

THE SPATIALIZATION OF SAINTLY MEMORY: BARAKAH AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF HAWL RITUAL IN RURAL MADURA

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Abstract: This article examines the transformation of *hawl* rituals in rural Madura through an ethnographic study of the *hawl* of Pujhu' Karang in Aeng Reksa Village, Lembana District, Sumenep Regency. It responds to studies that frame *hawl* mainly as a ritual formation of genealogical and hagiographic memory around saints or sacred lineages. Drawing on participant observation, semi-structured interviews with religious figures, committee members, and local residents, as well as documentation of the 2025 *hawl*, this article argues that the memory of Pujhu' Karang is sustained not through *manāqib*, genealogy, or extended biography, but through grave space, *congkop*, local naming, *tablil*, *salawat*, preaching, and the pursuit of *barakah*. The *hawl* thus shifts from genealogical remembrance to a communal-spatial ritual. This finding shows that local sainthood can be produced through place, ritual repetition, communal participation, and village religious identity, even when historical knowledge of the commemorated figure remains fragmentary, unstable, and orally transmitted.

Keywords: *Hawl*; *Barakah*; Spatial Memory; Pujhu'; Madura.

Introduction

Ḥawl occupies an important place in Indonesian local Islam. It is commonly understood as an annual commemoration of the death of a saint, a *keiai*, or a pious person, yet in practice it does not stop at remembrance alone. Through *ḥawl*, a community maintains its relationship with a deceased figure who is believed to have enjoyed a particular spiritual proximity to God.¹ *Tablīl*, prayer, *ṣalamat*, grave visitation, and communal gathering turn *ḥawl* into a space in which the living renew their closeness to the saintly dead. In this context, the grave is no longer merely a burial site. It becomes a sacred space, continually shaped through visitation, local narratives, ritual repetition, and communal involvement.² From this perspective, *ḥawl* may be understood as a religious practice that brings together memory, space, saintly authority, and the hope for *barakah* in Indonesian Muslim life.³

A number of studies on *ḥawl* and saintly visitation in Indonesia have shown that rituals surrounding the graves of holy persons never stand as simple, isolated events.⁴ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, for instance, reads *ḥawl* as a ritual formation of collective memory, especially in relation to the authority of the *Sādah*, hagiography, and saintly genealogy. In this reading, *ḥawl* works by bringing back the stories of sacred ancestors, reciting their hagiographies, and affirming the authority of descendants connected to those figures.⁵ Studies of pilgrimage also show that visiting the graves of saints is not simply a matter of moving toward a sacred place. It involves spiritual motivation, spatial experience, symbolic interpretation, and the pur-

¹ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "The Upsurge of Memory in the Case of Ḥawl: A Problem of Islamic Historiography in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 1, no. 2 (2007): 267-69.

² Siti Azizah, Karnaji, and Bagong Suyanto, "The Production of Religious Space: Lived Space and the Sacred-Economic Dialectic in the Sunan Ampel Pilgrimage Area, Surabaya," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 20, no. 2 (2026): 160-63; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 33-46.

³ Tanti Handriana, Praptini Yulianti, and Masmira Kurniawati, "Exploration of Pilgrimage Tourism in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 11, no. 3 (2020): 783-95.

⁴ Anwar Masduki, "Ziarah Wali di Indonesia dalam Perspektif Pilgrimage Studies," *Religiō: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 5, no. 2 (2015): 167-73.

⁵ Alatas, "The Upsurge of Memory," 267-70.

suit of *barakah*.⁶ Jamhari even demonstrates that *barakah* is a central concept in pilgrimage practice, although pilgrims do not always understand it in the same way.⁷ On this basis, *ḥawl* may be understood as a practice situated at the intersection of saintly memory, sacred space, and blessing.⁸

Yet the emphasis on hagiography and genealogy also leaves a space that has not been sufficiently explored. In several studies, *ḥawl* appears primarily as a ritual that works through relatively established memory: there is a sacred figure whose life is remembered, a lineage that is preserved, *manāqib* that are recited, and descendant authority that derives legitimacy from its connection to the commemorated figure.⁹ This pattern is important, but it is not always adequate for reading local practices of *ḥawl*. In many places, the memory of a saint does not always appear as a complete narrative. Sometimes it survives only in a name, a short story, a grave marker, or the belief that the figure was a pious person endowed with *karamah*. It is precisely at this point that the problem becomes interesting: how does a *ḥawl* continue to take place, and even become a major event, when the hagiographic memory of the commemorated figure is not fully formed? Such a question opens the possibility of reading *ḥawl* not only as a celebration of lineage and *manāqib*, but also as a practice that transfers saintly memory into space, objects, and repeated ritual.

This article begins from that problem by examining the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang in Aeng Reksa Village, Lembana District, Sumenep Regency, Madura. In the local community, *Pujhu'* refers to a saint, *kiai*, or pious person who has passed away and come to be venerated. *Pujhu'* Karang is honored as a local sacred figure, yet communal knowledge about his life does not take the form of a complete *manāqib*. No genealogy is recited during the *ḥawl*, and the people liv-

⁶ Masduki, "Ziarah Wali di Indonesia," 168-73.

⁷ Jamhari, "The Meaning Interpreted: The Concept of Barakah in Ziarah," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (2001): 91-93.

⁸ Jamal Mirdad, Helmina, and Iiril Admizal, "Tradisi Ziarah Kubur: Motif dan Aktivitas Penziarah di Makam yang Dikeramatkan," *Khaṣanah: Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2022): 65-80.

⁹ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "The Upsurge of Memory in the Case of Ḥawl: A Problem of Islamic Historiography in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 1, no. 2 (2007): 267-70; Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Pilgrimage and Network Formation in Two Contemporary Bā 'Alawī Ḥawl in Central Java," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 3 (2014): 298-304.

ing around the grave are not direct descendants of the figure being commemorated. Even so, the *hawl* is still held every year, prepared well in advance, and involves committees, *kiai*, *salawat* groups, residents, traders, and support from the village government. Based on ethnographic research conducted in 2025 through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, this article asks: how is the *hawl* of *Pujbu'* Karang in rural Madura produced and understood as a communal-spatial ritual of *barakah* amid the limited hagiographic memory of the *Pujbu'*?

This question is answered through the argument that the *hawl* of *Pujbu'* Karang reveals a process of spatializing saintly memory. The memory of *Pujbu'* Karang is not primarily maintained through *manāqib*, genealogy, or a complete biographical narrative, but through name, grave, *congkep*, and the repeated performance of the annual *hawl*. The name “Pandih” preserves a fragment of local memory about the *Pujbu'*s expertise, while the grave and the *congkep* give material form to his sacredness. The annual *hawl* then renews the community's relationship with this figure through *tablil*, *salawat*, preaching, prayer, food distribution, and the pursuit of *barakah*. Thus, this article shows that the transformation of *hawl* in rural Madura should not be understood as the disappearance of saintly memory, but as a shift in the medium of memory: from hagiography to space, from genealogy to community, and from narratives of the past to ritual practices that are continually repeated.¹⁰

To protect individual informants and the village community from possible social exposure, all personal names, village names, and ritual group names have been replaced with pseudonyms, while other locally identifying details have been anonymized. Broader regional markers are retained only insofar as they are necessary for situating the ethnographic case within the religious and cultural landscape of Madura.

***Hawl*, Hagiography, and the Problem of Saintly Memory**

In the study of Indonesian Islam, *hawl* is usually placed close to the tradition of saintly visitation. Both revolve around graves, pray-

¹⁰ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7-24; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 33-46.

ers, and reverence for figures believed to possess a particular spiritual standing. Yet *ḥawl* carries a slightly different emphasis. If grave visitation can be performed at any time, *ḥawl* binds that act of remembrance to a particular moment: the death anniversary of a saint, a *kiai*, or a pious person, commemorated again and again each year. For this reason, *ḥawl* does more than gather people around a grave. It also organizes the community's social time, marks the local religious calendar, and brings the deceased figure back into communal life. In such a practice, the grave is a destination, but not the only center of meaning. Equally important are the journey to the grave, the prayers recited together, the presence of *kiai*, the food distributed to participants, and the belief that taking part in the ritual may open a path toward *barakah*.¹¹

Ismail Fajrie Alatas's reading of *ḥawl* offers an important starting point for understanding the relationship between ritual, memory, and saintly authority. In his study of the proliferation of *ḥawl* in Indonesia, Alatas shows that *ḥawl* works as a ritual formation of collective memory. The memory of a holy person is not left as a private recollection or a family story alone; it is called back, voiced, and celebrated before a public audience. In Ba 'Alawi *ḥawl*, this process unfolds through the recitation of hagiography, poems of praise, prayers, and the affirmation of genealogical ties to sacred ancestors. In this way, *ḥawl* does not merely commemorate the death of a saint. It also confirms the social and religious standing of the group that links itself to that saint.¹² In another work, Alatas even reads *ḥawl* as a medium of network formation. Through annual gatherings, *habib*, local *kiai*, students, and congregants are drawn into a shared ritual

¹¹ Anwar Masduki, "Ziarah Wali di Indonesia dalam Perspektif Pilgrimage Studies," *Religió: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 5, no. 2 (2015): 168-73; Jamhari, "The Meaning Interpreted: The Concept of Barakah in Ziarah," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (2001): 91-93; Asep Saefullah and Indrawan Cahyadi, "Pilgrimage Tradition at the Tomb of Kyai Ageng Muhammad Besari Tegalsari, Ponorogo: Religious Tourism and Strengthening National Identity," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 1 (2023): 215-58.

¹² Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "The Upsurge of Memory in the Case of Ḥawl: A Problem of Islamic Historiography in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 1, no. 2 (2007): 267-70.

field that extends Ba ‘Alawi authority into the Indonesian Muslim public sphere.¹³

This hagiographic-genealogical model is important, but it is not always sufficient. It works well when a saintly figure has an established life history, a preserved genealogy, *manāqib* that are recited, and descendants or disciples who actively maintain the continuity of his authority. The problem is that not every *ḥawl* takes place under such conditions. In the case of *Pujhu’ Karang*, for instance, the memory of the *Pujhu’* is not organized as a complete life story. No *manāqib* is recited during the *ḥawl*, no genealogy is announced, and the community around the grave is not directly descended from the figure being commemorated. Yet the *ḥawl* continues. More than that, it is maintained as an important annual event. It is here that the problem of saintly memory emerges: how is a saint remembered when the hagiographic apparatus that usually sustains such memory is absent? This question matters because it shows that saintly memory does not always move through orderly narrative. It can survive in smaller, more dispersed forms: a name, a short story, a distinguished grave, a *congkep* structure, and the belief in *barakah*.

Pierre Nora helps illuminate this shift. In his discussion of *lieux de mémoire*, Nora shows that memory lives not only in mental recollection or historical texts, but also attaches itself to places, objects, symbols, and rites that allow the past to be continually brought into the present.¹⁴ Memory needs a medium. It needs something that can be visited, touched, seen, repeated, and treated in a special way. For this reason, the grave of a saint cannot be understood merely as a physical location. It can become a site of memory, especially when people continue to visit it, name it, build around it, and bind it to an annual ritual. Within this framework, spatial memory is not simply memory about place, but memory that works through place. *Pujhu’ Karang* is not primarily present in biographical records, but in a space that is continually maintained: the grave, the *congkep*, the cemetery named after the *Pujhu’*, and the *ḥawl* that brings the community

¹³ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, “Pilgrimage and Network Formation in Two Contemporary Bā ‘Alawī Ḥawl in Central Java,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 3 (2014): 298-304.

¹⁴ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7-24.

back to that location each year. Put differently, when hagiography weakens, space can assume part of the work of memory.¹⁵

A framework of memory, however, is not enough to explain *ḥawl* in its fullness. People do not come to the grave simply to remember *Pujhu'* Karang as a figure from the past. They also come to seek *barakah*.¹⁶ In practices of visitation and reverence toward saints, *barakah* becomes a religious language that connects prayer, spiritual proximity, the grave, and the hopes of everyday life.¹⁷ It is not always explained systematically, yet it appears in the way people understand the benefits of ritual: serenity, safety, ease in livelihood, protection, or simply the conviction that praying for a pious person will return goodness to the one who prays. For this reason, this article does not read the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang merely as a practice of remembering a saint, but as the spatialization of saintly memory grounded in *barakah*. The memory of the *Pujhu'* is attached to space, but that space becomes alive because it is believed to hold the possibility of blessing. At this point, the grave, the *congkep*, *tablil*, *ṣalawat*, preaching, and the presence of the community do not stand apart from one another. They work together as ways through which people sustain their relationship with the saint, care for sacred space, and renew the hope for *barakah* in the form of an annual ritual.¹⁸

***Pujhu'* and the Production of Sacred Space**

In Madurese society, *Pujhu'* refers to a figure who is no longer treated as an ordinary deceased person. Such a figure is usually understood as a saint, a *kiai*, or a pious person who, after death, re-

¹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37-40; Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17-44; Nora, "Between Memory and History," 18-24.

¹⁶ Husaini Husda, "Ziarah Tourism at the Site of Habib Muda Seunagan's Descendants' Tomb," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic History and Culture* 2, no. 1 (2021): 73-101

¹⁷ Jamhari, "The Meaning Interpreted: The Concept of Barakah in Ziarah," *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 1 (2001): 91-93.

¹⁸ Amrih Widodo, "The Stages of the State: Arts of the People and Rites of Hegemonization," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 29, no. 1-2 (1995): 1-35; Julian Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), 18-22.

ceives special reverence from the community. The grave is visited, prayed for, and often becomes a point of religious orientation within the surrounding cemetery. In some cases, the sacredness of such a grave does not necessarily begin with a stable written history. It may grow out of family stories, dreams, oral memory, a reputation for piety, or gradual recognition by the surrounding community.¹⁹ For this reason, *Pujbu'* is better understood as a local category of sainthood: a Madurese way of marking that someone, after death, continues to hold a spiritual place in the lives of the living.²⁰

Pujbu' Karang occupies such a position in Aeng Reksa Village. He is revered as a local sacred figure, yet communal knowledge about him is not organized into a complete life history. Informants describe him as a pious person or a saint, but they do not narrate his life through the extended form in which a saint's *manaqib* is usually recited. No genealogy is announced during the *ḥawl*, and the residents around the grave do not identify themselves as direct descendants of *Pujbu'* Karang. This limitation, however, has not weakened his standing. On the contrary, the community continues to care for his grave, names the cemetery area after him, and holds the *ḥawl* every year. In other words, the sainthood of *Pujbu'* Karang is not primarily sustained by a complete biographical account, but by a local recognition that is repeatedly enacted through space and ritual.²¹

The absence of *manaqib* and genealogy in the *ḥawl* of *Pujbu'* Karang is a crucial point for understanding how saintly memory works in Aeng Reksa. In many saintly commemorations, *manaqib* functions as a narrative device that brings the life of the holy person back into the present: his origins, teachers, *karamah*, descendants, and traces of piety. Genealogy, too, often provides a basis for ritual authority, especially when the family or descendants of the saint are the ones who maintain the grave and organize the commemoration. In the case of *Pujbu'* Karang, such devices do not appear prominently. The

¹⁹ Glenn Smith, "The Making and Unmaking of Madura's Sacred Tombs," *RIMA: Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 32, no. 2 (1998): 211-49; Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "Dreaming Saints: Exploratory Authority and Islamic Praxes of History in Central Java," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 26, no. 1 (2020): 67-70.

²⁰ Abdul Karim, "Nyai Sabirah's Folklore and Sacred Local Heritage in Central Java," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 1 (2023): 2198629.

²¹ Interview with *Kiai* Mahrus, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Salimah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Munir, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

residents around the grave are not his direct descendants, and his descendants are said to live elsewhere. During the *ḥawl*, what is recited is not the life story of *Pujbu'* Karang, but the *Fātiḥah*, *tablīl*, *ṣalawat*, preaching, and prayer. This gives the *ḥawl* of *Pujbu'* Karang a rather different form: it commemorates a sacred figure, yet says little about that figure's past in narrative terms. Sainly memory here does not move from text to congregation, but from place to congregation; from the grave, the *congkop*, and communal belief toward a ritual repeated every year.²²

Yet the limited hagiographic narrative does not mean that *Pujbu'* Karang stands outside communal memory. One of the most important fragments is preserved precisely in his name. According to *Kiai* Mahrus, the term “Pandih” is not understood merely as a personal name, but is connected to the figure's expertise. In Madurese, *pandih* refers to a person skilled in tempering or making *keris*.²³ This information may seem small, but analytically it matters. It shows that the memory of *Pujbu'* Karang does not appear as an extended biography, but as a dense sign: a name that carries memory of skill, reputation, and a certain distinction. The name works like a local archive. It does not explain the whole life of *Pujbu'* Karang, but it is enough to distinguish him from the other people buried around him. Through that name, the community recognizes the grave, refers to the cemetery area, and connects the figure to sacred status. Thus, the memory of *Pujbu'* Karang has not disappeared; it settles into the name, and is then reinforced by place and ritual.²⁴

The difference between *Pujbu'* Karang and ordinary graves is most visible in the way the grave is treated and given a place. The grave of a *Pujbu'* is not left to merge entirely with the rows of common graves around it. It is adorned, marked, and placed within a special structure known in Madurese society as a *congkop*. This structure gives the grave of *Pujbu'* Karang a clear boundary: there is a space sheltering the grave, a place where people can sit, recite the Qur'an, perform *tablīl*, and pray. A Qur'an shelf is also available inside, showing that the *congkop* functions not only as a protective

²² Interview with *Kiai* Mahrus, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Naufal, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

²³ Interview with *Kiai* Mahrus, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

²⁴ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 18-24.

structure for the grave, but also as a small devotional space attached to it. Its facilities, however, are not complete. There is no ablution area or toilet at the *congkop* of *Pujhu'* Karang. Those who wish to purify themselves must walk to the nearest mosque, located around 500 meters from the grave. This limitation is revealing. It shows that the sacredness of the *congkop* does not depend on the completeness of its facilities. Rather, it rests on spatial differentiation: the grave of the *Pujhu'* is separated, roofed, cared for, and made into a place to which the prayers of the community continually return.²⁵



Figure 1. The grave and *congkop* of *Pujhu'* Karang. Source: Author's field documentation, 2025.

The production of sacred space also appears in the way the community names the cemetery area. In Aeng Reksa, cemeteries are not commonly referred to by a general name such as “Islamic cemetery,” but by the name of the *Pujhu'* buried there. The name of the *Pujhu'* becomes a marker of place. People do not simply go to a graveyard complex; they go to the grave of *Pujhu'* Karang, or to the

²⁵ Participant observation by the author at the grave and *congkop* complex of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa Village, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Mahrus, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; Agus Subaqin, Antariksa, Lisa Dwi Wulandari, and Herry Santoso, “Patterns of Sacred Spaces in the Settlement with Religious Plurality: Balun Village, Lamongan,” *Journal of Islamic Architecture* 7, no. 3 (2023): 391-402.

cemetery recognized through that sacred figure. Such naming allows saintly memory to work in everyday life. It appears when residents give directions, explain a location, bury a family member, perform visitation, or gather for the annual *ḥawl*. In this sense, name, grave, *congkop*, and cemetery area form a single chain of spatial memory. *Pujhu'* Karang is not primarily remembered through a lengthy text recited aloud, but through a place that is continually named, visited, cared for, and ritualized. Space becomes an archive; and every year, *ḥawl* opens that archive again before the community.²⁶

***Ḥawl* as a Ritual of *Barakah* and a Communal Event**

The *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang does not appear as an event prepared at the last minute. It is an annual agenda discussed well in advance; in some accounts, preparations may even begin to be considered a year earlier. The earliest conversations usually concern matters that seem technical, yet in fact shape the social form of the *ḥawl* itself: the date of the event, the *kiai* to be invited as preacher, the *ṣalawat* group to perform before the main program, the structure of the committee, the division of tasks, and the sources of funding. In this way, *ḥawl* becomes a ritual with a clear calendar, structure, and social mechanism. It is not merely a moment of prayer at a grave, but an event that from the beginning requires coordination among many parties. Every decision—who will preach, when the event will be held, where the funding will come from, who will be responsible for food, stage, guests, and sound—helps determine how the *ḥawl* will appear before the community.²⁷

The committee is where this collective labor becomes most visible. Religious figures provide direction, the committee manages the event, residents contribute according to their capacity, and the village administration also lends support. The funding of the *ḥawl* does not rest on a single source. It comes from contributions from local residents, non-binding donors, and assistance from the village gov-

²⁶ Participant observation by the author at the grave complex of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa Village, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Salimah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Munir, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

²⁷ Interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Naufal, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

ernment. Food for guests reflects a similar pattern of mutual cooperation. The boxed rice distributed to attendees is donated by residents, while the committee arranges its distribution, together with bottled water, to every guest who arrives. In this practice, *hawli* not only brings the community into relation with *Pujhu'* Karang as a sacred figure; it also brings residents into relation with one another through shared work. Some give money, some provide rice, some arrange the space, some welcome guests, and others make sure the event runs in an orderly manner. The *barakah* sought through *hawli*, therefore, is not imagined only as something received after prayer. It is also built through almsgiving, labor, and the social involvement of the community.²⁸

As the event approaches, the space around the grave gradually turns into a ritual arena. Since morning, committee members have already been at the site, laying out mats, arranging the guest reception chairs, checking the stage, inspecting the decorations, and making sure the sound system works. A pathway to the seating area is marked with rope, so that the flow of arriving guests can be directed more easily. The space for men and women is also separated; in the middle, a cloth screen is installed as both a visual and social boundary. This arrangement shows that the space of *hawli* does not form by itself. It is prepared, divided, and ordered so that the crowd can gather within a particular religious discipline. Outside the main area, the atmosphere is already becoming lively. Residents arrive early, while vendors selling food, snacks, cigarettes, meatballs, ice cream, and fried foods begin to fill the road around the site. Even before the program begins, *hawli* has already transformed the cemetery into a village public space that is dense, religious, and festive.²⁹

Before the main program begins, the *salawat* group Al-Mahabbah performs as a pre-event program to welcome the attendees

²⁸ Author's participant observation during the preparation and implementation of the *hawli*, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with Miftah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; Rohanda, Asep Saefullah, Ahmad Yunani, Wati Solihat Sukmawati, and Usep Abdul Matin, "Optimizing Pilgrimage Traditions and Community Empowerment: Integration of Spirituality, Socio-Economy, and Technology in Pilgrimage Practices," *Buletin Al-Turas* 30, no. 2 (2024): 225-44.

²⁹ Author's participant observation during the preparation of the *hawli* site of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

as they continue to arrive. Guests are received by the committee and given a bottle of mineral water and a box of rice. At 2:00 p.m. Western Indonesian Time, the master of ceremonies takes over the program. After greetings and words of welcome, the order of events is read out in sequence: the opening with the recitation of the *Fātiḥah* led by *Kiai* Mahrus, the committee's address by *Ustadh* Hadi, *tablīl* led by *Kiai* Ahmad Matin, *ṣalawat qiyām* guided by the Al-Mahabbah group, a religious sermon by K.H. Syamsul Hadi, and the closing prayer. This sequence shows that the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang is not made up of a single form of worship. It assembles several religious expressions at once: prayer for a pious person, *tablīl* to connect the congregation with the deceased, *ṣalawat* to cultivate love for the Prophet, preaching to convey religious counsel, and the distribution of food as a form of communal almsgiving. With such a composition, *ḥawl* becomes a meeting point between ritual, preaching, and communal togetherness.³⁰

The presence of K.H. Syamsul Hadi as the main preacher shows that the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang is not directed only toward praying for the *Pujhu'*, but also toward presenting *da'wah* in a broader form. He is known as a popular preacher from Pamekasan, and such popularity matters in the logic of organizing the *ḥawl*. The committee does not simply seek a *kiai* capable of delivering a religious sermon, but also a figure who can attract a large audience. The better known the invited preacher is, the greater the likelihood that people will come, the more lively the event will become, and the wider the religious message can travel. In this sense, the popularity of the *kiai* does not stand outside the ritual. It becomes part of the way *ḥawl* is produced as a public event. Religious preaching places *ḥawl* within the field of *da'wah*, while the crowd drawn by the preacher's reputation strengthens the position of *ḥawl* as a socio-religious agenda of the village.³¹

³⁰ Author's participant observation during the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa Village, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Naufal, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

³¹ Interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Naufal, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; Adib Khairil Musthafa, Oky Bagas Prasetyo, and Amin Maghfuri, "Kiai, Ustadz, and Ghuru Morok: Contestation and Tolerance of Three Religious Authorities in Kangean Island, Madura," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 21, no. 2 (2023): 561-86.



Figure 2. The audience listening to a religious sermon. Source: Author's field documentation, 2025.

The crowd itself needs to be read as part of the ritual, not merely as a side effect. Since morning, the road around the *ḥawl* site begins to fill with vendors: sellers of *cilok*, *bakwan*, snacks, cigarettes, meatballs, ice cream, and fried foods. Vehicles have to move slowly, especially cars, because the flow of people and buying-and-selling activities make the road congested. When the event ends, the density becomes even more visible; the congregation disperses almost at the same time, the *kiai* first heads to a resident's house used as a reception place, and the road turns into a traffic jam. The effort to seek the help of a rain handler so that the weather remains clear also shows that the festivity of *ḥawl* is not simply left to chance. Good weather is needed so that more people can attend, vendors can sell,

and the event can proceed without disruption. Thus, the crowd, vendors, favorable weather, and road congestion form part of the ritual economy of *ḥawl*.³² A *ḥawl* is considered successful not only when the order of events is completed, but when it is able to bring people together, mobilize residents, and turn the grave space into the temporary center of village festivity.³³

In the end, the whole sequence rests on one central meaning: the pursuit of *barakah*. People attend the *ḥawl* because they believe that praying for *Pujhu'* Karang, as a venerated pious person, will bring a reflected blessing to those present. Yet *barakah* in this *ḥawl* does not appear as a wholly individual experience. It is built through shared work: residents donate rice, the committee organizes the event, *kiai* lead prayers, the *ṣalawat* group shapes the religious atmosphere, vendors enliven the crowd, and the village government offers support. In this sense, the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang becomes an event that binds the spiritual and the social at once. It directs the community toward the *Pujhu'*, but at the same time connects residents to one another through almsgiving, committee work, *da'wah*, and annual festivity. The support of the village government adds another layer of meaning. In Aeng Reksa, known by the slogan “the land of the saints,” *ḥawl* is not merely a ritual at one grave, but part of the way the village displays its religious identity. *Barakah*, solidarity, and village identity meet in the same event.³⁴

From Hagiography to the Spatialization of Memory: The Transformation of *Ḥawl*

The absence of *manāqib* in the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang cannot be read as the absence of memory. It is true that the community does

³² Mukhlis Anton Nugroho, Bambang Sunarto, and Budi Setiyono, “From Da'wah to Spectacle: Negotiating Sacred Space and Ritual Meaning in the Commodification of Sekaten,” *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 10, no. 2 (2025): 217-36.

³³ Author's participant observation during the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; interview with Miftah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025.

³⁴ Interview with *Kiai* Salimah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Munir, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; Author's participant observation during the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025.

not recite an extended account of his life, does not mention his genealogy, and does not place his descendants at the center of ritual organization. Yet *Pujhu'* Karang is still remembered. That memory appears in more dispersed forms: in the name "Pandih," which refers to his expertise; in the grave that is distinguished from ordinary village graves; in the *congklop* that shelters it; and in the annual *ḥawl* that keeps bringing residents back to that place. Sainly memory here, therefore, does not work as a complete narrative transmitted from text to congregation. It works through local signs that continue to be used, spoken, visited, and ritualized. The absence of hagiography, in fact, reveals another form of communal remembrance: not memory arranged as a life story, but memory attached to name, space, and repetition.³⁵

This shift is what distinguishes the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang from the genealogical-hagiographic model of *ḥawl*. In the model discussed by Alatas, *ḥawl* works by reviving the memory of sacred ancestors through hagiography, poems of praise, and genealogical ties that affirm the authority of descendants.³⁶ In the case of *Pujhu'* Karang, the emphasis moves elsewhere. What stands at the center is not a recited life history, but a cared-for place; not an announced lineage, but a grave and a *congklop* that continue to mark sacredness. It is here that the concept of the *spatialization of saintly memory* gains its meaning. Sainly memory does not disappear when biographical narrative weakens. It changes medium. It becomes spatial when the grave, the structure, the name of the cemetery, the pathways through which visitors arrive, and the annual *ḥawl* take on the role of bringing the *Pujhu'* back into communal life. Put differently, *Pujhu'* Karang is remembered not primarily because his life story continues to be told,

³⁵ Interview with *Kiai* Mahrus, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; Author's participant observation in the grave and *congklop* area of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025; Wiwik Setiyani, Nurhairunnisa, and Holilah, "Epistemology of Pundhen Telaga Sarangan: A Study of Sacred Rites as Cultural Identity in Magetan, Indonesia," *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 9, no. 1 (2024): 23-36.

³⁶ Ismail Fajrie Alatas, "The Upsurge of Memory in the Case of *Ḥawl*: A Problem of Islamic Historiography in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 1, no. 2 (2007): 267-70.

but because his place continues to be visited, arranged, and animated through ritual.³⁷

A further transformation appears in the social basis of the *ḥawl*'s organization. In many models of saintly commemoration, the descendants or close family of the commemorated figure occupy an important position as grave custodians, inheritors of authority, or genealogical links between the congregation and the saint. In the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang, that pattern is not central. The people living around the grave are not direct descendants of *Pujhu'* Karang, while his descendants are said to live outside the village and do not act as the main organizers of the ritual. What moves the *ḥawl*, instead, is the local community: the committee, local *kiai*, nearby residents, the *ṣalawat* group, donors, and the village government. This shift matters because it shows that the authority of the *ḥawl* does not rest on blood descent, but on the community's attachment to place. They feel responsible not because of a genealogical relation to *Pujhu'* Karang, but because the grave belongs to their social and religious landscape. Here, the community takes over work that, in other models, is often carried out by the saint's family or descendants: caring for the grave, organizing the commemoration, inviting *kiai*, collecting funds, preparing food, and ensuring that the *ḥawl* continues each year. In this way, the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang reveals a transformation from genealogical authority to communal authority, formed through spatial proximity, ritual habit, and a shared belief in the sacredness of the *Pujhu'*.³⁸

This shift in social basis goes hand in hand with an expansion of the *ḥawl*'s function. The *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang certainly remains a prayer for a pious person who has passed away, but it does not stop as a hagiographic commemoration. What the community seeks is not primarily knowledge of *Pujhu'* Karang's life history, but *barakah* believed to flow through prayer for a saint. For this reason, *tahlil*,

³⁷ Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 18-24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520>; Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 17-44.

³⁸ Interview with *Kiai* Salimah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Kiai* Munir, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; participant observation by the author during the preparation and performance of the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025.

ṣalawat, and prayer form the core of the ritual, while religious preaching expands the *ḥawl* into a space of public *da'wah*. The presence of K.H. Syamsul Hadi as a popular preacher makes this logic clear. A well-known preacher helps gather a crowd; the crowd makes the *ḥawl* feel alive; and that liveliness creates a space through which *da'wah* can reach more people. At the same time, the distribution of rice, committee work, residents' donations, and village support turn the *ḥawl* into an event of solidarity. It connects the congregation to *Pujhu'* Karang, but it also connects residents to one another. The transformation of *ḥawl*, then, should not be understood as a movement from the sacred to the profane, or from ritual to mere festivity. What takes place is subtler: the pursuit of *barakah*, *da'wah*, shared consumption, the small economy of vendors, and village identity converge within a single religious event. The *ḥawl* remains sacred, but its sacredness works through a broad communal form.³⁹

The *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang therefore broadens how *ḥawl* in local Islam may be understood. It shows that *ḥawl* does not always operate as a ritual of genealogical memory grounded in *manāqib*, lineage, and descendant authority. In this case, *ḥawl* is better read as a communal-spatial ritual: communal because it is animated by residents, committees, local *kiai*, donors, vendors, and the village government; spatial because the sacredness of *Pujhu'* Karang is maintained through the grave, the *congklop*, the naming of the cemetery, and the repeated performance of the annual ritual in the same place. The theoretical contribution of this article lies in that reading. The spatialization of saintly memory explains how a *Pujhu'* remains present in communal life even when his hagiographic narrative is limited. Memory of him does not disappear. It assumes another form: a name that is spoken, a grave that is visited, a space that is cared for, a *ḥawl* that is repeated, *barakah* that is sought, and a village identity that is continually affirmed.

³⁹ Interview with *Ustadh* Hadi, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with *Ustadh* Naufal, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; interview with Miftah, Aeng Reksa, Sumenep, 2025; Author's participant observation during the *ḥawl* of *Pujhu'* Karang, Aeng Reksa, Lembana, Sumenep, 2025.

Conclusion

The *ḥawl* of *Pujbu'* Karang shows that *ḥawl* rituals in local Islam do not always rest on hagiography, genealogy, or the direct involvement of a saint's descendants. In Aeng Reksa, the community does not possess a complete *manāqib* of *Pujbu'* Karang, and the *ḥawl* is not filled with the recitation of the *Pujbu'*'s life history. Yet this absence does not cause saintly memory to disappear. The memory of *Pujbu'* Karang continues to endure through the name "Pandih," the grave that is distinguished from ordinary graves, the *congklop* that shelters it, the naming of the cemetery area, and the annual *ḥawl* that keeps bringing the community back to that space. In other words, *Pujbu'* Karang is not remembered primarily through a long narrative about his past, but through a place that is continually named, visited, cared for, and ritualized.

This finding points to a transformation of *ḥawl* from a ritual of genealogical memory into a communal-spatial ritual grounded in *barakah*. The *ḥawl* of *Pujbu'* Karang is animated not by descendant authority, but by the local community: committees, *keiai*, residents, donors, vendors, and the support of the village government. Within it, *tablil*, *salawat*, preaching, prayer, food almsgiving, festivity, and the pursuit of *barakah* come together. *Ḥawl* becomes not only a way of praying for a *Pujbu'*, but also a medium of *da'wah*, social solidarity, the production of sacred space, and the affirmation of Aeng Reksa's identity as "the land of the saints." By reading *ḥawl* as the spatialization of saintly memory, this article argues that the sacredness of a local saint can remain alive even when hagiographic memory is limited, so long as the community continues to care for the space, repeat the ritual, and believe in the *barakah* that flows from its relationship with the *pujbu'*.

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