

Sustainability of the Malay Landscape Aesthetic Model in Urban Design: Case Studies of Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the application of Malay cultural landscape aesthetic elements in the context of contemporary urban development, focusing on Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu. The main issue of this study is the pressure of urbanization and modernization that threatens the sustainability of traditional elements such as gateways, gardens, and mosques, which are crucial for cultural identity and fulfilling the needs of modern society. The primary objective of this study is to identify the similarities and differences in the application of aesthetic elements among these three cities and analyze how these elements meet the needs of society in terms of biological, cultural, emotional, intellectual, and religious aspects. This study employs a qualitative approach using a multiple case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis, focusing on five key principles: biological needs, cultural development, intellectual creativity, emotional well-being, and religious fulfillment. Research instruments include checklists and interview guides based on sustainability principles. Data were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify patterns in the application of traditional elements in the three cities. The findings reveal that traditional elements such as rivers, gardens, and mosques continue to play a significant role but have been adapted to modern technologies. For example, the protective functions of traditional city have been replaced with digital security systems, while cultural and religious elements such as palaces and mosques continue to be symbols of identity. The study also discovered that creativity in architecture and traditional arts ensures these elements stay relevant to modern society couple with strategic integration and modern elements. This study thus, provides implications for urban planners and policymakers in preserving cultural values while addressing the current needs of society.

Keywords: Malay landscape, aesthetics, Malay Literature

INTRODUCTION

Urban landscape design helps balance growth in cities, notably in Malaysia, where culture and tradition drive development. Malay cities like Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu continued to maintain traditions. Malay landscape aesthetics are more than decoration; they reflect a life philosophy seeking harmony between humans, culture, and environment (Asad et al., 2023). Palaces, gates, traditional gardens, and other structures fulfil biological, cultural, emotional, mental, and religious needs and identities (Baharum et al., 2019).

However, as time goes on, changes in the design and function of these elements are inevitable. For example, city elements and main gates that were previously functioned as physical protection have been replaced with CCTV and police stations (Sabil et al. 2021 & Bong 2020). Although the current technology has increased the effectiveness of its protective function, the concern is how the principles of traditional aesthetic can be made relevant to modern demands without losing their original values. Therefore, this study is crucial to determine whether Malay landscape aesthetics are still relevant and how they could be integrated into modern urban architecture. The main focus of this study is to find out the similarities and differences between Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu in preserving Malay landscape aesthetics and comparing them with principles of modern sustainability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As outlined earlier, the study of Malay landscape aesthetics in urban settings requires a detailed understanding of how traditional components meet modern community needs. Palaces, gates, gardens, and city gateways are iconic Malay landscape design icons that both function and represent the culture.

Baharum et al. (2019) suggest that traditional Malay landscapes reflect a harmonious balance between physical, social, and spiritual needs. These decorative aspects also protect, represent culture, and fulfil religion. Palaces and gates once protected against outside threats as well as signifying power. These designs' dual usefulness shows their cultural brilliance.

Modern urban life challenges these old values (Asad et al., 2023). Urban planners must adapt traditional aesthetics to modern needs while retaining cultural sustainability, according to Baharum et al. (2019). Security systems like CCTVs and police stations have replaced traditional gateways as protectors. Despite these technical advances improving security, Baharum et. al. (2019) emphasize the necessity of preserving traditional symbols of identity and legacy to ensure cultural continuity.

The importance of Malay landscape components goes beyond usefulness, according to Md Syed et. al. (2019). Traditional gardens with lakes, trees, and flowers offer emotional and spiritual renewal. In busy cities, these qualities produce a calm environment for mental health. Public gardens in Kota Bharu use similar ancient designs, but they now feature recreational amenities.

Another view is Kuala Kangsar, where cultural and architectural heritage shape the city. According to Baharum et al., (2019), mosques, palaces, and gates are not just architectural icons but also community hubs that promote solidarity. These aspects boost tourism and local culture. The writers underline the importance of preserving these historic elements to ensure cultural resilience despite modernization challenges.

Kota Tinggi is a rare marriage of tradition and modernity. The city features medieval gateways and palaces in modern urban patterns due to its history with the Sultanate of Johor. Sabil et. al., (2021) show how modern materials and technology have preserved these elements' symbolic meaning. Residents are reminded of their cultural heritage and encouraged to appreciate the city's history by using traditional gates as design elements in urban landscapes.

The examined research show that Malay landscape aesthetics are still important in current urban settings, despite changing designs and uses. Palaces, gates, gardens, and city gateways maintain culture and history while meeting humans' physical, social, and emotional requirements. Traditional elements help cities keep their identity and sustainability, even while contemporary technology has replaced some of its duties.

Based on these findings, this study examines how Malay landscape aesthetics might be applied to urban planning and architecture. This project tries to bridge the gap between cultural preservation and current urban demands to preserve Malaysia's rich legacy in an ever-changing world.

Problem Statement

Traditional Malay landscape aesthetics including gardens, gates, and vernacular architecture impact Malaysian urban design's identity, function, and sustainability. In Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu, these landscapes represent historical values and meet community needs. These traditional elements are threatened by increasing socioeconomic growth, urbanization, and technological breakthroughs.

Modernization against cultural preservation is a major problem. Modern urban development often disregards traditional design ideals, replacing historical components with modern ones. According to Baharum et al., (2019), this substitution undermines local culture and breaks emotional links between communities and their environment. Due to growing urbanization, Kota Tinggi's loss of traditional symbols like self-protective gates and cultural identification markers has sparked worries about cultural heritage continuity. This divergence emphasizes the necessity to balance cultural preservation with urban needs.

Malay landscape aesthetics are harder to preserve due to economic restrictions. Traditional aspects are expensive to maintain, thus local authorities prefer economical and controllable new developments. Asad et al. (2023) stated that financial demands cause many traditional components to be disregarded or deleted, compromising their survival. This economic pressure compromises cultural values for cost-effective urbanization, putting communities at risk of losing their identity. Studies acknowledge the importance of Malay landscapes in urban identity and sustainability, but little is known about how much traditional aspects may be altered to fulfill modern demands without compromising cultural and historical values. Culturally rich cities like Kota Bharu and Kuala Kangsar must balance modernity with historical preservation, making this divide essential.

Maintaining Malay landscape aesthetics is difficult due to the modernization-cultural preservation mismatch. This issue demands a complex strategy that balances cultural continuity, economic viability, and urban society's changing requirements. This study fills this gap by comparing the aesthetic elements of the Malay landscape in Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu and making recommendations to ensure their sustainability in modern urban settings. Finally, sustaining Malay landscape aesthetics is a complicated issue that demands a holistic solution. Economic restrictions, changing societal requirements, and the imbalance between modernisation and cultural preservation must be deliberately handled (Baharum et al., 2019) By comparing how these elements are used in Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu, this study can show how traditional elements can be adapted to modern needs without sacrificing their cultural and historical values.

Research Objectives

1. Identify the similarities and differences in the application of Malay landscape aesthetic elements between Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu.
2. Analyze the ways in which these traditional elements meet the needs of the community in biological, cultural, emotional, thought, and religious aspects.

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to identify similarities and differences in the application of Malay landscape aesthetic elements in three major cities, namely Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu, as well as analyze how these elements meet the needs of the community in biological, cultural, emotional, mental, and religious aspects. The qualitative technique helps the researcher to grasp the community's values, perceptions, and experiences of conventional urban design features (Creswell, 2021). This study incorporates data sources to show how traditional aspects suit current society's demands using sustainability as a theoretical framework.

Approach

A descriptive-interpretive qualitative technique is used in this study. This technique can be helpful for studying social and cultural phenomena because it enables to researchers examine how urban designers use traditional components and how the community engages them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Sustainability, as defined by UNESCO (2016), balances ecological, economic, social, and cultural factors. The historical and present circumstances of traditional components in each city are also examined.

Study Design

This study employs a multiple case study methodology to analyse traditional components in three cities with different cultural, geographical, and historical contexts. In accordance with Yin (2020), the multiple case study approach allows researchers to compare examples systematically. The team of researchers selected Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu because they showcase Malay architecture, traditional gardens, and religious structures. Data triangulation improves the investigation's trustworthiness.

Study Data

Primary and secondary sources provided this study's data. Residents, architects, and cultural heritage experts in the three cities were interviewed in-depth. Government reports, municipal plans, historical records, and other

relevant research were examined as secondary sources for this study. This research directly observes mosque architecture, royal gardens, and traditional market buildings. This data is used to identify how these elements meet the needs of the community in the specified aspects.

Research Instrument Based On Sustainability Principles

According to Baharum et al., (2019), sustainability has five dimensions: biological needs, cultural development, intellectual creativity, emotional well-being, and religious fulfillment. The study instrument was created around these concepts. Traditional aspects were evaluated for function, effectiveness, and sustainability using a checklist. Rivers, parks, and mosques were evaluated for their ecological, cultural, and religious benefits to the community. The instrument comprised an interview guide to find out more about community opinions on these elements.

Data Collection Techniques

Researchers used triangulation techniques including interviews, direct observation, and document analysis to gather data. Semi-structured interviews with local people, cultural specialists, and urban planners provided in-depth observations. Traditional characteristics like gates, parks, and mosque architecture were observed directly. Document analysis examined the historical and policy circumstances of these assets' preservation (Creswell, 2021).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data was analysed thematically to identify biological, cultural, emotional, mental, and religious elements. This research codified interview and observation data to find patterns and similarities across the three cities.

Trustworthiness

Data triangulation enables the researcher to check study results from numerous data sources, boosting study validity. To verify interview data, respondents were asked to validate it. The study was reliable because an audit trail captured every data collection and analysis stage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Independent experts reviewed the study results to account for researcher bias.

Study Findings and Discussion

The study findings focus on similarities and differences in the application of Malay landscape aesthetic elements between Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar and Kota Bharu.

Biological Needs and Self-Protection

All three cities investigated use historic components adapted to current demands for biological needs and self-protection. Rivers that provide clean water and natural protection remain in Kota Tinggi. The Johor River, which was essential to the Sultanate of Johor, today helps manage water resources. Baharum et al., (2019) state that rivers serve biological requirements and buffer environmental risks like floods.

Strategic palace regions and royal gardens in Kuala Kangsar provide self-defence. According to Md Syed et al., (2019), these gardens comfort inhabitants and protect the surrounding nature. Ponds and huge trees regulate the city's temperature, making it more comfortable for residents. Sabil et al., (2021) and Rozman (2024) emphasise that traditional gardens make cities sustainable by offering green areas that reduce air and noise pollution.

Kota Bharu combines traditional and modern aspects to promote sustainability. Gates and historic market places remain markers of identity, but CCTV and computerised monitoring systems have superseded city services as protective measures. Asad et al., (2023) say this technique balances tradition and current security for the city.

This notion of biological sustainability and self-protection reveals how Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu may combine traditional features with contemporary technology without sacrificing cultural and historical

values. This mix of natural components and technological technologies maintains the protective function and sustains the urban ecology.

Cultural Development

Urban cultural development demands preserving local heritage. Traditional gates and Johor Sultanate historical sites are still the primary attractions of Kota Tinggi. Baharum et al., (2019) believe these features improve cultural identity and boost tourism. Ubudiah Mosque and Istana Kenangan are community centres in Kuala Kangsar that foster social interaction and harmony. According to Sabil et al., (2021), this city's historic architecture symbolises Malay culture's present relevance.

Kelantan arts and culture such as Wayang Kulit, Mak Yong, and textile art are the cultural backbone of Kota Bharu. Sabil et al., (2021) noted that this traditional culture draws visitors and educates youth. These characteristics demonstrate cultural sustainability by preserving and passing on traditional values.

These three cities demonstrate how cultural sustainability may preserve urban identity and function in the current day by combining traditional and modern cultural aspects in urban architecture.

Thinking Needs (Creativity)

Adapting to urban life while maintaining culture requires creativity. Malaysian cities Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu cleverly combine tradition with modernity to maintain culture.

Kota Tinggi's gate and architectural decorations combine old and new. These carvings show local artists' ability and culture. Through landscape design, Baharum et al., (2019) discovered that creative expressions represent aesthetics and community identity. Beautiful wood and stone carvings preserve the region's culture. Urban innovation keeps crafts relevant.

Istana Kenangan and Masjid Ubudiah are creative Kuala Kangsar buildings. Sabil et al.,(2021) deem these constructions elegant and imaginative in space and materials. Nail-free Istana Kenangan shows how the community may build powerful, complex structures sustainably. Kids are motivated to merge old and new with this creative building method. Kuala Kangsar shows how traditional inventiveness can help modern urban development.

Songket and batik, the region's main arts, make Kota Bharu interesting. Kelantan's culture influences modern design through art. Wibowo et al., (2023) states that sophisticated batik machine technology has improved design quality and uniqueness while preserving traditional methods and adapting to new trends. Beyond textiles, Kota Bharu's Wayang kulit and Mak Yong culture persist. Its traditional performing arts demonstrate its cultural relevance in current culture.

Every aspect illustrate how creativity, cultural preservation, and urban growth interact. In Kota Tinggi, traditional carvings, architectural brilliance, and artistic preservation blend past and present. These places' creative adaptations of traditional components show how cultural identity can thrive in modernity.

These methods incorporate cultural history into urban planning and inspire other areas to blend tradition and innovation.

Emotional Needs

Urban landscape design for emotional needs means creating environments that calm and comfort the community. Even in bustling modern cities, traditional aspects may provide these demands, as seen in the three cities investigated.

The Johor River and traditional gardens at Kota Tinggi offer calm and tranquilly. Baharum et al., (2019) states that these components serve "therapy spaces" to relieve urban residents' stress levels. Keeping historic components like wooden gates and buildings adds nostalgia and emotional attachment to the local culture.

The royal gardens and historic mosques of Kuala Kangsar are peaceful places to ponder. These characteristics create a harmonious atmosphere that benefits the community's emotional well-being, according to Sabil et al., (2019). In addition to devotion, the Ubudiah Mosque offers the community calm via its architecture.

Residents and visitors in Kota Bharu enjoy traditional marketplaces like Pasar Siti Khadijah. Social interactions at these marketplaces foster solidarity, belonging, and cultural pride, as stated by Asad et al. (2023). Additionally, traditional art acts like Mak Yong and Dikir Barat emotionally connect audiences to their cultural heritage.

Traditional features still contribute to community emotional well-being, as shown by these sustainability principles. In a time of growing urbanisation, Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu can keep these components and promote emotional equilibrium.

Religious Needs

Religious needs are crucial in urban landscape design, especially in multi-religious Malaysia. In their urban architecture, Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu all prioritise religious features.

Traditional mosques like Masjid Jamek Bandar Kota Tinggi serve as communal centres and link religion to the community. According to Baharum (2019), the mosque serves as a place of worship, religious instruction, and communal solidarity. Around the mosque, gardens and ponds provide spiritually necessary tranquilly.

Ubudiah Mosque represents religion and traditional architecture in Kuala Kangsar. Sabil et al., (2021) said that this mosque's architecture showcases Malay-Islamic grandeur and inspires modern mosques. These royal residences, frequently affiliated with religious organisations, accentuate the city's religious character.

Religious institutions including madrasahs and Islamic study centres dominate Kota Bharu. Baharum et al., (2019) states that the city is often referred to as the "Serambi Mekah" due to its commitment to the spread of Islamic values. This religious element is not only limited to mosques but also involves religious traditions such as dhikr ceremonies and lively religious festivals.

The principle of sustainability of religious needs shows that traditional elements such as mosques, madrasahs, and palaces still play an important role in the life of the community. By maintaining these elements, cities such as Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu can ensure the continuity of religious values while meeting the spiritual needs of modern society.

In short, all these explanations can be summarized in Table 1:

This description is long and has explained each principle thoroughly. To organize the similarities and differences based on the principles described, the following is a summary in tabular form:

Table 1 Similarity and Differences in Aesthetic Elements of Malay Landscapes

Principles	Similarities	Differences
Biological and Self-Protection Needs	- Rivers as a source of water and trade routes. - Traditional gardens preserve local ecosystems and protect against pollution.	- Kota Tinggi: Focus on protection through traditional fortifications. - Kuala Kangsar: Royal palace area as a strategic center. - Kota Bharu: Adaptation of modern technology such as CCTV.
Cultural Development	- Traditional cultural elements are preserved such as palaces, mosques, and textile art. - Cultural heritage is used for tourism and community identity.	- Kota Tinggi: Highlighting the heritage of the Johor Sultanate. - Kuala Kangsar: Focusing on royal architecture such as Istana Kenangan. - Kota Bharu: Rich in traditional performing arts such as wayang kulit and mak yong.
Thinking Needs (Creativity)	- Traditional elements are innovatively processed such as architecture and textile art. - The	- Kota Tinggi: Creativity through wood carving and traditional gates. - Kuala Kangsar: Innovation without nails in the architecture of Istana

	combination of traditional values with modern innovation enhances creativity.	Kenangan. - Kota Bharu: Creativity in textile art such as batik and songket.
Emotional Needs	- Traditional elements like gardens and markets create a harmonious and calming atmosphere.	- Kota Tinggi: Rivers and traditional gardens to relieve stress. - Kuala Kangsar: Royal gardens and Ubudiah Mosque for emotional reflection. - Kota Bharu: Traditional markets like Pasar Siti Khadijah create emotional attachment.
Religious Needs	- Mosques and madrasahs function as places of worship and community centers. - Traditional elements support religious values.	- Kota Tinggi: Traditional mosques such as Masjid Jamek as symbols of the community. - Kuala Kangsar: Ubudiah Mosque reflects Malay-Islamic architecture. - Kota Bharu: Religious elements are more dominant with madrasahs and religious traditions.

The main similarity in the application of Malay landscape aesthetic elements in these three cities is the preservation of traditional elements that reflect cultural identity and meet the needs of the community. The differences lie in the specific focus of each city: Kota Tinggi with its heritage of protection, Kuala Kangsar with its royal architecture, and Kota Bharu with its dominance of art and religion. The adaptation of traditional elements to modern needs is the key to the sustainability of each city.

The Ways These Traditional Elements Meet The Needs of Society in Biological, Cultural, Emotional, Thoughtful, And Religious Aspects.

Biological Needs and Self-Protection

Biological and self-protection needs refer to the basic aspects that humans need to survive and function safely in their environment. In this context, traditional elements found in urban designs such as Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu have played an important role in effectively meeting these needs, while adapting to modern needs.

Biological Resources

The three cities' rivers and parks sustain the community's biology. The Johor River in Kota Tinggi, the Perak River in Kuala Kangsar, and the Kelantan River in Kota Bharu have provided clean water and food to the locals. Baharum et al., (2019) claim that rivers provide water, transportation, and trade. Modern flood control and clean water systems use these rivers.

These three cities' traditional gardens around palaces and mosques buffer the environment and provide biological needs. These gardens manage the city's temperature, eliminate air pollution, and shelter local wildlife (Md Syed et al., 2019). For example, the Kuala Kangsar Royal Park is not only a recreational area but also plays an important role in preserving biodiversity.

Self-protection

The need for self-protection is often associated with design elements that protect residents from external threats, including extreme weather and enemy attacks in ancient times. In a traditional context, elements such as the fort and gate in these three cities are symbols of physical protection. For example, Kota Tinggi during the Johor Sultanate used a fort structure and fortifications to protect residents from external attacks (Sabil et al., 2021).

However, with technological advances, this protective function has changed. These cities now protect people with CCTV, police stations, and digital surveillance systems (Plan Malaysia, 2022; Bong 2020). To protect

tourists and sellers, Kota Bharu markets like Pasar Siti Khadijah have contemporary security systems (Boldur, 2024). Asad et. al., (2023) noted that combining traditional and modern components increases safety and preserves culture's aesthetic value.

Thinking Needs (Creativity)

Creatively adapting existing features to modern demands addresses the thinking need. Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu demonstrate how these old elements are innovatively processed to meet modern society's demands while retaining their aesthetics.

Johor Sultanate-inspired gates and wood carvings are creatively processed at Kota Tinggi. These sculptures promote tourism and cultural heritage, according to Baharum et al.,(2019). Using modern technology to complement traditional designs has produced a fascinating appearance that stimulates residents and tourists to be creative.

Built without nails, Istana Kenangan is a Kuala Kangsar landmark. Baharum et al., (2019) say this ingenious method reveals how ancient societies employed innovation to develop lasting and distinctive architecture. This architecture inspires future designers and symbolises beauty.

In Kota Bharu, batik and Kelantan songket inspire creativity. Wibowo et al., (2020) claim that new textile manufacturing methods, including colours and designs, have restored old traditions. Traditional arts like Mak yong and Wayang Kulit show Kelantan's creativity in conveying social values.

This concept promotes creativity in making history relevant and accessible to modern audiences. Traditional values and innovation foster cultural legacy and community creativity.

Emotional Needs

Traditional urban design components help address community emotional needs. Traditional components provide a peaceful and pleasant setting in Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu.

Rivers and traditional gardens in Kota Tinggi offer serenity and relaxation. Baharum et al., (2019) suggests natural factors alleviate emotional stress, especially in crowded cities. These gardens are tranquil with wood sculptures and local plants.

Kuala Kangsar's royal gardens and mosques bring community tranquilly. According to Sabil et al., (2021), the Ubudiah Mosque's beauty moves tourists. These mosques' gardens encourage meditation and reflection, improving emotional wellness.

Traditional Kota Bharu markets like Pasar Siti Khadijah provide residents and tourists unique emotions. These marketplaces promote community bonding through social contacts, according to Asad et al. (2023). Through song and narrative, traditional art performances like dikir barat affect and connect audiences.

According to emotional sustainability theory, gardens, mosques, and traditional markets help calm and consolidate. They meet emotional needs and promote community.

Religious Needs

Religious needs are significant in urban landscape design, especially in Malaysia. Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu demonstrate how traditional components meet these demands while preserving community culture and spirituality.

Traditional mosques like Masjid Jamek Bandar Kota Tinggi are community hubs. Mosques are places of worship, religious teaching, and community, described by Baharum et al., (2019). Gardens and ponds around mosques aid meditation.

Near Kuala Kangsar is Malaysia's breathtaking Ubudiah Mosque. Sabil et al., (2021) claim this mosque's architecture reflects Malay-Islamic culture. This city's royal palace symbolises religion and authority with religious affiliations.

Madrasahs and Islamic schools make Kota Bharu more religious. Baharum et al., (2019) called this city "Serambi Mecca" for promoting Islamic principles. This city shows its religious devotion with frequent dhikr and religious celebrations.

The sustainability of religious needs principle emphasises the relevance of mosques, madrasahs, and palaces in serving communal spiritual needs. These features allow Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu to maintain religious values while meeting modern societal needs.

CONCLUSION

The aesthetic features of the Malay cultural landscape are utilised to urban development in Kota Tinggi, Kuala Kangsar, and Kota Bharu to satisfy contemporary society's needs. Rivers, gardens, gates, mosques, and palaces have survived urbanisation and modernisation. These factors address biological, cultural, emotional, intellectual, and religious demands and preserve local history and culture, as determined by this study. However, there is a need to adapt these elements to current needs using modern technology without sacrificing their traditional values.

All three cities share similarities in the use of traditional elements to support the sustainability of culture and community identity. However, significant differences exist based on the geographical, historical and cultural context of each city. Kota Tinggi, for example, emphasizes the element of self-protection with traditional fort and gate structures, which are now equipped with modern technology such as CCTV for community safety. Kuala Kangsar, with its royal heritage, stands out through architecture such as Istana Kenangan and Masjid Ubudiah which reflect the excellence of Malay-Islamic architecture. Kota Bharu, on the other hand, shows the dominance of culture and religion, with traditional arts such as mak yong and wayang kulit, as well as a strong religious influence in the daily lives of its people.

This study confirms that traditional elements do not only serve as decoration or static heritage, but also as a mechanism to improve the quality of life of the community. Findings show that elements such as traditional parks and markets contribute to the emotional well-being of the community, while traditional architecture inspires modern creativity. Religious elements continue to play an important role in uniting the community and strengthening the spiritual values of the community.

From a practical perspective, this study provides important implications for urban planners and policymakers. Traditional and modern components must be integrated to ensure cultural sustainability in urban development. Understanding the similarities and variations between these cities allows a more strategic and contextual approach to preserve cultural values and historic aspects.

This study emphasises the need for a comprehensive approach to preserving and adapting Malay cultural landscape aesthetics. Tradition and innovation may make the city more appealing and preserve cultural identity in a period of growing urbanisation. This is essential for equitable, inclusive, and sustainable urban growth.

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