

The Chinese Trade Ceramics Found in Borneo – 11th Century to 19th Century

Seramik Perdagangan China di Borneo – Abad 11 -19 Masihi

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the Chinese trade ceramic found in Borneo from the 11th century to the 19th century. In the years between 2005 and 2007, Baszley Bee Basrah Bee did joint research with the Museum of Sabah and The Department of Museums and Antiquity in the form of an archaeological survey at Pulau Bangi, Simpang Mengayau, Kudat in Sabah. In his survey, he discovered ceramics especially from the Song Dynasty (since 11th Century), Yuan Dynasty, Ming and Ch'ing Dynasty (from 14-19th century). In Brunei, archaeological sites such as at Sungai Limau Manis uncovered thousands of Song Dynasty ceramics. Nonetheless, proper documentation and research are still lacking. Hopefully, in the future, adequate documentation would further clarify our understanding of the ancient trade ceramics found in Borneo.

Keywords: Chinese ceramic; underwater archaeology; Borneo

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini memfokuskan pada seramik perdagangan China yang terdapat di Borneo dari abad ke-11 hingga abad ke-19. Antara tahun 2005 dan 2007, Baszley Bee Basrah Bee melakukan penyelidikan bersama dengan Muzium Sabah dan Jabatan Muzium dan Antikuiti dalam bentuk tinjauan arkeologi di Pulau Bangi, Simpang Mengayau, Kudat di Sabah. Dalam tinjauannya, beliau menjumpai seramik terutama dari Dinasti Song (sejak abad ke-11), Dinasti Yuan, Dinasti Ming dan Ch'ing (dari abad 14-19). Di Brunei, tapak arkeologi seperti di Sungai Limau Manis menemui ribuan seramik Dinasti Song. Namun demikian, dokumentasi dan penyelidikan yang komprehensif masih lagi kurang. Mudah-mudahan, pada masa depan, dokumentasi yang mencukupi akan memperjelas pemahaman kita mengenai seramik perdagangan kuno yang terdapat di Borneo.

Kata kunci: Seramik Cina; arkeologi bawah air; Borneo

INTRODUCTION

Borneo is the third largest island in the world and is located north of Australia, at the geographic centre of maritime Southeast Asia. Administratively, the island is divided among three countries: Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia. Approximately 73% of the island is Indonesian territory. The Malaysian states of Sarawak and Sabah (East Malaysia), in the north, occupy about 26% of the island. The sovereign state of Brunei, located on the north coast, comprises about 1% of Borneo's land area.

Borneo is surrounded by the South China Sea to the north and northwest, the Sulu Sea to the northeast, the Celebes Sea and the Makassar Strait to the east, and the Java Sea and Karimata Strait to the south. It is the largest island in the Malay Archipelago, with an

area of 743,330 square kilometres (287,000 sq. mi). To the west of Borneo are the Malay Peninsula and Sumatera. To the south is Java. To the east is Sulawesi, and to the northeast, the Philippines.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF BORNEO

According to ancient Chinese, Indian and Javanese manuscripts, western coastal cities of Borneo had become trading ports, part of their trade routes, since the first millennium (Derek 2001: 133-149). In Chinese manuscripts, gold, camphor, tortoise shells, hornbill ivory, rhinoceros horn, crane crest, beeswax, lakawood (a scented heartwood and root wood of a thick liana, *Dalbergia parviflora*), dragon' blood,

rattan, edible bird's nests and various spices were among the most valuable items from Borneo. (Jan O. M. Broek 1962: 129-148). The Indians named Borneo as *Suvarnabhumi* (the land of gold) and also *Karpuradvipa* (Camphor Island), which includes the western part of the island shared with Sumatera. The Javanese named Borneo as *Puradvipa*, or Diamond Island. Archaeological findings in the delta river of Sarawak reveal that the area was once a thriving trading centre between India and China from the 500's until about 1300 A.D. (Jan O. M. Broek 1962: 129-148).

Dayaks, the natives of Borneo in their traditional war dress. Headhunting was an important part of Dayak culture. One of the earliest evidence of Hindu influence in Southeast Asia were stone pillars which bears inscriptions in the Pallava script found in Kutai along the Mahakam River in East Kalimantan dated around the second half of the 300's A.D.

In the 14th century, almost all coastal parts of Borneo were under the control of Majapahit Kingdom as is written in the Javanese Nagarakertagama document (ca. 1365) and it was called *Nusa Tanjungnagara*. The name of a trading port city in Borneo is *Tanjungpura* in the Nagarakertagama; the same name written in another Javanese Pararaton document (ca. 1355) (Jan O. M. Broek 1962: 129-148). In the 15th century, the Majapahit rule exerted its influence in Borneo. Princess Junjung Buih, the queen of the Hindu kingdom of Negara Dipa (situated in Candi Agung area of Amuntai) married a Javanese prince, Prince Suryanata, and together they ruled the kingdom which is a tributary to the Majapahit Empire (1365). In this way, it became a part of Nusantara. Along the way, the power of Negara Dipa weakened and was replaced by the new court of Negara Daha. When Prince Samudra (Prince Suriansyah) of Negara Daha converted to Islam and formed the Islamic kingdom of Banjar, it inherited some of the areas previously ruled by the Hindu kingdom of Negara Daha.

The Sultanate of Brunei, during its golden age from the 15th century to the 17th century, ruled a large part of northern Borneo. In 1703 (other sources say 1658), the Sultanate of Sulu received North Borneo from the Sultan of Brunei, after Sulu sent aid against a rebellion in Brunei. During the 1450s, Shari'ful Hashem Syed Abu Bakr, an Arab born in Johor, arrived in Sulu from Malacca. In 1457, he founded the Sultanate of Sulu; he then renamed himself "Paduka Maulana Mahasari Sharif Sultan Hashem Abu Bakr". Subsequently

HM Sultan Jamalul Ahlam Kiram (1863–1881), the 29th reigning Sultan of Sulu, leased North Borneo in 1878 to Gustavus Baron de Overbeck and Alfred Dent, representing the British North Borneo Company in what is now the Malaysian state of Sabah. The company also exerted control on inland territories that were inhabited by numerous tribes. In the 19th century, coastal areas ruled by the Sultanate in the west of the island were gradually taken by the dynasty of James Brooke. The Brooke dynasty ruled Sarawak for a hundred years and became famous as the "White Rajahs".

By the 18th century, the area from Sambas to Berau were tributaries to the Banjar Kingdom, but this eventually shrunk to the size of what is now South Kalimantan as a result of agreements with the Dutch. In the Karang Intan Agreement during the reign of Prince Nata Dilaga (Susuhunan Nata Alam) (1808–1825), the Banjar Kingdom gave up its territories to the Dutch Indies which included Bulungan, Kutai, Pasir, Pagatan and Kotawaringin. Other territories given up to the Dutch Indies were Landak, Sambas, Sintang and Sukadana.

In the early 19th century, British and Dutch governments signed the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 to exchange trading ports under their controls and assert spheres of influences, in which indirectly set apart the two parts of Borneo into British and Dutch controlled areas. China has had historical trading links with the inhabitants of the island. Some of the Chinese beads and wares found their way deep into the interior of Borneo. The Malay and Sea Dayak pirates preyed on maritime shipping in the waters between Singapore and Hong Kong from their haven in Borneo (Wilfrid Walker 2002). In 1849 James Brooke and his Malays attacked the Sea-Dayaks and wiped out 800 of the 4,000 pirates.

Moreover, in the 19th century the Dutch admitted the founding of district kingdoms with native leaders who were under the power of the Dutch (Indirect Bestuur). The Dutch assign a resident to head their rule over Kalimantan. List of the residents and governors of Kalimantan:

1. C.A. Kroesen (1898), resident
2. C.J. Van Kempen (1924), resident
3. J. De Haan (1924–1929), resident
4. R. Koppenel (1929–1931), resident
5. W.G. Morggeustrom (1933–1937), resident
6. Dr. A. Haga (1938–1942), governor
7. Pangeran Musa Ardi Kesuma (1942–1945), Ridzie
8. Ir. Pangeran Muhammad Noor (1945), governor

AN OVERVIEW OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN BORNEO

Borneo has a lot of well-known archaeological sites that range from the earliest prehistory period (Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Metal age) until early history. Archaeological research in Borneo which carried out by the local researchers since the early 20th century. However, most of them have focused more on the prehistoric archaeological research rather than protohistoric and historic period. The Department of Museums & Antiquity, The University Science of Malaysia had conducted joint research with The Sarawak State Museum and The Sabah State Museum concentrating on prehistoric archaeological research in various sites. In Borneo, there are three institutions leading in the research of the Chinese trade ceramics such as The Sarawak Museum, The Sabah Museum and The

Brunei Museum. This research will only focus on some archaeological sites in Borneo especially in Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei which has the evidences on the Chinese trade ceramics. The sites are Tanjung Simpang Mengayau at Kudat in Sabah, Santubong and some information from Gedung, Sarawak and Kg. Sungai Limau Manis in Brunei.

Until 1964, Sarawak Museum was the only museum in Borneo since its establishment in 1891. Due to the absence of professional crew in archaeological study at that time, the first excavation by the museum staff only took place in 1948. The findings were both rewarding and exciting. Since then, extensive archaeological works have been carried out on more than 50 sites throughout Sarawak. The excavations uncovered the best-kept secret of Sarawak's past history and the rich and varied heritage of its indigenous people.



PHOTO 1. The Niah cave in Miri Sarawak very rich on prehistoric archaeology evidence
Souce: Field working

Numerous prehistoric artefacts had been discovered. For example, at the West Mouth in the Niah great cave is the most rewarding site that provides significant and highly important evidences to not only the history of Borneo but also to the history of mankind. At the depth of 96 inches, a skull of one of the oldest humans was excavated, with the surrounding charcoal dated by archaeologist at about 40,000 years old. It is among the earliest definite representative of Homo Sapiens Sapiens found in the Southeast Asia. Further inside the same cave mouth is a Neolithic burial site where over 166 burials had been recovered, associated with stone implements and pottery.

In a separate limestone outcrop nearby the Niah Great Cave, a 200 feet stretch in length wall paintings was discovered. The paintings were generally drawn in bold and thick strokes and depict an array of boats and spread-eagle dancing human figures. Also found

in this Painted Cave were “death-ships”, Chinese stoneware and many ancient glass beads. Carbon-14 dating on four “death-ships” gave between 0 and 780 A.D.

Archaeological works in Sarawak continue to the recent years. Every dig and excavation brings them closer to the true history of the past. Another major site that has been explored and excavated is the Sarawak River Delta, which includes Santubong, Gedong and Bukit Sandong. Santubong is in fact the largest archaeological site in Malaysia, in comparison with Lembah Bujang in the Peninsular Malaysia. Thousands of ceramic sherds were excavated in 1949 under the curatorship of Tom Harrison. Other than Chinese ceramics, about 40,000 tons of iron slags formed another salient discovery. It is believed that this area was once an important centre of traders and iron mining in the region between 11th Century A.D. to 13th Century A.D. Another interesting

discovery was made in late 1974, when seventy-nine stone tools in association with metal objects, ancient beads and local earthenware were uncovered on a remote site of Ulu Baleh, Kapit. It is the first open stone age site ever located in Sarawak and Borneo as well.

MAJOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN SARAWAK

TABLE 1. Major archaeological sites in Sarawak

No.	Site	Descriptions
1.	Sungei Ja'ong	Sarawak River Delta Rock carvings (petroglyphs), associated with gold objects and ceramics (T'ang Dynasty).
2.	Bongkissam, Sarawak River Delta	Gold objects and semi-precious stones in raised platform (ancient Buddhist ritual deposit). Other associated finds are ceramics of T'ang and Sung Dynasties.
3.	Bukit Maras near Santubong	Hill top site with ancient Guptama Buddha figure, associated with heads and elephant figures and several pieces of soft pottery probably of local made for domestic or funeral uses but finished and shaped often in distinctly Indian style.
4.	Gua Sireh, Bau District	Cave site associated with burials and wall paintings, Neolithic stone implements, porcelains of 18th - 19th centuries and food remains.
5.	Gua Bungoh, Bau District	Cave site associated with blue and white Chinese ware and local pottery.
6.	Gedong, Simunjan District	Possibly an open burial site. Though no human bone has been recovered, many intact ceramics of T'ang and Sung periods have been recovered between 6" and 24".
7.	Tanjung Sangidam Hilir, 4 miles from Gedong upriver, Serian District	Associated with Sung and blue and white ceramics and local pottery.
8.	Gua Kedadum Cave, Kpg Retoh, Serian District	Associated with Neolithic stone implements.
9.	Gua Langup near Kpg Tai and Kpg Chupak, Serian District	Associated with Neolithic implements.
10.	Ensika, Ulu Sebang	Open site of Sung ceramics with local pottery.
11.	Bukit Sandong near Balai Ringgin, Serian District	Associated with Sung and blue and white ceramics and local pottery.
12.	Saratok Open site on hill top	Associated with T'ang and Sung ceramics (some pieces intact).
13.	Kelaka near Kabong District	Open site associated with Sung, blue and white, Annamese and Sawankhalok wares.
14.	Sekadang Lingga	Associated with blue and white as well as Sung ceramics and local pottery.
15.	Kanowit School	Song Secondary jar burial associated with Ming ceramics and glass beads.
16.	West Mouth, Niah	Most important Stone Age site discovered in Borneo. Carbon-14 dating on charcoal at 100" = 39,600 Bp (=1,000 years). Skull at 96" = 39,000 years old. Associated finds are stone implements and food remains. Further inside the same cave mouth is a Neolithic burial site where over 166 burials had been recovered, associated with stone implements and pottery. Two burials carried very early metal association.
17.	Kain Hitam ("The Painted Cave")	A separate cave high in a limestone island. 200 feet of wall paintings and floor littered with "death ships" with an abundance of bones, beads, porcelain and stoneware sherds, etc. Evidently this was the centre of elaborate prehistoric funerary rites, related to those still extant in the Niah River. C-14 dates on four "death ships" gave between 0 and 780 A.D.
18.	Lobang Angin ("Wind Mouth")	A shelf of c. 400 square feet high on cliff edge, fully occupied before the late Stone Age and back into the Paleolithic.
19.	Gan Kira ("traders Cave")	A small rock-shelf near sea level, evidently a Neolithic trading camp, which includes an apparent murder incident and scattered sub-surface skeletons (some beheaded). Fully excavated down to limestone bedrock (fossil oyster <i>O. gigas</i>).
20.	Lobang Tulang ("Caves of Bones")	Cliff grottos full of jar and other secondary burials, mainly of the early birdsnests trade with China period (900 A.D. to 1200 A.D.); bronze and other finds.
21.	Samti	Small rock shelter in an isolated corner of the Great Cave formation, which also held "death-ships" remains.

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22. Juragan	A very high cave up a barely accessible cliff. About 600 square feet, crammed with primary burials of small-bodied adults and urn burials of infants and some women. Very simple material culture, perhaps of a more primitive group (Punans?) integrated economically with the Great Cave people. The deposit had been entirely removed, owing to danger of guano-extraction and difficulty of control.
23. Upuising, Niah	A late burial cave associated with earthenware, ceramics, glass beads, metal objects and food remains.
24. Sekaloh, Niah	Ancient Melanau burials associated with fine pottery and food remains.
25. Cave at Kakus, Ulu Tatau	Primary and secondary burial caves before the advent of metal, glass and porcelain.
26. Sorang Caves (Batu Puteh and Lotong Ringen) in low hills near Tatau c.	50 miles south of Niah Cave paintings (quite unlike the Painted Cave and Gua Sireh) associated with stone tools (Pre-Neolithic).
27. Lobang Kudih, Bekong	Burial cave associated with Ming ceramics and beads.
28. Sungei Baya	Rock shelter site associated with many Ming type jars with dragon designs on them, and many 18th - 19th century lidded jars, plus beads and one very big Yi Hsing ware jar.
29. Batu Malong-along,	Ulu Limbang River Burial site associated with Annamese bowls and plates and Chinese lidded box.
30. Long Semadoh	There are five burial sites around Long Semadoh. Each of them is associated with Ming ceramics as well as some lidded jars of 18th - 19th centuries, and many different types of beads. There are two stone carvings (Batu Narit) which probably go back as far as the 17th - 18th centuries. There are four stone mounds found in Long Semadoh District, one at Long Rapuak and three at Long Lapukan. These stone mounds are believed to be used for burying valuable properties
31. Sungei Putai Baleh	Open site where 79 Neolithic adzes have been recovered in association with metal objects and local pottery.

THE PAST STUDY ON CHINESE CERAMICS IN BORNEO

CHINESE CERAMICS IN SARAWAK

The Sarawak River Delta is the major site where thousands of ceramic sherds have been discovered and excavated since 1948. Most of them dated from 11th to the 13th Century A.D. Majority of course originated from the motherland of ceramics, China, and also some from Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and Europe. The discovery of ceramics provides the evidence that this coastal area was once an important trading centre as early as at 11th century A.D. where traders from China, India and other neighbouring countries began to arrive in Borneo to trade.

Champor, beeswax, birds' nests, hornbill ivory and other exotic products are traded for textiles, beads, ceramic and brassware.

The earliest indigenous ceramics were found and excavated from the West Mouth site in the Niah Great Cave. These ceramics are plain and undecorated large jars or urns, bottles and other special funerary

vessel with round and globular body. All are coarse-tempered earthenware, handmoulded, thick bodied and low fired. A previous study by Barbara Harrison concluded that most of the ceramic vessels were in connection with the Neolithic burials either as containers for cremation or as funerary gifts.

It was once a tradition of the Melanau community that when a Melanau died, the body was dressed and laid out in the house. A blue and white plate was put under the head, while smaller ceramic plates were placed under the hands and feet. Placed near the body were some brass objects and a string of ancient blue glass beads was then tied around the wrist. A few days later, the body was taken out of the house and kept outside for a minimum period of a year. This is where the large jar came into the picture. The bones were then collected and placed inside the jar. The rest of the plates, bowls and beads were then buried as the grave goods with the jar containing the bones. All the excavated artifacts have formed an important source of material for study in the Sarawak Museum and they are classified into nine major classes based on their glaze colour and clay body (texture).



MAP 1. China and Southeast Asia: Selected trade centres and kiln sites, 14th to 16th centuries
 Source: Roxanna Brown & Sten Sjostrand 2002



White wares: sherds with basically white colour, although varying from grey-white to green-white, in many cases and including Ch'ing-pai, Ying-ch'ing and "Marco Polo ware"



Yueh types: sherds with a thin putty-green to blue or grey-green in many instances resemble the Yueh ware described by Gompertz



Celadons: sherds with a thick olive to blue-green glaze of the type usually associated with the Sung Dynasty Lung-ch'uan kilns



Temmoku: sherds from bowls with a very dark brown or black glaze, often called "temmoku", and like the Chin-yao bowls from Fukien



Green glazed wares: sherds with a thin bright glaze which contains lead



T'zu Chou wares: sherds of the ware usually termed T'zu Chou, with decoration in dark and/or light slip under plain or green glaze



Coarse stoneware include sherds of coarse stoneware from very large jars to smaller, but still coarse jars and jugs



Siamese wares: mainly sherds of Sawankhalok celadon thick plates and dishes, decorated with incised or carved decoration under the glaze and with burnt reddish brown on the foot



Blue and white wares: sherds with transparent glaze bluish tone, undulating slow flow containing a haze minute, almost invisible bubbles and the body greyish white translucent porcelain

PHOTO 2: The type of Chinese Ceramics found in Borneo.
 Source: Roxanna Brown & Sten Sjostrand 2002

Throughout the centuries, in association with the trade ceramics found in excavation sites in Sarawak River Delta, there is a strong evidence that the indigenous people of Sarawak later made their own domestic ceramics. It has also indirectly contributed to the development of Sarawak pottery industry.

This wide range of ceramic collections has been put on display in Sarawak Museum (Dewan Tun Abdul Razak). They are among the main attractions of the museum to the public and tourists. Because of its popular demand, the collection's catalogue and some local ceramics are produced and sold in the Museum Shoppe.

CHINESE CERAMIC IN SABAH

In Sabah's historical treasures recently salvaged from the seabed, some 400 meters off Simpang Mengayau at the Tip of Borneo, are now on display at the Sabah Museum. The treasures were recovered from a sunken Chinese junk that went down more than 800 years ago, believed to be from the Sung Dynasty of 960 to 1127AD.

The Chinese vessel was believed to have sunk near the Tip between 878 and 1045 AD, and a group of fishermen stumbled upon the shipwreck and its remains in March 2003. It is believed that the sunken ship hit the sandbank between the Tanjung Simpang Mengayau and Kalamunian Island in stormy weather. It is the oldest sunken ship ever found in the country and possibly in South East Asia to date.

Unsure of the ship wreck's significance, the fishermen informed the Sabah Museum here and the site was studied in several years ago jointly by the Sabah Museum, Museum and Antiquity Department in Kuala Lumpur, and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). The second and third phases were carried out from June to August last year with the expert assistance of UMS and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Since the findings became public knowledge many have wondered about the type of treasures found at the site.

The exhibition from Aug 15 to Sept 27 2008 displays seven per cent of 503 treasures found at the site and other archaeological findings in the state. Among the findings that are being displayed, are plates, bowls, teapots, jars and non-ceramic pieces like bronze gongs, copper pieces, iron cooking utensils and wood fragments of sunken ships. All the recovered artefacts found at the site of the sunken ship are very invaluable and priceless.

Before the Museum was informed about the site, Guntavid (former deputy state secretary of Sabah) said many of the artefacts were already found and stolen by nearby villagers who sold them to collectors for quick gains. The display on the 'Treasures of the Tip of Borneo' give an impression that Borneo since ancient times was already an established as a maritime commercial hub as well as explorers' destination. It was also one of the main locations of Ferdinand Magellan's voyages round the world about 500 years ago. Also, the exhibits of the artefacts bear witness to the existence of foreign trade links more than a 1,000 years ago especially Chinese traders as early as the 10th Century.

Borneo was known to Medieval Europe as 'Java the Great' while China called it as 'Poli', 'Poni' or 'Bun Lai'. The discovery of the sunken ship from the Sung Dynasty era is proof of a busy trade route, and now Simpang Mengayau is being promoted to the outside world as a recreation park and a tourist destination. The exhibition materials were very difficult to procure as archaeologists who were involved in the discovery had to dive 40 times to the seabed to search for the artifacts. The divers also had a hard time, as they had to fight strong currents and murky waters.

Some 300 pieces of ceramic and metal artifacts including gongs were salvaged during the first phase of the research. However, only about half of these artifacts are in good condition.

During the second and third phases, another 131 pieces of ceramic and a few pieces of wooden objects were also salvaged. These artifacts are kept at the Sabah Museum and some area still undergoing conservation treatment. The other half are broken and some have cracks on them. Apart from the treasures the exhibition is also displaying other archaeological excavation sites in the East Coast of Sabah.

Artifacts like prehistoric cultural tools, handmade weapons as well as ancient kitchen utensils made of stones and animal bones and woods like from coffin remains were recovered from these sites. One of the sites was a major prehistoric pottery-making site in South East Asia, located in Bukit Tengkorak off Semporna. The site was first excavated in 1988 and completed in 2003 with cooperation from the National University of Australia.

Later, in 1994-1995, the Archaeological Centre of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Sabah Museum continued the systematic archaeological research at the Bukit Tengkorak site.

The research, which included about two months of archaeological survey and excavations, revealed that the site was used a major pottery making area in Southeast Asia from 4340 BC to perhaps 50 BC.

The findings in the site dated back about 3,500 years and clay for making the pottery was also recovered, believed to have originated from large deposits of clay found at the foot of Bukit Tengkorak.



MAP 2. The map of Tanjung Simpang Mengayau. The location suggests that the ship may have been travelling from China via the Philippines, to Brunei or other location in Borneo. It is the oldest loaded ship to have been found in Malaysia to date and provides proof of early maritime trade to Borneo

Source: Sten Sjostrand, Adi Haji Taha & Samsol Sahar 2006

CHINESE CERAMICS IN BRUNEI

The discovery of the Sungai Limau Manis site ranks among the more important archaeological discoveries in Brunei that includes such sites as the Kota Batu site in the 1950's, the Terusan Kupang

site in 1974, the Sungai Lumut site in 1968 and the recently retrieved Kapal Karam (sunken ship) in 1997. The former site was uncovered by accident in March of 2002 during public works to make the Sungai Limau Manis waterway larger and deeper.

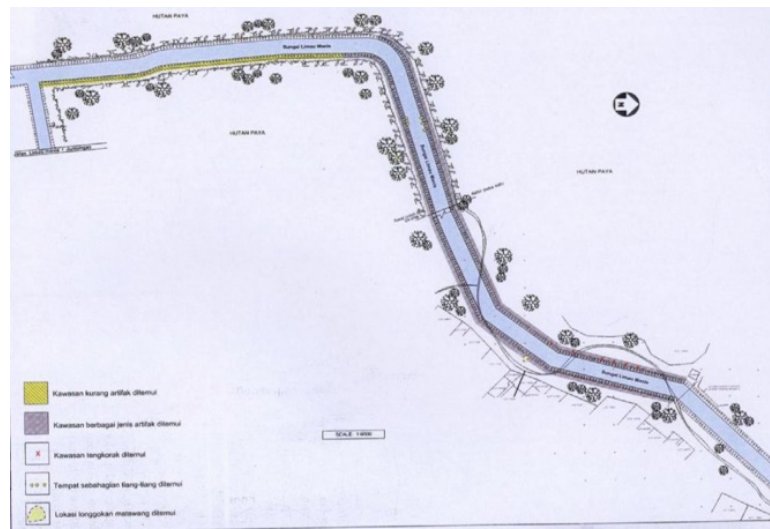


MAP 3. Archaeological site at Sungai Limau Manis and related to the other sites in Brunei

Source: Karim Haji Osman 2004

The rescue archaeological works at Sungai Limau Manis uncovered numerous artifacts including ceramics. The archaeological finds as a whole represent the largest collection of artifacts ever found in the archaeological history of Brunei in a short period of time. The total number of artifacts accounts for more than 90% of all the archaeological artifacts ever found in Brunei. The three types of ceramics found at this site include the porcelain, stoneware and earthenware. The number

of porcelain artifacts found accounts for the largest amount of artifacts uncovered and represents a figure that is approximately 60% of all ceramics counts, with the stoneware approximating 39% while the earthenware is a miserly 1%. Most of the artifacts found are normally associated with kitchen utensils such as bowls, dishes, bottles, and jar. The typical ceramic found at this site is normally circular, semi-circular, or square in shape. More than 600 of the complete ceramic vessels are circular in shape.



MAP 4. Distribution of artifacts at Sungai Limau Manis, Brunei
Source: Karim Haji Osman 2004



PHOTO 3. Rescue archaeology research at Sungai Limau Manis
Source: Karim Haji Osman 2004

Most of the ceramics uncovered at Sungai Limau Manis were imported, most from China, and can be easily identified as *trade wares*. These can be identified and dated as Late Song Dynasty (960-1269 CE) and Yuan Dynasty (1269-1368 CE). Some of the

ceramics that have been identified include celadon, Yueh, Lung-Chuan, Yaozhou, white glazed Dehua, Ching Pai, tin glazed, iron decorated, chocolate glazed and rough stoneage.

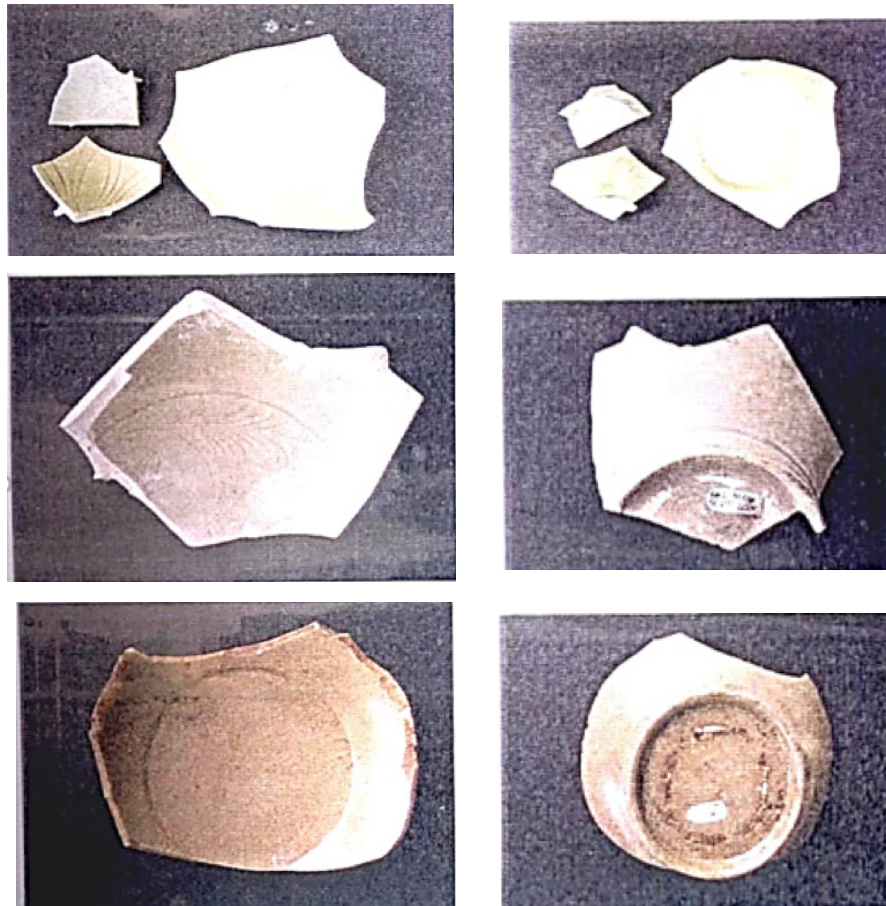


PHOTO 4. Some of the Chinese trade ceramic discovered at Sungai Limau manis
Source: Karim Haji Osman 2004

Other than ceramics from Song, Yuan, Ming and Ching ceramics dated between 14th and 19th century CE were also discovered. Even so, the total numbers for these later dynasties are very small when compared to the total number of Chinese ceramics found. They total to a very insignificant 1%. Other ceramics from the Southeast Asian region include those from Sukhothai and Sawankhalok of Thailand, and Vietnamese ceramics dated between 14th and 16th century CE.

CONCLUSION

Borneo (Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan) is well-known for its archaeological heritage since the prehistoric times. Even so, the archaeological data

for the protohistory period in Sabah and Sarawak is not as well understood when compared to the earliest prehistoric period. In actuality, Sabah, Sarawak and also Brunei also have a rich protohistoric and historical tradition. This can be seen from the large numbers of artifacts uncovered on land and sea, especially the ceramics.

Glancing from the discussion above, it is obvious that the evidence from Sarawak such as that uncovered in the sites of Santubung, Gedung, and Serian amongst others, foreign ceramics was traded in this region especially from China since the 10th century CE. The same is true for Sabah and Brunei. Borneo's strategic location in the trading sea routes that connect the east and the west enabled Borneo to become an important and well-known trading centre in the Southeast Asian region since the earliest times.

The discovery of various Chinese ceramics such as Song celadon from the 11th to 14th century CE, Yuan, Ming, and Ching ceramics proves that Borneo was an important trading centre. These ceramics were obvious traded using sea routes. The number of ship wrecks identified along the Bornean coastal areas also supports the above. Present-day ceramic production centres in China such as Jingdezhen, Dehua, and Jinjiang have maintained records of their exports to the Southeast Asian region since the early 10th century CE.

Even though the author has not done any archaeological excavation in Borneo, the evidence gathered through the literature review of published works as well as additional information from the state museums of Sabah and Sarawak suggests that important aspects of the protohistory and early history of Borneo is not given enough priority. The lack of expertise in the fields of ceramics and archaeology, as well as limited financial resources can be considered as the main factors that lead to the current situation. It is the hope the author that the future would provide a remedy for the current

situation since UMS and UNIMAS has the capability to produce a future generation of experts in the fields afore-mentioned.

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