

## Nahdatul Ulama, Religious Traditions, and Rural Communities: Narrative of Shifting Religious Traditions of the People of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, East Java

Mibtadin<sup>1</sup>, Rosidin<sup>2\*</sup>, Dandung Budi Yuwono<sup>2</sup>, Arnis Rachmadhani<sup>2</sup>, Ahsanul Khalikin<sup>2</sup>, Reslawati<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sebelas Maret University (UNS), Surakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> National Research and Innovation Agency, Central Jakarta, Indonesia

**Abstract:** Globalization marked by advances in science and technology is inevitable, including the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi Village. They are faced with maintaining traditions and following modernization. In the last three decades, the social, religious, and cultural faces of their people have shifted due to educational, transportation, and economic factors. What is the shape of this shift in religious traditions? This research is qualitative descriptive research, data collection was conducted by three ways: interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis using interactive analytical models includes data reduction, data delivery, and conclusions. This study aimed to describe the shift in socio-religious traditions of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village due to globalization. This research sharpens the paradigm of socio-religious philosophy in the sociological approach of religion. By the effect of modernization, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are faced with a new religious movement that brings a purification ideology that erodes Islamic traditions and nationalism. As a result, they were uprooted from their own cultural roots and traditions, causing crises of spirituality and moral damage to society. Nahdatul Ulama (NU) strengthens rural Sufism as a form of engaging tradition through spirituality groups, such as recitation, tahlilan, and other religious activities. This spirituality group exists in the public sphere for social, religious, and cultural activities in the presence of Islam in the community. The association spirituality has become a symbol of cultural resistance to violent ideologies and strengthened community resilience. The existence of NU places Islam as a social ethic in two respects: religion as the source and vision of community morality and Islam as a giver of peace. NU strives to educate life through education, social, cultural, and religious to provide a real contribution to realizing a just and civilized society. The spirituality community has an open religious understanding that puts forward the values of brotherhood (al-ukhuwah), idolatry (al-wathoniyah) and humanity (al-insaniyah). A friendly religious model based on the local culture of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is expected to shape the character and identity of a polite, tolerant, and civilized nation.

**Keywords:** Nahdatul Ulama, tradition, rural communities, public spaces, spirituality associations.

## 纳达图尔乌拉玛·宗教传统和农村社区：东爪哇班贡雷霍·基杜尔村人民宗教传统转变的叙述

**摘要：**以科技进步为标志的全球化是不可避免的，包括班贡雷霍基杜尔克登加拉·纳加维村的人们。他们面临着保持传统和追随现代化的挑战。在过去的三十年里，由于教育、交通和经济因素，他们人民的社会、宗教和文化面貌发生了变化。这种宗教传统转变的形式是什么？本研究为定性描述性研究，数据收集通过三种方式进行：访谈、观察和记录。使用交互式分析模型的数据分析包括数据缩减、数据交付和结论。本研究旨在描述由于全球化而导致的班贡雷霍·基杜尔村人民的社会宗教传统的转变。这项研究在宗教的社会学方法中锐化了社会宗教哲学的范式。在现代化的影响下，班贡雷霍·基杜尔村的人们面临着一场新的宗教运动，它带来了一种侵蚀伊斯兰传统和民族主义的净化意识形态。结果，他们被从自己的文化根源和传统中连根拔起，对社会造成了精神危机和道德损害。纳达图尔·乌拉玛(NU)通过诸如

朗诵、塔利兰和其他宗教活动等灵性团体加强农村苏菲派作为一种参与传统的形式。这个灵性团体存在于公共领域，在社区中有伊斯兰教存在的情况下进行社会、宗教和文化活动。协会精神已成为文化抵制暴力意识形态和增强社区复原力的象征。NU 的存在将伊斯兰教作为一种社会伦理体现在两个方面：宗教是社区道德的源泉和愿景，伊斯兰教是和平的给予者。NU 努力通过教育、社会、文化和宗教来教育生活，为实现公正和文明的社会做出真正的贡献。灵性社区有一个开放的宗教理解，提出了兄弟情谊（兄弟们）、偶像崇拜（偶像崇拜）和人性（因萨尼亚）的价值观。一种基于班古列祖基杜尔村当地文化的友好宗教模式有望塑造一个有礼貌、宽容和文明的国家的性格和身份。

**关键词：**纳达图尔乌拉玛，传统，农村社区，公共空间，灵性协会。

## 1. Introduction

The wave of globalization that presents in the midst of life is characterized by advances in science and technology that cannot be avoided by society. Globalization as a universal symptom appears in tandem with the presence of modernization in all aspects of human life [1]. Indirectly, globalization forces society and religion to make a brush on the current. Some societies and religions are resistant and some are accommodating to modernization [2]. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village did not escape this current so that socially and religiously they were faced with maintaining traditions or following the changing reality. In the last three decades, the social, religious, tradition, and cultural faces of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village have shifted a lot. This is influenced by educational, transportation, and economic factors of the people. The socio-religious life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in the 1990s was still close to the nuances of Islam kejawen with its traditional devices.

In the Bangunrejo Kidul community, the socioreligious traditions that were eroded by the modernization current did not completely disappear because they were still “*santri desa*” (village students) and traditional Islamic communities such as NU held religious traditions firmly. “Rural santri” through rural Sufism activities such as *yasinan*, *tahlilan*, *manaqib*, *sholawatan*, recitation, and others became a strong fortress for the diversity of rural communities. The existence of NU as the guardian of tradition puts local culture as an identity so that people do not lose their Javanese identity as an effect of modernization. The changes were also triggered by the rampant development and modernization of agriculture, transportation, media, education, and religious culture. One form of shifting religious traditions of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village can be seen from the rapid growth of places of worship, religious educational

institutions, and increasing the number of spirituality groups. Before the 1990s, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village only recognized the religious organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah but after the reformation, many religious movements with various ideologies emerged. This causes the socioreligious dynamics in Bangunrejo Kidul Village to experience a dynamic shiftic and encourages changes in the community.

People face two problems: first, the trans-national Islamic movement that carries the ideology of violence and the Islamic caliphate as the extreme right. The extreme left, in the form of religious liberalism, undermines Islam leading to *la-diniyyah*. Second, the current of globalization that brings pop culture has a negative impact on the socioreligious life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. In effect, rural society was uprooted and its cultural roots caused a crisis of spirituality and moral decay. Low traditions such as *dhikr* assemblies, *tahlil*, and spiritual communities are the goalkeepers to build cultural resilience by strengthening religion as spiritual traversal (*at-tarbiyatur ruhaniyah*) in the midst of hedonistic modern life. The religious traditions of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, which were eroded by modern currents, did not completely disappear because there are still those who hold the traditions firmly. *Santri* still conduct traditional Islamic practices, and the existence of NU as a guardian of tradition prioritizes local culture as self-identity so that people do not lose their Javanese identity as a result of cultural globalization. The presence of Islamism in rural areas is increasingly enlivening public spaces with various symbols and identities in Bangunrejo Kidul Village. Their presence carries the ideology of “popular Islamism” changing the mapping of religious movements in the form of hijra communities into society, especially the millennial generation. Islamic pop is present in rural public spaces as a strategy to adapt to the dynamics of the times and shape identity

politics. The existence of Islamic pop was adopted and became the new cultural way of life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, both fashion, lifestyle, and language reflecting the value of Arabic-Islamic culture.

Religion with Islamic pop puts forward a key value: first, local traditions influenced by Sufism produce local Islamic customs. Secondly, popular Islam is not understood as the modernization of Islam, but applying Islam flexibly in the practice of life remains within the corridors of shari'a'. Third, popular Islam cannot be confused with "populist;" and fourth, popular Islam emphasizes the rise of Islam for community empowerment [3]. Islamic pop became *mabda' al-hayah* (worldview) some people made a religious paradigm shift toward religion with sharia as the norm of life. In the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, there is currently a battle of low tradition discourse represented by NU traditional Islam with high tradition led by Islamists with Islamic pop, which muzzles community traditions. Islam is popular with the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village because it has developed into identity politics as a form of construction that is attached as a form of communal symbol that bind their togetherness. How is the resilience of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in responding to the changing times brought about by globalization? The presence of new religious movements in Bangunrejo Kidul Village such as the *Majelis Tafsir Alquran* (MTA) enlivened the village's public spaces. The MTA became a newcomer that started with a radio broadcast that attracted the sympathy of residents even though it did not yet have clear mass pockets such as NU and Muhammadiyah. In the last two decades in Bangunrejo Kidul Village, religious organizations have grown rapidly, marked by their presence in filling public spaces through their various symbols and identities. They have sympathizers and are scrambling to develop their ideology to attract the sympathy of the villagers. In religious ideology, they are engaged in the development of Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools, *madrasah*, recitations, and *taklim* assemblies. This is a tool for ideologicalization in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as well as for encouraging social changes in diversity. Their presence carries the ideology of "popular Islamism" in the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, thus changing the mapping of existing religious movements. Popular Islam in the form of hijra communities has penetrated all levels of Bangunrejo Kidul society, including the millennial generation and even their existence exceeds the barriers of religious organizations. Islam is popular in the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as a strategy for Islamist groups to adapt to the dynamics of the times that eventually shape identity politics. The existence of popular Islam was adopted and became a way of life for the village community in both fashion, music, language style, and daily activities trying to reflect

semi-Arabic-Islamic values.

The presence of Islam as a worldview for some people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village encourages them to "*hijra*" this has caused a shift in religion and puts the value of syar'î as a norm guide in the practice of daily life. Popular Islam manifested in the identity politics of some people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, especially Islamists, as a "habitus" form of behavior that develops into a habit in itself, distinguishing it from other communities. This makes mainstream cultural Islam such as NU face a new religious ideology in terms of ideology. The lifestyle trend can also be seen in the high religious awareness of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village such as hijab, sacrifice, and other religious activities that are fun. This article is restricted to a socio-religious setting, photographing the shift in traditions among the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village.

## 2. Research Methods

This descriptive qualitative research provides a comprehensive overview of the narrative of the shift in religious traditions of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village due to the changing times of globalization and the presence of new religious organizations in village public spaces with different ideologies. Qualitatively it is expected to understand the good meaning of the thoughts and actions of the object of study [5]. The approach used is the sociology of religion [6]. Religion is seen as an observable social fact [7]. Religion becomes part of the real life of its adherents, ideas, activities, and works of religious believers [8]. This approach studies the social aspects of religion [5]. The data was obtained through three ways, namely direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation in the form of social and religious activities of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. Data analysis through interactive analysis models includes data reduction, data delivery, and drawing conclusions. The conclusions obtained are tested for their correctness angulation of informant review data.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Community Traditions and Changing Village Public Spaces

Bangunrejo Kidul is a village in Kedunggalar Ngawi District, East Java. Most people are farmers. The village consists of nine hamlets including Pohjagal (village government center), Ngubalan, Blumbang, Pohsluku, Sidodadi, Garangan, Bangun, Golan, and Gelon. Each hamlet has a different history and origin. Gelon hamlet has the oldest history compared to other hamlets. Bangunrejo Kidul Village consists of ten RW (get along well with the citizens) and 53 RT (neighborhood association). Most people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village follow Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) so that religious routine activities such as *dhikr*,

*tahlil*, *khataman*, *manaqib*, *muludan*, *rejeban*, and other religious traditions are still carried out properly. The 1998 reforms brought changes to the order of social, political, cultural, and religious life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. The openness of public spaces formed after the fall of the New Order opened the opportunity for socioreligious groups to articulate their poetic aspirations and ideologies reactively and demonstratively in the public sphere [4]. Its existence as an Islamic social movement is a symptom of religious politics that cannot be separated from ideological and political interests that seize space and dominate the discourse. They are trying to claim space in a changing political situation. Its existence poses a threat to democratization, on the other hand, it shows the growth of democracy.

Anti-mainstream religious movements pose a threat to democracy because the various discourses and actions they take in the public sphere not only deny democratic principles but also undermine the growing foundation of human rights [9]. This openness encourages the presence of Islam in the public sphere to experience a significant development [10]. The openness of public space for religion is an important discourse because it shows three things: first, the efforts to modernize and strengthen the democratic system in the nation and state as a powerful system in accommodating the plurality of societies. Second, the religious fundamentalism movement is increasingly strengthening, marked by the movement to reject the democratic system because it is considered that it cannot provide a better life to the people. Third, the impact of the openness of public spaces is the emergence of the phenomenon of the revival of the spirituality of urban communities [11]. The public sphere as opposed to the anti-mainstream movement is carried out through bringing together the religious spirituality that has transformed public life. The consensus of the results of this transformation is "civic religion." Religion can only give closed particular allegiance, not a civic open allegiance to the state [12].

A touch of modernization encourages the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village to improve to prepare a social system that is resistant to social shifts, culture, and religious traditions. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are rural society people with a unique religious pattern, namely, religion but still cultured. The natural outlook of life of its people affects the way of religion in daily life. This reality is used by anti-mainstream religious movements to develop their ideologies, movements, and networks to gain public sympathy. The presence of anti-mainstream movements in public spaces gives its own color to public spaces and democracy [13].

Democracy and the open public sphere became an opportunity for them to articulate their political interests and religious ideologies aggressively,

reactively, and demonstratively [14]. In principle, their presence aims to fight for space, dominate discourse, enliven democracy, and enjoy existing facilities. Public space has become a medium and a strategy for spreading symbols, identities, and values to the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village by using the openness of existing political structures.

So far, the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is dominated by NU which actively empowers the spirituality of the village community through spirituality groups such as recitation, *tahlil*, *dhikr* assembly, and *shalawatan*. This activity became a public space as well as a space for searching for spirituality of the village community as rural Sufism. The term rural Sufism is used to refer to the phenomenon of the Sufism movement or spirituality that is rife in the periphery and practiced by traditional Islam. Through religious activities, NU greets the community with religious reasoning such as *tausiyah*, *dhikr*, *manaqib*, *dziba'*, *berjanjen*, send prayers, and others with the aim of strengthening faith, alleviating mental drought and thirst for the spirituality of the Bangunrejo Kidul Village people in facing social problems. In the village public sphere, NU encourages religion to be more progressive, dynamic, and oriented towards social movements for community empowerment. NU's presence in the midst of the public space of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village becomes important when they face a wave of social, cultural, and religious changes that demand a firm attitude in responding to it. One of them is the transnational Islamic movement that muzzles NU's practice religious traditions and other local wisdom on the pretext of religion.

So far, NU has maintained this tradition as a public space where the pilgrims involved in it consist of various groups in Bangunrejo Kidul Village, they sit together to practice religious teachings without being distinguished from one another. Through this public sphere, NU counters narratives, ideologies, and movements of the newcomer anti-mainstream religious movement that tries destructing the established order of religious social life. NU believes that through recitation as a public space, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village began to recognize, study, and study *turats* and other traditional religious knowledge to be in line with current realities. NU is a carriage for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village to be open to new ideas. It is not strange that many NU residents have a critical way of thinking that puts forward the principles of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *ta'adul* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance) as a form of religious moderation. In terms of social psychology, nu's existence in the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village fights for the central position so that it can control the discourse and dominate the ideology in the community. They indirectly give a new color in

strengthening identity politics, expressing spirituality based on local wisdom, and countering discourses and ideologies between existing religious mass organizations [10].

The battle of discourse and the dominance of public spaces in Bangunrejo Kidul Village through various religious activities is increasingly interesting because each has social capital. NU, for example, with social capital such as pilgrims and various spiritual nodes hopes to strengthen the faith and encourage people to a universal attitude and respect for locality because faith is a multidimensional concept that includes meaning producing activities [15]. Faith is considered here part of an activity that is relational and forms relationships between the subject, others, and shared centers of value and power. At this point, faith declares itself outward in the form of an open attitude, which fosters an awareness of respect and being dialogical when in the public sphere. Such a view of life increases open attitude with a willingness to accept the truth that comes from outside him, even though he comes from a different group. accepting truths that come from outside him, even if they come from different groups. NU through a “small public space” in the form of a spiritual community becomes a medium to instill dredging and respect for religious rights in the community. This openness of spirituality encourages mutual respect and is critical as a form of God’s instruction. A sense of religion is called a “sense of oneness” [15].

Faith and social piety in the public sphere are the ultimate goal of empowering the spirituality of rural communities by NU as an embodiment of the sense of oneness to encourage community religious attitudes at a critical stage, being condered a manifestation of faith as a “living belief” (*lebensglaube*) that is always moving dynamically closer to the best values as a path to God. The effort takes the form of a continuous, relentless process in daily activities in real life [15]. Therefore, NU through the small public space is a process of seeking spirituality toward Allah SWT with a dynamic, harmonious, and tolerant lifestyle. To borrow Fowler’s term, it is called a “religious person” or a “person of mature faith”, which is a person who can interpret the world and create a worldview (*mabda al-hayah*) dynamically, including when they are in a dynamic and interest-filled public space.

According to [16], the presence of Islam in the public sphere is not as monolithic but plural as politics in all civilizations. In the public sphere, religious discourses fight each other to dominate each other, framing becomes a medium for social negotiations with other religious groups in formulating the expected social order, namely the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in harmony and peace. In the theory of social movements, the presence of religion in the public sphere is driven by three things, namely resources, motivation, and the political environment [17]. Those

resources can be material, mass media, legitimacy, authority, identity, and institutional [18]. The presence of Islam in public spaces is the basis of morality for the development of religious maturity of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. Public space is also a medium for religious expression of rural communities with all the limitations of facilities, economy, education, and information for the internalization of Islamic values. The existence of NU in public spaces for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village completes the dimension of community spirituality, especially the “*santri desa*” (village students) who have received less attention from religion, even becoming an empty space left by scholars. Therefore. The small public space in the form of a spirituality knot initiated by NU is part of the big carriage of *Islam Nusantara*, namely, a typology and a new way of seeing Islam more substantially and deeply.

This conforms to the idea of introducing a new perspective in the study of Islamic history (a new kind of historical enterprise) namely “the perspective of the ‘edge.’” [19]. This perspective became an anti-thesis to “the perspective of the ‘central area.’” The perspective of the edge is essential to rise because the edge ultimately forms the center [19]. The existence of public spaces for rural communities is an effort to pave the way to develop *Islam Nusantara* as a discourse and reference knowledge for friendly Islam so that it becomes an inspiration for Muslims in parts of the world. The most important thing about empowering NU’s public space is the effort to re-mobilize the spirituality potential of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village for the benefit of national life. In rural Sufism, the various small public spaces are from nu religious traditions to drive civilization (*asy-syuhud al-hadhari*) as well as *asy-syuhud ats-tsaqafi* of society in building harmony and morality of the nation so that its citizens have the character of *al-akhlaq al-karimah*. According to [20], NU’s strength rests on three things: first, the *Aswaja* understanding that gave birth to a moderate Islamic discourse; second, values, traditions, and cultural institutions such as *pesantren* and *thariqat* networks; and third, a network of structures as organizational infrastructure spread across the archipelago. The dialectic of religious discourse in the public sphere of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is encouraged to the “friendly” in the community is shifting from traditional society to *al-madinah al-fadhilah* (civil society), an advanced, dynamic, and civilized society. Through the group spirituality, NU encourages a responsive to modernity that puts forward the principle of *al-muhafadhah ‘ala qadim as-shalih wa al-akhduh bi jadid al-ashlah* where people’s traditions have undergone a cultural shift due to a touch of modernity displayed in public spaces.

The presence of Islam in the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in principle considers two things, namely the good value of social praxis and

recognition of the reality of existing ethical pluralism. This can be done with deliberative objectivity by realizing religious values [21]. The existence of the concept of deliberative objectivity through religious values in the public sphere can provide significant benefits, namely, first, avoiding the existence of domination and monopoly of truth by a particular group. This is because the social consensus produced in the process of public deliberation is no longer the values and interests of individuals or groups, but the common interests. Second, minimize the occurrence of conflicts and social disintegration due to differences of opinion and interests. Third, it becomes a means for marginalized groups to increase their share in creating a just and prosperous society. Fourth, as a bridge of tension between religion and the state related to religious doctrines in the public sphere that are counter-productive to the achievement of state goals. Fifth, social transformation can only be carried out if the people have autonomy and independence in opinion and participation in fighting for their political interests without being co-opted by the power of the state and the market. The presence of religion in the public space of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as a social criticism, a source of morality vision, and religious expression. By placing Islam in the public sphere as a social ethic becomes a spirit in conducting social transformation and religious traditions that prioritize local values as a foundation for building a peaceful, tolerant, and just society.

### 3.2. NU, Civic Culture, and the Association of Spirituality: Strengthening Traditions

Departing from the principle of *al-muhafadhah 'ala qadim as-shalih wa al-akhdh bi jadid al-ashlah* NU in Bangunrejo Kidul Village strengthens existing spirituality groups such as *manaqib, yasinan, berjanjen, diba', tahlilan*, and other traditions become a stronghold in maintaining the integrity of the nation and religion by placing morals as the foundation of life that teaches harmony. In the midst of rural communities, NU places Islam as a social ethic, which is a form of concern for morality in order to create social welfare which then realizes social harmony. NU also strengthened the role of local religious leaders to be agents of change for their respective social bases. Only those who have been in direct contact with the public can understand the language and communicate with the grassroots masses to convey the message of friendly Islam. However, the important way and method is the message about the moderate Islamic discourse reaching the community, in this case Bangunrejo Kidul Village. It takes a different approach to conveying religious messages to reach them. This is cultural proselytizing for empowering the people, proselytizing that embraces not beating, proselytizing that is friendly and shows no anger.

The spirituality association initiated by NU in the public sphere is an effort to shape personality and build society (*liyundziru qaumahum*). According to [22], NU has two tasks related to society: first, spiritual mental development, personality formation, and community character building, which has responsibility to God and humans. Second, strengthening nation building by instilling love for the homeland, Pancasila, the Republic of Indonesia, and the 1945 Constitution. NU through the spirituality association encourages public awareness to be open by moving civic culture which is embodied in social harmonization. This spirituality group encourages religious patterns based on personal goodness in responding to existing issues such as plurality and new waves of religious culture. In Sufism, it is called *takhalluq bi akhlaqillah* with *tawhid* as the core values of directing to mutual respect for fellow citizens. The spirituality association becomes a medium (*al-washilah*) to build the character of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village to reach *al-insan al-kamil*. It is a plenary man who moves civilization based on good character and negates ugly and violent qualities in the name of religion to create peace of heart and tranquility in life.

The NU spirituality association in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is a religious expression and part of the great Islamic current mainstream that carries the discourse of *Islam Nusantara* because it always involves local culture in it. The spirituality group became nu's agent, structure, and media in the community for cultural resistance to the trans-national Islamic movement that muzzled the local culture because it was considered inconsistent with religious teachings. NU spirituality groups such as *slametan traditions, haul, diba', tahlilan, yasinan, manaqib*, grave pilgrimage, praise, prayer and other local traditions. Islam is present not only to bring *al-'aqidah wa al-shari'a* but also to bring *al-'ilm wa ats-tsaqofah, al-adabi wa al-hadlarah*, and *al-insaniyah*. The above spirituality groups show that Islam accommodates local culture, *rahmatan lil'alam* and rejects violence under the pretext of religion and God because it is a form of denial of the teachings of Islam itself because it reduces the universal value it contains. Taking into account the existing social realities and public spaces, the idea of *Islam Nusantara* is important to be based on the aim of determining the pattern and character of Islam as a normative thing and religious practice, something that is contextual and accommodated into a culture that comes from humans without losing their respective identities.

The spirituality association in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village as a rural Sufism as a small effort to strengthen *Islam Nusantara* departs from the principle of *al-Islam as-shalih likuli zaman wa al-makan* that is accommodating and cooperates with the local culture where it is present. Therefore, Islam can

be more developed because it synergizes with the noble values of local culture that is polite, tolerant, and people's outlook on life. NU's choice grounds Islamic values and spirituality groups through a cultural approach to have a "life force" in the community. Various spirituality groups are a form of spiritual intelligence of NU residents in grounding Islamic and Indonesian values in Bangunrejo Kidul Village that continue to be practiced by the community. The existence of spirituality groups in responding to modernity prioritizes five forms of movement, namely, modernization, anti-modernization, liberation theology, new religious movements, and religious syncretism [23]. The symptoms of the rise of Sufism are seen as a form of revival of a new religion [11]. The new religion arose because of two things: first, the existence of a spiritual crisis; and second, the emergence of religious radicalism. Society experiences mental drought with a legalistic and textual pattern of religion. They are trying to find new alternatives to religious ways that are more humanist and tolerant. In addition to the new religious movements (NRMs) and the rise of local religions to become a contemporary religious phenomenon in Indonesia, there are symptoms of urban Sufism becoming a movement of opposition for rural Sufism.

Meanwhile, the model of seeking spirituality of rural communities known as Sufism was considered in low or village traditions that are countered by cosmopolitan traditions, namely the legalistic variant held by scholars [24]. The tradition of Sufism was the element that was first displaced by modernity, because Sufism was part of the rural religious tradition. However, this thesis was broken because the existence of Sufism as part of the rural religious tradition still persisted and even grew mushrooming in various regions, especially in rural areas driven by NU. This is inseparable from the role of traditional Islam such as NU that actively mobilizes grassroots masses to form religious enclaves in the form of spirituality groups such as recitation, *taklim* assemblies, *dhikr* assemblies, and *shalawat* to strengthen the faith of rural communities. This phenomenon of rural Sufism is pleasant to see in terms of public space for religious expression because it is a forum for developing the spirituality of the village community. In the end, urban Sufism chooses a space that is different from rural Sufism.

The tradition of Sufism does not simply die but undergoes a transformation of forms and movements according to the setting of its locality [25]. The assessment of the spirituality revival movement phenomenon showed the existence of religious psychological problems, alienation, and spiritual crises of modern society [26]. This is what encourages the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village to seek peace of mind through the spirituality of recitation, *taklim* assembly and *dhikr* assembly, rediscovering the

meaning of their existence as a complete human being with all his human nature. Factors encouraged the rise of the rural Sufism model to develop in rural communities, namely: first, spirituality groups become vehicles for the search for the meaning of life and psychological therapy to solve psychiatric problems so as not to dry out of spirituality. Secondly, through recitation, they built socialization to strengthen *al-ukhuwah al-insaniyah*, *al-Islamiyah*, *al-wathoniyah*, and *ar-ruh ta'adudiyah* also gained intellectual enlightenment. Third, spirituality groups become a medium to follow fashion trends, life styles, and dynamics of contemporary religious discourse so that they do not miss out on developing issues.

The function of the spirituality group is a medium for driving life change and community development. Spiritual groups are a form of resistance from cultural movements present in society to counter discourse on trans-national Islamic ideologies. The spirituality association became a medium to promote tolerant and peaceful religious narratives to the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. The association of spirituality as a space for community encounters and religious da'wa can be developed as nu's social and cultural capital in strengthening social resilience so that it is not only a means of implementing routines of carrying out religious traditions. Through the spirituality group and noble traditions, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village can encourage the spirit of taking care of each other. Various socio-cultural religious activities in Bangunrejo Kidul Village have become a "gathering space" to conduct religious expressions.

Through the spirituality group, NU strengthens the social resilience of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village who already have immunity in the form of social ties, cultural systems, and religious maturity. This can be seen from the persistence and continuation of rural community traditions such as mutual aid, and the attitude of taking care of each other is still well maintained. This is a true village where the community offers politeness, friendliness, and a strong *hangrungkebi* (attitude of having) attitude between each other. The existence of the NU spirituality association is an addition to the pillars of civil society and social capital for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village in developing tolerance and peace that are naturally ingrained in the community. Additionally, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village with the spirituality association indirectly carried out cultural resistance to the incoming globalization, which was not in line with existing local values. This cultural resistance is a civic culture force that develops social resilience while still upholding the local traditions of the community so that an attitude of tolerance is maintained in Bangunrejo Kidul Village.

The role of Islam for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is very vital, because religion is placed as

a social ethic because of two things, namely: first, religion as a source and a vision of morality. They consider that religion is not only a source of conflict, intolerance, and a guardian of morality because it can kill the initiative and creativity of the religious people themselves. The NU spirituality association became a public space for social, religious, and cultural activities that wanted Islam to be present in the Bangunrejo Kidul community, since according to [27], religion is more dynamic and able to play a role in the midst of the struggles of human life. Both NU spirituality groups place Islam as a giver of a sense of peace that can support the process of human civilization. The sense of peace arising from God's belief is a measure of the harmony of the world where religious truth is explicit regarding the values of morality. This approach encourages religious people to open up to each other and learn from each other so that religion becomes more meaningful for common life [28].

NU with the spirituality association seeks to educate the lives of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village through education, social, cultural, and religious so that it can provide a real contribution to realizing a just and civilized society. This commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture is the principle of religious moderation that is practiced by the community by paying attention to the objective conditions of the plural Bangunrejo Kidul Village community without sacrificing the basic teachings of the religion itself. The spirituality community has an open religious understanding that puts forward the values of *al-ukhuwah al-wathoniyah* (community of fellow nation's children) and *al-ukhuwah al-insaniyah* (brotherhood of fellow human beings). A friendly religious model based on the local culture of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is expected to form a polite, tolerant national character and identity, and avoid exclusive and radical religious understanding because it can break national unity.

Indirectly, NU through the spirituality association positions itself as an agent of social, cultural, and religious change based on local culture by taking an active role in solving problems that exist in the community of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. With its spirituality, NU plays a role in improving the quality of religious understanding and national identity for rural communities in terms of democracy, tolerance, pluralism, and citizenship. For NU, the strengthening of the narrative of moderation, tolerance, and safeguarding of local culture is not only discourse but is an applied praxis that exists in society. The moderate and friendly religious display is not only for academic purposes but for the improvement of the quality of life of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village who are moral, civilized, and cultured. The NU spirituality association positions itself as a public space for religious expression as an empowerment of civil

society. In the empowerment of civil society, religion is understood as a public religion considering that the public context of religion is no longer the state or society but in civil society [29]. Religion in the process of strengthening civil society uses a social transformation approach, namely, emphasizing empowerment of the lower community through maintaining distance from the state even though it does not reject the existence of the state [17].

So far, NU spirituality associations have placed Islam as a social ethic and made it the spirit (*ar-ruh*) to conduct social transformation and religious traditions that prioritize local values as a foundation in building a tolerant and civilized society [30]. Traditional Islam like NU already has legitimacy deeply rooted in the lives of rural communities. The spirituality association is a social capital that can provide an important contribution to building the character of the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village. It is not surprising that this spirituality group has a dynamic and accommodating character in realizing Islam Nusantara, namely, Islam that is side by side with local culture. This causes religion not lose its human touch [31]. Through the association of spirituality, NU strives to present religion in society according to its *fitrah* (nature), which carries a sacred message in the form of peace so that universal humanity is realized. With these values, society can give birth to positive human attitudes and actions because it can be a source of meaning and wisdom. Through the spirituality of the Walisanga and the previous clerics instilled Islam in a faith society capable of mobilizing the forces of civilized humanitarian action.

The group of spirituality presents a culturally patterned Islam as a form of adaptation to the dynamics of the times that form a new identity and its own habitus. The existence of Islam with a taste of local culture was adopted and became a way of life for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village, both proselytizing methods and daily activities as a form of Islamic identity typical of Indonesia. Religion that carries Islam with culture in principle prioritizes several values: first, local traditions influenced by religious teachings produce local Islamic customs. Secondly, popular Islam is not only understood as the modernization of Islam but more than that, applying Islam in flexibility in daily life by staying within the corridors of shari'a. Third, the notion of popular Islam cannot be confused with populist or majority; and fourth, popular Islam itself emphasizes the rise of Islam for community empowerment [2]. So far, the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village who follow NU traditions have aligned well between religion and culture so that they become their own "identity politics."

The spirituality association for the people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is a stronghold of tradition in maintaining the integrity of Islamic culture and placing

religious morality as the foundations of social life that teaches harmony. NU in the community became a stronghold and pioneer for engaging traditions from the wave of cultural and religious globalization. Islam becomes a social ethic, concern for morality to create social welfare so that social harmony is realized. The NU spirituality association became a medium for the village community to greet and communicate with the grassroots masses to convey the message of polite Islamic proselytizing based on culture. The NU spirituality association forms local wisdom to convey the importance of the message of proselytizing to the bottom of society. This is cultural proselytizing through a cultural approach, the spirituality association not only teaches religious knowledge but also engages traditions of Javanese Islamic culture which is *adi luhung*. Through the rural Sufism movement in the form of spirituality groups, it is hoped that it can build religious awareness that wants the implementation of Islam as a religion of *rahmatan lil'alam*. Islam is not placed as a major issue, but Islam positions Islam as a spirit to build respect for *al-hifdz al-tsaqofah wa al-hifdz al-hadlarah al-Jawiyah* (maintaining Javanese civilization and culture).

#### 4. Conclusion

The impact of globalization with its various aspects is so felt by society. Through the case study in Bangunrejo Kidul Kedunggalar Ngawi Village, it is hoped that it can sharpen the paradigm of socio-religious philosophy in the approach of sociology of religion in detailing social reality. The people of Bangunrejo Kidul Village are faced with a new religious movement that brings a purification ideology that erodes Islamic and Indonesian traditions. As a result, rural society was uprooted from its own cultural roots and traditions, causing a crisis of spirituality and moral damage to the nation. NU through spirituality groups such as recitation, *tahlilan*, *yasinan*, and others strengthen rural Sufism as a form of engaging tradition. The existence of a spirituality group of public spaces for social, religious, and cultural activities that want Islam to be present in the community. The association of spirituality is also a symbol of cultural resistance to violent ideologies and strengthens community resilience. The existence of NU places Islam as a social ethic related to two things, namely, religion as the source and vision of community morality and Islam as a giver of peace. NU strives to educate life through education, social, cultural, and religious so that it can provide a real contribution to realizing a just and civilized society. The spirituality community has an open religious understanding that puts forward the values of *al-ukhuwah al-wathoniyah* and *al-insaniyah*. A friendly religious model based on the local culture of Bangunrejo Kidul Village is expected to shape the character and identity of a polite, tolerant, and civilized nation.

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