CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDIES OF 16 HISTORICAL MOSQUES

In Chapter 6 (this chapter) and Chapter 7, detail analysis of findings is recorded. Both of these Chapters may be taken as a reference and elaboration of the previous Chapter 5. All the selected 23 mosques are listed in Table 6.1 below and they are referred here as Case Studies where detailed analysis has been recorded. Each Case Study was researched with respect to three main criteria:

1) Mosque Overall Design in relation to Mihrab Visibility
2) Mihrab and Qibla Wall
3) Mosque Mihrab Design and Ornamentation

Table 6.1: List of the Case Studies

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Chapter analyses in detail the findings of all Historical Mosques (i.e. Case Studies 1 to 16) while the findings of all Post Independence Mosques (i.e. Case Studies 17 to 23) are analysed in detail in the preceding Chapter 7.
6.1 Case Study 1: Masjid Tengkerah or Tranquerah Mosque, Melaka - 1728

This mosque is recorded as the oldest mosque in Malaysia, built with a hybrid design of *Nusantara* and Chinese architecture. The square shaped mosque consists of main prayer hall and terrace with three layers of pyramidal roof. The *pagoda* like *minaret* is situated on the opposite of Mihrab, similar to the positioning of mosques built during Abbasid Dynasty. Even though upgrading and renovation works had been done to the original mosque, the design and structure was kept as close as possible to the original1.

![Masjid Tengkerah, Melaka 1728](image)

Figure 6.1: Masjid Tengkerah, Melaka 1728

6.1.1 Mosque Overall Design

Basically Masjid Tengkerah can be entered from two main doors. One is opposite the Mihrab, i.e. in front of its *pagoda minaret*, and the other from the ablution area. If the congregational has already taken place, late comers should not be using the entrance near the ablution because it will disturb the congregation. The main entrance to the prayer hall is through the doors situated on the opposite of the Qibla wall, where the *minaret* is positioned. When standing at this door, visitors will be directed to the Mihrab in a straight axis (refer to Figure 6.2 on page 127).

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1 As stated on the information board which is placed in front of the mosque entrance
6.1.2 Qibla Wall Design

The Qibla wall is finished with diamond-shaped ceramic tiles at about 600 mm in height from the floor of the prayer hall. There is also a band of geometrical design ceramic tiles that runs around the prayer hall including the Qibla wall.

The most prominent ornamentation on the Qibla wall is the existence of a pair of specially designed windows on both sides of the Mihrab (Figure 6.3). These windows are only found on the Qibla wall and not on the other walls around the mosque.
Ornamentation on Qibla wall

i) Lattice Window

Window screens such as the ones found in Masjid Tengkerah are widely used in China during the 18th and 19th Century. They serve as both decorative pieces and functional window screens. The dimension of these vernacular Chinese lattice windows is normally made 2:3 in width and length or vice versa (Lung and Chan, 1998: 125). Dimensions of these lattice windows in Masjid Tengkerah are 1600:2500 mm, which is almost equivalent to 2:3.

![Figure 6.4: Masjid Tengkerah: Lattice Window](image)

ii) Diamond shaped tiles featuring lotus flowers

This ornamentation of lotus flowers on ceramic tiles is placed symmetrically on both the left and right side of the Mihrab at about eye level. Lotus flower is frequently related to the Buddhist as they believe it to be sacred and full with meaning. It is believed to be connecting the three spheres of earthly existence; grows up from muddy soil, through the water and blossoming into the air (Ward, 1952: 135). The plant also symbolized rebirth because it closes at night and opens again at early dawn.
This motif of lotus flower probably means that the believers who built and came to the mosque during early days were of Hindu-Buddhist converts similar to those mentioned by Zakaria (1994: 407) in explaining the existence of turtle motif in Demak Mosque Mihrab, Java, Indonesia.

![Lotus Flower on Tile](image1)

**Figure 6.5: Masjid Tengkerah: Lotus Flower on Tile**

iii) Band of Ceramic tiles

The band of ceramic tiles that goes around the interior of the mosque walls at 600mm in height actually composed of three layers. The upper most and the lowest band are quite similar whilst the middle layer is totally different in both its colour and pattern (Figure 6.6). It is learnt from this observation that part of the top and bottom layer has a simplified version of the motif from Damascus’ Mihrab.

![Ceramic Tiles](image2)

**Figure 6.6: Masjid Tengkerah: Ceramic Tiles**
The figures above show the similarity between the two vegetal friezes; the ornamentations of Masjid Tengkerah and Umayyad mosques.

### 6.1.3 Mosque Mihrab

The Mihrab niche is semi circular and formed in concaved wall. On the façade, the Mihrab is seen as an arch with gold plated band giving a rich look to the Mihrab. The concave wall is decorated with geometrical designed ceramic tiles up to 900 mm in height. Measuring 1200mm in width, 1575mm in depth and at 2000 mm in height, this form is sufficient for a single person (prayer leader) to occupy comfortably. Even though the size and form of the Mihrab niche is made special for the prayer leader, this niche is not being used. The Imam (prayer leader) chose to lead the prayer in front of the Mihrab in line with the Mimbar. A wall and standing fan were seen occupying the Mihrab. No other ornamentation can be seen on the Mihrab wall. A clock is hung on top of the Mihrab arch, much higher than the eye level, so the clock does not seem to interfere with the concentration of the believers.
6.2 Case Study 2: Masjid Kampung Laut, Kelantan - 1730s

Masjid Kampung Laut is a mosque found on the river bank of Sungai Kelantan. Its exact built date is still under research but it is said to be built in the 1730s. From the design and structure which is similar to the Demak Mosque in Java, Indonesia this mosque is believed to be built by the Javanese. In 1969, Masjid Kampung Laut was moved to the vicinity of an Islamic Higher Learning Institute in Nilam Puri, Kelantan to save it from damages caused by flood. Shifting the mosque from Kampung Laut to Nilam Puri was done with extreme care as not to deviate from the original and this was done by both the Historical Department of Malaysia and Historical Department of Kelantan.
6.2.1 Mosque Overall Design

The overall floor plan is almost square in shape. Spaces in the mosque are arranged similarly to the spatial arrangement of traditional Malay house. The first entrance steps lead the visitors to the verandah (serambi). The second entrance door will lead the believers into the prayer hall. Standing at this second entrance door, the visitor is directly opposite of the Qibla wall. Thus circulation of safs inside the prayer hall is good as late comers can easily join the congregation without interrupting. Long and low windows surrounding the prayer hall allow ample circulation of fresh air, natural ventilation and natural lighting into the prayer hall. This provides comfort to the users. There are four columns inside the prayer hall to support the tiered pyramidal roof also known as ‘bumbung tumpang’.

![Figure 6.9: Masjid Kampung Laut, Kelantan 1730s](image)

6.2.2 Qibla Wall Design

The Qibla wall of Masjid Kampung Laut is basically divided into four sections. Two sections in the middle are recessed out by 1200mm. The left side is used
for the *imam* while leading the congregation and the right side is for the *Mimbar*. At the time pictures were taken during the research trip, the *Mimbar* was positioned in front of the recessed area and the *imam’s* praying mat was next to it. There were book racks holding Al-Qurans and other religious books on the Qibla wall. The other two sections, on the far left and right were given double leaf long and low windows allowing bright sunlight into the prayer hall.

![Figure 6.11: Masjid Kampung Laut: Qibla Wall](image)

**Ornamentation on Qibla Wall**

The wall was built in “*Janda Berhias*”, a traditional timber laying workmanship which is similar to most of the traditional Malay house especially on the East Coast of Malaysia.

### 6.2.3 Mosque Mihrab

Even though Masjid Kampung Laut’s overall design is said to be similar with the Great Mosque of Demak, treatments of its Qibla wall and Mihrab were different. There is no trace of Mihrab niche except for the recessed section on the Qibla wall. This style of Qibla wall design was never found in any of the other selected medieval mosques\(^2\) of this study.

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\(^2\) Refer Chapter 3 on Medieval Mosque Analysis.
6.3 Case Study 3: Masjid Batu Uban, Penang - 1734

This mosque is said to be built in 1734 by the Malays from Buadi Village, Paya Kumbu, Sumatera. It started as a surau (musolla) but later became a mosque when the Muslims formed a settlement. It was also used as a transit point for Muslim traders from India, Pakistan and Middle-east. The overall look of Batu Uban mosque is quite
similar to Sumateran design mosque such as Kampung Laut in Kelantan. It was originally built on tiers with pyramidal roof.

![Bat Uban Mosque, Penang 1734](image)

Figure 6.13: Bat Uban Mosque, Penang 1734

### 6.3.1 Mosque Overall Design

Similar to other vernacular mosques, the floor plan of Masjid Batu Uban is almost square in shape. There are four columns in the middle of prayer hall to support the pyramidal roof structure. Before renovation and expansion works were done, the original mosque (which still stands on its original site), had a clear entrance and Mihrab axis. During congregational prayers, praying lines are distracted only by the four small columns and nothing else.

![Masjid Batu Uban: Analysis of Floor Plan](image)

Figure 6.14: Masjid Batu Uban: Analysis of Floor Plan
6.3.2 Qibla wall Design

Masjid Batu Uban employs quite a simple Qibla wall with minimal ornamentation. On the Qibla wall, as can be seen in Figure 6.16, p:138, a three step Mimbar is placed on the right side of the Mihrab. On the left side of the Mihrab is a nicely decorated table and chair for the Imam or Religious teacher (Ustaz) to sit while teaching. On top of this furniture, there is an electrical announcement board that keeps changing its words providing relevant, up to date information on the praying times, dates, activities of the mosque’s community and so on. The board is hung quite low and within the cone of vision of the congregation performing solat (prayer). This might cause some sort of disturbance to the concentration of the congregation and it could be considered as an inappropriate decoration to be used on the Qibla wall.

Outline of Lotus Motif

This lotus motif appears on top of both the Mihrab and the Mimbar. In the motif on top of the Mihrab, the lotus impregnates the word Allah. The asymmetrical look gives an indication that both ornamentations were handmade as shown in Figure 6.15 below.

Figure 6.15: The Outline of Lotus Motif on top of Mihrab and Mimbar on the Qibla Wall
6.3.3 Mosque Mihrab

The Mihrab is filled with a wall fan meant for the Imam only and a stand for Al-Quran at 1000mm in height. According to the mosque’s Committee Member, the Al-Quran will be used by the Imam after he had finished leading the congregation in solat or whilst waiting for the next prayer time. It can be noted that the Mihrab of Masjid Batu Uban is also used for Dikka\textsuperscript{3}.

However, from observation, there is a prayer mat laid in front of the niche to show that the Mihrab is not being used by the Imam to position himself while leading the congregation. It has been clarified by the mosque’s Committee Member that the Imam does not want to be too far from the first congregational row (saf). The first saf only takes position in front of the Mimbar, next to the Mihrab to avoid any distraction of prayer line. Therefore, if the Imam is inside the niche, he will be quite far from the first saf.

**Mihrab Form and Ornamentation**

Masjid Batu Uban owns a semi circular concaved Mihrab. The Mihrab and the whole Qibla wall is painted in white with little ornamentation. The arched Mihrab is decorated with multi foil arch which is similar to the mosques built during the Mughal period.

\textsuperscript{3} A platform for the Imam or mosque special committee to recite the Al-Quran. Refer Chapter Two.
Figure 6.16: Masjid Batu Uban: View of Mihrab and Drawings.

6.4 Case Study 4: Masjid Kampung Keling, Melaka - 1748

Masjid Kampung Keling is situated in the middle of Melaka Heritage trail. “Keling” refers to the Southern Indian folks who married the local Malays. Built in 1748, this mosque was renovated in 1908, with the original structure and design well kept. The roof shape and structure of the mosque gives it the vernacular look that is pyramidal. Still, some of the interior design and detailing carry influences from British and Dutch architecture. Another impact of the Colonization.
6.4.1 Mosque Overall Design

Similar to Tengkerah and other mosques with pyramidal roof structure, the shape of the floor plan is almost square with four columns in the middle of the prayer hall. There are two main entrances to the prayer hall, one is directly opposite of the Qibla wall and the other is adjacent to the ablution pool. Most visitors prefer the latter rather than the former. The prayer hall is surrounded by verandahs on each side except on the Qibla wall side. This verandah provides the visitors with a transitional point before entering the prayer hall. It can also be used to reach to the other entrance if solat had already taken place. The verandahs are also used as additional praying spaces during big congregations.
6.4.2 Qibla Wall Design

Parallel to the Qibla wall, there is a series of six pillars with Ionic Roman capital in gold paint forming five similar arches. The middle arch is in line with the Mihrab and the arch on the right of the Mihrab is owned by the Mimbar. On the left and right side of the Qibla wall, there is a pair of specially designed windows. They seem to be copies of the ones found in Masjid Tengkerah.

![View of Qibla Wall](image)

**Figure 6.18: Masjid Kampung Keling: View of Qibla Wall and the Components of Study**

**Ornamentation on Qibla wall**

i) Lattice Window

Pair of lattice windows that are similar to the ones found in Masjid Tengkerah are positioned on both sides of the Qibla wall. Even though the size is slightly bigger than those in Masjid Tengkerah, the traditional Chinese proportion of 2:3 ratio is still being applied to its dimension of 1800:2700 mm.
ii) Ionic Columns

Columns from the Greek order are broadly used in mosques. The Great Mosque of Damascus is the first to employ columns from Corinthian order (Kinney, 2001). Ionic columns painted in silver and gold are planted in a single line in front of the Qibla wall, and thus differentiating it from the other common walls.

iii) Wood Carving on Ventilation panels

The wood carving could easily be missed as it is stationed at the upper most part of the Qibla wall. These carved ventilation panels are almost ruined as only three of them are still intact. Each panel represents the motif of ‘bayam peraksi’, a type of weed grown in local backyards⁴. This motif signifies the identity of Malay Archipelago and definitely vernacular to Malaysia.

![Figure 6.19: Masjid Kampung Keling: Ventilation Panel](image)

6.4.3 Mosque Mihrab

Masjid Kampung Keling employed a square shaped Mihrab niche which is different from the semi circular shape of Masjid Tengkerah’s Mihrab. The form of this niche is also different as it is a flat niche wall with an arched ceiling. On the façade, the Mihrab is arched with gold plated band. The Mihrab niche is

⁴ The motif is determined after a comparison study on woodcarving motifs with reference from Nik Rashidin, “Spirit of Wood” exhibition 2000.
finished with white luster ceramic tiles. Even though the Mihrab is sized comfortably for a single occupant to perform prayer, it is not being utilized. In the niche a larger scaled Al-Quran is placed on a stand at about 700mm in height.

(a) Mihrab Form and Ornamentation

Its Mihrab is lightly ornamented. Only two significant motifs were found from the observation. Again, lotus motif is utilized in ornamenting the mosque, but here the lotus is shown in its flower bud form.

(b) Motif on the Mihrab Arch

The same ‘bayam peraksi’ motif as the ventilation panel, but with a different design is used for the Mihrab arch on both legs. Here the motif is designed in a vertical composition. The beginning and ending of the carved motifs are clearly defined unlike the ones on the ventilation panels mentioned above. The wood carving is painted in gold to get the similar attention as the arches in front of the Qibla wall.
6.5 Case Study 5: Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin, Terengganu - 1793

Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin was originally built with timber in 1793 and then uplifted to a brick building back in 1852. The interior of the mosque received its colonial influences during this renovation. The mosque was then renovated and uplifted again in 1972. It was made bigger for the increasing number of users. A tall minaret was also added to the existing structure during the same renovation of 1972.
6.5.1 Mosque Overall Design

This mosque has one main entrance and that is from its side. Upon entering, series of doors leading to the main prayer hall will be seen. Standing at one of these doors, the visitors’ view is blocked by a series of big round columns. The prayer hall is in a longitudinal rectangular shape with the shorter sides lie parallel to the Qibla wall. The floor plan is confusing with the existence of another set of columns forming arches that leads to another praying area. The small prayer section is enjoys natural light and it is the best naturally lit area as compared to the rest of the mosque.

6.5.2 Qibla Wall Design

There seems to be two sets of Qibla wall. The first (the one in front) is divided into four sections and the two middle sections are arched. The double arch leads to a chamber like prayer hall which is about 3000mm by 3000mm square in
shape. Inside this square chamber lies a second Qibla wall with a Mihrab niche. During the research visit, there was a congregation taking place and this chamber was not used during that prayer. The chamber is actually surrounded by a graveyard compound situated outside the mosque on the Qibla wall side.

Figure 6.24: Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin: Qibla Wall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 6.25: Masjid Sultan Zainal Abidin: View of Mihrab and Drawings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mosque Mihrab and Qibla Wall</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor Plan</td>
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6.5.3 Mosque Mihrab

The arch situated on the right side of the Qibla wall is crowning the Mimbar and the area underneath the left arch is supposedly used by the Imam when leading the congregation. The Imam’s prayer mat is positioned right in front of the Mimbar and thus the first saf is formed quite far from the Qibla wall. If the Imam uses the chamber Mihrab niche, he will not be seen clearly by the congregation praying far behind him on the longitudinal floor plan. Hence longitudinal floor plan is not suitable for a prayer hall design.

(a) Mihrab Ornamentation

The ornamentation that could be seen inside this mosque either in terms of calligraphy, geometrical patterns or woodcarvings is minimal. There is a little ornamentation found on the column capitals supporting the double arched Mihrab. Motif of the carving depicts ‘saga kenering’\(^5\), another motif formed from weeds that grow in local backyards (Ismail, 2001: 51). This motif is carved in cement mortar instead of the usual timber methods used in Traditional Malay houses especially in Kelantan and Terengganu. The material used is probably the reason that makes the mortar carvings looked rather simplified.

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\(^5\) The motif is determined after a comparison study on woodcarving motifs with reference from Nik Rashidin, “Spirit of Wood” exhibition 2000.
(b) Mihrab Design

The Mihrab niche inside the chamber is rectangular in shape and it is comfortable for a single user. From the front, it is a plainly arched.

6.6 Case Study 6: Masjid Kapitan Keling, Penang - 1801

In the late 18th Century, 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 Kapitan Keling, Penang 1801](image)

Figure 6.27: Masjid Kapitan Keling, Penang 1801

6.6.1 Mosque Overall Design

The entrance to the mosque is very clearly defined by a walkway from the mosque compound to the mosque terrace area. The grand and welcoming floor plan makes it easier for the visitors to get comfortable being inside the mosque. However, looking for a space to pray inside the mosque is quite confusing. The praying lines look scattered with the existence of eight columns arranged in hexagonal manner directly in front of the Mihrab and the Qibla wall. These columns are assigned to hold the onion shaped dome on top. In between these
columns and the Qibla wall, there appears to be another row of columns. Hence the visibility of the Qibla wall and the Mihrab is quite poor unless one is standing in the middle of the entrance.

![Figure 6.28: Masjid Kapitan Keling: Analysis of Floor Plan](image)

6.6.2 Qibla Wall Design

The Qibla wall is richly ornamented with stucco plaster. Its upper section of is ornamented with a band of calligraphy in Thuluth script and finished with gold paint stating verses from the Al-Quran as translated below:

> ‘Only those are worthy of being the guardians and servants of Allah's houses of worship, who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and establish Solah and pay Zakat dues, and fear none but Allah: for these alone are expected to follow the Right Way’.
> From the Al-Quran, Surah At-Taubah 9: verse 18.

The Qibla wall is also ornamented with vertical bands of geometrical patterns resembling vegetal pattern. These vertical strips measure 2100mm in height and 600mm in width right below the inscription band. The ornamentation on these ten vertical bands carries motifs of lotus flower and the intertwining of stems is from ‘sulur kacang’ motif. Both motifs are combined to give the hybrid look of ornamentation to this mosque.

The geometrical pattern on the Qibla wall stretches through its entire length. It shows a pattern of eight overlapping circles forming components of polygons.

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6 Explained in detail for the geometrical shapes of the Kapitan Keling Mihrab
The Qibla wall is kept free from other decorations except for the *Mimbar* and a grandfather’s clock which produces annoying sound every hour on the hour.

![Masjid Kapitan Keling: Qibla Wall](image)

*Figure 6.29: Masjid Kapitan Keling: View of Qibla Wall and Components of Study*

### 6.6.3 Mosque Mihrab

The Mihrab shape is quite similar to Masjid Leboh Acheh’s on the employment of multi foils arch resembling Mughal architecture and then framed with rectangular plane. But here the ornamentation is done more expressive with two additional low columns flanking the Mihrab arch. One peculiar thing is that the Mihrab is orientated off perpendicular by about 5° to the right from the praying lines.
Obviously when the Mihrab is wrongly orientated, it cannot be used effectively.

The *Imam* normally leads the prayer by positioning the prayer rug next to the *Mimbar*. This is a classic example of a mosque built during the colonial era and the direction of the Qibla is not taken seriously.
Mihrab Ornamentation

The following ornamentations (as shown in Figure 6.33, page 152) were found on the Mihrab wall.

i) Lotus Bud

Lotus flower motif acts as the keystone to the multi foil arch. This arrangement is almost similar to Masjid Leboh Acheh’s Mihrab, with the only difference found is the levels of quality.
ii) Lotus Leaves

This motif was used to ornament the column capitals on both sides of the Mihrab.

iii) Geometrical Patterns

The pattern used is actually an enhancement of the Qibla wall pattern. This geometrical pattern originated from the same basic geometrical lay out of interlocking octagons (as shown in Figure 6.34 below). Critchlow (1976: 121) confirmed this pattern as an Islamic pattern.

Figure 6.33: Masjid Kapitan Keling: View of Ornamentation

Figure 6.34: Masjid Kapitan Keling: Islamic Pattern Study of Mihrab; Author’s Own