

## The Strategic Role of Islamic Kingdoms in Aceh in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries: The Case of Trade in Kuala Batee and Trumon

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### Abstract

Kuala Batee (Kuala Batu) and Trumon, two local Islamic kingdoms on the west coast of Aceh, had an important role in the spice trade, especially pepper, in the archipelago in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both *negeris* were special autonomous kingdoms under the Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A historical analysis approach to these kingdoms' past reveals several important findings. First, the Kuala Batee and Trumon kingdoms emerged as part of Aceh's growing power on the Southwest Coast after it ceased to rule in Minangkabau in 1665. Secondly, these kingdoms were originally fragmenting of the Susoh kingdom. They were subject to the rule of the Sultan of Aceh before finally putting up a fight along with the increasing penetration of Dutch politics on the west coast of Aceh in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Third, as Aceh's control weakened, the Kuala Batee and Trumon kingdoms established trade relations with other regions, including Europeans and the United States, making them strategic powers in world trade.

**Keywords:** Kuala Batee Kingdom, Trumon Kingdom, Aceh-European power solutions, trade route

### Introduction

This article explores the influence of the spice trade on the political dynamics of the northwest coast of Sumatra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century European expansion in the Archipelago. It examines the history of two local kingdoms on the west coast of Aceh, Kuala Batee (Kuala Batu) and Trumon (Figure 1), focusing on how the pepper plantation and business in these two kingdoms boosted the economy and raised political contestation in the region between the Acehnese Kingdom and the Europeans. Before European powers (the Dutch and British) entrenched the west coast of Sumatra, pepper was the driving force of the economy and the leading determinant for expanding the political interests of the Aceh kingdom.

However, with the arrival of European traders in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, demand for these products increased significantly, which resulted in the emergence of rich and influential traders coming to its ports, increasing the mobility of the local traders, as evidenced by the memoir of a wealthy pepper trader from Minangkabau named Nakhoda Muda.<sup>1</sup> His biography reflects the changing political constellation of this region when Aceh's political domination and economic monopoly began to be contested by spice hunters from Europe.

The rise of the Kuala Batee and Trumon kingdoms was intricately connected to the waning power of Aceh Darussalam after the reign of Iskandar Muda and the diminishing influence of the Serambi Mekah kingdom along the Malacca Strait. In 1663, pursuant to the Treaty of Painan,<sup>2</sup> the Dutch forcibly expelled numerous *datuk* Aceh (representatives of the Aceh sultan) as well as nobles and merchants from various regions of Minangkabau. Two years later, an alliance comprising the Dutch,

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<sup>1</sup> F. R. S. W. Marsden (1830), *Memoirs of A Malayan Family, Written by Themselves*, London: J. Murray, Parbury, Allen & Co.; G. W. J. Drewes (1961), *De Biografie van Een Minangkabausen Peperhandelaar in de Lampongs, naar Een Maleisch Handschrift in de Marsden-Collection te Londen Uitgegeven, Vertaald en Ingeleid*, Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the Treaty of Painan, see W. J. A. de Leeuw (1926), *Het Painansch Contract*, Amsterdam: H. J. Paris. See also Hendrik Kroeskamp (1931), *De Westkust en Minangkabau (1665-1668)*, Utrecht: Drukkerij Fa. Schotanus & Jens, pp. 31-32.

VOC,<sup>3</sup> and local Minangkabau people launched an assault on the Acehese in Minangkabau, initiating a 44-year Acehese rule in the Minangkabau region under the leadership of Sulthan Alauddin Ri'ayat Syah Al Qahhar and Sulthanah Safiatuddin Tajul Alam Syah.<sup>4</sup> Following their displacement, Acehese nobles and their descendants resettled and established pepper plantations in Susoh, which were believed to have occurred after 1781.

The Sultan of Aceh Darussalam authorised the cultivation of pepper along the southwestern coast of Aceh, overseeing the efforts of returning Acehese migrants from Minangkabau and local kings who had pledged allegiance to the sultan. This initiative attracted traders from India, America, and Europe, who engaged in periodic direct trade with the local population, circumventing royal authority in Aceh Darussalam.<sup>5</sup> This shift led to the emergence of various kingdoms, such as Kuala Batee, Trumon, Singkel, among others. It marked the inception of the South West Coast of Aceh's pivotal role in the global spice trade, particularly in pepper. Kuala Batee and Trumon, in particular, gained renown for their prominence in pepper production and their confrontations with European and American forces.

The province of Aceh has long been renowned for its association with the cultivation and trade of pepper (*segantang lada*), a commodity that has propelled Aceh onto the global stage. Historically, the Acehese leveraged pepper both as a diplomatic tool and an essential component of their economy.<sup>6</sup> As van Waardenburg mentions, wealthy individuals such as *uleebalangs* were instrumental in the establishment and oversight of pepper plantations, employing a hierarchical structure in which a designated head, or *peutoeha seuneubok*, managed the day-to-day operations.

The compensation for the plantation workers was linked to their performance (*voorschotgever* 'down payment provider'), with the down payment (*voorschotten*) and payments facilitated through intermediaries (*peutoeha djaga*) in the form of currency, grain, equipment, and cloth. Usually, the down payment (*voorschotten*) is not given all at once but is related to the work performance of the cultivators in the field. The pepper plant starts to flower after three years and can be cultivated for about 15 years.<sup>7</sup>

Aceh implemented a trade monopoly by centralising the distribution and pricing of pepper, effectively regulating its availability and cost. This control was further consolidated during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda,<sup>8</sup> prompting foreign and domestic traders to seek direct engagement with pepper producers in South West Aceh.

As demand intensified, the price of pepper soared, reaching 8 *rials* per *bahar*<sup>9</sup> at its peak, escalating to 20 *rials* with the arrival of Dutch and British traders, and soaring to 48 *rials* per *bahar* upon the arrival of the French. Meanwhile, in the royal capital, the price of pepper reached 64 *rials* per *bahar*.<sup>10</sup> Because the price of pepper was too high in the capital, European and American ships were tempted to buy directly from farmers and kings in areas such as Kuala Batee and Trumon. The flourishing trade of pepper, its historical significance as a diplomatic asset, and the economic dynamics surrounding its production and distribution underscore its pivotal role in shaping Aceh's historical and commercial landscape.

The European (American and Dutch) desire to trade directly with the two kingdoms was driven by the allure of abundant and high-quality pepper at a lower price. This was compounded by the weakening internal state of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate. The distance of the two regions from the sovereign capital, Kutaraja, also factored into the decisions of the Americans and the Dutch, leading them to engage directly through war or by entering into cooperation agreements.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Kathirithamby-Wells (1969), "Acehese Control over West Sumatra up to the Treaty of Painan, 1663," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 474-479.

<sup>4</sup> Aris Faisal Djamin (2021), *Susoh: Cahaya Kemilau Peradaban*, Banda Aceh: Aceh Culture and Education, pp. 144-147.

<sup>5</sup> Lee Kam Hing (1995), *The Sultanate of Aceh: Relations with the British 1760-1824*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Yoan Oktaviani (ed.) (2018), *Jalur Rempah Nusantara: Sisa Kejayaan Lada di Sumatera*, Jakarta: Litbang Kompas, p. 20.

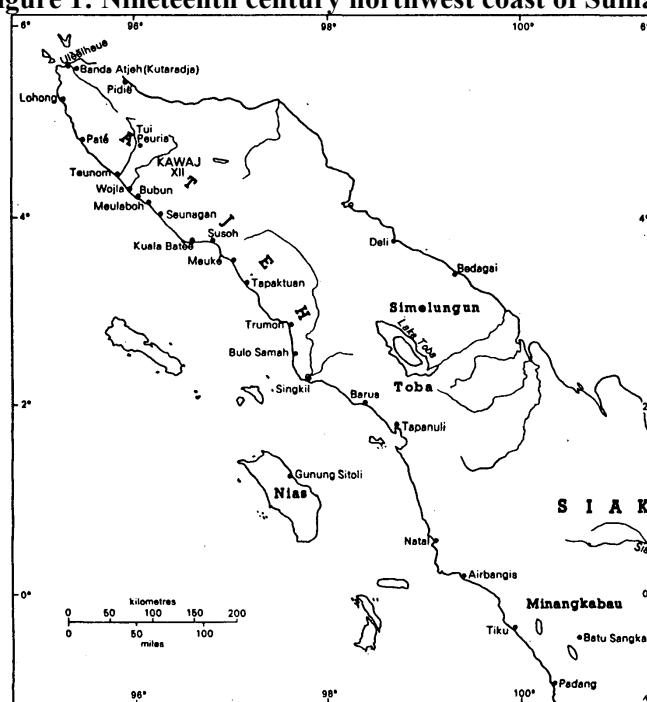
<sup>7</sup> Jan Julius Cornelis Hendrik van Waardenburg (1936), *De Invloed van de Landbouw op de Zeden, de Taal en Letterkunde van Atjehers*, Leiden: N.V. Dubbelman's Boekhandel, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), "Seuneubok Lada, Uleebalang dan Kumpeni: Perkembangan Sosial Ekonomi di Daerah Batas Aceh Timur, 1840-1942," PhD Dissertation, Leiden University, p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> One *bahar* is 375 ponds. See Gusti Asnan (2007), *Dunia Maritim Pantai Barat Sumatera*, Jogyakarta: Ombak, p. 377.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Ibrahim (1991), *Sejarah Provinsi Daerah Istimewa Aceh*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, p. 82.

Figure 1: Nineteenth century northwest coast of Sumatra



Source: Reid (1973), p. 197

## Previous Studies

In recent years, regional scholars have conducted historical studies on the northwest coast of Sumatra. These studies aim to enrich the scholarly literature about the region, which has previously been dominated by overseas scholars and has often been limited and related to other themes.<sup>11</sup> Our study takes a different approach by delving into the region's past not only through written sources but also by observing historical heritage that still exists in the region today. We conducted field research in 2022 to support our exploration.

Farish A. Noor (2014) and K. Subroto (2019) studied the American conflict with Kuala Batee related to the looting of the *Friendship* ship and its aftermath. Farish described the Kuala Batee War as a controversial event in the history of American military aggression, highlighting the inaccuracy of the United States' one-sided reporting.<sup>12</sup> K. Subroto (2019) stated that the conflict between the residents of Kuala Batee and traders from the United States was because both parties did not respect each other's laws and customs that applied in the partner regions. Moreover, the massive attack by the United States Army to wipe out the local population was considered too excessive in response to the actions of just a handful of pirates.<sup>13</sup>

Muchsin's research (2019) focuses on the existence of the Trumon Kingdom and the motives for resistance to the Dutch. Known fighters such as Teuku Cut Ali and Teuku Raja Angkasah played crucial roles in this resistance. According to Muchsin, the motive behind the war against the Dutch was to defend the homeland and religion.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For examples, see J. C. van Leur (1960), *Indonesian Trade and Society, Essays in Society and Economic History*, Den Haag: W. van Hoeve; M. A. P. Meilink Roelofs (1962), *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630*, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff; Hendrik Kroeskamp (1931), *De Westkust en Minangkabau*; J. Bastin (1965), *The British in West Sumatra 1665-1825*, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press; J. Kathirithamby-Wells (1969), "Achehnese Control"; Tsuyoshi Kato (1980), "Rantau Pariaman: The World of Minangkabau Coastal Merchant in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 4, pp. 729-752; Hing (1995), *The Sultanate of Aceh*; J. N. Miksic (1985), "Traditional Sumatran Trade," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. 74, pp. 423-467. See also: Gusti Asnan (2007), *Dunia Maritim*, and Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), 'Seuneubok Lada', and P. Swantoro (2019), *Perdagangan Lada Abad XVII: Perebutan "Emas" Putih dan Hitam di Nusantara*, Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.

<sup>12</sup> Farish A Noor (2014), "Attack, Reprisal and dealing with the Media Fall-Out: The Battle of Quallah Battoo in 1832," *Media Syariah*, Vol. XVI, No.1, pp. 255-286.

<sup>13</sup> K. Subroto (2019), *Serangan ke Kuala Batu Aceh, "Invasi Militer Pertama Amerika Serikat"*, Jakarta: Lembaga Kajian Syamina, pp. 28-29.

<sup>14</sup> Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat dan Perlawanan terhadap Kolonial Belanda di Barat-Selatan Aceh*, Banda Aceh: Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Aceh.

In a separate study, Wisber Wiriyanto (2021) discusses the currency used in the Trumon Kingdom, specifically the Trumon Kepeng money. Wisber suggests that the *Kepeng* money was not printed in Trumon but in England, indicating a political strategy by the British trade-partitioner authority to create monetary dependence.<sup>15</sup> This contrasts with Misri A. Muchsin's previous research, which suggested that the Trumon coins were printed in the Trumon fort.<sup>16</sup>

The archaeological research of Jovial Pally Taran and Rahmad Syah Putra (2021) shows the existence of the Kuala Batee Kingdom as a centre of the spice trade, especially black pepper in the Southwest Aceh region. European and American nations visited Kuala Batee until it sank after the hijacking of the *Friendship* and the attack of the American *Potomac* ship.<sup>17</sup>

Nasruddin AR's research (2021) delves into the history of the royal site of Kuala Batee in the Lama Tuha area. This was the original location of the Kuala Batee kingdom, which was later destroyed during the war against the Dutch. The royal centre was then relocated to Lama Inong (now known as Kota Bahagia Market). Nasruddin's research also discusses the important role of Kuala Batee in the global spice trade, which was significant for both Europe and America, as well as for the parent kingdom of Aceh Darussalam.<sup>18</sup>

Today, both Kuala Batee and Trumon no longer exhibit signs of their past trading economies, except for the submerged remains of historical artefacts in buildings, gravestones, and inscriptions, which are now located within swamp areas and oil palm plantations. Understanding the strategic significance of these two regions is important for decolonising knowledge, especially in addressing issues of socio-political equality. Some colonial perspectives have portrayed the southwest of Aceh as a passive region that repeatedly changed hands between different colonisers, including the Aceh power and European powers. By highlighting the active and strategic roles of both kingdoms, it is possible to dismantle and clarify the reconstruction of colonial history.

## Result

The Southwest region was a significant pepper producer in Sumatra from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was well-known for its "*peperhavens*" (pepper ports) and was part of the 'Rantau Nan XII', associated with the early migration of Minangkabau people to the area.<sup>19</sup> The Dutch referred to this region as the "*noordelijk afdeeling*" and it was a major pepper producer in Sumatra. Pepper was the first agricultural product that attracted the attention of international traders and brought foreign recognition to Aceh, both politically and economically, prior to the arrival of Western powers in the Archipelago.<sup>20</sup> Pepper cultivation took place in the fertile land behind the coast in the villages. When Europeans arrived in Sumatra, they found that Aceh had already monopolised the pepper trade.<sup>21</sup> The earliest trade contact between Aceh and the Europeans can be traced back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century when Dutch traders, Paulus van Caerden and Adam Vlaminck, signed a pepper purchase contract with Aceh's harbourmaster (*syahbandar*) Toean Jawa on 26 December 1600.<sup>22</sup> Since then European traders, particularly the Dutch, British, and American, regularly visited Aceh, expanding their search for pepper to the entrepots on the west coast, where the quality pepper was grown under the authorities' control. According to the narrative of Bakongan residents, Pulau Dua was one of the areas producing the highest quality pepper in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it is now a new tourist destination in South Aceh (Figure 2). However, pepper plantations declined by the end of the 1880s.

<sup>15</sup> Wisber Wiriyanto (2021), "Uang Kepeng Trumon sebagai Salah Satu Instrumen Administrasi Kolonial Awal Abad Ke-19," *Jurnal Sosiologi USK*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 1-21.

<sup>16</sup> Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat*, p. 77.

<sup>17</sup> Jovial Pally Taran and Rahmad Syah Putra (2022), "Kuala Batee and the History of the United States Invention [*sic*] in Aceh," *Proceedings International Conference on Islamic Studies*, Banda Aceh: UIN Ar-Raniry, 4-5 October 2021, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 103-116.

<sup>18</sup> Nasruddin AS (2022), "Sisa-Sisa Tinggalan Arkeologi di Kuala Batee, Kabupaten Aceh Barat Daya," *Proceedings International Conference on Islamic Studies*, Banda Aceh: UIN Ar-Raniry, 4-5 October 2021, Vol. 1, No. 1, 116-127.

<sup>19</sup> Moehammad Saleh Datoek Orang Kaja Besar (1965), *Riwayat Hidup dan Perasaan Saja* [Trasliterated from *Jawi* script by his grandson S.M. Latief], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Bogor: Dana Buku Moehammad Saleh, pp. 115-28. On the (hi)story of the early migration of Minangkabau people with 12 boats (*perahus*) to these regions, see K. F. A. van Langen (1889), "Atjeh's Westkust met Daarbij Behoorende Kaart," *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, 2<sup>de</sup> Serie, Deel VI, p. 4.

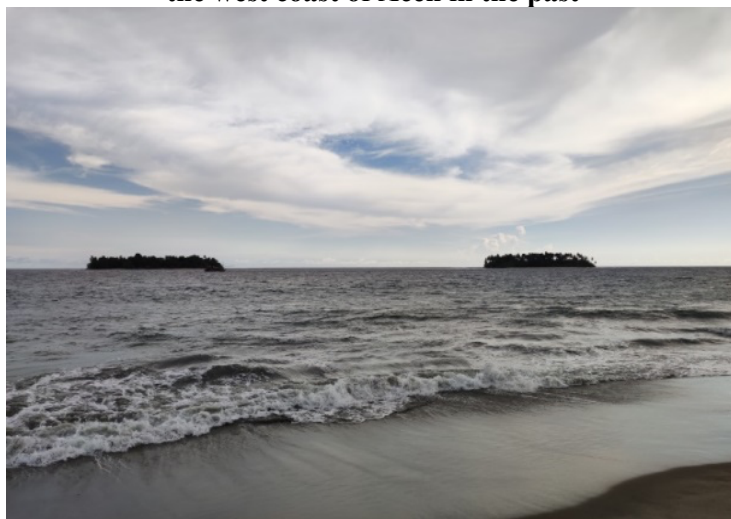
<sup>20</sup> Abdul Rani Usman (2003), *Sejarah Peradaban Aceh*, Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, pp. 21-26; Gusti Asnan (2007), *Dunia Maritim*, p. 212.

<sup>21</sup> Gusti Asnan (2007), *Dunia Maritim*, pp. 212-214.

<sup>22</sup> Ph.S van Ronkel [Dr.] (1908), "Een Maleisch Contract van 1600," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 60, Afl(elevering) 1/2, p. 98.

From the perspective of the residents of Bakongan, it is revealed that Teuku Ujung Pulau was authorised by the *mukims* for mining of peppers in Pulau Dua. He was succeeded by his son, Teuku Nyak Husin, and later by his grandson, Teuku Nyak Kecil. At the end of the 1880s, Pulau Dua and two other islands, Pulau Kayu and Pulau Ara, had a population of no more than 40 souls, were part of Bakongan, but adjacent to the Trumon coast, with a line that continues to Singkel.<sup>23</sup> From Sigantang Sira Peak, which is also one of the new tourist destinations, the coasts of Singkel, Trumon, and Pulau Dua were historically connected by merchant ships from distant foreign lands, serving as a route for hunting spices, particularly pepper.

**Figure 2: Pulau Dua currently, one of the best pepper producers in the west coast of Aceh in the past**



Source: Photograph courtesy the research team (2022)

The opening of large pepper plantations in the southwest employed the power of the Aceh sultan's representative known as *uleebalang*. The *uleebalang* acted as supervisors on behalf of the sultan and also functioned as local kings. In the power structure of Aceh Darussalam, the sultanate's territory was divided into several regions called mukim, each headed independently by an *uleebalang*. Their responsibilities included guarding the sultanate's territory, providing military assistance to the sultan when needed, and collecting taxes to be sent to Kutaraja.<sup>24</sup>

Pepper itself is not native to the archipelago, but was introduced from India at a later time. Pepper planting techniques were brought directly by the Indians, as Hinduism and Buddhism spread in the region. Sumatra became a major source of pepper in the world market from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, meeting a strong demand from China. Leonard Y. Andaya mentions that "the first *Piper nigrum* [pepper] was grown in Sumatra in the early 1400s to meet a strong demand from China. From these humble beginnings, Sumatra came to be the major source of pepper in the world market from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries."<sup>25</sup>

In 1511, the Portuguese conquered Malacca and then expanded to the Moluccas and Banda with the help of Malay sailors. The Spanish also sought to monopolise spices, leading to fierce competition when the Dutch arrived in the spice islands in 1599 AD. The Dutch established a monopoly through the VOC (Dutch East India Company) in 1602, aiming to control and reduce the price of spices. Their main targets were cloves, nutmeg, and pepper. The VOC enjoyed huge profits from the spice trade in the Nusantara and Southeast Asia until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup>

According to J. Kathirithamby-Wells, During the reign of Alauddin Riayat Syah (1588-1604), the Acehnese established strong political connections with the West Coast and controlled the pepper trade in the region. However, after the powerful rule of Sultan Iskandar Muda ended in 1636, many *uleebalangs* on the west coast started to challenge central authority by engaging in direct trade with

<sup>23</sup> Van Langen (1889), "Atjeh Westkust," p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Hing (1995), *The Sultanate of Aceh*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Y. Andaya (2000), "A History of Trade in the Sea of Melayu," *Itinerario*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, pp. 87-110.

<sup>26</sup> Nurarta Situmorang (2021), *Naskah Sumber Arsip Rempah Nusantara Abad 17-18*, Jakarta: Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia, pp. 2-4.

foreign traders without permission from Kutaraja.<sup>27</sup> By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a new pepper planting area emerged on the west coast of Aceh, controlled by the family of *uleebalang* Lebai Dapa (or Leube Dapa), an ancestor of Basa Bujang or Raja Bujang, a prominent king of Trumon who often collaborated with the British in Bengkulu.<sup>28</sup>

## **A History of Spice Trade and Influence**

The conflict between Aceh and foreign powers did not end on the northeast coast. The Portuguese, British, and Dutch managed to curb Aceh's influence along the Strait of Malacca to Minangkabau. The Dutch consistently disrupted Aceh's trade monopoly and supported opposition to the region's dominance. Even as Aceh shifted its economic focus to the southwest coast and began cultivating pepper, the Dutch continued to assert their presence. As power shifted, European and American merchant ships also redirected their attention and established trade relationships with local rulers.<sup>29</sup>

By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, American ships were transporting pepper from Aceh's southwest coast. This continued until 1873, when a major war broke out between Aceh and the Dutch. By 1803, the coast was producing about 5,000 tonnes of pepper, with a significant portion being shipped to New England, making America a major pepper supplier to Europe, "and so much of it was going to New England that America became a major supplier of pepper to Europe."<sup>30</sup>

The Dutch were determined to establish control over crucial trading centres like Singkel in order to secure their lucrative spice routes. In 1840, they successfully gained control of Singkel, which was then incorporated into the Tapanuli administrative region *afdeeling* (administrative area at the district level as part of a residency administered by an assistant resident) solidifying its importance in the Dutch colonial network. This strategic move proved to be advantageous for migrants from North Sumatra, particularly benefiting the Batak (Pakpak) people, while simultaneously undermining Aceh's influence in the region. The same situation occurred in Sibolga and Barus, where Dutch political policies favoured the Batak community over the Malay, Minangkabau, and Acehnese.<sup>31</sup>

In response to Aceh's dominance in trade and its competition for control over the spice route, the Dutch employed the term *Zeerover* (robbers and pirates) as a means of tarnishing the reputation of Acehnese ships, thereby impeding their activities in the west coast waters.<sup>32</sup> According to Muhammad Gade Ismail, colonial literature incorrectly interpreted the Sultan of Aceh's efforts to establish his power in areas considered to be to his territory as acts of piracy.<sup>33</sup> Dutch colonial literature inaccurately portrayed the efforts of the Sultan of Aceh to consolidate his authority in contested territories as acts of piracy. Through military intervention, the Dutch succeeded in wresting control of three pivotal spice trade centres—Air Bangis, Singkel, and Nias—from Aceh. Despite these areas having been under Aceh's influence into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, they ultimately fell under Dutch rule. The ruler of Aceh sought France's assistance in 1849 in a bid to reclaim control over these cities, which were now firmly under Dutch administration.<sup>34</sup>

The Dutch won the contestation of power between Aceh and the Netherlands to secure the centre of spices as an exotic commodity. However, this war has become a bad record in the history of warfare. In the end, this war was considered a situation that wasted the most human and financial resources and hindered the progress of the Dutch East Indies expansion.<sup>35</sup> The Netherlands was also in chaos in the

<sup>27</sup> Kathirithamby-Wells (1969), "Acehnese Control over West Sumatra," pp. 457, 459.

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), "Seuneubok Lada," p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> Aris Faisal Djamin (2021), *Susoh: Cahaya Kemilau*, pp. 16-17

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Reid (1995), *Witnesses to Sumatra: A Travellers' Anthology*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 235.

<sup>31</sup> Muhajir Al Fairusy (2016), *Singkel: Sejarah, Etnisitas dan Dinamika Sosial*, Banda Aceh: Pustaka Larasan, p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> However, there opposite claim is stated in Dutch sources: it was the local kings on the west coast of Aceh who invited the European powers there because they were often disturbed by "Atjinese zeerovers" (Acehnese pirates) and slave traders from Aceh. Suryadi (2004), *Syair Sunur: Teks dan Konteks 'Otobiografi' Seorang Ulama Minangkabau Abad Ke-19*, Padang: Citra Budaya Indonesia and YDIKM, explores the local sources, like the letters of Raja Bujang of Trumon preserved in Leiden University Library—among others bundle Cod. Or. 5554-A, C: Letters sent by the local king of Barus, Singkil, Trumon, etc. to the Dutch military commander in Padang—to assess this Dutch claim (pp. 200-201). See also: F. G. Hoffman (1837), *Atchin: Verhaal der Expeditie in 1857*, Nijmegen: H.C.A. Thieme, p. 7; A.V. Michiels (1851), *De Toestand van Sumatra's Westkust in 1848*, 's-Hertogenbosch: Gebroeders Muller, p. 12; J. Habbema (1885), "Fragmenten uit Een Maleisch Handschrift," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel XXX, p. 474; H. C. Klinkert (1899), *Kitab Boenga Rampai, ataw Tempat-tempat Pilihan di dalam Soerat-soerat Melajoe*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 247-248.

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), "Seuneubok Lada", pp. 1,3 (*Stelling/Dalil no. 1*).

<sup>34</sup> Muhajir Al Fairusy (2016), *Singkel: Sejarah, Etnisitas*, p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> Paul van 't Veer (1985), *Perang Aceh; Kisah Kegagalan Snouck Hurgronje*, Jakarta: Grafiti Press, p. 79.

face of the war with Aceh, which had drained the country's treasury to the point that other productive public works had to be set down. The Dutch military expedition against Aceh was almost universally criticised, including by the Dutch government. Spices as an economic motive had become the reason for the power struggle between Aceh and the Netherlands. The climax was when the Dutch officially conquered Southwest Aceh through First Lieutenant H. Coljin on June 3, 1939. However, the resistance of the fighters headed by Teuku Ben Mahmud Blangpidie continued, keeping Coljin busy.<sup>36</sup>

Two significant events occurred in 1778 that marked the establishment of the Kingdom of Kuala Batee and Trumon as an independent kingdom. These events were the arrival of ships from Europe and the United States that traded directly with local rulers and the weakening of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate's control over local rulers.<sup>37</sup> This was further exacerbated by the Dutch, who encouraged the local rulers to disobey the sultan. Although the Dutch were bound by the Treaty of London in 1824 to refrain from interference with the Kingdom of Aceh, they made a treaty with Trumon in 1830 that recognised its sovereignty as an independent kingdom. In addition to trade motivations, the Dutch approached small kingdoms with the intention of weakening the Aceh Sultanate, which they had not been able to conquer until that point.<sup>38</sup>

In the book *Aceh Sepanjang Abad* (Aceh throughout the centuries), Muhammad Said mentioned that around the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the above-mentioned Lebai Dapa (Leube Dapha, Lebai Dappa or Haji Dapha), Ruler of Trumon began to challenge Sultan Jauhar Alam and break free from the Kingdom of Aceh. Captain John Canning, the British Representative in Bengcoelen (Bengkulu) who visited Singkel in 1814, mentioned that Lebai Dapa and his family (he wrote: 'Lebbee Dappah') controlled Aceh's southern and western coast from Kuala Batee to Singkel.<sup>39</sup> It marked both independence and prosperity for the Trumon kingdom and its surroundings. In 1799, the Americans entered Trumons port to buy pepper. Besides Trumon, the Dutch also visited Meulaboh, Tapa Tuan, Singkel, Rigas, Mocco (Meukek), Labuhan Haji and Kuala Batee.<sup>40</sup>

From historical records, ships from the United States (US) began trading on a large scale in the 1780s in the Asian region. The first documented visit by US vessels to Padang and Bengkulu occurred in 1789. Then, in 1795, the ships found a new shipping route to the centre of a large and new black pepper plantation on the southwest coast of Aceh, located between Susoh and Trumon. Aceh then began to establish trade relations with the US, and the US brought its merchant ships to supply black pepper and then exported it to the US, Europe, and China.<sup>41</sup> The Kingdom of Trumon is known to have produced its coins (*Kepeng*) to support its economy (Figure 3a, b).<sup>42</sup> These coins marked Trumon's independence from Aceh's sovereignty and showed considerable economic activity in the region.

**Figure 3a: Front view of Trumon's *Kepeng* coin**



<sup>36</sup> Aris Faisal Djamin (2021), *Susoh: Cahaya Kemilau*, pp. 55-63.

<sup>37</sup> Muhammad Said (1981), *Aceh Sepanjang Abad, Jilid II*, Medan: Waspada, pp. 472-473.

<sup>38</sup> Muhammad Said (1981), *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, pp. 511-512.

<sup>39</sup> Muhammad Said (1981), *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, p. 474. See also Jane Drakard (1990), *A Malay Frontier: Unity and Duality in A Sumatran Kingdom*, New York: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, p. 42.

<sup>40</sup> Muhammad Said (1981), *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, p. 509.

<sup>41</sup> Subroto (2019), *Serangan ke Kuala Batu Aceh*, p.14.

<sup>42</sup> Wisber Wiryanto (2021), "Uang Kepeng Trumon," pp. 7-9; Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat*, pp. 75-77.

Figure 3b: Back view of the *Kepeng* coin



### Kingdom of Kuala Batee

Kuala Batee, formerly known as Quallah Battoe, presents a tranquil sight, with waves gently crashing against the shore, punctuating the silence of this historically significant area that was targeted by the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The beach is dotted with houses, predominantly inhabited by fishermen. Our informer named Edi Syafawi (see note 44), gestured towards a specific spot in the middle of the beach, flanked by bays, and indicated the location of a spice shipwreck. Not far from the beach, mounds of land once served as fortresses, known locally as “*madats*.” However, due to the expansion of oil palm plantations, many of these historical sites have been engulfed, resulting in the loss of evidence and documentation. A notable exception is an English inscription on a marble tombstone (Figure 4), now located near an elementary school, commemorating the date of death of Aceh’s panglima laut, Cut Buntar, also known as “Syekh Buntar.”

Appointed by Sultan Ala’ad-din Jauhar al-Alam Syah in 1816 to oversee the collection of pepper revenues in the west coast ports, Syekh Buntar commanded a fleet of smaller armed vessels used for transporting pepper between local growers and foreign buyers. His adept diplomacy and ability to foster connections between local powers and foreign traders earned him the admiration of Salem pepper traders, who honoured him with the marble tombstone as a tribute to his friendliness, courage, and diplomatic skills.<sup>43</sup> The inscription reads:

This marble points to the grave of SHEWBUNTAR who died at Quallahbatto 13 April 1824 ...t 42. As he was ambitious of distinction, active, persevering & energetic success followed his efforts & his dominion & reputation were widely extended. Personally brave, he was cautious & calculating. In more cultivated society, his fame would have been, probably that of a great conqueror & history would have recorded it. He had imperfections as we as virtues. He was generous & open towards his friends severe & implacable towards his enemies. The traditions of his. Countrymen will preserve the memory of his abilities & his conquests Strangers will recollect the kindness of his temper & the friendness of his conduct.

Figure 4: Syekh Buntar’s inscription



Source: Photograph courtesy the research team (2022)

<sup>43</sup> Hing (1995), *The Sultanate of Aceh*, pp. 243-244; Anthony Reid (2016), “Why did Aceh Lose Its Nineteenth Century Independence? Comparison with Siam and Other States,” *Heritage of Nusantara*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 168.



The region surrounding Kuala Batee, includes Bandar Susoh, is well-known for its historical significance and prominent spice production. Both areas are located in close proximity to the interconnected shoreline, separated only by Surien Bay. Currently, there is a contentious issue between the Aceh government and the private sector regarding the classification of Surien Bay as a special economic zone (SEZ). According to Edy Syafawi,<sup>44</sup> Surien, and Kuala Batee were crucial coastal areas and major hubs for spice trade in Southwest Aceh during their respective timelines.

Kuala Batee is one of the sub-districts in Southwest Aceh Regency, with an area of 176.64 km. It is bordered by Gayo Lues Regency (north), Jeumpa District (east), Babahrot District (west), and the Indian Ocean (south). The Kuala Batee subdistrict is divided into three *mukims*: Mukim Kreung Batee (comprising six villages), Mukim Sikabu (six villages), and Mukim Kota Bahagia (seven villages). According to a Dutch description, the landscape of Kuala Batee is separated from Senaam by the Simanjam and from Pulau Kayu and Blang Pedir by the Air Manis. The eastern border of Kuala Batee is formed by the Gajolanden (Patiambang), while the western border is formed by the Indian Ocean.<sup>45</sup>

The Kuala Batee Kingdom was originally an area of *uleebalang* from Susoh. This Kingdom is a fragment of Lama Muda and represents a continuation of the Lama Tuha Kingdom, which was destroyed by floods in the 1740s.<sup>46</sup> According to K.F.H. van Langen, the origins of the Kuala Batee's authority can be traced back to the following factors:<sup>47</sup>

Initially, Kuala Batee was part of the Susoh area. A certain Kecik Karim, the head of a Pedirean settlement, requested permission from the *datuk* in Susoh to establish pepper plantations at Lama Inong, in the upper regions of Kuala Batee. He was permitted to engage in this activity in exchange for the customary tribute of one-half Spanish dollar per kilo of pepper. The *datuk* was required to pay half of this amount to the Acehnese sultan as the *hasil* (harvested pepper).

Tuanku Sinkel, also known as Haji Lebai Dapa, was entrusted by the *datuk* with the task of collecting tribute as the representative of the Acehnese sultan. Kecik Karim, later known as Teuku Lama, fulfilled the entire tribute for the first harvest, only half for the second, and refused to honour his agreement for the third. This refusal by the pepper ships to land their cargo for Susoh had an adverse impact on the trade of the latter, affecting a large part of its population's livelihood.

Lebai Dapa, who benefited from the pepper trade through "*kamsen*" (the Chinese word for "commission") and "*oepah bawa kapal*," had planned to take Kuala Batee to task in consultation with the *datuk*. However, due to his untimely demise, this responsibility was passed on to his sons, Teuku Nyak Haji and Raja Bujang. Subsequently, Kuala Batee engaged in conflicts with Susoh on land and with Trumon at sea. These conflicts ended with Raja Kuala, the son of Teuku Lama, marrying a granddaughter of Datuk Bagah of Susoh, leading to the renunciation of Susoh's demands.

Raja Kuala, who had no children, was succeeded by his brother, Raja Pedir, who played a role in establishing peace between Kuala Batee, Susoh, and Trumon. He also worked towards achieving Kuala Batee's independence from Susoh, which, at that time, could be obtained by bribing the Acehnese ministers and offering a substantial financial gift. Additionally, Raja Pedir married an Air Bangis woman, and their child, Teuku Raja Sulaiman, took over the leadership (1889). Teuku Raja Sulaiman controls the left bank of the Batu River, while Pocut Hasan, son of Pocut Abdullah from the XXVI *Mukims*, reigns independently on the right bank during the reign of King of Pedir when he settled there.

The Rigah chronicle mentions that Pocut Kuala later moved to Rigah and took control of the local government there. Similar to Pocut Kuala, Pocut Abdullah was also linked to the Acehnese royal family through his mother. Teuku Raja Sulaiman continued to oppose Dutch supreme authority until December 1881, and only after that did he submit to it.

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<sup>44</sup> Edy Syafawi (38), Interview, August 16, 2022. Edy Syafawi is an alumnus of the Islamic history department of UIN Ar Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia. He is a local native and once wrote a thesis about the Kuala Batee Kingdom.

<sup>45</sup> Van Langen (1889), "Atjeh's Westkust," p. 66.

<sup>46</sup> Lukman Hadi Subroto and Tri Indriawati, "A Brief History of Kuala Batee Kingdom," *Kompas*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.kompas.com/stori/read/2022/08/24/160000279/sejarah-singkat-kerajaan-kuala-batee#>, accessed November 12, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> This paragraph and subsequent ones refer to van Langen (1889), "Atjeh's Westkust," pp. 66-67.

Van Langen's account suggests that the Kuala Batee Kingdom was established and was under the rule of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam. However, it also indicates that the Kuala Batee Kingdom sought to separate itself politically from Aceh Darussalam in order to dominate the pepper trade within its territories. Local government records show that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, pepper plantations began to emerge in the Kuala Batee area. It is believed that by 1820 or later, Kuala Batee had become the world's largest producer of pepper. The pepper was transported by British, French, and American ships to various parts of the world.<sup>48</sup>

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Kuala Batee has been a destination for numerous foreign visitors, including those from England, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, and Spain. In 1831, the *Friendship* ship from America also searched for pepper in Kuala Batee, which was known as one of the largest pepper producers and exporters of its time. At that time, Kuala Batee was still under the protection of the Aceh Kingdom, which maintained military relations with the Ottoman Turks.<sup>49</sup> It is said that the local population looted the American-flagged ship because it was considered to be engaged in illicit trade.<sup>50</sup>

## Trumon Kingdom

Trumon is one of the most significant regions in the history of South Aceh. It was previously the primary hub for pepper trade on the southwest coast of Aceh. At that time, trading vessels from foreign countries regularly traversed the waters of Trumon's harbour. The primary commodity produced by this region was black pepper. The Dutch traveller W.L. Ritter who visited the northwest coast of Sumatra in 1837 observed that the region exported between 150,000 and 200,000 *pikuls*<sup>51</sup> of pepper annually, requiring approximately thirty ships. These ships regularly arrived from England, France, and America, as well as from Java and "Poelow-Pinang" (Penang).<sup>52</sup>

Trumon's role in the pepper trade coincided with the weakening control of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam. Like Kuala Batee, Trumon played an important role in the spice route trade in the past. Although it did not have a history of major conflicts with foreigners like Kuala Batee, Trumon was once in a decisive position in foreign trade contacts on Aceh's west coast. Trumon significantly developed as people began arriving from Aceh Besar. The migration of this group of people in the process of pepper cultivation has transformed the region from a virgin forest area into a politically and economically important area on the southwest coast of Aceh. Such migration of the Acehnese people has also provided opportunities for economic improvement and political opportunities for family members of the *uleebalangs* to establish their political power in the newly migrated places.<sup>53</sup>

Negeri Trumon was built by one of the descendants of the people from XXV *Mukim* of Aceh Besar named Haji Lebai Dapa, whose name has been mentioned above. His father and followers moved from Aceh Besar to Susoh, Southwest Aceh, to open pepper plantations. The success of his business made him a ruler in the region. Haji Lebai Dapa and his brother, Bapa Bujang (or Datuk Siruyung), moved further south at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> Bapa Bujang began developing the land where the Subdistrict Trumon is now located and started his business there. However, he was not very successful and his efforts remained insignificant. His brother, Haji Lebai Dapa, went to Sinkel and gained prestige thereby gathering a large following of Acehnese people and acquiring wealth through trade. He married the daughter of the Acehnese representative in Sinkel and gained authority in the country.

<sup>48</sup> Lukman Hadi Subroto and Tri Indriawati, "A Brief History," *Kompas*, August 24, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> Faris A Noor (2014), "Attack, Reprisal and dealing with the Media Fall-Out," pp. 259-260.

<sup>50</sup> Muhammad Said (1981), *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, pp. 521-522.

<sup>51</sup> Anthony Reid (1969), *The Contest for North Sumatra*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 7. One *pikul* (picol) is 61,76 kg (Gusti Asnan, 2007, *Dunia Maritim*, p. 377) or "one hundred and thirty-three and a third pounds" (Jeremiah, 1835, *Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac, under the Command of Commodore John Downes, during the Circumnavigation of the Globe, in the Years 1831, 1832, 1833, and 1844; Including a Particular Account of the Engagement at Quallah-Battoo, on the Coast of Sumatra; with All the Official Documents Relating to the Same*, New York: Harpers and Bros, p. 232) or "as much as an ordinary man can lift, i.e. about 100 kati or (Batav[ia]) 120 bubut" (R. J. Wilkinson (1932), *Malay – English Dictionary (Romanised), Part II (L-Z)*, Mytilene: Salavopoulos and Kinderlis, p. 268).

<sup>52</sup> W. L. Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen over het Rijk van ATJIN, voor zoo verre het zich uitstrekt van den hoek van SINKEL tot aan het zoogenaamd GROOT-ATJIN, langs de Noordweskust van SUMATRA, gelijk ook over de, tusschen dien hoek en de baai van TAPPENOLIE gelegen, onafhankelijke staten SINKEL, TAPOES en BAROES: opgemaakt op eene reis langs die kust, in het begin van 1837," *Tijdschrift voor Nedèrland's-Indië*, Deel 1, Afl. I, p. 73.

<sup>53</sup> Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), "Seuneubok Lada," pp. 59-66.

<sup>54</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," p. 8; E. B. Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen met Troemon," *De Indische Gids*, Deel 10, Afl. II, p. 1191.

Despite his success in Sinkel, Lebai Dapa's ambition and desire for wealth remained unsatisfied. At the request of his brother, Bapa Bujang, he moved to Trumon but retained his rights in Sinkel. In Trumon, he played a key role in advancing the economy. His wealth led to a rapid increase in Trumon's population, prestige, and prosperity. This prompted him to challenge the Acehese rule, declare independence, and adopt a flag featuring a red or dark blue field with a white kris (*keris*) as seen by Ritter, or possibly *kelewang*. This flag was also used in Singkel. Despite continued hostilities with Aceh, he brought Trumon into such a flourishing state that it annually generated up to 40,000 *pikuls* of peppers. He managed to seize complete control of the country, displacing his brother's relatives who had to submit to his authority due to his prestige and power.<sup>55</sup>

From the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the central government of the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam was largely absent, resulting in a lack of control over the provinces. During this period, local rulers on the southwest coast enjoyed considerable autonomy, trading with foreigners directly without seeking permission or granting *wasee* rights to the Sultan of Aceh. This arrangement led to significant financial gains for these rulers, prompting them to resist central authority. In 1787, Lebai Dapa entered into a contract to sell pepper directly to the British Company in Bengkulu. By 1795, American merchants from Boston and Salem were also trading directly with this region.<sup>56</sup> The direct transportation of pepper from Aceh's southern west coast to America ceased only with the outbreak of Aceh's war with the Dutch in 1873.<sup>57</sup>

This success made Lebai Dapa a major pepper power on the southwest coast of Aceh in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to the observations of Captain John Canning, who visited Aceh on the orders of the Governor General in Calcutta, Lebai Dapa controlled most of the trading ports on the southwest coast of Aceh from Singkel to Kuala Batee with a population of approximately 27,750.<sup>58</sup> The influx of a larger population into Lebai Dapa's territory led to a significant increase in pepper production, reaching 83,000 *pikuls* in 1803. This was a notable expansion from the 47,000 *pikuls* reported by Captain Canning in 1814 for Trumon.<sup>59</sup>

Upon his death, Haji Lebai Dapa bequeathed a substantial inheritance to his seventeen sons and ten daughters. He subsequently secured his new Kingdom to his son, Basa Bujang. Another son, Muhammad Arif (the Dutch referred to him as Raja Amaris), obtained Sinkel, and a third, Muhammad Tahir or Teuku Silikat, founded a new *negeri* between these two places called Bulu Sama, which subsequently became an important trading hub. The latter also married the daughter of the Chief of Bakongan, a large and prosperous *kampung* located three miles north of Trumon, inhabited by people of the XXVI *sagies*. From that time onward, these four princes (local Kings) consistently faced a common adversary in the form of the Sultan of Aceh, with whom they shared a unified front.<sup>60</sup>

During the reign of Raja Bujang, Trumon experienced notable economic advancement and a corresponding political distance from Aceh. He exhibited a markedly more entrepreneurial spirit than his father and established broader political and trade connections with the Dutch and other European nations. As with other local rulers, his existence is evidenced, among other things, through a royal seal bearing his name. The seal, written in Jawi script, reads: "*al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh wakil rajah Asyi Tuanku Raja Bujang ibn Tuanku Sekandar Negeri Trumon*," which translates to "He who entrusts himself to God, the deputy of the ruler of Aceh, Tuanku Raja Bujang, son of Tuanku Sekandar of the State of Trumon."<sup>61</sup> The seal inscription indicates that Raja Bujang's father, Haji Lebai Dapa, was bestowed with the honorific title "Tuanku Sekandar [Iskandar]." It also suggests that until 1834, he claimed the title "deputy of the ruler of Aceh."

Raja Bujang's political power was almost unchallenged after his cousin, the only child of his uncle Bapa Bujang, named "Dateo Siboeijang" (Datuk Sibuyang), who had an infamous character and could regularly and always wanted to challenge his authority, but stayed in Padang, was expelled to Batavia

<sup>55</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," pp. 8-9.

<sup>56</sup> Reid (1995), *Witnesses to Sumatra*, p. 235.

<sup>57</sup> Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), 'Seuneubok Lada', pp. 116-122.

<sup>58</sup> Muhammad Said (1981), *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, pp. 474.

<sup>59</sup> John Anderson (1840), *Acheen and the Ports on the North and East Coasts of Sumatra*, London: Allen, p. 161.

<sup>60</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," p. 9; Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," p. 1192.

<sup>61</sup> Annabel Teh Gallop (2019), *Malay Seals from the Islamic World of Southeast Asia*, Singapore: NUS Press in association with The British Library, p. 172, based on Leiden manuscript Cod. Or. 2178.II.7: "Letter from Raja Bujang of Trumon to the Resident of Padang [E. Francis], 12 Syaaban 1250 (14 Dec. 1834)."

because he violently resisted the government in 1829.<sup>62</sup> In the 1820s, the pepper production of Trumon nearly doubled, reaching 150,000 *pikuls*. This amount was estimated to be more than half of the world's pepper production. It is no exaggeration to say that by 1800, almost all of the world's paper came from the west coast of Aceh.<sup>63</sup> With this huge production, Raja Bujang became a wealthy pepper lord. The profits from the pepper trade enabled him to build his defences and resist the rule of the Sultan of Aceh.<sup>64</sup>

Raja Bujang was estimated to possess approximately 100,000 *Spaansche matten* (Spanish dollars), which made him the wealthiest and most influential local ruler on the west coast of Aceh at the time. He was the first to earn 5 percent rights and lifted all foreign instruments, yet he was aware of his interests and thus protected the trade with foreigners. Like his father, Raja Bujang received and treated European traders in a genuine and friendly manner, thereby attracting them to visit the ports of Trumon. He sent a letter dated 25 Zulhijjah 1248 (Wednesday, May 15, 1833) to Captain James D. Gills of the *Borneo* ship from Salem, Massachusetts, in which he expressed his desire to purchase a pair of guns.<sup>65</sup>

Raja Bujang commanded a fleet of ships that travelled to Batavia, Bengal (Southern India), Singapore, and Penang, bringing back valuable goods. Despite his wealth and political influence being greater than his brothers', many doubted his sincerity, believing it only extended as far as his own interests. To match the strength of Aceh, he constructed a stone fortress near the seashore, adjacent to the princely residence. The fortress featured 8 to 10-foot walls with bastions and pointed irons to deter climbing, and was armed with 32 cannons, making enemy invasion difficult.<sup>66</sup>

Beyond the primary fort aimed at safeguarding the palace against potential sea invasions, there exists another defensive structure known as Kuta Tanoh, constructed from soil. Positioned around 400 metres from the main fort and in close proximity to the Trumon Kingdom's principal port, Kuta Tanoh stands as an additional line of defence approximately 200 metres from the port. Moreover, situated to the east and approximately 400 metres from the primary fort, lies Kuta Tambeh. Despite its current state of ruins, remnants of Kuta Tambeh can still be observed today (refer to Figure 5). It is important to note that the crown prince of the Trumon Kingdom inhabits this fort, adding to its historical and strategic significance.<sup>67</sup>

**Figure 1: The ruins of the Fort Kuta Tambeh in Trumon**



Source: Photograph courtesy the research team (2022)

Raja Bujang died in 1835, and it was said that his brother had poisoned him.<sup>68</sup> Trumon's rule was then succeeded by his second son, who had European ancestry and was known as Teuku Raja Fansurna

<sup>62</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aantekeningen," p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> James W. Gould (1956), "Sumatra-America's Pepperpot. Part One," *Essex Institute Historical Collection*, Vol. 92, No. 2, p. 102.

<sup>64</sup> Muhammad Gade Ismail (1991), 'Seuneubok Lada', p. 40.

<sup>65</sup> The letter is reproduced in George Granville Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages: A History of the Pepper Trade with the Island of Sumatra*, Salem, Massachusetts: The Essex Institute, pp. 100-101.

<sup>66</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aantekeningen," p. 10; Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>67</sup> Isa Ansari, SH (60), Interview, September 03, 2022. Isa is a former sub-district head in Trumon District whose house is located next to the Trumon Fort site. He knows oral information from his parents about the history of the Trumon kingdom.

<sup>68</sup> Kielstra (1888), "Onze aanrakingen," p. 1194 mentioned that Raja Bujang died in 1832 or 1833. So did D.G. Stibbe (1921), *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, Vierde Deel, 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff; Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 441. Actually, these records remain in doubt, because the King still wrote a letter with his seal to the Resident of Padang, E. Francis, dated 14 December 1834 (see Gallop, *Malay Seals*, p. 172). Ritter who visited Trumon in 1837 found that Raja Bujang has died "two years ago in the age of 41 years" (Ritter, "Koorte aantekeningen," p. 11). If we believe his record, thus it means Raja Bujang was born in 1794.

Alamsyah or Teuku Raja Batak but was also referred to as “Nja Bata,” “Nyak Batak,” or “Radja Moeda” in Dutch accounts. His mother has European blood who arrived in Trumon with an Acehese man. She is an *Indo* (Eurasian) woman by Dutch name, Kaatje Stolte. Her last name is derived from her father, “Doctor Stolte.”<sup>69</sup>

Kaatje’s life story is like a folk tale. His father, Dr. Stolte, a medical doctor, migrated to Padang from the Netherlands as a bachelor. In Padang, he worked for the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) and opened a health clinic, but it was not successful enough because many people in the city still liked to go to shamans. Although he has a girlfriend in the Netherlands, he feels no hope of returning to his homeland to marry her. In Padang, he then fell in love with a beautiful young female slave (*Slavin*) from Nias whom he bought from a Chinese slave trader in Muara harbour of Padang. It is not clear whether Dr Stolte and his Nias girl were officially married, but it is clear that not long afterwards, a cute baby girl was born who, after becoming a teenager, was very beautiful – an *Indo* (Eurasian) girl with blonde hair and black eyes. That’s what Kaatje Stolte is, whose official name is Catharina Stolte. The girl’s beauty amazed many people in Padang, including the Aceh traders. Her father died when she was seven years old.

One day, a rumour spread in Padang that the Pauah people (*de Pauërs*) from the outskirts of the city, who hate the Dutch, will launch an attack. Kaatje’s mother was very frightened. One night, she and her daughter decided to leave their house and sailed by boat. They sailed with an Acehese trade boat (*praauw*), and due to the strong winds and gusts, the boat was stranded on Toran Island. As they continued sailing, the storm brought their boat further away from Padang. What happened next can already be guessed: their boat lost its way to Trumon. The king of that land, Raja Bujang, asked Kaatje’s mother to marry her beautiful daughter. The proposal of the powerful king was certainly difficult to reject. Raja Bujang married Kaatje, who then famously called “Nonna” in Trumon.<sup>70</sup> Soon after, Nonna gave birth to a crown prince named Nyak Batak, alias Raja Muda, who succeeded his father as the ruler of Trumon.<sup>71</sup>

During his youth, Nyak Batak received Islamic teachings from a cleric (*ulama*) from Sunur, Pariaman, named Syekh Daud. Due to illness, he was stranded in Trumon on his trip to Mecca and married into a family member of Raja Bujang.<sup>72</sup> Nyak Batak, the crown prince, was only 12 or 13 years old when he succeeded his father. Because he was not yet mature enough to assume the role, the government of the

<sup>69</sup> See among others P.J. Veth (1837), *Atchin en Zijne Betrekkingen tot Nederland: Topographisch-Historische Beschrijving*, Leiden: Gualath Kolff, p. 94; Ritter (1839), “Korte aantekeningen,” p. 12; Kielstra (1888), “Onze Aanrakingen,” pp. 1194-1206. H. von Rosenberg called him “Radja Moeda van Taroemoen”. See Rosenberg, “Geografische en Etnografische Beschrijving van het Distrikt Singkel, de Landen Legende Langs de Simpang Kanan en de Banjak-Eilanden, Benevens Eene Korte Aanteekening Nopens de Simpang Kiri,” *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 3, Afl. 1, p. 417. Henceforth, he would be called “Raja Muda,” the name often found in many classic sources about Trumon.

<sup>70</sup> Her other names recorded are: “Nonna Gadoes” and “Loena” or “Lena”. See J. Kreemer (1923), *Atjeh: Algemeen Samenvattend Overzicht van Land en Volk van Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden, Tweede Deel*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, p. 234; D.G. Stibbe en F.J.W.H. Sandbergen (1939), *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië, Achtste Deel*, ‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff (Tweede Druk), p. 1764.

<sup>71</sup> This account is summarized from of a story entitled “KAATJE.: Een fragment – bij overlevering – uit de ongeschreven geschiedenis van Padang” (KAATJE [STOLTE]: A fragment – by tradition – from the unwritten history of Padang) published in sequences in Padang’s weekly *Sumatra-Courant*, VII<sup>ste</sup> Jaargang; No. 43, Zaterdag 26 October 1867, pp. 3-4; No. 44, Zaterdag 2 November 1867, pp. 2-3, and; No. 45, Zaterdag 9 November 1867, p. 3 by the author named “Onzen Sumatraanschen mederwerker”. However, some sources vary in mentioning that Kaatje, without her mother, fled with an Acehese boat (*prauw*) when Padang was occupied by the French pirates led by Le Mème in December 1793. The boat, which was skippered by an Acehese guy, then stranded in Trumon. It is not known whether she was forcibly taken there by the Acehese man or not. Other hearsay says that Kaatje and the Acehese guy fell in love. In Padang rumors spread that she had been kidnapped and was made as a slave. Raja Bujang, the king of Trumon, saw this beautiful girl, then married her. Kaatje then converted to Islam and gave birth to several children for Raja Bujang, including the eldest Nyak Batak alias Raja Muda. See Ritter (1839), “Korte aantekeningen,” p. 11, who notes that when he visited Trumon in 1837, Kaatje was already around 70 years old and her husband, Raja Bujang, has died. She lived in Trumon, but sometimes in Bulu Sama. See also Hoffman (1873), *Atchin: Verhaal der Expeditie*, p. 7; E.B. Kielstra (1888), “Onze Aanrakingen,” p. 1194; Veth (1837), *Atchin en Zijne Betrekkingen tot Nederland*, p. 94; Rusli Amran (1988), *Padang Riwayatmu Dulu*, Jakarta: CV. Yasaguna, pp. 80-82, 197. On the pirate Le Mème’s attack on Padang with his pirate ship *de Ville de Bordeaux* (December 1793), see E. Netscher (1881), “Padang in het Laatste der XVIII<sup>e</sup> Eeuw,” *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 41, 2<sup>de</sup> Stuk, pp. 112-122; A. Reid (1973), “The French in Sumatra and the Malay World,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 129, Afl. 2/3, 199-200; Rusli Amran (1981), *Sumatra Barat hinggga Plakat Panjang*, Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, pp. 346-350.

<sup>72</sup> Arnold Snackey (1888), *Sair Soenoer, Ditoeroekan dari ABC Melajoe-Arab*, Betawi: Albrecht & Co., p. 12. According to Snackey, Sheikh Daud’s marriage with a woman of Raja Bujang’s relative gave birth to a son who later also became a well-known *ulama*, (scholar of Islam) named Sheikh Muhammad Adam. Syekh Daud is the author of *Syair Sunur* and *Syair Rukun Haji* or *Syair Makah dan Madinah* which well-known in Sumatra in 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Suryadi (2004), *Syair Sunur*, pp. 52-57; Suryadi (2013), “Syair Mekah dan Madinah karya Syekh Daud Sunur, 1832,” in Henri Chambert-Loir et al. (eds.), *Naik Haji di Masa Silam, Tahun 1482 – 1840, Vol. 1*, Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia: 249-325. See also: Edwin Wieringa (2002), “A Tale of Two Cities and the Two Modes of Reading: A Transformation of the Intended Function of the Syair Makah dan Madinah,” *Die Welt de Islam*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 174-206. For more in the reformist *ulama* Syekh Daud of Sunur, see Suryadi (2001), “Shaikh Daud of Sunur: Conflict between Reformists and the Shattāriyah Sufi Order in Rantau Pariaman in the First Half of Nineteenth Century,” *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 8, No. 3: 57-124.

Trumon Kingdom was run by his uncle, Teuku Raja Mak Areh (Muhammad Arif).<sup>73</sup> In 1843, the government returned to him. However, in Trumon's early years, under his control, the young king, who is of European descent and therefore appears handsome, is unable to rule as effectively as his father. He was frequently distracted by those around him, who prioritised the interests of their respective cliques. This contributed to the reduction in assets inherited from his father. Some of his guardians (*walis*) expressed dissatisfaction with this situation, which could potentially lead to political conflict and have a detrimental impact on Trumon's prosperity. In 1837, it was reported that the prosperity of the Kingdom had already greatly diminished, with the country now yielding at most 10 to 12,000 *pikuls* of pepper.<sup>74</sup>

Fortunately, as Raja Muda's soul and mind matured, he was able to consolidate his political power. Some of his father's men remained loyal to him and did not want to betray him, including the *syahbandar*, "Toekoe Lebeidien." This friendly and personable man, who is Trumon's harbourmaster, seems to be very influential and close to the young king. He undertook frequent journeys to Batavia and Padang, where he was well acquainted with European manners and customs (*zeden en gewonten*).<sup>75</sup> With his assistance, the young king continued to cultivate cordial political relations with the Dutch authorities in Padang, a relationship that had been initiated by his father, particularly with the Military Governor of West Sumatra, A.V. Michiels (1837-1848).

A meeting between Michiels and Raja Muda was held in Singkel from June 22 to June 26, 1840. The result of this meeting was the signing of a treaty (*traktaat*) on June 26, 1840 (23 Rabiul Akhir 1256H). This treaty, which consisted of six articles, confirmed the commitment of both parties to assist each other.<sup>76</sup> On June 27, the young king returned to Trumon, accompanied by the Dutch frigate *de Rupel* and Captain A. van der Hart, a subordinate of Michiels. Van der Hart was known for his keen observation and extensive experience in native affairs. Before his departure, Michiels presented the Trumon king with a "musical set" as a gift, expressing his regret that he could not accompany him back to Trumon. The frigate arrived in Trumon on June 29.<sup>77</sup>

Upon returning from Trumon, Van der Hart submitted a report to his superior on July 7th, in which he detailed his experiences from a visit to Trumon that spanned over a week. He, among others, mentioned that on the shore, after rowing from the ship with a *kollek* (traditional boat), he and the Raja were received by a crowd of Acehnese and Malays armed with their *klewangs* (Acehnese traditional single-edged sword), who surrounded them and "forced their way onto the road to Radja Moeda's house." He met some important leaders like Raja Amaris (Muhammad Arif), Raja Sulaiman, and Nakhoda Muhammad. Additionally, he met with Raja Muda's mother (Kaatje Stoolte) and engaged in conversation with her. However, what is of particular significance is his assertion that "there was no doubt" that Troemon had fallen into a state of complete disrepair following the death of Raja Bujang. This decline has persisted due to internal divisions. However, Kielstra posits that the decline was also precipitated by the Dutch involvement in Trumon's domestic affairs in the years following the Singkel *traktaat* ratification by both parties.<sup>78</sup>

However, the government of Sumatra's Westkust in Padang still respected Trumon as an independent kingdom, partly due to its young king who had European blood, as reflected in a letter he received from the Dutch military chief in Aceh, Lieutenant General J. van Swieten, in which he called him as "*mijn vriend*" (my friend). His European descent, van Swieten said in the letter, is a reason to view him as a sincere friend of the Dutch.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," p. 12. But Kielstra (1888) in "Onze Aanrakingen," p. 1194 mentions he was only 8 years old at the death of his father. And during his childhood, he came under the guardianship of his two uncles, "Toekoe Malaboeh" and "Toekoe Hadji Kota". While D.G. Stibbe (1921), *Encyclopaedie*, p. 441 mentions that Nyak Batak was ± 10 years when his father died. If we follow the notes that Raja Bujang was just 13 years when his father died, then it means his father, Lebai Dapa alias Tuanku Sekandar, died in 1807. (Confirms note 68).

<sup>74</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," p. 13.

<sup>76</sup> For further of these six articles, see Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," pp. 1198-2000. He mentions that the Dutch, in fact, cannot fulfill its obligations, especially *Article 2* of the Treaty which states that the Dutch government promises to fairly maintain and protect Raja Muda against all attacks by his enemies (*[B]eloofte het Nederlandsche gouvernement, den Radja Moeda naar billijkheid te zullen handhaven en beschermen tegen alle aanvallen van zijn vijanden.*) (p. 1199).

<sup>77</sup> Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," p. 1200.

<sup>78</sup> Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," pp. 1200-1204.

<sup>79</sup> J. van Swieten (1879), *De Waarheid van Onze Vestiging in Atjeh*, Zalt-Bommel: Joh. Norman en Zoon, pp. 30-31.

In a letter to the Military Governor of Sumatra's Westkust A.V. Michiels in Padang dated 12 Sya'ban 1256 (17 October 1840), five years after his father's death, Raja Muda wrote: "[B]apak beta tiada lagi dalam dunia ini, karena beta anak piatu, tiada tempat bergantung melainkan kepada Tuan Besar adanya." (My father is no longer in this world, as I am an orphan, and there is no other recourse but to rely on you, my esteemed master).<sup>80</sup> In the spring of 1884, Raja Muda visited Padang for a couple of weeks, met with the high Dutch authorities, spent a considerable amount of money on attire, and appeared in European-style clothes to demonstrate his European descent.<sup>81</sup>

The establishment of the *Residentie Tapanuli* (Tapanuli Residency) in 1844 excluded Trumon from seven *afdeelingen* under its jurisdiction. Instead, Trumon served as its northern boundary.<sup>82</sup> Dutch high officials in Padang continued to maintain cordial relations with Trumon. In January 1849, before moving to Java, then Bali (where he was killed there in the *Jagaraga* war on 25 May), boarding the steamer *Etna*, A.V. Michiels visited Trumon, met Raja Muda and gave him f1000 before heading back to Singkil and Padang. Michiels proposed that the Trumon young king would be given a monthly allowance or remuneration (*eene maandelijksche tegemoetkoming of bezoldiging*) of f200, which was then approved by Batavia in 1849.<sup>83</sup> According to Michiels, good and strong relations with Trumon must be maintained properly, because the country can be used as a front wall (*voormuur*) that can prevent any potential political and military infiltration by Aceh into the Dutch East Indies territories (from Singkil southward).<sup>84</sup> In subsequent years, Raja Muda continued collaborating with the Dutch, who also sympathised with him because of his European blood. He signed at least two other treaties with the Dutch in Padang in 1874 and 1876.<sup>85</sup>

In 1874, Raja Muda recognised Troemon as belonging to the territory of the Dutch East Indies. In 1881, Trumon formally broke away from Aceh. It was officially declared through *Staatblad* 1881, No. 72, which declared that since then, Trumon has belonged administratively to the Sumatra West Coast Governorate (*het Gouvernement Sumatra's Westkust*). As the borderline with Government Atjeh and its dependencies (*het Gouvernement Atjeh en Onderhoorigheden*), then adopted the imaginary line between the lands of "Si Leka" (Seuleukat) and "Si Badi" (Seubadeh) over the "Pintoe [Rimba]" hill located near the "Koewala Laboehan Tangkar" to "Oeloe Bengkong".<sup>86</sup> In 1883, Raja Muda received f750 a month in compensation for relinquishing all opium revenues for the government's benefit.<sup>87</sup>

Raja Muda died on 17 July 1884, as Trumon was increasingly retreating politically and economically. His youngest and only legitimate son, Teuku Raja Iskandar, was appointed king of the Trumon Kingdom. On October 6 of the same year, he renewed the agreements his father had signed with the Dutch in Padang in 1874 and 1876.<sup>88</sup> After the death of Teuku Raja Batak, the Trumon Kingdom gradually declined. Since then, the influence of the Dutch has become stronger. One after another, like Singkel, the conquered territories of the Trumon Kingdom were controlled by the Dutch.<sup>89</sup>

During our field research in May and August 2022, we can still see the ruins of the royal residence of Trumon nobles. The tomb complex of Trumon nobles is still preserved (Figure 6). The Trumon king's palace, Kuta Tambéh, inside the fort (Figure 5) was confirmed by a resident of Keude Trumon Village, Isa Ansari (see note 67), who said that "Trumon Fort had a king's house inside, but the Japanese destroyed it. As a child, there were still traces of house pillars, maybe a house on stilts. The palace was not restored because of family problems."<sup>90</sup> The reason the Japanese damaged the palace of the King of Trumon was because he was considered a Dutch accomplice. This phenomenon

<sup>80</sup> Leiden manuscript Cod. Or. 550.C5 lines 17-18 (See Suryadi, *Syair Sunur*, p. 198).

<sup>81</sup> Onzen Sumatraanschen mederwerker (1867), "KAATJE.: Een fragment," *Sumatra-Courant*, VII<sup>ste</sup> Jaargang, No. 45, Zaterdag 9 November 1867, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> D.G. Stibbe (1921), *Encyclopaedie*, pp. 273-277; P. Th. Couperus (1855), "De Residentie Tapanoeli (Sumatra's Westkust) in 1852," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel IV, Nieuwe Serie Deel I, p. 216. Seven *afdeelingen* of this *Residentie* are: "Singkel, Baros, Si-boga, Ankola, Mandeling, Natal en het eiland [and the island of] Nias" (Couperus, "De Residentie Tapanoeli," p. 217).

<sup>83</sup> Stibbe (1921), *Encyclopaedie*, p. 441. Kreemer (1923), *Atjeh: Algemeen Samenvattend Overzicht*, p. 235.

<sup>84</sup> Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," pp. 1196-1206.

<sup>85</sup> Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," p. 1207.

<sup>86</sup> Stibbe (1921), *Encyclopaedie*, p. 441; K.F.A. van Langen (1888), "Atjeh's Westkust met Daarbij Behoorende Kaart," *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, 2<sup>de</sup> Serie, Deel IV, p. 214. The current names of the last three places are "Kuala Labuhan Tangkar," "Pintoe Rimba" and "Ulee Bengkong" as mentioned by Teuku Dadek and Hermansyah (2013), *Meulaboh dalam Lintas Sejarah Aceh*, Meulaboh: Bappeda Aceh Barat, p. 63.

<sup>87</sup> Stibbe (1921), *Encyclopaedie*, p. 441.

<sup>88</sup> Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," pp. 1206-1207.

<sup>89</sup> Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat*, p. 49.

<sup>90</sup> Isa, Interview, September 03, 2022.

happened to almost all *uleebalang* families in Aceh in general. The palace was destroyed, and the last king of the Trumon Kingdom, Teuku Raja Husen, was also arrested and exiled to Jakarta. He died in exile and was buried in Jakarta.<sup>91</sup>

**Figure 2: Tomb site of the kings of Trumon**



Source: Photograph courtesy the research team (2022)

### **Kuala Batee's Difficult Relationship with Foreign Traders**

Our field research in Kuala Batee in 2022 revealed historical evidence suggesting the Kingdom's past prominence. In the past, this Kingdom, like Trumon, became an extension of the Aceh Sultan's power, establishing the hegemony of the pepper trade on the South West Coast, in addition to Susoh. The two kingdoms had an intermittent relationship with the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam, the parent sultanate. The relationship between the two kingdoms took the form of recognition of sovereignty (autonomy), tribute (*wasee*), and monopoly of the pepper trade. However, when sultanate control weakened due to foreign interference and domestic political conflict, the two kingdoms rebelled and established direct relations with outsiders.

In its heyday, Kuala Batee had a large fort built during King Cut Ampon in 1785 before it was destroyed in 1832. Based on archaeological findings, in Kuala Batee, there is a *madat* (a type of earthen fort) located not far from the shoreline of Lama Tuha Village. There are also English inscriptions, cannon shell remains, and currency coins that were used during the time of these two kingdoms. An old cannon was also found in the mosque area of Keude Baro Village. Several cannons were also found in Krueng Batee Village.

In addition, a monument thought to have been carved in the 19<sup>th</sup> century bears the inscription of the death sentence of an important person above-named Shewbuntar (Chut Buntar or Sheikh Buntar) at Quallabatto on April 15, 1824, in English. The Kingdom's fierce battles with the United States are immortalised in numerous accounts. Some historical records indicate that Singkel, Trumon, and Kuala Batee were the largest pepper-producing areas. From these three areas, pepper exports began to be made outside Aceh, and the Kingdom of Aceh Darussalam ensured that the tax (*wasee*) for sultan from spice exports remained in their coffers through its representatives. The historical legacy of this period can be discerned in the seal of Kuala Batee's ruler, Teuku Raja Sulaiman, as evidenced by his letter addressed to the Assistant Resident of the West Coast Aceh, dated August 23, 1893.

This letter confirms the ruler's agreement to guarantee the safety of Dutch ships entering the waters of Kuala Batee. The seal—written in Jawi and Latin scripts—reads “*JE MAINTIENDRAI // Teuku Raja Sulaiman /Raja Kuala Batu–Simayam–Surian–Lam[a] Tuha dan Lam[a] Muda // TOEKOE RADJA SULEIMAN / RADJA V. KOEALA BATOE SIMAJAM SOERIAN LAMA-TOEAH EN LAMA-MOEDA*” (Its translation: “I will uphold // Teuku Raja Sulaiman / ruler of Kuala Batu–Simayam–Surian–Lam[a] Tuha and Lam[a] Muda // Toekoe Radja Suleiman/ Radja of Koeala Batoe Simajam Soerian Lama-Toeah and Lama-Moeda”).<sup>92</sup> Among other things, several important seals representing the Sultan of

<sup>91</sup> Isa, Interview, September 03, 2022.

<sup>92</sup> Annabel Teh Gallop (2019), *Malay Seals*, p. 141.



Aceh on the west coast to secure the spice tax indicate the two decades before the Dutch acquired (incorporated) Singkel into the Tapanuli regency in 1840.<sup>93</sup>

The inscription on the monument in front of the elementary school in the Kuala Batee area, known as aforementioned “Shewbuntar,” provides compelling evidence of the existence of this area as a spice route during that period. The community and people around Kuala Batee only recall two significant historical events about this area: the American invasion of Kuala Batee in 1832 and its status as one of the largest pepper-producing cities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, along with the west coast spice route in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Additionally, the area is home to several *madats*, small fortresses constructed from piles of earth to create a mound of earth that resembles a hill. According to local accounts, the *madats* present in the Kuala Batee area have existed since the Portuguese arrived in Sumatra to hunt for spices. It is believed that the cannons found within a *madat* originated from Europe (Portuguese and Turkish). The local community circulated rumours regarding the provenance of *Sicupak* pepper from Kuala Batee, which they employed as a diplomatic tool to persuade Turkey to return the cannons that had been scattered there.

As mentioned above, Kuala Batee was originally part of Negeri Susoh. Teuku Chik Karim received permission to open a pepper plantation in Lama Inong, agreeing to continue paying *wasee* to the Kingdom of Aceh and Susoh. Since the arrival of a *uleebalang* from Pidie, Teuku Chik Karim reneged on the agreement to pay taxes to the Kingdom of Aceh through Pangeran Mahmud as one of the representatives of the Sultanate of Aceh in charge of collecting taxes. Teuku Karim’s attitude received an unfavourable response from Bandar Susoh, who felt lost, especially since there was a discourse that Kuala Batee wanted to establish an official port and was no longer subject to Bandar Susoh.

The attack on Kuala Batee was carried out by Datuk Susoh and assisted by the King of Trumon. This war lasted several times, and neither party ever gave up. Reconciliation occurred after a marriage between Teuku Chik Karim’s son and Datuk Bagak-Susoh’s grandson. The survival of the Kuala Batee Kingdom was then continued by Teuku Raja Pidie, Teuku Chik Karim’s brother. Teuku Raja Pidie also asked the Kingdom of Aceh to separate the Kuala Batee Kingdom from the Susoh Kenegerian. Teuku Raja Pidie married a princess from Air Bangis, West Sumatra. He had descendants of Teuku Raja Sulaiman, who continued to rule in the Kuala Batee Kingdom.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, based on the records written by Aris Faisal Djamin, it is stated that the Kuala Batee Kingdom is an agricultural area that is very focused on pepper plantations, rice, and forest products that are traded in Bandar Kuala Batee. Even so, due to the hijacking of the American *Friendship* ship in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kuala Batee was beaten back and destroyed by the United States military force. In 1832, Kuala Batee was attacked by the *Potomac* ship. This event was recorded in the history of the Nusantara spice trade. According to many historical records, the attack occurred as a result of a ship hostage-taking by Kuala Batee residents against the United States merchant ship *Friendship*.<sup>95</sup>

The *Friendship*, a vessel belonging to Mr. Pickman and Mr. Silsbee, with a complement of seventeen men under the command of Captain Charles Moses Endicott, departed Salem, Massachusetts, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 1830, bound for the west coast of Sumatra. The ship arrived in Kuala Batee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September of the following year.<sup>96</sup> The ship was attacked by residents of Kuala Batee, an incident that caused the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, to express his displeasure. He then dispatched the American battleship *Potomac* to demand retribution, which subsequently perpetrated a “genocidal” assault on the local population of Kuala Batee.<sup>97</sup> This event is also indicative of the fact that upon closer examination of the news reports, opinions, and books written in the 1830s-1840s, Kuala Batee was once an area that played a more significant strategic role in the world’s geopolitical and geostrategic arenas.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Muhajir Al Fairusy (2016), *Singkel, Sejarah, Etnisitas*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>94</sup> van Langen (1889), “Atjeh’s Westkust,” pp. 66-67; Aris Faisal Djamin (2021), *Susoh: Cahaya Kemilau*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>95</sup> Aris Faisal Djamin (2021), *Susoh: Cahaya Kemilau*, p. 150.

<sup>96</sup> Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages*, p. 71.

<sup>97</sup> Farish A Noor (2014), “Attack Reprisal and dealing with the Media Fall-Out,” p. 261. Captain Endicott’s own testimony about the incident and the battle of the crew of the *Potomac* at Kuala Batee can be read in Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages*, pp. 71-110.

<sup>98</sup> Farish A Noor (2014), “Attack, Reprisal and dealing with the Media Fall-Out,” p. 261.

Nevertheless, the perception of Kuala Batee as a pirate country rather than a pepper producer and importer was reinforced. This is a colonialist narrative that seeks to justify the brutal American attack on Kuala Batee.

On February 7, 1831, Kuala Batee residents hijacked the *Friendship*, which lay about three-fourths of a mile from the shore.<sup>99</sup> Karen Goodrich-Hedriks and John D. Hedriks tell the story:

In February 1831, an American merchant ship, the *Friendship* of Salem, anchored off the northwest coast of Sumatra, was attacked and plundered. When the captain, Charles M. Endicott, and several crew members went ashore to buy pepper, a Malayan boat seized the opportunity to pirate the ship. Within minutes, the *Friendship* was overrun by natives who quickly gained control over the remaining crew.<sup>100</sup>

The attack caused five of the *Friendship's* crews killed and the ship and her cargos looted. Luckily its captain, Charles Moses Endicott, survived thanks to his native friend, "Rajah Po Adam" from "Pulo Kio" (Pulau Kayu).<sup>101</sup> He next went to Muckie (Meukek) to obtain assistance and he found there the ship *James Monroe* commanded by Captain Porter, the brig *Governor Endicott* commanded by Captain Jenks of Salem, and the brig *Palmer* commanded by Captain Powers of Boston. The three vessels immediately headed for Kuala Batee. Soon after, the *Friendship* was captured by the hijackers.<sup>102</sup>

Commanded by Commodore John Davies, the *Potomac*, with 500 crews aboard, embarked from its base in Boston on August 27, 1831, to take revenge.<sup>103</sup> It arrived in Kuala Batee waters around seven months later. With the excuse of punishing the pirates who had robbed the *Friendship* of the previous year, the American troops bombarded Kuala Batee and attacked its inhabitants blindly, destroying and burning everything until they were able to repel the royal troops and cause the community to stop resisting. The heavy battle, which launched on February 7 at midnight, 1832, lasted for seven hours before the *Potomac's* navies successfully ravaged Kuala Batee, forcing its king "Muley Mahomet" (Mulia Muhammad?) and most of the population to flee.<sup>104</sup> "Two Americans were killed and seven injured," while "enemy casualties were estimated at more than one hundred killed and twice that wounded."<sup>105</sup> Since then, Kuala Batee has been unable to recover and has completely lost its prestige. This situation was compounded by the prolonged Aceh-Dutch war, which shut down the plantation business and eliminated traces of glory in one of the world's largest pepper barns.

### **Strategic Role of Trumon Kingdom**

The Trumon Kingdom, as has been depicted above, had direct contact with traders from other parts of the archipelago and European ships. When Sulthan Mahmud Syah became Sulthan of Aceh, he assigned his young brother, Tuanku Ibrahim, to supervise the kings and commanders along the South West coast. At that time, the Kingdom may have smelled the aura of insubordination and needed to reassert power. Moreover, the King of Trumon, Raja Bujang, was known to be very happy to trade directly with the Dutch, which encouraged him to rebel against Aceh<sup>106</sup>, probably because of the high profits from trading directly with the Dutch rather than through Kutaraja. With Dutch support, the King of Trumon planted his flag and made his coins. In November 1830, the Dutch Resident in Padang, H. MacGillavry, agreed with the King of Trumon to break away from the Kingdom of Aceh. As a result, Tuanku Ibrahim, the sultan's representative, went to the king of Trumon and seized two large ships, the *Lexmy* and the *Anna* (in Trumon, it is called *Bagiana*), which were loaded with \$112,000 worth of pepper and brought to Kutaraja.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages*, p. 75.

<sup>100</sup> Karen Goodrich-Hedriks and John D. Hedrick (1972), "Cruise of the United States Frigate *Potomac*," *Expedition Magazine*, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 28.

<sup>101</sup> Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages*, p. 77-78.

<sup>102</sup> Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages*, p. 80.

<sup>103</sup> Reynold (1835), *Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac*, p. 226; Goodrich-Hedriks and Hedriks (1972), "Cruise of the United States Frigate *Potomac*," p. 29.

<sup>104</sup> Jeremiah (1835), *Voyage of the United States Frigate Potomac*, p. 229; Goodrich-Hedriks and Hedriks (1972), "Cruise of the United States Frigate *Potomac*," p. 32; Putnam (1922), *Salem Vessels and Their Voyages*, p. 100.

<sup>105</sup> Goodrich-Hedriks and Hedriks (1972), "Cruise of the United States Frigate *Potomac*," p. 32.

<sup>106</sup> Sudirman (2009), *Banda Aceh dalam Siklus Perdagangan Internasional 1500-1873*, Banda Aceh: Balai Pelestarian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, pp. 109-110.

<sup>107</sup> Sudirman (2009), *Banda Aceh*, p. 110.

Raja Bujang had several ships to take its produce directly to India, Pulau Pinang, Singapore, and Batavia. Among the trading ships of the Trumon kingdom that often carry merchandise abroad were those named the *Diana* and the *Lexmy*.<sup>108</sup> The Trumon kingdom earned even higher profits by having its trading ships. Apart from carrying black pepper, the Trumon kingdom's ships also transported other commodities produced by the Kingdom, such as camphor, bird's nest, resin, and rubber, which were very abundant.<sup>109</sup>

A resident, Isa Ansari, SH, corroborated this account. He elucidated that trade with foreign countries was not uncommon for the Trumon king's family, who also accompanied the transported merchandise. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for the voyage to proceed without incident. However, there were instances when the voyage encountered a disaster, particularly due to the sudden arrival of a storm that resulted in the ship sinking into the ocean along with the merchandise and all the crew members who participated.<sup>110</sup>

To facilitate seamless trade with foreign traders, the Trumon Kingdom had already established its currency, the *Kepeng* coin, which served as the Kingdom's official currency (Figure 3a, b). The obverse of the coin bears the inscription "Negeri Trumon," while the reverse displays "Dua Kupang" and the year "1247 AH." The inscription "Negeri Trumon" on the obverse side of the coin indicates that the Trumon Kingdom issued this coin. In contrast, the inscription on the reverse side, "Dua Kupang," signifies that the nominal value of this coin is equivalent to one ringgit, and the year number "1247 H." denotes the year this coin was issued. This coin was issued in 1830, which indicates that it was issued during the reign of the Trumon king of Basa Bujang.<sup>111</sup>

Further scholarly investigation is required to ascertain the production, economic, and political dimensions of Trumon's *kepeng*. Contrary to Muchsin's opinion, which stated that the *kepeng* was printed locally in Trumon, Wiryanto suggests that the money was printed with a British mint at Basa Bujang's request. The allegation is related to the shape and design, which are similar to money from other regions made by the British to strengthen relations with the country concerned. In addition to Trumon, the British also conducted money-printing politics in several other areas. Furthermore, the use of Arabic writing and the Malay language is merely a matter of adaptation. Regardless of the opinions of local scholars regarding the Trumon currency, it is evident that Trumon already possessed the economic bargaining power to have the authority to print trade currency. This, among other factors, has led the Kingdom to establish its status as a major trading hub and spice route, to defect from the traditional trade routes, and to achieve economic independence by establishing direct trade with Europe and America.

## Conclusion

The advent of Aceh's southwest coast in the global trade arena can be traced back to the loss of prestige experienced by Aceh along the northeast coast, which was ceded to Minangkabau. In 1665, after 44 years, Aceh's rule in Minangkabau's land came to an end. This year also marks the emergence of a new Acehnese trading point on the southwest coast. From Susoh to Singkel, pepper plantations were constructed under the auspices of the sultan and the supervision of *uleebalang*, the majority of whom were Acehnese *datuks*, who had been expelled from Minangkabau land and those who had migrated from some Groot-Atjeh's *mukims* to the west coast, such as Lebai Dapa and his brother, Bapa Bujang. The *uleebalang* also became small kings who guarded their territory and were loyal to their king masters in Kutaraja, providing military assistance and regularly sending *wasee* to their respected *sultans*.

However, the *uleebalangs'* loyalty to Kutaraja decreased as more and more European traders arrived in Sumatra's waters. The abundance of pepper plantations attracted them to visit the region and trade directly with the local population, thereby circumventing the royal control of Aceh Darussalam. The objective was clear: by contacting the petty kings directly, they could obtain pepper at a much lower price than that obtained in the imperial capital, Kutaraja. Furthermore, for the local kings, selling

<sup>108</sup> Ritter (1839), "Korte aanteekeningen," pp. 10-11; Kielstra (1888), "Onze Aanrakingen," p. 1193.

<sup>109</sup> Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat*, p. 62.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Isa Ansari, SH, September 3, 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Misri A. Muchsin (2019), *Trumon sebagai Kerajaan Berdaulat*, pp. 75-77.

pepper directly to buyers was more profitable. This mutually beneficial situation provoked the local kings to rebel under European and American instigation.

The kingdoms of Kuala Batee and Trumon were two of Aceh's southwest coastal states that experienced this process. They dared to make direct contact with foreign traders and considered it unnecessary to consult with Kutaraja. By carrying out direct trade with the Europeans and Americans and even inviting them to visit their Kingdom, as Raja Bujang did to Salem's vessels from America, both Kuala Batee and Trumon had a hand in the global trade arena, indicating the weakening of the political position of the Aceh Sultanate in its west coast regions.

Relations between these two kingdoms with foreigners who visited their ports did not run smoothly. In this context, Kuala Batee had a more bitter experience. The action of punishment carried out by the American warship *Potomac* to the people of Kuala Batee on February 1832, as a backlash against the hijacking of the *Friendship* trade ship of Salem in the previous year, has left unforgettable memories for the rulers and residents. On the other hand, the Trumon Kingdom, especially during the reign of Raja Bujang and his successor, Raja Muda, seems more able to maintain good relations with the Europeans, especially the Dutch, the British, and the Americans. One of the supporting factors was the European blood that flowed into the Raja Muda's body.

Demographics was one of the factors that influenced the political dynamics of the northern west coast of Sumatra in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The heterogeneity of the population of its entreports—the Acehnese, the Batak, the Chinese, the Minangkabau migrants, and other Malay groups—also determines the political contestation or alliances of local rulers with outsiders. The decline in Trumon and Kuala Batee's political alliance with Aceh, on the one hand, and the strengthening of their relations with Europeans, on the other hand, has brought both advantages and disadvantages. As history has recorded, the two kingdoms significantly declined following the increasing Dutch influence in this region, which culminated in the outbreak of the Aceh War in 1873. Trumon and Kuala Batee later politically disappeared due to the prolonged war between Aceh and the Dutch.

Despite the strategic role of the Kuala Batee and Trumon kingdoms having ended two centuries ago, historical sites in both areas attest to their existence in the past. In Kuala Batee, several sites have been identified, including cannons in several locations, Sheikh Buntar inscriptions, *madat* (highland), coins, and the king's house. Meanwhile, Trumon is renowned for the Kuta Batee fort site and the burial complex of the Trumon kings. This once again demonstrates the pivotal role these two areas played in global trade during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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