

Ritual Authority and Cultural Memory: Competing Narratives of *Azan Pitu* in Cirebon, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study examines how conflicting narratives regarding the *Azan Pitu* contribute to the formation of ritual authority and cultural memory in Cirebon, Indonesia. It explores the tension between the seven forms of the muezzin that have become established in contemporary practice and the heterogeneous representations found in various textual, historiographical, oral, and contemporary sources. This study employs a qualitative historical design that combines document analysis, historical source criticism, comparative narrative analysis, and a corpus audit of eleven textual sources, editions, and historiographical works related to the Cirebon tradition, supplemented by documented oral traditions, contemporary research, cultural documentation, and media reports. The findings indicate that the corpus of texts under study does not provide a single consistent narrative regarding the *Azan Pitu*: one source describes a protective call to prayer performed by a single figure, while another source depicts disturbances, fires, or threats to the mosque without mentioning the involvement of seven muezzins. The concept of seven muezzins is most clearly documented in oral, academic, and contemporary media representations. Despite their factual differences, these narrative layers converge around recurring motifs such as crisis, sacred space, spiritual authority, sacred voice, protection, loss, and the restoration of order. These findings suggest that the authority of the *Azan Pitu* is best understood through the interplay of cultural memory, ritual practice, and various forms of transmission rather than through a single, recoverable origin narrative. As a conceptual contribution, this study proposes cumulative narrative legitimation to explain how historically non-identical and even contradictory narratives can remain associated with the same ritual and provide symbolic resources through which ritual authority is articulated over time.

Keywords: *Azan Pitu*; cultural memory; cumulative narrative legitimation; ritual authority; sacred sound.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana narasi-narasi yang saling bertentangan mengenai *Azan Pitu* berkontribusi terhadap pembentukan otoritas ritual dan memori budaya di Cirebon, Indonesia. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi ketegangan antara tujuh bentuk muazin yang telah mapan dalam praktik kontemporer dan representasi-representasi heterogen yang ditemukan dalam berbagai sumber tekstual, historiografis, lisan, serta sumber kontemporer. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain historis kualitatif yang menggabungkan analisis dokumen, kritik sumber sejarah, analisis naratif komparatif, serta audit korpus terhadap sebelas sumber tekstual, edisi, dan karya historiografi yang berkaitan dengan tradisi Cirebon, serta dilengkapi dengan tradisi lisan yang terdokumentasi, penelitian kontemporer, dokumentasi budaya, dan laporan media. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa korpus teks yang diteliti tidak memberikan narasi tunggal yang konsisten mengenai *Azan Pitu*: satu sumber menggambarkan panggilan shalat yang bersifat pelindung yang dilakukan oleh satu sosok, sementara sumber lain menggambarkan gangguan, kebakaran, atau ancaman terhadap masjid tanpa menyebutkan keterlibatan tujuh muazin. Konsep tujuh muazin didokumentasikan dengan paling jelas dalam representasi lisan, akademis, dan media kontemporer. Terlepas dari perbedaan faktualnya, lapisan-lapisan naratif ini bersatu di sekitar motif-motif berulang seperti krisis, ruang suci,

otoritas spiritual, suara suci, perlindungan, kehilangan, dan pemulihan ketertiban. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa otoritas Azan Pitu paling baik dipahami melalui interaksi antara memori budaya, praktik ritual, dan berbagai bentuk transmisi, bukan melalui narasi asal-usul tunggal yang dapat dilacak. Sebagai kontribusi konseptual, penelitian ini mengusulkan legitimasi naratif kumulatif untuk menjelaskan bagaimana narasi-narasi yang secara historis tidak identik dan bahkan saling bertentangan dapat tetap dikaitkan dengan ritual yang sama, serta menyediakan sumber daya simbolik yang melaluinya otoritas ritual diartikulasikan dari waktu ke waktu.

Kata kunci: *Azan Pitu*; memori budaya; legitimasi naratif kumulatif; otoritas ritual; suara suci.

1. Introduction

Azan Pitu (seven-muezzin call to prayer) is a distinctive religious practice maintained at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa in Cirebon, Indonesia. In its regular performance, seven muezzins simultaneously recite the first call to prayer before the Friday prayer, using a vocal arrangement and ritual configuration that distinguish the practice from the conventional call to prayer (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). The tradition attracted wider public attention during the COVID-19 pandemic when its practitioners reactivated its protective dimension on April 9, 2020. On that occasion, the muezzins performed the call to prayer not only inside the mosque but also at four locations along the boundaries of Cirebon City using an open vehicle (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). The expansion of the ritual from the mosque into urban space illustrates *Azan Pitu*'s capacity to acquire renewed significance in moments of collective uncertainty. It also demonstrates how contemporary religious actors mobilize inherited narratives of sacred protection, ritual sound, and local identity in responding to new forms of crisis. The persistence of *Azan Pitu*, therefore, concerns not only the continuity of a liturgical practice but also the ways in which religious memory enables a ritual to be reinterpreted across changing historical circumstances.

Contemporary accounts generally identify *Azan Pitu* as a seven-muezzin ritual associated with protection from epidemics, calamities, or other forms of danger (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). However, the apparent stability of this contemporary form contrasts with the heterogeneous representations preserved in Cirebonese textual traditions and later historical reconstructions. Preliminary comparison suggests a tension between the established seven-muezzin form in contemporary practice and the diverse figures, chronologies, forms of threat, and modes of restoration represented in traditional textual sources. Manuscripts, later editions, oral traditions, historical studies, and contemporary representations do not necessarily possess the same evidentiary status, yet they are frequently brought together in public accounts as components of a single origin story. This tension raises a broader historiographical problem: the origins of a living religious ritual cannot be reconstructed simply by combining heterogeneous narratives without considering when, how, and for what purposes particular versions were produced and transmitted. The question surrounding *Azan Pitu* is therefore not merely when the ritual originated, but how different representations of its past have come to support its authority in the present.

Existing scholarship relevant to *Azan Pitu* can be organized into three major tendencies. The first concerns the historical and historiographical context of Cirebon, particularly the Cirebon Sultanate, the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa, the authority of the *wali* (Muslim saints), and the political and genealogical traditions surrounding major local figures. Rochani (2008), Ekadjati (1978), and Hernawan and Kusdiana (2020), although not primarily focused on *Azan Pitu*, provide important historical contexts concerning Sunan Gunung Jati, Panembahan Ratu, royal genealogies, and the development of Cirebon's religious and political spaces. Tan (2024) demonstrates that the figure of *Menjangan Wulung* operates within Cirebon historiography as a narrative motif through which political and religious transformations are represented. Wain (2017), meanwhile, emphasizes questions of provenance, textual hybridization, anachronism, and reliability in Cirebon historical traditions. Together, these studies underline the importance of treating Cirebonese historical texts critically rather than reading them as

transparent records of past events. However, this critical historiographical approach has not yet been systematically applied to the competing narratives associated with *Azan Pitu*.

The second tendency focuses on the socio-religious functions, contemporary practice, and adaptive capacity of *Azan Pitu*. Qodim and Hernawan (2023) interpret *Azan Pitu* as a “ritual of affliction” that provides symbolic protection, psychological reassurance, social cohesion, and a religious framework for confronting epidemics. Their study also demonstrates how the ritual’s location and mode of performance were adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic without eliminating its protective significance. Anwar (2023) approaches the regular Friday performance of *Azan Pitu* as a living hadith tradition through which religious practice and local heritage are transmitted, while Widiyanti and Zikrillah (2022) examine the revitalization of its legend through podcast media and the transmission of religious-cultural values to younger audiences. These findings correspond with broader studies showing that religious and traditional rituals were not simply suspended during the COVID-19 crisis but were reconfigured in response to new restrictions, risks, and experiences of collective vulnerability. In the Indonesian context, Sidik (2023) demonstrates how the *Ruwat Laut* ritual continued to articulate relationships among religious practice, traditional belief, and crisis response during the pandemic, while Baidowi et al. (2021) show that Islamic boarding schools combined health protocols with Qur’anic recitation, *selawat* (invocations of blessings upon the Prophet), *doa* (supplicatory prayer), and *hizib* (a formulaic devotional litany), while Saud et al. (2021) demonstrate the importance of socio-religious support and religious coping in managing situational stress. This body of scholarship establishes the contemporary significance of ritual as a medium of protection, reassurance, identity, and cultural continuity. Nevertheless, it has generally treated the historical narratives underlying *Azan Pitu* as an inherited background rather than as an object of critical comparison in their own right.

The third tendency approaches traditional texts, hagiographies, ritual narratives, and cultural memory as media through which communities select and reorganize the past. Studies of hagiography demonstrate that narratives concerning holy figures, sacred institutions, and commemorative practices can reshape the meaning of place, authority, and communal identity (Alatas, 2016). Studies of local memory in Indonesia likewise show that representations of historical figures and sacred pasts can be reconstructed to articulate contemporary local identity and collective belonging (Waluyo, 2021). Cultural-memory theory likewise emphasizes that the past is not simply preserved but repeatedly selected, materialized, ritualized, and reactivated through texts, symbols, institutions, and commemorative practices (Assmann, 2011; Zuhri, 2022). Such perspectives are particularly relevant to *Azan Pitu* because its contemporary authority is associated with several forms of transmission, including traditional texts, oral accounts, ritual practice, local historical writing, and media representation. Yet previous research has not systematically compared the evidentiary capacities of these different source layers, examined inconsistencies among figures and chronologies, distinguished different forms and numbers of ritual performers, or analyzed how apparently competing narratives become incorporated into a shared ritual memory.

The research gap, therefore, lies in the absence of a study that integrates historical source criticism, comparative narrative analysis, and cultural-memory interpretation to explain how *Azan Pitu*’s legitimacy is constructed through heterogeneous representations of the past. Previous scholarship has established the ritual’s contemporary functions, protective meanings, historical environment, and cultural significance, but it has not sufficiently examined how narratives with different textual statuses, chronologies, figures, and ritual configurations come to be associated with the same living tradition. Addressing this gap requires distinguishing evidence for the existence of a narrative from evidence for the historical occurrence of the event narrated, as well as separating traditional textual testimony from later oral, scholarly, and media representations.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how the origins of *Azan Pitu* are represented in Cirebonese textual and historiographical sources; compare the figures, chronologies, forms of threat, performers, and modes of resolution presented across different narrative versions; and explain how the plurality of these representations contributes to the formation of ritual memory and cultural-religious legitimacy.

The study distinguishes traditional texts, textual editions, historiographical works, documented oral traditions, and contemporary representations according to their respective evidentiary capacities. It does not seek to establish a single definitive origin of the ritual or to verify supernatural elements as empirical historical facts. Rather, it examines how different source layers represent and authorize relationships among sacred space, crisis, spiritual authority, ritual sound, and the restoration of order.

The central argument of this study is that the authority of *Azan Pitu* is better understood as the product of layered ritual memory than as the direct legacy of a single, internally consistent origin narrative. Differences among narratives concerning historical figures, periods, threats, and ritual forms are interpreted not simply as failures of historical memory but as evidence of processes of selection, adaptation, combination, and transmission through which the past is continually reorganized. Building on cultural-memory theory (Assmann, 2011) and scholarship on hagiography and Cirebon historiography (Alatas, 2016; Tan, 2024), this study develops the concept of cumulative narrative legitimation to describe a process in which historically non-identical narratives can contribute to ritual authority through their convergence around recurring motifs of crisis, sanctity, protection, spiritual authority, sacred sound, and restoration. The concept, therefore, shifts attention from the search for a single recoverable origin toward the mechanisms through which multiple narrative layers become meaningful within the continuing ritual memory of *Azan Pitu*.

2. Methods

This study analyzes how textual and historiographical sources from Cirebon depict and legitimize the narrative regarding the origins of the *Azan Pitu* ritual. The study stems from the tension between the established form of the seven muezzins in contemporary practice and the inconsistencies among the sources regarding numbers, chronology, the nature of the threat, and the form of the call to prayer. This study employs a qualitative historical design through document analysis and a corpus audit of eleven textual sources, editions, and historiographical works related to the Cirebon tradition. The audit results indicate that no source in the examined corpus explicitly states that seven muezzins recite the azan simultaneously. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* depicts Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as the sole performer of the protective azan, while the Brandes Edition of the *Babad Cirebon* and the *Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript* describe disturbances, fires, or threats to the mosque without mentioning the recitation of the azan. The form involving seven muezzins is, in fact, most clearly documented in oral traditions, contemporary research, and media sources. Although factually distinct, these narratives intersect on themes of crisis, the sanctity of the mosque, spiritual authority, the sacred voice, loss, and the restoration of order. These findings highlight the importance of methodologically distinguishing between textual evidence, oral transmission, and contemporary representations when reconstructing the history of local religious rituals. As an original contribution, this study introduces the concept of cumulative narrative legitimacy to explain how ritual authority can emerge not from a single, consistent origin narrative but from the convergence of multiple narrative layers within the Cirebon community's ritual memory.

The study employs a qualitative historical design that combines historical source criticism, document analysis, comparative narrative analysis, and cultural memory interpretation. A historical approach was selected because the data consist primarily of texts, editions, historiographical representations, hagiographical motifs, oral accounts documented by previous researchers, and contemporary representations of the ritual. Historical source criticism was used to assess the provenance, chronology, production context, textual position, and evidentiary limitations of the sources (Garraghan, 1946; Herlina, 2008; Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Because the researchers were unable to inspect all original manuscripts directly, the study does not claim to have fully authenticated every manuscript. Instead, it applies bibliographic and provenance assessment as part of external source criticism, using information available in manuscript catalogs, editions, transliterations, digital reproductions, and philological or historiographical studies. Material authenticity, script, copying history, and place of preservation were assessed only to the extent that such information was available in these supporting sources. Internal criticism was then used to examine narrative consistency,

chronology, authorial or editorial position, anachronisms, hagiographical motifs, political context, and the legitimizing functions of particular representations.

The data were organized into two analytically distinct corpora. The first was a traditional-textual corpus (n = 11) consisting of textual witnesses, transliterations, printed editions, local historical editions, and related historiographical works associated with Cirebon traditions and previously connected, directly or indirectly, with *Azan Pitu*, the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa, the call to prayer, epidemics and calamities, mosque disturbances, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, Nyi Mas Pakungwati, Menjangan Wulung, *bruang nandi* (a supernatural force or magical disturbance), fires, or the relocation of the *memolo* (the ornamental finial at the top of the mosque). These eleven items do not possess identical evidentiary status; some contain directly examinable passages, whereas others provide only genealogical, political, saintly, or historiographical context. The second was a contemporary transmission corpus, consisting of documented oral traditions, contemporary academic studies, cultural documentation, and media reports. This second corpus was used to identify how the seven-muezzin form, protective interpretations, and origin narratives are articulated in modern transmission. It was not used to verify events allegedly occurring in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The separation of these two corpora prevents contemporary documentation of the ritual from being treated as equivalent to historical evidence for its early origins.

Data were collected through document analysis and a structured corpus audit of accessible textual sources, published editions, transliterations, historiographical works, scholarly publications, documented oral traditions, and relevant contemporary media. The corpus was identified by tracing materials associated with *Azan Pitu*, the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa, and related narrative elements, including the call to prayer, epidemics and calamities, mosque disturbances, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, Nyi Mas Pakungwati, Menjangan Wulung, *bruang nandi*, fires, and the relocation of the *memolo*. Sources were included when they contained identifiable passages directly related to *Azan Pitu* or a protective call to prayer; narrated disturbances, threats, fires, or restoration associated with the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa; or provided traceable historical, genealogical, hagiographical, or political context necessary for evaluating these narratives. Sources that merely repeated an origin story without identifiable references, lacked sufficient bibliographic traceability, or could not be connected to a relevant textual passage were not treated as direct evidence of the ritual's origins. When different publications reproduced, edited, translated, or discussed the same textual tradition, they were evaluated in relation to their textual lineage and evidentiary function rather than automatically treated as independent historical witnesses. Each source was then recorded in an audit matrix that documented its identity, form, publication or copying information where available, textual provenance, relevant passages, principal figures, narrative chronology, form of threat, representation of the call to prayer, number of performers, mode of resolution, narrative function, evidentiary limitations, and analytical status.

The researcher analyzed the data in five stages. First, external criticism assessed the identity and form of each source, its author or copyist, date of copying, language, script, place of preservation, publisher, and the relationship between the manuscript and its modern edition. Second, internal criticism examined content consistency, authorial position, chronology, anachronisms, hagiographical motifs, political conflicts, and the legitimizing function of each narrative (Garraghan, 1946; Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Third, the researcher developed an evidentiary classification that distinguished E1 sources, which explicitly mention seven muezzins; E2 sources, which describe a protective call to prayer performed by fewer than seven individuals; E3 sources, which narrate disturbances at the mosque without mentioning seven muezzins; E4 sources, which contain oral traditions or contemporary representations; C1 sources, which provide historical context; and U sources, whose relevance remains unverified. Fourth, comparative narrative analysis examined the figures, chronologies, forms of threat, numbers of performers, spiritual authorities, crisis resolutions, and functions of each version (Riessman, 2008). Fifth, cultural-memory interpretation examined how texts, symbols, holy figures, mosque spaces, and rituals select, repeat, adapt, and combine representations of the past to construct the legitimacy of *Azan Pitu* (Assmann, 2011). This study does not verify supernatural elements as

empirical facts. Instead, it analyzes their functions within historiography, hagiography, political memory, and ritual legitimation. This analytical sequence treats differences among sources as components of ritual-memory formation rather than merely as weaknesses in the historical record.

3. Results

The Corpus and Evidentiary Status of Azan Pitu Narratives

This study audited eleven traditional Cirebon sources and textual editions previously associated with the history of *Azan Pitu*. The corpus includes editions and transliterations of traditional texts, historiographical studies of *babad* (traditional Javanese-Sundanese chronicles), and sources that provide only genealogical, saintly, political, and historical contexts related to the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa. Differences in form, provenance, and textual proximity give each source a different evidentiary capacity. Therefore, the researcher assessed each source according to its bibliographic traceability, the relevance of its textual passages, its narrative content, the relationship between the edition and the original text, and its capacity to support claims about the ritual's form and origins. Based on this assessment, the study classified the sources into E1 for explicit references to seven muezzins, E2 for a protective call to prayer performed by fewer than seven individuals, E3 for narratives of disturbances at the mosque without seven muezzins, E4 for oral transmission and contemporary representations, C1 for historical context, and U for sources whose relevance remains unverified. This classification prevents the study from automatically treating the presence of a source in Cirebon historiography as direct evidence of the origins of *Azan Pitu*.

The audit shows that none of the eleven traditional sources examined met the E1 criteria because the researcher did not find any explicit reference to seven muezzins reciting the call to prayer simultaneously. One source, the *Mertasinga Manuscript*, met the E2 criteria because it portrays Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as the only figure who recites the call to prayer to eliminate a disturbance at the mosque (Wahyu, 2005). Two sources met the E3 criteria. The Brandes Edition of *Babad Cirebon* narrates a mosque fire and the relocation of the *memolo*, while *Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript* contains a prophetic warning about the possibility that the Great Mosque would burn but does not mention the performance of the call to prayer (Ekadjati, 1978; Shafiyuddin, 2017). The remaining eight sources provide historical, genealogical, saintly, and political contexts or contain textual relevance that has not yet been verified. Therefore, the study classified them as C1 or U. In contrast, E4 sources consist of documented oral traditions, contemporary studies, cultural documentation, and media reports that describe *Azan Pitu* more clearly as a seven-muezzin practice (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). This distribution reveals a disparity between the established seven-muezzin narrative in contemporary understanding and the limited explicit evidence in traditional texts. Therefore, modern transmission provides stronger documentation of the seven-muezzin form than the available textual corpus.



Figure 1. Selected Covers of Traditional Written Sources from Cirebon

Source: Compiled from the author's private collection.

Table 1. Evidentiary Classification of the *Azan Pitu* Corpus

Source	Form of Source Examined	Relevant Section or Examination Result	Main Content Supported by the Source	Category	Position in the Study
<i>Wawacan Babad Walangsungsang</i>	Copy/transliteration by R. Muhammad Burhan, 1915; digital edition	The examination did not identify any passage that explicitly mentions <i>Azan Pitu</i> , seven muezzins, <i>Menjangan Wulung</i> , <i>memolo</i> , <i>bruang nandi</i> , or Nyi Pengalang-Alang.	The source supports the genealogical context, the journeys of historical figures, and early Cirebon historiography. References to the call to prayer or epidemics appear in other episodes.	C1	Negative comparative corpus
<i>Babad Sunda: Tanah Babad Cirebon</i>	Printed edition by P. S. Sulendraningrat, 1984	The examination did not identify, nor did the edition report, any explicit discussion of <i>Azan Pitu</i> .	The source supports the historical, genealogical, saintly, and political contexts of Cirebon.	C1	Historiographical contextual source
<i>Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari</i>	Edition and translation by Atja, 1986, based on a text attributed to Pangeran Arya Cirebon	The examination did not identify, nor did the edition report, any explicit reference to seven muezzins.	The source supports the genealogy of major figures, the formation of Cirebon, political chronology, and the position of Sunan Gunung Jati.	C1	Genealogical and chronological contextual source
Brandes Edition of <i>Babad Cirebon: Literary and Historical Review</i>	Edi S. Ekadjati's historiographical study of the Brandes textual tradition	Episode XX	The narrative states that the Great Mosque burned and that its upper section, or <i>memolo</i> , moved to Banten. It does not	E3	Primary corpus of mosque-calamity narratives

Source	Form of Source Examined	Relevant Section or Examination Result	Main Content Supported by the Source	Category	Position in the Study
			mention a call to prayer or seven muezzins.		
<i>Wawacan Sunan Gunung Djati</i>	Transliterated and translated edition by Emon Suryaatmana and T. D. Sudjana, 1994	The examined edition did not reveal any passage linking the call to prayer to disturbances at the Sang Cipta Rasa Mosque.	The source supports the hagiographical and saintly contexts, as well as the authority of Sunan Gunung Jati.	C1/U	Comparative corpus; ritual relevance remains unverified
<i>Sajarah Wali Syekh Syarif Hidayatullah Sunan Gunung Jati/Mertasinga Manuscript</i>	Transcription or printed edition by Amman N. Wahyu, 2005	<i>Pupuh</i> LXVI.20–LXVII.30	A disturbance caused by <i>bruang nandi</i> prevents the community from using the mosque. Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang recites the call to prayer alone and restores the mosque's function.	E2	Primary corpus of protective-call-to-prayer narratives
<i>Ahmad Hamam Rochani's Babad Cirebon</i>	Local historical edition, 2008	The examination has not identified any page that explicitly mentions seven muezzins. The study must also clarify which base edition the author used.	The source supports the historical context of the Cirebon Sultanate, major figures, genealogy, and popular versions of local traditions.	C1/U	Contextual source; cannot yet serve as direct evidence
<i>Babad Cirebon Carub Kandha, Tangkil Manuscript</i>	Transliteration and translation by Bambang Irianto and Ki Tarka Sutarahardja, 2013	The examination has not identified any passage that explicitly mentions <i>Azan Pitu</i> . The identified reference to <i>memolo</i> appears in another context.	The source supports the historical context and Cirebon's saintly traditions, but its relationship to the ritual remains unproven.	U	Unverified source
<i>Cariyos Walangsungsang</i>	Transliterated and translated edition published by the National Library of Indonesia, 2018	The examination did not identify any discussion of <i>Azan Pitu</i> . References to a "caller to prayer" and an epidemic appear in other episodes.	The source supports the genealogy of Walangsungsang, Cirebon historiography, and the context of religious journeys.	C1	Negative comparative corpus
<i>Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript</i>	Modern edition or transliteration; the relationship among editions still requires clarification	<i>Dangding</i> 2927–2931	A conversation between Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Gunung Jati suggests that the Great Mosque may eventually burn and that their descendants will repair it. The narrative does not mention a call to prayer.	E3	Primary corpus of prophetic narratives concerning mosque damage

Source	Form of Source Examined	Relevant Section or Examination Result	Main Content Supported by the Source	Category	Position in the Study
<i>Sejarah Peteng: Sejarah Rante Martabat Tembung Wali</i>	Modern transliterated and translated edition	The examination has not identified any passage that explicitly mentions <i>Azan Pitu</i> , seven muezzins, or a call to prayer as a response to a calamity at the mosque.	The source supports the context of saintly traditions and local historiography, but its relevance to the ritual remains unproven.	U/C1	Unverified contextual source

This study identifies three sources as the primary corpus because they contain textual passages directly related to disturbances at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* serves as the most relevant source because it presents the call to prayer as an act that protects a sacred space and identifies Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as its sole performer. The Brandes Edition of *Babad Cirebon* narrates the burning of the Great Mosque and the relocation of the *memolo* to Banten, while *Carub Kandha Carang Satul/Pulosaren Manuscript* presents a prophetic indication that the mosque might burn and that descendants would repair it in a later period. All three sources represent threats to a sacred space. However, only the *Mertasinga Manuscript* mentions the performance of the call to prayer, and none of the sources mentions seven muezzins. Therefore, these three sources constitute the primary corpus because they contain verifiable textual passages, although each source supports a different type of claim.

Sources such as *Wawacan Babad Walangsungsang*, *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari*, *Wawacan Sunan Gunung Djati*, and *Cariyos Walangsungsang* remain important because they explain genealogy, saintly traditions, political developments, and the position of Cirebon's religious spaces. However, the examined passages in these sources do not explicitly mention *Azan Pitu* or seven muezzins. This finding aligns with Qodim and Hernawan (2023), who demonstrate that several official written sources from Cirebon do not directly discuss *Azan Pitu*. Therefore, this study classifies these sources as a negative comparative corpus or as contextual sources rather than as direct evidence of the ritual's origins. In contrast, the study classifies documented oral traditions, modern scholarship, cultural documentation, and media reports as E4 sources because they clearly record the seven-muezzin narrative and practice in the contemporary period. The E4 category demonstrates that modern public memory recognizes, practices, and represents this form, but it does not demonstrate that the same form has existed since the fifteenth or sixteenth century. This distinction allows the study to separate evidence of a modern narrative's existence from evidence of the ritual's historical origins.

The corpus audit shows that the available traditional sources do not yet provide an early textual narrative that explicitly mentions seven muezzins reciting the call to prayer simultaneously. This finding does not demonstrate that such a source never existed. It applies only to the texts, editions, transliterations, and passages that this study successfully examined. Instead, the audit reveals several narrative layers that contemporary accounts now associate with *Azan Pitu*: a protective call to prayer performed by one figure, disturbances at the mosque, a fire and the relocation of the *memolo*, oral traditions concerning seven muezzins, and representations of the ritual during the pandemic. Thus, the audited traditional corpus does not contain an explicit account of seven muezzins performing simultaneously. However, it provides narratives about protective sound, disturbances within a sacred space, and calamities at the mosque that later became associated with the formation of the ritual memory of *Azan Pitu*. These differences in evidentiary capacity provide the basis for comparing how each source represents threats to the mosque, spiritual authority, and the restoration of sacred space.

Competing Narratives of Mosque Disruption, Sacred Protection, and Ritual Variation

The three primary sources do not present a uniform account of the origins of *Azan Pitu*. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* narrates a disturbance at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa that Nyi Gedeng

Pengalang-Alang resolves by reciting the call to prayer alone (Wahyu, 2005). In contrast, the Brandes Edition of *Babad Cirebon* describes the mosque fire and the relocation of the *memolo* to Banten within the context of political changes involving Cirebon and Banten, but it does not mention the call to prayer (Ekadjati, 1978). *Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript* also does not narrate the performance of the call to prayer. Instead, it contains a prophetic warning about the possibility that the mosque would burn and that descendants would repair it in a later period (Shafiyuddin, 2017; Zaedin, Arifia, & Sutaraharja, 2020). All three sources position the Great Mosque as a sacred space facing a threat, but they differ in their figures, chronologies, forms of crisis, representations of the call to prayer, and methods of restoration.

In the *Mertasinga Manuscript*, the disturbance begins when Ki Gedeng Anis, an envoy from Mataram, places *bruang nandi* on the *memolo* of the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa to test Cirebon's spiritual authority. The disturbance creates such intense fear that the manuscript describes the mosque as "no longer usable for prayer" (Wahyu, 2005). Panembahan Ratu then asks his grandmother, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, who lives in Tegal, for assistance. After performing ablution and entering the mosque alone, she "recites the call to prayer in a piercing voice." Her voice shakes the building and casts the magical force toward Gua Upas. The community can then use the mosque again. However, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang disappears during the restoration. The manuscript describes her as being "swallowed by the earth" and entering the *alam latif* (the subtle or immaterial realm, understood in Islamic mystical cosmology as a non-physical spiritual realm distinct from the material world) (Wahyu, 2005).

This narrative explicitly presents the call to prayer as an action that ends the disturbance, removes the community's fear, and restores the mosque's function. However, the text identifies only one performer, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, and it does not use the term *Azan Pitu* or mention seven muezzins. The presence of Ki Gedeng Anis also links the supernatural threat to the political relationship between Cirebon and Mataram, while Panembahan Ratu appears as a ruler who seeks assistance after the community fails to overcome the disturbance. Based on its evidentiary capacity, this source belongs to category E2 rather than E1. Thus, the *Mertasinga Manuscript* provides evidence of a narrative in which one figure performs a protective call to prayer, but it does not provide evidence that seven muezzins performed it (Wahyu, 2005).

Unlike the *Mertasinga Manuscript*, the Brandes Edition of *Babad Cirebon* places the Great Mosque fire within a series of political changes involving Cirebon, Demak, Pajang, Mataram, and Banten. After describing the transfer of authority to Panembahan Ratu, the text states that "at that time, the Great Mosque of Cirebon burned" and that "the upper part of the mosque (*memolo*) leaped toward Banten" (Ekadjati, 1978). The narrative then juxtaposes the relocation of the *memolo* with Banten's advancement and Cirebon's decline. Therefore, the mosque's destruction represents not only a physical calamity but also a transformation in the political conditions and authority of the two sultanates.

The Brandes tradition does not identify the call to prayer as a restorative action, nor does it mention seven muezzins. Its relationship to the study of *Azan Pitu* remains limited to the motifs of the Great Mosque fire and the relocation of the *memolo*. It does not directly explain the ritual's origins. Therefore, this source more strongly supports an interpretation of changing political authority than a history of the performance of the call to prayer (Atja, 1986). Based on this evidentiary capacity, the study classifies it as an E3 source. Researchers cannot use this text to claim that *Azan Pitu* emerged in response to the fire because it does not establish a direct relationship between the two events (Ekadjati, 1978).

Meanwhile, *Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript* places the threat to the Great Mosque within a meeting between Sunan Gunung Jati and Sunan Kalijaga. The narrative begins when Sunan Gunung Jati meditates in Gua Gunung Jati and smoke from the cooking activities of Sunan Kalijaga's entourage disturbs him. The event initiates a conversation about the mosque's future. In *dangding* 2930–2931, Sunan Kalijaga indicates that "the Great Mosque could be burned by fire," while Sunan Gunung Jati states that, should this event occur, one of his descendants might be willing to repair it (Zaedin et al., 2020).

The text does not describe the fire as an actual event. Instead, it presents a prophetic warning about possible destruction and the continuation of restoration through subsequent generations. The narrative also does not mention *Azan Pitu*, seven muezzins, or the call to prayer as a means of resolving the crisis. Instead, it assigns restorative authority to Sunan Kalijaga's prophetic knowledge, Sunan Gunung Jati's authority, and the possible actions of their descendants. Based on this evidentiary capacity, the source belongs to category E3 and supports only the presence of a motif concerning a threat to the Great Mosque and the continuity of its maintenance (Zaedin et al., 2020).

A comparison of the figures shows that different narratives assign the centers of action and authority to different individuals. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* presents Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as the figure who restores the mosque, Panembahan Ratu as the ruler who requests assistance, and Ki Gedeng Anis as the person who introduces the threat (Wahyu, 2005). *Carub Kandha Carang Satus* centers its narrative on Sunan Gunung Jati and Sunan Kalijaga, while the Brandes tradition places Panembahan Ratu and the rulers of Cirebon, Banten, Mataram, and other regions within a transformation of political authority (Ekadjati, 1978; Zaedin et al., 2020). Oral traditions and contemporary representations subsequently introduce Nyi Mas Pakungwati, *Menjangan Wulung*, Sunan Gunung Jati, and seven muezzins in different versions of the narrative (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023).

Some modern versions equate Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang with Nyi Mas Pakungwati or Nyi Mas Mertasinga. However, the examined corpus does not provide sufficient genealogical or narrative evidence to establish that these names refer to the same figure. In the *Mertasinga Manuscript*, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang is Panembahan Ratu's grandmother, who lives in Tegal. In contrast, modern versions tend to associate her with Nyi Mas Pakungwati and the period of Sunan Gunung Jati (Wahyu, 2005). This shift simplifies the generational differences and political contexts presented in the text. Therefore, this study continues to treat Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang and Nyi Mas Pakungwati as two distinct figures unless textual evidence demonstrates otherwise.

The narratives also present inconsistent chronologies. Oral tradition places the ritual's origins in the period of Sunan Gunung Jati through narratives about an epidemic, *Menjangan Wulung*, and an instruction to seven muezzins (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Suryaatmana & Sudjana, 1994). The *Mertasinga Manuscript* connects the disturbance at the mosque with the period of Panembahan Ratu and the political relationship between Cirebon and Mataram. In contrast, the Brandes tradition places the fire and the relocation of the *memolo* within changes in the relationship between Cirebon and Banten (Ekadjati, 1978; Wahyu, 2005). *Carub Kandha Carang Satus* places the threat within a prophetic conversation during the period of the *wali*, while the 2020 performance adds the COVID-19 pandemic as a contemporary crisis context (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Zaedin et al., 2020). Thus, these narratives move across the period of the *wali*, the reign of Panembahan Ratu, conflicts among sultanates, and the modern pandemic.

The combination of *Menjangan Wulung*, Nyi Mas Pakungwati, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, Panembahan Ratu, and seven muezzins within a single origin narrative may create chronological inconsistencies (Ekadjati, 1978; Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Wahyu, 2005). This risk increases because the editions, transliterations, documented oral traditions, and contemporary reports emerged long after the periods that they describe. Therefore, this study distinguishes the time of an event within a narrative from the time when a scribe copied the text, a publisher issued an edition, or a researcher documented the narrative. Anachronisms may arise when narrators combine figures, conflicts, and ritual actions from different periods into a single sequence of origins.

The forms of threat and their resolutions also vary. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* presents *bruang nandi* as a force that prevents the community from using the mosque, and a woman resolves the disturbance by reciting the call to prayer (Wahyu, 2005). Oral traditions describe *Menjangan Wulung*, poison, epidemics, or threats to the spread of Islam, which seven voices reciting the call to prayer overcome (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). The Brandes tradition presents a fire and the relocation of the *memolo* without describing the call to prayer as a resolution, while *Carub Kandha Carang Satus* emphasizes the knowledge of the *wali* and the possibility that descendants would repair the mosque (Ekadjati, 1978; Zaedin et al., 2020). In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted seven muezzins to

carry the ritual beyond the mosque and recite the call to prayer in several areas of Cirebon City (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). These differences demonstrate a shift from individual to collective action and an expansion of the ritual space from the mosque to the wider urban area.

Table 2. Comparative Structure of Azan Pitu Narratives

Source or Narrative Layer	Principal Figures	Narrative Period and Political Context	Form of Threat	Performer(s) of the Call to Prayer	Number of Voices	Form of Resolution	Narrative Function
<i>Mertasinga Manuscript</i> (Wahyu, 2005, <i>Pupuh</i> LXVI–LXVII)	Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, Panembahan Ratu, and Ki Gedeng Anis	The period of Panembahan Ratu; political relations between Cirebon and Mataram	<i>Bruang nandi</i> disrupts the use of the Great Mosque	Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang	One voice	The call to prayer eliminates the disturbance and restores the mosque's function	Presents the protection of a sacred space and the spiritual authority of a female figure
Brandes Edition of <i>Babad Cirebon</i> (Ekadjati, 1978, Episode XX)	Panembahan Ratu and the rulers of Cirebon and Banten	Changes in the political relationship and authority of Cirebon and Banten	The Great Mosque fire and the relocation of the <i>memolo</i>	Not narrated	Not narrated	The text does not present the call to prayer as a means of resolution	Connects the mosque calamity with changes in the political conditions of Cirebon and Banten
<i>Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript</i> (Zaedin et al., 2020, <i>dangding</i> 2927–2931)	Sunan Gunung Jati and Sunan Kalijaga	The period of the <i>wali</i> as represented in the text	A warning about the possibility that the Great Mosque would burn	Not narrated	Not narrated	The prophetic knowledge of the <i>wali</i> and the possibility that descendants would repair the mosque	Emphasizes the knowledge of the <i>wali</i> and the continuity of mosque maintenance through descendants
Documented oral traditions (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023)	The figures vary across versions: Nyi Mas Pakungwati, Sunan Gunung Jati, <i>Menjangan Wulung</i> , and seven muezzins	The early Cirebon period as reconstructed in modern memory	Epidemics, poison, or supernatural threats to the mosque and the spread of Islam	Seven muezzins	Seven voices	The simultaneous calls to prayer repel or end the threat	Connects the seven-muezzin practice with sacred protection and the ritual's origins
Performance during the COVID-19 pandemic (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023)	The administrators of the Sang Cipta Rasa Mosque and seven muezzins	April 2020; the COVID-19 pandemic	The health threat caused by the pandemic	Seven muezzins	Seven voices	The muezzins carry the call to prayer beyond the mosque and recite it while traveling around the Cirebon area	Reactivates the ritual's protective function during a contemporary crisis

The narrative period refers to the period represented in a story and must remain distinct from the date when a scribe copied the text, a publisher issued the source, or a researcher documented the narrative. The phrase “not narrated” indicates that the source does not mention the performance of the call to prayer in the examined passage. It does not prove that the call to prayer never occurred in historical reality. The figures listed in the row on oral traditions come from different versions and do not always appear within a single narrative sequence. This study continues to treat Nyi Mas Pakungwati and Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as two distinct figures because the examined corpus does not provide sufficient textual evidence to equate them.

The most significant difference within the corpus concerns the number of people who perform the call to prayer. Among the three primary textual sources, only the *Mertasinga Manuscript* explicitly narrates its performance, and one figure, Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang, performs the action (Wahyu, 2005). The Brandes Edition of *Babad Cirebon* and *Carub Kandha Carang Satus* both present threats to the Great Mosque, but neither source presents the call to prayer as a response to the crisis (Ekadjati, 1978; Zaedin et al., 2020). In contrast, documented oral traditions, modern scholarship, cultural documentation, and contemporary media present the seven-muezzin form more clearly (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). The examined corpus does not provide a textual basis for transforming a call to prayer performed by one figure into a performance by seven people. A shared protective function also does not establish an identical ritual form.

The difference in the number of performers constitutes an evidentiary boundary that researchers cannot disregard. This study does not conclude that the seven-muezzin practice developed directly from the action of Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang. The corpus demonstrates only three layers of evidence: a protective call to prayer performed by one figure in the *Mertasinga Manuscript*; disturbances at the mosque without the performance of the call to prayer in the Brandes tradition and *Carub Kandha Carang Satus*; and the seven-muezzin form in oral traditions and contemporary documentation. The available evidence does not verify a direct historical relationship among these three layers. Nevertheless, shared motifs of protection, threats to sacred space, spiritual authority, and the restoration of order allow public narratives to connect the different versions. Thus, the sources do not provide a single, consistent account of the origins of *Azan Pitu*. Instead, they reveal several narrative layers that differ in their figures, chronologies, threats, and ritual forms. Because oral traditions and contemporary sources present the seven-muezzin form most clearly, the following subsection examines the transmission processes that shaped the modern understanding of *Azan Pitu*.

Oral Transmission and Contemporary Reactivation

The audit of the traditional textual corpus did not identify any explicit reference to seven muezzins reciting the call to prayer simultaneously. In contrast, modern studies, documented interviews, cultural documentation, and media reports define *Azan Pitu* as a call to prayer performed by seven muezzins, especially before the Friday prayer at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). Mosque administrators and ritual practitioners explain *pitu* as “seven” and state that the seven muezzins simultaneously recite the first call to prayer according to procedures transmitted by the mosque’s administrators (Anwar, 2023; Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). This documentation confirms the existence, form, performers, and location of the practice during the period of observation, but it does not establish when the practice first emerged. Figure 2 presents the contemporary performance of *Azan Pitu*.



Figure 2. The Performance of Azan Pitu at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa, Cirebon

Oral traditions also explain the protective meaning attached to the seven voices reciting the call to prayer. Several versions connect the ritual with efforts to stop epidemics, avert calamities, or repel supernatural threats such as *Menjangan Wulung* (Anwar, 2023; Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). Other versions introduce Sunan Gunung Jati, Nyi Mas Pakungwati, or particular female figures into narratives about disturbances at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa. Although these narratives differ in their figures, periods, and forms of threat, they consistently present the call to prayer as a means of restoring security and the sanctity of the sacred space. Oral traditions therefore connect the contemporary Friday practice with Cirebon's sacred past while combining motifs of epidemics, mosque disturbances, holy figures, and protective sound (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Widiyanti & Zikrillah, 2022). However, oral sources confirm only the stories and interpretations expressed at the time of documentation. They do not establish the factual accuracy of all events associated with the fifteenth or sixteenth century.

On April 9, 2020, the administrators of the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa reactivated the protective function of *Azan Pitu* as a spiritual effort to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. The performance did not remain limited to the Friday call to prayer inside the mosque. After completing prayers and a series of ritual activities, religious leaders and muezzins carried the call to prayer to four locations along the boundaries of Cirebon City using an open-bed vehicle (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). Media reports represented the event as a *tolak bala* (a ritual intended to ward off calamity) ritual that included *munajat* (intimate supplicatory prayer), *selawat*, and the recitation of the call to prayer at four corners of the city (Sanjaya, 2020). This performance expanded the ritual space from the mosque to the wider city and transformed *Azan Pitu* from a marker of the Friday prayer time into a public religious response to a crisis. The pandemic therefore reactivated narratives of epidemics and the ritual's protective function. However, this adaptation does not prove that the same form continued without change from Cirebon's early period.

Contemporary sources possess evidentiary capacities that differ from those of traditional texts. Media reports can confirm the time, location, form of performance, and public representation of the ritual. Interviews record informants' stories, beliefs, and explanations, while contemporary studies document the performers, procedures, and functions of *Azan Pitu* during the period of observation (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). However, these sources cannot establish when the seven-muezzin form first emerged, identify its first originator, determine whether the ritual continued unchanged from the fifteenth or sixteenth century, or verify supernatural elements as empirical facts. Researchers must therefore account for the temporal distance between the period of documentation and the period represented in the narratives. Table 3 summarizes the different evidentiary capacities of each source layer.

Table 3. Layers of Transmission and Their Evidentiary Capacity

Source Layer	Form of Information	Claims the Source Can Support	Claims the Source Cannot Support
Traditional texts	Narratives of protective calls to prayer, mosque disturbances, fires, and the relocation of the <i>memolo</i>	The presence of figures, events, and narrative motifs in the examined textual passages	The seven-muezzin form, when the text does not mention it explicitly
Documented oral traditions	Statements from mosque administrators, ritual practitioners, cultural figures, or community members	Stories, interpretations, and inherited knowledge expressed during the period of documentation	The factual accuracy of all narratives concerning the fifteenth or sixteenth century
Contemporary research	Descriptions of practices, observations, ritual functions, and informants' accounts	The performance by seven muezzins, ritual procedures, and interpretations during the research period	The exact date when the ritual emerged and the identity of its first originator
Cultural documentation	Descriptions of traditions, public narratives, and representations of cultural heritage	The position of <i>Azan Pitu</i> within contemporary cultural identity and public memory	The uninterrupted continuity of the ritual without change since Cirebon's early period
Media coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic	News reports, photographs, videos, and performance reports	The time, location, form of performance, and expansion of the ritual space in 2020	The historical accuracy of origin narratives quoted or repeated by the media

Table 3 distinguishes evidence concerning the existence of a narrative from evidence concerning the truth of the event represented in that narrative. Media information must include both the event date and the publication date. This study treats informants' accounts as traditions narrated during the period of documentation rather than as verified historical facts. The phrase "cannot support" indicates the limitations of a source's evidentiary capacity and does not mean that the relevant event certainly never occurred.

Thus, documented oral traditions and contemporary sources provide the clearest evidence of the seven-muezzin form. These sources show that *Azan Pitu* has become firmly established in modern religious practice and public memory, while its performance during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the ritual's capacity to adapt its spatial setting and function to a crisis context (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). However, contemporary sources do not provide sufficient evidence to establish when this form first emerged. Instead, modern narratives combine motifs of epidemics, mosque disturbances, holy figures, protective sound, and the restoration of order that previously appeared across several sources. Therefore, oral and contemporary sources confirm the established position of the seven-muezzin form in modern ritual memory, but they do not eliminate the evidentiary gap between contemporary practice and its origin narratives.

Shared Motifs and the Convergence of Competing Narratives

The comparative analysis shows that sources concerning *Azan Pitu* differ in their figures, chronologies, forms of threat, and ritual performances. The *Mertasinga Manuscript*, the Brandes Edition

of *Babad Cirebon*, *Carub Kandha Carang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript*, oral traditions, and representations from the COVID-19 pandemic also belong to different source layers with distinct contexts and evidentiary capacities. Nevertheless, these narratives repeatedly present motifs of crisis and disruption within sacred spaces. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* describes *bruang nandi* as a force that prevents the community from using the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa. The Brandes tradition recounts the mosque fire and the relocation of the *memolo*, while *Carub Kandha Carang Satus* warns of the possibility of damage to the mosque (Ekadjati, 1978; Wahyu, 2005; Zaedin et al., 2020). Oral traditions associate the ritual with epidemics and supernatural threats, while the performance during the COVID-19 pandemic expanded the protected space from the mosque to the wider area of Cirebon City (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). Thus, each version connects the crisis with a disruption of either a sacred space or a community area that requires protection.

The narratives involve different forms of authority and restorative action in resolving these crises. The *Mertasinga Manuscript* assigns individual authority to Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang because her call to prayer restores the mosque's function. In contrast, oral traditions and contemporary practices collectively assign this protective function to seven muezzins (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023; Wahyu, 2005). *Carub Kandha Carang Satus* emphasizes Sunan Kalijaga's prophetic knowledge, Sunan Gunung Jati's authority, and the continuity of their descendants, while the Brandes tradition connects the mosque calamity with changes in political authority (Ekadjati, 1978; Zaedin et al., 2020). Restoration also frequently involves loss. Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang disappears after ending the disturbance, the mosque suffers damage, and the *memolo* moves to Banten. This pattern shows that authority may operate through individual, genealogical, political, or collective forms, while restoration may involve sacrifice, destruction, or the relocation of a sacred element.

The available evidence does not establish direct textual relationships among all versions. However, modern transmission brings together motifs of threats, the mosque, holy figures, the call to prayer, loss, and protection within the ritual memory of *Azan Pitu*. This convergence allows communities to interpret the seven-muezzin form through several stories that previously appeared across different sources. The traditional corpus does not explicitly present the seven-muezzin form as part of one complete narrative sequence. Instead, this form acquires meaning through the convergence of motifs involving crisis, sacred space, spiritual authority, sacred sound, and restoration. Figure 3 summarizes this pattern of convergence without presenting it as a definite historical sequence or causal relationship.

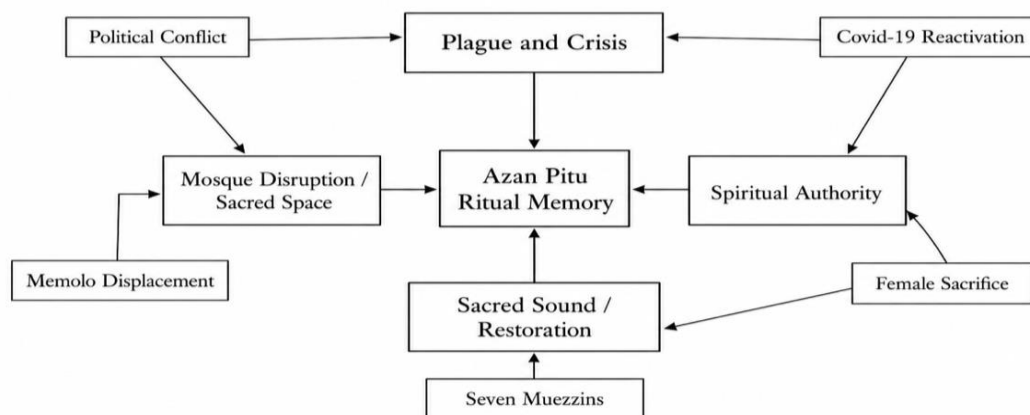


Figure 3. Convergence of Narrative Motifs in the Formation of *Azan Pitu* Ritual Memory

Source: The authors' construction based on a comparative analysis of traditional texts, documented oral traditions, contemporary studies, cultural documentation, and media reports concerning the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the factual level, narratives of *Azan Pitu* differ in their figures, periods, forms of threat, numbers of performers, and methods of crisis resolution. Documented oral traditions and contemporary sources

provide the clearest accounts of the seven-muezzin form, while the traditional corpus provides motifs involving a protective call to prayer, disturbances at the mosque, the authority of the *wali*, the loss of a sacred symbol, and the restoration of sacred space. As Figure 3 illustrates, these motifs originate from different narrative layers but converge within ritual memory without forming a definitive historical chronology. Overall, the findings show that a single, consistent origin narrative does not sustain *Azan Pitu*. Instead, several converging motifs connect crisis, the sanctity of the mosque, spiritual authority, sacred sound, and the restoration of order.

4. Discussion

The audit of eleven traditional sources shows that none explicitly mentions seven muezzins reciting the call to prayer simultaneously ($E1 = 0$). The *Mertasinga Manuscript* documents only a protective call to prayer performed by Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as the sole performer ($E2 = 1$), while the Brandes tradition and *Carub Kandha Karang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript* narrate disturbances, fires, or threats to the Great Mosque without describing the performance of the call to prayer ($E3 = 2$) (Ekadjati, 1978; Wahyu, 2005; Zaedin et al., 2020). In contrast, documented oral traditions and contemporary sources most clearly present the seven-muezzin form and record its performance, protective function, and ritual meaning in the modern period (Qodim & Hernawan, 2023). This finding does not prove that seven muezzins never performed the ritual in the past. Instead, it shows that researchers cannot derive its origins directly from a single, consistent traditional text. The differences among a call to prayer performed by a single figure, mosque disturbances without a call to prayer, and a seven-muezzin practice also confirm that a shared protective function does not automatically imply an identical ritual form. Therefore, scholarly inquiry into *Azan Pitu* should move beyond the search for a single origin event and instead explain how different narrative layers construct, preserve, and legitimize ritual authority within the memory of the Cirebon community (Mulia, 2022).

The differences among *Azan Pitu* narratives relate to the function, production context, and evidentiary capacity of each type of source. The Brandes Edition of *Babad Cirebon* situates the mosque fire and the relocation of the *memolo* within changes in political authority between Cirebon and Banten, while the *Mertasinga Manuscript* emphasizes the charisma of Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang as the figure who restores the mosque's sanctity through the call to prayer (Ekadjati, 1978; Wahyu, 2005). *Carub Kandha Karang Satus/Pulosaren Manuscript* provides a different emphasis through the prophetic knowledge of the *wali* and the continuity of mosque maintenance by their descendants (Zaedin et al., 2020). In subsequent layers, oral traditions, modern scholarship, and media representations tend to combine figures, threats, and periods that originally appeared separately so that contemporary communities can continue to understand the ritual within a relevant framework of protection. This pattern aligns with Tan (2024), who demonstrates that motifs in Cirebon historiography mediate political and religious change, and with Wain (2017), who emphasizes problems involving hybridization, anachronism, and source reliability. Therefore, researchers cannot equate Nyi Gedeng Pengalang-Alang with Nyi Mas Pakungwati without adequate genealogical and textual evidence. Contradictions among sources do not merely represent narrative errors. Instead, they reflect how each medium selects and organizes the past according to its purpose, authority, and audience.

Although the narratives differ in fact, the various versions of *Azan Pitu* follow a similar narrative structure: a crisis disrupts a sacred space, a particular authority intervenes, a restorative action occurs, and order returns. This similarity operates at the symbolic level and does not prove that all narratives originated from a single historical event. Within Assmann's (2011) framework, cultural memory operates through the selection, repetition, materialization, and institutionalization of elements of the past that become significant within particular systems of collective representation. The acoustic dimension of ritual is particularly important in this process because sacred sound can function as more than an aesthetic component of religious performance; it can mediate spiritual meaning, cultural identity, communal experience, and the perception of sacredness itself. Studies of Indonesian ritual and religious performance demonstrate that sound-based traditions can serve as vehicles for articulating and transmitting spiritual expression, cultural identity, and ritual meaning (Meylani & Hernawan,

2024; Pandor, Ton, Yuniarto, & Heribertus, 2025). In the case of *Azan Pitu*, the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa functions as a spatial anchor of memory, the call to prayer as an acoustic anchor, and the regular Friday performance as a mechanism of ritual repetition. Traditional texts, documented oral accounts, mosque-based practice, cultural documentation, and media representations together constitute a transmission network through which the ritual's protective meanings are preserved and reformulated. This finding aligns with Alatas (2016), who demonstrates that narratives concerning holy figures and ritual institutions can shape the identity of places and structure interpretations of the past. Thus, within documented Cirebonese ritual memory, *Azan Pitu* is sustained not by a single uniform historical account but by recurring associations among sacred space, sound, spiritual authority, protection, and ritual repetition.

These findings lead to the concept of cumulative narrative legitimation, which refers to a process through which historically non-identical and, in some cases, contradictory narratives coexist and contribute to the articulation of ritual authority without first being reconciled into a single historically consistent account. Cultural-memory theory explains how elements of the past are selected, preserved, repeated, and reactivated through texts, symbols, institutions, and ritual practices (Assmann, 2011). However, the *Azan Pitu* case reveals a further analytical problem: different narratives concerning figures, periods, threats, and ritual forms can remain historically unresolved while continuing to be associated with the same ritual tradition. Cumulative narrative legitimation is proposed to describe this specific process.

The process operates through three interrelated mechanisms. First, narrative accumulation brings together stories concerning epidemics, mosque disturbances, *wali*, holy female figures, political conflicts, the loss of sacred symbols, and the seven-muezzin practice within a broader field of ritual memory. Second, motif convergence allows these historically different narratives to become associated through recurring themes of protection, sacred space, sacred sound, spiritual authority, crisis, and restoration, even when their factual contents cannot be reconciled. Third, performative confirmation occurs when repeated ritual practices and contemporary representations continually reactivate these shared motifs, making inherited narratives meaningful in the present. The analytical value of this concept, therefore, lies not in replacing cultural-memory theory but in explaining how historically inconsistent narratives may jointly sustain the symbolic intelligibility of one ritual without requiring historical harmonization.

These findings extend previous studies that emphasize the socio-religious functions of *Azan Pitu*. Qodim and Hernawan (2023) interpret it as a "ritual of affliction" and a means of confronting crises. Anwar (2023) interprets it as a *living hadith* practice and a local tradition for averting misfortune, while Widiyanti and Zikrillah (2022) examine the revitalization of its legend through media. The present study acknowledges that *Azan Pitu* serves as a source of protection, identity, and cultural transmission, but it distinguishes these contemporary functions from evidence regarding its historical origins. The 2020 performance illustrates this distinction. During that event, practitioners no longer confined the ritual to the Friday call to prayer at the Sang Cipta Rasa Mosque but carried it to four areas of Cirebon City as a public religious response to the pandemic. This spatial expansion reactivated inherited associations between crisis and protection while altering the ritual's location, mobility, and public visibility. Comparable processes have been observed in other Indonesian ritual traditions, where cultural transmission preserves recognizable sacred meanings while allowing substantial changes in performance, context, and social function (Arbi, Herlina, Dewi, & Hanafi, 2025). This pattern aligns with Baidowi et al. (2021) and Saud et al. (2021), who demonstrate that communities used rituals, prayers, and religious coping to manage uncertainty during the pandemic. However, the ritual's adaptation during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates only its vitality and flexibility. It does not prove that its form continued unchanged from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Thus, its reactivation during the pandemic shows that ritual memory can preserve a protective meaning while altering the location, mobility, and form of performance.

Contemporary representations of *Azan Pitu* associate the ritual with local religious identity, the symbolic centrality of the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa, protection during periods of crisis, and the

continuity of Cirebonese religious heritage (Hamid, 2020). However, the preservation and interpretation of these narratives require methodological caution because oral traditions may condense genealogies, merge chronologies, incorporate the interests of particular narrators or institutions, and change through processes of remembering and transmission. Researchers should therefore treat oral traditions as evidence of meanings, interpretations, and claims articulated at the time of documentation rather than automatically treating them as factual reports of the historical events they describe.

This caution prevents researchers from equating different figures without genealogical evidence or merging narratives from different periods into a single historical chronology (Hamilton, 1987; Portelli, 1981). Media organizations and cultural institutions should also distinguish statements introduced as “according to tradition” from claims supported by textual evidence, and they should not represent spiritual practices as substitutes for medical responses. The implications of this study include the need for oral-history documentation that records informants’ identities and the contexts of narration, clearer identification of relationships among textual editions, manuscript digitization, and more critical public presentations. Nevertheless, this audit remains limited to accessible sources. It does not identify the ritual’s originator or initial period, verify supernatural elements, or include a comprehensive ethnography of the congregation and practitioners of *Azan Pitu*. These limitations create opportunities for further philological and ethnographic research. Ultimately, the documented authority of *Azan Pitu* is not grounded in the confirmation of a single origin event across all sources. Rather, it is articulated through the convergence of textual narratives, oral transmission, mosque space, sacred sound, ritual performance, and contemporary representation, centered on recurring motifs of crisis, sanctity, authority, protection, and restoration. This convergence is best understood as part of documented Cirebonese ritual memory, rather than as evidence of a historically uniform collective memory shared in the same form by all members of the Cirebon community.

5. Conclusion

Azan Pitu is better understood as a ritual whose authority is sustained by layered narrative memory than as a practice whose legitimacy depends on a single recoverable origin story. The examined sources reveal that narratives associated with the ritual differ in their figures, chronologies, forms of threat, ritual configurations, and modes of restoration, yet they repeatedly converge around motifs of crisis, sacred space, spiritual authority, sacred sound, loss, protection, and the restoration of order. This convergence helps explain why *Azan Pitu* can remain meaningful within documented Cirebonese ritual memory despite the absence of a uniform historical account across the available layers of sources.

The main scientific contribution of this study lies in its both evidentiary and conceptual approaches. Evidentially, the study distinguishes among traditional textual materials, historiographical works, documented oral traditions, contemporary research, cultural documentation, and media representations according to their respective capacities to support historical and interpretive claims. This distinction prevents contemporary ritual forms from being projected uncritically onto earlier textual traditions. Conceptually, the study proposes cumulative narrative legitimation to explain how historically non-identical and even contradictory narratives can remain associated with the same ritual and contribute symbolic resources to its authority without first being reconciled into a single consistent historical account. The concept extends cultural-memory analysis by drawing attention not only to the selection, preservation, and reactivation of the past, but also to the coexistence and convergence of unresolved narrative layers within the continuing representation of a ritual tradition.

The study is limited by its dependence on accessible textual witnesses, editions, transliterations, historiographical works, and documented contemporary sources. It does not establish when the seven-muezzin form first emerged, identify the ritual’s original initiator, demonstrate direct historical continuity among the different narrative layers, or verify supernatural elements as empirical facts. It also does not examine how muezzins, mosque administrators, congregants, or wider Cirebonese audiences currently interpret competing origin narratives. Future research should therefore expand manuscript-based and philological investigation, clarify relationships among textual editions,

document oral histories across generations, and employ ethnographic or reception-based approaches to examine how different narratives are understood and mobilized by contemporary ritual actors.

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