

## THREE LEVELS OF NATURE IN THE EMBODIMENT OF JAWI TEMPLE

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### ABSTRACT

Jawi Temple as a relic of the Singasari Kingdom is vertically composed of three levels of buildings, namely the base, body, and roof which are terraced, tall and slender, and towering, resulting in the idea to conduct a study related to the symbolic meaning in the form of the three segments. This article is a summary of the results of qualitative research on the interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the three segments of the Jawi Temple building. The results of the study obtained show that (a) the three levels of the Jawi Temple building are interpreted as the feet, body, and top of the mountain; (b) the three levels of the Jawi Temple building are interpreted as the feet, body, and head of humans; (c) Jawi Temple contains symbolic meaning as the natural levels of *Bhūrloka*, *Bhūvarloka*, and *Svarloka* in Hinduism and the natural levels of *Kamaloka*, *Rupaloka*, and *Arupaloka* in Buddhism; (d) Jawi Temple is a symbolization of Mount *Meru* which has a foot, body, and peak which in its top area is the location of the Kingdom of Heaven; and (e) the four similar faces of Jawi Temple are symbolic of Cosmogony in Hinduism and the embodiment of Lord *Brahmā*.

**Keywords:** *jawi temple, hinduism, meru, symbolic meaning, three levels*

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## INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage sites such as temples are not merely remnants of the past but serve as tangible expressions of the philosophical, spiritual, and symbolic worldviews of the civilizations that created them. Jawi Temple, located in Malang, East Java, is a significant example of such heritage, having endured since its construction in the 13th century during the Singasari Kingdom. The temple's distinctive architecture, characterized by its towering multi-storey roof and *Śiva*-Buddhist (Tantrayana) syncretic elements, reflects its dual function as both a place of worship and the mausoleum of King Kertanegara, the last king of Singasari, who died in 1292 AD (Eni & Tsabit, *Arsitektur Kuno Kerajaan-Kerajaan Kediri, Singasari & Majapahit di Jawa Timur Indonesia*, 2017).

The Jawi Temple which has endured long preservation, unlike many other ancient structures that have deteriorated or disappeared, raises important questions regarding the cultural values and symbolic meanings that have contributed to its continued relevance. This study is motivated by the desire to understand why Jawi Temple remains well-preserved and culturally significant, and how its embedded philosophical and spiritual elements continue to influence contemporary society. By examining the temple beyond its physical form, this research aims to explore the philosophical teachings, symbolic meanings, and cultural functions that underpin its conservation and ongoing role within the local community.

Architecturally, Jawi Temple features a rectangular basic plan and a towering multi-layered roof. The building is dominantly composed of white natural stone material and has a relatively high base or foundation, which distinguishes it from other Javanese temples. In the body of the temple, there is a sacred space which is known as *garbhagrha* in Javanese temples. The roof follows an equilateral quadrangle plan that is terraced and adorned with intricate ornamental carvings. The entire body of the temple is decorated with relief carvings and figures containing various symbolic meanings related to its function as a Hinduistic place of worship. These physical characteristics correspond to the Hindu-Buddhist cosmological concept of a tripartite universe, divided into *Bhūrloka* (the earthly realm), *Bhūvarloka* (the intermediate realm), and *Svarloka* (the heavenly realm), suggesting that the temple's form is a deliberate symbolic representation.

Although previous research has extensively documented Jawi Temple's historical context and architectural features, there remains a notable gap in the exploration of its embedded philosophical and symbolic dimensions. This study aims to address this gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of the temple's base, body, and roof as symbolic manifestations of religious and cosmological beliefs. Through this lens, the research contributes new insights into the cultural and spiritual significance of Jawi Temple, extending understanding beyond its physical form.

## METHODS

This brief paper is a summary of a research activity focused on interpreting the philosophical background and symbolic meaning contained in the three levels of the Jawi Temple building in East Java. The Jawi temple was chosen as the study material

based on the completeness of the physical form of the building, the characteristics of the temple's distinctive and towering form, the existence of various kinds of ornaments and decorations at all levels of the building, and the history of the temple building as a sacred building of the Singasari Kingdom in East Java. In conducting this research, there were several main stages that were carried out, namely as follows.

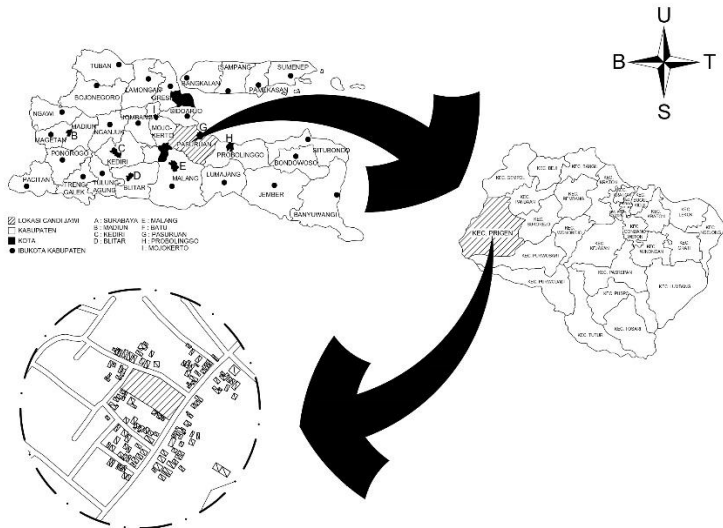
1. An initial literature study on the various forms of temple building elements both in the foot area of the body and in the head area of the building. This stage resulted in an understanding of the existence of several main elements that are commonly found at the foot of the temple in the body of the temple and at the head of the temple.
2. A literature study was conducted with a focus on finding the right temple object to be used as study material. At this stage, Candi Jawi was chosen as the temple to be used as the object of study based on the completeness of the elements, the characteristics of the distinctive building form, and its historical content.
3. In the next stage, a further literature study was conducted regarding the various conceptions and symbolic meanings commonly contained in the form of Hinduism worship buildings.
4. In the next stage, a field observation study and identification of the elements of the Jawi Temple building at the foot of the building, the body of the building to the head of this building were conducted.
5. The elements found in the three levels of the building are then dialogued with the philosophical background of the conception and symbolic meaning of Hinduism sacred buildings obtained from the results of the previous literature study.

The results of the review obtained are then summarized into conclusions that are compiled through deductive reasoning.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Location of Jawi Temple**

Of all the temples of the Singasari kingdom, Jawi Temple is the most beautiful one that has been completely reconstructed although almost all the statues are no longer there. Jawi Temple is located in Jawi Hamlet, Candi Wates Village, Prigen District, Pasuruan Regency, not far from Pandaan, Malang, at the foot of Mount Welirang, about 31 km from Pasuruan City (Eni & Tsabit, *Arsitektur Kuno Kerajaan-Kerajaan Kediri, Singasari & Majapahit di Jawa Timur Indonesia*, 2017). Its position is shown in Figure 1, while its accessibility and surrounding area are illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Jawi Temple is located at an altitude of 288 meters above sea level with coordinates E 112 degrees 40'11.76" and S 07 degrees 39'44.72" and occupies an area of 3,560 square meters. The main temple in the Jawi Temple area is the most intact building, with a height of 24.5 meters and a rectangular plan with a size of 14.2 meters x 9.5 meters (Adhitama, 2023). The temple layout is presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5.



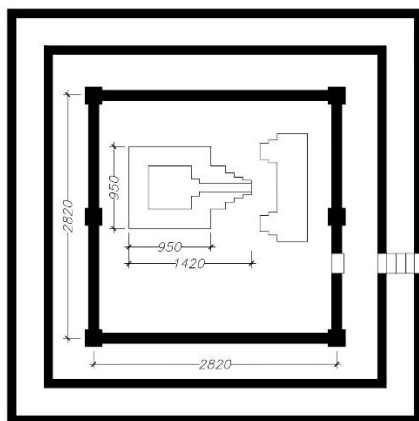
**Figure 1.** Location Map of Jawi Temple  
(Source: Google Maps and Google Earth, 2024).



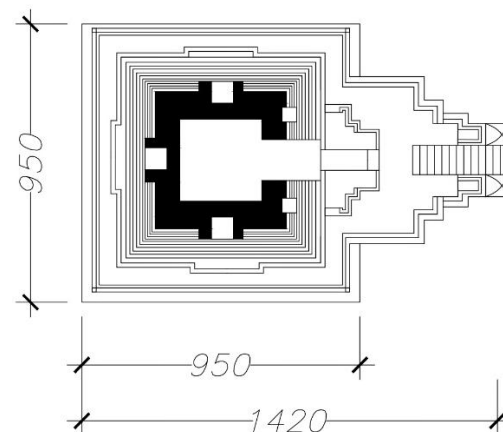
**Figure 2.** Accessibility Map of Jawi Temple  
(Source: Google Maps and Google Earth, 2024).



**Figure 3.** Situation Map of Jawi Temple  
(Source: Google Maps and Google Earth, 2024).



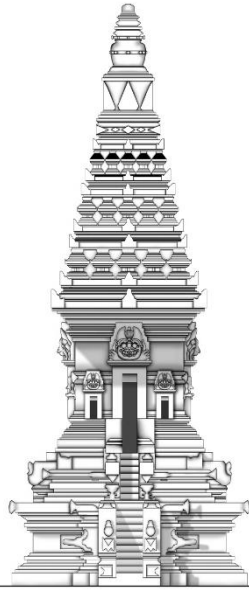
**Figure 4.** Jawi Temple Layout  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



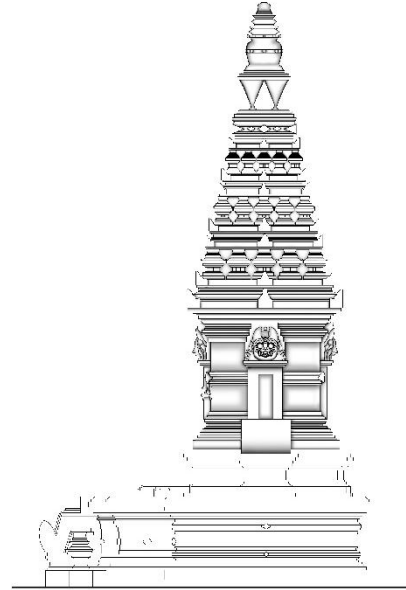
**Figure 5** Jawi Temple Layout  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

## History of Jawi Temple

Jawi Temple was built around the 13th century as a place of worship for *Śiva-Buddhists* (*Tantrayana*) (Lim, 2017). The *Śiva-Buddhist* religion (*Tantrayana*) is a faith that combines Hinduism and Buddhism (Wirakusumah, 2017). In addition to



**Figure 6.** Front View of Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



**Figure 7.** Side View of Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

serving as a place of worship, Jawi Temple is also a repository for the ashes of King Kertanegara who died in 1292 AD. Some of the ashes were stored in Singasari Temple. In *Kakawin Nagarakertagama* by Mpu Prapanca, *pupuh* 55 stanza 3 mentions that Jawi Temple was originally named Jajawa or “Java-Jawa”. Jawi Temple was built on the orders of King Kertanegara, who was the last king of the Singasari Kingdom, as mentioned in *Kakawin Nagarakertagama pupuh* 56 stanza 1 (Eni & Tsabit, Arsitektur Kuno Kerajaan-Kerajaan Kediri, Singasari & Majapahit di Jawa Timur Indonesia, 2017).

Candi Jawi was built at a distance from the Singasari Kingdom by King Kertanegara due to the strong presence of *Śiva*-Buddhism (*Tantrayana*) followers in Candi Wates village, who were also loyal to him. Another assumption suggests the temple area served as a base for Kertanegara’s supporters, as historical accounts state that Raden Wijaya, his son-in-law, sought refuge there after Kertanegara was overthrown by King Jayakatwang of Gelang-gelang (Kediri), before fleeing to Madura. (Eni, 2019). The front and side views of the temple are shown in Figure 6 and 7.

Jawi Temple is built on a *batur* or hallway about 2 meters high and surrounded by a courtyard and moat. Outside the moat, there are still remnants of a courtyard connected to the gate. However, the shape of the courtyard, gate, and other structures, including the perimeter fence, is no longer clear because they have collapsed, disappeared, or are covered by other buildings above them. Prapanca in his book *Nagarakertagama* explains that Jawi Temple has two religious aspects, the lower part of the temple is *Śiva*, while the upper part is Buddhist (Munandar et al., 2021).

### Overview of Jawi Temple

The staircase located in front of the entrance to the *garbhagrha* (the main room in the temple) is not too wide. The left and right sides of the stairs are decorated with intricate sculptures, while the cheeks of the stairs from the hallway to the temple floor are decorated with mythological creatures as motifs of figures in Jawi Temple, as



**Figure 8.** Mythological Creature Decoration  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



**Figure 9.** *Kala-Makara*  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

shown in Figure 8. The lion symbolizes courage, wisdom and power. In the context of Buddhism, the lion ornament motif was carved to protect the Buddha from danger. The hallway surrounding the body of the temple has a wide stone pathway.

Although the door frame lacks ornamentation, a *Kala-Makara* sculpture is placed above the lintel, depicting the *Bhutakala* head (*Karang Boma*) with a crown and detailed ornaments, inspired by the *Baomantaka* story, as shown in Figure 9. Typically positioned above the Great Kori entrance, *Karang Boma* serves as a guardian symbol. It also represents *Bhutakala*, embodying time and space. Its presence reminds viewers of human limitations within time and space, emphasizing the urgency of spiritual growth and the importance of not delaying virtuous actions. (Mulyadi et al., 2015).

### Materials of Jawi Temple

Jawi Temple was constructed using two types of stone in distinct colors. The foot to the *batur* (basement) is made of andesite, the body of white limestone, and the roof combines dark and white stones, as shown in Figure 10. This variation suggests the temple was likely built in two construction phases. Structurally, it comprises three main parts: the foot, body, and roof. The temple body features reliefs, statues, niches, and *Bhutakala* heads. While the foot contains narrative reliefs, their story and meaning remain unclear, possibly due to their faint carvings or the absence of supporting inscriptions or manuscripts. (Eni & Tsabit, *Arsitektur Kuno Kerajaan-Kerajaan Kediri, Singasari & Majapahit di Jawa Timur Indonesia*, 2017).



1. Starting from the foot to the basin, built using andesite stone
2. The temple body is made using white limestone
3. The roof of the temple is made of a mixture of dark and white stones

**Figure 10.** Jawi Temple Materials  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

### Statues and Reliefs on Jawi Temple

In *Kakawin Negarakertagama*, written by Mpu Prapanca, it is mentioned that the lower part of Jawi Temple is *Śiva*, therefore the temple has five niches in its outer wall that contain statues of the *Śiva* pantheon (Munandar et al., 2021). Inside the temple's sacred space or *garbhagrha*, there is a *yoni*, as shown in Figure 11, although the *linga* that used to accompany it is no longer visible. In the past, the *yoni* served as a place to place Kertanegara's ashes. On the ceiling of the main chamber of the temple, there is a relief depicting a horseman surrounded by light. The informants identified this relief as a representation of the Lord *Surya*, illustrated in Figure 12.

The niche to the left of the entrance gate of Jawi Temple should contain a statue of *Nandīśwara* and the niche to the right should contain a statue of *Mahākāla*, two aspects of *Śiva* as guardian. *Mahākāla* is an aspect of *Śiva* depicted in a state of anger or *kroda*, in the form of a giant with a frightening face, fanged teeth, and has two hands. One of them holds a mace, while the other rests on his waist. *Mahākāla* is regarded as the god of time who controls all things, making him a protector from disaster.

According to the Ministry of Education, Research, and Technology, statues found around Jawi Temple include *Nandīśwara* and *Durga Mahīśāsūramardīnī*. The *Nandīśwara* statue, discovered on the north side during excavation, resembles *Mahādeva* but has only two hands. The name combines “*Nandī*,” *Śiva*’s vehicle, and “*īśwara*,” an aspect of *Śiva*. In Hindu temple architecture, this statue is typically placed in a niche left of the entrance, as shown in Figure 13. The *Durga Mahīśāsūramardīnī* statue, located in the northern chamber near the *garbhagrha*, represents *Parwati*’s *ugra* form defeating the demon *Mahīśa*, symbolizing salvation and the removal of obstacles, as illustrated in Figure 14.

The reliefs in Jawi Temple depict the life of the people during the reign of King Kertanegara. Among other things, they depict the system of farming and the system of



**Figure 11.** *Yoni*  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



**Figure 12.** Relief of Lord *Surya*  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

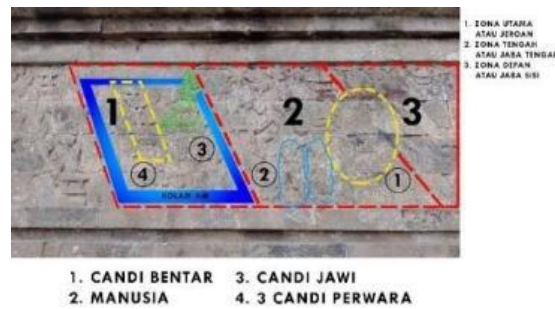


**Figure 13.** *Nandīśwara* Statue  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



**Figure 14.** *Durga Mahīśāsūramardīnī* Statue  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).





**Figure 15.** Relief Map of Jawi Temple Area  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

social interaction of the community, depicting the form of religious rituals, including the depiction of the spatial pattern of Jawi Temple. (Mulyadi et al., 2015).

The carved reliefs at Jawi Temple depict area boundaries marked by straight walls, temple structures, figures, and a *Bentar* Temple, resembling the spatial layout of Balinese temples, as shown in Figure 15. In Bali, temples are arranged into three zones: the *jeroan* (main zone) for worship, the *jaba tengah* (middle zone) for preparations, and the *jaba sisi* (outer zone) as a transitional space. Similarly, Jawi Temple's easternmost zone, along with three ancillary temples, served as the worship area. The central zone shows ceremonial activities, while the westernmost zone, marked by *Candi Bentar*, functions as an entrance. These elements suggest that Jawi Temple was a site of *Śiva* - Buddhist (Hindu-Buddhist) worship.

### Religious and Cosmological Symbolism

Jawi Temple, located on the slopes of Mount Welirang, is a significant heritage site from the Singasari Kingdom. Beyond its monumental architecture, the temple embodies religious, cosmological, and socio-cultural meanings. Field observations, community interviews, and symbolic interpretations reveal its role as a harmonious integration of spirituality and daily Javanese life, past and present. Architecturally, the temple reflects the syncretism of Hinduism and Buddhism: the lower section features Hindu elements, such as statues of *Śiva* and *Nandī*, while the upper part is crowned by a Buddhist *stūpa*. This design symbolizes King Kertanegara's strategy to unify religious communities and ensure social-political stability.

Moreover, the pond that surrounds the temple does not only serve as a water absorption system and seismic buffer but also holds a deeper cosmological meaning, as shown in Figure 16. The placement of the temple in the center of the pond has led to its poetic designation as the “diamond in the middle of the ocean.” During a full moon



**Figure 16.** Pond that Surrounds the Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).





**Figure 17.** Site Utilization Activities at Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

rising from the east, the reflection of the moonlight on the water creates a visual effect in which the temple appears to emit a radiant glow, reinforcing its spiritual role as a connector between the earthly and the celestial realms.

### **Local Community Engagement and the Preservation of Meaning**

Jawi Temple is not merely a passive heritage site but continues to be an integral part of the local community's cultural life, as shown in Figure 17. Rituals such as Padang Bulan, Purnama Sidhi, and Ruwah Desa demonstrate that the temple's spiritual values remain alive. These activities signify the ongoing continuity between the temple and the community that preserves it, where the temple's orientation, sacred timings, and social norms are still maintained within cultural practices.

The core construction of Jawi Temple dates back to the Singasari Kingdom period, which is characterized by the use of andesite stone. This material was carefully shaped and assembled using an interlocking system, reflecting a deep respect for natural materials, craftsmanship, and spiritual precision. In contrast, the red brick structures found in the surrounding areas, such as the split gate (*Gapura Bentar*) on the western side, are more closely associated with the Majapahit period. These later additions, constructed using refined red brick techniques, represent the architectural identity of Majapahit and serve to complement the older andesite-based structure, creating a harmonious blend between the two eras.

### **Symbolization of the Building Form of Jawi Temple**

In the following section, a discussion is presented regarding the symbolization of the building form of Jawi Temple.

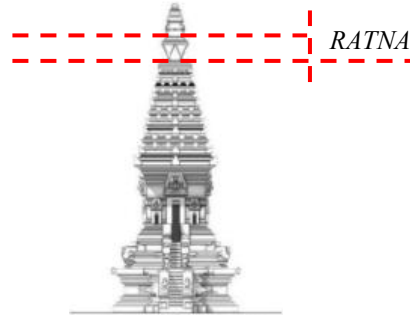
#### **a. Jawi Temple as Mountain Symbolization**

Jawi Temple is composed of three levels, namely the base or foot, the body, and the roof. This composition conceptually reflects a mountain, which in Hindu belief symbolizes a sacred realm divided into three parts. The elevated base includes a staircase and a *pradakṣiṇā patha* or circular terrace that surrounds the sacred area. This section is decorated with ornaments depicting life in the lower realms, such as carvings of animals and plants. The staircase is flanked by a pair of *makara*, mythological sea creatures, and functions as a connector between ground level, the *pradakṣiṇā patha*, and the sacred chamber known as the *garbhagrha*.

The body of the temple features the main entrance and carved niches on three other sides of the structure. The entrance, which faces southeast, is flanked by niches



**Figure 18.** Pit of *garbagrha* Sacred Space on Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).



**Figure 19.** *Ratna* is Symbolic of the Natural Level at the Top of the Mountain  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

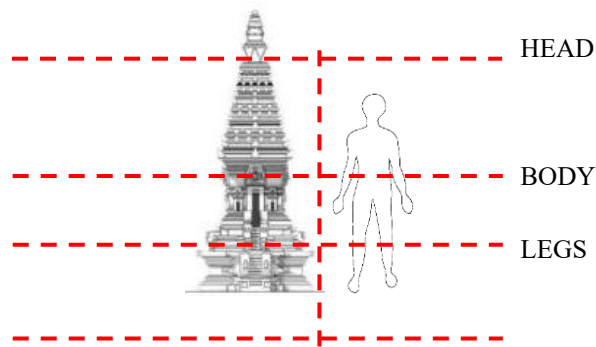
believed to have contained statues of *Nandiśwara* and *Mahākāla*, figures associated with Shaivism. Above the entrance and the niches are carvings of *kala* faces. The roof has a slender form, consisting of multiple tiers adorned with decorative carvings, and is topped with a single *ratna* or jewel-shaped finial.

Symbolically, the three levels of the temple represent a cosmic structure. The base reflects *Bhūrloka*, the earthly realm inhabited by humans and other beings. The body represents the transitional area of the mountain, typically containing caves used in ancient times for meditation. This is embodied in the *garbhagrha*, which functions as a sacred inner space where devotees spiritually connect with the worshipped deity, as shown in Figure 18.

The tiered roof of Jawi Temple represents the summit of a sacred mountain, layered with different realms of life and narrowing upward. At its peak lies the *ratna*, a cylindrical ornament with a rectangular base resembling a crown, symbolizing beauty and ultimate spiritual attainment, as shown in Figure 19 (Arifin, 2015). This ornament marks the highest and holiest realm, believed to be the dwelling of sacred spirits, aligning the temple with the concept of a mountain divided into three levels of sanctity.

#### **b. Equivalence of the Three Tiers of the Jawi Temple and the Three Tiers of the Human Body**

The three levels of the Jawi Temple building also have the same symbolic meaning as the three levels of the human body. In Bali, the conception of the three levels of the human body that is often equated with the three levels of the building body is commonly known as the *Tri Angga* conception or the three-part conception. *Tri Angga* emphasizes the concept of physical space that adopts the division of space based on the anatomy of the human body (head, body, and legs), which holistically accommodates the concept of metaphysical space. This division describes the relationship between humans and God (*Parhyangan*), fellow humans (*Pawongan*), and the surrounding nature (*Palemahan*) (Achmad & Antariksa, 2018). The base or base part of the temple is the foot part of the human body, the body part of the temple is the body part of the human



**Figure 20.** Three Levels of Human Body (*Tri Angga*) on Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

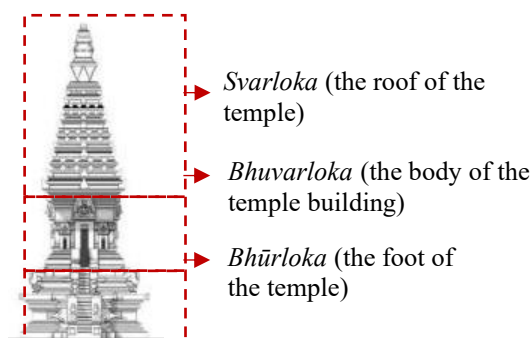
Body, and the roof part of the temple of course becomes easily understood as the head. An interesting aspect of temple architecture is the sacred space within the temple body known as the *garbhagrha*. This space symbolically corresponds to the human stomach, the internal void of the body. In Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, temples are seen as representations of the universe, and the *garbhagrha* reflects the cosmic womb—the source of life, the place where existence begins, unfolds, and eventually ends. It mirrors nature as the mother of all beings, providing life and ultimately reclaiming it.

The *garbhagrha* also serves as a space for spiritual purification and union with the divine. Entering it symbolizes a return to the womb of the universe to be spiritually reborn, pure and free from worldly defilements. In daily life, humans often become entangled in material attachments. Prayer and entry into this sacred space offer an opportunity for renewal, akin to a second birth. This idea aligns with the symbolic image of a child re-entering the cosmic womb to be born again in a state of purity.

This concept also explains the small size of the *garbhagrha* entrance, which typically accommodates only one person. Its form is inspired by the mother's womb, emphasizing a personal, intimate, and gradual process of spiritual rebirth, driven by maternal love and the sacred nature of life.

### c. Equivalence between the Jawi Temple Form and the *Tri Loka* Conception

Hinduism embraces the *Tri Loka* concept which divides the universe into three vertical realms. *Bhūrloka* represents the mortal world, *Bhūvarloka* is the realm of purification, and *Svarloka* symbolizes the divine state of nirvana (Monitha et al., 2021). This structure is reflected in Jawi Temple where the base signifies *Bhūrloka*, the body aligns with *Bhūvarloka*, and the roof represents *Svarloka* as an expression of cosmic order, as shown in Figure 21.



**Figure 21.** Three Levels of Nature (*Tri Loka*) on Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

The base or foot of Jawi Temple is the most richly decorated part, featuring diverse carvings and ornamental motifs that represent the realm of worldly life, or *Bhūrloka*. This section includes depictions of plants and animals that reflect the natural character of the earthly realm.

At the transitional level, the temple contains the *garbhagrha*, a sacred space for worship statues. This part symbolizes the natural middle realm and is often adorned with figures representing divine powers. The worship objects, typically in the form of statues, serve as personifications of divine energy, making the abstract concept of God more tangible and accessible for human devotion. This space bridges the material and spiritual realms, allowing humanity to connect with higher powers through symbolic representation.

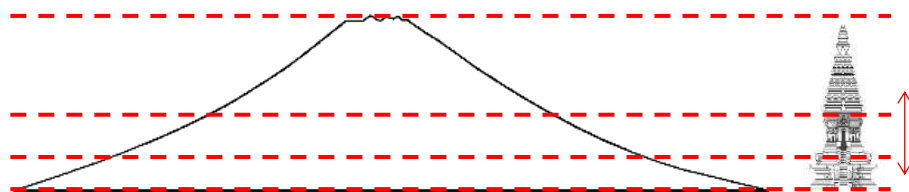
The upper part of the temple reflects *Svarloka*, the celestial or heavenly realm. The roof rises in increasingly conical tiers, symbolizing ascent into the abstract and intangible realm of the divine. Ornamentation at the top becomes simpler and more abstract, culminating in the *ratna* (gem) finial that signifies ultimate transcendence and cosmic emptiness.

This description, when simplified, reflects the concept that the ornamentation of Jawi Temple corresponds to the three realms of *Tri Loka*. The higher the level, the simpler and more abstract the decorative elements become. Ornaments at the lowest level tend to be more concrete, rough in texture, and easier to interpret from a worldly perspective.

#### d. Jawi Temple as a Symbolization of Mount *Meru*

Hindu temple buildings are usually inspired by the existence of Mount *Meru* and Mount *Mandara Giri*. These two mountains are the two most mentioned mountains in various Hinduistic mythologies and cosmological teachings. Mount *Meru* is a cosmic mountain that is all sacred as the support of the universe, this mountain is also referred to as having several levels, each of which is the abode of various creatures in the universe.

The foot of Mount *Meru* is interpreted as the level of the earthly realm or *Bhūrloka*, where humans and other creatures live. The body of the mountain as a level of nature or *Bhuvārloka* is an intermediate area that brings together the lower realm where humans live and the upper realm or the place where the gods live. This area is commonly depicted as the abode of various mythological creatures guarding the mountain body area. The summit of Mount *Meru* also has several levels, each of which has different strata of sanctity. The highest level of Mount *Semeru* has the highest sanctity which is the most sacred and is ruled by Lord Indra as the king of the other gods, as shown in Figure 22.



**Figure 22.** Jawi Temple as a Symbolization of Mount *Meru*  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

In Hindu mythology, the inspiration for sacred architecture originates from Mount *Mandara*, depicted in the *Adiparwa* story as the churning stick used to stir the sea of milk (*ksirarnava*), wrapped by the dragon Basuki and held by the Gods and Asuras (Suteja, 2017). In Bali, this symbolism is clearly reflected in the form of the *Padmasana*.

Mount *Meru*, however, is the most influential cosmic mountain in Hindu sacred architecture. Its conceptual form inspires various structures such as the *mandir* in India, *wat* in Thailand and Cambodia, temples in Java, *meru* towers in Bali, and even the Japanese *pagoda*, which derives from the idea of Mount Semeru, or *Sumisen* in Japanese. As a Hindu-Buddhist temple, Jawi Temple also draws from this cosmic model. The base symbolizes the foot of Mount *Meru*, the dwelling place of earthly beings.

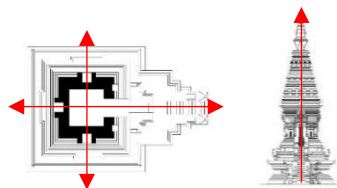
The temple body functions as a transitional space, representing the unification of the human mind through ritual within the *garbhagṛha*, directly facing the divine statue. The roof of Jawi Temple symbolizes the mountain peak, believed to be the dwelling of the gods. At the top sits an abstract ornament called *stūpika*, the highest and most inaccessible element of the structure.

The *stūpa*, in Buddhist symbolism, represents the Buddha's spiritual journey. It consists of three parts: *andaḥ*, the lowest part symbolizing the realm dominated by desire; *yantra*, the middle part representing self-awareness and meditation; and *cakra*, the topmost part signifying *nirvana*, the divine realm (Sinaulan, 2018). This symbolic structure illustrates a clear conceptual parallel between Jawi Temple and Mount *Meru*, reinforcing its sacred cosmological meaning in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

#### e. Jawi Temple as a Symbolic Illustration of the Head of Lord *Brahmā*

In the teachings of Hindu cosmogony or the process of creating the universe, it is stated that the universe was created from one point which then developed in four directions in a balanced manner. These four main directions are north east west and south which are known as the sanctified directions in Hinduism and Buddhism (Paramadhyaksa, 2014). This becomes the direction of orientation of settlements and ritual activities in Hinduism and Buddhism. In the form of sacred buildings, the existence of the concept of the four main directions further gave birth to the form of sacred building plans that tend to be equilateral boxes whose four sides face the four main directions, as shown in Figure 23.

The creation of the universe is personified through the figure of Lord *Brahmā*, who has four faces oriented toward the four cardinal directions. Each face, with a mouth cavity, symbolizes the act of creation, giving birth to holy beings that spread throughout



**Figure 23.** The Concept of Four Directions in Jawi Temple  
(Source: Personal Documentation, 2024).

the world. This cosmogonic concept also inspired the illustration of Mount *Meru*, believed to have four similar faces aligned with the cardinal points, reflecting the same symbolism as Lord *Brahmā*.

This concept is embodied in the architectural plans of many Hindu-Buddhist temples across Asia, which often feature four main sides as a base layout. These rectangular plans may evolve into octagonal or circular forms. In the context of Jawi Temple, the structure can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of *Brahmā*'s head, with four faces resembling four sacred spaces. Three of these appear as temple niches or reliefs surrounding the central sacred space. The main chamber or *garbhagrha*, located at the front, features a door adorned with a relief of a *kala* face above the entrance.

The entrance of the temple's *garbhagrha* symbolizes the oral cavity of Lord *Brahmā* who is believed to create various sacred beings in the universe. Entering the *garbhagrha* and performing prayers inside it can be interpreted as an effort to unite oneself with the Creator in order to be spiritually reborn through the sacred mouth of Lord *Brahmā* and emerge from the holy inner chamber. The act of praying within the temple and then stepping back into the outer world signifies symbolic rebirth entering the divine space through the mouth of *Brahmā* and returning purified and free from ignorance and darkness.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the study of the meaning contained in the foundation or base, body, and roof of the Jawi Temple building, the following five things can be concluded.

First, like the embodiment of a mountain, the three levels of the Jawi Temple building can be interpreted as the foot, the body, and the top of the mountain. Second, when equated with the segments of the human body vertically, the three levels of the Jawi Temple building can be interpreted as the feet, body, and head of a human being. Third, in line with the Hindu Tri Loka Conception, the three parts of the Jawi Temple building contain symbolic meanings as the natural levels of Bhūrloka, Bhuvarloka, and Svarloka. Fourth, when aligned with the Buddhist Tri Loka Conception, the three parts of the Jawi Temple building are the embodiment of the description of the natural levels of Kamaloka, Rupaloka, and Arupaloka. The last one, The Jawi Temple building is a symbolization of Mount Meru which has three levels, namely the foot, the body, and the top which in the top area is the location of the Kingdom of Heaven where the Gods reside.

This study highlights that the integration of cosmological and spiritual philosophy into the physical form of Jawi Temple is not merely artistic, but fundamental to preserving the community's cultural and spiritual values. Jawi Temple is a living symbol of cultural identity and spiritual worldview, sustained through traditional rituals, the relevance of its teachings to contemporary life, and its role as a cultural focal point. Thus, temple preservation entails not only physical conservation but also the safeguarding of the values that support the community's spiritual and social continuity.



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