Presenting the Archaeological Evidence in Aceh: International Trade Perspective

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to examine the evidence of the archaeological evidence founding in Lamreh, Aceh province, Indonesia. It shows that the ceramics fragment proves the connection of trade between Aceh and Southeast Asia. These specific ceramics originally come from mainland China, Thai and Vietnam. The current founding of ceramics in Malaysian Peninsula including Kedah, Melaka, and Johor confirm the similarities. It reaffirms that Aceh was the hub of international trade. This study used exploratory research approach. This approach with the narrative perspective to examine what ceramics tells us around 13th until 15th CE regarding to international trading in Lamreh, Aceh. The research will give the new perspective on historical record based on archaeological evidences. Previous researches are mainly focussing on record from international explorers. This study will help us to understand possibility to connect Aceh as part of ASEAN community to build a new international trade hub in Aceh.

Key words: *ceramics, trade, Lamreh, Aceh*

1. Introduction
Since early 16th CE, Aceh was known as the largest international trade centre in Nusantara world (Ito, 2015; PeACoCk & GAlloP, 2016). Most of the merchants came to trade the species which is in great demand in West and Middles East markets (Tracy, 1997). A number of explorers had visited Aceh in 16th CE telling that Aceh was the centre for international trade in Southeast Asia (Reid, 1995). As well as, local sources such as *Bustanus Salatin* and *Hikayat Aceh* was also declared the similarities (Lombard, 1967).

Archaeological research by McKinnon (1988) in Ujong Pancu – a coast to the west of Banda Aceh city – found several ceramics fragment that produced before 15th CE. Most of them were exported during South Song and Yuan Dynasties-China. It shows that before Aceh sultanate established, It had a commercial trade with international merchants. McKinnon has claimed that Ujong Pancu was the centre for international trade in Aceh. furthermore, he argued that the Lamuri kingdom capital is Ujong Pancu. The founding of those ceramics demonstrates that Aceh had a strong connection with international trader long time before the Kingdom of Aceh establishment.

Currently, a large quantity of ceramics has been discovered at Lamreh, Aceh Province-Indonesia.
This site is located approximately 30 km to the north of the provincial capital, Banda Aceh. Generally, the ceramics is dated back to the period of the Song, Yuan, and early Ming dynasties. Refer to historical records, ceramics was the merchandise in the past beside other items (Wood, 1999). Therefore, this paper will underline Lamreh site as the centre of trade in Aceh before 15th CE. As well as, the discovery the ceramics is proving that Lamreh was a hub of international trade in Southeast Asia until 15th CE.

1. Methodology

This research is aimed to identify the international trade in Aceh before 16th CE. To gain the purpose, the research applied several methods. Firstly, library research was used to obtain the record of the ancient trade in Aceh by international explorer. Then, field work was conducted in the site. A coastal survey of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar district has been done. It found that Lamreh was the site of the oldest ceramics. Lastly, a comprehensive survey during 3 weeks onsite was conducted to collect the ceramics fragment as the main data of this research. The final steps are ceramics analysis. Morphological analysis was used to identify the shape and decoration of ceramics fragment. The technological analysis was to determine the raw material of ceramics while the contextual analysis was applied to correlate the ceramics with the site. These methods are considering will answer the origin of the ceramics where the ceramics were produced. Lastly, relative dating was used to search the date of ceramics by comparing the similarities of another ceramic in Southeast Asia.

2. Discussion

Lamreh is a village located on the northern tip of Sumatra Island-Indonesia. This is a hilly area and facing directly with the Strait of Melaka. Lamreh site is situated at N 5°36'42.7" and E 95°31'54.2". This site is about 30 km to the northern of Banda Aceh city or 50 km from the north direction of Ujong Pancu site where McKinnon did his research. Lamreh site has 2 bays namely Krung Raya and Ujong Batee Kapai bays.

Picture 1. Research location area

During 3 weeks' survey onsite, numerous pieces of ceramic fragment were collected for analysis. Mostly, all of them are divided into 2 major types that are Chinese and Southeast Asian ceramics. The typologies of Chinese ceramics are celadon ware, Qingbai ware and blue white porcelain while Southeast Asian ceramics are Sukhothai ware from Thailand and Vietnamese ware.

2.1. Celadon Ware

The word of celadon refers to green glaze ware, all of the green glaze ware called celadon (Wood, 1999). The main production of celadon was in Zhejiang province, southern China. The great qualities of celadon were produced in Longquan city located at southern Zhejiang then known as Longquan celadon (Dejin, 1994).

A large number of Longquan celadon was produced since 12nd CE when the capital of Song Dynasty moved to Hangzhou-southern China (Kerr & Thomas, 2004). Since that time, the craftsman began improved the technology of ceramics and successfully produced the great quality of celadon ware (Hongming, 2010). This achievement due to several factors. Firstly, the main location of ceramics production was nearby to the court and it was easy to control by government. Then, the policy of Southern Song Dynasty launched the ceramics as one of the official commodity export other than silk (Wood, 1999).

Since 12th CE, a massive amount of celadon was exported and accepted in the international market due to their quality (Dejin, 1994; Valenstein, 1988; Wood, 1999). Finally, celadon ware reached the greatness in 12th until 14th CE under Song and Yuan dynasties (Satō, 1981). These ceramics have been already found in several sites in Southeast Asia either in Malay Peninsula and Indonesia as the evidence of their distribution outside China (Yatim, 1978).

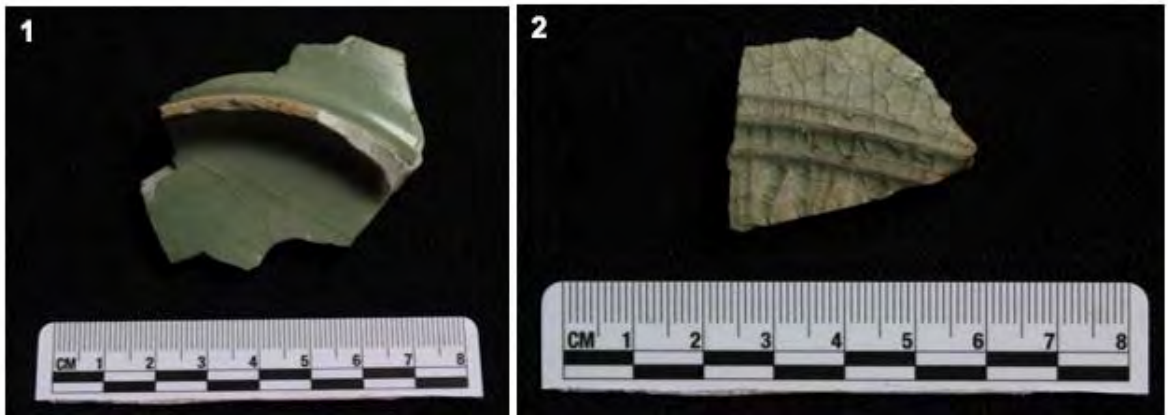
Lamreh site is the location where the celadon ware has been found in Sumatra Island-Indonesia. Most of them has a various colour such as olive green, bluish green, yellowish green and half of them has a thick glaze and cracked glaze. Those character is representing the identity of celadon ware produced in Longquan kiln, Zhejiang Province during Song and Yuan dynasties around 12th – 14th CE (Hongming, 2010; Wood, 1999).

The result of the technological analysis show that the celadon ware from Lamreh site was made by stone (stoneware). The temperature of ceramics firing was around 1150°C until 1300°C (Wood, 1999). The olive green glaze ware from Lamreh site was probably burned in highest temperature so that produced that colour (Hongming, 2010). The morphological analysis shows that the ceramics fragment was a part of utensils ware such as bowl and dish.

A half group of celadon ware from Lamreh site has the lowest quality, the glaze is very cracked and not glossy. The raw material of ceramics body is impure and coarse. Probably, that group was exported during the last decade of Yuan Dynasty. Since that time, the celadon ware was very high demand in international markets either in Asia or Middle East (Guy, 1986). Therefore, Yuan Dynasty established many kilns in Southern China to maintain the supply chain and finally they produced in the largest quantity of ceramics (Wood, 1999). As a result, the quality of celadon was declined (Hongming, 2010).

Beside in Lamreh-Aceh, the same type of ceramics has been found in Malay Peninsula such as in Kedah, Johor Lama, and Temasek (Singapore) (Yatim, 1978). In Indonesia, they have found in Kota China, Palembang and Jambi (McKinnon, 1977). It shows that Lamreh was an important market for celadon ware in Southeast Asia. Based on the quantity of ceramics fragment it shows celadon was an important commodity which was traded in Aceh before 15th CE. Probably, the discovery of Longquan celadon in Lamreh sites was inseparable from the policy of Yuan Dynasty expanding their maritime trade network in Southeast Asia.

Picture 2: Celadon ware from Lamreh site



Picture 1 is the celadon fragment from South Song Dynasty (12nd CE) and picture 2 is the celadon from the late period of Yuan dynasty (14th CE). Source: private collection

2.2. Qingbai Ware

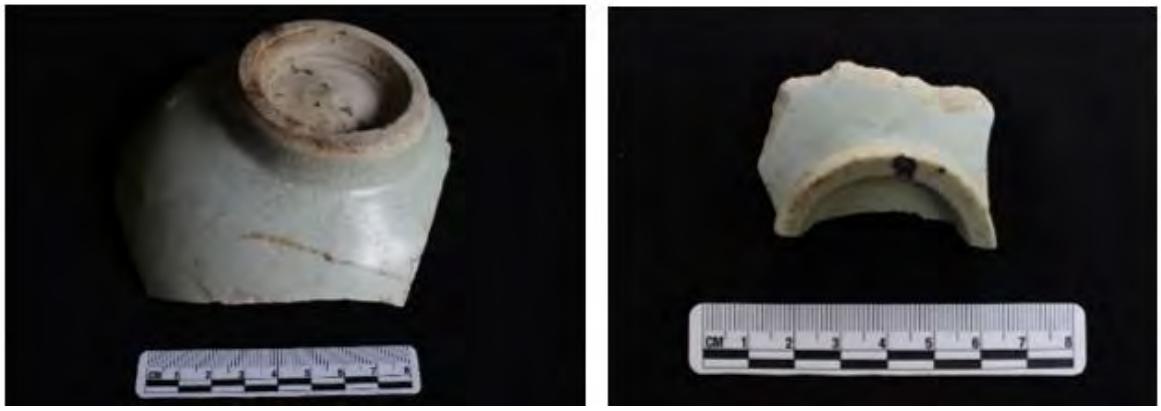
Qingbai ware was the another most popular ceramics produced under Song and Yuan Dynasties (12th – 14th CE) (Pierson, 2002). The word of Qinghai is refer to bluish-white glazed ware or white egg glazed ceramics. These ceramics was produced in Jiangxi province northern China. The raw material of this ceramics is a pure kaolin stone (Wood, 1999).

Qingbai was the common ceramics and some scholar believed these ceramics not produced for the royal court (Pierson, 2002). Mostly, it was used for household and some part in Southeast Asia was used for funerals (Chin, 1988).

These ceramics reached the glory in 12th – 14th CE under Song and Yuan Dynasties. It was the important commodity beside celadon ware and silks (Blumenfield, 2002; Pierson, 2002; Wood, 1999). Qingbai is the large quantity of ceramics fragment that has already found in Lamreh site, Aceh. The same type of ceramics has also found in several sites in Southeast Asia such as Kedah and Johor in Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo and Kota China in Sumatra (Chin, 1988; Harrisson & Harrisson, 1956; McKinnon, 1977; Yatim, 1978). The discovery of this ceramics in Lamreh site show that Lamreh-Aceh was a noteworthy market in Southeast Asia.

Based on morphological analysis show that the fragment of qingbai bare from Lamreh site was the untensils ware especially bowl. However, another type has not been found until today. Relative dating was found the qingbay ware from Lamreh site is dating back from 13th until 14th CE. Refer to the history of their production, these ceramics does not continue after 14th CE and the kiln was transformed to produce blue white porcelain where they become popular on 14th CE (Pierson, 2002).

Picture 3: Qingbai ware fragment from Lamreh site



Source: Private collections

2.3. Blue White Porcelain

The most popular on the history of ceramics production in the world was Chinese blue white porcelain (Carswell, 2000). They have a blue decoration on white ceramics body then known as the blue white ceramics. Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province-southern China was the largest kiln where the ceramics were produced (Juan, 2013).

Blue white porcelain was produced since 14th CE under Yuan Dynasty and continue until 19th CE. The blue colour began to be used on ceramics on 14th CE when cobalt successfully imported from Persia (Wood, 1999).

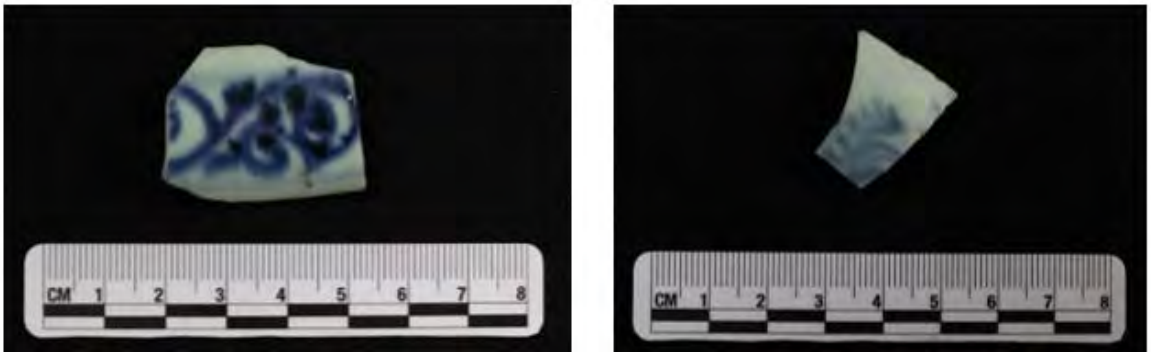
Jingdezhen started produced the porcelain ceramics in 14th CE and finally this area is known as the porcelain city. The raw material is porcelain stone and most widely available in Jiangxi province (Juan, 2013). The firing temperature was around 1200°C until 1350°C (Juan, 2013). The combination of blue and white colour brought these ceramics as a pearl on international market in the past (Guy, 1986).

The blue white porcelain was exported in a huge quantity to Southeast Asian market since 14th. Sarawak in Borneo is the area where these ceramics have been found (Chin, 1988). Currently, a new discovery of blue white porcelain from early Ming Dynasty has been already found in Lamreh site, Aceh Province-Indonesia. However, this fragment found in small quantity compare another types such as celadon and qingbai groups. Probably, blue white porcelain not exported in a large number because the celadon was still in high demand in Aceh at that time. Furthermore, blue white porcelain was a commodity that was traded in Aceh especially in Lamreh in 14th CE.

Refer to the historical record, a Chinse geographer Wang Ta-Yuan in 1349 CE mention that “Nan-Wu-Li” (Lamury / Lamreh) was the important place for trade. The imported product from China were gold, silver, iron tools, blue white porcelain, and another product. While the precious product from Lamuri was a lakawood because it has a great flavour than elsewhere (McKinnon, 1988). This record is an additional data that Lamreh was a market for Chinese blue white porcelain in Southeast Asia.

Blue white porcelain from 16th CE never been found in Lamreh site. Probably this case closely related with the established of Aceh Sultanate as a centre for international trade in Southeast Asia and the Lamury Kingdom was descent. The centre for trade was moved as well from Lamreh to Ujong Pancu where the Chinse porcelain from 16th – 19th is widely available. It is supported by historical record that Aceh Sultanate established the official sea port in 16th CE in Pantee Ceuremen near Ujong Pancu (Lombard, 1967).

Picture 4: Chinese blue white porcelain from Lamreh site.



Source: Private collections

2.4. Southeast Asian Ceramics

The important development occurred in 14th of trade ceramics was the appearance of Southeast Asia as the ceramics exporter (Brown, 2000). The emergence of Southeast Asia interrelated with the Mongol invasion of China on 13th CE. Many of Chinese refuge moved toward to various countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Myanmar. Among the migrater were the craftsman group, when they reached the Southeast Asian land they began continue produced the ceramics just a view time after they arrived (Brown, 1977; Richards, 1995).

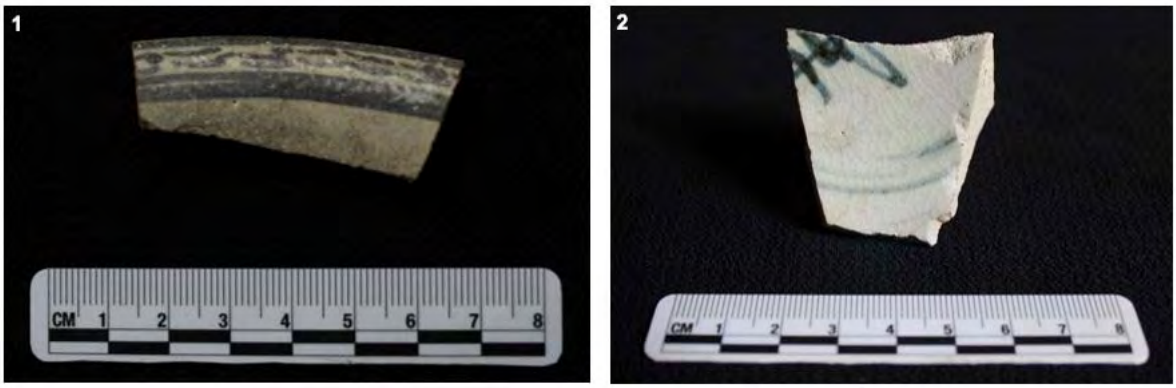
One hundred years later, in 14th CE, Southeast Asia emergence as a competitor of Chinese ceramics (Brown, 1977). Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia were the supplier of ceramics into international markets both in Asia and Middle East (Brown, 1977, 2000). Many of those ceramics have been found in several sites in Southeast Asia including Indonesia and Malaysia as the evidence of economic competition in the past (Guy, 1993). Lamreh site is the location where they have been found in Sumatra Island-Indonesia. Sukhothai ware and Vietnamese ware are the types of Southeast Asian ceramics that has been found in Lamreh site. However, both of them was found in view pieces in Lamreh site.

Sukhothai ware was produced in Thailand under Sukhothai Kingdom (13th – 14th CE). These ceramics was identic by creamy white colour and underglaze black decoration. While the Vietnamese type from Lamreh site is blue white ware (Brown, 2000; Guy, 1993; Richards, 1995). The colour was different, they have a faded blue and creamy white colour compare than Chinse blue white porcelain. This was due to the differences of the raw material of ceramics body where they did not used the porcelain for the body of ceramics. Then, they used iron to produce the blue or black colour for decoration (Brown, 2000).

Relative dating shows that the Sukhothai ware in Lamreh site was from 14th CE while the Vietnamese was from 15th CE. The result of morphological analysis was demonstrated their fragment was the part of utensils ware such as bowl and dish.

The discovery of Southeast Asian ceramics illustrated that Aceh under Lamuri Kingdom had a strong connection with Southeast Asian country. The product from Thailand and Vietnam was accepted in Aceh market before 15th CE. Probably, the ships from China stop in Vietnam Thailand to sale the Chinese commodities such as silks and ceramics. Then, the trader bought their ceramics to re-traded in another Southeast Asian markets. The discovery of Thai and Vietnamese wares in Lamreh site as the evidence that Aceh was the important market for Southeast Asian ceramics in Nusantara world.

Picture 4: Southeast Asian ceramics from Lamreh site



Picture 1 is the Sukhothai ware (14th CE) and picture 2 is blue white ware from Vietnam (15th CE). Source: Private collection.

3. Conclusion

Based on exploration of the coastal area of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, Lamreh is the site where many oldest ceramics was distributed. Detail survey onsite has found many ceramics fragment from China and Southeast Asia. Chinese ceramics type are celadon from 13th – 15th CE especially was made at Longquan kiln, qingbai ware (13-14th CE) from Jiangxi kiln and blue white porcelain from Jingdezhen kiln (15th CE), while the Sukhothai ware (14th – 15th CE) and Vietnamese ware (15th CE) are the types of Southeast Asian ceramics. The discovery of ceramics at Lamreh site described the growth of trade volume that had occurred in Aceh until 15th CE. Consequently, the development of trade in Aceh occurred in 14th CE which is confirmed by the founding of numerous celadon ware from Yuan period at Lamreh site. Lastly, the founding of Thai and Vietnamese wares at Lamreh site show that Aceh was the hub of international trade and had a strong connection with South East Asia communities in the past.

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