

Flying over the Anambas Islands is a lovely sight. Island after island dots the sea with azure blue reefs blending into rainforest mountain peaks. Only 24 of these 238 islands are inhabited – a hidden world amidst the bustling South China Sea.

I contemplate the spectacular scenery from the window flying overhead and realise that only the mountain tops are peaking up through the waters edge and recall reading about the drowned continent of Southeast Asia called Sundaland. This ancient land of Asia became the South China Sea about 8,000 years ago when the ocean water rose at the end of the last ice age. Once fertile valleys and lowlands now lie submerged, forests turned into reefs, lagoons and a rolling continental shelf.

During these years, as the ocean claimed the continent, people were forced to flee in all directions. Those who lived near mountains would have moved upwards, but those living in the valleys and far from the mountains were flooded. Thus, these people gathered themselves and became sea nomads, adrift in search of higher land. Many think that these “sea-people” from this ancient civilization spread north to the Asian continent, south to Australia, west to Africa and the Middle East, and east to Polynesia. They brought their possessions, language, crops such as rice, their dogs and other animals, and know-how that have influenced the world as we know it today.

What is most striking is that the technological world and bustling port of Singapore is just 150 nautical miles away. Yet these islands stand in quiet, mostly untouched beauty – a perfect holiday sanctuary with its protected lagoon, white sand beaches, and coral reefs.

Terempah, the main city of Anambas, is a



To The Heights Of The Sunda Shelf

Discover island sanctuaries from the lost continent of Sundaland.

By **Abigail Alling, President PCRF**

colourful, bustling city with ample supplies and gentle, friendly people. Just around the corner, on the waters edge in a sheltered bay, is a hotel located at Tanjung Tebu. There you will find excellent meals, hot showers and a peaceful atmosphere with large rooms and balconies extending over the water.

Our first voyage to the Anambas Islands was in 2006. Intrigued to learn more, we accepted Francis Lee’s proposal to return in 2008 to consider implementing a long-term marine conservation programme. We are ecstatic to learn that the Anambas people have embraced this idea and within the year, the programme will commence. Our first project will focus on setting up a protected area for endangered sea turtles that frequent the Anambas Islands to nest on its white sand beaches.

Please continue to join the voyage and learn more about the Anambas Islands at www.pcrf.org. For hotel contact in Tanjung Tebu, email anambas@gmail.com.

