



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***PLACE ATTACHMENT TO CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC-FUNDED  
MOSQUES IN MALAYSIA***

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**PLACE ATTACHMENT TO CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC-FUNDED  
MOSQUES IN MALAYSIA**

**By  
MINA NAJAFI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia in  
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MOSQUES IN MALAYSIA**

**By**

**Mina Najafi**

**October 2012**

**Chair: Professor L.Ar. Mustafa Kamal Bin Mohd Shariff, PhD**

**Faculty: Design and Architecture**

Place Attachment has been defined as an affirmative expressive bond between people and their surroundings, in terms of psychological well-being. Within the context of religious places, not only spiritual concepts, but also the architectural features of the space could play important roles in forming users' place attachment. This research investigated Malaysian [mosque] users' attachment to contemporary public-funded mosques in Malaysia. The study adapted a sequential mixed research methodology for investigating this attachment. In order to develop the research variables of the final survey, 23 people were interviewed within the selected mosques. In order to further formulate the content of the final questionnaire, the systematic field observations and content analysis on the results of the interviews were conducted to identify the architectural characteristics and afforded activities of the selected mosques. A total of 288 respondents participated in the conducted survey. The results revealed that Malaysian users have strong emotional attachment to all studied mosques, due to their significance as religious and cultural places. However, there was no evidence to show that the architectural styles of the

selected mosques could significantly affect the users' Place Attachment. Finally, the results indicated that the respondents were strongly attached to the existing social links to individual experiences, religious status of the places, aesthetical aspects of the architectural elements, spatial order, pleasant surroundings, the supportive facilities and equipment, and upkeep. Employing environmental psychology, this research provided theoretical recommendations to reveal the essential components of the significance of Islamic built environments. These recommendations could become a reference for designers and scholars for leveraging local Islamic identity in the context of Malaysia as a fast growing Islamic country. The reinforced Islamic identity within the public environments can also improve the people's environmental affections and their contributions toward the society.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**LEKAPAN TEMPAT TERHADAP MASJID BIAYA AWAM  
KONTEMPORARI DI MALAYSIA**

**Oleh**

**Mina Najafi**

**Oktober 2012**

**Pengerusi: Prof. LAr. Mustafa Kamal Bin Mohd Shariff, PhD**

**Fakulti: Rekabentuk dan Senibina**

Lekapan tempat ditakrifkan sebagai bon afirmatif ekspresif antara manusia dan persekitaran mereka dari segi kesejahteraan psikologi. Dalam konteks tempat suci, bukan sahaja konsep rohani tetapi ciri seni bina ruang juga boleh memainkan peranan penting dalam membentuk lekapan tempat bagi pengguna'. Kajian ini menyelidiki lekapan pengguna kepada masjid biaya awam kontemporari di Malaysia. Kajian menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan campuran bersekuen menyelidik lekapan ini. Dalam membangunkan pembolehubah penyelidikan kaji selidik akhir, 23 responden telah ditemubual dalam masjid yang dipilih. Dalam usaha untuk terus merangka kandungan soal selidik akhir, bidang pemerhatian sistematik dan analisis kandungan telah dilakukan pada hasil temubual untuk mengenal pasti ciri-ciri seni bina dan aktiviti masjid berkenaan. Seramai 288 responden telah mengambil bahagian dalam kaji selidik yang dijalankan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pengguna masjid di Malaysia mempunyai lekapan emosi kuat terhadap semua masjid yang dikaji oleh pentingnya masjid sebagai tempat-tempat agama dan budaya. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak ada bukti menunjukkan bahawa gaya seni bina masjid-masjid terpilih mempengaruhi lekapan tempat pengguna. Akhirnya, hasil kajian

menunjukkan bahawa responden sangat terlekap kepada lekapan sosial yang sedia ada, pengalaman individu, status agama tempat, aspek estetik-unsur seni bina, susunan ruang, persekitaran yang menyenangkan, kemudahan sokongan dan peralatan, dan penjagaan. Berasaskan psikologi persekitaran penyelidikan ini menyarankan cadangan teori untuk mendedahkan komponen penting persekitaran alam bina Islam. Saranan-saranan ini boleh menjadi rujukan untuk pereka dan pengkaji untuk memanfaatkan identiti Islam tempatan dalam konteks Malaysia sebagai sebuah negara Islam cepat membangun. Dengan memperkukuhkan identiti Islam dalam persekitaran awam ia dapat mempertingkatkan rasa sayang rakyat kepada alam sekitar dan sumbangan mereka kepada masyarakat.

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## APPROVAL

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 3 October 2012 to conduct the final examination of Mina Najafi on her thesis entitled "**Place Attachment to Contemporary Public-Funded Mosques in Malaysia**" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

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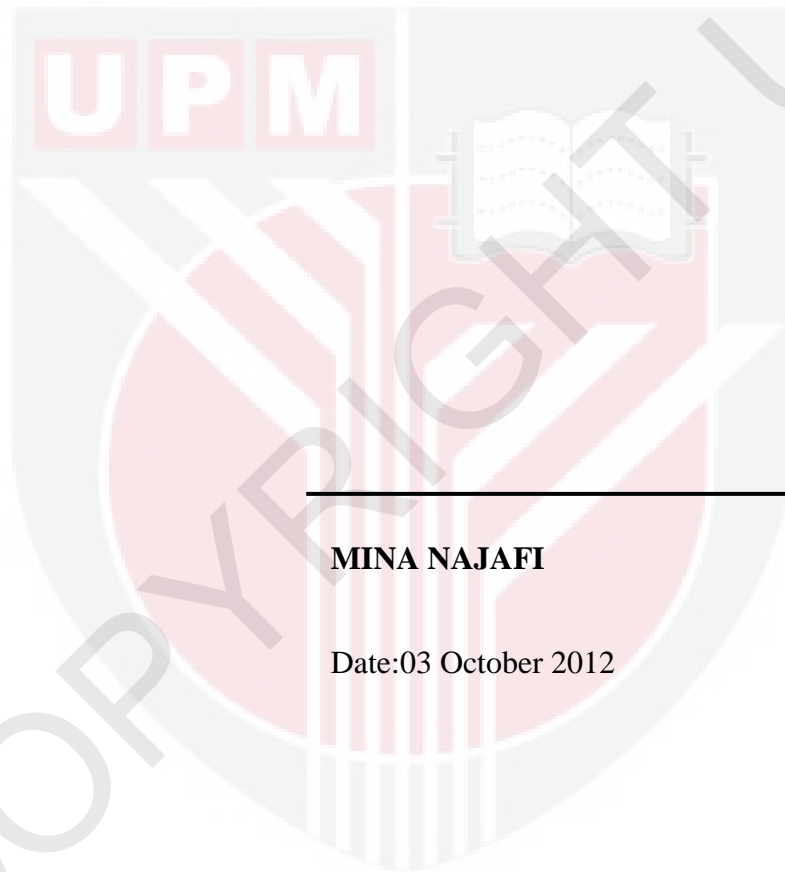
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## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.



---

**MINA NAJAFI**

Date:03 October 2012



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <b>Page</b>  |
|--|--------------|
| <b>ABSTRACT</b>  | <b>ii</b>    |
| <b>ABSTRAK</b>   | <b>iv</b>    |
| <b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>  | <b>vi</b>    |
| <b>APPROVAL</b>  | <b>vii</b>   |
| <b>DECLARATION</b>   | <b>ix</b>    |
| <b>LIST OF TABLES</b>  | <b>xiii</b>  |
| <b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>   | <b>xiv</b>   |
| <b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>   | <b>xviii</b> |
| <br>   |              |
| <b>CHAPTER</b>   |              |
| <br>   |              |
| <b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>  | <b>1</b>     |
| 1.1 Introduction   | 1            |
| 1.2 Statement of issues and background of the study                    | 1            |
| 1.3 Research questions   | 6            |
| 1.4 Aim and objectives of the study                                    | 6            |
| 1.5 Scope, limitation and areas of the study                           | 7            |
| 1.6 Research approach and the methodology                              | 9            |
| 1.7 Major theories and concepts referred in the study                  | 11           |
| 1.8 Significance of the study  | 13           |
| 1.9 Structure of the thesis  | 14           |
| <br>   |              |
| <b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>   | <b>17</b>    |
| 2.1 Introduction   | 17           |
| 2.2 The concept of place and place attachment in environmental studies | 17           |
| 2.2.1 Studying people's perception for places                          | 18           |
| 2.2.2 Perception and preference studies in architecture                | 20           |
| 2.2.3 Symbolic and formal attributes of environments                   | 27           |
| 2.2.4 Definition of place and its dimensions                           | 28           |
| 2.2.4 The measurement of place attachment                              | 46           |
| 2.3 Malaysian context and mosque architecture                          | 48           |
| 2.3.1 Malaysia   | 49           |
| 2.3.2 Mosque development in Malaysia                                   | 51           |
| 2.3.3 Categorisation of mosques in Malaysia                            | 60           |
| 2.3.4 Principal mosques of Malaysia                                    | 62           |
| 2.3.5 State mosques of Malaysia  | 62           |
| 2.3.6 Classification of architectural styles of mosques in Malaysia    | 71           |
| 2.4 Conclusion   | 76           |
| <br>   |              |
| <b>3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>                               | <b>80</b>    |
| 3.1 Introduction   | 80           |

|          |  |            |
|----------|--|------------|
| 3.2      | The adapted Sequential-Mixed-Method approach   | 80         |
| 3.3      | The scope of research and the scales adapted for measuring place attachment                                  | 82         |
| 3.4      | The study areas  | 85         |
| 3.5      | Characteristics of the study areas   | 86         |
| 3.6      | The research process   | 86         |
| 3.7      | Criteria for selection of the sample study areas   | 87         |
| 3.8      | Research design  | 88         |
|          | 3.8.1 Developing the theoretical framework   | 89         |
|          | 3.8.2 Preliminary investigation  | 89         |
|          | 3.8.3 Final questionnaire survey   | 94         |
| 3.9      | Reliability and validity   | 105        |
| 3.10     | Approach to data analysis  | 107        |
| 3.11     | Conclusion   | 109        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>RESULTS AND ANALYSIS</b>  | <b>110</b> |
| 4.1      | Introduction   | 110        |
| 4.2      | Results of the in-depth interview  | 110        |
|          | 4.2.1 Physical Features  | 113        |
|          | 4.2.2 Activities   | 120        |
|          | 4.2.3 Meaning(s)   | 121        |
| 4.3      | Results of the quantitative data   | 126        |
|          | 4.3.1 Respondents' profiles  | 126        |
|          | 4.3.2 Form and degree of users' attachment to the selected mosques   | 128        |
|          | 4.3.3 Attributes and characteristics of the selected mosques influence place attachment                      | 138        |
|          | 4.3.4 Factors influencing degree of attachment   | 144        |
| 4.4      | Conclusion   | 153        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>DISCUSSION</b>  | <b>156</b> |
| 5.1      | Introduction   | 156        |
| 5.2      | Physical features and attributes   | 157        |
| 5.3      | Religious symbols  | 159        |
| 5.4      | Religious and social activities  | 161        |
| 5.5      | Meanings and conceptions   | 162        |
| 5.6      | Answers to the research questions  | 163        |
|          | 5.6.1 Form and degree of users' attachment to the selected mosques   | 164        |
|          | 5.6.2 The influence of the attributes and characteristics of the selected mosques on users' place attachment | 171        |
|          | 5.6.3 Factors influencing degree of attachment   | 177        |
| 5.7      | Conclusion   | 183        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>CONCLUSION/ RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES</b>  | <b>185</b> |
| 6.1      | Introduction   | 185        |

|       |   |            |
|-------|---|------------|
| 6.2   | Research outline  | 185        |
| 6.3   | Outcomes of the conducted interviews and identified indicators  | 189        |
| 6.4   | Malaysian users' attachment to the contemporary public-funded mosques from different architectural styles | 191        |
| 6.4.1 | Impacts of attributes and characteristics of the selected mosques on the users' place attachment          | 192        |
| 6.4.2 | The meaning(s), which make people, attach to the selected mosques   | 194        |
| 6.4.3 | Impacts of socio-cultural and religious activities on users' attachment to the selected mosques           | 198        |
| 6.5   | Contributions of the study  | 200        |
| 6.6   | Recommendations for Future Study  | 203        |
| 6.7   | Conclusion  | 204        |
|       | <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>   | <b>206</b> |
|       | <b>APPENDIXES</b>   | <b>215</b> |
|       | <b>BIODATA OF STUDENT</b>   | <b>294</b> |
|       | <b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>   | <b>295</b> |

## LIST OF TABLES

| <b>Table</b>  | <b>Page</b> |
|---|-------------|
| 2-1: Principle and state mosques of Malaysia and their architectural styles   | 71          |
| 3-1: The average number of prayers in selected mosques everyday   | 97          |
| 3-2: The calculated sample size for each mosque   | 99          |
| 4-1: The interviewees' profile  | 111         |
| 4-2: Example of the method to analyse the interviews  | 112         |
| 4-3: The identified indicators for structures and styles of the mosques based on users' discussions   | 115         |
| 4-4: The identified indicators for forms of the elements of the mosques that affect people's perception   | 116         |
| 4-5: The identified indicators for spaces of the mosques that affect people's perceptions and preferences   | 117         |
| 4-6: The identified indicators for social and religious activities of the mosques that affect users' attachment   | 121         |
| 4-7: The identified indicators for meanings and concepts that affect users' attachment  | 123         |
| 4-8: Common indicators of attachment gathered from in-depth interviews  | 124         |
| 4-9: Summary of the respondents' profile  | 127         |
| 4-10: Statements of people's emotional attachment to the selected mosques   | 129         |
| 4-11: Results of the ANOVA test for comparing Malaysian [mosque] users' emotional attachment to the different Malaysian mosques with different architectural styles | 131         |
| 4-12: Frequencies of participants' care and concern about the places  | 132         |
| 4-13: Statements of functional attachment   | 134         |
| 4-14: Attachment to meanings associated with the place  | 136         |
| 4-15: Components of activities  | 142         |
| 4-16: Results of the comparison among façade elements of the studied mosques based on their architectural styles  | 146         |
| 4-17: Results of the comparison among interior spaces of the studied mosques based on their architectural styles  | 147         |
| 4-18: Results of the ANOVA test for place identity to the different Malaysian mosques with different architectural styles   | 149         |
| 4-19: The statements of place identity  | 150         |
| 4-20: Components of the level of place satisfaction   | 151         |
| 4-21: The components of sense of pride and belonging  | 152         |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| <b>Figure</b>  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| 1-1: Summary of methodological framework of the study  | 11          |
| 1-2: Research framework  | 16          |
| 2-1: Three components of place   | 29          |
| 2-2: A three-dimensional structure of place attachment is proposed by Scannell and Gifford (2010)                                    | 36          |
| 2-3: The map of Malaysia ( <a href="http://www.malaysia-maps.com">http://www.malaysia-maps.com</a> )                                 | 49          |
| 2-4: Pie chart of the religious groups of Malaysia   | 50          |
| 2-5: The Kampung Tuan mosque   | 53          |
| 2-6: The Kampung Laut mosque   | 53          |
| 2-7: Masjid Peringgit, Malacca   | 54          |
| 2-8: Kampung Hulu mosque, Malacca (1728)   | 55          |
| 2-9: Kampung keling mosque (1728)  | 56          |
| 2-10: Masjid tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin (left), masjid Putra (middle) and masjid Negara (right); three principal mosques of malaysia | 62          |
| 2-11: Masjid Negeri perlis   | 64          |
| 2-12: The Zahir mosque, Kedah  | 64          |
| 2-13: Masjid sultan idris shah ii, Perak   | 65          |
| 2-14: The sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz shah mosque, Selangor   | 65          |
| 2-15: The Seremban state mosque, Negeri Sembilan   | 66          |
| 2-16: Al-Azim mosque, Malacca  | 67          |
| 2-17: Masjid sultan Abu Bakar, Johor   | 67          |
| 2-18: The sultan Ahmad shah mosque, Pahang   | 68          |
| 2-19: Masjid Abidin, Terengganu  | 68          |
| 2-20: Muhammadi mosque or great mosque, Kelantan   | 69          |
| 2-21: Penang state mosque  | 70          |
| 2-22: The exterior body of masjid Wilayah  | 70          |
| 2-23: Development of theoretical framework of the study  | 79          |
| 3-1: Research process of the study   | 87          |
| 3-2: Data collection procedure   | 89          |
| 3-3: Calculation of sample size  | 98          |
| 3-4: Dependent and independent variables of the study  | 105         |
| 4-1: Mizan Zainal Abidin mosque, Putrajaya   | 114         |
| 4-2: Minaret (left) and Mihrab (right) of Putra mosque   | 116         |
| 4-3: Presence of light in Putra (left) and Wilayah (right) mosques   | 118         |
| 4-4: The results of the conducted in-depth interview   | 124         |
| 4-5: The developed theoretical framework   | 125         |
| 4-6: Statements of users' emotional attachment to the selected mosques   | 130         |
| 4-7: Comparison among people's attitudes about each attribute of functional attachment   | 134         |
| 4-8: The respondents' choices of attraction according to each selected place   | 139         |
| 4-9: The result of the questionnaire survey  | 155         |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 5-1: The exterior view of the selected modern and post-modern mosques   | 178 |
| 6-1: Model of [mosque] users' place attachment to the selected mosques  | 205 |
| 7-1: Masjid Negara  | 217 |
| 7-2: Ground and first floor plan of Negara mosque (a. S. Ismail, 2008)  | 218 |
| 7-3: Basement plan of Negara mosque (a. S. Ismail, 2008)  | 219 |
| 7-4: The exterior façade of Negara mosque   | 220 |
| 7-5: The folded plate roof of Negara mosque   | 220 |
| 7-6: Minaret of Negara mosque   | 221 |
| 7-7: Band of gold Quranic verses on top of north, south and east walls  | 221 |
| 7-8: Band of geometrical pattern runs   | 222 |
| 7-9: The entrance of main prayer hall   | 222 |
| 7-10: The kiblah wall of Negara mosque  | 223 |
| 7-11: The pulpit  | 223 |
| 7-12: 16 main concrete columns in the main prayer hall  | 223 |
| 7-13: The timber grilles separating women's prayer area   | 223 |
| 7-14: The clerestory window with the word of Allah  | 223 |
| 7-15: The base of columns in prayer hall  | 224 |
| 7-16: Top of columns in prayer hall   | 224 |
| 7-17: The carpet at main prayer hall  | 224 |
| 7-18: Terrazzo flooring at veranda area   | 224 |
| 7-19: Columns at veranda area faced with black mosaic tiles and strips of anodised gold coloured aluminium at its top and base  | 225 |
| 7-20: Columns at pavilion area faced with white mosaic tiles and strips of anodised gold coloured aluminium at its top and base | 225 |
| 7-21: Main lecture hall of Negara mosque  | 226 |
| 7-22: The lecture rooms of Negara mosque  | 226 |
| 7-23: Meeting room of Negara mosque   | 227 |
| 7-24: Islamic information programs of Negara mosque   | 227 |
| 7-25: External site on Negara mosque for outdoor activities   | 227 |
| 7-26: Sports facilities of Negara mosque for children   | 228 |
| 7-27: Masjid Putra  | 228 |
| 7-28: Basement level two floor plan of Putra mosque(a. S. Ismail, 2008)   | 229 |
| 7-29: Legend (basement level 2)   | 229 |
| 7-30: Legend (first floor plan of Putra mosque)(a. S. Ismail, 2008)   | 230 |
| 7-31: Legend (ground floor plan of Putra lake) (a. S. Ismail, 2008)   | 230 |
| 7-32: The Putra mosque dome encircled with stained glass window   | 231 |
| 7-33: The Putra mosque exterior façade is arranged in hierarchical manner   | 231 |
| 7-34: The minaret of Putra mosque   | 232 |
| 7-35: Glass windows at the north, south, east and west of the main hall   | 232 |
| 7-36: Ceiling underneath the first floor  | 233 |
| 7-37: The dome which is the dominant structure in the main hall   | 233 |
| 7-38: The Mihrab of the Putra mosque  | 234 |
| 7-39: The pulpit and Mihrab   | 234 |
| 7-40: Auditorium of Putra mosque  | 235 |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 7-41: Lecture rooms of Putra mosque  | 236 |
| 7-42: Putra mosque funeral preparation room  | 236 |
| 7-43: Dining room of Putra mosque  | 237 |
| 7-44: Library of Putra mosque  | 237 |
| 7-45: Computer room of Putra mosque  | 237 |
| 7-46: Wilayah mosque   | 238 |
| 7-47: The level one of masjid Wilayah  | 239 |
| 7-48: The level two of masjid Wilayah  | 239 |
| 7-49: The level third of masjid Wilayah  | 240 |
| 7-50: The level fourth of masjid Wilayah   | 240 |
| 7-51: The outlook of domes of masjid Wilayah   | 241 |
| 7-52: The minarets of masjid Wilayah   | 241 |
| 7-53: The Wilayah mosque is beset by a pool  | 241 |
| 7-54: Entrance gateway to prayer hall  | 242 |
| 7-55: Islamic decoration of entrance gateway to prayer hall  | 242 |
| 7-56: Wooden doors which separate the outside from the inside  | 243 |
| 7-57: Prayer hall of Wilayah mosque  | 243 |
| 7-58: Main dome of prayer hall   | 244 |
| 7-59: Blue medallion with the word of Allah  | 244 |
| 7-60: Carved wooden panels that make up the screen of the women's prayer area  | 244 |
| 7-61: Pastel-coloured carpets  | 244 |
| 7-62: The Mihrab of the Wilayah mosque   | 245 |
| 7-63: The pulpit of the mosque   | 245 |
| 7-64: Multipurpose hall of the Wilayah mosque  | 246 |
| 7-65: VIP room of Wilayah mosque   | 247 |
| 7-66: Marriage hall of Wilayah mosque  | 247 |
| 7-67: Muslim banquet hall  | 248 |
| 7-68: Al-Azim mosque   | 248 |
| 7-69: The minaret of Al-Azim mosque  | 250 |
| 7-70: The repetitious arches of exterior façade that run across the building   | 251 |
| 7-71: Islamic motifs on the roof which run across the building   | 251 |
| 7-72: The mosque has green   | 251 |
| 7-73: There are three main group together at every four to support the roof  | 251 |
| 7-74: Arrangement of windows in main prayer hall   | 252 |
| 7-75: The Mihrab and pulpit of the mosque  | 252 |
| 7-76: A band of Quranic verses written in gold in the black marble background that runs across the three levelled roof                       | 253 |
| 7-77: One of the entrances to the prayer hall which is made of timber  | 253 |
| 7-78: Main prayer hall (left), Quran reading activity for children (middle) and social activity for children (right); masjid Al-Azim Malacca | 254 |
| 7-79: The Negeri Sembilan mosque   | 254 |
| 7-80: The white coloured pure curved forms of reinforced concrete  | 256 |
| 7-81: The minaret of mosque  | 256 |
| 7-82: A band of arabesque made from wood has decorated around the main ring of the dome  | 257 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 7-83: The mezzanine floor   | 257 |
| 7-84: The Kiblah wall   | 258 |
| 7-85: The Mihrab and pulpit of the mosque   | 258 |
| 7-86: The main prayer hall is covered by a vault concrete roof with 9 curved elements               | 258 |
| 7-87: The carpet of the main prayer hall  | 258 |
| 7-88: Lecturer room (left), main prayer hall (middle) and library (right) of Negeri Sembilan mosque | 259 |



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| RQ                           | Research question  |
| Sub-RQ                       | Sub-research question  |
| Place                        | Place is a space associated with people's relationship with physical environments, individual and group activities, and conceptions or meanings. In this regard, <i>physical features</i> , <i>activities</i> , and <i>meanings</i> are considered as the three main constructs of a place.  |
| Sense of Place               | Sense of Place is defined as the collection of emotions, feelings, and perceptions of the people towards specific places and typical environmental attributes that affect these feelings and perceptions. It therefore comprises of main concepts and significance of particular physical settings that are held by people through experiencing the places and forming attachment to them. |
| Place Attachment             | The affective and emotional bond between people and places.  |
| Place Identity               | A cognitive connection between self and a physical environment.  |
| Place Dependence             | The significance of a place in providing people with conditions, characteristics and attributes that support specific goals and required activities with respect to their aims of appearing within the places.   |
| Perception                   | Perception is the cognition which is produced through a sense-organ coming into relation with an object. In the other word, Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organise sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world.   |
| Culture                      | The collective heritage of ways of thinking, concepts, values, and attitudes, which form the common foundations of social activities.  |
| Topophilia                   | An affective bond between people and place, love of place.   |
| Spirituality                 | Refers to those beliefs, values, and practices that relate to the search for existential meaning, purpose or transcendence.  |
| Physical Attributes/Features | Spatial, constructional, and architectural qualities of places that could affect the level of either physiological or  |

psychological satisfaction of users within the environments.

ContemporaryArchitecture This study defined the term '*contemporary mosque*' as a common chronological character amongst all mosques that were constructed after the independence of Malaysia in 1957.

User(s) Individuals who appear in public and private spaces in order to use the facilities and environment for supporting their intended activities.

Masjid

Mosque

JAKIM

Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Malaysian Islamic Development).

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the reported study in this thesis. It starts with clarifying the background issues and problems of the research. It also introduces the aim, objectives, research questions, and assumptions of the study. The chapter then outlines the employed methodology for data collection. The latter sections of this chapter explain the scope and the significance of the conducted research. Ultimately, the chapter ends with outlining the structure of the thesis.

### 1.2 Statement of issues and background of the study

Religious places are the physical settings correlated to religious or sacred events that could cultivate fundamental human values and enrich human soul (1990). These places are often embellished by architectural structures and art (Shampa Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2004). In the Islamic culture, '*Masjid*', or mosque, is considered as the most important sacred structure. They have always been the most frequent subjects in studying architecture of Islamic countries. Malaysia, as a country which has numerous huge and costly mosques, stands among the countries with diversity in architectural styles for mosque design and construction. This variety is due to various ethnic groups and cultures, colonialism, applied new technology and styles (Ahmad, 1999) as well as the political situation of Malaysia (Ahmad, 1999; A. S. Ismail, 2008).

The diversity in the architectural design of Malaysian mosques has reached to a peak when the ‘emerging’ generation of Western educated Malaysian architects introduced ‘new’ architectural designs (in accordance to Vision 2020) with a greater sense of style which placed great emphasis on innovative approaches of advanced structure and materials (A. S. Ismail, 2008; Yeang, 1992). The reviewed literature shows that many scholars (e.g. Ahmad, 1999; A. S. Ismail, 2008; Mohamad Rasdi, 1998, 2003, 2007; Yeang, 1992) have recently started worrying about these stark changes in design and construction of Malaysian mosques, as they asserted that these new trends might hinder the development of Islamic architectural identity in Malaysia.

Some researchers (e.g. A. S. Ismail, 2008; Yeang, 1992) even argued that the introduced modern architectural ideas that revealed a strong sense of rationality and functionalism could result in fading local and Islamic ‘*identity*’. In this regard, Arefi (1999) asserted that weakening the ‘place identity’ may lead to loss of meanings and disrupt emotional relationships with places. Such ‘*post-modernistic*’ or contextual considerations about preservation of the identity of Malaysian architecture were in accordance with the ‘Islamisation agenda’ under the leadership of Mahatir who tried to project Malaysia as a successful, modernised and progressive centre for Islamic civilisation in the world. Therefore, the local designers were encouraged to produce design ideas associated with Islamic elements and values (Ismail 2008). This was aligned with Mazumdar and Mazumdar’s (2004, 2009) idea that ‘significant’ places in religion could help believers learn identity and develop “*self*”. This also reflected Mazumdar and Mazumdar’s (1993) idea who argued that design, decor, and aesthetics of the religious places could bring people closer to religious ideals, spirituality, community, and peace. This theory explains religious identity and place attachment to religious places as a compound process (not as a

result of a single event) that needs objective investigation.

As such, study of feelings and emotions that people develop towards places is getting increased attention, while the concept of place attachment lies at the heart of these studies (e.g. Altman and Low, 1992; Ednie, *et al.*, 2010; Giuliani and Feldman, 1993; Hernandez, *et al.*, 2007; Hernández, *et al.*, 2010; Kamalipour, *et al.*, 2012; Kyle, Graefe, *et al.*, 2004; Manzo, 2003; Sanjoy Mazumdar, 2005; Shampa Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1993, 2004; Tumanan and Lansangan, 2012; Wynveen, *et al.*, 2012). Place attachment is defined as the emotional and affecting bond established between people and places. This sentimental connection could be developed towards different places that vary in terms of size and function; e.g. room, house, neighbourhood, city, recreational settings, community places, religious places etc. (Altman and Low, 1992; Hay, 1998; Sanjoy Mazumdar, 2005; Shampa Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1993, 2004; Tuan, 1977).

Religious places are the places that are constructed in order to support religious activities during rituals and satisfy human needs in terms of emotional security and social interaction (Shampa Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2009; Stokols, 1990). In essence, religious architecture represents the physical space in which people often try to get closer to the divine (Shampa Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1993, 2004). Barrie (1996) argued that religious architecture, in addition to directly symbolising the belief system, acts as a stage that accommodates and facilitates the embodying myth via ritual. Thus, the essential quality of religious architecture is its provision of built myth that symbolises cultural beliefs and facilitates the enactment of shared rituals. The method of producing this identification is through specifying a particular place. Religious architecture therefore is the synthesis of a variety of stimuli, when experienced in totality, has a semantic function.

Consequently, in religious architecture, the corporeal qualities of the space, its tactility, lighting, aural qualities etc are the aspects which orchestrate a predetermined meaning that edifies the spirit of the believer. Watson and Kucko (2001) argued that religious places could promote public attention to divine and increase demand for spirituality. The conducted literature review also shows that there is a significant correlation between the sacred buildings' spatial arrangements, materials, and furnishings with the worshipers' feelings, perceived meanings and their attachment within the places (Eliade, 1957; Shampa Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1993, 2009; Roberts, 2004; Tuan, 1977; Watson and Kucko, 2001; White, 2003).

Notwithstanding the established methodologies for investigating people's attachment to sacred places, there is a theoretical gap in existing literature in investigating the impacts of the environmental characteristics of Malaysian mosques on people's attachment. In other words, the preceding subjective and descriptive studies often could not provide a sufficient theoretical basis for the academic investigations of this kind of attachment. However, there is no formal research to actually reveal the type of people's attachment and influencing factors towards Islamic places within the context of Malaysia. Ismail et al. (2008) argued that there is a lack of concern to involve public in the design process in Malaysia. It means public's perceptions; their needs and their attachment to places are ignored. In order to fill this theoretical gap, this study firstly reviewed the published literature regarding Malaysian mosques.

Previous studies investigated Malaysian mosques from seven different perspectives: descriptions of the mosques regarding their historical development (Ahmad, 1999; Nasir,



1984), classification of mosque styles (Ahmad, 1999; Hisham, 1990; Mohamad Rasdi, 2007), documentation of the mosques in the form of measured drawings (Mohamad Rasdi, 2007; Nasir, 2004), discussions on the technical aspects of the mosques design (Ahmad, 1999; Mohamad Rasdi, 2007), theory for designing the mosques based on religious sources (Mohamad Rasdi, 2003), discussions on the role and function of the mosques in relation to social aspects (Mohamad Rasdi, 1998, 2003; Roslan, 2004), and the impact of political ideas on mosques architecture (A. S. Ismail, 2008).

Although these researches invaluable and rigorously attempted to introduce Malaysian mosques and their architecture, there are still some parts that are not addressed by these studies. These studies attempted to review Malaysian mosques either historically or typologically, while ignoring prolonged investigations of their characteristics as remarkable religious and socio-cultural places. In other words, they only described constructional and architectural features of these mosques and neglected people's attachment to these places.

This study therefore sought the answer of its question regarding Malaysian [mosque] users' attachment to contemporary Malaysian mosques through reviewing internationally published literature and collecting primary data to compare the reviewed literature against particular conditions within Malaysian context. These questions should be justified objectively as Mazumdar and Mazumdar (1993) asserted that investigation of people's attachment to religious places (e.g. mosques) is so important because these places are where religion is learnt and experienced and people are bonded to religion. Justifying people's attachment to places could also contribute to better use of place, satisfaction with place and affiliation to places (Altman and Low, 1992; Lewicka, 2010; Rapoport, 1990;

Scannell and Gifford, 2010a) and help designers to evaluate the existing places to avoid current mistakes in the future (Nasar, 2008).

### 1.3 Research questions

In accordance with the aforementioned aim and objectives in Section 1.2, Main Research Question (Main-RQ) and Sub-Research Questions (Sub-RQs) of this study were defined as follows:

- **Main-RQ:** What are the effects of socio-cultural and religious activities on users' attachment to the selected mosques?
  - **Sub-RQ1:** What are the spatial attributes and characteristics of the selected mosques that could influence users' place attachment?
  - **Sub-RQ2:** What are the meaning(s), which make people attached to the selected mosques?
  - **Sub-RQ3:** What are the effects of socio-cultural and religious activities on users' attachment to the selected mosques?

### 1.4 Aim and objectives of the study

Aligned with the issues discussed in Section 1.2, the purpose of this study was to discover Malaysian [mosque] users' attachment to selected contemporary Malaysian mosques. Due to the complex and multi-aspect nature of this aim, it has been divided into three objectives as follows:

- a) to examine the spatial attributes and characteristics of the selected Malaysian mosques that could influence the users' place attachment;

- b) to identify the meaning(s), which make users attach to the selected Malaysian mosques; and
- c) to determine the effects of socio-cultural and religious activities on users' attachment to selected Malaysian mosques.

### **1.5 Scope, limitation and areas of the study**

Before conducting the actual study, all mosques in Malaysia were identified from the literature and interviews with the personnel of Malaysian Islamic Development (JAKIM). According to Malaysian Islamic Development (JAKIM), mosques in Malaysia can be categorised into five groups: Principal mosques, State mosques, District mosques, Qaryah mosques, and Private mosques. Among these five types, only principal and state mosques are constructed '*fully funded*' by the government (Ref. JAKIM).

According to JAKIM, Masjid Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin in Putrajaya (2010), Masjid Putra in Putrajaya (1999) and Masjid Negara in Kuala Lumpur (1965) are the three principal mosques of the country. All these mosques were constructed after the independence of Malaysia in 1957. Malaysia has also 14 state mosques. These are Masjid Negeri (in Perlis state, 1897), Zahir Mosque (in Kedah state, 1912), Sultan Idris Shah II mosque (in Perak state, 1968), Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah mosque (in Selangor state, 1988), Seremban mosque (in Negeri Sembilan state, 1970), Al-Azim mosque (in Malacca state, 1990), Sultan Abu Bakar mosque (in Johor state, 1900), The Sultan Ahmad Shah mosque (in Pahang state, 1993), Abidin mosque (in Terengganu state, 1808), Muhammadi mosque or Great mosque (in Kelantan state, 1926), Penang state mosque (1979), Sabah state Mosque (1974), Sarawak state mosque (1968), and Wilayah mosque

(in Kuala Lumpur, 2000). Out of these 14 state mosques 7 mosques were constructed after independence of Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak are not included since those states are located in East Malaysia or Malaysian Borneo and our study focused only on mosques in West Malaysia).

In order to have homogenous cases of the study, this research only focused on Principal and State mosques that benefited from similar allocation of resources, as the construction of all of them have been fully funded by the government. This criterion minimises those differences between the cases that are due to the shortage or abundance of resources. In order to further mitigate the risk of heterogeneity of the cases, this study selected only 9 'contemporary' mosques out of all 17 Principal and State mosques of the country. This study defined the term 'contemporary mosque' as a common chronological character amongst all mosques that were constructed after the independence of Malaysia in 1957.

The 9 selected mosques vary in terms of their architectural styles. Mohamad Rasdi (2007) identified eighth architectural styles for Malaysian mosques: *Traditional Vernacular*, *Sino-Eclectic*, *Colonial*, *North Indian*, *Modern Vernacular*, *Modernistic Expressionism*, *Post-Modern Revivalism*, and *Vernacular Revivalism*. According to this taxonomy, all 'contemporary' Malaysian mosques could fall in one of the following three categories only: *Modernistic Expressionism*, *Post-Modern Revivalism*, and *Vernacular Revivalism*. Consequently, this study just investigated the characteristics of these three styles. In other words, the study focused on the mosques from *Modern*, *Post-Modern*, and *Vernacular Revivalism* architectural styles as the settings of investigation in order to investigate the type and degree of users' attachment to these mosques.

As such, as the result of the applied Purposive Stratified Sampling method (Kumar, 2005) the following mosques have been selected as the sites of investigation for this study: 1) Masjid Negara in Kuala Lumpur as a representative of Modern style, 2) Masjid Negeri Sembilan in Seremban as a representative of Modern style, 3) Masjid Wilayah in Kuala Lumpur as a representative of Post-Modern style, 4) Masjid Putra as a representative of Post-Modern style, and 5) Masjid Al-Azim in Malacca as the only representative of Vernacular style.

### **1.6 Research approach and the methodology**

In terms of methodological approaches, the study conducted a sequential mixed method (Creswell, 1998) research approach to design a process for investigating phenomena of place attachment in the context of selected places. This approach allowed the use of a sequential exploratory design in which the qualitative phase was used to identify potential relationships that were tested in the quantitative survey (Hanson, et al., 2005). For developing the variables for final investigation and identifying the potential relationships, 23 people were interviewed in the selected sites regarding their reasons for engagement with and being attracted to the selected places, their knowledge about the places, their feelings regarding the places (e.g. sense of loyalty and sense of belonging), description of the places, thoughts and beliefs related to the places, the feeling of comfort and satisfaction, opinions, and suggestions. In other words, the aim of the interview was to further justify the factors that were identified through reviewing the seminal literature. They were also designed to determine the factors that have the highest contribution towards users' attachment to the selected mosques. This study further developed the findings of the interviews through conducting quantitative surveys (Creswell, 2003) and

measuring place attachment by objective scales deployed based on *place-identity* and *place-dependence* theories (Lewicka, 2010; Proshansky, *et al.*, 1983; Shamai, 1991; Stokols and Shumaker, 1981; D. R. Williams and Roggenbuck, 1989; D. R. Williams and Vaske, 2003). The final survey solicited data from 288 mosque users to develop the findings of 23 in-depth interviews with purposely composed samples. Most of the participants were very familiar with the studied mosques as they were the frequent users of these places.

In terms of the quantitative data collection instrument, a questionnaire survey (Kumar, 2005) was designed based on the findings of interviews and the reviewed seminal literature. Ultimately, the conducted statistical analysis on the results of questionnaire survey and further discussions on the interpretations provided the adequate basis for final conclusions. The conducted statistical analyses included both descriptive and inferential statistics. In terms of descriptive analyses, the study benefited from analysing *mean*, *standard deviation*, and *variance* of the measured values as well as evaluating the implications of graphical data visualisations tools (e.g. bar charts, line charts etc). The employed inferential statistics for testing 12 hypotheses (Chapter 4) of this study were as follows: *Examination of Reliability Scale*, *Regression Analysis*, *Variance Analysis (ANOVA)*, and *Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient Correlation Analysis*. In order to evenly select the sample population of worshipers at the study areas, the *Systematic Random Sampling* (Kumar, 2005) method was adapted in this study since the other random sampling methods could not be applied without having the list of the members' names (Creswell, 2003). Out of the total of 1147 daily users of the selected 5 mosques, the study solicited data from a randomly selected sample comprising 288 respondents. Figure 1-1 illustrates the Summary of methodological framework of this study.

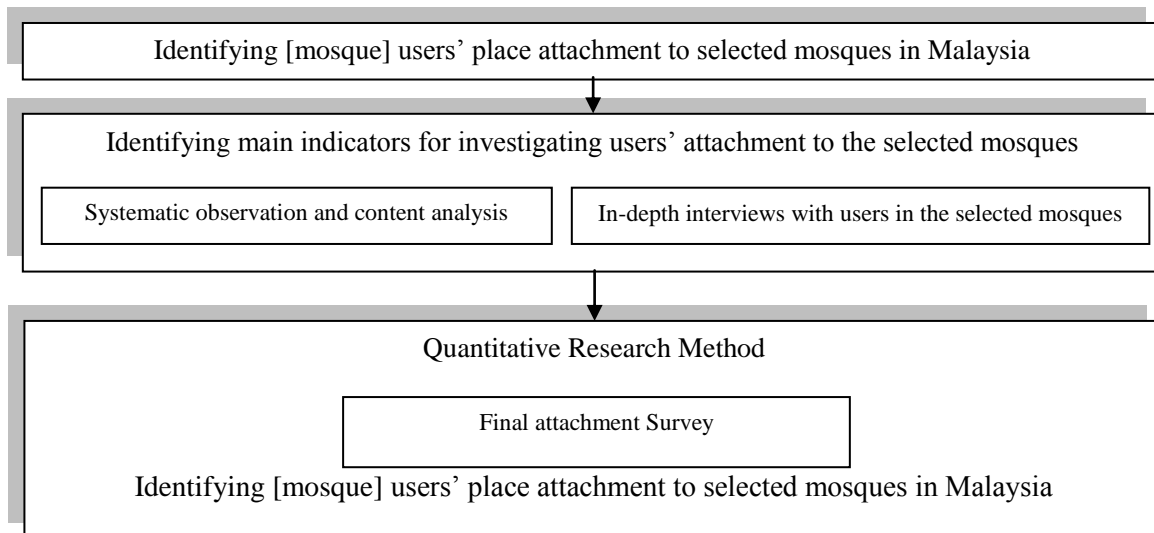


Figure 1-1: Summary of methodological framework of the study

### 1.7 Major theories and concepts referred in the study

In accordance with the aforementioned aim, objectives, and research questions in Section 1.3 and Section 1.4, this study relied on Relph's (1976) 'Place' theory, Altman's (1992) 'Place Attachment' theory, Proshansky's (1978) 'Place-Identity' theory, and Stokols and Shumaker's (1981) 'Place-Dependence' theory for investigating form and degree of [mosque] users' attachment to different Malaysian mosques.

The three main components of places (Relph, 1976) that are considered in this study as the main indicators of Place Attachment are as follows: a) the physical and spatial characteristics of places, b) the activities within the places, and c) the constructed meaning(s) and significance of the places. In essence, the following paragraphs describe the main terminologies that are frequently used in this study.

#### a) Physical and spatial characteristics of place

In this study, physical attributes and characteristics regard those spatial, constructional,

and architectural qualities of places that could affect the level of either physiological or psychological satisfaction of people within the environments. The study limited the discussions to those attributes and components which are in accordance with studying religious places within the particular context of the study (as per explained in Section 1.5). In this regard, some of the evaluated key components of physical settings are as follows: identity, distinctiveness, symbolism, impressiveness, accessibility, comfort, etc.

**b) The activities within the places**

Activities refer to the actions afforded by a place; it means that every place is constructed to organise a function. People combine with places through the activities. In Islamic religious places, a mosque is a building in which Muslims worship God. Throughout Islamic history, the mosque was the centre of the community and towns. Hosting the five daily prayers, Friday prayers, and Eid Prayers are the core function of each mosque. Nevertheless, besides praying, each mosque has different kind of activities that can be divided into 2 clusters: religious (e.g. praying) and socio-cultural (e.g. welfare activities) actions.

**c) Constructed meaning(s) and significance of the places**

Place meanings are the conceptions that people hold in their minds regarding a place; meanings are *what* people are attached to. It means that meaning(s) is a conceptual dimension of people's relationship with place that is created by the setting and combined with what people bring to place. The reviewed studies reveal that places hold deep-seated meanings for people and have a strong cognitive basis (e.g. Stedman, 2008; Tuan, 1977; Wynveen, et al., 2012). Tuan (1977) explained that meanings are attached to places by



humans over the course of time by tying the image of a place to personal experience. Stedman (2003) argued that meanings of place could contribute to place attachment. The seminal literatures reveal that the physical setting with its attributes and elements could contribute to forming the place meanings. This study used the Stedman's (2003) classification for meaning. He explained that the meaning of a place is divided into three groups; one is '*direct-effects*' it means that meaning is imbued in the physical setting itself and the other is '*meaning-mediated*', i.e. attributes attachment to symbolic meanings that places hold for people, and '*experiential*' it means that meaning is imbued through experience.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

This study identified the factors that affect worshippers' attachment to the selected mosques. Therefore, this study integrated the psychological aspects of environmental experience; whereby worshippers and their attachment to religious places are regarded as the key sources of reference in defining distinctive character of places. Consequently, this research provided evidence to show that users' attachment to the selected mosques is something beyond mere influence of religion itself. It objectively investigated the impacts of multiple factors within the selected mosques on people's place attachment. The study is important in exploring the attraction and the significance of Islamic places within the context of Malaysia. This could help sustain the characteristics that are attractive, meaningful and significant to the worshippers and leverage their continued attachment. The performed detailed study on place attachment also revealed the conceptual and physical values of the studied religious and sacred places.

## 1.9 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises of six chapters that are explained as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces the overall structure of the conducted research; it presents the issues and motivations of the study followed by the aims, objectives, and research questions. It also outlines the methodologies in collecting data through the employed quantitative research approach. The final sections of the chapter describe scope, outcomes, and the significance of the conducted research. It concludes with outlining the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature relevant to the study. This chapter is divided into three sections to define the theoretical foundation and scope of the research: the first part presents related literature regarding perception and preference studies; the second part reviews the theories and concepts of place, namely sense of place, place attachment, place identity, and place character; and the final part focused on mosques in the context of Malaysia and their developments.

Chapter 3 describes and discusses the adopted design, methodology, and strategies of research to collect, analyse, and validate relevant data which aims to answer the research questions. It also presents the main characteristics of the selected mosques as the contexts of the research.

Chapter 4 analyses the collected data regarding place attachment and its influencing factors. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first part presents the results of the

conducted in-depth interviews to identify the main indicators of the study; and the second part addresses the results of the conducted questionnaire survey. This chapter also presents the form and degree of [mosque] users' attachment to the selected places and the factors influencing feelings, emotions and meanings attached to the users' environmental experiences there.

Chapter 5 presents the discussions on the main findings of the research in association with the research agenda. The discussions also relate the findings to the reviewed theories. Finally, the discussions make conclusions based on the achieved results.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarises the whole thesis and its main findings. It makes general conclusions and recommendations for further researches. Finally, it concludes with highlighting the thesis knowledge contributions and impacts on leveraging users' attachment to Malaysian Islamic built environments.

Figure 1-2 shows the research framework of this study.

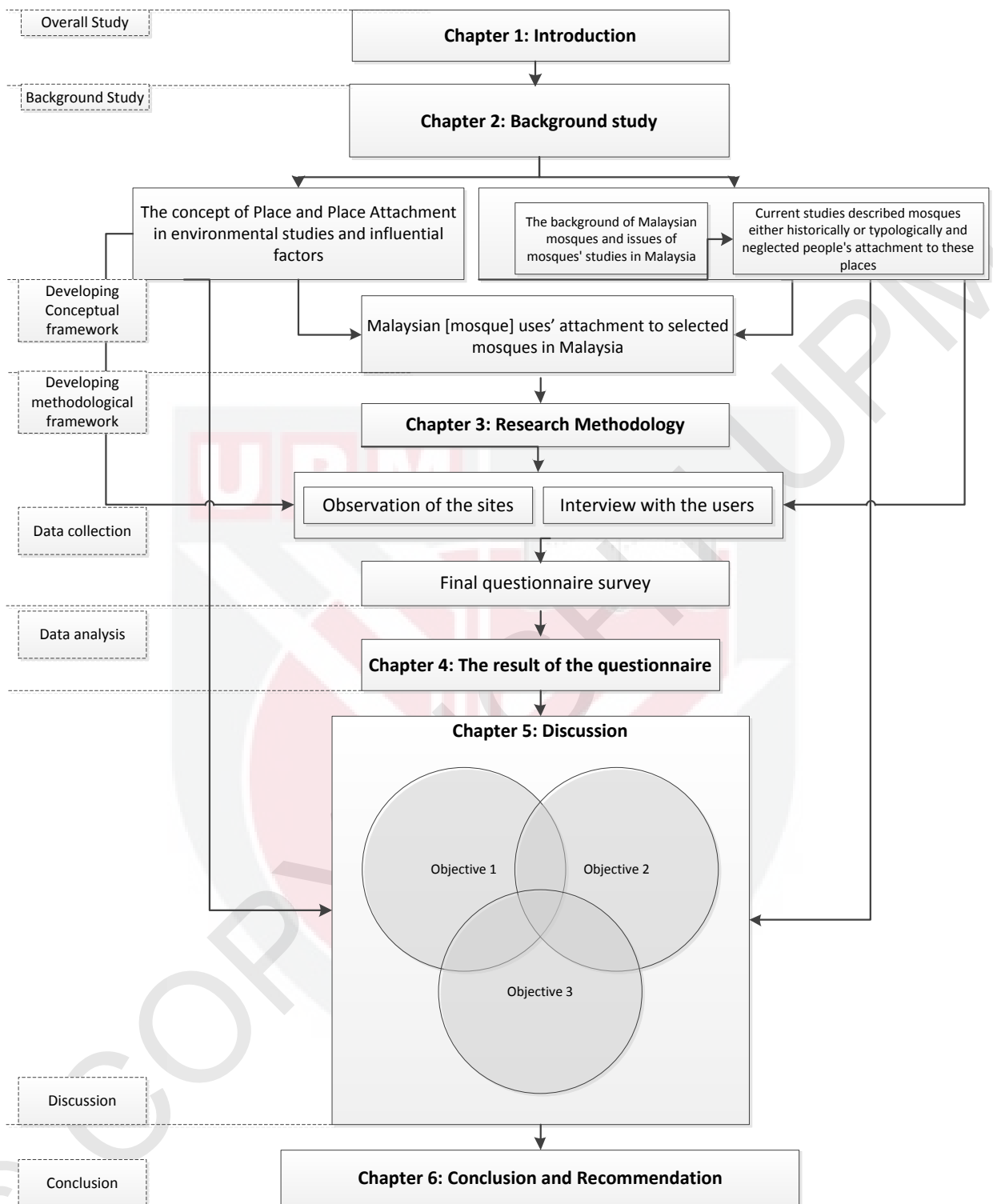


Figure 1-2: Research Framework

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