

Researching in Dieng, Students of Archaeology UGM Discovered Ceramics from 9th Century

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Students of Archaeology Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences UGM found a number of artifacts at Dieng temple complex located between Banjarnegara and Wonosobo in Central Java. The artifacts found during the research conducted from 2-11 June 2010 consist of fragments of Chinese ceramics from the Tang Dynasty in the 9th century and broken glasses from Persia.

The discovery added the historical evidence of the Ancient Mataram Kingdom, proving that in that century, there were trade routes connecting China and the Middle East passing through Indonesia. This finding is the first time ever and very significant to contribute the data on the economic side of Ancient Mataram Kingdom. Until now, the existing data cover only the development of religion and the kingdom.

"We did the excavation and identification of two boxes in the Dieng temple complex, precisely near the staircase entrance of Kailasa Museum and an old well nearby. Excavation was carried out on the ground that has not been explored before and has not undergone a transformation. We found a number of artifacts, ranging from ceramic fragments that are similar to the Chinese ceramics on the ship that sank in Belitung, gacuk which is fake money made of refined pottery, ancient glasses from Persia, as well as charcoal which can be used to determine the age of artifacts," Field Research Team Leader, Dr. Mahirta, explained to Fortakgama reporters in Faculty of Cultural Sciences Leadership Meeting Room UGM, Saturday (12/6).

According to the lecturer of Archaeology Department, dozens pieces of brown and yellow ceramics were made in the Ding pottery center in North China during the Tang Dynasty. This evidence can be ascertained because each pottery center in China has its own artistic style. Meanwhile, the analysis of ancient glass elements proved that the object came from Persia as shown by its distinctive blue and green colors. This ancient glass fragment is the oldest artifact in the finding. "The historical value of the discovery is very high, because it proved the Middle East' trade routes in the 9th century called as the Silk Road, stretching from India, Malacca Strait, East Coast of Sumatra, North Coast of Java, up to the Moluccas. At that time, traders obtained spices from Indonesia," she explained.

Meanwhile, an archaeologist from National University of Singapore, Prof. John Norman Miksick, explained that up to now, there is very few information on land trade in 9th century. Most historical



evidence and research findings were taken from shipwreck in the bottom of the ocean. "Only in the last 15 years, many new historical evidences were found on land, one of them is those in Dieng," he said.

According to Miksick, the discovery of a number of artifacts, especially ceramics of Tang Dynasty, has been done through various excavations. The finding, however, is usually accidental. So, it is hard to find accurate data, because many researchers focus on the excavation of other sites. As a result, the finding of such ceramics is not considered important and is used only as secondary data. In fact, the finding of Tang Dynasty ceramics on land can actually complete the existing historical evidence. The distribution pattern of ceramics can explain trade routes in the century that trade was not only done on the sea, but also in the hinterland. "This discovery can have important meaning to the history of Asia and the Middle East," he added.

Head of Archaeology Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences UGM, Prof. Dr. Inayati Adrisiyanti added that the Dieng site is only known as the site of temples. This finding, however, proved that in the 9th century, there were economic activities in the surrounding communities. "The area was not only a place of worship, but also the trading activities in the 9th century. This finding completed the historical data, because until this time, researchers found more historical evidence from much later period (approximately in 11th - 13th century)," she concluded.

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