

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE, STONE AGE UNDETERM. GUNUNG MERAкса, SOUTH SUMATRA, INDONESIA

Access to the discovery site

The place where the artifacts described below were discovered in 1974 is located at the end of the road leading to the oil exploration well Gunung Meraksa (Me-14) drilled in South Sumatra (Fig.1).

The prehistoric stone flakes/artifacts were strewn on top and inside of the soil layer covering the laterite crust, along the road and in the immediate vicinity of the abandoned Me-14 well. Topographically, this soil layer covers a small promontory encircled by the road.

Because of lack of time, the search for fragments as well as more detailed observations were very short and had to be abandoned.

For coal exploration purposes, the road leading to the well location was upgraded, including bridges crossing several deep gullies. It is almost certain that this road and its bridges are now in a poor state of preservation.

If this discovery is of any interest and if it is intended to study this site, it is recommended to contact the Indonesian National Oil Company (Pertamina) for access the location. The way to the site is, indeed, rather complicated (start of the road, branching, etc.).

Apart from the necessary permissions, one has to be aware that tigers are (at least were) numerous in the area. Elephants, bears, monkeys, snakes and scorpions also belong to the local fauna.

Short description of the stone tools

As shown in Fig. 2, the artifacts collected are comprised of

- a few one-sided pieces with obvious chipping marks on the edges;
- and more numerous chips representing remainders of the tool production activity.

The relative abundance of chips and tools may suggest that the site was occupied for tool production rather than for dwelling. Whether this suggestion is correct needs to be confirmed by in-depth study of the site.

The base material of the artifacts is chert the exact composition of it has yet to be determined. The use of this material is not surprising in view of the abundance of silicified wood and chalcedony concretions that can be found in river beds of the area. Under binocular lens, remains of plants can be seen embedded in the silica matrix of grey-brown colour (Fig.3).

These small tools production technology appears similar to well-known methods used elsewhere. Flake chips and denticulate edges are conspicuous among the samples recovered (Fig.4).

The age of this – local? - industry remains unfortunately unknown. Its determination would be of utmost interest.

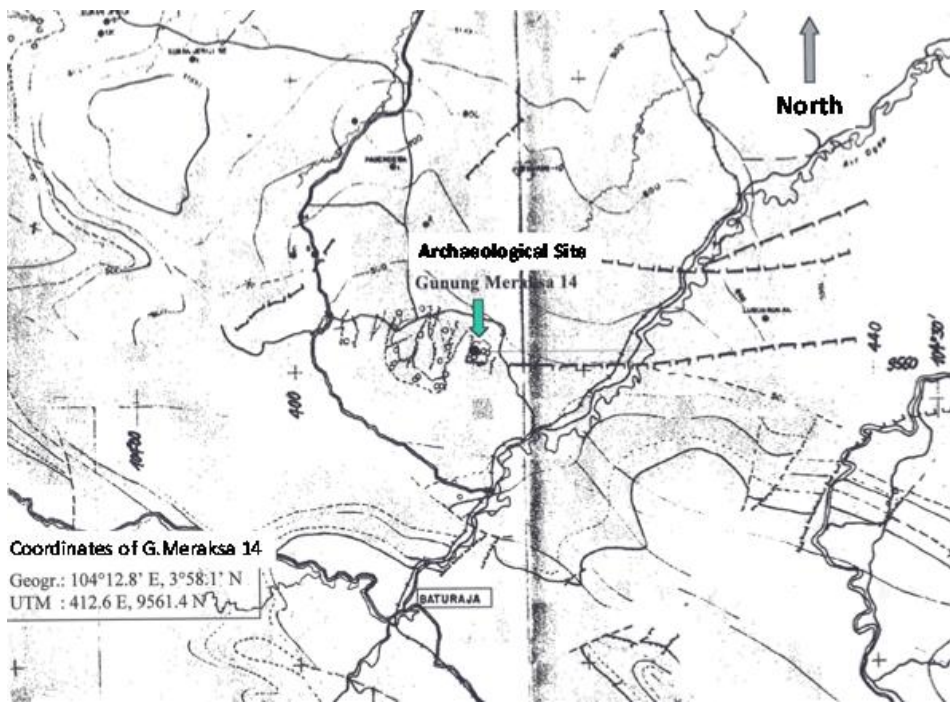


Fig.1 Situation of and access to the archeological site



Fig. 2 Best examples of the collected samples

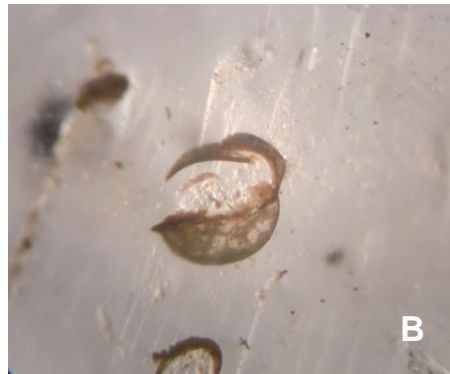


Fig.3 Examples of tiny plant remains (pollens, cuticles, etc.) embedded in the chert mass (A,B,C). Rugged surface of the chert (D).

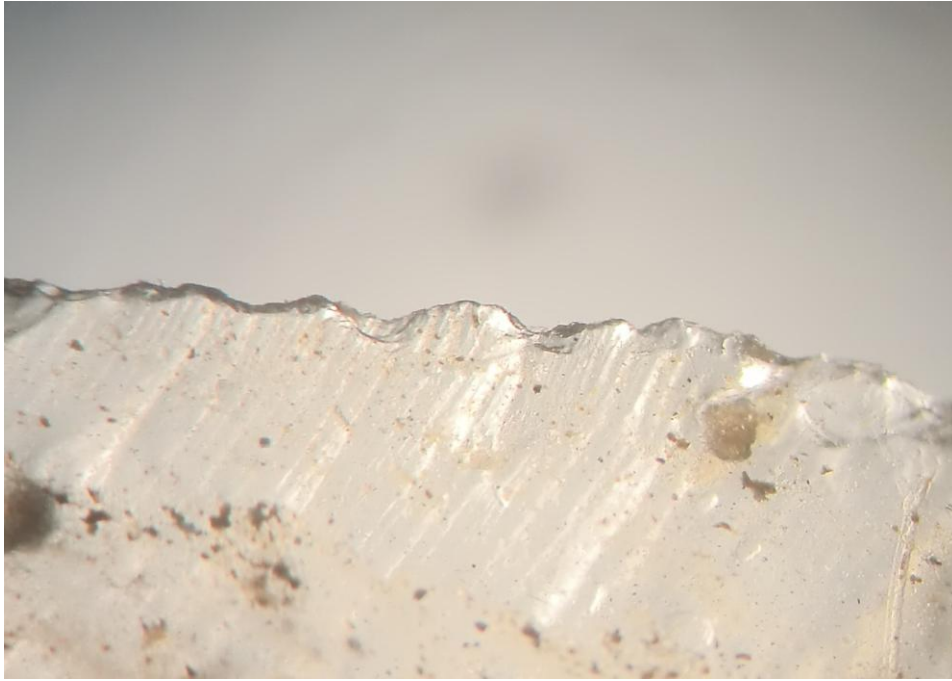


Fig. 4 Example of tool edge pointing to percussion technology