

# The Existence of Onan Balerong Balige, Tobasa Regency

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Abstract: This paper describes Onan Balerong Balige that still exist until today. The phenomenon of the change of lifestyle and space that accommodate the influx of modernisation into Balige becomes commercial space is a threat for the existence of Onan Balerong. However, the integrity of the cultural value of Batak that represented through the presence of Onan Balerong buildings and the local values of society Balige in their everyday life are the power to maintain the existence of Onan Balerong Balige as the identity of Balige.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Balige lies on the edge of Lake Toba (Figure 1). The city does not only present the beauty of Lake Toba, but it keeps a variety of charm in it. It was formed officially in 1998 as part of Tobasa District and in 2004 was set to be the Tobasa Regency capital.

Geographically, Balige is a strategic area. It is close to Harbor Balige, Silangit's International Airport, and accessible from surrounding area in Tapanuli.

In its history, in the past it was a center of the Batak village. Some of the Batak clans are derived from this area which now are spread around the world. As one of origin areas of Batak people makes it be known as "Bona Pasogit ". It has many King Tomb of Batak clans, monuments, and old Batak traditional villages. All strengthen the image as hometown of Batak people. Today the population of the area is dominated by Batak that live with their principles and values of their Batak cultures.

This area is also known as a center of education for its surrounding. In this place there are few good schools, so families send their children to study to this city. In this area, there is also health care facilities, i.e. Balige Hospital.

Its strategic location makes Balige is also the center of economical and trade activities. So that, the existence of Onan Balerong Balige as a central market complex in the city center is important since the beginning of the city growth. It always crowded by people especially on *Onan Day*. With its architectural design, the complex of *Onan Balerong* building become a landmark of Balige.

Onan Balerong exists in the city with the influx of vulnerable Balige modern development. The new stores, shops, tall buildings and developments are certainly challenges against the existence of this market. How can Onan Balerong Balige as a traditional market maintain its existence until recently. The paper will discuss this phenomenon.

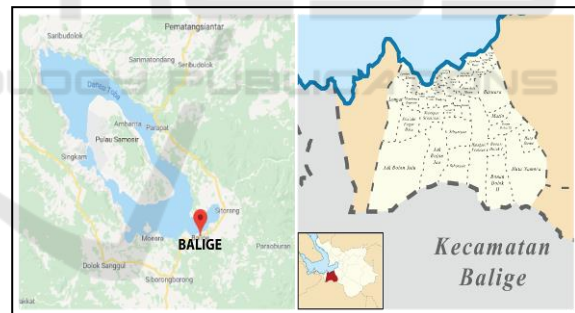


Figure 1. Map of Balige

## 2 TRANSFORMATION OF ONAN BALERONG BALIGE

Onan Balerong Balige is a traditional market. It is located on Jln. Sisingamangaraja, the main street of Balige city. The complex consists of six buildings with the traditional Batak Toba architecture. The buildings have similar typology, with similar facades and *gorga*. Originally, the buildings are open without walls and have same materials, those are made of wood and iron with natural material paint and distinctive ornament colors of Batak Toba ethnic (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Onan Balerong Buildings

This building was built by the Dutch Colonial in 1938. The architect designed those as meeting halls, entertainment centers and Batak Opera performance center. But in 1942, the function later turned into a traditional market. This happened through the desire of the Batak kings who appointed Balerong as the center of the market, because of its strategic location in the city center. The accessible location from surrounding area so make it easier for communities to visit (Figure 3).



Figure 3 Location of Onan Balerong.

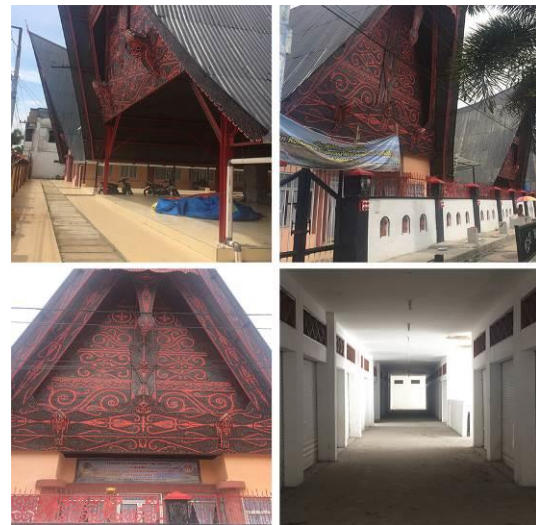


Figure 4 The Change of Onan Balerong Building.

In 1970, the market was developed, and characterized by the presence of shops around the Onan Balerong complex. The existence of these buildings aim for tidiness and security markets. Then in 1999 the management was taken over by the Government to the sustainability of the market (Siahaan, 2015).

Government adds infrastructure market in 2004 and does expand the market by building around 210 permanent kiosk in the 2 floor building on the back side of Balerong. However the market does not yet operate until today, although most of the kiosk are already sold. The owners prefer sell on the sidewalk and storefront. Last 2017 the city government did maintenance of the six buildings of Onan Balerong by using new material of paints which do not comply to the original characteristics and the typical of original design (Figure 4).

### 3 THE EXISTENCE OF ONAN BALERONG AS A SPACE OF LIFE

The existence of onan Balerong does not in spite of the presence of activities of onan (market). It is eagerly awaited by the community from surrounding areas, even from Samosir Island. Balige entrants, even by the nomads, atmosphere of *onan* sorely missed.



Figure 5 The Atmosphere of Onan Balerong Balige.

Every Friday is called *Onan Day*. The city center becomes very crowded because of many people who come to this area. They do for selling, shopping, gathering, even travelling. The crowd of sellers and buyers do not only focus on the center of the Balerong complex, but scattered around the buildings, on the sidewalk shops and along the left and right side of the road as far as 1.5 km, starting from Jalan Sisingamangaraja up to the port of Balige ( Figure 5). The community call Onan as Balige *bolon* (*bolon* means: big, great), because so many sellers come to the market comparing to other markets.

The variety of activities can be seen in this place. The sellers are not only hawking the companionship, but also bringing their families. People also watching storytelling. There is also many jokes, so they also getting acquainted and jokingly to visitors. The interaction of people on Onan Day creates new social space that strengthen the existence the market. The phenomenon is also found in the pedestrian paths in front of shophouses where sellers and buyers of fireworks can maintain the identity of the area (Siagian, 2016)

The buyers are also mingle in these spaces. Onan activities is not just for economic interests, but it is an opportunity for vacation and of socializing. People who bring families come to the onan and accidentally met in the market and then share information and eat together. The local community and the customs figured from some villages in Balige discuss the update information and distribute invitation of their family events. Moreover, this market are spaces for socializing, ties the relationship between families.

The activities of Onan Balerong Balige is resilience space of urban community for doing their use value of living and struggling their life. The

existence of Balerong is also resilience space of the identity of Balige as the area of Bataknese life achievement.

#### 4 THE ATMOSPHERE AROUND ONAN BALERONG BALIGE

Economic development makes the surrounding area of Onan Balerong complex be developed and changed into a commercial areas. The commercial activities have exchange values which was once the ghetto of communities lived with use values.

However, now along the main street Jln. Sisingamangaraja is evolved into shopping areas which facilitate varieties of needs, such as household furnitures, golds and jewels, mobile phones and accessories, computers, motors, instant foods and beverages; agricultural equipments and building materials. In addition, the public offices such as insurance offices, banks, lodgings and hotels, bakeries, saloons, fast food restaurants, even mini market with modern style architecture are presented together with Onan Balige that performs the traditional Batak architecture styles (Figure 6).

The changes of activities and the people lifestyle in the city accommodate modern values to turn off economic life in Onan Balerong market. It still operates every day. Some traditional food such as mie gomak, ombus-ombus, drinks, fruits are sold in this market that can attract people to visit.

The existence of Onan Balerong that stand on the Jln. Sisingamangaraja become the landmark of Balige until recently. It presents the characteristic, identity, and the existence of Balige. Its performance captivate people. It is a melting place of local and modern activities. The events take place naturally without any conflict



Figure 6 The Atmosphere around Onan Balerong Complex

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Onan Balerong Balige with the uniqueness of its Batak architecture exist until nowadays. It acts as the center of the economical activities and a landmark of the city.

The activities in the market are the resilience of the space of the local communities for doing their use values of living and struggling their lives. The transformation of spaces that occurs in Balige does not eliminate local values that live in the Onan Balerong Balige, however they present together in the city.

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