

Glocal muslim subjectivities and urban publics: transnational mobility, narrative ethics, and heritage gaze in contemporary Indonesian fiction

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

This article examines how contemporary Indonesian popular Islamic fiction narrates urban millennial spirituality by forming “glocal” Muslim subjectivities in modern urban publics. This research asks how protagonists cultivate piety, negotiate Islamic norms across borders, and transform heritage-looking into ethical judgment. This analysis is organized through three intersecting axes: self-fashioning of piety, transnationality/glocalization, and knowledge-pilgrimage/tourist gaze.

Design/methodology/approach

This study employs qualitative comparative close reading of three best-selling novels, 99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), *Api Tauhid* (2014), and *Pulang* (2015). Using comparative close reading, this article traces how ritual timing, embodied visibility, temporal discipline, mentor and communal mediation, and moments of ethical decision become narrative mechanisms through which piety is made legible. This analysis situates these mechanisms within study on public Islam, hijrah, urban Sufism, and critical heritage and tourism studies to show how popular fiction translates religious practice, mobility, and heritage-looking into forms of urban Muslim subjectivity.

Findings

This novels present piety as active practice, not inherited identity. Self-fashioning appears through micro-ritual adaptation, reputational ethics, exemplary endurance, and belated moral return. Transnational routes across Europe, Middle East, and East Asia produce glocal norm-translation through boundary work over time, consumption, speech, and visibility. Pilgrimage and heritage gazes direct attention to traces, archives, and memory-sites, turning affect (awe, shame, and longing) into ethical choice. This article proposes a cross-genre typology of urban millennial spirituality: heritage illumination, archival endurance, and moral homecoming.

Originality/value

This article connects narratology, mobility studies, and heritage studies to show how popular fiction scripts ethical techniques for inhabiting contemporary Indonesian public Islam.

Introduction

Indonesia’s urban middle class has become a crucial site for the public performance of piety. Prayer discipline, modest fashion, Qur’anic literacy, and hijrah as a narrated moral turn now circulate

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through campuses, cafés, and digital platforms, making religiosity an everyday urban competence rather than a private creed. This visibility matters because Indonesian public Islam is shaped by networks, markets, and media logics that privilege portable and shareable signs of virtue, while also generating anxieties over authenticity and moral authority (Hasan, 2009; Millie & Baulch, 2024). As the world's largest Muslim-majority, these aesthetics of piety reshape urban publics, gendered respectability, and civic belonging. Popular culture has become a major channel for this reworked religiosity. Islamic books, novels, films, and lifestyle icons allow young Muslims to inhabit global modernity without abandoning devotional aspiration (Akmaliah, 2014). Within this field, Islamic fiction does more than reflect social change. It teaches self-cultivation, stages ethical choices under urban pressure, and turns transnational mobility into a grammar of spiritual meaning, making the contemporary of tauhid stories and hijrah-inflected narratives therefore forms a socially urgent archive for close reading (Hasan, 2019; Rahman et al., 2021).

Previous studies on contemporary Indonesian religiosity have shown how piety enters public life through commodification, celebrity mediation, and new infrastructures of religious belonging (Hasan, 2009; Millie & Baulch, 2024). Later work identifies hijrah as a youth-oriented moral project, staged in festivals and amplified on Instagram, where testimony, branding, and affect reshape urban claims to Islamic authenticity (Hasan, 2019; Rahman et al., 2021). Other studies trace urban Sufism as devotional practice moving into leisure spaces, associations, and city-based communities, thereby complicating the opposition between formalist legalism and experiential spirituality (Howell, 2001; Sodik & Sujibto, 2023; Miichi, 2019). Literary and cultural studies have also noted the commercial success of popular Islamic novels and their role in transmitting Islam through narrative pleasure (Muzakki, 2017; Rani, 2012). Yet these discussions rarely converge in comparative close reading. What remains underexplored is how transnational itineraries, heritage gazes, and narrative ethics jointly produce glocal Muslim subjectivities across different genres of Indonesian fiction. Existing studies tend to separate theme from form, leaving focalization, voice, and genre-specific plotting insufficiently connected to contemporary urban publics.

This article reads 99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), *Api Tauhid* (2014), and *Pulang* (2015) as three contemporary Islamic novels that stage urban millennial spirituality through different narrative forms. It asks how the protagonists fashion religious selves through ritual practice, moral discipline, and guidance of mentors or communities, and how these practices are shaped differently by travelogue, hagiographic reconstruction, and thriller narration. It also traces how mobility routes (from Vienna, Paris, to Andalusia, Madinah to Turkey, and Sumatra, Jakarta, Hong Kong, and Japan) produce glocal Muslim identities and require negotiation of Islamic norms within modern urban publics. Finally, it analyses how pilgrimage and heritage gazes turn sites, archives, and memory into inner illumination and ethical decision-making. Methodologically, this study operationalizes indicators of piety, maps transnational networks, and compares the genre-specific ethics of narration. In doing so, it seeks to formulate a cross-genre typology of millennial spirituality emerging from these texts.

This article argues that urban millennial spirituality becomes glocal when transnational movement is turned into a narrative instrument of ethical self-formation. In 99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), the heritage-tourist itinerary recasts Europe's Islamic traces as a pedagogy of confidence. It enables a minority Muslim subject to translate visibility and dialogue into everyday virtue within secular publics (Akmaliah, 2014). In *Api Tauhid* (2014), Madinah to Turkey route transforms personal crisis into knowledge-pilgrimage. Said Nursi's biographical spaces become portable archives of resilience against secular power (Howell, 2001). In *Pulang* (2015), the global shadow-economy thriller turns mobility into moral exhaustion. Here, El Shirazy novel marks a return to an earlier pious compass, not merely a movement homeward. Across these genres, mentors and communities mediate transformation, while narrative voice guides readers' ethical alignment. Read comparatively, novels produce a typology of urban spirituality: heritage illumination, saintly archival

endurance, and belated moral return. This typology clarifies how popular Islamic fiction takes part in Indonesia's contested public Islam (Hasan, 2009; Muzakki, 2017).

Theoretical background

Within Indonesia's widening hijrah networks and newly branded urban Sufism, piety is no longer imagined simply as inheritance. It is learned, displayed, corrected, and made credible. Contemporary Islamic novels take part in this pedagogical field by narrating techniques of the self: praying under pressure, disciplining desire, and seeking authorized guidance. In this way, they translate public Islam into story (Hasan, 2009; Muzakki, 2017). Here, "self-fashioning of piety" refers to protagonist's continuous work of forming an ethical self through ritual practice, disciplined time, and affiliation with mentors or communities that define proper Islam in the city. This term stresses that piety is belief enacted as narrative praxis, visible within contested publics where authority passes through institutions, commodities, and digital cultures (Halim, 2018; Hasan, 2019). Yet novels define this process differently. In *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), piety appears as cosmopolitan confidence: devotion maintained amid minority visibility and interfaith dialogue. In *Api Tauhid* (2014), it becomes ascetic endurance, Qur'anic repetition, and suffering shaped by Sufi revival (Howell, 2001). In *Pulang* (2015), it enters the thriller mode as restraint, verification, and possible repentance within violent networks and broader struggles over piety and authority also in Indonesia's public sphere today (Miichi, 2019).

This study traces self-fashioning of piety through five textual indicators. First, *ritual enactment*: prayer, fasting, dhikr, and Qur'anic recitation, narrated as habit, failure, or recovery. Second, *bodily-visual regimes*: attire, modesty, food, and gendered interaction that make piety publicly readable. Third, *temporal discipline*: daily schedules, *itikāf*, and travel timetables that reorder modern time around devotion. Fourth, *mediating agents*: mentors, peer circles, mosques, and study groups that authorize knowledge and correct error. Fifth, *moral choice under pressure*, including speech ethics, violence, sexuality, and loyalty. These indicators are read across three narrative strategies. *99 Cahaya di Langit* (2014) uses first-person travelogue confession. *Api Tauhid* (2014) relies on didactic-hagiographic montage around Said Nursi. *Pulang* (2015) employs action-thriller focalization marked by ethical checkpoints. This aim is not only to identify religious themes, but to show how genre conventions recast religiosity as romance, hagiography, or noir-like action, while preserving tension between moral instruction, narrative pleasure, and urban public legibility for young readers (Rani, 2012; Muzakki, 2017).

Transnational movement reshapes Muslim selfhood by placing piety in spaces of study, work, devotion, and public visibility beyond the nation. In this sense, transnationality refers to social, institutional, and affective links that connect Indonesian Muslims to overseas religious and urban circuits, while glocalization names the retranslation of Islamic norms into the etiquette of particular publics (Hasan, 2009). Mobility is therefore not merely geographical. It is a regime of encounters that defines what counts as proper Islam under shifting civic expectations, surveillance practices, and cultural tastes (Halim, 2018). In *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), journeys through Vienna, Paris, and Andalusia frame a minority Muslim subject learning to negotiate secular institutions, academic debate, and interfaith contact without abandoning devotional identity. Cosmopolitan travel becomes an ethics of representation (Rani, 2012). In *Api Tauhid* (2014), Madinah to Turkey route glocalizes piety through transnational religious education and Sufi-inflected exemplarity. Indonesian students draw on Turkish devotional history to interpret contemporary crisis (Howell, 2001). In *Pulang* (2015), movement through Jakarta, Hong Kong, and Japan takes place inside a shadow economy. Piety appears less as public display than as contested memory, tied to authority, coercion, and politics of Indonesian urban Islam across genre and scale (Hasan, 2019; Miichi, 2019).

This analysis treats mobility as a narrative network, not as background. It records routes and nodes (airports, dormitories, mosques, campuses, hotels, and training halls) that make movement possible, stratified, and morally charged. It also traces how protagonists negotiate Islamic norms in urban publics: halal consumption, gendered sociability, speech ethics, and conduct within secular institutions or hyper-capitalist circuits. Moments of translation become especially important. Islamic terms may be explained, defended, softened, or asserted; each gesture shows glocalization as a practical recalibration of piety (Hasan, 2009). This study also considers mediated publics: Facebook- or Instagram-style preaching, book fairs, and popular publishing, which circulate pious scripts beyond face-to-face religious communities (Halim, 2018; Hasan, 2019). These indicators clarify how each novel imagines Muslim agency under European secularism, Turkish devotional memory, and East Asian capitalist modernity. This point not only to identify destinations, but also to show the moral infrastructures that mobility installs.

Knowledge pilgrimage and an Islamic tourist/heritage gaze explain how journeys to sites and archives become inner illumination and ethical orientation. Following tourist gaze as a socially organized way of seeing, this article treats the gaze not as casual sightseeing, but as disciplined attention shaped by expectation, narrative framing, and power (Urry, 1992). Critical heritage studies likewise remind us that heritage is not innocent memory. It is a contested field where histories are selected, moralized, and made governable (Winter, 2013). Three novels configure this process differently. In *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), museums, architectural remnants, and Andalusian archives appear as European Islamic traces that counter secular forgetfulness. They allow the protagonists to reclaim dignity and practise an ethics of dialogue in public life (Hasan, 2009). In *Api Tauhid* (2014), the gaze is more openly pedagogical and devotional. Madinah's sacred time and Said Nursi's Turkish sites form an itinerary of learning, where suffering and textual transmission become moral technologies for contemporary hijrah (Howell, 2001; Hasan, 2019). In *Pulang* (2015), heritage is mnemonic rather than monumental. The village, maternal counsel, and childhood religious instruction return as memory-sites that interrupt transnational violence and redirect action toward accountability, not mere loyalty. Across genres, pilgrimage becomes a practice: seeing, reading, and remembering produce ethical force.

This study codes how pilgrimage and heritage-looking become knowledge and ethical change in narrative form. It traces selection and sequencing of sites (sacred spaces, museums, prisons, and villages) and interpretive frames attached to them. It also follows archives in motion: books, inscriptions, photographs, and testimonies that mediate what is seen. Guided seeing matters, where mentors or communities teach protagonists how to read a site. Affective intensity also matters: awe, shame, longing, and grief mark moments of illumination. Finally, this study records decision nodes, where what has been learned reorganizes action, from speech ethics to the refusal or regulation of violence. Across genres, these mechanisms yield a concise typology of urban millennial spirituality: heritage illumination in *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), archival exemplarity and endurance in *Api Tauhid* (2014), and belated moral return amid global capitalism in *Pulang* (2015). Such a typology clarifies how contemporary Indonesian fiction glocalizes Islamic ethics by linking movement, public space, and remembered histories. It specifies narrative ethics, showing how focalization steers judgment through the gaze (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013).

Methods

This study reads three Indonesian novels as a comparative archive of contemporary urban millennial spirituality. *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), *Api Tauhid* (2014), and *Pulang* (2015) together stage urban millennial spirituality through distinct narrative settings: European diaspora, Turkish devotional history, and Asian transnational mobility. Each text gives a different narrative form to public Islam. Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra's novel frames pious self-making

through diaspora, European cities, and interfaith encounters. Habiburrahman El Shirazy's novel stages devotional discipline through Madinah to Turkey itinerary and the exemplary life of Said Nursi. Tere Liye's novel embeds religious memory and moral reckoning in a transnational thriller that moves across Sumatra, Jakarta, Hong Kong, and Japan. Read together, novels show how hijrah sensibilities and renewed Sufi idioms circulate through popular fiction. They also show how piety becomes practice, taste, and ethical labour under conditions of mobility and mediation (Hasan, 2009; Nisa, 2018). Novels' genre differences further illuminate how popular Islamic fiction participates in forming publics and subjectivities (Rani, 2012; Muzakki, 2017).

This research design is qualitative and comparative, combining close reading with concept-driven coding to explain how piety is crafted, negotiated, and authorized in late-modern urban settings. The narrative texts are the main information source. They are treated as cultural scripts that teach readers how to inhabit Islamic virtue under metropolitan pressure. This unit of analysis includes scenes of prayer, Qur'anic recitation, fasting, dhikr, modest comportment, and management of desire, anger, or violence. It also includes scenes where teachers, friends, mosque circles, or family counsel authorize knowledge and correct error. This study uses three lenses: self-fashioning, transnational glocalization, and knowledge-pilgrimage. These concepts clarify ritual discipline, mobile Muslim subjectivity, and heritage looking as ethical orientation (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013). Attention to voice, focalization, evaluative commentary, dialogue, and genre pacing shows how travelogue testimony, hagiographic montage, and thriller plotting produce different forms of public legibility (Hasan, 2009; Slama, 2018).

Data collection follows a desk-review procedure. Each novel is read repeatedly to mark passages on disciplinary practice, norm negotiation in urban publics, and heritage-oriented seeing. The marked passages are compiled into an excerpt bank with page-level metadata for quotation and comparison. Memos record shifts in focalization, moral evaluation, and the distribution of authority among mentors, peers, and communities. Secondary studies on Indonesian public Islam, youth hijrah, urban Sufi associations, commodified piety, and political mobilization provide contextual support (Hasan, 2009; Miichi, 2019; Nisa, 2018). Relevant theses and dissertations are used selectively as local baselines, while peer-reviewed journal articles remain the main interpretive warrant. This analysis proceeds through reduction, display, and verification. Coded segments are reduced into categories such as ritual technique, bodily visibility, temporal discipline, mentor mediation, ethical decision, mobility node, and heritage frame. Comparative matrices then display how each genre organizes these categories. Verification returns to the full narrative context, tests rival readings, and checks claims against recurring linguistic patterns and character positioning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The result is a typology of urban millennial spirituality grounded in textual evidence and linked to heritage economies and affective atmospheres (Winter, 2013).

Result and discussion

Indonesian popular fiction has become an important site for narrating urban millennial spirituality. In this field, piety is not simply inherited from family, pesantren, or community. It is learned, tested, displayed, and corrected in spaces shaped by mobility, media, and public judgment. This is visible in three widely read novels. In *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), piety is formed through everyday discipline in secular European cities. Prayer must fit the rhythm of class breaks: "*Setiap istirahat kelas... 15 menit*" (Every class break... fifteen minutes.), while the narrator admits that finding a place to pray is "*tidak mudah*" (It is not easy). The same novel links hijab to civic responsibility when Fatma warns, "*Jangan kita yang berkerudung... mengemplang koran*" (We, as veiled Muslim women... should not cheat the newspaper seller.), then defines Muslim presence in Europe as the duty to become "*agen muslim yang baik*" (a good Muslim agent in Europe). In *Api Tauhid* (2014), self-making takes a more devotional and historical form. Text presents preacher who "*tidak mau memakai cara kekerasan*" (refused to use violence) and places religious learning among "*ribuan jamaah*"

(Thousands of worshippers), showing piety as restraint, pedagogy, and collective transmission. In *Pulang* (2015), piety appears as rupture and possible return. Bujang confesses that he has “*lama melupakan agama*” (long forgotten religion), while a family voice restores hope through phrase “*jika Tuhan... sayang... Tuhan akan menemukannya*” (If God... truly cares... God will find him). These scenes show three modes of pious self-formation: visible practice in secular publics, non-violent endurance through religious exemplarity, and moral recovery within coercive transnational networks. Together, they clarify how contemporary Islamic fiction turns hijrah sensibilities and Sufi idioms into narrative techniques of discipline, repentance, and adab.

The comparison also shows that urban piety in these novels depends on mediating figures and social infrastructures. Friends, teachers, kin, and communities help protagonists sustain religious practice when modern cities scatter attention and weaken inherited authority. This pattern corresponds to studies of Indonesian public Islam, which show how piety is shaped by markets, media, networks, and new forms of religious belonging (Hasan, 2009; Nisa, 2018). In *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), Fatma’s counsel turns minority visibility into ethical representation. In *Api Tauhid* (2014), devotional history and congregational learning make religious endurance credible. In *Pulang* (2015), family memory and language of return reopen moral accountability after violence and estrangement. Popular Islamic fiction therefore does more than present “good Muslim” characters. It scripts work required to become one: regulating time, guarding conduct, reading public signs, and choosing restraint under pressure. This is why genre matters. The travelogue externalizes piety through civility and visibility; the devotional-historical narrative authorizes it through saintly memory; the thriller internalizes it as conscience and belated repentance. Such differences show how Islamic popular prose participates in Indonesia’s contested public Islam, where authenticity is desired, performed, and often disputed (Rani, 2012; Muzakki, 2017; Jones, 2010).

The work of becoming pious takes different forms in three novels. In European travel narrative, worship is shaped by everyday limits rather than ideal conditions. A brief class break becomes a space for prayer, while Fatma’s warning that “we, as veiled Muslim women,” must not cheat a newspaper seller turns hijab into more than visible identity. It becomes a demand for trustworthy conduct in public. Piety is therefore directed outward. It must be visible as courtesy, competence, and ethical reliability in classrooms, streets, and shops. This pattern reflects Indonesian public Islam, where piety often appears through everyday conduct, consumption, and visible signs of virtue (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). In devotional-historical narrative, piety rests on example, restraint, and collective feeling. The preacher who “refused to use violence” turns nonviolence into a religious virtue, while “thousands of worshippers” shows how sacred space and communal emotion transmit conviction. Such scenes echo urban Sufi idioms that value patience, adab, endurance, and moral discipline (Howell, 2001). Bujang’s confession, “I had long forgotten religion,” marks loss of religious habit. The family’s belief that “God will find him” then opens a path of recovery. Here, faith is not shown as public display but as conscience under transnational pressure. These differences reveal three narrative modes of urban Muslim spirituality: micro-ritual practice in secular publics, moral instruction through saintly exemplarity, and inner accountability within violent global networks. By following ritual, attire, disciplined time, counsel, and moral choice, the comparison shows how each novel makes piety credible in a different public world. Popular Islamic fiction does this through genre. It turns doctrine into feeling, habit, and action, making Islamic ethics readable through travel, devotion, memory, and suspense (Rani, 2012; Muzakki, 2017; Nisa, 2018).

These differences reflect the way Indonesian urban religiosity is shaped by middle-class aspiration, mediated authority, and concern over authenticity. In travelogue, etiquette and reputation matter because piety is judged in public through education, consumption, and cosmopolitan competence. Hijab is not only a sign of modesty. It is also a claim to moral credibility that must be protected. This explains the warning not to embarrass oneself as a “*pendatang*” (newcomer) while being “*berkerudung*” (veiled). In this context, Muslim visibility becomes ethical

labour: believer must show courtesy, discipline, and trustworthiness before secular others (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). The devotional-historical novel builds piety differently. Its stress on nonviolence and steadfastness draws on Sufi revival, where suffering, patience, and adab train the heart. Moral authority comes from saintly biography, collective memory, and affective force of shared devotion (Howell, 2001). Mobility brings danger, debt, and coercion. The self is not formed through steady discipline, but through delayed conscience. Bujang's confession that he had "forgotten religion" marks a hijrah-like rupture, where loss becomes condition for return and kinship reopens a path to God (Nisa, 2018). In all three novels, piety depends on guidance. Friends, teachers, families, study circles, and moral publics help sustain religious practice when city scatters attention. Public Islam rarely rests on solitary will; it needs networks that circulate models of becoming, endurance, and return (Hasan, 2009; Slama, 2018). Genre gives these processes emotional form. Travelogue scripts shame as public responsibility. The devotional narrative turns awe into steadfastness. The thriller converts fear and regret into moral reckoning.

Urban Muslim publics are shaped not only through sermons or institutions, but also through small narrative scenes in contemporary Indonesian fiction. A brief class break, for example, becomes enough time for prayer. A simple newspaper transaction becomes a test of honesty. Devotion is therefore shown as something practical and adaptable, carried through ordinary routines rather than displayed as rigid religious form. This narrative teaches readers to read minority visibility and cosmopolitan movement as occasions for adab. Mobility becomes a rehearsal of public accountability. Yet this logic also carries a burden. To become "a good Muslim representative" may individualize responsibility for Islam's image and place extra moral pressure on visibly Muslim bodies, especially women who wear hijab. This reflects the wider politics of public piety in Indonesia, where virtue is often judged through appearance, consumption, education, and social comportment (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). The devotional-historical narrative offers another script. By stressing that the exemplary preacher "refused to use violent methods," it presents piety as principled restraint rather than polemical force. The image of "thousands of worshippers" also turns collective worship into affective pedagogy: a scene where sacred architecture, memory, and shared emotion widen religious belonging. Still, saintly biography may privilege a single model of virtue and direct readers toward authorized figures as sources of certainty, a tendency often found in mediated public Islam (Hasan, 2009; Howell, 2001; Slama, 2018).

Bujang's journey reveals the harsher side of transnational mobility. Airports, cities, and cross-border networks draw him into debt, coercion, violence, and divided loyalties. His admission that he has long neglected religion makes piety appear not as a continuous habit, but as a broken memory. The family's belief that God will still guide the lost subject back then turns return into a difficult moral possibility, one that does not erase guilt but makes repair thinkable. This form can cultivate moral reflexivity: checking one's choices, naming shame, and reopening accountability. Yet it may also romanticize rupture as the most authentic path to faith, echoing hijrah narratives that often frame dramatic turning points as signs of sincerity (Nisa, 2018). These three scripts also prepare the ground for heritage-oriented seeing. Cities, sacred sites, villages, and memories become classrooms of ethical perception. Sufi-inflected inwardness then turns endurance, restraint, and repentance into everyday spiritual skills. Across three novels, pious self-making operates as an ethics of navigation: through cities, institutions, relationships, and remembered histories. Popular fiction therefore does more than represent contemporary religiosity. It translates spiritual movements into practical moral grammars, making Islamic ethics readable through travel, devotion, memory, and suspense (Rani, 2012; Muzakki, 2017; Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013).

Religious authority in these novels moves into spaces of mobile urban life. Work, study, and travel break older communal routines, so piety must be rebuilt through signs that can travel: clothing, short prayer times, remembered advice, and trusted companions. A hijab, a brief pause for prayer, a warning from a friend, or a family memory can become a small anchor of faith in the city. Mentorship

matters for this reason. Friends, teachers, and kin give practical direction when stable institutions are distant or weakened. They also offer emotional certainty when believer must decide how to act in classrooms, streets, airports, mosques, markets, or violent transnational networks. The wider setting matters too. Indonesian public Islam is shaped by media, markets, and new forms of religious association, so popular novels package ethical lessons through genres readers already enjoy: travel, devotion, memory, and suspense (Hasan, 2009; Slama, 2018). Hijrah discourse gives these stories a language of break and return, making moral failure narratable as the beginning of renewed faith (Nisa, 2018). Sufi revival adds another vocabulary: patience, inward discipline, adab, and nonviolent endurance (Howell, 2001). The result is a glocal form of piety. It travels across cities and borders, yet remains tied to everyday habits, moral choices, and the search for trustworthy guidance.

Mobility in three novels is not a decorative itinerary. It drives making of a glocal Muslim self: a believer who carries religious duties across borders and learns to adjust Islamic norms within shifting urban publics. Classrooms, streets, mosques, airports, and food spaces become places where belonging is tested. In 99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), European travelogue signals its route: “*Bagian I Wina... Bagian II Paris... Bagian III Cordoba & Granada... Bagian IV Istanbul*” (Part I Vienna... Part II Paris... Part III Cordoba & Granada... Part IV Istanbul). The journey then tests devotional practice within secular infrastructure. The narrator admits, “*Tidak mudah menemukan tempat ibadah shalat di Eropa*” (it is not easy to find a place for prayer in Europe), and later shows how time is remade for worship: “*Setiap istirahat kelas yang berdurasi 15 menit, Fatma mengajakku shalat zuhur berjemaah*” (every fifteen-minute class break, Fatma invited me to perform the Dhuhr prayer in congregation). Public visibility also carries moral pressure. Fatma’s warning, “We who wear the veil must not be the ones who cheat the newspaper seller,” links hijab to trust, while the call “to become a good Muslim representative in Europe” turns travel into ethical performance. Here, piety must be courteous, disciplined, and publicly credible. It must survive minority life without losing adab. This pattern reflects Indonesian public Islam, where virtue is often shaped by mobility, education, consumption, and visible conduct (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010).

Api Tauhid (2014) gives mobility a more devotional direction. Travel becomes a search for knowledge, memory, and moral strength. The narrator begins with a concrete journey: “*Pada 22 Juni hingga 1 Juli 2012, saya melakukan perjalanan keliling Turki*” (From 22 June to 1 July 2012, I travelled around Turkey). The route continues through sacred and historical sites: “*Setelah keliling Istanbul, lalu terbang ke Kota Kayseri... melakukan perjalanan darat ke Gaziantep... Konya, Isparta, Barla*” (After travelling around Istanbul, then flying to the city of Kayseri... making an overland journey to Gaziantep... Konya, Isparta, Barla). This movement is not solitary tourism. It is guided by religious networks, as narrator is “accompanied by Ustadz Hasbi Sen” and “visits several dershane of the Thullabun Nur”. The novel therefore presents Turkey as a living archive. Said Nursi’s spaces teach endurance, nonviolence, and disciplined faith, while teachers and study circles make that memory usable for contemporary Muslim readers. This mode fits Sufi-inflected revival, where patience, adab, and inward discipline become resources for facing secular pressure and moral anxiety (Howell, 2001; Hasan, 2019).

Pulang (2015) offers a darker route. The journey begins with a command: “*Pergilah, anakku, temukan masa depanmu*” (Go, my son, find your future), but the city is immediately marked as risk: “*jadi apa di kota sana... Mamak tahu...*” (What will you be in that city... your mother knows....). Later, global movement becomes urgent, “*sesegera mungkin ke Hong Kong*” (as soon as possible to Hong Kong), and routine logistics appear in the line, “*aku juga harus segera ke bandara*” (i must also go to the airport immediately). Even departure carries religious limits: “*berjanjilah... kau tidak akan makan daging babi... menjaga perutmu dari makanan haram*” (Promise me... you will not eat pork... protect your stomach from forbidden food). Movement tests halal boundaries, work discipline, loyalty, and conscience. The routes are therefore never neutral. Europe stages minority navigation, Turkey stages devotional learning, and Asia stages survival inside capitalist networks. Together, these novels

show how Indonesian fiction links transnational mobility to religious self-making, public ethics, and remembered guidance (Nisa, 2018; Slama, 2018; Rani, 2012; Muzakki, 2017).

Read side by side, three journeys show how Muslim identity travels, adapts, and gains public meaning in different urban worlds. In European travel narrative, the city appears as a demanding civic space. Piety must become brief, practical, and socially acceptable. The line “during every fifteen-minute class break” shows how ritual is fitted into tempo of urban study, while “it is not easy to find a place for prayer in Europe” makes access to worship a daily negotiation. Muslim identity becomes visible through disciplined conduct, careful speech, and Fatma’s reminder that appearance must be matched by public trust. In Turkish-centred narrative, movement works differently. The journey is not mainly about minority life, but about entering a living religious network. The route “around Turkey... Istanbul... Kayseri... Gaziantep... Konya, Isparta, Barla” is linked to “dershane of Thullabun Nur” and guided by Ustadz Hasbi Sen. Travel becomes learning, remembrance, and spiritual training. Movement creates moral pressure inside Asian capitalism. “That city” suggests an uncertain future; “as soon as possible to Hong Kong” signals deeper transnational entanglement; and “the airport” becomes a threshold where bodies, documents, and loyalties are inspected. Across three novels, mobile Muslim self is shaped through practical boundaries: food, time, speech, violence, loyalty, and public conduct. The city becomes an ethical testing ground, where desire for hijrah must be translated into ordinary decisions (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010; Nisa, 2018). Heritage traces, sacred routes, and saintly biographies add moral authority. They allow travellers to claim a history beyond the nation while remaining Indonesian in language, taste, and affect (MacCannell, 1973; Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013).

Contemporary Indonesian piety in these novels is lived through movement: people travel, images circulate, commodities mark identity, and religious authority moves through friends, teachers, books, media, and sacred memory. Faith no longer depends only on fixed institutions. It must be carried into classrooms, airports, streets, study houses, and digital publics. Middle-class desires to study, work, and travel place Muslim subjects in mixed urban spaces, where Islam is judged through stereotypes but also recognized through visible conduct. This explains the stress on reputation, courtesy, halal discipline, and ideal of becoming a “good Muslim” in public. Urban Sufi currents add another layer. They offer portable vocabularies of patience, adab, endurance, and inward repair, often attached to saintly biography and transnational religious networks (Howell, 2001). Hijrah discourse then gives mobility a moral plot: leaving, breaking, failing, and returning become signs of ethical transformation rather than mere movement across places (Nisa, 2018; Hasan, 2019). Media and lifestyle economies intensify this pressure, since piety is continually read through what one wears, eats, buys, says, and posts (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010; Slama, 2018). For this reason, city and airport become moral stages. Heritage sites, sacred routes, and remembered religious figures also teach travellers how to see the past as guidance for present conduct (Winter, 2013). The novels therefore produce glocal Muslim selves: rooted in Indonesian taste, language, and affect, yet trained to negotiate global Islamic signs, urban scrutiny, and cross-border uncertainty.

The comparison shows that transnational movement opens Indonesian Muslim publics to wider worlds, but also brings new moral burdens. In *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), Europe is not written simply as hostile space. It is a place where religious life must adjust to ordinary limits: lecture schedules, public buildings, unfamiliar streets, and scarcity of prayer spaces. A short class break can become prayer time. A small transaction, such as buying a newspaper honestly, can become a test of Muslim credibility. Fatma’s counsel about veiled women and public trust therefore gives hijab a wider meaning. It is not only modest dress, but also a demand for reliable conduct before others. Call to become a good Muslim presence in Europe encourages discipline, courtesy, and ethical visibility. Yet it also places a heavy representational burden on individual bodies, especially visibly Muslim women. Turkish narrative shifts this problem into another register. In *Api Tauhid* (2014), travel is guided by teachers, study houses, and remembered sacred lives. The route from Istanbul to Barla

links Indonesian readers to Said Nursi's world and presents piety as patience, learning, nonviolence, and endurance. This widens Muslim solidarity across borders. At the same time, it risks turning complex histories into simplified moral lessons if saintly memory is consumed only as certainty (Hasan, 2009; Howell, 2001; Slama, 2018).

Pulang (2015) gives movement a darker moral weight. Its airports, urgent departures, and Hong Kong route evoke a world of debt, violence, loyalty, and legal uncertainty. Here, piety does not appear mainly as public courtesy or devotional learning. It survives as remembered prohibition, family counsel, and a late return of conscience. The mother's warning about avoiding forbidden food functions as a small religious anchor in a world where other forms of harm remain harder to control. This anchor can teach restraint, but it can also reduce faith to a minimal rule if violence and coercion are left unresolved. Reading these novels show piety as a practical way of navigating time, food, speech, clothing, reputation, memory, and public conduct. This helps explain why hijrah cultures flourish in Indonesian cities as everyday ethics, not only as doctrinal debate (Nisa, 2018; Hasan, 2019). Genre gives each route its moral tone. Travelogue turns classrooms, streets, and museums into lessons in civility. The devotional narrative turns sacred journeys into training in endurance. The thriller turns airports and global logistics into scenes of conscience under pressure. From these patterns, urban Muslim spirituality appears in three connected forms: adaptive civility, devotional endurance, and moral reckoning within transnational life (Rani, 2012; Jones, 2010; Muzakki, 2017).

Beneath these narrative itineraries sits a shared structure: Indonesian Muslim modernity is increasingly organized by mobility regimes that promise opportunity while multiplying moral exposure. Educational migration, tourism, and transnational labor circulate bodies through airports, campuses, and heritage sites, where Islam is simultaneously securitized and marketized. These spaces promise opportunity, but they also expose religious identity to judgment. Islam may be viewed through suspicion, consumed as lifestyle, or measured through visible conduct. For that reason, piety must travel in practical forms: clothing, prayer habits, halal discipline, careful speech, and ethical self-control (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). The novels make this pressure concrete. Their characters do not simply move from one place to another. They must decide how to remain Muslim while entering new publics, new rules, and new gazes. Sufi revival and hijrah discourse help supply this language of movement. Patience, restraint, repentance, and adab become spiritual skills that can survive outside familiar institutions and hometown authority (Howell, 2001; Nisa, 2018; Slama, 2018).

The heritage also gives mobility a moral direction. Sacred routes, historical traces, museums, archives, and saintly biographies allow travellers to read the past as guidance for the present. The past is not only remembered; it is selected, visited, explained, and turned into ethical instruction (MacCannell, 1973; Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013). This is why fiction matters. It turns travel into scenes of choice. It lets readers imagine how a Muslim subject can remain Indonesian in language, taste, and affect while thinking across Europe, Turkey, and Asia. In this sense, mobility does not weaken piety by default. It can also intensify it. Movement creates uncertainty; uncertainty demands moral work. Once this moral work becomes story, travel itself appears as a path of discipline, learning, and return. Novels therefore show glocal Muslim subjectivity as an everyday negotiation between place, memory, faith, and public responsibility.

Pilgrimage in text of novels is not only movement across places. It becomes a way of learning how to see the past, measure the self, and decide how to live with others. European museums, Islamic traces, Turkish sacred routes, study houses, village memory, and mother's voice all work as different sources of guidance. Some sites teach humility before a plural public; others train patience, discipline, and endurance; still others reopen conscience after faith has been neglected. The remembered history of Islam in Europe does not simply restore pride. It also redirects pride toward love, dialogue, and non-domination. The journey across Turkey turns travel into study, since places linked to Said Nursi are mediated by teachers, religious networks, and practices of remembrance. Meanwhile, village in the thriller is not a monument but a moral memory. It returns through family

counsel and through the painful admission that religion has been forgotten. In each case, seeing leads to reflection, and reflection presses the protagonist toward ethical change.

Movement in contemporary Indonesian fiction often becomes a route toward spiritual formation. Heritage does not remain a passive setting; it enters the narrative as memory, guidance, and ethical pressure. Heritage must be visited, narrated, explained, and felt before it can become moral knowledge. Wonder, shame, longing, and grief prepare characters to rethink their conduct. Such scenes also connect with wider Indonesian hijrah and urban-Sufi imaginaries, where repentance, adab, patience, and inward discipline become practical resources for modern life (Howell, 2001; Nisa, 2018). More fluid map of urban millennial spirituality: European Islamic traces produce civic humility; Turkish devotional memory forms archival endurance; family memory turns return into moral repair. Together, these movements show how glocal Muslim subjectivity is shaped through travel, remembered histories, and ethical work of seeing (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013).

The narrative of novels do more than send characters to particular sites. They guide how those sites are seen, explained, and judged. Travel becomes a trained way of looking, close to Urry's (1992) idea of the tourist gaze as a socially shaped practice of seeing. It also recalls Winter's (2013) view that heritage is never neutral memory, but a selective way of giving moral meaning to the past. In Hanum & Rangga's novel, the itinerary is punctuated by interpretive scenes in museums, streets, and ruins where a guide-figure or mentor supplies the frame and then withdraws, allowing narrator to translate the trace into civic ethics. The museum confession: "*Aku begitu terpaku...*" (I was completely absorbed...), is followed by a normative lesson that rejects the fantasy of reconquest: "*merengkuh Eropa dengan cinta*" (to embrace Europe with love), thereby turning heritage into a pedagogy of restraint and dialogue rather than grievance. In El Shirazy's novel, the gaze is institutionally scaffolded: a dated route "*22 Juni hingga 1 Juli 2012*" (22 Juni to 1 July 2012) lists cities and then funnels traveller into infrastructures of transmission such as "*dershane Thullabun Nur*." This mechanism resembles staged authenticity in reverse: instead of consuming the 'real' as spectacle, traveller is invited to become accountable to a living archive, teachers, study houses, and saintly biographies that authorize endurance as an ethical habit (MacCannell, 1973; Howell, 2001). In Tere Liye's novel, the key site is not monumental heritage but affective archive of village, carried through injunctions and remembered speech. An early family imperative produces mobility as aspiration, while later admission "I had long forgotten religion" converts the village into a moral baseline against which global entanglement is judged; the reassurance "God will find him" functions as a narrative hinge that re-opens ethical possibility. Across these genres, three recurrent mechanisms can be described precisely. First, itinerary-as-curriculum: named routes and nodes order perception. Second, guided seeing: a mentor or institutional network interprets the site. Third, decision nodes: the moment of looking is followed by a choice; how to speak, to resist violence, and to return. Together with attention to ritual self-making and border-crossing publics, this strand clarifies how "seeing" becomes a method for producing knowledge and ethical transformation in contemporary Islamic fiction, amplified by mediated publics and lifestyle economies (Hasan, 2009; Slama, 2018; Nisa, 2018).

The emphasis on journeys, archives, and remembered places speaks to condition of late-modern Indonesian urban Islam. Mobility promises education, work, travel, and wider horizons, yet it also exposes believers to judgment, consumption, insecurity, and public scrutiny. In this setting, piety needs forms that can move. It appears through prayer habits, halal discipline, modest dress, careful speech, and ability to read unfamiliar places ethically. Popular fiction makes this movement intelligible. It shows that Islam can be learned not only from inherited locality, but also through routes, museums, sacred spaces, biographies, and family memories. This reflects wider formation of public Islam in Indonesia, where religious authority circulates through media, markets, peer networks, and popular culture (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010; Muzakki, 2017). Urban Sufi idioms strengthen this portability. Patience, adab, endurance, and inward repair become practical virtues for young Muslims who seek stability while moving across cities and borders (Howell, 2001). Hijrah

discourse adds a moral plot: leaving, failing, remembering, and returning. In that frame, confession that one has “forgotten faith” does not end the story; it opens the possibility of repair (Nisa, 2018).

Novels also show that heritage must be handled carefully. Museums, Islamic traces in Europe, Said Nursi’s spaces, and village memory do not simply offer pride. They ask characters to see the past with humility and responsibility. Heritage becomes meaningful only when it is visited, narrated, interpreted, and felt. It can guide, but it can also tempt characters into easy certainty if history is consumed as spectacle (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013). For urban Muslims whose religiosity is often watched online and offline, these encounters offer another source of authenticity. A museum trace, a saintly itinerary, or a mother’s remembered counsel gives piety weight because it is tied to embodied experience, not only to slogans or display. These experiences travel across publics: from Europe to Turkey, from village memory to Asian capitalist corridors, from private conscience to visible conduct. In this movement, contemporary Indonesian fiction forms glocal Muslim subjectivity as a negotiation between Indonesian affect, transnational horizons, public ethics, and inner discipline (Slama, 2018).

The journeys give novels a clear moral force, but their effects are not simple. Looking at heritage can open a wider Muslim public by teaching religion as humility, dialogue, and restraint. The call “to embrace Europe with love” turns historical loss into civic wisdom, not revenge. Muslim presence is made credible through conduct: patience, honesty, courtesy, and refusal to dominate. This matters in a public sphere where Islam is often read through suspicion or reduced to lifestyle display (Hasan, 2009). Yet heritage can also become too comforting. Museums, sacred routes, and remembered traces may turn difficult histories into easy proof of Islamic greatness. Awe can deepen reflection, but it can also close inquiry when the viewer becomes merely “transfixed.” What should invite careful historical reading may become certainty too quickly (MacCannell, 1973; Winter, 2013). Turkish route carries the same tension. Study houses, teachers, and places linked to Said Nursi can train endurance, nonviolence, and inner discipline, echoing Indonesian Sufi revival (Howell, 2001). But sacred memory can also narrow judgment when the past is presented as a single ready-made lesson.

Here, moral repair begins not in a heritage site, but in memory. A village voice returns, faith is confessed as long neglected, and divine pursuit is imagined as the force that keeps return possible despite guilt. This speaks to hijrah narratives, where rupture often becomes the beginning of renewed commitment (Nisa, 2018). Still, crisis can be romanticized as the only authentic path back to faith. Personal redemption may also hide the wider violence of the transnational networks that shape the protagonist’s choices. In all three novels, city becomes both a classroom and a marketplace of spiritual credibility. Characters learn how to see, but they must also decide what to do after seeing. The ethical value of travel depends on that step: whether looking produces restraint, empathy, and responsibility, or merely spectacle, certainty, and pleasing religious emotion (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013).

Transnational movement and heritage tourism give contemporary Indonesian piety new places to work: campuses, airports, museums, sacred routes, labour corridors, and digital publics. Popular fiction then turns these places into stories of choice. Middle-class Muslim subjects who study, travel, and work across borders meet different pressures. Islam may be viewed with suspicion, but it may also be packaged as lifestyle. In response, these novels make piety portable through everyday limits and habits: halal care, modest visibility, nonviolence, disciplined speech, and public trust (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). Heritage deepens this process. Traces, archives, and remembered religious figures allow characters to claim a history wider than the nation, then translate that claim into humility, confidence, or restraint (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013). Digital religiosity also raises the demand for credible experience. Screens can circulate pious signs, but pilgrimage, family memory, and embodied encounters give those signs emotional weight (Slama, 2018). Urban Sufi idioms and hijrah stories strengthen this movement by making patience, repentance, inward discipline, and return desirable for young Muslims facing moral uncertainty (Howell, 2001; Nisa, 2018). The relation

is circular but clear: mobility creates exposure, heritage offers guidance, and fiction arranges the passage from seeing to knowing, then from knowing to ethical action. This explains why urban spirituality in these novels travels more persuasively as narrative than as doctrine.

Conclusion

Glocal Muslim subjectivities and *Urban Publics'* yields three interlocking lessons about urban millennial spirituality in Indonesia, asking how self-fashioning, mobility, and heritage gazes become ethical transformation in popular Islamic fiction. Piety is not presented as a status inherited once and for all. It is made through daily discipline, public conduct, and the difficult return to conscience. In 99 *Cahaya di Langit Eropa* (2011), devotion must adjust to city rhythms and demand to appear trustworthy before others. In *Api Tauhid* (2014), religious life gains force through patience, learning, and nonviolent endurance. *Pulang* (2015) narrative, faith returns after rupture, when family memory and guilt reopen the question of accountability (Hasan, 2009; Nisa, 2018). These differences show that becoming Muslim in urban public life is not only a matter of doctrine. It also involves time, clothing, food, speech, reputation, and ability to act ethically in unfamiliar spaces.

Mobility sharpens this process. Classrooms, congregations, airports, and Asian capitalist corridors require Islamic norms to be carried across different publics, where halal boundaries, modest visibility, and speech ethics become practical guides rather than fixed labels (Jones, 2010). These novels also turn travel and memory into sources of moral knowledge. Museums, sacred routes, study houses, and the village do not function as scenery. They teach characters how to see the past, feel its pressure, and decide how to live afterward. What is seen becomes meaningful through guidance, emotion, and reflection: wonder, shame, longing, patience, and regret. This makes pilgrimage less a matter of destination than of ethical training (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013). Urban Sufi idioms strengthen this training by giving characters a vocabulary of adab, restraint, endurance, and inward repair (Howell, 2001). Mentors, families, and communities matter because they translate travel encounters into lasting habits. From this movement emerges a concise map of urban Muslim spirituality: insight through heritage, endurance through sacred memory, and moral return after estrangement. Narrative voice guides readers away from triumphant memory and toward everyday responsibility within Indonesia's contested public Islam.

This article contributes by joining mobility, urban publics, and heritage studies in a comparative close reading of three widely circulated Indonesian novels. It reads popular fiction not as simple religious instruction, but as a narrative space where ethical habits are shaped, tested, and made persuasive. By tracing ritual timing, visible conduct, mentor guidance, and moments of moral choice, the study explains how piety becomes readable and negotiable in late-modern Indonesia (Hasan, 2009; Jones, 2010). It also extends discussions of hijrah by showing that narrative form matters. Travel writing, saintly biography, and thriller plotting each make different kinds of spirituality appear credible, while transnational routes turn religious ideals into everyday discipline (Nisa, 2018; Slama, 2018). The use of the tourist gaze in Islamic heritage scenes further clarifies how seeing can become knowledge, and how knowledge can lead to ethical action without reducing heritage to spectacle (Urry, 1992; Winter, 2013). In this way, this study advances Indonesian literary studies by linking genre pleasure, moral formation, and the making of Muslim publics..

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