

THE SPIRITUAL VALUES IN REOG PONOROGO: FROM A SUFISM PERSPECTIVE IN PANTAI LABU DISTRICT, DELI SERDANG REGENCY

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji nilai spiritualitas dalam seni Reog Ponorogo di Kecamatan Pantai Labu, Kabupaten Deli Serdang, melalui perspektif tasawuf. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada bentuk ekspresi spiritual, proses internalisasi nilai keagamaan, serta pemaknaan simbolik dalam praktik Reog kontemporer. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologis-interpretatif melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan konsep tasawuf, terutama ihsan, dzikir, dan pengendalian diri sebagai dasar pembentukan perilaku spiritual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai spiritual dalam praktik Reog tampak pada pelaksanaan doa bersama, dzikir sebelum pertunjukan, disiplin latihan, dan penghormatan terhadap norma sosial-keagamaan masyarakat setempat. Praktik dzikir dipahami sebagai bentuk integrasi nilai sufistik dalam aktivitas budaya lokal. Selain itu, figur Warok dimaknai sebagai simbol keteladanan moral, pengendalian diri, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa praktik Reog di Pantai Labu tidak hanya



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dipertahankan sebagai kesenian tradisional, tetapi juga dimanfaatkan sebagai media penanaman nilai spiritual dan etika keagamaan dalam kehidupan masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Reog Ponorogo, Spiritualitas Sufistik, Living Sufism, Budaya Lokal, Moderasi Beragama.

Abstract

The spirituality embedded in the Reog Ponorogo performance in Pantai Labu District, Deli Serdang Regency, has undergone a reconstruction of meaning within the context of Islamic Sufism. This study aims to identify forms of spiritual expression, explain the process of value internalization, and analyze the transformation of symbolic meanings in contemporary Reog practices. The research employed a qualitative method with a phenomenological-interpretative approach through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The analysis was based on Sufism theory, particularly the concepts of ihsan, dhikr, and self-control as the foundation of spiritual praxis. The findings reveal that spirituality in Reog has shifted from a mystical orientation toward an ethical-religious consciousness reflected in practices of prayer, discipline, and social relations. The practice of dhikr before performances represents a form of living Sufism embedded in local culture, while the figure of the Warok is interpreted as a symbol of moral authority and self-control. These findings affirm the reinterpretation of sacredness in harmony with the principles of tawhid and religious moderation.

Keywords: Reog Ponorogo, Sufi Spirituality, Living Sufism, Local Culture, Religious Moderation.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation of local culture has become an important issue in the fields of social sciences and humanities amid the currents of globalization that continue to reshape cultural values and social practices within society.¹ Modernization, social mobility,

¹ Muryanto Amin and Alwi Dahlan Ritonga, "Diversity, Local Wisdom, and Unique Characteristics of Millennials as Capital for Innovative Learning Models:

and technological development not only influence cultural forms but also transform the ways people interpret identity, tradition, and spirituality in social life. In this context, traditional performing arts are no longer understood merely as entertainment or cultural heritage, but also as spaces for the expression of social and religious values that remain alive within the community.² One form of traditional art that reflects this process is *Reog Ponorogo*, which has developed in Pantai Labu, Deli Serdang.³ The existence of Reog in this region is particularly significant because it has evolved outside its place of origin and has undergone adaptation to the socio-religious characteristics of the local Malay Muslim community.⁴ Such adaptation can be observed in modifications to performance practices, the use of cultural symbols, and the strengthening of religious elements within Reog group activities.

From the perspective of cultural anthropology, art is understood as a symbolic system that embodies social meaning and collective values within society.⁵ Reog Ponorogo not only presents aesthetic dimensions of performance, but also contains values related to leadership, courage, discipline, and social solidarity.

Evidence from North Sumatra, Indonesia," *Societies* 14, no. 12 (December 1, 2024): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14120260>.

² Abdul Fikri Ginting, Amran Pikal Siregar, and Lahmuddin Lubis, "Peran Kecerdasan Emosional Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Efektivitas Komunikasi Antarpribadi," *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 10, no. 2 (2025): 350–365, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jdk.v10i2.13832>.

³ Romi Saputra, "Governance Frameworks and Cultural Preservation in Indonesia: Balancing Policy and Heritage," *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (July 30, 2024): 25–50, <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/2145>.

⁴ Barry S Hewlett, Adam H Boyette, and Sheina Lew, "Cultural Transmission among Hunter - - Gatherers," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 21, no. 48 (2024): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas>.

⁵ Sarmini, Aminkun Imam Rafii, and Agung Dwi Bahtiar El Rizaq, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (jejak pustaka, 2021), 56.

However, these cultural symbols cannot be fully understood solely through a cultural approach, because the practice of Reog in Pantai Labu is also closely connected to the spiritual experiences of its performers. Therefore, a Sufistic approach is employed to examine the inner dimensions of this cultural practice. In Sufi studies, spirituality is understood as a process of spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), consciousness of *ihsan*, remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and self-control as manifestations of human closeness to God. This approach is used as an analytical framework to understand how spiritual values are experienced, practiced, and interpreted within the social life of the Reog community.

Several previous studies have examined Reog Ponorogo from different perspectives. Fina Yuni Sriana (2020) investigated character education values contained in Reog symbols,⁶ while Muhamad Fajar Pramono and Muhammad Handri Aris Saputro (2024) explored the role of Reog in the internalization of Islamic religious education.⁷ The study conducted by Muhamad Faturahman and Izra Berakon (2025) positioned Reog as a cultural identity that strengthens social cohesion,⁸ while Muslih Aris Handayani (2021) discussed the transformation of Reog's symbolic

⁶ Fina Yuni Sriana, Trisakti Trisakti, and Setyo Yanuartuti, "Pengalaman Fenomenologis Pertunjukan Reog Ponorogo Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pendidikan Karakter," *Lokabasa* 11, no. 1 (2020): 38–49, <https://doi.org/10.17509/jlb.v11i1.25193>.

⁷ Muhamad Fajar Pramono And Muhammad Handri Aris Saputro, "Acculturation Of Islamic Culture In Reog Ponorogo Art," *Javanologi: International Journal Of Javanese Studies* 7, No. 1 (2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.20961/Javanologi.V7i1.84117> Acculturation.

⁸ Muhamad Faturahman and Izra Berakon, "Local Indonesian Traditions And The Enhancement Of Social Spirituality In Rural Communities," *Penamas* 38, no. 2 (2025): 153–167, <https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v38i2.997>.

meanings outside its region of origin.⁹ These studies indicate that previous research on Reog has primarily focused on character education, cultural identity, Islamic acculturation, and social cohesion. However, studies specifically examining Reog as a form of Sufistic spirituality within Muslim society remain limited, particularly among Reog communities outside Ponorogo itself.

Based on this review, three research gaps can be identified. First, studies on Reog Ponorogo remain dominated by educational and cultural anthropological approaches, while the dimension of Sufistic spirituality has not been explored in depth. Second, research on Reog outside Ponorogo generally discusses cultural transformation and social symbolism, but has not sufficiently examined how spiritual values are transformed within the context of local Muslim communities. Third, the concept of *living sufism* is still rarely employed in studies of traditional performing arts. In this research, *living Sufism* refers to the manifestation of Sufi values within the social and cultural activities of the community, such as collective prayer, *dhikr* before performances, self-discipline, and the formation of collective ethics within Reog groups. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in the use of a Sufistic perspective to analyze Reog as a practice of living Sufism among a migrant Muslim community in Pantai Labu.

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological-interpretative approach in order to understand the subjective experiences of cultural practitioners in interpreting Reog practices.¹⁰ The research involved 25 informants consisting of

⁹ Muslih Aris Handayani, "Symbolism and Islamic Values in Students' Reog Stage At Muharam Celebration," *Jurnal Dakwah Risalah* 31, no. 2 (2021): 183, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jdr.v31i2.11255>.

¹⁰ Abdul Fattah Nasution, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Cv. Harfa CreatAbdul Fattah Nasution.ive, 2023), 99.

studio leaders, Reog performers, community leaders, and members of the community actively involved in Reog performances in Pantai Labu. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The analysis was conducted using a Sufi theoretical framework centered on three principal concepts: *ihsan*, *dhikr*, and self-control. The concept of *ihsan* was used to analyze the spiritual consciousness of Reog performers in understanding performances as activities containing moral and religious values. The concept of *dhikr* was employed to examine ritual practices before performances as a means of strengthening collective spiritual awareness. Meanwhile, the concept of self-control was used to analyze the symbolic transformation of the *Warok* figure from a sacred-magical symbol into a symbol of moral exemplarity, discipline, and social responsibility.¹¹

Based on this framework, the study aims to analyze Sufistic spirituality in the practice of Reog Ponorogo in Pantai Labu. Specifically, the research seeks to answer three questions: (1) how Sufistic spirituality is expressed in Reog practices; (2) how spiritual values are internalized within the Reog community; and (3) how the symbolic meanings of Reog are transformed from the perspective of Sufism.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Expression of Spirituality in the Practice of Reog Ponorogo

The expression of Sufistic spirituality in the practice of *Reog*

[http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/19091/1/buku metode penelitian kualitatif.Abdul Fattah.pdf](http://repository.uinsu.ac.id/19091/1/buku_metode_penelitian_kualitatif.Abdul_Fattah.pdf).

¹¹ Feny Rita Fiantika and Anita Maharani, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Padang Sumatera Barat: PT. Global Eksekutif Teknologi, 2022), 54-68. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anita-Maharani/publication/359652702_Metodologi_Penelitian_Kualitatif/links/6246f08b21077329f2e8330b/Metodologi-Penelitian-Kualitatif.pdf.

Ponorogo in Pantai Labu can be observed through various activities performed by the artists, both before and during the performances. Based on the findings of this study, spiritual elements are not separated from artistic activities; rather, they are integrated into every stage of the performance process. The performers commonly engage in collective prayers and *dhikr* before appearing on stage as a form of supplication for safety and the smooth execution of the performance. In addition, there is a strong emphasis on maintaining proper conduct, such as mutual respect, avoiding conflict, and preserving discipline throughout the rehearsal process.¹² Values such as patience, responsibility, and self-control are also evident in the participation of group members.¹³ From the perspective of Sufism, these practices reflect the consciousness of *ihsan*, namely, an awareness of maintaining both outward and inward conduct in every aspect of life. Thus, Reog functions not only as a cultural performance, but also as a medium for the cultivation of Sufistic spirituality within the social life of the community.

Table 1. Forms of Spiritual Expression in the Practice of Reog Ponorogo

No.	Forms of Spiritual Expression	Number of Informants	Percentage
1.	Prayer and <i>dhikr</i> before performances	10 informants	40%
2.	Discipline and responsibility	7 informants	28%

¹² Jimin Rhim et al., "A Deeper Look at Autonomous Vehicle Ethics: An Integrative Ethical Decision-Making Framework to Explain Moral Pluralism," *Frontiers in Robotics and AI* 8, no. 01 (May 4, 2021): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3389/frobt.2021.632394>.

¹³ Emily C. Arauz, "Cultural Heritage, Ethics and Contemporary Migrations," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 4 (April 3, 2021): 427–429, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2020.1836504>.

3.	Self-control (emotions/attitudes)	5 informants	20%
4.	Feelings of calmness and focus	3 informants	12%
Total		25 informants	100%

Source: Primary research data (processed by the researcher, 2026).

Based on these data, the forms of Sufistic spiritual expression in the practice of *Reog Ponorogo* can be classified into several major categories. Ten informants identified prayer and *dhikr* before performances as practices that are consistently carried out. Seven informants emphasized the importance of discipline and responsibility in maintaining group solidarity. Meanwhile, five informants stated that participation in Reog helps them develop emotional control and maintain proper conduct during performances. The remaining three informants explained that their involvement in Reog provides a sense of calmness, focus, and inner direction. These findings indicate that spirituality in Reog is not limited to religious rituals, but is also reflected in the formation of ethical values and the inner experiences of the performers.

The expression of Sufistic spirituality in *Reog Ponorogo* is most strongly reflected through the practice of collective prayer and *dhikr* before performances begin. The performers regard these rituals not merely as traditions, but as expressions of *tawakkul* (trust in God) and supplication for safety and success. From the perspective of Sufism, the practice of *dhikr* is understood as an effort to cultivate spiritual awareness and inner tranquility in everyday life.¹⁴ This can

¹⁴ Andika Robinson and Jefri Setyawan, "Young Generation in the Preservation of the Tabot Tradition of Bengkulu City From the Perspective of

be seen in the statement of one informant:

“Before performing, we usually gather together for collective prayer. Sometimes we also recite short *dhikr* so that our hearts become calmer and the performance runs smoothly. If we do not begin with prayer, it feels as though something is missing.” (SR, Reog performer, interview, 2026)

This statement demonstrates that the practice of *dhikr* within the Reog community is not perceived merely as a formal ritual, but also as a means of building mental and spiritual preparedness before performing. In Sufi thought, this condition is closely related to the consciousness of *ihsan*, namely, the inner awareness that every activity is carried out under the observation of God. Therefore, the practices of prayer and *dhikr* in Reog may be understood as forms of *living Sufism*, namely the manifestation of Sufi values within the cultural practices of society.¹⁵

In addition to religious rituals, Sufistic spirituality in Reog is also reflected in the attitudes of discipline, responsibility, and self-control demonstrated by the performers.¹⁶ Informants explained that participation in Reog requires members to maintain proper behavior during both rehearsals and performances.¹⁷ They are

Social Identity Theory,” *Santhet (Jurnal Sejarah Pendidikan Dan Humaniora)* 9, no. 4 (2025): 1271–1282, <https://doi.org/10.36526/santhet.v9i4.5644>.

¹⁵ Stephen Cory Robinson, “Trust, Transparency, and Openness: How Inclusion of Cultural Values Shapes Nordic National Public Policy Strategies for Artificial Intelligence (AI),” *Technology in Society* 63, no. 01 (November 1, 2020): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101421>.

¹⁶ Guzel Aznagulova, Dmitry Pashentsev, and Yulia Kashevarova, “The Idea of Human Rights: From the Ancient World to the Digital Age,” *Wisdom* 1, no. 1 Special issue 1 (December 1, 2021): 18–29, <https://doi.org/10.24234/WISDOM.V1I1.663>.

¹⁷ Adrian Firman Rokandi, Yusmar Yusuf, and T. Romi Marnelly, “Modal Sosial Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Riau Dalam Melestarikan Tradisi Shalawatan,”

expected to maintain harmonious relationships among members, avoid harsh speech, and show respect toward group leaders and fellow performers. One informant stated:

“If you join Reog, you cannot behave carelessly. We are taught to respect one another, not to become easily emotional, and to be disciplined in attending rehearsals.” (DS, studio leader, interview, 2026)

From the perspective of Sufism, such attitudes are closely related to the concept of *mujāhadat al-nafs*, namely the discipline of controlling emotions and negative impulses. Spirituality in the practice of Reog is therefore expressed not only through symbols or rituals, but also through the cultivation of moral character and social ethics. In this sense, Reog functions as a social learning space that shapes the moral and spiritual consciousness of community members.

The expression of Sufistic spirituality is also evident in the inner experiences felt by performers during their involvement in Reog performances. Several informants revealed that they experienced feelings of calmness, focus, and emotional control while performing.¹⁸ These experiences indicate that participation in Reog carries personal meaning that extends beyond entertainment and is closely connected to individual spiritual experiences. One informant explained:

“When I perform, my mind becomes calmer. Sometimes after rehearsals or performances, my heart feels lighter, and I do not

Anterior Jurnal 25, no. 1 (2026): 58–65,
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33084/anterior.v25i1.11423>.

¹⁸ Linda Sunarti and Teuku Reza Fadeli, “Preserving Javanese Identity and Cultural Heritage in Malaysia,” *Cogent Arts and Humanities* 8, no. 1 (2021): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2021.1956068>.

become angry easily.” (BM, member of the Reog community, interview, 2026)

From a Sufi perspective, this experience relates to the condition of inner tranquility (*ṭuma'nīnah*) that emerges through spiritual engagement and self-control. Thus, Sufistic spirituality in Reog is not only manifested in outward rituals, but also appears as an inner experience that shapes the self-awareness of the performers. These findings demonstrate that the practice of Reog in Pantai Labu not only preserves its cultural function, but also serves as a medium for cultivating spiritual values and social ethics within community life.

The Process of Internalizing Spiritual Values within the Reog Community

The process of internalizing spiritual values within the *Reog Ponorogo* community in Pantai Labu takes place through the active involvement of members in various group activities. Values such as patience, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect are not formally taught, but instead develop through direct experience during rehearsals and performances.¹⁹ Community members learn to understand these values through interaction with fellow members, particularly senior performers. Regular training activities serve as the primary space for shaping attitudes and character. In addition, the habit of maintaining solidarity and appreciating each member's role further strengthens the process of value

¹⁹ Monique Botha, “Critical Realism, Community Psychology, and the Curious Case of Autism: A Philosophy and Practice of Science with Social Justice in Mind,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 53, no. 01 (January 1, 2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22764>.

internalization.²⁰ Several informants explained that participation in Reog has helped them become more capable of controlling their emotions and behaving more calmly. This process occurs gradually and repeatedly within the daily life of the community. Thus, the internalization of spiritual values in Reog does not occur instantly, but rather develops through continuous social experiences lived by the performers.

The internalization of spiritual values within the Reog community in Pantai Labu is shaped through habits that are repeatedly practiced in every rehearsal and performance activity. Values such as intention (*niyyah*), prayer, and inner preparedness are not taught theoretically, but are routinely practiced as integral parts of the artistic tradition. Members habitually begin activities with prayer and intention as forms of spiritual preparation before performing. Over time, these habits gradually cultivate the awareness that every activity should be grounded in good intentions.²¹ As stated by one Reog performer:

“In Islam, before performing, there is prayer, beginning with bismillah. In Reog, there is also intention, so that when lifting the Reog mask it feels lighter and the event runs smoothly.” (SR, researcher interview, 2026).

In addition, certain taboos are practiced repeatedly as part of the preparation before performances. These habits help cultivate

²⁰ Adam H Boyette et al., “Cultural Transmission and Market Participation in a Congo Basin Village,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 380, no. March (2026): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2024.0257/4408825/rstb.2024.0257.pdf>.

²¹ Kaleda K Denton, Uri Liberman, and Marcus W Feldman, “On Randomly Changing Conformity Bias in Cultural Transmission,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 34 (2021): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2107204118/-/DCSupplemental.y>.

discipline and caution among the members.²²

"The taboo is that we are not allowed to eat foods that smell like peanuts... that has become a rule passed down from the elders." (SR, researcher interview, 2026).

Through the repetition of these practices, spiritual values such as awareness, carefulness, and responsibility gradually become embedded within the members themselves. Thus, the internalization of spiritual values is formed through continuous habituation within the practice of Reog.

The internalization of spiritual values within the *Reog Ponorogo* community also occurs through exemplary conduct demonstrated by studio leaders and senior members in their daily activities. Values such as discipline, self-control, mutual respect, and responsibility are not conveyed formally, but are directly practiced through social interactions during rehearsals and performances. From a Sufi perspective, this process is closely related to the formation of moral character through habituation and exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), namely the process of instilling spiritual values through behaviors modeled by individuals who possess moral authority within the community. This process is also consistent with social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn through observing the behavior of others within their social environment. In this context, new members learn to distinguish between cultural aspects and religious values through the guidance, attitudes, and practices demonstrated by studio leaders and senior members, allowing the internalization of

²² Rachel Anne Buchanan et al., "Philosophy of Education in a New Key: Exploring New Ways of Teaching and Doing Ethics in Education in the 21st Century," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 54, no. 8 (2022): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2021.1880387>.

spirituality to develop gradually within the life of the Reog community.²³ As explained by a studio leader:

“We follow the artistic version, not the sacred version. This is culture, but before performing, there is still intention and prayer so that the performance runs smoothly.” (DS, researcher interview, 2026).

In addition, the process of adapting to Islamic values is reflected in the attitudes of senior members toward older traditions:

“We still preserve the old traditions, but now the artistic side is emphasized more. Elements that are considered too sacred are gradually reduced so they do not conflict with Islamic teachings.” (DS, researcher interview, 2026).

Through such exemplary practices, members learn how to perform Reog while preserving cultural values and simultaneously remaining aligned with religious teachings. Therefore, the internalization of spiritual values in this pattern develops through a process of social learning rooted in concrete examples within the community.

Beyond habituation and exemplary conduct, the internalization of spiritual values also occurs through personal reflection experienced by members of the Reog community. Participation in rehearsals and performances provides experiences that encourage members to understand the deeper meaning of the activities they engage in. Spiritual values are not only practiced, but

²³ Nanda Rochmahningtyas and Trisakti, “Simbolisme Dan Keindahan Dalam Kesenian Reog Ponorogo: Sebuah Kajian Multidisiplin,” *Besaung: Jurnal Seni Desain Dan Budaya* 10, no. 2 (2025): 347–363, <https://doi.org/10.36982/jsdb.v10i2.5420>.

are also personally felt as part of self-awareness.²⁴ This is reflected in the statement of a community leader:

"Today, Reog is entertainment for society, but it can also become a means of strengthening social ties." (BM, researcher interview, 2026).

In addition, interaction within the community creates space for members to develop awareness regarding the importance of togetherness and intention in artistic practice.²⁵

"What matters here is togetherness... there is no coercion, everything depends on each person's intention." (DS, researcher interview, 2026).

These experiences demonstrate that spiritual values are not merely understood as rules, but as forms of awareness that emerge from participation within the community itself.²⁶ Thus, the internalization of spiritual values in this pattern is shaped through personal reflection that develops from social and cultural experiences within the practice of Reog.

The Transformation of the Symbolic Meaning of Reog from the Perspective of Islamic Sufism

The transformation of symbolic meanings within *Reog Ponorogo* in Pantai Labu demonstrates significant changes in the

²⁴ Tamrin Fathoni, "Konsep Solidaritas Sosial Dalam Masyarakat Modern Perspektif Émile Durkheim," *Journal Of Community Development and Disaster Management* 6, no. 2 (2024): 129–147, <https://doi.org/10.37680/jcd.v6i2.6402>.

²⁵ Riana Hartati, Masyhur, and Yulion Zalpa, "Perilaku Politik Budaya Jawa Dalam Warga Buay Madang Timur Kabupaten OKU Timur," *Ampera: A Research Journal on Politics and Islamic Civilization* 2, no. 1 (2024): 15–24, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.19109/ampera.v2i1.7429>.

²⁶ Ilya Levin and Dan Mamlok, "Culture and Society in the Digital Age," *Information (Switzerland)* 12, no. 2 (February 1, 2021): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.3390/info12020068>.

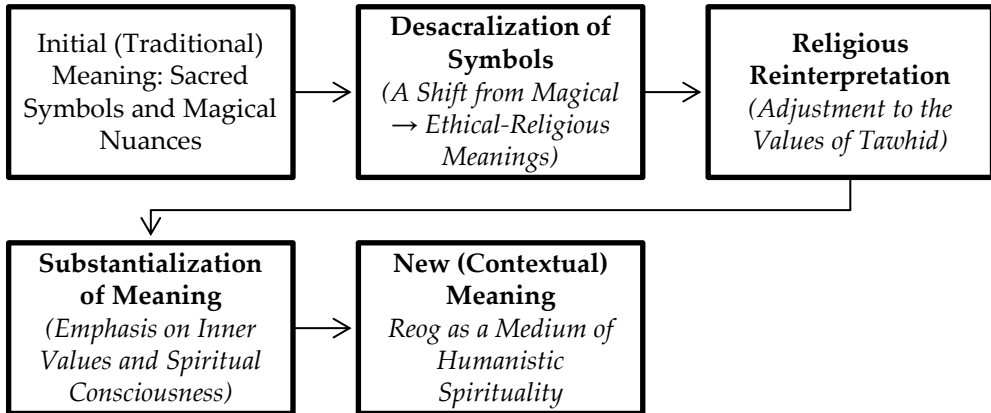
way the community interprets the elements embedded within this traditional art form. These changes are not limited to the form of the performance itself, but also involve reinterpretations of symbols, characters, and rituals that were previously associated with sacred and magical dimensions. Within a religiously oriented society, these symbols have gradually been adapted to align with Islamic values without eliminating the cultural identity that has long been preserved.²⁷ One clear example can be seen in the figure of the *Warok*, which was formerly understood as a figure possessing supernatural power and extraordinary spiritual abilities. Within the Reog community of Pantai Labu, however, the *Warok* is now interpreted more as a symbol of moral integrity, discipline, courage, and self-control.

In addition, rituals performed before performances, which were once closely associated with mystical elements, are now more commonly directed toward collective prayer and *dhikr* as expressions of supplication for safety and divine protection from Allah. Similar transformations are also evident in the use of performance attributes, which are no longer regarded as sacred objects possessing magical power, but rather as cultural symbols and markers of artistic group identity. From the perspective of Islamic Sufism, this process may be understood as a form of spiritual purification of meaning, namely a shift in emphasis from magical aspects toward the cultivation of inner awareness, moral character, and religious values within social life. Thus, Reog is not only preserved as a cultural tradition, but is also reinterpreted as a cultural practice that remains harmonious with the spirituality of

²⁷ Dwi Mariyono, "Indonesian Mosaic: The Essential Need for Multicultural Education," *Quality Education for All* 1, no. 1 (December 16, 2024): 301–325, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QEA-05-2024-0042>.

the local Muslim community.

Figure 1. The Transformation of the Symbolic Meaning of Reog from the Perspective of Islamic Sufism



Source: Researcher's analysis based on field data, 2026.

The visualization illustrates the process of symbolic transformation in the practice of *Reog Ponorogo*. In the initial stage, symbols were understood within a sacred framework closely connected to traditional beliefs. Subsequently, a shift in meaning occurred through a process of desacralization that redirected these symbols toward ethical and religious values. The next stage involved religious reinterpretation, in which the symbols were adjusted to align with the values of *tawhid* in Islamic teachings. This process then continued into the substantialization of meaning, emphasizing inner spiritual experience and consciousness. Ultimately, Reog came to be understood as a cultural practice possessing contextual spiritual value within the social life of the community.

The transformation of symbolic meaning in Reog can be observed through changes in the way society perceives elements that were previously regarded as possessing magical powers. In contemporary practice, these symbols are no longer positioned as

sources of supernatural power but are instead interpreted as expressions of culture containing ethical values, discipline, and self-control. From the perspective of Sufism, this transformation reflects a process of spiritual purification of meaning, namely a shift from outward orientations toward inner awareness that emphasizes *ihсан*, moral character (*akhlak*), and closeness to God. This shift reflects the community's effort to adapt cultural practices to a more religious and contextual understanding of Islam.²⁸

Within the context of the community in Pantai Labu, the interpretation of Reog symbols is directed more toward their social functions and moral values. This reflects a conscious effort to preserve cultural practices while ensuring that they do not contradict the principles of faith. In Islamic teachings, such a tendency is consistent with efforts to preserve the purity of *tawhid* from elements that could potentially lead to associating partners with God.²⁹

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا

Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him (QS. al-Nisa'/4: 36)

Thus, the desacralization of Reog does not signify the elimination of cultural values, but rather a transformation of symbolic meanings toward ethical and religious orientations more compatible with the community's beliefs.

In addition to undergoing desacralization, the symbols

²⁸ Esti Tri Martini and Muhammad Syaikon, "Mengelola Heterogenitas Sosial Di Kota Binjai Dan Kabupaten Bekasi: Perspektif Interaksi Sosial Dan Pembentukan Kohesi," *Jurnal Imiah Pendidikan Dasar (JIPDAS)* 5, no. 4 (2025): 5317–5321, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37081/jipdas.v5i4.4479>.

²⁹ Iswadi and Helmi Abu Bakar, "Ittishal Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media Implementasi Etika Komunikasi Islam Dalam," *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Media* 2, no. 2 (2025): 139–149, <https://ittishal.org/index.php/jkm/article/view/102/49>.

within Reog have also been reinterpreted within a religious framework. Traditions that continue to be preserved are not abandoned; instead, they are given new meanings in order to align with the values of *tawhid*. This process demonstrates the community's ability to adapt cultural heritage to evolving religious understandings without erasing its cultural identity.³⁰

This adjustment can be observed in the strengthening of intention (*niyyah*), prayer, and ethical conduct within the practice of Reog. These elements have become the foundation for positioning the performing arts as an activity inseparable from religious consciousness. From a Sufi perspective, this is closely related to the purification of the orientation of human actions, in which every act is directed as a form of devotion and servitude to God.³¹

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion. (QS. al-Bayyinah/98: 5)

Thus, the religious reinterpretation of Reog reflects a process of cultural adaptation that continues to maintain a balance between tradition and religious principles.

A shift in focus from outward forms toward inner spiritual experience also marks the transformation of symbolic meaning. In the practice of Reog in Pantai Labu, the primary emphasis is no longer placed on symbols as objects, but rather on the meanings

³⁰ Saidah Difla Iklila, "Titik Temu Tasawuf Dengan Tarekat Lokal Di Indonesia," *Purwadita: Jurnal Agama Dan Budaya* 8, no. 1 (2024): 30–40, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.55115/purwadita.v8i1.10>.

³¹ Difla Iklila, "Resonansi Mistisisme Sufi Dalam Sastra Nusantara : Konsep Wahdat Al-Wujūd Dalam Lagu ' Satu ,'" *Jurnal Thaqa'fiyyāt: Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban, Dan Informasi Islam* 24, no. 2 (2025): 119–136, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/thaq.2025.24202>.

experienced through social and spiritual engagement. Values such as togetherness, patience, and sincerity have become central to the practice itself.³²

This transformation indicates that symbols are no longer regarded as the ultimate center of meaning, but rather as media through which deeper values are conveyed.³³ From the perspective of Islamic Sufism, this shift corresponds with the emphasis on the heart (*qalb*) as the center of spiritual consciousness. What is considered most important is not the external form, but the inner quality that accompanies every action.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى أَجْسَادِكُمْ وَلَا إِلَى صُورِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

"Indeed, Allah does not look at your appearance or your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds." (Narrated by Muslim)

Thus, the substantialization of meaning within Reog reflects a shift toward a deeper spiritual experience, in which inner values become the essence of the community's cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Sufistic spirituality in the practice of Reog Ponorogo in Pantai Labu District is manifested through prayers and *dhikr* before performances, disciplined attitudes and self-control, as well as the inner experiences of the performers. The internalization of spiritual values occurs through

³² Marzanna Poplawska, "Intangible Heritage System: Challenges of Culture Preservation in a Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13, no. 01 (2025): 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2025.2484707>.

³³ Budi Prasetyo, Abdul Karim Batubara, and Jufri Naldo, "Upaya Pelestarian Tari Angguk Di Sanggar Angguk Marmoyo Tunas Baru Desa Dalu X B Kecamatan Tanjung Morawa," *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik, Dan Humaniora* 7, no. 2 (2023): 522–25, <https://doi.org/10.31604/jim.v7i2.2023.522-525>.

habituation, role modeling, and social interaction within the Reog community. Meanwhile, the transformation of symbolic meaning can be seen in the reinterpretation of the Warok figure and ritual elements that were previously associated with sacred-magical nuances into meanings more oriented toward ethical values, moral conduct (*akhlaq*), and awareness of *tawhid*.

The findings indicate that Reog functions not only as a cultural tradition but also as a medium for the formation of Sufistic spirituality within the social life of Muslim communities. The contribution of this study lies in strengthening the Sufi perspective in local cultural studies, particularly in understanding the relationship among cultural symbols, the Warok figure, and Sufi spirituality in contemporary society. Future studies are recommended to develop comparative cross-regional research and interdisciplinary approaches in order to deepen the understanding of the relationship between culture and spirituality within Muslim communities.

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