

# Cultural Landscape of Minangkabau Traditional Settlement in *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement

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**Abstract:** Harmonious interaction between human, nature and culture in a settlement present a concept of a cultural landscape. Traditional settlements which have distinctive arrangements according to the customs that apply in their area form cultural landscapes. One of the traditional settlements, namely The *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement, is a representation of the Minangkabau people's settlement in the form of a *Nagari*. A study will be conducted on the concept of living in The *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement in revealing a cultural landscape as a settlement identity of Minangkabau people. The method used is descriptive qualitative through theoretical studies, field observations and interviews. The findings show that the cultural landscape in The *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement refers to the comprehensiveness of the physical elements in the formation of a *Nagari* based on the customary provision, namely *basosok bajurami*, *balabuh batapian*, *barumah batanggo*, *babalai bamusajik*, *basawah baladang*, and *bapendam bakuburan*. These physical elements form a cultural landscape, which represent the natural, cultural and spiritual values. While the values are manifested in the land use that are in harmony with nature and the need of space for agricultural activities, residential, worship, housing, graveyards as well as influences on the form and the use of traditional buildings and settlement arrangement. Furthermore, the findings preserve knowledges for future generations in recognizing their history, as well as ecologically it presents a concept of sustainable land use.

**Keywords:** *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement, Minangkabau, Cultural Landscape

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## 1. Introduction

The term cultural landscape is generally seen as an idea of a landscape where culture and nature meet and interact harmoniously [1]. Cultural landscapes often reflect a specific technique for sustainable land use by considering the characteristics and boundaries of the natural environment in which humans live and have a spiritual relationship with nature. Preserving cultural landscapes can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land use and maintain or enhance natural value of a landscape. Therefore, preserving traditional cultural landscapes is useful in maintaining biodiversity [2]. Cultural landscape presents an idea of uncovering and preserving diversities formed through interaction between humans and their environment, to protect living traditional cultures and preserve the traces of the past. Accordingly, cultural landscapes can be considered a valuable and

irreplaceable heritage [3]. Preservation of cultural landscapes must be able to accommodate the need to maintain a dynamic relationship between humans and nature, to continue the interaction and mutual influence between the two [1].

According to H. H. Md. Jani and M. R. M. Hussain, there are three fundamental frameworks in a cultural landscape, namely history, heritage and culture [3]. As a result, a cultural landscape can be considered as geo-cultural area with a strong anthropogenic environmental [14]. Each culture has characteristics that connect humans with their environment while still considering to physical and spiritual aspects [4]. At some points, the cultural dimension of any cultural landscape associating with local community acts as a generating force [14]. Cultural landscapes are important to preserve because they are a valuable heritage, a key to communities identity and an original culture of a group of people or a place that cannot be replaced or reclaimed after being destroyed. The loss of cultural landscape would imply a lack of community identity.

Therefore, it is very important to understand the concept of cultural landscape to ensure that people's identity is maintained properly. Knowledge about cultural landscapes can be obtained by identifying form of a landscape to understand the processes and the meaning of a certain landscape [4]. In the long term, cultural landscape influences will benefit in terms of changing human perceptions on the concept of preserving local identity. Human activities and any decision made by humans at the present will ultimately shape the future generation whether to appreciate cultural landscapes or vice versa, because cultural landscapes contain knowledges about the landscape where they were born and grew up [3].

Minangkabau as one of the oldest cultures in Indonesia has a variety of natural resources ranging from mountains, hills, valleys, ravines to the traditional settlements of its people. The culture of the Minangkabau people obtains a unique tradition which is a reflection of the life and customs of the people. A settlement formed by various elements, both physical and cultural, will form a landscape. These elements form a certain settlement pattern that is specific to its culture [5]. The traditional settlements of the Minangkabau people are known as *Nagari* [6]. In the context of traditional settlements, the pattern of a settlement is not only influenced by physical aspects, but also by socio-cultural aspects as the primary factor [7].

The Minangkabau people as the community which has been maintaining its culture, the concept of living in the Minangkabau community refers to customary provisions that have been carried out from generation to generation. These provisions are contained in the *Tambo*. *Tambo* is a form of written literary work that was written hundreds of years ago, which tells about the history and culture of the Minangkabau people. The *tambo* of Minangkabau can be used to explore the character of the Minangkabau landscape based on the knowledge contained in the text to maintain the originality of a culture in an area that has been passed down from generation to generation [8]. The *tambo* of Minangkabau stated that a *Nagari* must fulfill the comprehensiveness elements of a settlement [5, 6, 8-11, 13]. In terms of culture, a *Nagari* consists of community groups, community structures and natural elements so that it has a special character and has many values in cultural and environmental aspects [11].

One of the *Nagari* in the Minangkabau region, namely *Nagari Sijunjung*, has a traditional village that has been survived since the history of the Pagaruyung Kingdom in the 14th century. The *Nagari Sijunjung* Traditional Settlement still maintains the existence of its traditional house, known as the *Gadang* house, and is still inhabited by the local community [9].

This village is a representative settlement that reflects the culture of the Minangkabau people where the existence of the *Gadang* house implements the living culture of a *matrilineal* society. Ownership of the *Gadang* houses in this village is inherited through the female lineage which is bound by the mother's genealogy. At present there are not many traditional settlements in the Minangkabau area that have complete physical components and their people keep living in traditional houses in their traditional way. However, the clans

in the *Nagari Sijunjung* Traditional Settlement still live within their social organization [12].

As H. H. Md. Jani and M. R. M. Hussain states that a cultural landscape will present interactions between humans and space, especially spaces where these groups exist and have the same identity and meaning [3], the Minangkabau people's settlement in The *Nagari Sijunjung* Traditional Settlement has unique cultures and landscapes. Minangkabau can form a unified character that cannot be separated [13]. The existence of the *Nagari Sijunjung* Traditional Settlement, which still maintains the culture of living in its traditional settlement certainly presents a unique cultural landscape. Previous research by J. Wongso and M. Asrina, A. Gunawan, and M. Aris examined the concept of landscape elements of *Nagari* settlements in general in the Minangkabau region [11, 13]. Research by A. Gunawan, F. M. Edison, W. Q. Mugnisjah, and F. N. H. Utami examines the cultural landscape of *Nagari* settlements with a case study of *Jorong Pariangan*, Tanah Datar District [5]. However, every area has different landscape according to its natural condition. Meanwhile, research has never been conducted in the *Nagari Sijunjung* Traditional Settlement on its cultural landscape. Moreover, this traditional settlement still maintains the existence of its traditional buildings and is inhabited by the Minangkabau people who still carry out their *matrilineal* culture. So this research conduct in the *Nagari Sijunjung* Traditional Settlement will be carried out on the concept of living in a *Nagari* in the term of forming its cultural landscape, as an effort to maintain knowledge about the diversity of Minangkabau people's settlement identity so that it is well preserved for future generations.

## 2. Method

The research method used is descriptive qualitative. The purpose of qualitative research is to explore object on natural settings, thus gaining a deep understanding as well as find uniqueness [15]. This research include literature studies, field observations and interviews. A literature study is carried out by examining related documents, scientific articles and other similar matters regarding the important elements which influencing the cultural landscape in *Nagari* settlements. The units of observation obtained from literature study were the physical elements of *Nagari* settlements as contained in the Minangkabau *tambo*, namely *basosok bajurami*, *balabuh batapian*, *barumah batanggo*, *babalai bamusajik*, *basawah baladang*, and *bapendam bakuburan* [5, 6, 8-11, 13].

Field observations were carried out to get a direct picture about the units of observation such as physical condition, architectural form and spatial pattern. Furthermore, interviews were conducted to dig up further information about the unit of observation and to verify the results of observations obtained from literature studies and field observations. Interviews were conducted with representatives of clan leaders, related institutions (Kerapatan Adat *Nagari*/KAN and the Minang Silokek Ranah Geopark Information Center) as well as several local peoples living in the *Gadang* house. Thus, the

understanding about the concept of cultural landscape in The *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement can be interpreted comprehensively.

The research locus is the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement which located in Indonesia, West Sumatra Province, Sijunjung Regency, *Nagari* Sijunjung. To the north it is bordered by *Jorong* Balai-Balai and *Jorong* Koto Tuo, to the south by *Jorong* Pudak, to the west by *Jorong* Koto Tuo and Sungai Sekam, and to the east by Tanjung Gadang District. The field observation and interviews were conducted from February to March 2022.

### 3. Results and Discussions

A *Nagari* consists of several *koto* (residential areas that are smaller in status than a *Nagari*). *Nagari* Sijunjung consists of four *koto*, namely, *Koto* Sosai, *Koto* Gunung Medan, *Koto* Danau, and *Koto* Bukik Kunik. Each *Koto* is led by *Urang Gadang*. *Urang Gadang* from *Koto* Sosai namely Datuak Bandaro Sati, *Urang Gadang* from *Koto* Gunung Medan namely Datuak Tan Mantari, *Urang Gadang* from *Koto* Danau namely Datuak Lubuk Kayo, and *Urang Gadang* from *Koto* Bukik Kunik namely Datuak Pamatang Sati.

The name Sijunjung has historical phylosophy. In the past the four *Urang Gadang* together with one of the scholars named *Sheikh* Abdul Mukhsin held a meeting in a place called Bukik Tabenek to discuss plans to establish a *Nagari*. When the deliberation took place, an incident occurred around the meeting place. A noble girl titled *Puti* got stuck in the mud and no one was able to pull her out. Then one of the residents came to *Sheikh* Abdul Mukhsin and informed about the matter. *Sheikh* Abdul Mukhsin rushed to the place where the *Puti* was trapped and held out his stick to the *Puti*. The *Puti* was then carried out using *Sheikh* Abdul Mukhsin's stick. After successfully rescuing the *Puti*, *Sheikh* Abdul Mukhsin resumed deliberations with the *Urang Gadang*.



Figure 1. The statue of Puti Junjuang.

As a lesson learned from the incident, the *Urang Gadang* and *Sheikh* Abdul Mukhsin who was in the deliberations

agreed to name the proposed *Nagari* as “Si Puti Junjuang” which means a noble daughter who is upheld or respected. The mention of the term “Si Puti” Junjuang gradually changed to Sijunjung because it was easier for the people to pronounce Sijunjung. After agreeing on the establishment of the *Nagari*, *Gadang* houses were then built by each clan along with rice fields and the formation of a government system. The community also immortalized the moment of the Si Puti Junjuang by building a statue which has become an icon of the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement (Figure 1).

The customary provisions require that a *Nagari* must be inhabited by at least four main clans [10]. The people living in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement came from six main clans, namely Caniago Nan Sembilan Sapuluah Jo Patopang, Piliang, Melayu, Tobo, Panai and Melayu Tak Timbago. Even though it consists of various clans, the people live side by side with each other by upholding Minangkabau customs. They also carry out Minangkabau cultural traditions.

The formation of a *Nagari* as mentioned in *Tambo* has comprehensiveness physical elements, namely *basosok bajurami*, *balabuah batapian*, *barumah batanggo*, *babalai bamusajik*, *basawah baladang* and *bapendam bakuburan* (Figure 2). These elements are complete requirements in the establishment of a *Nagari* as a settlement based on perfect customary law.



Figure 2. The physical elements of Nagari.



*Basosok Bajurami*. It is a physical element that forms a *Nagari*, namely boundaries with certain signs. Based on its landscape, the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement is crossed by two rivers, namely the Batang Sokam River (Figure 3) and Batang Kulampi River and is surrounded by forests, rice fields and gardens. The landscape is the natural boundary of the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement. In the past, areas close to rivers were often chosen for the opening of new settlement areas. This is inseparable from the existence of a river as an important transportation and trade route.



**Figure 3.** Batang Sokam river.

*Balabuah Batapian*. It means having roads and bathing places. Roads are one of the significance components in the establishment of settlements related to their role as accessibility. The main road in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement is an asphalt road and on the both sides of the road there are sidewalks and drainage (Figure 4). The layout of the main road extends towards the north and south of the settlement. It is located in the middle of the settlement, connecting the buildings and open spaces. Looking at the settlement area at a macro level, there will be seen a harmonious pattern between the river and the main road. This means that the process of forming the settlement landscape refers to the natural condition. In this case, the formation of the main road follows the shape of river spans. This condition is in line with the Minangkabau people's philosophy of life which is guided by nature as stated in the traditional saying "*Alam terkembang jadi guru*".

While the baths as one of the physical elements of *Nagari*, they referred to the public baths which are separated between men's baths and women's baths. The public baths used to be located near a river. However, the current conditions at the study site where public baths are no longer used. According to the chairman of the customary village management organization, the people have now switched to using a private bath in their house. This is related to environmental issues where bathing and washing activities around the river area in the long term can cause environmental pollution. The change shows the dynamic of the local people's life in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement following the times while still considering to the environmental condition.



**Figure 4.** The main road.

*Barumoh Batanggo*. It is a physical element of *Nagari* in the form of a residential area. The center area of the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement has a relatively flat area, making it suitable for residential area. The settlement forms a linear pattern. It is formed along the road and river contours according to the character of the landscape. There are 76 *Gadang* houses spread across two *Jorong* (district), namely *Jorong Padang Ranah* and *Jorong Tanah Bato*. The layouts of the *Gadang* houses are neatly lined up along the both sides of the road and the orientations are mostly facing the road. There are only two *Gadang* houses which are not facing the road but facing the river and fields. This is associated by the local community with one of the positions of the people in *Nagari*, namely *dubalang*. *Dubalang* has a role in keeping a *Nagari* safe, so that the layout of the two *Gadang* houses is intended to monitor if there is a threat coming from outside the village.

The *Gadang* houses belong to the people of each *kaum* (a smaller group of clan). The layout of the *Gadang* house is not specifically grouped based on the type of the clans. Each clan mingles with each other, while forging a quite strong connection, creating harmony in diversity. From the right and left sides of the road, the majority of the *Gadang* houses are facing each other. This condition facilitates the interaction of the people, both to greet and to convey good news or sad news.

The distinctive architectural form of the *Gadang* house can be seen on the roof which resembles the shape of a buffalo horn. This form has a Minangkabau cultural philosophy which represented a symbol of victory in a buffalo fight in the past. The part of the roof that rises to the top in a pointed shape is called *gonjong*. The number of *gonjong* on the *Gadang* house's roof in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement varies, including 2 *gonjong* to 5 *gonjong* (Figure 5). As a traditional house, *Gadang* house is not only used as a place to live but also as a place to carry out traditional activities such as deliberation place, wedding preparations, *batagak gala* (ceremony of a leader election), death event and others. Referring to the customary provisions, the traditional activities can only be held in a *Gadang* house which has a minimum of 4 *gonjong*, so *Gadang* houses with 2 *gonjong* are only used as dwellings. The building material

for *Gadang* house is dominated by natural materials in the form of wood except for the roof, which used to be using *rumbiang* leaves, has now switched to using zinc material because *rumbiang* leaves rarely found nowadays. It is an unfortunate fact but inevitable to the present condition.

Each *Gadang* house has a courtyard. At the frontyard there is a fence made of piles of natural stones neatly arranged shaping like a wall. The courtyard of the *Gadang* house is overgrown with various types of vegetations (Figure 6). The frontyard is generally planted with ornamental plants (*pudding*, jasmine, frangipani, sansivera and others), medicinal plants and some trees (palm, coconut, lansek, rambutan and others), while the backyard is generally planted with trees. Naturally, the existence of the vegetations creates a shady and beautiful environment and has ecological benefits.

*Babalai Bamusajik*. It means having a traditional hall and a place of worship (Figure 7). Traditional hall is known as *balairung*. *Balairung* is a meeting place for indigenous stakeholders to discuss *Nagari* issues or hear cases. The shape of the *balairung* is similar to *Gadang* house, but with the type of opening wall and smaller size. *Nagari* Sijunjung adheres to a *kelarasan* (a government system) based on the *kelarasan* Koto Piliang. *Kelarasan* Koto Piliang is an aristocratic system which applies a multilevel

decision-making procedure. This system traditionally has an influence on the shape of the *balairung* in *Nagari*. The *Balairung* in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement has *anjung* (raised floors) at both ends of the building as a representation of the *kelarasan* Koto Piliang.

As a Muslim society, places of worship are an integral part of Minangkabau people's life. Places of worship in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement are in the form of *surau* (small mosque) and mosque. The mosque is a center of worship activities. Especially during Friday prayers where people from a *Nagari* (especially men) who come from various clans are required to carry out Friday prayers together at the mosque. The location of the mosque in this traditional settlement is close to the *balairung*'s location and both are located in the center of the settlement. This layout represents both buildings are significant elements of *Nagari*.

According to the customary provisions, in the past *Balairung* and mosques could only be built in areas which have status as *Nagari*. These provisions relate to the function of *Balairung* and mosque, which are intended to unify the people in a *Nagari* since the joint activities of people from various clans in a *Nagari* are centered on these two buildings, while also represent the symbol of culture and the symbol of belief of Minangkabau people.



Figure 5. The *Gadang* houses with 2 gonjong (a), 4 gonjong (b) and 5 gonjong (c).



Figure 6. The vegetations in the courtyard of *Gadang* house.

*Basawah Baladang*. The landscape of the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement is surrounded by rice fields and gardens (Figure 8). As the majority of the livelihoods of the people are farming and gardening, the existence of rice fields and gardens are important elements for the survival of the people. Rice fields and gardens are customary land,

owned by a *kaum* or clan, requiring joint work among people of the same *kaum* or clan and the results are shared. This provision was made so that social inequality does not occur. Consequently, the agricultural land becomes one of the main components in a *Nagari* and produces sustainable land use.

The rice fields and gardens in the *Nagari* Sijunjung

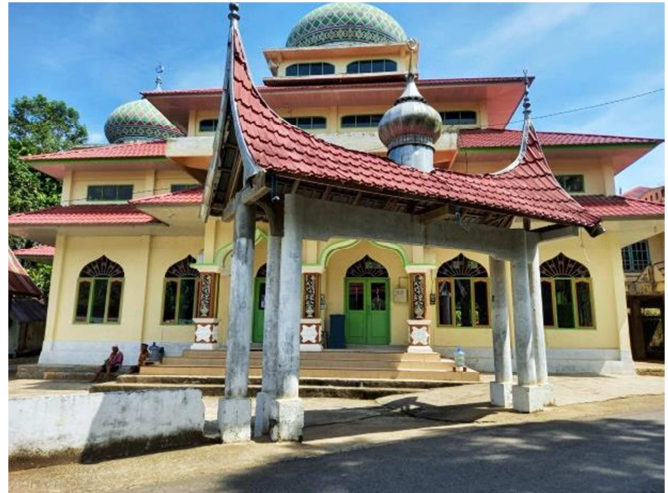


Traditional Settlement are located near the backyard of the Gadang house so that they are easy to reach by people who will go to work in the fields or gardens. Apart from that, the layout ecologically presents green open spaces around the dwelling. The interaction between the people and the existence of rice fields is not only limited as a livelihood, but

also has cultural activities in it. There are cultural activities, namely *boombai* (a ceremony preparation before working on the rice fields) and *bakaua adat* (a thanksgiving event for the abundance of harvests) which are still practiced by the people in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 7.** The traditional hall (a) and mosque (b).



**Figure 8.** The agriculture land.

*Bapendam Bakuburan*. It is a physical element of a *Nagari* in the form of a burial area (Figure 9). Islam, as the religion adopted by the Minangkabau people, has an influence on the way of life. As the Minangkabau traditional saying “*Adat Basandi Sarak, Sarak Basandi Kitabullah*” which means that Minangkabau customs must be based on Islamic sharia which is based on the Qur’an. One of the provisions taught in Islam is regarding a death. When a Muslim die, his body must be buried. Then the burial area becomes an integral element of the Minangkabau’s settlement.

The graveyards in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement consist of public and private graveyards. The public graveyard is located in a field area which is intended for anyone, while the private one is specifically intended for

relatives who are in the same *kaum*, generally located in the yard of the *Gadang* house. The existence of the graveyards reveals that a settlement is not only a place to live, but also provides space for those who lost his life.

According to the observation result and as discussed above, the cultural landscape of *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement shaped by physical elements including *basosok bajurami*, *balabuah batapian*, *barumah batanggo*, *babalai bamusajik*, *basawah baladang* and *bapendam bakuburan* which represent the natural, cultural and spiritual values (Figure 10).

The cultural landscape in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement represents the natural value which in terms of land use has referred to the Minangkabau people's way of life

which is oriented towards nature. As stated in the Minangkabau traditional saying, “*Nan data kaparumahan, nan lereng tanami tabu, nan payau karanangan itiak, nan baraie jadikan sawah, nan munggu kapakuburan*” [2]. This means flat land for housing, sloped land for planting, swampy land for swimming ducks and watery land for rice fields and high ground for graves, so that the utilizations of land use in *Nagari* settlements are based on land potential in harmony with natural characteristics. The embodiments of the cultural value are the form and the use of traditional buildings and the traditional activities which held in the traditional buildings. In addition, there is interaction between humans, nature and culture which is manifested through traditional processions in agricultural activities. While spiritual values refer to the way of life of the community which is carried out in people's lives according to Islamic provisions to present the need for prayer and burial spaces in a settlement.



Figure 9. The graveyard.

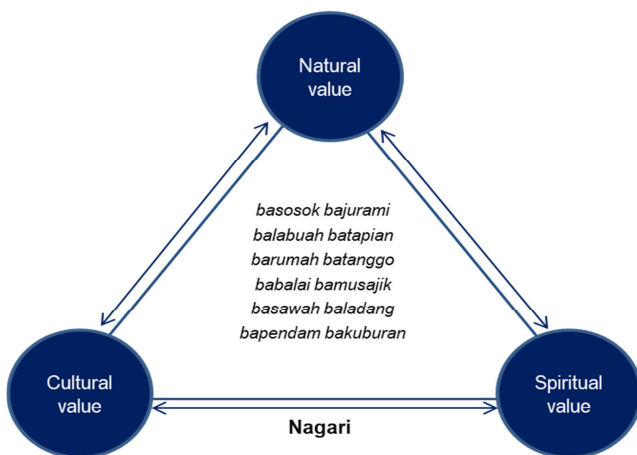


Figure 10. The concept of cultural landscape of *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement.

The integration between the three values that are embodied in the physical elements of the cultural landscape of Minangkabau settlement has a significant role in maintaining the traditional life in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement, as mentioned by A. Rapoport that socio-cultural

aspects are the primary factor influencing the formation of a settlement [7]. While the existence of this traditional settlement is a proof that the strong relationship between humans and the values (natural, cultural, spiritual) encourages people to preserve traditional culture to protect their history.

## 4. Conclusion

The *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement is one of the representations to see the culture of Minangkabau's traditional living. The people are still carrying out traditional and cultural processions in their daily lives. The settlement landscape refers to the customary provisions contained in the Minangkabau *tambo*, which mention physical elements in the formation of a *Nagari* include *basosok bajurami*, *balabuah batapian*, *barumah batanggo*, *babalai bamusajik*, *basawah baladang* and *bapendam bakuburan*. The characteristics of each physical element in the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement are as follows:

- basosok bajurami*: the natural boundaries in the form of rivers, rice fields, gardens and forests;
- balabuah batapian*: the main road forms a pattern in harmony with the river's span; the baths in the form of private baths considering environmental issues;
- barumah batanggo*: the house, namely *Gadang* house as well as a place to carry out traditional activities, the arrangement forms a linear pattern presenting inter-ethnic harmonization;
- babalai bamusajik*: the traditional hall as a symbol of culture and the mosque as a symbol of belief, both have a role as a means of unifying the community in a *Nagari*, located in the centre of the settlement;
- basawah baladang*: ecological arrangement of rice fields and gardens behind residential areas and implementation of customary activities as part of agricultural activities;
- bapendam bakuburan*: the burial area located in the yard of the *Gadang* house (private) and in the field (public), the need of burial area is according to Islamic provisions that the corpse must be buried.

The embodiment of these physical elements forms the cultural landscape of settlement that represents the natural, cultural and spiritual values. These values have an inseparable relationship in terms of land use and spaces need. The land use shows harmony with the natural conditions and characteristics. Meanwhile, the interaction between nature, culture and spiritual relations creates the need of settlement space for residential, agriculture, worship, burial as well as influences on the form and the used of traditional buildings and settlement arrangement. The cultural landscape of the *Nagari* Sijunjung Traditional Settlement shows a uniqueness which represents the Minangkabau people's identity. Therefore the knowledge of the cultural landscape is significant for future generations in recognizing their cultural identity and in the long term, the cultural landscape ecologically provides a concept of sustainable land use.

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