

CULTURAL, ARCHITECTURAL, 'SENSE OF PLACE' AND SUFISTIC BELIEFS IN MOSQUE TOURISM CASE STUDY: MASJID AR-RAHMAN, PULAU GAJAH, KELANTAN

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ABSTRACT

The mosque is a sacred important religious symbol for bringing Muslims together as demonstrated during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This paper investigates the potential of Masjid Ar-Rahman of Pulau Gajah, Kelantan as a spot for mosque tourism. Although this mosque was constructed in 2016, it has demonstrated simplicity in its scale and traditional image. It has the value of hybrid assimilation or Hindu-Buddhist syncretism and tolerance and coined as the Nusantara hybridized Malay and Javanese architectural styles. The typology of this humble Malay Mosque architecture is of medium-scale and reflects the Sufistic contextual value beliefs encouraging religious and architectural tourism alike. The conceptual framework capitalises the research gap found in mosque cultural, architectural and Sufistic beliefs research by further delving into constructing the 'Sense of Place' in relation to the 'Sacred Places'. This research employs qualitative methods of interviewing visitors, applying phenomenological and case study approaches supported by architectural documentation in emphasising the symbolic and semiotic aesthetics aspects in constructing the 'Sense of Place' bonded by the Sufistic symbolic aesthetics. The theory is constructed in the deeply rooted Islamic Mosque architecture via Sufistic beliefs that provides platform for the mosque tourism activities.

Keywords: Mosque tourism, Mosque architecture, Sufistic beliefs, Sense of place

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism offers a lot of possibilities in generating income for any country depending on the focus of the tourism activities. One aspect of tourism in Malaysia can be related to various aspects of Islamic related activities or events. Mosque tourism can be one of the angles that can be highly capitalised, and some efforts have been undertaken such as the Mosque Trail launched in Perak in 2014 (ITC, 2021). Several researchers have given emphasise on how Islam supported in different tourism activities to enhance religious and social functions. Tourism is traditionally closely linked to religion which has acted as a powerful motive for traveling. Religious buildings, rituals, festivals, and religious events are important tourist attractions for those are the followers of the systems of belief represented (Henderson, 2003).

1.1 Background

Malaysia is a moderate Muslim country of south-east Asia. There are a lot of Islamic infrastructures, mosques, Islamic heritage sites in Malaysia. Malaysia undeniably has attractive Muslim cultures and customs that are embedded in a lot of heritage. The Eastern Coast Economic Region (ECER) involves three east coast states of Malaysia, namely Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and some parts of Johor. It is formed to be focused on the socio-economic and industrial development of the region. Eastern coast states of the Peninsular Malaysia are still exposed to the privileging of Islam and gives priority to the erection and

redevelopment of mosques. Other Islamic infrastructures confirms the connection to their affirmation by the federal powers (Cleary, 1997). The paper investigates the potentiality of mosque tourism in Kelantan, a part of the ECER development (Figure 1). This is also in line with the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (Malaysia) under SDG11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities (Figure 2). In the SDG11, Goal 11 consists of 7 outcome targets Indicators and 3 mean of implementation targets, aim to form an inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements. This includes to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage (SDG Indicators Malaysia, 2018). Unfortunately, Kelantan in 2019 still fell behind other states (Table 1) in Malaysia in earning income from tourism activities (Table 2). This is based on the tourism statistics released by the Department of Statistics Malaysia before the COVID-19 pandemic affected Malaysia and the world and Kelantan received 11 million visitors with RM4.8 billion in tourist receipts.

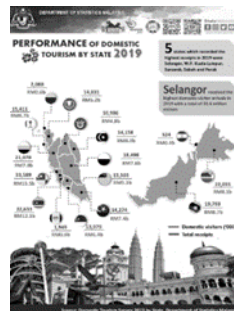


Figure 1 – Performance of Domestic Tourism by State 2019



Figure 2 – SDG 11

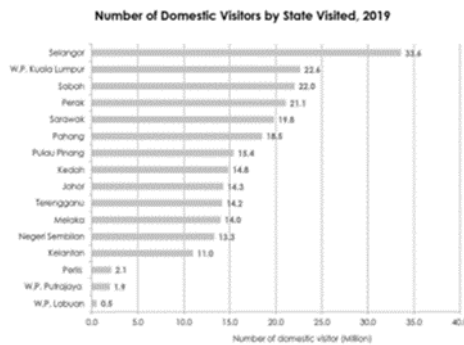


Table 1: Domestic Visitors by State Visited, 2019

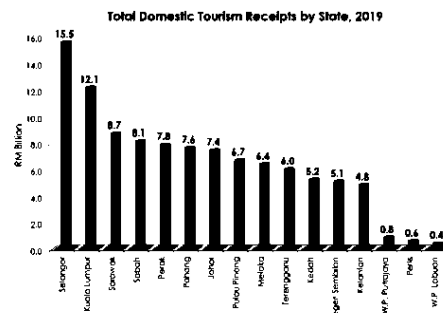


Table 2: Income Earning 2019

Under the KEGA 15 – Malaysia Truly Asia as one of the initiatives under the Malaysian Government’s Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, Kelantan can capitalise on mosque tourism as part of places to visit in Kelantan. The initiative leans towards cultural and rural economy and heritage tourism and Strategic Thrust 7 counting for Religious Harmony Index and Neighbourhood Harmony Index (SPV2030, 2019). In National Tourism Policy 2020-2030 (2019), specifically under the Product Augmentation Strategies, such activity of mosque tourism falls under the Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Muslim Friendly Tourism and to some extent the Cross Border Tourism. This is due to Kelantan’s close vicinity to Thailand that encourages religious activities either for education or religious events. The paper specifically examines mosque tourism and specifically employs the Masjid Ar-Rahman, Pulau Gajah, Kelantan as a case study in promoting cultural and architectural heritage strengthened by the Sufistic beliefs. A recent visit by the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), YB Dato’ Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, to officiate the opening of Masjid Al-Asr, the new mosque at Kampung

Meritam, Limbang, Sarawak, sparked interest and curiosity about the potential of mosques being made into a tourism product (ITC, 2021). This statement will enhance further the need for the mosque architecture to be given the focus in tourism. Moreover, according to Tourism Malaysia, this country has been chosen as the world's top destination for Muslim travellers for three consecutive years (2017-2019) in recent surveys conducted by Singapore's Crescent Rating and the United States' Dinar Standard (Tourism Malaysia, 2019).

1.2 Problem Statement

Cultural heritage plays an important role in keeping traditions alive and more so when mosque tourism is taken into consideration. Currently, most mosques in Malaysia have forms and structures which are similar in nature; most of them have the outer form and structure with the big domes with minarets, the inner decorations, and other similar features. Such forms and structures are built based on the forms and structures of mosques in Islamic history of the past, which have enjoyed its periods of glory (Utaberta et. al., 2015). The style was brought along by the British colonials during their period of colonisation in the then the Malay Federal States before the Independence. Moreover, British colonial architecture in Malaysia also inspired an eclectic design which included mainly Moorish inspired, Tudor, Neo-classical and Neo-Gothic (Asif, 2019). However, these features are not from the local style of mosque architecture specifically pointing towards the grandiose scale of the minarets and the domes imported from the Middle East via Indian sub-continent. One of the identified problems in mosque architecture in Malaysia now is the loss of the vernacular style mosque architecture hence the loss of the local architectural identity mainly in the usage of construction materials. Tajuddin and Rasdi (2014) describe this as a crisis for the mosque, as Western powers have tried to dominate the Muslim world. The architectural style and building materials of the mosques built during 15th centuries were like that of the traditional Malay houses.

According to Ahmad (1999), a conservation expert, there are two types of architectural styles under the vernacular mosques category, namely the traditional and regional influences, differentiate by the design of the roof. The traditional mosques usually reflect the strong influences of the Malay houses, way of life and environment. The roof generally a long shape gable roof. Conversely seen in vernacular mosques with regional influence which can be distinguished by their two or three-tiered roofs with decorative roof ridges and clay tiles. Previously, the mosques were using timber in their construction as opposed to the current materials of mainly bricks, steel, glass, and concrete. Amongst the different kinds of historical approaches employed, there is an approach or classification using types of most applicable as architectural typology deals with function, form, style, materials. Thus, these components play an important role in creating the identity of the mosque architecture. In this paper, the components coupled with the understanding of the Sufistic beliefs of creating 'Sacred Places' would be able to construct the 'Sense of Place'. The Sufistic beliefs are the vehicle in furthering the comprehension of 'Sacred Places' that are always embedded in the space functions of a mosque. It is another method of bringing back the meaning of the 'Sense of Place' in a mosque. This idea cumulates all the issues on 'conceived', 'perceived' ideas of mosque architecture in creating a 'lived' notion thus constructing the 'Sense of Place' after the 'Sacred Places' has been established. Nowadays, most mosques have lost their social characteristics. In other words, it seems that mosques in the present times are operated simply as a house of worship for Muslims, rather than being used as a whole community place. Considering the current situation in Malaysia, it has been stated that most of the mosques are only extensively used during the five-time congregational prayers and this situation has limited the functions of the mosques outside prayer times. Furthermore, mosque designs nowadays have generated spaces that are more exclusive spaces rather than inclusive (Nizarudin, 2014).

Questions arose as many people believed that majority of the contemporary mosques no longer inherit the value of the traditional vernacular mosque. This opinion is quite reasonable due to the formal expression of the mosque today which is different from the mosque architecture as seen in the contemporary mosques dominated by domes and towers, both are of monumental scale. Tranquil and quaint timber Masjids were gradually replaced with replica of middle eastern cum western brick and mortar architecture in most of the towns and villages (Mohd. Nawawi et.al, 2010). Today, the Malay architecture is instead a collection of contemporary traditional buildings that are made from concrete or brick instead of re-assembled hardwood timber or bamboo raised on stilts. Despite the forethought of sustainability and vernacular built form as sustainable architecture, the public perception of "progress" of perfect abode and long term nature of their structures is grossly misconstrued by the Western introduction of new building material and method of construction as modern architecture as well as the Middle Eastern architecture nostalgically imposed by the imams and religious teachers who had studied or had done their compulsory pilgrimage in the Middle East and India. These two non-local of tower and domes elements have replaced local parts and altered the official expressions of the mosques in the Malay Archipelago. This issue deals on the 'conceived' idea on the outlook on mosque architecture. Making the mosque architecture more local enhances the mode for mosque tourism presenting architectural and cultural heritage to the visitors.

1.3 Objectives

The main aim of this paper is mainly to dwell into mosque tourism by looking at connection between mosque architecture, that is rich in architectural and cultural heritage. It goes further into examining on the spiritual approach of Sufism that characterises the mosque through its architectural components and space planning. This angle is believed to have portrayed the mosque of having the ultimate beauty, simplicity, and openness thus visitors.

1. To put forward the examination of the architectural components of the mosque architecture of Masjid Ar-Rahman that contribute to the construction of the 'Sense of Place' based on 'Sacred Spaces' for mosque tourism.
2. To analyse the Sufistic beliefs that can be related to the mosque architecture of Masjid Ar-Rahman in relation with the understanding of the 'Sacred Spaces' for mosque tourism.
3. To construct the 'Sense of Place' of the mosque architecture of Masjid Ar-Rahman based on the Sufistic beliefs and the creation of the 'Sacred Places' for mosque tourism.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Architecturally, mosques represent space of beliefs that encompass that the believers frequent to worship. Mosques are established as physical manifestations of Islam and its cultural identity in every settlement in Malaysia. The original concept of the mosque suggests that its use as a community place should be all-encompassing, not only for Muslims, but also to inspire the involvement of other community members. Despite far-reaching studies conducted on the importance of mosque architecture, historical background and functions, very little attention has been paid to the 'Sense of Place' and the creation of 'Sacred Places' of this architecture. The paper investigates mosque architecture with practices of Sufistic beliefs that contributes to the creation of the 'Sense of Place' and ultimately producing the 'Sacred Places'. All these will be considered as another angle for mosque tourism that combine religious understanding with tourism activities.

2.1 Mosque Tourism

Mosque architecture can be an iconic feature of a community. The function of mosque as a centre for the development of communities becomes an important thing as a place of worship and variety of activities directly related to worship and spiritual development. In addition, the mosque also serves as a centre of community development where all the problems of the communities can be discussed in issues related to economics, education, politics, culture etc. Some mosques in Malaysia already have a variety of economic activities in the form of mosque owned enterprises, but the number is very limited (Hamdani & Muhammad Ibrahim, 2016). The combined religious activities and several studies related to the community empowerment through mosque have been done in several cities and noted for the potentiality to improve the welfare of the people who live around the mosque. In addition, mosque's function as a development and empowerment of Muslims should not be neglected (Dalmeri, 2014). As a place of worship, the mosque is used in a variety of activities directly related to worship and spiritual development and has been implemented well, unfortunately the function as community development still get less attention from the society.

Therefore, the purpose of mosques needs to be enhanced further so that these two functions can run well by improving creativity of the function of the mosque to serve the community, to increase the welfare of the people and by encouraging activities towards tourism, the community could improve further in the sustainability of their neighbourhoods. Jemaah mosques need to be fostered to have a balance of religious ethos and strong work ethic. Thus, creativity recognising economic opportunities and opening business-oriented activities to capture these opportunities is important (Riwajanti, Muwidha & Candrawati, 2018). Looking at the potential of Masjid Ar-Rahman, the community could benefit from the architectural and cultural values that this mosque architecture could offer to the visitors to further sustaining the continuous efforts of preserving the heritage. Since the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into force in September 2015, Malaysia has taken one step further in realising these goals. 'Sustainability' as defined in commerce is derived from the term 'sustainable development' in the Social Sustainability Index (Elkington, 1997). Alhaddi (2015) and Joseph (2013) have all posited that sustainability exists within the structure of social, environmental, and economic pillars which can be achieved in the mosque tourism activities relating to the Masjid Ar-Rahman. Thus, in proposing a sustainable model of mosque tourism, the sustainability elements are being integrated within the mosque tourism for the well-being of the local community and visitors alike. Serious consideration of creating the identity of Masjid Ar-Rahman is by enhancing the Sufistic beliefs in expressing the 'Sense of Place' to offer spiritual experience for the visitors.

2.2 Mosque Architecture

The paper focuses on mosque architecture that is significant in becoming one of the contributing factors in mosque tourism, specifically in Kelantan. One of the major problems in the discourse of Islamic architecture is the relevance of the idea of a 'style' as opposed to the more fundamentalist approach of vernacular revivalism or the radical approach of interpreting the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. In the context of the field of architectural theory and history, one must establish the latter to derive ideas of the former. Historical description and classification are the building blocks of architectural theory. In architecture, theory is denoted as an approach to design. Most important of all, the mosque architecture embodies the teaching of Islam and simultaneously producing the 'Sense of Place' to further enhance the 'Sacred Places' to compliment all religious activities that take place in the mosque. At the beginning of the life of the Prophet (pbuh), before the Hijrah year, the mosque was not a special building or a specific architectural work. According to the hadith narrated by Sahih Muslim in the Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer:

Jabir Abdullah Al-Ansary reported that the Prophet had mentioned that the earth has been made sacred and pure and a mosque for me, so whenever the time of prayer comes for any one of you, he should pray wherever he is.

Physically, the early building of the Masjid Nabawi (Prophet's Mosque) was a rectangular building using mud brick construction methods (Figure 3). The building had four walls and three protected areas. Roofs were supported by posts made of palm tree trunks. The first part of the roof protected the main space on the wall facing the *qiblah*. The second closed part was to protect the house of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his wives to the left of the main hall. The other side of the roof was in front of the mosque where Sufis (al-suffah) spent their night. These were poor but educated immigrants. They learned from Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and served him.

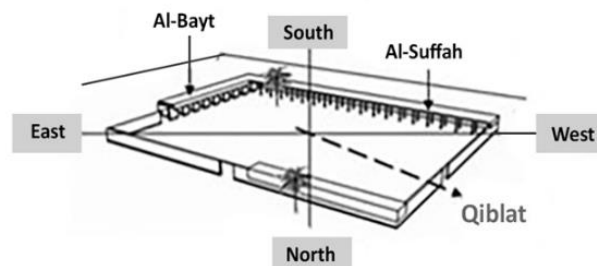


Figure 3 – Masjid Nabawi Layout
Source: (Creswell, 1969)

In terms of the design of the mosque architecture, a holistic framework approach in which aspects of spatial organisation, roof form, building materials, construction methods, decorative language, and visual order could be methodically included. These will then form three formal characteristics of morphology, technology and design articulation used in the study of mosque architecture. It should be noted that another aspect on descriptive elements is related to contextual components such as site context, cultural context, and architectural context (Arbi, 2014). This aspect will be addressed in constructing the 'Sense of Place' through the understanding of all those contexts in providing a 'Sacred Places' for worshipping purposes. The lack of serious consideration in this aspect can be observed in many contemporary mosque architectures. It leads to the lack of understanding of 'perceived' idea on mosque architecture.

2.3 'Sense of Place'

Mosque, as a sacred place, is not only functioned as a place of worship per se, but also a monumental display in the form of landmark to show the ruling authority in the conquered land. The architectural forms were diverse according to the tradition and characteristic of the region as well as the geographical locations. The non-confessional use of the place also a significant part of the local inhabitant's *raison d'être* (Gutiérrez, 2018). Besides, as a religious institution, mosque is built for social bonding platform. Hence, the concept of communal mosque or *jamek* mosque has been evolved since the early era of the Islamic development. In other words, mosque is a prominent space for community socialising as well as for daily religious activities (Baharudin & Ismail, 2014; Jaffar, Harun, & Abdullah, 2020). To the Muslim believers, mosque is an essential element in their life that created strong emotional ties based on the religious experiences and memories that built over time, in which the sense of place is formed.

The 'Sense of Place' is a subjective perception based on the physical characteristics of a place and involves cognitive and perceptual factors in a sense of time (Hashemnezhad,

Heidari, & Hoseini, 2013; Najafi & Shariff, 2011; Scannell & Gifford, 2014). Through the time, sacredness of a place is developed, and it ties intimately to the sense of authenticity of that specific place (Birch & Sinclair, 2013; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004). Based on the theoretical perspective of 'space triad' ('Sense of Place' and 'Space Triad'), the formation of sense of place is affected by the (i) 'perceived' space/spatial practices, (ii) 'conceived' space/representation of space, and (iii) 'lived' space/representational space (Lefebvre, 1991). In traditional building, perceived space is the physical characters of the buildings for constructing the sense of place by focusing on the historical forms, cultural characteristics, and its functional settings (Ali, 2019). The architectural design, symbols, iconography, and artefacts are essential to a religion. As a subset to culture, religion affects the people's attachment to a sacred place, where space is purposely created to keep the basic concept of religions and as a mediator for experiencing faith (Gojnik & Gojnik, 2019b). The rich cultural values and meanings of a sacred place, particularly in a traditional architecture, brings the community to form the place identity.

2.4 Sufism

An untouched angle in mosque tourism is looking at the spiritual aspect that the mosque architecture can evoke. The cultural heritage that can be witnessed in many old mosques seldom touch the finer aspect of Islamic teaching which is Sufism. The Sufistic beliefs play an important role in this investigation. It is the tool that able to construct the 'Sense of Place' by combining the 'perceived' space with the 'lived' in the mosque architecture. By understanding Sufism, the 'Sacred Places' can be established thus in producing the 'Sense of Place'. Sufism is commonly called "Muslim mysticism." This expression does have a certain relevance if one understands it as the knowledge of the "mysteries," as a communion with the divine through intuition and contemplation. The Koran, which distinguishes the "world of Testimony" (*'ālam al-shahāda*), i.e. the perceptible world, from the "world of Mystery" (*'ālam al-ghayb*), asks the faithful to believe in this Mystery, the *ghayb* (literally, "that which is not accessible to sight)." One of the goals of Sufism, precisely, is to pierce through the opacity of this world to contemplate spiritual realities that lie beyond simple faith (Geoffrey, 2010).

Until the ninth century, Islamic spirituality fit almost exclusively within the framework of *zuhd*, a word that can be translated as "detachment" or "renunciation." This inner attitude, which consists of looking at this lower world with a certain distance, has its prototype in the Prophet. The many treatises devoted to *zuhd* and the collections of hadīths composed during that period concerned the ethics of everyday life, which consisted of integrity and of balance (Geoffrey, 2010). While at first glance there appears to be a distinction between Sufism as Islamic mysticism and other forms of mysticism, there is no contrast between mysticism as a rejection of revealed law and the rigorous adherence to the revealed law (*shari'a*) stressed by numerous Sufis. The necessity of Sufis adhering to the revealed law (*shari'a*) is evident in statements including, though not limited to, al-Junayd's saying that, regarding the Sufi path, "our knowledge must be controlled by conformity with the Qur'an and the Sunna"¹⁵ and Abu'l Hassan al-Shadhili's saying that "if your mystical unveiling (*kashf*) diverges from the Qur'an and Sunna, hold fast to these two and take no notice of your unveiling; tell yourself that the Qur'an and Sunna is guaranteed by God Most High, which is not the case with the unveiling inspiration and mystical perceptions.". Rather, positing Sufism as a sort of "systematic" form of mysticism misses a crucial aspect of the relationship between the Sufi and the law (*shari'a*) (Cook, 2014). In relating the Sufistic beliefs to the theoretical framework of this research, the contribution of Sufism in constructing the 'Sense of Place' is from the Lefebvre's 'Space Triad' of 'Conceived', 'Perceived' and 'Lived' spaces.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The investigation into the issue of mosque tourism looks deeper into the potentiality of a mosque to provide an opportunity for tourism activities based only on its appearance and religious beliefs and functionalities. This study uses descriptive qualitative approaches, especially in the context of phenomenology, with the aim of obtaining accurate systematic facts regarding the characteristics and values of expression from the mosque architecture of the Masjid Ar-Rahman and the construction of the 'Sense of Place'. It also relies heavily on the observation process during an event, prayer time and during quiet time. According to Groat (2013), qualitative methods have the power to interpret something behind the meaning of symbols and forms. This study begins with comparing the early documentation of typology of the mosque's evolution with observation of the typology of this mosque and on the construction of the 'Sense of Place'. The observation also focussed on the overall composition of the mosque space contained in the hybrid components of some mosque architectural design styles. However, this study concentrated only on some of the dominant components such as the appearance of the roof, the prayer room, the porch space, the ablution space, and the azan (call for prayer) tower. The study also conducted several surveys of the architecture and the 'Sense of Place', architectural documentation and secondary sources from the authorities and historical history and the philosophy of the mosque. A survey on the number of visitors to the mosque also determines the popularity of the mosque in attracting tourists based on its architectural features on different occasions throughout the year. A set of questionnaires to indicate the attraction characteristics of the mosque issued to understand the connection between the visitors, the mosque architecture and Sufism.

3.1 Case Study - Masjid Ar-Rahman, Pulau Gajah, Kelantan

This mosque was built in 2016 and the whole construction process was funded by a philanthropist that included the land it was built on and the infrastructures constructed surrounding the mosque. Although it is considered new, this mosque has received many domestic tourists that frequent this area, especially on the weekends. Masjid Ar-Rahman was designed with local and the hybridised Malay Archipelago architectural identity in mind and is considered by many architects as having a very rich cultural and architectural heritage values. This mosque (Figure 4) was designed with local and the hybridised Malay Archipelago architectural identity in mind. Located on a small site of only 0.69 acre bounded by houses, this masjid was proposed to replace an existing old structure and to provide a larger prayer hall and facilities. In keeping the regional architectural heritage alive, Masjid Ar-Rahman was built with 90% solid timber for construction with *cengal* wood for the main columns, clay tiles for the roof and the rest of the materials were of concrete especially for the toilet and ablution areas (Figure 5).



Figure 4: Masjid Ar-Rahman



Figure 5: Ablution Area



Figure 6: *Tiang Seri*



Figure 7: *Joglo* Roof

Mosque Area and Minaret



Figure 8: *Mimbar*



Figure 9: Woven Bamboo Ceiling



Figure 10: *Janda Berhias* Walls

This is the first mosque in Malaysia that has five main pillars in the centre of the prayer hall to symbolise the five pillars of Islam. The configurations made the mosque unique and not following the norms of the Malay architecture layout. Main other details of the architecture also feature a lot of Malay Kelantanese architecture. The focus of the architecture features the *tiang seri* (Figure 6). This is the first mosque in Malaysia that has five main pillars (Figure 7) in the centre of the prayer hall to symbolise the five pillars of Islam. The focus of the architecture features the *tiang seri*. This is an indication of the placement of *tiang seri* as seen in the Malay vernacular architecture as well as in *joglo*. This is a type of traditional vernacular house of the Javanese people (Javanese *omah*). The word *joglo* (Figure 7) refers to the shape of the roof. In the highly hierarchical Javanese culture, the type of the roof of a house reflects the social and economic status of the owners of the house; *joglo* houses is traditionally associated with Javanese aristocrats. *Joglo* roof can be implemented to a dwelling (*omah*) or a pavilion *pendopo*. The ornamentation of the mosque was handcrafted with the combination of Malay and Javanese influences. The perforated wall panels for natural ventilation were carved out with verses from the Koran and constructed of Indonesian teak wood. The two pillars of date tree trunks (Figure 8) in the mimbar area were imported from the Middle East and carved by the carver artisans of Jepara, Central Java. Uniquely, the ceiling was woven from bamboo in highlighting the sustainable of the local material (Figure 9). Main other details of the architecture feature a lot of Malay Kelantanese architecture style especially of the main walls of stylised *janda berhias* arrangement (Figure 10). The ornamentation of the mosque was handcrafted with the combination of Malay and Javanese influences (Figure 11).



(a) Lamp Shade Drum



(b) Door Handle



(c)

Figure 11: Handcrafted Ornamentations

The setting of the mosque, surrounded by a river and greeneries, allows the emotional experience to be well immersed with the religious beliefs. The environment of the mosque offers the mosque a setting (Figure 12) that is conducive for the creation of the 'Sacred Places' through the establishment of the 'Sense of Place'. The magnificent timber masjid was built on an island in the lagoon of Pulau Gajah, Sabak, Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan. The mosque is surrounded by the Sungai Pengkalan Datu (Figure 13) and mangrove trees that create a peaceful surrounding suitable for religious activities at the mosque. Practically, the surrounding verdant and near a body of water provide the mosque with cool air all the time.

Furthermore, the open space plan of the mosque has already maximised the natural cross ventilation breeze for the interior of the mosque. These conditions further enhance the existence of the mosque that coexist. The sacred ambience created for the believers ensure the creation of the 'Sacred Places' for the mosque and to some extent many believers believe that the mosque uplifts their spiritual level to make their worshipping experience full of humility towards Allah. The strong connection between the 'Sacred Places' and the theoretical framework of the 'Sense of Place' of 'Perceived', 'Conceived' and 'Lived' spaces depict the narrative of the Masjid Ar-Rahman. Ultimately, the 'Lived' space is experienced with the condition of spirituality relating to the Islamic religious teachings and the performed rituals. All these space triad concepts come together in the creation of the 'Sacred Places'.



Figure 12 - The Environs of the Mosque



Figure 13 - Sungai Pengkalan Datu

4.0 FINDINGS

The mosque offers a sacred place for visitation both for the believers and non-believers. Architecturally, the structure attracts visitors for its portraying architectural heritage features. The mosque offers another angle of attraction through its context that surrounds it that creating a peaceful environment in tandem with the teaching of Sufistic beliefs. When dealing with Sufism in a mosque architecture, it involves spirituality and strengthens by other functions that create the 'Sacred Places'. Authenticity means that the architecture of the mosque has a twofold space conception: spiritual and physical, epistemological, and aesthetical (Kahera, 2007). These are fundamental areas of concern, which an architect will have to decipher and from which to compose form and structure. It is within these areas that the architect will also have to learn to become a mediator or negotiator of experiences, beliefs, and ways of knowing, while also bringing to bear on the design, the basics of building codes, local zoning ordinances, and socio-cultural dogmas. Most importantly is the sanctuary, the primary assembly space (or *musalla*) where men and women gather to pray daily, read the Qur'an, and engage in a host of pious activities. The Sufistic beliefs can be related to the mosque architecture of Masjid Ar-Rahman as the environmental context and the architecture itself offer the 'Sense of Place' with openness and no 'intimidation' to the visitors. The concept of inclusivity is truly found in the 'Sacred Spaces' that provides access to all walks of life hence enhancing the real meaning of mosque tourism. This welcoming ambience encourages visitation by the worshippers and non-Muslims alike. The Sufistic beliefs provide another angle of attraction for the visitors to the mosque. The mosque architecture of Masjid Ar-Rahman not only offers a look into vernacularity and heritage in architecture but also the meaning of inclusivity for the mosque tourism intention.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In referring to the objectives of the research, Masjid Ar-Rahman has demonstrated the success in constructing the 'Sense of Place' based on 'Sacred Spaces' for mosque tourism. Mosque tourism is achieved through words of mouths due to its presence of portraying architectural heritage features as well as providing the visitors a clearer understanding of the religion. It is

successful in presenting the outlook of a vernacular architecture that suited the environment. This is achieved with an understanding of the architecture in relating to simplicity or in moderation for all actions, physically, emotionally, and mentally. The mosque architecture has managed to construct the 'Sense of Place' based on the Sufistic beliefs and the creation of the 'Sacred Places' for mosque tourism. Above all the design conceptualization of faith, spirituality, and aesthetics can support the preservation of the identity of various forms that constitute the elements of a religious edifice for men and women; elements that thematise the relationship between spiritual repose, spatial equity, and aesthetics. Thus, the 'Sacred Places' can be identified departing from the teaching of Sufism. Above all, the Sufistic beliefs not only provide the 'Sense of Place' for Masjid Ar-Rahman but also encourages the mosque tourism in an inclusive mode of a house of worship. Although the Sufistic beliefs are considered the fundamental of Islamic teaching and long existed, the renewal of its existence enhances the meaning of local identity and vernacularity in the mosque architecture. This experience can be seen as an innovation in mosque tourism that can be further developed and promoted as part of the heritage trail for mosque architecture.

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