

# Spatial Characteristics of Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati in Padang, Indonesia

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## Abstract

Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is a traditional Minangkabau house in Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia, located in the Pauh District. This area is historically important as the early settlement of Minangkabau ancestors in the Rantau region. The research explores the unique characteristics of this traditional house and its significance in the cultural and social practices of the community.

The study uses a qualitative approach, which involves field observations, interviews, and documentation to analyze the spatial layout of the house. Previous studies were also analyzed to complement the findings of the field study.

The results indicate that Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati has distinct spatial characteristics compared to other traditional houses in Darek, particularly in terms of the smaller number of rooms. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding spatial characteristics of these houses in preserving cultural heritage. The findings contribute to the understanding of traditional Minangkabau architecture, particularly in the context of the Minangkabau region and the preservation of cultural heritage. This provides valuable insights for architects, urban planners and policymakers. Moreover, the study underscores the significance of preserving cultural heritage sites such as Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati, as they symbolize the community identity and the cultural continuity of the people living in vernacular settlement such as the Padang people.

**Keywords:** Minangkabau, Pauh, Padang, Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati, Spatial Characteristics

## Introduction

The design of traditional houses is significantly shaped by cultural, environmental, and social factors, mirroring the values and lifestyles of the communities they serve. These houses often incorporate specific architectural features that address the needs of their inhabitants, such

as privacy, communal living, and adaptation to the environment. For example, the design of traditional courtyard houses in Nigeria illustrates how private open spaces reflect cultural values and foster social interactions within the community. These areas not only serve as functional spaces for daily activities but also as venues for social gatherings, reinforcing communal ties and cultural identity (Adebara, 2022).

Examining the spatial principles of traditional Cairene courtyard houses reveals that these structures are intentionally designed with an awareness of environmental conditions and cultural practices. Typically, the layout features a central courtyard that enhances ventilation and light while providing a private outdoor space for family activities. This architectural choice directly addresses the climatic challenges of the region and aligns with the social norms surrounding family life (Abdelkader & Park, 2018). Likewise, traditional housing designs in Algeria demonstrate adaptations to the desert climate, where internal layouts are optimized for thermal comfort, highlighting a strong connection between environmental factors and housing design (Djafri et al., 2020).

The concept of privacy is crucial in traditional housing, especially within Islamic cultures, where values of modesty and hospitality significantly influence house design. Traditional Islamic houses often feature layouts that ensure privacy for the residents while also allowing for social interactions, such as separate entrances for guests and family members. This design duality reflects the cultural emphasis on privacy and social etiquette (Othman et al., 2015). Furthermore, studies on housing satisfaction indicate that traditional designs effectively meet the specific needs of private cultures, thereby enhancing the overall residential experience (Czacova & Yapicioglu, 2021).

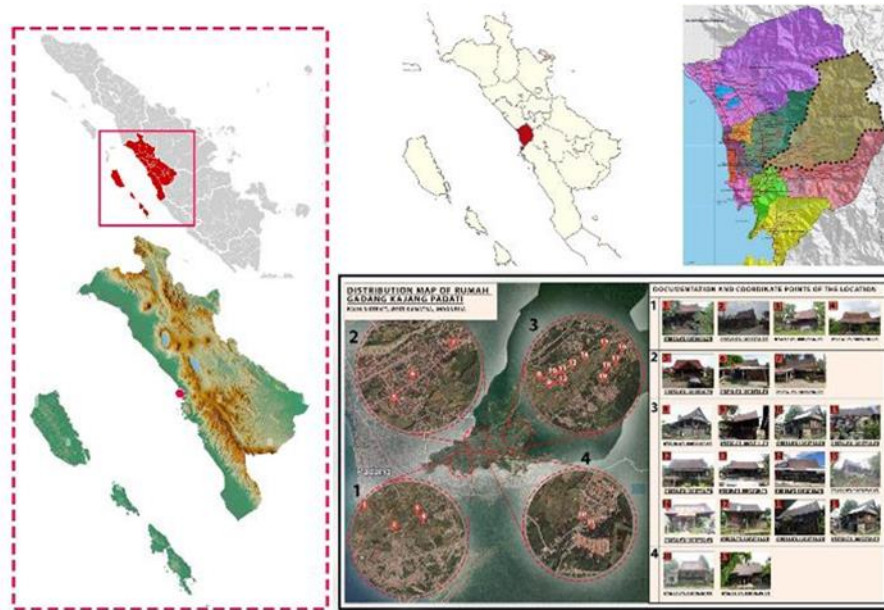
The relationship between individualism and collectivism significantly influences the design of traditional houses. Research shows that collectivist cultures often prefer layouts that encourage communal living, featuring shared spaces that promote interactions among the residents. In contrast, individualistic cultures typically prioritize private areas that allow for personal expression and autonomy. Understanding this distinction is essential for recognizing how spatial designs can either reinforce or challenge cultural norms (Youngjun, 2018).

In summary, the spatial configuration of traditional houses reflects a complex interplay of cultural values, environmental adaptations, and social practices. These houses are not just physical structures; they embody the identities and traditions of their inhabitants. The thoughtful integration of privacy, communal spaces, and responsiveness to the environment in traditional housing designs highlight the significance of cultural context in architectural practices.

For instance, the traditional Padang house, known as Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is characterized by its distinctive roof shape resembling a *pedati* roof. This roof features a curved design in the middle, similar to the Gadang houses found in the Darek region and is commonly referred to as *gonjong tak sampai*. Moreover, these houses typically include a porch or veranda called a balustrade that opens to the front area. Although the Gojong style may not be perfect, local people still refer to it as Rumah Gadang. The spatial arrangement and functions within the Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati mirror those of the Gadang houses in the Darek region. Furthermore, this house serves social, customary, and religious functions that reflect the Minangkabau culture.

## Research Method

This research uses a holistic mixed-method approach, including qualitative and quantitative data collection and in-depth analysis. It employs a case study methodology that involves in-depth research design, data collection, and data analysis. The case study reveals spatial characteristics of Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati in its specific context. The research location is in Pauh District, Padang, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The results of observations in the field still found 21 Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati that are still occupied and maintained. (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1:** Location map  
Source: Author, 2024

## Findings and Discussion

Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati showcases several rooms thoughtfully designed to reflect the cultural practices of the local community throughout history. The layout of the spaces is tailored to meet the residents' housing needs while also representing the social structure of the community. Each room serves a specific purpose, deeply rooted in the traditions passed down through generations.

According to Navis (1984:177), Rumah Gadang is divided into distinct sections, each serving a specific purpose. The interior layout is mostly open, except the bedroom. The living area is organized into rows or “*Lanjar*” and individual rooms, which are defined by pillars. Longitudinal poles run from front to back, while transverse poles mark the rooms.

Based on field studies and literature, the spatial organization of Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati can be described as follows: the house consists of three rows/*Lanjar* that extend from the front to back. The first row/*Lanjar*, known as the foyer or *Langkan*, serves as a portico. The second row, referred to as the edge room or *Ruang Tapi*, is the middle room. The third row includes both a bedroom and a communal area, typically called the living room or *Ruang Tengah*, located in the front section of the house. The first and second rows (*Lanjars*) are open spaces without partitions, while the third row contains bedrooms (*Biliak*) and communal areas. This information is supported by the works of Setijanti et al. (2012), Aryanti et al. (2022), and an interview with Dt. Rajo Indo Langik, the head of the Caniago tribe from Limau Manih in Pauh District.

Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati features various rooms that reflect the cultural practices of the local community throughout history. The layout is specifically designed to accommodate housing needs and illustrates the community's social structure. Each room serves a distinct purpose rooted in traditions passed down through generations.

Following is the division and use of rooms in the Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati

### a. Foyer/*Langkan*

The front room of Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is a terrace commonly referred to as the foyer/*Langkan*. The foyer serves as a space for receiving guests and resting. This area is open, with no walls on the front and sides, but is bordered by a wooden lattice that is 50-60 cm high. At the back is a wall that separates it from the family room, also known as the *Tengah Room*. This wall, referred to as the edge wall, is the front wall of the Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati.

On the walls, you can typically find decorations such as buffalo heads and holders for torch lights, which were used for illumination before the advent of electricity. The foyer, or *Langkan*, typically includes seating in the form of a *Palanta* made from wood or bamboo, positioned to face the front yard.

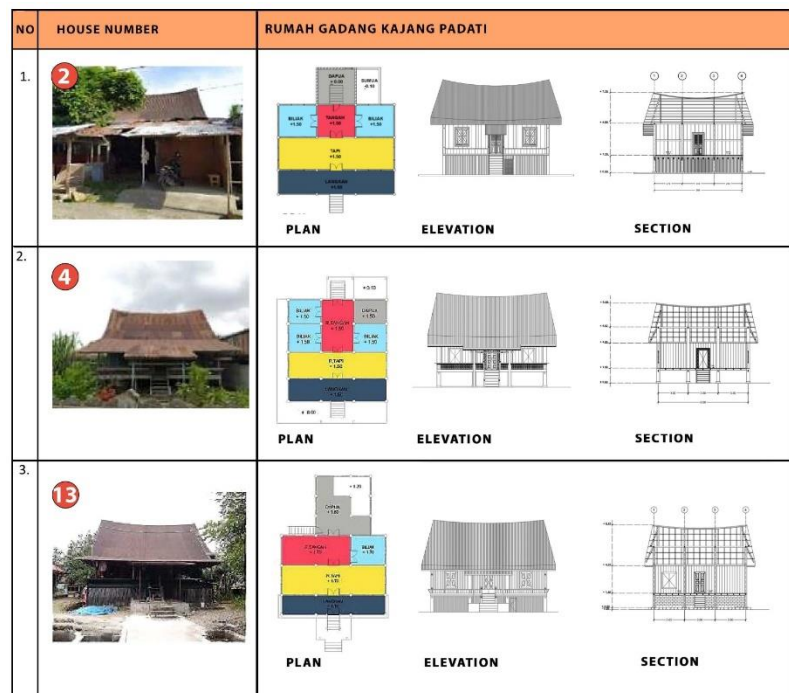
Access to the foyer is provided by stairs located in the middle. An entrance with two door leaves connects the foyer to the next room.

### b. Middle Room/*Ruang Tengah*

Middle Room/*Tengah Room*, located between the foyer/*langkan* and the edge room/*ruang tapi*. It is called the edge room/*ruang tapi*, because actually, this room is the edge of the *Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati*. This room usually functions as a family room. It can be said that this room is the main room of Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati. A space where the whole family gathers, deliberates, and carries out traditional events such as weddings, *Batagak Pangulu*, and others. This room is also a place to bathe the body if a member of the tribe dies. On the floor of this room, there are several small holes near the entrance of the foyer/*langkan*. These holes are used as a water flow when bathing the body and also a place to dispose of dust towards the bottom of the house. At night, this room is used as a resting place (for sleeping) by the residents of the house. They sleep on the floor with mats. Elderly married couples will sleep in the living room mingling with their children and other families. Some even sleep in a room near the kitchen.

### c. Bedroom/*Biliak*

Bedroom/*biliak* is located on the third Lanjar of Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati which is intended for the married women. As is known in Minangkabau, Rumah Gadang is inhabited by women, and the Bilik (room) is a place where married women (families) receive their husbands (Sumando). If there is a younger sister who marries, then the woman and her husband must leave the room or "mamondok" to make their own house not far from Rumah Gadang for those who can afford it. If they are not able to afford it, they will stay in Rumah Gadang. Men sleep in the Surau with their friends or in the "single" house located not far from Rumah Gadang, usually in the corner of Rumah Gadang. A room, usually can fit only a bed and a closet and has a little room for movement. Considering the narrowness of this room, changing clothes, putting children to sleep, and others are carried out outside the room, namely in the Ruang Tengah. Bilik (bedroom) in the Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is only one, or at most two on the third floor. If there is only one cubicle, it is usually located on the right side of the entrance from the front, and if there are two, then the two rooms will face each other on the third Lanjar. The room between the two rooms became a loose room (hallway) to go to the kitchen. If there are more than two rooms, then it is an addition (renovation) considering the increasing number of family members. Now, there have even been additional rooms on the Langkan, Ruang Tengah, and a loose room in front of the room.



**Fig 2.** Spatial Organization Characteristic Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati

Source: Author, 2024

## Conclusion

This research reveals various spatial characteristics in Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati which are rich in cultural and historical values. The conclusions of this study can be summarized as follows.

### 1. Functional and Hierarchical Layout

- The layout of the rooms in Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is designed with functionality and social hierarchy in mind. Key spaces such as the living room and customary room are placed in a central position, demonstrating the importance of their role in social and customary activities.
- The bedroom, family room, and kitchen are arranged in such a way as to meet daily needs, with access and circulation that facilitates the movement of residents.

### 2. Environmental Orientation and Adaptation

- Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati carefully adapts to the local physical environment and climate. Building orientation maximizes natural ventilation and lighting and protects against extreme weather conditions.
- The building structure and the use of local materials reinforce the home's ability to withstand challenging natural conditions, such as earthquakes and high rainfall.

### 3. Symbolism and Cultural Meaning

- Each space in Rumah Gadang has a strong symbolic meaning, reflecting the cultural values and beliefs of the Minangkabau people. Living rooms and customary rooms, for example, are used to symbolize social status and family friendliness.
- The decorations and ornaments used in the house are also loaded with symbolism, enriching the visual identity and aesthetics of this traditional house.

### 4. Social Interaction and Communal Life

- The spatial arrangement in Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati supports close social interaction between family members and the community. Spacious spaces such as living rooms and family rooms become centers of shared activities, strengthening social bonds and communal traditions.
- The functions of space also reflect the role of gender and hierarchy in Minangkabau society, with the placement of certain spaces that are in accordance with the roles and activities of each family member.

### 5. Cultural Heritage Preservation

- Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is not only a place to live, but also a symbol of the preservation of Minangkabau cultural heritage. The design and use of spaces that adhere to ancestral traditions reinforce cultural identity and the sustainability of customary values.
- The preservation of traditional architecture is important to maintain cultural sustainability and enrich Indonesia's architectural heritage.

Rumah Gadang Kajang Padati is not just a physical structure; it represents a complex and dynamic expression of culture, reflecting the history, values, and social life of the Minangkabau people, particularly those in the Rantau region. This research offers valuable insights into how traditional architecture can adapt to its environment while preserving fundamental cultural values.

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