Study of Underwater Archaeological History: Uncovering the Traces of Ancient Human Life in the Archipelago

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Abstract

Underwater archaeology is a branch of archaeological science that studies archaeological sites submerged by water, such as shipwrecks, ancient harbors, and sunken maritime artifacts, as well as the remains of ancient human life in the past. The archipelago, as a region with a long maritime history, is rich in underwater archaeological relics that provide important insights into ancient maritime civilizations. Many of these abundant underwater relics are none other than because the archipelago is an archipelago surrounded by the sea and thousands of beaches that make the abundance of underwater archaeology. One of the most famous relics is *the Kjokkenmoddinger* or kitchen waste from ancient humans in the past. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method, with an approach that prioritizes in-depth analysis of existing historical sources, such as archival documents and literature studies. This article aims to examine various underwater archaeological discoveries in the archipelago, especially in the Aceh region, explore the relevance of these findings to the understanding of ancient human history in Indonesia, and assess the role of underwater archaeology in preserving the nation's cultural heritage. And it is hoped that through this article it can be useful for all parties, especially it can be used as history learning material in schools.

Keywords: Underwater Archaeology, *Kjokkenmoddinger*, Archipelago, Cultural Heritage, Ancient Man.

Abstract

Underwater archaeology is a branch of archaeology that studies archaeological sites submerged in water, such as shipwrecks, ancient ports, and sunken maritime artifacts, as well as the remains of ancient human life in the past. The Indonesian archipelago, as a region with a long maritime history, is rich in underwater archaeological remains that provide important insights into ancient maritime civilizations. Many of these abundant underwater remains are none other than because the Indonesian archipelago is an archipelago surrounded by sea and thousands of beaches that make its underwater archaeology abundant. One of the most famous remains is Kjokkenmoddinger or kitchen waste leftover food from ancient humans in the past. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, with an approach that prioritizes in-depth analysis of existing historical sources, such as archival documents and literature studies. This article aims to examine various underwater archaeological discoveries in the Indonesian archipelago, especially in the Aceh region, explore the relevance of these findings to the understanding of ancient human history in Indonesia, and assess the role of underwater archaeology in preserving the nation's cultural heritage. And it is hoped that this article can be useful for all parties, especially as a material for learning history in schools.

Keywords: *Underwater Archaeology, Kjokkenmoddinger, Nusantara, Cultural Heritage, Ancient Humans.*

INTRODUCTION

The archipelago, as a region rich in history and culture, holds many historical relics scattered both on land and under the sea. Underwater archaeology, as a rapidly growing field, has opened up new insights into ancient human life, especially in the context of migration, social interaction, and maritime trade. Research on underwater historical relics is very important to understand the role of the sea in ancient human life in the archipelago.

Underwater archaeology is a discipline that conducts the study of past human life based on the remains of material culture on the surface and waters, because we discuss underwater, the definition is all related to the culture of matter that is below the surface of waters such as seas, lakes, rivers and so on that requires special skills, namely diving techniques and with aids such as diving equipment, salvage equipment and so on.

One of the evidence of underwater archaeological relics found in the East Sumatra region is *kjokkenmoddinger* or a type of mussel. In Danish, kjokken means kitchen and *modding* means garbage. So, kjokkenmoddinger is kitchen waste in the form of shells that have been piled up for thousands of years to form a small hill 4–9 meters high.

This article aims to examine the underwater archaeological historical relics found in the archipelago, especially those found on the east coast of the island of Sumatra, focusing on important findings that can provide insight into ancient human life. In addition, this article also seeks to explore the relationship between environmental changes and the existence of ancient humans in Indonesia. And this article aims to help provide extensive knowledge and insight related to the study of underwater archaeological historical relics which can later be used as a media for learning history in schools.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which focuses on the analysis of underwater archaeological findings at various sites in the archipelago. The data used are the results of previous research, field reports, and archaeological findings obtained from sea expeditions conducted by various research institutions. Data was collected through a literature study that included scientific articles, books, and archaeological expedition reports. In addition, data is also obtained through the collection of documents as well as drawings and direct observation of the sites found. Data analysis is carried out by comparing archaeological findings and trying to interpret the information obtained to understand the patterns of life of ancient humans and their interactions with the environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some Underwater Archaeological Finds in the East Sumatra Region

1. Bukit Remis Pangkalan



It is one of the relics of the hunting and gathering period, or contemporary with the Paleolithic period. The relics found on the hill are in the form of kjokkenmoddienger of the type of mussels or mussels. In Danish, *kjokken* means kitchen and modding means garbage. So, *kjokkenmoddinger* is kitchen garbage in the form of shells that have been piled up for thousands of years, forming small hills.

In addition, there are finds in the form of *sumatralith*, which is a stone tool that is carved on one side and left natural on the other. The stone tool is used to process food. Including shells whose shells are then stacked, thus forming *kjokkenmoddinger*. In addition to the discovery *of sumatralith*, at the Bukit Kerang Pangkalan Site three human skeletons were found with their grave provisions. In the book Prehistory of North Sumatra: Its Contribution to Contemporary Culture, Wiradnyana (2011:104–106) states that the discovery of a skull at the Bukit Remis Pangkalan Site along with its hematite and grave provisions represent the existence of human religious activities at that time.

The position of the folded skeleton is interpreted as the position of the baby in the womb. In other words, humans who lived at that time believed that people who died would be reborn in another realm. Looking at these aspects, of course Bukit Remis Pangkalan is not a mere pile of kitchen waste.

2. Shellfish Waste in Rantau Panjang Village

In addition to the Remis Pangkalan hill, the discovery of kitchen waste or kjokkenmoddinger was also found at the tip of the Tamiang River, precisely in the village of Rantau Panjang, East Aceh Regency.



Based on my interview with Mr. Irwansyah as the head of Rube hamlet, he explained that there were leftover shells that had been petrified around the river shore that connects Rantau Panjang village with Simpang Jernih sub-district. He estimated that the petrified shells were the remains of ancient human life that later became fossils that have not yet been further researched. Coupled with limited access, it was difficult for us to reach the location so that the information we got was only in the form of interviews.

The Benefits of the Findings as Information on Early Human Life

The findings at Bukit Remis Pangkalan and kjokkenmoddinger (kitchen garbage piles) can provide very important insights into ancient human life in Indonesia. Here are some things that can be learned



from these findings:

- Food Patterns and Social Life: Kjokkenmoddinger are the remains of food discarded by ancient humans, such as shells, animal bones, and plant pieces. By analyzing this kitchen waste, archaeologists can find out what early humans ate, whether they were hunter-gatherers or had begun to develop agriculture, as well as how they interacted with the surrounding environment. It also provides an overview of the diet and diversity of natural resources used.
- Stone Technology and Tools: Around Bukit Remis Pangkalan, many stone tools were found that were used by ancient humans to hunt, cut, or grind food. This type of tool gives clues to the level of technological development used by early humans at that time. The stone tools found also show the ability of ancient humans to adapt to environmental conditions and survive.
- Settlements and Activities of Ancient People: The discovery of kjokkenmoddinger and stone tools at Bukit Remis provides an idea of the dwelling or settlement of ancient humans. Bukit Remis, located in a coastal area, may have been a strategic place for early humans to hunt or gather natural resources from the sea and land. This activity helps archaeologists understand patterns of migration, settlement, and the relationship of ancient humans to coastal environments.
- Environmental Adaptation: These findings also show how early humans adapted to the environment around them. In coastal areas, early humans may have taken advantage of marine products such as fish and shellfish, while on land they hunted animals or gathered plants. This shows the ability of ancient humans to utilize a diverse array of natural resources to meet their life needs.
- Cultural Development and Cognition: The tools found at Bukit Remis and the pile of kjokkenmoddinger can also provide information about the cultural development and cognitive abilities of early humans. For example, more complex shapes and types of tools can indicate

the development of skills in tool making, as well as the existence of further thinking in terms of food or shelter management.

Overall, the findings at Bukit Remis Pangkalan and kjokkenmoddinger provide a more complete picture of how early humans in Indonesia lived, survived, interacted with their environment, and developed in social, cultural, and technological aspects.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of underwater archaeology in the archipelago provides very important insights for our understanding of the history of ancient humans in Indonesia. The findings not only provide evidence of the life of ancient peoples, but also show their interaction with the environment and the outside world. This underwater archaeological heritage has the potential to continue to dig up information about the journey of human civilization in the archipelago.

Therefore, there needs to be greater conservation efforts for these underwater sites to be preserved and can provide even deeper insights. In addition, it is hoped that this underwater archaeological discovery can provide insight and knowledge to students at school so that it is beneficial for them that it is important to preserve historical sites so that they are not lost to the times.

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