

## NEWS

# Steeped in history

**MAJESTIC:** Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta in Ipoh may be one of the oldest surviving mosques in the country, writes Raja Khalidatul Asrin



A mausoleum at Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta.

IT is widely known among Perak folk that the first mosque in Kinta Valley is Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta in Ipoh.

Combining Moghul and neoclassical architecture, it was believed to have been built by Datuk Panglima Kinta Mohamed Yusof in 1898 in memory of his wife, Saadiah, who died that same year.

However, according to Fazil Suhaimi Talib, a member of the Malaysian Historical Society, the mosque could have been built by the British as a gift to Yusof.

He said this could have taken place in the early years of the colonial rule after the Perak War to get back the allegiance of Malays and their Orang Besar.

"Yusof became Panglima Kinta in 1884 after Panglima Kinta Uda Zainal Abidin died.

"He was appointed Toh Muda by the British in 1881," Fazil said,

adding that the information was obtained from the Perak Council minutes of June 10, 1881.

He became one of the members of the Perak Council, the first Panglima Kinta to be appointed to the Perak Council with Toh Muda Ngah Abdul Wahab bin Uda Zainal Abidin.

"These men became powerful people in the council and were among the richest in Kinta, probably even Malaya, having inherited the ancestral rights to land and finances that originally belonged to the Panglima Kinta family," he said in an interview.

Kinta may have derived its name from a story told in a history book *Riwayat Kinta*.

A myth has it that a sea captain from Sumatra gave Kinta its name.

After crossing the Straits of Malacca, the captain steered his ship through a river flanked by overgrowth and thorny marshes.

He navigated the ship as if he was familiar with the terrain, all the way up to Gunung Cheroh. There, the crew heard sweet music coming from a waterfall and believed they were welcomed by unseen beings.

They looked around and saw a flying lizard leaping through the air across the water.

The captain then announced: "Let it be known that the name of the river is Kinta, because the river flows with the sound of tinkling bells."

After the lizard disappeared, the captain set up a settlement there and took the name of Kulup Kinta. He was later known as Lord of Kinta.

Fazil said: "Since the early 1500, the area was predominantly Muslim. This was around the period Sultan Muzaffar Shah 1 circa 1528.

"We can't claim Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta as the first mosque in Ipoh since Islam has been on the land since the beginning of the 16th century.

"It is likely that Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta is the first brick mosque to be built in Ipoh."



Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta could have been built by the British as a gift to Datuk Panglima Kinta Mohamed Yusof.



Masjid Datuk Panglima Kinta boasts Moghul and neoclassical architecture.



A religious school in the compound of the historical mosque.