

# Cultural Resilience at Candi Cetho to Exploring the Continuation of Javanese Spiritual Practices

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## Abstract

This research explores the cultural resilience of Candi Cetho, focusing on the enduring Javanese spiritual practices. Situated on the western slopes of Mount Lawu, Candi Cetho is a prominent Hindu temple built in the 14th century during the reign of the Majapahit Kingdom. The temple's architectural layout reflects Javanese beliefs in the sacredness of mountains, seen as dwellings for deities and ancestral spirits, particularly Lord Shiva. Designed following vastupurusa mandala principles, the temple blends Hindu cosmological concepts with Javanese traditions. The temple's role in purification rituals is symbolized by its Sudamala-themed reliefs and several natural springs, underscoring its significance in spiritual cleansing. These aspects emphasize Candi Cetho's dual purpose as a religious site and a center for communal purification ceremonies, integral to the spiritual and physical well-being of the local community. The research highlights how Javanese spiritual practices have survived and adapted throughout centuries, illustrating the cultural resilience at Candi Cetho despite historical changes. This resilience showcases the enduring cultural identity of the Javanese people, sustained and passed down across generations. Ultimately, Candi Cetho remains a critical cultural and religious site, representing the deep-rooted spiritual traditions of the Javanese community. Its ongoing usage and the preservation of its rituals reflect the robustness and adaptability of Javanese cultural resilience, providing important insights into the continuity and transformation of cultural traditions within changing historical and social contexts.

**Keywords:** Cultural resilience, Candi Cetho, Javanese spiritual practices, Hindu temple, Majapahit Kingdom.

## 1. Introduction

The life of the Javanese people, particularly in Central Java, was largely influenced by Hinduism prior to the fall of Majapahit. The community's belief system, deeply rooted in ancestor worship, facilitated the integration of Hinduism. One prominent site for ancestor worship ceremonies is Candi Cetho, located at an altitude of 1,470 meters above sea level in Dusun Cetho, Gumeng Village, Jenawi District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. According to an ancient Javanese inscription, Candi Cetho was established in 1397 Saka (1475 AD) as a site for purification rituals or liberation from curses. The first research on Candi Cetho was conducted by van der Villis in 1942, followed by further studies by W.F. Stutterheim, K.C. Crucq, and A.J. Bernet Kempers. Initial restoration efforts were made in 1975/1976 by Sudjono

Humardani, though they did not fully adhere to proper cultural heritage restoration guidelines. In 1982, the Antiquities Service conducted research for reconstruction purposes.

Stutterheim suggested that the simple and rough design of Candi Cetho symbolized the anticipated return of the royal center from East Java to Central Java. This research seeks to provide a clear understanding of the existence, function, and significance of Candi Cetho for Hindus in Karanganyar Regency, correcting misconceptions and reinforcing the religious identity of Hindus. It also aims to explore the cultural resilience at Candi Cetho, emphasizing the continuity of Javanese spiritual practices over time. By offering an overview of Candi Cetho's importance to both Hindus in Karanganyar Regency and the broader public, this study aims to dispel negative perceptions and encourage the Hindu community to use Candi Cetho as a place of worship and a site for seeking balance, safety, prosperity, and happiness for all humanity.

Additionally, this research seeks to delve deeper into the cultural resilience at Candi Cetho, examining how Javanese spiritual traditions have persisted. The study is expected to benefit the Hindu community in Karanganyar Regency, as well as the broader society, by fostering a better understanding of Candi Cetho's significance and reducing misunderstandings. Moreover, the findings will contribute to museum documentation in Karanganyar Regency and beyond, while enriching academic discourse on cultural resilience and the continuity of Javanese spiritual practices.

## **2. Data Collection Methods**

To investigate "Cultural Resilience at Candi Cetho: Exploring the Continuation of Javanese Spiritual Practices," multiple data collection methods will be employed. First, a literature review will be conducted to gather existing information and historical context about Candi Cetho, Javanese spiritual practices, and cultural resilience from academic journals, books, and historical records. Second, field observations will be carried out by visiting Candi Cetho to document the physical environment, ongoing rituals, and interactions among participants. Third, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with local practitioners, spiritual leaders, community members, historians, and cultural experts to gain in-depth insights. Fourth, focus group discussions will be organized to understand the collective views and shared experiences of different groups related to spiritual practices at Candi Cetho. Fifth, questionnaires and surveys will be distributed to gather quantitative data on the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of a larger population, including visitors, residents, and scholars of Javanese culture. Sixth, ethnographic methods will be applied, involving immersion in the local community to gain a deeper understanding of cultural meanings and social dynamics. Finally, document analysis will examine historical documents, inscriptions, and previous research related to Candi Cetho and Javanese spiritual practices. This combination of methods will offer a comprehensive perspective on cultural resilience at Candi Cetho and the persistence of Javanese spiritual traditions.

### **2.1 Data Types and Sources**

The research will primarily focus on collecting qualitative data in the form of words and images rather than numerical data. This will include detailed fieldwork activities such as recording, observing, listening, feeling, collecting, and capturing all phenomena and information related to the research topic. The research will also use both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a thorough and objective collection of relevant information. These combined methods will provide a comprehensive understanding of cultural resilience and the continuation of Javanese spiritual practices at Candi Cetho.

## 2.2 Data Analysis Method

The data analysis method for this research involves several key steps to ensure a comprehensive and accurate interpretation of the collected data:

1. **Data Reduction:** This initial step involves summarizing, selecting, and focusing on essential data related to the existence, function, and significance of Candi Cetho in relation to Hindu theological concepts. Irrelevant data is discarded to emphasize the most significant information.
2. **Data Display:** The reduced data is then organized and presented in a coherent format, using narrative descriptions, tables, and diagrams to clearly illustrate the findings. This stage helps in understanding patterns and drawing meaningful conclusions.
3. **Conclusion Drawing and Verification:** The final step involves interpreting the data to draw conclusions. This includes identifying themes, patterns, and relationships that provide insights into the cultural resilience and continuation of Javanese spiritual practices at Candi Cetho. These conclusions are continuously verified by cross-checking with the raw data to ensure accuracy and validity.

By following these steps, the research aims to provide a detailed and accurate understanding of the cultural significance and ongoing spiritual practices at Candi Cetho.

## 3. General Description of the Research Location

Candi Cetho is located in Cetho Village, Gumeng, Jenawi Subdistrict, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. Karanganyar Regency spans an area of 80,618.34 hectares, divided into 17 subdistricts and 17 villages, with Karanganyar City as the capital, located 14 km east of Surakarta City. The regency borders Sragen Regency to the north, Magetan Regency in East Java to the east, Wonogiri and Sukoharjo Regencies to the south, and Boyolali Regency and Surakarta City to the west.

Geographically, Karanganyar serves as a border region between Central Java and East Java, dominated by Mount Lawu, which rises to 3,265 meters with fertile forests. The western slopes of Mount Lawu are home to well-organized villages inhabited by indigenous people, though the terrain makes distances between these villages considerable. Jenawi Subdistrict, located on the highest plateau of Mount Lawu's western slopes, is one such area. It lies approximately 25 km from the capital of Karanganyar and is accessible via routes from Sragen or Karanganyar.

Candi Cetho is an exotic and historic temple, often visited by both domestic and international tourists. Jenawi Subdistrict comprises nine villages: Anggrasmanis, Balong, Gumeng, Jenawi, Lempong, Menjing, Seloromo, Sidomukti, and Trengguli. The distance from the Jenawi Subdistrict Office to the Gumeng Village Office is about 7 km, and from the capital of Karanganyar, it is approximately 27 km. Gumeng Village covers 1,501.67 hectares and is bordered by Jenawi Village to the north, Segoro Gunung Village in Ngargoyoso Subdistrict to the south, Kemuning Village in Ngargoyoso Subdistrict to the west, and Anggrasmanis Village in Jenawi Subdistrict to the east.

### 3.1 Population Demographics of Cetho Hamlet, Gumeng Village

Cetho Hamlet, located in Gumeng Village, Jenawi Subdistrict, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, is home to a diverse and vibrant community. The total population of Cetho Hamlet is 436 individuals, consisting of 211 males and 225 females. This diversity in occupation reflects a robust local economy with various sources of livelihood (as illustrated in Figure 1).



Numerous springs in the area further support its role as a place for spiritual cleansing and renewal. These features indicate that Candi Cetho was not only a religious site but also a center for communal purification ceremonies, reflecting its importance in maintaining spiritual and physical well-being among the local populace. The findings underscore the cultural resilience at Candi Cetho, highlighting the continuation of Javanese spiritual practices despite historical changes. The integration of Hindu and indigenous Javanese spiritual practices is evident in the temple's use and role in the local community's spiritual life.

## 5. Conclusion

The research on "Cultural Resilience at Candi Cetho: Exploring the Continuation of Javanese Spiritual Practices" highlights the enduring nature of Javanese cultural and spiritual traditions as exemplified by Candi Cetho. Located on Mount Lawu, the temple reflects the deep-rooted Javanese belief in the sacredness of mountains as abodes of deities and ancestral spirits. Its design, based on vastupurusamandala principles, integrates Hindu cosmological concepts into Javanese practices. Candi Cetho's role in purification rituals is evident through its Sudamala-themed reliefs and numerous springs, indicating its significance for spiritual cleansing. This underscores the temple's dual function as a religious site and a center for communal purification ceremonies, which are crucial for the local community's well-being.

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