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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE TRADER'S CAVE, NIAH NATIONAL PARK: REPORT ON THE SECOND AND THIRD (2018 & 2019) FIELD SEASONS

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### INTRODUCTION

In November 2017, 50 years after Tom and Barbara Harrison completed their excavations in the West Mouth of the Niah Great Cave Complex (NGCC), we began archaeological excavations in the Trader's Cave (Fig.1). While the area containing the Niah Caves was privately owned land at the time the Harrisons undertook their research it was gazetted as a National Park in 1974 and today comprises 3,138 hectares of forest and karst areas including many largely unexplored caves. Our research project, underway since 2011, aims to assess the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental potential of the caves in Niah National Park beyond the areas subject to research previously by the Harrisons. The Trader's Cave (3°49'1.16"N, 113°46'54.42"E) is the second largest cavern in Niah National Park and is located approximately 150 m north of the West Mouth within the same karst tower (Bukit Bekajang) as the NGCC. As noted previously (Curnoe et al. 2017), the Harrisons excavated a small trial excavation in the northern tourist entrance of the cave during 1956, but never published the results or returned to the locality for further archaeological research. Until our project began, there had been no archaeological activities within the main cavern of the Trader's Cave despite its size: the cave being ~200 m in maximum length, ~30 m at its widest point and with a maximum height >15 m. Similarly, while Hazelbroek and Morshidi (2000) provided a brief description of the geology of the cave, the only detailed speleological investigation of the Trader's Cave was published in 2017 (Dodge-Wan 2017). Since our first field campaign (Curnoe et al. 2017), we have completed a further two field seasons with a total duration of 16 weeks of field research 2017 - 2019 in this cave, with further excavations planned for 2020 - 2022.

### Keywords:

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