

SITE VISITS TO MOUNT SEREMBU, PENINJAU



(Left) View of Mount Serembu from the bottom. (Right) View from the top.

SHS members went on an expedition to Mount Serembu (Gunung Muan) at Peninjaw with the Siniawan local community on September 2009. A second trip was co-organised with Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) on 18th April 2010.

Serembu Mountain, is a significant natural heritage site, associated with the works of **Arthur Russell Wallace** who is believed to have contributed to Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. It is one of the three major sites in Sarawak where Wallace collected specimens for natural study.

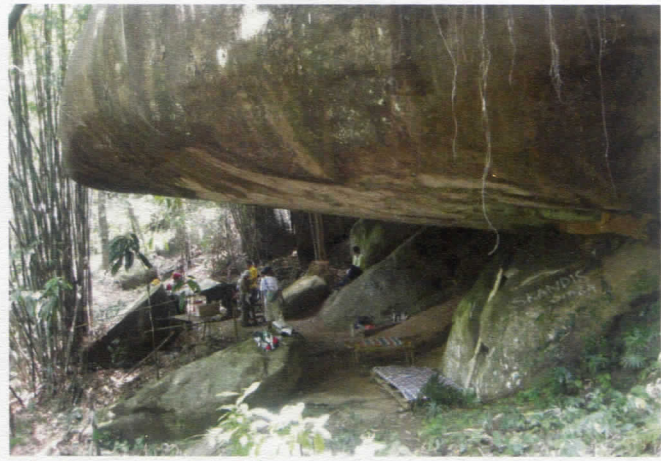
It is also a site of historical importance on which Rajah James Brooke's built a bungalow retreat " ... on a shoulder of the mountain called Si Dampul, here a portion of the Peninjauh villagers had formerly a settlement, but the late Rajah purchased their fruit trees and they moved lower down." ("Jottings made During a Tour amongst the Land Dayaks of Upper Sarawak, Borneo. During the Year 1874" by Noel Denison).

Wallace wrote in his book 'The Malay Archipelago' (1862) that he spent 3 weeks (Dec 1854) in James Brooke's retreat "for the purpose of making a collection of land - shells, butterflies and moths, ferns and orchids."



Land Dayak Headhouse, Peninjaw
(Source : "Old Sarawak : A Pictorial Study", 1972. Lockard & Saunders)

View from the Rajah's retreat with the Rajah's Fort Belidah along the river (source : "Power and Prowess", 2002. J.H. Walker)



Cantilever rock as seen by SHS members. It matches Wallace's description of the site for collecting water to drink and bathe exactly.

Wallace's description of the retreat and its surroundings reads as : " ..A cool spring under an overhanging rock just below the cottage furnished us with refreshing baths and delicious drinking water, ... On one side of the cottage there was a veranda, looking down the whole side of the mountain and to its summit on the right, all densely clothed with forest. The boarded sides of the cottage were whitewashed, and the roof of the veranda was low, and also boarded and whitewashed." However there is no trace left of this retreat that we could find on these trips.

Located in the same area as Siniawan township which has a significant cultural heritage (tangible and intangible), the two complemented one another to make them worthy of becoming a heritage site.

Encouraged by the success of the Siniawan Community Cultural Heritage Project, the local Peninjaw community has asked for government funding with the intention to establish the Wallace trail and to rebuild the Rajah's bungalow as a tourist attraction. This prompted a visit by the Deputy Minister of Tourism Malaysia YB Dato' Dr. James Dawos Mamit to launch the project in Peninjaw on 20th November 2010.

After the site visit to Peninjaw, YB Dato' Dr. James Dawos Mamit was guided by SHS on a heritage walk around the Siniawan Town and later briefed by Mike Boon on the Siniawan Community Cultural Heritage Project. SHS reiterate that the Wallace Trail development project launched should establish a Conservation Management Plan prior to implementation of the project to ensure that the heritage site will be properly managed.

Group picture of the various members of SHS and MNS during the expedition.

