



Mount Jerai at dusk

RAJA BERSIONG

-KEDAH'S LEGENDARY FANGED KING

The ancient Malay book *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* narrates how during the time of the early kingdoms on the Malay peninsula, there was a *Raja* or King named Ong Maha Perita Doria in the state of Langkasuka (today's Kedah). He was an ill-tempered and cruel king who terrified everybody. His realm was believed to be at Kota Aur near the foot of sacred Mount Jerai, near Gurun district.



Steps towards a candi

One day, his food was not ready when the Raja was already hungry. And a hungry Raja is an angry king. He furiously scolded the palace cook. In his haste to prepare the royal meal, the cook accidentally cut his finger and blood trickled into the ingredients. Alas, he was too scared to waste time washing the blood.

When the King ate the food, it was amazingly tastier. He was so fond of it that he summoned the cook demanding to know his secret. Fearing for his life, the cook admitted the incident. Thereafter, the King decreed that all his meals must have blood in it. The King became addicted to human blood and after a while, his incisors grew longer and became distinctly like fangs! He became known as *Raja Bersiong* or the Fanged King.

As his greed for blood continued to intensify, he ordered his guards to capture villagers for their blood. Local legend recounts they were kept in *Gua Penjara* or Prison Cave near today's Pantai Merdeka beach town, before being brought to the royal kitchen.

Eventually the people rebelled and Raja Bersiong's palace was stormed, but he escaped. He hid in the surrounding jungle. Although many tried to kill him, none could. In the end a *pawang* or shaman managed to turn the Fanged King into a wild boar. Until today, the wild boars reign the jungle with fangs in their mouths.

Raja Bersiong's dominion was near Mount Jerai, a then sacred mountain, where many Hindu- or temples were built that have now been excavated and preserved at the Lembah Bujang Archeological Museum. Recent findings also revealed the existence of the "Temple of the Ninth Water Pool" believed to be Raja Bersiong's favourite pool. Locals also believe his tomb is situated in Kampung Seberang Tok Soh, Pinang Tunggal in the district of Kuala Muda.

