

Analysis of human fossil findings in indonesia



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Indonesia is an important country to examine about human origins and evolution, due to many sites within central Java, such as Sangiran and Ngandong which account for 75 percent of the world's Homo erectus findings (Frederick & Worden, 2011). Evolution of Homo sapiens in Indonesia has shown Indonesian archipelago was inhabited by Homo erectus, which were known as the "Java Man", between 1.5 million years ago and present as 35,000 years ago. About 800,000 years ago, some of the earliest hominids of the archipelago made tools, constructed boats, used fire, and had a language (Fredrick & Worden, 2011). Furthermore, about 600,000 years ago, these hominids have developed a more complex and civilized culture which was dispersing throughout Indonesia (Fredrick & Worden, 2011). Patterns of evolution started to form through hunting, fishing, and creating communities which depended on tools made of materials such as shell, wood, bamboo, and stone (Fredrick & Worden, 2011).

The most recent discoveries in human fossils, were in 2004 on the island of Flores, Indonesia, which is located between Bali and Timor. Flores, Indonesia is one of many Wallacean islands, which lie east of Wallace's Line and west of Lydekker's Line. Teams of archeologists found an entirely new type of hominid species at the Liang Bua excavation site, which has since been named Homo floresiensis. This type of hominid has been considered a new hominid type that had locally evolved, was a considerably smaller hominid, and was mixed between Homo erectus and modern humans (Fredrick & Worden, 2011).

Homo floresiensis was a dwarf human, which lived at Liang Bua between at least 95,000 and 13,000 years ago. The species was believed to have used

stone tools, fire, and hunted small animals found on Flores (Foley, 2005). The newly found remains had a skull that appeared to belong to a hominine species, possibly belonging to a child considering its size, but once the remaining parts of its skull and teeth were found and they concluded it did not belong to a child, but an adult. The remains of this hominines partial skeleton was found and, the likes of which had never been discovered before. Today, this specimen is referred to as Liang Bua 1 (Smithsonian Institution, 2014). The earliest modern humans coexisted with their hominid relatives for thousands of years, although there is no evidence of this at Liang Bua (Fredrick & Warden, 2011).

Although Indonesia is extremely diverse ethnically, with more than 350 distinct ethnic groups that are recognized, along with 13 languages spoken by 1 million speakers (Fredrick & Warden, 2011). Human immigration to the islands of Indonesia occurred as long ago as 3000BC, and was continuous for about 3000 years. People immigrated to Indonesia in small groups and established independent civilizations all around the coast, occasionally coexisting with the hostile descendants of “Java Man” (Frederick & Worden, 2011). In the next several millennia Indonesia developed cultural characteristics that still exist today such as rice agriculture, ceramic and metal technology and the expansion of long distance sea travel and trade.

Earlier inhabitants used horticultural economy in which they grew cereals, created pottery and stone tools during the period 2500 to 500 B. C (Glasscase, 2011). During the period between 500 B. C. and A. D. 500, as the people of the archipelago increasingly interacted with South and East Asia, metals and domesticated farm animals were introduced (Glasscase, 2011).

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The Dongson culture, which originated in Vietnam and southern China around 1000 BC, spread to Indonesia, bringing irrigated rice growing techniques, husbandry skills; buffalo sacrifice rituals, bronze casting, the custom of erecting megaliths, and ikat weaving methods. By 700 BC, Indonesia was dotted with permanent villages where life was linked to rice production (Lonely Planet, 2014).

These early settlers were animists, believing all objects had a life force or soul. The spirits of the dead had to be honored, as they could still help the living and influence natural events, while evil spirits had to be warded off with offerings and ceremonies. As there was a belief in the afterlife, weapons and utensils were left in tombs for use in the next world.

By the 1st century AD, small kingdoms, were little more than collections of villages with a leader, which evolved from Java (Lonely Planet, 2014). The island's constant hot temperature, abundant rainfall and volcanic soil were ideal for wet field rice cultivation. The organization this required may explain why the Javanese developed a seemingly more successful society than the other islands. It is not certain how Hinduism and Buddhism arrived in Indonesia. The oldest works of Hindu art in Indonesia were found in Sulawesi and Sumatra in 3rd century AD (Fredrick & Worden, 1992). One theory suggests that the developing courts invited Brahman priests from India to watch over on spiritual and ritual sacrifices, thereby providing status to those in control (Fredrick and Worden, 1992).

In earlier kingdoms, the Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Sriwijaya rose in Sumatra (an Indonesian island) during the 7th century AD (Lonely Planet,

2014). It was the first major Indonesian sea power able to control the trade in Southeast Asia by being located on the Strait of Melaka. The Buddhist Sailendra dynasty and the Hindu Mataram dynasty flourished in Central Java (the largest Indonesian island) between the 8th and 10th centuries (Lonely Planet, 2014). While Sriwijaya's wealth came from trade, Javanese kingdoms like Mataram had human labor at their disposal and developed as agrarian societies.

At the end of the 10th century, the Mataram kingdom declined. The centre of power shifted from Central to East Java and it was a period when Hinduism and Buddhism were united and when Javanese culture began to come into its own (Pearson Education, 2000-2014). A series of kingdoms held until the 1294 rise of the Majapahit kingdom, which grew during the reign of Hayam Wuruk from 1350 to 1389 (Pearson Education, 2000-2014). Its territorial expansion can be credited to military commander Gajah Mada, who helped the kingdom claim control over the archipelago, claiming power over smaller kingdoms and obtaining trading rights from them. After Hayam Wuruk's death in 1389, the kingdom began a steady decline (Pearson Education, 2000-2014).

The first Islamic inscriptions found in Indonesia date from the 11th century. Islam first took hold in northern Sumatra, (a western Indonesian island) where Arab traders had settled by the 13th century. From the 15th and 16th centuries, Indonesian rulers made Islam the state religion. By the 15th century, the trading kingdom of Melaka (a small Malaysian state) was reaching the height of its power and had embraced Islam (Lonely Planet, 2014). Its influence strengthened the spread of Islam through the

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archipelago. By the time of the collapse of the Majapahit kingdom (based on the island of Java) in the early 1500s, many of its satellite kingdoms had already declared themselves independent Islamic states (Lonely Planet, 2014). Much of their wealth came from trading spices, and Islam followed the trade routes across the archipelago. By the end of the 16th century, a new sea power had emerged on Sulawesi, which had been settled by Malay traders and whose realm spread far beyond the region (Lonely Planet, 2014).

Beginning in 1602, the Dutch slowly established themselves as rulers of Indonesia and eventually laid the foundation of the Indonesian state, by taking advantage of the weakness of the small kingdoms that had replaced that of Majapahit (Pearson Education, 2000-2014). During 300 years of rule, the Dutch developed the Netherlands East Indies into one of the world's richest colonial possessions, extracting natural resources through local elites but doing little to modernize Indonesia. By the end of the Dutch rule and after many wars and lives taken, the Indonesian people wanted to stand alone and become united.

The Indonesian people started to receive a Dutch education for the children of the Indonesian elite, and with that came Western political ideas of freedom and democracy (Lonely Planet, 2014). However, the first ideas of Indonesian nationalism came from Islamic movements. Despite Dutch repression, the nationalist movement found a unified voice. In a historic announcement in 1928, the All Indonesia Youth Congress proclaimed its Youth Pledge, adopting the notions of one national identity, one country and one language (Lonely Planet, 2014). The battle for independence wavered between warfare and diplomacy. Under the Linggarjati Agreement of

November 1946, the Dutch recognized the Republican government and both sides agreed to work towards an Indonesian federation under a Dutch commonwealth (Pearson Education, 2000-2014). The agreement was soon swept aside as war escalated. The Dutch mounted a large offensive in July 1947, causing the United Nations to step in (Pearson Education, 2000-2014). In February 1948 the Dutch launched another attack on the Republicans, breaking the United Nations agreement. Under pressure from the United States, which threatened to withdraw its postwar aid to the Netherlands, the Dutch negotiated for independence. On December 27, 1949 the Indonesian flag was raised at Jakarta's Istana Merdeka, and power was officially handed over (Pearson Education, 2000-2014).

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