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## **THE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE WHICH ATTRACTS PEOPLE TO THE TRADITIONAL URBAN VILLAGE: KAMPONG BHARU AS A CASE STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

The traditional village is one of the urban design typologies where its survival depends on its success in attracting people. The number of people visiting an area can be considered as one of the factors used in assessing the overall success of a place. However, due to rapid urbanisation, the unique character of traditional villages in urban areas or cities can be seen as outdated or considered as not worth preserving. Thus, this paper aims to identify the buildings within a village that can create a character for the area, and which act as important physical elements that contribute towards the success of a traditional village in an urban setting. This case study was conducted in Kampong Bharu, Kuala Lumpur, and a mixed-method approach was used involving personal observations, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires with 330 respondents. The result revealed that buildings, as a physical element, play an essential role in attracting people to Kampong Bharu. Thus, this element should be considered for preservation in any regeneration programme targeted at existing traditional villages which are located in urban settings.

**Keywords:** Urban Village, Urban Design, Successful, Building, Kampong Bharu

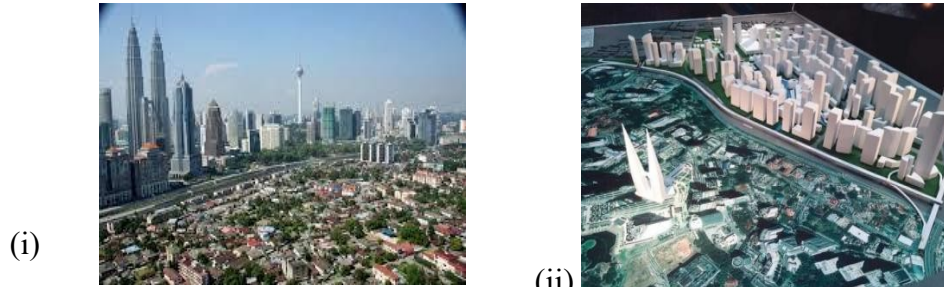
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Urban design involves multidisciplinary disciplines, namely: architecture, town planning, landscape architecture, and geographer. It involves planning the use of existing resources and the organisation of land use, transportation, and other networks (Ja'afar N.H., 2017). One of the definitions of urban design is 'life between building', where the village and the layout of the building within the area exist as a single typology (Ja'afar N.H., 2017; Ja'afar N.H. & Harun N.Z., 2018; Murtaza, F. F. N., 2020).

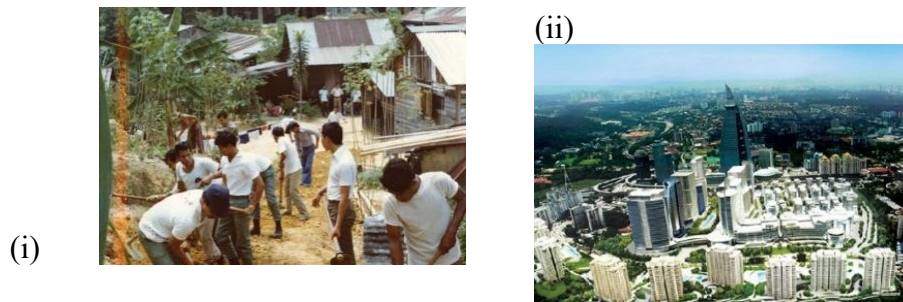
The concept of a village area differs depending on whether it pertains to an urban or town area. A village portrays its own unique characteristics, such as a sense of calmness, an uncomfortable feeling, nostalgic memories, a respected legacy, an association with greenery or nature, and the other elements its particular location provide unrelated to the economic growth cycle (Kamus Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka; JPBD, 2001, 2016; Ja'afar N.H., 2017). The settlements which are known as 'traditional villages' are not only found in rural areas, but also exist in urban areas, according to Plan Malaysia (Federal Town and Country Planning Malaysia-JPBD, 2016). This type of village has been selected as a case study for urban design research.

On the other hand, the physical elements are important features for determining the potential activities, characteristics, and space design of a city (Ismail W.N.W. et al., 2017). Ismail W.N.W. et al. (2017), confirmed that the physical aspects of buildings and areas do contribute to the success of a municipality. However, according to Ja'afar N.H. (2017), current development typically tends to ignore the physical elements of traditional villages that are located in urban areas. For instance, several traditional villages in the urban area of Kuala Lumpur have been demolished and replaced with new developments which utterly ignore the existing character of the surrounding buildings. Due to this, the newer generations of young people are unable to understand the historical character and historical events associated with the places where they reside or visit (S. Alhabshi, 2012). This scenario happened in the areas of Kampung Abdullah Hukum and Kampung Kerinchi in Kuala Lumpur. Kampong Bharu is an iconic urban village in Kuala Lumpur, and may also suffer the same misfortune if serious remedial action is not taken soon (Figure 1).



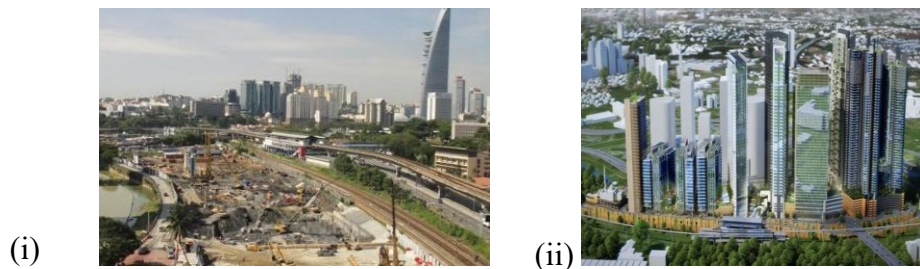
**Figure 1:** (i)View of Kampong Bharu in 2014 and (ii) future development of Kampong Bharu

*Source:* Ja'afar N.H. (2017)



**Figure 2:** (i) Development of Kg. Abdullah Hukum and (ii) future development of Kg. Abdullah Hukum

*Source:* Kosmo (2015) (iii) Metro (2016)



**Figure 3:** (i) Kg. Kerinchi in 1977 and (ii) future development of Kg. Kerinchi

*Source:* Metro (2016)

Thus, this paper aims to focus on the physical elements, which provide the overall design and character of buildings, which can in turn contribute towards the creation of an identity for a traditional village within a modern city. Kampong Bharu in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia, is considered as a unique case study due to the traditional character of the buildings and the uniqueness of the area, which can act as an attraction for local people and tourists alike (Shaw R. et al., 2009; Ja'afar N.H. et al., 2018).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a mixed-method with both quantitative and qualitative surveys. This combination is able to complement the strengths and weaknesses of each method, and allows the results to be considered more effective and authentic (Ja'afar N.H., 2018). Quantitative data was obtained through surveys from 330 respondents with a 95% confidence level (Ja'afar N.H., 2018). By design, two types of questionnaires were used, namely, open-ended and multiple-choice questionnaires. The data was then analysed for simple statistics such as frequency and percentage, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Meanwhile, the qualitative data was obtained through interviews with users in a semi-structured design with observation. Twenty-one respondents were selected because, according to a previous study, this number of respondents is sufficient if the mixed-method is used (Ja'afar N.H., 2018). The observation technique was personally conducted by the researcher for two main reasons, namely: (i) to see the different activity patterns between weekdays (Monday-Thursday), Fridays, and weekends (Saturday – Sunday), and (ii) to see the current built form as entailed by the buildings, landscape, and circulation. The observation period took approximately two weeks. All the qualitative data was analysed qualitatively using the thematic analysis approach, which had been determined via the conceptual framework.

Users were selected as respondents in this study based on their identity as local residents, and thus they were experienced in the location of research. The further addition of international visitors or tourists to the user pool offers the advantage of different physical image descriptions and a look at the opinions of outsiders (Alamouh S., et al., 2018). All the qualitative and quantitative data was analysed concurrently and triangulated with the existing literature before determining the results.

This study uses a case study as the research strategy, and Kampong Bharu in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was chosen. It was selected because it is historically and culturally important for its ability to portray the origin of Malay society within an urban settlement. Secondly, it is the only urban village that still exists in the middle of Kuala Lumpur City. The area is a Malay enclave that has been gazetted as a MAS or Malay Agricultural Settlement. Kampong Bharu became the largest Malay settlement through the gift of 223 acres of land by the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Alauddin Sulaiman Syah Raja Muda Musa, in 1899. The land was awarded to the Malays from the Malay Archipelago, who held Islam as their official religion, conversed in Malay, and adopted the Malay culture. The land of Kampong Bharu consists of seven villages, where each village has its own particular ethnicity. Those villages are: Kampung Atas A (Mandailing ethnic), Kampung Atas B (Minangkabau ethnic), Kampung Paya (Jawa ethnic), Kampung

Masjid (Rawa ethnic), and Kampung Pindah, Kampung Hujung Pasir, and Kampung Periok with descendants of Melaka.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The buildings are one of the important unique elements that attract users to Kampong Bahru. Referring to Table 1, this point has been mentioned by both the qualitative and quantitative data, respectively. This was stated by a high percentage of 94% (n=310) via survey, all respondents (n=21) through the in-depth interview, and was also supported in observation. This shows that buildings contribute towards the uniqueness of Kampong Bahru, which in turn attracts people to visit the place.

**Table 1:** Buildings as the unique physical element that contributes to attracting people to Kampong Bharu according to qualitative and quantitative data

| Physical Element | People           |    |                | Observation |
|------------------|------------------|----|----------------|-------------|
|                  | Interview (n=21) |    | Survey (n=330) |             |
|                  | Yes              | No | Frequency (%)  |             |
| Building         | 21               | 0  | 310 (94%)      | /           |

*Source: Author*

Table 2 shows further detail by asking, “why is the building unique?” as a follow-up question. Users responded that the unique appearance of the buildings attracts the attention of the users, and they consider it as one of the main attractions of Kampong Bharu. To explain in more detail, for the appearance characteristic, 69% of the respondents associated the architecture style, material and details as an important factor. Next, 31% felt that the colour of the buildings makes them unique, as seen in Table 2. The importance of these characteristics of appearance for traditional buildings was also mentioned during the in-depth interviews and was supported by observation.

**Table 2:** Factors that affect the uniqueness of a building’s appearance

| Why is a building unique?                     | Freq. (n=330) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---------------|----------------|
| • <b>Appearance</b>                           |               |                |
| i. Architectural style, materials and details | 228           | 69%            |
| ii. Colour                                    | 72            | 31%            |

*Source: Author*

Furthermore, via in-depth interview, respondents elaborated on types of buildings and their appearance (Table 3). All respondents identified the Malay Traditional Houses, Kelab Sultan Suleiman, and Masjid Jamek Kampong Bharu as particularly noteworthy (Table 3).

**Table 3:** List of buildings that are noticed most by respondents

| Buildings that are noticed most recognised (in-depth interview) | Appearance           |         |          |
|---|----------------------|---------|----------|
|   | Architect ural Style | Details | Material |
| 1. Malay Traditional Houses (n=21)                              | *                    | *       | *        |
| 2. Kelab Sultan Sulaiman (n=21)                                 | *                    | *       | *        |
| 3. Masjid Jamek Kg Bharu (n=21)                                 | *                    | *       | *        |

Source: Author

**Table 4:** Buildings that are noticed most unique by respondents

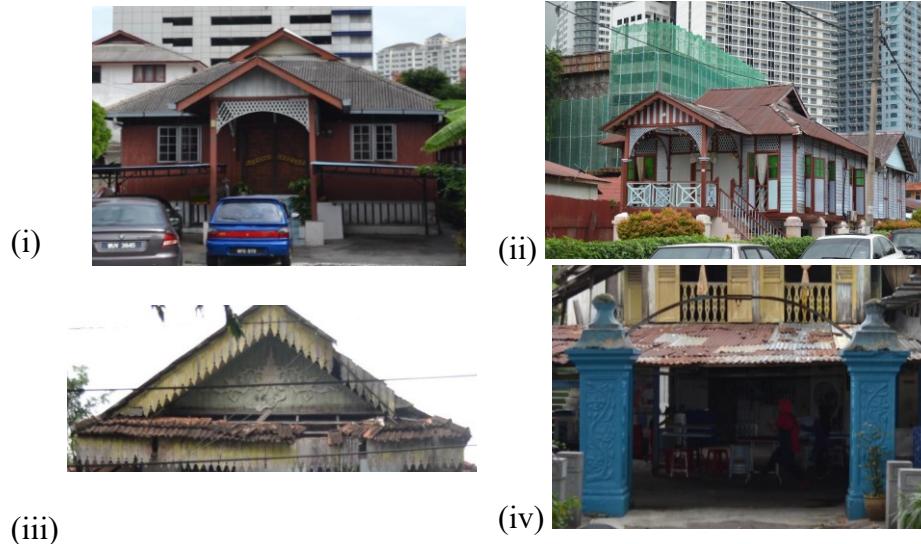
| Buildings that are unique in apperances (in-depth interview) | Freq. (n=21) | Percentage (%) |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| 1. Malay Traditional Houses (n=21)                           | 18           | 86%            |

Source: Author

The Malay Traditional Houses in Kampong Bharu were determined to be the most noticed (recognised) by all respondents (n=21) (Table 3) and the most unique buildings in this area (n=19) (Table 4). Below is the quotation from the interview.

*“To me, the old houses in Kampong Bharu give a sense of attraction to someone who passes it every day. The heritage unique designs of these old homes with one of-a-kind carvings and cannot be found in other parts of Kuala Lumpur. The material of wood also make this historical building so amazing”* –18th respondent.

The quotation above shows that the presence of the traditional Malay housing architectural style within the area contributes to Kampong Bharu’s uniqueness. There is a strong association between the feeling of uniqueness and the details and materials of these buildings. These buildings were considered unique, and cannot be found in other areas of the city of Kuala Lumpur. The presence of these traditional buildings in Kampong Bharu sets this place apart from other areas, especially considering the scarcity of traditional-styled homes in cities nowadays. These features make this place more memorable for the people who pass through or do business in the area.



**Figure 4:** (i, ii) Some of the Malay traditional houses in Kampong Bharu with a variety of colours. (iii, iv) Details of roof and columns of Malay Traditional Houses

Abd Malek (2018) coined the phrase which refers to these dwellings, but the style originally came from Melaka, Johor, and Selangor. However, the appearance of this style is changing over time. According to historical data, the distinctive diversity of this style appeared because Kampong Bahru has seven villages, which each create their own unique visuals. This diversity of architectural style for Malay Traditional Houses is one of the features of the indigenous architecture that belongs to Malay (such as Melaka and Minangkabau, the original people of Malaya). (Abd Malek, 2018).

Observations revealed that even though there are differences in the architectural styles of the homes, we still find common elements of the unique Malay architectural style in all of them. Those basic elements of the style include using an on-stilt design and using timber as the main material with special carved designs that give the area its own identity (Figure 4).



**Figure 5:** Kelab Sultan Suleiman was mentioned by respondents as a unique colonial building in Kampong Bharu

Furthermore, Kelab Sultan Suleiman was also mentioned by all in-depth interview respondents (n=21) as a unique building in Kampong Bahru, with its own special architectural style, material, and details.

*“Kelab Sultan Sulaiman building has a unique design compared to the ones surrounding it. This modernism style has its own simple details and material in concrete. It has its own charm and attracting qualities due to its one of a kind build.”*-12<sup>th</sup> respondent.

This interview shows that Kelab Sultan Sulaiman is not just a place of interest, but is also capable of attracting people to Kampong Bharu and making the place more memorable. The unique architectural style which includes modern characteristics, that can be seen from its use of concrete material and simple details, is also responsible for attracting people to Kampong Bharu.

Observation showed that Kelab Sultan Suleiman is a building that evokes a very nostalgic feeling in Kampong Bharu. This building has its own identity, which allows it to attract people with its unique architectural style, especially the design of its facade. According to history, this building is one of the colonial heritage buildings from the British era. This shows that the appearance of architectural styles through time could contribute towards the story of the historical timeline for Kampong Bahru. Thus, preserving these buildings will enrich the historical features of the place and attract more people to the area.





**Figure 6:** Masjid Jamek Kampong Bharu shows the uniqueness of Islamic architectural style and details

Masjid Jamek Kampong Bharu was also mentioned as a frequently visited building, and its appearance is considered unique. Furthermore, from the interviews, the users were able to identify the building based on these features.

*“Masjid Jamek Kampung Bharu is one of those buildings that I always frequent for prayers here. To me, this building have their own architecture style and the details, such as Islamic features, are very attractive in this Malay area. – 14th respondent.*

The quotation above shows that Kampong Bharu Mosque is able to give a high visual impact to people through the building’s physical characteristics. As mentioned in the previous study, the importance of the mosque as a community centre, with the Islamic architectural style, has an influence on the place’s identity (El Bouljoufi M. et al., 2021; Ismail, W.N.W et al., 2017). Lahamendu, V. et al. (2017) point out that the presence of religious buildings that are associated with the dominant elements of society will enhance the image of the area. This shows that a mosque is the perfect kind of building to attract people and has a great influence on the place’s identity.

From observation, it was seen that Masjid Jamek was the most visited and noticed building in the area due to its Islamic architectural style. Islamic architecture is characterised by the variety of decorative elements that combine with the unique elements of Islamic architectural features based on the background of Malay society as a Muslim environment. The background of the

Muslim community and living environment can be seen through the decorations which are used (Nang Naemah & Nur Maslina, 2014). This new mosque was rebuilt on the old site and completed in 2015 with a combination of historic and modern features (observation). In addition to its function as a place of worship, this building also contributes to the community via its diversity society programme, which attracts people to visit this building as a place to gain knowledge or cook a “lambuk porridge” en masse. Even though it uses elements of the new Islamic architectural style, but the fact that it retains the spirit of the existing site, inherited traditional functions, and preserves local culture makes Kampong Bharu a place known for having its own identity as a Malay Islamic village community enclave (Yaman, M. et al., 2018; Raharjo, T., 2021). Thus, this intangible heritage of the original Malay Muslim society continues to attract more people to visit the Kampong Bahru mosque.

The descriptions above show how the Malay Traditional House, Kelab Sultan Suleiman building, and Masjid Jamek Kampong Bharu mosque are important factors in attracting people to Kampong Bharu due to their architectural style and their use of materials and details. The description above shows that most of the listed buildings are categorised as traditional buildings or as buildings which are associated with Kampong Bahru’s historical significance. This shows that historical buildings are associated with the value of Kampong Bharu’s character, and therefore make it much more memorable and attract more people. This is supported by Radzuan, I. S. M., & Ahmad, Y. (2016), who stated that a place has to have a clear image and be easy to understand for it to have a sense of uniqueness and find success with the public (Rahil, N. R. M., 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, because of Kampong Bharu’s strategic location, it has become the prey of developers who desire to redevelop it into a series of high-rise buildings (PKB, 2021). In other words, Kampong Bharu has experienced a drastic morphological change in terms of the development of its socio-economic and physical form without much attention being paid to the quality of the urban neighbourhoods being provided (Abd Malek, 2018). Monolithic high-rise buildings reflect economic motives and are a result of the corporate image which has dominated development trends. The urban fabric is too often characterised as being fragmented, as a collage of buildings creates a profound sense of dissociation (Abd Malek, 2018).

Thus, there are a few building appearances (architectural style, details and material use) that have been determined as contributing towards the success of Kampong Bharu in attracting people. Therefore, these elements should be taken into consideration when planning new developments in the urban villages, in order to preserve their unique characteristics and at the same time support their ability to attract people to those places. These factors are:

- I. Conservation of the concept of Malay Traditional Houses with respect for the cultural society. These basic styles involve the use of on-stilt designs and using timber as the main material with special carved designs that give the area its own identity.
- II. Enhance the mosque's architectural style and its function as a Malay Muslim community centre, along with its inherited local cultural society. This is one of the main aspects in safeguarding cultural heritage, according to (Bakar, A. A., Osman et al., 2014; Yaman, M. et al., 2018; Radzuan, I. S. M., & Ahmad, Y., 2020).
- III. Conserving the architectural styles from different eras. This is because doing so will portray the importance of the historical timeline of the place, which will enrich the character and success of the area. Alraout, A. A. (2006) coined a phrase that shows that this represents some of the factors involved in being known as a “knowledge city”.

To produce a thriving village, in a city that is able to attract outsiders, physical elements of the buildings should be prioritised for their ability to give the place character and create its own image (Murtaza, F. F. N., 2020; Rahil, N. R. M., 2020). A village which is alive, comfortable, pleasant, rich in culture, has interesting architectural styles, and offers exciting spaces, will attract more people (O.A. et al., 2020; Radzuan, I. S. M., & Ahmad, Y., 2016).

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