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The Dialectic of Islam Nusantara and Globalization: The Transformation of Nahdlatul Ulama's Religious Practices

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Abstract This study examines the dialectical relationship between Islam Nusantara and globalization through Homi K. Bhabha's Hybridity Theory, focusing on the transformation of Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) religious practices within Indonesian modernity. Utilizing a library research methodology, the paper analyzes how traditional Islamic organizations navigate between preserving local traditions and adapting to global influences. The findings reveal that NU employs a sophisticated cultural negotiation strategy, creating a "third space" where new hybrid identities emerge. Through cultural translation, traditional Islamic values are reinterpreted for modern contexts without losing their essence. Furthermore, NU's approach exhibits an ambivalence that simultaneously accepts and rejects various aspects of globalization. This hybridity enables the organization to maintain its traditional roots while constructively engaging with contemporary challenges, fostering innovative religious practices that blend local wisdom with global perspectives.

Studi ini mengkaji hubungan dialektis antara Islam Nusantara dan globalisasi melalui Teori Hibriditas Homi K. Bhabha, dengan fokus pada transformasi praktik keagamaan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dalam konteks modernitas Indonesia. Menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan, artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana organisasi Islam tradisional bernavigasi antara melestarikan tradisi lokal dan beradaptasi dengan pengaruh global. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa NU menerapkan strategi negosiasi budaya yang canggih, menciptakan "ruang ketiga" tempat identitas hibrida baru muncul. Melalui penerjemahan budaya, nilai-nilai Islam tradisional diinterpretasikan kembali untuk konteks modern tanpa kehilangan esensinya. Selain itu, pendekatan NU menunjukkan ambivalensi yang secara bersamaan menerima dan menolak berbagai aspek globalisasi. Hibriditas ini memungkinkan NU mempertahankan akar tradisinya sekaligus terlibat secara konstruktif dengan tantangan kontemporer, menghasilkan praktik keagamaan inovatif yang memadukan kearifan lokal dengan perspektif global.

Keywords Cultural translation; globalization; hybridity theory; Islam Nusantara; Nahdlatul Ulama; third space.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalization has created a complex landscape that challenges religious communities worldwide to reformulate their religious identities and practices. The flow of information, technology, and values that cross geographical boundaries at high speed has forced every religious tradition to confront unavoidable new realities (Hefner, 2020). This process not only presents opportunities for dialogue and cultural exchange but also raises profound concerns about the potential erosion of local identities and traditional values that have been rooted in society for centuries (Kasdi, 2018). This challenge becomes increasingly complex when religious communities must navigate between the demands to maintain the authenticity of tradition and the need to adapt to contemporary social, economic, and political dynamics.

Indonesia, as a country with the world's largest Muslim population of more than 270 million people, serves as a fascinating laboratory for understanding how Muslim communities respond to the challenges of globalization. Indonesia's geographical position as an archipelagic nation located at the crossroads of global trade routes has shaped the unique character of Nusantara Islam, which from the beginning has demonstrated remarkable adaptability and acculturation with local cultures (Susanto & Karimullah, 2016). This uniqueness becomes increasingly manifest in the era of globalization, where Indonesia faces a fundamental dilemma of how to maintain Islamic identity rooted in local traditions while remaining relevant to the increasingly rapid demands of global modernity (Alwi HS, 2021). This dynamic involves not only theological aspects but also social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions that interweave to shape the face of contemporary Indonesian Islam.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), as Indonesia's largest Islamic organization with membership reaching more than 90 million people, becomes a highly strategic object of study in understanding the dynamics of religious practice transformation in the era of globalization. Since its establishment in 1926, NU has demonstrated unique characteristics in its ability to adapt traditional Islamic values to the demands of modern times without losing its spiritual roots (Murtaufiq, 2018).

This organization has proven its capacity to survive and develop through various phases of Indonesian history, from the colonial era, independence, the Old Order, the New Order, to the reform era, consistently demonstrating extraordinary adaptive capacity (Goncing, 2015). NU's uniqueness lies in its moderate approach

that is neither anti-modernity nor abandons tradition, thus creating a distinctive model of Islam that can serve as a reference for other Muslim communities worldwide.

The transformation of religious practices in the era of globalization cannot be understood simply through the traditional versus modern dichotomy, as the occurring reality is far more complex than such binary division. The phenomenon occurring within the NU community demonstrates that the process of adaptation to modernity does not always mean rejection of tradition, just as the preservation of tradition does not always mean resistance to modernity (Bhabha, 1994). This complexity requires an analytical approach capable of capturing subtle nuances in the negotiation process between various elements of tradition and modernity that interact within dynamic social spaces. The dichotomous approach is not only inadequate for explaining this phenomenon but can also be misleading in understanding the actual dynamics occurring within contemporary religious communities.

The hybridity theory developed by Homi K. Bhabha offers a highly relevant and appropriate analytical framework for understanding the complexity of religious practice transformation in the era of globalization. Bhabha fundamentally critiques binary understandings of cultural identity that tend to view culture as homogeneous and static entities, and proposes the concept of "third space" as a liminal space where new identities are formed through creative and dynamic hybridization processes (Gairola & Ali, 2017). This third space concept explains how encounters between different cultural elements do not always result in the domination of one culture over another, but can create negotiation spaces that enable the emergence of new forms of identity that cannot be predicted beforehand. This theoretical framework is highly powerful in analyzing the phenomenon of religious practice hybridization as it can capture the ambivalence and ambiguity inherent in such processes.

Bhabha's concept of third space has particular relevance in analyzing religious practices because religion is often understood as the domain most resistant to change and hybridization. However, reality demonstrates that religious practices often become the most dynamic arena in the process of identity negotiation, where various elements of tradition, modernity, locality, and globality interact in complex and unexpected ways (Masduki, 2018). Third space in the religious context is not merely a physical or geographical space, but rather a discursive and symbolic space where religious meanings are negotiated, transformed, and reproduced in new forms. This space enables the emergence of religious practices that cannot be simply categorized

as traditional or modern, local or global, but instead contain elements from various categories in creative and innovative synthesis.

Research on the hybridization of NU's religious practices in the era of globalization becomes highly important because the Islam Nusantara phenomenon developed by this organization demonstrates a unique model in responding to globalization challenges that differs from patterns commonly found in academic literature (Firdausi et al., 2024). This model is not only theoretically important for enriching academic understanding of religious dynamics in the era of globalization, but also has significant practical significance in providing alternatives for other Muslim communities facing similar challenges. The urgency of this research increases given the minimal comprehensive studies that use the theoretical framework of hybridization to analyze the phenomenon of religious transformation in the Indonesian context, despite Indonesia as the largest Muslim country having great potential to make significant theoretical contributions to contemporary Islamic studies.

Nahdlatul Ulama demonstrates a highly distinctive strategy in responding to globalization, fundamentally different from the two extremes commonly found in the contemporary Islamic world. Unlike puritanical or fundamentalist Islamic movements that tend to totally reject modernity and seek to return to an Islamic model considered pure from the past, NU does not show strong resistance to elements of modernity that are deemed non-contradictory to fundamental Islamic principles (Van Bruinessen, 2013). Conversely, NU also differs from liberal Islamic movements that tend to totally adopt modernity at the risk of losing authentic Islamic identity. NU's unique strategy lies in its negotiative approach, which enables this organization to create creative synthesis between tradition and modernity without losing integrity in both domains.

The Islam Nusantara model developed by NU demonstrates the possibility of a third alternative emerging that is not captured in the puritan-liberal dichotomy that often dominates discourse on contemporary Islam. This model is not only important in the Indonesian context but also has the potential to provide inspiration for Muslim communities in various parts of the world facing similar challenges in the era of globalization. Islam Nusantara demonstrates that it is possible to maintain the substance of Islamic teachings while remaining open to dialogue with modernity and universal values such as democracy, human rights, and pluralism. This model also shows that locality and tradition do not always become obstacles to modernization,

but can instead become sources of strength and uniqueness in facing global homogenization (Murfi & Fitriyani, 2018).

Although various studies on Indonesian Islam and specifically on Nahdlatul Ulama have been conducted, most previous research has not used the theoretical framework of hybridization to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of religious practice transformation. Research such as conducted by Firdausi et al. (2024) on Islam Nusantara, and Hefner (2020) on civil Islam in Indonesia have made important contributions to understanding Indonesian Islamic dynamics, but have not specifically used the lens of hybridization to analyze the complexity of identity negotiation processes occurring within NU communities. This gap becomes important to fill because the hybridization framework can provide deeper insights into the micro-mechanisms that enable NU to create successful synthesis between tradition and modernity.

Based on the background and problematic outlined above, this research aims to comprehensively analyze the hybridization process of religious practices in Nahdlatul Ulama communities in the era of globalization using Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical framework of hybridization. Bhabha's theoretical framework is particularly suited to this study for several compelling reasons. First, it was developed to theorize postcolonial cultural encounters a condition directly analogous to NU's historical navigation between Arab-Islamic intellectual heritage and the diverse local traditions of the Nusantara. Second, unlike analytical frameworks that privilege either tradition or modernity as fixed poles, Bhabha's approach is fundamentally premised on transcending binary oppositions, rendering it especially appropriate for phenomena that resist simple categorization within conventional dichotomic schemas. Third, his conceptual apparatus has been productively applied to Islamic contexts in Southeast Asian and global scholarship, demonstrating its cross-cultural analytical validity (Gairola & Ali, 2017; Kersten, 2009).

Specifically, this research draws on four interrelated concepts from Bhabha's framework: (1) the "third space," a liminal negotiation zone where new hybrid identities are produced beyond and between fixed cultural categorizations; (2) "cultural translation," the interpretive and transformative process through which values are adapted rather than mechanically transferred across cultural boundaries, generating new meanings in the process; (3) "ambivalence," the productive and constitutive tension arising from the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of dominant cultural norms and modernizing pressures; and (4) "non-binary identity negotiation," the fluid, dynamic, and ongoing construction of collective selfhood that

refuses reduction to simplistic dichotomies between tradition and modernity. Together, these four concepts constitute a robust analytical toolkit for capturing the nuance and complexity of NU's religious practice transformation. The primary focus of the research is to understand how NU creates third space as a negotiation space between classical Islamic tradition and the demands of global modernity, as well as to identify specific mechanisms that enable creative synthesis between various elements often considered contradictory. Through in-depth analysis of concrete religious practices within NU communities, this research seeks to reveal the complexity of hybridization processes that cannot be captured through conventional dichotomic approaches, and to provide more comprehensive understanding of contemporary Indonesian Islamic dynamics in the context of globalization.

This study employs a library research approach with a qualitative-descriptive method. This research design was selected to analyze the transformation of NU's religious practices within the context of globalization through comprehensive literature review. The research focus is on how NU develops hybridity strategies in confronting the challenges of global modernity, utilizing Homi K. Bhabha's Hybridity Theory as the primary analytical framework (Nasution, 2023). Primary data were collected from official NU documents, congress decisions (*muktamar*), and relevant writings by NU figures. Secondary data were obtained from books, academic journals, articles, and previous research on Nusantara Islam, globalization, and hybridity theory. Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation study focusing on the period 1990-2020, which represents the era of intensified globalization in Indonesia (Zuchri, 2021).

Data analysis employed a hermeneutic approach with the following steps: (1) data classification based on hybridity themes, (2) data interpretation using Bhabha's concepts of third space, cultural translation, and ambivalence, (3) synthesis of findings to identify transformation patterns in NU's religious practices, and (4) drawing conclusions about the hybridity model of Nusantara Islam within the globalization context.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. The Concept of Third Space in NU's Religious Practies

Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of cultural dynamics in the postcolonial era, particularly in the context of identity negotiation between tradition

and modernity. The concept of “third space” developed by Bhabha refers to a liminal space that cannot be rigidly categorized as either traditional or modern, but rather constitutes an active negotiation zone where new identities are formed through dynamic interaction processes between various cultural elements (Faqihuddin, 2021). Within the context of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), this third space manifests concretely in various religious practices that successfully combine elements of traditional Nusantara Islam with elements of global modernity, creating a unique synthesis that is neither fully traditional nor fully modern (Mukhlisin et al., 2018). This third space enables NU to maintain traditional authenticity while remaining relevant and responsive to contemporary challenges.

The clearest manifestation of third space in NU can be seen through the transformation of pesantren institutions as traditional educational establishments that have undergone significant metamorphosis in the era of globalization. NU pesantrens have evolved from educational institutions that exclusively taught classical texts into hybrid educational institutions that integrate modern curricula, information technology, and practical skills within learning structures that maintain traditional characteristics (Mukodi, 2017). Pesantren Tebuireng, as one of NU's leading pesantrens, maintains the tradition of studying kitab kuning (classical texts) as its core curriculum while developing modern programs such as colleges, universities, and research centers integrated with national and international educational standards (Rifah, 2023). This transformation creates a hybrid space that enables santri (students) to access the intellectual heritage of classical Islam while preparing themselves with competencies required to face contemporary challenges.

Beyond Java-based educational institutions, the manifestation of third space in NU is equally evident in a range of non-pesantren and extra-Javanese contexts across the Indonesian archipelago. In Kalimantan and Sulawesi, NU's regional branches (wilayah) have cultivated hybrid forums for community dispute resolution that simultaneously operate within Islamic jurisprudential frameworks and local adat (customary law) traditions, creating liminal spaces where Islamic and indigenous normative systems are neither collapsed into one another nor kept rigidly separate, but continuously negotiated. In West Nusa Tenggara, NU's collaboration with local pesantren networks in the Sasak community demonstrates how third space can emerge through the integration of distinctively local Islamic literary traditions (including indigenous Sasak Islamic manuscripts) with the broader curriculum of classical Nusantara learning. In urban metropolitan settings such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Makassar, NU-affiliated professional associations, women's

organizations (Fatayat NU, Muslimat NU), and youth bodies (Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, Ikatan Pelajar Nahdlatul Ulama) have established organizational spaces that combine traditional Islamic learning and community solidarity with contemporary professional development, social advocacy, and civic engagement. These cases collectively demonstrate that the third space produced by NU is not geographically or institutionally confined to Javanese pesantren environments, but constitutes an archipelago-wide dynamic that adapts its hybrid forms in accordance with diverse local cultural and social ecologies.

The characteristics of third space in NU's ritual religious practices also demonstrate creative adaptation that maintains the essence of spirituality while utilizing advances in modern technology. Traditions such as tahlilan, yasinan, and maulid, which are cultural heritage of Nusantara Islam, undergo adaptation processes without losing their spiritual substance and theological meaning (Ghozali et al., 2020). The use of digital applications for scheduling religious activities, live streaming of studies and religious gatherings, and utilization of social media for community coordination and communication demonstrate how NU successfully creates new spaces that combine oral tradition with digital technology. (Brown & Fauzia, 2019) This adaptation is not merely technology adoption, but rather integration with profound thinking that considers spiritual and communal aspects of traditional religious practices.

NU's success in creating this third space can be seen from the organization's ability to maintain traditional legitimacy while enhancing contemporary relevance. The third space created by NU enables Indonesian Muslims to remain connected with the intellectual and spiritual heritage of classical Islam while actively participating in modern life. This third space also becomes an arena where young NU generations can explore their religious identity without having to choose dichotomously between tradition and modernity. This creates a model of religious practice that is inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable, capable of responding to the dynamics of changing times without losing its spiritual and intellectual roots.

2.2. Cultural Translation in the Transformation of Islamic Values

The concept of cultural translation in Bhabha's theory refers to a complex process where cultural values are not transferred mechanically or literally, but undergo an interpretative transformation process that creates new meanings relevant to local contexts (Kersten, 2009). Within NU's context, cultural translation occurs when traditional Islamic values are reinterpreted to respond to modernity's challenges

without losing their fundamental essence and theological authenticity (Jubba et al., 2022). This process involves profound intellectual negotiation between classical Islamic texts and contemporary realities, creating interpretive spaces that enable meaning transformation without substantial distortion. Cultural translation in NU is not merely a passive adaptation process, but rather a creative process involving meaning reconstruction that considers theological, sociological, and anthropological dimensions of religious practice.

The concept of “Islam Nusantara” popularized and developed by NU represents the most significant result of a complex and multidimensional cultural translation process (Schäfer, 2019). Islam Nusantara is neither an attempt to Indonesianize Islam in the sense of syncretism or religious relativism, nor an attempt to Islamize Indonesia in the sense of Arabization or importing Arab culture, but rather an intellectual effort to understand and actualize Islam within the rich and diverse local cultural context of the Nusantara (Khoirurrijal, 2018).

This conceptualization is firmly grounded not only in academic scholarship but equally in NU’s own official institutional discourse and the writings of its leading figures. At the 33rd NU Congress (Muktamar ke-33) held in Jombang in August 2015 (widely regarded as the formal institutionalization of the Islam Nusantara concept) NU articulated it as a framework for promoting peaceful, tolerant, and contextually sensitive Islam deeply rooted in the local cultural traditions of the Indonesian archipelago (Rumadi et al., 2016).

Said Aqil Siradj, as Chairman of NU’s Executive Board (Ketua Umum PBNU) during the period 2010–2021, consistently emphasized in his public statements and writings that Islam Nusantara is not a theological deviation or syncretic innovation, but rather a methodological orientation toward understanding and practicing Islam in creative and respectful dialogue with Nusantara culture (Siradj, 1999). Similarly, KH. Ahmad Mustofa Bisri “Gus Mus” (one of NU’s most revered ulama and poet), articulated Islam Nusantara as the natural expression of an Islam that has been genuinely lived, internalized, and humanized within the ethical and aesthetic world of the Indonesian archipelago. These official and authoritative voices from within NU itself underscore that the concept of Islam Nusantara is not merely an academic construct imposed from without, but a living theological and cultural commitment articulated from within the organization’s own leadership and intellectual tradition. This cultural translation process involves intensive negotiation between universal Islamic principles that are normative in nature and local wisdom that has been organically rooted in Indonesian society for centuries. The result of this process is an

Islamic model that is authentically Indonesian yet universally Islamic, enabling Indonesian Muslims to express their Islam in familiar cultural idioms without sacrificing theological orthodoxy.

The practice of religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*) developed and implemented by NU also demonstrates a cultural translation process that shows the hermeneutical sophistication of this organization. The concept of *wasatiyyah* derived from classical Islamic texts and the theological tradition of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah is translated into concrete practices such as interfaith tolerance, constructive interfaith dialogue, firm rejection of extremism and radicalism, and promotion of universal humanitarian values (Saleh, 2025). NU successfully translates abstract theological concepts into concrete and relevant social praxis within Indonesia's religiously, ethnically, and culturally plural context. This translation process involves not only intellectual dimensions but also practical dimensions that enable the concept of *wasatiyyah* to become operational guidance in social life. This translation also demonstrates NU's ability to bridge the gap between theological theory and practical social application.

In the economic field, NU develops and implements Islamic economic concepts that not only adopt models from the Middle East or classical literature but also integrate traditional Nusantara economic practices that have proven sustainable and equitable (Haris, 2020). Pesantren cooperatives, Baitul Maal wat Tamwil (BMT), and community economic empowerment programs demonstrate how NU translates Islamic economic principles into Indonesia's specific socio-economic context. This cultural translation process produces an Islamic economic model that is not only Islamically compliant but also culturally appropriate and economically viable (Ahmad, 2010). NU successfully creates a synthesis between Islamic economic principles and traditional Indonesian economic practices, producing a holistic and sustainable economic empowerment model that considers spiritual, social, and material dimensions in an integrated manner.

2.3. Ambivalence toward Global Modernity

Ambivalence constitutes a fundamental characteristic in Bhabha's hybridity theory that refers to attitudes that are contradictory yet simultaneously productive toward modernization and globalization processes (Hana et al., 2025). Within NU's context, this ambivalence manifests in complex attitudes toward global modernity, where the organization is selective in accepting aspects considered positive and constructive while rejecting or modifying aspects considered contrary to Islamic values or potentially destructive to existing socio-cultural order. This ambivalence is

not inconsistency or confusion, but rather an intelligent strategy that enables NU to remain actively engaged in modernity without becoming victims of global cultural homogenization (Triani et al., 2020). This ambivalent attitude enables NU to maintain agency in the modernization process, where the organization becomes an actively engaged actor rather than a passive recipient of global change.

Recent scholarship has significantly deepened the analytical understanding of this ambivalence within NU. Arifianto (2024) argues that NU's ambivalence is not merely a pragmatic organizational response to external pressures, but constitutes a theologically grounded hermeneutical stance rooted in the *usul al-fiqh* principle of *maslaha* (public interest), which allows for contextually sensitive engagement with modernity without compromising doctrinal foundations. From a different vantage point, Meyer (2020) situates NU's ambivalence within broader comparative frameworks of religious mediation and mediatization, noting that organizations like NU occupy a distinctive position as "mediating institutions" that simultaneously produce, translate, and regulate cultural meanings at the interface between religious tradition and contemporary global culture. Alatas & Slama (2026) further elaborate on the ambiguity embedded in NU's public positioning, demonstrating through ethnographic and discourse-analytical approaches how NU's spokespeople and *ulama* strategically deploy both traditionalist and modernizing vocabularies depending on their interlocutors. This producing a form of communicative ambivalence that is not contradictory but rather constitutive of the organization's social and religious authority. Taken together, these recent works corroborate and deepen Bhabha's theoretical insight that ambivalence is not a sign of ideological incoherence, but a structurally productive feature of hybrid cultural agency in postcolonial settings.

NU demonstrates paradigmatic ambivalence toward economic globalization that reflects profound understanding of the complexity and contradictions of contemporary global economic systems (Rofik & Mukhsinun, 2023). On one hand, the organization proactively develops Islamic economic networks integrated with global financial systems, utilizes modern financial instruments, and participates in interconnected global markets (Al-Butary et al., 2022). On the other hand, NU maintains fundamental criticism of exploitative aspects of capitalism, economic systems that widen social inequality, and business practices contrary to Islamic social justice principles (Ashari & Castrawijaya, 2024). The development of Islamic banks, Islamic insurance, and halal investment platforms demonstrates strategic acceptance of modern economic systems, but with substantial modifications according to Islamic

principles and social justice values. This ambivalence enables NU to utilize opportunities from economic globalization while mitigating risks and negative impacts that could harm the ummah (Hajar, 2025).

In education, NU adopts modern educational systems while consistently maintaining and strengthening pesantren educational traditions that have been tested for centuries. Integration of national curriculum with pesantren curriculum creates a hybrid educational model that enables students to access modern knowledge, science and technology, and skills required for global competition while preserving Islamic traditions and Nusantara culture (Syafii et al., 2025). However, NU also firmly rejects aspects of Western education considered contrary to Islamic values, such as excessive liberalism that can damage morals and ethics, or secularism that ignores spiritual and transcendental dimensions in the educational process. This ambivalence creates a comprehensive and balanced educational model that prepares young generations for success in modern life while maintaining strong religious and cultural identity. This approach also enables NU to develop critical thinking toward modernity while still benefiting from advances in knowledge and technology (Zamimah, 2018).

Intelligent ambivalent attitudes are also evident in the use of communication and information technology, where NU extensively utilizes social media, websites, digital applications, and online platforms for dakwah, organizational coordination, and engagement with broader society. Simultaneously, NU remains vigilant and critical of negative technological impacts such as the spread of hoaxes and misinformation, negative content that can damage morals, degradation of social values, and the potential for technology addiction that can disturb spiritual development. NU develops digital literacy programs and guidelines for responsive and ethical technology use, creating frameworks to utilize technology as tools for positive social change while mitigating negative risks and consequences. This ambivalence enables NU to become a digitally literate organization while maintaining values and principles fundamental to organizational identity.

2.4. Non-Binary Identity Negotiation Strategies

NU develops and implements identity negotiation strategies that fundamentally reject simple dichotomies between traditional-modern and create more fluid, dynamic, and adaptive identity models (Ashcroft et al., 1996). This strategy is based on understanding that identity is not a fixed or static entity, but rather a construction that is continuously negotiated and reconstructed in response to changing

circumstances and developing challenges. This non-binary approach enables NU to maintain authenticity and legitimacy while remaining relevant and responsive to rapid and unpredictable developments. This identity negotiation strategy also reflects intelligent understanding of the nature of cultural identity in the globalization era, where boundaries between various cultural categories become increasingly porous. NU successfully creates a resilient and adaptable identity model in dynamic and complex environments.

This non-binary identity negotiation strategy gains further critical depth when situated within the broader postcolonial and global discourse on Muslim identity. Mahmood Mamdani's seminal work *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (2005) offers a compelling analytical counterpoint that illuminates why NU's approach represents a principled rejection of externally imposed identity binaries. Mamdani argues that the "good Muslim/bad Muslim" distinction is fundamentally a Cold War and post-9/11 political construction through which Western powers categorize Muslim communities according to their compliance with or resistance to Western liberal norms—a binary that reduces the profound diversity of Muslim intellectual and social life to a single axis of political evaluation. NU's non-binary identity negotiation can be read as a sustained institutional refusal of precisely this imposed binary: rather than accepting the terms of the "moderate versus radical" or "good versus bad" Muslim dichotomy, NU articulates its own internally generated criteria for authentic Islamic identity rooted in the epistemological traditions of Ahlul-sunnah wal Jama'ah and the cultural heritage of the Nusantara. This reading is powerfully reinforced by Abdalla (2021) in his essay "Islam Nusantara sebagai Cosmopolis," in which he argues that Islam Nusantara constitutes not merely a local adaptation of global Islam, but a cosmopolitan intellectual project: a vision of Islamic civilization that is at once rooted in the particularity of Nusantara culture and oriented toward universal human values of justice, pluralism, and peaceful coexistence. For Ulil, Islam Nusantara's non-binary character (its simultaneous embeddedness in tradition and openness to the world) positions it as a contribution to global Islamic thought rather than merely a regional variant, transforming NU's local identity negotiation into a cosmopolitan intellectual stance of global significance. Together, Mamdani and Ulil Abshar Abdalla's perspectives underscore that NU's non-binary identity negotiation is not simply organizational pragmatism, but a theoretically significant and politically conscious refusal of reductive identity impositions from both within and without the Islamic world.

The concept of “Pribumisasi Islam” (Indigenization of Islam) developed and popularized by Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) represents one of the most influential and revolutionary identity negotiation strategies in Indonesian Islamic context. (Ramdhan, 2018) Pribumisasi Islam is not an attempt to reduce Islam's universality or compromise the authenticity of religious teachings, but rather a hermeneutical approach that enables Islam to adapt to local culture without losing fundamental essence and basic characteristics (Aliyah, 2024). This indigenization practice creates an Islamic model that is authentic yet not rigid or dogmatic, universal in basic principles yet contextual in application and manifestation. This strategy enables Islam to become organically integrated with Indonesian culture without becoming syncretic or losing its distinctive characteristics. Pribumisasi Islam also enables Indonesian Muslims to express their Islam in familiar idioms without sacrificing authentic spirituality.

The development of contemporary *fiqh* by NU scholars also demonstrates intelligent identity negotiation strategies and rigorous methodology. Through the *bahtsul masail* methodology that has been ongoing for centuries, NU develops *fiqh* understanding that is responsive to contemporary challenges while remaining grounded in Islamic jurisprudence tradition (Nasih, 2009). NU fatwas on technology, modern economics, bioethics, environmental issues, and other contemporary social issues demonstrate this organization's ability to maintain traditional authority while providing relevant and practical guidance for the modern era (Kurniawan & Maheswari, 2021). The *ijtihad* process conducted by NU is not merely mechanical application of existing rules, but creative interpretation that considers the spirit and objectives of shariah in contemporary reality contexts. This strategy enables NU to maintain credibility as religious authority while demonstrating relevance and application of Islamic education in modern life.

In the political context, NU develops and implements the concept of *khittah* (organizational movement framework) that enables the organization to engage in practical politics without becoming a political party or losing its character as a religious organization (Mahatma, 2017). The *khittah* strategy enables NU to maintain independence and objectivity while still making significant contributions to nation-building and democratic development. This approach reflects understanding of the relationship between religion and politics, where NU can influence political processes and policy-making without becoming partisan or sacrificing its religious mission. *Khittah* also enables NU to maintain unity and cohesion as a religious organization while accommodating diversity in preferences and political affiliations

among its members. This strategy creates a principled yet pragmatic model of political engagement that enables religious organizations to contribute to democratic oversight and government programs without being hijacked by any political interests.

2.5. Hybrid Religious Practices in the Digital Era

The digital era has created unprecedented opportunities and challenges for religious practice, opening new spaces for hybrid and innovative spiritual expression. NU has proactively utilized digital technology to develop dakwah and religious education models that successfully combine tradition with technological innovation, creating synthesis that maintains spiritual substance while utilizing the capabilities of digital platforms (Hilmy, 2012). Digital platforms such as NU Online and various mobile applications developed by NU enable the dissemination of traditional Islamic teachings through modern media that is easily accessible and attractive to generations born in the digital era (Fatmasari et al., 2021). This digitalization of religious practice is not merely transferring content from analog to digital format, but rather mature transformation that considers unique characteristics of digital media and preferences of digital audiences. NU successfully creates a comprehensive digital ecosystem that supports various aspects of religious life, from education and spiritual guidance to community building and social networking.

Online religious study practices that developed rapidly during the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrate NU's extraordinary adaptive capacity to dramatic and unprecedented changes in circumstances. NU kyai and ustadz quickly adopted digital platforms to deliver kitab kuning studies, religious lectures, and spiritual guidance, while maintaining the etiquette and traditions of pesantren studies that have been established for centuries. This creates a unique hybrid space where oral tradition meets digital technology in organic and authentic ways. Online studies not only maintain content and methodology of traditional studies but also preserve the distinctive atmosphere and ethics of pesantren learning environments (Haq & Rifai, 2018). This innovation enables continuity of educational and spiritual activities during restriction periods while simultaneously expanding access to broader audiences who previously could not access traditional studies due to geographical or practical constraints.

The development of digital libraries containing complete collections of manuscripts, classical texts, and scholarly works demonstrates NU's comprehensive efforts to preserve intellectual heritage while making it accessible to digital generations accustomed to instant access and searchable content (Setia & Asep, 2021).

This digitalization not only facilitates access to rare and valuable texts but also creates new possibilities for advanced study and research on Nusantara Islamic intellectual treasures previously limited to small circles of specialists (Murharyana et al., 2024). Digital libraries also enable cross-referencing, search capabilities, and analytical tools that can significantly enhance scholarly work and research in Islamic studies. Preserving manuscripts in digital format also ensures continuity and accessibility of intellectual heritage for future generations, protecting valuable knowledge from damage or loss that may occur to physical manuscripts.

Integration of technology in daily religious practices is also evident in the use of applications for prayer schedules, qibla direction, Quranic recitation, and spiritual reminders customized for Indonesian Muslims and particularly for the NU community (Hidayat, 2024). These applications not only provide practical utilities but also incorporate distinctive elements from NU traditions and practices, creating digital tools that authentically represent NU's approach to Islamic spirituality. The development of social media strategies and online community platforms also enables NU to maintain connection and cohesion among geographically dispersed members, facilitating communication, coordination, and mutual support in ways previously impossible (Sodikin et al., 2023). Digital platforms also enable young generations to engage with NU traditions and teachings in formats familiar and attractive to them, ensuring continuity and relevance of NU's mission for future generations while maintaining authenticity and integrity of core teachings and values.

3. CONCLUSION

The analysis of Nahdlatul Ulama's identity transformation in the era of globalization through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's hybridity theory reveals the complexity and sophistication of adaptive strategies developed by Indonesia's largest Islamic organization. This research demonstrates that NU has successfully created a hybrid identity model that rejects simplistic dichotomies between traditional and modern paradigms, instead developing a fluid and dynamic approach in negotiating with the challenges of global modernity. Bhabha's concept of the "third space" proves highly relevant for understanding how NU creates liminal spaces where traditional religious practices encounter elements of modernity, producing syntheses that are both authentic and innovative. The transformation of pesantren institutions, adaptation of religious rituals with digital technology, and development of online platforms for Islamic outreach demonstrate NU's capacity to maintain spiritual substance while leveraging modern technological advances.

The process of cultural translation undertaken by NU reveals hermeneutical sophistication in interpreting traditional Islamic values for contemporary contexts without sacrificing theological authenticity. The concept of Islam Nusantara, implementation of religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*), and development of Islamic economics integrated with traditional Nusantara practices constitute concrete evidence of successful cultural translation that creates new meanings relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic reality. NU has succeeded in translating universal Islamic principles into familiar local cultural idioms, creating a model of religiosity that is authentically Indonesian while remaining universally Islamic. This process involves not only intellectual dimensions but also practical ones, generating operational guidelines that can be implemented in communal life.

NU's ambivalent attitude toward global modernity reflects an intelligent strategy that enables the organization to selectively adopt positive aspects of modernity while rejecting or modifying elements that conflict with Islamic values. This ambivalence does not constitute inconsistency, but rather represents a strategic approach that allows NU to maintain agency in the modernization process. In the fields of economics, education, and technology, NU demonstrates the ability to capitalize on opportunities from globalization while mitigating risks and negative impacts that could harm the *ummah*. This strategy enables NU to become an active agent in the global modernization process without becoming a passive victim of cultural homogenization.

The non-binary identity negotiation strategy developed by NU, particularly through the concept of Islam's indigenization, development of contemporary *fiqh*, and implementation of political *khittah*, demonstrates a resilient and adaptable identity model. NU has successfully created a framework that enables the organization to actively engage in responding to various contemporary challenges while maintaining traditional legitimacy and modern relevance. The digital era has opened new spaces for hybrid religious practices. NU has proactively utilized digital technology to develop models of Islamic outreach and education that integrate tradition with innovation. Digitalization of religious practices, online religious gatherings, and development of digital libraries demonstrate extraordinary adaptive capacity while preserving authenticity and spiritual substance. NU's success in creating this hybrid identity provides significant contributions to understanding religious dynamics in the era of globalization and offers a model that can be adapted by other religious organizations in confronting the challenges of global modernity.

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