

# Acehnese Tombstones in the Vernacular Settlements of Southeast Asia: A Chronology and a Typology

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## Abstract

The Acehnese tombstones in vernacular settlements in Asia remain as an area of unexplored subject and due to limitations of previous research. There are still many such tombstones that have escaped the attention of experts in the past. This paper produces a guide for the analysis of similar studies in the future. It unravels the time of arrival of Islam and the process of Islamization of Indonesia in particular and the history of Islamic culture along with the emergence of Acehnese tombstones in Asia.

It employs a survey, documentary research, qualitative data analysis and a scientific analysis in a laboratory as research methods.

The paper concludes that the term '*batu Aceh*' meaning Aceh stones, which is popular in Malaysia, does not necessarily mean that such tombstones were brought from Aceh in Indonesia. Instead, the technology or the makers themselves were brought from Aceh to build the tombs of Acehnese dignitaries buried in Malaysia. In terms of typology, there are 24 new types of Acehnese tombstones spread throughout Southeast Asia. The use of such tombstones in Islamic burial monuments have started at least around the 11th century AD.

This paper produces a new typology with codes that are practically easy to remember and use. They are: AP (*Nisan Aceh Pipih* or Flat Acehnese Tombstone), AB (*Nisan Aceh Blok* or Block Acehnese Tombstone), and AS (*Nisan Aceh Silindrik* or Cylindrical Acehnese Tombstone). Each has 24 variations.

**Keywords:** Southeast Asia, Batu Aceh, Islamisation, Chronology, Typology

## Introduction

The term *batu Aceh* (Aceh stones) is more commonly recognised in Malaysia than in Aceh itself. In Indonesia, there are various shapes of tombstones with many different decorations. The shape of the tombstone is usually a continuation of previous times such as the phallus, *meru*, and *lingga* shapes with numerous decorative patterns. The Acehnese tombstone is considered a work of art that involves the art of design, calligraphy and literature on a stone that was first introduced by H.S. Strcom in the second decade of the 20th century and then

popularised by Othman Yatim in 1988. At that time, early studies of tombstones were still discussing the status of the dead especially for sacred tombs and Malay Muslim burial customs. After independence, Ambary (1981), Othman (1988), (Perret, 1999;2007), Herwandi (2003), Miksic (2004), and Lambourn (2004) began to analyse basic forms, calligraphy, class, typology and even developed inventories with a classification of tombstones, especially in Peninsular Malaysia. They have been carried out by Othman, Perret and Kamaruddin. Othman has even gone further by building a chronology of the use of Acehese tombstones (Suprayitno, 2011).

According to Ambary (1998), based on their centre of distribution, the tombstones can be divided into four types: Acehese, Demak-Troloyo, Bugis-Makassar, and local. The Acehese type tombstone is based on the tomb of Malik-as-Shaleh which is the oldest tomb in the area. This type of tombstone is found not only in Aceh but is spread throughout North Sumatra, West Sumatra, Peninsula Malaysia, Lampung, Banten and Jakarta. The Demak-Troloyo type tombstone is based on the shape of the tombstone of Raden Patah in Demak and several ancient tombs in Troloyo. The shape of the Demak-Troloyo type of tombstone is spread over the North coast and inland areas of Java, Palembang, Aceh, Riau, Banjarmasin and Lombok. The Bugis-Makassar tombstones are based on the tombs of Goa and Bone kings in Tamalate, Soppeng, and Watang Lamuru, all in South Sulawesi (Suprayitno, 2011). Tombstones of this type distributed outside of South Sulawesi can be found in Central Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, and Bima. A local type tombstone is a distinct form of tombstone found in a certain specific area, such as the tombstones found in Ternate-Tidore, Jeneponto, and Barus.

This paper examines the Acehese tombstones with a focus on typology and chronology, as a continuation of what has been discussed by several previous researchers based on the results of the latest studies conducted from 2007 to 2017.

Its aim is to reconstructs the early history of the Islamization process in Southeast Asia based on evidence from Acehese gravestones and examine the history of the development of Islamic culture in Southeast Asia based on the typology of Acehese gravestones.

Its objectives are:

1. To categorize the typology and chronology of Acehese gravestones in Southeast Asia based on precise dates found on Acehese gravestones.
2. To discover the oldest gravestone used as a burial marker (monument) in Southeast Asia.

## Research Methods

This is descriptive-analytical research in which qualitative data is used. In order to achieve this, data collection techniques using surface surveys and field surveys directed at the research object were conducted. Supporting sources that could potentially supplement the research data were examined in libraries and institutions such as the National Library and the National Archives of Indonesia in Jakarta. Similarly, publications related to Acehese tombstone, especially regarding its typology and chronology were examined (Lambourn, 2004; Othman, 1988). Data analysis used historical analysis, in order to explore the facts or experiences (Perret and Kamaruddin, 1999; Damais, 1968).

## Findings and the Discussion

### Studies on the Shape of Acehese Tombstones

Out of the many past studies on Acehese tombstones, the issue of shape has been the most discussed (Othman, 1988; Lambourn, 2004; Perret and Kamaruddin, 1994; Damais, 1968; Ambary, 1984; Miksic, 2004). Studies have often looked at motifs, decorations, calligraphy, characters, and gender. In Malaysia, this

issue began to receive attention when Skeat (1900) explained about burial places and the relationship between the shapes of the tombstone with the person who died. He stated that round shape was for men, while the flat shape was for women.

Snouck (1906) suggests that a male tombstone was a prism in shape with four, six or eight sides that tapered towards the base, with the surface sides resembling inverted cones. The base and ornaments on the head were of various shapes, and the entire surface of the tombstone looked finely cut, often with inscriptions of the *shahada* (Muslim profession of faith) engraved. Meanwhile, for a woman's tombstone, the surface sides were made conical to the front and back. On both of its sides, there were decorations of a crown hugging a tree trunk and a spiral-shaped ornament resembling an ear that the Acehnese called as '*giwang*'. Linehan (1951) has argued that the Sacred Tomb of Seri Benian in Batu Hampar, Perak was a woman's tomb based on the engraved roses, despite the absence of any engraving of a name or date of the deceased.

Othman (1988) suggests that tombstones with carvings of flowers and *giwang* (ears) belong to a man. He referred to the tombstones in Sultan Muzaffar Shah Cemetery Complex in Telok Baking, Perak. Other examples are Panglima Md. Berani Tomb in Pagoh, Muar and Bendahara Tepok Tomb in Segamat, both in Johor, which is curled on the back and has flower motifs (Hurgronje, 1906; Linehan, 1951), yet is known by the locals as the tombs of men. The link between the shape of a tombstone and gender is still difficult to identify. This problem has become an interesting research issue and has not been answered satisfactorily until now.

The relationship between the size of a tombstone and the age of the dead is also an interesting issue. Kiefer and Sather as quoted by Othman (1988) say that the graves for children were small. Winstedt (1993) has given an explanation that there was a relationship between the shape of the tombstone with its small size as a children's grave and large size as an adult grave. He has concluded this by referring to the tombs of an adult and two children at Tanjong Sibadam and three tombs; two with large tombstones and one with smaller tombstone in Bukit Seluyut. Othman (1988) has also affirmed that a tomb in Tanjong Belading belonged to a girl and a tomb in Kota Tinggi belonged to a child based on the locals' accounts.

The survey on a number of tombs in Kota Rintang revealed a tomb with small size tombstones (height 22 cm and thickness 4.5 cm) with a carving of the '*aneuk abi*' flower motif at the base of the tombstone. '*Aneuk abi*' can be directly translated to 'father's child'. Hence, if the size of this tombstone is connected with the presence of such a flower motif, it can be inferred that this tombstone belonged to a child. However, the relationship of size with the age of the dead has not been explored comprehensively as yet.

This is because some small-sized tombstones might also be used for adults, such as the small-sized tombstone (height 30 cm and thickness 8 cm) located in Bandrong Village, Peureulak Timur District, Aceh Timur Regency. It is recognised by the locals in the area as the Tomb of Sultan Alaidin Said Maulana Abdul Aziz Shah, which is the Sultan of Peureulak "Bandar Khalifah" Sultanate that is believed to be the first Islamic Kingdom in Southeast Asia.

The issue of calligraphy on tombstones is also an interesting topic of study. Alfian (1973) has made a comparative study between the Arabic inscription on the tomb of Sultan Malik al-Saleh in Pasai with the tombs of Sultan Mansor Shah in Melaka and Raja Jamil in Pahang. He has found that there were similar marks on the tombstones. The sentences written on each tombstone contain Sufi poetry about profits. Meanwhile, Herwandi (2003) explicitly explains that there is a significant relationship between the calligraphies on various tombs in Banda Aceh and the Aceh Besar Regency with the individuals buried there. All these tombs contain tombstones that bear calligraphies that indicate them as the tombs of sultans, nobles, *laksamana* (admiral) and ulama (religious scholars). Such studies can be used to

analyse the *batu Aceh* of tombs in Southeast Asia so that the individuals buried can be identified.

### **Typology, Types and Chronology of Acehnese Tombstones**

Typology and the chronology of Tombstones have attracted the attention of scholars since the first discussion of *batu Aceh*. Researchers have formed their own typologies for all the tombstones they have studied according to their individual preferences. Shukor (1907) has identified Acehnese tombstones in the form of rectangles and octagons. Wilkinson (1920) has stated that there were two: slab-shaped with four sides at the head and a unique polygonal shape that narrows at the base and enlarges near the top as well as the “Chinese temple *tanglung* (lantern)” shape for tombstones in Perak, Pahang and Johor.

Meanwhile, Ambary (1998; 2001) has classified Acehnese tombstones into three basic shapes, which consist of a shape that combines wings with bucrane or horn of buffalos, rectangular shape with a decoration of a buffalo head, and a cylindrical shape. Ambary has also connected the decoration of buffalo heads on tombstones with the decorative patterns of houses or other sacred buildings. He emphasises that there is a connection between the buffalo head tombstone with pre-Islamic culture as shown in the buffalo slaughtering ceremony during funerals in Tanah Toraja (Sulawesi) as well as the decoration on traditional houses of the Batak and Minangkabau people. The circular shape of such tombstones also provides a glimpse into the foundation of such form that have existed in pre-Islamic architecture, namely the *lingga* form (Hindu period) and the menhir form (megalithic tradition). Herwandi (2003: 98-101) has also made his own typology. He has classified Acehnese tombstones into eight forms, which he has coded as A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, B2, C1, and C2: each of which has been assigned its own attributes.

Based on a comparative study of the forms of tombstones in Samudera Pasai, Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar and other places with the tombstones found in various regions in Malaysia, Othman (1988) has classified the tombstones that he termed as *batu Aceh* based on shape forms: They are slabs, rectangular pillars, cone-shaped pillars and rectangular pillars with extensions. However, Othman preferred to group the forms of tombstones in several places in Malaysia into 14 subtypes that have been coded with the letters A to N, each of which has its own attributes.

These tombstones types A to N have been given a few ranges of estimated age, such as type A being from 1400 CE, type B to G being from 1500 CE, and type H being from 1700 to 1800 CE. He has also said that out of the 63 sites with *batu Aceh* in Peninsular Malaysia, there were 54 tombs with missing tombstones. Some of them have been washed away upon falling into rivers, replaced with modern ones or deliberately destroyed by the local residents. He has also discussed the decorations and has examined the inscriptions on these tombstones, which have been found to mention descriptions of the owner and verses from the Qur'an.

However, the estimated period of the use of Acehnese tombstones has been relatively made and has been discussed by Herwandi (2003). The author has also found that a type H tombstone found in the Ratu Nahrisyah Cemetery Complex in Kuta Kareung, Pasai contradicted the suggestion by Othman (1988: 19) that the transition of the shape of Acehnese tombstone from flat-shaped to pillar-shaped has occurred around the 16th century. This is because the Ratu Nahrisyah Tomb Complex is dated to early 15th century as inscribed on a tombstone in the Fig. 1 that the owner died on the 17th Zulhijjah 831 H, which is equivalent to 27th September 1428.



**Fig. 1:** Pillar or block-shaped tombstone at the Ratu Nahrisyah Cemetery Complex  
Source: Author

Based on the discussions above, it is clear that the issue of typology of Acehese tombstones never resolved for several reasons. First, there is a subjective factor in the researchers to build different typologies according to their background knowledge. Second, because there are new findings from the survey conducted, it is necessary to make a typology that is in accordance with the latest data. Based on the latter, the typology issue continues.

The classification of tombstones in Southeast Asia is guided by the general characteristics of the basic shapes of the tombstones. From the classification, the type of tombstone is derived to imagine the overall appearance of the artefact by trying to incorporate properties that are more general rather than focusing on specific characteristics. This includes attributes such as size, material, colour and the number of finds.

In this regard, the typology of tombstones made in this research is based on the formal form of tombstones by comparing the typologies made by Othman, Ambary, and Herwandi. Ambary (1988: 12-14) classifies Acehese tombstones into three main classes: the combined wing-bucrane shape, rectangular shape, and cylindrical shape. The shape of the wing-bucrane-a tombstone resembles a buffalo horn, both in tangible and stylised form. Rectangular shapes are tombstones in the form of a rectangle with an ornament resembling a crown on the top. Cylindrical tombstones are those that are rounded like a club (Ambary, 1988: 12-14). Meanwhile, Othman (1988: 26-31; 52-58) has classified it into two main classes, namely slabs and pillars or blocks. The slab tombstone has a flat base, both plain as well as decorated and stylised. Pillar tombstones are shaped like a block, either squarish or roundish.

By comparing the typologies by Othman and Ambary, Herwandi (2003, 98-100) has classified inscribed tombstones into three main classes, namely flat (coded A), block (coded B), and round (coded C). Based on this classification, Ambary has arranged the typology of tombstones by including additional features. Flat tombstones are divided into four types, namely A1, A2, A3, and A4; block tombstones are divided into two types, namely B1 and B2; and round tombstones are divided into two types, namely C1 and C2. The three main classes of tombstones in Aceh Besar and Banda Aceh are arranged in eight types complete with their attributes.

Another types of Acehese tombstone is by Perret (1999). However, Perret continues the method used by Othman by adding three more types for the Acehese tombstones found in Johor, which he coded as O, P and Q. Hence, based on the types by Othman (1988) and Perret (1999), there are 16 forms of such tombstones that can be categorised into two main shapes, which are planks or flat that consisted









of nine forms (type A, B, C, D, F, N, O, and Q) and columns that consisted of seven forms (types G, H, J, K, L, M, and P) (Suprayitno, 2011).

### A New Typology

Fieldwork has offered new findings that had not been included in previous typologies. Moreover, Herwandi's typology was also limited only to inscribed tombstones. Hence, this paper produces a new typology by using the same method that Othman used to develop his typology. This is by observing the morphology of the tombstone that consisted of six parts, namely base or foot, lower body, upper body, shoulder, head and top. It is argued that this method is the most detailed so far. Further types are then arranged based on additional characteristics, such as wings, protrusions and curvatures on the shoulders, heads and tops of tombstones.

Based on the previous studies, such tombstones are known as Acehese tombstones. Thus, this research assigned the code A (Aceh) as the first code to classify Acehese tombstones. The next code is based on the general morphology or shape of all Acehese tombstones, namely the cylindrical shape (code S), the thin rectangular shape (code P) and the thick rectangular-block shape (code B). Thus, the proposed general classification codes are AP, AB and AS. The next classification is based on additional attributes such as the presence of wings, protrusion and curvature of the shoulders, and the top and the head as shown in the Fig. 2.

The chronology of various types of tombstones found in Aceh, Perak, North Sumatra and Riau is rather difficult because in this study, most of the tombstones did not mention significant information such as the names and dates. It is difficult to give a firm statement for a tombstone used at one time, as there are many cases of a type of tombstone being used across ages. The chronology in this study is only compiled based tombstones bearing inscriptions of date, whether from the results of the author's own research or from the previous studies in different places. Hence, for this new typology and chronology, there are 24 types of Acehese tombstones that the articulated as can be seen in the Fig. 2.

Typology and Chronology of Batu Aceh in Southeast Asia	
11 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
13 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
14 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
15 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
16 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
17 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
18 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	
19 <sup>th</sup> Century AD	

**Fig 2:** Typology and chronology of Acehese tombstones in Southeast Asia

Source: Author & Othman Yatim, 1988.

## Use of Typology and Chronology in the Study of Islamic Historical Research

Indications that such tombstones had been used since the 11th century AD can be seen through the ones from Kampung Permatang Pasir Tomb in Pahang (1028 AD), Fatimah binti Maimun Tomb in Leran Gresik (1082 AD), Ahmad bin Abu Ibrahim bin Abu Aradah Tomb in Phan-rang (1039 AD), and Makhdararah/Roqayah Tomb in Brunei (1048 AD), among others. The types of tombstones in the latter three tombs were not found during the field study in Aceh. Meanwhile, the tombstone in Kampung Permatang Pasir Tomb in Pahang is of the AP6 type. Othman doubted the authenticity of the *Naskh* script inscribed on the tombstone as it looked more modern and seemed contemporaneous with the style of script inscribed on the tombstones of Sultan Mansur Shah tomb in Melaka. Hence, he insisted that the oldest use of Acehnese tombstones was around the 13th century AD, and argued that the Permatang Pasir tombstone was replaced later (Othman, 1989). Despite that, based on the author's study in 2010, the oldest usage of the Acehnese tombstone could be seen based on a tomb in Kuta Lubhok, Lamreh in Aceh Besar that had thin rectangular-shaped tombstones (type AP6) with a date inscription of 1007 AD.

The *Naskh* script inscribed on Acehnese tombstones had come into being in the Middle East during the Abbasid dynasty around the 9th to 10th centuries AD and flourished during the Turkish Atabek period around the 11th century AD (Muhammad Uzair, Zuliskandar and Ros Mahwati, 2022). At this time, Islam had already existed in Southeast Asia, based on the findings of tombs in Brunei, Sumatra, Vietnam and Java. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the use of the *Naskh* script had also been used in the Islamic art of Southeast Asia. Despite this, there has yet to be a scientific study to prove the authenticity of the inscriptions on such tombstones. However, based on the existence of inscribed dates of around the 11th century, it can be suggested that the Acehnese tombstones had been used since the 11th century AD.

Fieldwork, has found that Aceh, which is the region with the most distribution of tombstones of various types, bear evidence of tombstones with the oldest inscribed date, 1007 AD, on a tombstone type AP6. This is followed later by the Tomb of Sultan Sulaiman bin Abdullah bin al-Basyir, 680 AH / 1211 AD with the type of tombstone AB4. Meanwhile, at Batu Badan, Barus, North Sumatra, the oldest tombstone discovered in the area was the tomb of Siti Tuhar Amisuri with an inscribed date of 1206 AD. However, its type cannot be determined as it has been damaged. The discovery of the oldest tombstones in Aceh is very interesting not only because of the date, but the type of tombstone used, namely the AP6 type, which is known as the flat type batu Aceh. The shape and decorative pattern of the type of tombstones in Lamreh indicate a glimpse into the transition from prehistoric culture to Hindu-Buddhism, and then to Islam. Thus, it is assumed that the type of tombstone is the oldest type. The distribution of this type of tombstone is often found in Aceh, such as in Kampung Pande, Kuta Lubhok, Lamreh, Samudera Pasai and tombs in Ulee Kareng District.

Even more interesting is the tomb of Sultan Sulaiman bin Abdullah bin al-Basyir that has been found in an ancient fort site in Lamreh. Many historians associated Lamreh with the Kingdom of Lamuri or Lan Wuli, Lanli or Lan-Poli as recorded by a Chinese Muslim, Ma-Huan in his book *Ying-yai Sheng-lan* in 960 AD. It is also referred to as Lamuri by Prapanca, Lambry by Tome Pires and Ramni by Aby Zaid Hasan, which all describe it as a famous port city that attracted the attention of foreign traders from China, India and Arabia. Perhaps not just a mere legend, as Tun Seri Lanang in the *Malay Annals* (1612 AD) say that Lamuri was Islamised earlier by Nakhoda (ship captain) Ismail compared with the other cities like Aru and Pasai.

However, this study does not use assumptions to determine the oldest date for the use of Acehese tombstones. Although it seems strange that the oldest date for the use of Acehese tombstones in the 11th century AD was found in Lamreh, Aceh Besar, and not in Samudera Pasai. However, this conclusion is based on evidence, not just conjecture. Acehese tombstones are tombstones that are widely available in Aceh, including those that have not been recorded by many experts and these are then used in the tombs of important individuals in the Malay Sultanate.

The distribution of tombstones shows that Aceh ranks first with 492 tombstones. Then it is followed by North Sumatra (48), Riau (1) and Perak (45) (Suprayitno, 2011). In Malaysia, Acehese tombstones in Perak ranked fourth (23 pairs) after Johor (83 pairs), Pahang (39 pairs), and Kedah (30 pairs). Perlis follows Perak with eight pairs, then Melaka and Terengganu with three pairs each (Othman, 1988) The distribution of such tombstones proves that Johor and Pahang have received the most influence from Aceh. This case is also in accordance with historical events that have occurred in the past.

Obviously based on the number of distributions of Acehese tombstones, Aceh is the cultural centre for the stone carving art of batu Aceh in Southeast Asia. However, from the distribution based on the types, there is an interesting explanation. North Aceh (Samudera Pasai) and East Aceh (Perlak) have similarities with North Sumatra (Aru). In terms of numbers, it can be said that from Samudera Pasai, the type of Acehese tombstones have spread to East Aceh and North Sumatra (Aru).

However, that does not mean that Islam started from Samudera Pasai. Based on the type of tombstones, those in Perlak and Aru are contemporaries and are thought to have accepted Islam earlier. The simple decorative pattern proves that the tombstone carving skill is not yet high. This problem means that the technology and influence of Islamic art is still very limited. Therefore, they still use pre-Islamic elements. No dates have been found on all the tombstones of this type, perhaps because of the lack of technology and not because they are younger than the other types.

The distribution of tombstones in Samudera Pasai is quite complete, representing almost all types of tombstones that are everywhere. However, the rise of Aceh Darussalam in the 16th century has replaced the role of Samudera Pasai in the fields of politics, economy and of course the culture of tombstone making. In the golden era of the Aceh kingdom, many cannons and tomb construction experts have been imported from Turkey (Ozay, 2011). From this period, Acehese tombstones in the form of flat, block and cylinder shapes with sizes larger than the Perlak and Aru types spread to remote parts of Southeast Asia. This type of tombstone has more Arabic calligraphy decorations, which consist of Sufi poems, verses from the Qur'an, announcements about people being buried and others. This calligraphy decoration is also combined with decorative patterns with floral motifs and buildings of pre-Islamic traditions. Therefore, it is this type of tombstone that is commonly found in Malaysia, including in Perak, not the small and simple types from Perlak and Aru.

## Conclusion

Based on the chronology of the use of Acehese tombstones, it can be emphasised that the forms of flat and block (pillar) tombstones have been used earlier than the cylindrical type tombstones. Flat and block tombstones have been used from the 13th century to the 18th century AD, while cylinder tombstones have been used from the 16th century to the 19th century AD. The case of the 11th century type AP6 tombstone found in Lamreh is so far the only evidence that affirms that flat tombstones have been the earlier form than the block type.



This conclusion is based purely on the dates on the tombstones, and not based on the rise and fall of a political power such as the Kingdom of Aceh and Samudera Pasai, which are assumed the main agents of disseminating the art of Acehese tombstone. It cannot be denied that there is a relationship between the spread of culture and political power. However, in the case of tombstones, only *Busatanus Salatin* recorded an order from a ruler to send tombstones from Aceh to Pahang. The order should not be interpreted as the interference of political power in the distribution of tombstones, because it is familial in nature (non-political and economic).

Although there have been no tombstones out of the 45 found in Perak that contain a date, but similar types, namely the ones coded as AP, AB and AS in this research were present. Based on the chronology of Acehese tombstones developed, the relationship and influence of Aceh with the Perak Sultanate and its establishment could be interpreted. Besides that, the small distributions of Acehese tombstone in Riau Daratan (Kampar, Siak and Pelalawan) has indicated a low-level influence from Aceh. There is only one tombstone, a block type and dateless, that has been found in Pelalawan. This is still questionable. In contrast to the Riau Archipelago (Upstream of the Riau River, Bintan and Penyengat Islands) there are tombstones of the AP8, AS4 and AP11 types bearing dates around 16th and 17th centuries AD (Othman, 1988, pp. 38-39). Therefore, the relationship between the Perak kingdom and the Kampar can only be identified by other evidence, such as mosques, forts, former palaces, the relics of the Kampar kingdom and the historical data.

From prehistoric evidence, stone technology has begun with simple polishing techniques to more advanced techniques that are complex. For example, it has started with the production of a chopper into a hand-axe, and finally to polished adzes. By using such analogy in the context of the development of Acehese tombstone, this research found that the earliest form would be the flat shape, followed by block or pillar, and finally the cylindrical shape.

The paper argues that the tomb site of Kampung Pande in Banda Aceh, which includes the tombs of the Kings of Kampung Pande, Putroe Ijo Tomb, Tuanku Dikandang Tomb, and Kampung Pande Beach Tomb have been the areas where the earliest Islamic civilisation has been formed in Southeast Asia. This is based on three reasons; First, archaeologically, Kampung Pande is a cemetery site with the highest number of tombstones 103 (22%) out of the 551 Acehese tombstones surveyed and contains a complete set of types of Acehese tombstones. Based on the findings of tombstones in Barus, Brunei, Leran (Gresik), Permatang Pasir, Pahang, Islam has been already present in Southeast Asia in the 11th century AD. Based on previous studies as well as the present study, the centre where the art of carving Acehese tombstones has been in Aceh. Hence, the earliest Islamic civilisation in Aceh should have existed since the 10th century AD, not the 13th century AD. The area of Kampung Pande is assumed to be the first centre for Islamic *da'wah* (preaching) in Aceh.

Second, geographically, the area has been strategic as a trading port that was located facing the entrance to the Melaka Strait. Hence, the location of Kampung Pande is very important from an economic-trade perspective because merchant ships from Arab, Persian and other nations will first dock in this area. Therefore, it is estimated that Islam came in contact for the first time in the area at Kampung Pande and its surroundings. Third, it has been mentioned in Chinese historical records that since the 10th century AD there had been a political power (Kingdom of Lamuri) in Aceh (Husni, A. et al., 2019). So far, there are two areas that are assumed to be the location of the Lamuri Kingdom, namely Lamreh in Masjid Raya District, Aceh Besar and the Kampung Pande area. Kampung Pande is thought to be the origin of the Darul Kamal and Makuta Alam dynasties. The descendants of the two dynasties also built the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam in the 16th century AD. According to

*Hikayat Aceh*, Kampung Pande became the centre of the spread of Islam at least since 510 AH / 1116 AD under the leadership of an ulama named Tuan Sheikh Bandar almu qallab Tuan in Kandang. His son, Sultan Johan Syah became a king in Kampung Pande Bandar Darussalam.

As conclusion, flat and block-shaped Acehnese tombstones were discovered to have been used earlier than cylindrical ones. From the 11th to the 16th centuries AD, tombstones were flat and block-shaped. From the 16th to the 19th centuries AD, cylinder tombstones were used. Based on the typology and chronology of this Acehnese tombstone, it can be used in the study of the history of the development of Islam in Southeast Asia, such as the early analysis of Islam's entry into Southeast Asia, researching the history of local civilization, analysing the position of royal courtiers, and recognising the form of Islamic culture that is compatible with pre-Islamic tradition. Based on the discovery of several tombs in Barus, Brunei, Leran (Gresik) Champa, and Pahang, the strength of this study proves that Southeast Asia received Islamic influence as early as the 11th century AD. The study's weakness is that some tombs have contradictory chronology information, such as the tomb in Kampung Permatang Pasir Tomb in Pahang, dated 419H/1028 AD or 914 Hijrah/1508 AD and the Makhdararah/Roqayah Tomb in Brunei, dated 440H/1048 AD or 862H/1457 AD. To address this flaw, researchers should conduct additional research to find a solution.

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