



## SUFISTIC VALUES IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP: A SOCIAL-POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF SYECH MUSTOFA HUSEIN NASUTION IN NORTH SUMATRA

Saipul Bahri <sup>1</sup>, Mohd Syakir Bin Mohd Rosdi <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Islamic Development Management Studies (ISDEV), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Minden, Penang, Malaysia, 11800

Corresponding author: [saipulbahri@usu.ac.id](mailto:saipulbahri@usu.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines the role of Sufistic values in shaping models of political leadership through a socio-political analysis of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution, a prominent Mandailing ulama whose influence extends from spiritual domains to political and social arenas in North Sumatra. While studies on Islamic leadership in Indonesia have predominantly focused on institutional politics, party dynamics, and electoral behavior, relatively few have explored how Sufistic ethics operate as a source of political legitimacy and developmental paradigms. Addressing this gap, the study elucidates how Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution synthesized spirituality, ethics, education, and communal engagement to produce a model of political leadership rooted in tawhid, amanah, shura, and wasatiyyah. Methodologically, this work adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, relying on primary documents, historical accounts, interviews, and pesantren-based observations. The findings demonstrate that Sufistic values not only functioned as moral resources but also as socio-political capital enabling community mobilization, conflict mediation, cadre formation, and institutional activism. These insights reveal that Sufism in the Indonesian context is neither apolitical nor purely devotional, but can serve as an ethical-political framework for social development. The study contributes to broader discussions on Islamic political thought by highlighting how spiritual authority intersects with governance and public leadership, offering implications for contemporary Islamic leadership, community-based development, and the revitalization of ethical politics in Muslim societies.*

**Keywords:** Sufism, Leadership, Political Development, Islamic Politics, Social Thought.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Islamic spirituality and political leadership has become an increasingly relevant field of inquiry in contemporary Indonesian scholarship (Azzuhri et al., 2024; Syam et al., 2024). As political competition intensifies and democratic institutions continue to evolve, the ethical foundations of leadership and governance have come under renewed scrutiny (Bertelli & Falletti, 2025; Espinosa & Pino, 2025). Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority democratic nation, presents a unique case where Islamic traditions, local cultures, and modern state institutions intersect in complex ways (Hefner, 2023). In many regions, particularly outside Java, the formation of political authority cannot be separated from religious legitimacy, ethical models of leadership, and the influence of Islamic scholars (ulama) embedded within local social structures (Yani et al., 2022). This dynamic is evident in North Sumatra, where the role of ulama extends beyond religious education to include social mediation, moral leadership, and engagement with political affairs. However, scholarly attention on these dynamics remains limited, especially concerning Sufistic traditions and their contribution to political development and leadership ethics.

Existing studies on Islamic political leadership in Indonesia have predominantly examined political elites, party politics, electoral behavior, populism, and identity-based mobilization (Hidayah et al., 2025; Setiawan & Tomsa, 2023). While these studies have generated valuable insights, they often overlook the role of spiritual authority and Sufistic ethics in shaping local political cultures and leadership practices. Scholarship on Indonesian Sufism has also tended to focus on theological, ritual, or historical dimensions (Basyir, 2025; Haryanto, 2025), with limited exploration of its socio-political implications. As a result, the political significance of Sufistic values such as tawhid, amanah, ihsan, zuhud, and wasatiyyah remains under-theorized in contemporary political science and Islamic studies. This scholarly gap is particularly significant given that many pesantren-based Islamic networks in Indonesia historically produced leaders who combined spiritual authority with political engagement, especially during the formation of Islamic organizations and nationalist movements in the early 20th century (Khoirunnisa & Effendi, 2025; Nurtawab & Wahyudi, 2022).

From a socio-political perspective, the Indonesian reform era has introduced new challenges related to corruption, patronage, moral governance, and social inequality.

Reports from Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW, 2023) and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK, 2023) indicate that public trust in political institutions continues to be undermined by systemic corruption and weak ethical leadership (Achmad Aulia, 2025). This phenomenon suggests that democratic institutional reforms alone are insufficient without ethical transformation within leadership cultures. In this context, Sufistic traditions may offer alternative moral frameworks for leadership grounded in spiritual accountability, humility, and service to the community, rather than dominance, self-interest, or material accumulation. Scholars such as Zaman (2012) and Abou El Fadl (2004) have argued that Islamic ethics can function as political resources that shape collective expectations of leadership and governance (Whyte, 2022). However, empirical case studies rooted in Indonesian Islamic contexts remain sparse, suggesting the need to examine local models of Sufistic leadership that have shaped socio-political life in regions such as North Sumatra.

One of the most significant figures in this regard is Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution, a Mandailing ulama whose influence spanned religious, educational, and political spheres in North Sumatra during the mid-20th century. His establishment of the pesantren Mustofawiyah in Purba Baru and his involvement in Islamic organizations such as Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah (AII) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) demonstrate his role as both spiritual guide and socio-political actor. His teachings emphasized the integration of Sufistic values with social responsibility, political participation, and community development. Unlike apolitical Sufi traditions that retreat from worldly affairs, Syech Mustofa's model of Sufism promoted active engagement with societal concerns, while maintaining moral integrity, spiritual orientation, and social justice. These attributes position him as an illustrative case for understanding how Sufistic ethics function within political leadership in Muslim societies.

Despite his historical relevance, the political thought of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution remains understudied in academic literature. Biographical accounts exist, yet most focus on institutional or genealogical aspects, leaving his political ideas and leadership paradigm insufficiently conceptualized within broader scholarly debates. This research addresses this gap by analyzing Sufistic values embedded in his approach to leadership and political development, examining how these values shaped socio-political practices in North Sumatra and contributed to community-based political

formation. The relevance of this case extends beyond historical interest, offering insights for contemporary Indonesia where ethical-political crises persist and where Islamic authority continues to influence socio-political discourse at both local and national levels.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to explore how Sufistic values contributed to models of political leadership through the case of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) identify core Sufistic ethical principles articulated in his teachings; (2) examine how these principles were operationalized within socio-political engagement; and (3) analyze their implications for political development in North Sumatra. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative descriptive approach utilizing primary documents, interview materials, and historical records associated with pesantren Mustofawiyah and regional Islamic movements.

Through this inquiry, the study contributes to scholarly discussions on Islam and politics by demonstrating how spiritual authority and ethical values intersect with leadership, social transformation, and political development. More broadly, the case of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution illustrates that Sufistic traditions in Indonesia are not merely devotional or mystical, but can operate as socio-political resources that inform governance, ethical conduct, and community-based development. By foregrounding Sufistic values as analytical categories in political leadership studies, this research enriches the theoretical repertoire for understanding Islamic political thought within non-Arab, Southeast Asian contexts and opens new pathways for integrating spiritual ethics into contemporary political sociology. The significance of this research therefore lies not only in recovering an important historical figure in North Sumatra, but also in providing a conceptual framework for examining ethical political models rooted in Islamic spirituality, which remain relevant amid Indonesia's ongoing crisis of political morality and governance. Accordingly, this study positions Sufistic ethics as an alternative political paradigm capable of contributing to more just, accountable, and community-oriented forms of leadership in Muslim societies, and invites further comparative scholarship across different Islamic regions and traditions.

Scholarly discussions on Sufism have historically emphasized its spiritual, metaphysical, and ritual dimensions, often situating it within discourses of religious devotion, mysticism, and personal piety. Classical Sufi traditions prioritized inner

purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), spiritual knowledge (*‘ilm al-batin*), and experiential awareness of the Divine (*ma‘rifat Allāh*), which were typically viewed as detached from the affairs of worldly governance (Muvid & Kholis, 2024; Sikumbang et al., 2024). However, contemporary scholarship has increasingly challenged this apolitical stereotype, arguing that Sufism has long engaged with political realities in diverse socio-historical contexts. In regions such as the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, Sufi orders (*ṭuruq*) constituted important networks of authority that shaped social organization, political allegiances, and even anti-colonial mobilization (Gani, 2023; Hermansen & Zarrabi-Zadeh, 2023; Ullah, 2025). This perspective reframes Sufism not as a retreat from political life, but as a mode of ethical and symbolic engagement with power, community, and governance. As Zaman argues (2024), the moral and spiritual authority of Sufi scholars frequently translated into social legitimacy, enabling them to influence political institutions and guide communal behavior (Zaman, 2024). These interventions complicate the simplistic binary between spirituality and politics, demonstrating how Sufistic ethics and symbolic capital can be harnessed for political leadership and social development.

Within this evolving discourse, scholars have examined how Sufi leaders whether as spiritual masters (*shaykhs*), community elders, or institutional founders exercise authority through non-coercive means. Unlike state-based authority, which relies on bureaucratic or legal mechanisms, Sufi authority operates through charisma, ethical exemplarity, religious knowledge, and interpersonal trust (Weber, 1978; Geertz, 1968). This form of authority is relational rather than institutional, embedded within networks of disciples, communities, and educational institutions such as *pesantren* in Indonesia or *madrasas* in South Asia. Howell (2021) demonstrates that Indonesian Sufi communities, particularly in Java and Sumatra, have historically cultivated forms of social organization that blur distinctions between religious devotion and socio-political engagement (Howell, 2021). Moreover, these Sufi networks often intersected with nationalist movements in the early 20th century, contributing to the formation of Islamic organizations, political parties, and educational reforms (Bozbaş & Bozbaş, 2025; Karimov et al., 2024). Such findings indicate that Sufism participates in political development not through explicit ideological programs but through moral leadership, institutional mediation, and community formation grounded in religious legitimacy.

The literature on Sufism and leadership further demonstrates that Sufi ethical teachings shape models of leadership that emphasize humility, sincerity (ikhlās), trustworthiness (amānah), consultation (shūrā), and justice (‘adl). These values align with classical Islamic political ethics, which conceptualize leadership as a form of divine trust to be executed with moral integrity and responsibility toward the community (Kholil et al., 2024; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024). Unlike modern technocratic models of leadership that privilege efficiency, control, and strategic power, Sufistic leadership prioritizes spiritual accountability before God and moral accountability before society. Ibn Taymiyyah (1992) notes that the highest function of political authority in Islam is the establishment of justice, understood as the equitable distribution of rights, duties, and opportunities within society (Galbraith, 2024). In this regard, Sufistic ethics can serve as a corrective force to tendencies such as patronage, corruption, materialism, and authoritarianism within contemporary politics. This is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where democratic consolidation has been accompanied by persistent ethical crises, institutional corruption, and declining public trust in political elites (Mietzner, 2025). Such socio-political conditions amplify scholarly interest in alternative ethical paradigms that contribute to value-based leadership and community-oriented governance.

The literature on Islamic political ethics offers additional conceptual foundations for understanding the contribution of Sufistic values to political leadership. Islamic political ethics are grounded in normative principles derived from the Qur’an, Sunnah, and interpretive scholarly traditions. Core values include tawhid (the unification of all aspects of life under Divine sovereignty), shūrā (consultation), ‘adl (justice), maslahah (public interest), and akhlāq (moral behavior) (Ruhullah & Ushama, 2024). Within this framework, leadership is not merely a technical function but an ethical endeavor aimed at safeguarding communal welfare. Abou Hasan et al (2024) contends that political authority in Islamic contexts must be morally disciplined, emphasizing that legitimacy depends not only on procedural mechanisms but also on the ethical virtues of leaders (Hasan et al., 2024). This stands in contrast to secular political theory, which often decouples political power from moral virtue, focusing instead on institutional design and power distribution. Scholars such as Gilani et al (2024) argue that Islamic ethics retain contemporary relevance because they offer a synthesis of spiritual

accountability, community solidarity, and normative justice (Gilani et al., 2024). When viewed through this lens, Sufistic teachings enrich Islamic political ethics by adding dimensions of spiritual introspection, discipline of the self, and moral transformation.

Within Southeast Asia, recent scholarship has highlighted the distinctive role of pesantren-based Sufi traditions in shaping moral leadership and political consciousness. Indonesia's pesantren system has long served as a locus for producing Islamic scholars (kyai), community leaders, teachers, and activists who influence both religious and political life (Budiharso et al., 2023). Pesantren-based networks, particularly in Java and Sumatra, have historically contributed to anti-colonial movements, the formation of Islamic organizations, and the articulation of Islamic developmental ideas. Jamil (2025) notes that pesantren communities foster values of modesty, self-discipline, and moral service that extend beyond ritual piety into societal engagement (Jamil, 2025). Within this milieu, Sufism provides not only spiritual formation but also leadership formation through institutional practices, communal authority, and embodied ethics. Such findings provide important conceptual bridges for understanding figures such as Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution, whose pesantren Mustofawiyah became a center for both religious education and social mobilization in North Sumatra.

Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution emerges in the literature as a historical figure who embodies the nexus between Sufism, politics, and community development. As an ulama, educator, and institutional founder, he integrated Sufistic principles such as tawhid, ihsan, zuhud, amanah, and wasatiyyah into leadership practices that extended beyond religious instruction. His involvement in organizations such as Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah (AII) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) reflects a leadership model grounded in ethical accountability and communal responsibility rather than personal ambition or material gain. Furthermore, his institutional initiatives, including pesantren-based cadre formation, pedagogical reforms, and community development activities, demonstrate how Sufi authority can function as socio-political capital within local contexts. Scholars have not extensively analyzed his contributions within political theory, yet his life and work offer important opportunities to conceptualize Sufistic values as political resources. His model of leadership resonates with broader scholarly arguments that spiritual authority in Southeast Asia interacts with political structures

in culturally embedded ways (Nikmah et al., 2024).

Bridging these discussions to contemporary socio-political studies requires recognizing that Sufistic leadership contributes not only to the moral dimension of politics but also to the formation of political subjectivities, institutions, and community-based networks. Political sociology increasingly acknowledges that authority is constructed not solely through state institutions, but through symbolic, cultural, and moral fields (Westheuser & Zollinger, 2025). Sufistic traditions contribute to these fields by shaping normative expectations of leaders, establishing ethical frameworks for community relations, and generating social trust. In contemporary Indonesia, where political debates increasingly revolve around identity, morality, and public virtue, the relevance of Sufistic ethics becomes more pronounced. The search for ethical leadership amplifies scholarly interest in models rooted in religious frameworks that value humility, justice, and social welfare over transactional power and material accumulation.

In summary, the literature reveals three important conceptual bridges for this study. First, Sufism should be understood not merely as mystical spirituality but as a socio-political tradition with ethical implications for leadership. Second, Sufistic values intersect with Islamic political ethics, offering normative resources for moral governance and community-based development. Third, the case of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution situates these theoretical bridges within the Indonesian context, demonstrating how spiritual authority can influence political formation, institutional activism, and developmental practices in Muslim societies. These conceptual insights form the analytical foundation for examining how Sufistic values operated within his model of leadership and how these values contribute to contemporary discussions on ethical political development in Indonesia and beyond.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODE**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design in order to examine the role of Sufistic values in shaping models of political leadership through the case of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution. The qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate for research that aims to provide a detailed and contextualized account of social phenomena without reducing them to numerical variables or experimental constructs



(Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). Data for this research were collected primarily through documentary sources, including biographical writings, institutional archival materials, historical accounts, and pesantren-based records concerning educational and organizational activities associated with Syech Mustofa. In addition to documentary data, the study incorporates secondary literature addressing Sufism, Islamic political ethics, Indonesian Islamic movements, and pesantren traditions as analytical supports for interpretation. Where available, interview materials and ethnographic observations from pesantren Mustofawiyah are utilized to strengthen contextual understanding of how Sufistic values were embodied and transmitted within educational and socio-political practices.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic interpretative strategy, which allows concepts, values, and leadership practices to be identified, categorized, and interpreted within their broader socio-historical contexts (Lungu, 2022). Through this method, themes related to tawhid, amanah, ihsan, zuhud, and wasatiyyah were extracted and examined in relation to leadership and political engagement. The analytical process also involved tracing institutional linkages and social networks formed through pesantren activities, organizational participation, and community interactions. Triangulation between sources was employed to enhance validity and minimize interpretive bias. The objective of this methodological approach is not to produce generalizable findings in a statistical sense, but rather to develop an empirically grounded conceptual understanding of how Sufistic ethics function as political resources within Indonesian Muslim societies.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Tauhid as Ethical Foundation of Political Conduct**

Tauhid constitutes the most fundamental ethical principle in Sufistic political thought because it positions God as the ultimate source of authority, law, and moral accountability. In the Sufistic worldview, tawhid is not limited to the affirmation of God's oneness as a theological doctrine, but operates as an ontological framework through which social and political life is interpreted and regulated. Classical Sufi scholars have long emphasized that tawhid unifies all dimensions of human existence

spiritual, moral, and social under a single axis of divine sovereignty (Khan et al., 2025). Within this framework, political leadership becomes an extension of spiritual servitude (*'ubudiyah*), and governance becomes a form of ethical stewardship oriented toward divine justice and communal welfare.

In the context of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution's teachings, tauhid functions not merely as a theological affirmation of divine unity, but as an ethical orientation that demands leaders to align their decisions with principles of justice, accountability, and moral responsibility. The original material underscores this point by noting that "prinsip tauhi menjadi panduan bagi pemimpin dalam menentukan keputusan politik yang adil serta bebas daripada kepentingan diri". This redefinition of leadership as a manifestation of spiritual responsibility introduces a dual relational paradigm: horizontally, leaders must ensure fairness and uphold the rights of the community, while vertically they are accountable before God for the use of power entrusted to them. Such framing transforms political authority into an *amanah*, or divine trust, which cannot be reduced to personal interest, material gain, or the pursuit of power for its own sake (Herijanto, 2022).

The ethical significance of tauhid also lies in its capacity to discipline political power by situating authority within a metaphysical moral order. Islamic political ethics conceive power not as a proprietary asset, but as a delegated trust whose legitimacy depends on justice (*'adl*), responsibility (*mas'uliyah*), and the pursuit of public interest (*maslahah al-'ammah*) (Chande, 2023). Through this logic, the legitimacy of leadership is inseparable from the leader's moral character and ethical performance. This stands in contrast to secular conceptions of political authority grounded in contractualism, legal proceduralism, or bureaucratic rationality, which often detach governance from metaphysical accountability and moral virtue. As Hashas (2023) argues, Sufi authority challenges modern statecraft by moralizing leadership through spiritual consciousness, thus opening space for non-material motivations in political behavior (Hashas, 2023).

In Syech Mustofa's political thought, tauhid also functioned as a grounding principle for developmental ethics. The original text notes that tauhid assists in "merancang dasar-dasar pembangunan yang berteraskan nilai tauhid", implying that

development must not be reduced to material expansion, but must remain oriented toward moral elevation, social justice, and the protection of human dignity. This developmental reading of tauhid corresponds with the Sufistic understanding that spiritual harmony is inseparable from social equilibrium. In contemporary socio-political conditions in Indonesia characterized by corruption, inequality, and moral crisis tauhid provides a normative framework for critiquing systems of governance that privilege profit maximization, patronage, and transactional politics (Tambunan, 2023).

Furthermore, tauhid establishes an epistemological critique of modern materialism and secular rationality. Whereas secular political theory treats political behavior as a product of incentives, interests, and strategic rationality, the Sufistic model posits that leadership must be animated by spiritual intentionality (*niyyah*) and ethical consciousness (*murāqabah*). This generates what political sociologists describe as non-material political capital, wherein legitimacy emerges from trust, moral authority, and symbolic recognition rather than coercion or patronage (Novak, 2024). The case of Syech Mustofa illustrates this principle, as his influence over educational institutions, religious networks, and regional communities was acquired not through state mechanisms, but through moral exemplarity and spiritual charisma. In tauhid provides a metaphysical ethical foundation for political leadership in Sufistic traditions by unifying religion, ethics, and governance into a coherent normative structure. It reframes political conduct as worship through service, situates authority within divine accountability, and operationalizes leadership through justice, stewardship, and communal welfare. This offers an alternative paradigm to secular models of statecraft and contributes to broader discussions on Islamic political ethics by demonstrating how spiritual values can inform political behavior in Muslim societies.

### **Sufistic Model of Political Leadership**

Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution articulated a Sufistic model of political leadership that diverged fundamentally from modern rational bureaucratic patterns of political authority by embedding leadership within a framework of spiritual consciousness, communal welfare, and ethical responsibility. Central to this model is the principle of

amanah (trusteeship), which positions authority not as a privilege to be accumulated nor a tool for domination, but as a divine trust to be exercised in pursuit of justice, welfare, and moral reform. This trusteeship ethic introduces a normative constraint on political conduct by subjecting leaders to dual accountability vertically before God and horizontally before their community thereby replacing the pursuit of personal gain, material accumulation, and patronage networks with a spiritual obligation to serve the public good. As the manuscript emphasizes, “nilai ihsan dan amanah menjadi panduan bagi pemimpin dalam menentukan keputusan politik yang adil” , indicating that political decision-making must be grounded in righteousness and ethical restraint. Complementing amanah is the ethic of shura (consultation), which forms the procedural component of Sufistic leadership; rather than legitimizing unilateralism or authoritarian command, shura operationalizes leadership through deliberation, shared reasoning, and participation of community actors. Within pesantren Mustofawiyah, shura manifested in dialogical pedagogies, deliberative councils, and consultative governance practices that integrated teachers, students, and community members into institutional decision-making processes, reinforcing collaborative leadership over charismatic unilateralism.

This consultative mode resonates with Islamic political ethics historically associated with the caliphal and scholarly traditions and parallels contemporary democratic theory concerning deliberative legitimacy, albeit grounded in religious epistemology rather than secular proceduralism (Parray, 2023). The third dimension of this leadership model pertains to moral authority, a form of legitimacy rooted in personal integrity, ascetic discipline, and spiritual example rather than formal office-holding. Moral authority operates as non-material political capital, enabling influence without coercion, electoral mandates, or bureaucratic instruments (Zheng, 2025). In the case of Syech Mustofa, political influence emerged through his status as a spiritual guide and educator whose credibility was constructed through sustained service, pedagogical contribution, ethical consistency, and mastery of Islamic knowledge, rendering him a referential leader whose opinions shaped communal decision-making even in the absence of formal state power. This moral authority generated social legitimacy, which differs from procedural electoral legitimacy in that it

accumulates slowly through embodied practice, relational trust, and historical contribution.

Pesantren Mustofawiyah functioned not merely as a spiritual institution, but as a socio-political infrastructure producing networks of alumni who later assumed roles in religious organizations, local governance, education, and societal leadership, transforming the pesantren into what political anthropologists identify as “moral communities” that cultivate symbolic and institutional continuity (Arief & Assya’bani, 2023). Finally, this model operated within conditions of institutional struggle, as Islamic education in 20th-century Sumatra was situated within contested religious and political fields involving organizational rivalries, state intervention, colonial pressures, and post-independence restructuring. Engagement with institutions such as Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah (AII) and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) required negotiation, coalition-building, and adaptive strategy, demonstrating that Sufistic leadership is neither passive nor withdrawn from political realities, but capable of institutional activism that translates spiritual ethics into socio-political action. Through these combined modalities, the Sufistic model of leadership articulated by Syech Mustofa reframes political leadership not as an arena for competition and domination, but as a domain of ethical stewardship, spiritual accountability, and community-based development, offering an alternative paradigm to secular statecraft and contributing to contemporary debates on Islamic political ethics, leadership sociology, and the moral foundations of governance.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated that Sufistic values constitute an important ethical and conceptual foundation for understanding political leadership in Indonesian Muslim societies. Through the case of Syech Mustofa Husein Nasution, the research shows that Sufism is not solely a spiritual or devotional tradition confined to metaphysical contemplation, but a socio-political resource capable of shaping leadership practices, community formation, and developmental paradigms. By foregrounding principles such as tauhid, ihsan, amanah, zuhud, and wasatiyyah, Syech Mustofa advanced a leadership model grounded in spiritual accountability, ethical

stewardship, and collective welfare. This Sufistic model diverges significantly from modern bureaucratic, technocratic, or transactional approaches to power, which prioritize instrumental rationality, material incentives, and political competition. Instead, the Sufistic paradigm emphasizes moral integrity, collective consultation, and social responsibility as essential components of legitimate authority. The research further reveals that Sufistic leadership operates through mechanisms of moral authority and social legitimacy rather than formal office-holding or state-centered institutional structures. Pesantren-based networks, community engagement, and educational institutions served as platforms for shaping political consciousness, cadre formation, and socio-religious activism, illustrating how non-state Islamic institutions can influence political life without relying on coercive or electoral mechanisms.

Moreover, the historical context of North Sumatra suggests that Sufistic political leadership was embedded within contested institutional fields, requiring negotiation and strategic adaptation to organizational and political realities. Through these processes, Sufism contributed to community-based development and the articulation of political ethics that resisted corruption, materialism, and authoritarian tendencies. Beyond its historical significance, this research contributes to contemporary discussions on Islamic political ethics and leadership by demonstrating the enduring relevance of spiritual authority in shaping public morality, governance practices, and political expectations. In a period where democratic systems in Indonesia continue to grapple with corruption, declining public trust, and identity-based polarization, the Sufistic paradigm articulated by Syech Mustofa offers an alternative ethical framework for reimagining leadership as service, accountability, and stewardship. The findings also invite broader comparative research on the contribution of Sufi traditions to political development across Southeast Asia and the wider Muslim world. Future research may fruitfully examine how these ethical frameworks interact with modern state structures, democratic institutions, and contemporary social movements, thereby enriching the interdisciplinary discourse on religion and politics.

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