced through encounters, negotiations, and contestations between different cultural forces. Globalization has intensified these encounters by bringing local Malay traditions into direct contact with transnational Islamic discourses, global media cultures, and new forms of religious authority. As a result, Malay-Muslim identity emerges not as a stable or homogeneous identity but as a hybrid formation that is constantly being reconstructed.

One important dimension of this hybridity is ambivalence. Bhabha (2012) argues that encounters between different cultural systems rarely produce complete acceptance or rejection; rather, they generate a condition of ambivalence in which individuals simultaneously embrace and resist external influences. This ambivalence is evident in Malay Muslims' responses to global Islamic discourses circulating through social media and transnational religious networks. Many welcomed teachings from international scholars for enhancing religious knowledge, strengthening Islamic commitment, and providing alternative sources of authority beyond local institutions. At the same time, they expressed concern that some transnational interpretations of Islam could delegitimise local customs long regarded as integral to Malay cultural heritage. Questions have emerged over whether existing traditions are “genuinely Islamic” or merely cultural practices, reflecting the growing influence of scripturalist discourses that assess customs against religious texts. This has encouraged efforts to reinterpret local traditions as compatible with Islamic values. Such ambivalence is not a sign of cultural confusion but a space for negotiating religious authenticity and cultural continuity, while global Islamic teachings are increasingly accepted as sources of religious legitimacy in everyday life.

The second dimension is mimicry. According to Bhabha (2012), Mimicry refers to the selective adoption of external cultural forms that are adapted rather than fully replicated. This is evident in how Malay Muslims incorporate transnational Islamic symbols into everyday life while retaining local cultural references. The use of Arabic greetings, Islamic fashion, and religious terminology often signals piety and belonging to the wider Muslim *ummah*, yet these practices remain embedded within local cultural meanings. Women who adopt globally popular modest fashion trends often combine them with Malay aesthetic preferences, while religious gatherings blend transnational Islamic themes with local customs of social interaction. Similarly, online religious content from Middle Eastern and international Muslim influencers is frequently reinterpreted through local experiences and Malay social values. This shows that mimicry is not simple imitation but a process of selective appropriation through which external influences are localised and transformed.

Furthermore, mimicry generates a complex relationship between similarity and difference. While some young Malay Muslims seek to emulate what they perceive as more authentic forms of Islamic practice promoted by transnational religious movements, they remain embedded within social

environments structured by Malay cultural norms. Consequently, global Islamic models are never fully reproduced in their original form. Instead, they are translated into local contexts where considerations of family relations, communal harmony, respect for elders, and customary traditions continue to shape religious behaviour.

The interaction between local traditions and global Islamic influences also generates what Bhabha (2012) describes as a *third space*. This concept refers to an intermediate cultural arena in which new meanings, practices, and identities emerge through interaction and negotiation rather than through the dominance of one cultural system over another. Unlike ambivalence, which emphasizes the tensions produced by competing cultural influences, or mimicry, which highlights the selective appropriation of external forms, the third space focuses on the creative production of new cultural configurations. In this space, identity is neither a preservation of tradition nor an imitation of global models, but a continuous process of innovation through which individuals construct new ways of understanding themselves and their social world.

However, hybridity within contemporary Malay Muslim society is not entirely symmetrical. Previous discussions of cultural hybridity often assume that global and local influences interact on relatively equal terms to produce new cultural forms. However, the evidence presented in this study indicates that the relationship between Malay culture and transnational Islamic influences is increasingly uneven. While Malay cultural traditions continue to exist, the religious dimension of identity is becoming progressively shaped by global Islamic discourses circulating through digital media.

From the perspective of Olivier Roy (2004), this development reflects a process of partial deterritorialization. Islamic identity is becoming less dependent upon specifically Malay cultural references and increasingly connected to transnational Islamic networks that transcend ethnic and territorial boundaries. Through social media platforms, online religious communities, and global communication technologies, Malay Muslims encounter similar religious authorities, symbols, narratives, and moral frameworks as Muslims in other parts of Indonesia and the wider Muslim world. As a result, religious practices become increasingly standardized despite differences in local cultural backgrounds.

Importantly, deterritorialization does not imply the disappearance of Malay culture. Field observations indicate that local traditions continue to function as important markers of cultural belonging. Malay language expressions, customary ceremonies, traditional values, and local cultural institutions remain significant elements of social life. Nevertheless, these cultural markers increasingly occupy a secondary position relative to the expanding influence of global Islamic discourse. While the cultural layer of identity remains locally grounded, the religious layer is becoming increasingly globalized.

This situation produces what may be described as asymmetrical hybridity. Rather than representing a balanced synthesis between Malay culture and global Islam, contemporary identity formation reflects a condition in which one component exerts greater influence than the other. Islamic elements become increasingly globalized, deterritorialized, and standardized through transnational religious networks, whereas Malay cultural elements persist primarily as localized cultural markers. The result is neither complete cultural homogenization nor the preservation of a purely traditional identity, but a dynamic process of deterritorialized re-Islamization.

Therefore, the emerging identity of Malay Muslims in Pekanbaru is best understood not simply as hybridity but as asymmetrical hybridity characterized by deterritorialized re-Islamization. Globalization simultaneously generates cultural adaptation and religious convergence. While Malay cultural traditions continue to provide symbolic markers of local identity, the religious dimension of Malay Muslim life is increasingly shaped by global Islamic discourses that connect Pekanbaru to broader transnational Muslim communities. This finding extends existing discussions of hybridity by demonstrating that globalization may simultaneously produce cultural hybridity and religious homogenization.

Social media plays a particularly important role in accelerating this asymmetrical hybridity. Digital platforms facilitate encounters among Malay cultural narratives, transnational Islamic teachings, global Muslim concerns, and contemporary lifestyles that would rarely intersect within traditional social settings. Discussions concerning halal consumption, Islamic fashion, family

ethics, philanthropy, environmental responsibility, and international Muslim solidarity demonstrate how global religious discourses are localized within Malay society. Nevertheless, the direction of influence is not entirely reciprocal. While global Islamic discourses are actively incorporated into local life, local Malay traditions are increasingly expected to justify themselves through Islamic legitimacy. This indicates that the religious component possesses greater normative authority than the cultural component.

It is true that globalization creates conditions for the production of new cultural meanings and social practices through which Malay Muslims actively redefine their place within both local society and the wider Muslim world. Cultural identity is not a static concept, but rather a dynamic process that continues to evolve in the context of globalisation (Mohyeddin, 2024). Indeed, in modern, dynamic, pluralistic societies, it is evident that traditional culture can survive and thrive through a harmonisation of the traditional (heritage) and the contemporary (modern). Traditional rituals of a sacred nature, with religious and cultural overtones, tend to preserve tradition, whilst contemporary rituals of a secular nature tend to adapt through innovation and modernisation (Lin & Ang, 2025). However, unlike cultural practices that diversify through interaction and adaptation, religious expressions show a stronger tendency towards convergence. Exposure to similar digital preachers, religious movements, and scriptural interpretations fosters increasingly uniform views of piety, morality, and Islamic practice. Globalisation thus produces both cultural diversification and religious homogenisation: culture remains open to negotiation and hybridity, while religion increasingly reflects shared transnational Islamic references.

The persistence of Malay culture can also be observed through its continuous adaptation to changing social circumstances. Historically, Malay society in Riau has never developed in isolation. Situated along the Strait of Malacca, the region has long participated in extensive commercial, intellectual, and religious exchanges connecting Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, and other parts of Southeast Asia (Andaya, 2008; Milner, 2011). Interactions with migrant communities from Minangkabau, Javanese, Batak, and Bugis backgrounds further diversify Malay culture. Wedding ceremonies, culinary practices, and community celebrations increasingly incorporate elements from multiple ethnic traditions while retaining Malay and Islamic characteristics. These developments highlight cultural adaptation as a key feature of Malay identity. Consequently, many traditions in Pekanbaru reflect both local developments and historical ties with Malay communities in present-day Malaysia, including *tepuk tepung tawar*, *kenduri kampung*, *berzanji*, *marhaban*, and communal Islamic celebrations, which remain important markers of cultural and religious identity (Effendy, 2004).

This tendency is evident in the growing influence of transnational religious authorities, the widespread consumption of online Islamic content, and the increasing emphasis on scriptural understandings of religion. While Malay Muslims continue to practise traditions such as *tepuk tepung tawar*, communal celebrations, and *berzanji* recitations, these are increasingly interpreted through broader Islamic discourses rather than solely local cultural meanings. As a result, Islamic expressions in Pekanbaru increasingly resemble those of Muslim communities across Indonesia and the wider Muslim world.

Therefore, the contemporary identity of Malay Muslims in Pekanbaru is best understood as asymmetrical hybridity shaped by deterritorialised re-Islamisation. Globalisation has not weakened Islam as a source of identity; rather, it has expanded its influence through digital communication and transnational religious networks. While Malay traditions remain important markers of local belonging, Islamic identity increasingly provides the dominant framework for interpreting cultural practices, moral values, and social norms. The result is neither complete cultural homogenisation nor a purely traditional Malay identity, but a dynamic process in which local culture persists as religious identity becomes increasingly globalised and standardised.

In this context, Malay traditions in Pekanbaru increasingly function as residual cultural markers rather than the primary basis of religious identity. They remain important symbols of historical continuity, ethnic belonging, and collective memory, preserving connections to Malay cultural heritage. However, their normative influence on everyday religious practice appears to be declining as transnational Islamic discourses gain greater prominence. While rituals such as *tepuk tepung tawar*, *berzanji*, *marhaban*, and other customary ceremonies remain visible in communal life, they are increasingly treated as cultural expressions that complement Islam rather than serve as primary sources of religious legitimacy. Malay traditions are therefore not disappearing but being repositioned within a hierarchy of meanings in which globally circulating Islamic interpretations hold greater authority. This condition reflects what may be described as asymmetrical hybridity, whereby local cultural forms persist as symbolic markers of identity, while the religious dimension of social life is increasingly shaped by deterritorialized Islamic norms, values, and authorities.

This development reflects the dual dynamics of glocalisation and deterritorialisation. Global Islamic ideas are localised through existing Malay cultural practices, allowing traditions to survive and adapt to changing social conditions. At the same time, expanding digital religious networks shift religious authority from local cultural institutions towards transnational Islamic references.

Consequently, the religious dimension of identity becomes increasingly standardised across Muslim societies, while the cultural dimension remains locally distinctive. This explains why contemporary Malay Muslims in Pekanbaru continue to identify themselves as culturally Malay while simultaneously exhibiting patterns of religiosity, moral discourse, and Islamic expression that closely resemble those found in other Muslim communities across Indonesia and beyond.

Therefore, the transformation of Malay-Muslim identity in Pekanbaru should not be understood as a process of cultural disappearance or simple homogenization. Rather, it represents a form of deterritorialized re-Islamization in which global Islamic discourses increasingly provide the dominant framework for identity construction, while Malay traditions endure as residual cultural markers that maintain symbolic links to local history, collective memory, and communal belonging. The result is an asymmetrical hybrid identity characterized by the coexistence of cultural persistence and religious convergence under conditions of globalization.

Nevertheless, the persistence of Malay traditions should not be underestimated. Even when their normative authority is increasingly overshadowed by transnational Islamic discourses, these traditions continue to play important social and cultural functions within the community. As Rahman et al. (2025) argue, local traditions can serve as communicative mechanisms that strengthen social cohesion, transmit religious and cultural values across generations, and facilitate the negotiation between modernity and local heritage. In the context of Pekanbaru, rituals such as *tepuk tepung tawar*, *berzanji*, and various communal celebrations continue to provide spaces where cultural identity is reproduced and collective solidarity is reinforced. Thus, while Malay traditions may increasingly function as residual cultural markers, they remain important resources through which local communities maintain a sense of continuity amid rapid social and religious transformation.

The continuing significance of these cultural practices highlights the importance of public policies aimed at cultural preservation. If globalization simultaneously encourages religious convergence and cultural differentiation, then the sustainability of Malay cultural identity cannot be left entirely to informal community initiatives. The Pekanbaru local government has attempted to address this challenge through programmes promoting Malay cultural values, the preservation of local arts, cultural tourism initiatives, and collaborations with the Riau Malay Customary Institution (LAMR). These efforts are reflected in the incorporation of Malay cultural content into



Figure 3.

Tepung Tawar Tradition (Source: Researcher, 2026)

educational curricula, the use of Malay-Islamic architectural symbols in public buildings, and various cultural events designed to strengthen public awareness of local heritage.

However, symbolic recognition alone is insufficient to preserve Malay-Muslim identity. Cultural identity is a dynamic and ever-changing process that must adapt to current social conditions while remaining connected to historical traditions. As a result, government initiatives should progressively include digital technology as tools for cultural preservation and transmission (Faiz, 2024). Given that social media and digital platforms have become key vehicles for shaping contemporary identities, disseminating Malay traditions via digital media is critical to ensure their continuous relevance among future generations. Traditional rituals, cultural narratives, and local histories can all be documented, promoted, and reinterpreted via online platforms, allowing them to remain visible in an increasingly digital public space.

In this regard, the future development of Malay-Muslim identity in Pekanbaru requires a balance between adaptation and preservation. While engagement with global Islamic discourses is an unavoidable consequence of globalization, efforts to sustain the city's distinctive Malay-Islamic character remain equally important. Increased budget allocations, improved cultural infrastructure, stronger partnerships with traditional institutions, and the integration of cultural preservation into local development policies can contribute to this objective. Such initiatives not only support the preservation of Malay cultural heritage but also strengthen community empowerment by ensuring that local cultural resources remain meaningful and relevant within an increasingly interconnected global environment.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that globalization has transformed the construction of Malay Muslim identity in Pekanbaru through the expansion of digital communication, transnational Islamic networks, and global religious flows. Rather than weakening religious identity, globalization has facilitated a process of re-Islamization by increasing access to Islamic teachings and amplifying religious discourse within the public sphere.

Drawing upon Robertson's concept of glocalization, the findings reveal that global Islamic influences are localized within existing Malay cultural frameworks. However, the study also shows that this process is accompanied by a gradual deterritorialization of Islamic identity. Consistent with Roy's argument, religious practices and expressions increasingly resemble those found in other Muslim communities beyond the Malay cultural sphere. The circulation of digital religious content, the growing influence of transnational Islamic authorities, and the strengthening of scripturalist perspectives contribute to this development.

Consequently, the emerging identity in Pekanbaru cannot be adequately understood simply as cultural hybridity. Instead, it is more accurately described as an asymmetrical hybridity characterized by deterritorialized re-Islamization. Islamic elements become increasingly globalized and standardized, while Malay cultural traditions continue to function as localized cultural markers. This finding contributes to broader debates on globalization and Muslim identity by demonstrating that globalization may simultaneously generate cultural hybridity and religious homogenization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this research and the preparation of this manuscript. Special appreciation is extended to the informants and community members in Pekanbaru who generously shared their time, experiences, and perspectives during the fieldwork. Their openness and insights have been invaluable for understanding the dynamics of Malay Muslim identity in the context of globalization.

REFERENCES

- Andaya, L. Y. (2008). *Leaves of the same tree: Trade and ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Asteriani, F., & AR, H. F. (2025). FILOSOFI RUMAH ADAT MELAYU: REPRESENTASI PERADABAN ISLAM. *Journal of Urban Regional Planning and Sustainable Environment*, 4(02).
- Bauman, Z. (2001). Identity in the globalising world. *Social Anthropology*, 9(2), 121–129.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2012). *The location of culture*. routledge.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- Effendy, T. (2004). *Tunjuk ajar dalam pantun Melayu*. Balai Kajian dan Pengembangan Budaya Melayu.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity youth and crisis* (Number 7). WW Norton & company.
- Faiz, F. A. (2024). Understanding cultural identity in a globalized world. *Journal of Social Signs Review*, 2(01), 10–18.
- Feener, R. M. (2017). *Islam in Southeast Asia to c. 1800*.
- Habermas, J. (1985). *The theory of communicative action: Volume 1: Reason and the rationalization of society* (Vol. 1). Beacon press.
- Hall, S. (2015). □ Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (pp. 392–403). Routledge.
- Hoesterey, J. B. (2009). *Sufis and Self-Help Gurus: Islamic Psychology, Religious Authority, and Muslim Subjectivity in Contemporary Indonesia*. University of Wisconsin–Madison.
- Hoesterey, J. B. (2022). Globalization and Islamic Indigenization in Southeast Asian Muslim Communities. *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture*, 3(2), 1–21.
- Ichwan, M. N., Amin, F., Khusairi, A., & Andrian, B. (2024). Digitalization and the shifting religious literature of Indonesian Muslims in the Era of Society 5.0. *Islamic Communication Journal*, 9(2), 245–266.
- Jouili, J. S., & Moors, A. (2014). Introduction: Islamic sounds and the politics of listening. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 87(4), 977–988.
- Kersten Ph D, C. (2009). Islam, Cultural Hybridity and Cosmopolitanism: New Muslim Intellectuals on Globalization. *Journal of International and Global Studies*, 1(1), 5.
- Khokhar, S., Pathan, H., Raheem, A., & Abbasi, A. M. (2020). Theory development in thematic analysis: Procedure and practice. *Review of Applied Management and Social Sciences*, 3(3), 423–433.
- Khotimah, K., Rosidi, I., & Embong, R. (2025). The Quest for Islamic Identity among Muslim University Students in Riau, Indonesia. *Ascarya: Journal of Islamic Science, Culture, and Social Studies*, 5(2), 180–196.
- Lin, Z., & Ang, M. F. (2025). Coexistence of tradition and modernity for cultural sustainability: The Teochew Opera approach in Malaysia. *Arts*, 14(5), 110.
- Milner, A. (2011). *the Malays*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mohyeddin, Z. (2024). Cultural identity in a globalized world: Navigating tradition and modernity. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Research*, 1(3), 106–115.
- Rahman, A. M. A., Ummah, A. H., Perwira, R., & Erlandy, T. D. (2025). SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION IN THE BETTULAK RITUAL: HARMONY BETWEEN LOCAL BELIEFS AND EPIDEMIC PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN LENDANG ARA VILLAGE. *Penamas*, 38(2), 235–249.

- Rosidi, I. (2020). Anak Muda Muslim di Pekanbaru: Konsumsi, Identitas dan Globalisasi. *MADANIA: Jurnal-Jurnal Keislaman*, 10(2), 67–72.
- Rosidi, I. (2021). Being active Muslim audiences: reception of Thai films in Indonesia. *Media Asia*, 48(4), 258–270.
- Rosidi, I., & Yazid, Y. (2021). The Fragmentation of Religious Authority in Provincial Towns in Indonesia: The Case of the mui (Indonesian Muslim Scholar Council) in Pekanbaru and Pontianak. *Manusya: Journal of Humanities*, 24(2), 185–203.
- Roy, O. (2004). *Globalized Islam: The search for a new ummah*. Columbia University Press.
- Roza, E. (2017). Aksara Arab-Melayu di Nusantara dan sumbangsuhnya dalam pengembangan khazanah intelektual. *Jurnal Tsaqafah*, 13(1), 177–204.
- Supandi, D. (2025). The Impact of Social Media on Muslim Religious Identity in the 21st Century Social and Cultural Perspective. *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 8(1), 1600–1610.
- Taqiyuddin, M., & Mohammed, S. S. (2025). Islam, Cultural Differences, and Intercultural Communication. *Cultural Conflict and Integration*, 2(2), 99–107.
- Tytarenko, V. (2021). *Transformation of religious identity in the context of globalization: causes and consequences*.
- Varpio, L., & Artino Jr, A. R. (2015). Answering the mail: replying to common questions about qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 7(4), 667–668.
- Wahid, S. H. (2024). Exploring the intersection of Islam and digital technology: A bibliometric analysis. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 10, 101085.
- Weintraub, A. N. (2011). *Islam and popular culture in Indonesia and Malaysia* (Vol. 24). Routledge.
- Widjayengrono, P. S. (2023). Identifikasi melayu dalam perspektif historis. *Ilmiah Kebudayaan Dan Kesejarahan*, 10(2), 78–90.