MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN : 0854-5138 || E-ISSN 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

Remembered but Marginalized: Collective Memory in the Majalengka Folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih

Rafi Raihan Nafis[1*], Endi Aulia Garadian[2], and Nurul Aini[3]

[1,3]English Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia
[2]Department of History, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Northern Illinois University, USA

Open Access
Article Type: **Research Paper**

Article Info
Article history:
Received: March 23, 2026
Revised: July 18, 2026
Accepted: September 12, 2026
Published: October 30, 2026

Keywords:
Collective memory; Cultural identity; Folklore; Islamization; Narrative marginalization; Nyi Rambut Kasih

Correspondence Address:
rafi.raihan@uinjkt.ac.id

© Nafis et al. (2026)

This is an open-access article under the CC BY-SA license

ABSTRACT

Folklore serves as a medium through which communities construct collective memory and preserve their identities, yet remembrance is a paradoxical process that involves both remembering and forgetting. This study examines this paradox in the Majalengka *sasakala* folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih, focusing on how the ancestral figure remains culturally significant while the political and religious identity associated with her kingdom becomes marginalized. Employing a qualitative interpretive approach, the study applies narrative analysis informed by Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, examining narrative episodes through four categories: remembrance, selective emphasis, marginalization, and reconstruction. The findings reveal that Nyi Rambut Kasih is continuously remembered as a wise and powerful ruler through oral narratives, cultural symbols, and associated places. However, the narrative of Islamization, represented by the arrival of Pangeran Muhammad from Cirebon and the queen's supernatural disappearance, positions the pre-Islamic tradition of Sindangkasih Kingdom within a past that is symbolically preserved but no longer culturally dominant. This tension shows that collective memory operates through selective reconstruction. The study concludes that remembering Nyi Rambut Kasih does not mean preserving the cultural order she represents; rather, folklore accommodates religious transformation and identity negotiation through simultaneous remembrance and marginalization.

Please cite this article in APA Style as:
Nafis, R. R., Garadian, E. A., & Aini, N. (2026). Remembered but marginalized: Collective memory in the Majalengka folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih. *Mimbar Agama dan Budaya, 43(2)*, 418–435. https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

1. INTRODUCTION

Folklore is not merely a myth about the past; instead, it is a cultural discourse in which communities construct their collective memory and cultural identity (Kato Bukenya, 2025). Through oral cultural expression, social values, collective experiences, and symbolic representation are passed down through generations. As such, folklore becomes a medium of collective remembrance. It allows communities to preserve and transmit cultural memory (Mungmachon, 2012). At the same time, it unites the community under a shared cultural identity (Novianti, 2022; Sims & Stephens, 2011).

The tradition of *cerita sasakala* (the narrative about the origin of a place or thing) in Indonesia, especially in Sundanese tradition, is one of the ways in which communities shape their local identity. Many regions in Indonesia maintain *sasakala* as the legend about the emergence of their community. These narratives often become a foundation for collective memory and regional identity (Karim et al., 2023). As a cultural text, *sasakala* does not simply preserve the past but also reflects the process in which societies remember certain histories while forgetting others. As such, folklore can become a medium of remembering through reinterpretation and negotiation of the shared identity (Faruk, 2021).

One example of such folklore is the story of *Nyi Rambut Kasih*, a legendary narrative associated with the origin of Majalengka, West Java. The story portrays Nyi Rambut Kasih as the queen of the Sindangkasih Kingdom, a Hindu kingdom believed to have existed before the emergence of present-day Majalengka. In the narrative, the arrival of Pangeran Muhammad from the Sultanate of Cirebon introduces a new cultural and religious order. The conflict between Sindangkasih and Cirebon eventually leads to the defeat of Nyi Rambut Kasih, who disappears (*hyang*) together with the *maja* trees. This event is believed to be the origin of the name Majalengka, derived from *maja* and *langka* (disappeared).

The primary object of analysis is the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih. As the folktale originates from oral tradition, there is no single canonical version of the folktale. Therefore, the study collects the folktale from various sources and previous studies. Despite some narrative differences, it shares a similar storyline. The plot of the story is the portrayal of the Sindangkasih Kingdom, the arrival of Pangeran Muhammad and Siti Armilah from Cirebon to ask for maja trees, the Islamization of Sindangkasih, the conflict between the two cultural and religious traditions, and the symbolic disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih.

Previous studies on *Nyi Rambut Kasih* have mostly emphasized its ethical and educational meanings. The story has been interpreted as a representation of local wisdom, moral values, leadership, and exemplary character. Such studies highlight the importance of preserving the narrative as cultural heritage and utilizing it as educational material (Asteka et al., 2020; Rahmawati, 2018). Similarly, efforts to transform the story into new forms, such as illustrated narratives, demonstrate the importance of maintaining local

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

cultural memory among younger generations (Alfernando, 2021). Beyond Nyi Rambut Kasih, studies of Indonesian folklore and Islamization have shown how oral traditions preserve sacred local heritage (Karim et al., 2023), how Islam accommodates local rituals through processes of continuity and change (Rofiq, 2024), and how folk literature constructs Islamic identity within local communities (Fakhrurozi et al., 2025). These studies largely emphasize acculturation, harmony, and the preservation of cultural heritage. However, both strands of research tend to focus on the explicit values and integrative outcomes of these narratives while paying limited attention to the process of remembrance where one aspect is centered while the other is marginalized. Consequently, how folklore simultaneously remembers and marginalizes a pre-Islamic past, and how Islamization reshapes what a community chooses to remember about its origins, remains underexplored.

A critical reading of *Nyi Rambut Kasih* reveals a tension of its remembrance. On the one hand, Nyi Rambut Kasih remains an important cultural symbol associated with the origin of Majalengka. Her name persists in local memory and cultural practices. On the other hand, the narrative also presents her as a defeated ruler whose kingdom disappears after encountering a new cultural and religious power. This contradiction suggests that the story is not only about the preservation of cultural identity but also about how certain historical meanings become dominant while others are pushed to the margins.

To explore this tension, this study is informed by Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory. The theory emphasizes that memory is not merely an individual recollection of past events, but a socially constructed process shaped by the values, beliefs, and perspectives of particular communities. According to Halbwachs (1925/1992), collective memory is selective and continually reconstructed within social frameworks, meaning that certain historical experiences are preserved and emphasized while others may be marginalized or forgotten. Subsequent scholarship has extended this insight into the broader field of social memory studies, which examines how groups remember through shared mnemonic practices (Erll, 2022; Roediger, 2021).

The study does not aim to verify the historical accuracy of the events depicted in the folktale. Instead, it examines how the narrative constructs cultural meanings through selective remembrance and the negotiation of competing cultural identities. By applying Halbwachs' theory, this study seeks to explain how Nyi Rambut Kasih can remain an enduring symbol of Majalengka's collective memory while the cultural identity represented by her character occupies a marginalized position within the narrative. Accordingly, this study examines how Nyi Rambut Kasih is constructed and remembered as an ancestral figure in the folktale, how the narrative of Islamization reconfigures the collective memory of the Sindangkasih Kingdom, and how the queen's supernatural disappearance reflects processes of narrative marginalization and selective forgetting. By addressing these issues, this study contributes to folklore and collective memory studies

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

by showing that remembrance in local origin narratives does not necessarily entail equal recognition of the identities being remembered.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach using narrative analysis to examine the construction of collective memory and cultural identity in the Majalengka folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih. This approach allows the narrative to be understood as a cultural text through which communities construct, preserve, and reinterpret representations of their past. According to Riessman (2008), narrative analysis provides a means of examining how stories organize experiences and produce meanings within particular social and cultural contexts. The study examines how the narrative remembers Nyi Rambut Kasih as an important figure in Majalengka's cultural history while also representing the marginalization of the cultural identity associated with her.

The data consist of several versions of the Nyi Rambut Kasih folktale. Because the story circulates primarily through oral tradition, no single authoritative text exists. The study therefore draws on various sources and scholarship. The analysis focuses on the shared storyline across these versions, while variant episodes, such as the romantic conflict between Nyi Rambut Kasih and Pangeran Muhammad, are identified according to the version in which they appear.

The analysis is conducted through five stages. First, the narrative is read closely and divided into episodes according to changes in events, characters, and conflicts. Each episode is documented by identifying the actors involved, their actions, the outcome, and the symbolic meanings explicitly conveyed in the text. This segmentation establishes the textual evidence used in subsequent analysis.

Second, the identified episodes are coded according to four analytical categories derived from Halbwachs' understanding of collective memory: remembrance, selective emphasis, marginalization, and reconstruction. Remembrance refers to the figures, events, and cultural symbols retained within the narrative. Selective emphasis identifies which elements receive narrative prominence or are presented as meaningful to the community's past. Marginalization examines how particular figures, traditions, or cultural identities are displaced, subordinated, or given limited narrative recognition. Reconstruction concerns how earlier events and identities are reinterpreted through the narrative's explanation of Majalengka's origins.

Third, the analysis identifies the social frameworks through which the remembered past is organized. Following Halbwachs (1925/1992), this stage examines how religious and cultural perspectives shape the representation of the Sindangkasih Kingdom and the arrival of Islam-associated figures from Cirebon. Particular attention is given to the relationship between these narrative perspectives and the ways in which the story assigns significance to cultural continuity, transformation, and disappearance.

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

Fourth, the coded episodes are compared to examine the relationship between the continued remembrance of Nyi Rambut Kasih and the narrative representation of her defeat and disappearance. This comparison considers which aspects of her identity are preserved, which are displaced, and how both representations contribute to the construction of Majalengka's collective identity. Interpretations are checked against the relevant episodes to distinguish meanings supported by the narrative from assumptions about historical events or contemporary community beliefs.

Finally, the findings are synthesized through Halbwachs' concept of the social reconstruction of memory. The analysis examines whether and how the narrative's preservation of Nyi Rambut Kasih as a cultural symbol coexists with the marginalization of the earlier religious and cultural identity associated with Sindangkasih. Through these procedures, the study explains the processes of selective remembrance and identity negotiation represented within the folktale.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Remembering the Queen: The Narrative Construction of Nyi Rambut Kasih

The past is not merely recalled but also reconstructed through narratives that shape how communities remember and interpret their shared experiences (Erll, 2009; Mandolessi, 2023). In this sense, folktales serve as a medium through which communities preserve their collective memories, transmit their cultural heritage, and explain their historical origins (Gülüm, 2023; Kashaka, 2025; Zou & Priscilla, 2023). In Majalengka, the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih serves this function by connecting the community's present cultural identity with its remembered past, particularly through the narrative of the Sindangkasih Kingdom and the origin of Majalengka rooted in its encounter with the Cirebon Sultanate and Islam. As narration is a way of remembering, this section further scrutinizes how Nyi Rambut Kasih is remembered through the narration of its folklore.

From the perspective of Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, the remembrance of Nyi Rambut Kasih can be understood as a socially constructed representation of the past. Halbwachs (1925/1992) argues that individual recollections are shaped by the social frameworks within which people remember and interpret past experiences. Memory, therefore, does not operate independently of society but is continuously reconstructed through shared values, cultural practices, and collective understandings (A. Assmann, 2010). Applied to the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih, this perspective suggests that her continued presence in Majalengka's cultural consciousness is not dependent solely on the historical verification of her existence. Rather, her significance emerges from the ways the community collectively narrates, interprets, and preserves her story as part of its understanding of the past (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2014).

One of the most prominent aspects of this narrative construction is the representation of Nyi Rambut Kasih as an ideal ruler. The folktale repeatedly emphasizes

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

her wisdom, beauty, supernatural power, and ability to maintain prosperity within the Sindangkasih Kingdom. These characteristics function as cultural attributes through which the community remembers an idealized image of its ancestral leadership. The idealization of ancestral figures plays an important role in the construction of collective memory because it enables communities to preserve and transmit cultural values associated with their shared origins (J. Assmann, 2011).

Nyi Rambut Kasih's authority is therefore constructed not only through her political position as queen but also through the moral qualities associated with her rule. This representation transforms Nyi Rambut Kasih into a symbolic embodiment of leadership, compassion, and local identity. In Halbwachs' framework, the preservation of these particular qualities demonstrates the selective character of collective memory: certain aspects of the past are emphasized because they remain meaningful within the social frameworks through which a community remembers. These qualities provide a symbolic representation of the values associated with the remembered Sindangkasih Kingdom and offer a model of leadership that can be transmitted across generations (Rahmawati, 2018). However, this idealization also demonstrates the selective nature of collective memory, as the emphasis on her admirable qualities may overshadow other dimensions of the narrative, particularly her defeat and the disappearance of her kingdom.

Another important dimension of this collective remembrance is the relationship between Nyi Rambut Kasih and Majalengka's origin narrative. According to the folktale, the Sindangkasih Kingdom eventually entered into conflict with the Cirebon Sultanate following the arrival of Pangeran Muhammad and Siti Armilah. The conflict involved a request for maja fruit, the introduction of Islam into Sindangkasih, and the queen's refusal to fulfill the prince's demands. Following the defeat of Sindangkasih, Nyi Rambut Kasih is said to have disappeared supernaturally through a process known as *hyang*, while the maja trees also vanished. The disappearance of these trees subsequently gave rise to the expression *maja langka*, which the narrative associates with the origin of the name Majalengka. This sequence establishes a symbolic connection between the queen's disappearance, the end of Sindangkasih, and the emergence of Majalengka. Rather than functioning as an independently verified historical explanation, the story provides a shared narrative through which the community can understand the relationship between its remembered past and present geographical identity. Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) argue that cultural identity is sustained through shared memories preserved in symbolic forms, narratives, and cultural practices. In this context, the story of Nyi Rambut Kasih provides a narrative framework that connects the remembered Sindangkasih Kingdom with the cultural identity of contemporary Majalengka.

The preservation of Nyi Rambut Kasih's memory is also supported by the cultural and geographical symbols associated with her story. The Patilasan Nyi Ratu Rambut Kasih, particularly Batu Karancang, is identified in the narrative as the location of her supernatural disappearance and as a place associated with her spiritual activities.

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

Moreover, the continued use of the name Sindangkasih and the regional motto *Sindangkasih Sugih Mukti* demonstrates how elements associated with the remembered kingdom remain recognizable within the community's cultural landscape (Ciptandi et al., 2024). These references provide tangible connections between the narrative and the physical environment, allowing the memory of Nyi Rambut Kasih to extend beyond oral storytelling.

The physical places related to the folklore of Nyi Rambut Kasih are described by Nora (1989) as *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory. The concept refers to places and symbols in which collective remembrance becomes concentrated and preserved. Although Halbwachs remains the primary theoretical framework of this analysis, Nora's observation helps clarify how locations associated with Nyi Rambut Kasih can serve as symbolic references for remembering the past. Their significance lies not only in their physical existence but also in the cultural meanings that the community attaches to them. Through these sites, the remembered figure of Nyi Rambut Kasih continues to be connected with the geographical and symbolic identity of Majalengka.

Overall, the narrative construction of Nyi Rambut Kasih demonstrates that collective remembrance is sustained through the interrelationship between narrative representation, cultural symbols, and shared understandings of the past. Her identity as a wise ruler, her association with the Sindangkasih Kingdom, her supernatural disappearance, and the continued recognition of places connected to her story collectively establish her significance within Majalengka's cultural memory. Through Halbwachs' (1925/1992) theoretical framework, the preservation of Nyi Rambut Kasih can be interpreted as an ongoing social process in which the community reconstructs and maintains a meaningful representation of its origins. Her importance therefore lies not solely in whether she can be historically verified as an individual ruler, but in how her narrative continues to provide a symbolic connection between the remembered past and the cultural identity of Majalengka.

Islamization and the Reconfiguration of Collective Memory

The collective memory of a community is not static but continuously reconstructed in relation to changing social and cultural circumstances (Larsson, 2025; Lužný, 2021). Remembrance takes place within social frameworks that influence how individuals and groups interpret the past. These frameworks are shaped by the beliefs, values, and social relationships that organize communal life. Consequently, transformations in religious and cultural orientations may also influence how communities remember their earlier histories (Rodriguez & Fortier, 2007). This process is reflected in the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih, particularly through the arrival of Pangeran Muhammad from the Cirebon Sultanate and the subsequent transformation of the Sindangkasih Kingdom. The narrative presents an encounter between two religious and cultural orders: the Hindu-associated kingdom ruled by Nyi Rambut Kasih and the Islamic tradition introduced by Pangeran Muhammad. This encounter also resonates with the broader historical process through

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

which Islam became deeply embedded in Sundanese religious life and cultural identity (Hanafi, 2025; Rohmana, 2025). This encounter is significant because it not only marks a transformation within the story but also provides a narrative framework through which the community remembers the transition from Sindangkasih to Majalengka.

According to the folktale, Pangeran Muhammad arrived in Sindangkasih with the intention of obtaining maja fruit to treat an illness affecting the people of Cirebon. However, his arrival was also associated with the mission of spreading Islam among the inhabitants of Sindangkasih. While many members of the community are described as gradually accepting Islam, Nyi Rambut Kasih refused to convert and rejected the prince's request for maja fruit. The disagreement eventually developed into a conflict between Sindangkasih and Cirebon, resulting in the defeat of Nyi Rambut Kasih and the disappearance of the queen and the maja trees. These events establish religious transformation as an important element of the narrative. The arrival of Pangeran Muhammad represents not merely the introduction of a different religious belief but also a transformation in the cultural order through which the community's past becomes understood. The conflict therefore provides a narrative setting in which the relationship between an earlier cultural identity and an emerging religious order is negotiated.

Through Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, this religious transformation can be interpreted as a reconfiguration of the social frameworks through which the past is remembered. Halbwachs (1925/1992) emphasizes that religious communities develop shared memories through their beliefs, traditions, and collective representations. These frameworks influence how past events are selected and interpreted in relation to the group's present understanding of itself. In the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih, the transition from the Hindu-associated Sindangkasih Kingdom to an Islamic community suggests a corresponding change in the narrative interpretation of the region's origins. Although Nyi Rambut Kasih remains recognized as an ancestral ruler, the story also incorporates Pangeran Muhammad as an important figure associated with the establishment of a new religious order. Thus, the earlier cultural past is not entirely forgotten but is remembered alongside the narrative of Islamization. The resulting collective memory connects the community's pre-Islamic origins with the religious transformation represented in the story.

The representation of Pangeran Muhammad is particularly significant in this process. Within the narrative, he is associated with the introduction of Islam and the transformation of Sindangkasih following the defeat of its queen. His arrival becomes a central event through which the transition between the earlier and later cultural orders is explained. In contrast, Nyi Rambut Kasih, though remembered as a wise and powerful ruler, is portrayed as a figure whose authority ends. This contrast demonstrates how the narrative assigns different roles to the two figures in the remembrance of Majalengka's origins. Nyi Rambut Kasih represents the ancestral kingdom, while Pangeran Muhammad represents the religious transformation associated with its disappearance. Collective

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

identity is sustained through cultural representations that preserve meaningful understandings of the past (Jovchelovitch, 2012). In this sense, the inclusion of both figures enables the folktale to connect two different cultural periods within a shared origin narrative, even as the transition between them is represented through conflict.

Nevertheless, the folktale does not present this transformation without narrative tension. Although the inhabitants of Sindangkasih are described as accepting Islam, the queen herself refuses to abandon her religious beliefs, and the encounter eventually leads to warfare. Furthermore, one of the oral versions introduces a romantic conflict in which Nyi Rambut Kasih falls in love with Pangeran Muhammad, who rejects her because he is already married to Siti Armilah and because the queen does not embrace Islam (Rahmawati, 2018). The inclusion of this romantic element shifts part of the narrative attention toward personal relationships rather than exclusively emphasizing religious and political differences. From the perspective of collective memory, this variation is significant because it demonstrates how different narrative elements can shape the interpretation of the same remembered transformation. Erll (2011) argues that narratives do not simply reproduce the past but participate in constructing cultural memory by organizing events into meaningful representations. Accordingly, the combination of religious conversion, personal rejection, and political conflict in the folktale suggests that the transformation of Sindangkasih is remembered through multiple interconnected explanations rather than a single historical account.

The supernatural disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih further illustrates the reconfiguration of collective memory following the emergence of the new religious order. After her defeat, the queen is said to have disappeared through *hyang*, a supernatural phenomenon that removes her from the visible world. Her disappearance is followed by the loss of the maja trees and the emergence of the name Majalengka, derived in the folktale from the expression *maja langka*. This narrative sequence connects the disappearance of the earlier kingdom with the emergence of a new regional identity. Significantly, Nyi Rambut Kasih does not disappear from collective remembrance even though she disappears from the narrative's physical world. Instead, her absence becomes part of the explanation of Majalengka's origins. This can be understood through Halbwachs' (1925/1992) argument that collective memory reconstructs the past according to the social frameworks through which it is remembered. Within the folktale, the remembered disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih allows the earlier cultural order to remain symbolically present while explaining its replacement by a different political and religious order. Her disappearance therefore functions not only as the conclusion of her personal story but also as a narrative mechanism connecting cultural transformation with the construction of communal identity.

The changing representation of the past is also reflected in the different forms of recognition given to figures associated with Sindangkasih and Cirebon. The names of Pangeran Muhammad and Siti Armilah have been commemorated through important

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

streets in Majalengka, while Nyi Rambut Kasih remains associated with the Sindangkasih Kingdom, local traditions, and places connected to her supernatural presence. These different forms of remembrance suggest that the earlier and later cultural orders continue to occupy distinct symbolic positions within the region's remembered history. The public recognition of figures associated with Islamization exists alongside the preservation of Nyi Rambut Kasih as an ancestral cultural figure. Rather than indicating the complete disappearance of the earlier memory, this coexistence suggests that collective remembrance can incorporate different cultural traditions while assigning them different meanings. In Halbwachs' (1925/1992) terms, the same past may be reconstructed differently according to the social groups and cultural frameworks through which it is remembered. Similar divergences have been observed in how religious and political communities remember their collective origins (Yamashiro et al., 2022).

However, the coexistence of these memories does not necessarily imply that their cultural meanings are equally recognized. Pre-Islamic traditions are sometimes rejected by some Muslims as practices of *musyrik* or *bid'ah* (Rofiq, 2024). Such views suggest that some practices associated with the earlier cultural tradition have become subject to reinterpretation through contemporary religious understandings. Although these religious perspectives cannot be assumed to represent the entire Majalengka community, they illustrate how different social groups may attach different meanings to the same cultural heritage. Practices regarded by some as expressions of ancestral remembrance may be questioned by others through religious frameworks. Such differences are consistent with Halbwachs' (1925/1992) understanding that collective memory is socially situated and that groups may preserve distinct representations of a shared past. The remembrance of Nyi Rambut Kasih can therefore be understood as a continuing process in which ancestral traditions and religious interpretations interact in shaping cultural memory.

The narrative of Islamization in the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih consequently demonstrates how religious transformation can influence the reconstruction of collective memory. The arrival of Pangeran Muhammad, the conversion of Sindangkasih's inhabitants, the defeat of Nyi Rambut Kasih, and the emergence of Majalengka collectively form a narrative through which the community connects its earlier cultural heritage with a subsequent religious order (Fakhrurozi et al., 2025). Importantly, this analysis concerns how Islamization is represented and remembered within the folktale rather than establishing the historical circumstances of religious conversion in Majalengka. Through Halbwachs' theoretical framework, the narrative can be interpreted as a form of socially constructed remembrance in which changing religious perspectives influence the meanings assigned to earlier cultural figures and events. The memory of Nyi Rambut Kasih is therefore neither entirely erased nor preserved unchanged. Instead, it is reconfigured within a broader narrative that accommodates the community's ancestral origins and the religious transformation associated with the emergence of Majalengka.

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

This demonstrates that collective memory involves not only the preservation of the past but also its continuous reinterpretation within changing social and cultural frameworks.

The Disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih: Narrative Marginalization and Selective Forgetting

Collective memory involves not only the preservation of the past but also the selection of particular experiences, figures, and events that remain meaningful to a community. As Halbwachs (1925/1992) argues, the past is reconstructed through social frameworks that influence what is remembered and how it is interpreted. Consequently, certain aspects of the past may be emphasized while others receive less attention within a shared narrative. Connerton (2008) further explains that forgetting is not necessarily a passive process but can occur in different forms, including through the formation of new collective identities and the selective preservation of particular memories. This relationship between remembrance and forgetting can be observed in the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih, particularly in the supernatural disappearance (*hyang*) of the queen following the defeat of the Sindangkasih Kingdom. Although Nyi Rambut Kasih continues to be remembered as an important ancestral figure of Majalengka, the narrative simultaneously marks the disappearance of the political and cultural order associated with her kingdom. This contrast raises questions about how the community preserves the memory of its ancestral ruler while reconstructing the significance of the earlier cultural past.

In the folktale, Nyi Rambut Kasih's disappearance occurs following her confrontation with Pangeran Muhammad and the forces associated with the Cirebon Sultanate. After refusing the prince's demands, the queen becomes involved in a conflict that culminates in the defeat of Sindangkasih. Rather than being portrayed as dying in battle, she is said to have disappeared supernaturally through *hyang*. Her disappearance is accompanied by the vanishing of the maja trees, symbolizing the loss of an important element associated with her kingdom. These events establish the queen's disappearance as a central moment in the narrative, marking not only the end of her political authority but also the transition from Sindangkasih to Majalengka. The disappearance can therefore be interpreted as more than an individual event within the story. It functions as a symbolic representation of the transformation of an earlier cultural order, in which the political authority and cultural traditions associated with Nyi Rambut Kasih lose their former position.

However, the disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih does not result in her complete absence from collective memory. Although she vanishes from the visible world, her identity remains preserved through the folktale and cultural symbols associated with her existence. The narrative continues to recognize her as a wise, powerful, and compassionate ruler whose kingdom represents the ancestral origins of Majalengka. Moreover, local beliefs concerning her supernatural presence suggest that her disappearance is understood not necessarily as the end of her existence but as a

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

transformation in the form of her presence. This creates a paradox in which Nyi Rambut Kasih is simultaneously absent from the physical world and present within the community's cultural imagination. Through Halbwachs' (1925/1992) perspective, this paradox can be understood as an expression of selective reconstruction, in which the community preserves particular representations of the past even as the social circumstances associated with them have changed. Thus, the queen's continued remembrance demonstrates how a historical or legendary figure can retain cultural significance despite the disappearance of the political order represented within the narrative.

The symbolic relationship between remembrance and disappearance is further reflected in places associated with Nyi Rambut Kasih. The Patilasan Nyi Ratu Rambut Kasih, particularly Batu Karancang, is identified in the folktale as the location of her supernatural disappearance. The site provides a physical reference through which the community continues to associate a particular location with the remembered queen. Although her presence is represented as supernatural rather than physical, the continued recognition of the patilasan allows her memory to remain connected to the geographical landscape of Majalengka. Comparable sacred sites in the archipelago likewise show how pilgrimage and commemorative practices keep the memory of revered figures alive within local communities (Madjid et al., 2022). Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) explain that cultural memory is maintained through symbolic forms that preserve shared knowledge of the past and contribute to a group's understanding of its identity. In this context, the patilasan functions as a cultural symbol that sustains the remembrance of Nyi Rambut Kasih even after her disappearance. Nevertheless, the preservation of a site associated with the queen does not necessarily entail the preservation of the entire cultural system of the Sindangkasih Kingdom. The site commemorates her presence while the broader political and religious practices associated with her rule remain comparatively less developed within the narrative.

A similar pattern of selective remembrance is evident in the relationship between the queen's disappearance and the origin of Majalengka's name. According to the folktale, the disappearance of the maja trees following the defeat of Sindangkasih leads to the expression *maja langka*, which subsequently becomes associated with the name Majalengka. The transformation of the region's name is therefore narrated through the disappearance of something belonging to the earlier kingdom. This connection is significant because the cultural origins of Majalengka are remembered through an event that simultaneously marks the end of Sindangkasih. The earlier kingdom remains important as the foundation of the region's identity, yet its existence is principally recalled through the circumstances of its disappearance. Erll (2011) emphasizes that cultural memory is shaped through narrative and symbolic forms that organize representations of the past. In this case, the disappearance of the maja trees functions as a narrative device that connects the loss of the earlier kingdom with the emergence of a new regional

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

identity. The past is therefore preserved within the origin narrative, but its meaning is reorganized around the transition from Sindangkasih to Majalengka.

The selective character of this remembrance becomes particularly evident when examining which aspects of Nyi Rambut Kasih's identity are emphasized and which remain comparatively marginalized. The folktale preserves her beauty, wisdom, supernatural power, and compassionate leadership as central characteristics through which she is remembered. However, the narrative provides less attention to the broader political implications of her defeat or to the subsequent fate of the cultural traditions associated with Sindangkasih. Furthermore, the inclusion of a romantic conflict between Nyi Rambut Kasih and Pangeran Muhammad introduces another explanation for their confrontation. In this oral version, the queen's affection for the prince and his rejection of her become important elements of the conflict, potentially shifting narrative attention away from the struggle between the political and religious orders represented by the two figures (Rahmawati, 2018). This narrative emphasis does not necessarily eliminate the religious and political dimensions of the conflict, but it influences how they are presented and understood. From Halbwachs' (1925/1992) perspective, such a representation illustrates how collective memory can privilege particular aspects of the past while leaving other dimensions less visible.

The marginalization of the earlier cultural order can also be examined through the distinction between remembering Nyi Rambut Kasih as an individual and remembering the society over which she ruled. Although her identity as queen remains central to the folktale, comparatively little is narrated about the institutions, religious practices, and everyday cultural experiences of the Sindangkasih community following its defeat. The story describes the conversion of its inhabitants to Islam and the disappearance of its ruler, but it does not extensively explain how the earlier cultural traditions were maintained, transformed, or abandoned. This absence is analytically significant because it indicates a difference between the preservation of an ancestral figure and the preservation of the broader cultural world associated with that figure. Halbwachs (1925/1992) argues that collective memory is shaped by the interests and perspectives of social groups, meaning that not every dimension of the past is preserved with equal emphasis. The folktale may therefore be understood as maintaining the symbolic importance of Nyi Rambut Kasih while providing a more limited representation of the cultural continuity of Sindangkasih.

This distinction also helps explain the relationship between collective memory and selective forgetting. Connerton (2008) identifies forgetting associated with the formation of new identities as one possible dimension of social forgetting, suggesting that the emergence of a new collective identity may involve changes in which elements of the past remain prominent. Recent work extending Connerton's typology similarly distinguishes several forms of erasure, ranging from repressive to amending, through which traces of the past are removed or reworked (Fredrikzon & Haffenden, 2023). Applied to the folktale, this perspective provides a way of understanding how the

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

emergence of Majalengka and the religious transformation associated with Cirebon are narrated alongside the disappearance of Sindangkasih. The earlier kingdom is not entirely excluded from the community's remembered origins, but its political and cultural authority is no longer represented as continuing in the same form. However, the narrative does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that this marginalization resulted from a deliberate attempt to erase the earlier cultural past. Instead, the limited representation of Sindangkasih's subsequent cultural life can be interpreted as a form of narrative selectivity, in which certain memories remain recognizable while others occupy a less prominent position within the shared account of the region's origins.

The disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih therefore illustrates a relationship between cultural preservation and narrative marginalization. On the one hand, the folktale sustains the queen's symbolic presence through her idealized qualities, supernatural disappearance, and association with culturally significant places. On the other hand, the political and cultural order represented by her kingdom is primarily remembered through its defeat and transformation. This contrast suggests that the preservation of collective memory does not necessarily involve the continued recognition of every aspect of the past. As Assmann and Czaplicka (1995) explain, cultural memory involves the reconstruction of shared knowledge through frameworks that remain meaningful to a group's identity. The story of Nyi Rambut Kasih similarly preserves a recognizable connection with Sindangkasih while organizing that connection around the origins of contemporary Majalengka. Her disappearance thus becomes a narrative moment through which the earlier cultural past is both remembered and repositioned within a changing collective identity.

Ultimately, the disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih reveals the selective nature of collective memory, in which remembrance and forgetting operate as interconnected processes. The queen remains an important ancestral figure in Majalengka's cultural consciousness, yet the narrative places the political and cultural order associated with her kingdom in the past. Through Halbwachs' (1925/1992) concept of collective memory, this contrast can be understood as a process of selective reconstruction, whereby communities preserve particular representations of the past according to the social frameworks through which they remember. The supernatural disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih therefore does not simply conclude the story of an ancestral ruler. It symbolically marks the transformation of an earlier cultural world while allowing selected aspects of that world to survive through folklore. Rather than demonstrating the complete erasure of Sindangkasih's past, the narrative suggests that cultural memory may preserve the image of an ancestral figure while marginalizing other dimensions of the cultural order she represents.

MIMBAR AGAMA DAN BUDAYA
Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the folktale of Nyi Rambut Kasih functions as a medium of collective memory through which Majalengka's cultural identity is constructed, preserved, and negotiated. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, the findings reveal a paradox of remembrance and marginalization: Nyi Rambut Kasih remains celebrated as an ancestral ruler whose wisdom, authority, and symbolic presence contribute to Majalengka's cultural heritage, while the political and religious order associated with the Sindangkasih Kingdom occupies a marginalized position within the narrative. The representation of Islamization, particularly through the arrival of Pangeran Muhammad and the supernatural disappearance of Nyi Rambut Kasih, illustrates how religious transformation becomes a framework for reconstructing the community's remembered past. Rather than indicating the complete erasure of pre-Islamic cultural identity, the folktale demonstrates how selected elements of an earlier tradition can survive within a narrative that privileges a subsequent cultural and religious order. This study contributes to folklore and collective memory studies by demonstrating that cultural remembrance does not necessarily ensure equal recognition of the identities and traditions being remembered. However, because the analysis focuses primarily on narrative representations, further research involving multiple oral versions and contemporary community perspectives is needed to examine how these competing memories are interpreted and negotiated in present-day Majalengka.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contributions: The first, second, and third authors contributed to the conceptualization of the study, development of the analytical framework, interpretation of the findings, and preparation and revision of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research is not funded by any institution.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Use Statement: Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist with sentence construction and grammatical correction during manuscript preparation. No generative AI tools were used in the research analysis, interpretation of findings, or formulation of conclusions. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

Ethics Approval and Informed Consent: This study primarily involved qualitative textual and narrative analysis of folklore and publicly available secondary sources. As the textual analysis did not involve human participants or the collection of personal or sensitive data, formal ethics approval was not required.

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

Data Availability: The textual data and secondary sources supporting the findings of this study are publicly available online through the sources cited in the manuscript.

REFERENCES

Alfernando, S. F. (2021). *Visualisasi cerita bergambar Nyi Rambut Kasih Majalengka meneladani sifat kuat teguh mempertahankan prinsip baik* [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Pasundan]. http://repository.unpas.ac.id/53282/

Assmann, A. (2010). Re-framing memory: Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past. In K. Tilmans, F. van Vree, & J. Winter (Eds.), *Performing the past: Memory, history, and identity in modern Europe* (pp. 35–50). Amsterdam University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048512027.003

Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*. Cambridge University Press.

Assmann, J., & Czaplicka, J. (1995). Collective memory and cultural identity. *New German Critique*, (65), 125–133. https://doi.org/10.2307/488538

Asteka, P., Suwandi, S., Andayani, & Slamet, S. Y. (2020). Kearifan lokal Majalengka sebagai materi ajar mata kuliah sosiolinguistik. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan*, *2*, 870–894. https://prosiding.unma.ac.id/index.php/semnasfkip/article/view/398

Ciptandi, F., Oetari, J., & Rosandini, M. (2024). Exploring the Sundanese culture in the Makuta Binokasih as a cultural asset of the Sumedang Larang Kingdom. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *11*(1), 2426361. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2426361

Connerton, P. (2008). Seven types of forgetting. *Memory Studies*, *1*(1), 59–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083889

Erll, A. (2009). Narratology and cultural memory studies. In S. Heinen & R. Sommer (Eds.), *Narratology in the age of cross-disciplinary narrative research* (pp. 212–227). Walter de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110222432.212

Erll, A. (2011). *Memory in culture*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230321670

Erll, A. (2022). The hidden power of implicit collective memory. *Memory, Mind & Media*, *1*, e14. https://doi.org/10.1017/mem.2022.7

Fakhrurozi, J., Suganda, D., Rahayu, L. M., & Darmayanti, N. (2025). Construction of Islamic identity in the Lampung community leadership system through folk poetry. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *12*(1), 2451494. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2451494

Faruk. (2021). *Pengantar sosiologi sastra* (7th ed.). Pustaka Pelajar.

Fredrikzon, J., & Haffenden, C. (2023). Towards erasure studies: Excavating the material conditions of memory and forgetting. *Memory, Mind & Media*, *2*, e2. https://doi.org/10.1017/mem.2023.2

Gülüm, E. (2023). Folkloric memory: (Re)connecting the dots for broader perspectives. *Memory Studies*, *16*(6), 1466–1483. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231204175

Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226774497.001.0001 (Original work published 1925)

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

Hanafi, T. (2025). Contemporary Sundanese Quran: A departure or divine proximity? *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*, *26*(2), 212–235. https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v26i2.1758

Jovchelovitch, S. (2012). Narrative, memory and social representations: A conversation between history and social psychology. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, *46*(4), 440–456. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-012-9217-8

Karim, A., Raya, M. K. F., Mutholib, A., Kawakip, A. N., Retnanto, A., & Mukroji. (2023). Nyai Sabirah's folklore and sacred local heritage in Central Java. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *10*(1), 2198629. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2198629

Kashaka, N. D. (2025). The role of folklore in modern society. *IDOSR Journal of Arts and Management*, *10*(1), 32–35.

Kato Bukenya, T. (2025). The role of folklore in modern culture. *Research Invention Journal of Law, Communication and Languages*, *5*(2), 66–71.

Larsson, F. (2025). The role of memory in shaping collective cultural heritage. *European Review of Contemporary Arts and Humanities*, *1*(1), 12–15.

Lužný, D. (2021). Religious memory in a changing society: The case of India and Papua New Guinea. *Changing Societies & Personalities*, *5*(1), 36–62. https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2021.5.1.121

Madjid, A., Latief, H., & Fauzan, A. (2022). Honoring the saint through poetry recitation: Pilgrimage and the memories of Shaikh Abdurrahman Siddiq al-Banjari in Indragiri Hilir. *Religions*, *13*(3), 261. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030261

Mandolessi, S. (2023). The digital turn in memory studies. *Memory Studies*, *16*(6), 1513–1528. https://doi.org/10.1177/17506980231204201

Mankowski, E., & Rappaport, J. (2014). Stories, identity, and the psychological sense of community. In R. S. Wyer, Jr. (Ed.), *Knowledge and memory: The real story* (pp. 211–226). Psychology Press.

Mungmachon, M. R. (2012). Knowledge and local wisdom: Community treasure. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *2*(13), 174–181. http://www.ijhssnet.com/journals/Vol_2_No_13_July_2012/18.pdf

Nora, P. (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire. *Representations*, *26*, 7–24. https://doi.org/10.2307/2928520

Novianti, N. (2022). Indonesian folk narratives: On the interstices of national identity, national values, and character education. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, *16*(1), 99–116. https://doi.org/10.2478/jef-2022-0006

Rahmawati, I. S. (2018). Cerita rakyat Nyi Rambut Kasih sebagai wujud kearifan lokal terhadap pendidikan sastra di Majalengka. *Diglosia: Jurnal Pendidikan, Kebahasaan, dan Kesusastraan Indonesia*, *2*(1), 50–56.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE Publications.

Rodriguez, J., & Fortier, T. (2007). *Cultural memory: Resistance, faith, and identity*. University of Texas Press.

Roediger, H. L., III. (2021). Three facets of collective memory. *American Psychologist*, *76*(9), 1388–1400. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000938

Rofiq, A. C. (2024). Continuity and change process to sanctify the holy month of Muharram in the Suroan tradition. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *11*(1), 2335779. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2335779

Vol. 43 No. 2 – October 2026 (418-435)
P-ISSN: 0854-5138 (Print) | E-ISSN: 2715-7059 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15408/mimbar.v43i2.54482

Rohmana, J. A. (2025). Sundanese "kitāb" printed in early-twentieth-century Egypt as evidence of Islamic transregional networks. *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*, *26*(2), 191–211. https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v26i2.1779

Sims, M., & Stephens, M. (2011). *Living folklore: An introduction to the study of people and their traditions*. University Press of Colorado.

Yamashiro, J. K., Van Engen, A., & Roediger, H. L., III. (2022). American origins: Political and religious divides in US collective memory. *Memory Studies*, *15*(1), 84–101. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698019856065

Zou, P. H., & Priscilla, B. E. (2023). Folklore: An identity born of shared grief. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *10*(1), 2249279. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2249279