

From Indigenous Mysticism To Mystical Nationalism: Reimagining Islam, Culture, And Spiritual Belonging In Contemporary Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Indigenous Mysticism; Mystical Nationalism; Living Religion; Spiritual Belonging; Majelis Pesona Ilahi	The relationship between Islam, local culture, and national identity has become a central concern in contemporary studies of Indonesian Islam. While previous scholarship has extensively explored Sufism, religious authority, Islamic revivalism, and cultural accommodation, limited attention has been paid to the role of local mystical spirituality in shaping collective national belonging. This gap is significant because contemporary Muslim communities continuously negotiate religious devotion, cultural identity, and civic commitment amid rapid social and ideological transformations. Existing studies often treat spirituality, culture, and nationalism as separate analytical domains, thereby overlooking the processes through which everyday religious practices generate broader forms of social cohesion and national consciousness. Consequently, the relationship between lived spirituality and national belonging remains insufficiently theorized within the literature on contemporary Indonesian Islam. This study examines the transformation of indigenous mysticism into mystical nationalism within the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI), a contemporary Islamic community located in Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. Specifically, the study investigates how MPI constructs indigenous mysticism through everyday religious practices, how cultural symbols mediate spiritual experiences within the community, and how living mysticism generates collective attachment to the nation. The research employs an interpretive ethnographic approach informed by the symbolic anthropology of Clifford Geertz and the concept of Islam indigenization developed by Abdurrahman Wahid. Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and field notes involving spiritual leaders, administrators, members of MPI, and surrounding community members. The study analyzes these data through thematic interpretation and

thick description to uncover the meanings embedded in ritual practices, cultural performances, and communal interactions.

The findings reveal that MPI constructs indigenous mysticism through the integration of Islamic devotional practices, communal ethics, local cultural traditions, and everyday spiritual discipline. Congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Sufi learning circles, charitable programs, and collective social engagement transform mysticism into a lived social reality rather than an individual spiritual experience. Cultural symbols, including traditional Javanese attire, local languages, ritual performances, and cultural aesthetics, function as symbolic mediators that connect religious teachings with collective emotional attachment and communal identity. Furthermore, living mysticism generates collective attachment to the nation by incorporating national commemorations, civic values, and narratives of social responsibility into spiritual practice. Members consequently interpret nationalism as an expression of devotion to God, social solidarity, and moral responsibility toward the nation.

This article proposes two interconnected theoretical concepts: *Indigenous Mysticism*, which explains the localization of Islamic spirituality through culturally embedded religious practices, and *Mystical Nationalism*, which explains the transformation of spiritual devotion into collective national belonging. The study argues that mystical nationalism emerges through the continuous negotiation between Islamic devotion, local cultural identity, and national consciousness. The theoretical model developed in this research demonstrates a process in which indigenous mysticism produces spiritual belonging that subsequently evolves into mystical nationalism. By integrating spirituality, culture, and nationhood within a single analytical framework, this study contributes a novel perspective to the sociology of religion, anthropology of Islam, and contemporary Indonesian Islamic studies.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islam in Indonesia demonstrates an increasingly complex relationship between spirituality, local culture, and national identity in light of ongoing globalization, social transformation, and the rise of religious expression in public spaces (Woodward, n.d., 2017). Muslim communities no longer function solely as ritual institutions governing human

relationships with God, but also as social arenas that generate collective meaning, build social solidarity, and reproduce cultural values in everyday life (Ammerman, 2021; McGuire, 2018). This situation demonstrates that religious practice occurs through interactions that simultaneously integrate spiritual, social, cultural, and national dimensions (Howell, 2001). Several recent studies have shown that local Islamic communities actively reinterpret religious traditions through cultural adaptations, symbolic performances, and communal participation appropriate to the local context (Kersten, 2019). This process demonstrates that religiosity is a social construct that is continuously reproduced through interactions among actors, traditions, and the surrounding cultural environment (Fadil & Fernando, 2021; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Therefore, Indonesian Islam has developed as a religious tradition capable of integrating religious teachings with local cultural heritage without losing its Islamic legitimacy (Barton, 2020; Wahid, 2024). This phenomenon confirms that spirituality, culture, and collective identity interact to shape the religious experiences of contemporary Indonesian Muslims (Orsi, 2022).

These developments have prompted scholars to shift their attention from a normative approach to a religious life perspective, emphasizing the lived experiences of religious people in everyday life ((McGuire, 2018; Orsi, 2022). This approach views religion not only as a system of doctrines and beliefs, but also as a system of meaning embodied through social practices, communal rituals, and the lived experiences of its adherents (Ammerman, 2021). Muslim communities construct religious meaning through participation in collective activities, the use of cultural symbols, and engagement in recurring social relationships (Woodward, 2017). These practices enable individuals to connect the sacred world with the social realities they encounter every day (Orsi, 2022). Therefore, religion functions as a mechanism that simultaneously connects spiritual awareness with the formation of social and cultural identities. This perspective is crucial for explaining the dynamics of the development of Indonesian Muslim religiosity amidst contemporary social change.

In this context, the concept of lived mysticism emerges as an analytical framework explaining how spirituality is not limited to individual inner experiences but is manifested in social practices within religious communities (Schielke, 2019; Ammerman, 2021). Unlike classical studies of Sufism, which focus on metaphysical dimensions, lineage, and spiritual authority, the lived mysticism approach emphasizes the manifestation of mystical values in everyday social actions (Howell, 2018; Sedgwick, 2017). Various activities such as congregational prayer, Quranic recitation, dhikr gatherings, Sufi study groups, philanthropic activities, and cooperation (gotong royong) are key means of fostering collective spiritual experiences within Indonesian Muslim communities (Bruinessen, 2018; Woodward, 2017). These activities enable individuals to feel close to God while strengthening social connections with other community members (Fadil & Fernando, 2021; Hoesterey, 2022). As a result, mysticism has evolved into a social reality that shapes collective identity, communal ethics, and social solidarity in community life (McGuire, 2018; Schielke, 2019). This phenomenon demonstrates that spirituality can function as a social force that transcends the individual to shape a broader moral community.

This process can be explained through the theory of the social construction of reality

developed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, which explains that social reality is formed through a process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization that occurs repeatedly in community life. Collective religious practices initially represent a form of externalization of spiritual values into social action, then undergo objectivation into traditions recognized by society, and finally internalized as part of the identity of its members. In this context, mysticism is no longer understood as a personal experience, but rather as a social reality experienced in the daily practices of religious communities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Luckmann, 1967). Furthermore, Clifford Geertz explains that cultural symbols function as systems of meaning that connect religious worldviews with the social realities of society (Geertz, 1973; Woodward, 2017). Through symbols, rituals, local languages, and other cultural expressions, religious communities build connections between spirituality, culture, and social experience simultaneously (Howell, 2018; Orsi, 2022).

Cultural rituals and symbols generate collective emotional experiences that strengthen a sense of togetherness and social solidarity within a community. Émile Durkheim explained that shared rituals generate collective excitement, emotional energy that strengthens collective consciousness and builds a moral community with shared values and goals (Durkheim, 1912:1995). Through participation in religious rituals and recurring social activities, community members develop a collective spiritual identity that transcends individual interests (Alexander, 2006; Collins, 2004). This identity not only shapes the community's internal solidarity but also fosters a sense of togetherness within the broader social group (Ammerman, 2021; Schielke, 2019). In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, collective spiritual experiences often interact with cultural symbols and national narratives within the community (Heryanto, 2023; Fealy & White, 2021). Therefore, spirituality not only generates individual piety but also shapes a social orientation that connects individuals to their community, culture, and nation.

Various studies have explored the relationship between local Islam, culture, and everyday religiosity, but a conceptual gap remains in explaining how collective spiritual experiences transform into national identity (Kersten, 2019; Fadil & Fernando, 2021). Most research on Indonesian Islam, vernacular Islam, and lived religion focuses on cultural adaptations and local religious expressions without explaining the mechanisms by which national solidarity emerges from these spiritual experiences (Howell, 2018; Schielke, 2019). Meanwhile, studies on religious nationalism focus more on the political and ideological dimensions without connecting them to mystical experiences in everyday life (Menchik, 2016; Mujani & Liddle, 2021). Consequently, the relationship among local spirituality, cultural identity, and national attachment remains inadequately theoretically explained. This study fills this gap by developing the concepts of Indigenous Living Mysticism and Mystical Nationalism to explain how lived spiritual practices, local cultural symbols, and collective experiences shape sacred national attachment. By integrating the theories of Ammerman, Schielke, Wahid, Barton, Geertz, Woodward, Fealy & White, and Fadil & Fernando, this study offers a new theoretical model that explains the transformation from local mysticism to spiritual nationalism in the Majelis Pesona Divine (MPI) community.

This study addresses this gap by examining the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI), a

contemporary Islamic community in Ponorogo, East Java, that integrates Sufi-oriented spirituality, Javanese cultural symbols, communal ethics, and civic nationalism into its daily religious life. MPI conducts worship activities through congregational prayer, Quranic recitation, Sufi studies, charity programs, and National Holiday commemorations, using traditional Javanese attire, cultural aesthetics, and narratives of national responsibility. This unique configuration raises several important questions: How does MPI construct local mysticism through everyday religious practices? How do cultural symbols mediate spiritual experiences within the community? How does dynamic mysticism generate collective attachment to the nation? Based on these questions, this study aims to analyze the transformation of local mysticism into mystical nationalism through the interaction of spirituality, culture, and belonging within the community. This article assumes that mystical nationalism emerges from the ongoing negotiation between Islamic devotion, local cultural identity, and national consciousness in contemporary Indonesian religious life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an interpretive ethnographic design to investigate how *indigenous mysticism* and *mystical nationalism* are constructed, experienced, and reproduced within the everyday religious life of the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI) community in Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). An interpretive ethnographic approach was selected because the study focuses on lived religious experiences, symbolic practices, cultural performances, and social interactions that cannot be adequately understood through quantitative measurement alone (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Madison, 2020). Rather than treating religion as a fixed doctrinal system, this approach enables the researcher to explore how religious meanings emerge through everyday practices and communal engagement (Ammerman, 2021; McGuire, 2018). The study therefore examines spirituality as a socially embedded phenomenon that is continuously negotiated through ritual participation, cultural symbolism, and collective experience (Orsi, 2022; Schielke, 2019).

Ethnography provides an effective methodological framework for understanding social reality from the perspectives of community members themselves through prolonged engagement and direct participation in their daily activities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; O'Reilly, 2020). Within the interpretive tradition, the researcher seeks not merely to document observable behavior but also to uncover the symbolic meanings, moral values, and cultural logics that inform social action (Madison, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This orientation is particularly relevant to the symbolic anthropology of Clifford Geertz, who conceptualized religion as a system of symbols through which communities construct meaningful worlds and sustain collective moral orders (Geertz, 2017). Following this perspective, the study employs *thick description* to interpret the relationship between religious devotion, cultural identity, and national consciousness within the MPI community (Geertz, 2017; Orsi, 2022). Through detailed ethnographic description, the research seeks to reveal how spiritual meanings are embodied in ritual practices, social relations, and cultural performances.

This research constitutes a field study with a phenomenological-interpretive orientation

that prioritizes participants' subjective understandings of their religious experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2017). The study aims to understand social reality through the meanings that community members attach to their spiritual practices, cultural participation, and communal relationships (Schutz, 1967; Orsi, 2022). Fieldwork was conducted at Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI), located in Joresan Village, Mlarak District, Ponorogo Regency, East Java. The site was selected because MPI represents a contemporary Islamic community that combines Sufi-oriented spirituality, Javanese cultural expressions, communal ethics, and civic nationalism within its everyday religious activities (Woodward, 2017; Howell, 2018). Particular attention was devoted to congregational worship, Qur'anic recitation, Sufi learning circles, charitable activities, community gatherings, and national commemorations that constitute important components of communal life.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). Primary data were obtained from key informants who actively participate in the life of the community, including Gus Labib Hudaf as the spiritual leader of MPI, Nyai Tazkiya as a central figure in religious and civic education, community administrators, active members, and residents living in the surrounding area. These participants were selected through purposive sampling because of their direct involvement in and knowledge of the community's religious, cultural, and social activities (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Secondary data were collected from organizational documents, community archives, photographs, social media publications, religious study materials, and written records related to community activities. Academic literature concerning Sufism, lived religion, indigenous Islam, nationalism, and the anthropology of religion was also consulted to contextualize and interpret the empirical findings (Ammerman, 2021; Kersten, 2019).

Data collection involved participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and field-note recording as complementary ethnographic techniques (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; O'Reilly, 2020). Participant observation enabled the researcher to experience directly the rhythms of communal life and to observe how spiritual values were enacted in ritual and social contexts. Semi-structured interviews provided insight into participants' interpretations of spirituality, cultural identity, and national belonging, while documentation supplied historical and contextual information concerning community activities (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Madison, 2020). Data were analyzed through thematic interpretation following the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020). The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were strengthened through triangulation of sources and methods, prolonged engagement in the field, member checking, reflexive note-taking, and the use of thick description to ensure contextual accuracy and interpretive depth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). These procedures enhanced the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, thereby ensuring methodological rigor throughout the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Constructing Indigenous Living Mysticism through Everyday Religious Practices

Field research shows that the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI) builds authentic Sufism through the integration of Islamic worship practices, local cultural ethics, and collective spiritual experiences that occur in the community's daily life. MPI members do not interpret mysticism as an abstract metaphysical teaching separate from social reality, but rather as a process of self-formation manifested through ongoing religious and social actions. They understand spirituality as a moral discipline built through congregational prayer, Quranic recitation, Sufi study, Friday almsgiving, mutual cooperation and humility, and caring for fellow community members. These practices make mystical experiences present in a concrete social space and easily accessible to all community members. As a result, MPI spirituality is no longer positioned as a purely individual contemplative experience, but as a communal practice that forms solidarity, collective identity, and social bonds among MPI members. This finding is in line with recent studies on lived religion that show that contemporary religiosity develops through everyday practices that integrate ethical behavior, emotional engagement, and communal participation in local cultural contexts (Ammerman, 2021; Fadil & Fernando, 2021).

Majelis Pesona Ilahi fosters mystical awareness through narratives of the lives of prophets, saints, and especially the Walisongo (Wali Songo), which are regularly presented in weekly Sufism study groups. In each meeting, Gus Labib Hudaf connects interpretations of the Quran with stories of holy figures who demonstrate the values of humility, sacrifice, social service, and love for God as a path to spiritual piety (Azra, 2017; Kersten, 2019). These narratives serve not only as a medium for conveying religious knowledge but also as symbolic models that shape the moral imagination and action orientation of community members. Through listening, collective reflection, and ritual repetition, MPI members internalize spiritual values into their daily lives. In accordance with Geertz's view, religious symbols and narratives connect sacred meanings with concrete social experiences (Geertz, 2017; Schielke, 2019). Therefore, the stories of the saints serve as symbolic frameworks that guide the spiritual journey and communal responsibility of MPI members. Consequently, indigenous mysticism is formed through the ongoing interaction among sacred memory, religious practices, and local cultural consciousness that lives within the community (Woodward, 2017; Fadil & Fernando, 2021).

Indigenous mysticism in the MPI develops primarily through the formation of a collective ethic, rather than through individual asceticism divorced from social life. Members consistently place the values of *uhud*, *qana'ah*, *ikhlas*, *sabar*, mutual assistance, and social concern at the heart of their spiritual journey toward closeness to God. This understanding encourages members to translate religious devotion into concrete actions that benefit the community and the surrounding social environment. Therefore, the community actively organizes charitable activities, community service, social assistance, and various forms of community service as an integral part of its members' spiritual lives. These practices demonstrate that mystical experiences are not separate from social engagement but are realized through contributions to the common good. These findings align with recent research showing that local Islamic spirituality in Indonesia increasingly operates through

collective ethics, social solidarity, and communal responsibility rather than solely through formal rituals (Fealy & White, 2021; Heryanto, 2023). In this context, mystical teachings are reinterpreted as practical mechanisms for strengthening social cohesion, building community resilience, and maintaining harmony in communal life..

The multilingual character that developed within the MPI community played a crucial role in the development of an indigenous mysticism, rooted in the cultural experiences of its members. Religious teachings and Sufi studies were flexibly delivered in Indonesian, Javanese, and Sundanese, tailored to the diverse backgrounds of participants from various regions in Indonesia. This linguistic diversity enabled members to understand spiritual teachings through cultural idioms that resonated with their social experiences and local identities. In this context, language served not only as a means of communication but also as a symbolic medium connecting religious values with cultural meanings inherent in the community (Geertz, 2017; Orsi, 2022; Woodward, 2017; Heryanto, 2023). Various studies on the indigenization of Islam demonstrate that local cultural expressions continue to play a crucial role in maintaining collective identity and a sense of belonging amidst contemporary social change (Azra, 2017; Nurhadi, 2022). Therefore, MPI builds authentic mysticism through culturally embedded communication practices, thereby strengthening spiritual closeness, social cohesion, and communal inclusiveness among its members (Fadil & Fernando, 2021; Fealy & White, 2021).

This study found Indigenous Living Mysticism to be a form of mysticism born from the intersection of religious symbols, local culture, and everyday social experiences in contemporary Muslim communities (Geertz, 2017). Unlike the classical Sufism model, which focuses on religious institutions and formal spiritual authority, mysticism within the Majelis Pesona Ilahi develops through routine religious practices, communal ethics, and ongoing cultural participation in members' social lives (Howell, 2018; McGuire, 2018). These findings extend Geertz's symbolic theory by demonstrating that religious symbols not only generate cultural meaning but also shape spiritual disciplines embodied in collective social action (Geertz, 2017; Orsi, 2022). At the same time, these findings confirm Abdurrahman Wahid's notion of the Indigenization of Islam, which states that Islamic teachings gain social relevance when translated into local cultural expressions without losing their theological substance (Barton, 2020; Wahid, 2001: 2024). Thus, Indigenous Living Mysticism can be understood as a continuous process of negotiation between Islamic devotion, social morality, and cultural identity that produces a form of religiosity that is uniquely Indonesian and inclusive, contextual, and rooted in the lived experiences of the community (Fadil & Fernando, 2021; Kersten, 2019).

Symbolic Spiritual Mediation: Cultural Symbols, Ritual Performance, and of Communal Spiritual Experience

Cultural symbols within the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI) play a central role in mediating the spiritual experiences of its members through the integration of local cultural expressions and everyday religious practices. For example, during the commemoration of Indonesian Independence Day, Kartini Day, National Education Day, National Awakening Day, and various other national events, MPI members consistently use elements of Javanese and

Sundanese culture, such as traditional clothing, local languages, cultural aesthetics, and communal rituals as a medium to express their religiosity. During these activities, female members help each other wear kebaya (a traditional Javanese dress for women), jarit (a traditional long cloth), sanggul (a traditional head covering), jilbab (a head covering for Muslim women), and selop sandals (traditional footwear), while male members wear lurik (a traditional Javanese dress for men), blangkon (a traditional Javanese head covering), sarong, selop sandals, and keris (a traditional Javanese weapon) as part of a shared cultural identity. Conversely, during the commemoration of Islamic holidays, such as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and Isra' Mi'raj (the Prophet's Ascension to receive the command to pray), female members wear Muslim attire with a hijab, while male members wear baju koko (traditional Javanese Muslim attire). MPI members do not interpret these cultural and religious attributes solely as markers of social identity, but rather as symbolic representations of dignity, humility, discipline, respect for tradition, and spiritual responsibility in community life (Geertz, 2017; Orsi, 2022). Therefore, cultural symbols function as mediators connecting religious values with everyday social experiences, allowing spirituality to be experienced through cultural forms that are familiar, meaningful, and relevant to the community.

Rituals within the MPI transform cultural symbols into social meanings that acquire religious legitimacy and sacred value in community life. National ceremonies organized by MPI integrate Islamic spiritual narratives, Javanese-Sundanese cultural aesthetics, and collective moral education, producing a religious experience that is both culturally and nationally significant. On numerous occasions, Nyai Tazkiya emphasizes the importance of nationalism, social responsibility, brotherhood, and interfaith harmony as integral parts of devotion to God. Through these rituals, community members interpret their love for their homeland as an expression of their piety and religious moral obligations. In line with Geertz's symbolic theory, ritual symbols generate emotional and moral orientation by connecting sacred worldviews with everyday social realities (Geertz, 2017). At the same time, cultural symbols construct a collective identity through a process of social identification that strengthens a sense of belonging to society and the nation, as explained by Tajfel's social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg, 2016). These findings also confirm Abdurrahman Wahid's notion of the indigenization of Islam, which states that local culture can be a legitimate medium for expressing Islamic values within the context of Indonesian society (Wahid, 2001:2024; Barton, 2020). Therefore, symbolic performances in the MPI function as social mechanisms that embody, internalize, and sustainably reproduce spiritual meaning, communal morality, and collective identity.

Cultural symbols within the MPI serve as a medium that strengthens emotional bonds and spiritual solidarity among community members. Shared participation in traditional attire, communal ceremonies, and various collective celebrations creates a sense of togetherness that transcends the geographical, social, and cultural differences of participants. Members from Ponorogo, Madiun, Trenggalek, Pacitan, Magetan, Jakarta, Bogor, Sumatra, and Kalimantan experience a process of symbolic unification through engagement in shared rituals and cultural activities. From a symbol-spiritual perspective, cultural symbols not only represent specific meanings but also evoke emotional bonds that connect individuals to the community and the sacred world simultaneously (Geertz, 2017; Orsi, 2022). These findings

align with Tajfel's social identity theory, which explains that participation in group symbols and activities strengthens members' sense of belonging and collective identification with their community (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg, 2016). At the same time, this phenomenon confirms Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of Islamic indigenization, which states that cultural diversity can be a means of social integration and the expression of Islamic values without eliminating the local identity of each group (Wahid, 2001: 2024; Barton, 2020). Therefore, MPI demonstrates how symbolic participation can transform cultural diversity into an inclusive, cohesive, and meaningful spiritual and communal identity for all members of society.

Cultural symbols in the MPI serve as intermediaries connecting local traditions with Islamic legitimacy in the daily lives of the community. Community leaders consistently interpret various Javanese cultural expressions, such as the kebaya, jarit, blangkon, sanggul, and other communal traditions, in harmony with Islamic values, serving to strengthen the social and spiritual piety of community members (Wahid, 2001/2024; Barton, 2020). This phenomenon reflects the dynamic relationship between the larger Islamic tradition and the smaller traditions of local culture. In the anthropology of religion, it is explained that universal religious teachings continuously interact with the cultural practices of local communities (Redfield, 1956; Geertz, 1960). This interaction does not occur linearly, but rather moves through a pendulum-like process that demonstrates a continuous negotiation between religious orthodoxy and local cultural expressions in various social contexts (Azra, 2017; Howell, 2018). Recent studies on religious creativity in Indonesia show that Muslim communities often combine local cultural heritage with Islamic values to construct forms of spirituality relevant to contemporary social needs (Kersten, 2019; Fealy & White, 2021). In the context of the Indonesian Muslim Religious Education Movement (MPI), local culture is not positioned as a remnant of pre-Islamic traditions, but rather as an effective medium for communicating Islamic ethics, social solidarity, and the process of spiritual refinement to community members (Woodward, 2017; Heryanto, 2023). Therefore, cultural symbols function as mediating spaces that enable the integration of local identity, religious authority, and spiritual experience within a contextual and inclusive framework of Indonesian Islam.

Thus, Symbolic Spiritual Mediation is a process in which cultural symbols serve as bridges that transform normative religious teachings into meaningful, emotional, and accessible spiritual experiences in everyday social life. In the context of the Islamic Religious Movement (MPI), cultural symbols not only represent local identity but also operate as mediating structures that connect Islamic values to the lived experiences of community members (Ammerman, 2021; Woodward, 2017). Through symbolic performances, traditional aesthetics, ritual participation, and cultural narratives, MPI members experience spirituality within a familiar cultural framework with strong emotional resonance (Geertz, 2017; Heryanto, 2023). These findings extend Geertz's concept of religious symbols by demonstrating that symbols not only generate meaning but also facilitate the internalization of spiritual values through repeated collective experiences (Geertz, 2017; Schielke, 2019). At the same time, these findings reinforce Abdurrahman Wahid's notion of the indigenization of Islam, arguing that local culture can be a legitimate medium for translating Islamic messages into the social context of Indonesian society (Wahid, 2001:2024; Barton, 2020).

Therefore, cultural symbols serve as a primary mechanism for the inheritance, reproduction, and continuity of local mysticism across generations in contemporary Muslim communities (Fadil & Fernando, 2021; Kersten, 2019).

Mystical Nationalism: Transforming Spiritual Devotion into Collective National Belonging

The practice of living mysticism within the MPI fosters a collective attachment to the nation through the integration of spiritual devotion, social responsibility, and national awareness into the daily lives of community members. Members do not view nationalism as a secular ideology separate from religion, but rather as a manifestation of piety manifested through concern for the nation and society. They interpret love of the homeland as a form of gratitude to God and a moral responsibility to maintain unity, social harmony, and shared prosperity. Commemorations of Indonesian Independence Day, National Education Day, Kartini Day, Pancasila Sanctity Day, and various other national moments serve as ritual spaces where religious values and national identity are symbolically and emotionally united. This finding aligns with the lived religion perspective, which explains that spiritual experiences develop through social practices that connect religious beliefs with the realities of public life (Ammerman, 2021; Orsi, 2022). This phenomenon also confirms the Religious Moderation paradigm developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which places national commitment as one of the main indicators of moderate and constructive religiosity in a multicultural society (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019; 2023). Therefore, nationalism in MPI is not placed outside of religious commitment, but is realized as an integral part of the spiritual journey and religious responsibilities of community members (Azra, 2017; Fealy & White, 2021).

Gus Labib, Nyai Tazkiya, and senior MPI members actively construct a religious narrative that connects Islamic values with national responsibility in the daily lives of the community. In various religious studies, national ceremonies, and community gatherings, Gus Labib and Nyai Tazkiya consistently emphasize the importance of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), *ukhuwah basyariyah* (human brotherhood), and *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) as interconnected foundations for a Muslim's spiritual development. Through this narrative, community members understand that serving the community, respecting cultural diversity, and maintaining national unity are concrete forms of devotion to God and manifestations of noble social morality. This perspective reflects the character of a vibrant mysticism, which translates spiritual experiences into social actions that impact public life (Ammerman, 2021; Orsi, 2022). Within the framework of nationalism and patriotism, love of one's country is understood not merely as political loyalty, but as a moral commitment to the common good and maintaining the nation's social cohesion (Smith, 2021; Viroli, 2021). This finding aligns with recent studies showing that Indonesian Muslim communities increasingly interpret nationalism through ethical, spiritual, and communal frameworks, rather than solely through formal political orientation (Barton, 2020; Heryanto, 2023). Therefore, the Indonesian Muslim Student Association (MPI) contributes to the formation of a model of religious citizenship that aligns with the paradigm of Religious Moderation, namely a religiosity that integrates spiritual piety, national commitment, respect for diversity, and collective responsibility in community life (Ministry of Religious Affairs of

the Republic of Indonesia, 2019; 2023).

From the perspective of ritual meaning theory, MPI rituals not only represent specific values but also generate emotional experiences that connect the symbolic world with the social realities of the participants (Bell, 2009; Geertz, 2017). Therefore, these communal activities create affective bonds that connect personal spirituality with collective national identity (Orsi, 2022; Ammerman, 2021). This finding also aligns with social identity theory, which explains that repeated engagement in group activities strengthens an individual's sense of belonging and identification with the broader community (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg, 2016). Through continued participation in civil-religious rituals, MPI members internalize national values as part of their spiritual identity (Fealy & White, 2021; Kersten, 2019). As a result, attachment to the nation is formed not only through the transmission of ideology, but also through religious experiences embodied in ritual practices, social interactions, and the collective memory of society (Barton, 2020; Heryanto, 2023).

The transformation of the MPI occurred gradually, as indigenous mysticism evolved into a form of national attachment conceptualized in this article as mystical nationalism (Ammerman, 2021; Howell, 2018). The concept of mystical nationalism refers to a form of collective national identity constructed through spiritual devotion, communal ethics, cultural participation, and sacred narratives embedded in a community's everyday experiences (Orsi, 2022; Woodward, 2017). Unlike secular nationalism, which generally derives legitimacy from political institutions and national history, mystical nationalism derives meaning and legitimacy through religious experiences embodied in the community's rituals, symbols, and social relations (Geertz, 2017; Bellah, 2011). At the same time, mystical nationalism does not develop into an exclusive religious identity, but rather continues to open up space for cultural diversity and social coexistence, as emphasized in Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of the Indigenization of Islam, which views local culture as a legitimate medium for Islamic expression (Wahid, 2001:2024; Barton, 2020). From the perspective of Javanese mysticism, spiritual experiences do not strictly separate sacred and profane dimensions, but rather connect the two in harmonious social practices (Mulder, 2005; Woodward, 2017). This finding is also in line with identity theory, which explains that individuals can develop layered identities through simultaneous involvement in religious, cultural, and national communities without experiencing fundamental identity contradictions (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Hogg, 2016). Therefore, mystical nationalism in the MPI emerges as a hybrid form of identity that integrates spiritual piety, local culture, and national commitment within a coherent and sustainable framework of meaning (Fealy & White, 2021; Heryanto, 2023).

Thus, Mystical Nationalism is a process of forming national attachment that grows from the ongoing interaction between local mysticism, cultural symbolism, and communal participation in everyday life. In the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI), spirituality serves not only as a means of connecting with God but also as a source of social cohesion, cultural continuity, and national solidarity that is lived out in the community's collective practices (Orsi, 2022; Woodward, 2017). These findings expand Abdurrahman Wahid's concept of the Indigenization of Islam by showing that the integration of worship, local culture, and civic responsibility can produce a form of national identity rooted in religious experience (Wahid, 2001:2024; Barton, 2020). Thus, Mystical Nationalism explains how contemporary

Indonesian Islam continues to negotiate spirituality, culture, and nationhood through religious experiences that are lived locally and manifested in everyday social life.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Majelis Pesona Ilahi (MPI) constructs spirituality through the dynamic interaction of Islamic devotion, local culture, and communal life, thereby producing a distinctive form of religious experience within contemporary Indonesian Islam. The first theoretical contribution is Indigenous Living Mysticism, which explains how mysticism emerges from the integration of everyday religious practices, communal ethics, and culturally embedded experiences rather than from formal Sufi institutions alone (Geertz, 2017; Wahid, 2001/2024). The second contribution is Symbolic Spiritual Mediation, which shows that cultural symbols function as mediating structures that transform normative Islamic teachings into emotionally meaningful and socially accessible spiritual experiences through ritual participation and cultural performance (Geertz, 2017; Orsi, 2022). The third contribution is Mystical Nationalism, which explains how spiritual devotion, cultural participation, and civic responsibility generate collective attachment to the nation through lived religious experiences (Wahid, 2001/2024; Barton, 2020). Together, these concepts extend Geertz's symbolic anthropology and Abdurrahman Wahid's Islam indigenization framework by demonstrating that contemporary Indonesian Islam continuously negotiates spirituality, culture, and nationhood through locally embodied religious practices, producing an inclusive, culturally rooted, and socially engaged form of Muslim religiosity.

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