

Preliminary Research Findings from Trade Ceramic Archaeological Sites in Sabah

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Abstract

Ceramics is one of the most important merchandise in the past. In Sabah, many trade ceramic wares were found in archaeological sites. The study of trade ceramics in Sabah and its distribution enables the types of ceramic wares were identified and their distribution by region in Sabah. Therefore, in order to achieve this objective, whole sites with the imported ceramic in Sabah has been divided into the following four main areas including east, west, north and interior of Sabah. Results from the analysis showed that most of ceramics that were found came from China, Europe, Netherlands, Vietnam and Thailand. While the age of ceramics is from the Song dynasty (10-13 century AD), Yuan (13-14 century AD), Ming (14 -17 century AD) and Ching (17-20 century AD), Thailand (14-15 century AD), Vietnam (14-15 century AD), Europe and the Netherlands (19-20 century AD). All of this discovery shows that the distribution of the ceramic sites may have been connected with other countries via trading activities especially in the coastal areas in Sabah

Keyword: *Sabah, trade, ceramic*

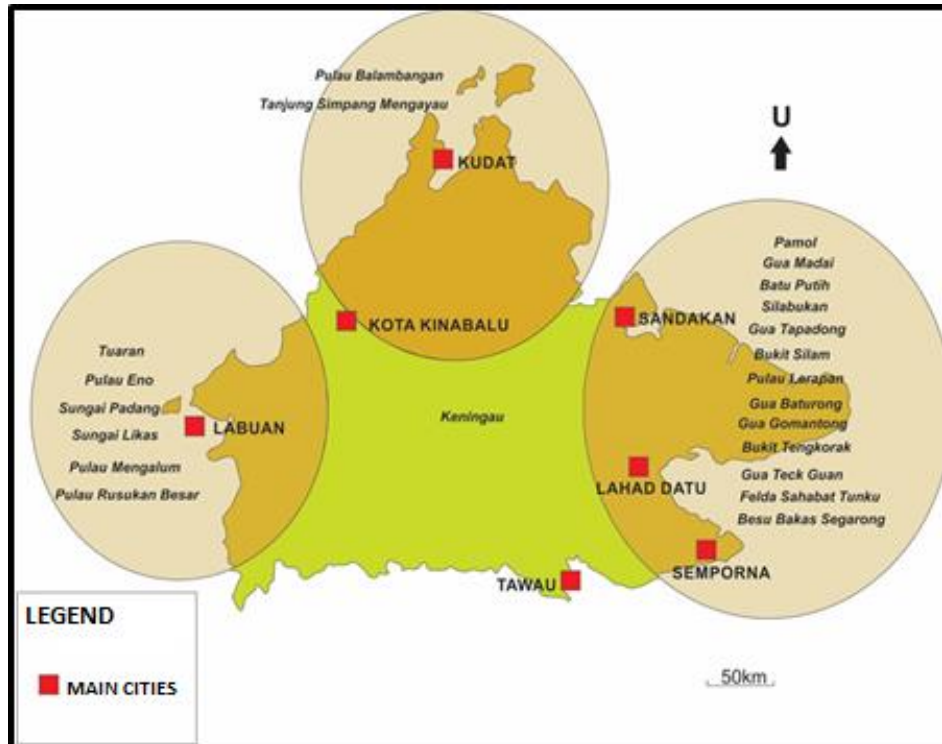
1. Introduction

Reviews archaeological sites, especially by researchers such as Harrison and Harrison (1971), Baszley and Bilcher Bala, (2009) and Sabah Museum has found many archaeological sites in the state. Harrison and Harrison (1971) revealed many archaeological sites with the discovery of ceramics in the east coast of Sabah as Tapadong Cave, Gomantong Cave, Kinabatangan River, Baturong Cave, Gua Madai Cave and Eno Island in the western part of Sabah. While the study from Baszley and Bilcher Bala (2009) emphasizes the study of the shipwreck in Tanjung Simpang Mengayau. But a study by the Division of Archaeology, Sabah Museum Department has found more archaeological sites with the discovery of ceramics in which are Pamol, Batu Putih and so on. The study of these sites is important to see the overall findings of trade ceramic archaeological sites in Sabah. Those sites are mostly ceramic discoveries along the coast. It show these sites at one time maybe worked as a port, a collection port (feeder point), the settlement or else.

2. Sites of Ceramics

The sites were divided into western, northern, eastern and central Sabah. Sites in the eastern part were Madai Cave, Baturong Cave, Bukit Silam, Batu Puteh, Felda Sahabat Tunku, Silabukan, Teck Guan Cave, Bukit Tengkorak, Laraman Island, Tapadong Cave and Besu Bakas Segarong. While Eno Island, Tuaran, Pulau Gaya, Padang River, Likas River, Mengalum Island and Rusukan Besar Island site located in the west coast of Sabah. The central part of Sabah is

Keningau. While Balambangan Island and Tanjung Simpang Mengayau located in the northern part of Sabah (Map 1).



Map 1 shows the discovery of ceramic sites in Sabah

3. Problem Statement

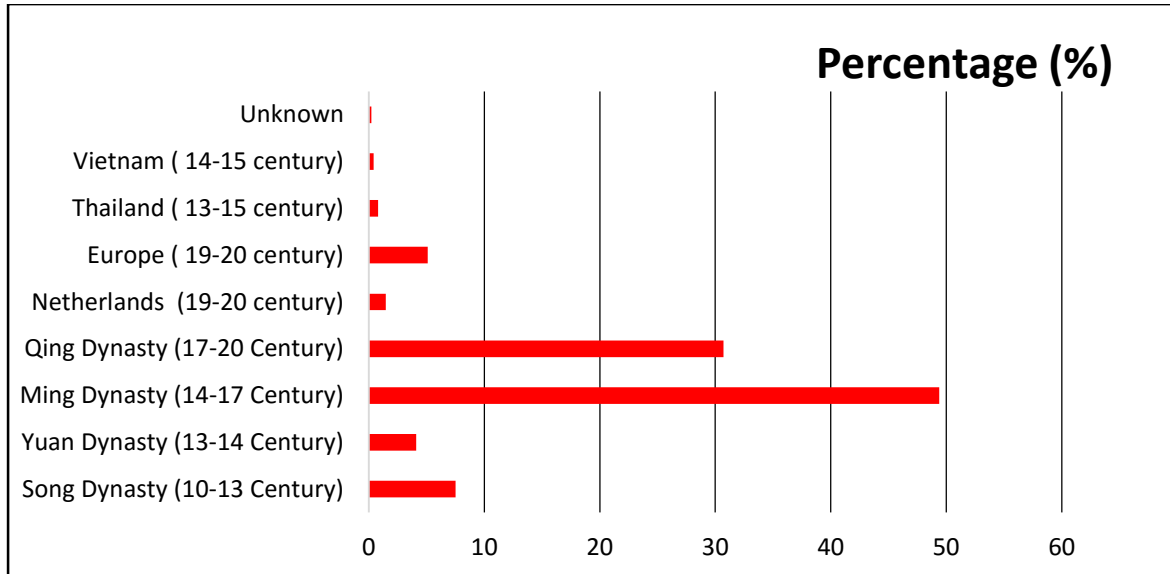
According to Harrison and Harrison (1971), there are many sites such as burial sites in the east coast with the discovery of Chinese ceramic, Vietnam, Thailand, Europe, Japan that dating from the 14th century until 20th century. But a recent study conducted by the Sabah Museum has found many other archaeological sites that have ceramic either discoveries in the west, center, north and east inland. Sites should be reviewed and analyzed to gain a more complete overview about the distribution of ceramics in Sabah. The study of ceramic artifacts that exist in Sabah directly can be used to complete the actual data and information on the issues. The study of artifact that found in Sabah directly can support the opinion of scholars and build a chronology of the ceramic trade in Sabah more clearly.

4. Distribution of Ceramics in Sabah

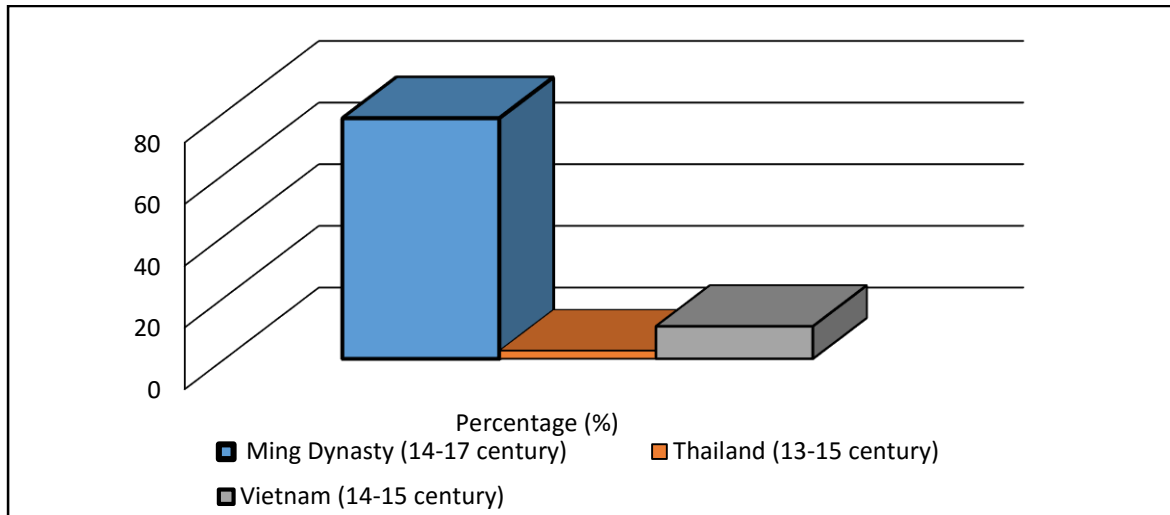
This discussion will be based on the distribution ceramic in Sabah that include part of west, central, east and north region.

4.1 On the West Coast of Sabah

Most of the ceramic sites in the western part of Sabah coast were open site. The islands and coastal area were probably to be used for trading activities. The ceramics were from China during the Ming Dynasty, Qing Dynasty, Song Dynasty, Europe, the Yuan Dynasty, the Netherlands, Thailand, Vietnam and unknown ceramic (Graph 1). The unknown ceramic exist because the ceramic fragments were too small to identify. As for the complete ceramic, they were from the Ming Dynasty (Ages 14-17) was most common, followed by ceramics from Thailand and Vietnam (Graph 2).



Graph 1 shows the period percentage of the fragment that were found in the west coast of Sabah



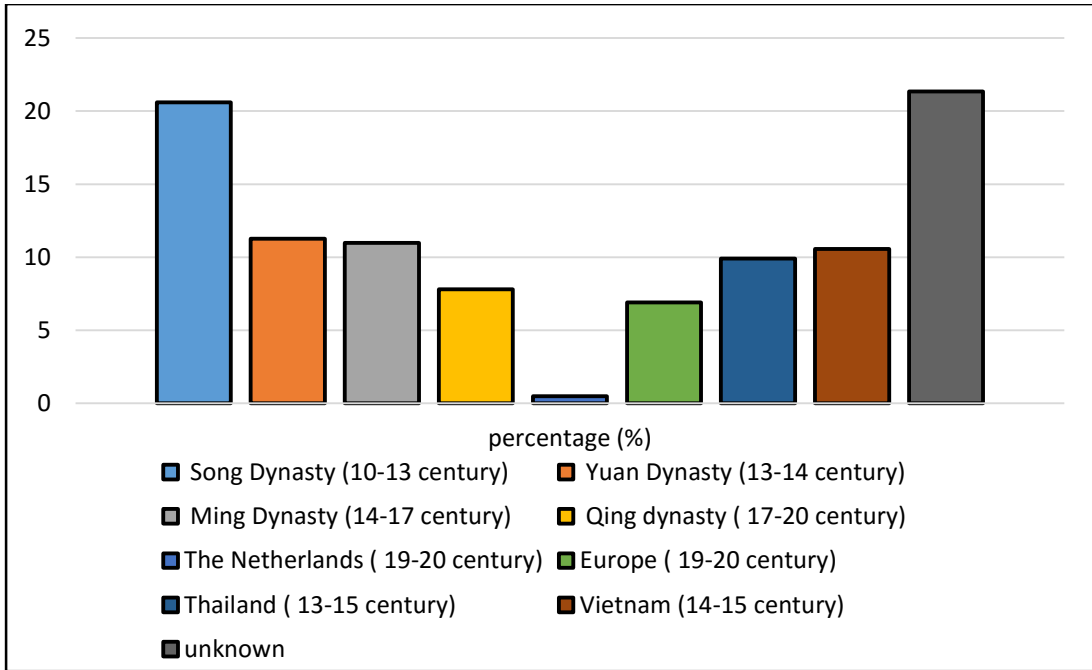
Graph 2 shows the period of the complete ceramic discoveries in the west coast of Sabah

4.2 Central Sabah

The central part of Sabah covers areas such as Tenom, Keningau, Tambunan, Ranau, Telupid and Kundasang. But only in Keningau ceramics were found by the Sabah Museum. The ceramics mostly fragment that dated to Song dynasty (10-13 centuries AD).

4.3 East Coast Division

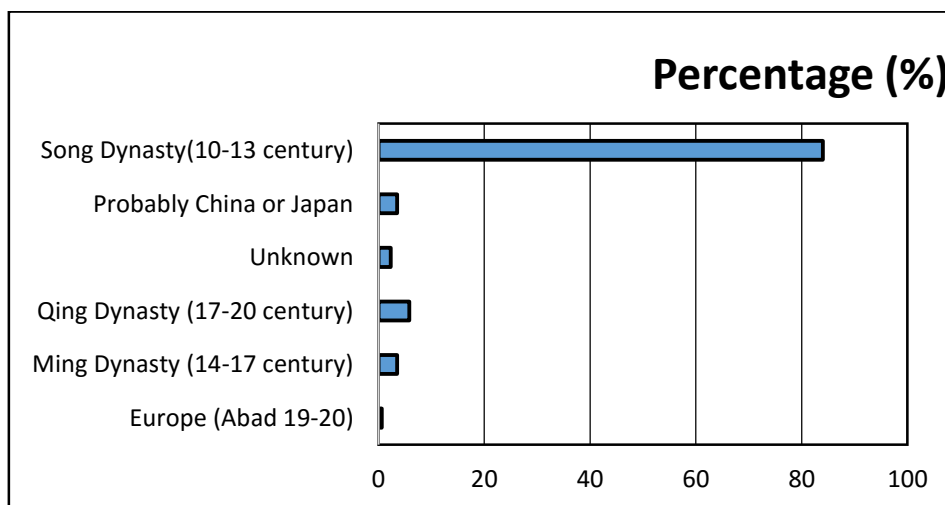
The analysis showed that ceramics from eastern part of Sabah were from Song Dynasty followed by the Yuan Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty, Vietnam, Thailand, the Qing Dynasty, Europe and the Netherlands (Graph 3). However, the percentages of ceramics that cannot be identified were also high around 21.35%. It is because the fragments were too small and hard to identify and most of them were part of the stoneware urns type.



Graph 3 shows the percentage of the period from ceramics fragment in the east coast of Sabah

4.4 On the North Coast of Sabah

Ceramic analysis on the north coast of Sabah shows that ceramics from the Song Dynasty was the most abundant following the discovery of a shipwreck in Tanjung Simpang Mengayau. On the site of Balambangan Island were found ceramics from the Qing Dynasty, Ming Dynasty and Europe. But there are likely ceramics from China or Japan that are difficult to be identified due to the small fragments and restricted patterns that complicate the identification process while the ceramic is not identified that mean the ceramics cannot be determine country or period of ceramic (Graph 4). For a complete ceramics, they only been found in Simpang Mengayau wreck dated Song Dynasty between 10th-13th centuries.



Graph 4 shows the percentage of period ceramics unearthed in the northern coast of Sabah

5. Discussion

The distribution of trade ceramic in Sabah is likely to be caused by the trading activity that dates back to the early centuries AD, with China, Thailand, Vietnam, the Netherlands, Europe and so on. The overall distribution of ceramic can be seen in Table 2.

Part of Sabah	Timeframe	Most Ceramic
West coast	Song Dynasty(10-13 century)	Ming Dynasty (14-17 century)
	Ming Dynasty (14-17 century)	
	Qing Dynasty (17-20 century)	
	Europe (Abad 19-20), the Netherlands (19-20 Century), Thailand (13-15 Century),Vietnam (14-15 century) and unknown	
Centre Sabah	Song Dynasty(10-13 century)	Song Dynasty(10-13 century)
East Coast	Song Dynasty(10-13 century), Yuan Dynasty (13-14 century),	Song Dynasty (10-13 century)
	Ming Dynasty (14-17 Century), Qing Dynasty (17-20 Century),	
	Vietnam (14-15 Century), Thailand (13-15 century), Europe (19-20 century)	
	The Netherlands (19-20 Century)	
North Coast	Song Dynasty (10-13 Century), Ming Dynasty (14-17 Century),	Song Dynasty(10-13 century)
	Qing Dynasty (17-20 Century), Europe (19-20 Century),	
	Probably China or Japan, Unknown	

Table 2 shows the overall distribution of ceramics in Sabah

The distribution of many ceramics of the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty followed by other dynasty in the west coast of Sabah show this part of Sabah interaction area outside of the period. This is supported by studies by Harrisson that found many of Chinese Ming types in Eno Island. The period of the discovery of ceramics is also equivalent to the discovery of the site Kota Batu and the Brunei Shipwreck dated 15th century AD. Kota Batu site is the center of the old royal government Brunei and important port in the South China Sea (Green & Kimura, 2013). This matter is supported by the discovery of the shipwreck Brunei (Brunei Shipwreck) with a cargo of Ming period ceramics in Brunei Bay.

As for the east coast of Sabah, most of the sites were cave that serves as the coffins burial site. The study by Harrison and Harrison (1971) recorded the discovery of ceramics Song, Ming and Ch'ing burial at sites in the eastern coast of Sabah including Darvel Bay, Madai Cave, Tapadong Cave and so on. The ceramics were found during the excavations conducted by Harrisson. All of the ceramic were from the province of Guangdong and Fujian in China. Both these regions represent the largest pottery center in China (Harrisson, 1986).

In the North, the discovery of the Song Dynasty ceramics through the discovery of the shipwreck Tanjung Simpang Mengayau representing merchant vessels from South China. Even jumping many shipwrecks including three board Wreck, Wreck Skulls, Canon Wreck, Coral Wreck and Wreck in Sabah waters Kalamunian (New Sabah Times, 2009) showed Sabah waters likely to be chosen to go to the merchant ship of Borneo region in the northern part of the Philippine Islands, The discovery of sunken ships proves that Tanjung Simpang Mengayau thousand years ago is the most important maritime route and gateway for ships from China's entry into the island of Borneo and the Malay Archipelago (Baszley and Bilcher, 2009).

Balambangan Island is the first port was built by the British East India Company a hundred years ago. Even the Royal Captain of the ship was a merchant ship that sank on December 17, 1773 at Royal Captain Shoal, 76 kilometers west of Palawan Island. Freight found 100, 000 pieces of Chinese ceramics, glass beads, gold and gold gong (Baszley, 2003) dated 18th century AD. Vessel weighing 780 tons carrying merchandise such as porcelain, silks, spices and so on shipwrecked on the way from Canton to get to Balambangan. This is also shows that the northern coast of Sabah is likely to be preferred as trade routes in the past. However, the discovery of fragments of a ceramic type in Keningau, cannot be identified either brought by traders, or even local communities due to only the site that was found in the interior of Sabah.

6. Conclusion

In the western part of Sabah, the period of highest ceramics are ceramics of the Ming Dynasty, while in the north side of the Song Dynasty with the discovery of the shipwreck Simpang Mengayau. East is divided Sabah term of trade ceramic 10th century AD to 20th century AD, indicating that the ceramic is continuously distributed in addition to ceramics from Vietnam, Thailand, Europe, the Netherlands and others. As for ceramics in the interior of Sabah, only fragments were found in the area Keningau. Results of the analysis showed that the discovered ceramic trade in coastal areas of Sabah is thoroughly 10th century until the 20th century

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