

# Azan Pitu: The Pacification of Plagues rituals during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Authors:**Husnul Qodim<sup>1</sup> Wawan Hernawan<sup>1</sup> **Affiliations:**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Ushuluddin, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Bandung, Indonesia

**Corresponding author:**

Husnul Qodim,  
husnulqodim@uinsgd.ac.id

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The COVID-19 pandemic has spread to the whole world, including Indonesia. People have made various efforts to overcome this outbreak. One of them is through local wisdom, such as in Cirebon-Indonesia. Cirebon people carry out the *Azan Pitu* ritual to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic that has spread in Cirebon. This study aims to explore the local knowledge system or local wisdom regarding *Azan Pitu* in overcoming the COVID-19 outbreak. The method used in this research is a qualitative method with observation and in-depth interviews for collecting data. In the analysis process, this study uses Victor Turner's ritual theory and Bronislaw Malinowski's functional analysis theory. The study's results found that people first performed the *Azan Pitu* ritual to overcome the outbreak of *menjangan wulung* during the Sunan Gunung Djati era. However, Cirebon people maintain it as a tradition to prevent disease outbreaks, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. The *Azan Pitu* ritual to ward off COVID-19 has changed form and function, but it does not diminish its essential meaning: the community's efforts to expel COVID-19.

**Contribution:** This study contributes to broadening insights into ritual studies, especially those related to epidemics and disasters.

**Keywords:** Azan Pitu; COVID-19; rituals; a ritual of affliction; local wisdom.

## Introduction

Religion still has a central role in society. Based on the world religions data, religious adherents in the world have increased over time from about 63.7% of the world's population in 1945 to around 86.2% in 2010 (Maoz & Henderson 2013). Society still embraces religion because it has a function (Vess et al. 2009). One of the functions is when a disaster occurs. The results showed that the victims would feel severe mental shock and trauma if a disaster occurred. The feeling of losing family members and property suddenly makes the individual experience deep feelings of sadness. However, with the influence of religion, most religious communities can survive amidst limited conditions (Amawidyati & Utami 2007). Moreover, the religious nuances in the disaster area increase the enthusiasm for performing worship rituals to God and touch the sides of authentic and inclusive social, natural and supernatural relations (Suprpto & Huda 2020).

On the contrary, disasters also change religious ritual patterns (Darmawan et al. 2020). Previously, the adherents celebrated the great day of religion on a large scale. It changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has transformed the celebrations of Nowruz, Easter and Ramadan. They must eliminate several rituals related to mass gatherings and look for an alternative to media use in their delivery (Imber-Black 2020). The 2020 Hajj was also impacted because of its limitation in preventing the spread of COVID-19 (Kasman 2020). State policies that impose social restrictions affect the patterns of religious worship. The religious leaders and institutions immediately respond to the social restriction policy by supporting the country's policies (Dahlan 2020; Hasbiyallah et al. 2020; Rusyana et al. 2020; Saeful 2020).

The description above shows clearly that both religion and disaster influence each other. The religious community's response to disasters also comes in rituals to ward off the disaster. Several previous studies on rituals in dealing with disasters have been carried out. Specific communities believe that some rituals have a role in warding off disease or disaster, such as cleaning the village to protect the village from illness or disaster (Fatanti, Rahmiati & Yustisia 2019; Supriono, Ridwan & Sarmini 2017). Rituals with the same purpose are also carried out in Padang in the form of the ritual *Raba'akia* (Trisanti 2013) and Aceh under the name *Tulak Bala* (Saputra 2020; Usman et al. 2020).

**Note:** Historical Thought and Source Interpretation.

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In fact, there are many other rituals related to the goal of *warding off misfortune*. Based on the previous studies, there are no rituals in dealing with a pandemic; in other words, there have been no studies that reported ritual activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Cirebon, a ceremony called *Azan Pitu* is carried out to ward off the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of this study is to explore *Azan Pitu* ritual as one of the rituals of expelling the plague, namely, COVID-19, which has become a global pandemic (Darsono, Rohmana & Busro 2020). The ritual has a long history since the time of the spread of Islam in Cirebon by Sunan Gunung Djati. The community still carry out the ritual today. In addition, many versions of the oral and written traditions directly or indirectly related to this ritual still survive. However, the joint researchers will present a brief history of this ritual. This article focuses on the implementation of *Azan Pitu* ritual in Cirebon at this time, especially relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Research methods

This article is a report on our study of the ritual *Azan Pitu* conducted by residents of Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia, during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Azan Pitu* is a cultural tradition followed by the people of Cirebon with the aim of rejecting disaster – in this study, it is the COVID-19 pandemic disaster. We conducted this study because of academic and professional interests. Academically, we value this article's research output for its potential to strengthen and supplement lecture materials in the study of the anthropology of religion and cross-cultural understanding.

This study employed qualitative methods with an anthropological approach. A qualitative method is a scientific approach to resolving descriptive issues (McNabb 2015). The main problems in this study require primarily visual and descriptive data, this qualitative method was chosen as part of how to solve the main research problems. In other words, descriptive data are required to solve research problems and provide adequate explanations about the participants, properties, visual performance and structure elements of *Azan Pitu* implementation.

The primary data were obtained by direct observation during this ritual and in-depth interviews using stationery, interview guides and camera phones with ritual actors of *Azan Pitu*. The use of a camera can improve the observation performance using qualitative methods (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2018). The secondary data were obtained by collecting classical manuscripts and documents, whether many previously documented sources held by the Cirebon people in explaining the history of *Azan Pitu* (Hernawan 2014). In the process of analysis, this study uses Victor Turner's theory of the ritual, which defined the ritual as a sequence of activities involving gestures, words and objects in a certain place that was carried out to influence supernatural powers on behalf of the goals and interests of the actor (Turner 1969). For analysing the function of ritual, this study

uses Bronislaw Malinowski's theory of functional analysis. In Malinowski's view, observing the function of a ritual institution (as part of the culture) is observing the institution's use to meet the psycho-biological needs of individual members of a society and its use to maintain the social group's continuity (Malinowski 1939).

## Literature review

### *Azan Pitu*

The *Azan Pitu* ritual is a ritual in the form of a call to *prayer* or prayer time invitation performed by seven muezzins simultaneously. It is usually performed at certain times. They wear special clothes. The six muezzins wore green robes and white turbans. Meanwhile, one person wore a white robe and a black turban. Sometimes, the seven muezzins also wore white robes and turbans. They must wear the robe every time they chant *Azan Pitu* as a marker and differentiator from other congregations. Even performed simultaneously by seven people, the chanting of *Azan Pitu* still sounds good. The short length of the tone of the seventh muezzin sounds in tune. They are also compact to maintain a balance of high and low tones. Initially, the seventh muezzin carried out *Azan Pitu* in every obligatory prayer five times. However, they recently performed it during Friday prayers at the first call to prayer.

It is challenging to trace back to when the *Azan Pitu* tradition began. Based on official Cirebon sources such as Cariyos Walangsungsang manuscript, Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari, Babad Cirebon, Babad Tanah Sunda Babad Cirebon and Babad Cirebon Brandes Edition, none of them discussed it. The researchers just found it through oral sources from the Cirebon people.

Cirebon people strongly suspect the commencement of the *Azan Pitu* ritual at Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque in 1549 AD as the first event. However, because of the oral tradition from generation to generation in Cirebon, it has several versions, including:

- The first version is an attempt to extinguish the fire. According to Aaz Azhary (pers. comm., 12 May 2020), at the beginning of the construction of the Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque, it had thatched roofs. Once upon a time, Cirebon had a very extreme summer. Because of the hot weather, a severe fire in the *memolo* [dome] of the mosque occurred. Because of the incident, Nyi Mas Pakungwati, wife of Sunan Gunung Djati, tried to extinguish the fire. Since it was challenging to extinguish, he ordered a muezzin to chant the call to prayer. However, the fire did not go out immediately. Nyi Mas Pakungwati also ordered two muezzins directly called to prayer. But the effort had come to fruition. Then, three until six muezzins carried it out. Finally, the fire was only extinguished after chanting by seven muezzins simultaneously (Aaz Azhary, pers. comm, 12 May 2020).
- The second version is a strategy of Nyi Mas Pakungwati. According to Moh. Ismail (pers. comm, 17 June 2020),

when the Cirebon people and their surroundings began to flock to the Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque to study religion, there was a magician who felt jealous, even jealous of the success of the da'wah inscribed by Sunan Gunung Djati. The name is unknown but has the magic of *Menjangan Wulung* (A. Maylani, pers. comm, 12 May 2020). *Menjangan Wulung* is depicted as an evil creature that spreads plague and death. *Menjangan Wulung* is always perched on top of the *memolo* at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa and causes disease for mosque congregants who want to worship. In another version of the story, *Menjangan Wulung* only attacks the muezzin, and after chanting the call to prayer, every muezzin must die. A. Munadi (pers. comm, 12 May 2020) recounted that Sunan Gunung Djati asked Allah for guidance so that this epidemic would quickly pass. According to the clues, the solution was to chant *Azan*. However, when a muezzin uttered the call to prayer, that person died not long after that. Two people were ordered to call to prayer but still died. Then, he was ordered to continue to increase the number of muezzins, up to seven muezzins. Finally, *Menjangan Wulung* was defeated, and his body was destroyed (A. Munadi, pers. comm, 12 May 2020). Since then, in anticipation, seven muezzins continuously chanted the call to prayer in every prayer time. Only after safe, it was only carried out during Friday prayers. It is then known as *Azan Pitu*.

Based on the observation, there are many other versions. However, many versions of the plague that hit Cirebon in the past vary widely. The existence of a variant of the story is probably because contemporary and local written sources have not been found. Therefore, storytelling depends very much on the memory of the speaker. Historical criticism steps often fail because they do not pay much attention to the chronology of each episode narrated. For example, who were the main characters of the event? Is it Sunan Gunung Djati or Nyi Mas Pakungwati? Then, who gave the command to perform *Azan Pitu*, was it Sunan Gunung Djati or Nyi Mas Pakungwati? However, from many existing versions, there is a collective memory that this event happened in the past of Cirebon. In fact, muezzins at the Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque still echo *Azan Pitu*, passed down from generation to generation.

## The present time

The ritual of *Azan Pitu* is still happening today, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been going on from generation to generation for approximately 500 years. Previously, it was performed every time the prayer came. However, at this time, the tradition of the *Azan Pitu* is only performed during Friday prayers at the first call.

Based on observations, there are two groups of muezzins. The first group is those from the Kasepuhan Palace who wear green clothes. At the same time, the second group is the muezzin from the Kanoman Palace, who wear white clothes.



FIGURE 1: *Azan Pitu* ritual in Sang Cipta Rasa Mosque.

It is possible that both groups together chant the call for prayer, but there are still seven muezzins (Figure 1).

These muezzins generally come from the surrounding community who understand Islam well. In addition, they are usually a descendant of the previous muezzin. In its implementation, the muezzin in charge has been arranged and scheduled by the management of the Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque (A. Munadi, pers. comm, 17 June 2020). Based on Munadi's narrative, once upon a time, employing the call to prayer carried out as usual by one muezzin, they ever tried to eliminate the *Azan Pitu*. But there was an incident; the muezzin died. Replaced by another person, a few moments later he died too. Thus, this traditional ritual was revived, and they still carried it today.

## The Pacification of Plagues rituals

Studies related to rituals have attracted the interest of many researchers (Frankiel 2001; Post 2015). Studies on rituals have been approached regarding the practice of their implementation and meanings (Goody 1961; Helland & Kienzl 2021; Kapferer 2004). Rituals are a set of symbolic activities carried out in a specific sequence of procedures and are repeated from time to time with passion and sincerity (Crank 2014; Rook & Levy 1983). In its development, rituals were studied and investigated from various perspectives, not only in religious and cultural studies. Scholars have studied grooming rituals in the marketing and consumer fields (Rook & Levy 1983). Rituals cannot be separated in the economic and political areas (Goldman, De Pinho & Perry 2013) and included in education (Bernstein, Elvin & Peters 1966). There are also studies on rituals in maintaining cosmic harmony and nature preservation (Adimiharja 1992; Hakim 2006:60; Qodim 2019; Wessing 1974:282). Even now, studies on rituals and commodification in tourism are booming (Olsen 2003; Ovies & Bautista 2021; eds. Smith & Robinson 2006).

In ritual studies, many experts carry out ritual research because of special events in the human life cycle, for example, pregnancy and birth rituals (Busro & Qodim 2018), marriage rituals (Moore 1988; Strange 1976) and death rituals

(Metcalf & Huntington 1991; Reeves 2011; Watson, Watson & Rawski 1988). Besides the life cycle, rituals are usually associated with special events such as an epidemic outbreak. One of these ritual studies is expelling the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak that has spread worldwide.

Many studies and theories have emerged until now in the development of ritual studies. However, there were at least three prominent ritual studies experts, namely, Emile Durkheim (1915), Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1969). There are many types of rituals, including those that are performed seasonally, such as harvest rituals (Kershaw & Kershaw 1998; Madigan 1964; Searle 2019), suffering rituals (e.g. healing rituals, exorcisms and purification rituals) and divination rituals (Turner 1973).

These various rituals are still practised today because they are considered to have a function. For many people, rituals have value; conversely, many feel powerless in the face of the forces that overwhelm them (Kertzer 1988:131–132). Rituals have a psychological function, namely, helping to reduce the anxiety level of many people and giving the impression to the perpetrators that they are healthier because they can control their lives. In addition, rituals also have a social function, as that occurs in transitional rituals (life cycle rituals) that follow the changing conditions of the social status of the ritual participants (Rook 1985). Also, rituals have a symbolic function; that is, people create alliances, wholeness and community through rituals (Han 2020:6).

The *Azan Pitu* ritual is one of the ritual types related to a special event for the pacification of plagues, in this case, the COVID-19 pandemic. The people of Cirebon, Indonesia, perform the *Azan Pitu* ritual. They view an epidemic or pandemic as a large number of cases of *Pagebluk*, a disease outbreak that causes many victims to fall and fall (Adji & Priyatmoko 2021). *Pagebluk* is derived from the word *gebluk* or *bluk*, [to fall]; it can also be interpreted as an explosion (Imamah 2021). They believe that if there is a *pagebluk* phenomenon, a ritual is needed to expel it.

Rituals for expelling plagues and disasters in various regions have differences in name and implementation. Still, they have the same function: asking God to give salvation or avoid the plague that hit.

## COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 that can cause severe acute respiratory syndrome (Das & Dutta 2021; Ramirez, Sanchez & Pirskanen 2021). COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan, China (Das & Dutta 2021), and has spread rapidly throughout the world and resulted in an ongoing pandemic (Ciotti et al. 2020).

The COVID-19 virus spreads incredibly fast because of its transmission; it spreads through droplets of liquids produced from sneezing or coughing (Galbadage, Peterson & Gunasekera 2020; Jayaweera et al. 2020). This rapid spread

process resulted in COVID-19 being declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020, by the World Health Organization (Downing 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused huge losses, based on economic losses, restrictions on social activities and loss of life. The conditions resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic have caused people to be unstable and chaotic (Sinding Bentzen 2019). Under these conditions, people use religious beliefs and rituals to deal with sudden and unexpected difficulties (Bentzen 2021). A Pew Research Center (2020) report corroborated that more than half of the adults said they had prayed to end the spread of the COVID-19. Two-thirds of Catholics (68%) also said they had prayed to end the plague. In other words, many people are trying to expel the COVID-19 pandemic through religious rituals based on their beliefs.

## The *Azan Pitu* ritual in expelling COVID-19

The *Azan Pitu* ritual was held on 09 April 2020. It started in the afternoon and culminated in the evening after *Isya* prayer. The event started at the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa and was attended by Keraton Relatives, community elders and the general public. It begins with prayers, *tawasul* and *hadarah* to the Prophet Muhammad. The activity took place in the main hall of the Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque.

The activity was continued with the *Azan Pitu*. It still takes place in the main hall of the mosque. *Pitu*'s call to prayer begins with gathering seven muezzins while standing in a row. The muezzins wear robes of the same colour, usually white or green. All muezzins wore masks in the *Azan Pitu* ritual to expel the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 2). Thereafter, the muezzins stand up and recite the reading.

After carrying out many mosque rituals, the Islamic religious leaders traveled around the city using an open truck [*pick-up*] (Figure 4) to four border points of Cirebon City to chant *Azan* (Figure 3). The cold night did not dampen them from echoing it. In addition to *Azan*, they are also still reciting prayers and *tawasulan*, so the COVID-19 outbreak can quickly pass. The four points are in the west of Jalan Tuparev (in front of the North West Police), the south of Jalan Raya Penggung, the east of the Mundu Border Monument and the northern city of Cirebon, to be precise at the Kesenden Bend between Jalan Diponegoro and Jalan Samadikun.

Jumhur (Chief of the Kasepuhan Palace and the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa) said that the *Azan Pitu* was a tradition since the Sunan Gunung Djati era, which was carried out to ward off *misfortune*, disease outbreaks, witchcraft and others (Pers. comm., 09 April 2020). He said further:

We echo *Azan Pitu* because we know there is a corona outbreak. In the past, *Azan Pitu* was also used to reject the plague, witchcraft, and others. Previously, there was an outbreak of smallpox and others.



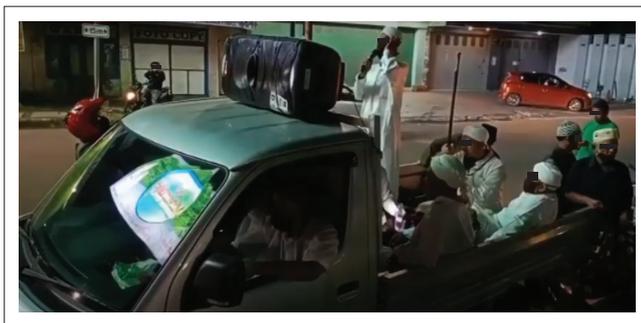
Source: Ina Koran Documentation 2021

FIGURE 2: Muezzins in Azan Pitu echoed Azan.



Source: Ina Koran Documentation 2021

FIGURE 3: Azan Pitu by going around the city.



Source: Ina Koran Documentation 2021

FIGURE 4: Azan Pitu by travelling around the city using a pick-up car.

## Azan Pitu as The Pacification of Plagues rituals

Studies on rituals are strongly related to the findings of Victor Turner. According to Turner (1973), ritual is a sequence of activities involving gestures, words and objects in an isolated place designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actor's goals and interests. There are seasonal

rituals. It can be in the form of sanctifying culturally determined moments of change in the climate cycle, moving from winter to summer pastures or opening up activities such as planting and harvesting. It may also be contingent on responding to an individual or collective crisis. Rituals can further be subdivided into life crisis rituals and suffering rituals. Life crisis rituals are performed to limit the passage from one phase to another in an individual's life cycle, such as at birth, puberty, marriage, death and so on, while suffering rituals are performed to appease or drive beings or supernatural powers away that are believed to have left the villagers with illness, bad luck, gynecological problems, severe physical injuries, etc. (Turner 1973).

Based on the results of observations and the objectives of the ritual, the *Azan Pitu* ritual is included in the category of suffering ritual (*Rituals of Affliction*). As a suffering ritual, it is carried out to heal the community from the damage caused by physical suffering, such as illness, or social suffering, such as immoral behaviour from some parts of society. Because of its history, a spiritual force is considered disruptive to community activities, namely, *Menjangan Wulung*. Suffering rituals try to deal with the plague. In Turner's perspective, the suffering ritual not only aims at getting rid of the plague but also aims at reforming the immoral behaviour of a person or part of society. In other words, the task of the religious leaders during this ritual was more than simply driving out the plague. They must also atone for the immoral behaviour of the community and convince the 'Supreme Power' to cancel the punishment society deserves.

However, the *Azan Pitu* ritual differs from most suffering rituals in a fundamental respect. It seems unrelated to the goal of moral reform. Victor Turner has always insisted that any study of rites of suffering explores the relationship between these rituals and actual social drama (Turner 1985:12–13). In the case of the *Azan Pitu* ritual, it was detached from the social drama. It is because of decontextualisation and recontextualisation discourse (also known as decay and re-centring). Based on this theory, decontextualisation and contextualisation are two components of a process that includes releasing discourse or text from one situational context and relocating it to another. Performances like drama, ritual and drama ritual have a significant potential for decontextualisation and recontextualisation because of their highly reflexive nature. Therefore, such texts go through a transformational process and may change their form, function and meaning (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Katz 1995).

Even though the *Azan Pitu* ritual is now not explicitly linked to social drama, it does not mean that the ritual of driving out COVID-19 is entirely independent of such a thing. For example, the activity '*Doa Bersama dan Pertaubatan Global Bersatu Melawan Corona* or Joint Prayers and Repentance Global Unite against Corona' was held along with *Azan Pitu* on 09 April 2020, organised by the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (Figure 5). This activity was published via the YouTube NU Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSrEyeaCW4>) to prevent the



Source: <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/doa-para-kiai-nu-bawa-spirit-di-tengah-pandemi-covid-19-hDoel>

FIGURE 5: Joint prayers to ward off coronavirus.

spread of the virus. Robikin Emhas, Chairman of the Tanfidziyah PBNU Board, said:

As part of our inner efforts, PBNU invites all Muslims in general and NU citizens worldwide to carry out joint prayers and global repentance. Asking Allah SWT's forgiveness and help, the coronavirus pandemic may be kicked out of the world.

In the belief of the people, the arrival of disasters, not only natural disasters but also social disasters, is related to the social order, which is closely related to the level of social obedience either by the authorities or by the people. The occurrence of the plague is a solid warning to a country, either its government or its people, to maintain social order and obedience (Hendro 2020). In some communities, the plague is also seen as an act of God's anger (Zaluchu 2020). Therefore, special rituals are needed, such as the Cirebon people do through the *Azan Pitu* ritual.

## The function of *Azan Pitu* ritual

Based on the functional analysis perspective, a tradition or ritual has a cultural function if it can persist for a long time and continue to exist in society. Redcliffe-Brown (1952) stated that in the figure of structural functionalism, culture is formed and developed as a manifestation of diverse biological, social and psychological fundamental needs grouped. For Brown, the purpose of culture is to meet these needs. As a shared property, culture possesses characteristics. Common denominators allow individual actions to be comprehended collectively and share ideals and norms of social conduct (Syam 2007:31). Regarding the cultural function, Bronislaw Malinowski emphasised that all cultural activities are designed to meet all the human's organic (psycho-biological) needs throughout their existence

(Malinowski 1939). Malinowski was more interested in the psycho-biological reality of the individual within a society than Brown, who was observing social structures (culture).

Jumhur (Chief of the Kasepuhan Palace and the Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa) stated that the *Azan Pitu* was a tradition since the Sunan Gunung Djati era, which was carried out to ward off plagues, disease outbreaks, witchcraft and others (pers. comm, 09 April 2020). This tradition still exists among the Cirebon people up today. Therefore, the *Azan Pitu* ritual can last a long time because of its functions. What are the functions of *Azan Pitu* ritual?

On Malinowski's theory, the ways to observe the functions of the *Azan Pitu* ritual are as follows:

The first is observing the use of the *Azan Pitu* ritual to meet the psycho-biological needs of individual members of a society (Malinowski 1939). Malinowski claimed that there are seven minimum criteria to meet individual psycho-biological needs: nutrition, reproduction, bodily comforts, safety, relaxation, movement and growth (Malinowski 1939). Based on the observations and the discussion above, two functions of the *Azan Pitu* ritual in accomplishing the minimum requirements for individual psycho-biological needs, and they are as follows:

- The *Azan Pitu* ritual is used to meet the safety needs of individual members of society. As discussed above, based on Turner's theory, the *Azan Pitu* ritual is categorised as a suffering ritual (Turner 1973). It is carried out to save the community from the damage caused by physical suffering such as illness from disease outbreaks, witchcraft and plagues, in this case, the COVID-19.
- The *Azan Pitu* ritual is used to meet the relaxation needs of individual members of society psychologically. The Cirebon people believed that all disease outbreaks and plagues were God's creatures. By performing *Azan Pitu* ritual, they feel a sense of submission and surrender to God, the supreme being. It helps psychologically to reduce the anxiety of the member of the *Azan Pitu* ritual and to fulfil their relaxed feeling. According to Rook, rituals have a psychological function, helping to reduce the anxiety level of many people (Rook 1985).

The second is observing the use of the *Azan Pitu* ritual to maintain the continuity of their social group. Based on the observations and the discussion above, two functions of its ritual institution in maintaining the continuity of their social group are as follows:

- Regarding maintaining social order and obedience for the continuity of social group, in Turner's perspective, the suffering ritual not only aims at getting rid of the plague but also aims at reforming the immoral behaviour of a person or part of society. In other words, the task of the religious leaders during this ritual was more than simply driving out the plague. They must also atone for the immoral behaviour of the community and convince the

'Supreme Power' to cancel the punishment society deserves (Turner 1985:12–13).

- As a social adhesive and binder for its member of society, through a shared system of beliefs, ideas and normative patterns, the essence of the *Azan Pitu* ritual will strengthen social solidarity and become the symbol of unity of their social groups. Collective consciousness, according to Durkheim, is the entire belief and shared emotions of the average person in a society, which will create a fixed system with its own life (Durkheim 1893).

Therefore, in the perspective of Malinowski's functional analysis, the *Azan Pitu* ritual has four functions, namely:

- To meet the safety needs of individual members of society.
- To fulfil the relaxation needs of individual members of a society psychologically.
- To maintain social order and obedience for the continuity of their social group.
- To be a social adhesive and binder for its member of society.

## Conclusion

Based on the discussion, the *Azan Pitu* ritual has been carried out long since Sunan Gunung Djati was still alive. In the early days, the *Azan Pitu* ritual was performed as a ritual to overcome the plague of *wulung* that hit Cirebon. The source of this information cannot be traced because it comes from an oral tradition. However, a memory collective indicates that the event has happened in the past. In fact, the *Azan Pitu* is still echoed today at the Sang Cipta Rasa Grand Mosque by seven muezzins passed down from generation to generation.

The *Azan Pitu* ritual is included in the category of suffering rituals (*Rituals of Affliction*). The suffering ritual has two purposes. Firstly, it aims to heal the community from physical and social damage. Secondly, it seeks to reform the immoral behaviour of a person or part of society. The first function is felt in the *Azan Pitu* ritual. But the second function is not explicitly seen. This second function appears in other activities that are also trusted by the community, namely, in collective prayer and global repentance held by NU. These changes are most likely because of decontextualisation and recontextualisation of discourse.

*Azan Pitu* ritual, in the perspective of functional analysis, can last a long time and still exists in society today because it has several functions, namely:

- To meet the safety needs of individual members of society. The community carried out this tradition to save them from the damage caused by physical suffering such as illness from plagues or the COVID-19.
- To psychologically fulfil the relaxation needs of individual members of society. It helps to reduce the anxiety of the *Azan Pitu* ritual members and fulfil their relaxed feelings.
- To maintain social order and obedience.
- To be a social adhesive and binder for its member of society. A collective consciousness structured by a belief

system, concepts and normative patterns shared in the essence of the *Azan Pitu* ritual will strengthen social solidarity.

## Recommendation

There is a need for additional research, specifically in philological studies concerning the palace's numerous unstudied manuscripts, particularly those that reveal the origin and history of the *Azan Pitu* ritual.

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## Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

## Authors' contributions

All the authors contributed equally to this article.

## Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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