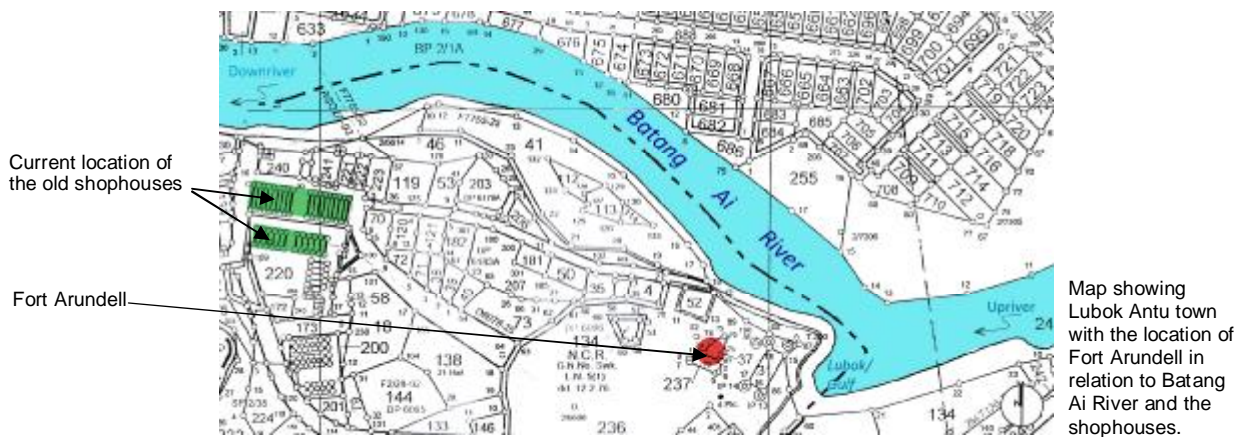


Location	Lubok Antu and Nanga Kesit	Ref No.	SAWS/AR007
Subject	Visit Fort Arundell and Rumah Sambun	Date	14.01.2014
		Time	Day 1: 11.30pm – 5.00 pm
Attended by	Refer to attached attendance list	Conducted by	John Ting, Goh Kaw Sze & Mike Boon
Recorded by	Goh Tze Hui & David Boon	Coordinated by	Goh Kaw Sze & Kapitan Tay Cho Ming

As the third workshop of the Cultural Exchange Programme, 52 participants went to Nanga Kesit on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014 to visit the traditional Iban longhouse, Rumah Sambun. Earlier in the day, the group also paid a short visit to Fort Arundell near the Lubok Antu town and the Custom, Immigration & Quarantine (CIQ) by the Lubok Antu-Kalimantan border.

**Lubok Antu**



The participants gathered at the entrance of Fort Arundell at 11.30am, where they were introduced to the local host, Kapitan Tay Cho Ming of Lubok Antu. According to Kapitan Tay, the shophouses were once situated at the foothill of this fort. They were then relocated to the current location due to the expansion of settlement and were constrained by the hill and the river.

Kapitan Tay also shared a local myth about the origin of the name “Lubok Antu”. It was believed that the Ibans at Upper Batang Ai River used to have severe fights and resulted in many casualties. The dead bodies were then swept by the river and gathered around the gulf. Local people believed that the gulf is full of ghosts/spirits. In Iban language, “lubok” is a deep pool in the river and “antu” means ghost/spirit – thus Lubok Antu got its name.

**Fort Arundell**



Left: Fort Arundell is located on a hill opposite the current Lubok Antu District Police Headquarters.

Right: Walking uphill to the fort.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO- ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS





Northwest corner of Fort Arundell.



View from the fort towards the "lubok" at the bottom of the hill.

After a short briefing on the day's programme, Mr Goh introduced John Ting, an architectural historian from Melbourne who specialises in the old forts of Sarawak. John gave an informative account on the important events related to Lubok Antu and Fort Arundell. The timeline established by John is summarised as follows:

Year	Events
1852	First English mention of Lubok Antu was in Ida Pfeiffer's (Austrian traveler) book. Ida stopped by Lubok Antu on her way up to the crossover to Kapuas.
~1868	Lubok Antu Fort was first established by the Rajah to contain and pacify the Ibans led by Ngumbang at Upper Batang Ai River. It was a timber fort with palisade.
Late 1868	The fort was burnt down by Ngumbang and rebuilt by the government
1875	Alexander Hill Grey stopped at Lubok Antu on the way from Sintang, Kapuas River to Simanggang.
1886	-Ngumbang relented, joined the government and moved to Lupar River. -However, Bantin, Ngumbang's collaborator continued to resist tax and settlement direction. -Many expeditions to attack the Ibans were held until 1915. -Kerdang expedition.
1896	Expedition against Bantin. The fort played an important role in stopping Iban rebels from moving downriver.
1898	Native officer at Lubok Antu Fort (Abang Aing's son) died.
1902	2 <sup>nd</sup> expedition against Bantin (cholera expedition).
1907	Bantin submitted to Charles Hose at the Kapit Fort & later recanted.
1908	Expedition against Delok River Iban.
1909	Bailey went on leave. Ward negotiated peace and Bantin agreed to pay fine. When Bailey died in the same year, Bantin migrated to Kalimantan.
1915	Expedition against Delok River and Jingin River Iban. Reasons for the conflict between Iban and Brooke's Government: 1) -Batang Ai river was overpopulated at the time -Iban practised shifting agriculture which required them to migrate. However Rajah wanted them to establish permanent settlements. 2) The government's reliance on military rather than negotiated civil approaches. 3) D.J.S. Bailey, resident of Simanggang and Bantin hated each other.
1920	Final peacekeeping with the dissident Ibans before dismantling the palisade.
1935	Gilbert Arundell was stationed as District Officer.
1941	Gilbert and his Iban wife, Sendie (daughter of Tuai Rumah Bangka) went into hiding in upriver area during Japanese Occupation.
1942	Gilbert and his wife were killed by Kanowit Iban headhunters as revenge-killings, when they were released from the Simanggang jail by the Japanese.
1945	Fort Lubok Antu was burnt down by a group of Ibans when they attacked the Japanese who stationed there.
1946	Current fort was rebuilt in the same location and named after Arundell.

(Source: Tabulation provided by John Ting on 14.01. 2014)

LEAD ORGANISER



CO - ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS



According to John, the fort was rebuilt twice. The first fort at Lubok Antu was built in 1868, and was burnt down by the Ibans in less than a year’s time. The second fort was destroyed in 1945 by the Ibans who attacked during the Japanese occupation. These early forts were constructed using timber as brick or stone was not common during that time. The current fort was completed in 1947. It shows interesting cast in-situ concrete at certain part of the external walls where river pebbles were used as aggregate. Ar. Mike Boon pointed out that similar construction was also found in an abattoir and a few units of shophouses (probably built in late 1930s) in Siniawan.

John then informed that all the old forts were not named when they were first built. They were often known after the locality of the place; for instance, Fort Lubok Antu. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some of the forts were named after the Brooke’s family member or officers. Fort Lubok Antu was later named after of a District Officer, Gilbert Arundell.



John Ting (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) telling the story of Fort Arundell.



Some of the participants in front of the fort.

Unfortunately the fort was closed during the visit because it was a public holiday. Kapitan Tay said that the District Office had moved into their new building and the building is currently occupied by a government internet centre (first floor) and RELA headquarters (ground floor).

**Suspension Bridge across Batang Ai River**

Moving down the hill to view the fort from the river, the participants were attracted by a suspension bridge crossing the river. The bridge, constructed with timber and steel cables, appeared older than the one in Engkilili that the group had visited during the previous workshop.



Impression of height given by the scale of people at the foothill.



Crossing the fragile suspension bridge in Lubok Antu.



The bridge is structurally supported by (compressive) timber members and (tensile) steel cables.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO- ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS





Looking back towards Fort Arundell from the bridge.



View of the kampong (village) houses on the other end of the bridge.



The wild palm tree produces an alcoholic drink called "Ijok".



Support system of the bridge viewed from the village.  
(Source: Photo taken by Ar. Mike Boon on 05.01.2011)

**CIQ at Sarawak-Kalimantan Border**

After visiting Fort Arundell, the group headed to the Custom, Immigration & Quarantine (CIQ) at the Lubok Antu-Kalimantan border – an approximate 10 minutes’ drive from Lubok Antu. Kapitan Tay mentioned that a lot of Indonesians cross this check point, especially the Indonesian Ibans, to trade in Lubok Antu during the weekends.

The Ibans in Sarawak were believed to migrate from the Kapuas valley in Kalimantan approximately 300 years ago. Thus, there is a strong link between the Ibans in Lubok Antu and Kalimantan sides. Some of them may have originated from the same family, but the international border demarcation separated the families. It was interesting to find out that the border towns in Kalimantan are accepting Malaysian Ringgit as legal tender.

At 1.30pm, the participants gathered for buffet lunch served at Teratai Café in Lubok Antu Bazaar before heading towards the Iban longhouse.



Old shophouses at Lubok Antu Bazaar.



Everyone was contented with the lunch. Fresh Tilapia from Batang Ai River was the most popular dish among all.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO - ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS



**Iban Longhouse - Rumah Sambun at Nanga Kesit**

Nanga Kesit is located between the junction of Sri Aman-Betong highway and Lubok Antu Bazaar. The tar sealed road ended at Lubok Sumbong (a village), where the participants had to disembark from the bus to walk through a dirt road. After that, they had to cross a timber suspension bridge to reach the longhouse.



Rough dirt road leading to Nanga Kesit not suitable for the bus to drive through.



Crossing the suspension bridge before reaching Rumah Sambun.



Some railings and timber floor boards were missing from the derelict suspension bridge.



Panic-stricken while crossing the dilapidated suspension bridge.



View around the villages on the way to Rumah Sambun. Livestock are left to roam freely around the area.



The visit was hosted by the immediate past Tuai Rumah, Mr Jampang who gave a welcoming speech in the Iban language, and later translated by Mr Goh. "Tuak", a traditional Iban rice wine was served as welcome drink. Traditional dances were performed following the beats of drum and gongs played by some Iban women. Enticed by the festive mood, the participants also joined the dance. After having light snacks and drinks, the longhouse folks politely seek consent to display their crafts for sale.



Side view of the longhouse.



Entering the longhouse from the stairs located at one end of the outdoor deck ("tanju")



Shoes to be taken off before entering the longhouse.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO - ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS





Immediate past Tuai Rumah Jampang welcomed the group.



Serving tuak.



The group happily exchanged views and thoughts with the friendly hosts.



Mr. Goh Kaw Sze (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) presented certificate of appreciation to Tuai Rumah Sambun (2<sup>nd</sup> from left).



Ar. Mike Boon (4<sup>th</sup> from left) presented certificate of appreciation to Kapitan Tay Cho Ming (3<sup>rd</sup> from left).



Iban lady presenting the traditional dance.



Traditional Iban dance.



Fun time joining the dance with our hosts.



The kids were excited to try on the warrior hat.



"Bamban", an arrowroot species (*Donax canniformis*) normally found along the riverbank.

Fresh bamban stick (left, green), and dried stick (bottom) ready to be processed for weaving into mats, baskets etc.

(Source: Wikipedia, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bemban>)



Delighted with the variety of handmade crafts.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO- ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS



Later, all the participants were given free time to roam around the 21 bilik (individual rooms) longhouse built in 1991. The plan of Rumah Sambun generally follows the traditional tripartite layout – open drying deck (“tanju”), covered verandah/community living spaces (“ruai”), with doors to individual family compartments (“bilik”) along the length of the “ruai”. Kitchen, shower and toilets are attached to the rear of the “bilik”. Roof attic (“sadau”) is used as storage space.

There are no big traditional main columns to be found in traditional longhouses. The living platform is raised on slender belian posts (some in the size of belian pepper posts). However, it is such a delight to find out the wall and ceiling panels were lined with the traditional split bamboo mat. It reflected the effort of the longhouse community to revive the traditional craft.

The “tanju” floor is decked with belian similar to pepper posts, whereas the timber floorboards in the “ruai” are lined with bamban (arrowroot species) mats. Most of the “bilik” are lined with linoleum and furnished with modern fittings and furniture.



Forest of slender columns provides shelter for



“Tanju”- open deck for drying.



“Ruai” – communal “living room” to receive guests.



Weaved split bamboo mat for door and wall.



Skulls hanging in the “sadau” (attic).



Timber wall decorated with Iban motif.



The “bilik” (family compartment) was furnished with modern furniture.



Kitchen was attached at the rear of “bilik”. Traditional fireplace (for cooking) was still remained.



Toilet was detached from the “bilik” and located at the rear.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO- ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS



Tuai Rumah Sambun (daughter of Jampang) said that the residents have shifted from planting rubber to cocoa and pepper. While many longhouses have empty "bilik" kept by the family who seek a better life in the city, it is heartening to see that three generations live a relatively traditional communal life in this longhouse.

While the river has lost its significance as major means of access and source of food, it still plays an important social role here for bathing, washing and as kids' playground.

At 5pm, the participants bid farewell to their friendly hosts. It was relatively quiet in the returning journey after an exhilarating day. There are more to digest and ponder after dispersing from the Chinese Temple at Sri Aman waterfront an hour later.



Three generations still live together in the longhouse.



Young Iban with tattoos.



Tanju - impromptu playground for the kids.



Traditional rubber sheet pressing machine found at the vicinity of the longhouse.



Fun time playing at the river.



Rare sight of a motorised long boat.

LEAD ORGANISER



CO - ORGANISER



LOCAL PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



PROJECT SUPPORTERS

