

Political Occultism in Contemporary Indonesia: Divination, Epistemic Confusion, and the Eclipse of Tawhid

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Abstract: *The use of political occultism is still prevalent in the political circles of Indonesia in the form of divination, paranormal consultation, talismans, and supernatural claims are some of the ways these practices are being used to support a candidate's political legitimacy. The article uses Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri's views on the different kinds of reasoning as the basis. Moreover, it incorporates Ibn Taymiyyah's distinction between divine and worship-related monotheism. With the aid of qualitative library research, conceptual analysis, source criticism, and philosophical interpreting techniques the researchers have been able to sort out the recorded activities and have also made judgments about their claims for knowledge, theological aspects, and the threats of democracy. The authors state that political occultism is not the same thing as Sufism or 'irfān. A misunderstanding of the epistemic level takes place if individual unchallengeable assertions are transformed into public power without textual supervision, demonstration of proof, or ethical accountability. The article sets up an epistemic-theological grid in which the different functions of moral advising, customary practices, divination, and talismanic protection can be identified, so as to allow an accurate critique of supernatural absolutization without the need to brand the local culture as a whole.*

Keywords: al-Jabiri; divination; Islamic epistemology; political occultism; tawhid

Abstrak: *Okultisme politik bertahan dalam sejumlah arena politik Indonesia melalui divinasi, konsultasi paranormal, jimat, dan klaim supranatural untuk menopang pencalonan atau legitimasi. Artikel ini menganalisis fenomena tersebut melalui kritik Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri atas nalar bayānī, 'irfānī, dan burhānī serta perbedaan Ibn Taymiyyah antara tawhīd al-rubūbiyyah dan tawhīd al-ulūhiyyah. Penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif ini menggunakan analisis konseptual, kritik sumber, dan interpretasi filosofis untuk mengklasifikasikan praktik terdokumentasi serta menilai klaim epistemik, implikasi teologis, dan risiko demokrasinya. Hasil penelitian menegaskan bahwa okultisme politik tidak identik dengan tasawuf atau 'irfān. Kerancuan epistemik terjadi ketika klaim personal yang tidak terverifikasi dipindahkan menjadi otoritas publik tanpa kontrol tekstual, pengujian demonstratif, dan tanggung jawab etis. Artikel menawarkan matriks epistemik-teologis yang membedakan nasihat moral, ritual adat, divinasi,*

proteksi jimat, dan permohonan ritual sehingga kritik terhadap absolutisasi supranatural tidak berubah menjadi stigmatisasi menyeluruh atas budaya lokal.

Kata kunci: al-Jabiri; divinasi; epistemologi Islam; okultisme politik; tauhid

INTRODUCTION

Political life nowadays is usually connected with the official forms, electoral strategy, media communication, party formation, and political performance evaluation. Indonesian research findings indicate, however, that formal politics and political culture may also sometimes overlap with supernatural beliefs, talismans, auspicious day choosing, protective rituals, or declaring that one has access to unseen forces. Although such magical-political behaviors may not be a general feature of all localities or be practiced by all political actors in Indonesia, they have been quite a consistent presence in some local political settings and in elite accounts in such a way as to merit careful intellectual investigation by scholars. Bubandt shows, for example, that people of the spirits and the imaginative worlds are no longer just ghosts of the past, as they might become involved in democratic, corrupt, and contemporary power.¹ Other studies document the involvement of *dukun* in village-head elections, the informal legitimacy of Tengger ritual specialists, and the use of *sanro* in Bugis-Makassar political settings.²

This article uses the term political occultism to refer to the deployment of supernatural claims, intermediaries, objects, or rituals in order to obtain hidden information, protection, influence, or legitimacy within political processes. The term is narrower than political spirituality. Pilgrimage, prayer, customary ceremonies, consulting with religious scholars, and symbolic traditions are not necessarily occult activities. Only when there are assertions of knowing secret knowledge or having independent supernatural powers or when a ritual is asked for and its grant is given by a higher political authority does a practice fall under the analysis of occultism.³

Philosophical issues occur if evidence coming from very different origins and methods is considered equally reliable. Expectations of winning, messages from unseen beings or the magical power of charms get the same weight as research reports, history record, laws, and other decision factors. In this article, epistemic confusion is defined as the status of granting identical public authority to claims different in origin, method, and reliability without appropriate classification and verification. The issue is not spirituality

¹Nils Ole Bubandt, *Democracy, Corruption and the Politics of Spirits in Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1–18.

²Eko Setiawan, “Eksistensi Dukun di Era Modern dalam Pesta Demokrasi Pemilihan Kepala Desa,” *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Pemerintahan* 9, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.37058/jipp.v9i2.6286>; Allaida Az-Zahra et al., “Legitimasi Politik Informal Dukun Tengger di Desa Ngadas,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Muqoddimah* 8, no. 2 (2024): 576–85, <https://doi.org/10.31604/jim.v8i2.2024.576-585>; Muh. Basir Said, Andi Batara Al Isra, and Muh. Nur Rahmat Yasim, “When Mystics and Politics Are Intertwined: Understanding Dukun as a Shamanistic System in Bugis-Makassar Political Sphere, Indonesia,” *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture* (2024): 1439–51, <https://doi.org/10.70082/esiculture.vi.1410>.

³Mahatva Yoga Adi Pradana, *Ritual dan Spiritualitas Politisi* (Yogyakarta: SUKA Press, 2021); Abdul Chalik, “Sintesis Mistik dalam Kepemimpinan Politik Jawa,” *Jurnal Review Politik* 5, no. 2 (2015): 254–78, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jrp.2015.5.2.254-278>; Bahaudin Bahaudin, “Mistik dan Politik: Praktek Perdukunan dalam Politik Indonesia,” *Jurnal Keamanan Nasional* 1, no. 3 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.31599/jkn.v1i3.31>.

by itself, but the fact that private and non-verifiable claims are being transferred into collective political decisions.

Previous research has given rise to many paths for further inquiry. Bubandt anthropologizes spiritual politics; the literature on *dukun* and local elections has helped in understanding social functions, patronages, and symbolic legitimacy; and on the other hand, Ahmad Syahid has laid out the *bayānī*, *irfānī*, and *burhānī* epistemic systems as part of Muhammad Abid's critique of Arabic reasoning.⁴ Matroni also draws our attention to the importance of differentiating disciplined spiritual practice from shamanistic and supernatural experiences.⁵ The writings referred to here are indeed quite significant, but they fail to provide a unifying analytical framework that identifies the various kinds of practices, examines the claims to knowledge they make, and assesses their theological relevance to the concept of tawhid.

Al-Jabiri's framework is used not to make every spiritual experience equivalent to irrationality. In *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, he presents bayānī, irfānī, and burhānī reasoning, and treats each as a historically constructed system of knowledge having its own principles, main authorities, and ways of validating arguments. His project is not a simple call to integrate the three equally; rather, he criticizes the expansion of *irfānī* reason and assigns a strong corrective role to *burhānī* demonstration.⁶ Al-Jabiri's concepts are therefore used to assess how claims to unseen knowledge acquire legitimacy, not to classify Sufism or *ma'rifah* as shamanism.

Ibn Taymiyyah is used to distinguish the implications of tawhid at the levels of belief and action. *Tawhīd al-rubūbiyyah* concerns the recognition that creation, governance, benefit, and harm remain under God's sovereignty, whereas *tawhīd al-ulūhiyyah* concerns the exclusive direction of worship, prayer, ultimate petition, and devotional dependence to Him. Ibn Taymiyyah includes soothsayers, astrologers, geomancers, and related figures within the category of *'arrāf* because they claim access to hidden matters through such means.⁷ Nevertheless, evaluating a specific practice still requires careful attention to what is believed, requested, and performed. Labels such as "custom," "ritual," or "mysticism" do not justify a uniform judgment.

On this basis, the study asks: How do documented practices of political occultism in Indonesia reflect epistemic confusion, and under what conditions do such practices have implications for *tawhīd al-rubūbiyyah* and *tawhīd al-ulūhiyyah*? The article argues that political occultism is not identical with *irfān*. The epistemic problem arises when claims to hidden knowledge are detached from spiritual discipline, rational examination,

⁴Ahmad Syahid, "Konsep Epistemologi Keilmuan Islam Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri," *Aqlania* 12, no. 1 (2021): 53–74, <https://doi.org/10.32678/aqlania.v12i1.3950>.

⁵Matroni Matroni, "Pemikiran Mistiko-Filosofis Mulyadhi Kartanegara," *Aqlam: Journal of Islam and Plurality* 3, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.30984/ajip.v3i2.720>.

⁶Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi: Dirasah Tahliliyyah Naqdiyyah li Nuzum al-Ma'rifah fi al-Thaqafah al-'Arabiyyah* (Beirut: Markaz Dirasat al-Wahdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1986).

⁷Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, compiled by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Qasim (Medina: Mujamma' al-Malik Fahd, 2004), 35:173; Qois Azizah Bin Has, "Konsep Tauhid Ibnu Taimiyah dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Pembaharuan Pemikiran Islam," *Aqlania* 12, no. 2 (2021): 181–209, <https://doi.org/10.32678/aqlania.v12i2.4350>; Fikri Hailal, Zulkipli Lessy, and Siti Nuroh, "Dukun dalam Perspektif Kitab al-Halal wa al-Haram fi al-Islam," *An-Nawa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 1 (2023): 59–80, <https://doi.org/10.37758/annawa.v4i1.548>.

and textual boundaries, then converted into public authority. Its theological implications must be assessed in stages according to the content of belief, the object of petition, and the causal power attributed to supernatural intermediaries.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes the method of qualitative library research based on conceptual analysis, source criticism, and philosophical interpretation. Its main theoretical reference frame is from the work of Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri's *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi* and related passages from Ibn Taymiyyah's *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* on tawhid, 'arrāf, and knowledge claims about the unseen.⁸ From its collection of phenomenological works, this book presents a mixture of anthropological, political, and religious studies, revealing the roles played *dukun*, paranormal, the use of a charm, the performance of a ritual, or other spiritual means, in different political situations in Indonesia in a particular way as for example of Javanese, Tengger, and Bugis-Makassar.

Selecting the source materials was based on four different factors. First, they had to illustrate a distinct practice. Second, they had to give account of the person, activity, or political environment involved. Third, they had to have verifiable source information. Lastly, the content had to connect directly with the epistemological or theological issues of the topic under study. It is important to note that the article does not take each report as a proof of supernatural power. The literary works are employed only so as to highlight the fact that particular beliefs, rituals, and forms of communication have been described and given political meanings.

The examination was done in four steps. The first step was to categorize the phenomena in order to differentiate between: religious advisory services, pilgrimage, customary rituals, divination, talismanic practice, and petitions to unseen beings. The second step was an epistemological diagnosis which checked to see what kind of knowledge a claim had and whether there was any source of it and how it had been acquired and its degree of testability along with its relationship to *bayānī*, *'irfānī* and *burhānī* reasoning. The third element involved a theological assessment, where it was looked into that a particular practice was granting the knowledge of the unseen in an independent manner, the power of a cause in an autonomous way, or a divine right to a spiritual intermediary. In the end, the political aspect was the subject of the fourth step when they were examining what kind of implications for accountability, deliberation, equality, and manipulation might arise. All these stages led to the epistemic-theological matrix which was discussed at length in the discussion.

⁸Al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-'Aql al-'Arabi*; Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, vols. 1, 2, and 35.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Conceptual Boundaries: Spirituality, Divination, and Political Occultism

Divination in this article does not refer to hermeneutic “divination” as the intuitive reconstruction of an author’s intention. The term is used in its religious and anthropological sense: practices that seek or claim knowledge of fate, future events, hidden affairs, or decisions through omens, dreams, astrology, spirits, ritual media, or persons believed to possess supernatural access.

Divination contains three elements: a knowledge claim, a supernatural mode of access, and practical use of the resulting information. When such information is used to select a candidate, determine an auspicious day, anticipate an opponent’s attack, or justify political victory, divination becomes part of political occultism.

Political occultism is broader than divination because it may include magical protection, talismanic objects, mystical attacks, or legitimacy derived from unseen narratives. Not every religious or customary practice, however, belongs to this category. Consultation with an *ulama* may seek moral counsel; pilgrimage may function as remembrance and prayer; and customary ritual may sustain collective identity. The analysis must therefore distinguish social-symbolic functions from claims of autonomous supernatural efficacy.

Table 1. Taxonomy of Spiritual-Political Practices

Practice	Primary claim	Political function	Analytical status
Religious counsel/ <i>sowan</i>	Moral, legal, or experiential judgment	Consultation and social legitimacy	Not identical with occultism; assessed through competence and argument.
Pilgrimage	Prayer, remembrance, or historical connection	Identity symbolism and communal proximity	Not automatically divination; the form of prayer and underlying belief must be examined.
Customary ritual	Cohesion, symbolic protection, or tradition	Cultural legitimacy	Assessed case by case; symbolic function is not the same as autonomous causal power.
Divination/fortune-telling	Knowledge of the future or hidden affairs	Strategic direction and decision-making	Occultism when an unseen claim is granted authority without verification.
Talismans/ <i>susuk</i>	Protection, charisma, or supernatural influence	Symbolic and psychological advantage	Theological implications depend on beliefs about

Practice	Primary claim	Political function	Analytical status
			causation and efficacy.
Petition to spirits/entities	Assistance, protection, or determination of outcomes	Legitimacy and perceived security	An issue of <i>ulūhiyyah</i> when it entails prayer or devotion to other than God.

2. Al-Jabiri and the Confusion of Epistemic Authority

Al-Jabiri sees *bayānī*, *irfānī*, and *burhānī* not as simply three methods always existing in perfect harmony, but as systems knowledge which developed in the context of arab-islamic civilization. *Bayānī* reason generates knowledge by texts, language, and forms of inference with the central authority of the *aql*. *Burhānī* reason is based on demonstration, casual regularity, and rational proof. *Irfānī* reason is about internal revelation, symbolic correspondence, and knowledge that supposedly goes beyond reasoning in terms or words. Al-Jabiri's critique particularly focuses on instances where "irfānī" reason is generalized from personal experience into a framework explaining nature, history, and society.⁹

This paradigm does not equate *irfān* with shamanism. Sufi traditions encompass spiritual practice, ascertainment, and critique of fraudulent assertions. The main contrast is in the authority issue. The mystical inner state may be essential for self-transformation, however it does not automatically grant it the power to decide who is voted, what law is passed, whom the rights belong to, etc.

It seems, in other words, that political occultism is more likely an expression of unverified public speculation than the spiritual insight of the "pure *irfān*." Dreams, omens, or intuitive impressions become a form of evidence for public discussion when individuals turn them into statements about what will happen in the future. The statement, however, is used to influence decisions, and it can gain authority simply because the claimant is seen as having a close connection to an unseen realm, or is otherwise thought of as charismatic or sacred.

Therefore, the nature and character of knowledge-based confusion change in certain way and reveal three characteristics: firstly, different forms of the source of knowledge such as inspiration, rumor, prophecy, surveys and religious texts are taken as equivalent without any sort of categorization and source confusion takes its toll. Secondly, confusion about different levels of how certain a person is in a matter is created since some intuitions or symbols are translated into statements that can be said to be factual. Finally, there is confusion with the authority when, for instance, the status based on charm substitutes the expertise and the public reason.

Burhānī correction does not mean that politics must be stripped of religious values. *Bayānī* reason remains relevant for establishing normative boundaries, while spiritual experience may cultivate honesty and self-restraint. What must be rejected is the transfer

⁹Al-Jabiri, *Bunyat al-‘Aql al-‘Arabi*; Syahid, "Konsep Epistemologi Keilmuan Islam," 58–69.

of private claims into public authority without a bridge of argument, evidence, and accountability. In the political domain, claims affecting the public must remain open to examination by those affected.

3. Ibn Taymiyyah: Tawhid and a Graduated Evaluation of Occult Practices

Within Ibn Taymiyyah's framework, recognition of God as Creator and Governor entails the obligation to worship Him alone. He emphasizes the relation between *rubūbiyyah* and *ulūhiyyah*: recognition of God's governance grounds His exclusive right to worship.¹⁰ Occult claims must therefore be assessed not merely by the name of a ritual, but by examining who is believed to know the unseen, who is believed to confer benefit and harm, and to whom ritual petitions are directed.

An implication for *rubūbiyyah* arises when a *dukun*, spirit, talisman, or other power is believed independently to know the unseen, determine fate, or produce benefit and harm outside submission to God's will. An implication for *ulūhiyyah* arises when prayer, vows, sacrifice, ultimate petition, or devotional dependence are directed to other than God. The two dimensions may overlap, but they are not identical.

Ibn Taymiyyah uses *'arrāf* as an inclusive term for *kāhin*, astrologer, geomancer, and similar figures who speak about hidden matters through such means.¹¹ This category is relevant to practices claiming to know election results, an opponent's attacks, or the timing of victory through unseen media. Yet theological judgment concerning particular actors cannot be inferred from a cultural report alone. One must distinguish belief in autonomous power, treatment of an object as an unauthorized cause, participation in a tradition without a clearly articulated theological belief, and the merely symbolic use of ritual in political communication.

A graduated approach avoids two errors. The first is cultural romanticism, which refuses all normative evaluation. The second is theological overgeneralization, which collapses pilgrimage, prayer, custom, Sufism, divination, and magic into a single category. Careful analysis may still conclude that a claim conflicts with tawhid, but such a conclusion must follow from the belief and action actually documented.

4. Documented Cases and Patterns of Political Occultism

The literature in Indonesian politics mainly focuses on three principal patterns. The first of these is the practice of strategic divination, i.e. consultation regarding winning potential, favorable days, opponent's attacks, or the direction of political decisions. The investigations of village-heads' elections disclose candidates hiring the services of *dukun* for protection, charisma, or prediction.¹² In this case, the author relies on unconfirmed assertions to convey strategic information. Hence, the main issue is the reliability of the supporting facts and the replacement of political discernment with foresight.

There is actually a second pattern that refers to informal legitimacy here a spiritual or ritual leader (especially someone who is not very formal) is a person who has social power to a point that he/she can really affect deliberation and decisions of a group.

¹⁰Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 1:89–93.

¹¹Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, 35:173.

¹²Setiawan, "Eksistensi Dukun"; Fitria Barokah, "Mistisisme Politik: Eksistensi Magis dalam Perpolitikan Indonesia," *JiIP: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pemerintahan* 8, no. 1 (2023): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.14710/jiip.v8i1.13275>.

Research in Ngadas Village shows that Tengger *dukun* perform ritual and customary functions while their authority may shape communal decisions.¹³ This case should not immediately be equated with fortune-telling. A distinction is required among customary authority, ritual-calendar knowledge, social mediation, and claims to know political outcomes through unseen powers.

The third pattern is protective and symbolic aggression, including talismans, *susuk*, or the services of *sanro* to safeguard a candidate or counter perceived mystical threats. Research on Bugis-Makassar society shows that *sanro* may operate within patron-client networks and may be used for protection or the enhancement of political charisma.¹⁴ Here, the analysis of *rubūbiyyah* depends on whether objects and persons are believed to possess autonomous efficacy or are regarded merely as psychological symbols. The analysis of *ulūhiyyah* depends on whether ritual petition is involved and to whom it is directed.

These three patterns show political occultism is not just one Divination is a method of obtaining knowledge informal legitimacy is when social authority flows from unofficial channels talismans and rituals give one feeling of protection or symbolic influence If one puts together all these under the heading dominance of *'irfān* it would hide the significant differences and make the theological commentary very general.

Table 2. Application of the Epistemic-Theological Framework

Case pattern	Epistemic claim	Al-Jabiri diagnosis	Tawhid question	Political risk
Prediction of victory/auspicious days	Access to future outcomes	Hidden claims replace <i>burhānī</i> testing and public accountability	Is the diviner believed independently to know the unseen?	Non-evidence-based decisions and manipulation of expectations.
Customary ritual specialist in deliberation	Ritual, customary, or spiritual knowledge	Social authority must be separated from unseen claims	Does the practice entail prayer/devotion, or only a customary role?	Informal authority may restrict equal deliberation.
Talismans, <i>susuk</i> , and protection	Objects or rituals are believed to convey power or protection	A symbolic cause is treated as factual without verification	Is efficacy regarded as autonomous, and to whom is the petition directed?	Symbolic advantage, intimidation, and hidden costs.

¹³Az-Zahra et al., “Legitimasi Politik Informal,” 576–85; Arwani Ilyas, “Paradigma Masyarakat tentang Dukun: Melacak Peran dan Posisi dalam Struktur Sosial, Politik, dan Ekonomi Masyarakat,” *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 6, no. 2 (2018): 309–28, <https://doi.org/10.21274/kontem.2018.6.2.309-328>.

¹⁴Said, Al Isra, and Yasim, “When Mystics and Politics Are Intertwined,” 1439–51.

Case pattern	Epistemic claim	Al-Jabiri diagnosis	Tawhid question	Political risk
Religious counsel or pilgrimage	Moral counsel, prayer, and religious memory	Not automatically <i>'irfānī</i> -occult; assessed through content and function	Does prayer and reliance remain directed to God alone?	May support political ethics or be instrumentalized as political imagery.

5. An Epistemic-Theological Evaluation Matrix

Based on the above analysis, the article offers a four-step matrix. The first step relates to classification of claims. Those wishing to challenge such claims need to classify what they are challenging as either moral guidance, self-identity, factual prediction, a statement about metaphysics, or a religious/supernatural petition. After that, the second stage is to look at it epistemologically: What is the source of this claim? Can one investigate the source? What is its level of certainty? Is it extrapolating or projecting from the field of its origination?

The third stage of the evaluation is a theological one. One might consider some of the following questions: Is the independent knowledge given to a created being considered as such or the knowledge of something that is unseen? Is one thinking that the good and the harm come from another being, which is basically a different being but at the same time, it is not the same as the being that is referred to here? And is the act of prayer or devotion to the one that is another? Besides that, is one thing given the power to be the reason without having textual or empirical backup? And the fifth, the political evaluation, would be: Does it cause people to feel guilty, to have an unfair advantage, or to do things in secret that they would not do in front of an audience if it were not possible for the voters not knowing or being able to question them on them?

This matrix exemplifies a fruitful interplay between al-Jabiri and Ibn Taymiyyah. Through al-Jabiri, one may recognize different ways the truth is validated and see the danger of allowing statements that cannot be proven to govern the common life. Ibn Taymiyyah is concerned with standards or rules of dependence, belief, and service to God that guide and limit individual or communal behavior. Together, they yield an analysis that is simultaneously epistemological and theological.

The practical implication is the need for Islamic epistemic literacy in politics. Such literacy should not consist merely in teaching the rejection of *dukun*. It must cultivate the ability to distinguish facts, interpretations, intuitions, symbols, and unseen claims; examine sources; understand the limits of spiritual experience; and retain human responsibility in decision-making. Political decisions with public consequences must be justified through evidence, law, and reasons that citizens can examine.

This approach also prevents the stigmatization of local culture. Tradition should not be treated as a single package that is wholly irrational or polytheistic. Some rituals perform social, identity-forming, and ethical functions; others contain claims to the unseen that require criticism. More precise research should identify the actor, statement,

object, ritual, belief, and political effect before reaching a philosophical or theological conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Political occultism in several documented Indonesian cases reveals an intersection of culture, informal authority, claims to unseen knowledge, and strategies of power. This phenomenon, on the one hand, should not be reduced merely to a residual tradition, on the other hand, it needs not also be viewed as the key factor in all aspects of Indonesian politics. The different cases presented in this study at least reveal three different ways: strategic divination, informal ritual legitimacy, and talismanic protection (or symbolic aggression).

In view of al-Jabiri's scheme, the fundamental issue is not the presence of the *'irfan* (gnosis) experience. When statements which express personal and unverified views get into the public sphere without being put through *bayani* (clarification), *burhānī* (proof), and ethical checking, the epistemological situation breaks down. From the perspective of Ibn Taymiyyah, the *tawhid* consequences depend on the content of the belief and the form of the action. The knowledge claims about the unseen and the power claims are *rubūbiyyah* whereas prayers, vows, and devotion to other than Allah are considered *ulūhiyyah*.

What the research offers fundamentally is a philosophical-theological grid which relates the categories of practices, the examination of assertions, the assessment of tawhid, and the outcomes of such assessments under democracies. The grid provides a middle way: it exposes the danger of making absolute the ungrounded claims about the supernatural without falling into equvalizing Sufism with shamanism, a social custom with a divination act, or a local culture with a theological deviation. Further works should make use of this model when investigating face-to-face conversations, political messages, as well as concrete parliamentary elections, so that the role of belief, ritual, and deliberation could become an object of closer scrutiny.

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