

Artefacts Evidence of the Entry of Islam in the First History Century (7th A.D.) at the Bongal Site, Badiri District, Central Tapanuli District

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Abstract. Bongal is the name of a hill with a height of around 324 meters above sea level located in Jago Jago Village, Badiri District, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra Province. Since archaeological research was carried out by the Medan Archaeological Center or the National Innovation Research Agency in 2019 - 2022, in various reports or writings this area has been called the Bongal Site. This site holds various worldwide archaeological traces, one of which is Islamic artifacts from the 7th century (7th AD. This research aims to identify Islamic archaeological artifacts found by the community which is very important and rare primary data. Next, the analysis process is carried out to validate that the data obtained can be reconstructed and is relevant to existing historiography. Furthermore, the Islamic archaeological data became the basis for reconstructing the Islamic history of North Sumatra in the 7th century AD.

Keywords: Islam, artifact, Bongal Site

1. Introduction

Bongal is the name of a hill with a height of around 324 meters above sea level in Badiri District, Central Tapanuli Regency. So far, several parts of the Bongal Hill area have been used by residents as traditional gold mining locations, especially those in Jago Jago Village. It seems that this area is quite rich in gold content because mining activities have been going on since 2016 and are spread over a fairly wide area [1]. Simultaneously with the search for gold, miners discovered various archaeological remains by accident. They don't even know what this object is, how it functions, why it is there, let alone its significance for the history of the area in the past.

It is the antiques trading network that has become the entry point for the outside world to see the potential for valuable archaeological remains from the area since 2019. From this network of antique traders, archaeological finds in the form of old coins and jewelry have been identified. In 2020, archaeological research began to be carried out in the Bongal area or Jago

Jago Village, either independently by private institutions or in collaboration with authorized government agencies. From this research, various archaeological traces were found in the form of artifacts, ecofacts, and features that are very important for the history of classical era Indonesian civilization such as glass, ceramics, coins, beads, as well as various organic findings both of local origin and various other regions such as the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia [3].



Fig. 1. Research location, Bongal Site, on a map of Central Tapanuli (Source: BPS Tapanuli Tengah 2022)

Several types of artifacts found at the Bongal Site that have been documented by a team from the National Innovation Research Institute (BRIN) from research in 2019 - 2021 include ceramics, pottery, glass, stone, wood, beads and various types of metals such as gold, silver, tin, copper and bronze [6]. The origin of these artifacts is thought to come from West Asia (Middle East), South Asia (India), and East Asia (China) [6]. All the archaeological data shows that Bongal in the past was a cosmopolitan trading banda that was probably inhabited by various nations and even various religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam.

Archaeological data that strengthens the earliest historical assumption of the entry of Islamic civilization into the archipelago is the discovery of Umayyad Dynasty coins from 79 AH or 7 AD as findings from the Bongal Site community which are currently kept at the North Sumatra Al Qur'an Museum. There is still a lot of archaeological data indicated to come from the Middle East that has not been analyzed, whether it is kept by the public or in museums, such as finds of glass fragments, glazed pottery, or beads. Therefore, various archaeological data from the Bongal Site, especially Islamic artifacts, can be important data for reconstructing

or reconstructing the historiography of the Islamic civilization of North Sumatra in particular and the historiography of Indonesian Islam in general.

2. Method

This research is a type of qualitative research that will use two approaches, namely: 1) a historical approach and 2) an archaeological approach. A historical approach is used to reconstruct the history of the entry and development of Islam in North Sumatra, especially on the west coast of North Sumatra. In this approach, the method used consists of four stages, namely: 1) collecting sources through literature study and interviews (oral history); 2) verifying or critiquing sources; 3) data interpretation; and 4) historiography or historical writing [4]. These historical sources can be in the form of archives, old photos or drawings, old maps, newspapers, books, and oral histories conveyed by local community leaders or traditional leaders. Furthermore, the data from various historical sources must be criticized or verified from both internal and external aspects to ensure truth and discrepancies.

An archaeological approach is used to identify and analyze Islamic archaeological remains at the Bongal Site, Central Tapanuli Regency. Islamic archaeological data was obtained from survey results on findings from the Bongal Site community, either still kept by the community or stored in museums in North Sumatra. In this approach, the method used consists of four stages: 1) field observation or survey; 2) data identification; 3) data analysis; and 4) synthesis. When conducting a survey, many archaeological data must be collected, including artifacts and ecofacts which are thought to be evidence of traces of past human activity. The data expected to be obtained from this surface survey is in the form of a general description of various artifacts or Eco facts, especially those related to the history of the development of Islam. Next, the data identification process is carried out to determine the morphological form of archaeological remains in the form of size, shape or typology, material, color, decorative patterns, and other data so that it can be analyzed to determine the relative period of use and use in the past.

3. Results and Discussion

Currently, the Bongal Site has been designated as a district-level cultural heritage site based on SK Bupati Tapanuli Tengah No. 2565/DISDIK/2021, and as a provincial-level cultural heritage site based on SK Gubernur Sumatera Utara No. No. 188.44/465/KPTS/2022[8]. Currently, Bongal Site is in the process of being submitted as a national cultural heritage site. The Bongal site has very high importance for historical, scientific, cultural, educational, and religious aspects. Especially for the religious aspect, archaeological artifacts found at the Bongal Site can be important evidence of the arrival of various religions in Indonesia, one of which is Islam. Quite some surprising Islamic artifacts were found that date back to the 7th century AD.

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which is Islam. Quite some surprising Islamic artifacts were found that date back to the 7th century AD. These artifacts include coins, glass, ceramics, beads, medical equipment, jewelry, and others.

3.1. Islamic Coins

The coins found at the Bongal Site consist of Umayyad, Abbasid, and Sasanian coins. At the Bongal site, several variations of Umayyad coins were found. One of the Umayyad coins weighs 2.22 grams and has a diameter of 26.25 mm. On the front there are the inscriptions "*Laa ilaaha illa / Allah wahdahu 'Laa syarikalahu*" and "*bismillahi, dhuriba hadza ad-dirham bil Basrah fi sanah tis'a wa sab'in*" which means "In the name of Allah, this dirham was made in Wet on seventy-ninth year." On the back of the coin there is an inscription "*Allahu ahad Allah/ Ash-shamad lam yalid/ Wa lam yuulad wa lam yakun/ Lahu kufuwan ahad*" which means "Allah Almighty, Allah/ The place of asking, not having children/ and not being begotten, and not there is something/ That is equal to none of Him/". As well as the inscription "*Allahu ahad Allah/ Ash-shamad lam yalid/ Wa lam yuulad wa lam yakun/ Lahu kufuwan ahad*" which means "Allah Almighty, Allah/ The place of asking, not having children/ and not being begotten, and there is nothing/ There is none equal to Him."



Fig. 2. Umayyad Coin 1 Found at the Bongal Site, Collection of the Al-Qur'an History Museum, North Sumatra

Apart from that, Abbasid coins were also found. one of them weighs 2.86 grams and has a diameter of 21.77 mm. On the front, there is the inscription "*Laa ilaaha illa/ Allah wahdahu/ Laa syarikalahu*" which means "There is no God but/ The One God/ There is no partner for Him/". Apart from that, there is also text arranged in a circle with the inscription "*Bismillahi , dhuriba hadza ad-dirham bi Madinah as-Salam sanah khamisa wa khamsin wa miah*" which means "In the Name of Allah, this dirham was made in Madinah as-Salam in the year one hundred and fifty-five". On the back, there is an inscription in the middle that can no longer be read clearly. However, there is text arranged in a circle with the inscription "*Muhammad Rasulallah, arsalau bil huda wa din al-haq liyudzhirohu ala ad-dini kullihi walau karihal musyrikun*" which means "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, Allah sent him with

guidance and the true religion that he prefers over all religions even though the polytheists don't like it."



Fig. 3. Abbasid coins found at the Bongal site from the collection of the Al-Qur'an History Museum in North Sumatra

3.2. Islamic Beads

At the Bongal Site, many beads were found. One collector was found to have collected as many as 3000 beads at the Bongal site, which came from 218 types of bead variants. Of the 218 beads, 12 types of Islamic beads were identified with a total of 137 beads [5].



Fig. 4. Various variations of Islamic beads are found at the Bongal Site.

3.3. Intaglio

Intaglio is a gemstone that is engraved with various types of images and inscriptions. Currently, the number of Islamic intaglios found at the Bongal site is 7. Six are in the Solo Hijriyah First Century Museum and one is in the North Sumatra Al Qur'an Museum. In terms of color, of these 7 intaglios, two are crystal colored, one green, two black, one brown, and one red. The shapes vary, namely round, oval, and rectangular. In Intaglio there is a reading of

Bismillah, the result of an analysis by an expert on ancient Arabic letters. It is suspected that this was the stamp used at that time in Bongal, because the letters are reversed.



Fig. 5. Various variations of Bongal Site intaglio

3.4. Islamic Glass Bottle

These tiny bottles are traces of the Middle Eastern glass civilization that traders brought to ancient sites on the west coast of North Sumatra. It is estimated that this bottle comes from the 7th-10th century [2]. Due to its easily broken nature, it is very difficult to find this glass bottle intact.



Fig. 6. Various variations of Iranian glass bottles found at the Bongal Site

3.5. Islamic Glass Fragments

Various types of Islamic glass artifacts were also found by local people around the Bongal Site. Most of these Islamic glass artifacts come from Nishapur and Khorasan in Northern Iran. This Islamic glass artifact is thought to originate from the 7th – 10th century AD and is a very

rare and valuable type. Bongal Site glass artifacts were found in various shapes such as bowls, plates, large bottles, small bottles, and jars with beautiful colors such as blue, green, red, and yellow.

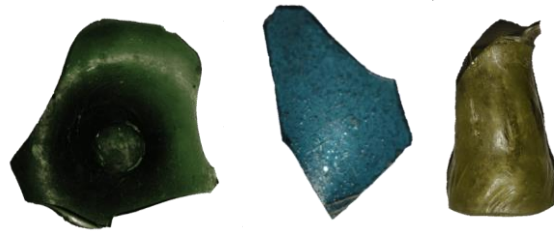


Fig. 7. Various variations of glass found at the Bongal site

3.6. Islamic Pottery

As a result of gold mining activities carried out by the community at the Bongal Site, apart from Islamic coin artifacts, Middle Eastern ceramic artifacts of Persian origin were also found which were produced during the Islamic era. This ceramic has a variety of glazes, although it is dominated by monochrome colors such as turquoise blue, bluish-green, golden brown, and others. This Middle Eastern ceramic artifact is thought to date from the 9th – 10th century AD.



Fig. 8. Various variations of ceramic fragments found at the Bongal Site

3.7. Islamic Ring

This ring has an Arabic script motif right on the ring and weighs 14.64 grams. This ring has Arabic inscriptions in Kufic letters with two alternative readings, the first is "min rabbil bait" and the second alternative reading is "*Bismilah*". This ring shows that there was an ancient Arab Muslim community who lived at the Bongal Site in the past.



Fig. 9. One of the rings with Arabic inscriptions found at the Bongal Site

3.8. Islamic Medical Tools

The various relatively small ancient tools found on the west coast of Central Tapanuli are medical and pharmaceutical equipment from the ancient Islamic world, similar artifacts have also been found in various excavations at ancient sites in the Middle East. Based on a literature review, this ancient medical and pharmaceutical equipment was collected at the Islamic Museum, Istanbul (Turkey). 20 items in the North Sumatra Al-Qur'an Museum collection of medical and pharmaceutical equipment require further identification.



Fig. 10. Various types of Islamic medical equipment found on the Bongal Site

4. Conclusion

This research was carried out at the Bongal Site in Jago-Jago Village, Badiri District, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra. The Bongal site is located in Jago-jago Village, Central Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra. At this location, there is the Lumut River which flows into Tapian Nauli Bay. The bay is considered strategic for anchoring ships from ancient times to the present. There is also the Indian Ocean to the west of the site. In this research, it was found that Islamic archaeological artifacts found at the Bongal Site consisted of 1. Coins, 2. Beads, 3. Intaglio 4. Bottles. 5. Glass Fragments. 6. Pottery 7. Rings. 8. Islamic medical equipment.

Analysis of various finds of Islamic artifacts from the Bongal Site discovered by the community, both those currently kept by the community and those that have become museum collections, is important data regarding the entry of Islamic civilization in Indonesia. This presentation is an initial attempt to reconstruct the findings of existing archaeological evidence

based on a series of regional observations and research results at the Bongal Site and in various related museums in 2023. The Bongal Site has enormous archaeological potential, especially regarding shipping interactions, and early trade West Coast of Sumatra with the Islamic world since the 7th-10th century AD.

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