



# Mysticism in the Myth of the Safety Forest as a Value of Student Character Education: a Case Study of Wonosalam Village, East Java

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**Abstract.** Myths play an important role in reflecting the diversity of people's lives and are custodians of cultural heritage and collective values. Folklores, including myths, have the potential to shape the character of students with character education values. This study aims to explore the character education values in the myth of the Safety Forest in Wonosalam and its impact on the moral and ethical development of the community. By combining the theory of mysticism and the concept of character education, this study investigates the possibility of integrating mysticism and character education as a solid foundation to form a generation of students who are spiritually and morally balanced. Through a qualitative approach, this study uses mythical stories as data sources to analyse mysticism in the context of character education. The research findings show that mysticism in Wonosalam includes practices with positive motives and material existence, while the mystic ethics of the community reflect the importance of maintaining moral values in the tradition of mysticism. The integration of mysticism values into student character education refers to the teachings of Imam Ghazali, which aims to form morally and spiritually strong characters. Thus, character education through the values of mysticism in myths makes a positive contribution in shaping a generation of students who are responsible, ethical, and caring in society. This research is a pioneer in combining the two research domains and makes a significant contribution to the understanding of mysticism and its application in the formation of student character.

**Keywords:** Myth, Mysticism, Character Education, Safety Forest.

## 1 Introduction

Myths are also the main pillar of folklore, playing a central role in reflecting the diversity of people's lives [1]. Through myths, people celebrate history and cultural norms, creating an epic dimension with magical elements [2]. Myths are not only entertainment attractions, but also guardians of cultural heritage, reflecting the collective beliefs and values of a society that bind different generations [3, 4]. A deep

understanding of the role of myths not only unlocks cultural wealth, but is also the key to maintaining and preserving the essence of community life amidst changing times and globalisation [5]. Folklore, especially among students, is not only an entertainment narrative, but also has the potential to shape the character of society [6]. A deeper understanding of the influence of folklore on student character building is essential [7]. On the other hand, character education values in mythical stories are crucial in shaping a person's morals, ethics, and outlook on life [8]. This research tries to explore the values of character education in mythical stories as an effort to understand their impact on the moral and ethical development of society [9]. Research on mysticism in the Myth of the Safety Forest in Wonosalam tries to provide an understanding of the development of character education, especially among students. The focus of the research includes understanding the concept of mysticism and its impact on character building, especially in the context of students' morals, ethics, and spirituality [10].

This research is expected to explore the potential of character education in myths, provide relevant understanding for students' lives, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage through a character education approach [11]. As an in-depth study of mysticism in myths, this research has an urgency in revealing the mystical dimension and accommodating this understanding to support the development of student character. Thus, this research not only reveals the mystical side of myths, but also views the urgency of such understanding in supporting the formation of student character as an integral part of personal development in adulthood [12].

The problem-solving approach that combines Niels Mulder's theory of mysticism and Imam Ghazali's concept of character education in the analysis of mythical folktales creates a solid foundation to address the challenges of student character development. In analysing folklore, Niels Mulder's mysticism opens up insights into the spiritual dimension and personal experiences involving belief in the supernatural. The results of this analysis can be applied in people's lives, especially to students, as a means of character education [13].

Through Imam Ghazali's concept of character education, analyses of mysticism can be articulated into values that underlie positive character. For example, sincerity, patience, honesty, trust, and justice. The implementation of these values in students' daily lives can form a good and strong character. By developing a character education strategy based on the results of mysticism analysis, students can undergo their unstable period with local wisdom enriched by religious values [14].

Mysticism and character education, if well integrated, become a solid foundation to form a generation of students who have a balanced character, both in terms of spiritual and moral. This can help them overcome the challenges of modern life by understanding traditional values and spirituality. Thus, this approach is not only about analysing myths, but also making a positive contribution in shaping the character of students who are resilient and have integrity [15].

The research entitled *Mysticism in the Myth of the Safety Forest as a Student Character Education Value* brings novelty by integrating two previously separate research fields, namely mysticism and character education. Research related to mysticism and myths has been done several times before, such as research conducted by Wahidi [16], Hapsoro [17], Nisa [18], Setiawan [19], Hermansya [20], Khomalia [21], Arif [22], Tanaya [23], Trisna [24], Widiyanto [25]. Likewise, research related to

character education was previously conducted by several of them, including Imawati [26], Irma [27], Junaini [28], Suwarno [29], Wisnu [30]. In the panorama of previous research, it can be seen that many studies tend to focus on one domain, whether it is mysticism or character education. Previous research on mysticism has focused more on analysing the motives and existence of mysticism in literary works, be it novels, short stories, or television media. This approach shows an interest in the expression of mysticism in the context of works of art. In contrast, research on character education is more often related to the analysis of character values in various forms of literary works, such as novels and folktales, or in the context of educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools.

The research has not combined these two domains, particularly in the context of mysticism and character values contained in local myths. This research is a pioneer in creating synergy between mysticism and character education, specifically involving the myth of the Safety Forest. Therefore, this research brings a sense of novelty by filling the existing literature gap and making a significant contribution to the understanding of mysticism and its application in student character building.

## 2 Methods

A qualitative approach is a form of research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behaviour that can be observed. According to Moleong [31], research on literary works generally involves authors, social environment, and cultural elements. The use of a qualitative approach in this research is based on several considerations that (1) the data source of this research is oral literature in the form of folk stories, namely myths that exist and develop in the Wonosalam District area, Jombang Regency, (2) the data in this study is mysticism in the mythical story of the Salvation Forest in Wonosalam District, Jombang Regency. (3) the researcher is the key instrument that analyses and assesses the data in the mythical stories of the Safety Forest in Wonosalam Subdistrict, Jombang Regency. (3) this research is the result of interpretation conducted through the study of sociology, anthropology, and literary ecology that focuses on mysticism in myths as a form of student character education values and in the form of descriptive data that has been collected previously, (4) this research uses a study with a theory that functions as a tool of interpretation on the object of research with the aim of obtaining the meaning contained therein, (5) this research is a data analysis on the mysticism of mythical stories in Wonosalam sub-district, Jombang Regency which focuses on the form of character education that can be examined using the concept of character education according to Imam Ghazali as a form of student character education values.

The data sources in this study are folklores found in Wonosalam Subdistrict, Jombang Regency, which focus on Myths related to the origins of Wonosalam which are believed to originate and mean the Safety Forest, Data sources are processed through the process of transliteration and transcription so that they become written data, with the aim of facilitating the process of data classification and analysis. The data collection technique in this research uses literature study techniques and record notes, namely recording when conducting interviews, and taking written notes from the recording results. The research model in this study uses content analysis. To test

the validity of the data in this study using the adequacy of referential material with evidence of recording and the results of transcription and transliteration of the recording. Data analysis techniques in this study include (1) transcription of recording data, (2) transliteration of recording data, (3) data classification, (4) structure analysis and interpretation, and (5) data testing. Data testing is done by checking and validating the data results with the data source repeatedly so that the data obtained can be accounted for.

### 3 Results and Discussion

The positive motifs in mysticism relate to good intentions or desires to prevent calamities and to enrich oneself both spiritually and materially. The quote "*Crita punika nyariosaken bilih wonten tiyang ingkang asma Mbah Wali Wono Segara. Panjenenganipun diyakini minangka tiyang ingkang sepindah babat alas (hutan) Wonosalam. Jeneng Wonosalam asalipun saking tembung 'wono' ingkang tegesipun hutan lan 'salam' ingkang tegesipun keselamatan. Dados, Wonosalam saged diartikan minangka hutan keselamatan.*" shows that the name "*Wonosalam*" which means forest of safety, reflects the good intention of creating a safe and peaceful place. The mystical practices of Mbah Wali Wono Segara in clearing the forest were accompanied by positive goals for the welfare and safety of the local community.

"*Gunung Kuncung saniki dados salah satunggaling tujuan wisata religi ingkang menarik ing Wonosalam. Papan punika boten namung dipun kunjungi kangge ziarah, nanging ugi kangge tiyang ingkang kepingin nyariyosaken sejarah lan legenda ingkang wonten.*" Pilgrimage to the grave of Mbah Wali Wono Segara on Mount Kuncung is not only a spiritual act but also an effort to enrich oneself with knowledge about local history and culture.

"*Dadi saiki, yen wong tani ing desa iki mesthi migunakaké galengan sing dawa, beda karo daerah liyane. Iki amarga kontur tanahé sing miring.*" The use of long embankments in Galengdowo Village shows a positive adaptation to the environment to optimize agricultural yields.

"*Mula saka iku, masyarakat banjur nyebut desa iki Desa Jarak. Sampai saiki, sawetara masyarakat percaya yen tanduran jarak nduweni kekuatan magis.*" The belief that the castor plant has magical powers reflects the community's belief in the mystical aspects of nature that can bring good. The use of castor leaves in the process of dying shows an effort to provide peace and reduce suffering, which is a good intention.

"*Pangeran Benowo milih kanggo bersemedi ning sak panggonan deket kali. Pas Pangeran Benowo bersemedi, beliau ndeleng kali sing banyune tersumbat (judge atau mandeg) karo sebuah batu gedhe.*" Prince Benowo's meditation near the Judeg River with the aim of solving the problem of a blocked water flow reflects an effort to prevent calamities (floods) and enrich the community with a smooth water flow.

"*Panjenenganipun rawuh kangge tapa brata lan ngendhah nganti dumugi sedo.*" The practice of *tapa brata* or meditation performed by Mbah Wali Wono Segara until his death can be seen as an effort to obtain supernatural abilities or personal power. This extreme dedication is often driven by a desire to achieve a high spiritual status or extraordinary mystical abilities, which can be used for personal gain. "*Sapa tiyang*

*ingkang munggah ing Gunung Kuncung menawi pikirane peteng, mesthi bakal dados padhang.*" The indication that people come to Mount Kuncung with the intention of cleansing or overcoming personal problems shows an egoistic motivation. They seek to solve problems or gain enlightenment for themselves, indicating that this mystical practice is used for personal benefit and not for the common good.

*"Mbiyen, yen wong tuwa menahi perintah utawa larangan, ora kena takon alesané."* Blind obedience to orders or prohibitions without understanding the reasons behind them shows how mystical traditions can be used for the benefit of individuals in positions of authority.

*"Masyarakat percaya yen tanduran jarak nduweni kekuatan magis."* Belief in the magical power of the castor plant to solve personal problems or gain power shows an egoistic motive. Individuals use the mystical power of the castor plant for personal benefit, such as protecting themselves or gaining advantage.

*"Pengapesane bisa dikalahké nganggo wit jarak."* Using the castor plant to defeat the power of others believed to have mystical abilities or bad intentions shows an egoistic motive.

*"Saka lubang iku, banyu kali mau bisa mengalir maning."* Prince Benowo's act of using his staff to solve the problem of blocked water flow can be seen as an effort to demonstrate personal power. The use of mystical power to solve physical problems can be considered a way to show personal greatness or power, which is an egoistic motif.

Sharia in the context of mysticism refers to basic religious beliefs and practices that often involve sacred objects, rituals, and religious figures such as shamans or saints. This level reflects belief in the magical or spiritual power of objects or individuals who are believed to have a connection with the unseen world or supernatural powers. In the context of Islam, sharia also refers to the laws and rules that must be followed by the faithful, including worship rituals and daily manners.

*"Panjenenganipun rawuh kangge tapa brata lan ngendhih nganti dumugi sedo."* and *"Sapa tiyang ingkang munggah ing Gunung Kuncung menawi pikirane peteng, mesthi bakal dados padhang."* indicate that the practice of *tapa brata* performed by Mbah Wali Wono Segara can be interpreted as part of sharia if the main goal is to gain spiritual enlightenment or a solution to personal problems. The belief that someone whose mind is dark will become bright after visiting Mount Kuncung shows a belief in the power of the place and the rituals performed there.

*"Mbiyen, yen wong tuwa menahi perintah utawa larangan, ora kena takon alesané."* indicates that blind obedience to orders or prohibitions without understanding the reasons behind them can be categorized as a sharia practice.

*"Masyarakat percaya yen tanduran jarak nduweni kekuatan magis."* as well as *"Pengapesane bisa dikalahké nganggo wit jarak."* are concrete examples of the sharia level in mysticism. The use of plants for specific purposes shows a belief in the power of certain objects. *"Saka lubang iku, banyu kali mau bisa mengalir maning."* suggests that Prince Benowo's act of using his staff to solve the problem of blocked water flow can be seen as an example of belief in personal power often associated with religious figures.

In these interviews, many aspects reflect the sharia level of mysticism. The practice of *tapa brata*, belief in the power of objects or plants, and obedience to

orders without question show that society still holds fast to basic religious and mystical beliefs.

"...Mbah Wali Wono Segara rawuh wonten gunung utawi bukit ingkang sinebut Gunung Kuncung... Nalika sepisanan rawuh ing gunung, panjenenganipun ningali sakitar gunung ingkang taksih awujud alas lebat ingkang cocog kangge semedi..." This quote is included in the practice of the tarekat level of mysticism because it describes a spiritual process involving meditation or *tapa brata*. In this context, Mbah Wali Wono Segara performed *tapa brata* near Mount Kuncung, which is believed to be a suitable place for meditation or *tapa brata*. The emphasis on the presence of a "dense forest" suitable for meditation shows that the place is considered a supportive environment for spiritual practice.

This explanation is supported by the understanding of mysticism in the context of traditional Javanese religion, where the practice of meditation in natural places considered sacred is an integral part of the spiritual quest and strengthening the connection with the spiritual dimension.

The people of Wonosalam believe that the presence of Mbah Wali Wono Segara as the first figure to open the Wonosalam forest brings safety and blessings. The oral tradition that mentions the name Wonosalam derived from "wono" (forest) and "salam" (safety) shows the belief that this forest provides protection and safety for its people. Pilgrimage to the grave of Mbah Wali Wono Segara and belief in the power of his staff and white horse reflect a positive motif of mysticism, which is to prevent calamities and enrich the spiritual and material life of the community. Religious ceremonies or rituals in the area of the grave also aim to avoid disaster and gain blessings. Although not often mentioned in the interview narrative, the egoistic motif in Wonosalam's mysticism can be found in practices involving personal desires such as *pesugihan* (a heretic ritual performed as a means to get rich instantaneously). People who seek supernatural abilities or personal wealth in ways contrary to moral values or religious teachings may visit the grave with the intention of gaining magical powers for personal gain. However, this motif is less frequently mentioned compared to the positive motif that dominates the beliefs of the Wonosalam community. Studies on mysticism and *pesugihan* in Indonesia show that although egoistic motifs exist, they tend to be hidden and not openly discussed in public life.

The practice of mysticism includes four levels, namely the levels of *sarengat*, *tarekat*, *hakekat*, and *makripat*. In *sarengat*, the people of Wonosalam believe in the power of sacred objects such as the tomb of Mbah Wali Wono Segara and the stick which is believed to be his relic. Shamans or caretakers like Pak Tasrip are also considered to have special abilities to connect people with these supernatural powers. This practice shows a basic belief in objects as spiritual mediums, in accordance with the levels of mysticism. Meanwhile, the *tarekat* level in Wonosalam mysticism is in the form of the practice of casting spells or praying to God or Gods in the Wonosalam tradition which reflects the tarekat level. Ceremonies and prayers performed at graves or other sacred places show people's efforts to get closer spiritually to higher powers. Research states that congregations are often a way for individuals to seek spiritual closeness and inner enlightenment.

The penance performed by Mbah Wali Wono Segara on Mount Kuncung is an example of the *hakekat* level. This practice involves personal sacrifice and a search for deep inner truth, in which humans recognize violations of God's rules and seek

spiritual enlightenment. The practice of *tarekat* reflects the search for meaning and truth behind physical reality. The peak achievement of mysticism in Wonosalam can be seen in the universal unity believed in by the community. Mbah Wali Wono Segara as a symbol of perfection and inner purity is a representation of the makripat level, where this figure has reached the highest level of spirituality and is an example for society in achieving inner purity.

The use of sacred objects such as sticks and tombs which are believed to have magical powers shows the material existence of mysticism in Wonosalam. The grave of Mbah Wali Wono Segara and the objects considered his relics are sacred places that are respected and visited by the community to obtain blessings. Anthropological studies show that sacred objects function as a medium to connect the physical and spiritual worlds. The inner nature of the Wonosalam people is reflected in their belief in the spiritual power that resides in sacred objects and mystical figures such as Mbah Wali Wono Segara. This spiritual aspect includes the outer and inner sides of humans, where ceremonies and pilgrimages to sacred places become a real form of spiritual belief. Studies on local beliefs show the importance of spiritual elements in maintaining balance between humans and nature. The spiritual ethics held by the Wonosalam people can be seen in the way they maintain the tradition of mysticism which still contains moral elements. This tradition includes respect for ancestors and sacred places, as well as spiritual practices aimed at achieving inner perfection. This ethic ensures that existing mysticism remains in line with the moral values held by society. Research suggests that mysticism's mystic ethics often reflect the social and moral norms of the community.

Mysticism in Wonosalam shows the existence of complex and diverse motifs, practices and existence. These traditions and beliefs passed down from generation to generation reflect the spiritual and cultural richness of the Wonosalam people. The mysticism in the myth of the forest of salvation in Wonosalam, which involves the figure Mbah Wali Wono Segara and local religious traditions also hold values that can be represented in character education. This character education can refer to several fundamental values which include sincerity, patience, honesty, trust, justice, compassion and humanity, dependence on God, and non-dependence on the world.

Mbah Wali Wono Segara's sincerity in meditating and worshiping on Mount Kuncung without seeking praise or recognition from others reflects the value of sincerity. In character education, students must be taught to carry out every action with sincere intentions. Like Mbah Wali Wono Segara who meditates for the safety of society, students must understand the importance of sincerity in studying and working, doing everything with pure intentions without expecting material rewards. Patience in undergoing asceticism and life as a caretaker shows high patience. In character education, students must be taught to face challenges and trials with patience. Patience in learning and the process is important so that they don't give up easily when facing academic or personal difficulties.

The public's trust in the story and existence of Mbah Wali Wono Segara shows the value of honesty and integrity in oral traditions. Honesty in behavior, speech and intentions must be the main foundation for students. They need to get used to being honest in everything, including when doing assignments and exams, as well as in social relationships. The role of a caretaker like Mr. Tasrip who is entrusted with looking after the tomb shows great trust and responsibility. Students must learn the

importance of maintaining trust and responsibility in the tasks given, both in the academic context and in everyday life. Trust includes trust given by lecturers, friends and family.

Justice in providing protection and safety to all creatures in the Wonosalam forest. The value of justice needs to be taught so that students can act fairly in providing rights and treatment to others. This includes fairness in social interactions and in decision making that affects others. Compassion for nature and fellow creatures is shown in the story of Mbah Wali Wono Segara. Students must be educated to have compassion and concern for others. This value can be applied in social activities, teamwork, and empathy for other people.

Mbah Wali Wono Segara's spiritual dependence on divine power during his penance. Students must learn to have complete dependence on God in every aspect of life. This *Tawakal* (to have complete faith and trust upon Allah) forms a strong character in facing challenges with the belief that everything is under Allah's control. Mbah Wali Wono Segara's simple and sacrificial life does not depend on worldly material things. Students need to be taught not to be too attached to possessions and material wealth. This *Zuhud* (turning away from or does not desire or want something, for it is of no value) teaches them to live simply, prioritizing spiritual and moral values above material gain.

The integration of mystical values contained in the Wonosalam safe forest myth into student character education according to Imam Ghazali's teachings helps shape better character. Students are taught to have sincerity, patience, honesty, trustworthiness, justice, compassion, trust and asceticism. These values not only form moral and spiritual integrity but also create students who are responsible, ethical, and care about each other and the environment. Thus, character education plays an important role in producing a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually strong.

## 4 Conclusion

The discussion describes mysticism in Wonosalam society, which is influenced by the existence of the mystical figure Mbah Wali Wono Segara. The Wonosalam community believes that the forest provides protection and safety, with the tradition of pilgrimage to the grave of Mbah Wali Wono Segara as part of an effort to obtain blessings and prevent disasters. While there are mystical practices with positive motives, such as seeking spiritual and material safety, there are also egoistic motives, especially in the practice of *pesugihan*, although these are less frequently mentioned.

The practice of mysticism in Wonosalam society is divided into four levels: *sarengat*, *tarekat*, *hakikat* and *makripat*. These include belief in the power of sacred objects, the practice of chanting mantras or prayers, and the search for inner truth through *tapa brata*. The use of sacred objects such as sticks and the tomb of Mbah Wali Wono Segara reflect the material existence of mysticism, while the mystical ethics of the Wonosalam community show the importance of maintaining moral values in the tradition of mysticism.

The values of mysticism, such as sincerity, patience, honesty, trustworthiness, justice, compassion, *tawakal*, and *zuhud*, are integrated into student character

education according to Imam Ghazali's teachings. This aims to form a better character, who is not only intellectually intelligent, but also morally and spiritually strong, as well as caring for others and the environment. Thus, this character education plays an important role in shaping a responsible, ethical, and caring generation in society.

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