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## Audio-Visual Documentation of Cengklungan as a Living Archive

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### Abstract:

This study explores the practice of audio-visual documentation of Cengklungan, a traditional musical expression from Temanggung, Central Java, through the framework of applied ethnomusicology. The purpose of this research is to examine how documentation can function not only as a record of musical information but also as a form of cultural engagement that supports the continuity and transmission of the tradition. The research employed qualitative methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews with tradition bearers, and collaborative audio-visual recording sessions. These approaches allowed the researcher to engage directly with the musicians and community members, ensuring that the process of documentation was participatory rather than extractive. The results reveal three major findings: first, the musical structure of Cengklungan demonstrates a collective rhythmic organization shaped by local ritual and agricultural cycles; second, its performance functions as a medium of social cohesion, spirituality, and intergenerational learning; and third, the community perceives documentation not merely as preservation but as cultural validation. The process of co-producing the recordings also generated renewed interest among younger participants, demonstrating the potential of documentation as a catalyst for revitalization.

This research concludes that audio-visual documentation can operate as a living cultural archive, enabling tradition holders to shape how their cultural expression is represented, stored, and circulated. Beyond capturing sound and image, the documentation becomes a dialogic space where cultural agency and continuity are negotiated. The study offers implications for heritage work, community-based archiving, and applied ethnomusicology practice, particularly in contexts where living traditions face shifts in participation, transmission, and cultural relevance.

**Keywords:** Cengklungan; Audio-Visual Documentation; Applied Ethnomusicology; Living Archive; Community-Based Practice

**Abstrak:**

Penelitian ini mengkaji praktik dokumentasi audio-visual terhadap Cengklungan, sebuah ekspresi musik tradisional dari Temanggung, Jawa Tengah, melalui kerangka etnomusikologi terapan. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah menelaah bagaimana dokumentasi tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai catatan informasi musical, tetapi juga sebagai bentuk keterlibatan budaya yang mendukung keberlanjutan serta transmisi tradisi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, termasuk observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan para pelaku tradisi, serta sesi rekaman audio-visual kolaboratif. Pendekatan tersebut memungkinkan peneliti berinteraksi langsung dengan para musisi dan anggota komunitas, sehingga proses dokumentasi bersifat partisipatif, bukan sekadar ekstraktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga temuan utama. Pertama, struktur musical Cengklungan memperlihatkan organisasi ritmis kolektif yang dibentuk oleh siklus ritual dan pertanian lokal. Kedua, pertunjukan Cengklungan berfungsi sebagai medium kohesi sosial, spiritualitas, dan pembelajaran lintas generasi. Ketiga, komunitas memandang dokumentasi bukan semata sebagai upaya pelestarian, melainkan sebagai bentuk validasi budaya. Proses produksi bersama rekaman juga menumbuhkan minat baru di kalangan generasi muda, menunjukkan potensi dokumentasi sebagai katalis revitalisasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa dokumentasi audio-visual dapat berfungsi sebagai arsip budaya yang hidup, memungkinkan para pemangku tradisi menentukan bagaimana ekspresi budaya mereka direpresentasikan, disimpan, dan disebarluaskan. Lebih dari sekadar menangkap suara dan gambar, dokumentasi menjadi ruang dialogis di mana agensi budaya dan keberlanjutan dinegosiasikan. Studi ini memberikan implikasi bagi kerja pelestarian, pengarsipan berbasis komunitas, serta praktik etnomusikologi terapan, khususnya pada konteks

tradisi hidup yang menghadapi perubahan

partisipasi, transmisi, dan relevansi budaya.

**Kata kunci: Cengklungan; dokumentas Audio-Visual; Etnomusikologi terapan; arsip hidup; praktik berbasis komunitas**

## 1. Introduction

Traditional musical practices in Indonesia demonstrate a rich diversity shaped by geography, ritual function, and localized knowledge transfer. Among these traditions is Cengklungan, a communal musical practice found in Temanggung, Central Java, which is performed using a set of small idiophones and rhythmic vocal patterns. While widely recognized within the community, Cengklungan remains under-documented in academic and archival contexts, particularly in comparison with more established Javanese musical practices such as gamelan or tembang. As cultural expressions increasingly encounter shifts in participation and intergenerational transmission, documentation becomes central not only to preservation but also to cultural continuity and community identity.

Previous studies in ethnomusicology have explored audio-visual documentation as a tool for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, yet these approaches often operate within extractive research frameworks that separate researchers from cultural actors. Meanwhile, the growing movement in applied ethnomusicology positions research as a collaborative practice that engages communities in the process of cultural representation, decision-making, and dissemination. This framework aligns with the concept of the living archive, which understands documentation not as a fixed record but as an evolving cultural space shaped by negotiation, use, and reinterpretation.

Despite this development, research addressing how audio-visual documentation can function as a living archive—particularly in community-led contexts—remains limited. In the case of Cengklungan, no established archival model currently exists to represent its musical structure, cultural function, or performance context in a way that is accessible to both researchers and community practitioners.

Therefore, this study investigates how the process of documenting Cengklungan through applied ethnomusicology can generate a living cultural archive. It examines how collaborative documentation practices may support cultural agency, foster intergenerational engagement, and contribute to sustainable preservation within the community..

## 2. Literature Review

Studies in ethnomusicology have long emphasized the importance of documenting musical traditions as part of cultural preservation, particularly within communities where knowledge transmission occurs orally. Scholars such as Seeger (2004) and Barz & Cooley (2008) argue that documentation is not merely a process of recording sonic material but also an interpretive practice that shapes how musical traditions are

represented and understood. In this context, audio-visual media has evolved into a preferred archival method due to its capacity to capture performance, embodiment, and social interaction—elements that cannot be fully conveyed through notation alone.

The development of applied ethnomusicology marks a shift from observational research toward participatory and community-centered engagement. Titon (2015) and Harrison (2016) define applied ethnomusicology as an approach that integrates scholarship with social action, ensuring that research outcomes remain relevant and beneficial to the communities represented. This shift challenges extractive documentation models by prioritizing collaboration, cultural agency, and reciprocity.

Closely related is the concept of the living archive, which critiques conventional archival approaches that treat culture as static. Instead, living archives are dynamic systems where cultural materials continue to circulate, adapt, and remain socially meaningful. Ketelaar (2001) and Giannachi (2016) highlight that a living archive does not end at the point of documentation; rather, it develops through engagement, interpretation, and reuse by cultural practitioners and future generations.

Research concerning Indonesian traditional music archives—such as works by Goldman & Strachan (2020) on gamelan documentation—demonstrates increasing interest in community-based archival practices. However, musical traditions such as Cengklungan remain critically understudied in both applied and archival scholarship. Thus, existing literature provides theoretical grounding but reveals a gap in case-based studies where audio-visual documentation is explicitly treated as a living archive within a collaborative fieldwork framework.

### 3. Methods

This research employed a qualitative research design grounded in ethnographic fieldwork and the methodological principles of applied ethnomusicology. The study was conducted in Temanggung, Central Java, where Cengklungan is actively practiced by local community members. The qualitative approach was selected to capture the cultural, social, and musical dimensions of the tradition as expressed through lived experience rather than solely through textual or analytical description.

Data collection was carried out through participant observation, allowing the researcher to engage directly in rehearsals, performances, and informal gatherings where Cengklungan is practiced. This approach provided insight into performance context, musical structure, and community perception. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key cultural practitioners, including senior performers, younger musicians, and community leaders. These interviews focused on cultural meaning, transmission, musical knowledge, and perspectives on documentation

and preservation.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's framework, including data reduction, coding, and interpretation to identify themes related to musical structure, cultural function, and archival practice. Validity was strengthened through triangulation of field notes, interviews, and recorded media, while member checking ensured interpretive accuracy and ethical representation of participant voices.

#### 4. Results

The findings of this study are organized into three primary categories: musical characteristics, performance context, and community responses to the documentation process. These results reflect data collected through interviews, participant observation, and audio-visual recording.

First, the musical structure of Cengklungan demonstrates a cyclic rhythmic framework performed through a combination of percussive patterns and interlocking vocal calls. The instruments used consist primarily of small idiophones arranged to create layered rhythmic textures. Each performer contributes a specific rhythmic role, and coordination is maintained through shared memory rather than formal notation. The structure includes repeated rhythmic cells that form a continuous loop throughout the performance, displaying collective timing and synchronized ensemble sensitivity.

Second, Cengklungan is performed within a social and cultural setting tied to agricultural cycles and communal gatherings. The tradition functions as both entertainment and ritual expression. Performances typically occur in open communal spaces and involve flexible participation, where performers may join or leave without interrupting the musical flow. Intergenerational participation was observed, with senior performers leading rhythmic cues while younger participants followed through imitation.

Third, the introduction of audio-visual documentation generated varied responses within the community. Participants expressed a sense of pride and recognition upon seeing their cultural practice recorded. Younger members showed increased interest in learning the music after participating in and viewing the recordings. During the documentation process, community members contributed feedback regarding recording angles, instrument placement, and performance sequencing, demonstrating a collaborative engagement with the archival process.

These results provide a descriptive overview of the musical, cultural, and participatory dimensions of Cengklungan as observed during the fieldwork and documentation stages.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings	Category	Description
	Musical Characteristics	Cyclic rhythmic structure, layered idiophone textures, interlocking vocal patterns, absence of notation, collective timing through shared memory.
	Performance Context	Community gatherings, agricultural cycle relations, open and flexible participation, intergenerational involvement, outdoor performance setting.
	Community Response to Documentation	Increased engagement, pride in cultural visibility, youth interest in learning, and collaborative involvement in recording decisions.

**5. Discussions**

The findings of this study illustrate how Cengklungan functions not only as a musical tradition but also as a socially embedded practice that reflects communal identity and cultural continuity. The ensemble's cyclic rhythmic structure and flexible participation model align with Seeger's perspective that traditional music systems often rely on embodied memory rather than notation. The absence of written scores among practitioners suggests that performance knowledge is transmitted orally and through imitation, supporting Merriam's assertion that music in oral traditions is inseparable from its social and cultural context.

The collaborative process of documentation demonstrated the principles of applied ethnomusicology, where research is conducted with rather than on cultural practitioners. The community's involvement in decisions regarding recording procedures, camera angles, and musical sequencing shows that documentation can empower participants and reinforce cultural agency. This aligns with Titon's framework of sustainability, which emphasizes the importance of community participation in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The increased engagement of younger participants after encountering the recordings suggests that documentation can act as a bridge between generations, potentially revitalizing traditions facing decreased transmission.

These results also demonstrate the relevance of the living archive framework. Rather than functioning as a static repository, the audio-

visual documentation became a dynamic space where cultural meaning was negotiated, reinterpreted, and experienced by the community. The recordings served both as memory and as an active catalyst for renewed participation, affirming Ketelaar's argument that archives are activated through use rather than merely through preservation. In this context, the documentation process not only preserved musical materials but also stimulated cultural reflection and participation, demonstrating how an archive can operate as a living and evolving cultural entity.

### **6. Conclusions**

This study demonstrates that the audio-visual documentation of Cengklungan, conducted through an applied ethnomusicology framework, can function as a living cultural archive that supports preservation, participation, and intergenerational transmission. The findings show that Cengklungan possesses a cyclical rhythmic structure, flexible performance format, and strong communal significance rooted in local cultural practice. The collaborative approach used in the documentation process fostered cultural agency, encouraged participant involvement, and contributed to a renewed sense of ownership among community members. Younger participants, in particular, expressed increased interest in learning the tradition after engaging with the recorded material, indicating the potential role of documentation in revitalization efforts. The study affirms that a living archive does not merely collect and store cultural material, but evolves through continued use, reinterpretation, and circulation among the community. Future research may expand this work by exploring long-term access models, community-led archiving systems, and comparative studies with other regional traditional music practices. The results highlight the importance of ethical, participatory, and context-sensitive documentation methods in ensuring that traditional music remains meaningful and sustainable within contemporary cultural ecosystems.

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