

# Pottery of Fort Kuta Lubuk, Non-European Goods in European Fort

Libra Hari Inagurasi

*The National Research Center of Archaeology*

\*Corresponding author. Email: [libra.hari@kemdikbud.go.id](mailto:libra.hari@kemdikbud.go.id)

## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the existence of the Portuguese fort of Kuta Lubuk. It reveals the artifacts buried and indicates whether the European fort's architecture resembles the artifacts left behind. Fort Kuta Lubuk is located on Lamreh beach, Aceh Besar, Aceh, located on the edge of the Strait of Malacca at the northern end of Sumatera Island, built during the Sultanate of Aceh in the 17th century. Around the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean is a strategic location for trade shipping. Muslim traders have visited the northern coast of Aceh from Arabia, the Middle East, Indian, Chinese, and European traders. Apart from being a stopover and port, it is also a place for the growth of Islamic kingdoms such as Lamuri and Aceh. Fort Kuta Lubuk is a cultural heritage with European characteristics, traces of competition in the world of trading shipping around the Malacca Strait. This paper uses archaeological methods with survey and excavation techniques. The survey was conducted to observe the fort's architecture and the archaeological remains around it, while the excavation collected data buried in it. Excavation results obtained the findings of pottery fragments associated with ceramics. Fort Kuta Lubuk is a fortress with European characteristics, while pottery artifacts used for daily needs between the fort and pottery are not comparable. The incomparability between fort architecture and pottery because there is an older cultural layer before the arrival of the Portuguese.

**Keywords:** *Malaka Straits, Lamreh Aceh Besar beach, Fort Kuta Lubuk, pottery.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Pottery (earthenware) is an object made of clay that is burned at a temperature of 350 to 1.000 degrees Celcius. Clay is the primary material for making pottery mixed with other materials as a temper, such as sand, shell fragments, pieces of rice husks, or remains of pottery that is no longer used (grog) (McKinnon 1996,1). Pottery generally functions for daily household purposes, as storage containers and non-containers. Pottery is a type of artifact commonly found at archaeological sites in Indonesia from the prehistoric, Hindu-Buddha, and Islamic eras. The north coast at the north of Sumatera Island, especially on the north shore of Aceh Besar Regency, holds many historical, cultural remains related to the arrival, growth of Islam, Islamic kingdoms, and the arrival of Europeans, including pottery and forts.

Fort Kuta Lubuk is located at Lamreh Village, district of Masjid Raya, Aceh Besar regency, Aceh (Inagurasi, et al., 2018, Inagurasi 2019), located on the shore of the Malacca Strait at the northern end of

Sumatera Island. Forts are scattered in the northern coastal area of Sumatra Island in Aceh Besar Regency, in the coastal area in order from the east to the west. There are Fort Kuta Lubuk, Kuta Inong Balee fort, Iskandar Muda fort, and Indrapatra fort (Sahar et al., 1997, Koestoro 2013, 6-7, Inagurasi, 2018, Inagurasi 2019, McKinnon 209, 365-368). Fort Kuta Lubuk is the only fort with European characteristics among other forts.

Fort Kuta Lubuk has become the object of attention and study by researchers, including the use of electromagnetics to map the existence of the fort that has been buried underground. In addition, the use of electromagnetic also reveals the shape of the fortress floor plan. The VLF method is used for archaeological exploration by utilizing electromagnetic waves emitted by low-frequency radio transmitters (15 kHz - 30 kHz) (Yanis et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the survey of fort Kuta Lubuk has also been conducted in order to survey the fortresses on the northern coast of Aceh (McKinnon 2009, 365-368). However, there isn't much research revealing the fort Kuta Lubuk and the context of

artifacts buried in it. Whereas the ground inside the fort certainly stores artifacts that can reveal various aspects of the fort.

Excavations on other European forts outside Aceh have been carried out, and one of them is fort Sumenep, Sumenep Regency, East Java. Fort Sumenep is a Dutch fort built-in 1785. From the excavation inside the fort area, fragments of pottery, ceramics, and glass were found. Most of the findings were broken glass parts such as cups, bottles, oil lamps with Latin script inscription in Dutch. The artifacts show the use of tools to fulfill daily needs for processing and storing food and lighting (Abbas 2013, 220, 227). Fragments of glass bottle show that the artifacts came from or was imported from the Netherland, Europe. The characteristic of a Dutch European fort is comparable to its artifacts, which also have Dutch characteristics. This paper presents the existence of fort Kuta Lubuk on the coast of Lamreh, Aceh Besar, as a Portuguese European defense on the northern coast of Sumatera in the 17th century and reveals the artifacts buried in it.

The problem to be solved in this paper is whether the artifacts inside the fort also correlate with the fort, which functions as a means of defense? What artifacts are buried in the ground inside the fortress? The purpose of this paper is to reveal the fort specifications, the dating of the fort, the type of artifacts inside the fort wall, and to find out the correlation between European forts and their artifacts. Archaeological methods are used through survey and excavation techniques to solve the problem of this paper. Surveys mean to describe the building of the fort and collect archaeological remains around the span, excavations to collect data buried underground. The data in this paper are divided into two groups and the first group is X, namely fort data, and group Y, namely artifact data collected from excavations. The data from group X and group Y then studied their origins, characteristics, whether they were comparable with the European fort, or there were differences with the artifacts buried in the forts. If it's not equal, what's the cause?

## 2. RESEARCH RESULT

### 2.1. Fort Kuta Lubuk: Chronology, Specifications (Group X Data)

Detailed information about the dates, specifications, architecture of the fort Kuta Lubuk is not found in the literature. Little information was obtained from Dennys Lombard book titled *The Kingdom of Aceh at the Age of Sultan Iskandar Muda*, stating that based on European sources, it is known that at the beginning of the early 17th century, Portuguese envoys Dong Dawis and Don Tumis came to face the Aceh sultanate asking for Biram

fort in Aceh was handed over to the Portuguese, the request was rejected by the Sultan of Aceh Ala ad-Din Ri'yat Syah, but allowed to build a fort in another location. Then the Portuguese envoy came back to Aceh on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1600 using a ship from Malacca, asking for permission to build a fort called "Lubbock" on the north coast of Sumatra (Lombard 2014: 139; Said 1961, 228, 229), related to the arrival of Portuguese envoys to Aceh in the early 17th century narrated in *Hikayat Aceh* (Mess 1935, 39-43 in Hermansyah 2020, 14; Lombard 2014, 139). The content of *Hikayat Aceh* tells of the outstanding leadership of Sultan Iskandar Muda and the leadership of his grandfather, incredibly when defeating and expelling the Portuguese (Hermansyah 2020, 144). Based on European sources, it is known that the fort Kuta Lubuk was built by the Portuguese in the early 17th century during the Sultanate of Aceh. In other words, the fort Kuta Lubuk was a European fortress.



**Figure 1** Map of Fort Kuta Lubuk Location (Source: The National Research Centre of Archaeology, Indonesia, 2019).

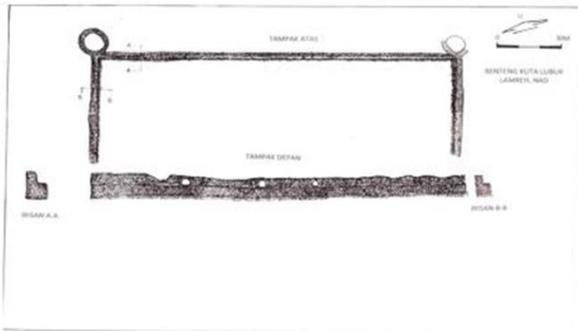
Fort Kuta Lubuk administratively located in Kuta Lubuk Village, Lamreh Village, Mesjid Raya District, the astronomical location is at coordinates koordinat 05° 36' 34,1"N – 95° 32' 11,8"E. The fort Kuta Lubuk faces north, the orientation facing the sea (the Strait of Malacca). The boundaries of the fort Kuta Lubuk are south of the Lamreh hill, east of Krueng Sungai Lubuk, north of the Malacca Strait, west of vacant land. The position of the fort is on the beach in a bay under the Lamreh hill. The fort in the Aceh language is called *Kuta*. Fort Kuta Lubuk is located in the Lamreh Site area, which has a lot of archaeological remains. Bukit Lamreh to the south of the fort contains dozens of ancient tombs from the 15th century AD. In the southeast direction of the fort, at the back of the fort, there are ancient tombs. Among these ancient tombs is the tomb of Sultan Muhammad Sulaiman from the 15th century AD (Inagurasi, et al. 2018, 20-21).

The condition of the fort Kuta Lubuk is no longer intact. The parts that can still be observed and remain are the walls or walls around the north and west part of the fort, while on the east side, only the foundation

remains. The southern part is open because the southern wall is gone. The walls of the fort are made of coral stone using white chalk. The fort has a rectangular plan, extending from west to east and wide north-south, facing the ocean, and built on a rock (Inagurasi et al., 2018, 19-20; Ismail, Muhammad Yanis, Gumati, 2014, 101).



**Figure 2** View from the top of the fort Kuta Lubuk (Source: The National Research Centre of Archaeology, Indonesia, 2018).



**Figure 3** Kuta Lubuk Fort Plan (Source: The National Research Centre of Archaeology, Indonesia, 2018).

**2.2. Pottery Artifacts Excavated from the Fort (Group Y Data)**

Pottery is the artifact discussed in this sub-chapter, considering that pottery is the most common artifact found among other artifacts at the time of excavation. The National Research Centre of Archaeology Indonesia (Puslit Arkenas) in April 2019 conducted excavations at the fort Kuta Lubuk. The excavation opened one box named LMRH/BKTL 2 2019, located in the south-western area of the fort. The excavation box name LMRH/BKTL 2 2019 is the box code for the Lamreh Site (LMRH) in the Kuta Lubuk Fort (BKTL) sector and the second box opened in 2019. The astronomical position is at latitude 05°36'34.3" N Latitude - 095°32'09.7" E, at an altitude of 6 m above

sea level (asl). LMRH/BKTL 2 box size is 2x2 meters, the orientation of the box is north-south slightly shifted to the left in a northwest-southeast direction (Inagurasi et al. 2018, 45).



**Figure 4** LMRH/BKTL 2 2019 Excavation Box (Source: The National Research Centre of Archaeology Indonesia, 2019).

The selection of the LMRH/BKTL 2 2019 excavation box inside the Kuta Lubuk fort located on the Lubuk beach was based on the consideration that many finds were found on the fort's ground surface, including walls around the fort, tombstones, ceramic and pottery fragments. In addition to many cultural remains found on the ground surface of the beach, to the northeast of the fort, there is also a source of clean water; although it is located on the coast, the water is fresh and not salty. Archaeological data found on the ground inside and outside the fort (horizontal data) is relatively abundant. Observing the abundance of the archaeological data, then conduct excavations to capture archaeological data buried in the ground (vertical data).

The excavation used the spit technique with a 20-centimeter interval. The land surface tends to be flat, except the south and southwest are slightly higher than the other sides. The techniques were chosen with the reason to be able to collect data properly when excavating and to see the potential of archaeological data on the inside of fort Kuta Lubuk. If there are no loose findings are found, the process will continue to the next depth (spit) and so on until other findings are found. The fort is located on a beach, and the condition of the soil surface is sandy mixed with gravel and loose black, greyish soil. The soil layer from the surface to spit 6 consists of black topsoil (humus layer), then sandy soil mixed with gravel and limestone, and there are white inserts, brown sandy soil or tends to be slightly lighter, the last layer at spit 6 depth 120 cm is a layer of fine sand (beach sand) which moist and slightly

wet. The top layer of soil, namely the topsoil or humus layer, is the most fertile form of the soil layer, blackish-brown colored and loose soil mixed with leaves, rubbish, and overgrown with grass.

Information from residents around the area, the fort is sometimes used as a place for a religion-related ceremony where they sacrificed animals, the bones found on the surface and in-depth of the soil, for example, at the spit 2-which is not too deep-is suspected to be remnants of that religion ceremonial activity. Fragmentary artifacts were found from the ground surface up to spit 5 to close to spit 6. The artifacts collected from the excavations consist of pottery, ceramics. The ceramics are from China, Vietnam, and Thailand. Ceramic dating dates from the 13-14th centuries. Pottery is associated with ceramics, but the amount of pottery is more than ceramics. Considering that spit 6 with a depth of 120 cm did not find artifacts or sterile from cultural remains, with sandy beach soil, and under coral sand, excavation was stopped at a depth of 120 cm (Inagurasi, et al. 2019, 52).

Excavations found a lot of pottery, found in fragments, none of which were intact, none of the fragments could be reconstructed. The pottery collected from the excavations at the fort Kuta Lubuk was analyzed for morphological analysis. There was no laboratory analysis, for example, to determine the content of the elements and the dating of the pottery. However, viewed from the pottery findings associated with ceramics from the 13th-14th centuries, it is suspected that the pottery has a relatively recent date with ceramics. Morphological analysis is conducted to determine the pottery findings in terms of texture, color, and parts. The pottery fragments that were rough in texture, thin, and some were thick; consists of parts: body, edge, handle, beak; pottery colors can be grouped in gray and red; plain, and some are decorated. As for the shape, it is difficult to identify because the pottery fragments are small and difficult to reconstruct. However, some fragments can be observed from the pottery parts, which are known after the analysis to have the shape of plates, vessels, pans, urns, and bowls. The pottery artifacts at the fort Kuta Lubuk are categorized by their functions as daily necessities, utensils for cooking, eating, drinking, and food containers.

Pottery is found at many coastal sites in Aceh. One of them is the Samudra Pasai Site area. Daniel Perret pointed out that there are sites that found the container pottery with carination and red materials in the Aceh area. The pottery closely resembles pottery commonly found in India and Sri Lanka, possibly imported to Aceh from South Asia. These pottery findings can be found at sites on the coast around Lamreh Lhok Cut (Lamreh), Ladong (Perret, et al. 173). In addition to pottery from

South India, in Aceh, there is also a lot of pottery that is thought to have been made or originated from Southeast Asia with lightness, simple geometric decoration, and rough texture (Perret et al., 2015, 157). The pottery has similar characteristics to those found on the surface and obtained from the excavation box at the fort Kuta Lubuk, which has similarities in morphological traits. The pottery found on the ground surface in the fort also has the characteristics of red pottery and have decorations.

Lamreh Hill, which is located south of fort Kuta Lubuk, is an area that contains many ancient tombs from the 15th century. In addition to ancient tombs, at Lamreh hills, pottery fragments associated with stone tools were also found. The stone tool is known as *pipisan* and uses for smoothing leaves or seeds. Pottery fragments and stone tools reflect that the Lamreh hill in the past was a settlement. One phenomenon that can be revealed is that the area around the fort Kuta Lubuk, Lamreh hills, and Lubuk beach in Lamreh, is where pottery is found.



**Figure 5** Pottery fragments samples from LMRH/BKTL 2 2019 excavation box, rough texture, red and gray colored, thick, pottery's edge parts, have the shape of plate, urn, bowl (Source: The National Research Centre of Archaeology, Indonesia, 2019).



**Figure 6** Pottery fragments samples from LMRH/BKTL 2 2019 excavation box. The pottery handle, rough texture, gray and red-colored, thick handle, plain, has a pan shape (Source: The National Research Centre of Archaeology Indonesia, 2019).

### 3. DISCUSSION

The data discussed in this chapter consists of two groups, group X and group Y. The first data is group X data, namely data on fort buildings. Group Y is the second group, namely the set of pottery obtained from

excavations in the fort. Group X got some information: the fort has a European architectural style, built in the early 17th century in the 1600s, during the Sultanate of Aceh. However, foreign news or local news from group X haven't found the data about human life and activity inside the fort. Group Y obtained a collection of data about the morphological characteristics of pottery: it is known that the findings of non-item pottery came from Europe. Comparative studies with other pottery found outside the fort Kuta Lubuk and other sites on the coast of Aceh, which have a period close to the establishment of the fort, the pottery findings thought to have come from South Asia or Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, groups X and Y are compared with the distribution of archaeological remains around the fort area; it is suspected that group Y's pottery exists in the same era with the tombs dating from the 15th century and the same age as the pottery around the tomb. From the two data groups, group X and Y, it turns out that the data is not comparable both in origin and chronology. The data information of group X shows that the fort Kuta Lubuk is a Portuguese European fort. In contrast, the data information of group Y: shows that the pottery findings have types of South Asian (southern India) and Southeast Asian (Southern India) pottery (Thailand, Vietnam).

Aceh, located at the northern tip of Sumatra Island, is surrounded by seas in the east, north, and west, the Malacca Strait in the east, the Indian Ocean in the north and west. The Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait are important routes because they become global trade and shipping routes that connect the western hemisphere (Europe-Middle East-India) with the eastern hemisphere (Southeast Asia-China). The Aceh coast became a stopover for shipping routes for Indians, Chinese, Arabs (Middle East), and Europeans. The ancient port, the trade center, the center of the kingdom grew in the coastal areas of Aceh and the Malacca Strait. Samudra Pasai, Lamuri, Malacca, Achin (Aceh) are trading centers that grew into the center of an Islamic-style kingdom on the coast of Aceh. In connection with its existence as a stopover for trading posts, forts were built on the north shore of Aceh, one of which is the fort Kuta Lubuk.

Fort Kuta Lubuk is located on the coast of Lubuk bay on the Lamreh coast, Kuta Lubuk fort is not the only cultural heritage in the Lubuk beach bay area, but there are other cultural remains in the area. At the south of the fort on the Lamreh hill, there is a cultural area of Lamreh hill, which holds abundant tombs dated the 1400s or the 15th century. At the south of the east side of the fort wall, tombs date from the 15th century. Before the Portuguese arrived in Aceh and built forts, Lubuk beach was a stopover and port for Arabs, Chinese, Indians in northern Sumatra (Inaugurasi 2021,

8-10). In addition to the port on the coast of Lamreh, a civilization has also grown, named the Lamuri Kingdom. In short, before there was a fort Kuta Lubuk, there was already a port at the Lubuk coast.

The Portuguese in Aceh were known to come later than the arrival of the Arabs, Middle Easterners, Indians, and Chinese. When the Portuguese built the fort Kuta Lubuk, the location around the fort has grown and has cultural developments, the Lamuri civilization with a transitional pattern from pre-Islam to Islam, as evidenced by the discovery of tombstones that had pre-Islamic shapes and ornaments such as *stiliran* ornaments, *padma* (lotus), and also the face of a living being disguised. Pottery, ceramics, stone tools are found on the surface of Lamreh hill, which is associated with ancient tombs from the 15th century. The pottery on the Lamreh hill is abundant and is thought to have the exact chronology as the tombs in the Lamuri cultural area. Fort Kuta Lubuk, which has the style of a European fort, is a European fort, a cultural heritage built in a location that already has its own culture, the Lamuri culture, which is a non-European culture. The pottery found at the fort Kuta Lubuk in this initial study is thought to be the traces of daily activities of the Lamuri culture. However, more detailed evidence is needed in the future.

Fort Kuta Lubuk is not the only Portuguese fort in Indonesia. Other Portuguese forts in Indonesia are found in Jepara and Ternate. In this paper, the Portuguese Fort in Jepara was used to compare the European characteristics of fort Kuta Lubuk. The Portuguese fort in Jepara is located in Banyumanis Village, Donorojo District, Jepara Regency, and built on a hill jutting towards the sea (cape) flanked by two bays on the west and east. The fort has a rectangular plan. Based on ancient KITLV Leiden University Library Digital Collections photos, May 2017 in 1925 and 1930, the fort has bastions at the corners and three holes in the north side wall (Stefanus dan Lucas Partanda Koestoro 2018, 84). Observing and comparing the fort Kuta Lubuk with the Portuguese fort in Jepara, it seems that one feature that indicates a European fort is the presence of a bastion. Bastions and holes in the fort walls were used for defense and security, for monitoring the enemy, or placing cannons. The design of the Portuguese fort has a defensive aspect.

Contrary to the fort Kuta Lubuk, which should have been designed as a means of defense, however, at the fort Kuta Lubuk found no artifacts or objects related to defense. The remains of bullets, fragments of cannons were not found in the fort of Kuta Lubuk. Instead, what was found were tools of daily use, such as pottery. The absence of artifacts related to defense at the fort Kuta Lubuk could be because it has disappeared or because

the Portuguese used the fort was relatively short. Conflicts over economic interests around the Malacca Strait between Aceh, the Portuguese, Johor, and the presence of the Dutch in Aceh caused the Portuguese to be expelled from Aceh so that the Portuguese did not stay long in the fort Kuta Lubuk.

Between the fort building and the pottery, findings inside the fort have a different chronology. The fort has a chronology of the early 1600s in the early 17th century to be exact, during the period of the Aceh sultanate, while the pottery, when converted to ceramic remains and ancient tombs around the fort, has an estimated chronology from the 13-14-15 century. Fort Kuta Lubuk and pottery have different cultural layers, and pottery is estimated to be an older layer while the fort layer is younger. The pottery findings are from the pre-Sultanate period of Aceh, and the fort was built during the Aceh Sultanate period.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The fort of Europe is one of the cultural remains found on the north coast of Aceh at the northern tip of Sumatra, which was present during the development of the Islamic kingdom. In Indonesia, the known European forts are the Dutch, Portuguese and British forts. The Fort Kuta Lubuk at Lamreh on the north coast of Sumatra is an example of the Portuguese presence during the Aceh Sultanate. Humans chose various places as settlements in the past. Caves and forts became one of the preferred places. And the fort became the center of settlement, activity, means of surveillance, and defense from the enemy.

Even though the architecture has European characteristics, there are no artifacts found inside the ground of the fort Kuta Lubuk which have similarities with the architecture. Ideally between the architecture and the artifacts found will be directly proportional or comparable. If the fort is built according to European design, ideally, the traces found inside the fort are artifacts with European characteristics. Likewise, if the fort has been used for war, ideally, the traces found are artifacts related to war activities.

Fort Kuta Lubuk, in this paper, is an example of the fact that there are oddities or anomalies. The design is a European fort built in a conflict situation to fight for hegemony around the Malacca Strait during the Aceh sultanate, but the artifacts found do not characterize the style of the building. There is a difference or gap between the design and the artifacts left behind. The characteristics of the fort as a European fort are not the same as the artifacts found in it. We can understand the causes of anomalies with observation on the context of the use of the environment around the site and

civilizations that have taken place before. It seems that European defense forts do not have to be accompanied by European artifacts either. The fort Kuta Lubuk in this paper has proven it.

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