

## BARUS AND CAMPHOR IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISLAM IN NUSANTARA

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### KEYWORD

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### ABSTRACT

The seminar on the entry of Islam into the archipelago in Medan in 1963 has resulted in a decision that Islam had reached the west coast of Sumatra in the 7th century AD, brought by Arab traders. The arrival of Arab traders to the west coast, precisely at the trading port known in the literature as Barus or Fansur, was not to spread Islam. Long before, in fact, they had already arrived in Barus to trade. Among the trade commodities they sought were camphor, frankincense and gold. This means that Barus and camphor had indirectly "invited" the entry of Islam into the archipelago in the early days of Islam through Muslim Arab traders.

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### INTRODUCTION

The popularity of Barus, Fansur and camphor defeats their history and location (origin). Their names are always mentioned both in the daily conversation and books. Notes on barus, fansur and camphor have been found since in the earliest AD, even incense from barus said was used to preserve the dead body of Egyptian kings. It was mentioned in some international languages, including in the Qur'an and bible. Barus also was called as kingdom of great barus or network of trade like Sriwijaya kingdom. Discussion on the coming of Islam and Christianity in Nusantara actually is through Barus. However its history is still obscure and its exact location is not known both by native people and other Indonesian people. Historical writing of Indonesia on Barus is only connected with the producer of camphor in the past and the birth place or the place where Hamzah Fansuri lived. A satisfying reference about Barus can be found from the study of foreign researchers.

A writer team of Bunga Rampai Tapian Nauli, Sibolga-Indonesai regrets the absence of serious attempt at discovering the mystery of glorious great Barus kingdom in the past which was the entrance of the coming of Islam in Nusantara and perhaps the first place of the coming of Catholics (Panggabean et al, 1995:23-24). This paper tries to describe the one side of the history of Barus and camphor which invited the coming of Islam in Nusantara.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Today Barus

When someone mentions Barus, he will remember a camphor. Barus in this case is a small town located between the Beach of Hindia Sea and Bukit Barisan (hill of Barisan). Barus is also a name of district in Kabupaten (regent) TapanuliTengah (central Tapanuli), south Sumatera Province. Barus as the city center of the district in Tapanuli is still isolated because its facilities and infrastructures are bad.

The district of Barus is located between 23 20'-34 56' north latitude , 65 58'-76 36' east longitude, height 0-3 meters above the sea. Its width is 84,83 square kilometers divided into 18 villages.

Barus crosses the border from:

North : Kabupaten Tapanuli Utara (regent of south Tapanuli)

South : Hindia Sea

West : Kecamatan Andam Dewi (district of Andam Dewi)

East : Kecamatan Sosor Gadong (district of Sosor Gadong)

The population of Kecamatan Barus is 21.148 people. It consists of 10.585 men and 10.563 women, Malay and batak descent. Islam is the majority religion embraced by the native people. The percentage is 47,85% (Islam), 17,20 % (Catholic), 33,08 % (Christianity), and 1, 87% ( other religions). In this region, there are 20 mosques, 17 small mosques (mushalla), and 27 churches.

Barus has 20 state primary schools, 8 private primary schools, 3 state junior high schools, 3 private junior high schools, 2 state senior high schools, 1 private senior high school and two private higher educations.

The land of Barus is fertile so that it produces a lot of plants such as paddy, crops (corn, cassava, nut), coconut, banana, chocolate, and many other fruits and vegetables. There are also many kinds of livestock, such as cow, goat, chicken. Every non muslim people has pigs. There are 5 small industries and 129 home industries and some workshops.

Barus was known as the producer of large fresh fishes which were expensive sent to Medan, a capital city of south Sumatera. And the cheap fishes were sold by people using bicycles or motorcycles. Fishing at that time was a main economic activities for the native people. however, in this last ten years, it has not been economic potency. There is no a car which brings fishes from Barus to Medan so that there is no activity of fishing recorded in Barus dalam Angka, 2008. There are of course some people selling fishes but they just sell to the native people in Barus. The limited economic activities can be seen from the limited availability of goods in Barus. Goods are distributed from Medan and Sibolga. The public transportation to and from Barus basically is smooth but the bad infrastructure and the absence of economic potency in Barus have made it isolated.

The center of governmental administration is located in the eastern Barus. There are a district office, other governmental offices, schools, hospitals, an office of state electricity company, post office, banks and so on. In the same area, there is an ex-dutch fort which is used as police office today. This fort, they say, was built in the early of 20<sup>th</sup> century during the Aceh war and it is the largest historical monument in this town (Guillot, 2002:6). Near from the beach, there is a large and comfortable hotel owned by a native entrepreneur who lives in Jakarta. Many traders who come to Barus or native people who go back to Barus stay in this hotel.

Although Barus does not have many interesting tourism places but it has historical sites which interest many tourists, researchers, and journalists to come to Barus. A serious study was done in the end of 1980s sponsored by Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi. Then, in 1995, with the agreement of Prof. Dr. Hasan M. Ambariyah, the head of Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi, and in collaboration with Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient from France, there was a research in an ancient site known as Lobu Tua. In this research, many ancient objects were found such as jewelry and gold and silver coins, inscriptions, statue fragment. During the research, in the site which was about 1000 square meters land was found thousands objects (Guillot, 2002:1).

In 2008, some journalists from Trans TV, RCTI, and al-Jazeera visited Barus. They covered sites of muslim graves in line with the memorization of the coming of Islam in Barus in 7<sup>th</sup> century, it was during the time of Rasulullah (prophet Muhammad) in Mecca. In Barus, there were 29 graves which the highest one was Papan Tinggi located in the hill. It has 700 stairs and its height is 270 meters. The largest one is a complex of Makam Mahligai. Each grave has gravestones, every gravestones is written *La ilah illa Allah Muhammad Rasul Allah* (this is the majority sentence written on the gravestone), and some verses of Qur'an (Gulliot, 2008:298).

These old graves in Barus were called by the native people especially the old people as "Kuburan Aulia 44" (forty four pious people's graves) forty four states of Barus. These old graves are located around Barus and most of them are located in valleys or hills, from Desa Bukit Patupangan to Desa Lobu Tua (Batubara, tt:2). Today, these old graves are under the supervision of Balai Pelestarian Peninggalan Purbakala, Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Provinsi Nangroe Aceh Darussalam dan Sumatera Utara.

Although Barus is famous both in Indonesian country and foreign countries because of its camphor, but Barus camphor now is just in history. It is difficult to find trees of Barus camphor. According to Habibuddin Pasaribu, a native ulama, there are trees of Barus camphor in the forest. Sometime, people find them when they look for woods. Even, their trees are cut to sell in the form of a high quality wood. Unfortunately, their camphor is not taken to be sold; they do not take the benefit of it.

The forest is located in a lower land. But, the condition changes fast because migrants from Java cut the trees in the forest for palm plantations. As a result, some kinds of tree including camphor tend to be extinct (Guillot, 2002:5-6).

### **The History of Barus and Barus Camphor**

Since the rise of Hinduism-Javanese culture, -also since Coedes and Ferrand wrote *Le Royaume de Criwijaya and L'Empire Sumatranais de Criwijaya*), majority people have paid their attention to Jambi and Palembang. They mostly forget other penetration from South India. This indication is shown by the finding of stone or "banda bapahek", near from Suruaso Batusangkar, West Sumatera. On the stone, there was an announcement in two languages from Adityawarman to his people who had various languages. On the left of the stone, there were 10 rows of sentence in Sanskrit. On the right of the stone, there were 13 rows of sentence in Tamil. There was an

assumption that they came to Middle Sumatera through a port city which perhaps was the oldest port city in Nusantara, namely Barus (Amran, 1981:46-47). From some evidences found in Barus, such as written stones and Sanskrit vocabulary, it can be assumed that the first generation in Barus came from Tamil, South India. These people monopolized the trade of Barus camphor in some countries at that time. They were united in a group of trade called “Kelompok 1500 (a group of 1500)” (Amran, 1981:46-47).

It should be differentiated between today Barus and historical Barus . Today Barus is a name of port or small town which its age is three centuries, and a name of district located in the beach of southern west Sumatera. While Barus in the context of history is great Barus, i.e. an area which was previously known as the producer of high quality camphor which was extremely famous in the world. It was located in west beach of Sumatera. Some parts of this region today become part of Sumatera Utara province, and others become part of Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam province. The great Barus consisted of *Kecamatan Barus*, *Kecamatan Sorkam*, *Kecamatan Pakkat*, *Kecamatan Parlilitan*, *Kecamatan Onang Ganjang*, a part of *Kecamatan Sibolga*, and all regions located in the right or east of Simpang Kanan river or a part of Kabupaten Aceh Selatan, including the city of Singkil Baru, and Pulau Mursala and other Pulau (islands).

The width of great Barus was assumed more than 400.000 hectares, starting from the west beach of Sumatera, between mouth of Kalong in southeast and mouth of Simpang Kanan river, here was city of El Suraya or known as Singkil Baru.

Another name of Barus is Fansur, written in Arabic ur)Fans. The word of Fansur, they say, comes from the word ‘pancur’ or spout, when a Arabic trader, Wahab bin Abu Kabsah arrived in the beach of Barus in 627 AD. And he saw the water which spouted in Pulau Mursala in front of Barus beach. In Batak area, there were many people who used pancur to denote a bath place. It was then many people used pancur or fansur to denote the region. This Arabic trader continued his travel to China and he died in Kuang Cu. It seems that Pulau (island) ‘mursala’ comes from ‘moor salata’ because the first Arabic (moor) people who came to this island performed thankful prayer (salat syukur) after they were safe in traveling from Sekotra sea of Hindia sea.

Related to Wahab ibn Kasbah (Abu Kasbah or Abu Kasba), according to Abdullah Abbas Nasution, a scholar in History from Kedah Malaysia, he was a ministry of special delegation of Prophet Muhammad PBUH. He traveled to China and arrived in Kanton port to send Muhammad’s Islamic propagation for both King of Tang dynasty and King Tai-Ta-Song, South China (Nasution,1978).

In Nouha Stephan’s study, a name of ur)Fans and Balus was connected with the producer of camphor, found in original arabic sources and Persia such as in the books of tourism, botany, modern and traditional medic. One of the references which he cited was in wa al-Hind) Akhbar al-S (notes on China and India) written in 851 AD by unknown people which its main actor was Sulayman:

*Ketika berlayar ke Caylon, di laut ini (Laut Harkand) tidak terdapat banyak pulau, tetapi tiap-tiap pulau yang dijumpai luas, dan kami tidak memiliki maklumat terperinci mengenainya:di antaranya, terdapat sebuah pulau yang bernama Lambri dengan beberapa raja. Katanya pulau ini seluas 800 atau 900 parasange (persegi). Pulau ini mengandung banyak emas, dan sebuah tempat yang bernama fansour menghasilkan banyak kamper yang bermutu tinggi (Guilot, 2002:215).*

(when traveling to Caylon, in this sea (Harkand sea), there were not many islands, but each island found was wide, and we did not have detailed information about these islands:among them, there was an island known as Lambri with some kings. They say, this island had 800 or 900 square (meters). This island had gold, and there was a place called fansour which produced many high quality camphors.)

Word of or Fans was also found in the work of al-Qazwini (geographer died in 1283 AD) entitled *Athar al-Bilad wa akhbar al-Ibad* (monument of state and information about human beings). In this book, names of place were arranged alphabetically and or Fans can be found in alphabet fa'. According to al-Qazwini, the city of urfans was located in India and known for its Camphor called as fansuri. He added that the number of camphor produced increased during the rainy season (Guilot, 2002:219). The location of Fansur was confirmed by a Spain geographer, Ali ibn Sa'id al-Maghribi (died in 1274 AD or 1286 AD) who described Javanese Islands (Sumatera)- as was referred by G. Ferrand from Arabic manuscript-as follows:

*Di selatan pulau-pulau Mahraja terletak pulau Jawa yang besar dan terkenal, tempat kapal-kapal singgah karena terdapat berbagai jenis bahan local dan sambutan yang baik dari penduduknya. Ujung baratnya terletak pada 144 garis bujur. Di sini (bagian barat), diantara kota-kota terdapat sebuah yang terkenal, iaitu Lamuri. Garis lintangnya 5. di selatan, di bagian barat daya pulau ini ur yang namanya diberikan kepada sejenis kamper yang terletak kota Fans disebut uri. Garis bujurnya sama dengan kota fans di atas (Lamuri) yang lintangnya 1 30.kawasan pegunungan di mana terdapat kamper ur) hampir terletak di anatar kota (Fans sampai ke ujungnya, dari Barat sampai ke Timur) (Guilot, 2002:220).*

A geographer, al-Dimasqi (died in 1325 AD) mentioned in his article entitled *Nuhbah al-Dahr fi A'jaib al-Barr wa al-Bahr* (Some Miracles in the land and in the sea) that Fansur produced the best camphor. He described about how to cite camphor and said that the best camphor was I'ribah and uri\*fans which were only found in the peak of the tree or leaves, their color were bright red (Guilot, 2002:215).

Ibn Sarabiyun (the 10<sup>th</sup> century) mentioned in his book *Buku tentang Sifat Obat-obatan Asli* (book about the character of original medicine) that camphor was a kind of tree which its wood was white and soft. He added about the origin of camphor:

*Kamper yang bermutu tinggi dinamakan al-Riyah;kamper ini adalah suatu bahan alami. Warnanya merah berbintik-bintik tetapi menjadi putih selepas disublimasi di tempat asalnya...tempat asalnya bernama Fansur dan daripada nama ini berasal nama sejenis uri...kamper ini adalah jenis terbaik, paling ringan, kamper, iaitu fans paling murni, paling putih, dan paling mengkilat. Potongan – potongan terbesar sebesar kira-kira mata uang dirham (Guilot, 2002:228).*

There were also Persian sources such as ur, Sumatera. In informing about camphor, there was a Persian book entitled *Akbarnamih* (a biggest book), abu al-Fazl (died in 1602 AD), wrote:

*Kamper diperoleh daripada batang dan dahan...kamper yang ada di dalam kayu serupa dengan butiran kecil garam; kamper yang ada diluar kayu serupa getah dan mengeras beberapa lama selepas mengalir ke tanah...diantara jenis kamper yang terbaik adalah i\*ribah atau uri\*fans. Walaupun namanya berbeza, tetapi jenisnya sama. Katanya kamper ditemui untuk pertama ur, sebuah \*kalinya oleh seorang raja yang bernama Ribah, dekat Fans tempat dekat dengan pulau sarandib (Guilot, 2002:227).*

The change of name from Fansur to Barus was done by Sultan Ibrahimsyah. They say, Sultan Moghul, a king of Pariaman, felt jealous to his brother, Ali Riayatsyah (king of Buyung) who governed in Aceh, so that he wanted to conquer his brother. Before arriving in Aceh, he anchored in Fansur and asked suggestion and help to two batak people, Datu Tenggara and Datu Negara, for conquering Aceh. But, Raja Moghul cancelled his desire to conquer Aceh and traveled to Pariaman bringing Datu Tenggara as the commander. Before traveling, Datu Tenggara took a bucket of soil and water and suggested that in the next days he or his descendants would come back to Fansur. This happened, they say, in 1571 AD.

In Pariaman, Datu Tenggara studied religious education and changed his name to be Muhammad. He was married by Sultan Mughul with his sister Siti Permaisuri, Raja Indrapura Munawwarsyah's daughter. In Pariaman, he opened a new village called Tarusan, to remember his grandmother's name Raja Hoturasan II, and got a title, Sultan Muhamadsyah.

In 1572 AD, Sultan Ibrahimsyah was born. But getting adult, about 17 years old, he was in conflict with his father, Datu Tenggara/Sultan Muhamadsyah, and left Tarusan with 1000 followers to come back to his home land, namely Fansur.

Sultan Ibrahimsyah and his followers traveled to west beach of Sumatera. In Batu Mundam (Drakard (ed), 1988:31), their ship collapsed and they continued traveling on foot. Finally, they arrived in a mouth of river near with the sea. Then, the soil and water brought his father were compared with the soil and water on the location which was actually suitable. Sultan Ibrahimsyah decided to live in this place and established a village called Negeri Barus with Sultan Ibrahimsyah as the king. The kingdom then was called Hotorusan. In Indonesian history, Barus was popularized as the place where Hamzah Fansuri lived and producer of camphor and incense. These two goods were sold in Sumatera to Chinese in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and to some extent to India and Middle Eastern people (Drakard (ed), 1988:31).

Barus was an unique name which was identified by Claude Guillot (1995:3) as a city or kingdom mentioned in some books, but its history and location was unknown. Its location was obscure. Many articles mentioned this city even some sources from many languages, such as Arabic, Javanese, Malay, and many others, in the first century. But, its location and history was still obscure because they only mentioned a Barus port and camphor as its main product. Moreover, it was mentioned in different languages so that it was difficult to be identified (Guillot, et al . 1995:3)

What was mentioned by Claude Guillot (1995:3) , perhaps, it was correct. There were some native people could explain the history of Barus by referring foreign sources. When there was a question about who can explain about its history, native people would point to Tajudin Batubara and Habibuddin Pasaribu. These two people would refer some foreign books when detailed information was needed. Tajuddin Batubara was not a native person in Barus but he came from another region that moved in Barus. He also prepared an article entitled Sejarah Ringkas Kota Barus Negeri Tua when someone asked him about the history of Barus.

Although people do not know about its history, native people know that Barus is an old town, has bright history, producer of high quality camphor, and the early place where Islam came to Nusantara. They were unhappy to the government for neglecting Barus so that Barus is a undeveloped town with its low economic standard. *Bunga Rampai Tapian Nauli Sibolga-Indonesia* mentioned :

*Kapur barus lama kelamaan menjadi dongeng modern dari sebuah kerajaan atap langit yang tercabik-cabik di Barus raya. Muskil sekali sebab Barus Raya yang sesungguhnya ada di pantai barat Sumatera, masuk wilayah kedaulatan Negara Republik Indonesia, namun terasa sepi. Sesungguhnya begitu dekat, namun terasa asing dan begitu jauh dari hati, seoh tak ada upaya dari pihak manapun untuk menguak misteri kejayaan Barus raya di masa lampau yang merupakan tempat masuknya ajaran Islam pertama di Nusantara dan konon juga tempat pertama agama Katolik (Panggabean, et al . 1995).*

Although it did not fulfill the hope of native people, the study of Barus was done many times, such as by Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Arkeologi Nasional Forum Jakarta-Paris. The result of the research was the finding of some artifacts from Lobu Tua sites. This research concluded that Lobu Tua was stayed starting from the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Panggabean, et al. 1995:32).

Since there was no the oldest artifact explaining the existence of Barus before the 9<sup>th</sup> century,

Claude Guillot used three kinds of source in discussing the case, namely native tradition, notes on Barus and Fansur in foreign sources, and data on camphor, a main export from Barus (Panggabean, et al. 1995).

### 1. Native Tradition

There were two written versions from oral tradition about the early history of Barus found by some researchers. However, both of them came from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first version was collected by England captain, David Jones, who, in 1815 was sent to Aceh by the government of Penang as a commander of Ariel's ship to identify the case of pirate in the sea. The main purpose was to limit the power of Aceh sultanate in west beach of Sumatera especially in Tapanuli and Natal. For that aim, England tried to establish a region or authority in which it could limit Aceh sultanate, namely Barus. Barus also wanted to separate from Aceh's authority. When David Jones traveled to Barus, he met with Barus's leader, Tuanku Bahroo, who told about the history of Barus (Drakard, 1988).

Based on this tradition, before Barus was established near with the sea (by sultan Ibrahimsyah), there had been a kingdom called Mahligai in the land in which its king lived on the hill known as bukit (hill) Mahligai

One of Se Bunyan people from Fansur came to Mahligai to bring their king, people, and followers to Fansur, the first name of Barus. They were also brought to the top of hill 'Mamputu', a place where they taught Islam. After teaching Islam, they brought them back to Fansur where they lived. This tradition described three steps of its history; the time of Fansur, Mahligai, and 'today' Barus near with the beach.

The second version was tradition written in the chronicle of Batak kingdom called as chronicle 'hulu', in the form of Malay language in 1870s and published by Jane Drakard (Drakard, 1988). This chronicle told about the history of new dynasty in high land of Batak established by a person, Alang Pardoksi. One of his sons, Guru Marsakot, walked down to Hindia sea to look for a place for his village. In traveling, together with his people, he met with spout water, and he called it Pancur. Next travel, he met with Ceti and Hinduism people who were lost because their ship had collapsed. Because each wood they made was always broken, they could not go back to their home land, Keling. They then farmed and gardened in the village called Aek (water) Busuk. The arrival of Guru Marsakot provoked the native people to acknowledge that Guru Marsakot was their king. The village of Air Busuk then was crowded and in this village, different ethnic groups engage each others. They are Batak, Aceh, and Malay. In the next time, its king and people moved to Lobu Tua. Lobu Tua became crowded and many rich traders traveled to Keling, Arabian, and Aceh.

These two versions of tradition noted that the first town in Barus, Fansur, was located in Lobu Tua, next to Aek Busuk. Today, Aek Busuk still exists next to Lobu Tua. Surveys done by some researchers together with native people cannot find its site. This does not mean that there was no site in Aek Busuk. In Lobu Tua, however, some researchers could find the site in the form of artifact, such as gold coins, and statue fragments. There was no site of village in Aek Busuk. It can be understood because its king, Guru Marsakot and his people, did not stay longer, he moved to Lobu Tua.

The invention of goods in Lobu Tua, according to Claude Guillot, reflected the relation of one port to other international ports known at that time because some of these inventions came from the Middle East to China, including Mesopotamia, Persia, Iran and Nusantara (Guillot, 2002:13).

## 2. Foreign Sources

To explain the history of Barus from foreign sources, Claude Guillot referred to some sources (Guillot, 2002:13) as follows:

*First*, O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce : a Study of the Origins of Sriwijaya*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1967, pp. 184-186. It was explained in Geography written by Ptolemaeus. He noted 'five Baroussai islands' between other islands in far east. This name usually was related to the name of Barus. In this case, Chinese sources starting from the 6<sup>th</sup> century were more reliable because they always mentioned a name of place in some phonetic transcriptions suitable with the name of Barus. Moreover, the name of this place was always mentioned as the producer of camphor.

*Second*, Roderich Ptak, "Possible Chinese References to the Barus Area (Tang to Ming)" in C. Guillot (ed), *Historie de Barus, Sumatra, Le Site de Lobu Tua. Etudes et Documents*, Paris, Cahier d'Archipel 30, pp.119-148 (pp. 105-138 in Indonesian version). These Chinese sources reviewed by Roderich Ptak also discussed its interpretations. Related to the time of Lobu Tua, this interpretation can conclude that four names of place-Poluosa, Polu, Polushi, and Polu may be related to the name of Barus. Polu itself was related to camphor and therefore it was very possible referring to Barus.

*Third*, a translation in Chinese done between the 8<sup>th</sup> century and 10<sup>th</sup> century from a Sanskrit text entitled *Arya Manjusrimulakalpa* explained transcript of name 'Varuca' in the form of Bolu-sha. Wolters, referring to Przulski noted Varusaka.

*Fourth*, a collection of text from the 12<sup>th</sup> century discussing churches in Egypt and other neighbors, was given a title 'Tadhkur fiha Akhbar mi al-Kana 'is wa al-Adyar and perhaps was written by Abu al-Armani. In this text, it was found a chapter about India. After a note about Quilon, there was a short description about Fansur.

This text was published and translated by B.T.A. Evetts (*The Churches & Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighboring Countries Attributed to Abu Salih, The Armenian*); translated from the original Arabic by B.T.A Evetts with added notes by Alfred J. Butler, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p.300). The citation of translation note in English can be seen as follows:

Fansur, there, there are several churches and all the Christians are Nestorians and that is the condition of thing here. It is from this place that camphor and this commodity oozes from the trees. In this town there is one church named after our lady the pure virgin mary.

This note was referred by al-armani from a book of 'nazm al-jauhar', written by Melkit from Alexandria named Sa'id ibn al-Batriq (877-940), explaining information about members of Nestorian church in far east in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. J.W.M. Baker then concluded that al-Armani's citation referred to Barus at that time.

## 3. Sources related to Camphor

Claude Guillot referred to many sources about camphor. But, he acknowledged that ancient history of camphor was complicated because the term of camphor referred to materials made of some plants. From the study of Nicholas Sims-Williams (1996:48) referred by Claude Guillot, that the oldest note known about camphor came from the early of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This note was gotten in the collection of document called 'old letters' found in Dunhuang (china) and written by Sogdian trader who traveled in 'jalan sutera'. Related to camphor, the note mentioned the term of 'kprwh'.



The first note in the west related to camphor was found in Actius' work from Amida (502-578), a Greek doctor who lived in Mesopotamia. This note was referred by Imr al-Kais (530s AD), who lived in the kingdom of Sassanid. In 638 AD Arabic troop conquered the palace of Chosroes II in Madan (Mada'in) in which many buckets were full of camphor previously regarded as salt. Al-Qur'an also notes the term of camphor related to a description of palace which has camphor in its spout water (Guillot, 2002).

The term of camphor in china was written in the chronicle of Liang dynasty (502-557 AD). This source was very interesting because camphor was named Po-lu camphor, a name place which was similar with Barus.

From some notes about camphor above showed that camphor was traded in most part of the world since the 4<sup>th</sup> century, before the birth of prophet Muhammad PBUH. Related to the origin of camphor, Calude Guillot (2002) acknowledged that it was very difficult because the term in India was used for all the places. The etymology of camphor is still in debate. But the conclusion of previous researchers said that the term of camphor came from the south east asia because it was closer to the central producer. Three sources proposed by Claude Guillot (2002), namely native tradition, foreign sources, and sources about camphor, are to prove the existence of Barus in history before the 9<sup>th</sup> century or before ancient town of Lobu Tua were established. From the proofs proposed were known that camphor was traded from china to the region of middle sea. It was very possible that, at that time, camphor came from Sumatera and particularly from a region which is now called 'Barus'. Although there was no proofs in the form of cultivation or survey about the existence of a town around today Barus before the time of Lobu Tua, but information about the chronicle of Batak kingdom related to the existence of a village in Aek Busuk Lama was reliable proof.

The history of Barus before the birth of Prophet Muhammad PBUH could be seen from 29 locations/complex of old graves (grave of 44 pious people) found around Barus. From the written Arabic grave stones, it could be assumed that buried people in the graves were ulama who lived during the time of prophet Muhammad PBUH. This was supported by the decision of seminar on the coming of Islam in Nusantara in 1963 in Medan, which decided that Islam came to the west beach of Sumatera in the 7<sup>th</sup> century brought by Arabic traders.

In the decision, there was no statement about Barus but it can be understood that the famous west beach of Sumatera which was known as Barus. On the grave stone of old grave in Barus written person buried in was Syekh Rukunuddin died in a' mim \*h meant by Tajuddin Batubara as the year of 48. This was based on:

**First**, that Arabic people came to Barus at that time were traders who understood with falaq science, they knew exactly the season of wind changed so that they could travel because there was no compass at that time. **Second**, because they understood falaq science so it could be understood that the writing of year when Syekh Rukunuddin died was influenced by falaq science. In falaq science, Arabic alphabets ara started from alif to ya' who have their partners in number, namely alif =1, ba'=2, jim=3, dal=4, ha'=5, waw=6, za'=7, a\*h=8, a\*t=9, ya'=10, kaf=20, lam=30, mim=40, nun=50, sin=60, ayn=70, fa'=80, ad\*s=90, qaf=100, ra'=200, syin=300, ta'=400, tha'=500, kha'=600, dhal=700, 1d\*d=800, a\*z=900, ghayn=1000. **Third**, the way of calculating the values of name, as explained in the book of Taj al-Mulk, could be done as follows; Ahmad, alif = 1, a\*h=8, mim=40, and dal=4, so the values of Ahmad are 1+8+40+4 =53. The death of Syekh Rukunuddin written in the form of a\*h and mim can be calculated 8+40 = 48. so, he died in the year of 48.

Related to old graves in Barus, Ludvik Kalus studied in a depth on written gravestones. The result of his study was found in Calude Guillot, Barus Seribu Tahun yang Lalu, entitled :

Sumber-Sumber Epigrafi Islam di Barus. Old graves in Barus became witness that Barus was visited by many people from Arab, Persia, China, India (tamil). Their coming of course was closely related to the commodity of camphor and other commodities. The study of Ludvik Kalus was reported in 772 H. it was different from Kalus, tajuddin Batubara (native person), Dada Meraxa (historian from Aceh), and Abdullah Abbas Nasution, a historian from Kedah, Malaysia (also came from a region around Barus) believed that old graves already existed in the 7<sup>th</sup> century during the prophet Muhammad in Mecca. When it was connected with the arrival of Wahab ibn Abi Kasbah in the beach of Barus in 627 AD; and the result of seminar about the coming of Islam in Nusantara in Medan, as well as the writing of kalimah syahadah and verses of Qur'an on the Faith (there was no verse on Syariah), so it was assumed that Barus was visited since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, even before the time of prophet Muhammad PBUH.

Barus camphor or camphor known in the world and famous commodity among the traders because it was expensive and advantageous, in fact it has a legend, both its origin and the way of searching its wood. A Dutch writer, J.de Ligny, succeeded in getting its story from a Bona Hayu ( a figure who looking for camphor) Pa Tombok, in Pardomuan (Barus), and he finished writing on 29 July 1922 in Barus.

It was told (de Ligny, 1924) that, in the past, there was a beautiful lady, Nan Tar Tar Nan Tor Tor. She, however, did not come from the real world. One day, she was asked to get married by Si Pagedag Si Pagedog. She would accept him when he could realize her requirement, namely he must never ask her to dance. During the birth of their son, and her husband took bed in Sopo because of drinking. She was forced by a bad man to dance. She was very scared. Before dancing, she shouted and disappeared. She was kidnapped by begu sombaun (bad spirit) who like young people. Her spirit (simangot) entered to the forest Langkukung and became the character of camphor. Because its form was too small and it has a high risk to be destroyed by animal, she moved to the tree of Johar. This tree also was not nice to sit, she moved to the tree of Suya, the tree of camphor.

When she disappeared, her husband looked for her in anywhere. He dreamt that his wife sat on the tree of Suya, he then looked for it and cut it by saying "Pagedag Pagedog" in the forest. He never found his wife and hurt his hand. His soul was always looking for around the tree of camphor to find her wife, and the hunter of camphor sometimes heard his sound 'Padegag Padegog" in the tree of camphor. When si Padegag Padegog walked closer to the tree of Camphor, Nan Tar Tor Nan Tor Tor disappeared from the tree. Bona Hayu never put his stick under the tree of camphor since he knew that Nan Tar Tar Nan Tor Tor run from the tree.

Since at that time, women dancers of Dairi used a leave on their hair in order to save their children from the hand of begeo Sombaon who kidnapped Nan Tar Tar Nan Tor Tor. During the hunting of camphor in the forest, Batak people considered some requirements which should be done before searching camphor.

In the past, the hunter of camphor was a king, head of village, trader of forest products. They asked a hunter of camphor (Bona Hayu), who knew its secret and knew the use of magic words to own this expensive good. The cost needed by Bona Hayu was paid by instructor. He also fulfilled living cost of Bona Hayu and his servants. Bona Hayu was an animist who had smart thinking, disliked the use of drug, lived alone, and considered everything well. During his activity, daily activities were connected with the hunting of camphor. When he took an axe, he would say: "I took an axe because I wanted to get a lot of camphor".

With some preparations, Bona Hayu went to the forest. In the forest, he built a small house (jambar kuburan) near with the tree of camphor. When the tree sounded, he went because there would not be camphor. The small house was made of materials taken from the

forest and it had two doors, one for Bona Hayu and another for his servants. In the morning, Bona Hayu started to work by looking for the location of camphor. He put a leaf of pandayangan which some parts of it pointed to Bon Hayu and other parts pointed to the tree of camphor. Above leaf, there was mixture of betel 1 cm when there were some people in this hunting. Nan Tar Tar Nan Tor Tor was a lady who her wisdom was needed by some people. Bona Hayu sat near with the leaf until there was meruten (small animal) which appeared from the betel. This small animal became the guide in looking for camphor. Its color also described the color of offering of animal which would be cut. When its color was white, the animal which should be cut was white animal. Each betel leaf was arranged systematically. It was a person who his betel was bitten by this small animal (ngangat) would lead the hunting.

When the complete information was gotten, Bona hayu would walk back to his house to sleep and dream by using opium. In his dream, he was visited by a woman who offered him rice. The color of herface informed the tree that would be cut. The number of rice also described the number o camphor that would be gotten.

When the woman appeared in the dream, a white chicken was cut in order to respect begu sombaon and bona Hayu called : “ Hi, begu sombaon give me information to get camphor. If you do not give me the information, I will die because I am ashamed”. After that, bona Hayu came back to the person who gave the order to inform the color of animal to be cut for sombaon. Sometimes, it was not animal that sombaon asked but the king’s children were also kidnapped naturally and let them in the forest to eat by beu sombaon.

When the desire of begu sombaon was fulfilled, under the guide of appointed leaders people went to the forest and cut the tree based on the information given. Many of them succeeded in getting camphor. But, usually the guide of bona hayu was mistaken and they did not get anything. Bona Hayu paid attention to the impact of the regulations which are not enough, magic words were re-read, and finally asked the offerings to be given to the begu somboan. Sometimes, the person who gave the order would fulfill the asking of Bona Hayu, sometimes he would not. If not, Bona Hayu was responsible for the realization of the promise to begu somboan. To prevent the disaster, he appointed one of his servants for his substitute.

When his servant slept at afternoon, he put a white cloth on servant’s head and said to somboan: “ great spirit, I am sorry because I can not fulfill your desire but please accept this person to be your dish so that I can get camphor and safe”. His servant would be dead. But during the dutch colonial, somboan disliked human and since at that time there was no person who disappeared. Begu then would made person sick or broken when he did not fulfill begu’s desire.

In looking for camphor, there was no prohibition of words and actions. The hunters did not speak about spoon because spoon can be meant a snake. Therefore, they spoke ‘lemuk’ meaning spoon.

When the person came back by bringing a lot of camphor, their arrival would be welcomed by gondang and manortor. It was interesting that bona hayu can not be prosecuted and he also might not pay tax. In the story, people believed that bona Hayu died when he was poor.

The slaughter of offering was done to get camphor, even sometimes there was a person, a (died in 1377 AD), who was asked to be offerings as it was told by Ibn Bat:

*Pohon-pohon yang mengandung kamper adalah sejenis buluh yang serupa dengan tanaman air di kawasan kita, perbedaannya adalah bagian di antara dua bonjol lebih panjang dan lebih tebal. Ketika batangnya dipotong tangkai yang mengandung kamper kelihatan. Ada suatu rahasia yang mengherankan, yaitu kamper hanya diperoleh dari dalam batangan buluh jika seekor binatang yang disembelihakan pada kaki pohonnya. Di kawasan ini kamper yang terbaik disebut al-hardalah dan*

*mencapai derajat kedinginannya yang tertinggi. Beratnya sedragma (=3,24 gram, catatan penerjemah) cukup untuk mematikan seseorang dengan menghentikan pernafasannya. Jenis kamper ini diperoleh dari pohon buluh yang didekatnya telah disembelih seorang manusia. Korban manusia boleh diganti dengan beberapa gajah muda (Guillot, 2002:222).*

The above citation confirmed that the slaughter of animal and even human for the offerings was to get camphor as it was told in the legend of camphor.

### **The Relation of barus and Middle East**

Middle East refers to region which is politically and culturally part of Asian or African-Eurasia regions. The center of this area was land between the sea of Mediterranean and Teluk Persia and a location between Anatolia, Arabic and Sinai Peninsula. Sometimes it was mentioned that this area covers the region from South Africa to Pakistan, Caucasus, and west Asia. Media and other international organizations considered that the region of Middle East is West East Asia (including Cyprus and Iran) and Egypt.

This region covers some ethnic groups and cultures including Iranian, Arabic, Greece, Barber, and many others. Its main language are Arabic, Persian, and so on. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Middle East has become the center of international phenomena and sensitive region, from its strategic location, politics, economy, culture, and religion. The middle East has great potency of oil and the birth place of some prophets and the center of spiritual religions such as Jew, Christianity, and Islam.

The term of 'Middle East' refers to cultural region, so it does not have certain limitation. General definition used refers to region covers : Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine, Jordanian, Kuwait, Libyan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arabic emirate, Amman. With the disappearance of ottoman kingdom in 1918, the term of 'near east' also nearly disappeared in general mention, while the term of 'middle east' is used to denote Islamic countries. However, the use of 'near east' remains to be used by some academic scholars. The critics of erocentrism was also related to the fact that the East and the West was defined in the relation to latitude relative to main meridian or Greenwich meridian. This is because the standard of Britain cartography accepted widely in 1884 in the conference of international meridian. In the past, Barus contacted with Parsi on the one hand and eastern part from middle sea on the other (Guillot, 2002). Region between Persia and eastern part of Middle East, including Egypt, as proposed above, is the Middle East.

In P.H Brans' dissertation, Sumatra Benzoe, referred by Rusli Amran (1981:45), there was incense from Barus used by kings of Egypt in BC. This fact informed that incense (and of course camphor) from Barus was already known in the past.

In the book of bible translated into Indonesian, it was told about the birth of Christ. They say, there were pious people from East who came to Bethlehem to worship and give present to the king of Jew newly born (Christ). When pious people entered to the house, there were this child and his mother (maria); then they worshipped to Him. And they gave Him their presents, namely gold, incense and moor.

Moor in Indonesian dictionary (KBBI, 2007) means aromatic resin used for incense. Although it was used as incense, it means, according to Tajuddin Batubara, camphor. In the bible, moor (camphor) and incense were expensive materials and were same as gold.

During the time of Alexander the Great, there was a person who met fisherman from Sumatera in the river of Indus (India). In the middle of the first century, there was a person from Sumatera who visited the emporium of Roma and met its king, Caesar Claudius (Said, 1981:16).

In the past, the port city of Alexandria was a place of barter between goods from Europe and goods brought from Arabic people of Saba. During this time, there were natural resources brought from Indonesia, such as camphor, incense, gold and so on (Said, 1981:16).

Nouha Stephan said that al-Qur'an noted the term of camphor in the verse of 79 (al-insan or human). In his book, tafsir al-Azhar, Hamka did not interpret the word of kafur as camphor directly. But in his explanation, it means camphor. Hamka (1983:269) believed that, before the birth of prophet Muhammad PBUH, there were Arabic people who traveled to Indonesian islands, they looked for camphor and other goods. And kafur as one of natural resources was used to denote camphor for a long time. The term of kafur was also found in the poem which was written before the birth of Islam. In the poem, kafur was compared with aromatic oil.

According to Muhammad Said, those who already made contact with foreigners first were Indonesian fishermen. Long time before the invention of compass, Indonesian travelers used stars as their guide. The migration of Indonesian people to the eastern part of Africa in the past was the fact (Said, 1981:17). They say, the origins of Madagascar people were the mixture of Indonesian-Malay and Afro-Arab. In 700 AD, Indonesian people came to Madagascar through African beach. Their culture was based on Indonesia and to some extent based on other cultures, Islam and Arab. The people art, traditional art, dance and music developed in Madagascar. A word which explained clearly about the close relation between Indonesia and Madagascar was 'Matahari' to call sun (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1999).

According to Claude Guillot's Study, the relation between Barus and Persia was old. Camphor which possibly came from the Southern part of Sumatera was known during the kingdom of Sassanid (Persia) since the 4<sup>th</sup> century. This was found in one of "old letters" which noted that camphor was sold in China by traders from Sogdiane who came from Nusantara. It was also known that camphor was used among other medicines in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

The relation of Barus and Persia (Middle East) before the birth of Islam was also known from short notes in the book of al-Armini. Claude Guillot concluded that information found in Al-Armini proved the network of maritime Christianity from Persia to China before the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This network connected Barus and Persia through Sri Lanka and Malabar's beach, particularly Quilon. Donkin in his book on camphor, as referred by Claude Guillot, emphasized the important role of Gondhesapur, in Mesopotamia and Arabic people in enriching the list of medicines and the dissemination of camphor in the West (Guillot, 2002).

The seminar on the coming of Islam in Nusantara in Medan in 1963 decided that Islam arrived in west beach of Sumatera in the 7<sup>th</sup> century brought by Arabic traders. It means that the relation between Barus and the middle east in the early Islam scientifically was acknowledged by historians of Nusantara.

Barus actually was not related to the middle east but also related to China. According to Wolters, as referred by Esther Katz, the trade relation in the region of southern part of Sumatera and China was connected in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (Guillot, 2002). Old graves in Barus was regarded as the proof of relation between Barus and the Middle East in the early of Islam. as it was told above, among these graves, there was a grave of Syakh Mahmud who died in 44 H. This was also supported by the result of the seminar. Also, there was Wahab bin Abi Kasbah who traveled to Barus in 627 AD.

Some archeologists from France and Indonesia studied on the site of old village in Lobu Tua. Their analysis of finding came from old artifacts from Persian Gulf. In the text of 'Ajaib al-Hind, about 1000 AD, there were some travels from Persian Gulf to Barus/Fansur. In this Gulf, there was Siraf. Siraf was a starting point of maritime network to the Middle East, including Barus. Text 'La Relation de la Chine et de l'Inde wrote Barus. In the a guide book aimed at muslim traders, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, camphor was one of trade goods which were sold in the Middle East. In Kitab

Surah al-Ardh written by Ibn Hawqal, Siraf was described as the richest place of export products such as camphor. Istakhri (about 950 AD) connected Siraf with the import of camphor. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the abbasid period, Siraf was regarded as the big emporium for camphor and other products (Guillot, 2002).

The explanation about the relation between Barus and the Middle East gave information that Barus was a place of destination for traders from the Middle East. This relation was long, even before the birth of Islam and Christianity.

## CONCLUSION

Barus as a place in Tapanuli Tengah is a poor place now. This is because there is not enough facility and infrastructure available. It can be understood that the writers of "Bunga rampai Tapan Nauli, Sibolga-Indonesia and native people felt disappointed to the government which neglected the glory of Barus in the past.

There were some researches done by some historians and archeologists. Some literatures in Arabic, France, English, Chinese, and others mentioned Barus and Barus camphor. Some archeologists from France and Jakarta studied in the historical site in Barus and they succeeded in finding some proofs about the existence of glorious Barus in the past.

Barus was famous because many Arabic traders were looking for its camphor, even before the birth of Islam. When they were Muslim, they brought Islam to Barus and propagated it to native people. Islam which they brought was Mecca Islam (Islam in the period of Mecca). So, Barus and its camphor provoked indirectly Arabic people to propagate Islam in Nusantara. Barus, then, became the first region accepting Islam in Nusantara.

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