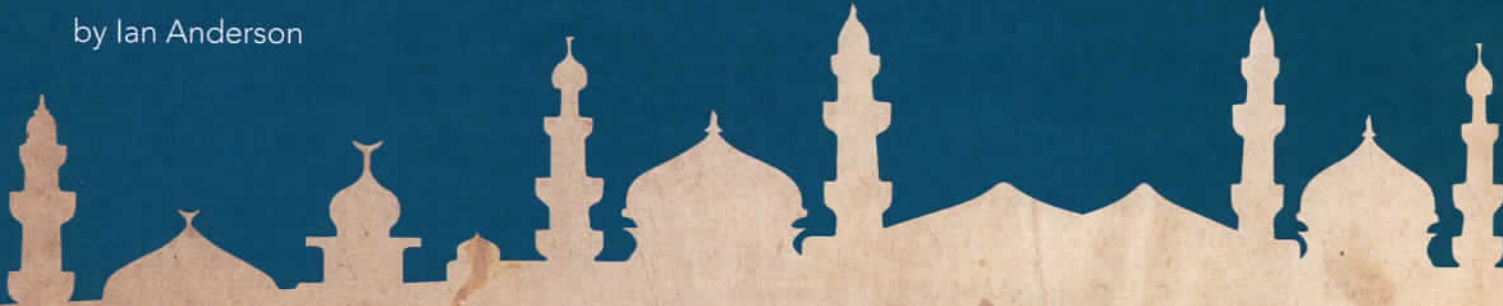


Heritage Mosques of Old Ipoh Town

by Ian Anderson

If you were to look at the many mosques (or *masjid* in Malay and Arabic) in Ipoh, you would notice the many distinct styles that have evolved from the earliest *masjids* with fusions in architectural styles, to the newer ones with modern architecture and breathtaking structures.

Nevertheless, one will still find the beauty and reverence for older mosques, all thanks to the rich history that these *masjids* possess. And what better time to appreciate the beauty of Islamic architecture than in the month of *Ramadhan*? Here are four beautiful heritage mosques found in Ipoh town.



The Panglima Mosque

Located in Jalan Masjid, originally called Hume Street (Named after Lt. Col. W. J. P. Hume who retired in 1921 as British Resident, Perak), the Datoh Panglima Kinta Mohamed Yusuff's Mosque, known locally as Panglima Mosque, is close to the Kinta River in New Town. It was once situated adjacent to Kampung Laksamana, the only settlement on the New Town side which has since disappeared. The photograph, taken in 1920 by J. A. S. Jennings, editor of the Times of Malaya newspaper, was taken from the Hugh Low Bridge.



This mosque, the first to be built in Ipoh, "a very substantial handsome brick building", is said to be the 'grand dame' of Ipoh's mosques. It was built in 1898 by Datoh Panglima Kinta Mohamed Yusoff in memory of his principal wife, Saaidah, who died in the same year; it combines Moghul and Neoclassical architectural features and cost about \$15,000 to build. A golden dome caps the prayer hall and there is also a pyramid shaped roof. Two minarets in six tiers rise from the sides of the building.



Next to the mosque is an old building which was once the Madrasah Kamaliah, a religious school. Built in the 1950s, it ceased operation in the 1970s. Now known as Masjid Datoh Panglima Kinta the mosque is located in Jalan Masjid, originally Hume Street, Ipoh.

A well-known figure who lived at the mosque was the Egyptian Quranic teacher Shaik Tholji who popularised Quranic recitation in the state of Perak. He is buried at the Panglima Kinta's family mausoleum behind the mosque.

The Mohammedan Mosque

This mosque, opposite the Ipoh Padang was built in 1908, at a cost of \$500,000 and endowed by Tamil Muslim Shaik Adam. It is an important and notable part of Ipoh's early history. Built before the adjacent St Michael's Institution (SMI) in Clayton Road (Named after Mr. R. J. B. Clayton, a British Government administrator) now Jalan S. P. Seenivasagam, the mosque is also known as the Town Padang Mosque designed to serve the Hanafi sect of the Indian Muslim community.



As can be seen in the old postcard image from 1918, the mosque was built in reflection of Moghul architecture by Indian workmen. Square in plan, it has verandahs on three sides with scalloped archways inspired by the Chitty architectural style of South India. A single pyramidal roof caps the prayer hall, and there are two minarets. A square gateway leads into the compound.



Shaik Adam built this separate 'Hanafi' mosque, rather than continue using those existing in the town because of a dispute with his Malay co-religionists, the latter being followers of the 'Shafie' school of Islam.

Shaik Adam came to Malaya from India and started in Penang as a clerk for the tailor's shop of A. Moungeyee, who also owned APK Soda Water Company. In 1899 Moungeyee started a second factory in Ipoh which, in 1906, Shaik Adam managed to buy and rename the Kinta Aerated Water Company. He followed this up by starting similar companies in Taiping and Kampar.

The Kampung Paloh Mosque

Kampung Paloh Mosque is the third oldest mosque in Ipoh. Located at Jalan Datoh, near the junction of Leong Boon Swee Road it was built in 1912 by Wan Muhammad Saleh, Superintendent of Penghulus (Village Headman) and assistant collector of Land Revenue during the Frank Swettenham administration. It has an old Malay cemetery alongside in which is located the Mausoleum of Wan Muhammad Saleh.



The construction was funded by two prominent wealthy local people at that time, one of them being Long Kassim. As an appreciation to him, the administration of the mosque is believed to still be handled by Long Kassim's grandchildren.

The present structure has been extensively renovated as comparison with the old 1920's photograph will show. Nonetheless, the original five-tiered minaret and mausoleum of its founder still remain in their original form. The mausoleum features a two-tiered gabled roof and its enclosure comprises a half-wall with balustrades. It stands behind the mosque. The earliest tomb is said to be that of a nobleman, dated 1825.

Unlike typical mosque architecture, Paloh Mosque is inspired by traditional forms; it does not have a dome but appeared in traditional Malayan style, with the prayer hall with its decorative coffered wooden ceiling, surrounded by the usual colonnade and the deep niche of the mihrab (Facing Mecca) projecting well outside the wall. Another beautiful example of the Malay woodcarvers craft is the Minbar (pulpit) carved by Muhammad Amin a well-known woodcarver of his time.

The Pakistani Mosque

The youngest of Ipoh's heritage mosques and carrying the simplest design of the four is the Pakistani Mosque. It was opened on 15 December 1930 on a piece of land alongside the Ipoh District Police Headquarters compound. Today it is accessed via Jalan Koo Chong Kong.



The history of the mosque stems from the early days of the British Administration in Perak as they brought in many people to the State to assist in its growth. One particular group of these immigrants were Pathans and Punjabi Muslims from Northern India, and many of these joined the Police force to assist in keeping the peace and order between the vast numbers of Chinese immigrants arriving daily. Many also fought against the Japanese invaders in 1941/42. With so many of these in the Police force a mosque was necessary to allow them to fulfill their religious obligations and so the "Police Mosque" came into being. Incidentally just adjacent to the mosque there was also a Gurdwara for the Sikh policemen. As the number of Punjabi policemen grew smaller the mosque was opened to the public in 1949 and renamed the "Pakistani Mosque".

The design of this mosque is very simple with the prayer hall underneath a peaked roof and surrounded by a colonnade. There is no dome nor minarets, the congregation being called to prayers by loudspeakers at the peak of the roof. Again, in simple fashion there is no beautifully carved ceiling or Minbar (pulpit), the Imam (leader) simply preaching from behind a lectern at ground level. Nonetheless the mosque is still in regular use both for prayers and as a meeting place for Pakistani and Punjabi Muslims and their families. Unusually, there are no really old photographs of this mosque available but the one depicted here is still quite different from the view today with an enlarged compound and double gateway. How times change!