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The Layering of Historic Urban Patterns of the Littoral: Colonization as Degree of Spatial Rupture

[Urban-Architectural Forms of Historic Southeast Asia: The Littoral Cities](#) • Book Chapter • 2026 •

DOI: 10.4324/9781003470045-2

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Abstract

Once subjected to the colonial administration, the Indigenous urban core in Southeast Asian cities represents a palimpsest of multiple layers. Underneath layers of colonial and developmental impact lie the original traditional compact planning, which has its own character. The present planning of Southeast Asian towns is characterized by residual and inherited patterns of deliberate ruptures of the original urban realm by the colonialists. Thus, this chapter, by focusing on Kota Melaka, Alor Setar in Kedah, and Kuala Kangsar in Perak as a key case study, highlights an intense form of rupture of the original urban continuum caused by colonialists, from which the changes in urban core patterns can measure the degree of their intervention. In the context of urban design, the nature of rupture is the discontinuity of people, which is closely related to urban development. This method uses the map of the original and present patterns compared from spaces and cultural interference by the colonial as an external influence on the region. These current patterns, thus, are indicative and may refer to the economic significance of the site to the colonialists. Its relevance is related to reducing the symbolic and sociopolitical influence of the traditional Malay polities Indigenous to the area. © 2026 Shireen Jahn Kassim and Illyani Ibrahim.

Indexed keywords

Engineering uncontrolled terms

Case-studies; Colonisation; External influences; Littorals; Multiple layers; Urban core; Urban design; Urban development; Urban patterns; Urban realm

Engineering main heading

Urban growth

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Abstract

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