CHAPTER 5: MIHRAB IN MALAYSIAN MOSQUE

In addressing public buildings such as mosques, the aspects of ‘style’ and ‘origin’ are not the only categories that should be taken into account. This thesis will show that other elements in contribution to mosque components are vital in giving the mosque its identity as part of Islamic art and architecture.

This chapter shows the differences and similarities between Malaysian Historical Mosques (listed under Malaysian Heritage Buildings) and mosques built after Independence (1957) in terms of their external façade and internal elements. This chapter is a concentrated and summarized version of Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 where detailed analysis of findings is recorded for both categories respectively. Hence further explanation on this chapter is referred to Chapter 8 where thorough elaborations on the 23 case studies of selected mosques are found.

5.1 CATEGORY OF SELECTED MOSQUES

The Research Methodology (Chapter 4) explains that the 23 mosques chosen are among the best possible samples to be studied and they are well dispersed all over Peninsular Malaysia. The 23 mosques are classified with respect to their built dates namely Historical Traditional/Vernacular, Historical Colonials and Post Independence/Contemporary.

5.1.1 Historical Mosques

Historical Mosques are classified as those built between the 1700’s and 1956 i.e. prior to the Malaysian Independence. These mosques are then branched into two sub-categories according to (1) Traditional and/or Vernacular and (2) Colonials.
(1) **Traditional and Vernacular Mosques**

Traditional mosques are normally built using local materials. They are modestly small as they portray the vernacular Malay house image. Vernacular mosques are built with influences from *Nusantara* vernacular architecture. Their significant feature is the employment of layered pyramidal roof. There are 6 mosques listed under this category as shown in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1: List of Historical Mosques – Traditional and Vernacular Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mosque Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Built Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Masjid Tengkerah</td>
<td>Melaka</td>
<td>1728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Masjid Kampung Laut</td>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>1730s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Masjid Batu Uban</td>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>1734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Masjid Kampung Keling</td>
<td>Melaka</td>
<td>1748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Masjid Melayu Leboh Aceh</td>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>1808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masjid Kampung Tuan</td>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>1830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) **Colonial Mosques**

British Colonial era marks the existence of significant British influence on the political, economical and social status of Malaysia. Colonization effects can be seen on mosque design especially in the design and ornamentation of Mihrab and Qibla wall. 10 selected mosques are listed under this category as shown in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2: List of Historical Mosque - British Colonial Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mosque Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Built Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin</td>
<td>Trengganu</td>
<td>1793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Masjid Kapitan Keling</td>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Masjid Muhammadiyah</td>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>1867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar</td>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Masjid Sultan Alaeddin</td>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>1898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Masjid Jamek Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>Wilayah Persekutuan</td>
<td>1908</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Masjid Zahir</td>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>1912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Masjid Ubudiyah</td>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Masjid Sultan Ibrahim</td>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Masjid Sultan Sulaiman</td>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>1932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1.2 Post Independence Mosques

Post Independence Mosques in the study are the ones built between 1957 and 2005. These mosques are mostly designed by local architects without direct foreign influences. There are 7 mosques listed under this category as shown in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3: List of Post Independence Mosques

<table>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Negeri Sembilan State Mosque</td>
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<td>1967</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Perak State Mosque</td>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>1978</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Masjid Ismail Petra</td>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pahang State Mosque</td>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Wilayah Persekutuan Mosque</td>
<td>Wilayah Persekutuan</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Masjid Putra Jamallullail</td>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
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</table>

5.2 FINDINGS ON TRADITIONAL AND VERNACULAR MOSQUES

There are 6 mosques listed under this category as shown in Table 5.1 (p: 98). Masjid Tengkerah (Melaka), Masjid Kampung Laut (Kelantan), Masjid Batu Uban (Penang), Masjid Kampung Keling (Melaka), Masjid Melayu Leboh Acheh (Penang) and Masjid Kampung Tuan (Terengganu) were selected primarily because of the years they were built (i.e. between 1728 and 1830). Their physical appearance and interior spaces organizations make them fall under the Traditional/Vernacular category.

Masjid Tengkerah is recorded as the oldest mosque in Malaysia. It is built with designs taken from Nusantara architecture. This design is vernacular to most of the mosques in Melaka. The square shaped mosque consists of a main prayer hall, terraces and covered with three layers of pyramidal roof. The pagoda like minaret is situated on the opposite of the Mihrab, similar to mosques built during the Abbasid Dynasty.
Masjid Kampung Laut was built in the 1730s. This mosque is believed to be built by the Javanese. This notion is agreeable because of its design and construction which is similar to Demak Mosque in Java. It was built without using a single nail to connect the joints.

Masjid Batu Uban is said to be built in 1734 by the Malay people from Buadi Village, Paya Kambu, Sumatera. Started small as musolla, it was then enlarged as a mosque when Muslims formed a bigger settlement. It was built on tiers with pyramidal roof.

Masjid Kampung Keling is situated in middle of Melaka Heritage trail. It was built in 1748 and renovated in 1908, with the original structure and design well kept. The roof shape and structure of the mosque give it the vernacular look that is pyramidal. Still, some of the interior design and detailing carry influences from British and Dutch architecture, impact of the Colonization.

Masjid Leboh Acheh was built in 1808 by a member of a royal family from Acheh, Sumatera. Its surrounding area expanded with the growing number of merchants and traders from all over Malaysia (Malaya then), Arabian Peninsular and India. The mosque is said to be influenced by Colonial style (Ghafar 1999) since there was already a British resident in Penang in 1786. However, looking at the roof and interior design, it actually falls under vernacular category with the existence of a pyramidal roof and the minaret is built detached from the mosque building similar to the mosques in Melaka, for example Masjid Kampung Keling (1748).

Masjid Kampung Tuan was built in 1830 by Sheikh Abdul Rahman, a religious teacher from Palembang, Sumatera. It was once a main prayer centre for Fridays and ceremonial prayers in Chukai, Trengganu. However, the mosque lost its glory since the erection of a new mosque in uptown Chukai in 1920, and was made a musolla (not
being used for Friday prayers). The mosque is well maintained by the villagers and used for the five daily prayers throughout the year.

![Mosques Images](image1.jpg)

**Figure 5.1: Historical Mosques: Vernacular and Traditional Category**

### 5.2.1 Mihrab Visibility

All selected Traditional and Vernacular mosques employ simple and direct floor plans which are almost square with clear *saf* lines. The existence of four columns inside the prayer hall supports the pyramidal roof with the exception of Masjid Kampong Tuan which does not employ any columns to support its roof because it is built with ‘timber space frame system joint’ that eliminates the use of nails.

In most cases, the prayer halls are surrounded with verandah. The verandah is treated as a transitional point between the out door and the prayer hall. Mosques with verandah on their three sides are Masjid Tengkerah, Masjid Kampung Keling and Masjid Leboh Acheh. In these three mosques, the verandah functions as a path for late comers to move around the prayer hall from one entrance to another without disturbing the congregational which had already taken place.
Mihrab visibility is highly achievable as the Mihrab could easily be seen right from the entrance point as shown in Figure 5.2 below.

![Figure 5.2: Traditional and Vernacular Mosques: Analysis of Floor Plans](image)

5.2.2 Mihrab Form

There are four types of Mihrab forms found on these six mosques (Figure 5.3, page 104);

(1) Semi Circular Concaved;

Masjid Batu Uban (1734); The Mihrab takes up one fifth of the whole Qibla Wall. The material used for the concaved Mihrab is painted concrete similar to the rest of Qibla wall. There is no opening found on the Qibla wall. The niche size is just enough for a single user.

Masjid Leboh Acheh (1808); The Mihrab takes up about one fifth of the Qibla wall’s width. The material used for the concaved Mihrab is painted concrete similar to the rest of Qibla wall. The niche size is just enough for a single user.

Masjid Kampung Tuan (1830); The semi circular concaved Mihrab is made from a single tree trunk which has been hollowed out similar to the ancient ways of making canoes. The Mihrab is fronted with pointed arch made of wood just like the rest of the Qibla wall.
(2) **Semi Circular Niche with Flat Ceiling;**

Masjid Tengkerah (1728); Even though the Mihrab niche is fronted with semi circular arch on semi circular floor plan, the Mihrab wall is straight and not concaved with flat ceiling. The niche size is enough for a single user. The Mihrab is finished painted and made of concrete similar to the rest of the Qibla wall.

(3) **Rectangular Niche Shape;**

Masjid Kampung Keling (1748); The Mihrab niche is arched front and the ceiling is also arched in shape. The three walls of the Mihrab are straight walls. The niche size is enough for a single user. The Mihrab is finished painted and made of concrete similar to the rest of the Qibla wall.

(4) **Recessed Room on the Qibla Wall.**

Masjid Kampung Laut (1730s); There is no trace of the existence of Mihrab niche here except for the recessed section which takes about two fourth (half) section in the middle of Qibla wall (Figure 5.3: p104, Masjid Kampung Laut). This style of Qibla wall design was not found in the selected medieval mosques\(^\text{1}\).

\(^1\) Refer Chapter 3 on medieval mosque analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mosque</th>
<th>Floor Plan</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Elevation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><img src="image1" alt="Floor Plan" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Section" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Elevation" /></td>
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<td>Masjid Kampung Laut 1730</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Floor Plan" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Section" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Elevation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masjid Batu Uban 1734</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Floor Plan" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Section" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Elevation" /></td>
</tr>
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<td>Masjid Kampung Keling 1748</td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Floor Plan" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Section" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Elevation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masjid Leboh Acheh 1808</td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Floor Plan" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Section" /></td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Elevation" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Masjid Kampung 1839</td>
<td><img src="image16" alt="Floor Plan" /></td>
<td><img src="image17" alt="Section" /></td>
<td><img src="image18" alt="Elevation" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.3: Traditional and Vernacular Mosques: Mihrab Floor Plans, Sections and Elevations.
5.2.3 Mihrab Ornamentation

(a) Motifs

Ornamentation of the Traditional and Vernacular mosques is mostly concentrated on the Mihrab and Qibla wall. During this built period ‘lotus’ motif (Figure 5.4, p:106) is frequently used and can be found in Masjid Tengkera, Masjid Batu Uban, Masjid Kampung Keling and Masjid Kampung Tuan. In Masjid Leboh Acheh, motifs of jasmine flowers in scallops are found on top of the Mihrab arch. Ornamentation does not appear on the Qibla wall of Masjid Kampung Laut.

Other motifs are also found in Masjid Tengkera and Masjid Kampung Keling of Melaka. Masjid Tengkera employs continuous bands of vegetal scrolls around the prayer hall including the Mihrab wall. Local motif of ‘bayam peraksi’ (refer Chapter 8) appears on both legs of the Mihrab arch in Masjid Kampung Keling.

(b) Materials

In the earliest mosque of Masjid Tengkera, ornamentation was mostly designed with ceramic tiles. Then builders in Penang started to use simple hand made concrete moldings placed directly on the Mihrab as in Masjid Batu Uban. 14 years later, motifs and ornamentation styles had evolved to wood carving as found in Masjid Kampung Keling. In 1808, builders of Masjid Leboh Acheh used concrete moldings directly on the Mihrab and Qibla wall that is similar to its neighbouring mosque, Masjid Batu Uban. However, in Masjid Leboh Acheh the ornamentation is more advanced with smaller and detailed motifs including a band of calligraphy in Thuluth.

Subsequently, builders started to use a combination of high quality wood carvings and calligraphy as motifs and ornamentation. This design could be
classified as arabesque and it appeared in the most recent of the six mosques, Masjid Kampung Tuan (1830).

Masjid Tengkera 1728
Masjid Kampong Tuan 1730
Masjid Batu Uban 1734

Masjid Kampung Keling 1748
Masjid Leboh Acheh 1808
Masjid Kampung Tuan 1830

Figure 5.4: Traditional and Vernacular Mosques: Mihrab Ornamentation

5.3 FINDINGS ON THE HISTORICAL MOSQUES: COLONIAL MOSQUES

Ten mosques were chosen to be under this category (refer Table 5.2). Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin (Terengganu), Masjid Kapitan Keling (Penang), Masjid Muhammadiah (Kelantan), Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar (Johor), Masjid Sultan Alaeddin (Selangor), Masjid Jamek Kuala Lumpur (Wilayah Persekutuan), Masjid Zahir (Kedah), Masjid Ubudiyah (Perak), Masjid Sultan Ibrahim (Johor) and Masjid Sultan Sulaiman (Selangor) were selected to be historical mosques, primarily because of the years they were built (i.e. between 1793 and 1932). However, their designs seemed to have been influenced by British Colonization and thus the author classifies them to be Colonial Mosques (refer to Figure 5.5 on pages 108 and 109).

Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu was originally built with timber in 1793 and then uplifted to a brick building in 1852. The mosque interior obtained its colonial
influences during this renovation. The mosque was then renovated and uplifted again in 1972. It was made bigger to accommodate the increasing number of users.

Cauder Mydin Merican led the Muslims’ request for a larger and permanent mosque from the East India Company in Penang to accommodate the increasing number of worshipers. Their proposal was granted and they were given an 18 acre plot of land where they built a single storey mosque structure made of brick in 1801. Since then, Masjid Kapitan Keling has gone through multiple renovations.

Masjid Muhammadiah is the state mosque of Kelantan and it was built in 1867. It used to be the centre of Islamic teaching in South East Asia.

In Johor, Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar was built in 1892 on a prime location at the top of a hill overlooking the Straits of Johor and a silhouette of neighbouring Singapore. The mosque is seen to be purely in British architecture resembling a church design.

Masjid Sultan Alaeddin was built in 1898 and it is situated in Jugra, a historical town in Selangor. This royal mosque had gone through a few renovations and additions to cater for the expanding number of the believers and their needs. The biggest extension done was on the expansion of praying area to the sides of the main mosque.

Masjid Jamek Kuala Lumpur is the oldest existing mosque in the capital city of Malaysia. This mosque is situated at the point where the Kelang River and the Gombak River converge. It was built in 1908 by AB Hubback, a British architect who was inspired by Mughal architecture from India.

Masjid Zahir is the state mosque of Kedah. Built in 1912, it is also known as Masjid Zahrah, for it is situated within the compound of Kedah Sultanate’s palace. Design of
the mosque was inspired from Azizi Mosque in Langkat, Acheh. From the external view, five domes can be seen clearly. These domes symbolize the five pillars of Islam.

Masjid Ubudiyah is another royal mosque built during the British Colonial era, 1917 to be exact. The golden onion domes of Masjid Ubudiyah provide a taste of Mughal architecture whilst the arches and marble arrangements are of Moorish influences.

Built in 1927, Masjid Sultan Ibrahim stands proudly on the southern bank of the Muar River. Muar is a small town located at the north of Johor bordering Melaka. The mosque is said to be designed with influences mostly from European architecture. This is obvious by looking at the four storey minaret at the back of Sultan Ibrahim mosque. The construction of the mosque was aspired by local Muslims of Muar in replacement of the old Masjid Jamek Muar.

Masjid Sultan Sulaiman is situated in the royal city of Selangor, Klang. The mosque was officially opened in 1932 and designed by a British architect named L. Keste Ven with influences from Western Art Deco architecture.

Figure 5.5: Historical Mosques: Colonial Category
5.3.1 Mihrab Visibility

Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin has one main entrance on the side. There are series of doors leading to the main prayer hall and upon standing at one of these doors, view to the Qibla direction is blocked by another series of huge circular columns.

The prayer hall of Masjid Kapitan Keling is quite confusing with the existence of eight piers arranged in hexagonal manner situated directly in front of the Mihrab and Qibla wall. These hexagonal columns are assigned to hold the onion shaped dome on top and in between them and the Qibla wall, there appears to be another row of columns. The visibility of Mihrab and Qibla direction is quite poor. Similar column arrangement is also employed by Masjid Jamek Kuala Lumpur and Masjid Zahir. In Masjid Zahir, the Mihrab is successfully the focus of vision but the prayer hall seems less unified and distracted because the columns are attached to each other forming series of arches. These arches are like replicas of the main Mihrab but they are positioned in a hexagonal manner.

Masjid Muhammadiah, Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar and Masjid Sultan Ibrahim employ rectangular main prayer halls with the shorter sides parallel to the Qibla wall. There are two sets of columns in Corinthian capitals lined up on the left and right side of all the three prayer halls. Locating the Qibla direction is easy once inside the mosques.
Entrances to Masjid Sultan Alaeddin are from the opposite of Qibla wall and both sides of the extended prayer hall. Columns are only positioned on the far left and right side and none in the middle of the prayer hall, so visibility of Mihrab is at the maximum. The minaret of the mosque is positioned opposite the Mihrab by the entrance. This makes the imaginary axis of the mosque focal point from the entrance to the Mihrab stronger. This is the second mosque under study which has this orientation of minaret after Masjid Tengkerah in Melaka.

The eight pointed star patterned floor plan of Masjid Ubudiayah puts the prayer area in an octagonal shape. The Qibla wall is in an odd triangular shape. The mosque’s main axis is weak and there is no main entrance to the prayer hall.

The prayer hall of Masjid Sultan Sulaiman is in an odd octagonal shape which could not offer maximum length to the first praying line (saf). The Mihrab however is in high visibility because the entrance is in a straight axis with the Mihrab niche.

![Figure 5.6: Colonial Mosques: Mihrab Visibility](image)
5.3.2 Mihrab Form

There are four types of Mihrab forms found on these ten mosques (Figure 5.7, p: 113);

(1) Semi Circular Concaved;

Masjid Kapitan Keling’s Mihrab employs multi foils arch that resembles Mughal architecture and is quite similar to that of Masjid Leboh Acheh. The Mihrab façade is expressive with the addition of two low columns flanking the Mihrab arch.

Masjid Zahir has quite a shallow plan with scallop top façade depicting the Mihrab from Bagha Mosque (16th Century) of Mughal architecture. It is then framed with pointed arch and flanked by two columns, one on each side.

Semi circular niche of Masjid Sultan Sulaiman has a deep plan because the Mihrab occupies one of the eight sides of an octagonal floor plan. The semi circular niche is fronted with a ‘U’ shaped arch and flanked by two columns, one on each side.

(2) Semi Circular Niche with Flat Ceiling;

Masjid Sultan Alaeddin’s Qibla wall owns a multiple Mihrabs design with the main Mihrab being in the middle. The main Mihrab is in semi circular concaved form fronted with double arches. The outer arch is flanked by a couple of columns. The other two Mihrabs are of straight walls with a low arch shaped opening allowing natural light to penetrate the mosque interior.

In the case of Masjid Jamek Kuala Lumpur, façade of the Mihrab is a horse shoe arch shape which is similar to the surrounding windows on its Qibla Wall. The size of its niche is comfortable for a single occupant.
(3) **Recessed Room on the Qibla Wall**;

Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin has a square shaped Mihrab chamber area of about 3m by 3m. Inside the square chamber there exists another niche. The niche inside the chamber is rectangular in shape and comfortable for a single user. There is a rectangle recessed area of about 3m by 5m in Masjid Muhammadiah’s Qibla wall but no Mihrab exists. Similarly, there is no Mihrab niche on the Qibla wall of Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar except for a small room recessed from the central arch of the Qibla wall area. However, access to this room is blocked by a **Mimbar** structure.

Qibla wall of Masjid Ubudiyah occupies one corner of the eight pointed star shaped floor plan. The square room leads to a semicircular Mihrab niche which looks deeply recessed from the Qibla wall. The Mihrab niche has taken up the tip of the wing from one of the eight pointed star shaped prayer hall.

(4) **Freestanding Structure Carrying both Mihrab and Mimbar**.

The recessed octagonal chamber of Masjid Sultan Ibrahim is similar to the one owns by the Cordoba Mosque during Ummayad Dynasty (Chapter 3), especially when it is topped with a half dome ceiling. A lavishly decorated stainless brass structure stands at the centre of the Qibla wall of Masjid Sultan Ibrahim. This double storey structure is designed to place the **Mimbar** and has a space on its lower section reserved for the Mihrab. The structure stands on its own and movable. This is a unique way of treating the Mihrab and **Mimbar** in this region. It is space saving since they are not be used simultaneously.
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<thead>
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<th>Section</th>
<th>Elevation</th>
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Figure 5.7: Colonial Mosques: Mihrab Floor Plans, Sections and Elevations
5.3.3 Mihrab Ornamentation

Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin, Masjid Muhammadiyah, and Masjid Sultan Abu Bakar do not employ ornamentation on their Mihrabs and Qibla walls (Figure 5.8).

![Images of Mihrab Ornamentation](image1)

All of the other seven Colonial Mosques have motif and ornamentation such as:

(a) Geometrical Star pattern

Basically the geometrical pattern originated from basic geometrical layout of interlocking squares and octagons. It is a pattern derived from a series of eight circles overlapping each other and thus forming components of polygons² (Figure 5.9).

![Images of Geometrical Star Pattern](image2)

² The geometrical shapes of the Masjid Kapitan Keling’s Mihrab are explained in detail in Chapter 6.
(b) Lotus and Vegetal Motifs

Ornamentation found in Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin is located on the capitals of columns supporting the double arched Mihrab, carved in cement mortar. This carving looked rather simplified and it probably because of the material used.

The ornamentation in Masjid Kapitan Keling is heavily done on the Mihrab. Motifs of lotus flower and the intertwining of vegetal stems are chosen as the Mihrab ornamentation. Both motifs of Geometrical pattern and Vegetal are combined to give the hybrid look of the ornamentation.

Most of the motifs used in Masjid Sultan Alaeddin are adapted from the old Langkasukan motif\(^3\). The main characteristic seen is the intertwining of the stems carrying lotus flowers at the corners of the Mihrab arch (Figure 5.10: Alaeddin).

Inside the niche of Masjid Ubudiyah, Mihrab wall is divided into two parts: lower and upper. The lower part is finished with dark marble whilst the upper part is filled with ornamentation of carved white stucco. The carved stucco carries both geometrical pattern (Islamic eight pointed star pattern) and traditional Malay motifs.

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\(^3\) Statement is made after comparison with the research paper written by Rosnawati Othman, (2005: 103). It is elaborated further in Chapter 6.
(c) Calligraphy

Most of the calligraphy verses are taken from Al-Quran and written in Thuluth script. Detail findings of the calligraphy designs are explained in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

5.4 FINDINGS ON THE POST INDEPENDENCE MOSQUES

Post Independence Mosques refer to mosques built after Malaysia achieved her Independence from the British in 1957. Seven mosques were chosen to be under this category (refer Table 5.3; p: 99). The National Mosque (Wilayah Persekutuan), Negeri Sembilan State Mosque, Perak State Mosque, Masjid Ismail Petra (Kelantan), Pahang State Mosque, Wilayah Persekutuan Mosque and Masjid Putra Jamallullail (Perlis) were selected to be Post Independence Mosques because they were built after 1957 (refer to Figure 5.11; p: 117).

The National Mosque of Malaysia or Masjid Negara is uniquely designed by mixing contemporary architecture with the Islamic traditional arts. One unique feature on this mosque is the employment of multi folded ‘umbrella’ roof, terminating the varieties of domes introduced by the British Colonials.

The state mosque of Negeri Sembilan is of modern structure. The white concrete roof is carried by nine pillars symbolising the nine districts in Negeri Sembilan. It stands adjacent to the Seremban Lake Gardens and becomes a landmark of Negeri Sembilan.

Perak State Mosque is a rectangular mosque stands proudly in the middle of Ipoh city. Its most prominent feature is the minaret that stands at 38m. The mosque has multiple domes of ceramic tiles covering its roof thoroughly.
Masjid Sultan Ismail Petra was built in Kubang Krian, Kota Bharu the capital city of Kelantan. It was opened in 1992 and officiated by the Sultan of Kelantan himself.

Pahang State Mosque was built in 1994, after 37 years of independence. The architectural style of the mosque is still in great influence of Ottoman and Moorish architecture. It owns four *minarets* and stands magnificently in the heart of Kuantan, the capital city of Pahang.

Wilayah Persekutuan Mosque is situated near Jalan Duta, Kuala Lumpur. The mosque was built on a 33-acres site and wholly managed by the Wilayah Persekutuan Religious Department since 2000. The built up area of the mosque is about 47,000 sq meters and it could accommodate up to 17,000 people at one time.

Masjid Putra Jamallullail was named after Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail, the Sultan of Perlis who was made the third Yang Di Pertuan Agong (King) of Malaysia. The mosque is set in a modest single storey and finished with facing bricks. It was built in 2005 in Kangar, the capital city of Perlis.

![Figure 5.11: Post Independence Mosques](image-url)
5.4.1 Mihrab Visibility

The visitors have to walk alongside the huge prayer hall area of Masjid Negara in order to get to the main entrance of prayer hall. Eighteen piers are arranged in a big circle to be the footprint of the umbrella structure roof. The eighteen piers do not seem to disturb the prayer lines (ṣaṭṣ) because the diameter span of the piers is huge.

The prayer hall’s main entrance is on the opposite of the Mihrab.

In contrast, the floor plan of Masjid Negeri Sembilan is circular in shape but the Qibla wall is still made in straight line to ensure everyone’s shoulder is parallel to the Qibla wall during prayers. The main entrance of the mosque is from the opposite end of the Qibla wall though there are a few other secondary entrances located around the circular plan including from the Qibla direction. The Mihrab can be figured out easily as it is the only wooden wall in the hall, whilst the rest are made of steel and glass.

Masjid Perak has a very simple yet practical internal spatial organization. The prayer hall is easily reached via a welcoming staircase that leads to the entrance of prayer hall. The entrance is wide open for the visitors at the wall opposite to the Qibla. With minimum distraction by columns in the prayer hall, Mihrab could clearly be seen from the entrance point.

Masjid Ismail Petra has a very interesting and unique floor plan. The entrance is from the side walls and the area on the left and right sides of the prayer hall is used as a hall way. Columns in the prayer hall are set on the sides and thus do not interfere with the praying area and the Mihrab visibility.

The prayer hall of Masjid Pahang holds an open floor plan where visitors can enter from all direction including from the back of Qibla wall. This arrangement distracts the concentration of ongoing prayers. However, visibility of the
Mihrab and Qibla wall is poor with distractions coming from a series of columns inside the main prayer hall. These columns are the three footprints of three semi spherical domes on top. Safs formation is weak due to break ups in between the lines caused by the columns.

In order to achieve its concept of a mosque within a gardened pond, Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan ended up with a complex floor plan. From the mosque’s main entrance, visitors have to climb up the stairs and pass through or go around a huge courtyard to reach the prayer hall.

Axis and focus of Masjid Putra Jamalullail’s internal lay out is already defined by the paved walk way which starts from the mosque yard. This walk way leads a straight path to the main entrance of prayer hall and goes further to the Mihrab. This mosque is selected among the other newly built mosques because of its unique way of spatial arrangements. The prayer hall is shaped in a simple square with four columns erected in the middle similar to the Vernacular and Traditional mosque. These four columns are structures to the dome that is visible from the interior.

Figure 5.12: Post Independence Mosques: Mihrab Visibility
5.4.2 Mihrab Form

There are four types of Mihrab forms found on these seven mosques (refer to Figure: 5.13, p: 121);

(1) Semi Circular Concaved;

Masjid Negara’s Mihrab is concaved with stucco *muqarnas*. The Mihrab is fronted with a horse shoe arch, resembling the Cordoba Mosque’s Mihrab. The arch is flanked with a pair of brass columns in rich golden.

Wilayah Persekutuan Mosque has prominent Mihrab influenced by the Safavids’ architecture of Iran. The Mihrab catches the eyes with its neatly carved vegetal motifs on white marble. The Mihrab is shaped in polygonal, almost semi circular and concaved with *muqarnas*.

(2) Semi Circular Niche with Flat Ceiling;

Masjid Negeri Sembilan has a wooden Mihrab. In the middle part of this wooden structure there is a Mihrab niche which appeared to be in semi circular shape up to 4m tall and it is not concaved.

Masjid Putra Jamalullail has a tall, semi circular, non concaved niche finished in dark coloured marble. On its left side, there is apparently a fixed spiral staircase encircling the niche wall leading to the Mimbar at about 3m in height.

(3) Polygonal Niche

Masjid Negeri Perak’s Mihrab niche is in semi octagonal shape and not concaved. The shape of the arch takes after the ones found in Zahir Mosque but it is rather simplified and widened. Its size is huge for a single user.

The Mihrab of Masjid Negeri Pahang is too big to be called a Mihrab niche, with a measurement of 4m in width, about 2.5m in depth and 8m in height. This Mihrab is finished with ceramic tiles and arched with a pointed arch.
(4) Freestanding Structure Carrying Both Mihrab and Mimbar

The freestanding structure serving as both the Mihrab and the Mimbar in Masjid Ismail Petra is made of solid white marble. The white marble structure is similar to the one in Masjid Sultan Ibrahim in Johor, with different material.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Section</th>
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Figure 5.13: Post Independence Mosques: Mihrab Forms
5.4.3 Mihrab Ornamentation

The modern era has witnessed a lot of mosques employing varieties of motifs and calligraphy ornamenting the Mihrabs and Qibla walls. The materials used have also evolved throughout the years (refer to Figure 5.14).

(a) Geometrical Patterns

Geometrical Patterns of these mosques are taken from the basic Islamic eight pointed star pattern. The Mihrab employs Iranian *muqarnas* with basic conversion of from seven stars, five stars and three stars. The material used is Indian marble.

(b) Vegetal Patterns

Modern era captures the employment of local vegetation motifs in mosque’s Mihrabs and Qibla Walls. Traditional vegetal motifs are arranged in geometrical composition (further explanation in Chapter 8).
(c) Calligraphy

Most of the calligraphy verses are taken from the Al-Quran and written in Thuluth, Naskh and Kufic scripts. Detailed findings of the calligraphy designs are explained and elaborated further in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of this thesis.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The selected mosques suggested that the orientation of Traditional and Vernacular mosques built in Malaysia mostly have strong level of visibility towards the Mihrab from the entrance point. The formation of prayer lines (safs) is uninterrupted due to the width and clarity of the prayer hall.

On the other hand, floor plans of mosques built during the Colonials era are very much influenced by church design and renowned Islamic buildings from the Medieval Islamic Dynasties. It is apparent that the colonization era changed the whole physical and architectural values of Malaysian mosques. Mosques erected during this era were designed by British architects such as A.B. Hubback (Kuala Lumpur Jamek Mosque 1909, Wilayah Persekutuan) and H.A. Neubronner (Kapitan Keling Mosque 1916, Penang).

Most of the Mihrab and Qibla wall of the selected mosques built during this period are of plain white or with very minimal ornamentation. Only in the later years that ornamentation such as carved stucco and timber were added to the Mihrab and Qibla walls as in the Sultan Sulaiman Mosque (1932, Selangor) and the Sultan Alaeddin Mosque (1898, Selangor). The typological studies done on mosques built from 1700s-1850 also showed the evolution of materials used in building the mosques as well as in ornamenting the Mihrab and Qibla wall.
After independence, Malaysia started to have mosques that are designed and built by local designers and builders. Even though these designers have produced gigantic mosques with varieties of physical appearances to ‘show off’ the mosques’ majestic identity, somehow the interior arrangement of the important mosque components have been placed secondary. Focus of mosque design is more towards the external look rather than the practicality of the internal layout especially around the prayer halls.

Consequently, the Mihrab design and form have also experienced changes in its shape, size and ornamentation. However, these changes should be made to follow a certain guideline administered by relevant authorities and thus allowing the entire mosque building to project itself as a true identity representing Islamic art and architecture. Classification of mosque components and presenting the mosque elements appropriately are important for the future of mosque art and architecture.