

## TANJUNG BALAI IN THE 18<sup>TH</sup>-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY POTENTIALS OF ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY AND CULTURE

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Tanjung Balai, located at Asahan River's banks, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was a port city built and maintained by the government of Dutch East Indies. Tanjung Balai is precisely located between 2°58'NL and 99°48'EL. The 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was chosen as the research scope because in this century, Asahan Sultanate was prominent, in addition to the Dutch Government which was encouraging the trade. The history of Tanjung Balai's development was closely related to the presence of Asahan Sultanate at around mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The kingdom was later annexed by the Government of Dutch East Indies, turning it into gemeente based on Besluit Gouverneur General, dated June 27, 1917, under Stbl. no. 284/1917, resulting in plantations openings in the area of East Sumatra. Tanjung Balai became a port city and gateway to Asahan, carrying an important meaning for trading traffics of Dutch East Indies. The writing of the history and potentials of Tanjung Balai in the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the 20<sup>th</sup> century employed investigation with direct surveys to field, and archives study as well. It is expected that upon finding the presence of Tanjung Balai in such century, it will lead to the findings of its history and development in the upcoming years.

**Keywords:** Port, Tanjung Balai, History Potentials, Asahan Sultanate and Archeology.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tanjung Balai is one of the cities in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. Tanjung Balai is located exactly between 2°58'NL and 99°48'EL, with an area of 60.52 km<sup>2</sup> (6.052 ha), a population of 154,445 people. Tanjung Balai is located in the area of North Sumatran east coast at an altitude of 0 up to 3 m above the sea level, and the area's condition is relatively flat. The city is surrounded by Asahan Regency with following boundaries:

- To North: Tanjung Balai District;
- To South: Simpang Empat District;
- To West: Simpang Empat District; and Sei Kepayang District.

Tanjung Balai is located on the banks of Asahan River, the longest river in North Sumatra; and it takes about 4 hours to get there from Medan. Prior to Tanjung Balai expansion, from only 199 ha (2km<sup>2</sup>) into 60.52 km<sup>2</sup>, and the city was once the most populous city in South East Asia with a population of approximately 40,000 people and density of roughly 20,000 per km<sup>2</sup>. Tanjung Balai was eventually expanded into ± 60 km<sup>2</sup> under Indonesian Government Regulation No. 20 of 1987, on changes in boundaries of Tanjung Balai and Asahan Regency.

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The result of Population Census in 2010 found that the total Tanjung Balai population was 154,445 people, consisting of 77,933 men, and 76,512 women. The most populous district is found in Teluk Nibung District with a population of 35,802, whilst the lowest is North Tanjung Balai with a population of 15,862 people. Tanjung Balai is divided administratively into six districts, 31 villages:

1. Datuk Bandar District with following villages; Sijambi, Pahang, Sirantau, Pantai Johor and Gading.
2. East Datuk Bandar District with following villages; Pulau Simardan, Tanjung Bunga, Semula Jadi, Selat Lancang, Selat Tanjung Medan.
3. South Tanjung Balai District, consisting of following villages; Tanjung Balai Kota I, Tanjung Balai Kota II, Perwira, Kaya, Pantai Burung and Indra Sakti.
4. North Tanjung Balai District, consisting of following villages; Tanjung Balai Kota III, Tanjung Balai Kota IV, Sejahtera, Kuala Silo Bestari and Matahalasan.
5. Sei Tualang Raso District, consisting of following villages: Muara Sentosa, Sumber Sari, Pasar Baru, Keramat Kubah and Sei Raja.
6. Teluk Nibung District, consisting of following villages: Perjuangan, Pematang Pasir, Kapias, Pulau Buaya and Beting.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was selected as the time setting of the research, because in this century, Asahan Sultanate was prominent, in addition to the Dutch Government which was encouraging trade. The history of Tanjung Balai's development was closely related to the presence of Asahan Sultanate at around mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The kingdom was later annexed by the Government of Dutch East Indies, turning it into gemeente based on Besluit Gouverneur General, dated June 27, 1917, under Stbl. no. 284/1917. As a result, plantations were opened in the areas of East Sumatra, including Asahan area, such as H.A.P.M., SIPEF, London Sumatra ('Lonsum'). Tanjung Balai becomes a port city and entrance to Asahan area holding an important meaning for trade traffic of Dutch East Indies.

In history, Tanjung Balai became a trading town in the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and no doubt it was a multiethnic city. Varying ethnic groups were mixed, there was 30% Malay, 35% Javanese, Sundanese, 20% Batak, and 15% Nias and Chinese. They were the major ethnics living in that city. This multi-ethnics produced some typical food of Tanjung Balai, such as *kerang daguk* (stone clams), *kerang bulu*, salted fish Mayung, Medan anchovy (white anchovy), salted shrimp (*udang pukul*), *belacan* (shrimp paste), sour curry, mashed cassava leaf, fish *sombam*, *anyang pakis*, and *anyang kepah*.

At the end of the year, clam party was held to commemorate the Anniversary of Tanjung Balai, hence the name "City of Shells" (Tanjung Balai used to produce

clams, but lately clam production dropped due to the ecosystem that does not support it). The writing this paper was aimed to find out about the potentials of history, archeology and culture of Tanjung Balai in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to develop the potentials of history, archeology and culture of Tanjung Balai, and preserve the potentials of history, archeology and culture of Tanjung Balai. From the research findings, it can be seen that the objects have high values of history, archeology and culture and should be preserved and recorded as the history of Indonesia in general, and Tanjung Balai City in general.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. History, Archaeology and Culture**

In the view of Sir John Seeley, the purpose of studying history is to be wiser before some incidences occur. Having insufficient access to the facts and the truth of the past attenuates the sense of history. It will finally strip the appreciation towards the relationship with the past that actually carries huge significances in explaining various issues of today.

To be able to reflect and develop the values of local cultures, especially in history field, it's an important element that is able to enrich and paint color to national culture. Local history research also means to foster local loyalty in order to maintain the national struggle for Republic of Indonesia. The historical method is a process of critically examining and analyzing the records of the past, so as to use the rules and principles in history science. The stages to take in historic research are collection of resources, verification (source criticism and source validity), consisting of internal critique to prove the credibility (whether or not the data is trustworthy), and external criticism (used to test the authenticity of the source obtained). The research used was descriptive-narrative or processual history, in which the history writing used how an event occurred, and described the events as a process included in the description narratives or stories (Kartodirdjo, 1992: 10). The development of an event complete with facts about what, who, when, where, and how is followed by chronologically sorting the relationship between cause and effect, motivation as a complexity. According to Kartodirdj, the task of the historical discussion will be more centered on the issue of continuity in the discussion. The problems with roots in the past will continue to grow up to present-day and in the future (Kartodirdjo, 1997: 134).

At that time, Malacca Strait was fought over, as a territory of large kingdoms in West Sumatran east coast and west coast of Malay Peninsula. Aceh Sultanate under the rule of Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607 - 1636) was the peak of their heyday, where his hegemonic power reached up to Malaya Peninsula (Perak and Penang), and he even got married to Pahang Princess (Putroe Phang) who he deeply loved.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Based on problems in such research, the methodology used is the more precise analysis of history tracing. As well as the descriptive method was selected as the way in solving the problem. Then the data in the analysis of this descriptive method with a qualitative approach (Suriadi *et al*, 2015 and Muda *et al*, 2016). The qualitative approach so that it is more in reference to the approach of the description or overview of the objects examined, based on the data that appear as is, and describe systematically will facts the situation factually and closely.

### 4. RESULT

In 1612 AD, large and powerful fleets of Aceh Sultanate, directly led by Sultan Iskandar Muda, were in pursuit of Sultan Johor's fleets (from Malay Peninsula) which tried to enter into agreements and cooperative relationship through kinship between kingdoms already existed for a long time ago with Aur Kingdom (Langkat) that was included in the regional hegemony of Aceh Sultanate.

The sea fleets of Sultan Johor, directly led by Sultan Johor, heard the news that Aceh Sultanate army would launch attacks against them; and they immediately returned to their ship and fled back to Malay Peninsula. The pursuit of Sultan Johor led Sultan Iskandar Muda to a wide estuary, i.e. today's Kuala Bagan Asahan River. To take a rest, they entered the wide river and went along its banks. While resting, their weapons were sharpened, making them sharp and not rusty. Grass that grew along the river was tried to sharpen the weapons. Thereafter, the river was named Asahan River. Before reaching Asahan River's upstream, Teluk Dalam, Pulau Raja and Bandar Pulau could be found first. At that time (1612 M), there had been community led by a ruler named King Margolang. Bandar Pulau was a crowded village as the center of the small kingdom. The village was located on the banks of Asahan River's upstream, whilst Pulau Raja was kingdom area which was once a woods, used by the kingdom and people to gather forest products, hunt animals and as agricultural and plantation land for the people and the kingdom. Meanwhile Teluk Dalam was a small kingdom's port and settlement for fishermen communities.

Sultan saw that drifting jackfruit's peels and a few pieces of corn cobs indicated that human were dwelling in the upstream area. He ordered his troops to trace the river upstream to ensure this. They arrived at the meeting point of two rivers. Here, they saw that a few houses and a place where fishermen moored their boats. Sultan ordered some armed soldiers to go down to the mainland and meet leaders there to be brought in his presence. None of residents whom they talked to understood their language (Acehnese), with sign language they were finally taken by residents to a smart Haro-Haro man named Bayak Lingga who could speak little Acehnese. Thereafter, the communication run smoothly and they were also

welcomed. Villagers flocked to watch a large warship moor; a warship from Great Kingdom of Aceh, directly led by Sultan Iskandar Muda who had been well-known figure for a long time.

The residents, via Bayak Lingga, asked them to take a rest here for couples of days for restoring their stamina while loading logistics. The troops then rested there, as it was no longer possible to go deeper into the upstream to the center of this small kingdom (Bandar Pulau): the river got smaller, shallower and was not navigable for their large ship. In the ship, Sultan Iskandar Muda asked Bayak Lingga to inform the local authorities (King Margolang) to build “centers” as the place facing at the end of the headland and to give name Asahan to the area, and they shall subject to the Sultanate of Aceh. King Margolang, via Bayak Lingga, bowed down to the request for fearing of his force and the greatness of Aceh Kingdom that had been hegemony in Sumatra East Coast, and even West Coast (Pagaruyung Kingdom). Bandar at the end of this cape eventually became Tanjung Balai as today.

In addition, there was also the title Datuk Muda, a kingdom’s relative serving as office holder in Asahan Kingdom. The great-grandson of Sultan Asahan I named Sultan Abdul Jalil II had helped King Ismail in taking over the Siak’s throne from the hands of King Alam (1771). Once successful, Siak gave him the title “His Royal Highness”. Based on this degree, Sultan Yahya of Siak, in his letter to the Dutch Governor of in Melaka in 1791, stated that Asahan was included as his colonies, and it was opposed by Asahan people. The grandson of Sultan Abdul Jalil II was King Musa and King Ali. King Musa became the king of Asahan. When Raja Musa died, his son was still in the womb. Therefore, the government was replaced his brother, King Ali. King Ali had a son named Husin, and a daughter named Raja Siti. Raja Siti got married to Sultan Deli. His dowry was Bedagai area, and their son would be the king in Bedagai.

Sultan Musa had a son named King Ishak. When Sultan Musa died, in Asahan, civil war occurred between King Husin (son of Sultan Ali) and King Ishak (son of Sultan Musa). The civil war was ended with agreement when Jhon Anderson visited Asahan in 1823. In the agreement, it was established that King Husin became Sultan, and King Ishak became Rajamuda Asahan while taking the position as King of Kualuh-Leidong. In 1835, Sultan Ismail of Siak attacked Asahan. Siak fleets led by Tengku Panglima Besar managed to conquer Asahan. Sultan Husin was replaced by his son, Sultan Ahmadsyah (1854). Sultan Ahmadsyah was known to be persistent in fighting the Dutch, and he was finally exiled to Ambon by the Dutch in 1865. The three sons of Marhum Mangkat in Jambu, King Indera, King Segar, and King Awan each were granted the power and respective territory. King Indera as the oldest son settled in Kumbul and became zuriat of King Panai and King Bilah. Raja Segar settled in Tunas River, and King Awan became zuriat of Kings of Kotapinang.

When Siak troops went to Panai and Bilah in 1835, the kings bowed down to them and they were required to help them to attack Asahan. However, Panai helped halfheartedly, resulting in failure of Siak attack launch. However, Siak troops had entered Panai and King Sultan Mangedar Alam ran away to Kotapinang. King Kotapinang, Sultan Busu vowed alongside King Panai to oppose Siak. Nevertheless, it turned out Kotapinang broke its promises, forcing Panai to ask for mercy and pay tribute of \$ 2,000 to Siak.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In the era of the Dutch colonial in Indonesia, the areas in Sumatra had changes in terms of government form. The areas of East Sumatra, including Tamiang, Langkat, Deli Serdang, Asahan, Labuhan Batu, Siak, and Rokan became residency with its capital in Bengkalis, Riau. Residency of East Sumatra was divided into four *Afdeling* (regencies), namely (1) *afdeling Deli with kontelir* in Labuhan Deli; (2) *Afdeling Asahan with kontelir* in Tanjung Balai; (3) *Afdeling Labuhan Batu with kontelir* in Labuhan Batu; (4) and *afdeling Siak with kontelir* in Siak Indrapura (North Sumatra Monograph, 1976: 12).

Malays in the East Sumatra is a mixture of various ethnic groups. The mixture has occurred since the 13<sup>th</sup> century when islamification process of non-Malays remote areas, such as Karo, Simalungun, Padang Lawas, and partly Toba, creating the term 'embracing Islam equals to entering Malay.' This process was coupled with the displacement of other ethnics entering Malays. They eliminated the identity of the origin and embraced Islam, and they ultimately called Malay (Saputra, 1993; 89).

In terms of livelihood, according to the natural state of Sumatran East Coast located on coastal areas, most of them were fishermen. For Malay communities living in the coastal areas, other livelihoods such as farming are a side job, especially when deep-sea fishing activities are going short. The Malays who live in Malay Peninsula, and Sumatra in general, and in Sumatran East coast in particular, are predominantly Muslim. However, in some communities, traditional beliefs influence can still be seen in many aspects of life, such as marriage, fishing in seas, agriculture and medicine. The influence of traditional beliefs on nuptial ceremonies is known from a variety of equipment accompanying the ceremonies, such as *puan* and betel nut, plain flour, incense, and *pulut balai*. Nuptial ceremony includes *merisik* and *penghulun tangkai*, *jamu sukut*, *meminang*, *imat janji*, taking betel flowers, *berinai*, sitting side-to-side, and eating face-to-face are a part of Malay culture (Ray, 1994: 6).

Besides, when the fishermen sail, they will perform *jamu lait* at certain times in order to get great fishing outcome in the sea. At the time of a traditional ceremony, there are elements showing influences on traditional beliefs, namely using equipment such as yellow rice, plain flour, betel and prayers according to Islam. In

the present century, Tanjung Balai is also dubbed clam city, for in the past, this produced clams in large quantities, fulfilling clam demand throughout Sumatra and even some parts of Java. Unfortunately, due to unresponsive and initial destruction of the ecosystems, clams are hard to find. However, at the end of each year, clam party is always held to celebrate the Anniversary of Tanjung Balai.

Tanjung Balai in the reign of the Dutch East Indies was the most important port in North Sumatra. In the past, people who would go to Mecca for Hajj were departed from Tanjung Balai port. The port location was called Bom. Another important historical evidence for Tanjung Balai was the railway built by Dutch government from the city to the coast of Tanjung Balai and Teluk Nibung port, via Dutch company – Deli Train Company. At which time, Tanjung Balai that was controlled by the Dutch government became a *gemeente* (municipality) based on *Besluit Gouverneur General*, dated June 27, 1917, *Staadblaad* number 284/1917. As a result, plantations in the area of East Sumatra were opened. There were H.A.P.M; SIPEF; London Sumatera. The legacy of the Dutch East Indies reign can be seen in hospitals, buildings on the harbor, prisons, Great Mosque, and China Town.

For 37 years, from 1886 to 1937, *Deli Spoorweg Maatschappij* had built a railways as long as 553.254 Km. In 1915, railway was built from Rantau Laban to Tanjung Balai as long as 95.062 Km. Then in the following year, 1918 railway was built from Tanjung Balai to Teluk Nibung by 5,132 Km in length. Most recently, in 1937, railway was built from Milano to Rantau Perapat so far as 12,562 Km. the construction of railway gave positive impact on the economic development of East Sumatra in general, and Tanjung Balai in particular. Since 1915, goods storage in the warehouse was no longer managed by *duane* officials, rather handed over to the government, carried out by Port Authority or *havenbestuur*. There were approximately seven (7) warehouses built in the port of Tanjung Balai with an area of 2,600 m<sup>2</sup>. The warehouse was rented to various trade, farming and shipping companies, namely *Holland Amerika Plantage Maatschappij*; (2) *Firma Guntzel dan Schumacher*; (3) *Koninklijk Paketvaart Maatschappij*; (4) *Norddeutscher Lloyd*; (5) *The Eastern Shipping Company Limited* (Anonymous, 1911: 12).

*Norddeutscher Lloyd* owned by Germany with its ship's named S.S. Rance loaded with cargo of 298 tons, came periodically every month. The Eastern Shipping Company Limited ship with a cargo of 121 tons belonged to Britain, and its ship's name S.S. Mary Austin. There were two of Dutch ships, S.S. Valentijn and S.S. Merkus, each loaded with 243 tons and 379 tons (Anonymous, 1911: 399). Tax revenues on goods at the Port of Tanjung Balai in 1879 were dominated by imported goods, such as opium and liquor. Opium tax was the greatest tax, nearly 50%. Other things, for example licensing, pork, pawnshops, import tax, export tax, custom tax, and warehouse rent were all paid using guilders.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Numerous buildings/public facilities and urban infrastructure in Tanjung Balai are mostly built by Dutch colonial government between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Netherlands could hold collaboration politically to develop Tanjung Balai. Whoever became the king shall get a 'blessing' from the Dutch government. Regulations or policies regarding small ports were to control them and manage the funds received on tax, customs and warehouse rent and other forms of rent. Judging from the types of buildings and public facilities built by the Dutch, it appears that Dutch designed Tanjung Balai to look similar with urban models in Netherlands. It is seen from the shapes (architecture) of the buildings they built; they were exactly the same with the building's style in Netherlands at that time. The shades of traditional (local) architecture or Islamic influence on buildings constructed by the Dutch are nowhere to be seen. The same goes to docks and railways built using the design from the Dutch Government.

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*Verslag van de Kleine Havens in Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1916-1940.* Medan. Verkamp.

*Verslag van de Kleine Havens in Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1923.* Weltevreden :  
Landsdrukkerij. 1925.

*Verslag van de Kleine Havens in Nederlandsch-Indie over het jaar 1924-1925.* Weltevreden :  
Landsdrukkerij. 1926.

## APPENDIX



A photograph of Tanjung Balai in 1895 (source: Collectie Tropen Museum)



The photograph shows a lift bridge over the Silau River in Tanjung Balai  
The photograph was taken between 1900 and 1916  
(A collection of Tropen Museum by a photographer named C.J. Kleingrothe).



A photograph of Silau Kadete, Tanjung Balai (Military office in Silau, A collection of Tropen Museum)



A photograph of Tanjung Balai in 1930 (A collection of Tropen Museum)