



# **Annual Report 2017/2018**

Presented to the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2018

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## ABOUT SARAWAK HERITAGE SOCIETY (SHS)

SHS was set up as a non-partisan, non-governmental and non-profit organization in 2007.

The mission of SHS is to promote the conservation, permanent preservation and sustainable management of Sarawak's unique cultural heritage assets, both tangible (buildings, monuments, sites, cultural landscapes, objects) and intangible (traditional arts and crafts, customs and traditions, food).

The vision of SHS is a Sarawak where all stakeholders value the rich and unique cultural heritage and diligently contribute, directly or indirectly, to its ongoing sensitive and sustainable protection, conservation and management.

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## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2017/2018)

President: Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu

Vice President: Ernest Teo

Honorary Secretary: Sharifah Nur Hannah

Honorary Treasurer: Anna Wee Chiaw Sek

Committee Members:

Arif Arabi

Francis Frey

James Lo

James Yong

Wendy Teo

## PAST SHS PRESIDENTS

2014 - 2016 Karen Shepherd

2012 - 2014 Hong Boon Kheng

2010 - 2012 Joseph Ingai Gasing

2008 - 2010 Mike Boon Chee Khian

2006 - 2008 Datu Aloysius Abg Dris



L to R: (Seated) Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu, Sharifah Nur Hannah, James Yong, Anna Wee, Ernest Teo, Wendy Teo; (Standing) Francis Frey, James Lo, Arif Arabi

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been an eventful year for the Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS). SHS has been pursuing two broad thrusts of activities.

The first has been our engagement with government leadership, where we tried to encourage an ongoing dialogue with key decision makers on management policy, strategy, regulatory, governance, enforcement and project matters related to heritage management. During the past year, the SHS executive committee had called on the Sarawak Chief Minister, Datuk Amar Abang Zohari Abang Openg, where we presented SHS' perspectives on Sarawak heritage, its critical issues and problems and possible resolutions. On the suggestion of CM, we also met with the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth & Sports, Datuk Haji Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, to delve deeper into specific initiatives. We were further invited by the Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources to participate in a Lab on heritage conservation.



The second area has been our ongoing awareness building programmes for members and the public. This has been through study visits, film shows, workshops and the SHS "Heritage Speaker Series" of talks. Together with our website and FB presence, we believe that this help to deepen public appreciation of Sarawak's unique cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible - and highlight the importance of heritage protection, conservation and management.

I am happy to report that the Registrar of Societies has approved our revised Constitution which was passed at the previous AGM. Our proceedings will be in accordance with the new Constitution which is available on the SHS website.

Going forward, I hope many more members of the public will join SHS. A strong and stable membership base will reinforce SHS' credibility, power of advocacy, and capacity to engage government and private entities in dialogue. I call on current members to come forward and contribute actively to our initiatives with your varied technical, marketing or administrative skills. With stronger membership and germane competencies, it would be advantageous to co-opt a Panel of Specialists to look into different spheres of Sarawak's tangible and intangible heritage. SHS requires fresh inputs and so would like to request members to invite your friends and family who may be motivated by SHS' cause to sign up.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Committee and all the other members who have helped and supported SHS throughout the year, including other civil society organisations such as Friends of Sarawak Museum (FoSM), Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia (PAM) and Borneo Art Collective. We look forward to continued, active partnerships with them and other likeminded bodies and organisations on common causes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. J. Ridu', written over a horizontal line.

Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu  
President  
Sarawak Heritage Society

# 2017/2018 AT A GLANCE

**1,400**

Facebook Likes

**3,900** visitors & **6,700**  
page views to SHS Website

**9**

Public/Member Events

**316+**

Participants at Events

**3**

Key Govt Engagements  
(Chief Minister; Minister of  
Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth  
& Sports; MUDNR)

**16**

Media Mentions

**3**

Issues of MISC HERITAGE  
NEWS e-newsletter

**89**

SHS Members



# ACTIVITIES

## Position Paper

In November 2017, we developed a Position Paper to introduce the Sarawak Heritage Society and to elaborate on the society's views relating to heritage protection, conservation and management. We clarify how SHS can play a key role in advocating for heritage issues and raising public awareness. We also express what we hope to see from the Government and other stakeholders in Sarawak [see Appendix].

## Government Engagement

### **Meeting with Sarawak Chief Minister**

On 14th Nov 2017, the SHS Committee led by its President Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu paid a courtesy call to the Chief Minister of Sarawak Datuk Patinggi Abang Zohari Abang Openg.



We presented the SHS position paper and discussed the status of Sarawak's heritage conservation framework, how SHS can play a key role to pilot a baseline study on Kuching's heritage zone and to work with the State Government to strengthen our cultural heritage management. We also raised the possibility of adopting a Heritage Impact Assessment approach to future development proposals.

### **Meeting with Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth & Sports**

On 15th December 2017, The Sarawak Heritage Society Committee led by its President Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu paid a courtesy call to the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports, Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah.

We explored a variety of heritage management issues and proposed a built heritage baseline study, using independent consultants, that would include a technical assessment of buildings and documenting heritage assets within defined "heritage zones" of Kuching.



### Participation in Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources (MUDNR) ‘Lab’ on Heritage Protection & Conservation

On 11-12<sup>th</sup> January 2018, SHS President and three members of the Executive Committee attended a two-day Lab organised by the Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources. Invited were representatives from various government departments and other stakeholders. The SHS team emphasised the importance of carrying out a Technical Baseline Study of Old Kuching, as well as an Institutional Baseline Study/Review.



### Public Outreach

#### SHS e-Newsletter: ‘Misc Heritage News’

Three issues of the “MISC. HERITAGE NEWS” were published (Nov 2016-Feb 2017, Mar-Jul 2017 and Aug 2017 - Jan 2018). This periodic e-newsletter consolidates relevant news on cultural heritage in Sarawak and the region.



## Talks, sharing sessions

### **Heritage Speakers Series: “Ethos, Heritage, Conservation & Advancement” - Datuk Seri Lim C. K.**



On 5<sup>th</sup> May 2017, Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat captivated the audience at The Ranea Boutique Suites with a presentation titled “Ethos, Heritage, Conservation & Advancement”.

Attendance: 52 persons.

*Datuk Seri Lim Chong Keat spoke with passion on cultural values and conservation concerns*

### **Sharing Session with Think City**

On 8<sup>th</sup> July 2017, Think City Sdn Bhd (a subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional Berhad) did a sharing session at ZINC, Kuching. This was a ‘members only’ event. Think City’s Mr Ram Murali (Programme Director for Penang-Georgetown/Butterworth) shared the organisation’s activities/experience in heritage conservation/management, followed by a rich Q&A session. Think City also left a set of brochures, including a “Simple Guide to Heritage Management Plan” and a copy of the Muzium Negara Conservation Management Plan (KL) developed by them in 2016. Mr. Ram Murali’s colleagues, Ms. Nicole Thum and Puan Kartina were also at the session.

Attendance: 12 persons.

### **Heritage Speakers Series: Urban regeneration approaches and GIS/urban mapping - Dr Matt Benson & Dr Ceelia Leong, Think City**

On 12<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018, our invited Think City executives Dr Benson and Dr Leong shared their insights and experience. Dr Benson spoke on urban rejuvenation and heritage conservation work in Penang & KL, Malaysia while Dr Leong described her project using GIS for urban mapping in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

Attendance: 21 persons.

*Dr Ceelia Leong and Dr Matt Benson from Think City with Francis Frey, SHS committee member*



**Heritage Speakers Series: “Transformation of Cultural Identity: The Refurbishment of Garcimunoz Castle”, (Spain) - Dr Izaskun Chinchilla**

On 5th Dec 2017, as part of SHS' Heritage Speaker Series, we had internationally reknown architect Dr Izaskun Chinchilla give us a lecture entitled “Leading with the Transformation of Cultural Identity: The Case of the Refurbishment of Garcimunoz Castle” on how she, her firm and a group of other architects worked on the innovative transformation of a medieval castle in Spain.

Attendance: over 50 persons.



*Garcimunoz Castle, Spain.*

*Dr Chinchilla speaking on the innovative transformation of a Spanish medieval castle*



**Heritage Speakers Series: WW2 Shipwrecks off Santubong - Ernest Teo**

On 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018, Mr Ernest Teo, a professional diving instructor, wreck diver, SHS Vice President and advocate for the protection of the WW2 Japanese shipwreck historical sites gave a talk on “Borneo’s WW2 Japanese Shipwrecks: An Underwater Living Museum”.

Attendance: about 35 persons.



A Japanese shipwreck off the coast of Santubong in 1941.

*Ernest Teo speaking on Japanese shipwrecks in Borneo*

### **Heritage Speakers Series: “The Endangered Arts of Sarawak” - Edric Ong**

On 9<sup>th</sup> Mar 2018, well-known artist, architect, designer and President of Society Atelier Sarawak, Mr Edric Ong gave a talk on “The Endangered Arts of Sarawak” where he shared Sarawak’s rich palette of tribal artisanal legacy which is in danger of extinction. He cautioned that the diverse motifs, material culture and crafts of the peoples of Sarawak would be lost if not preserved.

Attendance: 33 persons.



*Edric Ong highlighting endangered arts and crafts*

### **Site visits, walks**

#### **Visit to Darul Maziah (Datuk Bentara’s Residence), Kuching**

On 2nd December 2017, SHS members had the privilege of visiting the traditional Malay heritage house "Darul Maziah" in Kampong No 6, on Jalan Ajiabah Abol. The house is currently home to Tuan Haji A.S. Jaya and his family, who were very

gracious hosts and all had an enlightening time at the house. A.S. Jaya and his nephew Arif Arabi, (who is also an SHS exco member) gave us a brief history of the house and various people who had lived in it. This was followed by refreshments and an informal tour of the place.



*Darul Maziah – a beautifully preserved Malay heritage house*



*SHS members who visited Darul Maziah pose with Tuan Haji A S Jaya and wife (seated)*

## A Stroll Through Kuching’s Chinese History

On four consecutive Saturdays in October 2017, as part of the “What About Kuching 2017” (WAK 2017) festival, SHS member Paul Gerarts led heritage walks for the public around the streets of old Kuching to showcase its Chinese heritage.

Attendance: 65 persons

### A Stroll Through Kuching’s Chinese History

*Discover the history and culture of the Chinese in Kuching through a guided tour of the Chinese History Museum and a stroll along Ewe Hai & Carpenter Streets*

When: Saturdays: October 7 - 14 - 21 - 28, 2017  
 Time : 10:00 - 12:00  
 Where: Chinese History Museum entrance (start) to Upper China Street (finish)  
 Registration: Strictly Limited to 15 pax      Cost: FREE  
 Whatsapp/SMS to 0149074406 (no calls)



artwork donated by artist Yeoh Sui Chuan

The docent-led tour of the museum will touch on the origins of the Sarawak Chinese, the various communities with their distinct local Chinese culture briefly covering: education, religion, music and festivals. After the museum tour, we will stroll along Ewe Hai and Carpenter Streets to take a closer look at the typical features of a Hokkien temple as compared to a Hainanese temple, learn what makes the trades and shops typical Chinese.

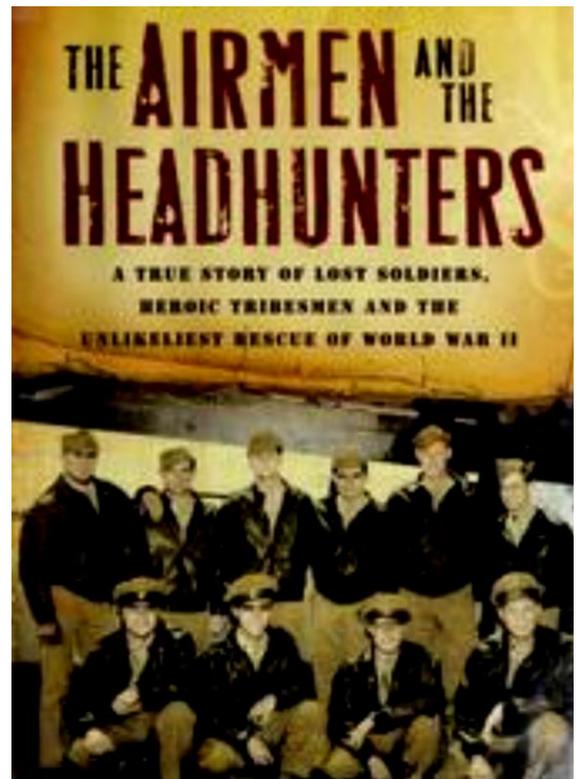


Special for WAK 2017: Audio Described Tour of Chinese History Museum for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired : **ON DEMAND**

## Film Screening

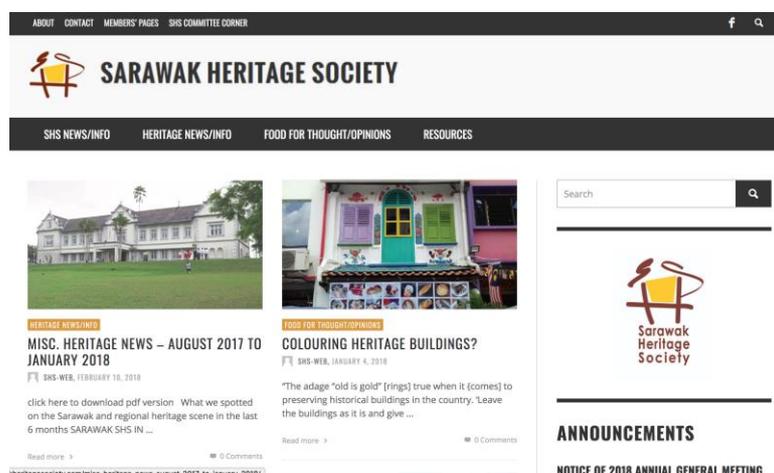
On 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at 7pm, a screening of “The Airmen and the Headhunters” took place at the Auditorium of the Islamic Information Centre, Kuching. This was a survival story of survival and heroism based on a 1944 event where a scattered crew of military airmen from a B-24 bomber shot down off the Borneo coast were met by Dayak tribesmen from the mountainous jungle. Together the unlikely combined force helped destroy one of the last Japanese strongholds. Admission was free but the invitation was restricted to members and their families.

Attendance: 28 persons.



## WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

The revamped SHS **website** ([www.sarawakheritagesociety.com](http://www.sarawakheritagesociety.com)) and enhanced Facebook presence continued to contribute to the visibility of the Society. The website attracted over 3,900 visitors and 6,700 views in 2017.



The SHS **Facebook** page currently has 1,400 followers and ‘Likes’.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

In 2017/2018, SHS collaborated with Friends of Sarawak Museum (FoSM), Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM) and Borneo Art Collective.

## **REVISED CONSTITUTION**

Further to the motions presented two years ago, we have revised the SHS Constitution to make it more streamlined and relevant to current heritage management practices. We have also included provisions that the Registry of Societies (RoS) considered necessary for the interests of the society.

## **STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP**

Up to April 2018, we have 89 members, of whom 27 are in the process of membership renewal.

## **MEDIA COVERAGE**

SHS events and activities were covered by print publications such as The Borneo Post, New Sarawak Tribune and The Star, with a total of 16 media mentions in 2017/2018 to-date:

### **2018**

*["SHS to present talk on endangered arts of Sarawak"](#) - Borneo Post, 4 March 2018*

*["Japanese shipwrecks off Borneo coast WW2"](#) - Sarawak Tribune, 8 Feb. 2018*

*"Sarawak Heritage Society to give free talk on WW2 Japanese shipwrecks" - Borneo Post, 8 Feb. 2018 (not available online)*

2017

["Need to review state's policy, framework on heritage assets"](#) - Borneo Post, 18 Dec. 2017

["Heritage Society pays courtesy call on Karim"](#) - New Sarawak Tribune, 18 Dec. 2018 (not available on line)

NEW SARAWAK TRIBUNE • MONDAY DECEMBER 18, 2017

# Heritage society pays courtesy call on Karim

**KUCHING:** The executive committee of Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) paid a courtesy call on Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports at his office in Baitulmakmur here, yesterday.

Led by its president Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu, the visit was a follow-up to a recent meeting with the Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg.

Karim informed the visitors that the State's policy, legislative and regulatory framework on heritage assets as well as the Heritage Ordinance needs to be revisited.

Such action is needed to ensure that heritage management is consistent and coordinated with a clear partition of scope, not overlapping with that of the Sarawak Museum's.

He also acknowledged the tension between heritage conservation and development.

"I believe that a pragmatic balance between economic development and conservation can be achieved when a proper heritage management framework is in place," he said.

Meanwhile, SHS agreed with the Minister that with innovative planning and adaptive reuse, the integrity of our cultural and built heritage need not be compromised.

SHS explored a variety of heritage management issues with the Minister and found that its views are generally in sync with the Sarawak Government's plans and intentions for heritage management.

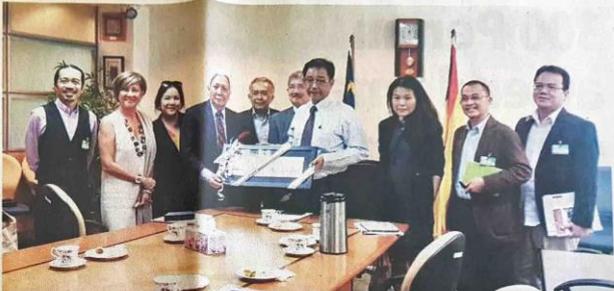
Among the areas proposed was a baseline study using independent consultants which would include technical assessment of buildings and documenting heritage assets within defined 'heritage zones'.

The results of such a study would provide valuable inputs for heritage management, city planning and urban rejuvenation.

SHS also requested for more government fund allocation to maintain listed government-owned heritage sites as well as incentivise private owners to maintain their heritage assets.

Karim acknowledged a common shared vision with SHS and encouraged its members to hold further discussions with the Sarawak Museum for future collaboration.

Also present at the discussion were Tazudin Mohtar and Harry Jobia, representatives of the Sarawak Museum.



SHS President Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu (fourth left) presents a souvenir to Datuk Abdul Karim (fourth right) while SHS executive committee members look on.

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Also present at the discussion were Tazudin Mohtar and Harry Jobia, representatives of the Sarawak Museum.

DATUK Abdul Karim (second right) with the SHS delegation led by Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu (second left).

### Former heart patient climbs Mt Santubong

**KUCHING:** Three years ago, nine-year-old Siti Nur Intan Hidayah Azhar had undergone a corrective surgery to treat her congenital heart defect condition and two months ago she proved to others that former heart patients were capable of doing outdoor activities.

The Year Three student of Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Gau, in Temerloh, Pahang, was one of the proud climbers of Mount Santubong near here.

The youngest of five siblings scaled the 810-metre high peak with her parents, Azhar Ahmad, 49, and Siti Hawa Abdul Latif, 45, showing her commitment and grit in overcoming the challenge.

"My parents brought me along the climbing mission after the doctor who treated me at the National Heart Institute (JNI) confirmed that I was capable of doing outdoor activities. This is my first time climbing Mount Santubong," she told Bernama here.

Siti Nur Intan Hidayah was the youngest climber among 28 participants of the 'Komuniti Sihat Perkasa Negara' (Kospenn) programme and Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Hospital, in Temerloh, Pahang who recently joined in the mission to climb the legendary mountain.

She said the hardships faced when scaling the mountain was unforgettable and she nearly gave up due to exhaustion.

"I never expected that I would be able to reach the top of Mount Santubong. I was able to do this with the support of other participants and if given the opportunity I would like to join other climbing missions in the future," she added. - Bernama

["Call for heritage buildings to be re-purposed"](#)- Borneo Post, 7 Dec. 2017

6 THE BORNEO POST Thursday, December 7, 2017 HOME

# Call for heritage buildings to be re-purposed

By Karen Bong  
reporter@theborneopost.com

**KUCHING:** The Sarawak Heritage Society has called for the re-purposing of heritage buildings here into community spaces.

In a press statement issued on Tuesday in conjunction with a public lecture under its 'Heritage Speaker Series', the society said Sarawak is currently facing heritage conservation challenges.

"Kuching has many heritage buildings, which no longer serve their original function, but rather than being demolished they can be innovatively repurposed into community spaces," said the society.

The society suggested among the potential projects would be the restoration and adaptive reuse of the old Brooke Dockyard facilities.

On the public lecture, 'Leading with the Transformation of Kuching has many heritage buildings, which no longer serve their original function, but rather than being demolished they can be innovatively repurposed into community spaces.'

Sarawak Heritage Society

**Cultural Identity: The Case of the Refurbishment of Garciminoz Castle** by international award-winning architect Dr Izaskun Chinchilla, the society said the adaptive reuse of a medieval castle could be a useful update of innovative ways by which cultural heritage can be conserved and how they may be applied to Sarawak.

Garciminoz Castle in Spain was first the site of a 16th-century Moorish citadel, before becoming the residence of the prominent Villosa family in the 18th century and, from 1796, the site of a church that is still in use today.

Chinchilla shared on how this innovative refurbishment consolidates and reinforces ruins from Arab, Medieval and Neoclassical times, adding contemporary architectural value to the building's heritage, while transforming the castle into sustainable and safe spaces for the public to visit.

The refurbishment also integrates digital media and new meeting venues in order to engage the local population socially and facilitate renewed cultural and economic activities in a deprived rural area.

The project aimed to show how innovative architectural design can refurbish heritage sites imaginatively, while also strengthening local economies, enabling public access for all, and supporting their socially and environmentally sustainable use



Chinchilla presents the public lecture on heritage conservation through architecture.

for the long term.

Chinchilla is an honorary fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

In addition to being principal partner at Izaskun Chinchilla Architects, she is also senior teaching fellow, senior research associate, and public engagement fellow at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College of London.

["Renowned Spanish architect giving a talk tomorrow"](#) - The Star, 4 Dec. 2017

["Sarawak Heritage Society holds public lecture by international architect"](#) - Borneo Post, 4 Dec. 2017

["Study to help assess Kuching's conservation efforts"](#) - The Star, 16 Nov. 2017

["SHS: Govt committed to heritage conservation"](#) - Borneo Post, 15 Nov. 2017

HOME THE BORNEO POST Wednesday, November 15, 2017 3

# SHS: Govt committed to heritage conservation

By Georgette Tan  
reporters@theborneopost.com

**KUCHING:** The Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) is optimistic that the state government is on the same page when it comes to the conservation of the state's heritage.

Following a courtesy call on Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg yesterday, SHS president Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu told The Borneo Post that three points on heritage conservation were discussed.

"We brought up the subject of a database on heritage areas so that we will know how to zone areas in Kuching based on heritage, and Abang Johari already has that in mind," said Ridu.

SHS also mooted the idea of a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), similar to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

"In most developments, there's an EIA but they never include heritage impact. We are suggesting that they should also do this," he said, adding that Abang Johari shared that this would fall under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports.

SHS also raised the need to strengthen public policy as well as regulatory, financing and enforcement framework on existing buildings and heritage regulations.

It also asked for a strengthening of the cultural heritage management framework, suggesting it could start with a candid, independent review of the current status of Sarawak's heritage conservation and management.

In addition, SHS suggested providing government maintenance requirements of gazetted government-owned heritage sites, provide financial support to selected heritage conservation projects, and financial incentives for private owners of built heritage to conserve and maintain their assets.

"We also hope to do our convention on heritage next year," added Ridu.



Abang Johari (centre) looks through the book 'Living in Sarawak' with Ridu. - Photo by Chimon Upon

["Multi-pronged effort to adapt and promote cultural assets"](#) - The Star, 16 Sept. 2017

["Melting pot of heritage to treasure"](#) - The Star, 16 Sept. 2017

["Sarawak needs special unit to oversee heritage conservation"](#) - The Star, 25 Aug. 2017

["An insightful talk on heritage conservation"](#) - The Star, 13 May 2017

["NGO offers helping hand to protect state's heritage"](#) - The Star, 11 May 2017

["Conservationist: Start valuing heritage for its own sake"](#) - The Star, 9 May 2017

[in *italic* characters: announcements of SHS events]

# APPENDIX



## POSITION PAPER

November 2017

### Overview

The Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) was set up as a non-partisan, non-governmental and non-profit organization in 2007. Our mission is to promote the conservation, permanent preservation and sustainable management of Sarawak's unique cultural heritage assets, both tangible (buildings, monuments, sites, cultural landscapes, objects) and intangible (traditional arts and crafts, music, songs and dances, customs and traditions, food etc.)

Over the years SHS has organised talks, film screenings and visits to raise heritage awareness for its members, the public and schools. It has participated in the development of the Kuching Heritage Trail, piloted community engagement programmes, helped in training tourist guides, and raised the alarm on some threatened heritage assets. The upgraded SHS website ([sarawakheritagesociety.com](http://sarawakheritagesociety.com)) and Facebook pages provide an improved platform for knowledge sharing and exchange of views.

SHS believes that the delicate balance between short-term economic development and heritage protection can be achieved. Many studies have demonstrated the positive economic impact of agile heritage conservation and management. Indeed wise heritage preservation can provide a significant boost to property values, job creation, business earnings, household incomes and tourism. However, SHS is of the view that while the economic considerations are important, they should not be the main driver of our cultural heritage protection. Heritage conservation should be primarily an endeavour by Sarawakians because we are proud of what we have. It is "Tourism from Heritage" rather than "Heritage for Tourism".

SHS advocates the creation of clear and coordinated policy, strategy, regulatory, institutional and financial frameworks to support heritage conservation and management. The Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance enacted in 1993 may need to be reviewed and updated, then enforced more consistently. We also need to incorporate cultural heritage management into the planning process, alongside economic, social and environmental considerations. Government should also proceed with the gazetting of heritage sites that have already been identified and Government Budget allocations should be set aside for key heritage management projects and incentivising heritage conservation.

Although limited by human and financial resources, SHS could mobilise a small technical team to conduct a rapid assessment of the public policy, regulatory, institutional, financing and enforcement framework. This would require information collection from the concerned Government stakeholders. SHS could also facilitate a baseline technical study by independent consultants on Kuching's heritage zone.

## Introducing Sarawak Heritage Society

The Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) was set up as a non-partisan, non-governmental and non-profit organization in 2007. It just celebrated its 10th anniversary.

### MISSION

Our **mission** or **purpose** is to promote the conservation, permanent preservation and sustainable management of Sarawak's unique cultural heritage assets, both tangible and intangible.

### VISION

Our **vision** is a Sarawak where all stakeholders value the rich and unique cultural heritage and diligently contribute, directly or indirectly, to its ongoing sensitive and sustainable protection, conservation and management.

Over the years SHS has organised talks, film screenings and visits to raise heritage awareness for its members, the public and schools. It has been instrumental in the development of the Kuching Heritage Trail, which it hopes to continue to enhance. It has piloted community engagement programmes in Siniawan and the Fort Alice restoration project. It contributed to the training of tourist guides. It has raised the alarm on some threatened or disappearing heritage assets. The recently upgraded SHS website (*sarawakheritagesociety.com*) and Facebook pages provide an improved platform for knowledge sharing and exchange of views.

SHS website

The screenshot shows the Sarawak Heritage Society website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'ABOUT', 'CONTACT', 'MEMBERS' PAGES', and 'SHS COMMITTEE CORNER'. On the right side of this bar are icons for Facebook and a search function. Below the navigation bar is the Sarawak Heritage Society logo, which consists of a stylized yellow and red icon resembling a traditional Sarawak house or a similar structure, followed by the text 'SARAWAK HERITAGE SOCIETY'. Below the logo is another navigation bar with links for 'SHS NEWS/INFO', 'HERITAGE NEWS/INFO', 'FOOD FOR THOUGHT/OPINIONS', and 'RESOURCES'. Underneath this bar is a link that says 'Click [HERE](#) for latest announcements'. The main content area features two news items. The first item is titled 'MISC. HERITAGE NEWS – MARCH TO JULY 2017' and includes a thumbnail image of a building with a sign that says '1ST WA'. The second item is titled 'A CALL FOR A BOOST TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH' and includes a thumbnail image of several dark, circular archaeological artifacts. To the right of the news items is a search bar with the text 'Search' and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is the Sarawak Heritage Society logo and the text 'Sarawak Heritage Society'. At the bottom right of the page, there is a section titled 'ANNOUNCEMENTS'.

## SHS View of the Heritage Situation in Sarawak

Sarawak has an extraordinary history with a diversity of peoples bringing about a real confluence over the years. This has created a unique fusion of architectures and monuments, customs and traditions, arts and crafts, song and dance, and generally lifestyle, sometimes called the “Sarawakian way”. It has made Sarawak a verdant place for good, secure, pleasant and quality living. Our wholesome, rich and unique heritage is a precious gift, not only for Sarawakians, but also for visitors and indeed for mankind. “*My heritage has been my grounding and it has brought me peace*”, the actress Maureen O’Hara once wrote.

### 1. Managing and protecting our cultural heritage

Management of cultural heritage is important to strengthen Sarawak’s identity in a fast-moving world, swept along by market-driven forces of globalisation. This applies both to ‘tangible’ heritage (buildings, monuments, sites, cultural landscapes, objects) and ‘intangible’ heritage (traditional arts and crafts, song and dance, cultural practices). It is the blend of the two that gives Sarawak its unique ‘sense of place’. It is in everyone’s interest that Sarawak’s heritage be robustly protected and further enhanced by all Sarawak residents and by the State Government.

Protecting our heritage does not mean freezing our development. Rather, well managed heritage contributes to sustainable development. SHS acknowledges that the trade-off between short term economic development and heritage protection requires a delicate and expert balance. We strive to contribute resolutely and constructively to achieving this balance.

### 2. Heritage and Economy

Many studies have shown the positive economic impact of agile heritage conservation and management. Indeed heritage conservation can be a substantial revenue earner for the state. Considering only built-heritage, experience shows that conservation initiatives can have sizeable impact on jobs, business earnings, household incomes, property values (with city revitalisation programmes), and on tourism. Well-managed cultural heritage brings in tourists/visitors. One might say that Sarawak’s rich cultural heritage and natural heritage (including biodiversity) are the two main pillars of the “Sarawak brand” which is a major draw of tourists. Wisely managed cultural heritage can decisively enhance the perception of Sarawak by outsiders.

However cultural heritage protection initiatives should not be driven merely by tourism promotion considerations. The SHS view is that heritage conservation should primarily be an endeavour by the Sarawak people anchored on our feeling of pride in wanting to showcase what we have. In other words, we believe in “Tourism from Heritage” rather than “Heritage for Tourism”.

### 3. Heritage and Public Policy

Heritage conservation and management require clearly articulated and coordinated policy, strategy, regulatory, institutional and financial

frameworks. It appears that up to now, these have not been affirmed priorities of Sarawak's public policies. One reason could be that they embody long term objectives, which may have diffuse short term benefits. Another reason may be that sound, productive heritage management is a delicate, complex and demanding task involving a multiplicity of skillsets (planners, economists, sociologists, architects, engineers, etc.) and stakeholders (various Government or Government-related authorities, professional bodies, community organisations, etc.). Some of the required skills may not be readily available, and integrated approaches often face challenges.

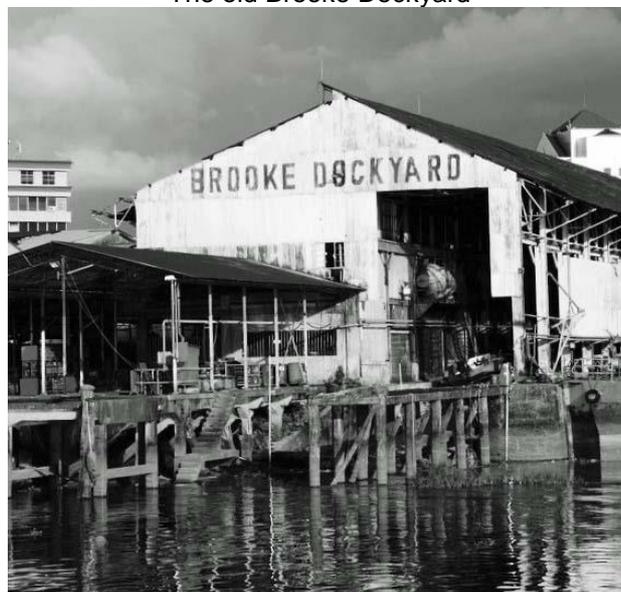
#### 4. Heritage Legislation and Planning

Although the Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance was enacted in 1993, it seems to have been sparsely applied. To our knowledge, few heritage sites (if any) have been actually gazetted since 1986. Also the Ordinance is silent on some topics such as underwater cultural heritage (e.g. shipwrecks), and there may be legal overlaps with the Malaysia National Heritage Act 2005. In view of this, and also to include latest global 'best practices' on heritage management, SHS views that the Ordinance and subsidiary regulations should be reviewed and updated.

Over the years, this situation has led to the loss or deterioration of a number of valuable buildings or sites, or damage to their environment. From the perspective of the public and SHS, many heritage sites still remain under threat, especially from "spotty", not clearly prioritized or uncoordinated initiatives. Even Government-owned built heritage assets, which are supposedly protected, have suffered from poor enforcement or maintenance.

To be effective, cultural heritage management needs to be fully incorporated in the planning process in addition to economic, social and environmental considerations. In the area of built heritage, in order to counterbalance the constraints imposed by heritage regulations on the owners of heritage assets, there is a need for tangible incentives to encourage conservation, with funds provided for in the Government budget.

The old Brooke Dockyard



## What SHS Would Like to See Happen

### A. From the Government

#### (1) Strengthened public policy, regulatory, financing and enforcement framework:

There should be stronger enforcement of the existing building and heritage regulations. For example, the historical centre of Kuching is a landscape of rampant illegal, often unsightly building extensions, signages and loud colours.



#### (2) Strengthened cultural heritage management framework.

The framework would have diverse facets, e.g. policy, strategy, regulatory, and financial. Our view is that the first step should be to commission a candid, independent review of the current status of Sarawak's heritage conservation and management.

The actual gazettement of heritage sites that have long been in the pipeline for listing, as well as additional sites and areas, e.g. the old Hokkien School, Siniawan Bazaar, the old Brooke Dockyard, and creation of a gazetted heritage zone (with specific conservation requirements) for the historical centre of Kuching, based on an heritage asset inventory.

#### (3) Government Budget Allocations.

The State may need to consider providing Government budgets or measures (i) commensurate to the maintenance requirements of the gazetted government-owned heritage sites, (ii) providing financial support to selected heritage conservation projects and (iii) providing financial incentives to private owners of built heritage to conserve and maintain their assets.

## **B. From all Stakeholders**

- (1) Increased public awareness of heritage protection and conservation issues
- (2) Grassroot willingness to highlight to SHS and relevant agencies those areas where heritage assets are being damaged or improvement to heritage management is required.
- (3) Active participation by holders of heritage assets in their conservation and management.

### **How SHS can Play a Key Role**

SHS is a small organisation with limited human and financial resources. One of our key strengths is that our members are passionate about heritage conservation and management and have spent time thinking and discussing the subject. SHS has also delivered a variety of programmes to enhance heritage awareness among civil society.

SHS is confident that we can contribute and value-add to the heritage scene. Here are several concrete ways:

1. Conduct a rapid assessment of the public policy, regulatory, financing and enforcement framework with a small SHS-led technical team. This team would need relevant information from the stakeholders involved, primarily the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture; the Sarawak Museum Dept.; the State Planning Authority; Lands and Surveys; the two Kuching municipalities; and LCDA. For such an exercise to be fruitful, the concerned institutions should be mandated to share their information and discuss issues openly. This assessment could be followed by a workshop to discuss findings and chart the way forward.
2. Facilitate a baseline technical study by independent consultants on Kuching's heritage zone. The content of such a study could be the following:
  - (a) Provide an expert assessment of the built and intangible heritage conservation potential of the Kuching heritage core, taking into account current and proposed programmes and projects (e.g. Heritage Square, Heritage Trail, Keep Kuching Clean, Beautiful and Safe initiative, etc)
  - (b) Outline proposals for a mid-term strategy and planning itinerary for the heritage core
  - (c) Draft a Concept Paper / Terms of Reference for the preparation of an Inventory of Heritage Assets and a Special Area Plan for the heritage core
  - (d) Present a technical opinion and suggestions on conservation itineraries that could be envisaged for specific assets such as the old Brooke Dockyard and the old Hokkien school building at Jalan Tabuan.

*ThinkCity Sdn Bhd, which has done valuable work in these areas in Penang and other parts of Malaysia, could be a good candidate to undertake such assignment.*

3. SHS will continue its efforts to raise public awareness through

- site visits, field trips, study tours, outings, large and small conferences, forums, talks;
- communication (website, Facebook, publications);
- better structuring of information on various aspects of Sarawak cultural heritage,
  - leverage on our website or FB community,
  - set up a structured photo bank of heritage assets,
  - development of a mobile app to support the Heritage Trail, etc.
- collaboration with other stakeholders involved in heritage conservation: beyond Government agencies, partnerships with Friends of Sarawak Museum, PAM (Malaysian Institute of Architects), Badan Warisan Malaysia, other heritage trusts and societies, and ThinkCity.
- sourcing sponsorship for project financing, building on the tax incentives that the private sector can call for when sponsoring heritage conservation activities.

The old Hokkien School building, Kuching



Wish to join us ?

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

### REGISTRATION DETAILS

**Joining Fee RM100 is WAIVED during recruitment drive period**

Ordinary Annual Membership Fee RM50  Ordinary 3 years RM120   
Student Annual Membership Fee RM25

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Age : \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

\*Malaysian NRIC No. : \_\_\_\_\_

\*Non-Malaysian Passport No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile : \_\_\_\_\_ Office / Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Email : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

#### How would you like to contribute to the Society (Please tick)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video and documentation of events | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic design   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website / Social Media            | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund-raising     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Event planning                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Any others _____ |

I enclose RM \_\_\_\_\_ (Cash/Cheque No.) : \_\_\_\_\_

made payable to Sarawak Heritage Society Account No. : Maybank 511234118858  
Kuching Selatan



#### FOR OFFICE USE

Membership status : Approved / Not approved / KIV

SHS Membership No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by : \_\_\_\_\_

Date of application : \_\_\_\_\_

Date joined : \_\_\_\_\_

Expired date : \_\_\_\_\_

#### FOR ALL ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT :

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Jalan Rock, 93200 Kuching, Sarawak

Email: sarawakheritagesociety@gmail.com

Fax: +60 82 426 992

Tel : +60 82 235 333 (Mr.Man)

**Membership renewal:** 2018 form can be downloaded from our website :

<http://sarawakheritagesociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SHS-2018-Membership-Renewal-Form.pdf>



*A montage of built heritage in Kuching.  
 From top left, clockwise: Darul Maziah, Round Tower & Pavilion buildings, Main Bazaar shophouses,  
 Museum Bandstand, Tua Pek Kong Temple, Square Fort, Hokkien School, and Brooke Dockyard*