

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **State Party**

Malaysia

## **State, Province, or Region**

State of Sarawak, Miri Division, Niah Sub-district

## **Name of nominated property**

The Archaeological Heritage of Niah National Park's Caves Complex

## **Geographical coordinates to the nearest second**

3° 48' 50" N 113° 46' 53" E

## **Textual description of the boundaries of the nominated property**

The Niah Caves Complex is located within the boundaries of the Niah National Park (NNP) on the island of Borneo in Southeast Asia. The boundaries commences at a point on the true right bank of Sungai Niah at Tanjong Belipat, the boundary follows a cut line on a bearing of 90°00' and approximate distance of 11,400 links to a point on the true left bank of Sungai Tangap: thence upstream along the true left bank of Sungai Tangap for an approximate distance of 34,800 links to a point bearing 65°30' and approximate distance of 18,400 links from the trigonometrical station at Gunung Subis: thence along a series of cut lines on a bearing of 180°00' for 4839 links. 270°00' for 298 links. 180°00' for 748 links. 90°00' for 298 links and 180°00' for 6.150 along the true right bank of Sungai Sekaloh to a point approximately 10.000 left bank of Sungai Trusan: thence downstream along the true left bank of Sungai Trusan to its confluence with Sungai Sekaloh: thence downstream along the true right bank of Sungai Sekaloh to its confluence with Sungai Niah: thence downstream along the true right bank of Sungai Niah to its point of commencement at Tanjong Belipat.



## Criteria under which property is nominated

(iii)(v)(vi)

### Cultural Landscape

No

## Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

### *a) Brief synthesis*

The Niah Caves Complex is located in Island Southeast Asia (ISEA), tropical islands lying in between mainland East Asia and Taiwan to the northwest and Australia and New Guinea to the southeast. Niah National Park and its Cave Complex provides an outstanding example of the complex prehistoric adaptation and manipulation of the tropical rainforest environment towards the understanding of human evolution, adaptation and dispersal in both the mainland and island Southeast Asia geocultural region. It is also an exceptional testimony to the ability of prehistoric humans in adapting their lifestyle, behaviour and survival techniques to a changing environment due to climate change while being guided by their spiritual legacy which is being re-invented in the form of contemporary approaches in sustainable resource management.

### *b) Justification for Criteria*

The property fulfils Criteria (iii), (v) and (vi) of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

#### ***Criterion (iii)***

The Niah Caves Complex contains archaeological evidence that represents an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition that existed from at least 50,000 years ago.

#### ***Criterion (v)***

The property is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which evolved through human interaction with a fluctuating physical environment due to climate change.

#### ***Criterion (vi):***

The property has a long and rich history of scientific research and publications that had contributed to a universal body of knowledge on the understanding of human evolution, adaptation, and dispersals, especially within the context of human-rainforest interaction in island Southeast Asia.

### *c) Statement of Integrity (for all properties)*

The National Parks and Nature Reserves Ordinance 1998 provides the legal protection for the property and its integrity against external impacts. As such the physical fabric and significant features of the property are still intact and in good condition. Within the Cave

Complex the Sarawak Heritage Ordinance 2019 provides another layer of protection which ensures that the physical fabric within the caves is intact despite the long tradition of birds' nest harvesting activities for sustainable community use. Furthermore, elements of the traditional approach in resource management (molong) has been re-introduced in contemporary approaches that ensures its legacy.

*d) Statement of authenticity for properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi)*

Essentially the 'culturing' of the rainforest represents the authenticity of the values of the Niah Caves, which demonstrates how fluctuations in the bio-physical processes and climate change have resulted in the existing tropical rainforest that have also been modified by human adaptation.

*e) Requirements for protection and management*

A two-tier management system has been effective in protecting the integrity and OUV of the property while the setting up of a high-level State joint committee will minimise silo actions and facilitate collaborative management approaches towards the harmonisation of existing strategies and macro management plans.

**Name and contact information of official local institution / agency / organization**

**Sarawak Forestry Corporation**

Lot 218, KCLD, Jalan Sungai Tapang,  
Kota Sentosa, 93250 Kuching, Sarawak,  
MALAYSIA  
Tel.: +6 082-610 088  
Fax: +6082-610 099  
E-mail: info@sarawakforestry.com

**Sarawak Museum Department**

Jalan P. Ramlee  
93400, Kuching, Sarawak,  
MALAYSIA  
Tel: +6082-548181  
Fax: +082-548282  
Email : *museum@sarawak.gov.my*