

# Genius Loci of Adat Karuhun Urang (AKUR) Cigugur Community's Settlement

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## Genius Loci of Adat Karuhun Urang (AKUR) Cigugur Community's Settlement

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**Abstract.** Adat Karuhun Urang (AKUR) Community is a customary community that lives by practicing their ancestral teachings. The existence of traditions and teachings shows that they have spiritual places or traditional places. This study aims to explore the *Genius Loci* or values contained within the space of the AKUR Community in Cigugur through an assessment concept developed on their Cultural Landscape. The assessment is divided into several elements comprising material forms, immaterial forms, and link forms. The results of this study indicate that the AKUR Community has a strong spirit and sense of the legacy of Prince Madrais. Formal identity and substantial identity are the characters that shape the existence of the AKUR Cigugur community. There are several challenges to maintaining the existence of the AKUR community, such as social interaction, the transformation of awareness, dialogue between stakeholders, organizational strengthening, and the role of local government.

*Keywords:* *genius loci*, akur community, cultural landscape

### Introduction

Adat Karuhun Urang (AKUR) Kuningan Community is one of the customary communities that still survive up to this day to practice the traditions and teachings of Prince Madrais. Prince Madrais always emphasizes his adherents respect their national and cultural characteristic (Komarudin, 2017). The traditions and teachings that are still being practiced indicate that the AKUR community still has and manages its spiritual and traditional places, such as Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal which has its spirit and sense for the AKUR Community as a place to live for the nuclear family. This phenomenon gave researchers attention to further explore the meanings or values of the AKUR community's settlement. Adiyanto (2011) stated that this is in the form of a genius loci or local genius owned by a place that has the meaning of soul and feeling present at a certain location

and it can visualize the quality of spaces and places (Lianto et al., 2021). (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) revealed the role of the soul in the physical depiction and interpretation of the human experience of these places.

Genius loci discuss the cultural landscape of an area. The cultural landscape is a landscape formed by a cultural value of a community group that is linked to the natural resources and environment. Norberg-Schulz (1980) argued that a place is formed from natural phenomena and man-made phenomena, or can be referred to as the environment (landscape) and settlements. It is almost in line with Ziyae (2018) who stated that an area consists of material objects (natural and artificial), immaterial objects, and links that create the space. In his work, Schulz explained the concept of an essential space and divided it into two elements, namely space and

interrelated character. Thus, understanding the space and character of an area can lead to discovering the space identity.

The existence of a community can be traced from its cultural identity based on the study of the cultural landscape. Cultural Landscape is a relationship between local communities and their heritage as well as the relationship with their natural environment (Rössler, 2006). A cultural landscape is a tangle of tangible and intangible heritage that represents the close relationship, cultural essence, and identity of people who are located in the same geographic area (Carmody, 2016; K. Taylor & Lennon, 2011). Indratno (2018) explained that tangible and intangible heritages are the way to understand a subject's consciousness. Landscape, belief systems, and community's way of life are closely related to the customary people as the main actors (Choy et al., 2010). Customary people still adhere to the traditional life patterns, where one and the other have territorial and descent lineage similarity (territorial-genealogical) (Hamka, 2017), and these shape their personality (Ningrum, 2012).

There have been studies that reveal the settlement structure of the AKUR community: Dwi and Widiastuti (2014) explain the liminal space of AKUR Community, Indratno *et al.*, (2020) explain the persistence of settlement space of AKUR Community, Nurfasha and Weishaguna (2020) explain the semiotic aspect of *Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal* Building, but none has provided an assessment of the cultural landscape of the community. This study tried to view the values of the cultural landscape of the AKUR community through an assessment concept developed by Jones (2003); and Ziyae (2018) and Parsaee et al. (2015)'s sense of place components, such as meaning, activity, and physical environment. The last two research provide the component that researchers should explore to assess the cultural landscape system of AKUR Community. In their study, both Ziyae and Parsaee revealed that the development of identity values can develop, perceive, and recognize the identity of a region. In the case of the AKUR Community, understanding the values of the cultural landscape does not mean only understanding the meaning of the spirit and sense of each customary area in the community, but also understanding the values that have not been developed and can be utilized in the development of the AKUR Community and their customary areas.

## Research Methodology

The research method used is qualitative with a rationalistic paradigm. Sutrisno dan Sarwadi, (2019) stated that the research design in the rationalistic paradigm begins with a theoretical framework of previous existing research results. Then, based on rationalism philosophy, researchers build intellectual understanding and rational thinking to create logical scientific arguments. The analytical method used in this study refers to the cultural landscape assessment by Jones (2003) and using Parsaee et al., (2015)'s sense of place to get the meaning behind each landscape. The cultural landscape assessment is an arrangement that combines the components of place identity with the main components and elements of the characteristics of the cultural landscape. The components and elements of the cultural landscape used in the cultural landscape assessment are derived from the simplification of the components and elements of the cultural landscape as initiated by Brown (2001); Stephenson (2008); O'Donnell (2014); Sonkoly (2017); Ziyae (2018).

Components of cultural landscape (figure 1) consist of materials that represent the natural and artificial physical forms, immaterial (non-materials) represent non-physical forms of the cultural landscape which are largely shaped by beliefs and rules, and links consisting of the process of building connections between material and non-material components through time (Ziyae, 2012).

The steps to analyze problems in this research are as follows:

- (1) Liminalizing to determine the territorial boundaries of the cultural landscape of the Cigugur AKUR Community. The elimination is carried out by observing the tangible and intangible aspects, including the social conditions of the community, activities related to rituals and daily activities, the legal boundaries of the community (regional claims), artifacts, and physical activities.;
- (2) Determine the components as well as elements of the

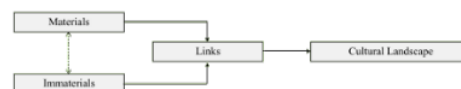


Figure 1. *The Components of Cultural Landscape* (Ziyae, 2012)

identity of the place and cultural landscape as the composition of the cultural landscape assessment;(3) Identify the natural conditions of Cigugur AKUR Community according to the components specified in the cultural landscape assessment;(4) Identify the artificial elements existing in Cigugur AKUR Community according to the components of the cultural landscape assessment;(5) Identify immaterial elements (forms of activity) that occur in Cigugur AKUR Community, including rules and beliefs;(6) Identify link elements that exist in the Cigugur AKUR Community according to the components in the cultural landscape matrix;(7) Determine the relationship between place identity and cultural landscape;(8) Interpreting the results of analysis of cultural landscape identity of the Rawabogo Tourism Village;(9) Synthesize the results of the analysis to form a new identity.

In this study, data collection was carried out in several ways including observation, interviews, and document review. Observations were made by observing the cultural landscape of Cigugur AKUR Community based on natural forms (Curug Goong, Situ Hyang, Leuweung Leutik, and Ricefield); artificial forms consist of rooms in *Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal* (Pendopo, Jinem, Sri Manganti, Mega Mendung, and Dapur Ageung); immaterial forms (rules and doctrine, religion, and ritual), and links (history, technique, and process). Interviews were conducted with key informants concerning the culture and Cigugur AKUR Community (Rama Anom, Ibu Dewi Kanti, Ibu Juwita, Pak Kentom, Pak Didi) to complete the documents related to culture in the AKUR Community in Cigugur.

**Results and Discussions**

The result shows there are three main components in the formation of the cultural landscape structure of the AKUR Cigugur Community: material forms, immaterial

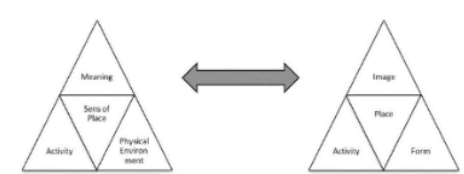


Figure 2. The Components that Create the Sense of Place (Parsaee et al., 2015)

forms, and links form; as Parsaee, Parva, and Karimi (2015) divide it into three components (meaning, activity, and physical environment) that forms space and place.

The components are the spirit of space (figure 2) in accordance with the basic teachings of the *pikukuh tilu* of the AKUR Cigugur Community, which is manifested in the way of *cara-ciri bangsa* (nationalism) and *cara-ciri manusia* (humanism). *Pikukuh* has the meaning of strengthening and *tilu* means three; *Pikukuh tilu* is considered as the three foundations to achieve the perfection of life.

**Material Forms**

The identity components formed in the natural space of the AKUR Community consist of Situ Hyang, Curug Goong, Leuweung Leutik, Balong Girang, and rice fields. Each of these places forms its own form, function, and meaning for the AKUR Community.

**Situ Hyang**

Situ Hyang (Figure 3) is a basin of land surrounded by trees, where there is three huts used for the opening of traditional ceremonies (I. Indratno et al., 2020). Situ Hyang is known as a water catchment area



Figure 3. Situ Hyang



Figure 4. Curug Goong

by the surrounding community due to the presence of rocks and trees. The existence of Situ Hyang has ever been disturbed as it was exploited as a mining area. Historically, Situ Hyang was a place for Prince Madrais to meditate. The ritual that takes place at Situ Hyang has a meaning as a form of hope so that there will be no pests returning to the community's agricultural land.

#### **Curug Goong**

Curug Goong (figure 4) is a flat highland at the slope of Mount Ciremai which is functioned as agricultural land by the community. There is a building considered as a sacred one because there are gamelan or local traditional music instruments and objects which are considered mystical. According to history, the gamelan was believed to be able to reduce the eruption of Mount Ciremai when Prince Madrais played them. This phenomenon is considered as a form of God's love for humans with the cessation of the eruption of Mount Ciremai.

#### **Leuweung Leutik**

Leuweung Leutik (figure 5) is a water catchment area and local people call it the forbidden forest that must not be affected.



Figure 5. *Leuweung Leutik*



Figure 6. *Ricefield*

The local government also made Leuweung Leutik an urban forest park with an area of 3.5 hectares. Another function of Leuweung Leutik is that it has been used since the Prince Madrais era as agricultural land which finally was granted to the community. History about how it was considered as a forbidden forest revealed that apart from being a water catchment and farming place for Prince Madrais, it was believed there were supernatural beings in that place.

#### **Rice field**

The livelihoods of the residents of AKUR Community and Cigugur Village are generally farming. Rice field (figure 6) is not only useful as a place for daily livelihood but also as a form of gratitude for the AKUR Community which is manifested through the traditional ceremony of *seren taun*.

Besides natural space, material forms also consist of an artificial identity component. Artificial identity is a place to reside and space for the AKUR Cigugur Community, which is called *Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal*. It is a central and sacred place for the AKUR Cigugur Community. The meaning of *Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal* is a place to unite three wills, namely creativity, taste, and intention manifested in behavioral attitudes. *Paseban* consists of several rooms that have the meaning of the journey of human life. Those rooms are *pendopo*, *jinem*, *sri manganti*, *mega mendung*, and *dapur ageung*.

#### **Pendopo**

The *pendopo* room (figure 7) is a place where art performances are held every two weeks. The pavilion can also be used as a place to discuss and welcome guests. The *pendopo* room has five steps and eleven circular pillars. Five steps stair has the meaning of five senses that need to be cared



Figure 7. *Pendopo*



Figure 8. Jinem



Figure 10. Mega Mendung



Figure 9. Sri Manganti

for by humans. Pendopo is also considered as a description of the situation when humans have been born into the world.

#### Jinem

The Jinem Room is a place for religious and cultural activities for the AKUR Community. The Jinem room is also used as a place for the *seren taun* ceremony. *Seren taun* is an annual ritual of AKUR Community to respect and thank the God for their crops, consisting of a series of activities to pray together attended by members from various believes. Jinem has the meaning of fixed or clear (Indratno et al., 2020).

The Jinem room (figure 8) is considered a place to define and stabilize humanity and values that exist in humans, or the AKUR Community calls it a way of human characteristics. In relation to other rooms, the jinem room has the meaning of a description of the creation process, and there is an influence from the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire.

#### Sri Manganti

The Sri Manganti room (figure 9) is a room used as an internal meeting place for the nuclear family and a reception area in the *paseban*. This room is characterized

by the presence of batik art on display. Sri Manganti room is a space of feeling where humans must be able to find wisdom in life.

#### Mega Mendung

Mega Mendung room (figure 10) is a library and room for a collection of art tools from customary people. The north part of Mega Mendung room is used to produce batik and for the collection of typical Cigugur handmade batik. In addition, this room is used as a place for deliberation and provides a way to solve problems. This room has a meaning as a process of human life.

#### Dapur Ageung

Dapur Ageung is a central place for the AKUR Cigugur Community to worship or meditate. This room has a fire stove in the center of the room decorated with four crowned dragons at its four corners. The crown represents humans and the four corners are the four elements of lust such as earth, water, wind, and fire. So it is expected that every human being would be able to maintain his lust, especially for the fire element as a negative emotion.

#### Immaterial Forms

##### Rules and Doctrine

The main teaching philosophy of the AKUR Community is *pikukuh tilu*. The teachings of *pikukuh tilu* are manifested into principles that are firmly held by the AKUR community, namely *cara-ciri manusia* and *cara-ciri bangsa*. *Cara-ciri manusia* means the existence of basic elements in human life, such as love, the order in the family, manners, and culture, and human nature (I.Indratno et al., 2020). *Cara-ciri bangsa* has customs and cultures that need to be preserved by maintaining human differences, for example, appearance, customs, language, script, and culture.

## Religion

The Akur community holds religious principles that are still plural. The way of life of the AKUR community is the coexisting among three religions, namely Islam, Sunda Wiwitan, and Catholic. This attitude of coexistence is an effort to appreciate the views of each religion and the manifestation of the values of nationalism and humanism. The forms of activities also involve these religious groups, such as at funeral processions and in the *seren taun* ceremony where there are interfaith prayers.

## Ritual

The ritual activities of the AKUR community consist of annual ritual activities, namely *seren taun* and daily ritual activities, namely *kurasan* or meditation. *Seren taun* is a ritual or tradition of the AKUR community which aims to give respect and thank the God for crops. This ceremony also aims as an event of solidarity between religious communities. *Seren taun* is identical to rice since rice is a source of human life and most of the AKUR community member work as farmer. *Seren taun* is not only as a symbol but also a way to connect and create interaction between humans and nature. *Seren taun* ceremonies are carried out in various places, from *situ hyang* to *paseban tri panca tunggal*. According to Dwi dan Widiastuti (2014); Royyani (2017); Indratno *et al.* (2020) there are several main activities in the *seren taun* ceremony, namely *damar sewu*, *pesta dadung*, *kidung spiritual*, *ngajayak*, *mesek pare*, *siraman balai kembang*, *seribu kentongan*, *kaulinan barudak lembur* dance, and *rampak gendang*.

The daily ceremonial activity usually performed by the AKUR Cigugur community is *kurasan* or meditation. The procession is done by doing meditation at sunrise and sunset. *Kurasan* is performed as a symbol of hope for help from the Almighty to burn lust and negative emotions within.

## Links

## History

The teachings of the AKUR community were initiated by Prince Madrais who taught many values related to the relationship between humans and humans, humans and nature, and humans and God, which were compiled in the principles of humanism and nationalism. These principles are manifested in daily activities that have been

continuing until now, such as the teachings of cooperation, inter-religious tolerance, the implementation of *seren taun* as a form of gratitude, to *kurasan* as the daily exercise to control anger. The leadership of Prince Madrais began in 1869. In 1924, the phenomenon of damping Mount Ciremai with gamelan took place. Then in 1936-1939, Prince Madrais lived in Curug Goong. The next leadership was continued by Prince Tejabuana who became a follower of the Catholic religion to protect his followers from the massacre of non-tolerant groups. Prince Tejabuana is known as a strategist (Komarudin, 2017; Qodim, 2017).

The next leadership was under Prince Djatikusuma. During his leadership, there were many pressures and disturbances to the AKUR group. It happened from 1982 until 1999, which was triggered by the termination of the *seren taun* ceremony. In 2009, there was a conflict in *Leweung leutik*; then in 2014, the status of Mount Ciremai changed to a National Park which was originally a community forest, so that people were not free to carry out activities. There were mining companies that run activities on Mount Ciremai. There were also conflicts from customary land assets up to the prohibition of the construction of tombs on customary land by the local government in 2020. These things made the AKUR Community feel that they have been given a sentiment of resistance and persistence to continue the teachings of Prince Madrais (I. Indratno *et al.*, 2020; Ismiandika & Indratno, n.d.; Komarudin, 2017; Qodim, 2017; Sabandiah & Wijaya, 2018).

## Technique and Process

Living a life in a pluralistic society makes the AKUR Community carry out several activities that reveal an image of human characteristics and national characteristics, one of which is funeral processions. AKUR community lives in the existence of three religions so that they carry out a funeral procession in three religious ways of processions as well. The burial ground is not a land for one religion only, but of the mixed one. Three religions mean there are also three different places of worship. The AKUR community gives this description as a form of tolerance and teaches nationalism and humanism. The marriage rule of the AKUR Cigugur Community is that neither polygamy nor divorce is allowed. One can remarry if the spouse has already died.

Another rule is that people from the AKUR Community are prohibited to marry people from other nations, but it is allowed if they have different religions.

The AKUR community is known as a strong community in defending and preserving its traditional territory. The AKUR community has to live in stressful and discriminating situations, such as disputes with mining companies, the existence of non-tolerant groups that suppress their existence, restrictions on development and activities from the local government, and others. The AKUR Community's defensive sentiment is based on their belief in the teachings of Prince Madrais and they keep on persevering in order to continue and carry on the culture that was handed down to them. It can be seen through the *seren taun* ceremony which is still taking place to this day.

The concept of Sundanese community settlements consists of two types: *tapa di mandala* and *tapa di nagara*. *Tapa di mandala* is a concept of living in which the community unites, gathers, and forms a pattern of living and separates from the general public. Such a concept makes it easy to identify the territory and territorial boundaries of customary people. The concept of living in the AKUR Community is *tapa di nagara*. *Tapa di nagara* is the concept of traditional Sundanese settlements that are integrated with non-customary community settlements. Thus, the boundaries of the customary territory of the AKUR community are difficult to identify due to their territorial fusion with the general public. (Dwi & Widiastuti, 2014) in their research reconstruct the boundaries of the customary space of the AKUR Community through the *seren taun* ceremony, and call it a 'liminal space that moves. The boundaries

of the AKUR Community space through the *seren taun* ceremony are shown in Figure 11.

Seren taun is not only a description of the relationship between humans and nature, but also the relationship between humans and humans, and humans and God. The relationship between humans and humans is created from the existence of many people who come together to enliven the seren taun ceremony and do not discriminate between groups or races. The relationship between humans and God is illustrated through a procession of interfaith prayer. Seren taun is also a part that connects natural objects and artificial and immaterial objects and links in one traditional ceremony. Following the territorial boundaries according to the seren taun ceremony in Dwi dan Widiastuti (2014), the paseban becomes central in the living space of the AKUR Community; natural objects are customary blocks and complement their liminal space. Seren taun is also a witness to the history of every leader in every era.

### Discussion

The concept of AKUR community settlements that mingle with residents (*tapa di nagara*) causes territorial boundaries (limation) and social categories to appear unclear. However, the AKUR community seems to emotionally feel discriminated (alienation), so that it requires better or equal recognition just like other communities. On the other hand, the local government wants to appear superior in dealing with the AKUR community. The long journey as a marginalized community did not seem to dampen the spirit of the AKUR Community in facing every problem. It even became a challenge for the process of maturation and existence of the AKUR community in Cigugur. This difference in perception needs to be bridged through a process of communication and assistance for both parties.

The form, function, and semantics of each living element of the AKUR Community are part of the values of their cultural landscape that cannot be separated. The form, function, and semantics of the existing natural objects illustrate the relationship between the AKUR community and nature. The teachings of Prince Madrais provide confirmation and increase confidence for the AKUR Community to be able to continue and preserve nature. The form of preservation

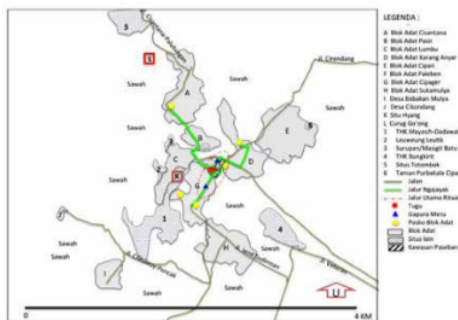


Figure 11. The Boundaries of the AKUR Community (Dwi & Widiastuti, 2014)



is shown by the AKUR community through the *seren taun* ceremony and the use of land according to its spatial function. One form of manifestation of nature conservation is done through the *seren taun* ceremony. The *seren taun* ceremony is a cultural capital for the AKUR Community because it is in the form of an identity and has its spirit and sense (Indratno et al., 2020).

#### **Formal Identity**

Sugiharto (2019) explains that formal identity is a visible or sensed feature or character. The formal identity of the AKUR community can be seen from objects or cultural symbols, as well as various cultural activities as the cultural roots of the AKUR community. As stated by (Kaymaz, 2013), identity refers to the uniqueness of a place from its physical conditions and interactions with its people. Fisher (2006) stated that the identity of a place consists of geographic location, cultural traditions, and cultural heritage which are things that affect local culture. This formal identity must be unique compared to other customary communities. Cultural identity is the uniqueness of a place that is different from another place (Stobbelaar & Pedroli, 2011). This statement was added by Heidari dan Mirzaii (2013), stating that each place has specific characteristics that show differences from other places which refer to the uniqueness of the place.

Some of the unique characteristics or characters of the AKUR Cigugur community are cultural elements (such as Paseban, Curug Goong, Situ Hyang, and so on) as cultural symbols owned only by the AKUR Cigugur Community. Another existence can be found in the *seren taun* ceremony, which is annually carried out by the AKUR Community. This ceremonial procession is one of the tourist attractions in Kuningan Regency. The religious perspective of the AKUR community, which is different from the official state religion, should be seen as a form of human rights in carrying out the beliefs of each individual. Even different religious views (ritual processes) can become the distinctive identity of the AKUR community. Adherents of other religions can tolerate and coexist with the AKUR Community in daily life.

#### **Substantial Identity**

Sugiharto (2019) explains that substantial identity is a feature or character

that is not visible in a community. Substantial identity can be seen from the daily behavior of the AKUR community and the values they believe in. Substantial identity can also be obtained by interpreting various symbols and activities of the Cigugur AKUR community. A landscape identity is associated with the important values and meanings behind it. (K. E. N. Taylor, 2007), in line with Stephenson (2008), state that the meaning and interpretation of landscape identity comes from human relations with what is happening/exist in the landscape, such as spirituality, the sacredness of places, stories, and others.

The interfaith prayer at the *seren taun* procession is a form of high tolerance of the AKUR community towards adherents of other religions. Another manifestation is seen in the harmony of a family which can consist of several adherents of religions or beliefs. The value of human characteristics has become a very strong mental factor in the AKUR Cigugur community. This can be seen from the behavior that respects fellow human beings and the community's commitment to implementing these values in daily life. This difference with other customary communities is the substantial identity of the AKUR Cigugur community.

#### **Cultural Identity Challenge**

Formal identity and substantial identity are characters that shape the existence of the AKUR Cigugur community. To maintain the existence of the AKUR community, there are several challenges, namely social interaction, the transformation of awareness, dialogue between stakeholders, organizational strengthening, and the role of local government. Social interaction occurs between communities, AKUR communities, Cigugur communities, and the local government of Kuningan Regency. Strengthening internal communication within a family needs attention so that the maturity of community value orientation is stronger since there is an agreement in maintaining the noble values inherited by Prince Madrais.

Transformation of higher awareness from a socio-centric orientation to a world-centric value-oriented emphasizes the struggle for broader human values. A more intensive dialogue process with certain stakeholders to explain a non-dualistic view of looking at nature is also important to be carried out. The concept of silence (*makrifat* - mystical) as a form of obedience to God

and harmonization with the universe needs to be socialized so that several stakeholders understand the transcendental awareness found in the AKUR Cigugur community. It is also crucial to strengthen the Cigugur AKUR organization so that the community is able to maintain and preserve cultural values systemically.

### Conclusion

The existence of cultural landscape shows the spatial existence of the AKUR Cigugur community. The existence of space can be seen from the characteristics and characters based on the identity of the AKUR Cigugur community, which is divided into components of natural form, artificial form, immaterial form, and link form. The community identity is divided into two categories: formal identity and substantial identity.

The character of the AKUR community will be clearer if it is considered from its substantial identity. The substantial identity of the AKUR Cigugur community, which respects the quality of humanity and the high spirit of nationalism, can be described from their physical landscape and activity that show strong tolerance and greatly appreciate diversity. This identity becomes a distinguishing feature to other indigenous communities in Indonesia. However, the role of both the AKUR Cigugur community and related stakeholders is needed to be able to maintain the cultural values that characterize the AKUR Cigugur. The Local Government of Kuningan Regency must be able to capture this local wisdom or knowledge to be used as cultural capital in the community development process.

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