



Annual Report 2021/2022¹

Presented to the 16th Annual General Meeting, 21st Dec 2022

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¹ This report covers the period starting 17th July 2021 (AGM 15) to December 2022 (AGM 16). The financial /audit report covers the calendar year 2021

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 and advocate for the conservation, permanent preservation and sustainable management of Sarawak's significant 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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Sarawak Heritage Society SHS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (2020/2022)

President James S L Yong
Vice President Donna Yong
Hon. Secretary Deborah Dris
Hon. Treasurer Rosemarie Wong
Committee Members

Ar William Khoo
the late Arif Arabi
Dr Atta Idrawani bin Zaini
Angelina Jong
Michael Liew **

*** Co-opted in June 2022*

Membership admin: Ming Hung
Website admin: Francis Frey
Accounts admin: Yvonne Saman



SHS Executive Committee members (in Nov 2021)

PAST SHS PRESIDENTS

2016 - 2020 Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu
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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The 16th AGM is being held in the closing days of 2022 because our Executive Committee first took office only in November 2020 (due to the Covid-19 movement control), so the team wanted to serve a full two years. We had gotten approval from Director, RoS for this deferment.

Our last AGM was in July 2021 and we had reported on activities the previous eight months (Nov 2020-July 2021). The second half of 2021 saw pandemic restrictions being cautiously relaxed and we began to transition from online activities to physical ones.



The society's focus has continued to be centred around three A's, our goals of AWARENESS, ADVOCACY and ADVISORY.

As part of our heritage AWARENESS BUILDING, we organised a series of talks on heritage-related topics, led study visits to selected heritage sites in Kuching. We were also active at a national and regional level, speaking at a talk series organised by Badan Warisan Malaysia, hosting visitors from other parts of the country, and facilitating online classes for UNESCO Bangkok / Think City Institute. The architects on the team also focused on documenting a number of heritage buildings in Kuching.

Our public talks (a mix of online and physical) covered a spectrum of heritage-related subjects from dragons in Borneo culture, genealogy, Malay textiles, built heritage conservation and urban renewal, and Melanau spiritual beliefs. In July 2022, I had the privilege to speak on "Sarawak's Endangered Heritage" at a 'Spotlight on Sarawak' series, curated by Tan Sri Datuk Amar Leo Moggie and Puan Sri Elizabeth Moggie, and organised by Badan Warisan Malaysia. The talk was well received. Forthcoming on 18th December 2022, we have our last talk for 2022, by three passionate architects, built heritage advocates from Penang.

In 2022, we organised study visits to heritage sites such as St Joseph's School 's recently restored Mill Hill Block and the historic "Darul Kurnia" house. The latter visit was particularly well attended as we were joined by a group of descendants of Datu Patinggi Abang Hj Abdillah, the original owner of the house and a leader of the Anti-Cession movement in the 1940s.

On the ADVOCACY front, SHS continued to air our views on various topics. Some examples of areas we touched on: 1950s/60s colonial built heritage, the ongoing renovation of Reservoir Park, name changes to familiar public places, the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019, old buildings in town unnecessarily falling into disrepair (e.g. the old Nurses Quarters), heritage landscapes, etc.

On knowledge building and ADVISORY, the architect members on our ExCo began an initiative to document a number of heritage buildings in and around Kuching. This was done through measured drawings and photographs.

I was appointed to the inaugural Sarawak Heritage Council in March 2022. This was created as part of the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance (2019) and comprises eleven members, to advise the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts, Sarawak on matters of policy, strategy or plan of action relating to sustainable heritage management in Sarawak.

I have also continued to engage with UNESCO Bangkok and Think City in 2022. I helped develop a case study based on the heritage house, Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion in Georgetown, Penang and facilitated an online Masterclass on "Building a Legacy" for around fifty attendees from Asia and Australia.

My “Padungan” book is finally about to be published. This personal project on the history and heritage of the Padungan area of Kuching has taken three years of research, interviews, lots of walking throughout the Padungan area, and speaking to members of the community. Thanks to my field research collaborator John Soo (also an SHS member), whose family has had long links to the Padungan area. My hope is that this book will be useful for present and future generations in understanding the history and heritage of an important area of our city. The book is supported by SHS, Badan Warisan Malaysia and the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts, Sarawak.

Heritage is not all about serious stuff. We had an enjoyable “SHS Members Night” in August 2022. It was a wonderful opportunity to finally meet each other in person (after the pandemic restrictions), share updates on what had been done on various cultural heritage fronts, discuss challenges faced, and also play games, laugh and enjoy a good dinner.

As I step down from the SHS presidency, I would like to thank the Executive Committee and all SHS members for their support and friendship. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to contribute to SHS over the past seven years. It has been a rich learning journey. I have deepened my knowledge on Sarawak, made many new friends and had the opportunity to reflect on and share thoughts on sustainable management of Sarawak heritage. Hopefully my team and I have made a small difference towards achieving the society’s goals.

I wish the new ExCo the very best and am confident that they will continue this important work of safeguarding Sarawak’s rich and unique heritage for the present and future generations.



James S L Yong

5th December 2022

2021/2022 AT A GLANCE

2,882 likes & **3,089**
followers on Facebook

4,100 visitors & **8,600** page views
to SHS Website *

7

Heritage talks

2

Heritage site visits

>650

Participants at talks & visits

>5

Key Govt Engagements
(MTCP, Sarawak Museum Dept, MUDNR,
Pustaka Negeri Sarawak, Sarawak
Crafts Council)

>15

Media Mentions of SHS

1

SHS-supported book published

133

SHS Members #

(51% increase from AGM in 2021)



* Jul 2021 – 31 Nov 2022
up to 7th Dec 2022

MEMBERSHIP

The membership currently stands at 133, breaking down as 106 Ordinary Members, 11 Affiliate Members (members who do not reside in Sarawak) and 16 Student Members. So far SHS does not have Institutional Members, a category provided for in our constitution.

Compared to the paid-up membership of 88 at the time of the 2021 AGM (17/07/2021), there is a welcomed increase of 51% over the period. This increase is a result of a significant number of new sign-ups: in the period we have welcomed 56 new members. The attendance at the SHS talks, site visits and Members' Night has contributed to this boost, as well as the sponsorships by friends of the Society, of sets of annual student membership fees.

There remains however a non-negligible turnover in the membership base: 15 memberships that were due for renewal end of 2020 and 21 that were due for renewal end of 2021 were so far not renewed.²

It is worth recalling that the membership fees have remained unchanged – at RM50/year or RM120 for 3 years for Ordinary and Affiliate Members, and RM25/year for Student Members – since the launch of a membership drive end of 2014. Most members have subscribed to the reduced 3 years rate.

ACTIVITIES and PROJECTS

Government Liaison / Public Policy Dialogue

In March 2022, SHS President was appointed to the inaugural Sarawak Heritage Council (SHC). The SHC, formed as part of the enactment of the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance (2019), is a body of eleven persons which advises the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts on matters relating to sustainable heritage management. The appointment is until end of 2022, with possibility of renewal.

We have had a number of engagements with government agencies:

- Sarawak Museum Department
 - Discussion on the Findings at Central Police Station Compound (April 2022)
 - Discussion on the use of Detector Devices (Nov 2022)
- Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry & Performing Arts
 - Workshop on Commitment and Responsible Tourism 2021 (Sept 2021)
 - Seminar on Conservation & Management of Built Heritage (Nov 2021) (SMD)
 - Discussion on work with Google Arts & Culture (April 2022)
 - Discussion on "GODIGITAL" Sarawak program (April 2022)
 - Sharing Session on Direction of Sarawak Creative Industry (July 2022)
- Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources
 - Stakeholders' Meeting on Kuching City Local Plan 2030 (July 2022)
- Sarawak Crafts Council
 - Lab on Sarawak Craft Council Bill (March 2022)
- Pustaka Negeri Sarawak
 - Courtesy Meeting with Pn. Hayati Sabil (Sarawak Record Repository)

² Membership goes on calendar year. "In the event of a member failing to pay his subscription for six months, his membership shall be deemed to have lapsed." (SHS Constitution, clause 4.5)



Met with staff of Pustaka Negeri Sarawak (from Sarawak Record Repository), to discuss storage and archival of documents and small heritage artefacts

Partnering and Networking

Hosted two executives from National Heritage Board, Singapore and brought them to the Tun Jugah Foundation to learn about Iban culture, especially on pua kumbu and beads (28th Jun 2022).

Gave a two-hour talk to some fifty certified tour guides, members of the Sarawak Tourist Guide Association on 24th November 2022.



Visitor from National Heritage Board (Singapore), hosted to Tun Jugah Foundation



Talk on Padungan to certified tour guides From Sarawak Tourist Guide Association

In order to strengthen the bonds with and between our members, we had an SHS Members' Night event on 7th Aug 2022 at the Telang Usan Hotel. It was an evening of good conversation, good food and good fellowship.



Animated conversation happening at SHS Members' Night (Aug 2022)

Talks and Site Visits

We had a series of well-attended talks on a variety of topic on tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Up until November, we had done five talks (three online, two physical) and on 18th December 2022, we will have another event, where we have invited three speakers from Penang.

SHS Heritage Speaker Series (2021/22)



DRAGONS IN THE WATERS OF BORNEO - Dr. Monica Janowski

This talk focuses on the beliefs of snake-like water spirits or dragons among the highlands Kelabit and Lundayeh, Iban, Kenyah and Kayan.

Platform: Zoom

Total attendees: 85

GENEALOGY & HERITAGE - Dr. Chan Lek Lim

In this talk, Dr. Chan shares his personal experience in his journey of tracing his family history and tips on what to do, and how to overcome challenges.

Platform: Zoom

Total attendees: 70

SPLENDOR OF MALAY TEXTILES - Mr. John Ang

Mr. Ang's talk focus on the subject of textiles from the Malay world, comprising of 12 categories, identifying the various subcategories, and how to differentiate them.

Platform : Zoom

Total attendees: 65

URBAN RENEWAL THROUGH BUILT HERITAGE CONSERVATION - Ar. Lim Take Bane

Ar. Lim shared his knowledge on identifying built heritage, creating an inventory and collating invaluable data on heritage buildings. This talk also included information on global best practices for heritage conservation, mainly on issues of authenticity and the principle of reversability.

Venue: Borneo Cultures Museum, Auditorium

Total Attendees: 90

THE REALM BETWEEN - Ms. Diana Rose & Dr. Rolf Schlomer

A conversation on Melanau Culture and traditional healing practices

Venue: Borneo Cultures Museum, Arts & Craft Room

Total Attendees: 67



Speaker Diana Rose and audience during "The Realm Between" talk (Aug 2022)



After the talk by Ar Lim Take Bane, held at Borneo Cultures Museum (Jul 2022)



Zoom talk for Badan Warisan Malaysia (July 2022)

On 7th July 2022, SHS President delivered a well-received talk on **“Sarawak’s Endangered Heritage”** as part of Badan Warisan Malaysia’s ‘Spotlight on Sarawak’ (#toksarawak). There were around 135 participants.

We also had **“A Conversation with Datuk Sri Lim Chong Keat”** event on 22nd October 2022 at the Telang Usan Hotel space.



Sharing by Dato Sri Lim Chong Keat (Oct 2022)

We organized two heritage site visits. The first was to St Joseph’s School, where we wanted to see what had been done with the recently restored Mill Hill block. The second was to the “Darul Kurnia” house on Jalan Haji Taha. This historic building, now part of Chung Hua Middle School No.4, was once the home of Dato Patinggi Abang Hj Abdillah, a community leader and anti-cession activist.



Heritage site visit: Mill Hill Block, St Joseph’s School (Jul 2022)

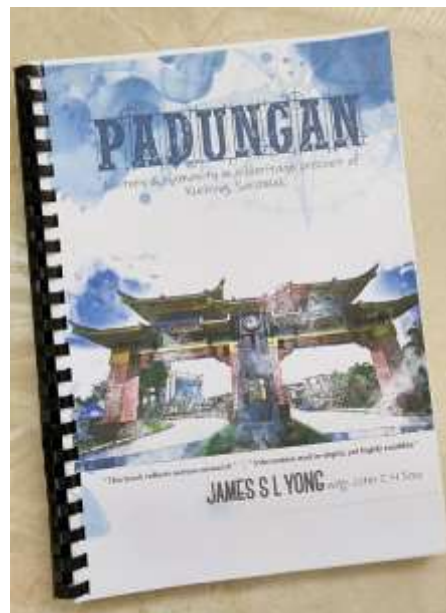


Heritage site visit: Darul Kurnia (Oct 2022)

Publications

“Padungan” book project

The book “Padungan: History and Humanity in a Heritage precinct of Kuching, Sarawak”, authored by James Yong, with field research support by John Soo, is due to publication in December 2022. It is supported by SHS, Badan Warisan Malaysia and the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts.



ACCOUNTS

The accounts presented at this AGM cover the period Jan-Dec 2021 and have been audited by Richard Kiew & Company.

Total accounting income for 2021 is RM 4,560.78, of which RM3,840 from membership fees and RM 720.78 from fixed deposit interest income. Cash expenditure stood at RM 1,169.65, leading to a surplus of RM 3,391.13

Main expenditure was web hosting and domain charges. (around M475 /year).

As of end of December 2021, the bank account balance stood at RM11,206.56.

[for details, see the audited Financial Statements report]

SOCIAL MEDIA

The SHS **website** (www.sarawakheritagesociety.com) and **Facebook** presence continued to contribute to the visibility of the Society. The Facebook page currently has around 3,089 followers and 2,882 'Likes'. The website, which functions mainly as a resource base, attracted some 8,600 views by 4,100 visitors from July 2021 to of end Nov 2022, and currently has 65 followers.

The '**SHS Community**' **whatsapp** chatgroup currently about 100 members.