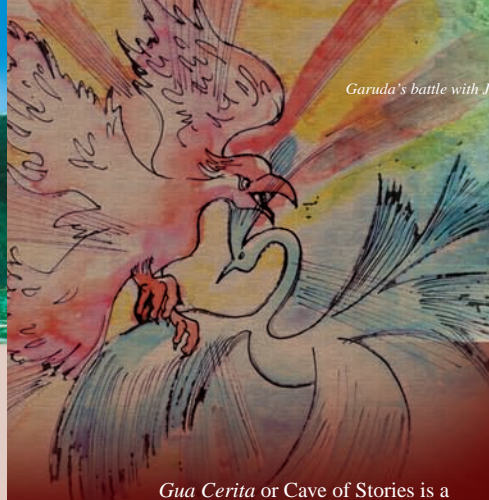


Garuda's battle with Jentayu



Entrance to Gua Cerita

Gua Cerita or Cave of Stories is a cavern alive with captivating legends. The most famous is the one concerning the origin of Kedah's royal lineage as related in the Epic of Merong Maha Wangsa or *Hikayat Merong Maha Wangsa*.

The legend recounts of an eagle reporting to the *Garuda* or Phoenix that the emperors of China and Rome were planning to marry off their children. He received this auspicious news from a Cockatoo, who also revealed of a big fleet that will accompany the Roman Prince to China. Such plans were resisted by the legendary *Garuda* who saw the union as a severe threat to other smaller kingdoms. Determined to prevent the marriage, *Garuda* sought an audience with the wise Prophet Solomon. Having failed to convince the Prophet, *Garuda* decided to use brute force and pledged an oath to destroy himself, if he fails.

Without delay he flew straight to China, abducted the Chinese Princess with his huge talons and hid her in his favourite hideout located in a far away enchanting island, now known as Langkawi, and the secret den is believed to be *Gua Cerita*. He then attacked the Roman Prince's fleet, which was commanded by the phenomenal Merong Maha Wangsa, who is believed to be of supernatural origin, son of an *Indera*, a descendant of a minor deity, and a *Gergasi*, a giantess who is a daughter of a powerful ogre.

THE MYSTICAL CAVE OF STORIES

Though *Garuda's* assaults were intense, these attacks were steadily repulsed by Merong Maha Wangsa, who invoked the assistance of *Jentayu*; a powerful mystical bird of water. As each attack on *Jentayu* became more ferocious and each assault more violent, *Garuda* was finally victorious. *Garuda* returned to the presence of Prophet Solomon with the intention of bragging, only to be told that the Roman Prince survived and was washed ashore on the island where the Chinese Princess was hidden. Fate decreed that the couple fell passionately in love with each other. Greatly humiliated and disgraced, the *Garuda* kept his vow and set himself on fire.

Merong Mahawangsa, who was spared the fate of many of his men, decided not to return to Rome for he too thought that the Prince was dead. He sailed on, keeping to the coastline till he found a place to settle, he named *Langkasuka* – the ancient civilisation of Kedah. Later, the prince and princess met Merong Maha Wangsa again and were crowned the sovereign of *Langkasuka*.

Located in the northern part of the main island of Langkawi, *Gua Cerita* is easily accessible by boat from Tanjung Rhu. Cave explorers can expect to find fascinating stalactites and stalagmites as well as faintly legible ancient inscriptions on the walls.



*View from mouth of
Gua Cerita*