

# **KELEW CAVE, ULU KELANTAN AS REMAINS OF PREHISTORIC SOCIETIES PLACEMENT EVIDENCE BASED ON SURFACE SURVEY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Kelantan is a state rich in its own history by contributing information about prehistoric times until now. Ulu Kelantan has its own significant record of biodiversity and this can throw light on the exploitation of resources by prehistoric people. Using a systematic and scientific approach, the study was conducted by a team of researchers from the Institute of Malay and World Civilizations (ATMA), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in April 2018 in Kelew Cave. Based on the findings of this study, the research team was able to discover cave paintings and surface discoveries such as stone tools, pottery and ceramics. Thus, the discovery of this surface further reinforces that the Kelew Cave was once inhabited by prehistoric peoples to the indigenous peoples. This study will also discuss the discovery of artifacts and their relationship with the prehistoric community in Kelew Cave.*

**Key words:** Prehistoric, Kelew Cave, cave painting, stone tools, artifacts.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Kelantan is a state rich in its own history by contributing information with respect to the prehistoric times until today. Ulu Kelantan is the largest administrative district in the state of Kelantan and filled with mountains of limestone caves. The shape of the limestone surface is commonly seen due to the formation that results from the environmental conditions that would form the pits of the limestone caves [1]. These limestone caves are also the home of prehistoric communities to serve as a gathering place for the excavators and these caves serve as their home.

Prehistoric sites in Ulu Kelantan have been identified and carried out by several former researchers. A brief study was done by Peacock and Dunn (1964), excavations by Tweedie (1940), Sieveking (1954-1955) and Adi Taha (1985) formed the basis of archeology in Ulu Kelantan. The purpose of this survey was to find and evaluate sites researched by previous

researchers, as well as to find new sites that could potentially excavate mainly in limestone caves located in Ulu Kelantan [3].

The success of the prehistoric society is closely related to the experiences and challenges that its people must face when interacting with the environment. The need to continue the survival of the prehistoric society has the power of innovation and creativity to contribute to the formation of cultures and the creation of different tools over time.

Prehistoric times can be divided into three periods: the Paleolithic Age (200 000-16 000 years), the Hoabinhian Age (16 000-6000 years) and the Neolithic Age (6 000-5 000 years) while in Malaysia, Paleolithic cultural evidence was first discovered by HD Collings in 1938 in Kota Tampan. Among the identifiable cultures are the discovery of stone tools artifacts made of river rocks that are suitable for extinction while their diets are more for wildlife and aquatic life such as snails [13].

This is because, Prehistoric society is a society close to the existence of nature. In general, prehistoric societies in the Paleolithic and Hoabinhian Age can be characterized by the nomadic life of a nomadic people living as hunter gatherer. A hunter-gatherer is a human living in a society in which most or all food is obtained by foraging (collecting wild plants and pursuing wild animals). The Neolithic community, in turn, had the characteristics of a community engaged in farming and rearing, starting local life and producing pottery [11].

These cultural differences show that the existence of a revolution in society that was initially just a hunting activity began to change for the people who applied technology in pottery production by controlling the temperature of fire from open burning. Cultural developments based on artifact typology and material culture can be seen in the earliest or oldest sequences based on simple or easy-to-create tools.

## **2. GEOMORPHOLOGY OF KELEW CAVE SITE**

The location of Gua Kelew is close to Kledong Village as well as Gua Batu Tambah, Gua Lubang Kelawar, Gua Keledong and Gua Cahaya. All of these caves are near the main river Nenggiri River and near the cave there are also small streams flowing into the main river. The topographic reading of the site is recorded in the longitude of the 05.03976 North and latitude 101.54564 East while the elevation reading from the sea level is 62 meters.

## **3. RESEARCH IN KELANTAN**

Among the prehistoric archeological studies conducted in Malaysia are such as the Kechil Cave and Kota Tongkat in Pahang, the Gunung Runtuh Cave, Kota Tampan and Bait Cave in Perak, the Niah Cave in Sarawak, the Mount Tungku Lembu Cave in Perlis. While in Kelantan, among the sites that have been identified and excavated by several scholars are the HD Caves by HD Noone (1939), Sieveking (1951) and Adi Taha (1979) and the Madu Cave and Gua Musang by Tweedie (1939), the Chawas Cave (Adi Taha, 1994) and Caves of Peraling (Adi Taha, 1994).

The Nenggiri Valley located in Kelantan is also an archeological center rich in ancient heritage. There are many areas around the Ulu Nenggiri river which is believed to be the site of prehistoric society. Among them are Cha Cave, Chawas Cave, Peraling Cave, Chawan Cave, Batu Cincin Cave and Lembing Cave. In Cha Cave, H. D. Noone's study has found 8 complete pottery pieces along with two graves. Cha Cave prehistoric human skeleton was kept for 52 years in personal savings Sieveking, who is also a researcher in advance on the site. However, they are all evidence that has not yet been recorded, analyzed and published related data. Based on 20 burials in Duckworth and recent evidence of 32 prehistoric

individuals in Cha Cave, it was found that there were at least 11 individuals, 5 women and 2 children.

Excavations at the Chawas Cave conducted from 1994 to 1995 by Adi Taha have uncovered layers of material culture left over from the Hoabinhian, Neolithic and Proto-historical times. The most commonly found Hoabinhian layers are stone tools and other artifacts such as animal bone fragments, plant residues in the form of pytoliths (small silica found on leaves and stems of plants) and freshwater snails. In addition, there are important discoveries in the Chawas Cave - the discovery of monochromatic glass, one in the Chawas Cave and another in the Peraling Cave. This finding has proven the role of the community in Hulu Melayu in relation to the activities of the communities in the interior and the people of the river. Other prehistoric sites that find monochromatic glass beads are in Angin Cave, Kota Gelanggi, Jerantut [16].

#### **4. DISCOVERY OF CAVE PAINTING IN KELEW CAVE, ULU KELANTAN**

Kelew Cave is located in the area of Gua Musang, upstream of Kelantan. This cave is close to the Batu Tambah Cave and the Lubang Kelawar Cave. An initial survey was conducted by Zuliskandar Ramli with UKM archeology students and villagers in April 2018. The results of this survey has successfully found the paintings on the cave walls. In addition, there are also artefacts for stone tools, ceramics and pottery. Researchers argue that the painting on the wall of Kelew Cave is a painting by the Temiar indigenous people of the Senoi ethnic group.

This cave painting also functions as a medium of communication among humans, spirits, invisible beings and the spirits of their ancestors [9]. Most of the paintings are in the form of pectograph and use a black monochromatics coloration of charcoal medium. The paintings on the walls of this cave are mostly anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, geometric and abstract (Figure 1).



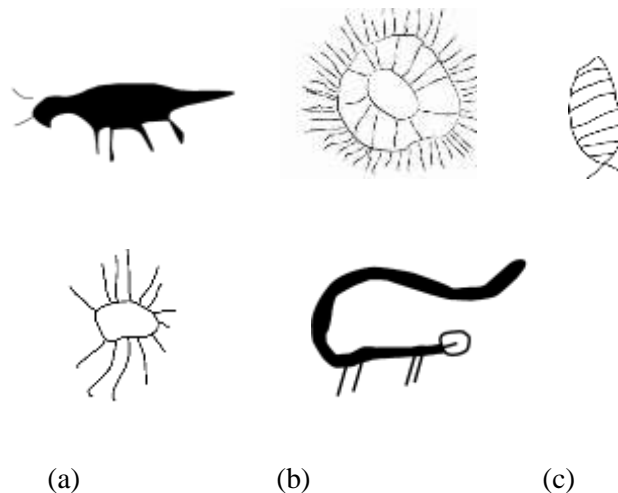
**Figure 1** Cave paintings at Kelew Cave

There are some anthropomorphic or human figures, but it is impossible to identify the gender of either male or female. The human image is drawn using a simple line pattern which is also referred to as the sketch. In addition, zoomorphic paintings are also featured in cave paintings in Kelew Cave. Zoomorphic paintings found on cave walls include deer, fish, pigs,

monkeys and insects. Typically these animals were painted on the walls of the cave, which were the animals of the community at that time as their daily food source.



**Figure 2** The sketch shows a human figure.



**Figure 3** Zoomorphic sketches are: (a) Buffalo, (b) Pig, (c) Fish, (d) Pick, (e) Monkey

In addition, the paintings displayed on the walls of the caves are geometric and abstract. Geometric drawings can be seen in the form of triangles, squares and so on. The basic form of geometry also includes a circle, dot, oval, semi-circular, coil, centered lines, curved lines, squares and crescents [1]. Abstract painting is a bit difficult to interpret because it has no fixed shape or specific features. Most abstract drawings have a variety of shapes such as straight, curved lines and even dashed lines such as hurried or incomplete drawings that can only be understood by the people who painted only [4].

## 5. ARTIFACTS OF PREHISTORIC SOCIETY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH KELEW CAVE

As a result of the surveys there was a discovery of lithic artifacts on the surface of the Ground Cave floor. Based discovery of lithic tools, the classification should be made to identify the function of the tools and its connection with prehistoric societies. Lithic tools has been identified for its features such as its sharp edges and its impacted parts.

Some of the lenses found to have function or effect are such as ax, stone hammer and lubricating stones. This finding further confirms that this cave was once a shelter or stopover. In prehistoric times the ax was a multi-functioning tool used as a cutting and chopping tool for hunting animals [15]. In addition, the stone hammer (Figure 4b) is also discovery on the floor of Kelew Cave floor. Stone hammer is the stone used to form or get rid of core stones [14]. The characteristics of a stone hammer has a impact on the surface of the stone and has a size suitable to be gripped or held.

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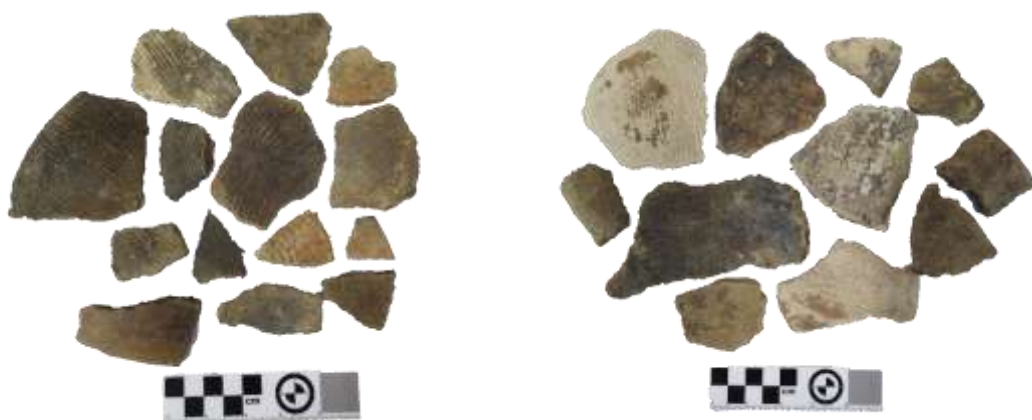


**Figure 4** Lithic tools: (a) ax, (b) stone hammer, (c) lubricating stones

The discovery of fragments of pottery also reinforces that the prehistoric people have used the Kelew Cave. A total of 26 pieces of pottery have been found that consist of the mouth or lips, the body and the combination of some parts of the body is known as '*karinasi*'. The pottery found in decoration is 22 pieces of various sizes.

Earthenware pottery also belongs to the ceramic category but the degree of combustion and the materials used to produce the earthenware pottery are different from other ceramics such as c'hing-pai, porcelain, stone pottery and others. The degree of combustion for earthenware pottery is around 350 °C - 1000 °C [18]. The development and progress of Neolithic society can also be identified through pottery production methods [14]. Therefore, these findings prove that prehistoric people in Kelew Cave uses pottery as a tool for cooking or storing food that has been cooked. Pottery also has multiple functions and it's not only for daily use but is also used in religious ceremonies and funerals.

In archaeological research the motifs are commonly found marked with decorative or unnamed pottery data. If the motives are referred to in a more specific way they are able to provide information from the origin or influence of their production. Prehistoric earthenware pottery typically has motifs such as ropes, nets, mats and baskets or other types of geometry such as dots, lines, circles and wavy lines [12]. Cord-marked pottery is also widely found in prehistoric sites of the Neolithic Age. Some of the features of the Neolithic Age pottery are known as dark colored, the surface is rough due to the soil used to be mixed with sand [7].



**Figure 5** Pottery fragments with motifs

The fragments of earthenware pottery found during this survey used a parallel line motif which is a parallel cutting technique known as a brush pattern (Figure 5) and only a few fragments using a cord marked motif. The parallel lines using this incising technique are created using sharp wood or animal teeth [10].

Some fragments of pottery were found using the impressed technique of using a non-skating rod and carved paddle. Beats were used on the exterior and the liner was used as an inner liner (Shepard, 1956: 59; Solheim et al., 1961: 168). Bat is also used to control the thickness and shape of earthenware pottery [19]. Impressive technique is the decoration by pressing something with the tip of a finger, the tip of a nail and a stamp on the surface of a soft pottery to form a desired motif. The principle of movement is to press and lift. [8].

The process of soil-forming pottery is divided into two stages, namely the primary forming phase and the secondary forming phase. In both processes, pottery can be formed using various techniques with or without the help of tools [8]. The techniques of pottery manufacture among prehistoric pottery in Peninsular Malaysia are slow wheel technique, hand molding, segmentation and coiling [6].

Through this survey, there were also ceramic fragments found around the floor of the cave. Distribution of various ceramic fragments such as blue and white from the Ching Dynasty in the 19th century and the red and white of the Netherlands in the 19th century (Figure 7). The findings of this fragmentation of the bowl (Figure 6) are similar to those found during a phase 1 review study conducted from February 15-24, 2001 in the village of Panchor, Kota Tinggi Johor [5]. Evidence of this ceramic discovery reinforced that the Kelew Cave area was once an old settlement and that the community was in contact with outsiders through trade activities. This is because the location of the cave near the Nenggiri river has been a major link to the community for a long time.



**Figure 6** Ceramic fragments such as blue and white from the Ching Dynasty on 19th century



**Figure 7** Red and white ceramic fragments from Netherlands on 19th century



**Figure 8** Blue and white ceramics from Ching Dynasty on 19th century and the Ming Dynasty on 16th Century. There is a Sanskrit text which means holy symbol

## 6. CONCLUSION

As a result of surveys conducted in the Kelew Cave, it is highly probable that the cave has become a settlement or stopover for prehistoric peoples practicing Neolithic culture. The findings of this survey indirectly reinforce the evidence that the Ulu Kelantan area, especially in the Kelew Cave, was once inhabited by prehistoric peoples to the indigenous Temiar peoples of the Senoi ethnic group. Therefore, these findings also indicate that the Kelew Cave has high potential for researchers to conduct scientific excavation activities for future studies.

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