

Location	Marup, Engkilili and Fort Alice, Sri Aman	Ref No.	SA/WS/AR006
Subject	1. Visit Marup and Engkilili on 17.12.2013. 2. Site visit to Fort Alice on 18.12.2013.	Date	17-18.12.2013
		Time	Day 1: 12.45pm – 5.00 pm ; Day 2: 8.30am- 10.30am
Attended by	Refer attached attendance list	Conducted by	Mike Boon & Goh Kaw Sze
Recorded by	Goh Tze Hui	Coordinated by	Goh Kaw Sze & Lee Kao Choo

After visiting the traditional Malay kampung in Sri Aman on 18th November 2013, this workshop brought the participants to Marup at Engkilili in order to trace the footsteps of Chinese Hakka gold miners who had migrated from West Kalimantan during the mid-19th century. A follow-up site visit to Fort Alice was conducted on the second day.

DAY 1 (17.12.2013) - Visiting Marup

At 12.45pm, 40 participants gathered in the Chinese temple situated alongside the waterfront for registration and briefing. The guide of the day, Mr Goh Kaw Sze, gave a briefing on the programme and introduced the background of Chinese Hakka gold miners in Marup.

Prior departing, Mr Goh also introduced a book, entitled *Historical Essays on Marup Fifteen Shares Kongs*, co-authored by him and Mr Tay Check Pin in 2006 which documented their research on Marup that was established by Hakka miners who migrated from West Kalimantan around 1856. Similar to the "Twelve Shares Kongs" (十二分公司) in Bau, this group of miners also established a self-governed settlement under the management of "Fifteen Shares Kongs" (十五分公司).

Mr Goh highlighted that there were seven Chinese schools in Engkilili which were set up by the Hakka miners before WWII. Records showed that they were the first to request monetary assistance from the Rajah to pay for the teachers' salary. This showed that the Hakka communities placed great emphasis on education.

According to a record from Brooke's officer, A. B. Ward mentioned that all mining activities in Marup had stopped by 1899. The members of "Fifteen Shares Kongs" became farmers and resettled around this area, and the deities which were once worshipped in the kongs were also brought with them to their new settlement (分炉). Therefore, by tracking down these deities, we may be able to trace the settlement of their descendants.



Historical Essays on Marup Fifteen Shares Kongs by Goh Kaw Sze and Tay Chek Pin.

Briefing by Mr Goh about the programme of the day.

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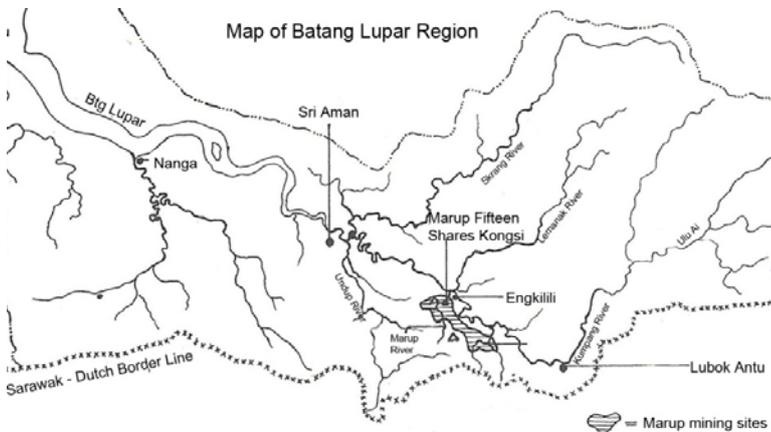
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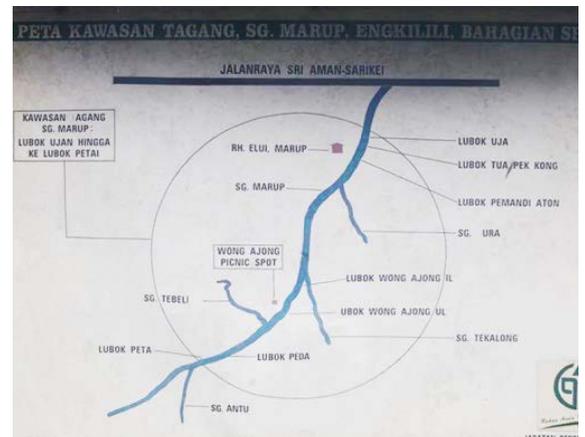
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Lubok Tua Pek Kong (把水口伯公)

Accommodated in two chartered vans, the participants travelled approximately 30km to the first stop at Lubok Tua Pek Kong (把水口伯公).



Location map of Marup.
(Source: Essays on Marup Fifteen Shares Kongs, p. 31)

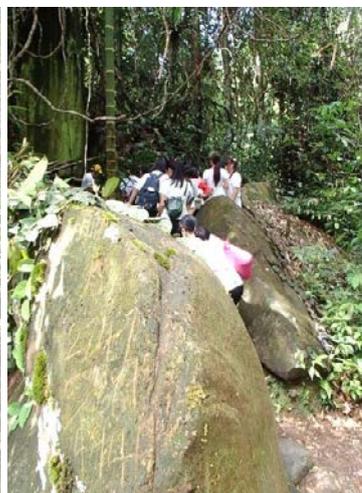


Locality map of Lubok Tua Pek Kong in Tagang area, Sungai Marup.

Lubok Tua Pek Kong is a local ‘guardian’ which was believed to be able to suppress evil spirits and protect the gold miners. An approximately 3m high rock with smoothed surface that seemed to be split by a sword overlooking the ‘parit’ (巴历) was chosen to signify the deity. ‘Parit’ means drain or a small stream where the miners panned for gold with the method called ‘dulang washing’ (洗琉琅). People still worshipped the rock but some also prayed for prosperity and luck as lottery numbers evidently carved on the surrounding rocks.



The main rock chosen to signify Lubok Tua Pek Kong reached a height of 3m.



Lottery numbers were carved on the rock.

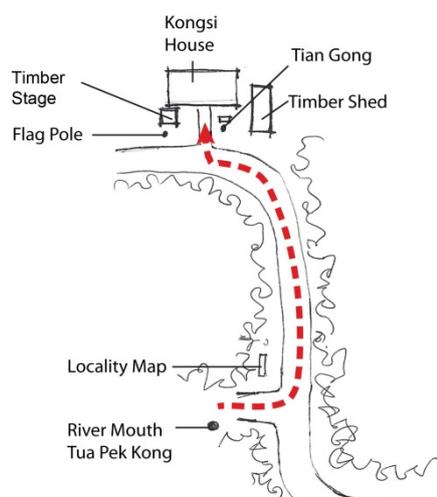


The path from Lubok Tua Pek Kong to “Fifteen Shares Kongs” House.

According to Mr Goh, the jungle path across the parit led to Marup River and an old burial site was located at the hill across the river. The most significant tomb belonged to Huang Ji (黄际), the leader of “Fifteen Shares Kongs”. Unfortunately, the group was unable to venture to the site due to unfavorable accessibility condition.

From oral history gathered by the late Mr Liu Pak Kui (刘伯奎), it was said that there was a kongs ancestral shrine, called Zhong Chen Temple (忠臣庙) near Lubok Tua Pek Kong. However, there is no record of the building and nobody had ever seen it before.

“Fifteen Shares Kongsı” House



Dotted line shows our walking trail from Lubok Tua Pek Kong to the “Fifteen Shares Kongsı” House.

From Lubok Tua Pek Kong, the participants decided to take an uphill walk along a winding concrete road, flanked by secondary jungle, to the “Fifteen Shares Kongsı” house.

The kongsı house functioned as the administration centre and central gathering space for important festivals. Records showed that it had received many important guests, such as the Rajah and his officers. In the Italian naturalist’s book *Wonderings in the Great Forest of Borneo*, Ordoardo Beccari mentioned that he had attended a feast on 5 April 1867 where Malays and the Chinese guests were served with banquet in the kongsı house. He also described the relationship between the Chinese and Iban and the kongsı’s election system in that book.

Upon approaching the kongsı house, the remnant of the original belian flag pole and an open timber shed on stilt were sighted on the left side of the road, whereas an earth mound and a shrine stands on the right. A new open shed was added to the right of the kongsı house to cater for large crowds during festivals.



Flag pole and open shed on left road, and earth mound on the opposite side of the road with the kongsı house in background.



Group photo taken in front of the kongsı house.

Flag Pole

Mr Goh observed that the remnant of flag pole is quite similar to the one which belonged to the “Twelve Shares Kongsı” in Bau.

Open Shed on Stilts

A timber shed was constructed adjacent to the flag pole, in order to stage offerings during the Hungry Ghost Festival. The public would rush to grab the offerings at the signal after the ritualistic ceremony. Mr Goh had observed that the local Iban also participates in this annual festival. However, it raised goosepimples when Mr Goh recalled an event in which he brought a local researcher to take some photos during the festival. The photos taken showed ‘people’ sitting on the stage which was then only filled with offerings at that time.

Tian Gong (天公)

There were much speculations on the earth mound and whose tomb that it belonged to. Through Mr Goh’s research, it was suggested that the earth mound was a unique and unusual representation of Tian Gong (King of Heaven) (天公) by the Hakka which is commonly worshipped by the Hokkien community.



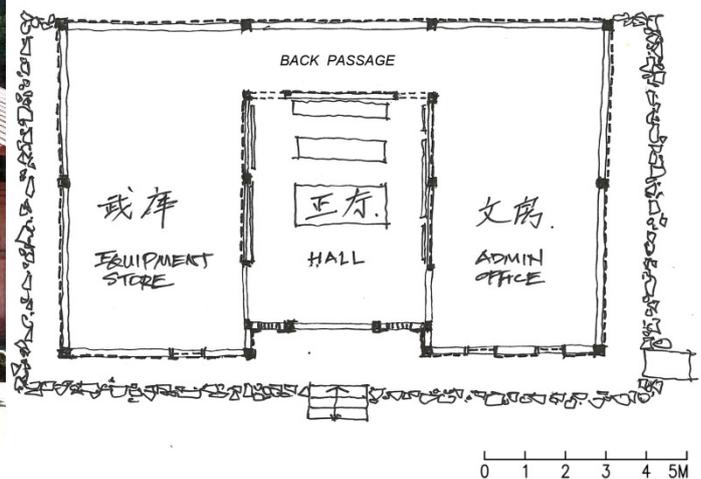
The flagpole (left), open shed on stilt and a mound to worship Tian Gong (right).

The kongsi house is a simple single-storey timber structure with a gabled roof. The post and beam construction was raised on a compacted earth platform retained by river stones. The earth floor is commonly found in the traditional Chinese farmhouses and had been similarly applied to Fort Alice. Vertical timber cladding left gaps for ventilation on external walls, and the front façade was punctuated with openings of various size and timber lattice pattern. Although the building had been renovated, the local claimed that it still retains much of its original form. The construction date of the original building cannot be established but one of the original plaques hanging on the wall recorded the donors of an earliest renovation carried out in 1873.

The kongsi house underwent a major renovation in 2000. Due to its adaptation to become a temple and also served as the centre to celebrate major Chinese festivals, the building is kept and constantly maintained by the local community.



The entrance façade of the kongsi house.



Sketched plan of the kongsi house.

The rectangular floor plan has three bays with the main hall taking up the most prominent central position, whereas administrative office (文房) and equipment store (武庫) on both sides (although the Chinese naming suggested that it was a weapons store). An old photograph showed that there were two doors at the rear wall of the central hall leading to a back passage.

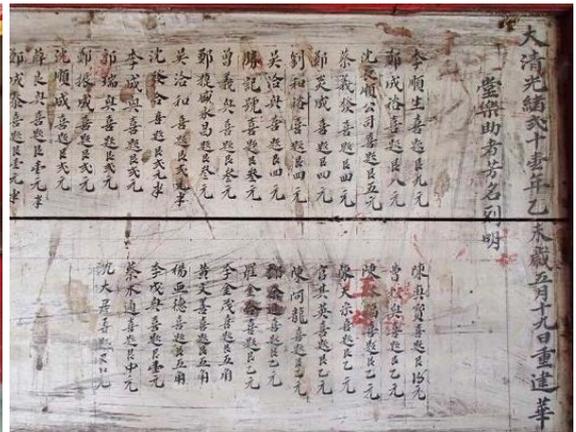
After the kongsi disbanded in the late 19th century, the members moved to other locations around Marup and started farming. Seven deities that were worshipped in the kongsi were brought with them to settle in the new place. One of them was the Monkey God (齐天大圣) which was brought to Mawan (下梯头). Therefore, we could trace the settlement of their descendants through these deities.



Main entrance with no door.



The central meeting hall was adapted to house various deities.

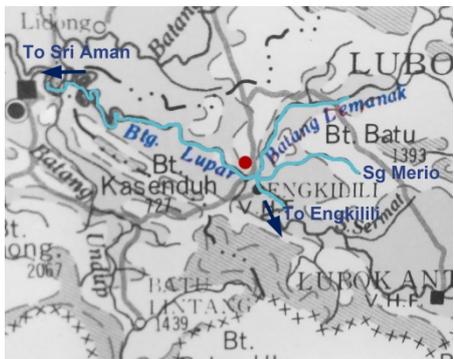


Typical plaque recorded donors for past renovations.

Temple of the Monkey God (齐天大圣庙)

The group followed the footsteps of Huan Ji's descendants to Mawan (下梯头) near Engkilili, where they set up a temple to worship the Monkey God. This temple was carefully sited on a hill facing the confluence of the three rivers - Engkilili River, Merio River and Lemanak River, which converge at Batang Lupar that flows to Sri Aman. When these rivers receive different amount of rainfall, the varying silt density causes the water to appear in different colours at the confluence.

The participants enjoyed a light tea break with local kuih before going to Engkilili to look for the site of the fort built by Rajah Vyner Brooke in 1925.



The temple (red dot) located at the confluence of three rivers.



Temple of Monkey God at Mawan.



View towards the confluence of three rivers at far distance.



Statue of the Monkey God

奕吉利里下梯头齐天大圣廟	二月一日至
本坡各區福首	期從二月三日
巴利區福首	榮昌號 胡声榮
新街區福首	葉同勝 鄭國輝
雙溪區福首	陳國華 黃躍宋
下馬鹿區福首	楊和進 余承助
上馬鹿區福首	葉和福 賴亞福
馬旺區福首	劉德壽 余永華
培路元區福首	集順号 楊欽博

New settlements and the descendants are evidence in the plaque.



Taking a break in front of the temple.

Fort Leonora, Engkilili

Engkilili is a small town established along the upriver region of Batang Lupar. The town used to have a fort that perched on a hill overlooking the rows of shophouses and Malay villages which were arranged linearly along the Engkilili River – a setting quite similar to Sri Aman.

After a brief stop at an old shophouse name 'Chai Joo' (再裕) to greet the owner who used to own an old photography studios Sri Aman, the group walked past the park surrounding the Council Office to the hill where Fort Leonora supposed to be. It was a great disappointment to find out from the officers in a Sub-District Office that the fort was demolished to make way for their office building.

There was not much record about Fort Leonora which was built in 1925. Some old photos showed that it was once a single storey timber barrack. The term "fort" was loosely used by the Brookes for their outstation administrative building.



The old shophouses at Engkilili, all built parallel to the flow of river.



The new district office was built on the historic site of Fort Leonora.



Fort Leonora Engkilili Camp, 1965
(Source: Photo by Brian Houldershaw, accessed December 19, 2013, <http://lat222.org/gallery2/v/brian/army/B+and+C+Sqn+SingaporeSarawak/sarawak/Enkilili34.jpg.html>)



Fort Leonora before demolished
(Source: Photo taken in 23th May 2006 by JKR)



Suspension Bridge, Engkilili

The participants found new excitement when they were brought to the suspension bridge on the other end of the town. Ar. Mike Boon explained that while the natives are highly skilled in building suspension bridges with bamboo and rattan in the jungle, the government has introduced bridges of similar concepts but built with steel in many outstation towns and kampungs. A bigger version (of a government built suspension bridge) was the Satok suspension bridge in Kuching which collapsed on 7th October 2004.

The programme of the day came to an end at 5pm and all participants returned to Sri Aman.



The suspension bridge in Engkilili was supported on concrete pylons.



It is more than a pedestrian bridge as motorcyclists also use it frequently.



Smiling faces after an exhilarating day.

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DAY 2 (18.12.2013) – Fort Alice Site Visit

The day started at 8.30am with registration and a safety briefing by Ar. Mike Boon (Conservation Architect for the project). The participants were surprised by the progress of construction as there were only a few columns being erected during their last visit a month ago (19.11.2013). Master Carpenter, Mr Ting Nik Sing said that his 7-man team managed to reassemble the columns, first floor bearers and joists effectively like a 'Lego set' because these old components were laboriously labelled, carefully dismantled and systematically stacked away.



Safety briefing by Ar. Mike Boon before entering the site.



Site progress on 18.12.2013.



Columns, first floor bearers and joists were locked in place.

Result of Lime Wash Experiment

Contractor's supervisor, Mr Tan Ting Huat revealed the result of various lime wash recipes applied on boiled belian. Those who participated in the experiment during the last site visit were baffled by the reason that caused the lime wash to flake off from the belian surface after being exposed to weather for a period of one month. Mr Tan speculated that the belian surface may have been too smooth and dense for the lime wash to key on the surface. The project team would have to do more research on lime wash recipe and continue to experiment with belian panels of different surface texture.



Result of lime wash experiment. The lime wash paint peeled off due to poor adhesion after being exposed to weather for a month.

Traditional Hand Tools

Ar. Mike Boon then introduced the hand drill and adze for traditional carpentry work. After demonstration by the carpenters, the participants were given a chance to try them out. They then realised it required are a lot of hand-eye coordination, practice, plenty of sweat and blisters in their hands to master the skill.

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Hand drill.



Adze reconstructed based on an antique sample.



It is a slow process to drill into belian



Hand-eye coordination is needed to handle the adze.

Site Tour

Ar. Mike Boon later brought the group to tour around the site. He highlighted that the joints between old and new belian columns were treated with tar to prevent water seepage that would cause wet rot. Tar is also applied to the base of columns that would be buried underground. He also pointed out that the wooden dowels to all connections are not being trimmed off at this stage to allow flexibility for adjustment during the roofing installation.

As he peeled off a piece of old paint from the old timber, he explained the properties of the modern acrylic paint, traditional oil paint and lime wash as the surface coating on timber. The layers of paint told a story of different paints that had been applied on the building by the different users of the past.

The site visit ended at 10.30am with a brief discussion of the next workshop. All participants were eager to find out what they are going to see and do in the next workshop, which was tentatively to be held in mid-January 2014.



Guided tour around the site.



Removing excess tar with heat.



Molten tar and belian dowels at the joint.



Layers of paint can tell the story of a building.



Active participation.



Chilled out under the 'site control station' after the site visit.

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