

IDENTIFYING KEY ELEMENTS OF GENIUS LOCI IN THE AREAS OF HISTORICAL MOSQUES IN YOGYAKARTA

Case Studies of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman

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ABSTRACT: *This research explores the key elements of genius loci in the areas of historical mosques in Yogyakarta. These mosques' areas demonstrate the acculturation of Hindu and Buddhist tradition and the architecture of the early mosques in Nusantara. Using qualitative methods, the study examines the elements of genius loci framed by Norberg-Schulz's on the areas of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman in Yogyakarta. The findings reveal that both mosques' area integrate image, space, and character yet differ in the extent to which they manifest Islamic and local cultural influences. The conclusions suggest that these mosques' areas not only serve as religious sites but also as cultural symbols, highlighting the resilience of local identity amidst social transformation. Recommendations include emphasizing the preservation of cultural narratives in architectural development to maintain a connection with the past while accommodating modern needs.*

Keywords: *Genius Loci, Javanese-Islamic Architecture, Masjid Gedhe Kauman, Masjid Gedhe Mataram, Yogyakarta*

INTRODUCTION

Background

Mosques (masjids) are an inseparable part of the series of worship rituals in Islam (Adi, Puspitasari, 2016). Apart from worship, mosques are also cultural and social centers for Muslims, such as providing space for education, cultural preservation and social networking (Cesari, 2006). As in Indonesia, mosques are not only religious symbols such as places of worship and religious study but also function as public spaces and buildings (Adi, Puspitasari, 2016). However, in regions like Yogyakarta, Indonesia, masjids also integrate deeply with local cultures, reflecting the rich heritage of the region. The construction of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* dates back centuries, during periods of significant cultural exchange between Islamic and Javanese influences. According to Fauziah Nasution (2020), there are several theories about when Islam began to enter Indonesia. Not by colonizing, this teaching was spread through trade, education and culture. That is what differentiates this teaching from other teachings, so it takes quite a long time to be accepted by society (Nirmala, Samad, Zuheldi, 2024). *Ulama* such as preachers or saints embed Islamic teachings and combine them with the original culture of Javanese society, which makes Islam well accepted (Munna, Ayundasari, 2021). We can see the results of this combination in the architectural style of the *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*. This blending is evident in the ornate carvings, symmetrical layouts, and use of natural materials characteristic of many Indonesian mosques. In Yogyakarta specifically, the royal court's patronage facilitated the creation of grand masjids that served both spiritual and ceremonial purposes. These structures not only reflected the power and prestige of the ruling dynasty but also embodied the syncretic nature of Javanese-Islamic culture.

It is proposed that the areas of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* in Yogyakarta, despite sharing commonalities in their integration of natural elements, Javanese cultural aspects, and architectural context, will reveal distinct genius loci. This

distinction stems from the unique expression of Islamic and local cultural influences found within each mosque's area. This hypothesis suggests that each mosque's area genius loci is not merely a reflection of its physical attributes, but rather a result of the complex interplay between these tangible and intangible cultural influences, creating unique atmospheres, meanings, and cultural significance that contribute to their individual identities.

There has not been a single study that directly discusses the genius loci comparison between the areas of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*. Existing literature primarily focuses on individual aspects of these structures rather than exploring the comparative values of the genius loci in the two mosques' areas. However, the study differs in accessibility, specifically on access permits at the *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*. There are limitations for this research which only focus on the surrounding area, outside area, and porch.

Analyzing and comparing the genius loci of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* area is crucial to understanding how the distinct spirit of place in these historical mosques areas reflects the unique interaction of religious and cultural influences in Yogyakarta. While serving as essential religious spaces, these mosques also hold profound cultural significance, showcasing the integration of various architectural elements and design philosophies (Saputra, 2024). The research addresses a significant research gap by comparing the genius loci of these two prominent mosques' area, providing valuable insights into Yogyakarta's architectural and cultural heritage.

The study of the Genius Loci value of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* area is crucial for understanding their historical significance and the integration of local cultural narratives into their architectural structures. It highlights the importance of public literacy in preserving history and the need to foster creativity in preserving culture and history (Wilaela & Widiarto, 2022). This research aims to deepen our understanding of how genius loci shape cultural identity, ensuring future generations can appreciate and celebrate the rich legacies embedded in these sacred spaces.

This paper aims to explore the genius loci in *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* areas in Yogyakarta, examining the three elements of genius loci which are image, space, and character. By applying the Norberg-Schulz phenomenological approach, this study identifies the key elements of genius loci on these mosques' areas, demonstrating their dual functions as religious sites and cultural symbols.

Problem Formulation

How does a comparative analysis of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* areas reveal the elements of genius loci and socio-cultural roles in their architecture, shaping their identities as cultural symbols in Indonesia?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Christian Norberg-Schulz's Genius Loci theory seeks to understand the "spirit of a place," or the essence that makes a location unique. The theory posits that every place possesses a distinct character derived from a combination of tangible and intangible qualities. This character can be understood by examining a location through three key lenses: image, space, and character (Norberg-Schulz, 1979).

The Genius Loci emerges from the interplay of these three aspects:

- Image refers to the immediately apparent visual elements of a place. These could include landmarks, colors, textures, and other features that make a place visually distinctive.
- Space considers the relationship between various elements within a place and its surrounding environment. This encompasses factors such as proximity, connectivity, and the organization of built and natural forms.

- Character describes the overall atmosphere of a place, which is shaped by both its physical characteristics and its cultural and historical context (Norberg-Schulz, 1979).

The Genius Loci theory can be used to analyze and understand both types of places. Authors can discover the Genius Loci of a place by repeatedly observing it and documenting the human experiences that occur there. They can then analyze these observations through the theoretical framework of the Genius Loci theory (Norberg-Schulz, 1979).

The study of Genius Loci, as explained by Christian Norberg-Schulz, examines how the distinctive character of a place is formed through architectural elements and local cultural practices. This example study case highlights a case of Kauman Village in Yogyakarta which illustrates how natural elements, cultural values, and architectural context play a role in creating the unique identities of these locations.

In Kauman Village, the genius locus is characterized by traditional Javanese landscapes, which foster community interaction and reflect the village's historical significance as the birthplace of the Muhammadiyah organization. The architecture combines Javanese style with Islamic influences, creating a functional design that supports communal activities (Saputra, 2024). Such as the research conducted by Rudnicka Bogusz on the Issue of Genius Locus in the Revalorization of Post-Military Complexes in Legnica, Poland. According to Rudnicka Bogusz M (2022), Changes that occur due to two components, namely tangible and intangible components of cultural heritage, are very important in preserving the identity of the Community that has created and inherited spaces of cultural and historical meaning. Changes in the function of the barracks still maintain the historical value of the barracks into monumental historical buildings. With the historical value and identity of the existing Community, the Barracks are no longer seen as a foreign culture but as a valuable architectural heritage and as a local symbol (Bogusz M, 2022). By examining this case study through the Norberg-Schulz framework, this research reveals how a place embodies its unique spirit while adapting to a changing cultural landscape.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research will use a multifaceted approach, including field surveys, observations, interviews, and document analysis, to gather data on the cultural significance and acculturation processes of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*. Field surveys will involve direct visits, while observational studies will focus on understanding socio-cultural roles. Interviews will gather personal narratives from mosque administrators, visitors, and residents. Data analysis will use qualitative techniques, focusing on individuals' lived experiences and themes related to belief, identity, and community belonging. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Genius Loci elements influence mosque architecture and their cultural significance in communities. Moreover, secondary resources will be reviewed to provide a broader context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Masjid Gedhe Mataram's visual image exhibits a distinct architectural style characterized by the fusion of Javanese, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist cultural elements. Figure 1 showcases the front facade of the Grand Mosque of Mataram, highlighting the tiered *tajug* roof, a common feature in Javanese mosques. *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* also reflects the results of the acculturation of two cultures, which is clearly visible in its architectural design. The mosque building combines elements of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic culture, which are reflected through various ornaments and architectural elements that adorn every corner of the building.



Figure 1 Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman in Yogyakarta
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Moving on to the spatial organization of the *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*, Figure 2 presents the mosque's site plan. Both mosques' site plan, have similarity of a typical Javanese architecture plan. It encompasses the *liwan* (main prayer hall), the *serambi* (veranda), the courtyard, and the *jagang* (moat) encircling the mosque complex. This layout echoes the spatial organization found in many traditional Javanese mosques, emphasizing a harmonious balance between the built environment and its natural context. The inclusion of a *makam* (tomb) complex within the mosque compound further underscores the cultural blend.

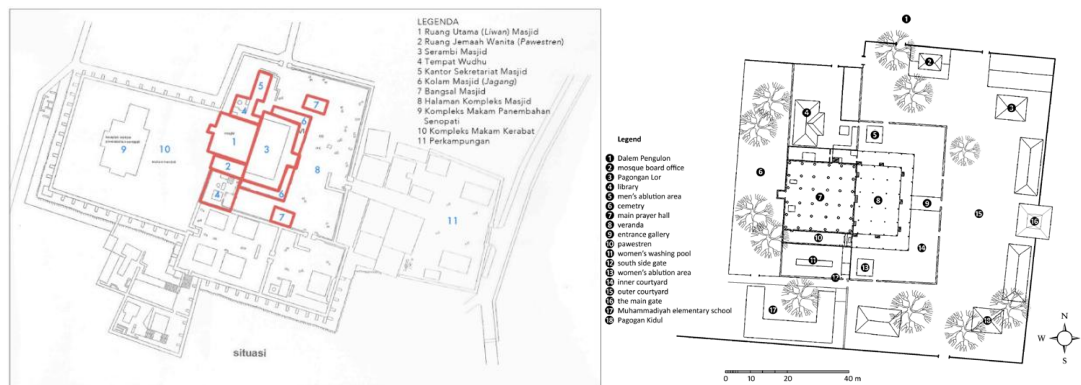


Figure 2 Site Plan of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman Complex
Source : 1995 Dinas Kebudayaan DIY Archive and Research Gate

Image

Masjid Gedhe Mataram and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* are heritage buildings from the Islamic Mataram Kingdom, both with unique architectural designs influenced by acculturation. *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*, founded in 1640 under Sultan Agung, stands south of the Kotagede Market in Jagalan village and is considered a royal mosque. Its design features a blend of pre-Islamic and Javanese-Islamic styles, with a temple-like entrance gate and a *limasan* roof. The *paduraksa* gate, a Hindu-Buddhist temple entrance, is also present (Purbahanggita & Prianto, 2021).

Masjid Gedhe Kauman, founded in 1773 by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I, embodies a Javanese-Islamic character associated with the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the Muhammadiyah organization. Its gate features Muhammadiyah Islamic symbols and has a *limasan* roof. Located west of the Ngayogyakarta Palace, it serves as a spiritual center for *abdi dalem* (palace servants) but is not directly owned by *Keraton*. The gate to this mosque is white, with a typical palace design surrounding the complex area. On the roof, *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* has a layered roof, a legacy of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition in Java, like *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*.



Figure 3 Paduraksa Gate of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Entrance Gate of Masjid Gedhe Kauman from The Front and Side Views
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Masjid Gedhe Mataram and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* are mosques in the area, both surrounded by residential areas and surrounded by small alleys accessible only by motorbikes. Both mosques play a significant role in the economy, providing job opportunities for the community. At *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*, residents can open businesses like kebaya rental, photo services, and food stalls. Meanwhile, *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* attracts visitors from near and far, creating economic opportunities for residents. Many people act as traders, selling goods and souvenirs, and tour guides, sharing the mosque's rich history and cultural significance. During *Ramadhan*, the alley is also used as a Ramadan market in Gang Tiban.



Figure 4 Residential area of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation and Tirto.id

Moreover, *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* is a mosque with a unique architectural style that blends Javanese and Islamic elements. It features a multi-layered roof, wooden tiles, and traditional Javanese elements like the *mustaka* and *makara*. The mosque's main pillars, *lambang gantung*, *sirah kutu*, and leaf-shaped carvings reflect a conscious effort to adapt to the tropical climate and incorporate Javanese aesthetics. The mosque's management member (*takmir*), Soehadi emphasizes the symbolic meaning behind elements like the *kepuh* in the courtyard and the 17 trees representing the cycles of prayer in Islam.

Space

Masjid Gedhe Mataram and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* are historic mosques with distinctive large front yards, reflecting Javanese Islamic architecture. They also feature tomb areas of significant historical and cultural value, serving as the final resting places for notable figures, scholars, and locals connected to the mosque. The mosque's Space is another crucial aspect of its Genius Loci. The plan reveals a spatial organization typical of traditional Javanese mosques, featuring a *liwan* (main prayer hall), *serambi* (veranda), courtyard, and a *jagang* (moat) that encircles the complex. This layout reflects the Javanese principle of harmonizing the built environment with nature.

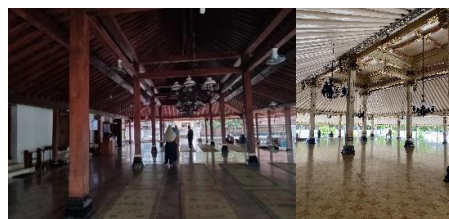


Figure 5 *Serambi* (Veranda) of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Both mosques have tombs in their complex areas. *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* complex includes the tombs of kings, important historical sites and pilgrimage destinations. Meanwhile, in *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*, the tomb complex contains the tombs of Nyai Ahmad Dahlan, the wife of Ahmad Dahlan, and the *keraton* soldiers. According to the website of the Ministry of Culture (2023), the King's Tomb in *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* houses the tombs of the founders of the Islamic Kingdom of Mataram and their families. This unique combination of mosque and king's tomb transformed Kotagede from the political capital of Mataram into a pilgrimage city, attracting pilgrims seeking mystical powers.

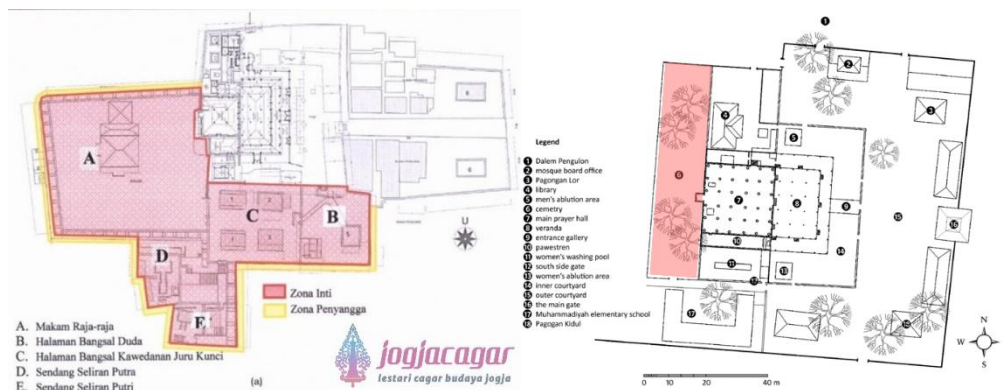


Figure 6 Site Plan of Tombs Area in *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*
Source : 2021 Jogja Cagar Website and Research Gate

In addition, both mosques also have *pangonan* (pavilions). Based on an interview with Erwito, the documenter of Kotagede, it was revealed that the existence of *pagongan* (pavilions) on the right and left of the Great Mataram Mosque building adds a historical dimension to the space, connecting the present with the past which primarily serve as spaces for relaxation and reflection for visitors and pilgrims. Meanwhile, based on the interview we conducted at *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*, currently the pavilion in the mosque complex only functions as a security post.



Figure 7 *Bangsals* (Pavilion) of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Masjid Gedhe Mataram and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* are renowned for their functionality, inclusivity, and environmental connection. They have spacious, inclusive places of worship for all ages, offering religious classes and daily prayers. The mosque's layout supports various activities, including daily prayers, *Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an* (TPA), social gatherings, and health services. In *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*, this qur'anic school is conducted every evening at the mosque on the north and south part of the *serambi*. These mosques are originally a religious court and meeting place for scholars, has evolved into a communal space for all ages.



Figure 8 Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPA) Facility of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman

Source : 2024 Author Documentation



Figure 9 Front Yard of Masjid Gedhe Kauman and Masjid Gedhe Mataram

Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Character

Masjid Gedhe Mataram and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*'s character is shaped by the harmonious integration of Javanese and Islamic architectural traditions, especially in the roof section which carries the concept of a multitiered (*tajug*) roof, they also equipped with a porch on the right and left sides or terraces, as well as a main prayer hall. Inside the main prayer room, four main wooden columns, known as *soko guru*, support the structure, a common feature in Javanese mosque architecture.

The *liwan* itself is covered by a *tajug* roof, a pyramid-shaped structure characteristic of Javanese styles and influenced by Hindu architecture. This roof type is well-suited for Yogyakarta's tropical climate. However, the *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* porch exhibits a different roof structure—a *limasan* roof with wooden horses. This *limasan* roof connects to the *tajug* roof through iron plate gutters, a technique possibly adopted from Chinese carpentry of the period. This detail reveals an openness to external influences while still retaining the core Javanese architectural character (Purbahanggita & Prianto, 2021).



Figure 10 Tajug Roof of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman

Source : 2024 Author Documentation



Figure 11 Limasan Roof of Masjid Gedhe Mataram and Masjid Gedhe Kauman

Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Surrounding both entire mosques complex is a *jagang*, or perimeter pool. The *jagang* acts as a symbolic cleansing element, requiring visitors to purify themselves before entering the mosque. This spatial element signifies the mosque's sanctity and integrates water as a purifying element, reflecting Islamic principles of ritual purity. The *jagang* serves not only as a physical boundary but also symbolizes spiritual cleansing before entering the sacred space of the mosque (Purbahanggita & Prianto, 2021). The *jagang* in *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* completely encircles the complex which serve as a symbolic barrier that requires spiritual cleansing before entering the holy space. Meanwhile, in *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*, which was previously used as a place to clean one's feet before entering the mosque area, the *jagang* now functions as a practical element for water management and drainage, reflecting its integration with the surrounding urban environment.



Figure 12 *Jagang* (Moat) of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

The gate ornaments of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* incorporate floral and plant motifs influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions and symbolize values like good behavior and social adaptability. However, these ornaments are not merely decorative but represent the integration of Hindu-Buddhist elements into Islamic architecture, embodying specific values: the fragrance of flowers represents good behavior, and the flexibility of leaves symbolizes social adaptability. These details emphasize the mosque's function as a space for cultivating community and social harmony within the framework of Islam (Purbahanggita & Prianto, 2021). There are no specific meanings behind each individual motif of the *Paduraksa* Gate's ornaments. On the other hand, the gate of *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* displays the symbol of the Muhammadiyah organization which reflect its association with Islamic reform and modernity.



Figure 13 *Paduraksa* Gate Ornaments of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Masjid Gedhe Mataram's vibrant and multifaceted character is attributed to its role as a place for worship and cultural practices, characterized by various human behavior within its spaces, which converges tangible and intangible aspects to create a unique atmosphere. (Setyowati et al., 2017). Moreover, *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* has evolved from a place of worship to a hub for community activities, socializing, and business. The mosque's presence in the area reflects a blend of tradition and modernity, enhancing economic and social relations. This transformation demonstrates *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*'s ability to adapt to community needs while maintaining its cultural and spiritual identity, as well as its influential Javanese heritage.

The unique atmosphere of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* stems from the harmonious blending of Islamic and Javanese elements. Erwito highlights the use of *bedug* (large drum) and *kentongan* (slit drum) to announce prayer times. This tradition, predating loudspeakers, persists as a symbol of Javanese Islamic identity. Unfortunately, there are no longer any *bedug* and *kentongan* at *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* because they have been returned to the Ngajogjakarta Hadiningrat Palace. Moreover, the presence of Islamic calligraphy ornaments in *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* alongside traditional Javanese elements further signifies the intertwining of religious and cultural influences. Meanwhile, *Masjid Gedhe Kauman* does not have any calligraphy ornaments. On the terrace and veranda there are only Javanese carved ornaments covered with colored paint.



Figure 14 *Bedug* (large drum) and *kentongan* (slit drum) of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation



Figure 15 Calligraphy Ornaments of *Masjid Gedhe Mataram* and Art Ornament of *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*
Source : 2024 Author Documentation

Masjid Gedhe Mataram in Java is a mosque that blends Javanese and Islamic traditions, offering a tranquil atmosphere for spiritual retreat. Its historical significance is evident in its inclusivity, welcoming people from different religions. The mosque's architecture combines Islamic and Hindu elements, reflecting the community's cooperative spirit. The mosque's connection to Javanese Islamic traditions is emphasized by Sunan Kalijaga, a prominent Javanese *wali*. *Masjid Gedhe Kauman*, on the other hand, has a timeless character reflecting the harmony of history, architecture, and tradition, embodying the essence of Javanese craftsmanship and Islamic influence.

CONCLUSION

Through the exploration of the Genius Loci concept in both mosques, it can be concluded that the spirit values of historical values contained in both mosques in the past are still maintained and can be felt even with changes and adaptations in the changes in architectural aspects, and spatial functions. We as a society can participate in maintaining and preserving these values by respecting the existing culture and values.

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