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WAHAU COAL FIELD, EAST
KALIMANTAN, INDONESIA
"CONCERN OF: GEOLOGY,
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COALBED METHANE

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POTENTIAL

by Basuki Rahmad

**GEOLOGY AND GEOHERITAGE OF MUARA WAHAU COAL FIELD,
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“CONCERN OF: GEOLOGY, MICROSCOPY, ORGANIC GEOCHEMISTRY
AND COALBED METHANE POTENTIAL**

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia coal have the coal-forming material (plants) as well as the parameters that are relatively the same deposition conditions (tropical) although it is located in the sprawling region Indonesia with diverse geological conditions, hence Indonesia is one of the significant coal producer in the world. Research site located in Muara Wahau, East Kalimantan, including the Upper Kutai Basin. Coal bearing formation in the area of Muara Wahau is Wahau Formation Late Oligocene - Early Miocene age. Laboratory analyses was conducted using method coal microscopy observations to determine vitrinite reflectance random (Rr) and maceral composition as well as method of Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) to determine facies, organic compound (biomarker), maturity and precursor of plant MuaraWahau coal. Maceral composition of the Muara Wahau coal is dominated by vitrinite maceral group, ranging from 76% to 82.4.0%. Liptinite maceral group accounts 0.4% – 1.8 %. The composition of inertinite maceral group ranges from 8% to 18.8%. Huminite reflectance of coal samples from Muara Wahau range from 0.44 to 0.45 Rr (%), according to huminite reflectance, all studied samples are low rank sub-bituminous coals. Maceral composition to detect coalbed methane potential. The presence of 2-series long chain *n*-alkane indicates the changes of peat forming facies condition from oxic condition (increasing odd carbon proportion) and anoxic condition (increasing even carbon proportion) Geological Outcrop along the Telen River and Wahau River, is the type locality of Wahau Formations, should become a geology conservation area in Muara Wahau as Geoheritage and it is very interesting to study geology.

Key words: geology, coal; tropical; facies; high plants; long chains; oxic; anoxic; methane

INTRODUCTION

Muara Wahau is an area of Muara Wahau, East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan province, including in the Upper Kutai Basin. Coal bearing formation in Muara Wahau is Wahau Formation, the age Late Oligocene - Early Miocene.

Regional geology of Muara Wahau is part of the Kutai Basin which economically is one of the sedimentary basins in Indonesia, most importantly, in addition to rich in oil and gas, the area is also rich in coal deposits.

Indonesia is one of the countries producing big enough coal in the world, some of the factors that affect it are the geological environment and climate.

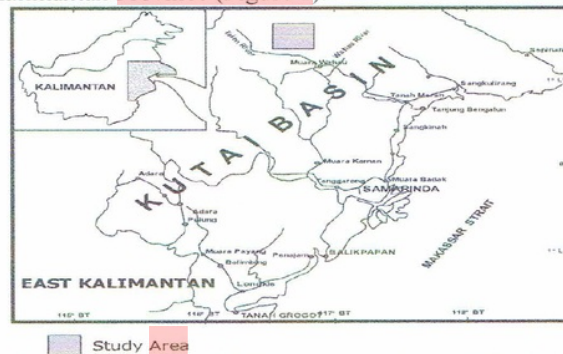
Indonesia as a tropical country with two seasons (wet and dry), greatly contributed to the accumulation of peat formation, especially fluctuations in water level changes in the peat bog, as the primary control in the accumulation of peat (Dehmer et al., 1993). This causes the Indonesian coal generally has the characteristics of microscopic, organic geochemistry, and almost the same quality.

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This study will discuss Geology of Muara Wahau particularly Wahau Formations where the type locality is on the Telen River and the Wahau River, and both rivers are expected to conservation area as Geoheritage of Muara Wahau.

GEOLOGICAL SETTING

Administratively location area of research is in the area of Muara Wahau **East Kutai Regency, East Kalimantan Province (Figure 1)**.



1 Figure 1. Location map of Muara Wahau coal field in Kutai Basin, East Kalimantan



Figure 2. Kutai Basin of the elements of Regional Tectonics (Ott, 1987)

Regionally Muara Wahau is part of the Kutai Basin which economically is one of the sedimentary basins in Indonesia, most importantly, in addition to rich in oil and gas, the area is also rich in coal deposits. According to Ott (1987), the Kutai Basin is restricted by Tinggian Kuching in the west, the north ridge Mangkalihat, Adang Fault to the south and the Makassar Strait to the east (Figure 2). This basin is the largest and deepest of the Tertiary basins in Indonesia with more than 14 km thick fluvial sediments which are accumulated until batial (Allen and Chambers, 1998).

The age of Merah Formation is Late Eocene lithology composed by marl, mudstone, conglomerate and limestone. The age of Merah Formation Late Eocene sequence is an interbedded marl, mudstone, conglomerate and limestone exposed in Muarawahau Sheets and Muara Ancalong, East Kalimantan. The location is the type of formation Angry Angry River at Muara Wahau Sheet (Supriatna and Abidin, 1995). The thickness of this formation is approximately ranging between 400 to 800 meters. Merah Formation cropping in the Merah River is a series of sub-littoral sediment deposited on the foreland basin (Supriatna and Abidin, 1995). The content of the fossil of a layer of marl constituent Merah Formations show Late Eocene age.

Conformably on the top of Merah Formation was deposited Wahau Formation the age is Oligocene - Early Miocene, lithology consists of interbedded claystone, quartz sandstones, silty sandstones and sandy mudstone. Wahau Formation is divided into 2 (two), lower Wahau Formation consists of limestones rich in fossilized algae and corals, while the upper Wahau Formation containing inserts of tuff and lignite.

Unconformably on the top of Wahau Formation deposited Metulang volcanic rocks, the lithology consists of andesite, basalt, lava, lava breccia, tuff, agglomerate and lava breccia. Intrusion Sintang cross cut the Wahau Formation consists of andesite and diorite. Radiometric dating is based on K - Ar, Sintang Intrusion age is 16-21 million years old, Early Miocene (Soeria Atmadja et al., 1999).

Based on the stratigraphic framework and tectonics, the development of the basin coal in the Kutai Basin during the Tertiary related to continental margin, where the basin coal is found in parts of the continental crust that is on the edge of the continent (continental margin) and is passive margin associated with the system rifting. The age of coal of Wahau Formation is Early Miocene deposition during the regression phase in conjunction with orogenesis process known as Syn-orogenic Regressive Phase Deposition. Deposition coal associated with deltaic floodplain environment of prograding delta during the Miocene. Coal layer tends to be thick, lateral distribution is relatively constant (Koesoemadinata, 2002). Muara Wahau regional stratigraphy based on the correlation of rock units Geological Map Sheet Muara Wahau (Supriatna and Abidin, 1995), ranging from old to young Tertiary shown in Figure 3.

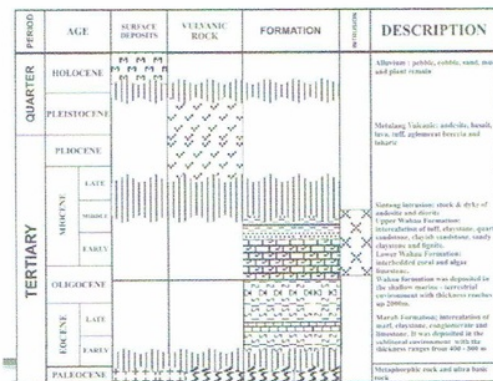


Figure 3. Regional Stratigraphic of Muara Wahau area (Supriatna and Abidin, 1995).

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Stages of the research started from the preparatory phase which includes planning work and literature study, research and collection of field data through geological survey and sample the rocks and the coal is taken directly core drilling, followed by laboratory analysis consists of the preparation and analysis of samples of coal which includes petrographic analysis of rocks and coal, organic geochemistry in the form of Gas Chromatography - Mass Spectrometry (GC - MS) and proximate analysis of coal.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

GEOLOGY OF MUARA WAHAU

Generally, the condition of morphological research areas undulating low (5° - 10°) almost all areas of research covered in oil palm plantations (Figure 4) so most of the outcrop and coal are already covered by the waste ground at the beginning of the opening of oil palm plantations formerly primary forest.

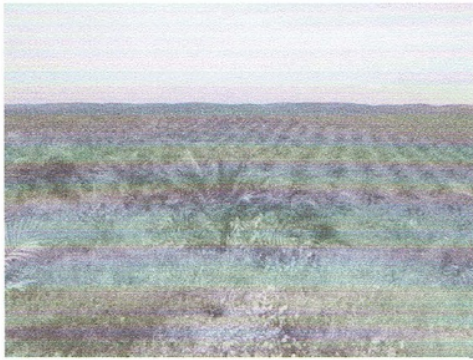


Figure 4. The Landscape of study area in Muara Wahau

Local Stratigraphy Wahau Formation in the study area consisted of interbedded black carbonaceous claystone, tuffaceous mudstone, fine sandstone, medium sandstone inserts of thick coal and andesite igneous intrusions (Figure 5).

Coal deposition associated with floodplain deltaic environment of the delta during the Miocene progradation. Inclined thick coal layers, spread laterally relative basis (Koesoemadinata, 2002). Wahau Formation lithology in the study area consists of black claystone containing carbonaceous, claystone tuffaceous, fine sandstones, sandstones and interbedded thick coal.

The geological map of Muara Wahau area consist of one unit lithology is claystone unit (Figure 6). The pattern of distribution of the geological structure of coal (coal cropline) in the study area is trending north-west of syncline-southeast. Commonly position of the main seam of coal seam and the seam-1-2 is a northwest-southeast with a slope of the coal seam ranges from 8° to 12° . In general, the Muara Wahau coal thickness is in the range 8 to 66 meter (Figure 6).

PERIOD	AGE	FORMATION	LITHOSTRATIGRAPHY	INTRUSION AND/OR ENVIRONMENTAL	DESCRIPTION	REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL
TERTIARY	EARLY MIOCENE	WAHAU	CLAYSTONE UNIT		<p>Tufaceous claystone, white, soft. Indurated, grey, moist, appears crystalline, fine lamination, argillaceous, porphyro, plagioclase, biotite, quartz, hematite, pyroxene.</p> <p>Coal Seam-4 (II), thickness 8m, brown blackish, streak brown, hard. Heterogeneous dull coal, band of dull coal dan handuk coal.</p> <p>Interbedded black claystone carbonaceous, grey claystone, inert quartz sandstone. Coal Seam-1 (II), thickness 12m, brown blackish, streak brown, hard. Heterogeneous dull coal, band of dull coal dan handuk coal.</p> <p>Coal seam-1 (II), thickness 14m, brown blackish, streak brown, hard. Heterogeneous dull coal, band of dull coal dan handuk coal.</p> <p>Interbedded green claystone, grey claystone, tufaceous claystone white, carbonaceous claystone, quartz sandstone, with wavy lamination, facies laminae, there is carbon streak, inert sandy claystone.</p> <p>Coal Seam-2, thickness 5m, brown, streak brown, hard. Heterogeneous dull coal, band of dull coal dan handuk coal.</p> <p>Interbedded grey claystone, greenish claystone, inert tufaceous claystone, carbonaceous claystone, quartz sandstone, sandy claystone.</p>	DELTA PLAIN

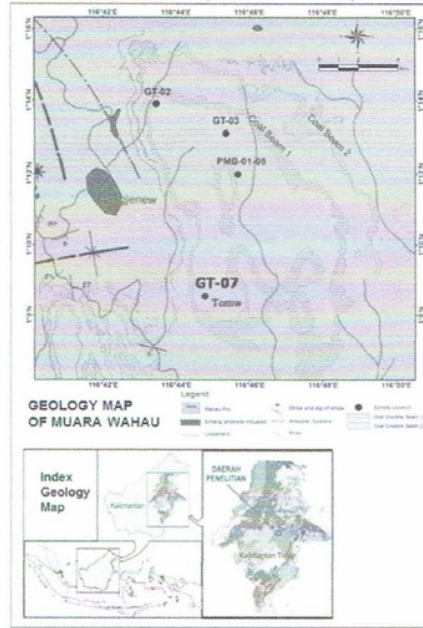


Figure 5. Stratigraphy of Wahau Formation in MuaraWahau area (source: PMB01-08 drill)

Figure 6. Geological Map of Muara Wahau area

The top of the coal seam seam-i revealed distributed in Telen River. In general, the physical properties of coal Muara Wahau are: dark brown, hard, dull coal, banded coal and coal banded dull, dull gloss, streak brown color, containing resin. Igneous intrusions as part of the intrusion of andesite Sintang (Supriatna and Abidin, 1995) one of them exposed in Ben Hes residence is the northern part of the study area (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Geological Outcrop type locality Wahau Formation on Wahau River.

- a. Coal Seam-1 outcrop
- b. Claystone unit
- c. Andesite Sintang Intrusion
- d. Interbedded Sandstone and claystone

COAL MICROSCOPY (MACERAL) OF MUARA WAHAU

Maceral composition of the Muara Wahau coal is dominated by vitrinite maceral group, ranging from 76% to 82.4.0%. Liptinite maceral group accounts 0.4% - 1.8%. The composition of inertinite maceral group ranges from 8% to 18.8% (Table 1). Huminite reflectance of coal samples from Muara Wahau range from 0.44 to 0.45 Rr (%). According to huminite reflectance, all samples studied are low-rank sub-bituminous coals.

Microscopic analysis shows that the Muara Wahau coals are predominantly consist of vitrinite macerals (Figure 8), with minor liptinite and inertinite. Vitrinite maceral of the coals composed of telocollinite, desmocollinite, densinite, and corpocollinite. Liptinite maceral consist of cutinite, resinite, suberinite, and sporinite. Inertinite maceral is dominated by fusinite, semifusinite, and sclerotinite. Cutinite mainly presents as thin continuous bands in association with vitrinite maceral (Figure 9)

Sclerotinite shows rounded to oval forms and has high reflectance. This maceral is present in all coal samples (Figure 8)

Table 1. Result of Microscopy Analysis (Maceral) coal of Wahau Formation in Muara Wahau area

No. Sampel	Total Vitrinite (% vol)	Total Liptinite (% vol)	Total Inertinite (% vol)	Total Mineral Matter (% vol)	Reflektan Vitrinite (Rv) %
1	79.8	-	18.8	1.4	0.44
2	76.2	1.4	17	5.4	0.44
3	79.4	0.4	17.8	2.4	0.44
4	79.4	1	15.4	4.2	0.45
5	78.8	1.8	17.6	2	0.45
6	82.4	1	8	8.6	0.44
7	79.4	0.4	17.8	2.4	0.45
8	79	1	16.2	3.8	0.45
9	82.4	1	10.8	5.8	0.44
10	79.4	1	15	4.6	0.44
11	80	2	17	1	0.44
12	76	1.2	17.2	5.6	0.45

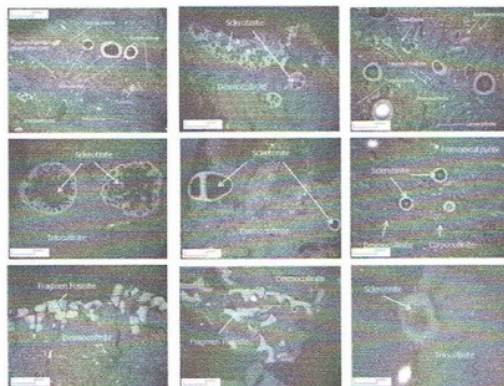


Figure 8. The appearance of microscopic maceral vitrinite and inertinite Muara Wahau coal using white light, a magnification of 200 times

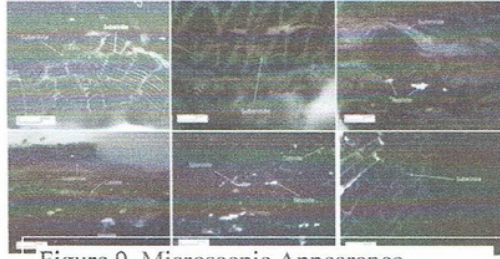


Figure 9. Microscopic Appearance maceral liptinite Wahau Muara coal, using blue light, magnification 200 times

ORGANIC GEOCHEMISTRY OF MUARA WAHAU COAL

Saturated fraction from Muara Wahau coal samples was detected forming long chain series *n*-alkane, the ranging of first series from *n*-C₂₁ to *n*-C₃₅, with a high odd over even predominance peaking at *n*-C₃₁, this condition is very specific for higher plant. Additionally, second series long chain *n*-alkane ranging from *n*-C₃₆ to *n*-C₄₀ with even over odd predominance peaking at *n*-C₃₈.

High concentration of saturated non-hopanoid triterpenoid dominated saturated hydrocarbon Muara Wahau Coal such as: Olean-13(18)-ene; Olean-18-ene and Urs-12-ene, indicated much input from higher plant (*angiosperm*) which long chain *n*-alkane characteristic.

The presence of long chain *n*-alkane at Muara Wahau Coal are very exclusive especially carbon number *n*-C₃₆ to *n*-C₄₀. The long chain in Indonesia was found only in the Kalimantan Coal, beside in Muara Wahau, it was also found in Palangkaraya peat, Central Kalimantan and in Embalut, East Kalimantan (Lower Kutai Basin) at coal of Balikpapan Formation.

The presence of 2-series long chain *n*-alkane indicates the changes of peat forming facies condition from oxic condition (increasing odd carbon proportion) and anoxic condition (increasing even carbon proportion) (Figure 10; Table 2)

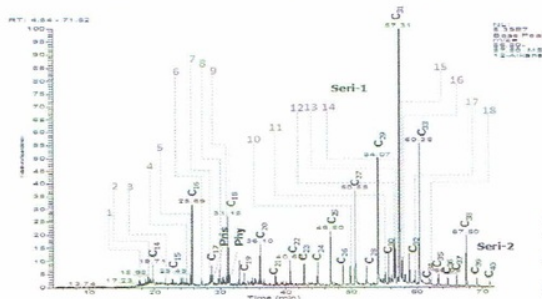


Figure 10. Distribution of long chain *n*- Alkane Muara Wahau coal (Basuki RAHMAD, et al., 2012)

Table 2. Result of identification substance number 1 s/d 18 *n*-alkane fraction Muara Wahau coal sample G2S1C12 (Basuki RAHMAD, et al., 2012)

PEAKS	RET.TIME	COMPOUND (G251C12-ALKANE-M/257)	BASE PEAK	M.W.	CONCENT. $\mu\text{g/g TOC}$
1	17.63	DODECANE (Wiley)	57	170	2.71
2	18.98	TETRADECANE,2,6,10-TRIMETHYL (Wiley)	57	240	3.78
3	21.63	DOTRIACONTANE (Wiley)	57	450	3.42
4	25.38	6-ISOPROPYL-2,5-DIMETHYL-1,2,3,4-TETRAHYDRONAPHTHALENE (Wiley)	187	202	1.18
5	25.48	2-ICOSANETHIOL (Wiley)	57	314	3.42
6	27.08	TETRADECANE,2,6,10-TRIMETHYL (Wiley)	57	240	4.89
7	28.48	N-TRICOSANE (Wiley)	57	282	9.64
8	29.87	DOCOSANE (Wiley)	57	310	10.08
9	30.39	TRICOSANE (Wiley)	57	324	3.8
10	49.78	23-NORLUPANE (Haven et al.,1989)	177	398	9.94
11	55.2	ERGOST-22-EN-3-OL, (3 β ,5 α ,22E,24R)- (Wiley)	55	400	5.47
12	56.55	OLEAN-13(18)-ENE (Philp, 1985; Dehmer, 1993; Anggayana, 1996; Amijaya, 2006; Widodo, 2008)	218	410	31.37
13	56.66	OLEAN-12-ENE (Philp, 1985; Dehmer, 1993; Anggayana, 1996; Amijaya, 2006; Widodo, 2008)	218	410	13.60
14	56.77	OLEAN-18-ENE (Philp, 1985; Dehmer, 1993; Anggayana, 1996; Amijaya, 2006; Widodo, 2008)	218	410	10.32
15	57.31	URS-12-ENE (Philp, 1985; Anggayana, 1996; Amijaya, 2006; Widodo, 2008)	218	410	32.1
16	57.42	NEOHOP-13(18)-ENE (Wiley)	191	410	4.16
17	58.21	22R-17 α (H), 21 β (H)-HOMOHOPEANE (Philp, 1985; Dehmer, 1993; Anggayana, 1996; Amijaya, 2006; Widodo, 2008)	191	426	5.44
18	59.71	(22R)-17 β (H)-HOMOHOPEANE (Philp, 1985; Dehmer, 1993; Anggayana, 1996; Amijaya, 2006; Widodo, 2008)	205	426	2.26

COALBED METHANE POTENTIAL

Vitrinite content is relatively high in Muara Wahau coal included in kerogen type III as an identifier of humic organic matter derived from the woody tissue of higher plants (Angiosperm). Vitrinite maceral which is a cellulose-rich network on herbaceous plants forming methane (gas prone) high. The physical properties maceral groups, such as vitrinite has a specific gravity of 1.3 - 1.8 with a high oxygen content and volatile matter content of about 35.75%, it can produce methane (CH₄) or as gas prone.

In essence, the network of cellulose plants more easily hydrolyzed, such as disaccharides, starch, cellulose, hemicellulose, pentosanes, pectins and proteins are decomposed without any difficulty by bacteria and fungi, some produce methane (CH₄) and the solution (carbon dioxide, ammonia, methane/CH₄ and water), which will come out and left to produce a solid material (mainly humic substances), which participated in the formation of coal.

The average quality of coal Muara Wahau Formation: Calorific Value 4087 kcal/kg (adb), sulfur 0.11% (adb); ash 3.41% (adb); inherent moisture 33.25% (adb); volatile matter 34.48% (adb); fixed carbon 28.86% (adb), Total Moisture 43.51% (Ar); 1:34 relative density. Random vitrinite reflectance from 0.44 to 0.45. Classification rank of coal: sub-bituminous.

CONCLUSION

- Geological Outcrop along the Telen River and Wahau River, is the type locality of Wahau Formations, should be become a geology conservation area in Muara Wahau as Geoheritage and it is very interesting to study geology.
- Characteristics of Coal Wahau Formation very unique and interesting aspects of microscopic, organic geochemistry and potential for development coalbed methane.

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