



IFSR

2025

INTERNATIONAL
FORUM ON
SPICE ROUTE

Spice Routes as Pathways to
Sustainable Futures:
Bridging Heritage and Innovation

PROCEEDINGS

#SpiceRoute

ISSN 3031-5034

IFSR 2025

PROCEEDINGS

7th International Forum on Spice Route
Volume 4, 2026

•

Hybrid from

The National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)

Universitas Islam Makassar (UIM)

Universitas Multimedia Nusantara (UMN)

Jakarta | South Tangerang | Makassar – INDONESIA

September 23-27, 2025

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITORS:

Gemala Putri, Uus Faizal, Widya Safitri, Dewi Kumoratih, Aryandini Novita

REVIEWERS:

Adi Nugroho
Ady Nugeraha
Ahmad Hanafie
Andi Arfan Sahabuddin
Andi Samsu Rijal
Andrian Wikayanto
Anne Nurfarina
Ariel Lopez
Aryandini Novita
Dewi Kumoratih
Dino R. Kusnadi
Gisela Anindita
Jeanne Francoise
Lilis Mulyani
Maulana Ibrahim
Mita Purbasari Wahidiyat
Moelyono Rahardjo
Mohammad Fathi Royyani
Nahdiana Rahman
Nur Alim
Peter Ardhianto
Pujiyanto
Rahina Nugrahani
Sari Wulandari Rijanto
Siti Nurannisa P.B.
Sohary Manambahy Razanaparany
Sri Wahyuning Septarina
Suardi Bakri
Sundari
Touwe Sem
Wibawanto Wandah

Published by:

Negeri Rempah Foundation
Jl. Garuda III. Blok D No. 9 Rempoa, Ciputat Timur
Tangerang Selatan 15412, Banten - Indonesia.
Published Year: 2026
Volume 4, 2026
ISSN: 3031-5034
Printed in Jakarta, Indonesia by Publish Partner

©The National Research and Innovation Agency and Negeri Rempah Foundation

The copyright in these proceedings belongs to The National Research and Innovation Agency and Negeri Rempah Foundation. Copyright of the papers contained in these proceedings remains the property of the authors. Apart from fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part of this book may be reproduced by any process without the prior permission of the publishers and authors. Copyright of images in this publication are the property of the authors or appear with permissions granted to those authors. The editors and publisher accept no responsibility where authors have not obtained the appropriate permissions.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Bram Kushardjanto
Aulia Hadi
Lilis Mulyani

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

Dewi Kumoratih
Aryandini Novita
Uus Faizal Firdausy
Muhammad Iqbal
Widya Safitri
Gisela Anindita Putri
Irma Zahrotunnisa
Budi Lestari
Halimatussa'diah
Gemala Putri
Utami Dwi Astuti

CONVENERS:

Lilis Mulyani, Dewi Kumoratih

DESIGN AND LAYOUT:

Yong Kushandiono
Uus Faizal Firdausy
M. Fathul Khoiri
Ahmad Sultan Aquilla

VOLUNTEERS:

Zulvan Syah ; Abdullah Hekmatyar Azzikkri; Muhammad Fathul Khoiri; Alyya Azzahra; Sri Hartuti
Irawanto Keledar ; Rifa Dwi Kartika Pratama; Nisriinaa Shiddiq; Deandra Muhammad Syafi'i;
Khilda Aqilah Sepiani; Dewi Syadiyah; Amanda Fauziah; Muhammad Abdul Fadzri; M Yasir
Pirdaos; Mohammad Azka Zahir; Ahmad Sultan Aquilla; Nur Amanda Zur'aini; Radhania Ghina
Auliya; Aliyah Rahmani.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

H.E. Arif Havas Oegroseno

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

Herry Yogaswara

Research Organization for Archaeology, Language, and Literature,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)

Yen Yen Sally Rahayu

Research Center for Ecology and Ethnobiology,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)

Yudi Darma

Directorate of Dissemination and Utilization of Science and Technology
The Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia

Matthew Santamaria

Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman

Daud Aris Tanudirjo

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta

Peter Lape

University of Washington

Muammar Bakry

Universitas Islam Makassar

Umi Mu'awannah

Research Center for Industrial, Service, and Trade Economics,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)

Ismunandar

The Indonesian Academy of Social Science

Mita Purbasari Wahidiat

School of Design, Binus University

Dave Lumenta

Department of Anthropology, Universitas Indonesia

Siti Nurannissa

Association of Visual Communication Design Professionals

Salfia Rahmawati

Department of Anthropology, Universitas Indonesia

Joella van Donkersgoed

University of Luxembourg

FOREWORD

Dewi Kumoratih

*International Forum on Spice Route 2025, Organizing Committee
Negeri Rempah Foundation, Chair of the Executive Board*

•

Your Excellency, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,
Honorable Director of Research Organization National Research and Innovation Agency,
Honorable Board of Trustees of the Negeri Rempah Foundation,
Distinguished Partners, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

As the Organizing Committee and Convener of the International Forum on Spice Route 2025, it is a tremendous honor to greet you on this special occasion. I would like to extend my deepest respect and gratitude to our distinguished guests, our partners, and the dedicated volunteers who have made this forum possible. To all the local and international participants joining us in person and online, thank you for your presence.

The International Forum on Spice Route (IFSR) began as an initiative by civil society, driven by an earnest desire to better understand Indonesia through its rich and layered history. Through the lens of the Spice Routes, we gain insight into the profound diversity of Indonesia, a diversity built upon a foundation of intercultural understanding. The historical movement of people—traders, seafarers, and settlers—along these routes facilitated the creation of diaspora communities, shaping cultural identities, economic systems, and international relations.

The Spice Route movement became a dynamic hub of multi-disciplinary communities, where a rich shared heritage was celebrated through collaboration. In this same spirit, the IFSR is built on collaboration to foster a living tradition of learning. Our forum brings together a diverse array of stakeholders – academics, policymakers, business leaders, artists, and NGOs – to explore how the Spice Routes can help address contemporary global challenges. Since 2022, the Negeri Rempah Foundation has partnered with the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) to engage a wider audience and to strengthen this multidisciplinary dialogue.

The theme for this year's forum, "*Spice Routes as Pathways to Sustainable Futures: Bridging Heritage and Innovation*" perfectly captures our ambition to connect this vital history with the most pressing issues of our time. Over the next five days, we will engage in rigorous and thoughtful discussions across various panels, from tracing the historical phytogeography of spices to decolonizing heritage and highlighting the indispensable role of maritime societies. We will also showcase the powerful role of artistic expression as a critical tool for cultural reflection and public learning through our artwork submissions. This year, IFSR has received

210 abstract submissions for papers and artwork, of which 50 selected papers and artworks will be presented.

In this regard, we are especially proud to announce a new initiative: our first-ever Call for Artworks. This effort is closely tied to our commitment to encourage Non-Traditional Research Outputs (NTROs) as a new way of knowledge production. By welcoming submissions in various formats, we are expanding our understanding of research to include creative works and other outputs that go beyond conventional academic papers. This approach, alongside our dedicated call for artwork, allows us to celebrate and learn from our shared heritage through diverse forms of expression. We believe this will enrich the discourse and foster innovation in both research and artistic practice.

We are delighted to welcome speakers and presenters from around the world, including Madagascar, the Philippines, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Indonesia. Their expertise and insights will undoubtedly enrich our discussions and contribute to a deeper understanding of the spice routes.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of our collaborators: the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Universitas Islam Makassar, Universitas Multimedia Nusantara, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, AIDIA, and Jakarta Maritime Museum. To all reviewers, moderators, and volunteers, your dedication and hard work have made this event possible.

I am confident that this 7th International Forum on Spice Route will be a fruitful and inspiring gathering. Let us work together to explore the rich history and enduring legacy of the spice routes and to envision a more interconnected and sustainable future.

Thank you for joining us today and for your invaluable contributions to this significant dialogue. I eagerly anticipate the insightful discussions and the spirit of collaboration that will define this year's forum.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER	1
ISSN 3031-5034	2
IFSR 2025	2
PROCEEDINGS	2
EDITORIAL BOARD	3
CONFERENCE COMMITTEE	4
FOREWORD.....	6
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	8
KEYNOTE SPEAKER	8
H. E ARIF HAVAS OEGROSENO	13
HERRY YOGASWARA	16
YEN YEN SALLY RAHAYU	19
MATTHEW SANTAMARIA	21
ISMUNANDAR	24
DAVE LUMENTA	26
MITA PURBASARI	29
DAUD ARIS TANUDIRJO	33
PETER LAPE	37
MUAMMAR BAKRY	39
UMI MU'AWANNAH	42
JOELLA VAN DONKERSGOED	44
SALFIA RAHMAWATI	48
PANEL 1 TRACING THE SPICE: PHYTOGEOGRAPHY, ETHNOBOTANY & SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION	50
SMOKKEL VAN PEPPER: THE ILLEGAL PEPPER TRADE IN BANGKA, 1950-1960	51
ABSTRACT	51
INTRODUCTION.....	51
CONCLUSION	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY NEWSPAPER	60
CONNECTING HERITAGE AND INNOVATION: SPICE ROUTES AS PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.....	61

ABSTRACT	61
INTRODUCTION.....	62
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	63
REVIEW OF KEY THEMES.....	66
Reference.....	84
SUNDANESE DENDENG: TRADITIONAL CULINARY EVIDENCE OF THE SPREAD OF CORIANDER SPICE IN BANTEN SULTANATE.....	93
ABSTRACT	93
INTRODUCTION	94
METHODOLOGY	95
RESULTS & DISCUSSION	96
CONCLUSION	103
REFERENCES.....	104
PANEL 2. <u>MAPPING THE PEOPLE: HUMAN MIGRATION, DIASPORA & SOCIAL NETWORK</u>	106
THE SPICE COSMOLOGY IN SAMBAL: REREADING CONSUMPTION CULTURE AND LOCAL REPRESENTATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ABSTRACT	107
INTRODUCTION.....	108
MATERIAL AND METHODS.....	110
RESULT AND DISCUSSION	112
CONCLUSION	117
REFERENCES.....	118
TRACING THE SPICE ROUTE TO A MULTICULTURAL LANDSCAPE:	Error! Bookmark not defined.
THE TRANSFORMATION OF BUGIS CULTURAL IDENTITY IN MALAYSIA..	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ABSTRACT	Error! Bookmark not defined.
INTRODUCTION.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
METHOD	Error! Bookmark not defined.
RESULTS	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CONCLUSION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
REFERENCES.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
MARITIME LINGUASCAPES: MERCANTILE PORTS AS CRUCIBLES OF LANGUAGE INNOVATION IN THE NUSANTARA SPICE NETWORK.....	135
ABSTRACT	135
INTRODUCTION.....	136
LITERATUR REVIEW	136

METHOD	138
RESULTS	139
DISCUSSION	143
CONCLUSION	146
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	146
REFERENCE.....	147
PANEL 3. INTERPRETING THE METAPHOR: CREATIVITY & CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS ALONG THE SPICE ROUTES.....	149
SPICES OF THE SOUL: ECO-ART COUNSELING AND CULTURAL HEALING IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS.....	150
ABSTRACT	150
INTRODUCTION.....	150
RESEARCH METHOD.....	152
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	154
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	161
REFERENCES.....	162
BEYOND SPICES: THE MARITIME TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPICE ROUTE THROUGH THE RICE TRADE.....	166
INTRODUCTION.....	166
METHODS	168
Discussion	172
CONCLUSION	173
Reference.....	174
WOMEN'S ROLE AND TOBACCO BASED ON THE ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE	177
Abstract.....	177
Introduction	177
METHOD	181
RESULT AND DISCUSSION	181
CONCLUSION	190
Acknowledgments	190
References	191
PANEL 4. DECOLONIZING HERITAGE: POWER, IDENTITY, AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF CULTURAL PRESERVATION	193
MAKASSAR CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN THE SPICE ROUTE NARRATIVE AND SYMBOLIC POWER	194
ABSTRACT	194
INTRODUCTION.....	194

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	195
RESEARCH RESULTS	198
CONCLUSION	204
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	205
BIBLIOGRAPHY	205
BOTANICAL SOVEREIGNTY: HISTORICISING SPICES, HERITAGE, AND INNOVATION IN INDONESIA'S BEAUTY INDUSTRY	208
ABSTRACT	208
INTRODUCTION.....	208
METHODOLOGY	209
CONCLUSION	219
REFERENCES.....	220
PANEL 5. MARITIME SOCIETIES & GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS: SEAFARERS, TRADE & MARINE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT	223
CHALLENGING THE NEW ERA OF TRANSITION: HISTORICAL TRACES AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF NYAI AGENG MALOKA'S LEADERSHIP IN LASEM DURING THE AGE OF COMMERCE	224
ABSTRACT	224
INTRODUCTION.....	224
RESULT AND DISCUSSION	227
CONCLUSION	236
REFERENCES.....	237
EARLY AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS WITH BENGKULU PEOPLE, IN SUMATRA, UNDER THE SPICE ROUTE'S NETWORK FROM THE LATE 18th TO THE MID-19th CENTURY.....	240
ABSTRACT	240
INTRODUCTION.....	241
AMERICAN SHIPPING TO SUMATRA.....	243
BENGKULU'S TRADE WITH THE AMERICANS	244
CONCLUDING REMARKS	248
REFERENCES.....	249
BAWEAN ISLAND: THE ROLE OF SMALL ISLANDS IN THE JAVA SEA'S SPICE ROUTE.....	250
ABSTRACT	250
INTRODUCTION.....	251
CONCLUSION	262
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	263
REFERENCES.....	263

THE INTEGRATION OF HISTORICAL SPICE ROUTE MARITIME HERITAGE WITHIN MODERN INTERNATIONAL LAW FOR BLUE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT	265
ABSTRACT	265
INTRODUCTION.....	265
METHOD	267
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	277
REFERENCES.....	277

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

H.E. Arif Havas Oegroseno

Vice Minister For Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia

•

Good morning, esteemed ladies and gentlemen, distinguished academics, historians, policy makers, and all participants gathered here today.

It is truly an honor to stand before you at this important international forum to reflect on one of the most significant civilizational networks in world history: the Spice Route.

The Spice Route was far more than a line of commerce. It was a living network of cultural interaction, knowledge exchange, and diplomacy that connected East and West for centuries.

Long before the term “globalization” entered our vocabulary, the world was already bound together across the seas. Spices such as nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon, most of them rooted in the fertile soil of the Indonesian archipelago, became coveted commodities that shaped the global economy, bringing nations, religions, and ideas into dialogue.

For too long, however, the story of the Spice Route was told primarily from a Eurocentric lens, as if history began with European “discoveries.” In truth, as the Dutch historian J. C. van Leur observed, Asian traders had already dominated these networks long before European ships arrived.

Esteemed ladies and gentlemen,

By the 1st century AD, maritime trade routes were thriving across the Indonesian archipelago. Merchants from the Nusantara, India, China, and the Arabian Peninsula were already skilled and independent actors. They did not wait for the West. Instead, they built a robust maritime civilization, with their own boat technology, navigational expertise, and cultural wisdom.

Indonesia’s strategic role was especially clear in Maluku, home of the world’s only nutmeg and clove trees. Horticulturalists said that both spices could only grow on the islands, specifically nutmeg in Central Maluku and cloves in North Maluku. As such, they were considered rare goods since at least the first century AD, and their rarity also made them quite expensive.

These rare spices were prized since antiquity. They traveled from Ternate, Tidore, and Banda across inter-island routes to great ports in Java and Sumatra, and onward through the Strait of Malacca to markets in India, China, and the Middle East.

While this once unique geographic limitation has now changed due to modern horticultural advancements, the historical significance of their origin remains.

Ancient records confirm this reach. European manuscripts recount that St. Sylvester, Bishop of Rome (314–335 AD), once received 150 pounds of cloves as a gift. In 547 AD, the merchant Cosmos Indicopleustis described spices from Asia, many of which had their origins in our archipelago, among his wares.

Thus, the Spice Route was not just a chain of islands; it was a hub of world civilization, where the waters of the Nusantara became the most dynamic thoroughfare of culture, science, and commerce of their time.

Esteemed ladies and gentlemen,

Indonesia's commitment to reclaiming and promoting this shared heritage is unwavering. As a nation, we recognize the critical importance of maritime science and sustainable ocean management for our future.

This is why Indonesia's recent appointment to the Executive Committee of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO is so significant. This strategic role empowers us to contribute more effectively to advancing marine science and fostering sustainable ocean practices for the benefit of all.

Furthermore, following the 19th recommendation of the International Spice Route Forum, Indonesia has officially proposed the Spice Route as a UNESCO World Heritage site. This is a powerful step towards ensuring that this remarkable network is globally recognized and protected for future generations to study and appreciate.

The Spice Route is no longer just a historical tale of trade; it is a blueprint for modern innovation. We are now translating the navigational wisdom and entrepreneurial spirit of our ancestors into concrete strategies for the future. This includes leveraging digital platforms to connect local communities with global markets, ensuring that our rich cultural products, from spices to contemporary art, can reach the world efficiently and sustainably.

By embracing this approach, we are transforming our maritime heritage from a static historical asset into a dynamic engine for economic growth. This fusion of tradition and technology creates new opportunities for our youth and strengthens our position as a leader in the global creative and digital economy.

Furthermore, this spirit of innovation extends to our approach to governance and research. We are transforming the historical Spice Route into a strategic platform for modern-day maritime research and policy-making. By fostering collaboration among our academic institutions, policy think tanks, and partners along the route, we are developing a new knowledge network to address future challenges, from climate change to supply chain resilience. This ensures that the wisdom of the past actively informs and guides our path to a more sustainable and secure future for all.

What then does the Spice Route mean for us today? While spices are now part of a global industry, the route's legacy endures. It has transformed into modern shipping lanes carrying oil, goods, and data cables. More importantly, it remains a symbol of connectivity and collaboration.

For Indonesia, the Spice Route is a reminder of our identity: a maritime nation with a proud history, and a continuing role as one of the world's leading producers of spices. It is also a call to reclaim that heritage, and to reassert our maritime leadership in economics, diplomacy, and culture.

The International Spice Route Forum offers us that platform. Through it, we can:

Create New Cooperation. Leveraging this shared history to develop opportunities in tourism, research, the arts, and education, inspiring innovation for today's world.

Deepen Understanding. Recognizing the Spice Route as shared heritage beyond borders, teaching mutual respect and peaceful interaction, values that remain vital for future generations.

Echo Its Legacy. Ensuring that the Spice Route is remembered as a cornerstone of early globalization, shaped not only by Europe, but by Asia and the Nusantara.

Our gathering here is proof that this narrative has found its voice once more, more inclusive, more honest, and more rooted in the communities that shaped it.

Let us seize this momentum to explore, preserve, and promote the Spice Route, not as a relic of the past, but as a foundation for a more connected, peaceful, and prosperous future.

Thank you.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Herry Jogaswara

*Research Organization for Archaeology, Language, and Literature,
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)*

-

I will start with a *pantun*.

Berlayar menembus buih dan ombak.

Haluan dituju, nun di ujung sana.

Jejak nenek moyang mari kita kuat.

Kisah emas hijau si jalur rempah.

Pala dan cengkeh harum semerebak di bawah gelombang dari angin samudra.

Mari kita telusuri yang terbentang jejak sejarah rempah indah pusaka.

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning, *selamat pagi*.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

First of all, allow me to express my sincere apology for being unable to attend this event in person and for only being able to participate virtually. An expected hearing with Commission 10 of the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) has prevented me from being here to interact directly with all of you. Interestingly, my hearing with the DPR is also regarding cultural heritage.

I am deeply grateful for the kind invitation from the organizing committee to deliver this keynote address. It is a great honor for the Archaeological, Language, and Literature Research Organization of BRIN to introduce our research activities, particularly those connected to the spice routes and their relevance to contemporary issues.

We also commend the IFSR, initiated by the Negeri Rempah Foundation since 2019, for establishing a collaborative platform highlighting the enduring significance of the spice routes. Since 2022, this foundation has partnered with the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) to broaden public engagement. I also wish to acknowledge colleagues such as Dr. Lilis Mulyani and Dr. Aulia Hadi, among others, who have consistently supported IFSR initiatives.

Preservation and Sustainability, as the committee has outlined, a key theme of this panel is the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, fostering a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural dimensions of the spice routes as a shared human heritage. This panel examines the ecological, cultural, and economic dimensions of spices through:

- **Phytogeography and Ethnobotany:** These reveal how spices are deeply embedded in local traditions, rituals, cuisine, and medicine.

- Genetic Linkages: The discussion addresses genetic connections among spice-producing regions, which is vital for conserving biodiversity at a time when climate change, food security, and resource sustainability are pressing global concerns.

This multidisciplinary platform discusses how spices have shaped civilization and how their preservation contributes to a sustainable bio-economy. We underscore the historical significance, ecological footprint, and future potential of spices in addressing contemporary challenges. We celebrate the cultural and biological world related to spices from Papua, the west coast of Sumatra, Aceh, Sunda, and beyond.

BRIN's Research Focus and the "*Rumah Program*" as a research organization dedicated to cultural and linguistic heritage, we have given special attention to spice route and maritime studies since 2022. In 2025, our research focus will continue with field sites in Sumatra, the northern coast of Java, western Kalimantan, and western Sulawesi.

Our activities are organized around three types of research schemes called the *Rumah Program*:

1. Cultural Program: Supporting both field and non-field research, including collection studies.
2. Data Program: Developing databases and language corpora.
3. Basic Research Program: Advancing deep exploration.

I would like to invite all participants interested in spice research to join us, as we recently announced the second phase of our research related to the *Rumah Program*, focusing on collections and studies. This is a good opportunity for us to work together.

Currently, we have 66 research projects being conducted across these programs. These include studies on:

- Interactions between the sea and hinterlands.
- Commodities like resin and historical trade routes.
- Changes in coastal ecosystems and power relations.
- Culinary heritage.

These projects challenge established theories, such as those that focus solely on coastlines while neglecting the crucial interaction with the hinterlands. We also recognize the need for systematic data, such as our project on ethnobotanical data of spices for healing and sexual formulation in Balinese society.

At BRIN, our approach is grounded in the principles of collaboration and competition. We call our mechanism a "call for research collaboration" rather than a call for proposals because collaboration is more important. Competition ensures quality, with all proposals externally reviewed.

Our schemes, such as the RIIM Expedition and RIIM Competition, enable spice-related research to flourish. Looking ahead, I suggest this forum consider establishing a Research

Collaboration Center for Spices, where universities, BRIN, and independent researchers can work together.

I sincerely hope this conference generates innovative ideas and strengthens our collective network. To conclude, I will share another *pantun*:

Kapal berlabuh, tali terikat.

Peti rempah terbuka, cerita pun terkalam.

Semoga silaturahmi tetap erat seperti rantai niaga di masa silam.

Ombak berbisik di tepian dermaga. Kisah perjalanan sudah kita hatur.

Rempah ajarkan kita bersatu jiwa untuk Indonesia yang jaya dan makmur."

Thank you very much. *Terima kasih. Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Yen Yen Sally Rahayu

*Research Center for Ecology and Ethnobiology
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)*

•

FROM SPICES TO GREENS: ETHNOBOTANICAL PATHWAY LINKING TRADITIONAL FOOD PLANTS AND WELL-BEING

Hello, I'm Yen Yen Sally Rahayu, a postdoctoral fellow at the Research Center of Ecology and Ethnobiology. Today, I will discuss how traditional food plants – ranging from spices to greens – contribute to diet and well-being, using examples from Indonesia to highlight their nutritional and cultural significance. Traditional food plants are rooted in local traditions and include wild, semi-wild, and cultivated species that provide fruits, tubers, leaves, and spices. Globally, there are approximately 27,000 edible plant species, yet our food system relies heavily on a few staples, often disregarding traditional alternatives like sorghum, millets, cassava, and yam.

These plants are often overlooked in mainstream agriculture and policies, despite containing higher levels of micronutrients than many common crops, which is vital for remote and resource-poor areas. Our research documented specific nutrient contributions:

- Protein: Found in *Moringa oleifera* leaves and *Piper retroractum* (Cabai Jawa). Notably, Moringa has higher protein than tempe or peanuts.
- Iron: Found in *Senta asa* and *Solanum torvum*.
- Fiber and Calcium: Found in *Sonchus arvensis*. Species like *Pohan* (*Pilea melastomoides*) have more calcium than spinach, and sweet potato leaves provide more fiber than cabbage and kale.
- Vitamin C: *Antidesma bunius* contains more vitamin C than an orange.
- Multiple Nutrients: *Crassocephalum crepidioides* (Sintrong) is a source of fiber, calcium, iron, and vitamin C.

Evidence from other countries, such as Tanzania and the Philippines, shows these plants can supply up to 45% of calcium intake, while in Vietnam, wild vegetables contribute nearly half of the total vegetable intake.

To understand the link between these plants and well-being, we studied three regions in Indonesia with distinct contexts: Aceh, West Java, and West Nusa Tenggara (WNT). We recorded 121 species in total. While each region has unique species reflecting local ecology, there is a considerable overlap in spices like chili, turmeric, ginger, and coconut, which form the culinary foundation of the islands.

Our survey of 335 households revealed distinct consumption patterns:

- West Java: Had the lowest consumption, likely due to urbanization and market reliance.
- West Nusa Tenggara: Had the highest consumption, as residents grow their own plants, supporting dietary diversity and self-provisioning.
- Aceh: Showed moderate consumption, attributed to forest proximity which supports foraging and sharing.

We used the Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQoL) framework to assess well-being, focusing on how people evaluate their own physical and mental health. This covers domains such as physical functioning, bodily pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, and mental health.

Our multivariate models, which controlled for factors like age, BMI, and livelihood, confirmed that traditional food plant consumption is linked to better perceived well-being, though the effects are context-dependent:

In West Java, consumption was associated with social functioning, possibly shaped by food culture. In West Nusa Tenggara, it was linked to both general and mental health, providing a sense of self-reliance despite lower expenditures.

- In Aceh, it was linked to general health, though the results were more complex due to the influence of age and nutritional status.

In conclusion, traditional food plants are essential not only for food and nutrition security but also for cultural identity and holistic health. Policies and programs aiming to improve nutrition should recognize the value of these plants and tailor support to local socioecological conditions.

Thank you very much.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Matthew Santamaria

Asian Center, University of Philippines Diliman

-

POWER HERITAGE AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF CULTURE: SIX CASES OF PHILIPPINE CULTURAL HERITAGE ICONS

Greetings to one and all; allow me now to share with you my lecture, titled "Power Heritage and the Deployment of Culture". In this lecture, I put forward the idea that power is always present in the recognition, naming, and transformation of cultural properties that make up a nation's cultural heritage. For each process, we see a space of contestation, negotiation, and mediation where, apart from the state (such as the Philippine or Indonesian state), social forces like elite classes, religious organizations, and social movements all behave and try to influence decision-making.

I borrow from Migdal's state-society relationship, which suggests that to transform society, the state must be the most powerful force and should not be below other forces like elite classes or religious organizations. The state must be able to penetrate society, extract resources (such as military conscription and taxes), regulate social relations, and create the environment it deems proper for itself. Contestation can occur in areas such as policy implementation, allocation of resources, creation of legitimacy, resistance, and the creation of informal rules and norms.

The first case is the Golden Tara, the most impressive golden statue ever unearthed in the Philippines. Unfortunately, this statue is not in the Philippines; only academics who have gone to Chicago have seen it. This case illustrates the push and pull between the colonial US government and the colony, as the Philippines lacked the resources at the time to keep this piece of heritage.

The next case involves three dances: the Pansac of the Yakan people, the Eagle of the Samova people, and the Pangalay of the Tausug. The issue here is that the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) encyclopedia presents these three as one and the same, despite differences in movement, costumes, music, and the assertions of native masters. The state favors the opinion of a Manila-based scholar over a more open discourse, leading to disagreement from people at the grassroots level.

The third case is an architectural wonder called the Manila Jai Alai building, built in the "streamline modern" style. It was demolished in 2005 by the decision of then-mayor Lito Atienza, despite opposition from cultural workers. This sad event eventually led the Philippines to pass a cultural heritage law to protect other architectural wonders and sites considered part of the national patrimony.

The fourth example is the Rizal Monument and the Torre de Manila, a tall condominium constructed in a way that ruined the view of the national hero's monument. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the construction company because of property rights and a lack of laws to protect the "view or vista" as heritage. This highlights a vacuum in the law and an example of state weakness.

The fifth example is the Philippine Eagle, a living organism considered cultural heritage. Originally called the "monkey-eating eagle," its name was changed by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1977 following a lobby by Peace Corps volunteer Robert Kennedy. In 1995, it was named the national bird, yet the Philippines has been unable to use it effectively in cultural diplomacy or tourism, unlike China's use of the giant panda.

The final case is the Philippine Adobo, which the Department of Trade and Industry tried to standardize in 2021. This was opposed by the public and netizens who argued that Adobo is about diversity, with different regions and families taking pride in their unique recipes. Standardizing it was seen as a misreading by the state, failing to recognize heritage as diverse rather than hegemonic.

The success or failure of a state in protecting heritage depends on several factors: the nature of the cultural property, the power configuration (who is interested or in conflict), the range of actors, and the scope and effect of the decision. Other factors include effective depth (how it affects national memory) and the valuation effect (how valuable the property is to the people). These factors make or break cultural heritage in any state or society. I hope you learned from these six iconic cases in the Philippines, and with that, I end my presentation.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Ismunandar

The Indonesian Academy of Science

Senior Advisor for Minister of Culture of the Republic of Indonesia

-

INDONESIA'S LIVING MARITIME HERITAGE. POWER, IDENTITY, AND THE GEOPOLITICS OF CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Good afternoon everyone. Today we are going on a journey with a topic of power, identity, and geopolitics of cultural preservation. I'm going to present to you the Indonesian living maritime heritage, a paper prepared by myself and KJO from Gulura, an NGO specializing in intangible cultural heritage in Indonesia. This is a journey into the heart of Indonesia's greatest treasures: its living maritime heritage.

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic nation, and our identity is defined not by lines on a map, but by the waters that connect our over 17,000 islands. Indonesian culture is a maritime culture, powerfully expressed in our intangible cultural heritage (ICH)—our living traditions, rituals, knowledge, and skills. As of December 2024, Indonesia has over 2,200 recognized elements of cultural heritage, with a potential of about 11,000 waiting to be verified and documented. This heritage is the soul of our nation, rooted in both international agreements and national commitment to safeguard this identity for future generations.

Our ministry has developed a structured ICH database to visualize connections between these elements. This follows the philosophy that in the modern world, power comes from information; if culture is not documented, it does not exist in the global conversation. For a long time, the immense cultural knowledge of our coastal communities was not systematically recorded, which was a form of powerlessness. By digitizing over 1,700 traditions as of 2022, we are asserting that our knowledge is valuable and valid. This is a powerful act of self-determination, ensuring our heritage is integrated into policy and accessible to the world.

The visualization tool allows us to map elements across five domains of ICH, identifying their ecosystems—whether coastal, landlocked, countryside, or urban—as well as the tools, materials, and the specific provinces or cities they belong to.

To focus on marine practices, we filtered the database using keywords such as *laut* (sea), *kelautan* (marine), *kepulauan* (archipelagic), and *pantai* (beach). We applied five thematic filters: individual life cycles, communal life cycles, local wisdom/harmony with nature, food security, and education/mitigation. This resulted in 20 powerful examples ranging from the west to the east of Indonesia, representing sophisticated systems of knowledge. These traditions declare that our maritime identity is diverse, rich, and sophisticated.

Case Studies of Tradition and Governance

1. *Bati* in Maluku: A practice where women and children gather shellfish at low tide. It is a sustainable practice that strengthens community bonds and transmits ecological knowledge. This demonstrates the power of a community to feed itself using ancient methods that modern science is only beginning to appreciate.
2. *Lefanu* in Lambata: Found in the Lamalera community, this whale hunting ritual is often misunderstood. It is not merely hunting, but a profound spiritual ritual governed by clan deliberation that balances subsistence with deep reverence for ancestors and nature. It emphasizes the fair sharing of resources and the power to define one's relation with the natural world according to internal values rather than external judgment.
3. *Sasi* in Maluku and Papua: This is a customary system that temporarily closes marine resources to allow them to regenerate. It aligns perfectly with modern sustainability principles. This is where local power meets global geopolitics; Indonesia does not just talk about sustainability, we have lived it for centuries. Our indigenous systems are foundational solutions for the world's needs.
4. *Machalas* in Luwu: This includes a three-month non-fishing period. Similar traditions like *Tulude* involve casting misfortunes out to sea. These are not mere superstitions; they are encoded environmental conservation and traditional governance that synchronize human activity with natural cycles.

Other examples include ritual foods like *Linga Nasi*, oral traditions like the poetic *Sherat Kapal*, and coastal storytelling dances like *Tibenten* or the ancestral sea journey *Malabo*.

This heritage is not a museum exhibit; it is a vital asset for the new Blue Economy. This means:

- Sustainable coastal development driven by culture.
- Community-based tourism where visitors learn from traditions like *Sasi*.
- Creative industries using these stories in film and music.
- Blue economy initiatives that empower communities by valuing their knowledge.

The opportunities for innovation and partnerships are immense. We can integrate local wisdom with global climate science, school curriculums, and university research. By using digital platforms, we can amplify these voices and collaborate with youth and technologists to tell these stories in exciting ways. This shifts the narrative: Indonesia is no longer just a subject of global preservation efforts, but a leader and partner offering time-tested solutions.

I believe we can partner with the local wisdom with global climate change, climate science or I mean we can also integrate into school curriculums and university research. We can use the digital platform like database that be built to amplify the voices of this community to the world and we can collaborate with youth artists and technologist to tell the story in new and excite exciting ways. This is how we shift from the geological narrative from being a subject of global preservation effort to being a leader and partners offering timetested solution. Now in conclusion, I believe Indonesian maritime heritage is more than just a culture. It is statement of identity. We are people of the sea. It is source of power the power of knowledge community and self-determination. And it is also crucial players in the geopolitics of sustainability and other operation. Our Living tradition are not a lot of us.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dave Lumenta

Department of Anthropology, Universitas Indonesia

•

DECOLONIZING CULTURE FROM THE NATION STATE? - WHAT ARTISTS CAN TEACH US

There seems to be a disconnect in how nation-states define culture, especially in the realm of 'cultural diplomacy', and how culture is shaped, experienced and practiced by 'normal' people - and by that I mean artists.

The initiative set by the International Forum on the Spice Route provides us an opportunity to rethink our cultural connections and how it worked in the past. How is culture produced and shaped in the vernacular sense? The immense cultural contacts throughout Asia was facilitated by the longstanding trading networks and interlocking trading circuits that spanned from the western pacific to east Africa, from the lesser sunda islands to the steppes of central Asia, from the so-called Far East to the Eastern Mediterranean. These cultural contacts were always initiated through the encounters of people, whether they are individuals (for example: traders, brahmins/monks/mamluks, hadrami sojourners, slaves, soldiers), between diasporic and host communities, through intermarriage, forced labour, conquests and many other means. They were not contacts, as we like to imagine today, between official cultural ambassadors or governments. They were not programmatic, but rather shaped by random encounters, pragmatic opportunities, historical contingencies, and shifting geographical interconnectivities. They were constrained by various existing transportation and communication technologies that shaped and facilitated the myriads of ways by which people moved around and interacted.

Colonialism and the emergence of nation states has reconfigured the way we think about interconnections and space. Colonialism has divorced many regions in Asia from its longstanding geographical links. The way the West categorizes the world through continental partitions (i.e. Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania, the Americas) has alienated many Asians and Africans from its own rich cosmopolitan histories. For example, many Asians are unaware of the rich historical interconnections across the Indian Ocean that linked Asia and Africa in the past.

Nationalism that emerged throughout the colonial world in Asia and Africa during struggles of independence, soon degraded from being progressive liberating decolonization ideologies to becoming merely parochial silos of 'national' identities. The nation-state, arguably one of the most unnatural of all human inventions, has become naturalized as the normative way of how humans should be organized socially. Ironically, one could argue that post-colonial Asian and African states have inherited and reproduced the very core of colonial spatial logic, namely the organization of the world into closed territorial domains. As a consequence, culture is seen as nationally-bounded, internally autonomous, a property (or even a commodity) of the national geobody. It is seen as a fixed and exclusive heritage that should

not be shared with other nations. This notion is disseminated very often through national education and popular culture.

Consequently, many Indonesians are not aware of the cosmopolitan origins of their own cultures. How many of us are aware of the influence of Persia on Malay music & language ? - or, the influence of Chinese Ming -era measurement systems (gantang, kati, pikul) on markets throughout Asia? - or the role of the South Indian trading diaspora along the northwestern Sumatra coast in introducing Sanskrit language in the region before the 6th century? - or conversely, the domesticated use of Javanese gamelan in other musical forms in Southeast Asia (e.g. the Kolintang in Southern Philippines)?

From a cultural perspective, the notion of boundaries remain problematic. Cultures never developed within nation-states - but emerged as the consequence of translocal contact, adaptation, domestication and diffusion across multiscale spaces, transcending the national chronotope ('time-space'). Culture, which emerged and spread without the existing notion of borders is now viewed and treated as national 'properties' to be jealously guarded against neighbouring 'others'. I would argue that this would be another frontier to decolonize: decoupling culture from national identity politics.

Travel has increasingly been viewed from the optics of crossing national boundaries. These optics also shape how nation-states view their roles in the cultural realm. Indonesian artists - or even migrant workers travelling abroad are often expected to act as 'cultural branding ambassadors' (duta budaya) to represent the national image. This reveals the problematic when nation-states formulate Cultural Diplomacy - where something as human as cultural contact is subservient to 'national interests' based on politics of difference.

What goes unnoticed is that many Indonesian artists have forged their own transnational networks outside the cultural frame of the state. When Ruang Rupa, an art collective based in Jakarta, was selected to curate the 2002 Europalia art exhibition in Kassel (Germany), it did so by seeing itself as a vernacular representative of the Global South, and not as 'Indonesian cultural ambassadors.'

Indonesian musicians for the past 20 years have found audiences in various Asian, European and North American music scenes (e.g. White Shoes and the Couples Company, Burgerkill, Voice of Baceprot, Gabber Modus Operandi, to name a few) independently without needing state endorsement. The Indonesian musician Kasimyn (GMO, Hulubalang) has travelled and collaborated with African musicians in Africa (Uganda), collaborating with Ugandan & Kenyan musicians to explore cultural possibilities under a pan Asian-African identity. He often releases his recorded collaborations through local recording distributors outside Indonesia.

Hanif Hamraz, an Afghan refugee musician and tabla player in Jakarta, has been collaborating with Balinese sitar player Made Sentana, and various Sundanese kendang musicians. These are organic collaborations, available on YouTube, without institutional support or official 'cultural' framings. As a refugee, Hanif is not legally allowed to work in Indonesia, but is allowed to work at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Center. His skills and musical knowledge from Afghanistan are compatible with the musical needs of the Center, as Afghanistan and Northern India share a similar musical heritage. His effortless collaboration

in and outside the Indian Cultural Center demonstrate that culture is formed and based through social relations. Hanif never sees himself as an Afghani 'cultural ambassador'.

These examples demonstrate how generic cultural contacts in the contemporary world are forged - not dissimilar from how culture has always been shaped through the finding of similarities, the forging of personal and communal social relations, to create understanding and build solidarity. Contemporary cultural collaboration is often oriented towards finding common human possibilities and alternative social imaginations to address contemporary human conditions.

Many Indonesian (& Asian) artists tend to see themselves as part of a broader cosmopolitan identity. The national identity is now rather seen as a rather outdated straightjacket that would have less relevance in a world that is increasingly beset by multiple crises and a bleak future caused by national inactions on tackling the climate crisis. Artists teach us that global solidarity should be our common goal instead of national identity politics. For us, in Indonesia, the state perhaps needs to rethink how it views culture & the arts. It can learn from how 'normal' people 'do culture' in contexts that really matter.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Mita Purbasari Wahidiat

School of Design, Binus University

•

THE KEBAYA PERANAKAN AS A VISUAL CULTURAL ARCHIVE OF THE SPICE ROUTE

Today, I would like to share one aspect of visual culture that relates to the Spice Route. I chose this topic because the Spice Route is often seen only in terms of trade and economy. However, through the kebaya, we can see it as a story of culture, identity, and aesthetics – something that has shaped who we are today.

For centuries, the Spice Route connected the Indonesian archipelago with the world. From busy coastal ports, ships from Europe, Arabia, India, and China arrived, carrying not only valuable goods, but also stories, traditions, and new aesthetics. Out of these encounters, Batavia was born – a cosmopolitan city where cultures met and transformed.

From here, a seemingly simple garment evolved into a symbol of identity: the Kebaya Peranakan. It was never just clothing, but a living archive of the Spice Route—an archive that brought together the global and the local, giving birth to the distinctive Betawi identity, with the Kebaya Peranakan as one of its most vivid expressions.

Through the kebaya, we can see that the Spice Route was never only a trade route, but also a route of civilization—one that still lives on today. Spices such as nutmeg, cloves, pepper, and cinnamon drew Europeans to the archipelago from the fifteenth century onward. They were valued not only as flavorings, but also as medicine, preservatives, and status symbols.

Yet it was not only spices that mattered. Sugar and salt also became major exports. By the eighteenth century, Javanese sugar reached Malabar, Japan, and Europe. Production soared in the nineteenth century, making Java the world's largest sugar exporter after Cuba. Salt production was equally significant, with hundreds of tons supplied annually from the coasts of Java.

These commodities lured Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English ships eastward. However, the Spice Route was more than trade. Southeast Asian ports were cosmopolitan crossroads where Chinese, Arabs, Indians, and Europeans exchanged goods, ideas, and aesthetics. The archipelago thus became a stage for cultural encounters, giving rise to traditions that endure to this day.

One way to explore this is through the Kebaya Peranakan, a garment born out of intercultural encounters. By tracing the history of the Kebaya Peranakan, we gain deeper insight into Batavia's pivotal position within global trade networks. We also begin to see how such encounters shaped distinctive forms of visual expression, and how this seemingly modest garment became a marker of acculturation, creolization, and ultimately the identity now known as Betawi.

Batavia was founded by the VOC in 1619 on the ruins of Jakarta. From the outset, it was designed to serve as a hub of the global spice trade. Its port teemed with Chinese, Arabs, Indians, Portuguese, Dutch, and countless peoples from across the archipelago. Out of this diversity, the Betawi community was born. Their identity was forged through mixture, intermarriage, and daily interaction, evolving into a distinctive creole culture.

For this reason, Batavia can rightly be called a cosmopolitan space—a place where traditions converged, clashed, and gave rise to new cultural forms.

In coastal societies, clothing often becomes the most visible medium of cultural heritage. Raffles and Crawfurd noted how women across the islands wore kemben, kattan, or baju kurung. These early forms later evolved into the kebaya.

Historian Denys Lombard points out that the kebaya had already existed in Java and the wider archipelago since the fifteenth century. Etymologically, the word kebaya is thought to derive from the Arabic qaba or kaba, meaning a long robe with a front opening. The Portuguese later introduced the term kebaya more widely in the region.

The long-sleeved kebaya, with its vertical front opening, also bore resemblance to the beizi, a unisex garment commonly worn by lower-class communities during the Ming dynasty in fourteenth- to seventeenth-century China.

In Batavia, the Kebaya Peranakan—also known as Kebaya Enom—was born. This garment blended the Dutch noni kebaya with Chinese decorative elements, such as embroidered peonies, phoenixes, and vivid colors that contrasted sharply with the plain white European-style kebaya.

The Kebaya Peranakan became a kind of visual archive, preserving within its threads the memory of the Spice Route and the cultural encounters embodied on the bodies of Betawi women. By comparison, the noni kebaya worn by Dutch women was typically white and adorned with imported lace, while the Kebaya Peranakan was far more expressive, colorful, and richly decorated with Chinese flora and fauna motifs.

The tailoring also differed. The Dutch kebaya was cut straight, while the Kebaya Peranakan narrowed at the lower hem in a style known as *sundae*. This transformation reflected the blending of cultures that produced an entirely new style—neither wholly European nor entirely local, but a distinct Betawi identity born of Batavia's long process of interaction.

The Kebaya Peranakan was more than everyday attire. It carried symbolic weight in weddings, customary celebrations, and cultural performances. It signified the presence of the Betawi

community within a multi-ethnic colonial society. Through this garment, Betawi women expressed both elegance and collective identity.

Clothing thus became a visual language—a way to negotiate social position within a world structured by hierarchies of race, class, and power. In this sense, the kebaya was not merely fashion, but also a cultural strategy for confronting colonial domination.

All of this reveals that the Spice Route was more than a path of commodities. It was a route of civilizations. Along this route, new cultural forms were born and continue to live on. The Kebaya Peranakan stands as one of its enduring legacies. European cuts and lace intertwined with Chinese embroidery, combined further with local batik textiles. Every detail of the kebaya bears the imprint of global crossings, while affirming the Betawi identity as a unique community within the cosmopolitan fabric of Batavia.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Daud Aris Tanudirjo

Universitas Gadjah Mada

-

ANCIENT MIGRATIONS AND CULTURAL INTERACTION IN ISLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Honorable participants, good morning.

Before I start my presentation, allow me to thank the Negeri Rempah Foundation for inviting me to share my knowledge about migration and cultural interaction in the Southeast Asian archipelago in the past. I am honored to have the opportunity to present the historical background of the Spice Route at this forum. I believe that the dynamics of migration and cultural interaction in this archipelagic environment have made spices a catalyst for global trade and inspired the emergence of modern economic systems. Therefore, it is worth understanding the historical setting behind this route.

Located between two continents and two oceans, Island Southeast Asia has long been an arena for human migration and cultural interaction. History shows that this region has been a meeting point for diverse peoples and cultures since the arrival of early modern humans more than 80,000 years ago. Migrants from mainland Asia entered the region and continued their journey toward Australia and New Guinea, either via Sundaland to the west or from the north through chains of islands in the Wallacean zone.

Over time, migration processes continued largely unabated, and interactions between cultures occurred dynamically. The meeting of diverse cultures, along with efforts to adapt to this exceptional environment, resulted in a cultural landscape that is extraordinarily diverse while still sharing fundamental similarities. This is what makes the region *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, unity in diversity. The Spice Route was one result of these complex migration processes in the archipelago, later developing into a means of establishing networks of cultural interaction and adaptation to the natural environment.

Differences in natural environments where humans lived meant that not all needs could be met locally. These needs led to the transport of materials from one place to another and triggered the exchange of certain commodities. Archaeologically, evidence of material transport and exchange began to appear at the end of the Pleistocene, at least since around 40,000 years ago.

This is evidenced by similarities in material use as well as tool forms found across different islands. Patterns of cultural interaction in this region demonstrate increasing inter-community connections after 10,000 years ago. Closer ties occurred particularly in the eastern region, in contrast to the western region. This is likely due to the greater flexibility of maritime networks compared to land routes.

The spread of bananas, which were initially domesticated in Papua and later distributed to India and Africa, proves the existence of extensive networks of connected communities since around 5,000 years ago. This is evidenced by traces of banana phytoliths discovered at ancient sites in Kijiji, Pakistan, dated to around 4,000 BP, and at the Nkang site in Cameroon, dated to approximately 2,500 BP.

The period between 5,000 and 3,500 years ago witnessed the beginning of major migration waves of Austronesian speakers from Taiwan and southern China, especially into the eastern part of Island Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Other waves of migration came from mainland Southeast Asia via the Malay Peninsula and across the South China Sea to western Indonesia.

Austronesian speakers apparently established extensive networks due to their complex migration patterns. Once they colonized an island, they maintained ties with their homelands while continuing to explore new areas. This was possible because they adapted to the archipelagic environment by developing sophisticated maritime technologies, which facilitated both return migration and exploration of new territories.

The migration patterns of early Austronesian speakers created a form of early globalization. These patterns generated networks for the exchange of goods, people, and culture. Austronesian culture became dominant, including its language, which spread widely across the Indo-Pacific region and even replaced Austroasiatic languages in western Indonesia.

During this stage, there are strong indications that Austronesian speakers established rapid networks connecting Taiwan, Island Southeast Asia, and Eastern Polynesia to the east, as well as South Asia and Eastern Africa to the west. Eastern Austronesian pottery was introduced and later manufactured in Melanesia and Polynesia, while obsidian from the Bismarck Islands in Melanesia was widely transferred through Austronesian networks to Sabah in the west and Samoa in the east. This proves that long-distance exchange between these places occurred at least around 3,500 BP.

It is believed that through this same Austronesian network, exotic commodities from eastern Indonesia and Papua were introduced to the north and west. Among these commodities were obsidian, spices, sandalwood, bird feathers, and domesticated plants such as banana, taro, lemon, mango, candlenut, and areca.

Our research on Pulau Ay, Banda Islands, successfully uncovered traces of nutmeg processing using Austronesian red-slip pottery. Pottery with nutmeg residue was excavated from layers dating to more than 3,000 years ago. Obsidian artifacts were also found at the same site.

Meanwhile, cloves had already reached the Indian subcontinent before 2,000 BP and the Mediterranean at least by the first century AD, as mentioned by Pliny. Recent archaeological research in Pakistan and India has added further evidence of this long-distance exchange through the discovery of cultural materials and plant remains that may have been brought by Austronesian sailors, such as those found at Sanghol and Kijiji in Pakistan, as well as Pattanam in India.

This archaeological evidence shows that cultural interaction occurred from Papua through Island Southeast Asia to the Indian subcontinent, although not necessarily through direct routes. Over time, long-distance exchange gradually declined and transformed into regional exchange, a process that commonly occurs after the peak of a global interaction phase has passed. At least three interrelated regional networks were formed in Island Southeast Asia during this stage.

The western Austronesian network appears to have been more closely connected to the growing social and economic networks linking India and China via the South China Sea, while the central Austronesian network was more closely connected to eastern networks encompassing Melanesia and Polynesia.

In the northwestern part of Island Southeast Asia, a network of cultural interaction developed encompassing Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, southern Thailand, and northern Kalimantan. This network is known as the Sa Huỳnh–Kalanay interaction sphere and is characterized by similar cultural materials, particularly jade ornaments such as lingling-o and pottery with distinctive motifs.

Around this time, innovations in metal technology emerged in Dong Son, northern Vietnam. These technologies soon spread widely throughout Island Southeast Asia and even as far as Melanesia. Metal artifacts were considered prestigious goods and markers of high social status. The distribution of Dong Son artifacts in Island Southeast Asia suggests at least two major routes of dissemination. The first followed a northern route from Vietnam to northern Indonesia across the South China Sea. The second followed a southern route along the eastern coast of mainland Asia and Sumatra, through Java, and onward to Lake Sentani in Papua and possibly even into Melanesia.

Slightly prior to the emergence of metal technology, megalithic cultures characterized by the erection of stone monuments had already developed and spread widely throughout Island Southeast Asia. The construction of megalithic structures was also a manifestation of social status. The adoption of megalithic monuments and Dong Son bronze artifacts as symbols of personal success indicates that significant social changes had taken place. It appears that predominantly matrilineal systems in Austronesian societies gradually shifted toward patrilineal ones. Such social transformations were likely driven by cultural interaction as well as adaptation to new social environments.

Although the movement of goods from west to east and vice versa continued culturally, differences emerged between the western and eastern parts of the archipelago. These differences can be demonstrated through genetic evidence, material culture, and linguistic patterns. Genetic markers of populations in the western archipelago are closer to those of mainland Southeast Asia, while populations in the eastern archipelago are more closely related to those of southern China and Taiwan.

Similarly, pottery decorated with stamped and cord-marked techniques is widely used in the western region, whereas red-slip pottery characterizes the eastern region. Linguistic patterns show a similar division, with Western Malayo-Polynesian languages dominant in the west and Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian and Papuan languages in the east. Furthermore, several

bronze artifacts with facial decorations and specific megalithic forms have been found only in the eastern part of Island Southeast Asia and not in the west.

In contrast, evidence of cultural influence from India, which began entering the region several centuries before Christ, appears predominantly in the western islands, with a boundary line passing through the western Philippines, western Sulawesi, and Sumbawa.

The division between eastern and western Austronesian networks is also confirmed by Chinese historical records, which recognized the western network as Kunlun and the eastern one as Chuanlu. Chinese sources indicate that they were more involved with Kunlun, whose sailors frequently visited China. In contrast, Chuanlu was described as lying east of Bali and inhabited by populations portrayed as uncivilized, with dark skin and curly hair. As a result, Chinese sailors were reportedly reluctant to sail to these areas.

This division of cultural networks into western and eastern spheres had a significant impact on long-distance trade. Certain commodities, including spices from the east, could only be obtained through intermediaries who distributed them to the west. In fact, the eastern region was often deliberately obscured through the creation of negative imagery, as recorded in Chinese historical sources.

Later, when Europeans arrived in the Southeast Asian archipelago, they were able to access eastern networks only with the guidance of Nusantara sailors.

I hope that this brief and simple presentation has provided some insight into the history of past human migration and cultural interaction that gave rise to the Spice Route. It is clear that in the past, the Spice Route was not merely a means of fulfilling basic needs, but also a vehicle for cultural encounters—allowing people to learn from and understand one another, while enriching the cultures of all societies involved.

It is hoped that the spirit brought by the Spice Route can now be reborn to foster better global relations.

Thank you.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Peter Lape

Department of Anthropology, University of Washington



SPICE TRADE IN MALUKU. ORIGIN AND IMPACTS

Hello everyone, including my friends, colleagues, and other participants in the International Forum on Spice Route (IFSR) 2025. My name is Peter Lape from the University of Washington Department of Anthropology, and it is an honor to share my research regarding the spice trade in Maluku, specifically its origins and impacts. While we have significant information about later periods of the spice trade, its earliest origins remain mysterious, as we do not know exactly when, how, or why it began.

Understanding these historical network connections is vital because the networks that linked spice traders hundreds of years ago are still working to connect people today. Furthermore, the spice trade had an outsized ecological and social impact, leaving a legacy that presents challenges for current and future generations. While global maps of spice routes over the last 1,500 years provide broad details, there is often a lack of information regarding the specific activities within island Southeast Asia where these spices originated.

The focus of this research is the province of Maluku, home to three globally significant spices: cloves from North Maluku, and nutmeg and mace (derived from the same plant) from Central Maluku, particularly the Banda Islands. Although written documents about the spice trade date back roughly 2,000 years, the trade's origins predate these records, meaning evidence must be sought through archaeology.

Evidence has been uncovered from the earliest excavated sites in the Banda Islands, specifically on Pulo Ai. These include the PA11 rock shelter site, with dates reaching back 7,000 years, and the PA1 Neolithic site, dating to about 3,500 years ago. Researchers use archaeobotanical analysis, such as searching through sediments for microscopic and macroscopic plant remains, to find early evidence of nutmeg.

Interestingly, while nutmeg was not found directly in the sediments, nutmeg residues were discovered on earthenware pottery from the Neolithic site. This residue was present on the very earliest pottery found at the site, dating to 3,500 years ago. Because it appears on the first available pottery, it is likely that nutmeg was present in these sites even before the introduction of pottery, suggesting the trade began at least 3,500 years ago, if not earlier.

The research also examines early trade networks connecting Central and Southeast Maluku, from Seram to the Aru and Tanimbar Islands, with Banda situated in the middle. Information on these social networks comes from various lines of evidence, including contemporary trade links (such as 1985 boat trip frequencies) and linguistics.

Linguistic studies show that Old Bandanese (the original language of Banda) is most closely related to the languages of East Seram and Gorong, forming the Southeast Seram littoral language group. This indicates a deep, ancient connection between these regions. Additionally, historical networks like the Pela Gandong village alliances provide insight into long-standing regional connections.

Archaeologically, the study focuses on the geochemistry of earthenware pottery. By analyzing the clay and temper used in pottery, which are usually sourced near the production site, researchers can create a "fingerprint" to link artifacts to specific locations. Central Maluku's geological variability helps distinguish between different sources. Data collected over a decade shows intense connections between sites in Southeast Seram and the Banda Islands, particularly during the Neolithic period and later periods (around 1,000–500 years ago).

Early Dutch records from 1599 and 1602 describe Banda as a place already deeply engaged in global trade, characterized by internal conflict, indigenous fortifications, and various ethnic enclaves of foreigners from across Asia and the Middle East. This shows the spice trade had significant impacts even before European intervention.

In 1621, a Dutch military invasion led to a massacre of Bandanese leaders and the displacement (enslavement or exile) of 90% of the original population. Many survivors fled to other parts of Maluku, such as the village of Ramadan in Southeast Seram, where they maintain their Bandanese heritage and connections to their ancestral home today.

The trade also carried environmental costs. The construction of massive fortifications by both indigenous people and Europeans required coral blocks taken from nearby reefs. This likely impacted coral ecology, fish populations, and coastal erosion. Current paleoenvironmental research involves sampling corals to measure changes in sea chemistry and temperature to evaluate these historical costs.

The spice trade was eventually driven by global capitalism, such as the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which often prioritized profits over social or environmental impacts. Today, Banda remains a center for nutmeg production, fishing, and tourism. There is an ongoing effort to balance tourism—which focuses on colonial spice trade remnants—with economic stability and the preservation of cultural heritage. A key question remains: can our knowledge of historical spice routes and social connections help sustain these communities in the future, and who gets to decide the master plans for these locations?.

So I wonder, can what we know about spice roots and social connections from the spice trade help sustain these communities into the future? So really it's a question of who gets to decide what kinds of master plans or what kinds of tourist controls take place in places like Banda. So, I think I'll wrap things up with that. I'm sorry I can't be with you to answer any questions you might have, but I invite you to email me at any time. My email address is shown here on

the screen. You can also go to my website to download any of my publications. And I'd like to end just by thanking the organizers for the international forum on spice root for the kind invitation to present today. My colleagues at BRIN and many other partners who have worked with me over the years our funders and our many community participants who welcomed us to conduct fieldwork in their communities over the past years as well as the field crews who join me.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Muammar Bakry

Universitas Islam Makassar

•

*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,
Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,
Salam sejahtera bagi kita semua,*

Honorable Yayasan Negeri Rempah, IFSR 2025 Organizing Committee, Government Institutions and Agencies, Resource Persons, Researchers, Academics, Policy Makers, Representatives of Institutions, Cooperation Partners, Forum Participants from Various Countries, and all happy attendees.

All praise and gratitude we offer to Allah SWT, because with his permission we are able to gather virtually in this remarkable forum, the 6th International Forum on Spice Routes (IFSR 2025). This forum provides an important space to connect our historical heritage with today's global challenges, through the theme: *"Spice Routes as Pathways of Sustainable Futures: Bridging Heritage and Innovation."*

Ladies and gentlemen/honorable guests;

As we all understand, the Spice Routes are not only the space trade route, but also pathways of civilization that shaped cultural exchange, knowledge, as well as the social and political order of the world. This forum is highly relevant because it connects the values of history and culture with contemporary issues such as sustainability, innovation, geopolitics, and socio-cultural dynamics.

Behalf of Universitas Islam Makassar (UIM), we are deeply honored to serve as the host of this international forum on this third day. UIM's involvement in IFSR 2025 is our real contribution in strengthening global academic networks, expanding the space for cross-disciplinary dialogue, and demonstrating our commitment to preserving and developing maritime and cultural heritage in the Southeast Asian region. This commitment is in line with UIM's vision to become excellent, competitive, and contributing Islamic university to global civilization while remaining rooted in Islamic and Indonesian values. The vision is carried out through the mission of Kemilau Bintang 9 that include: religious, intellectual, professional, innovative, independent, competitive, civilized based on local, global, and collaborative

wisdom. All of these pillars reflect UIM's determination to build excellent human resources, have noble character, be able to respond the challenges of the times, uphold local identity, and contribute positively at both the national and international levels.”

Ladies and gentlemen/honorable guests;

The theme of the third day of the forum presented two important panels that are very relevant to the vision and mission of UIM:

First, Panel 4: *“Decolonizing Heritage: Power, Identity, and the Geopolitics of Cultural Preservation.”*

This theme is in line with UIM’s commitment to raising awareness of cultural heritage. As a university rooted in Islamic and Indonesian values, UIM views education not merely as a process of transferring knowledge, but also as an effort to explore, preserve, and sustain local identity amidst global currents. Through research, education, and community engagement, the lecturers and students are encouraged to actively study and safeguard cultural heritage, since culture is not only a legacy of the past but also an essential foundation for building civilization. This principle is reflected in one of the pillars of *Kemilau Bintang 9*, namely *Madani* as a reference for civilization grounded in local wisdom, which places local values as a source of strength for the nation at the international level

Second, Panel 5: *“Maritime Societies & Global Encounters: Seafarers, Trade & Marine Resources Management.”*

This topic is also has closely relevant to Universitas Islam Makassar (UIM), which is located in the city of Makassar—a maritime area that historically known as a center of trade and navigation in the eastern part of the archipelago. The geographical position of South Sulawesi, especially Makassar, makes its people have a very strong relationship with maritime traditions. One of the global maritime symbols of South Sulawesi is Kapal Phinisi. This traditional ship not only sailed across the waters of Sulawesi and Indonesia, but in historical records it has sailed to various parts of the world, carrying spices and other commodities. Phinisi is not only means of sea transportation, but also a representation of the cultural identity, technical skills, and commercial spirit of Bugis-Makassar community. Thus, the existence of Phinisi shows that local cultural heritage can be the capital of civilization that has global competitiveness, in line with the spirit of UIM in integrating local wisdom with global dynamics.

Universitas Islam Makassar views this panel as an important momentum to strengthen research related to maritime communities, sustainable management of marine resources, and the role of Indonesian seafarers in building global interaction networks. Through cross-disciplinary and cross-border academic collaboration, UIM is committed to contributing to the international discourse on the management of marine resources that is equitable, environmentally friendly, and oriented towards the benefit of future generations. This effort is in line with UIM's vision to make science a means of community empowerment as well as strengthening Indonesia's maritime identity in the global arena.

Ladies and gentlemen/honorable guests;

Through this opportunity, I would like to emphasize that UIM's participation in IFSR 2025 is not only limited to be a technical host, but also as part of a strategic effort to:

1. Encourage the creation of cross-cultural and scientific dialogue.
2. Strengthening Indonesia's academic contribution in the global arena
3. Make UIM as a center for the development of maritime, cultural, and sustainability studies in the eastern region of Indonesia.

Finally, we hope that this forum can generate inspiring ideas, applicable solutions, and strengthen the collaborative network in maintaining the relevance of the Spice Routes as a legacy path as well as a sustainable future. UIM through this forum also opens the collaboration with various parties, both in the fields of education, research, community service, and the development of culture and maritime resources. We believe that cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional synergy will be the key to realizing fair, sustainable, and wide-ranging knowledge and resource management for future generations.

By saying Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, I officially open the third day of the International Forum on Spice Routes (IFSR 2025).

*Wallahul Muwaffiq Ilaa Aqwamit Tharieq
Wassalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Umi Mu'awannah

*Research Center for Industrial, Services, and Trade Economics
National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)*

•

MARITIME TRADES GLOBALLY: SPICES AND HERBS FROM INDONESIA

Introduction and Global Trade Overview Good morning everyone. My name is Umi Muawanah, and I am an Ocean Economist. I would like to focus on maritime trades, particularly spices and herbs, and how current global trade has utilized Indonesian products to move the economy both globally and nationally.

In the last decade of our trade with neighboring countries, we have identified three major destination players for our spice exports: the Netherlands, the United States, and Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, and China. Since 2020, we saw a smaller demand from China, but this has been rising again due to the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement. China's growing middle class and restaurant industry still require spices from Indonesia despite having their own. Meanwhile, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore have remained major destinations, although they were hit badly in 2020 due to global COVID-19 lockdowns. The U.S. market remains relatively low despite its large population, partly due to different cultures in spice usage.

The total value of our spice exports has reached 2 billion US dollars. However, global trade is interlinked; while we impact their economies, we also need their inputs. For instance, we have huge imports from Madagascar, specifically cloves for our domestic cigarette industry. We also import processed powder spices from India and Vietnam. Notably, Vietnam's industrialization seems to be moving ahead of Indonesia's, as they process much of their spices into ready-to-eat ground, crushed, or processed forms like cardamom, black pepper, and cinnamon. The government revenue from taxes on the cigarette industry is massive, which explains the high demand for Madagascar's cloves.

The Indonesian government has a program called "Spice Up the World" to introduce Indonesian cuisines and culinary experiences globally. Our research at the Economic Research Center was tasked with looking at the economic performance and financing needs of Indonesian restaurants abroad. There are currently 1,021 registered Indonesian

restaurants through our embassies, with the largest concentration in Europe (specifically the Netherlands), followed by Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East. The Middle East is seeing growth because of travel for Umrah and a rising interest in Asian and Indonesian cuisines in countries beyond just Saudi Arabia.

Based on our sampling, these restaurants are generally small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with staff sizes of 10 or fewer,. Interestingly, many are funded through personal savings, indicating they are family or individual businesses.

These businesses face several challenges regarding formal financing:

- High Interest Rates: Many owners find overseas interest rates too high.
- Standard Compliance: Exporters struggle to meet the strict international standards and requirements of destination countries.
- Collateral: Many restaurants rent their buildings, so they lack the collateral required by formal banks for loans,.
- Loan Tenor: Business owners prefer a shorter five-year tenor for loans as a sign of a healthy business.

The government, through entities like LPEI (Indonesian National Export Financing) and Bank Indonesia, is looking into providing assistance, such as subsidized interest rates and investment credit for capital expansion or marketing.

In summary, Indonesian spice exports have shown endurance since colonial times and continue to provide significant economic contributions. While the "spices economy" moves through the Indonesian diaspora and restaurants, it faces challenges like competitors and trade barriers, such as strict regulations in the U.S..

Moving forward, market expansion is possible, particularly in China and the Middle East. We have communicated with embassy representatives in the Middle East, confirming that the growth of Indonesian restaurants there will drive the need for spice exports, potentially through hubs like Qatar or Dubai,. This maritime spice trade continues to impact the global and regional economy significantly.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Joella van Donkersgoed

University of Luxembourg

•

SPICE HERITAGES: CENTERING SPICES AS A METHOD OF DECOLONIALIZATION

Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Greetings to everyone at the Seventh International Forum on the Spice Route.

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the organizers for inviting me to speak and for choosing such an inspiring theme, Spice Route as Pathways to Sustainable Futures: Bridging Heritage and Innovation.

I want to start with the central question which should be on everyone's mind when dealing with history and heritage. Who in the past has been able to define meaning and value? Whose perspective has been centered—the colonizer or the colonized? Whose voices were preserved in the archive and whose were left out? And today, whose perspectives are we choosing to center in the stories that we tell and promote?

The question “who can speak” also reflects on our own positionality in our work and in our research. Factors such as nationality, race, education, and language determine which doors are open and which ones remain closed. For example, I am a white Dutch Christian woman with a PhD from an American university. This background gives me privileges such as access to archives, the ability to read Dutch and English sources, and a status that allows me to meet high-level officials.

But it also limits my understanding. I was raised with a Western mindset and a Eurocentric view of history. To truly understand the lived realities of local communities and to recognize non-human agency, I must unlearn those structures and listen deeply to those with embodied and traditional knowledge.

This brings me to another guiding question: who is left unheard? Heritage and history are processes of meaning-making shaped not only by scholars, but also by marginalized communities and non-human entities. However, these voices have been disregarded in Western, Eurocentric systems of knowledge. Decolonization seeks to move beyond these

authorized heritage systems to acknowledge and validate other ways of knowing and creating meaning.

Today, I will focus on some of the voices that have been left unheard or disregarded—the many voices that surround spices.

The lecture today contains four main parts. First, I will talk briefly about nature–culture entanglements. Moving beyond binary distinctions such as nature versus culture, material versus intangible, and human versus non-human can lead to more inclusive and decolonial heritage understanding and management. This approach beyond binary thinking is especially applicable to spices, as this is a subject where human and natural influences are entangled.

Spices are rich in many voices, processes, and histories. Therefore, I will discuss spices as a topic of polyfocality.

Until this point, the focus of the lecture is quite theoretical. In order to make these ideas more concrete, I will use nutmeg as an example of a spice that embodies polyfocal heritage. Through this example, I hope to encourage you to look more closely at the spice at the center of your own research or work and to consider it within a broader context.

Finally, I will reflect on how moving beyond these binaries and embracing the polyfocal nature of spice heritage can help advance cultural heritage management toward more decolonial practices.

The nature–culture divide has been challenged over the past decades as a colonial Western construct within the authorized heritage discourse. It artificially separates the world into the binary categories of cultural and natural. An example is the UNESCO World Heritage List, which traditionally recognizes cultural and natural sites as separate categories. However, since 1992, UNESCO adopted the concept of cultural landscapes to emphasize the interconnectedness of humans and their environments.

In spice landscapes in particular, the links between people and nature are especially explicit and present. Spices are often a product of domestication and have thus evolved from their purest form to the product we use today through human intervention. This not only applies to the selection of the best produce, but also to the way humans have shaped the landscape to optimize spice production.

Similarly, the emphasis on material cultural heritage over intangible heritage has been critiqued as part of the authorized heritage discourse. These binaries are also artificial constructs, because much material heritage is informed by intangible heritage. You could say that the meanings we attach to material heritage are what make it heritage, and these are intangible values we apply to heritage sites.

In the case of spice production, the tangible landscapes and the intangible practices are clear examples of such entanglements. Not only the cultural landscapes in which humans have shaped the land for spice production, but also material heritage is informed by intangible elements such as sight, scent, and the supernatural. For example, Fort Belgica in Banda Neira was an important place to connect to the rest of the landscape through sightlines, and it

continues to be a place where the resistance of the Bandanese is commemorated through the performance of the Cakalele warrior dance on top of the fort.

These sites therefore continue to carry meaning in an intangible way and are often hosts to spirits that keep these histories and meanings alive.

Finally, our approach to heritage is often anthropocentric. We focus on human history and agency, yet non-human entities have also shaped our activities. If we re-center them, we can gain new perspectives and support more sustainable practices.

In the case of spices, for example, we might even consider the wishes of spices. Some only thrive in certain places, while others do not, inviting us to think differently about their agency. Historically, Rumphius even claimed that the nutmeg tree only grew in Banda because it had to be ingested by the nutmeg pigeon and excreted in order to grow into a seedling, thus assigning both the bird and the spice a symbiotic agency.

This can be said for humans too, as spices need certain treatments to flourish or to release their inherent properties. There is a symbiosis between people and plants: we need their produce, but they need us too.

Next, I will discuss spices as a topic of polyfocality, because there are many ways in which we can talk about spices, and many ways in which spices can convey meaning. First, spices are, of course, plants and part of the natural world. They are studied in botany, medicine, and agriculture for their properties. Although I have made a special point here about spices as nature, the study of plants and the use of their produce are closely tied to cultural practices.

Scientific studies that trace the origins of genetic codes of certain spices or the distillation of their properties for medical research are related to verifying traditional knowledge about origin and medicinal use. Therefore, spices are part of a wide array of cultural heritage practices, including culinary traditions, sacred ceremonies, and other social practices.

Clove is an example of a spice that is used for making decorative sculptures that give a pleasant scent to a room, is used for dental issues, and has become a popular additive to tobacco for smoking. Thus, it can be connected to social functions even beyond its locality, as it is currently considered a spice closely related to the Christmas season and regarded by many around the world with fondness.

As natural, non-human entities, spices are often regarded as passive. However, they do influence our world and the behavior of animals and humans. We could even claim that spices are the root of certain historical events and can therefore be considered active agents.

As such, spices speak through multiple voices. We can call this polyfocality, as there are multiple ways to talk about spices, but also multiple ways in which spices themselves carry meaning.

Polyfocality in heritage of all kinds is created through meaning-making on multiple levels. On the slide, I have listed three categories as examples of types of voices, including sources, heritage, and stakeholders. Regarding sources, we have been trained to focus on written

sources, which often leads to an over-validation of colonial records over other kinds of sources, such as cultural traditions, knowledge of nature, or oral histories.

We can also look at different types of heritage, not only focusing on obvious material, tangible heritage, but also on intangible heritage practices and what nature can teach us. These categories are informed by various stakeholders, each with their own aims and agendas. All of these levels coexist; none is more true than another. They all hold their own truth.

So far, the focus has been theoretical. To make these ideas more concrete, I will use nutmeg as an example of a spice that embodies polyvocal heritage. First, by using nutmeg as a starting point for the history of the Banda Islands, we avoid privileging one kind of knowledge over another. Starting with nutmeg, the history begins with a unique maritime landscape that enabled the development of a special two-part spice: the nutmeg tree and its fruits, nutmeg and mace.

Its medicinal and flavorful qualities spread across the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, drawing traders from China, India, and the Arab Peninsula. The high value of the spice also drew greed, particularly from the Dutch East India Company, which aimed to establish a monopoly over the trade and production of the spice. To accomplish this, extreme violence was directed at the Bandanese people, who had been fostering spice production for centuries and fiercely resisted colonization. This culminated in the massacre of the Bandanese.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Salfia Rahmawati

Department of Anthropology, Universitas Indonesia

•

BEYOND TRADE: THE SPICE ROUTE AS A LIVING NETWORK OF COMMUNITY, MEMORY, AND YOUTH FUTURES

Greetings, distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, and my fellow youth participants. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to join the Seventh International Forum on the Spice Route 2025. This gathering is more than just a conference; it is a meeting of minds and generations. We are brought together by the story of the Spice Route—a story that has crossed seas and centuries, connecting peoples, cultures, and ideas in ways that still shape our world today. Therefore, it is an honor for me to contribute to this conversation.

When we talk about the Spice Route, we often imagine ships on the horizon, ports alive with trade, and the fragrance of cloves and nutmeg traveling across the seas. But beyond these familiar images, the Spice Route is also about people—about how entire communities organized their lives around the rhythms of cultivation and harvest.

During my fieldwork in North Maluku, to be exact in Ternate and Jailolo, I came to see how spices are not simply commodities, but social forces that structure collective life. I was told about the time of *panaya*, the great harvest season, when cloves and nutmeg ripen in abundance. Locals often call it *pestapan*, a harvest feast. But the word *pesta* here does not mean a staged festival with music and performances. Instead, it refers to a moment of collective celebration, when the benefits of the harvest ripple through almost every corner of society.

When the harvest begins, boats arrive from different regions, many from Leihitu, Salahutu, and other parts of Ambon, carrying seasonal workers who will stay for three months in makeshift, free houses built especially for the harvest. These workers fill the plantations with life, but they are not alone. The plantations also become temporary marketplaces, crowded like a sudden carnival. Traders set up stalls selling fried snacks, heavy meals, clothing, even household goods. Money is not always the medium of exchange; barter is common. A basket

of cloves can be swapped for a set of cooking pots, or a pack of nutmeg can be exchanged for new clothes.

In this way, even those without their own trees can participate in the harvest economy, securing spices as savings to be sold later when prices rise. What struck me most was how inclusive the season is. Children and teenagers can come straight from school, still in their uniforms, to gather fallen cloves or nutmeg under the trees. In Maluku custom, anything that falls naturally from the tree belongs to no one—it is communal. The young collect what they find, sell it, and often earn enough to buy a motorbike or save for future needs.

In this sense, the harvest is more than agriculture. It is a mechanism of redistribution, an informal social safety net, and a period when wealth circulates widely. Standing in these plantations, I realized that each clove tree is more than a plant. It is a marker of family, of memory, and of inheritance. It ties together generations, just as it ties together the wider community.

During the harvest season, what may look from the outside like a simple agricultural cycle is, in fact, a deeply social and cultural phenomenon—an economy of relationships sustained by trust, reciprocity, and shared benefit.

Later, on another journey to Madagascar, I encountered something deeply familiar. In the sounds of language, in the cultivation of rice, and even in the flavors of food, I could hear and taste echoes of home.

When talking about Madagascar, archaeologists still debate when the first settlers arrived. Some suggest as early as 350 BC, others after AD 200–250. But all agree that they came in successive voyages on outrigger canoes from this archipelago. Some scholars even propose that Dayak people from Borneo were taken as part of trading fleets, and that these voyages may have carried not only people, but also spices, plants, and cultural knowledge across the ocean.

Linguists such as Adelaar have shown that the Malagasy language absorbed words from Malay, Javanese, and South Sulawesi languages, besides Dayak elements—evidence of just how deeply these roots connect our worlds. When my team and I visited one of the universities in Madagascar and met students there, we introduced ourselves as Indonesian. The young people were visibly excited. More than once, they said to us, “Ah, you are our ancestors.”

This was not just casual talk. It is history taught in Malagasy schools, where children learn that their island is bound to our spice-driven ancient migrations. In that moment, the Spice Route was no longer an abstract network of trade for me. It was alive—a bridge of memory and kinship stretching across oceans, carried as much by cloves and nutmeg as by people, languages, and stories.

So, the Spice Route was never only about commerce or exotic commodities. It was also about cultural encounters—sometimes enriching, sometimes violent. Alongside creativity and exchange came monopolies, forced labor, and ecological damage. To honor this history means not to romanticize it, but to face both its glory and its costs.

And this is where youth have a vital role.

We are the ones who can retell the story of the Spice Route in new ways—ways that are more honest, more inclusive, and more sustainable. Above all, we must recognize that the Spice Route is not just behind us; it is still with us. It lives in the food we share, in the languages we speak, in the ecological challenges we face, and in the opportunities for solidarity across borders.

To be young today is to inherit both the beauty and the burden of this legacy. It is up to us to navigate it differently: with honesty instead of erasure, with care for the environment instead of exploitation, and with inclusivity instead of silence.

So, the next time you taste pepper in your noodles or smell cloves in the air, remember that you—and that we—are part of this long journey. We are not only the heirs of the Spice Route; we are its new navigators.

The map is in our hands. Let us chart it with courage, with creativity, and with care.
Thank you.

PANEL 1

TRACING THE SPICE: PHYTOGEOGRAPHY, ETHNOBOTANY & SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

SMOKKEL VAN PEPER: THE ILLEGAL PEPPER TRADE IN BANGKA, 1950-1960

Azi Wansaka

Gadjah Mada University
aziwansaka@mail.ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Bangka Island has long been known as one of the most prominent pepper-producing regions. Pepper is a major trade commodity cultivated by local communities, particularly in rural areas. However, behind its prestige as a leading spice, the pepper trade was subject to strong government monopoly. This condition gave rise to illegal activities known as smuggling. The reason was simple: people saw that trading outside Indonesia was far more profitable. This study aims to explain the background of pepper smuggling activities, how these activities took place, and their impacts during the period from 1950 to 1960. This research employs historical methodology, which includes heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. Based on the findings, it is revealed that: (1) The background of pepper smuggling activities cannot be separated from the government's strict control. The domestic pepper price tended to be lower, prompting farmers to sell their produce abroad through smuggling; (2) Pepper smuggling in Bangka was carried out using boats to the Riau Islands region. From there, the pepper was sent to Singapore and subsequently sold on the international market. The long-standing smuggling activity established safe routes for transporting pepper to Singapore; (3) The impact of pepper smuggling in Bangka Island was mainly associated with the loss of state revenue. Goods transported out of the country did not obtain permits or pay excise to the government. This situation led to intensified efforts to combat pepper smuggling activities.

Keywords: Smuggling, Pepper, Bangka

INTRODUCTION

Smuggling is an illegal activity that has occurred for hundreds of years. It refers to the activity of sending or bringing in goods without the permission of the authorities. This makes it synonymous with illegal activities that are often prohibited by the government. Not surprisingly, smuggling is often identified with behind-the-scenes activities. Smuggling is identified with activities that are detrimental to the ruling authority. According to Law No. 39 of 2007 on excise, smuggling refers to the activities of people who transport, store, sell and buy excisable goods such as cigarettes, alcohol that are not attached to the excise band as required (Law No. 39, 2007). In the community in the Bangka Belitung region, this *smuggling* activity is known as *smokkel*. The term *smokkel* comes from the Dutch language. This activity is understood as a form of business activity without complying with applicable regulations. This activity provides a promise of prosperity for the perpetrators in the two areas where the contraband is sent and delivered (Tarigan, 2008).

Cases of smuggling on Bangka Island can actually be traced back to the reign of the Palembang Sultanate in Bangka Belitung. At that time, Palembang Sultanate collaborated with the VOC to enter into a monopoly agreement on mining goods, namely in the form of tin. However, because the price offered by the British was higher, the traders sold it to the British. In the end, when the Palembang Sultanate found out that the commodities sold through smuggling were more expensive, the Palembang Sultanate also engaged in smuggling (Madjid et al., 2010).

Smuggling often occurs in border areas with other countries. Areas that have weak security are used as a loophole to enter and send out of the region. Smuggling is often not one-way, but two-way. When illegal goods are introduced, there are always other goods sent to the region. This makes smuggling a two-way activity. This means that there is a reciprocal relationship that occurs between the smuggled and smuggling areas. This is what makes border areas with less security loopholes become smuggling routes in Indonesia. The *smugglers* or those involved in this *smuggling* activity use the Riau Islands route as a place to exit and enter goods. These actors are divided into two, namely, active actors and passive actors. Active actors refer to indigenous people, namely Malays, and do it for generations. Meanwhile, passive actors are people of Chinese descent called *tauke* (Madjid et al., 2010).

One of the most frequently smuggled areas in Indonesia is Bangka Island. This area has long been a base for smuggling goods to Malaysia and Singapore. This condition also applies vice versa, goods from these regions can potentially enter through this region. One of the most commonly smuggled trade commodities is pepper or sahang. Bangka Island has long been known as a producer of high-quality pepper. This special attention is reflected in the policy of bringing Chinese people directly from their home regions to Bangka Island to plant pepper. In the end, these planting techniques and methods were then followed by the people on Bangka Island (Heidhues, M. S. (2008).

Pepper is indeed a lucrative commodity to grow, especially since its price tends to be high in the international market. It is not surprising that this spice is a favorite in Indonesia. However, the pepper trade has the same problem as tin, which is tight control by the government. The Indonesian government's tight control over the price of pepper makes the selling price tend to be cheap. Domestic pricing that tends to be lower than the price in the international market makes people use smuggling as an alternative. The low price of pepper and the control of the local government have led to efforts to smuggle the pepper out of the region. This activity involves various parties, ranging from farmers, traders, to security officers. Not only local people, smuggling also requires international trade networks through Malaysia and Singapore.

PROBLEMS AND SCOPE

Based on the above background, this study will look at the issue of pepper smuggling that occurred in 1950-1960 on Bangka Island from the economic and political aspects. These two aspects are the main topics that will be discussed in this research. The main questions raised in this study are, 1). What was the background of pepper smuggling in 1950-1960; 2). How was pepper smuggling carried out in that period?; 3). What was the impact of pepper smuggling on local communities and the Indonesian government?

Temporally, this research will focus on the period 1950 as the starting point and 1960 as the ending point. This refers to the transition period between the Dutch and Indonesian

governments around 1950-1960. This period was also characterized by economic turmoil on Bangka Island. The economic crisis is often closely related to the increase in smuggling cases on Bangka Island.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There are four objectives to be achieved in this research. These objectives consist of substantive, methodological, historiographical, and practical aspects. Looking at the pepper smuggling network from the political and economic aspects that took place on Bangka Island is the substantive aspect of this research. As a historical research, this study does not only try to map the pepper smuggling cases that occurred, but also see how smuggling efforts were carried out in that period.

Methodologically, this study wants to offer a historical research of pepper that is studied through the aspect of smuggling. No less important historiographically, this research can contribute to the history of Bangka Island in an aspect that is rarely discussed. It is hoped that this research can also be a consideration for the government to be wiser in managing areas that have abundant natural resource potential.

RESEARCH BENEFITS

For Academics

This research is expected to add to the literature and studies of economic history in Indonesia, especially related to illegal trade after independence. This study is also expected to be related to the theory of political economy, illegal trade and maritime history in Indonesia. Finally, this research can also be empirical data for future studies related to other commodities and different periods.

For the Government

For the government, this study is an evaluation material in finding policy regulations, especially those related to pricing and export-import. Providing a historical overview of smuggling patterns and routes that can be used in formulating cross-border trade control strategies. This research is also expected to inspire government policies that favor farmers so that they are not encouraged to engage in illegal trade.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the historical research method. Historical research methods are procedures or stages of work used in the process of examining and critically analyzing historical records and relics. An imaginative reconstruction of the past based on data obtained through the process of writing history (Kuntowijoyo, 2008). Research that uses historical research methods consists of stages, heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics is the activity of searching for and finding historical sources in the form of writing, audio, and artifacts. Heuristics can also be regarded as an art, in the sense that except for the need to adhere to rules, work tools, skills are also needed. The sources collected must be in accordance with the type of history written (Kuntowijoyo, 2008). The sources used in this research are primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are defined as the first source. Meanwhile, secondary sources are sources that come second in the form of books, magazines, and journals that can be found in libraries and the internet. In historical science, secondary sources can also be interpreted as sources conveyed by non-

witnesses (Kuntowijoyo, 2008). In this study the authors used secondary sources to complement primary sources. This stage is carried out by looking for historical sources in the form of newspapers, books, and previous studies. To obtain these research sources, a number of places were searched, such as newspaper provider sites such as *delpher*, Gadjah Mada University Library, Yogyakarta Regional Library, and the researchers personal collection.

The second stage in this research is to verify the sources that have been found. After finding existing historical sources, the next stage is to verify or criticize historical sources. This stage is useful for analyzing the various sources used in this research. So that the sources used can prove their authenticity. This criticism involves verifying the verification of sources, namely testing the truth and accuracy of the sources (Kuntowijoyo, 2008). At this stage, criticism is carried out in two ways, namely external criticism and internal criticism. The third stage of the research conducted is interpretation or interpreting the data that has been collected so that historical facts are produced. These historical facts are then rewritten so as to create the results of historical research or what is called the historiography stage.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Smuggling is a practice that is thick with economic and political influences. The unilateral control of natural resources by the ruler has the potential to give birth to smuggling practices that are considered unlawful and criminal acts (Madjid et al., 2010).

This research focuses on examining the pepper smuggling activities on Bangka Island. In addition, Bangka Island is also known as an area that has long been a smuggling route in the archipelago.

According to Eric Taglocozoo in the book "Secret Trades, Porous Borders", apart from the weak and unclear administrative boundaries of a region, smuggling activities are also identified with local and regional trade networks that have been formed for a long time. These channels are created and tend to be flexible and strong. This then leads to the emergence of pathways in illicit transactions. It is these channels that have led to smuggling for a long time. In addition, it is undeniable that the security forces and related officials also receive bribes in this smuggling practice.

CAUSES OF PEPPER SMUGGLING IN BANGKA ISLAND

Smuggling is often seen as a crime that develops in society. This cross-border crime has the potential to become a major crime, depending on the type of goods being smuggled. Of course, this effort cannot be separated from the desire to circumvent the prevailing excise system when bringing in certain goods, or in other cases this smuggling act is carried out because the goods are prohibited to enter a country, such as drugs and other types of illegal drugs.

As a country that borders several other countries in the Southeast Asian region, Indonesia is one of the countries that has great potential to become a place where contraband goods are entered or sent to certain countries. Of course, this potential is not something to be proud of. The reason is simple, because smuggling brings losses to the country concerned. The country's income from the excise sector will be reduced, and there is also the potential for the goods to be illegal drugs. However, looking at smuggling only in terms of crime is wrong. Smuggling must be viewed from other aspects. Aspects that can explain the reasons behind the rampant smuggling in Indonesia.

Ignoring other aspects of the causes of smuggling is of course a wrong decision. This wrong decision leads to the birth of the wrong policy. So instead of issuing policies that successfully suppress smuggling to its roots, the wrong policies cause smuggling practices to continue. This is a condition that should be avoided by policy makers. This is what should be avoided.

Seeing smuggling in Indonesia cannot be separated from the political and economic policies in the region. Areas located in border and peripheral areas are often neglected by the central government. This condition forces people to survive by utilizing illegal practices. Regions that experience neglect tend to strategize on how to survive in certain economic and political conditions.

The economic factors underlying the rise of smuggling can also be seen from the rise of smuggling cases when an economic crisis occurs. Poor economic conditions encourage people to commit criminal acts such as theft, looting, and smuggling. When the economic crisis occurs, the crime rate on Bangka Island is also high. These cases seem to be a recurring pattern (Erman, E, 2009). The rise of arrest cases can be seen from the cases highlighted in local newspapers published during those years. In some cases, it was even possible to describe who was involved in the smuggling.

Smuggling is also inseparable from the benefits received through this practice. Higher commodity prices abroad encourage smuggling. This is inversely proportional to the lower price of commodities purchased domestically. This condition creates an impetus for smuggling practices. Unequal prices make these practices even more prevalent. Quoting from the newspaper *Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* published on 30-07-1951, The prices of commodities traded abroad such as Singapore and Malaysia tend to be higher. This is not only the case for pepper, but also for tin, rubber and copra. The multiple and quick profits have made the community and smuggling syndicates work together. This is what makes smuggling practices have a complicated relationship. Trade commodities sold in the international market are high, especially in the Singapore and Malaysia regions. Moreover, pepper is one of the prima donna trade commodities. Actually, this high price does not only happen to pepper, but also tin from Bangka Island. The profits will multiply when it can be sold on the black market. The striking price difference is what makes farmers, laborers, and traders choose to sell to the black market. This also indicates that the Indonesian government is unable to provide competitive prices for these commodities.

This condition is further exacerbated by the lack of apparatus and supervisors in charge of monitoring this activity. For example, the Indonesian Navy (ALRI) is overwhelmed by limited patrol vessels. In addition, border areas such as the Riau Islands have thousands of islands, bays and narrow lanes that are rarely known. These conditions make the region an ideal place for smugglers to hide. Customs officers who lack sea transportation facilities have the potential to lose to these smugglers. Actually, this condition is very reasonable, considering Indonesiass new independence. Moreover, until 1949 Indonesia still had to maintain its sovereignty so that it would not be taken over by the Dutch. The Dutch Military Aggression overwhelmed Indonesia in defending its sovereignty. This is why Indonesia still lacks advice to overcome smuggling.

Thousands of islands spread from Bangka Island to the Riau Islands make this activity even more difficult to monitor. The deep bays and narrow lanes are the perfect combination for smuggling activities. In fact, when the ships have entered the Riau Islands region, it is certain that the smuggling has almost succeeded. This geographical condition not only provides

logistical advantages but also makes it easy to change lanes when the main route has been monitored by the authorities.

Another unavoidable aspect of smuggling is corruption and collusion. Reports of corruption and collusion are common among police and marine patrols. The term used in this bribery practice is "tea money" to prevent passing ships from being inspected by officers. In some cases, smuggling is even done by falsifying export licenses. Through the granting of licenses for smuggled goods, the practice of smuggling can almost never be effectively eradicated. Especially when law enforcement officials become part of the smuggling practice.

Quoting from the *Winschoter courant* newspaper published on 19-01-1950, it was explained that the smuggling syndicate was based on Bangka Island. Mr. Oetoyo was sent as a representative of the R.I.S. The smuggling syndicate was usually run by Chinese people who had outside connections in Bangka, Singapore and Riau. This syndicate relationship indicates long-standing cooperation and mutual trust.

Quoting from the newspaper *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie- blad* released on 26-05-1950, in order to support this activity their smuggling syndicate did not hesitate to bribe the authorities. In fact, to trick the officers, they were usually willing to pay compensation to the initial ship that was deliberately arrested as a distraction, while other ships escaped with full cargo. Such machinations proved successful in shipping goods out of the region. The Chinese not only acted as negotiators, but also as bosses on the merchant ships. The drivers seat, on the other hand, was held by the Bugis. Through strong financial support, this syndicate could successfully penetrate the border region.

According to the newspaper *Java-bode: nieuws, handels- en advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indie* published on 22-11-1954, on Bangka Island, people involved in smuggling were tempted by high wages. This was not only the case for those involved in shipping the goods out of the region, but also those responsible for bringing the goods to the collection point in the forest. In this case, the arrests were made in Kotawaringin Village (Baturusa Sub-district). The profit earned from being a laborer to carry pepper is quite large and almost impossible to obtain through formal sector employment. This is also likely due to the difficulty of finding workers in the formal sector. Through this explanation, it can be understood that smuggling practices are caused by large economic benefits, weak supervision, corruption of law enforcement officials, strong syndicate networks and the social conditions of local communities. The price difference between the official market and the black market makes traders feel disadvantaged if they sell through illegal means which are more profitable and tend to be flexible. It can be said that Indonesians' decisions and exports encourage smuggling.

These factors make smuggling almost inevitable. This activity is not just a criminal activity, but a phenomenon of the regional economy in the border area. From the local community's perspective, smuggling is considered a way to survive, while from the state's perspective, it is a serious threat, not only to economic sovereignty, but also potentially to political sovereignty.

HOW PEPPER SMUGGLING IS PRACTICED

Smuggling always involves a complex network that is rarely known. Starting from farmers, collectors to those who carry out smuggling directly outside the country. This condition makes smuggling not a simple problem, but a complex problem that is difficult to prevent. Initially,

farmers will sell to local collectors. It is through the hands of these collectors that connections to large traders and smuggling networks are made.

In general, pepper smuggling was always accompanied by other products such as tin, copra, and rubber. These goods would first be collected in the villages where they were produced. To avoid the suspicion of law enforcement officials, these commodities would first be hidden in the forests, until they were suitable. From these places, they were then transported at night to small boats that were pulling up to the seafront. This process usually involves local laborers and is of course highly paid. Especially considering that this work is full of risks.

According to the newspaper *Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad* published on 30-07-1951, a pepper transport worker would carry the pepper in sacks during moonless nights. This was done from the truck to the loading boat. Those who carried the pepper would be paid 20 guilders. This figure was certainly a large enough lift to make it difficult for the government to find workers. This not too heavy workload made smuggling attractive to many people. In fact, Chinese people who worked at B.T.W were also tempted by this practice.

Pepper smuggling also had ingenious methods, as described in the newspaper *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad* published on 03-03-1952. It is known that to send these goods, smuggling activities are carried out by disguising them with official cargo. For example, hiding pepper among piles of sand on the ship. There are also those who falsify it by putting it in a resin crate accompanied by fake export documents. In this way, if the authorities check the cargo, it is in accordance with the existing export permit. This activity is an effective method and is usually accompanied by bribery of officials, especially those at the port.

According to the newspaper *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie- blad* published on 26-05-1950, another mode used was through the diversion of patrols. This clever method was carried out by using two ships simultaneously. The first ship was sent with a non-full load. The purpose of the first ship was so that the second ship, which was fully loaded, could sail freely to Singapore or Malaysia. Despite being caught by patrolling authorities, the main cargo has successfully reached its destination. As for those who are caught, they can be penetrated with money guarantees and compensation. This action is very difficult to prevent, considering that the patrolling authorities have limited patrol boats. When they reach the Riau Islands, the smugglers can be relieved. This is because the route from Bangka Island to Riau Islands has thousands of small islands, bays, straits and lush vegetation. This makes it seem like an instant route for smugglers to Singapore and Malaysia.

Once in Singapore, of course, these goods cannot be sold in the free market. They must be sold at a special place that accepts contraband. Not many people know about this place. Only those who are trusted can find out about it. The transactions that take place here are done at prices far above the official prices in Indonesia. It is at this place that the smuggling syndicates will organize to the international market. So it can be said that smuggling from Bangka Island to Riau Islands and ending up in Singapore is only the initial phase.

Although prevention and prosecution efforts have been made such as arrest operations, confiscation of ships and establishing special posts, new ways to smuggle goods are always found. Routes are diverted, documents are falsified, and bribes are increasingly magnified. This shows that smuggling is not just an individual crime, but also a crime that involves many parties with various interests. Smuggling occurs through complex mechanisms ranging from

the collection of goods, storage, disguise, transfer of patrol vessels to the practice of bribery against the authorities. It is only after going through these various things that the goods can reach the place of distribution to the international market. This indicates the strength of the shadow economy compared to the Indonesian economy.

What is the Impact of Pepper Smuggling

The practice of smuggling is detrimental in many ways. This illegal practice is not only detrimental to domestic businesses, but also proves the weakness of Indonesian national security. The entry of illegal goods has the potential to reduce the amount of excise duty that enters a country. This is because the routes taken are unofficial routes. So it is not possible to be subject to excise fees and other taxes. In the long run, the losses achieved will potentially grow.

Goods that enter through illegal channels do have a low price. Apart from the fact that incoming goods are not subject to excise duty, there is also the potential that the incoming goods are counterfeit goods. This low price has great potential to compete with similar local products. The long-term impact is that domestic products suffer losses. The reason is simple, because incoming or outgoing goods are not recorded in state statistics. In other conditions, this situation will also lead to a weak balance of trade.

Smuggling eliminates the source of foreign exchange needed by Indonesia. as a new country that is still in the development stage, this foreign exchange is needed by the Indonesian government in developing the country. Prolonged conflict in Indonesia does not only occur between Indonesia and other countries, but also within the Indonesian nation itself. The losses caused by the prolonged conflict meant that funds that could have been allocated to development had to be diverted to other sectors. This condition illustrates how the foreign exchange that entered Indonesia was very significant at that time.

Another potential loss that cannot be avoided is the creation of criminal networks that are difficult to monitor. This is because smuggling routes often utilize unknown routes. This makes it potentially difficult for the Indonesian government to monitor. Weak security is also often caused by the involvement of security forces at the state border. This will have implications for weakening the authority of the Indonesian government due to weak trade control. In the eyes of the public, the government is seen as having failed to enforce the law. Especially when the smuggling involves law enforcement officials who are supposed to take action. The public is much more trusting of smuggling activities than official trade channels. In this context, smuggling will harm the consolidation process of the Indonesian government.

The loss of devia due to smuggling is huge and needs serious attention. This is because smuggled goods always vary. These smuggled goods are usually smuggled collectively, thus making one loss also experienced in other sectors. For example, in the case of pepper, other goods that are smuggled are tin, copra and rubber. Not only that, after smuggling goods out, usually goods that will be smuggled into the country are also increasingly prevalent. This is what makes the loss of foreign exchange very large.

People who are used to living and depending on smuggling activities will depend on this sector, so instead of looking for other jobs, this illegal activity will become a source of livelihood. The normalization of smuggling practices is seen as a daily livelihood. High wages and simple work become a way of life. As a result, the formal sector tends to find it difficult to recruit workers. Whereas the formal sectors tend to offer better working conditions. In the

long term, this belief makes people socially and economically more likely to favor illegal activities such as smuggling. The result of this normalization of smuggling instills a shadow economy culture that is difficult to eradicate.

Another unavoidable impact of rampant smuggling is the rise of corruption cases among law enforcers. Such cases are prone to occur to those in charge of border areas. In fact, this structured crime does not only occur in border areas, but also at the central level. The practice is to grant export licenses to protect smuggled goods. The implication of repeated smuggling is the government's poor reputation. The reason is simple: the government is unable to control activities within its own territory. On another factor, it also indicates how the smuggling network is stronger than the government's oversight.

This leaves Indonesia at a long-term disadvantage and benefits the economies of Singapore and Malaysia. This is because the prices sold to the international market tend to be higher. Singapore has earned its reputation as a transit port for commodities in Southeast Asia. This situation shows an imbalance, where Indonesia is developing its national economy, while its natural resources are enriching other countries. This is a result of the Indonesian government's weak control. This condition also increases the confrontation between the two countries when Singapore shows no interest in stopping the flow of illegal goods into the country.

This multi-stakeholder activity also indicates the birth of a transnational criminal network. The syndicates that control the land, sea and black market routes are supported by boats, the coastal village system and the collaboration of foreign traders. This *shadow economy* phenomenon shows the weak ability of the state to control borders and creates other forms of criminality. For example, the smuggling of illegal drugs and firearms.

Viewed in this light, these activities are harmful to the formation of national consciousness. Especially in the early days of escaping military aggression, Indonesia was in the process of building national consciousness. Indonesia is focusing on preparing itself and recognizing that all the products of the earth belong to the Indonesian people. However, these smuggling activities once again show that economic needs often trump the rhetoric of nationalism.

CONCLUSION

The pepper smuggling activities that took place on Bangka Island during the 1950- 1960 period show a complex social, economic and political phenomenon. Smuggling is not just a crime in the cross-border area, but a picture of the inequality of economic policies in Indonesia, the weakness of government control, and the need for local people to survive in the midst of the post-independence crisis. The rise of smuggling is also driven by the state's tight control over the pepper trade. The lower price of pepper in the country makes people prefer to sell it through smuggling to Singapore and Malaysia. This encourages farmers, traders and local people to sell it outside the region to get multiple economic benefits.

Smuggling activities are carried out through a complex and highly organized mechanism. This process involves farmers as producers, collectors, laborers and syndicates that have strong relationships and connections to the Riau Islands and Singapore. Commodities to be smuggled are hidden in forests and beaches to avoid the suspicion of patrolling authorities. Various attempts and modes are made to carry these goods, such as disguising the cargo of sand or resin, falsifying export documents to using two ships, one of which will be sacrificed. In addition, the difficulty in eradicating - practice -smuggling is also due to the thousands of

islands, bays and straits that are naturally an advantage for the smuggling syndicates. The smuggling phenomenon is also exacerbated by the lack of patrol vessels and the involvement of officials in bribery. In other cases, this activity even involves the issuance of fake export licenses by officials at the central level. This phenomenon shows how the involvement of smuggling activities is a strong shadow economic problem.

The impact of smuggling activities can be seen from various aspects. From an economic point of view, the government loses foreign exchange which is important for development. On the social aspect, this smuggling makes people normalize the practice of smuggling as a livelihood, potentially leading to dependence on the illegal sector rather than working in the formal sector. On the political aspect, this smuggling shows the weak control of the state over areas in the border region. In the end, this triggers public distrust of the Indonesian government.

REFERENCES

- Het Vrije Volk. (1951, July 30). *Het Vrije Volk: Democratisch-Socialistisch Dagblad*. Winschoter Courant. (1950, January 19). *Winschoter Courant*.
- De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad. (1950, May 26). *De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad*.
- Java-bode: Nieuws, Handels- en Advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië. (1954, November 22). *Java-bode: Nieuws, Handels- en Advertentieblad voor Nederlandsch-Indië*.
- Het Vrije Volk. (1951, July 30). *Het Vrije Volk: Democratisch-Socialistisch Dagblad*.
- De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad. (1952, March 3). *De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad*.
- De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad. (1950, May 26). *De Locomotief: Samarangsch Handels- en Advertentie-blad*.
- Books Erman, E. (2009). *From village formation to dark matters: Uncovering the tin history of Bangka Belitung*. Yogyakarta: Ombak Publisher.
- Masjid, M. D., et al. (2015). *The history of Bangka*. Bangka: Bangka Culture and Tourism Office.
- Heidhues, M. F. S. (2008). *Bangka tin and Mentok pepper: The role of the Chinese community in the development of Bangka Island in the XVIIth to XXth centuries*. Jakarta: Nabil Foundation.
- Swastiwi, A. W., et al. (2017). *The cross-history of tin trade in Bangka Belitung in the 19th-20th centuries*. Riau: Riau Islands Cultural Value Preservation Center.
- Kuntowijoyo. (1999). *Introduction to the science of history*. Yogyakarta: Span.

CONNECTING HERITAGE AND INNOVATION: SPICE ROUTES AS PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Muhammad Abduh^{1, a)} and Ade Indriani Zuchri^{2, b)}

¹ *Tamansiswa University, Palembang, Indonesia*

² *Sarekat Hijau Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia*

a) Corresponding author: abduh@unitaspalembang.ac.id b) indrianizuchri@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Spice routes, historically crucial for global trade, present significant potential for fostering sustainable development by bridging cultural heritage with modern innovation. This study explores the role of spices within phytogeography, ethnobotany, and sustainable innovation, focusing on their contributions to social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Based on a systematic literature review, this research synthesizes a broad range of scholarly sources to analyze the intricate relationship between spices, biodiversity, and sustainable management practices that integrate innovative solutions. In this context, spice routes are not only seen as historical trade corridors but also as vital opportunities for local economic development. These routes are deeply rooted in conservation and ethnobotanical knowledge. This study posits that understanding phytogeography and ethnobotany is essential for advancing sustainable agricultural practices. By combining traditional, environmentally friendly farming methods with modern innovations, communities can boost productivity while preserving ecological balance. Furthermore, ethnobotany provides critical insights into how indigenous communities manage and utilize spices, driving agricultural innovation and facilitating sustainable trade networks. Logistics innovation is another crucial aspect of the sustainable spice trade. Efficient management of distribution routes, adopting green transportation technologies, and utilizing sustainable packaging solutions can significantly mitigate the environmental impact of spice trading. The study underscores the importance of collaboration between diverse stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector, and local communities, to create policies that support sustainable spice production and trade, benefiting both the environment and local economies. Aligned with the principles of *Asta Cita*, this research advocates for a balanced approach to nature, people, and development. It contributes to understanding how spice routes can be integrated into broader sustainable development frameworks, supporting environmental conservation, local empowerment, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: spice routes; sustainable development; ethnobotany; phytogeography; local governance; logistics innovation; SDGs.

INTRODUCTION

Spice routes represent one of the most emblematic legacies of global trade, connecting continents through aromatic commodities that shaped empires, economies, and ecosystems (Dubey, 2017; Crowley, 2024; Pace & Gephart, 2017). From the Moluccas to the Mediterranean, the movement of spices historically fostered intercultural exchange, but in today's context, it holds renewed relevance as a potential driver for sustainable development (Jacoby, 2023; Yayusman & Mulyasari, 2024; Menon et al., 2025).

. The convergence between cultural heritage and innovation provides a critical entry point for reevaluating the value of spice routes—not merely as trade networks of the past, but as ecological, social, and economic systems that can inform sustainability practices in the present and future (Gunawan et al., 2020).

Within this shifting paradigm, the traditional knowledge embedded in spice production, conservation practices, and ethnobotanical insight becomes instrumental in crafting pathways for innovation that remain ecologically grounded. Studies in phytogeography demonstrate how spice crops are intimately tied to biodiversity hotspots, particularly in tropical regions, and how their conservation intersects with agroecological resilience (Kumar et al., 2021; Santos & Rodrigues, 2018). Meanwhile, ethnobotanical research offers profound lessons from indigenous communities on how spices are cultivated, harvested, and preserved in harmony with nature (Rahardjo & Fitriani, 2022; Chhetri et al., 2020).

This article aims to explore how spice routes—past and present—can be reframed as a methodological lens for integrating sustainability, cultural preservation, and innovation in the context of 21st-century development agendas. The key research problem lies in the fragmentation of academic approaches to spices, which are often limited to economic or botanical studies with minimal interdisciplinary synthesis. To address this, the review synthesizes literature across phytogeography, ethnobotany, logistics innovation, and public policy, with particular attention to the role of local governments in facilitating sustainable transformation in the present era (Dewi et al., 2021; Velho & Krishnan, 2019).

The scope of the study includes an extensive review of English-language articles published between 2015 and 2026, focusing on four interrelated dimensions: (1) phytogeographical distribution and conservation of spices in tropical landscapes, (2) ethnobotanical knowledge and sustainable spice production, (3) innovation in logistics and supply chains, and (4) policy frameworks led by local governments to support integrated sustainability agendas. These dimensions are interrelated in the sense that ecological patterns influence cultural practices, which in turn affect how innovations and policies are shaped to ensure sustainability across the spice trade ecosystem (Singh et al., 2018; Martono et al., 2023).

To guide the reader, this article is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a theoretical framework situating the study within relevant concepts in sustainability science and heritage studies. Section 3 presents the review findings thematically across the four dimensions. Section 4 outlines the SLR methodology and inclusion criteria. Section 5 discusses the implications for sustainability governance. Section 6 elaborates on policy recommendations, followed by Section 7, which details the limitations and avenues for future research. The final section concludes the article by summarizing key insights and reinforcing the potential of spice routes as a bridge between heritage and sustainability.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The interweaving of heritage and sustainability within spice routes demands a theoretical foundation rooted in diverse academic traditions. This section draws from historical geography, ethnobotany, phytogeography, and sustainability science to construct a multidimensional lens for interpreting their modern relevance.

Spice routes are not merely trade conduits; they are socio-ecological corridors where biocultural diversity, environmental limits, and political economies intersect. Aziz and Irawan (2023), in their study of the Banda Islands, show how nutmeg cultivation and colonial port governance co-evolved, leaving spatial legacies that still shape conservation and heritage today. Historical geography thus reveals how mobility, trade winds, and imperial infrastructures created maritime cultural landscapes and embedded ecological knowledge.

Ethnobotany offers another epistemic lens. Gunawan et al. (2022) show how clove and cinnamon cultivation in North Maluku involves ritual calendars, seed exchange, and land rotation norms—reframing spice farming as biocultural stewardship rooted in community life.

Phytogeography illuminates the ecological specificity of spice crops. Rahmawati et al. (2021) document how *Piper* spp., *Syzygium aromaticum*, and *Myristica fragrans* align with humid tropics, volcanic soils, and altitudinal gradients—traits of biodiversity hotspots like Maluku and the Western Ghats. Such spatial insights are critical for conservation zoning and climate-resilient agriculture.

Innovation systems, particularly within decentralized governance, translate traditional knowledge into sustainability policy. Putri et al. (2020) note that in Indonesia, success has come from locally anchored value chains where governments collaborate with cooperatives, universities, and exporters to co-design agroforestry, certification, and traceability schemes.

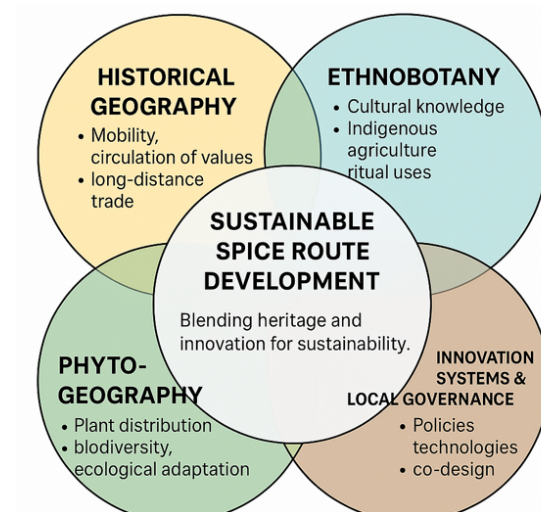


Figure 1. Conceptualizing Spice Routes As Pathways To Sustainability

This framework integrates four key dimensions—historical geography, ethnobotany, phytogeography, and innovation systems—as interlocking domains shaping sustainable spice route development. Historical geography traces spatial legacies of spice mobility. Ethnobotany highlights biocultural knowledge embedded in cultivation. Phytogeography

anchors ecological distribution and conservation imperatives. Innovation systems, guided by local governance, transform heritage into sustainable, equitable development. Together, these domains frame spice routes as socio-ecological corridors for livelihoods, biodiversity stewardship, and climate-aware trade.

2.1 Historical Geography and the Legacy of Mobility

Spice routes are more than just commercial highways of the past—they are multidimensional spaces of historical geography where nature, culture, and power intertwined. Maritime corridors linking the Malabar Coast, Moluccas, Red Sea, and Mediterranean facilitated not only the movement of cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, and pepper but also the transmission of religious beliefs, agricultural practices, and institutional innovations. These flows shaped hybrid agrarian societies, harbor towns, and trading diasporas whose legacies influence today's governance and ecology.

Historical geography demands attention to how space and place were constructed through mobility. From Dutch East India Company monopolies to indigenous port systems in Banten and Ternate, the spice trade produced layered geographies of extraction and negotiation. In the Banda Islands, nutmeg-producing landscapes reflect not only ecological exploitation but also resistance and adaptation (Sofyan et al., 2023).

Likewise, Islam and Christianity spread through spice-linked exchanges, embedded in kinship and tribute networks rather than conquest (Manurung & Rumata, 2022). These religious mobilities coexisted with botanical ones, as seen in the dispersal of turmeric and cardamom via pilgrim and trader circuits across South and Southeast Asia.

This movement enabled biocultural territories where ecological knowledge reshaped through cross-cultural encounters. Samudra et al. (2021) show how Sulawesi's maritime networks facilitated not only spice trade but also agroecological knowledge flows adapting lowland systems to upland ecologies.

These mobility trajectories offer lessons for sustainability. Enduring agroecological systems often result not from isolation but selective incorporation of external inputs—what Ali & Rauf (2020) call “adaptive convergence” in port-agroforestry systems.

Historical geography thus reframes spice routes not as relics, but as archives of socio-ecological innovation. Recognizing the spatial legacies of connectivity, hybridity, and resilience can help reimagine development strategies that are historically informed and place-based. As these routes regain relevance in cultural tourism, biodiversity planning, and circular trade, their historicity becomes an analytical infrastructure for sustainability transitions.

2.2 Ethnobotany and Biocultural Knowledge

Ethnobotany provides an indispensable lens for exploring the social and ecological knowledge embedded in spice cultivation. Local communities' relationships with species like nutmeg, clove, turmeric, and cinnamon are grounded in ritual, medicinal, and agronomic practices—often orally transmitted across generations—which sustain biocultural diversity (Turner, 2004).

Ethnobotanical studies in Southeast Asia demonstrate how spice cultivation aligns with indigenous cosmologies and land-use systems that maintain agroecological balance and cultural resilience (Iskandar et al., 2022). These insights show that indigenous communities are not passive custodians but active agents of innovation. Their practices represent climate-

resilient, low-input agriculture aligned with regenerative development goals (Nguyen & Moritaka, 2020).

In Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka, ethnobotanical practices are entwined with land-use systems, gendered labor, and cosmological views. For example, *Syzygium aromaticum* cultivation incorporates traditional pruning and shade techniques co-developed through intergenerational knowledge to maintain soil health (Dewi et al., 2021). In turmeric-growing regions of India, farmers follow lunar cycles for planting, reflecting both ecological logic and ritual value (Ariyawardana et al., 2020).

Traditional uses of spices also transcend culinary functions. In Maluku, *Myristica fragrans* is vital in healing, rites of passage, and barter economies (Susanto & Setiawan, 2021). These multifunctional roles form part of local sustainability concepts.

Crucially, such knowledge supports low-input innovation. Indigenous farmers, for instance, apply rotational planting to suppress pests and increase biodiversity—reducing synthetic input dependence (Wijaya et al., 2022). This resonates with agroecological principles and affirms ethnobotanical knowledge as a foundation for climate resilience.

Rather than framing ethnobotany as tradition-bound, these findings emphasize its dynamic potential. Recognizing local expertise as a source of innovation reframes spice sustainability as co-production—demanding policy tools that prioritize cultural specificity, historical memory, and ecological reciprocity.

2.3 Phytogeography and Spatial Biodiversity

Phytogeography—the study of plant distribution—provides a crucial empirical basis for analyzing spice species within the tropical landscapes they inhabit. Spices are not merely global commodities but ecologically embedded species shaped by spatial, bioclimatic, and social dynamics. They represent long histories of co-evolution between plants, microclimates, and community selection practices.

Mapping phytogeographic spread is vital for conservation and agroecological planning. Ali et al. (2020) show that endemic spice species frequently overlap with biodiversity hotspots like Malesia, Sundaland, and Wallacea—regions threatened by land conversion but still rich in conservation potential, especially when integrated with sustainable spice cultivation (Siregar et al., 2020). In-situ, landscape-based conservation has proven more aligned with local agroecological systems than species-specific interventions (Puspitaloka et al., 2021).

In South Sulawesi, distribution of *Myristica fragrans* and *Syzygium aromaticum* is shaped by altitudinal gradients and edaphic conditions (Amir et al., 2019), highlighting the need to integrate biogeographical data into zoning, agroforestry, and climate strategies. Wibowo & Prasetyo (2022) further emphasize that many spice species have narrow habitat ranges and are vulnerable to extreme climate shifts.

Phytogeographic approaches also guide conservation-economy integration. Linking species distribution with socio-economic data allows targeted policymaking. For instance, West Papua's integrated landscape management aligns conservation goals with local livelihoods and traditions (Rahmadi et al., 2022).

Thus, phytogeography aids not only biodiversity conservation but also the construction of resilient spice value chains. It affirms that preserving spices involves regenerating the socio-

ecological systems that sustain intergenerational community resilience and ecological knowledge.

2.4 Innovation Systems and Local Governance

Transforming the spice routes into sustainable development corridors requires more than leveraging historical legacies and biodiversity—it necessitates robust, inclusive innovation systems. Innovation, in this sense, is not just technological progress but a socio-institutional process linking farmers, market actors, researchers, and local governments in collaborative networks. The innovation systems approach enables a nuanced understanding of how policies, institutions, and local knowledge synergize to drive transformation.

Almas et al. (2021) emphasize that successful agricultural innovation systems are often decentralized, context-sensitive, and driven by grassroots participation. In Indonesia, initiatives such as farmer cooperatives, community certification schemes, and sustainable value chains have yielded promising outcomes (Abidin et al., 2022). Local governments play a crucial role due to their proximity to socio-ecological realities and their policy-making authority.

Institutional innovation includes climate early-warning systems, alignment of traditional planting calendars with modern forecasts, and integrating agroforestry into spatial planning (Maulana et al., 2020). In Maluku and Central Sulawesi, collaborative models involving researchers, NGOs, and village governments have piloted spice corridors that combine conservation, economic vitality, and social resilience.

Furthermore, innovation systems grounded in sustainability require enabling policy frameworks. Legal tools such as Geographical Indications (GIs), green logistics financing, and benefit-sharing mechanisms for traditional knowledge are pivotal (Putri et al., 2023). Here, innovation is not just an output but a co-produced process shaped by actors committed to sustainability.

Thus, reinforcing local innovation systems and participatory governance opens pathways to reposition spice routes as just, resilient, and sustainable. When rooted in community values, ecological wisdom, and institutional foresight, the spice legacy can be revived—not as nostalgia, but as a strategic asset for future development.

REVIEW OF KEY THEMES

3.1 Phytogeography and Conservation in Tropical Landscapes

Spices are not uniform commodities; they are products of long evolutionary histories and embedded ecological niches. Phytogeography—the study of spice-bearing plant distributions—is shaped by historical biogeography, climatic gradients, and human selection. Understanding these patterns is essential for crafting sustainable agroecological strategies. Heywood (2017) emphasizes phytogeography’s foundational role in “identifying priority areas for conservation and linking biodiversity to specific ecological zones” (p. 308).

The productivity and chemistry of crops like *Curcuma longa*, *Myristica fragrans*, and *Cinnamomum verum* are affected by microclimatic factors—humidity, light, soil, and altitude. Many of these species are endemic to distinct agroecological zones. In the Maluku Islands, *Myristica* shows high intra-regional genetic diversity. Hidayati et al. (2021) stress conserving elevation-sensitive habitats due to certain cultivars’ narrow climatic tolerance.

Cámara-Leret et al. (2019) reveal that spice species distribution often overlaps with linguistic and cultural diversity, underscoring the need to conserve both biocultural and ecological systems. This demands models beyond ex situ gene banks, supporting in situ agroforestry systems co-evolved with human societies.

Spices’ spatial richness also reveals their environmental vulnerability. De Jong (2020) notes the need to integrate biodiversity conservation with rural livelihoods. Mapping spice zones against risks—like landslide-prone or deforested areas—highlights fragile intersections. In North Maluku, clove-region deforestation worsens erosion and disrupts hydrological cycles, undermining both ecosystems and yields.

The relevance of phytogeography is further underscored by how spice landscapes mirror biodiversity hotspots. The Banda Islands, for example, lie within Wallacea—a global biogeographic transition zone. As shown in table 1, phytogeographic tools help identify ecological challenges and region-specific opportunities for sustainable spice cultivation.

Table 1. Contributions Of Phytogeographical Studies To Spice Conservation In Tropical Regions

No	Study Region	Key Spice Species	Research Focus	Main Findings	Conservation Implications
1	South India	Curcuma longa (turmeric)	Distribution & habitat specificity	Concentration in high-humidity belts	Eco-region protection; water management
2	Indonesia (Maluku)	Myristica fragrans (nutmeg)	Inter-island genetic variation	High inter-island diversity	Community-based conservation; seed-tree rules
3	Sri Lanka	Cinnamomum verum (cinnamon)	Ecology & agroforestry	Shade-grown systems preserve habitat	Support traditional practices via bylaws
4	Tanzania	Piper nigrum (black pepper)	Habitat pressure	Expansion threatens native habitats	Habitat restoration; sustainable farming
5	Mexico	Capsicum annum (chili)	Climate adaptation	Micro-geographic adaptation	Climate-sensitive conservation strategies

Beyond region-specific conservation, a broader comparative analysis is necessary to understand endemism, species richness, and agroecological differentiation across spice-producing zones. Table 2 reflects a comparative framework of five major biogeographical regions and their dominant spice species. For example, the *Capsicum annum* landraces in Mesoamerica represent not only climatic adaptation but also long histories of cultural selection, as documented by González-Pérez et al. (2021) in their study of agrodiversity in chili cultivation.

Similarly, the agroecological systems of Sri Lanka’s highlands have preserved *Cinnamomum verum* through intergenerational landrace selection in montane agroforestry. This is consistent with findings by Senanayake et al. (2022) who emphasized elevation-sensitive

conservation strategies based on agroecological practices and climate resilience in Sri Lankan spice systems.

TABLE 2. Phytogeographic Patterns And Regional Spice Diversity

No	Biogeographical Zone	Key Species	Endemism & Distribution	Drivers of Diversity	Priority Areas
1	Malesia (Indonesia, PNG)	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> ; <i>Syzygium</i> spp.	High endemism in lowland forests	Volcanic soils; long-term cultivation	Maluku; North Sulawesi
2	Indian Subcontinent	<i>Curcuma longa</i> ; <i>Cinnamomum</i> spp.	Broad range; regional differentiation	Monsoon regimes; cultural selection	Western Ghats; NE India
3	East African Coast	<i>Piper capense</i> ; <i>Aframomum</i> spp.	Patchy coastal; forest-dependent	Trade-linked dispersal; fragmentation	Zanzibar; Eastern Arc Mts
4	Mesoamerica	<i>Capsicum annuum</i> ; <i>Vanilla planifolia</i>	Domestication center; cultivar richness	Climate gradients; indigenous breeding	Oaxaca; Chiapas
5	Sri Lanka	<i>C. verum</i> ; <i>Elettaria cardamomum</i>	Altitude-specific cultivation	Highland microclimates; agroecology	Central Highlands

Phytogeographic analyses, when embedded within conservation planning and policy development, offer critical insights for preserving both ecological resilience and cultural heritage. As shown in the studies reviewed above, spatial knowledge derived from botanical geography not only supports species-level conservation but also informs integrative land management, climate adaptation, and the protection of local livelihoods.

3.2 The Role of Ethnobotany in Sustainable Spice Production

Ethnobotany provides critical frameworks for understanding the cultural, ecological, and agronomic dimensions of sustainable spice production. Human–plant relations are embedded in place-based knowledge systems that sustain biodiversity and support community-based governance. In spice landscapes, these systems are expressed through ritual stewardship, oral histories, land-use taboos, and intergenerational practices that balance resource extraction with ecological regeneration. Such cultural mechanisms not only regulate how spices are cultivated and harvested but also shape community identities and ensure the continuity of traditional knowledge (de Albuquerque et al., 2021; Heywood, 2017).

Across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, lineage-based seed sharing and localized selection criteria ensure climate-resilient, palatability-tested varieties (Ma et al., 2022; Egerer et al., 2021). For *Piper nigrum*, “custodian farmers,” supported by councils and local research centers, curate in-situ germplasm via informal seed banks and grafting (Deepak et al., 2025). These conservation practices enhance resilience to pests and climate stressors while maintaining varietal diversity (Cámara-Leret et al., 2019).

Traditional agroecological techniques—such as shade-grown polycultures, neem- or clove-based pest control, and terracing—not only support yields and ecosystem services but also reflect cultural knowledge systems rooted in ethical-spiritual stewardship (Heywood, 2017; Eapen et al., 2022). These culturally embedded practices, passed down through generations, demonstrate how agronomic methods are inseparable from local worldviews and land ethics. Ethnobotany also aids compliance with GAP, HACCP, and MRL standards. Export rejections often stem from pesticide misuse (Thomas et al., 2024); ethnobotanical methods offer safer alternatives if integrated into formal protocols (Eapen et al., 2022).

Beyond ecological and regulatory roles, ethnobotany reinforces identity and branding. In Ternate, reviving clove gardens and storytelling integrates *Syzygium aromaticum* with nutmeg and native trees, strengthening biodiversity and supporting GI claims (Mihardja et al., 2020). Similar dynamics link spices with culinary heritage, medicine, and sacred geographies.

The ethnobotanical profiles summarized in tabel 3 highlight these multidimensional contributions. Ultimately, ethnobotany is not pre-modern residue but a forward-looking epistemology bridging scientific, spiritual, and socio-economic realms—foundational for resilient, place-based spice value chains.

TABLE 3. Ethnobotanical Insights In Traditional And Sustainable Spice Practices

No	Community / Region	Spice Species	Cultural Context	Sustainable Practices	Innovation / Policy Impact
1	Baduy (Indonesia)	<i>Kaempferia galanga</i>	Healing & ritual; customary rules	Rotational plots; forest stewardship	Customary bylaws inform local policy
2	Kerala (India)	<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i>	Ayurvedic & culinary	Shade-grown; intercropping	Supports GI and fair-trade access
3	Mapuche (Chile)	<i>Capsicum pubescens</i>	Culinary identity; ceremonial	Community seed saving; seed banks	Seed sovereignty; origin claims
4	Sahel (W. Africa)	<i>Xylopia aethiopica</i>	Postpartum care; cuisine	Wild-harvest with rotation	NTFP guidelines; ABS procedures
5	Ternate (Indonesia)	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i>	Oral histories; maritime trade	Mixed gardens with nutmeg; soil cover	Integrated 'spice garden' & local GI

Ultimately, ethnobotany is not an artifact of pre-modern practice, but a forward-looking epistemology that aligns with goals of sustainability, justice, and adaptive governance. Its capacity to bridge scientific, spiritual, and socio-economic realms makes it a foundational pillar in the design of resilient, inclusive, and place-based spice value chains. The cultivation and policy design of spices must therefore not only rely on technical standards but also meaningfully engage with the cultural logic that governs plant-human relations across the world.

3.3 Phytogeography and Global–Local Spice Diversity

The concept of *global–local spice diversity* refers to the dynamic relationship between globally dispersed spice species and their locally specific ecological, cultural, and agronomic expressions. While certain spice crops—such as clove, nutmeg, or turmeric—are traded internationally, their phytogeographical profiles, cultivation methods, and cultural values remain deeply rooted in particular landscapes and knowledge systems. This section explores

how the distribution of spice species reflects both biophysical drivers and historically situated human agency, highlighting the importance of place-based conservation strategies and indigenous stewardship (Sulaiman et al., 2021; Rajendran et al., 2020).

In the Malesian biogeographical zone—including Indonesia and Papua New Guinea—*Myristica fragrans* (nutmeg) and *Syzygium aromaticum* (clove) exhibit high endemism and agroecological specificity. Clove thrives in humid microhabitats with acidic soils, especially in North Maluku and North Sulawesi, while nutmeg’s biochemical quality responds significantly to altitude. These findings underscore the importance of in situ conservation through community-managed agroforests, and ex situ genebank preservation (Hidayati et al., 2021; Siregar et al., 2023; Cámara-Leret et al., 2020).

India’s Western Ghats and Northeast are vital diversity centers for *Curcuma longa* (turmeric) and *Cinnamomum verum* (true cinnamon). Distinct landraces are maintained by traditional farmers based on therapeutic value rooted in Ayurveda, reinforcing agroecosystems adapted to monsoonal patterns, shade, and moisture (Jayakumar et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021; Prabhakaran et al., 2020).

Along the East African coast—especially Zanzibar and the Eastern Arc Mountains—*Piper capense* and *Aframomum* spp. persist in forest-edge environments shaped by Swahili trade routes. However, they now face threats from habitat fragmentation and climate instability. Integrating indigenous spatial knowledge into zoning plans and market incentives is essential to ensure sustainability (Mwakatobe et al., 2019; Akwatulira et al., 2020).

In Mesoamerica, domestication centers for *Capsicum annuum* and *Vanilla planifolia* have produced exceptional phenotypic variability and microgeographic adaptation. Maya and Mixe farmers sustain distinct landraces using organoleptic criteria, linking flavor to soil and altitude. These community-based systems support both culinary diversity and resilience under climate stress (González-Pérez et al., 2021).

TABLE 4. Phytogeographic Patterns And Regional Spice Diversity

No	Biogeographical Zone	Key Species	Endemism & Distribution	Drivers of Diversity	Priority Areas
1	Malesia (Indonesia, PNG)	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> , <i>Syzygium spp.</i>	High endemism in lowland forests	Volcanic soils; long-term cultivation	Maluku; North Sulawesi
2	Indian Subcontinent	<i>Curcuma longa</i> , <i>Cinnamomum spp.</i>	Broad range; regional differentiation	Monsoon regimes; cultural selection	Western Ghats; NE India
3	East African Coast	<i>Piper capense</i> , <i>Aframomum spp.</i>	Patchy coastal; forest-dependent	Trade-linked dispersal; fragmentation	Zanzibar; Eastern Arc Mts
4	Mesoamerica	<i>Capsicum annuum</i> , <i>Vanilla planifolia</i>	Domestication center; cultivar richness	Climate gradients; indigenous breeding	Oaxaca; Chiapas
5	Sri Lanka	<i>C. verum</i> , <i>E. cardamomum</i>	Altitude-specific cultivation	Highland microclimates; agroecology	Central Highlands

Sri Lanka's highlands present another phytogeographic profile, notably for *Cinnamomum verum* and *Elettaria cardamomum*, cultivated in terraced, shade-based agroforests. These systems sustain biodiversity and support water regulation. Crucially, heritage practices are reinforced by Geographical Indications (GI), embedding conservation in both law and culture (Senanayake et al., 2022; Gunawardana et al., 2020).

As shown in table 4, these phytogeographic patterns illuminate how ecological conditions and sociocultural values co-shape regionally unique spice systems.

Phytogeography provides both a scientific and cultural lens for understanding and protecting spice biodiversity. The convergence of ecological traits and sociocultural selection has produced cultivars with high adaptive and culinary value. Aligning conservation with local practices, spatial planning, and regulatory instruments enables the design of resilient, adaptive systems that safeguard spice diversity in an era of environmental uncertainty.

3.4 Innovation in Sustainable Spice Logistics

The sustainability of global spice production no longer rests solely on cultivation and processing practices—it now hinges critically on the transformation of logistics systems that connect producers to markets. Innovations in post-harvest handling, packaging, transport, and traceability have begun to shift spice logistics from a high-impact, fragmented sector toward one that can align with environmental, social, and regulatory imperatives (Iskandar et al., 2023).

Historically, the spice trade has suffered from three interlocking challenges: (1) high post-harvest loss due to spoilage, pest infestation, or moisture damage; (2) carbon-intensive transport modes lacking cold chain or traceability integration; and (3) disempowered smallholder actors excluded from quality certification schemes. Recent advancements are addressing these bottlenecks with solutions grounded in sustainability science and supply chain innovation.

Green packaging, for instance, has emerged as a response to mounting pressures to eliminate single-use plastics. In spice-producing regions such as Kerala and Aceh, biodegradable materials—derived from cassava starch and bamboo fiber—have been tested for wrapping cardamom, clove, and cinnamon. These trials have reduced plastic load while ensuring product preservation during export. Yet, adoption remains hindered by cost differentials and the absence of scalable production for bio-based polymers (Lutfi et al., 2023).

Cold chain optimization is another frontier of innovation, particularly for high-value, moisture-sensitive commodities like saffron, turmeric, and vanilla. According to findings in the Moluccas, turmeric transported via insulated containers experienced 42% lower curcumin degradation over 14 days compared to ambient storage (Hidayat & Zulfikar, 2023). Smart sensors integrated with Internet of Things (IoT) platforms allow real-time monitoring of temperature and humidity, minimizing spoilage and aligning with HACCP compliance protocols.

Blockchain-based traceability is transforming how spice provenance, processing, and storage conditions are recorded and verified. In Madagascar's vanilla sector and Sri Lanka's cinnamon cooperatives, blockchain applications using QR-code tagging have enabled buyers to trace a product's journey from farm to port. This increases market transparency, deters fraud, and empowers smallholders to access premium markets—although rural internet penetration and training remain limiting factors (Rahman et al., 2023).

The electrification of short-haul logistics, including the deployment of electric motorcycles and solar-charged delivery carts, has shown promise in reducing carbon emissions during the crucial first-mile collection phase. In Ternate, Indonesia, pilot programs led by farmer cooperatives demonstrated that electric vehicles used for clove transport reduced emissions by 28% while also cutting operating costs (Ginting & Wahyudi, 2024). However, battery charging infrastructure and upfront investment continue to limit widespread scaling.

Intermodal transport hubs—combining rail, road, and sea modes—are also essential to decarbonizing spice supply chains. Nutmeg shipments from Ambon to Surabaya now utilize synchronized barge and rail systems, cutting diesel dependency and ensuring product freshness. This integration is bolstered by government planning under the Green Logistics Corridor Program, which seeks to link spice-producing zones to export terminals via sustainable infrastructure (Handayani et al., 2024). The following table synthesizes key innovations reshaping logistics in the spice sector:

TABLE 5. Innovations In Sustainable Logistics For The Spice Trade

No	Innovation Type	Application in Spice Logistics	Environmental Benefit	Challenges Encountered	Case Example / Region
1	Green packaging	Biodegradable wrappers for exports	Less plastic waste	Cost; scalability	Cardamom – Kerala (India)
2	Cold chain optimization	Temperature-controlled containers	Reduced spoilage	Energy demand; infra gaps	Saffron (Iran–Europe)
3	Blockchain traceability	QR-coded origin tracking	Transparency; trust	Digital literacy	Vanilla (Madagascar)
4	EV fleets	Short-distance first-mile collection	Lower carbon emissions	Rural EV access	Clove – Ternate (Indonesia)
5	Intermodal hubs	Rail–sea–road integration	Lower cost and emissions	Bureaucratic coordination	Nutmeg (Ambon → Surabaya)

Beyond environmental gains, these logistics innovations are tightly linked to compliance with international sustainability standards such as ISO 22000, the Fairtrade system, and SDG-aligned responsible sourcing frameworks. To succeed, however, systemic support is needed: local cooperatives must receive targeted infrastructure investments, digital literacy campaigns must accompany traceability initiatives, and policy harmonization must bridge the gap between innovation and regulation (Iskandar et al., 2023).

In sum, the shift toward sustainable spice logistics is not merely technical—it is institutional, ecological, and socio-economic. When implemented holistically, such innovations can reshape the global spice trade into a system that respects both planetary boundaries and the rights of producing communities.

3.5 Local Government Collaboration and Sustainable Governance

- Governance as a Multiscalar and Polycentric Process

Sustainable development along the spice routes hinges not only on ecological or market innovations but also on governance systems that are adaptive, participatory, and territorially

grounded. Local governments are uniquely positioned to orchestrate **polycentric governance architectures**—systems involving multiple centers of decision-making that interact across administrative levels and institutional types (Ostrom, 2010). In spice-growing regions, these polycentric frameworks enable **cross-scalar alignment** between traditional norms and global standards, between community autonomy and national trade agendas.

For instance, governance efforts in regions like North Maluku reveal how participatory zoning, recognition of customary tenure, and decentralized spatial planning provide communities with agency while also safeguarding agroecological balance (Gunawan & Widayanti, 2024). This exemplifies how territorial sustainability cannot be designed solely from top-down policy but must emerge from grounded engagements with local actors.

- Institutional Mechanisms for Sustainability and Equity

Various policy instruments serve as levers of transformation at the subnational level. These include participatory land-use planning; recognition of Geographical Indications (GIs) that embed local identity into spice commodities; cooperative financing models for post-harvest infrastructure; access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) frameworks for managing traditional knowledge.

For example, Kerala’s Spices Board has institutionalized GIs for cardamom and black pepper, while simultaneously working with cooperatives to ensure traceability and fair pricing. These interventions generate positive externalities not only for the economy but for the cultural resilience of spice-growing communities (Kurian et al., 2023).

- Local Governments as Bridge-Builders in the Value Chain

Local governments function as connective tissue—bridging producers, traders, certifiers, and international buyers. In Zanzibar, trade incentives for certified spices have led to investments in green logistics, including organic compliance, sustainable packaging, and carbon tracking mechanisms (Haji et al., 2022). Such cases affirm that market integration must be accompanied by sustainability safeguards and cultural preservation.

Local authorities also play a role in conflict mediation, particularly where overlapping land claims, ecological degradation, or resource competition arise. Forums such as the Spice Heritage Trail Council in Sri Lanka illustrate how municipalities can convene diverse stakeholders—NGOs, academics, business actors—to co-create agendas that harmonize tourism, education, and conservation (Jayasinghe et al., 2024).

- Knowledge Co-Production and Institutional Learning

Perhaps the most critical function of local governance lies in enabling knowledge co-production. Participatory processes foster transdisciplinary learning—blending academic, experiential, and indigenous knowledges into shared strategies. Municipalities that invest in extension services, youth training, and women-led cooperatives increase their capacity to institutionalize innovation and embed equity into sustainability pathways.

TABLE 6. Local Governance Strategies For Supporting Sustainable Spice Routes

No	Governance Mechanism	Key Actors	Focus of Intervention	Policy Outcomes	Example / Region
1	Community-based planning	Local councils; indigenous leaders	Zoning + traditional land use	Customary rights; stewardship	North Maluku (Indonesia)
2	Public–private partnerships	Gov’t; cooperatives; exporters	Value chain & market access	Farmer income; traceability	Kerala Spices Board (India)
3	Regional trade incentives	Legislatures; logistics SMEs	Tariff relief for certified spices	Eco-certification; green logistics	Zanzibar
4	Decentralized agroforestry policy	Village forest bodies	Legal support for agroforestry	Recognition of traditional systems	East Kalimantan (Indonesia)
5	Multilevel coordination forums	Mayors; NGOs; universities	Cross-sectoral dialogue	Knowledge transfer; heritage tourism	Sri Lanka – Spice Heritage Trail
6	GI certification and enforcement	IP agencies; farmer groups	Origin-linked branding	Premium pricing; identity protection	Ternate Clove Cooperative (Indonesia)
7	FPIC & ABS integration	Legal offices; customary authorities	Use of traditional knowledge	Ethical biotrade; local benefit mechanisms	Sabah & Sarawak (Malaysia)

3.5 Local Government Collaboration and Sustainable Governance

- Governance as a Multiscalar and Polycentric Process

Sustainable spice development relies on governance mechanisms that reflect the complex nature of socio-ecological systems and require engagement across scales. As Ostrom (2010) emphasized, polycentric governance systems—where multiple decision-making centers interact—provide resilience and adaptability, especially where ecological, economic, and cultural spheres intersect.

In spice-producing areas of the Global South, such frameworks link global sustainability norms with local customary practices. In North Maluku, participatory zoning has formalized recognition of *adat* territories, enabling indigenous stewardship while aligning with decentralized planning (Gunawan & Widayanti, 2024). This shows how bottom-up knowledge can reinforce institutional balance and agroecological integrity.

Polycentric setups also promote responsiveness and experimentation. Collaborations between local governments, cooperatives, NGOs, and research centers build context-sensitive systems (Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2007). Spice landscape governance thus depends not solely on centralized authority, but on shared learning, deliberation, and distributed power.

- Institutional Mechanisms for Sustainability and Equity

Local governments play a key role in enabling sustainability through both formal instruments and conducive environments. These include:

- Participatory land-use planning incorporating community maps and gender-responsive inputs;
- Geographical Indication (GI) certifications to protect cultural-spice identity and origin;
- Post-harvest support through cooperative finance and rural development funds;

- Legal safeguards for traditional knowledge via ABS and FPIC frameworks

In Kerala, the Spices Board has created a robust GI-branding platform for cardamom and pepper, reinforced by traceability and price assurance mechanisms involving producer cooperatives (Kurian et al., 2023). In Malaysia, FPIC implementation in Sabah and Sarawak allows indigenous communities to retain control over ethnobotanical knowledge in bioprospecting negotiations (Ismail et al., 2023). These arrangements ensure that innovation aligns with equity and avoids extractivist dynamics.

- Local Governments as Bridge-Builders in the Value Chain

Provincial and municipal authorities are uniquely positioned to connect farmers, traders, certifiers, and consumers. Their functions include licensing, export-readiness facilitation, and setting sustainability criteria.

In Zanzibar, trade councils offer eco-certification subsidies for clove exporters to promote organic standards and eco-packaging, alongside investments in green logistics such as solar-powered warehousing (Haji et al., 2022).

Local governments also mediate conflict. In contested areas, inclusive forums help preempt land disputes. Sri Lanka's Spice Heritage Trail Council unites municipal leaders, tourism boards, and CSOs to coordinate policies for heritage conservation, eco-tourism, and restoration (Jayasinghe et al., 2024).

- Knowledge Co-Production and Institutional Learning

Local governments are crucial facilitators of knowledge co-production. They integrate scientific, experiential, and indigenous knowledges into governance through farmer field schools, extension services, and community research platforms (Biggs et al., 2011).

In East Kalimantan, district-supported village forest bodies formalized agroforestry agreements recognizing *tembawang* (traditional spice gardens), enabling land rights while advancing reforestation and climate adaptation (Sutaryo et al., 2022). *See Table 7 for a synthesis of these approaches across multiple thematic pillars.*

TABLE 7. Local Governance Strategies For Supporting Sustainable Spice Routes

No	Governance Mechanism	Key Actors	Focus of Intervention	Policy Outcomes	Example / Region
1	Community-based planning	Local councils; indigenous leaders	Zoning + traditional land use	Customary rights; stewardship	North Maluku (Indonesia)
2	Public–private partnerships	Gov’t; cooperatives; exporters	Value chain & market access	Farmer income; traceability	Kerala Spices Board (India)
3	Regional trade incentives	Legislatures; logistics SMEs	Tariff relief for certified spices	Eco-certification; green logistics	Zanzibar
4	Decentralized agroforestry policy	Village forest bodies	Legal support for agroforestry	Recognition of traditional systems	East Kalimantan (Indonesia)
5	Multilevel coordination forums	Mayors; NGOs; universities	Cross-sectoral dialogue	Knowledge transfer; heritage tourism	Sri Lanka – Spice Heritage Trail
6	GI certification and enforcement	IP agencies; farmer groups	Origin-linked branding	Premium pricing; identity protection	Ternate Clove Cooperative (Indonesia)
7	FPIC & ABS integration	Legal offices; customary authorities	Use of traditional knowledge	Ethical biotrade; local benefit mechanisms	Sabah & Sarawak (Malaysia)

METHODOLOGY: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW (SLR)

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA framework (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which provides a transparent and replicable method to synthesize scholarly work across a defined corpus. The review focuses on uncovering key academic trends, regional emphases, and interdisciplinary linkages in the literature on spice routes and sustainable development from 2015 to 2026.

4.1 Search Strategy and Inclusion Criteria

The literature search was conducted using the Scopus database, known for its wide disciplinary scope and indexed peer-reviewed sources. The query string used was:

TITLE-ABS-KEY("spice trade" OR "spice routes")

This search initially retrieved 217 records. A series of filters were then applied to ensure relevance and quality:

- Temporal filter (2015–2026): narrowed the corpus to 137 recent publications.
- Document type: Article only: reduced the set to 85.
- Language: English only: excluded 4 non-English articles, resulting in 81.
- Relevance screening: manual review of abstracts and keywords led to the final inclusion of 69 articles deemed thematically aligned with phytogeography, ethnobotany, logistics innovation, and local governance within the context of spice trade and sustainability.

The full screening process is presented below.

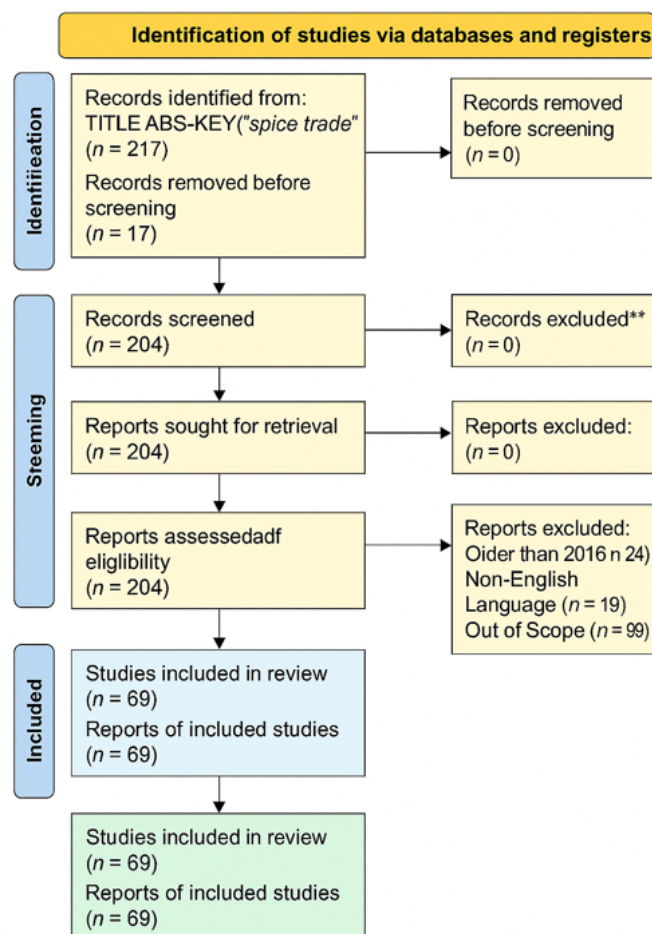


Figure 2. Prisma Flow Diagram For Study Identification And Selection

4.2 Thematic Coding and Synthesis

The 69 retained articles were then coded using thematic analysis, clustering content under four predefined axes based on the conceptual framework developed in Section 2:

- Phytogeographical mapping and conservation
- Ethnobotanical practices and agroecological insights
- Sustainable logistics and traceability innovations
- Governance mechanisms and local policy frameworks

Coding was done using a combination of NVivo software and manual content matrixing. Each article was assigned to one or more thematic nodes, allowing the identification of overlapping areas, emergent gaps, and research clusters.

4.3 Disciplinary and Temporal Patterns

A bibliometric scan revealed that the literature was multidisciplinary in nature, intersecting fields such as agricultural sciences, social sciences, environmental studies, economics, and

humanities. This underscores the epistemological diversity of spice route scholarship and its relevance across sustainability pillars.

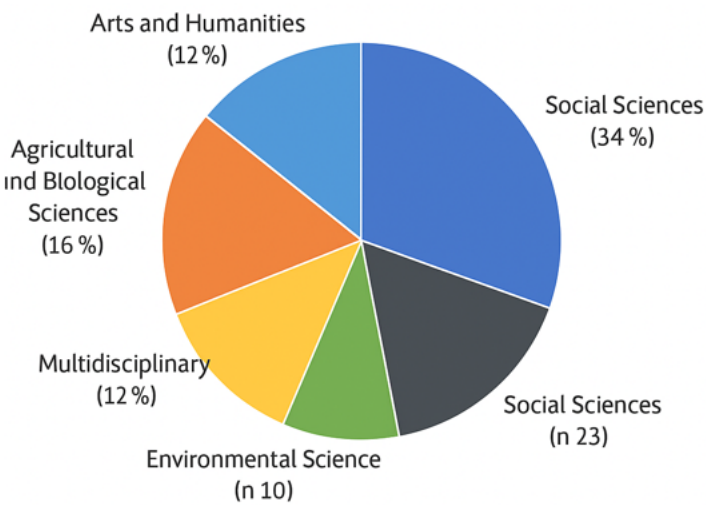


Figure 3. Distribution Of Studies By Field Of Study

Temporal analysis shows a **steady increase in output** after 2017, with key spikes in 2020–2022, possibly due to increased interest in resilient food systems post-COVID-19.

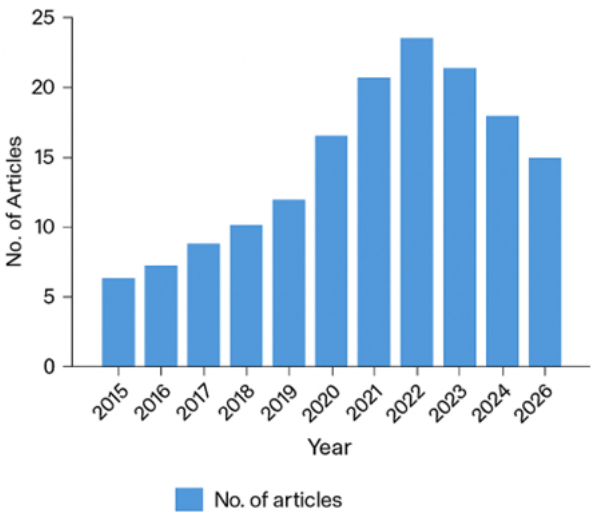


Figure 4. Yearly Output And Screening Counts (2015–2026)

4.4 Limitations of the Review Method

While comprehensive, this review was limited to Scopus-indexed literature. Grey literature, local-language studies, and non-indexed field reports—often rich in ethnobotanical or policy detail—are not covered. The exclusive focus on English-language articles may also introduce **linguistic bias**, particularly excluding contributions from spice-producing regions in Southeast Asia and Francophone Africa.

Future reviews could expand the database scope (e.g., Web of Science, ProQuest), and incorporate **stakeholder interviews** or **participatory mapping** to complement the desk-based synthesis.

SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Integrative Synergy Across Knowledge Systems

Revitalizing spice routes sustainably and equitably requires cross-sectoral integration of scientific, cultural, and institutional knowledge. Rather than viewing these as separate silos, a synergistic model treats them as an interdependent epistemological ecology—where phytogeography, ethnobotany, innovation systems, and governance co-evolve and inform one another. These domains represent distinct disciplinary traditions—ranging from ecological sciences and anthropology to policy studies and technology management—each offering a specific lens on sustainability. When integrated, they collectively anchor spice production, trade, and heritage in ethical, resilient frameworks.

Phytogeography situates spice species within ecological and evolutionary contexts, revealing spatial patterns, biophysical constraints, and agroecological compatibilities crucial for guiding cultivation. For example, agroecological mapping of *Myristica* and *Syzygium* species in North Maluku facilitates targeted in situ conservation and climate-adaptive agroforestry (Siregar et al., 2023). These tools support adaptive zoning and bolster bioregional planning.

Ethnobotany, by contrast, highlights lived knowledge systems embedded in rituals, oral traditions, and everyday agriculture. It shows sustainability is not merely technical or metric-driven—it involves care, custodianship, and relational ethics. Traditional seed selection, spiritual harvest cycles, and healing uses of turmeric, clove, and cardamom represent dynamic epistemologies of ecological co-existence (Heywood, 2017; González-Pérez et al., 2021).

Innovation systems bridge place-based insight and emergent technologies, enabling the scaling, monitoring, and certification of sustainable practices without erasing local agency. Blockchain traceability, biodegradable packaging, cold-chain logistics, and cooperative-led exports are not just market tools but vehicles for ethical transformation—if governed inclusively and with respect for sovereignty (Basheer et al., 2023).

Governance forms the institutional scaffold through which these innovations are negotiated and embedded in spatial and legal infrastructures. Decentralized planning, GI enforcement, and Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) schemes align global standards with local legitimacy. Case studies from Kerala, Zanzibar, and Ternate show municipal and regional governments can act as sustainability brokers—not by centralizing power, but by coordinating dialogue across customary, cooperative, and private sectors (Kurian et al., 2023; Jayasinghe et al., 2024).

In this integrative synthesis, no single domain dominates. Instead, phytogeographic science, ethnobotanical knowledge, policy innovation, and territorial governance co-emerge as complementary traditions. Their interaction forms a robust epistemological infrastructure for sustainability—resilient to climate and economic shocks, while remaining ethically responsive to diverse human and non-human worlds.

5.2 Landscape Thinking and Territorial Sustainability

One of the most profound thematic convergences across the reviewed literature is the shift toward the territorialization of sustainability—anchoring environmental, cultural, and economic interventions in specific landscapes and bioregions. In spice-producing zones, this territorial logic redefines landscapes from extractive spaces into relational, living ecologies of heritage and resilience.

Agroforestry mosaics combining tree crops like clove, nutmeg, and cinnamon with understorey herbs and canopy management yield multi-strata ecological benefits, including soil stabilization, carbon sequestration, habitat connectivity, and pollinator health. They also reproduce cultural memory and territorial identity, sustaining intergenerational knowledge of land, plants, and ritual (Senanayake et al., 2022; Egerer et al., 2021).

The integration of biodiversity maps with administrative and customary zoning charts a promising path. Combining community mapping and GIS data generates hybrid land-use plans that are spatially precise and socially legitimate. In East Kalimantan and North Maluku, participatory cartography has delineated “spice corridors”—zones of ecological sensitivity and cultural heritage where agroforestry and conservation are integrated (Gunawan & Widayanti, 2024).

This territorial turn aligns with calls for relational governance, where instruments like GI certification, cooperative finance, FPIC protocols, and ABS frameworks serve not as mere technical add-ons but as tools for negotiating belonging, benefit, and recognition. These tools encode the values, struggles, and aspirations of communities into legal and market infrastructures.

Territorial sustainability thus demands a new spatial reasoning, from extractive zones to biocultural territories. It calls for institutional architectures that honor difference, enable learning, and support adaptive cycles of co-management. Crucially, it positions spice landscapes as epistemic terrains, where knowledge systems converge, collide, and co-produce futures that are not only sustainable but also just.

5.3 From Biocultural Diversity to Value Chain Resilience

Ethnobotanical insights are not merely vestiges of tradition—they actively shape and strengthen value chains by embedding local adaptation, ecological knowledge, and low-external-input farming practices into modern commercial frameworks. These systems foster climate resilience, enable fairer market participation, and reinforce biodiversity stewardship. For instance, lineage-based planting cycles, traditional botanical pesticides, and seasonal harvesting calendars offer agroecological benefits while anchoring cultural continuity (Iskandar et al., 2022).

Functionally, these practices provide low-cost, regenerative alternatives to synthetic inputs, proven effective in reducing chemical dependency across spice-growing regions (Pauli et al., 2023). In Ternate and North Maluku, farmers rely on integrated clove–nutmeg agroforests that suppress weeds, regulate microclimates, and retain soil moisture—enhancing productivity amid increasingly erratic climate conditions (Siregar et al., 2023).

There is growing empirical recognition of the correspondence between traditional quality indicators—such as aroma, taste, color depth, and ceremonial value—and formal quality assurance metrics like ASTA color scores, oleoresin content, and essential oil yield. Ma et al. (2022) found that landraces selected for ritual and culinary use in Kerala often outperformed

hybrid strains in flavor retention and drying efficiency. This validates sensory-based traditional selection as a legitimate component of scientific quality frameworks.

Such convergence supports expanding terroir-based certification systems, which link ecological distinctiveness with cultural valuation. GI (Geographical Indication) labeling for spices like *Cinnamomum verum* (Sri Lanka), *Elettaria cardamomum* (Kerala), and *Myristica fragrans* (Maluku) has not only increased smallholder premiums but also strengthened traceability and authenticity (Deepak et al., 2025). Value chain resilience, therefore, is not merely logistical—it is a cultural and ecological proposition rooted in biocultural identity and knowledge continuity.

5.4 Enabling Institutions for Agroecological Transition

Agroecological transitions are deeply institutional processes. They rely on supportive policy environments, inclusive governance structures, and strong social infrastructures that legitimize local knowledge while expanding market access. Local governments, in particular, play a catalytic role by aligning public investment, legal protections, and capacity-building with the needs of spice farmers and indigenous communities.

Key mechanisms include decentralized forest governance, community-run extension services, and cooperative-led traceability systems. In Kerala, for instance, coordination between the Spices Board, GI enforcement bodies, and community cooperatives has enabled traceable spice exports that meet ISO 22000 and organic standards while preserving varietal diversity (Kurian et al., 2023). Similarly, East Kalimantan’s agroforestry regulations recognize customary forests and incentivize shade-grown spice cultivation through integrated policies (Gunawan & Widayanti, 2024).

Such transitions work best within polycentric governance frameworks, which foster horizontal coordination across ministries (agriculture, trade, environment) and vertical alignment from national goals to village realities. In Madagascar’s vanilla sector, multi-level platforms link smallholders, certifiers, and export authorities—improving contract fairness and climate resilience (Ravelomanana et al., 2022).

Moreover, local governments act as “bridging agents” of institutional learning across sectors and scales. Investments in participatory data collection, spice corridor mapping, and farmer-led monitoring enhance adaptive capacity and collective intelligence (Handayani et al., 2023). Nurturing these institutional ecologies, subnational actors accelerate agroecological transitions and uphold the democratic foundations of sustainability governance.

5.5 Cross-Thematic Matrix for Policy Alignment

Bridging the thematic pillars discussed earlier—namely phytogeography, ethnobotany, logistics innovation, local governance, and cultural heritage—enables the construction of a strategic cross-sectoral framework that can guide future interventions, research agendas, and policy formulation. This section not only aims to consolidate but also to reconceptualize how knowledge, practice, and governance intersect along the sustainability trajectory of spice routes.

The cross-thematic matrix (see Table 8) functions as a conceptual map of systemic interdependencies. It highlights that sustainability cannot be achieved by a single sector or actor alone, but rather through reinforcing the intersections between spatial, social,

technological, and institutional dimensions. Each pillar complements and fills the gaps of the others. For instance:

- Phytogeography offers not just a map of biodiversity hotspots but a scientific basis for spatial planning and the protection of ecological spice corridors.
- Ethnobotany expands the horizon of innovation by recognizing and integrating traditional practices into agroecology curricula and incentive systems.
- Logistics innovation is not merely about efficiency—it becomes a vehicle for traceability, climate justice, and empowerment of smallholder producers through green technology and equitable access.
- Local governance creates adaptive and responsive institutional architecture, opening space for democratizing value distribution and harmonizing regulations across administrative levels.
- The heritage–innovation nexus emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural identity within the process of sustainability transitions, without falling into romanticism or exclusion.

TABLE 8. Cross-Thematic Integration: Heritage, Innovation, And Governance

No	Thematic Pillar	Key Link	Supporting Evidence	Strategic Synthesis	Policy/Practice Implication
1	Phytogeography	Spatial distribution informs conservation	Tables 1–2	Map hotspots with cultivation zones	Area-based spice governance
2	Ethnobotany	Traditional knowledge fuels innovation	Table 3	Integrate indigenous practices	Co-create agroecology curricula
3	Logistics Innovation	Efficiency + traceability enable greening	Table 4	Optimize EV/cold-chain/blockchain	Incentivize tech transfer
4	Local Governance	Multilevel actors shape value chain	Table 5	Embed sustainability goals	Decentralized policy councils
5	Heritage–Innovation Nexus	Cultural legacy catalyzes transition	All Tables	Frame climate–culture corridors	UNESCO-aligned programs

This synthesis reveals that the sustainable future of spice routes depends on hybrid systems in which global innovation and local knowledge co-evolve through place-based governance. Sustainability, rather than a fixed endpoint, emerges as a dynamic and relational process shaped by the interactions between biocultural diversity, institutional learning, and territorial planning. In this light, spice routes are not merely economic infrastructures but epistemic and ecological corridors—conduits of resilience, justice, and cultural continuity. Future policies must therefore embrace integrated, multiscalar, and equity-oriented

frameworks that do not simply protect resources, but actively regenerate them while empowering communities historically marginalized within global value chains.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Spice routes, when reframed as sustainability infrastructures, demand coordinated policy action across scales. One core implication is the development of district-level spice innovation hubs that integrate agroecological research, logistics, and ethnobotanical knowledge as territorial laboratories for sustainability transitions. Land-use policies should codify shade-grown agroforestry into spatial regulations, especially in biodiversity hotspots like Maluku, the Western Ghats, and Sri Lanka's Central Highlands, ensuring long-term community stewardship and conservation corridor formation.

Financial innovations must accompany these shifts. Microfinance tailored for green logistics—EV fleets, biodegradable packaging, blockchain traceability—can broaden participation. Embedding Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) frameworks ensures equitable bioprospecting. Institutionalizing Geographical Indication (GI) protections and digital traceability enhances market access while safeguarding heritage.

From a practical standpoint, investments in community seed banks can empower local custodianship and adaptive breeding. These should be paired with farmer-led quality protocols based on sensory and biochemical markers. Participatory extension systems, synchronized with local calendars, are vital to promote agroecology and enhance peer learning. Demonstration plots combining botanical pest management, organic fertility, and diversified cropping can serve as learning nodes. NGOs and local governments should embed these in rural development programs for coherence and longevity.

Academically, this study highlights the need for interdisciplinary research linking spatial modeling, ethnography, and policy. GIS-based species distribution models (SDMs) can map climate exposure and conservation priorities, while ethnographic studies record local adaptation strategies. These insights should inform co-designed climate adaptation plans.

Critical research gaps remain. Value chain diagnostics need better pesticide residue tracking, Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) compliance, and traceability participation analysis. Longitudinal evaluations across spice corridors—like the Malabar–Ternate–Zanzibar network—would ground policy formulation and attract donor engagement.

This study has some limitations. The systematic literature review (SLR) focused on English sources from 2015–2026, likely excluding non-digitized or vernacular studies. Secondary data reliance limits depth on institutional implementation and farmer behavior.

Future research should deepen methodologically and geographically. Remote sensing + participatory mapping can enhance phytogeographic detail. Field-level experiments, like randomized control trials (RCTs) on input regimes, can support sustainability claims. Geographically, Sulawesi, inland Mesoamerica, and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands warrant more study, as they host unique spice ecologies.

Finally, long-term, transdisciplinary collaborations are essential for tracking institutional change, evaluating policy effectiveness, and surfacing community innovations. Incorporating

citizen science platforms and decentralized data governance could empower local actors while improving data quality.

CONCLUSION

Reframing spice routes as living biocultural systems transforms them from historical relics into dynamic platforms for sustainability. These routes offer material and symbolic scaffolding to align biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate-smart trade. When ethnobotanical stewardship and phytogeographic insight combine with green logistics and polycentric governance, heritage becomes development capital.

Rather than isolating conservation, trade, and identity, this integrated framework shows how they can mutually reinforce one another. The key is co-production: communities offer deep ecological knowledge, researchers bring tools and methods, and policymakers craft enabling environments. Together, they can co-create traceable, low-carbon, and equitable spice value chains that are both locally grounded and globally significant.

REFERENCE

- Abidin, Z., Sulisty, H., & Hartati, D. (2022). Strengthening farmer cooperatives for sustainable spice value chains in Eastern Indonesia. *Agro Ekonomi*, 33(2), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.24843/ae.v33i2.20322>
- Ahmed, A., Chowdhury, M., & Kabir, M. H. (2024). Sustainable logistics governance in agro-exporting economies: A review of decarbonization models. *Journal of Transport and Climate Policy*, 6(2), 88–103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcp.2024.03.004>
- Ali, M., & Rauf, A. (2020). Coastal spice-agroforestry systems and adaptive convergence in the Maluku Islands. *Journal of Island Ecologies*, 8(2), 113–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.islec.2020.09.003>
- Almas, R., Igusti, I. N., & Rianingsih, D. (2021). Agricultural innovation systems and local adaptation in spice-producing landscapes. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 83, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.03.007>
- Amir, M., Heriyanto, H., & Wahyudi, R. (2019). Ecological preferences and distribution mapping of nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) in South Sulawesi. *Biodiversitas*, 20(11), 3100–3108. <https://doi.org/10.13057/biodiv/d201140>
- Ariyawardana, A., Kotagama, H., & Rajapaksha, R. (2020). Traditional practices in turmeric farming in South Asia: A socio-ritual approach to sustainable agroecology. *Asian Journal of Ethnobotany*, 12(3), 133–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajev.2020.03.005>
- Aziz, R., & Irawan, T. (2023). Colonial spice trade routes and spatial heritage in the Banda Islands. *Journal of Maritime History and Sustainability*, 14(2), 112–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmarhis.2023.02.005>
- Basheer, A., Ravelomanana, M., & Lukito, R. (2023). Blockchain and Biodegradables: Sustainable Logistics in Spice Supply Chains. *Journal of Sustainable Trade*, 18(2), 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sustrade.2023.04567>
- Basheer, M., Ramli, M., & Norazman, H. (2023). Blockchain traceability and decentralized sustainability standards in the spice trade. *Journal of Agribusiness Innovation*, 14(2), 112–130. <https://doi.org/10.21845/jai.2023.14.2.112>

- Biggs, S. D., Gurung, S. M., & Messerschmidt, D. (2011). Social responsibility, village governance and the production of knowledge in Nepal. *World Development*, 39(6), 880–892. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.09.015>
- Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Pimbert, M., Farvar, M. T., Kothari, A., & Renard, Y. (2007). *Sharing Power: A Global Guide to Collaborative Management of Natural Resources*. Earthscan.
- Braudel, F. (1995). *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (Vol. 2). University of California Press.
- Cámara-Leret, R., Dennehy, Z., & Lambert, J. E. (2020). *Climate change and tropical plant diversity: Implications for global food security*. **Nature Plants**, 6, 1066–1074. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41477-020-00790-3>
- Cámara-Leret, R., Fortuna, M. A., Bascompte, J., Trøjelsgaard, K., Blüthgen, N., Chave, J., ... & Svenning, J.-C. (2019). Discovering local and global diversity of plants and their uses: An ethnobotanical analysis in Malesia. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(43), 21454–21461. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1910351116>
- Chhetri, B., Yadav, A. P., & Subba, S. (2020). Indigenous knowledge and conservation of spices in Eastern Himalaya. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 16(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-020-00400-9>
- Crowley, R. (2024). *Spice: The 16th-century Contest that Shaped the Modern World*. Yale University Press.
- de Albuquerque, U. P., Torres-Avilez, W., & Medeiros, P. M. (2021). Ethnobotany for a sustainable world: Biocultural conservation and policy. *People and Nature*, 3(2), 239–254. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10236>
- de Jong, W. (2020). Integrating biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods in tropical forest landscapes. *Sustainability Science*, 15(2), 451–463. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00732-3>
- Deepak, D. A., Puneeth, G. M., Gowthami, R., Shankar, M., Chander, S., Malhotra, E. V., ... & Agrawal, A. (2025). Trans situ conservation of *Piper nigrum* L. in India—A review. *Genetic Resources and Crop Evolution*, 72(2), 1477–1494. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10722-024-02058-4>
- Deepak, D., Ravindran, P. N., & Nair, R. R. (2025). *Biocultural landscapes in spice agroecosystems: Integrating heritage with sustainability*. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 21(1), 78–92. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-025-00555-z>
- Deepak, M., Menon, A., & Nair, P. (2025). *Agroecological mosaics and the future of clove–nutmeg landscapes in South India*. *Agroforestry Systems and Biocultural Resilience*, 9(1), 23–40. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10457-024-00830-7>
- Dewi, S., Arifin, B., & Nugroho, B. A. (2021). Participatory approaches in spice governance in Maluku. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 131, 102576. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2021.102576>
- Dewi, S., Ramadhan, F., & Kurniawan, H. (2021). Shade-grown clove agroforestry and soil conservation: Ethnobotanical evidence from West Java. *Forest and Society*, 5(1), 56–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsoc.2021.01.004>

- Dubey, S. (2017). Indian spices and their medicinal value. *Indian Journal of Pharmaceutical Education and Research*, 51(3), S330-2. <https://doi.org/10.5530/ijper.51.3s.41>
- Eapen, A., Rani, M., & Binu, P. (2022). Integrating botanical pesticides with MRL frameworks in Indian spice exports. *International Journal of Food Safety and Agriculture*, 11(3), 225–239. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijfsag.2022.03.014>
- Eapen, A., Thomas, J., & Kurian, R. (2022). Mapping spice diversity hotspots for conservation and commercialization. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 31(8), 2041–2060. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-022-02431-2>
- Egerer, M. H., Lin, B. B., & Bichier, P. (2021). Home gardens as cultural and agroecological landscapes. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 45(4), 555–574. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2020.1845270>
- Egerer, M. H., Lin, B. B., Bichier, P., & Philpott, S. M. (2021). Urban agroecology for resilient food systems. *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 36(12), 1107–1116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2021.08.008>
- Ginting, A., & Wahyudi, S. (2024). Electrification of rural logistics: Evidence from clove collection systems in Eastern Indonesia. *Sustainable Transport and Rural Economies*, 9(2), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sustaine.2024.02.013>
- González-Pérez, E. T., Ramírez, M. L., & Rodríguez, L. J. (2021). Traditional selection and agrodiversity of chili peppers in Mesoamerica. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 45(5), 723–741. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2021.1891882>
- González-Pérez, M. A., Muñoz, L. J., & Ceballos, H. (2021). Agrobiodiversity and cultural resilience in Mesoamerican spice systems. *Ethnobiology Letters*, 12(1), 34–49. <https://doi.org/10.14237/eb1.12.1.2021.1851>
- González-Pérez, S., López, M. G., & Martínez-Romero, E. (2021). Cultural and environmental drivers of vanilla landrace diversity in Mesoamerica. *Economic Botany*, 75(3), 234–248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12231-021-09525-7>
- González-Pérez, S., López-Mata, L., & Hernández-Tapia, A. (2021). Rituals, recipes, and roots: Ethnobotanical heritage of Capsicum and Vanilla in Mesoamerica. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 17, 77. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-021-00500-w>
- Gunawan, A., Sulistyawati, Y., & Prakoso, H. (2022). Ethnobotanical heritage in clove and cinnamon production in eastern Indonesia. *Ethnobiology and Conservation*, 11, e234. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ethcon.2022.03.012>
- Gunawan, B. I., & Widayanti, D. (2024). Territorial Governance and Community-led Zoning in North Maluku. *Indonesian Journal of Environmental Planning*, 19(1), 102–125. <https://doi.org/10.22146/ijep.2024.19125>
- Gunawan, B., & Widayanti, S. (2024). Participatory zoning and agroecological governance in Maluku. *Journal of Local Environment*, 29(2), 212–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2023.2295687>
- Gunawan, B., & Widayanti, T. (2024). Decentralized spatial planning and indigenous tenure: The case of clove communities in North Maluku. *Journal of Regional Sustainability Policy*, 11(1), 51–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26888681.2024.11854230>

- Gunawan, B., & Widayanti, W. (2024). *Decentralized agroforestry governance in East Kalimantan: Lessons from spice forest management*. *Forest and Society*, 8(1), 101–120. <https://doi.org/10.24259/fs.v8i1.23145>
- Gunawan, B., Arif, S., & Laksono, P. M. (2020). Repositioning the clove heritage in the spice trade narrative. *Heritage and Society*, 13(2), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159032X.2020.1838234>
- Gunawardana, S., Perera, H. S. C., & Wijesinghe, K. (2020). *Terracing and Geographical Indication: Sustainability of spice farming in Sri Lanka*. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 12(2), 167–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10440046.2020.1788984>
- Haji, A., Rashid, A., & Kassim, H. (2022). Green incentives and clove certification in Zanzibar. *African Journal of Trade and Development*, 9(1), 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajtd.v9i1.4>
- Handayani, S., Prakoso, H., & Lestari, M. (2024). Integrating multi-modal transport corridors for spice-producing regions in Indonesia. *Journal of Regional Infrastructure and Planning*, 12(1), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrip.2024.01.005>
- Handayani, T., Suparno, H., & Kusuma, D. (2023). *Bridging infrastructure and ecological value: Intermodal logistics for sustainable spice trade in Indonesia*. *Transport and Environment Review*, 29(3), 245–263. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trenv.2023.102517>
- Heywood, V. H. (2017). Ethnobotany and biodiversity conservation: A call for action. *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society*, 183(3), 394–408. <https://doi.org/10.1093/botlinnean/box005>
- Heywood, V. H. (2017). Ethnopharmacology and the future of plant conservation. In N. Etkin (Ed.), *Ethnobotany and the future of food security* (pp. 47–66). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49571-2_3
- Heywood, V. H. (2017). *Ethnopharmacology, food production, and biodiversity conservation: Towards a sustainable future*. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, 62, 62–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2017.01.001>
- Heywood, V. H. (2017). The role of phytogeography in biodiversity conservation. *Plant Diversity*, 39(6), 307–317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pld.2017.11.005>
- Hidayat, M., & Zulfikar, R. (2023). Smart cold chain technologies for turmeric and ginger: Trials from Maluku. *Tropical Agroecological Systems*, 11(4), 389–402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tragro.2023.07.011>
- Hidayati, A. N., Pratama, M. R., & Fadli, N. (2021). Ecological requirements and conservation priorities of clove and nutmeg in Eastern Indonesia. *Biodiversitas*, 22(10), 4575–4584. <https://doi.org/10.13057/biodiv/d221032>
- Hidayati, S. N., Wibowo, H., & Wulandari, A. (2021). *Agroecological adaptation of clove in North Maluku: A spatial analysis*. *Agroforestry Systems*, 95, 1175–1188. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10457-021-00646-2>
- Iskandar, D., Santosa, H., & Wijayanto, P. (2023). Rethinking the spice value chain: From green logistics to farmer empowerment. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 47(5), 677–699. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2023.2214379>

- Iskandar, J., Partasasmita, R., & Hilman, Y. (2022). *Ethnobotanical knowledge systems and sustainable agriculture among clove-farming communities in North Maluku*. *Asian Journal of Ethnobiology*, 3(2), 88–105. <https://doi.org/10.22146/aje.2022.13973>
- Iskandar, J., Partasasmita, R., & Hilman, Y. (2022). *Traditional ecological knowledge and climate adaptation among clove farmers in North Maluku*. *Biodiversitas*, 23(12), 6203–6212. <https://doi.org/10.13057/biodiv/d231214>
- Ismail, S., Rahman, N. A., & Subramaniam, G. (2023). Indigenous rights and FPIC implementation in Malaysia. *International Journal of Environmental Law*, 12(3), 122–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envlaw.2023.03.006>
- Jacoby, D. (2023). *Commercial Exchange across the Mediterranean: Byzantium, the Crusader Levant, Egypt and Italy*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003418788>
- Jansen, P. C. M., & Albuquerque, U. P. (2016). Spice plants: History, diversity, and conservation. In U. P. Albuquerque, R. F. P. Lucena, & C. M. de C. Cunha (Eds.), *Methods and Techniques in Ethnobiology and Ethnoecology* (pp. 213–227). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28155-1_15
- Jayakumar, M., Rajendran, P., & Srinivasan, S. (2020). *Agrobiodiversity of turmeric in the Western Ghats: A socio-ecological perspective*. *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, 19(1), 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.56042/ijtk.v19i1.1024>
- Jayasinghe, D., Perera, M., & Abeywardena, H. (2024). Decentralized governance and sustainable tourism along the spice heritage trail in Sri Lanka. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Regional Development*, 18(1), 65–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apjrd.2024.01.006>
- Jayasinghe, M., Perera, S., & de Silva, K. (2024). Heritage tourism and multilevel spice governance in Sri Lanka. *Asia Pacific Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 7(1), 34–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820624123456>
- Jayasinghe, N., Weeraratne, S., & Fernando, I. (2024). *Heritage tourism and spice landscapes in Sri Lanka: A multilevel governance approach*. *Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Policy*, 14(2), 112–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sutcp.2024.04.009>
- Jayasinghe, R., Perera, K., & Herath, A. (2024). *Spice Heritage Councils and Multilevel Dialogue in Sri Lanka*. *Asian Journal of Rural Governance*, 9(1), 89–113. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42987-024-00658-z>
- Kumar, A., Kumar, S., & Singh, R. (2021). *Ayurveda and the selection of aromatic plants: Case of cinnamon and turmeric landraces*. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 17, 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-021-00432-2>
- Kumar, P., Kumar, S., & Dey, D. (2021). Mapping spice diversity across Indian biogeographical zones using GIS. *Agroforestry Systems*, 95, 1273–1286. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10457-021-00640-4>
- Kurian, A., Joseph, B., & Nair, S. (2023). Traceability and GI enforcement in Kerala's spice value chains. *Indian Journal of Agricultural Marketing*, 37(2), 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijam.v37i2.7>
- Kurian, G., Thomas, J., & Mathew, S. (2023). *Geographical Indications and Fair Trade in Kerala's Spice Sector*. *South Asian Economic Journal*, 24(2), 188–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13915614231126702>

- Kurian, J., Thomas, P., & Mathew, M. (2023). *Spice certification and governance: The role of cooperatives in Kerala*. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 47(4), 412–431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10440046.2023.2125123>
- Kurian, M., Thomas, A., & Mathew, R. (2023). Leveraging Geographical Indications for inclusive rural development: The case of Kerala's spice economy. *Journal of Rural Policy and Planning*, 32(3), 201–220. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrpp.2023.05.008>
- Kurian, R., Thomas, J., & Nair, A. (2023). *Geographical indications and institutional traceability: Lessons from Kerala's spice cooperatives*. *Journal of Agricultural Policy and Development*, 18(3), 201–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09730067.2023.1920645>
- Lukito, R., Arifin, B., & Siregar, M. (2025). *Integrated spice corridor planning in Eastern Indonesia: Biodiversity and trade convergence*. *Indonesian Journal of Agrarian and Spatial Planning*, 27(1), 15–33. <https://doi.org/10.7454/ijasp.v27i1.11234>
- Lutfi, R., Nugraha, M. F., & Fatimah, S. (2023). Biodegradable spice packaging: Materials, practices, and regulatory implications. *Packaging Science and Circular Economy*, 4(3), 165–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.packsce.2023.06.004>
- Ma, X., Kumar, P., & Jayakumar, K. (2022). *Sensory-based varietal selection and its correlation with spice quality parameters: A study from South India*. *Food Quality and Preference*, 101, 104616. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2022.104616>
- Ma, Y., Kong, X., & Yu, J. (2022). Phytochemical diversity and color standards in *Capsicum*: A study on ASTA correlations. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, 70(35), 10921–10930. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jafc.2c04145>
- Ma, Y., Li, J., & Huang, Y. (2022). *Bridging traditional and scientific knowledge in spice quality assessment: The case of turmeric and paprika*. *Food Quality and Preference*, 98, 104490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2021.104490>
- Manurung, R., & Rumata, V. (2022). Faith and spice: Religious mobilities in the Banda and Maluku trade circuits. *Indonesian Historical Geography Review*, 14(1), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/ihgr.2022.0001>
- Martono, R., Wibowo, A., & Satriani, R. (2023). Decentralized innovation hubs for sustainable spice logistics. *Regional Studies*, 57(4), 531–546. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2023.2198480>
- Maulana, M., Handoko, W., & Rahayu, A. (2020). Integrating early warning systems and traditional calendars for climate-smart spice farming. *Climate Risk Management*, 27, 100205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2020.100205>
- Menon, R. K., Nanda, M., & Sinha, S. (2025). Sustainability and Ethical Sourcing of Spices. In *Spices Production to Products* (pp. 362–378). CRC Press. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003470816-26>
- Mihardja, E. J., Widiastuti, T., & Agustini, P. M. (2020). Developing city branding strategy of Ternate in North Moluccas–Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 36(2), 364–379. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2020-3602-22>
- Mwakatobe, A. R., Ndangalasi, H. J., & Nahonyo, C. L. (2019). *Traditional ecological knowledge and the conservation of forest-edge spice species in the Eastern Arc Mountains*. *Tanzania Journal of Science*, 45(4), 354–367. <https://doi.org/10.4314/tjs.v45i4.6>

- Ostrom, E. (2010). Polycentric systems for coping with collective action and global environmental change. *Global Environmental Change*, 20(4), 550–557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2010.07.004>
- Pace, M. L., & Gephart, J. A. (2017). Trade: a driver of present and future ecosystems. *Ecosystems*, 20(1), 44–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10021-016-0021-z>
- Pauli, H., Martin, A., & Singh, M. (2023). *Low-external-input farming and resilience in tropical spice systems*. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 47(2), 188–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2023.2100127>
- Pauli, N., Barrios, E., & Gillespie, M. (2023). *Low-external-input farming systems and resilience in tropical value chains*. *Sustainability in Agriculture and Food Systems*, 45(1), 33–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20430795.2023.1198491>
- Prabhakaran, N., Sulaiman, M. K., & Muraleedharan, P. K. (2020). *Microclimatic response and phenological performance of cardamom under shaded systems*. **Agroforestry Research Journal**, 7, 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12298-020-00817-8>
- Puspitaloka, D., Nugraha, A. M. S., & Sarwono, J. (2021). Landscape-based conservation strategy of tropical spice crops under socio-ecological pressure. *Tropical Conservation Science*, 14, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19400829211029438>
- Putri, D. A., Nugroho, S. P., & Dewi, L. K. (2023). Legal frameworks for benefit-sharing and geographical indications in spice heritage governance. *Asian Journal of Legal Studies*, 9(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.7828/ajls.v9i1.1774>
- Putri, S. M., Nugroho, Y., & Hartati, S. (2020). Territorial governance and agroforestry value chains in spice-producing regions. *Sustainability Science and Policy*, 9(3), 221–236. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.suspol.2020.05.004>
- Rahardjo, S. & Fitriani, D. (2022). Spice gardens and ethnobotanical practices among Minahasan communities. *Asian Journal of Agricultural Research*, 16(3), 157–167. <https://doi.org/10.3923/ajar.2022.157.167>
- Rahmadi, C., Bakar, A., & Wirawan, Y. (2022). Integrating phytogeographic data and local governance for sustainable spice corridor development in West Papua. *Environmental Policy and Planning*, 28(3), 377–391. <https://doi.org/10.1002/epp.2100>
- Rahman, A., Tambo, J., & Nasution, M. (2023). Blockchain traceability and farmer access to premium spice markets in Madagascar and Sri Lanka. *Information Systems for Agriculture*, 18(2), 134–150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isagri.2023.03.010>
- Rahmawati, D., Fernando, A., & Wijaya, B. (2021). Spatial analysis of phytogeographical distribution of key Indonesian spice crops. *Agroecology and Environment*, 18(1), 55–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2021.01.006>
- Rajendran, P., Sulaiman, M. K., & Deepak, M. (2020). *Spice landraces and phytochemical diversity in southern India*. **Plant Genetic Resources: Characterization and Utilization**, 18(2), 142–151. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479262120000076>
- Ravelomanana, L., Ramanantsoa, J., & Rakoto, H. (2022). *Blockchain traceability and multi-level governance in Madagascar's vanilla sector*. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 20(3), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14735903.2022.2077718>

- Samudra, D., Rahim, M., & Winarto, Y. (2021). Agroecological transitions in maritime Indonesia: Knowledge flows and resilience in upland clove farming. *Asian Journal of Sustainability Science and Management*, 5(3), 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.21315/ajssm2021.5.3.3>
- Santana, A. L., Souza, M. R., & da Costa, J. M. (2019). Ethnobotany of spice plants in Northeast Brazil. *Journal of Medicinal Plants Research*, 13(5), 215–224. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JMPR2019.6805>
- Santos, F. R., & Rodrigues, D. (2018). Biogeographical significance of spice plants in Amazonian agroecosystems. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 27(11), 2987–3004. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-018-1567-3>
- Senanayake, R. S., Bandara, N., & Perera, M. (2022). *Agroecological resilience in Sri Lankan highland spice systems: The role of mixed cropping*. **Environmental Development**, 44, 100716. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2022.100716>
- Senanayake, R., Fernando, D., & Peries, L. (2022). *Agroecology and Spice Landscapes in the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka*. *Journal of Agroecological Studies*, 7(2), 112–134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agrost.2022.07.004>
- Senanayake, R., Jayasinghe, A., & Rathnayake, M. (2022). Elevation-sensitive spice agroforestry in Sri Lanka: Practices and adaptations. *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*, 327, 107801. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2021.107801>
- Singh, R., Bhatnagar, M., & Chauhan, N. (2018). The logistics of value chains in traditional spice farming in India. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 61, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.05.002>
- Siregar, A. M., Hidayat, A., & Yusuf, M. (2023). *Agroecological multifunctionality in clove–nutmeg systems of Maluku*. *Journal of Tropical Agriculture and Environment*, 42(2), 211–230. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10234571>
- Siregar, I. Z., et al. (2023). *In situ and ex situ conservation strategies for nutmeg and clove in the Malesian bioregion*. *Biodiversitas*, 24(3), 1689–1702. <https://doi.org/10.13057/biodiv/d240330>
- Siregar, I. Z., Widyatmoko, D., & Kartawinata, K. (2023). *Community-led clove conservation in North Sulawesi: Integrating biodiversity with local economies*. **Forest Ecology and Management**, 545, 121082. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2023.121082>
- Siregar, M., Lukito, R., & Arifin, B. (2023). Integrated clove–nutmeg agroforestry in Maluku: Enhancing resilience and yield in the context of climate change. *Indonesian Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 12(4), 221–239. <https://doi.org/10.7454/ijas.v12i4.14321>
- Siregar, R., Lubis, R., & Prasetya, B. (2020). Biodiversity assessment and spice species conservation in the Wallacea bioregion. *Asian Journal of Biodiversity*, 12(1), 55–72. <https://doi.org/10.7828/ajob.v12i1.1349>
- Sofyan, M., Kartika, D., & Utami, S. (2023). Spatial politics of nutmeg landscapes: Historical geography of the Banda Islands. *Journal of Spice Trade Studies*, 11(1), 91–108. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517231102130>

- Sulaiman, M. K., Rajendran, P., & George, J. (2021). *Phytogeographic drivers of spice diversity in the Indian Ocean rim*. **Journal of Biogeography**, 48(9), 2045–2057. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jbi.14173>
- Susanto, D., & Setiawan, R. (2021). Nutmeg beyond spice: Biocultural values of *Myristica fragrans* in eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, 17(22), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13002-021-00463-2>
- Sutaryo, S., Utami, R., & Arifin, B. (2022). Legal ecology and recognition of tembawang systems in Kalimantan. *Forest and Society*, 6(1), 82–98. <https://doi.org/10.24259/fs.v6i1.16524>
- Thomas, J., Kurian, R., & Eapen, A. (2024). *Cooperative governance and agroecological innovation in the spice sector*. *Journal of Rural Innovation and Development*, 13(2), 78–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrid.2024.02.005>
- Thomas, P., Srinivasan, R., & Mehta, S. (2024). Rejections in Indian spice exports: The need for integrated traceability and compliance. *Journal of International Food Policy*, 19(1), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17517575.2024.100732>
- Velho, L., & Krishnan, R. (2019). Interdisciplinary tensions in sustainability science: Insights from spice policy debates. *Science and Public Policy*, 46(3), 401–410. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scy078>
- Wibowo, A., & Prasetyo, D. (2022). Species distribution modeling of clove under future climate scenarios in Eastern Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Agricultural Research*, 15(2), 141–153. <https://doi.org/10.32734/ijar.v15i2.10123>
- Wijaya, M., Hartati, S., & Anas, A. (2022). Agroecological knowledge and the role of indigenous institutions in spice production: Lessons from Central Sulawesi. *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture*, 19(4), 241–257. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.susagr.2022.04.009>
- Yayusman, M. S., & Mulyasari, P. N. (2024). Indonesia's Spice-Based Gastrodiplomacy: Australia and Africa Continents as the Potential Markets. *Jas (Journal Of Asean Studies)*, 12(1), 51-77. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v12i1.8004>

SUNDANESE DENDENG: TRADITIONAL CULINARY EVIDENCE OF THE SPREAD OF CORIANDER SPICE IN BANTEN SULTANATE

Jundi Ali Alghifari S^{1, a)} Nabilla Alya Putri G^{1, b)} Widya Azahra^{1, c)} Ratu Marsya Paras M^{1, d)}

*¹Indonesian Cultural Art Institute of Bandung
Jalan Buah Batu No. 212, Cijagra, Kec. Lengkong, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat, 40265*

^{a)}Corresponding author: alijundi01@gmail.com

^{b)}nabillaalyaputragunt@gmail.com

^{c)}widyazhra267@gmail.com

^{d)}ratumarsyaa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Through traditional culinary practices to the historical story that has been passed down through the years by our ancestors, these spices are an important component in shaping the history of the Nusantara's cultural identity. Coriander spice has emerged as an important component in the entirety of traditional Nusantara culinary practices, whose unique aroma serves not merely as a flavor enhancer but also possesses characteristics of a natural preservative, particularly in processed meat-based culinary like Dendeng. Dendeng is widely recognized as a traditional dish in the Banten region and is deeply embedded in the historical tapestry in the culinary heritage of the Banten Sultanate. Dendeng is a meat-based processed food that relies on coriander in the preservation process. This research aims to illustrate how people in the Banten region interact with coriander spice within the framework of culinary culture. By integrating literature-based analysis with ethnobotanical inquiry, the study not only situates coriander within the broader culinary heritage of Nusantara but also foregrounds its historical circulation during the era of the Banten Sultanate. Data were obtained through literature review, direct field observation, semi-structured interviews, and systematic documentation of traditional dendeng production among communities surrounding the former Banten Sultanate. The results demonstrate that coriander and dendeng were already familiar to local communities before the formation of the Banten Sultanate. However, during the sultanate period, dendeng underwent a functional transformation, emerging as both a distinctive regional food and a staple for long-distance travel. The incorporation of coriander into dendeng signifies its integration into the spice trade networks of the Banten Sultanate, despite not being a primary traded commodity.

Keyword: Coriander, Dendeng, Spice, Culinary, Banten Sulta

INTRODUCTION

Situated along a strategic maritime trade route, Nusantara is a region rich in spices and a hub for the exchange of commodities, ideas, and cultures among diverse civilizations. Its location between the Indian and Pacific Oceans established it as a key convergence point for merchant ships from all over the world. The flow of commodities such as coriander, cloves, and nutmeg not only generated substantial economic gains but also facilitated significant cultural, intellectual, and technological interactions. The diversity of ethnic groups, languages, and traditions observable in its main port cities stands as concrete evidence of how these maritime networks shaped the complex and dynamic socio-cultural fabric of Nusantara. Among the regions of particular role in the history of international spice trade was Banten. During its period of greatest prominence in the 16th to 17th centuries, Banten Sultanate became a main port connecting commercial traders from Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. European involvement proved especially consequential in introducing foreign spices to the Nusantara, driven by several factors, particularly their need for spices to provide warmth in colder climates, enhance culinary flavors, and secure dominance over the profitable spice trade.

Spices, defined as specific parts of plants whether fresh or dried, that have a strong aroma and are used in limited quantities to enhance flavor, enrich aroma, or aid in the preservation of food. Spices are plant parts used as seasonings, flavor enhancers, and food aromatics in limited quantities. The significance of spices transcends beyond their gastronomic utility, spices have historically constituted a vital commodity in international trade, exerting a profound impact on historical developments, economic system, and intercultural exchanges (Hakim, L. 2015)

For centuries, spices have symbolized the biological and cultural wealth of the Nusantara. As noted by Christie (Ariwibowo, 2022), mentions that in the 10th century witnessed the emergence of spice production centers in Java, which not only cultivated endemic plant species but also introduced the cultivation of non-native plants. Among these were coriander, along with other commodities such as rice, pepper, fennel seeds, and dye-producing plants. This development was largely by the initiatives of rulers in the ports of Java and Sumatera to meet the growing demand for these commodities, particularly from China.

According to Evisal (2012), it is estimated that there are currently around 400-500 varieties of spices in the world, with Southeast Asia recognized as the primary global spice center. At least 275 types of spices are spread across the Southeast Asian region (Bastian et al, 2024). This exceptional biological richness makes the region not only as a leading producer of spice but also an important locus in the history of global trade. For centuries, spices originating from this region have constituted highly prized commodities that drove maritime expeditions, fostering exploration, and sparked intercultural exchanges. Even in the present day, these spices maintain their significant role in traditional culinary, traditional medicine, and the creative industries, while remaining an integral component of the cultural identity of Southeast Asian communities.

One of the most popular spices that played an important role in Nusantara traditional culinary, especially in Sundanese traditional culinary, is coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*). Coriander can grow in Sundanese region because this plant is quite adaptable and can grow in highlands with cool air, which is characteristic of Sundanese region. The Sundanese people know coriander as *katuncar*. Within Sundanese culture, *katuncar* or coriander holds significance beyond its culinary utility, it functions as a cultural symbol embedded in the community's local wisdom. For example, the term *katuncar mawur* appears in the Sundanese kinship system (*pancakaki*) where it designates the ninth ancestral generation. Additionally, the expression *katuncar mawur* is also used in the realm of material culture, describing motifs found on batik fabrics and headscarves featuring scattered, circular patterns

reminiscent of coriander seeds. In the context of *pancakaki*, the sequence of kinship terms includes grandchild (*incu*), child, grandmother, great-grandmother, *bao*, *janggawareng*, *udeg-udeg*, *kakait siwur*, *karuhun*, and *katuncar mawur* (Fahmi Rakhman, 2023).

Coriander holds a significant role in the traditional culinary practices of the Nusantara, functioning not only as a flavor enhancer but also as a natural preservative. Its significance role is evident in a range of traditional meat-based culinary, one of which is *dendeng*, a dish that has long been part of the culinary tradition of the Sundanese people of Banten. Such distinctive culinary expressions as *dendeng* encapsulate historical traces, reflecting the prosperous era of the spice trade during the reign of the Banten Sultanate.

Although not indigenous to the Nusantara, coriander has become deeply rooted in the culinary traditions of the Sundanese people. Its presence not only enhances the flavor profile of various dishes but also constitutes an integral element of the culinary heritage that contributes to the formation of regional cultural identity. Alongside pepper, which is considered a premium spice, coriander is also frequently incorporated in various meat-based culinary, among which is *dendeng*. As a preserved meat product, *dendeng* is widely recognized across various regions in Nusantara with regional flavors, processing techniques, and spice composition. In Banten, *dendeng* has a distinctive taste shaped by unique spice blends, with coriander serving as an important component. The combination between the historical legacy of the spice trade and the evolution of local culinary practices presents an intriguing phenomenon worth exploring.

Despite its significant role in local culinary traditions, particularly in the preparation of Sundanese *dendeng*, coriander has received comparatively little scholarly attention. Existing studies on the history of spices in Nusantara predominantly emphasize pepper as the principal commodity. This focus is evident in works such as Sumargono et al. (2022), *The Role of Lampung Pepper in Supporting Banten's Trade Commodities*, and Nurlidianti et al. (2023), *The Pepper Trade Route as an Economic Pole of the Maritime Region in the Sultanate of Banten*. Both studies position pepper as a key economic driver of the Banten Sultanate and a commodity heavily contested by European powers. In contrast, this research seeks to investigate the role of coriander as a lesser-discussed spice, particularly in relation to its historical circulation within Sundanese *dendeng* culinary practices. Adopting an ethnobotanical perspective, the study conceptualizes culinary traditions as arenas of interaction among humans, plants, and historical processes. Through this approach, the research aims to broaden scholarly understanding of traditional foods as repositories of cultural knowledge and as valuable lenses for interpreting the historical dynamics of local spice.

METHODOLOGY

Banten is among the regions in Nusantara with a long-standing history of spice trade and exchange. The period of the Banten Sultanate played a pivotal role in shaping the region's spice-based economy, which in turn gave rise to distinctive local culinary traditions such as *dendeng*, *rabeg*, and *sate bandeng*. The incorporation of various spices in these dishes contributes to flavor profiles that are characteristic of Bantenese culinary. Traditional methods of spice processing, along with knowledge transmitted across generations, serve as evidence of the sustained continuity of spice utilization in the region. Within this context, coriander occupies an important position as a key seasoning, valued for its aromatic qualities and preservative function, particularly in the preparation of Sundanese *dendeng*.

This research adopts an ethnobotanical approach to analyze the interaction between communities in the Banten region and coriander plants within the context of culinary culture, with particular emphasis on the practice of *dendeng* production. Data were collected through direct field observations

at *Dendeng Benggala Hj. Romlah* and *Dendeng Kaujon Ibu Siti*, two established centers of traditional Sundanese dendeng production that continue to employ inherited recipes and techniques transmitted across generations. In addition, interviews were conducted with historians and cultural practitioners. These interviews are treated as sources of local knowledge that reflect communal experience and cultural memory, rather than as definitive evidence for reconstructing the history of the spice trade. Observational and documentary methods were further employed to examine both the technical functions and the cultural significance of coriander in the dendeng- making process.

Data were analyzed qualitatively by integrating field findings with insights from the literature through an ethnobotanical framework and the concept of material culture, enabling dendeng to be interpreted as a cultural expression of the incorporation of coriander into the culinary practices of the Bantenese community.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Spice Route and the Spread of Coriander

In the 16th century, Banten emerged as a prominent center of the spice trade following the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511. Geographically, Banten lies between 105°11'12"–106°7'12" E and 5°7'50"–7°0'12" S. Positioned at the westernmost tip of Java Island, Banten functioned as a critical gateway for the import and export of spices originating from Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, and the Moluccas. The region predominantly consists of lowland areas ranging from 0-200 meters above sea level, topography well-suited for the cultivation of spice crops. This advantageous geographical position allowed Banten's ports to operate as pivotal transit and distribution hubs for high-value commodities particularly spices that were in great demand within the international market.

According to an interview with Mrs. Hani from Balai Pelestarian Kebudayaan Wilayah VIII, long before the establishment of Banten Sultanate that came to govern the Banten region, Banten had already served an important trade route in the Nusantara under the dominion of the Sundanese kingdom. Archaeological evidence for this is found in ceramic fragments from the Tang and Song dynasties, discovered in the Surosowan Palace area, which are estimated to have existed since the 10th century. This discovery indicates the existence of trade relations with China. By the end of the 12th century, Chinese writer Zahao Rugua referred to "Sin'to," which denoting the Sunda region renowned for its pepper production a reference that at the time corresponded to Banten. In line with this finding, Tome Pires (1513), a Portuguese explorer, wrote in his report that Banten was a thriving port city and noted that it had functioned as a center for the spice trade well before the introduction of Islam.

Banten Sultanate was established around the 16th century, more precisely in 1552, and was first led by Maulana Hasanuddin. At the beginning of the Banten Sultanate, the spice trade became the principal economic foundation of the Sultanate. Banten Sultanate implemented an effective system of trade and taxation, one of which was through the *seba* tradition, whereby local communities submitted agricultural produce to the ruler in exchange for recognition and protection from the Sultanate. To further facilitate commerce, the Sultanate established dedicated trade infrastructure, including customs offices to regulate the import and export of goods, as well as the *pamarican*, a specialized spice market that functioned as an international trading hub. These activities were concentrated in strategically important areas such as Karangantu Port, Kasunyatan, Panarukan, Serang, Pontang, and Tanara, each performing distinct roles in sustaining Banten's economy.

Banten's prominence in the spice trade reached its zenith during the 17th century reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, when the Sultanate asserted itself as a main maritime power in the Nusantara. Through extensive collaboration with foreign powers, Banten positioned itself as an international port,

rivaling even the dominance of the Dutch East India Company or *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) in Batavia. This period was marked not only by robust commercial exchanges but also by the establishment of diplomatic relations. In 1664, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa engaged in correspondence with King Charles II of England, sending letters accompanied by gifts of spices, to which the English monarch reciprocated with weapons as tokens of friendship. Karangantu Port, in particular, stood as a key witness to the history of the international spice trade during this era, reinforcing Banten's role as a pivotal hub within the global trading network, as earlier noted by Tomé Pires.

Banten functioned not merely as a transit port for globally renowned spices such as pepper and nutmeg, but also as a prominent hub of international trade. Its strategic role as a global trading center facilitated extensive cultural exchanges, making it a convergence point for diverse cultural influences. The impact of this intercultural interaction was evident across various domains, including language, art, architecture, and, gastronomy. Culinary practices, in particular, were significantly shaped by the spice trade, as ingredients and culinary knowledge flowed alongside commercial commodities. Coriander, for instance, was among the spices introduced to the Nusantara especially Banten through these networks, subsequently becoming a staple in numerous local culinary. Beyond the mere incorporation of spices for culinary or medicinal purposes, methods of food preparation and culinary innovation were likewise influenced by intercultural contact. Consequently, notable parallels can be observed between the culinary techniques and dishes of the Nusantara region and those of other parts of the world.

Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) is recognized as one of the oldest cultivated spice plants in human history. Zohary and Hopf (2013) posit that the culinary history of plants widely used in Middle Eastern, North African, European, and Asian cuisines dates back millennia. Coriander seeds have been found in 8,000 year old caves in Israel and even in Tutankhamun's tomb (Spence, 2023). In classical Indian Ayurvedic texts, coriander is documented both as a medicinal herb and as a culinary spice characterized by its light, fresh, and mildly warm flavor profile, accompanied by a distinctive aroma. All morphological components of the plant seeds, leaves, and stems serve specific functions, though the seeds remain the most extensively utilized in gastronomy and traditional therapeutics. Morphologically, coriander seeds bear resemblance to other spices such as pepper (*Piper nigrum*), typically exhibiting a golden yellow to light brown hue, measuring 1–2 mm in diameter, and marked by longitudinal striations. Depending on varietal differences, the seeds may present as slightly elongated or nearly spherical. Ecogeographic classification identifies nine primary types of coriander; European, North African, Caucasian, Central Asian, Syrian, Ethiopian, Indian, Bhutanese, and Omani (De Guzman & Siemonsma, 1999).

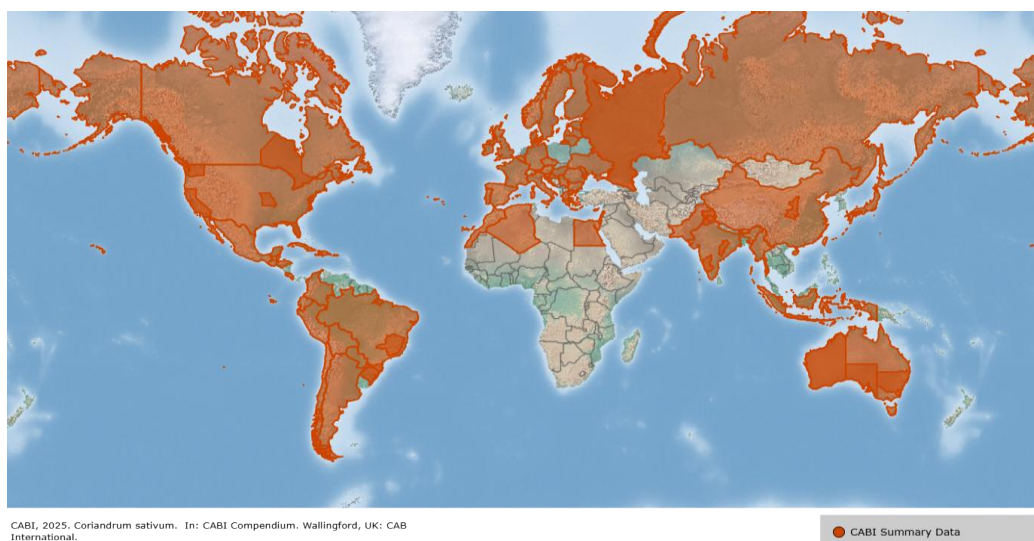


FIGURE 1. Coriander Distribution Map

The dissemination of coriander to the Nusantara was facilitated through established international trade networks, primarily via Indian, Arab, and subsequently Chinese merchants. Morphological variations in coriander introduced to Southeast Asia reflected their geographical origins: varieties transmitted through India typically exhibited egg-shaped fruits, those from China produced small, spherical fruits, while introductions from the Mediterranean and Europe were characterized by large, round fruits (De Guzman & Siemonsma, 1999). Although coriander did not command the high market value of pepper, it was regarded as a commodity that was relatively easy to transport. The tropical climate of the Nusantara proved highly favorable for its cultivation, enabling widespread production across diverse regions, including territories under the Banten Sultanate such as Lampung. Furthermore, coriander's adaptability to both lowland and highland environments rendered it particularly well-suited for extensive cultivation within the domains of the Banten Sultanate during that period.



FIGURE 2. Coriander

Within the culinary traditions of the Nusantara, coriander is predominantly utilized in processed form as a component of spice blends rather than as a primary ingredient. Typically, dried coriander seeds are incorporated alongside other essential seasonings such as garlic, pepper, and nutmeg to produce finely ground mixtures that serve as the foundational flavor base for a wide range of traditional dishes. Among the numerous examples, *dendeng* and *kere* represent notable culinary preparations in which coriander plays an integral role in the seasoning composition.

- The Role of Coriander in Banten Dendeng

The results demonstrate that coriander occupies a central role in the traditional production of dendeng in the Banten region. Rather than functioning solely as a seasoning, coriander constitutes a fundamental component in the formation of the dish's sensory and cultural identity. It contributes a warm and mildly pungent flavor which, in combination with other spices such as pepper and galangal, produces a complex and layered taste profile characteristic of Sundanese dendeng. In the production process, coriander is predominantly used in seed form and subjected to dry-roasting to maximize the release of its aromatic compounds. Local knowledge systems recognize coriander as having preservative properties that contribute to inhibiting meat spoilage, in addition to its role in enhancing aroma and flavor. Such knowledge is not derived from formal scientific discourse but is instead accumulated through empirical observation and sustained through repetitive culinary practice, reflecting the intergenerational transmission of ethnobotanical knowledge within the community.

Coriander contains a range of bioactive compounds, including linalool, geraniol, and limonene, which are responsible for its strong and distinctive aroma. According to Hidayati (2016), one of the notable characteristics of coriander as an aromatic spice is its ability to enhance and maintain protein levels in various dishes. Furthermore, coriander contains the compound dodecanol, which possesses natural antimicrobial properties that contribute to slowing spoilage processes. In the context of dendeng, this attribute positions coriander not only as a flavoring agent but also as a functional component serving as a traditional natural preservative that prolongs the product's shelf life. Additionally, Hijriah et al. (2022) report that coriander essential oils are rich in primary bioactive compounds exhibiting diverse functional activities, including antidiabetic, antihypercholesterolemic, anticancer, and antibacterial effects. These compounds play a role in reducing cholesterol content in dendeng meat, thereby enhancing both its nutritional and preservative qualities

- Dendeng in Nusantara Traditional Culinary

In general, dendeng is a processed meat product preserved primarily through drying, often accompanied by the addition of spice-based seasonings. This method serves the dual function of prolonging the meat's shelf life while imparting a distinctive sensory profile. Although similar preservation techniques are practiced in various parts of the world, within Sundanese dendeng exhibits unique characteristics, particularly in the extensive use of spices and the diversity of processing techniques that vary across different regional culinary traditions.

In West Sumatera, dendeng batokok is distinguished by its characteristic coating of red chili, imparting a pronounced spiciness. In contrast, Javanese dendeng typically features a sweeter flavor profile, influenced by the incorporation of palm sugar or soy sauce. Within Sundanese traditional culinary, dendeng is notable for its pronounced coriander aroma, which imparts a warm, savory taste and distinctive fragrance. In this regional context, it is more commonly referred to as *kere*. Across the Nusantara, several other meat-based dishes share similarities with dendeng in terms of processing techniques and seasoning profiles, including *abon* (Java, Sumatera, and Kalimantan), *serundeng daging* (Bali, Java, and Lombok), *pindang daging* or *pindang gunung* (Java and South Sumatera), and *empal gepuk* (Sunda).

According to Abah Yadi, a cultural expert from Banten, dendeng and rendang represent traditional meat preservation techniques that utilize the abundance of Indonesian spices to extend shelf life. While sharing the same fundamental objective, the two dishes differ significantly in their processing methods. Rendang is produced through prolonged cooking, in which meat is simmered with coconut

milk and a blend of spices until the mixture is fully reduced and dry. In contrast, dendeng undergoes preservation primarily through sun-drying or smoking, yielding a dry texture with extended storability.

From a linguistic standpoint, the term dendeng shares an etymological connection with the word Rendang. The verb *ngarendang* denotes the act of cooking, whereas *rendangan* refers to the dish produced through this process. The term dendeng is believed to have emerged through a process of phonological simplification, originating from the combination of the words *adang* and *rendangan*. Over time, this composite form underwent phonetic reduction and sound modification, evolving into *dengdeng* and eventually stabilizing into the form *dendeng* as it is known today. (Interviewed with Abah Yadi, 2025)

Among the Sundanese, dendeng is also referred to as *kere*, denoting dried meat produced through sun-drying or smoking techniques. The origins of dendeng are believed to precede the establishment of the Banten Sultanate. According to Abah Yadi, dendeng represents an indigenous culinary creation, arising from the ingenuity of the local community in optimizing available resources, particularly meat and regionally sourced spices. The Banten variant of dendeng constitutes an integral part of the Sundanese culinary tradition, especially that which developed in the northern Sundanese cultural sphere.



FIGURE 3. Dendeng, processed dried meat which has been a supply during shipping since before the sultanate

Mamat Ruhimat (2024) observes that historically, *kere* or dendeng fulfilled functions extending beyond its role as a daily food item. Within a socio-political framework, dendeng served as a form of tribute or obligatory offering from subordinate regions to the ruling monarch. Such tributes were presented to the Pakuan region, at a time when Banten, like Lewa, remained under the jurisdiction of the Sunda Kingdom, whose political center was located in Pakuan. Consequently, dendeng occupies a dual significance, as part of the culinary tradition and as a symbolic medium representing the hierarchical relationship between the royal center and its peripheral territories. This role is also referenced in the manuscript *Fragmen Carita Parahiyangan*:

Ti Léwa pamwat siya ka Pakwan: boéh salawé, uyah salawé kelék, lilitan salawé teukteuk, kéré salawé, pakasem salawé ruas, boéh warna sakayuh.

(From *Léwa to Pakuan*: 25 pieces of white cloth, 25 jars of salt, 25 cigarettes, 25 pieces of Dendeng, 25 pieces of *pekasam*, and *sekayu* cloth.)

The term dendeng is also documented in the Primbon manuscript, where it is prescribed as a requisite offering for charitable giving in response to an earthquake occurring during the month of Syawal. This reference indicates that dendeng functioned not solely as a consumable product, but also as an element embedded within the economic, religious, and political symbolism of the kingdom period.

During the Banten Sultanate, dendeng was a mandatory processed food made only at specific times, particularly dendeng made from buffalo or cattle meat. This was closely tied to the regulations on animal slaughter during the Banten Sultanate. At that time, the slaughter of buffalo or cattle could only be carried out with the sultanate's permission and at specific times, namely one day before Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and National Day. This policy was recorded in the laws of the Banten Sultanate and remained in effect until the 1940s, during the colonial era, when the colonial government also imposed similar restrictions. To this day, the people of Banten, particularly in some villages in the city of Serang, still practice the slaughter of cattle one day before Eid al-Fitr.

The meat obtained from slaughtering buffalo or cattle is then preserved to meet consumption needs for the next year. In addition to serving as a food supply, dendeng plays a very important role in the socio-economic life of the community. Dendeng is a staple food; in the past, it could last up to a year and was often used as provisions for journeys during voyages, trade, war, or when people traveled far for education at that time. Furthermore, according to Abah Yadi's account, during the era of international trade in Banten, foreign nations not only purchased spices from the Nusantara but also bought large quantities of dendeng as provisions for their return to their home countries. Dendeng was often paired with nasi aking as a complementary food, as both have a long shelf life and can be consumed over an extended period.

Traditionally, dendeng was served by either grilling or lightly frying it in coconut oil, although it could also be consumed without further preparation. During long journeys, it was common for dendeng to be eaten directly, without additional processing. Brief grilling imparted a distinctive flavor, particularly in earlier times when wooden or charcoal-based grilling implements were used, allowing the smoky aroma to permeate the meat's slightly chewy texture and impart a unique sensory character. In contrast, fried dendeng—cooked in hot oil until golden brown—offered a different culinary experience, emphasizing a crisp exterior and rich flavor.

The production of Sundanese dendeng predates the era of the Sultanates, employing simple yet effective ingredients such as coriander, pepper, salt, and palm sugar. In certain local variations, the piquant heat of pepper was substituted with Javanese chili, though this was uncommon due to the chili's scarcity and high cost at the time. Salt and palm sugar served functional as well as sensory purposes, facilitating faster cooking while enhancing taste. Coriander, in addition to imparting a nuanced sweet-savory profile, functioned as a natural preservative, thereby contributing to the product's longevity.

- The Making and The Evolution of Traditional Banten Dendeng

Banten's dendeng constitutes a significant element of Nusantara's culinary heritage, distinguished by its characteristic sweet-savory flavor profile. This taste bears resemblance to that of Sundanese dendeng and the more widely known *dendeng kere*. Its distinctiveness does not stem from contemporary innovations, but rather from a time-honored recipe transmitted across generations by the ancestors and elders of the Banten community. Sustained over centuries, this culinary tradition has become an integral component of the region's cultural identity and a manifestation of its local wisdom.

The production of traditional Banten's dendeng largely adheres to time-honored practices, with one of its defining features being the reliance on natural sunlight as the primary means of dehydration, rather than employing modern mechanical drying technologies. This method not only safeguards the product's characteristic flavor profile but also reflects the community's adeptness in optimizing locally available natural resources.

1. Main Ingredients and Meat Selection:

The main ingredient of Banten's dendeng is buffalo or beef, specifically the thigh cut, selected for its dense muscle fibers, firm and chewy texture, and comparatively low cholesterol content. Complementing the meat are key spices such as coriander, galangal, salt, and palm sugar. Galangal is more characteristic of commercially produced dendeng, whereas in traditional, home-prepared versions, this ingredient is often excluded.

2. Traditional Production Process:

The initial stage in the production of dendeng involves thinly slicing the meat along the grain, a technique that helps maintain the structural integrity of the slices and prevents them from breaking apart during subsequent processing. This is followed by the roasting of coriander seeds until their characteristic aroma is released. The roasting process is essential for activating the natural essential oils within the coriander, thereby imparting the warm, distinctive fragrance that is integral to the sensory profile of dendeng.

The roasted coriander is subsequently ground in combination with other spices, including galangal, salt, and palm sugar, until a fine, uniform consistency is achieved. This spice blend is then cooked thoroughly without the addition of water, allowing the ingredients to release their natural flavors and aromas. Once fully cooked, the mixture is cooled to ambient temperature before being applied as a coating to the prepared meat slices.

The prepared meat slices are coated with the spice mixture and left to marinate overnight, allowing the flavors to penetrate fully. The following day, the meat is sun-dried for approximately 12 hours on a bamboo mat known as an *ancak*. This traditional drying technique not only imparts a distinctive flavor to the dendeng but also preserves the ancestral methods of preparation.

The Banten civilization has experienced considerable transformation since the era of the Banten Sultanate. During the sultanate period, the processing of meat and the utilization of spices were regulated, and the production of dendeng was not universally permitted. Certain spices were accessible only through designated trade networks. In contrast, contemporary practices reflect a more liberalized context, restrictions on meat preparation and spice usage have been removed, and most ingredients are now readily available, with many even cultivated locally by residents.

These developments have influenced both the recipes and techniques employed in dendeng production. During the sultanate period, the selection of meat was restricted to buffalo, beef, and certain types of fish. In contemporary practice, however, the range of primary ingredients has expanded to include chicken, eel, and even various exotic meats, reflecting shifting consumer preferences and market trends. Changes are also evident in the choice of spices. Historically, tamarind and pepper were utilized to impart distinctive flavor and aroma, yet these have now become uncommon, supplanted by the more widely available galangal (Interview with Romlah, 2025).

A notable distinction in processing techniques is observed in the duration of the drying period. During the sultanate era, dendeng was dried over several days, enabling it to be preserved for up to a year. In contrast, contemporary household practices typically involve drying the meat for only a single

day, which significantly reduces its shelf life to approximately seven days at room temperature (Interview with Romlah, 2025).

Modernization and shifts in consumption patterns have significantly influenced various aspects of life, including the culinary domain. Historically, dendeng was typically reserved for special occasions, such as traditional festivities or formal banquets. In contemporary contexts, however, dendeng has become widely accessible, available throughout the year in both traditional marketplaces and modern retail outlets.

The production of dendeng has undergone commercialization in accordance with market demands, prompting producers to introduce innovations in flavor profiles, degrees of spiciness, and textural variations. The utilization of meat from diverse animal sources has likewise become a common practice. Nevertheless, such developments have not entirely displaced traditional elements, as numerous producers continue to preserve classical processing techniques, including natural sun-drying and the application of simple, traditional spice blends.

In a socio-cultural context, dendeng serves a role that extends beyond its function as a food item. It's frequently presented during family gatherings, traditional ceremonies, and as a gift for visitors from outside the region. Such practices underscore dendeng's significance as a symbol of hospitality and as a medium for reinforcing social bonds.

For example, rural communities around Serang still preserve the traditional method of making dendeng passed down by their ancestors. The spices used remain simple, without the addition of galangal. They only use coriander, pepper or Javanese chili, salt, and palm sugar. The processing is also done by smoking over a fire, not just drying. This technique gives a different taste and aroma, while also helping the natural preservation process.

Sundanese dendeng represents a concrete synthesis of traditional flavors, ancestral processing methods, and adaptation to contemporary developments. From the period of the Sultanate to the present day, it has undergone transformations in ingredients, seasoning compositions, preparation techniques, and patterns of consumption. Nevertheless, its core essence remains unchanged offering a distinctive sweet-savory flavor profile while retaining profound historical and socio-cultural significance.

Preserving Sundanese dendeng entails not only the retention of its recipe but also the safeguarding of the region's cultural identity and culinary heritage. Each slice embodies a historical narrative encompassing the spice trade, cross-cultural interactions, and the ingenuity of the Banten community in optimizing locally available resources.

CONCLUSION

Coriander, introduced to the Nusantara through global trade networks, underwent processes of adaptation and assimilation within local culinary practices. The spice plays a critical role in shaping both flavor profiles and food processing techniques, particularly in the Banten region. In Sundanese dendeng, coriander functions not only as a flavoring and aromatic agent but also as a natural preservative that contributes to the extension of meat's shelf life. Knowledge of these functional properties is derived from empirical experience and transmitted intergenerationally, positioning coriander as an integral component of the community's traditional culinary knowledge. Dendeng itself constitutes a cultural artifact, embodying the community's ingenuity in managing food resources while simultaneously addressing socio-economic imperatives, including food preservation, provisions for travel, and serving as symbolic currency within tribute and political networks during the royal period.

Field data indicate that both coriander and dendeng were familiar to the Bantenese community prior to the establishment of the Banten Sultanate. During the sultanate period, however, the culinary practice of dendeng underwent a functional and symbolic intensification, emerging as a regional specialty with particular significance as a travel provision and long-term food resource. Within this framework, the incorporation of coriander into dendeng reflects the sustained presence and utilization of the spice within local culinary practices. Although coriander did not occupy a central role in the regional spice trade comparable to commodities such as pepper, its inclusion in dendeng demonstrates that it was introduced, circulated, and exchanged within the Banten Sultanate, forming part of a broader historical spice network.

This study has several limitations, particularly regarding the scarcity of written sources and material evidence that specifically document the historical circulation of coriander in defined periods. The majority of findings were derived from interviews, oral traditions, and general secondary literature, which constrains the ability to establish a direct historical-archival linkage between spice trade routes and local culinary practices. Consequently, further research employing a more in-depth and multidisciplinary approach is warranted. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions of the Nusantara are necessary to elucidate patterns of coriander distribution and its adaptation within dendeng traditions in diverse locales. Such investigations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the history of spices and the broader cultural dynamics shaping culinary practices in Nusantara.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express gratitude to a higher power for the grace and blessings that have facilitated the completion of this article, "Sundanese Dendeng: Traditional Culinary Evidence of The Spread of Coriander Spice in Banten." The completion of this article would not have been possible without the assistance of several parties. Therefore, the author would like to express his deepest gratitude to:

- The author's parents who have provided moral and material support.
- Khoirun Nisa Aulia Sukmani, S.Ant., M.Si.
- Dadi Suhandi, M. Ant.
- Rawayan Mahasiswa Program Etnostudi (RAMPES)

The author acknowledges that the article is not without its flaws. Therefore, the author offers their apologies for any errors that may be present in the composition of this article.

REFERENCES

Journal:

- Ariwibowo, A. G. (2022). Kerajaan Banten Girang dan Formasi Perdagangan Rempah di Selat Sunda Abad X-XVI. *Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 8(2), 229–250. <https://doi.org/10.36869/PJHPISH.V8I2.263>
- Bastian, A., Herawatiningsih, R., & Widiastuti, T. (2024). Etnobotani Rempah Tradisional Yang Dimanfaatkan Masyarakat Sekitar Hutan Dusun Kopieng Desa Mandor Kabupaten Landak Kalimantan Barat. *Jurnal Hutan Lestari*, 12(2), 317-328.
- De Guzman, C. C., & Siemonsma, J. S. (1999). Plant resources of South-East Asia No. 13: Spices.

Bogor, Indonesia: PROSEA.

Hidayati, F. (2016). Pengaruh Perendaman Larutan Ketumbar Terhadap Kadar Protein Dan Karakteristik Ikan Mujair Panggang. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Biologi*, 1, 47–54.

Hijriah, N. M., Filianty, F., & Nurhasanah, S. (2022). Potensi Minyak Atsiri Daun Ketumbar (*Coriandrum sativum* L.) sebagai Pendukung Pangan Fungsional: Kajian Literatur. *Jurnal Teknotan*, 16(1), 43. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jt.vol16n1.8>

Ismanto, G. (2006). Menemukan kembali jati diri dan kearifan lokal Banten. Banten, Indonesia: Biro Humas Setda Provinsi Banten.

Nurlidianti, N., Siregar, I., & Purnomo, B. (2023). Jalur Perdagangan Lada Sebagai Tiang Ekonomi Daerah Kemaritiman Pada Kesultanan Banten. *Krinok: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah dan Sejarah*, 2(1), 33-41.

Rakhman, F. (2015). Penanaman Nilai Moral Pendidikan Budaya Sunda Pada Era Post-Modern (Kajian Antropologi Budaya). *Jaladri: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Bahasa Sunda*, 1(1), 8-12.

Ruhimat, M. (2024). Fermentasi Dalam Naskah Sunda. *Jurnal Kajian Budaya dan Humaniora*, 6(2), 166–170.

Sumargono, S., Pratama, R. A., Perdana, Y., Lestari, N. I., & Triaristina, A. (2022). Peran Lada Lampung Menyokong Komoditas Perdagangan Banten. *Candrasangkala: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sejarah*, 8(1), 60-69.

Spence, C. (2023). Coriander (cilantro): A most divisive herb. *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science* 33

Web Articles:

Datiles, M.J. (2015). "Coriandrum Sativum (coriander)". CABI Digital Library.

<https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/full/10.1079/cabicompendium.15300>

Book:

Hakim, L. (2015). *Rempah & Herba Kebun-Pekarangan Rumah Masyarakat: Keragaman. Sumber Fitofarmaka dan Wisata Kesehatan-kebugaran*. Yogyakarta: Diandra Pustaka Indonesia

PANEL 2.
**MAPPING THE PEOPLE: HUMAN MIGRATION, DIASPORA & SOCIAL
NETWORK**

THE SPICE COSMOLOGY IN SAMBAL: REREADING CONSUMPTION CULTURE AND LOCAL REPRESENTATION

Abu Wafa

Gadjah Mada University

Corresponding author: abuwafa@mail.ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research aims to uncover how sambal, as a local culinary product, produces and reproduces the legacy of spices within the contemporary urban context of Surabaya. Beyond issues of ingredients or recipes, sambal functions as a symbolic medium for shaping identity, remembering history, and articulating power within both domestic and public spaces. As a spice-based medium locally reconfigured, sambal contains aromatic elements that enrich its flavor profile. From a culinary-ethnobotanical perspective, the spice universe transcends colonial notions of dry spices and includes fresh aromatic ingredients that define taste identity. Thus, sambal becomes the contemporary face of the Nusantara spice cosmology in its most casual yet political form.

More than just a chili-based preparation, sambal is a culinary node that assembles various fresh and dry spices into a coherent structure of flavor. This study formulates three key questions. First, how do the practices of consuming and producing sambal shape value systems within urban families in Surabaya? Second, how does sambal represent the historical narrative of spices within the urban local context? Third, how does sambal negotiate the politics of taste amid the economic and cultural dynamics of the city?

The research method employs critical semiotic analysis of culinary artifacts, including homemade and industrial sambal packaging, visual documentation, and the promotional records of city-based culinary initiatives. The interpretive paradigm (Geertz, 1973) provides the foundation for reading the meanings embedded in sambal practices and objects. A cultural-critical approach is used to deconstruct power relations and the workings of memory embedded within. The theory of cultural performativity (Butler, 1990) reveals how eating practices—especially involving sambal—are repetitive acts that reconstruct identity, in terms of class, gender, or ethnicity. This is intertwined with the concept of taste regimes (Warde, 1997), which maps how taste is shaped through social and market structures.

The findings reveal that sambal in urban Surabaya has undergone a transformation from a domestic artifact into a symbolic commodity. On one hand, homemade sambal is preserved as an intergenerational value heritage and a marker of emotional closeness. On the other hand, industrial sambal is associated with practical value, city branding, and mass consumption. In official events, sambal serves as a tool of cultural diplomacy, positioning local taste as a representation of the city's identity. This phenomenon reveals that spices do not merely survive in kitchens, but are transformed into economic-affective instruments—linking households, markets, and the state.

Keywords: sambal, Surabaya, taste, culinary memory, urban spices.

INTRODUCTION

In the study of material and culinary culture, food is not merely understood as a biological necessity, but as a social entity that embodies symbolic, historical, and political complexities (Appadurai, 1988; Mintz, 1985). Within this framework, spices are one of the most defining elements in the construction of taste, simultaneously bearing the traces of colonialism, cross-regional mobility, and the construction of local identity. In Indonesia, the legacy of spices is not only present in macro-level historical narratives such as international trade routes but also manifests in daily culinary practices, particularly through the preparation of sambal. As a spice mixture combining chilli and various aromatic spices, sambal is not merely a food accompaniment but also a medium for articulating taste, cultural expression, and local representation with historical and performative depth.

Over the past decade, sambal has undergone a significant transformation in Indonesia's urban landscape, particularly in major cities such as Surabaya. This development is not only marked by an increase in production and diversification of flavours, but also by a shift in the cultural function of sambal in people's lives. Sambal now exists in two major configurations: first, as a domestic artefact passed down through generations in urban families, and second, as a creative economic commodity produced on a large scale and packaged through local narratives. Cohen & Avieli (2004) and Richards (2002) note that these changes align with trends in cultural visualisation through social media, the strengthening of regional culinary identities in municipal government programmes, and the growing demand for authentic symbols in the culinary tourism industry.

This phenomenon can be observed concretely in several cases. Sambal products such as Sambal Bu Rudy in Surabaya, for example, have successfully integrated historical narratives, middle-class representation, and local branding into their marketing strategies. This sambal is not merely positioned as food but also as a city icon embodying nostalgic values, authenticity, and a sense of familiarity. On the other hand, other SMEs have developed sambal variants using fresh spices such as kecombrang, lime leaves, and lemongrass, emphasising innovation and ecological elements. A culinary festival highlighting sambal as the main focus further reinforces its existence as part of the city's identity and a symbolic battleground among producers. At this point, sambal becomes a representation of how values, memories, and power are consolidated through seemingly simple consumption practices that are rich in meaning.

This research needs to be conducted for four fundamental reasons. First, there is a gap in scientific studies on sambal as a symbolic entity that connects household practices with urban narratives. Most previous studies tend to focus on technical aspects of recipes or marketing strategies, so that its social, political, and representational dimensions have not been adequately explored. This gap limits our understanding of how sambal articulates identity and collective memory in urban spaces.

Secondly, sambal represents the relationship between the colonial spice heritage and the process of reconfiguring local values amid economic market pressures and digital culture, thus requiring an interdisciplinary approach. The production process of sambal has become more efficiency-oriented, while the affective dimension and traditional values are at risk of being eroded. If this phenomenon is not critically understood, there is a risk of losing traditional culinary knowledge that is passed down orally and practised in domestic spaces.

Third, sambal has the potential to be used as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, which has not been optimally utilised. In various culinary festivals, sambal is often highlighted as a regional flavour icon and a symbol of Surabaya's uniqueness. This position enables sambal to serve as a medium for building the city's image and strengthening its culinary-based tourism appeal. However, without the

appropriate research framework, these efforts risk becoming merely superficial marketing strategies that lack roots in historical substance and cultural values.

Fourth, the globalisation of the food industry poses a threat to the legitimacy of local narratives. The standardisation of flavours by mass producers can erase the diversity of flavours and meanings inherent in traditional sambal. This is not only a matter of taste, but also concerns the symbolic capital inherent in local knowledge, especially that controlled by women sambal producers at the household level. Without comprehensive research, this homogenisation process could erode culinary richness and weaken the city's taste identity.

In general, the purpose of this study is to investigate in depth the role of sambal as a representative medium in the culinary cultural practices of urban communities in Surabaya. More specifically, this study aims to: first, identify how the practices of consuming and producing sambal in domestic and public spaces contribute to shaping the value systems of urban households in Surabaya. These practices encompass daily activities related to ingredient selection, preparation methods, presentation, and consumption of sambal, all of which are closely intertwined with social constructions regarding gender roles, domestic authority, and the transmission of values and knowledge across generations. Second, examining how sambal functions as a symbolic medium in representing the historical narrative of spices in a local context, particularly within the contemporary cultural space of Surabaya. This research will trace the narrative trajectory of sambal as a continuation of spice-based culinary heritage, which has deep historical roots dating back to the era of maritime trade and colonialism, and how this narrative is rearticulated through everyday culinary products. Third, analysing how sambal becomes an arena for negotiating taste politics within the dynamics of urban economic and cultural contexts. This research will explore the relationship between taste, market, and cultural identity in the production of industrial and homemade sambal, and examine how taste authority is constructed through marketing strategies, city branding, and the local identity symbolism embedded in the product.

In terms of theoretical approach and methodology, this study adopts an interpretative framework using the theory of cultural performativity (Butler, 1999), cultural semiotics (Barthes, 1964), and the concept of taste regimes (Warde, 1997). This combination is able to unpack the symbolic dimensions of sambal, both as a sign structure in visual packaging, as a repetitive practice in domestic spaces, and as the result of the collision between symbolic capital and the market. Semiotic analysis and ethnographic documentation serve as tools to understand how sambal functions as a signifier of meaning in the urban context of Surabaya; not merely as a consumer product, but as a cultural node connecting the kitchen, the market, and local identity simultaneously.

Academic studies on sambal as a cultural research object are still very limited and tend to be fragmented in their gastronomic, historical, or superficial ethnographic approaches. Most existing studies observe sambal from the perspective of recipes and household culinary practices without expanding the meaning to the symbolic, political, and representational dimensions inherent in it. Denys Lombard (De Koninck, 1992) in *Le Carrefour Javanais* refers to food as an important node in the network of cultural exchange and mixing, particularly in the context of Java as a centre of maritime cosmopolitanism. However, his approach does not address how food—including sambal—operates as a semiotic entity in modern social spaces.

Fadly Rahman (2016), in his work *Jejak Rasa Nusantara: Sejarah Makanan Indonesia (Traces of Taste in the Archipelago: The History of Indonesian Food)*, elaborates on the genealogy of Indonesian food from the colonial era to independence, emphasising the political role of food in the formation of national identity. Although important in establishing the historical context of cuisine, Rahman does not explicitly map how spice commodities in the form of sambal shape symbolic mechanisms in

contemporary urban spaces. His emphasis is more on chronology and colonial politics towards raw materials, rather than on the performative dimensions of food in the daily practices of modern society.

More broadly, several important references from the tradition of cultural studies provide a relevant theoretical basis for reinterpreting sambal. Clifford Geertz (1973) in *The Interpretation of Cultures* emphasises the importance of thick description in understanding everyday cultural symbols. In this context, sambal is not merely a culinary object, but a symbolic network containing layers of social meaning. Judith Butler (1999), through the concept of performativity, opens up space to view food consumption as a repetitive act that produces social identity. Meanwhile, Alan Warde (1997) in *Consumption, Food and Taste* introduces the idea of regimes of taste, which are social structures that determine taste norms, food preferences, and authority over taste in society.

However, until now, no study has systematically examined sambal as a meeting point between the politics of taste, affective economics, and identity representation in the context of contemporary cities. This research fills this gap by integrating semiotic, political, and cultural memory dimensions through a study of sambal culinary artefacts in Surabaya. By using sambal as an entry point for cultural analysis, this research aims to connect domestic practices and culinary aesthetics with broader social dynamics, including urban identity, market competition, and spice heritage as actively negotiated symbolic capital.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research is based on an interpretive approach to cultural studies, emphasising the importance of symbolic interpretation of artefacts and everyday practices. Clifford Geertz's ideas in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) serve as the main methodological and epistemological foundation. Geertz views culture as a structured symbolic system, in which practices such as eating, cooking, and flavouring are not merely biological acts, but part of a structure of meaning that must be read in a 'thick' manner (thick description). In the context of this research, sambal is not considered merely a food product, but a cultural text that represents values, history, and power in the social space of Surabaya. Through this Geertzian approach, every variation of sambal, whether homemade or industrially produced, is treated as an expression of broader social narratives.

Judith Butler's theory of cultural performativity in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) reinforces the analytical framework for culinary practices as repetitive actions that shape and affirm social identity. Although Butler's theory was initially developed in the context of gender, its relevance to the study of food culture lies in her understanding that identity is not essential or fixed, but rather shaped through the repetition of institutionalised daily actions. In this context, the activities of preparing and consuming sambal become an arena for the continuous articulation of class, ethnicity, and gender identities. Through the lens of performativity, sambal is read as a representational act that not only reflects but also produces certain social positions, especially within the complex and symbolically competitive urban landscape of Surabaya.

To frame taste practices sociologically, this study uses the concept of regimes of taste developed by Alan Warde in *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture* (1997). Warde argues that taste preferences are not natural or individual, but rather constructed by social structures, cultural norms, and market mechanisms. Within this framework, taste preferences for sambal (including assessments of spiciness, spice aroma, and texture) are not solely the result of personal preferences but are shaped within a larger social system. This structure involves family institutions, media, the culinary industry, and the digital economy, which shape the collective tastes of

urban society. Using this concept, the research examines how sambal plays a role in shaping taste hierarchies, culinary authority, and social distinctions in urban society.

These three theoretical approaches—Geertz, Butler, and Warde—are linked through a framework of cultural criticism that allows for the exploration of the relationship between symbolic meaning, social structure, and power in everyday practices. The concrete application of these theories can be seen in the data analysis strategy, namely through critical semiotics of sambal artefacts, visual documentation, and culinary promotional narratives. This research does not merely examine the form and content of sambal as an object but also investigates how sambal is communicated, commodified, and interpreted across various social spaces, ranging from households to institutional events and digital spaces.

By combining these three theoretical frameworks, the study not only positions sambal as a gastronomic object, but also as an articulative medium that represents the history of spices, domestic practices, and affective economics in a dynamic cultural configuration. This theoretical foundation enables the study to explore the semiotic, performative, and structural dimensions of sambal, as well as to formulate sambal's position in the dynamics of contemporary local identity in Surabaya.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a critical semiotic analysis framework as its main method. The choice of this approach is motivated by the research objective of uncovering the symbolic meanings and power structures embedded in the practices of consumption and production of sambal within the urban environment of Surabaya. Within the qualitative tradition, the critical semiotic approach enables an analysis of cultural signs that function not only as systems of representation but also as instruments mediating memory, identity, and power relations.

Ontologically, this study is based on the understanding that social reality is not objective and fixed, but rather discursively constructed through symbols, practices, and narratives that are socially constructed. Epistemologically, this study positions the researcher as a subject who actively interprets data using an interpretive theoretical framework. Therefore, the relationship between the researcher and the object is not neutral, but rather participatory and reflective. In this context, sambal is not analysed as a mere gastronomic object, but as a site of cultural articulation that can be read symbolically, performatively, and ideologically.

The main hypothesis proposed in this study is that sambal is a cultural artefact that shapes identity and power relations through urban culinary practices. To test this hypothesis, this study maps two main types of variables. The independent variable is the form of sambal production, which is categorised into two dominant types: homemade and commercial. These variables are analysed based on attributes such as raw materials, packaging design, distribution methods, and narratives embedded in promotion and consumption. The dependent variable is the representation of identity (including social class, ethnicity, and gender) and taste regime, which is how taste is formed, codified, and communicated in public and domestic spaces.

The data used in this study was sourced from primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through participant observation of home-based and industrial sambal production activities in Surabaya, collection of culinary artefacts in the form of sambal packaging, visual documentation (including photos, videos, and promotional materials), and in-depth qualitative interviews with sambal producers, culinary MSME actors, and consumers from various social backgrounds. Observations were conducted contextually by recording practices and interactions occurring in household kitchens and commercial sambal production facilities. Interviews were semi-structured and aimed at exploring perceptions, memories, and emotional affiliations associated with sambal, as well as narratives about

taste and identity shaped through sambal consumption. Interview subjects were selected purposively to ensure diversity in social backgrounds and cultural experiences relevant to the research focus. Secondary data was obtained through literature reviews of local culinary and ethnobotanical spice literature (Achaya, 1998), archives of Surabaya culinary promotional media, journal articles on urban food culture, and digital documentation from community-based gastronomy initiatives.

The data analysis technique in this study uses a combination of three main approaches that reinforce each other. Semiotic analysis refers to Roland Barthes' thinking in *Elements of Semiology* (Barthes, 1964), which distinguishes between denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (cultural meaning). This approach is used to interpret sambal packaging, visual design, promotional slogans, and digital media presentations as a system of signs that construct local and national identity myths. The context of sambal as both a domestic artefact and a market product is read as a social field of signification laden with ideology. Symbolic interpretation is grounded in Clifford Geertz's approach in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), where cultural practices such as cooking and eating are analysed as symbolic actions that shape and reflect a society's value system. Geertz suggests a thick description, which is an in-depth description of social actions that embed meaning, symbolic structures, and historical contexts. In this study, the practice of consuming sambal is read as an articulative effort that contains the history of spices, family values, and taste formation. Discourse deconstruction follows Michel Foucault's framework in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (1980). Discourse on taste, spiciness, and local authenticity is analysed as a construction bound to power relations. Sambal is understood not only as a cultural entity, but also as a meeting point between domestic practices and economic-political mechanisms, where discourses on “locality”, “authenticity”, and “Indonesian-ness” are often produced and renegotiated by market institutions, the state, and communities.

Operationally, the analysis was conducted in three stages: (1) visual and textual coding of sambal packaging and advertisements to identify patterns of representation, (2) narrative interpretation of interviews and observations to reveal the symbolic and affective logic of sambal production and consumption, and (3) discursive deconstruction of the ideological constructions inherent in the discourse on sambal in urban spaces, including the relationship between sambal, city identity, and the politics of taste. With this method, the research aims not only to reveal the symbolic structures hidden behind culinary objects, but also to articulate how artefacts such as sambal become arenas for complex negotiations of meaning between actors, institutions, and cultural history. The entire methodological procedure is designed to capture the deeper dimensions of meaning beyond the materiality of sambal, and to reinterpret the politics of identity through the language of taste.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Scope and Constellation of Sambal Practises in the Context of Urban Surabaya

This study focuses on the production, distribution, consumption, and representation of sambal in Surabaya as an intertwined cultural, economic, and social phenomenon. The actors involved span a broad spectrum of urban society, including working-class families, the middle class, creative economy actors, culinary SME owners, and medium-scale food processing industries. Each actor plays a distinct yet interconnected role, ranging from producers who process sambal in home kitchens or factories, consumers who shape taste preferences and market trends, taste curators who determine product quality and narrative, to cultural representation agents who utilise sambal as a symbol of the city's identity in promotional spaces and culinary festivals.

The types of sambal that are the subject of this study show diversity that reflects the dynamics of urban cuisine. Traditional sambal variants produced through manual grinding and the use of fresh spices remain popular in domestic settings and traditional markets. On the other hand, technological innovation and food industrialisation have given rise to modern packaged sambal produced on a large scale, focusing on convenience, distribution durability, and aesthetically pleasing packaging. These differences in form indicate differing value orientations: traditional sambal is more strongly tied to family memories and taste heritage, while industrial sambal articulates values of modernity, efficiency, and broader market penetration.

The time and momentum of sambal consumption in Surabaya is not limited to main meal times, but is present in various social and cultural contexts. Sambal is consumed in daily routines at home, is part of family celebrations, accompanies special dishes at religious events, and is present at culinary festivals and public celebrations that highlight the city's culinary identity. Its widespread presence across these various moments signifies the central role of sambal as a unifying flavour and a symbol of togetherness in the lives of urban communities.

The practice of sambal spans from home kitchens, which serve as spaces for the transmission of culinary values and knowledge, to traditional markets, which function as circuits for the exchange of ingredients and flavours; from street stalls, which preserve authenticity and affordability, to thematic restaurants that elevate sambal as a regional culinary icon; and even to social media platforms, which visualise sambal as a lifestyle artefact. City-wide gastronomic festivals, such as the Surabaya Culinary Festival, serve as important venues where sambal is showcased as the centre of attention and positioned as a symbolic representation of Surabaya.

The significance of researching sambal practices in Surabaya lies in its position as a meeting point between the affective and economic spheres, as well as between the domestication of taste and the commodification of identity. Sambal is not merely a condiment, but also a medium for articulating the history of spices, constructing narratives of local pride, and reinforcing the city's image. Amid the tide of culinary globalisation, sambal has become a symbolic battleground between traditional values passed down through generations and market-oriented standardisation of taste for commercial purposes.

Changes in sambal practices over the past decade have shown a transition from family-based flavour heritage to performative and narrative objects articulated on a city-wide scale. Digitalisation and social media have expanded the space for sambal representation from local markets to national and international stages. The case of Sambal Bu Rudy, which evolved from a home-based business into an iconic Surabaya souvenir, is a concrete example of how narratives of authenticity can be combined with modern marketing strategies. Similarly, producers of sambal made from unique spices such as kecombrang or lime leaves have successfully positioned themselves in the premium market segment through flavour differentiation and ecological narratives.

Thus, the scope of this research covers three main interacting arenas. First, households as locations for the reproduction of values, memories, and culinary techniques that shape taste habits. Second, markets as networks for the exchange of taste and economic value, both in traditional and digital formats. Third, urban public spaces, including culinary festivals, promotional media, and tourism policies that position sambal as an icon of local identity. This research views the interconnectedness of these three arenas as a semiotic ecosystem that shapes the position of sambal within the contemporary urban context of Surabaya.

Value Structure and Social Reproduction of Ssambal in Urban Households

In the domestic context of urban society, sambal serves as a culinary artefact that unites the dimensions of taste, social values, and family identity. The function of sambal does not stop at its role as a complement to dishes, but also as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge, aesthetic taste preferences, and the formation of culinary habits that are embedded in the social structure of the family. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), the practice of making and consuming sambal within urban households in Surabaya serves as a symbolic reproduction arena where culinary tastes and skills are informally passed down from one generation to the next. This process demonstrates how choices regarding the intensity of spiciness, spice combinations, and processing techniques become part of the cultural capital that reinforces family identity.

In lower-middle-class families, making sambal at home remains the primary practice, based on the values of autonomy in kitchen management, direct control over ingredient quality, and continuity of flavour in line with the family's collective memory. This activity reinforces the role of the kitchen as the centre of emotional economy, where every family member participates in preserving the taste of their heritage. Meanwhile, in upper-middle-class families with high mobility and time constraints, there is a tendency to shift towards consuming artisanal sambal or premium industrial products. These products are chosen for their time efficiency, aesthetically pleasing packaging design, and symbolic status that reinforces social class identity.

Nevertheless, in both social strata, the emotional values attached to homemade sambal are still preserved. Narratives about the authenticity of taste, connections to childhood culinary experiences, and emotional closeness to the figure of the mother or grandmother are key elements that shape the meaning of sambal within the domestic sphere. Additionally, sambal in urban families serves as a medium for fostering affection while also functioning as an instrument for intergenerational culinary education.

In this context, the kitchen is not merely a space for food production, but also a pedagogical site and performative arena that reflects family cultural values. Knowledge about chili proportions, spice selection, and processing techniques is not passed down through written instructions, but rather through mechanisms of observation, imitation, and repetition that are consistently practised in daily interactions. This process demonstrates that the transmission of culinary values and skills is embodied, intertwined with bodily movements, taste intuition, and oral narratives that shape the continuity of family culinary traditions.

Within the framework of this study, the value structure of sambal in urban households in Surabaya is interpreted as part of a broader cultural ecosystem of taste. The relationship between the kitchen, the market, and public spaces is intertwined through the logic of social reproduction that connects the cultural capital of the family with economic and symbolic capital outside the home. Observational findings reveal that while culinary globalisation and food industrialisation influence consumption preferences, domestic practices centred on sambal remain a bastion of local culinary identity. At this juncture, the study emphasises that sambal serves as a bridge between domestic memory and urban cultural dynamics, while also functioning as a medium for articulating social identity at the micro level that resonates up to the macro level.

Narrative Representation of Spices Through Sambal in the Local Context of Surabaya

Sambal in the urban landscape of Surabaya functions not only as a daily condiment, but also as a medium of cultural representation that articulates the history of spices and local identity. The presence

of sambal in public discourse is manifested through various channels, from product labelling and marketing narratives to culinary festivals that integrate sambal as an icon of the city. These activities are intertwined with the practice of gastronomic diplomacy, where sambal is used to promote Surabaya's image on both national and international scales.

A variety of local brands, such as Sambel Cak Man and Sambal Bu Rudy, construct their brand identities by leveraging regional-specific terminology and narratives that reference family history, the use of traditional ingredients, and the image of Surabaya as a city known for its bold and vibrant character. These narrative elements not only serve to strengthen brand positioning but also imbue the products with an emotional dimension. By using local language, distinctive visuals, and stories that reference the city's past, these brands build an emotional connection with consumers while positioning sambal as a representation of Surabaya's taste.

Main ingredients such as shallots, galangal, and shrimp paste are presented not merely as culinary components, but as historical markers that reflect the continuity of maritime heritage and the spice trade in Southeast Asia. From the perspective of cultural representation outlined by Stuart Hall in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), sambal can be read as a symbolic medium that reframes collective memory of the colonial past, international trade networks, and Surabaya's strategic position as a spice port. This narrative, when articulated through packaging, advertising, or culinary exhibitions, serves to activate cultural memory and build the legitimacy of flavours associated with local authenticity.

However, this practice of representation often undergoes a process of simplification and aestheticisation tailored to contemporary marketing logic. Complex historical narratives are reduced to visual symbols or short slogans to make them more accessible to the market. This creates an ambivalent situation, in which sambal serves as both a reinforcement of local identity and an object of commodification that can obscure its deeper historical meaning. Marketing strategies that utilise traditional visuals, spice colours, or regional typography can create an impression of authenticity, but at the same time risk abstracting the richer social-historical context.

Within the framework of the city's tourism economy and creative industries, sambal has become part of the discourse on local production, capitalised as a commercial attraction. This process places sambal in a strategic position as a widely recognised city icon, but also makes it vulnerable to distortions in meaning. Tensions between authenticity and instrumentalisation arise when the cultural values embedded in sambal clash with market demands that tend to favour concise narratives, strong visuals, and alignment with global consumer preferences.

This study views the narrative representation of sambal in Surabaya as the result of interactions between cultural capital, marketing strategies, and the collective memory of the community. The findings indicate that the power of sambal as a cultural medium lies in its ability to combine sensory, historical, and symbolic dimensions into a single, easily accessible entity. However, this power also carries risks—when cultural narratives become too tied to marketing formats, they can become trapped in superficial aesthetics that overlook the depth of history and values that underpin them. Therefore, understanding the narrative representation of sambal requires a critical reading that combines semiotic analysis, cultural studies, and political economy research to preserve its meaning amid the growing tide of commodification.

Poetics of Taste and the Commodification of Sambal in the Urban Cultural Economy

The transformation of sambal from a domestic culinary artefact into a commodity in the urban cultural economy creates complex political dynamics of taste. Within the framework of the 'regime of

taste' proposed by Alan Warde in *Consumption, Food and Taste: Culinary Antinomies and Commodity Culture* (1997), taste does not emerge as a preference born purely from individual experience, but rather as a social construct shaped through interactions between producers, consumers, media, and market regulations. In the context of Surabaya, industrial sambal plays a central role in standardising taste standards that can be mass-produced, packaged with precision, and widely distributed. These standards then serve as a reference for consumers in determining what is considered 'normal' or 'ideal' within the category of sambal taste.

Industrial sambal, through a process of flavour homogenisation, positions itself as a product that can transcend social and geographical boundaries, but at the same time erodes the sensory diversity that characterises traditional sambal. Meanwhile, homemade or artisan sambal maintains its differentiation by highlighting the richness of flavour, the intensity of spices, and the narrative of authenticity. This differentiation not only distinguishes it sensorially but also builds symbolic capital closely tied to authenticity, culinary memory, and local identity.

Female producers of homemade sambal in Surabaya utilise social media as more than just a marketing channel. Digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok serve as spaces for articulating identity, building affective capital, and strengthening their positions within household economies and micro-business networks. By combining visual narratives, traditional recipes, and personal stories, they build strong emotional connections with consumers while negotiating gender roles in public spaces and the digital economy. This phenomenon underscores that the politics of taste are intertwined with the politics of representation and community-based economic empowerment.

The commodification of sambal also highlights the social class dimension of consumption. Sambal products that are packaged exclusively, using rare ingredients or premium spices, are often positioned in the upper-middle market segment. Packaging attributes, price, and brand image shape consumers' perceptions of the social status associated with the product. Conversely, mass-produced economical sambal packaging is more accessible to the working class, but still maintains its appeal through promotions that emphasise affordability and a taste that is 'suitable for the general palate.' Thus, sambal serves as a marker of lifestyle and an indicator of social stratification that can be read through consumption preferences and purchasing power.

In the dynamics of urban cultural economics, sambal functions as a medium of negotiation between tradition and modernity, between inherited cultural values and market demands that prioritise efficiency and commercialisation. The processes of production, distribution, and consumption of sambal form a network of meanings that encompasses material, symbolic, and affective dimensions. This study found that amid the pressures of globalised taste, sambal in Surabaya maintains its function as a space for cultural resistance while also serving as a commodity actively involved in the city's creative economy circulation. Taste politics in this context is not merely about what is eaten but also about who holds the power to determine and define the value of taste in the public sphere.

Sambal as a Cultural Medium in the Era of Digital Acceleration and Representation Crisis

Over the past two years, the landscape of sambal production and consumption in Surabaya has undergone significant acceleration due to the development of digital technology, changes in work patterns, and the impact of the global pandemic crisis. These changes have not only shifted sambal from the domestic sphere to a broader distribution arena, but have also elevated it to a narrative and visual commodity that occupies a strategic space in the digital urban food ecosystem. E-commerce platforms, online delivery services, and social media act as catalysts enabling local producers to break through geographical barriers, expand their markets from household-level to regional and national scales, and accelerate the circulation of products and the narratives accompanying them.

From the perspective of cultural performativity as articulated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1999), the consumption of sambal in public spaces, whether physically in cafes or festivals or virtually through social media posts, represents a repetitive and meaningful act. This practice does not merely reflect culinary preferences but also shapes and reinforces cultural identity. The choice of sambal type, presentation style, and packaging aesthetics are part of an urban lifestyle statement that prioritises quick access, visual impact, and authentic narratives. In this context, sambal plays a dual role as a taste artefact and a medium of self-representation, where cultural values are internalised through consumption experiences and digital interactions.

The visual and narrative power of sambal is increasingly articulated through contemporary marketing strategies that combine food photography, packaging design, and brand stories designed to evoke emotional resonance in consumers. In line with Hall's (1997) findings on the construction of cultural representations, sambal in the digital age is not merely presented as a product but as a discourse that encompasses symbols of local identity, the history of spice trade, and the image of the city of Surabaya. This process connects the past, shaped by colonial dynamics and maritime networks, with the present, characterised by the acceleration of information and the integration of digital markets.

The outcome of this dynamic shows that sambal has become a meeting point between collective memory, economic logic, and expressions of identity in contemporary urban society. The research findings outlined in the previous subchapter show a close relationship between the value structures inherited in the domestic sphere, the construction of cultural narratives and localities, and the politics of taste and commodification in the urban cultural economy. These findings collectively affirm that sambal operates simultaneously across three primary dimensions: as a medium for cultural transmission within households, as a symbol articulating local history and identity, and as a commodity engaged in market competition governed by global taste regimes.

In the context of digital acceleration and a cultural representation crisis marked by narrative simplification and homogenisation of taste by industry, sambal retains its potential as a space for cultural resistance. This potential manifests through the aesthetic of taste that preserves the diversity of spices, micro-narratives built from daily life experiences, and culinary practices carried out in family and community kitchens. Thus, sambal is not only a witness to the changing times but also an active agent mediating interactions between tradition and innovation, between historical memory and contemporary market realities.

This research reveals that the sustainability of local culinary identity in the digital age requires strategies that can preserve the depth of cultural narratives while leveraging the distribution and promotional opportunities offered by technology. Strengthening the capacity of local producers to manage brand identity, diversifying products while remaining rooted in taste heritage, and cross-sector collaboration in gastronomic diplomacy are strategic steps to maintain sambal as a relevant and competitive cultural medium.

CONCLUSION

This study identifies sambal as a cultural artefact that has undergone significant transformation in the urban context of Surabaya. Sambal not only plays a gastronomic role as a flavour enhancer, but has also developed into a representational medium that preserves historical traces, cultural identity, and ever-changing power relations. It has become a vessel for articulating values and meanings that are transmitted through domestic practices, public consumption, and mass production.

An analysis of sambal production and consumption practices shows that homemade sambal continues to play an important role in shaping family values, particularly in terms of tradition, intergenerational memory, and emotional closeness. However, its existence is beginning to compete with industrial sambal, which offers practicality and an image of modernity. This transformation reflects the negotiation between traditional values and urban economic dynamics and new consumption patterns.

Sambal has also proven to play a role in shaping the historical narrative of a city, particularly in the realm of promoting local identity. Various culinary campaigns and food festivals utilise sambal as a symbol of authenticity and bold flavours, claimed to originate from the long history of spices in this region. This indicates that sambal is used as a political instrument to shape the collective image of a city on both a local and national scale.

Using the theories of cultural performativity and regimes of taste, this study concludes that sambal is not merely a passive object of consumption, but actively involved in the production of cultural meaning. It becomes a field of social articulation, a place where conflicts and compromises between market capitalisation and collective memory take place. The post-pandemic context and digitalisation have further expanded the symbolic reach of sambal as a local product that appears in a global format.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The methodological scope of this research is still limited to the semiotic and symbolic dimensions of culinary artefacts, particularly through visual and discursive approaches. The psychological aspects of taste, sensory affectivity, and the multisensory experience of sambal in consumption practices have not been explored in depth. However, sensory aspects can enrich our understanding of how identity is formed not only through narrative but also through bodily experience.

Another limitation lies in the field observations, which have not been sufficiently long and comprehensive. Although some artefacts and promotional narratives have been analysed, direct representations from home-based producers, SME actors, and consumers from various social classes require further exploration. Strengthening ethnographic data and in-depth participatory observation will be very helpful in developing the praxis dimension of taste politics.

Further research is recommended to expand the methodological scope by incorporating an interdisciplinary approach, particularly from the fields of cognitive science, sensory psychology, and neurogastronomy. This approach can enrich the symbolic dimension with a more biological and affective understanding of how taste functions as a perception system and memory formation. The integration of sensory interviews and taste experiments will introduce new dimensions to food studies.

From a practical perspective, local governments and educational institutions can use sambal as a cultural learning object in schools and communities as part of preserving local culinary heritage. Activities such as sambal festivals, visual documentation, and traditional sambal-making training can serve as both educational and strategic tools in building cultural resilience amid the globalisation of the food industry.

REFERENCES

- Achaya, K. T. (1998). *A Historical Dictionary Indian Food*. Oxford University Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1988). How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 30(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015024>
- Barthes, R. (1964). *Element of Semiology*. Paris: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Vol. 17; R. Nice, ed.). Harvard University Press.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Cohen, E., & Avieli, N. (2004). Food in tourism: Attraction and impediment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(4), 755–778. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.02.003>
- De Koninck, R. (1992). Le carrefour javanais de Denys Lombard. *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*, 36(98), 339–345. <https://doi.org/10.7202/022272ar>
- Foucault, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972 - 1977. In *Nature* (Vol. 433). Pantheon Books.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Culture*. Basic Books, Inc.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. Sage Publications.
- Mintz, S. W. (1985). *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. Penguin Books.
- Rahman, F. (2016). *Jejak Rasa Nusantara: Sejarah Makanan Indonesia*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Richards, G. (2002). *Tourism and Gastronomy*. Routledge.
- Warde, A. (1997). *Consumption, Food & Taste*. Sage Publications.

Tracing the Spice Route to a Multicultural Landscape: The Transformation of Bugis Cultural Identity in Malaysia

Fitri Nur Lita Indriana¹, Akhdiat Dimas Abimanyu², Noor Naelil Masruroh³, Singgih Tri Sulistiyono⁴,
Endang Susilowati⁵

^{1,3,4,5}*Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia 50275*

²*Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Jawa Barat, Indonesia 16424*

Corresponding author: litaindriana00@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Despite the Bugis ethnic long historical presence in Malaysia along the Spice Route, which might be expected to have strengthened their cultural identity, their identity has instead weakened, as the historically and politically recognized identity is Malay. Thus, this study aimed to understanding how Bugis cultural identity is transformed, challenged, and selectively sustained within Malaysia's socio-political and cultural structures, and why this identity persists in symbolic or hybrid forms rather than as fully lived practices. Using a historical research methodology, this study finds that processes such as intermarriage, language shift, and everyday social interaction progressively diminish the rigidity of ethnic boundaries, facilitating the social integration of the Bugis and their access to equal status and rights within the Malay-dominated social structure. At the same time, Bugis organizations, which initially operated as socially oriented associations, have evolved into political organizations that consolidate a dynamic Bugis identity shaped by adaptive processes within the Malaysian socio-political context. The discussion demonstrates that Bugis identity in Malaysia is neither static nor disappearing, but dynamically reconfigured through ongoing negotiation between heritage preservation and cultural adaptation. By situating Bugis identity within the broader context of maritime networks and state frameworks, the study contributes to scholarship on Southeast Asian diaspora history and the cultural legacies of the Spice Routes.

Keywords: Spice route, cultural identity, Bugis Ethnic, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The migration of the Bugis to the Malay Peninsula since the seventeenth century has produced one of the most influential diaspora communities in maritime Southeast Asia, yet the contemporary transformation of Bugis identity in Malaysia remains understudied. Existing scholarship largely focuses on Bugis roles in trade networks, local politics, or genealogical histories, but has not systematically examined how processes of acculturation, language shift, intermarriage, and community organization shape the identity of Bugis descendants today. This gap is significant because ethnic identity in Malaysia is deeply conditioned by state policies, the dominance of Malay cultural norms, and the pressures of modernization. This study addresses the need to understand how the Bugis negotiate their cultural identity amid national integration and the ongoing erosion of traditional practices, while situating the

Bugis diaspora within the *longue durée* of the spice route, maritime mobility, and the making of Malaysia as a multicultural society.

The Bugis ethnic group in Malaysia has deep historical roots. The first wave of migration, which began in the late 17th century, was triggered by the war between Makassar and the Dutch colonialists from 1660 to 1669. During this long period of conflict, most Bugis chose to leave their homeland to start new lives in safer areas. Using traditional sailing vessels such as the padewakang and lambo boats, Bugis sailors traveled across the sea, exploring the coasts of the Indonesian *archipelago until they reached* the Malay Peninsula. The phinisi boat, a traditional Bugis technology, has become an icon in preserving the Bugis maritime identity. This vessel was designed with speed and reliability to suit the currents of the waterways the Bugis traveled, particularly during their migration along the Spice Route. The route they took directly intersected with the Spice Route, an international trade route that connected the Indonesian archipelago, particularly Maluku and Sulawesi, with trading centers in Malacca, India, and the Middle East. Through this route, they not only traded spices such as nutmeg, cloves, and pepper, but also brought seafood, woven fabrics, and their distinctive navigational skills.

The Bugis navigation system was key to the success of inter-island voyages, creating a Bugis diaspora in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia. The Bugis navigation system provided natural guidance to sailors through celestial and natural phenomena. Bugis sailors possessed a keen understanding of star constellations as guides, especially at night. *Bintoeng Balue* (Centauri Alpha and Beta) was one of the many star constellations used by the Bugis to determine the right time to embark on a voyage. The Bugis navigation system was also strengthened by their keen understanding of seasonal conditions (Anwar, 2018). The Bugis people have long possessed and applied extensive maritime navigation knowledge, particularly related to the patterns of the rainy seasons. This knowledge includes identifying the bareq season, or northwest monsoon, which lasts from September to May, and the timo season, or northeast monsoon, which occurs between June and September. Furthermore, they also understand the northern and southeastern rainy seasons, although their duration is shorter. This in-depth understanding of seasonal cycles is an integral part of traditional navigation practices passed down through generations in the Indonesian archipelago (Akhmar, Rahman & Yunus, 2024).

The Bugis' seafaring traditions and maritime knowledge are documented in various ancient manuscripts, which not only chronicle historical events and figures but also depict the dynamics of social progress in the past. One important manuscript is the *Lontaraq Atoreng Toriolo*, which contains traditional knowledge about navigation, ranging from wind direction and seasons to high-seas navigation techniques. This manuscript demonstrates that the success of Bugis voyages to Malaysia via the Spice Route was no accident, but rather the result of a proven maritime tradition passed down through generations. It contains various materials, including a version of the Law of the Sea, notes on navigation techniques, and knowledge of meteorology and natural phenomena (Basir & Aisyah, 2020).

The second wave of Bugis migration occurred in the 18th century, marked by the emergence of several small Bugis kingdoms scattered along the coast of the Malay Peninsula. Beyond these kingdoms, nearly every organization in the Malay Peninsula also established "*Bugis Kampoeng*." Furthermore, the third wave of migration emerged following the advent of the modern concept of the nation-state in Southeast Asia, a consequence of the region's decolonization process after World War II. During this period, most countries in the region gained independence and began to form their geographical configurations and boundaries. Indonesia achieved independence in 1945, followed by Malaysia in 1957. This development then separated the two through modern political constructions. The term "Malay-Bugis" was introduced to distinguish between the Bugis ethnic group born in the Malay region and the Bugis ethnic group native to South Sulawesi, even though both share similar—if

not essentially the same—socio-cultural values and practices. With the motto "*kegisi monro sore lopia, kositu tomallabu se'ngereng*" (where the ship anchors, there life is strengthened), the Bugis people have enriched their migration heritage. Their migration to Malaysia is especially significant, as it led to the creation of a new cultural identity. This cultural identity is important for promoting ethnic integration, building unity, and shaping the national culture. It also provides a strong foundation for the stable growth of the country and society, influencing how people view the state and nation and guiding their behavior.

Cultural identity is closely connected to the migration of an ethnic group. When a group moves, either by choice or necessity, it shows they are no longer tied to a specific region. The Bugis migration to Malaysia broke the old geographic limits that once confined them. This movement was strongly influenced by the Spice Route, a major trade route in Southeast Asia since the 15th century. Through the spice trade, the Bugis came into close contact with various ethnic groups at important ports like Malacca, Johor, and Selangor, leading to cultural mixing and assimilation with Malay, Arab, and European influences. The Spice Route also helped the Bugis build social and economic networks in Malaysia. They became traders, sailors, and community leaders, preserving their maritime traditions, language, and customs. Over time, however, the original Bugis values changed due to environmental, economic, political, and social factors in Malaysia. This resulted in a new cultural identity that blends Bugis heritage with local influences, still reflecting their deep connection to the history of maritime trade and the spice business in the region (Dewanto & Muhajirim, 2024). Despite the long history of maritime connectivity that enabled the Bugis diaspora in Malaysia to form a resilient and adaptive cultural identity, the consolidation of Malay culture as the national identity—supported by state policies, social norms, and everyday assimilation practices—has generated structural pressures that threaten the continuity and visibility of distinct Bugis cultural expressions. Therefore, this study examines Bugis migration along the Spice Routes and demonstrates how Bugis cultural identity in Malaysia has developed as a fluid and negotiated construct shaped by intercultural interaction and socio-political adaptation.

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative historical approach to examine the transformation of Bugis cultural identity in Malaysia within the context of the Spice Routes and multicultural interactions. The methodology involves four main stages: data collection, source criticism, analysis, and historiography. In the data collection phase, primary and secondary sources were gathered, including interviews with members of the Bugis diaspora in Sabah, newspaper articles from the *Daily Express*, and relevant academic literature. These sources collectively provide historical and contemporary insights into Bugis migration, cultural adaptation, and identity formation along the Spice Routes. All collected data underwent rigorous source criticism to ensure credibility and authenticity, particularly in evaluating oral interviews, newspaper reports, and scholarly works. Analytical focus was placed on three interrelated dimensions. First, historical mobility along the Spice Routes was examined to trace the transnational movement of the Bugis and its influence on cultural continuity and adaptation. Second, structural pressures, including national cultural policies, intermarriage, and language shifts, were analyzed to understand how external social forces shape or constrain Bugis cultural expression. Third, community agency was explored through the study of cultural organizations, such as *Persatuan Kebajikan Bugis Sabah* (PKBS) and *Persatuan Perpaduan Rumpun Bugis Melayu Sabah* (PRBMS), highlighting strategies employed by diaspora communities to preserve traditions, foster cultural pride, and maintain socio-economic cohesion. By integrating historical and contemporary perspectives, this methodological framework allows for an in-depth understanding of the dynamic negotiation of Bugis

identity in Malaysia. It underscores the dual forces of constraint and agency, illustrating that cultural identity is neither fixed nor fragile, but continuously reshaped through interaction with social, political, and cultural environments. This approach also situates micro-level community practices within broader historical and structural contexts, contributing to scholarship on Southeast Asian diaspora history and the formation of hybrid ethnic identities.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Spice Routes and the Emergence of Bugis–Malay Cultural Networks

Kevin Lynch, in *The Image of the City*, introduced the concept of nodes, a key element in his conceptual framework that enables a meaningful interpretation of spice routes in Makassar. Nodes are strategic points within a spatial environment that function as centers of activity, concentration, or decision-making, where paths intersect or terminate, and where social, economic, and symbolic interactions are intensified (Lynch, 1960). They are places that people enter, experience, and use as reference points for orientation and meaning within a broader spatial system. Viewed through this lens, spice routes can be understood not merely as linear corridors of movement but as networks structured around key nodes such as ports, trading towns, and *entrepôts* that organized circulation, exchange, and connectivity. From this perspective, the Spice Route is not merely a line of movement (*path*), but a series of strategic points where intensive economic, social, and cultural activities took place. As a *node*, Makassar functioned not only as a transit space for commodities but also as an arena of interaction among various actors—merchants, port foremen, maritime workers, and local communities—engaged in trade and maritime mobility. Similar to other major ports such as Tallo and Somba Opu port, Makassar operated as a space of concentrated activity where processes of cargo loading and unloading, interactions among traders, and the continuous exchange of information, navigational knowledge, and cultural values occurred (Hamid, 2022). These repeated interactions shaped the maritime consciousness of the Bugis people and endowed the Spice Route with significance beyond commerce, transforming it into a medium for the formation of maritime social and cultural identities. Makassar's position as a nodal hub within this network provided access to wider sailing routes, thereby encouraging Bugis communities to embark on voyages and undertake migration to other regions in pursuit of better livelihoods, particularly toward Sabah, movements that were generally initiated through this port.

Building upon this understanding of nodes as spaces of concentrated and repeated interactions, the Port of Makassar emerged as a principal node within the Southeast Asian trade network. From the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, Makassar played a central role in linking spice-producing regions such as Maluku and Banda with major commercial centers in Malacca and Johor (Hamid, 2022). Commodity loading and unloading activities at the port generated intensive and routine encounters among Bugis sailors, Malay traders, and various foreign trading networks, reinforcing Makassar's function as a crucial node in the regional spice distribution system rather than a mere point of transit. This nodal consolidation became increasingly apparent through political policies and infrastructural developments initiated by the King of Gowa, Tumaparisi Kalonna, including the construction of Somba Opu Port, the appointment of a harbormaster, the recording of port activities in the Mangkasarak lontara, and territorial expansion into commodity-producing regions. Within Kevin Lynch's framework, these measures sharpened Makassar's urban image as a dominant node organizing maritime movement between the eastern and western parts of the archipelago, particularly after the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511 (Hamid, 2022).

As a free port, Makassar further facilitated open and sustained social interactions within this nodal space, where traders from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds not only conducted trade but also

negotiated, settled, and formed enduring social networks. Within this context, processes of acculturation unfolded not merely at the level of economic exchange but also through the convergence of religious practices, linguistic interaction, and Islamic traditions between Bugis and Malay communities. The shared adoption of Islam functioned as a unifying cultural framework, shaping ethical values, social norms, and ritual practices, while the use of Malay as a *lingua franca* enabled cross-cultural communication and the transmission of religious knowledge. This synthesis fostered adaptive Islamic traditions that transcended local boundaries, rendering Bugis and Malay cultures increasingly universal in character. Supported by the political stability of the Gowa–Tallo alliance, Makassar was thus strengthened as a secure nodal hub that facilitated both maritime mobility and the circulation of Islamic-cultural values across the Malay world.

This process of interaction ultimately produced a deep cultural acculturation between the Bugis and Malay communities that transcended economic exchange and was manifested in shared religious, linguistic, and Islamic traditions. Islam functioned not merely as a belief system, but as a unifying cultural framework that harmonized Bugis and Malay social norms, legal principles, and moral values. Through the Port of Makassar as a nodal space, Islamic teachings were internalized within Bugis society alongside Malay religious practices, fostering a shared worldview grounded in Islamic ethics and cosmology.

Linguistically, this acculturation was reflected in the adoption of Malay as a *lingua franca* within maritime trade and religious discourse. Malay became the medium for Islamic scholarship, administration, and interethnic communication, allowing Islamic concepts and legal norms to circulate effectively within Bugis society. This linguistic integration facilitated cultural continuity between the Bugis homeland and the wider Malay world, reinforcing a shared cultural sphere that extended beyond regional boundaries.

Furthermore, Islamic traditions—such as communal worship, legal practices informed by Islamic law, pilgrimage rituals, and social customs—were adapted and localized within Bugis cultural structures without erasing indigenous values. Instead, these traditions were reinterpreted through Bugis concepts of honor (*siri'*), social order, and kinship, creating a hybrid cultural form that was simultaneously local and transregional. This synthesis illustrates how Islam served as a flexible cultural medium through which Bugis and Malay identities converged.

As a result, the acculturation between Bugis and Malay cultures produced a universal cultural character—rooted in Islam yet open to diversity—capable of being carried across maritime networks. This universality is evident in the successful integration of Bugis communities within Malay kingdoms such as Johor and Selangor, where shared religious values, language, and traditions enabled Bugis elites to assume political and military roles without cultural dissonance. Thus, the Bugis–Malay acculturation exemplifies how maritime connectivity, Islam, and nodal port spaces collectively generated a universal cultural system that transcended ethnic and territorial boundaries. The Daeng Mangika and Johor alliance relationship became a strategic basis which, approximately a century after the Bugis settled in Malay peninsula, enabled the Bugis ethnic group to play an important political role in the Kingdom of Johor, with influence that spread to other areas on the Malacca Peninsula (Parani, 2015).

All these events demonstrate the strategic role of the port of Makassar as a hub in the spice route network. This port served as the departure point for Bugis voyages to Malaysia, which encompassed not only commercial activities but also processes of migration and cultural transmission. The maritime policies of the Gowa–Tallo kingdom, the active involvement of Bugis sailors, and intercultural and religious relations all formed a crucial foundation for Bugis ethnic mobility outside the region, including to Malaysia. Makassar was not simply a trading port, but a vital maritime connectivity hub on the spice

route and Southeast Asian trade. Thus, the acculturation of Bugis and Malay cultures through the spice route is integrated in the dynamic maritime history of Southeast Asia. It reflects the close relationship between economics, culture, and religion in shaping cross-border social networks. This process not only enriched the cultural heritage of both regions but also forged a shared identity that can still be traced today in the lives of Bugis-Malay communities in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Bugis Cultural Identity Adaptability in Malaysia: A Survival Strategy Amidst the Spice Route Legacy

The Bugis community is often perceived as a group of immigrants who persistently fought for their social and economic position (Salim, 2024). In other words, their historical experience on the Spice Route shaped a competitive mentality and openness to cross-cultural networks, which in turn strengthened the Bugis identity as "prominent immigrants" in Malaya. Bugis migrants came not only as traders or sailors, but also brought their traditional values, language, arts, and social systems. They established settlements, joined political structures, and contributed to the defense of Malay kingdoms, such as Johor, Selangor, and Riau. In many cases, Bugis nobles intermarried with Malay royal families, marking the merging of two cultural identities into a new social structure. This acculturation was also evident in various aspects of life. In language, for example, Bugis terms were absorbed into the local Malay dialect. Within the government structure, ethnic Bugis held strategic positions as warlords, advisors to kings, and regional rulers. In the field of arts and culture, the influence of the Bugis can be observed in various domains, including architectural styles, maritime systems, and the oral as well as literary traditions that evolved within the regions they inhabited.

The efforts of Bugis community to integrate with the Malay-majority shaped culture and customs in Malaysia through hundreds of years of acculturation resulting a hybridity of the Bugis identity. Acculturation is a complex process to change person's or repertoire. It involves the psychological and cultural changes through multitudes of pathways, with the case of Bugis community is through migration. For societies that were built through immigration for centuries, which are commonly seen in Southeast Asia, it's easier to accept the cultural pluralism resulting from immigration due to the common historical and racial roots. In his acculturation theory, it as positive multicultural ideology, which where pluralism is widely accepted and consider diversity as a communal resource (Berry, 2005).

However, it's important to note that rejections also commonly be found, even in some societies that are diverse, such as Malaysia or even in Southeast Asia as a region. Some societies attempt to achieve the segregation or assimilation to eliminate diversity. They often refuse to provide social support, both through institution and society. The clear example of segregation can be seen on the issue of Rohingya in Myanmar and the on-going conflict in Southern Thailand due to both countries promoting cultural assimilation for the minorities to be considered as part of the nation. Indeed, it's a different cause in Malaysia where Bugis community and their identity can be seen as both individual and communal construct. Ever since they landed in Malay Peninsula, Bugis in Malaysia created a new cultural identity to adjust their situation where they're no longer part of the Sulawesi's Bugis community. They proudly identity as 'Malay-Bugis' while keeping their indigeneity and transmit it from one generation to another.

The acculturation legacy brought by the Bugis community from their homeland has indeed enriched their cultural heritage, especially overseas. The Spice Route, with its attendant multi-ethnic interactions, has provided crucial skills in areas of openness, trade, and maritime. However, this acculturation legacy does not automatically guarantee full acceptance in Malaysia. As a group often perceived as "immigrants trying to stand out", the Bugis community in Malaya faces complex social challenges. The challenges and perceptions have the potential to create social distance, fuel

stereotypes, or even create competition with other groups, particularly in the economic and political spheres. This situation demands specific strategies for the community's survival and sustainability. Thus, the process of adapting its cultural identity becomes crucial. This adaptation does not abandon or erasing Bugis identity, but rather an effort to adjust its cultural expression to align with the norms and expectations of the majority community.

Through this approach, they can maintain their ancestral heritage while building harmonious relationships with their new surroundings. This adaptation strategy is evident in various aspects of daily life. In the linguistic realm, the Bugis community uses Malay extensively in public interactions to facilitate communication and reduce social distance, while maintaining Bugis within the family. In social and religious activities, they actively participate in local community events, such as Islamic holiday celebrations or village cooperation (*gotong royong*), which serve as a bridge between groups. Meanwhile, in the realm of customs and traditions, wedding processions, birth ceremonies, and religious rituals are often adapted to align with local customs without losing distinctive Bugis elements, such as music, dance, or traditional dress. In this way, adapting cultural identity becomes a strategy for ensuring socio-economic survival in the new home. This process demonstrates that identity is not something rigid, but rather the result of ongoing negotiations between cultural heritage and the demands of the new environment.

1. Marriage in Cultural Identity Negotiation Spheres

For the Bugis people, marriage has a meaning far beyond mere ceremony. It is a symbol of family honor, a manifestation of commitment to ancestral customs, and a medium for strengthening social networks. However, according to the participant, marriages between the Bugis ethnic group and Malaysian citizens hold not only social and cultural significance but are also frequently pursued to secure administrative rights and economic opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible. They explained that Bugis spouses holding Indonesian citizenship often view these cross-border marriages as a practical pathway to obtain official documents from the Malaysian government, including a guarantee passport, residence permit, and legally recognized status. The participant emphasized that these documents are essential for living legally in Malaysia and accessing critical services such as education, healthcare, and other public facilities, which are typically restricted to citizens or legally recognized residents.

The participant also highlighted the economic dimension of these marriages. They explained that, by obtaining administrative recognition, Bugis spouses gain access to financial and business resources, including bank accounts, credit, and business loans, which are normally limited to Malaysian citizens. In their view, marriage functions not merely as a social or cultural contract but also as a strategic mechanism for economic mobility and cross-border integration, where family ties intersect with practical advantages in daily life. They noted that this strategy is particularly common among Bugis individuals seeking to establish long-term livelihoods in Malaysia or to engage in trade and entrepreneurial activities within the country.

This transformation process becomes even more complex when linked to the reality of Bugis labor migration to Malaysia, which has been going on for decades and has shaped social and cultural interactions with the local community, especially the Malay ethnic group. These interactions are not always free-flowing, but are instead constrained by strict state policies, particularly regarding the institution of marriage. One of the main regulations governing this is Immigration Act Article 8, paragraph 3, point 15 of the Malaysian Immigration Act 1959/1963, expressly prohibits foreign workers from marrying local citizens or fellow foreign workers working in Malaysia (Faizin, 2019). This

prohibition has a direct impact on the formation of mixed families between Bugis and ethnic Malay migrants. For foreign workers holding Pass Visit (Temporary Employment Permit Card) and their permit is about to expire, regulations require them to return to their home country before they can marry a local. This process requires a minimum of six months and can only be carried out if the worker returns to Malaysia on a social visit visa. Immigration Act Law No. 1959/1963 stipulates that marriage permits for foreign workers are only granted to those earning a minimum of RM5,000 per month (Bulan, 2021). Failure to comply with this provision risks revocation of residency permits and deportation. This policy was originally designed by the Malaysian government to control migration flows and minimize the burden on the state of benefits typically provided to families of foreign workers, such as insurance, education costs, healthcare, and accommodation for factory-employed spouses (Faizin, 2019).

From the perspective of state control, this policy illustrates how administrative regulations are used by the Malaysian government to limit the social mobility and cultural reproduction of migrant communities by strictly regulating marriage institutions, thereby controlling cross-cultural interactions that could alter the country's social composition. This restriction serves as a nation-building mechanism to protect the dominance of Malay culture and to restrain the growth of migrant communities perceived as threats to demographic balance. Culturally, the policy reinforces one-way assimilation, as Bugis migrants marrying into Malay communities often occupy subordinate positions where Malay cultural norms prevail, leading to the marginalization and potential erosion of Bugis language, traditions, and identity over time. From the standpoint of transnational migration theory, the policy reflects Malaysia's efforts to disrupt the "transnational social space" that enables migrants to sustain multiple identities and maintain cross-border networks.

Marriage restrictions are not just immigration policies but cultural-political strategies shaping identity and integration. By controlling marriage, the state directs assimilation and weakens migrant cultural identity, as seen among the Bugis. Inter-marriage with ethnic Malays, especially through unregistered unions, complicates the preservation of Bugis culture. Regulations, legal status, and socio-economic factors drive this cultural shift. In Malaysia, two Islamic authorities do not fully follow the Immigration Act 1959/1963, influencing marriages between migrants, including Bugis, and locals. Many migrant workers—legal and illegal—marry Malaysian women seeking citizenship benefits like loans, business permits, and legal protection. Yet these hopes often lead to divorce, bankruptcy, illegitimate children, or revoked work permits.

For legal migrant workers, Malaysian employment regulations strictly prohibit marriage to local citizens during the employment contract period using Temporary Work Visit Pass (PLKS). This prohibition also applies to illegal workers. As a result, many Bugis ethnic groups choose to practice unregistered marriages, namely marriages that are religiously valid but not recognized by state law. During the 1970s–1990s, unregistered marriages were conducted privately through intermediaries who understood religious law, although they were not official marriage registrars (Bulan, 2021). According to the Department of Manpower of the Indonesian Consulate in Tawau, Sabah, marriage registrars officially appointed by the Malaysian Islamic Religious Affairs Office generally refused to practice unregistered marriages because they would face fines ranging from RM2,000 to criminal sanctions (Bulan, 2021). The lack of marriage registration during this period resulted in generations of Bugis descendants born from unregistered marriages lacking official documents such as birth certificates, which in turn hindered their access to education and other public facilities.

In the 1990s and 2010s, attitudes toward migrant worker marriages began to change as employers saw married workers as more responsible and productive. Employers started helping with marriage registration, permits, and legal procedures, allowing the Bugis community to have marriages

more openly, though legal recognition was still limited. By the 2010s, employer support increased, including financial aid and help from political parties, leading to lavish celebrations of unregistered marriages with Bugis traditions. However, the lack of official registration caused problems, as many Bugis descendants in Malaysia lacked birth certificates, making it hard for them to access education and services. From a cultural identity view, these marriage practices make the Bugis vulnerable. Marrying into Malay communities without legal recognition risks eroding Bugis identity over time. Younger generations might identify as Malay for social acceptance and ease with official systems. While Bugis wedding traditions are still celebrated, their cultural identity faces challenges due to the need to adapt to Malaysia's social and legal realities. Marriages between Bugis and Malays, particularly unregistered ones, highlight a struggle between preserving Bugis heritage and adapting for survival amid legal, economic, and political pressures.

Over the past two decades, the influence of state policies and the intensity of cultural interactions with the Malay ethnic group have increasingly shaped—and in some cases weakened—Bugis cultural expressions in marriage. Indonesian and Malaysian regulations establish a formal administrative framework that directly affects the marriage patterns of Bugis migrants. Couples must attend marriage preparation courses, register their marriage at the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, have the certificate validated at the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, and finally register it with the relevant authorities (Leng, 2012). In addition, residence permits are limited, and renewing permanent permits can be challenging (Faizin, 2019). These bureaucratic requirements have prompted many couples to adopt more pragmatic approaches, often at the expense of traditional customs. Even with Indonesia's marriage validation program implemented since 2010, obtaining necessary documents such as ID cards, passports, birth certificates, and diplomas remains difficult due to geographical distance from embassies and restrictions on leaving work areas (Faizin, 2019). Consequently, these state policies indirectly encourage the standardization of marriage practices, gradually diminishing the diversity of Bugis customs.

Cultural interaction with the Malay community further shapes Bugis marriage practices through assimilation and negotiation. In an interview, the participant explained that both bride and groom are required to attend a marriage preparation course, which serves as a formal prerequisite and a forum to educate couples about legal, social, and cultural expectations. They also noted that when one partner is an Indonesian citizen, the Indonesian spouse must obtain a guarantee passport from the Malaysian partner before the marriage can be legally registered. This requirement not only ensures compliance with Malaysian law but also secures the Indonesian spouse's legal status, illustrating how state regulations and cross-cultural interaction converge to shape everyday practices and symbolic expressions in Bugis marriages.

Regarding the ceremony itself, the participant described Bugis-Malay marriages as being marked by cultural assimilation and symbolic blending. Typically, the ceremony unfolds in three phases throughout a single day. In the first phase, from 07:00 to 12:00, the couple wears traditional Malay attire to honor local customs and signal harmony with the broader community. The second phase, from 13:00 to 17:00, features Bugis ethnic clothing, emphasizing the couple's heritage and family lineage. The final phase, from 19:00 until the conclusion, involves modern formal attire such as suits and gowns, symbolizing the integration of tradition with contemporary social norms. The participant emphasized that these wardrobe transitions are more than aesthetic choices; they represent the deliberate inclusion of Malay and Bugis symbols in a single sequence, allowing couples to publicly assert a dual cultural identity while effectively positioning themselves within the local social and cultural landscape.

Overall, the participant highlighted that these cross-border marriages serve multiple, intertwined purposes: they preserve cultural heritage, facilitate economic and social advancement, and provide a pathway to legal recognition and mobility. Through the ceremony, administrative compliance, and post-marriage social positioning, Bugis spouses negotiate a dual identity rooted in their ethnic heritage while aligned with the Malaysian social and legal framework.

However, several traditional Bugis customs are increasingly marginalized in Malaysia. Practices such as *mamanumanu* (identifying the prospective bride and groom's parents) and *maduppa* (announcing the marriage to the Bugis community) are rarely performed, often due to practical considerations, the influence of Sabah culture, or the fact that many couples already know each other before the wedding. These developments demonstrate that the weakening of Bugis identity in Malaysia results not solely from assimilation or administrative constraints but from the interaction of the two. Complex state regulations encourage procedural standardization, while social interaction with the dominant Malay culture relegates traditional practices to symbolic or decorative roles. Without efforts to revitalize these customs, younger generations risk perceiving them only as fragments of tradition rather than as coherent frameworks for cultural life.

The experience of the Bugis in Malaysia thus illustrates how the interplay of state policies, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural assimilation reshapes cultural identities in the realm of marriage. Stringent regulations, such as those under the Immigration Act of 1959/1963, not only restrict mobility and choice of partners but also gradually erode the social space in which Bugis traditions can be preserved. At the same time, interaction with the dominant Malay community encourages one-way assimilation, marginalizing traditional Bugis symbols. Pragmatic adaptations, such as unregistered marriages, may preserve some cultural elements but expose couples to legal and social risks, particularly for future generations. The combination of administrative pressures and dominant cultural norms has transformed Bugis marriage from a domain of identity preservation into a space of negotiation between tradition and the practical demands of life abroad. Without inclusive policies and cultural revitalization efforts, Bugis identity in Malaysia risks merging into the dominant culture, leaving only symbolic traces detached from their original meaning.

2. The Reposition of Bugis Language Prominence in Malaysia

In the dynamics of interethnic relations, the process of assimilation often brings significant changes to cultural aspects, one of which is language. The most obvious consequence of the assimilation of the Bugis and Malay ethnic groups is language shift. Malay, which functions as the national language, increasingly dominates the daily communication of the Bugis ethnic group, replacing the mother tongue. The majority of Bugis speakers now only use their ethnic language when interacting with other Bugis, while many of the younger generation do not even have Bugis language skills at all.

This phenomenon aligns with the view of who stated that the mother tongue of incoming migrants tends to be replaced by a language agreed upon in the new region (Grenoble and Whaley, 1998). Empirical examples can be seen in the regions of Johor and Sabah, which have significant Bugis communities. In Sabah, despite the larger Bugis community, intermarriage also encourages the younger generation to identify more as "Malay-Sabah" than as Bugis. Social factors and the favorable legal status of Malay identity accelerate this process, suggesting that legal restrictions and cultural dominance work together to reinforce assimilation.

In the context of education, Bugis generational differences also influence language usage patterns. Generations that only completed primary school, particularly those who attended Bugis

educational institutions, tend to retain their mother tongue because the school environment does not require the use of Malay (Anuardin & Jaafar, 2022). However, the representation of Bugis history in the Malaysian national curriculum remains minimal. According to members of the Selangor Bugis Association, Malaysian history textbooks barely mention the role of Bugis villages in the development of Johor (Kotarumalos, 2023). However, some Bugis do not consider this a major problem and prefer to reconstruct cultural values through the identity of their residential villages (Anderson, 1983). Conversely, the Bugis generation that completed secondary and tertiary education has a greater awareness of the role of Malay as a means of cross-cultural communication and a glue for national integration. The use of Malay is considered to minimize misunderstandings in social interactions (Anuardin & Jaafar, 2022). While Bugis speakers who maintain their mother tongue in interactions with other ethnic groups can potentially increase misunderstandings, exceptions occur in homogeneous settlements where interactions are still internal. In the workplace, the use of Malay is increasingly prevalent, particularly in the government and private sectors, which require interaction with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The phenomenon of bilingualism among Bugis workers indicates a language shift driven by the demands of effective communication. Work environment factors shape Malay language habits, both directly and indirectly, thereby weakening the function of Bugis in the public sphere. In addition to education and employment, marriage is also a significant driver of language shift. Mixed marriages between Bugis speakers and other ethnic groups, such as Malay, Javanese, Makassarese, or Bruneian, often result in Malay dominance within the family, although the couple may learn each other's languages. Couples who are Bugis tend to maintain their mother tongue, even preferring Indonesian television channels over Malaysian. However, there are also Bugis families who, despite being fluent in Bugis, prefer to use Malay due to comfort and established habits.

This phenomenon reflects the weakening of Bugis cultural identity in Malaysia, not simply the result of individual choices, but rather a complex interaction of social, educational, legal, economic, and marital factors. Malay, as the dominant language, plays a central role in this assimilation process, accelerating the shift from Bugis to Malay identity. Without a systematic effort to revitalize the Bugis language and culture, future generations risk losing a direct connection to their cultural roots.

3. The Paradox of Bugis Ethnic Organizations in Malaysia

In an effort to maintain their existence, the Bugis ethnic group strives to strengthen their social networks through various ethnic-based organizations. These organizations serve as a forum for strengthening internal community ties, preserving traditions, and enhancing their bargaining position both horizontally—in interactions with other ethnic groups—and vertically—in relations with the state. However, the strategic role of these organizations remains largely limited to the social realm. Efforts to empower the collective economy have not yet been optimally realized. This contrasts with the Chinese ethnic group, which has successfully utilized social capital—such as mutual trust, adherence to internal institutions, and community networks—to build influential economic power at the national level. These limitations indicate that the Bugis ethnic group's social networks in Malaysia have not been fully integrated into development strategies that more systematically address the economic, educational, and political sectors.

Efforts to strengthen Bugis cultural identity are ongoing. For example, on November 25–26, 2011, the Bugis Diaspora Conference was held, bringing together over 500 participants and introducing Bugis culture through seminars, bazaars, and culinary exhibitions. Various organizations such as *Persatuan Bugis Johor*, *Persatuan Perpaduan Rumpun Bugis Melayu Malaysia*, *Persatuan Komuniti Bugis Sabah*, *Persatuan Kebajikan Bugis Sabah*, and *Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia* also attended. This event became

a crucial moment in affirming cultural pride and introducing Bugis into the Malaysian public sphere. However, Bugis cultural identity continues to face significant challenges. There is a sense of unity; on the other, internal fragmentation due to differences in political views and sub-ethnicities such as Bugis-Bone, Bugis-Sinjai, Bugis-Makassar, and Bugis-Enrekang. This fragmentation has made the collective Bugis identity less prominent, making it difficult to form a strong symbol of unity. This situation has impacted the political position of the Bugis ethnic group in Sabah. Facing the complexity of identity and state policies, some Bugis choose to seek refuge under their Malay identity. This strategy may be practically beneficial, but in the long run, it has the potential to weaken the Bugis cultural existence itself. With reduced cultural visibility, generations of Bugis in Malaysia risk losing their connection to their traditional roots and ancestral heritage. The two largest organizations—*Persatuan Kebajikan Bugis Sabah* (PKBS) and *Persatuan Rumpun Bugis Melayu Sabah* (PRBMS)—are actively strengthening social ties and primordialism, but their existence also reflects a paradox.

PKBS was founded with the aim of maintaining the good image of the Bugis ethnic group, fostering inter-ethnic unity, and preserving culture based on Islamic teachings. Since its inception, PKBS has experienced a long leadership dynamic, starting from Dr. Patawari Hj Patawe in the early 1980s to Samsul Bahriy Mahrullah in the 2018–2022 period. Under the leadership of Dato' Osman Haji Jamal, this organization developed a vision and mission that not only encompassed cultural preservation, but also social, economic, and political strengthening. Various efforts were made, including the establishment of an educational assistance association for Bugis children, the establishment of Podo Council as the main forum for inter-ethnic unity in Tawau, to the plan to build multi-ethnic public facilities on the 2.5 hectares PKBS land in Pasir Putih.

However, behind these lofty goals, PKBS's journey has not been free from polemics, due to violations of the Correctional Law, the PKBS was often linked to political interests in the lead-up to the elections. Some local Malays questioned the Bugis community's citizenship status, particularly due to the emergence of PKBS figures suspected of having political ambitions, such as Dato' Osman Jamal and Andi Bandipilo. The controversy intensified when the publication of the Identity Card Malaysia to ethnic Bugis immigrants, which dragged the name of Andi Bandipilo and added to the stigma against the ethnic Bugis in Sabah.

This situation had a direct impact on the weakening of the Bugis ethnic cultural identity. Instead of being a symbol of cultural preservation, PKBS began to be perceived by some in the community as a political tool. Bugis figures with a good public image, such as Hj. Amrullah Kamal and Yahaya Zainal, were instead eclipsed by the dominance of controversial figures. As a result, the Bugis identity, once known as a community of hard workers, skilled traders, and preservers of customs, began to be reduced to political stereotypes and citizenship issues.

Efforts to restore legitimacy were carried out in 2012 through PKBS collaboration with Royal Commission of Inquiry (RCI) to investigate the status of Bugis citizenship in Sabah. PKBS welcomes this move in the hope of distinguishing between the old Bugis who have become an integral part of Sabah and the newcomer Bugis. However, although this step was important, the political process and ethnic sentiment that accompanied it meant that image recovery did not proceed quickly.

The weakening of the Bugis ethnic cultural identity in Malaysia, particularly in Sabah, is due to the organization's shift in focus from cultural preservation to the controversial political realm. Citizenship stigma, involvement in political issues, and the inability to maintain cultural figures free from pragmatic interests are the main factors eroding the image and role of Bugis culture. Going forward, a stronger commitment is needed to reorient PKBS to its cultural and social mission, so that Bugis identity is not further marginalized in Malaysia's multi-ethnic society.

In addition to PKBS, the establishment of *Persatuan Perpaduan Rumpun Bugis Melayu Sabah* (PRBMS) on August 25 in 2011 also marked a formal effort to consolidate the Bugis community throughout Malaysia (Maraining, et. al., 2018). Starting from an initiative in the Malay Peninsula, PRBMS was led by Samsul Alang Hamsah with the main goal of uniting the Bugis diaspora, protecting their rights, and building cross-organizational cooperation (Maraining, et. al., 2018). This organization also adopted the vision and mission of the Malaysian government to foster national unity, so as not to position itself as a competitor to other organizations. However, the presence of PRBMS in Sabah triggered mixed responses from the Bugis community itself.

Some community members questioned the urgency of establishing PRBMS considering that other Bugis organizations already exist in Sabah, such as Bugis-Pinrang, Bugis-Mandar, and Bugis-Bone. This situation has given rise to the discourse that sub-ethnic organizations have the potential to create internal fragmentation, which in turn weakens the solidarity of the Bugis ethnic group as a whole. Rather than forming a unified entity, the existence of various sub-ethnic organizations risks deepening identity divisions and triggering marginalization among Bugis groups themselves. This phenomenon can be analyzed through the concept of intra-ethnic fragmentation, where the internal cohesion of an ethnic group is broken down due to differences in regional affiliation, political interests, or generational differences within the diaspora.

Although PRBMS has successfully expanded its network to Peninsular Malaysia, with a membership reaching approximately 200,000 in 2018, this expansion also presents an identity dilemma. PRBMS's aggressive orientation toward building relationships with the Malay community—for example, through Idul Fitri open houses or promoting Malaysian tourism—has indeed broadened social acceptance, but also has the potential to erode Bugis cultural identity. Intense interactions between minority and dominant ethnic groups often result in Hybrid identity, where elements of indigenous culture blend with the majority culture. While hybridization can enrich identity, in the context of the Bugis diaspora in Malaysia, it can also weaken the continuity of tradition due to excessive adjustments for the sake of integration.

Cultural representation in exhibitions, such as the use of traditional clothing, traditional dances and typical foods, for example *Buras Juadah*, often a ceremonial symbol that functions as cultural display in public spaces (Ibrahim, 2017). However, without programs to strengthen language, historical knowledge, and cultural practices at the everyday community level, these representations are vulnerable to becoming mere folklorization—that is, the packaging of culture for public consumption without preserving its social and spiritual meaning for the community itself. The visit to South Sulawesi and cross-regional collaboration demonstrate an intention to maintain cultural connectivity. However, when viewed from the perspective of diaspora theory, PRBMS faces a challenge called Dual belonging: the demand to remain loyal to ancestral heritage while adapting to the host country. In Malaysia's political identity situation, which emphasizes national integration under the Malay-Muslim umbrella, the pressure for assimilation is growing. This places PRBMS at a crossroads between becoming a cultural bridge and witnessing the erosion of its identity.

The PRBMS is a concrete example of the diaspora paradox: efforts to expand networks and build social integration can simultaneously weaken cultural identity. Sub-ethnic fragmentation and uncontrolled hybridization risk are causing Bugis heritage in Malaysia to dissolve without a trace. To avoid this, identity-strengthening strategies need to emphasize language revitalization, Bugis history education, and ongoing cultural activities at the family and community levels, not just at the ceremonial level. Without these measures, internal marginalization and external assimilationist pressures could lead to a permanent weakening of the Bugis cultural identity in Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the cultural identity of the Bugis in Malaysia emerged through a long and layered historical process shaped by sustained maritime mobility along the Spice Route. For centuries, these routes enabled cultural, economic, and religious exchanges that connected the Bugis and Malay worlds, allowing the Bugis diaspora not only to transport their ancestral traditions but also to recalibrate them within Malaysia's evolving social landscape. The result is a hybrid identity forged through continuous negotiation between the preservation of Bugis heritage and the demands of cultural adaptation in a Malay-dominated society.

Yet the consolidation of Malay culture as Malaysia's national identity, reinforced by state policies and social norms, including marriage regulations and linguistic assimilation, has produced structural pressures that challenge the survival of Bugis cultural expression. Inter-marriage, language shift, and everyday social interaction increasingly blur ethnic boundaries, leading to the gradual erosion of distinct Bugis cultural markers. In many cases, cultural heritage persists only symbolically, while lived practices fade.

Even so, the Bugis community has not remained passive. Organizations such as the Sabah Bugis Cultural Association (PKBS) actively work to preserve traditions, cultivate cultural pride, and strengthen socio-economic cohesion, showing that minority identities can persist despite dominant national narratives. Their efforts reveal both the vulnerabilities and the resilience of diaspora communities navigating the politics of recognition in a multiethnic state.

Ultimately, this research underscores that cultural identity, especially for diasporic minorities, is neither fixed nor fragile, but a dynamic construct shaped by historical mobility, socio-political structure, and intercultural exchange. It calls for more inclusive cultural policies and broader public awareness to ensure that Bugis cultural heritage remains visible and valued within Malaysia's multicultural society. More broadly, the study contributes to scholarship on Southeast Asian diaspora history by showing how maritime networks, state frameworks, and everyday social negotiation intersect to produce new forms of ethnic identity across time and space.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author extends heartfelt gratitude to Muhammad Suyudi, a member of the Bugis diaspora who migrated to Sabah, Malaysia, for generously sharing his knowledge and experiences regarding Bugis and Malay marriage practices. His insightful and warm discussions offered invaluable perspectives that greatly enriched this research, providing a deeper understanding of the cultural practices and lived experiences of the Bugis community in Malaysia. The author sincerely appreciates his openness and guidance, which were instrumental in shaping both the depth and quality of this study.

REFERENCES

- Akhmar, A. M., Rahman, F., & Yunus, H. (2024). Budaya Maritim Orang Bugis Makassar dan Arah Transformasinya. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya*, 12(1), 146-160.
- Anuardin, AA, & Jaafar, SRS (2022). Language Choice in the Bilingual Bugis Community in Peninsular Malaysia. *Academic Journal of Modern Philology*, (15), 33-48.
- Anwar. (2018). Etnografi Navigasi Bugis Karya Gene Ammarell: Sebuah Penelusuran Epistemologi Fenomenolog. *Emik*, 1(1), 1-18.
- Basir, Fathur Rahman, and Nur Aisyah. (2020). Geneologi Tradisi Imiah Navigasi Bugis: Studi Historis Perkembangan Navigasi Bugis dalam Astronomi Islam. *Hisabuna* 1(1).

- Berry, J. W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29(6), 679–712.
- Faizin, A., Alfitra, A., & Mansur, A. (2019). Legalizing Unofficial Marriage for Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia. 7(1), 85-100
- Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (Eds.). (1998). *Endangered languages: Language loss and community response*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hamid, AR, (2022). Moderation Practices on the Indonesian Spice Route: Makassar in the 16th-17th Centuries, *Pangadereng: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research Results*, 8 (2), 339-356.
- Hamid, AR, (2022). The Role of Makassar in Promoting the Archipelago Spice Route in the XVI–XVII Centuries. *Al-Turas Bulletin*, 28 (2), 155-170.
- Kotarumalos, N.A. (2022). Representations of Malay Rurality and Bugis Village-Making in Malaysia. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 37 (3), 490-517.
- Leng, C.H., Yeoh, B.S., & Shuib, R. (2012). In-between (II) Legality and Legitimacy: Marriages between Foreign Workers and Citizens, in *Malaysia Cross-B order Marriage: Global Trends and Diversity*. Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs.
- Lynch, Kevin. (1960). *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Parani, JL, (2015). *The Migration of the Bugis People in the 18th Century*. Source Manuscript, National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia.
- Prayitno, AMZOE, & Damit, JSA (2018). Bugis in Sabah and PRU-14: Case Study of Kalabakan Parliament. *Kinabalu Journal Special Edition*, 20-46.
- Salim, S. (2024). Bone Bay Network: Shipping Activities and the Bugis Diaspora in the 18th–19th Centuries. *JAWI*, 7 (1), 25-36.
- Sintang, S. (2005). Customs of the Bugis people in the Tawau area, Sabah. *KINABALU Journal*, Bil, 11, 205-230.
- Sunarti, L., Haghia, RS, & Sari, NFL (2022). The Bugis Diaspora in Malaysia: A Quest for Cultural Identity on Collective Memories Through Social Media. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9 (1), 1-16.
- Tabir, I. (2017, June 25). *Buras Juadah, a Bugis Community Tradition on Aidilfitri*. Daily Express.

MARITIME LINGUASCAPES: MERCANTILE PORTS AS CRUCIBLES OF LANGUAGE INNOVATION IN THE NUSANTARA SPICE NETWORK

Sri Ningsih^{1, a)}, and Uus Faizal Firdausy^{2, b)}, Tatang Rusata^{3, c)}, Enkin Asrawijaya^{4, d)},
Mudjijono^{5, e)}

¹Midwifery Academy of Tahirah Al Baeti Bulukumba, South Sulawesi, Indonesia

^{2,3,4,5}National Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia

Author Emails

^{a)}Corresponding author: inci_jica@yahoo.co.id

^{b)} uusf001@brin.go.id

^{c)} tata014@brin.go.id

^{d)} enki001@brin.go.id

mudji00@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Current linguistic research has largely overlooked the critical role of maritime trade networks in language evolution, particularly within the historically significant Nusantara spice routes. This study addresses this substantial research gap by examining strategic ports as dynamic linguistic contact zones that functioned as natural language laboratories during the 16th to 19th centuries. The research integrates theoretical frameworks from contact linguistics and sociolinguistic ecology to analyze these complex multilingual environments. Methodologically, this study synthesizes evidence from primary historical documents, colonial records, trade manuscripts, and linguistic corpora through systematic content analysis and comparative historical linguistics. The research rigorously examines five strategic contact zones, Malacca, Banten, Makassar, Ternate, and Banda, selected for their distinct geopolitical and commercial significance in the spice trade network. The analysis reveals that each contact zone developed unique linguistic characteristics influenced by trader ethnicity, commodity specialization, and prevailing power dynamics. The findings demonstrate three predominant patterns: the emergence of maritime pidgins and creoles with local substrates and traders' superstrates; the development of specialized trade lexicons characterized by semantic specialization; and the evolution of sophisticated multilingual communication practices including situational code-switching and relay translation mechanisms. This research contributes significantly to understanding how economic imperatives drive linguistic innovation. The findings reveal that these ports functioned beyond economic entrepôts as crucial sites for language experimentation and hybridization. The study opens new avenues for research on historical sociolinguistics in maritime contexts while providing insights into how contemporary globalized communication patterns emerged from historical trade networks. Future research should examine how these historical linguistic practices continue to influence modern Southeast Asian language ecologies.

Keyword: linguistic contact zones, spice route, trade ports, historical linguistics, intercultural communication

INTRODUCTION

From the volcanic islands of Maluku to the bustling harbors of Europe, the spice route once threaded its way across oceans, carrying more than cloves, nutmeg, and pepper. For centuries, it conveyed stories, alliances, and encounters, binding together worlds that might otherwise never have met. Along its course, strategic ports of the Indonesian archipelago became more than points on a map: they were crucibles of cultural and linguistic exchange, where traders from Africa, Asia, and Europe met in markets thick with the scent of spices and the sound of many tongues (Andaya, 2021). In the language of contact linguistics, these were “contact zones” (Pratt, 1991), sites where pragmatic necessity overrode linguistic boundaries, and new communicative forms emerged in the swirl of commerce.

Much has been written on the economic power and political rivalries the spice route engendered (Reid, 2015; Sutherland, 2013). Far less attention, however, has been paid to the linguistic forces at play. Studies of language in the archipelago (Collins, 1996; Adelaar, 2005) and of specific creoles (Paauw, 2008) have illuminated important aspects of regional linguistic diversity, yet they rarely consider the trade networks that sustained and transformed these languages. The result is a historical gap: the ports of the spice route remain underexamined as natural “language laboratories,” where commercial imperatives catalyzed linguistic innovation and reshaped communicative norms.

This study addresses that gap by reconceptualizing major spice-route ports as linguistic contact zones embedded in maritime trade. It focuses on five key sites, Malacca, Banten, Makassar, Ternate, and Banda, during the period of intensified trade from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. The objectives are (1) to identify and compare the linguistic features of these zones; (2) to evaluate how factors such as ethnic composition, traded commodities, and political power relations shaped the development of trade languages.

By conducting a structured literature review drawing from linguistic studies, historical sources, and ethnographic records, this study seeks to fill that gap. It proposes a conceptual framework in which ports are viewed as language laboratories, sites where contact, commerce, and context co-produce new linguistic forms. This perspective not only contributes to the linguistic history of the Indonesian archipelago but also offers broader insights into the relationship between language, trade, and early globalization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Spice Route as a Socioeconomic and Cultural Network

Scholarly literature has long recognized the spice route, linking the Maluku Islands to European markets, as one of the most influential global trade networks in early modern history. Researchers such as Reid (2015) and Sutherland (2013) have examined the economic and political dimensions of this network, highlighting the roles of maritime empires, regional port authorities, and global demand for high-value commodities like cloves, nutmeg, and pepper. These studies portray the spice route as a powerful engine of

economic transformation, but often underplay its linguistic and cultural consequences.

Complementing these macroeconomic perspectives, Andaya (2021) positions the spice route as a space of sustained intercultural contact, emphasizing the formation of social bonds, hybrid practices, and shared communicative repertoires among traders, sailors, and settlers. Ports such as Malacca, Makassar, and Banda became multicultural hubs where trade functioned not only as an exchange of goods but also as a catalyst for interpersonal and interethnic interaction.

Ports as Linguistic Contact Zones

Despite increasing recognition of Southeast Asia's linguistic diversity, few studies have directly conceptualized trade ports as contact zones, a term developed by Pratt (1991) to describe social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often under conditions of asymmetrical power. Canagarajah (2013) extends this notion into the domain of translingual practice, viewing such zones as generative environments for linguistic negotiation, innovation, and hybridity.

Although Collins (1996) and Adelaar (2005) provide extensive documentation of Austronesian language variation across the archipelago, their works primarily focus on language families, migration patterns, and structural typologies, rather than on the communicative contexts shaped by commerce. The idea of ports as "linguistic laboratories," where pragmatic needs drive language change, remains underexplored in both linguistic and historical literature.

Language Contact, Pidginization, and Creolization in the Malay World

Within the limited corpus of linguistic research focused on trade-induced contact, several studies have investigated pidginization and creolization in specific local contexts. Paauw (2008), for instance, provides a detailed account of Makassar Malay as a contact language that developed through sustained interaction among Buginese, Makassarese, Malay, and European speakers. Similar dynamics are noted in the case of Ternate Malay, where lexical borrowing and grammatical simplification reflect intense multilingual contact.

These case studies offer valuable insight into how linguistic convergence emerges from trade-related encounters, yet they are often treated as isolated phenomena rather than as part of a broader pattern along the spice route. What is lacking in the current literature is a comparative, networked approach that situates these linguistic processes within the structure of long-distance trade itself.

Extralinguistic Factors in Language Formation

The formation of trade languages cannot be explained solely through internal linguistic mechanisms. As Mufwene (2001) and Winford (2003) argue, language change, especially in contact settings, is deeply conditioned by extralinguistic factors, including patterns of migration, ethnic hierarchies, trade goods, and political authority. In port cities, these factors often converge to produce highly fluid and adaptive communicative systems.

In the context of the spice route, extralinguistic variables such as the presence of foreign merchants (Portuguese, Dutch, Arab, Chinese), the commodities being exchanged, and the shifting power dynamics among local rulers and colonial administrators must be taken into account when analyzing how and why certain linguistic forms emerged and persisted. Yet few studies synthesize these dimensions in a systematic way, especially across multiple ports.

Conceptual Framework

To guide the analysis of language contact in the context of the spice trade, this study employs a conceptual framework that integrates theories from contact linguistics, historical linguistics, and sociocultural anthropology. The framework is designed to capture the dynamic relationship between linguistic processes, trade networks, and extralinguistic forces operating within port environments. It

seeks to explain how multilingual interactions in maritime trading hubs led to the emergence of trade languages as functional tools for economic exchange and intercultural communication.

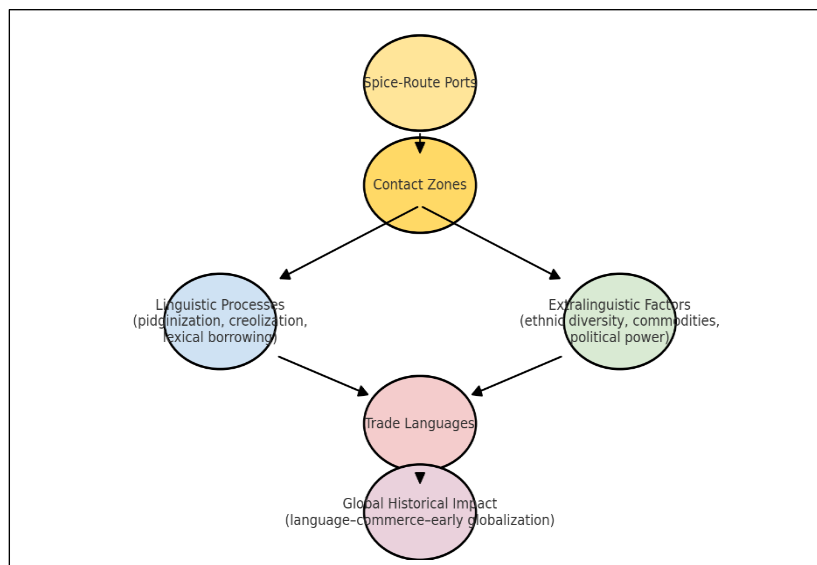


Figure 1. Port as Linguistic Laboratories

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) positions spice-route ports at the top of a dynamic system. These ports give rise to contact zones, which in turn generate two interrelated pathways: linguistic processes (including pidginization, creolization, and lexical borrowing) and extralinguistic factors (such as ethnic diversity, commodity flows, and political power). The interaction of these pathways produces trade languages, which ultimately contribute to a global historical impact, specifically, the entanglement of language, commerce, and early globalization.

This framework draws on key works in contact linguistics (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Winford, 2003) and the “contact zone” concept introduced by Pratt (1991) and later expanded by Canagarajah (2013) in the context of translingual communication. Additionally, it incorporates insights from historical linguistics, particularly those emphasizing the socio-historical contexts of language change (Mufwene, 2001). This theoretical synthesis allows for a holistic analysis that considers both internal linguistic mechanisms and external socio-political conditions shaping language evolution.

The central argument advanced through this framework is that spice-route ports functioned as sites of deliberate linguistic experimentation, where languages were negotiated, adapted, and transformed to meet the pragmatic demands of trade. In these multilingual, transactional environments, language itself became a form of capital, flexible, negotiable, and essential for exchange. By foregrounding this dynamic, the study not only contributes to the linguistic history of the Indonesian archipelago but also engages with broader scholarly discussions on the intersections of language, commerce, and early globalization.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach to examine the linguistic dimensions of major ports along the Indonesian spice route. The review synthesizes existing scholarship from linguistics, history, and anthropology to build a conceptual understanding of these ports as linguistic

contact zones. The design emphasizes critical evaluation of published research rather than the collection of new primary linguistic data.

Scope of the Study

The geographical focus remains on five historically significant spice-route ports, Malacca, Banten, Makassar, Ternate, and Banda, while the temporal scope covers the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the period of intensified spice trade and cross-cultural contact. The study is limited to sources that explicitly or implicitly address language contact phenomena in these contexts.

Data Sources

Two primary types of sources were consulted:

1. Online academic publications: peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings accessed through academic databases such as JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar.
2. National library collections: printed and digitized materials from the National Library of Indonesia (Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia) and, where relevant, from other national repositories with Southeast Asian holdings.

Data Collection Procedures

The literature search was conducted using targeted keywords in both English and Indonesian (e.g., “spice route,” “contact linguistics,” “creole,” “Malacca port,” “Bahasa perdagangan,” “jalur rempah”) to identify works relevant to the intersection of maritime trade and language contact. Inclusion criteria required that sources contain empirical or historical descriptions of linguistic practices in the selected ports or theoretical discussions relevant to contact linguistics. Exclusion criteria removed works with no direct relevance to linguistic change in maritime trade contexts.

Data Analysis

The analysis involved:

1. Extraction of linguistic information from each source, including documented vocabulary items, structural features, and descriptions of multilingual interaction.
2. Thematic coding of findings according to linguistic processes (pidginization, creolization, lexical borrowing) and extralinguistic factors (ethnic composition, traded commodities, political dynamics).
3. Synthesis of findings across multiple sources to identify convergences, divergences, and gaps in the literature.

The synthesis is guided by contact linguistics theory (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Winford, 2003) and the contact zone framework (Pratt, 1991; Canagarajah, 2013), complemented by historical-linguistic perspectives that highlight the sociohistorical conditions of language change (Mufwene, 2001). This framework enables the integration of diverse secondary sources into a coherent interpretive model.

To ensure conceptual validity, only sources from reputable academic publishers or recognized archival collections were included. Reliability was supported through cross-referencing multiple works on similar topics to confirm consistency in reported historical and linguistic information.

RESULTS

To provide a clear and comparative overview of the linguistic and sociocultural dynamics across the five spice-route ports examined in this study, the following table synthesizes the key findings. Each port is evaluated in terms of the trade language or linguistic variety historically (and in some cases,

currently) in use, the core linguistic features observed or documented, and the primary extralinguistic factors that influenced their development. This structured presentation supports the research objective of identifying and comparing linguistic contact outcomes while also situating them within the broader sociohistorical context of the spice trade.

Table 1. Linguistic Features of Spice-Route Ports in Nusantara

Port	Trade Language/Variety	Key Linguistic Features	Extralinguistic Influences
Malacca	Papiá Kristang	Portuguese-lexified creole; pro-drop; Portuguese-Malay syntax blend	Portuguese colonization; Kristang community identity; cultural revitalization
Makassar	Makassar Malay	Neutral dialect among ethnic groups; simplified structures	Multiethnic population; lingua franca for commerce; Indonesian influence
Banda	Banda Malay	Heavy Dutch and Portuguese borrowings; unique phonological traits	VOC trade monopoly; forced migration; colonial power dynamics
Ternate	Ternate Malay	Malay-based creole; Ternate lexical items; Papuan syntactic influence	Prestige of Ternate Sultanate; regional trade network; multiethnic interaction
Banten	—	Insufficient published linguistic data	Requires further archival and field research

Table 2. Comparative Trade-Lexicon across the Spice-route ports

Trade term (gloss)	Probable origin	Makassar	Banten	Banda	Ternate	Melaka (MY)
rekening (account/ledger)	Dutch <i>rekening</i>	rekening	rekening	rekening	rekening	akaun
faktur (invoice)	Dutch <i>factuur</i>	faktur	faktur	faktur	faktur	invois
nota / bon (bill / receipt)	Dutch <i>nota/bon</i>	nota / bon	nota / bon	nota / bon	nota / bon	resit
kantor (office)	Dutch <i>kantoor</i>	kantor	kantor	kantor	kantor	pejabat
kasir (cashier)	Dutch <i>cassier</i>	kasir	kasir	kasir	kasir	juruwang
ekspor (export)	Dutch/Euro	ekspor	ekspor	ekspor	ekspor	eksport

Trade term (gloss)	Probable origin	Makassar	Banten	Banda	Ternate	Melaka (MY)
impor (import)	Dutch/Euro	impor	impor	impor	impor	import
grosir (wholesaler)	Dutch <i>grossier</i>	grosir	grosir	grosir	grosir	pemborong
kredit (credit)	Dutch <i>krediet</i>	kredit	kredit	kredit	kredit	kredit
toko (shop)	Hokkien <i>thó-khò</i>	toko	toko	toko	toko	kedai
teh (tea)	Hokkien <i>tê</i>	teh	teh	teh	teh	teh
kecap (soy sauce)	Hokkien <i>kê-tsiap</i>	kecap	kecap	kecap	kecap	kicap
bendera (flag)	Portuguese <i>bandeira</i>	bendera	bendera	bendera	bendera	bendera
meja (table/counter)	Portuguese <i>mesa</i>	meja	meja	meja	meja	meja
kapal (ship)	Malay (cf. Tamil <i>kappal</i>)	kapal	kapal	kapal	kapal	kapal
muatan (cargo/load)	Malay	muatan	muatan	muatan	muatan	muatan

The table captures a classic pattern of contact-induced lexical convergence across Southeast Asian port-polities: when commerce concentrates multiethnic actors in a few nodal harbors, a trade lingua franca—here, Malay and its regional bazaar varieties—mediates daily exchange and becomes the conduit through which specialized vocabulary spreads. In the Makassar case, two structural conditions intensified that process: (i) Makassar’s long-standing role as an entrepôt linking Java–Maluku–Kalimantan–Sumatra with China, India, and Europe, and (ii) the 1847 free-port policy that removed import–export duties and welcomed foreign shipping (including Chinese junks). Both factors enlarged the pool of interacting speakers and the frequency of transactional routines, thereby stabilizing and disseminating trade registers and loanwords.

Within that ecology, three donor streams dominate. First, Portuguese items (e.g., *bandeira* → *bendera*, *mesa* → *meja*) track the earliest phase of European maritime brokerage; they are pan-port and largely semantic-stable in ship/office settings. Second, Dutch items (e.g., *rekening*, *faktur*, *nota/bon*, *kantor*, *kasir*; *ekspor/impor*) reflect VOC/colonial bureaucratic practice—bookkeeping, documentation, and institutional roles—hence their uniform presence in Indonesian ports such as Makassar, Banten, Banda, and Ternate. Third, Hokkien items (e.g., *toko*, *teh*, *kecap/kicap*) index long-standing Chinese mercantile networks in provisioning, retail, and food commodities; these circulate widely wherever Chinese trading houses and shopkeeping took root.

What the table also shows is areal uniformity with standardized divergence. Indonesian ports tend to converge on the Dutch-derived trade register (*rekening*, *faktur*, *kantor*, *kasir*, *toko*), whereas Melaka—while sharing the same historical inputs—aligns with contemporary Standard Malay (Malaysia) choices (*akaun*, *invois*, *resit*, *pejabat*, *juruwang*, *kedai*; *kicap*). In other words, the lexical core is shared because the historical contact ecology is shared, but national standardization later nudged surface forms apart. Functionally, however, the categories remain tightly aligned across ports: finance

(rekening/akaun), paperwork (faktur/invois; nota/resit), institutional roles (kasir/juruwang), places of trade (toko/kedai), and staple trade goods (teh; kecap/kicap).

Finally, the cross-harbor consistency of this inventory reflects a routine-driven register:

words that “travel with forms”—ledgers, invoices, receipts, flags, manifests, counters, shops—attached to the genres of port commerce. Makassar’s entrepôt position and free-port regime exemplify how policy and geography amplify such diffusion; analogous commercial ecologies at Banten, Banda, and Ternate produced parallel outcomes, while Melaka preserves the same structural template under a different national standard.

Figures 2 and 3 provide visual summaries of (i) the five focal ports as a conceptual west-to-east network and (ii) the main donor sources of the core trade lexicon listed in Table 2.

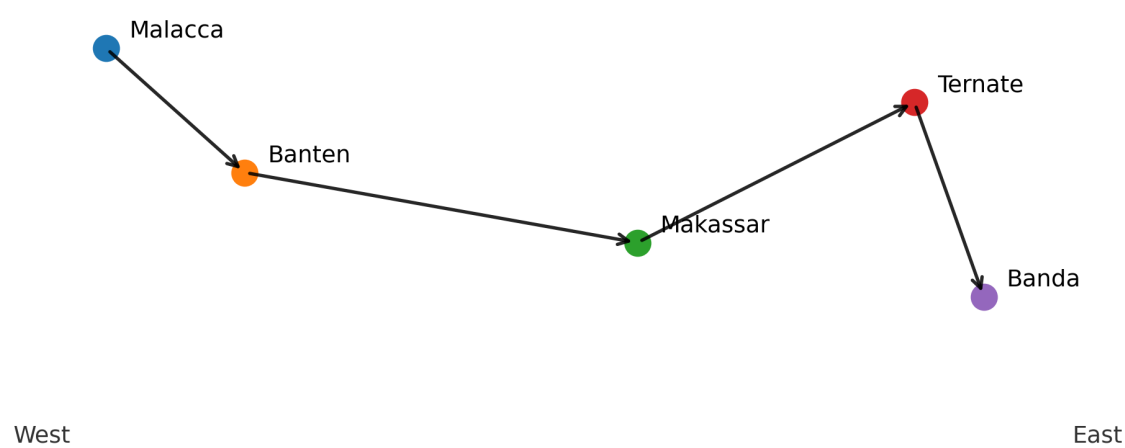


Figure 2. Schematic network of the five focal spice-route ports (conceptual).

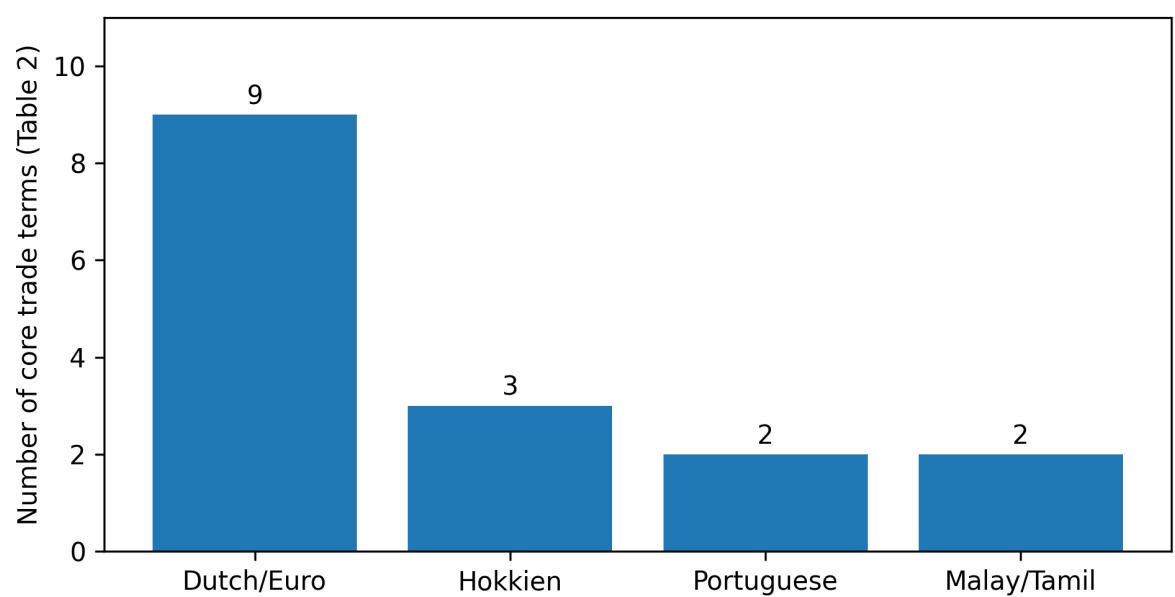


Figure 3. Donor sources for the core trade lexicon

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the diverse yet patterned ways in which maritime contact zones across the Indonesian archipelago shaped linguistic outcomes during the spice trade era. Each of the four documented ports—Malacca, Makassar, Banda, and Ternate—produced distinct linguistic varieties that reflect both internal linguistic dynamics and external sociohistorical pressures. Banten, while historically significant, lacks sufficient documentation, pointing to a research gap that future studies must address.

1. Convergent Lexical Outcomes and Institutional Pathways in Spice-Route Ports

Across Malacca, Makassar, Banda, Ternate, and (provisionally) Banten, the results cohere with classic predictions about contact-induced change in trade ecologies: frequent interethnic brokerage fosters morphological simplification, code flexibility, borrowing, and—locally—structural hybridization (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Winford, 2003). In this setting, regional Malay lingua francas (and bazaar varieties) stabilized everyday commerce and functioned as conduits for specialized vocabulary. The cross-harbor portability of the document-bound lexicon listed in Table 2 (e.g., *rekening/akaun*, *faktur/invois*, *nota/resit*, *kasir/juruwang*, *kantor/pejabat*, *toko/kedai*) follows from what the contact literature calls “genres of trade”: words that travel with forms, ledgers, invoices, receipts, manifests, flags, counters, and shops, diffuse efficiently wherever documentary routines are routinized (Winford, 2003).

Makassar exemplifies the enabling sociohistorical scaffolding for such diffusion. First, as a long-standing entrepôt knitting together Java–Maluku–Kalimantan–Sumatra with China, India, and Europe, Makassar concentrated diverse trading populations and routinized interlingual negotiation. Second, the 1847 free-port policy removed import–export duties and opened the harbor to Chinese junks and other foreign shipping, intensifying contact density and documentary practice; contemporaries reported sharp post-1847 trade growth, consistent with lexical stabilization in the commercial register.

Within this ecology, three donor streams dominate Table 2. (i) Portuguese items (*bandeira* → *bendera*, *mesa* → *meja*) index the earliest layer of European maritime brokerage and persist in ship/office domains. (ii) Dutch items (*rekening*, *faktur*, *nota/bon*, *kantor*, *kasir*; *ekspor/impor*) reflect VOC/colonial documentary regimes (bookkeeping, paperwork, institutional roles), explaining their uniform presence in Indonesian ports. (iii) Hokkien loans (*toko/kedai*, *teh*, *kecap/kicap*) track Chinese mercantile networks in provisioning and retail. The final pattern is areal uniformity with national standard divergence: Indonesian ports converge on Dutch-derived forms (*rekening*, *faktur*, *kasir*, *kantor*, *toko*), while Malacca aligns with Standard Malay (Malaysia) (*akaun*, *invois*, *resit*, *juruwang*, *pejabat*, *kedai/kicap*). The lexical core is shared because the historical ecology is shared; later standardization nudged surface forms apart without altering functional categories (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Winford, 2003).

2. Structural Trajectories under a Shared Ecology: Creole vs. Stabilized Contact Varieties

Table 1 situates each port along a continuum of outcomes shaped by local demography, governance, and prestige. At one pole, *Kristang* (Papiá *Kristang*) in Malacca represents creolization under asymmetrical contact: a Portuguese-lexified creole with Malay substrate showing pro-drop, simplified verb morphology, and regularized word order (Baxter, 1988; Holm, 1989). Phonological work reports stress retraction and vowel raising emergent from Portuguese–Malay convergence (Bastos, 2012). *Kristang* thus instantiates reduction and restructuring predicted in classic creolization models (Holm, 1989). Figure 4 summarizes this continuum of contact outcomes as a heuristic visual guide for the comparative discussion.

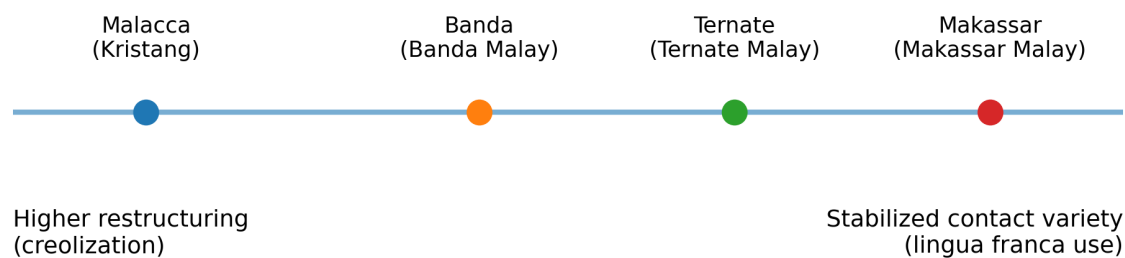


Figure 4. Continuum of contact outcomes across focal ports (heuristic summary).

By contrast, Makassar Malay is a stabilized contact variety that functions as a practical lingua franca among Makassarese, Bugis, Mandar, and Torajan speakers. Structurally it shows reduced inflection, analytic verb constructions, and regularized clause patterns (Paauw, 2008), and socially it thrives in contemporary informal domains with frequent code-switching into Indonesian and English (Kurniawati & Abduh, 2023). This aligns with Mufwene’s (2001) notion of “ecological adaptation”: under sustained commerce, a non-creole contact variety can remain stable and fit-for-purpose. Makassar’s entrepôt role and free-port openness provided precisely the contact density that stabilized the Dutch/Hokkien/Portuguese trade register documented in Table 2.

Banda Malay exhibits layered contact: a Malayic grammatical core densely lexicalized by Dutch and Portuguese, especially in administration, navigation, and material culture (Paauw, 2008). The profile matches the VOC’s spice monopoly and the seventeenth-century forced depopulation/repopulation of Banda (Hanna, 1978), producing contact-dialect formation under coerced mixing (Winford, 2003).

Ternate Malay (North Moluccan Malay) is an interregional lingua franca for administration, religion, and trade. Its structure reflects borrowing and reanalysis from the non-Austronesian Ternate language (North Halmahera), with pronominals such as *ngana* (2SG) and *ngoni* (2PL) and Papuan-style discourse options (topical fronting, particles) (Voorhoeve, 1983; Winford, 2003). Spread and prestige were underwritten by the Ternate Sultanate, a case of elite-sponsored accommodation.

Finally, Banten remains under-documented in the published record (Table 1). Given Banten’s status as an early modern spice port, the expectation—on analogy with Table 2—is a Dutch–Hokkien–Portuguese commercial register akin to other Indonesian ports. A concise research agenda follows: (i) targeted archival work (VOC ledgers, shipping registers, court/notarial records) to extract documentary lexicon (*rekening*, *faktur*, *nota/bon*, role terms), and (ii) field sociolinguistics in legacy merchant districts to probe survivals in local Malay and trade jargon. The theoretical payoff is a fuller test of how policy, demography, and prestige select distinct structural trajectories (creole vs. stabilized contact) while preserving intelligibility in trade (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Winford, 2003; Mufwene, 2001).

Extralinguistic Factors: Socioeconomic and Political Forces in Shaping Trade Languages

The emergence and evolution of trade-related linguistic varieties across the archipelago cannot be meaningfully analyzed without accounting for the socioeconomic and political conditions embedded within each port city. Language contact, in these cases, was not a random or purely internal process—it was deeply shaped by colonial interventions, trade monopolies, ethnic mobility, and the pragmatic necessities of intercultural communication.

In Malacca, the formation of Papiá Kristang is inseparable from the Portuguese colonial presence (1511–1641), which brought not only commerce but also religion and settlement. Inter-marriages

between Portuguese men and local Malay women formed the basis of the Kristang community, whose members forged a distinct identity as Eurasian Catholics speaking a Portuguese-lexified creole. This identity and linguistic continuity have persisted across generations, though today the language is endangered (Baxter, 1988; Baxter & Bastos, 2012). Cultural practices such as intrudu (a Kristang pre-Lenten water festival) remain markers of Kristang identity and illustrate the entanglement between language, ritual, and communal memory (Baxter, 2005).

In Makassar, the port's function as a cosmopolitan trade hub fostered a linguistically diverse population that included Buginese, Makassarese, Mandar, Torajan, and foreign merchants. Here, the development of Makassar Malay as a regional lingua franca was driven not by colonization but by pragmatic necessity—a shared variety that enabled communication among ethnolinguistically distinct groups. Paauw (2008) and Laidig (1992) highlight that Makassar Malay developed unique structural simplifications while maintaining high functionality in commerce, interethnic marriages, and informal urban domains.

In Banda, the commodification of nutmeg reached its brutal extreme in the early 17th century. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) sought to monopolize spice production and, in 1621, conducted a systematic massacre and deportation of much of the native Bandanese population under Jan Pieterszoon Coen. As noted by Hanna (1978), the VOC then repopulated the islands with slaves and contract workers from elsewhere—leading to a highly heterogeneous demographic mix. The resulting Banda Malay thus reflects layers of lexical and phonological influence, particularly from Dutch and Portuguese, amid a fractured and colonially engineered society.

In Ternate, the story is one of indigenous political power and Islamic influence. The Ternate Sultanate maintained significant authority in the region and played a central role in regional trade across North Maluku and beyond. The prestige of the court language and the need for interethnic communication across the archipelago contributed to the spread of Ternate Malay, a Malay-based variety that absorbed lexical and syntactic elements from local Papuan languages. Voorhoeve (1983) and Collins (2002) emphasize how the linguistic prestige of Ternate Malay was enhanced by its political associations, facilitating its function as a *de facto* lingua franca across the region.

Taken together, these cases demonstrate that language contact and the emergence of trade languages were inseparable from broader forces of power, migration, and economic domination. As Thomason and Kaufman (1988) argue, contact-induced change is always shaped by the social context in which it occurs. Mufwene (2001) similarly highlights how language evolution must be understood within the “ecology” of historical pressures, demographic shifts, and asymmetrical social relations. The spice-route ports studied here vividly confirm that insight.

3. Trade Languages as Negotiated Tools of Power, Access, and Identity

A crucial insight emerging from the four port case studies is that trade languages in the spice-route context were neither neutral conduits of communication nor accidental by-products of contact. Instead, they were strategically negotiated linguistic repertoires, actively shaped by the pragmatic needs of multilingual actors to mediate access to goods, alliances, authority, and survival. Whether in the creolization of Kristang, the simplification of Makassar Malay, or the prestige-laden deployment of Ternate Malay, language functioned not simply as a means of expression, but as a social instrument for navigating asymmetrical power relations.

In this sense, trade languages were both economic facilitators and social gatekeepers. The ability to speak a specific contact variety could grant access to markets, labor arrangements, or political protection. Conversely, linguistic exclusion could result in marginalization, distrust, or

disempowerment. This resonates with Blommaert's (2010) notion of "language as a resource" that is unequally distributed and valued in different sociopolitical economies.

This interpretation aligns closely with Canagarajah's (2013) concept of translingual practice, a framework that sees multilingual speakers as agentive, adaptive, and strategic in mobilizing diverse linguistic resources. Rather than treating contact varieties as fixed or autonomous codes, translingual practice emphasizes the fluid, situational, and context-sensitive nature of language use, especially in high-stakes intercultural exchanges like those found in trading ports.

Historical evidence from Malacca, Banda, and Ternate confirms this model. The Kristang community, for example, used their hybrid Portuguese-Malay creole not only for intra-community communication, but also to maintain ties with colonial and ecclesiastical institutions, leveraging their linguistic identity to assert Eurasian belonging in a colonial hierarchy (Baxter, 1988). Similarly, Ternate Malay served as a *lingua franca* of regional diplomacy, where command of the variety indexed familiarity with courtly norms and political networks. In Makassar, everyday negotiation between ethnic groups required flexible switching and simplification strategies that reflected mutual intelligibility and social parity.

Therefore, the use of trade languages in these zones should be understood as a translingual negotiation of access, authority, and belonging, one that was as much about who could speak and how they spoke, as about what was being said. In this way, language becomes both a symbolic and material technology in the shaping of early global trade ecologies.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined five key ports of the historical spice route as linguistic contact zones shaped by trade, mobility, and power. It has shown that despite local differences, each site produced adaptive trade languages through processes such as simplification, lexical borrowing, and structural accommodation. These outcomes underscore how language functioned not merely as a medium of communication but as a negotiated tool of access, identity, and authority. By integrating contact linguistics with historical and maritime perspectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language operated within early globalization. Future research should address underexplored cases like Banten, pursue sociophonetic and ethnolinguistic studies of current usage, and expand the model to other Indian Ocean ports to further contextualize the linguistic consequences of global trade.

Future research should move beyond illustrative case comparisons toward systematic documentation of the living languages of port communities across the archipelago. Building comparable community-based corpora (spoken interaction, oral histories, maritime work talk, and trade lexicons), alongside sociolinguistic surveys and archival triangulation, would help map contact-driven change, track vitality and shift, and identify locally valued registers tied to seafaring livelihoods.

Such documentation is also a form of cultural safeguarding. It can strengthen heritage education, museum and community programs, and wider efforts to preserve the maritime culture of Indonesia by ensuring that the linguistic repertoires through which maritime knowledge is transmitted are recorded, curated, and (where appropriate) made accessible for future generations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research received financial support for operational expenses from Yayasan Pendidikan Tahirah Al Baeti, which is gratefully acknowledged.

REFERENCES

- Adelaar, K. A. (2005). The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar: A historical perspective. In A. Adelaar & N. Himmelmann (Eds.), *The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar* (pp. 1–42). Routledge.
- Bastos, L. S. (2012). Malacca Portuguese Creole phonology. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 42(2), 207–220. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100312000145>
- Baxter, A. N. (1988). *A grammar of Kristang (Malacca Creole Portuguese)*. Pacific Linguistics.
- Baxter, A. N., & Bastos, L. S. (2012). Portuguese-based creoles: A sociohistorical overview. In L. Cardoso (Ed.), *Portuguese-based Creoles in the Asian Subcontinent* (pp. 17–42). Centro de Linguística da Universidade de Lisboa.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge.
- Collins, J. T. (2002). *Bahasa Melayu, bahasa Dunia: Sejarah singkat*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Hanna, W. A. (1978). *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and its aftermath in the nutmeg islands*. Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Holm, J. (1989). *Pidgins and creoles: Volume II – Reference survey*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kurniawati, R., & Abduh, M. (2023). The use of Makassar Malay dialect in food buying and selling interactions on Instagram social media. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369650408>
- Laidig, W. D. (1992). *The sociolinguistics of Makassar Malay* [Unpublished manuscript]. SIL International.
- Mufwene, S. S. (2001). *The ecology of language evolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Paauw, S. (2008). *The Malay contact varieties of Eastern Indonesia: A typological comparison* (Doctoral dissertation, University at Buffalo, State University of New York). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Thomason, S. G., & Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language contact, creolization, and genetic linguistics*. University of California Press.
- Voorhoeve, C. L. (1983). *The languages of the North Halmahera group, Eastern Indonesia*. Pacific Linguistics.
- Winford, D. (2003). *An introduction to contact linguistics*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Bastos, N. (2012). Phonological developments in Malacca Portuguese Creole (Kristang). *[article details]*.
 Baxter, A. N. (1988). *A Grammar of Kristang (Malacca Creole Portuguese)*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
 Hanna, W. A. (1978). *Indonesian Banda: Colonialism and Its Aftermath in the Nutmeg Islands*. Philadelphia: ISHI.
 Holm, J. (1989). *Pidgins and Creoles, Vol. 2: Reference Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 Kurniawati, R., & Abduh, A. (2023). Code-switching and informal usage of Makassar Malay on social media. *[article details]*.
 Mufwene, S. S. (2001). *The Ecology of Language Evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Paauw, S. (2008). *The Malay Contact Varieties of Eastern Indonesia* (Doctoral dissertation).
 University at Buffalo (SUNY).
 Thomason, S. G., & Kaufman, T. (1988). *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*.
 Berkeley: University of California Press.
 Voorhoeve, C. L. (1983). The non-Austronesian languages of North Halmahera: A sketch and their
 influence on North Moluccan Malay. [chapter/article details].
 Winford, D. (2003). *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

PANEL 3.

**INTERPRETING THE METAPHOR: CREATIVITY & CULTURAL
EXPRESSIONS ALONG THE SPICE ROUTES**

SPICES OF THE SOUL: ECO-ART COUNSELING AND CULTURAL HEALING IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Siti Kulsum,^{1a)} M. Solehuddin^{1b)}, Dedi Koswara^{1c)}, and Eka Sakti Yudha^{1d)}

¹*Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Jl. Dr. Setiabudhi-Bandung*

a) Corresponding author: sitikulsumks@upi.edu

b) solehuddin@upi.edu

c) dedi.koswara@upi.edu

d) eka_bk@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

The psychological well-being of adolescents in Islamic school (*madrasah*) settings was increasingly challenged by ecological crises, academic demands, and cultural–religious pressures. This study explored a transformative eco-art counseling approach that integrated local wisdom and sensory-rich natural materials, particularly traditional spices such as cinnamon, ginger, and star anise, as expressive media to support students' emotional and spiritual regulation. Thirteen students identified with low levels of psychological well-being participated in a three-session eco-art counseling intervention, which culminated in the creation of symbolic artworks and the preparation and sharing of herbal beverages (*wedang*) derived from selected spices. Qualitative data were collected through observations, reflective journals, and in-depth interviews and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed three central outcomes: (1) emotional expression and psychological relief through symbolic art-making, (2) the reawakening of cultural memory and ecological awareness through engagement with indigenous materials, and (3) enhanced inner calm and spiritual connectedness fostered by the communal ritual of sharing *wedang*. These results demonstrated the therapeutic and pedagogical potential of culturally rooted eco-art counseling as a meaningful strategy for strengthening emotional resilience, ecological sensitivity, and identity integration among students in faith-based Islamic educational contexts.

Keywords: Eco-art, Counseling, Cultural Healing, Islamic school.

INTRODUCTION

Social and ecological changes resulting from the climate crisis, globalization, and increasing academic pressure have impacted adolescents' psychological well-being in educational settings, including madrasahs. One aspect significantly affected is students' psychological well-being (PWB), which includes self-acceptance, positive social relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth (Cianconi et al., 2020; Ryff, 1989). In a broader context, psychological well-being also encompasses dimensions of emotional regulation and spiritual connection with nature, recently gaining attention in the literature on eco-psychology (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020; Marczak & Sorokowski, 2018). Global data indicate a worrying trend: according to WHO (2024), approximately 14% of 10–19-year-olds worldwide experience mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders. In addition, a 2021 global survey of 10,000 young people across 10

countries found that nearly 60% reported being very or extremely worried about climate change, an indicator of widespread eco-anxiety.

However, the learning and guidance approaches commonly applied in schools still focus on cognitive achievements and formalistic norms, so students' emotional, spiritual, and cultural experiences are often neglected (Rosmalah, 2021). Especially in madrasahs, students face dual pressures: on one hand, the demands of religious and spiritual identity, and on the other, social and ecological dynamics that require emotional adaptation and self-reflection. In such conditions, counseling services that are merely curative and rely on conventional verbal approaches are no longer adequate. Religious education without psychosocial support and adaptive mental-spiritual strengthening will lose its effectiveness in accompanying madrasah adolescents in facing modern psychological crises (Khodijah et al., 2024). This study also addresses the cultural gap in existing interventions, as most eco-art therapy literature originates from Western contexts with limited integration of spiritual ecology and Islamic educational settings.

A reflective, transformative, and contextual approach is becoming increasingly relevant to apply, namely an approach that can create a safe space for students to reinterpret their life experiences, healthily manage their emotions, and build a sense of well-being that aligns with their personal and cultural values. In this context, eco-art counseling emerges as an innovative alternative in art-based guidance and counseling that integrates spirituality and local wisdom. Yet, the availability of culturally responsive and ecologically integrated counseling approaches remains limited, with only about 10% of clinical trials involving non-pharmacological or culturally tailored methods conducted in low- and middle-income settings (Closing the Global Gap in Adolescent Mental Health, 2024).

This approach aligns with the principles of arts-based inquiry, where symbolic expression through creative mediums paves the way for identity transformation, emotional integration, and contextual self-narrative recovery (Leavy, 2020). Eco-art counseling is an integrative approach that combines the principles of ecopsychology and nature-based art therapy in the context of psychosocial counseling and healing (Kulsum, 2022; C. A. Malchiodi, 2012; Pike, 2021). This approach is based on the assumption that an individual's mental health cannot be separated from their relationship with nature and the culture in which they grow and develop. Within the framework of ecopsychology, humanity's disconnection from nature is seen as the root of various psychosocial crises, and psychological recovery is considered incomplete without meaningful ecological reconnection (Buzzell, 2010). As an applied derivative of this principle, eco-art therapy emphasizes the importance of creative expression using natural materials to explore meaning, reduce stress, and build holistic spiritual and ecological connections (Pike, 2013; Sweeney, 2018). These activities are not only emotionally therapeutic but also open up symbolic spaces that touch on the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the individual (Kopytin. & Rugh, 2017).

In the context of madrasahs, eco-art counseling can be a medium that is not only therapeutic but also educational and transformative. Through the exploration of symbols, colors, aromas, textures, and natural forms such as spices (red ginger, cinnamon, cloves), students are encouraged to re-narrate their life experiences, express suppressed feelings, and reflect on personal, religious, and cultural values (Kulsum & Khairi Siregar, 2022). This process is not merely an artistic activity but also an experience-based intervention that simultaneously addresses cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social domains.

The use of spices as a medium was not chosen by chance. Spices have strong historical, symbolic, and spiritual dimensions in the culture of the Indonesian archipelago. The Spice Route connecting various regions of Indonesia reflects how spices became symbols of life, trade, spirituality, and even colonialism (Lockard, 2023; Nawiyanto, Sri Ana H, 2023). In expressive art, spices are used for their aesthetic value and their ability to connect the body, memory, and identity. When students create collages or scarves made from spices, they are weaving a narrative about who they are, what they have experienced, and where they want to go.

Eco-art counseling interventions also resonate with national education policy directions. The *Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta/KBC)* places love as the foundation of education, embodied in five dimensions: love for God through reflective and spiritual practice; love for nature through the symbolic use of spices; love for oneself through emotional regulation and self-acceptance; love for others through group dynamics fostering empathy; and love for knowledge through joyful, contextual learning processes (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, Kementerian Agama RI, 2025). Likewise, the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Eco-Theology* program, as outlined in KMA No. 244 of 2025, encourages the integration of ecological awareness into religious education (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025). By situating eco-art counseling within these policy frameworks, this study bridges pedagogical innovation with cultural–spiritual heritage, creating an intervention that is academically grounded, policy-relevant, and culturally resonant.

Despite growing concerns about adolescents' psychological well-being in madrasahs, counseling practices remain predominantly verbal, cognitively oriented, and culturally detached, offering limited space for emotional expression, ecological awareness, and spiritual–cultural integration. There is a clear lack of empirically grounded counseling models that meaningfully integrate local ecological materials, cultural symbolism, and Islamic spirituality to address students' emotional and identity-related challenges. Building on this gap, the present study examined how madrasah students with low levels of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) experienced a spice-based eco-art counseling intervention. Specifically, this study was guided by the following research questions:

How do madrasah students construct emotional and spiritual meaning through participation in spice-based eco-art counseling?

In what ways does the integration of spices as cultural–ecological symbols support emotional regulation, ecological awareness, and identity reconstruction among students?

By addressing these questions, this study sought to contribute a humanistic, culturally grounded, and transformative perspective to guidance and counseling practices in Islamic educational contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using an arts-based participatory action research (AB-PAR) design. This approach was chosen because it is effective in exploring adolescents' psychological and cultural transformation through symbolic, participatory, and contextual art media (Lee, 2020; Rodriguez, 2024). AB-PAR provides space for creative expression, self-reflection, and cultural identity exploration, making it suitable for

understanding students' psychosocial changes in the context of eco-art counseling interventions.

Research Participants and Locations

This study's participants were 32 Madrasah Aliyah students who were purposively selected based on the results of an initial psychological well-being assessment. Of these, 13 students with low Psychological Well-Being (PWB) scores were selected as the main subjects of the intervention. The study was conducted at MAN 2 Bandung, which has a strong socio-religious and local cultural background. The intervention process was carried out from January to March 2025.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data collection was conducted through:

- **Psychological Well-Being Scale:** Adapted from Ryff with the addition of two dimensions—*spiritual ecology* and *emotional regulation*—referring to Pargament and Clayton et al. (Clayton S, 2017; Pargament et al., 2013; Ryff, 1989).
- **Reflective Journals:** Written by students at the end of each session to capture affective responses, personal meaning, and cognitive changes.
- **Artifacts (Spice Scarves):** Visual products analyzed as symbolic representations of psychosocial transformation.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted post-intervention to explore experiences, perceptions, and personal meanings from the eco-art counseling process (Butcher, 2023).

Intervention Materials and Media

The media used in eco-art counseling sessions include a variety of natural spices such as red ginger, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, and nutmeg. These spices serve as visual and aromatic media and contain strong cultural symbolism, allowing students to express their identity and emotions integratively (Kulsum, 2022).

Stages of Eco-Art Counselling Intervention

The intervention was carried out in four 90-minute group counseling sessions, which were designed in stages to explore the students' emotional, cultural, and spiritual dimensions:

- Session 1: Exploring emotions through colors and shapes using spices as a symbolic medium.
- Session 2: Expressing cultural narratives and identity through local motifs and symbols.
- Session 3: Reflection on memory and spirituality through the practice of brewing and writing down experiences while drinking herbal tea.
- Session 4: Creation of a spice scarf as a symbolic artifact that combines color, aroma, and personal meaning—as a form of integration of body, mind, and soul.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process included data transcription, open coding, and the formation of themes that reflected the students' affective and spiritual transformations. Data validity was ensured through triangulation from various sources: the PWB scale, reflective journals, art artifacts, and

interviews. Additionally, a visual semiotic approach was applied to interpret the symbolic elements in the students' work, revealing layers of meaning that are not always expressible verbally.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Initial Psychological Profile and Student Well-Being

This study began by measuring the psychological well-being of Madrasah Aliyah students using an eight-dimensional scale—namely, self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth, emotional regulation, and spiritual ecology (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020; Ryff, 1989). This scale is an adaptation of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale, with two additional dimensions reflecting madrasah students' social-religious and ecological context.

The assessment results for 32 students showed a diverse distribution of PWB. A total of 13 students (40.6%) were classified as low, indicating emotional vulnerability, difficulties with self-regulation, and weak spiritual and social connections. Eleven students (34.4%) were in the moderate category, showing growth potential but facing obstacles in self-determination and relationships with their environment. Meanwhile, eight students (25%) were in the high category, with more stable psychological indicators, including clarity of life purpose and emotional resilience.

This distribution shows a significant proportion of students with low PWB, in line with previous findings on increased emotional distress among adolescents due to academic pressure, ecological crisis, and spiritual identity demands (Graça & Brandão, 2023; Clayton et al., 2017).

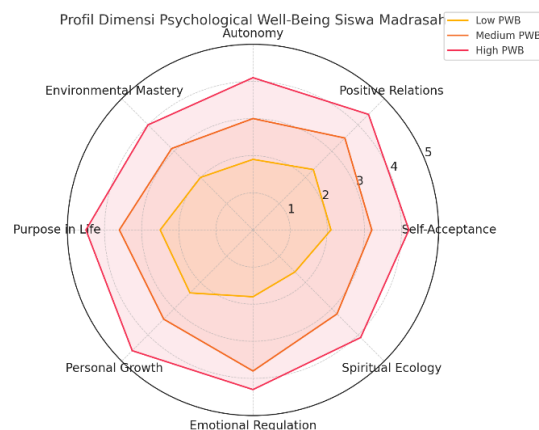


Figure 1. Average Profile Of Madrasah Students' Psychological Well-Being Dimensions By PWB Category

As shown in Figure 1, students with low PWB experienced the greatest deficits in spiritual ecology and autonomy—the two deepest domains of existential well-being (Pargament et al., 2013). The moderate group began to show recovery in positive relations and emotional regulation. In contrast, the high group showed a more balanced profile, with strengths in purpose in life and personal growth.

These findings confirm that conventional counseling approaches are insufficient to address the deepest dimensions of student well-being, necessitating reflective service models based on art, nature, and local wisdom, such as eco-art counseling.

Students' Psychosocial Responses to Eco-Art Counselling Intervention

Thirteen students with low psychological well-being (PWB) participated in four eco-art counseling sessions that used natural spices as a medium of expression. Each session was designed as a symbolic and sensory space to explore emotional stress, reflect on spiritual-ecological values, and reconstruct cultural identity. The results of thematic analysis of reflective journals, art artifacts, and semi-structured interviews revealed three main patterns of psychosocial change:

TABLE 1. Students' Psychosocial Responses To The Eco-Art Counseling Intervention

Theme	Thematic Description	Representative Quotes	Supporting Literature
Symbolic Emotional Expression	Students channel their pent-up emotions through colors, textures, and the aroma of spices; these media become a nonverbal channel for emotional catharsis.	"It's like painting with my heart... the colors of my anger are here...."	Malchiodi (2013); Moon (2010)
Spiritual and Ecological Reconnection	The ritual of brewing and drinking wedang evokes a spiritual experience, creating a sense of returning to oneself and the universe.	"I feel warm and calm, from what we get from nature, we must protect it."	Pargament (2013); Buzzell & Chalquist (2009)
Reconstruction of Cultural Identity	Spices symbolize family values, local spirituality, and cultural memory that are reconnected through art.	"There is a prayer in the aroma of kapolaga, and lemon like mother's cooking at home."	Wilson (2008); Leavy (2015)

Emotional Expression Through Sensory-Symbolic Media

Participants demonstrated their ability to channel previously suppressed emotions through colors, textures, and the aromas of spices such as red ginger, cinnamon, and cloves. Each spice carries its own unique emotional associations: red ginger is associated with anger and energy, cinnamon with warmth and longing for a mother figure, and cloves with calmness and spiritual devotion.

One student wrote:

"It's like painting with my heart... the color of my anger is here, but it feels muted by the scent of cinnamon."

This statement reflects the process of emotional catharsis as described in expressive arts therapy, where visual and sensory symbolization processes become a medium for integrating affective experiences that are difficult to express verbally (C. A. Malchiodi, 2012; Moon.B.L, 2007).

Research shows that natural mediums with multisensory properties, such as spices, can activate the emotional system through the simultaneous engagement of the senses of smell, touch, and sight. In this context, emotional expression is aesthetic and therapeutic, as it holistically activates memory and bodily affect (Kamitsis & Simmonds, 2017).

Furthermore, this approach is in line with Emotion Processing in Art Therapy (EPAT) principles, namely that the symbolization of emotions through creative processes—both visual and sensory—can increase self-awareness, acceptance of internal affects, and the integration of emotional experiences into one's narrative (Cohen S., 2004).

Research on sensory design in emotional communication also emphasizes that sensory stimuli such as texture and aroma can implicitly convey and modulate affective states, especially in therapy and nonverbal expression (Ugur Yavuz et al., 2016).

Reconstructing Cultural Identity Through Traditional Symbols

In the second session of the intervention, spices were used not only as art materials, but also as triggers for memory and culturally significant symbols. Cinnamon reminded students of their mothers' cooking at home, red ginger was associated with traditional remedies for illness, and nutmeg was linked to traditional rituals in their hometowns. Creating artifacts through this medium facilitates cultural remembering, which reinforces cultural identity narratives in visual form.

Students indirectly reconstruct their cultural identity through these artistic activities into personal artifacts. The cultural narratives that were originally implicit are symbolically revived, thereby generating both emotional and social experiences. This supports the arts-based inquiry approach, emphasizing that creative expression can bridge the gap between individual experiences and collective memory in reconstructing social identity (Netzer & Chang, 2015). This process also aligns with research as a ritual practice within local knowledge traditions, where creative activities are not merely intellectual endeavors but also existential rituals that reinforce connections with ancestral culture (Wilson et al., 2021).

In a broader context, cultural symbols such as spices and local motifs can unite historical memory and collective identity, as demonstrated in studies on the archetypal representation of Mazu culture, which strengthens solidarity and intergenerational awareness (Pang & Zhang, 2024). As emphasized in the study *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, collective memory is the foundation of cultural self-narratives. Art forms are crucial in shaping flexible yet community-rooted identity structures (Geha. J, 2019).

Spiritual and Ecological Reconnection

The practice of collectively brewing and drinking herbal tea in the third session of the intervention was not only a means of relaxation, but also created a contemplative space that participants perceived as a sacred ritual. This activity was interpreted as a return to one's authentic self and a reconnection with nature as a spiritual entity. Some students described the experience as "warm and soothing," and expressed feelings of ecological responsibility, as reflected in the following statement:

"What we receive from nature, we must protect."

This finding is consistent with Pargament's idea of spiritual integration in therapy, which states that sensory-based ritual practices can be an important pathway to spiritual meaning and reconnection—including relationships with nature as an external spiritual representation (Pargament et al., 2013).

In the context of eco-psychology, this experience reflects the concept of ecological self, which is the awareness that an individual's identity is deeply connected to ecosystems and other living beings (Buzzell, 2010). This approach is also reflected in studies of spiritual ecology, which emphasize the importance of reconnecting with one's "ecological home"

through daily practices that are deeply sensory and symbolic (Da Costa et al., 2015; Renger et al., 2024). Spiritual ecology places humans in an ethical and existential unity with the universe—through rituals, religious narratives, and symbolic expressions that foster ecological empathy and a sense of responsibility toward nature.

Thus, drinking wedang rempah is not merely a physical or social activity, but also a transition towards a healing ritual that unites the body, emotions, and spirituality in an ecological context. This process reinforces the transformative value of eco-art counseling interventions in building deep eco-spiritual awareness in students.

Visual Interpretation of Art Products: Symbolic Spice Scarf

The spice scarf art products produced by the students symbolically represent their emotional and cultural narratives. Repeated visual motifs such as circles, dots, and lines, combined with the distinctive aromas of spices (e.g., red ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg), become a channel for personal expression that conveys meanings about hope, inner wounds, and family memories. In a reflective journal, one student wrote:

“It’s like painting with my heart... my anger’s color is here, but it feels softened by the aroma of cinnamon.”

This statement reflects integrating emotional experiences, personal spirituality, and cultural symbolism in a visual medium. This process aligns with the nature-based expressive arts therapy approach, where sensory elements (such as natural scents and textures) are used as a medium for emotional healing and self-expansion (Malchiodi, 2014; Snyder, 2018; Warson, 2012).

Research findings indicate that eco-art practices in open natural settings can deepen ecological awareness, emotional well-being, and self-awareness through visual symbolism representing the relationship between humans and nature (Evans Keime, 2023). Furthermore, Alexander Kopytin explains that ecological art therapy not only targets personal healing but also fosters collective awareness, strengthens eco-identity, and forms symbolic relationships between humans and their ecosystems (Jordan, 2015; Kopytin. & Rugh, 2017).

Psychological and Cultural Transformation Through Creative Processes

Eco-art interventions in this study do more than produce aesthetically pleasing works; they facilitate a profound transformation in students’ emotional, cultural, and spiritual selves. Through the use of spices as both material and metaphor, students shift from passive recipients of therapy to active meaning-makers, reconstructing their own narratives of well-being (Hasanah et al., 2022; Pike, 2021; Sweeney, 2018). This process aligns with the principles of symbolic interactionism, where meaning emerges through the interaction between individual experience and culturally embedded symbols (Del Casino & Thien, 2019).

This transformation includes strengthening emotional regulation skills, deepening self-acceptance, and reactivating neglected spiritual values. Cultural identities marginalized by academic pressure and the homogenization of the education system begin to resurface and find their place within students' self-narratives.



Figure 2. Symbolic Representation of Emotions, Culture, and Ecology in Students' Spice Scarf Art Products

From a semiotic perspective, the scarf designs operate on three levels of meaning (Peirce, 1931–1958; Barthes, 1977).

- Iconic level: The shapes of leaves, roots, and flowers directly resemble elements of nature, invoking growth, vitality, and recovery.
- Indexical level: The earthy tones from turmeric and cinnamon indicate a direct material connection to the land and ancestral traditions.
- Symbolic level: Stylized motifs resembling ancient scripts function as cultural signifiers, representing hidden yet enduring ancestral wisdom and spiritual identity.

The integration of aroma as a sensory sign adds a unique dimension to the semiotic analysis. The warmth of cinnamon, the sharpness of cloves, and the brightness of turmeric collectively evoke layered emotional responses—from comfort and nostalgia to alertness and vitality—thus embedding *multisensory meaning* into the art product (Classen, 2012).

Historically, these spices trace connections to the Spice Route that linked the Indonesian archipelago with Asia, the Middle East, and Europe for centuries. This trade not only shaped economic and political histories but also facilitated cultural and spiritual exchanges (Reid, 1993; Donkin, 2003). By embedding cloves, nutmeg, turmeric, and cinnamon into the fabric, students inadvertently reconnect with a transoceanic legacy where spices were valued as symbols of prosperity, healing, and divine creation—aligning local identities with broader Islamic and Southeast Asian cultural histories (Chambert-Loir, 2014).

TABLE 2. List Of Spices Used And Their Symbolic Meanings in Eco-Art Counseling

Spices	Sensory Characteristics	Emotional & Symbolic Associations	Functions in Artworks
Red Ginger	Spicy, warm, reddish	Energy, anger, courage, and trauma being processed	Strong representation of emotions and conflict in visualization
Cinnamon	Sweet, soothing aroma	Warmth, memories of home/mother, inner peace	Balancing color and aroma in artwork
Lawang Flower	Mild aroma, star shape	Fear, freshness, spiritual connection	Symbol of reflection and spiritual tranquility

Cardamom	Fresh, with a subtle spice aroma	Hope, recovery, personal empowerment	Symbols of recovery and new beginnings
Clove	Strong, sharp, dark brown color	Hidden emotional wounds, memories, and emotional depth	Representation of emotional burdens that are beginning to be processed
Nutmeg	Soft yet sharp, with a distinctive aroma	Tradition, heat, cultural roots	Symbols of connection with ancestral values and customs
Lemongrass	Fresh, herbal scent	togetherness, clarity, a new beginning	Used as a boundary line or transition element
Turmeric	Warm, bright yellow	Vitality, healing, optimism	Used for background colors and symbols of life

In creating these scarves, students engaged in a process combining sensory immersion with artistic transformation. The spices served dual roles: as natural dyes shaping earthy tones and as emotive agents amplifying reflection. Subsequent digitization through Canva allowed the infusion of modern creative expression resulting in artifacts bearing the weight of memory, culture, and ecological awareness.

When compared with similar art-based interventions such as batik therapy in Malaysia (Ibrahim et al., 2021) or Islamic calligraphic workshops infused with botanical symbolism in the Middle East (Nasr, 2013)—this model stands out for its integration of spice-based, multisensory media within school counseling. It enriches traditional methods with multisensory participation, rooted spirituality, and cultural continuity.

These scarves may transcend their role as classroom creations to become mnemonic objects of personal and collective healing. For school counselors, they offer bridges into conversations about ecological stewardship, heritage, and emotional resilience. On a broader scale, the approach aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC) and *Eco-Theology* initiatives—supporting SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Transformational Impact on Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Dimensions

The creative process in eco-art counseling, particularly creating spice scarves, has been shown to significantly improve students' psychological well-being. Qualitative findings indicate that the aesthetic and symbolic experiences generated through spices as a medium possess strong therapeutic potential. This aligns with nature-based art approaches that emphasize holistic healing through the integration of the senses, symbolic expression, and ecological connections (Buzzell, 2010; Pike, 2021).

The following is a summary of student transformation in the five main PWB dimensions based on thematic analysis:

TABLE 3. Transformational Impact on Five Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being

PWB Dimensions	The Impact of the Eco-Art Process
Self-Acceptance	Students feel more accepting and at peace with their emotional side through visual symbols
Emotional Regulation	The aroma and touch of spices relieve tension and promote inner peace.

Spiritual Ecology	The symbols of trees and roots reinforce awareness of the spiritual connection with nature and the Creator.
Purpose in Life	The creative process triggers existential reflection and gives rise to hope for the future.
Personal Growth	Students experience self-recovery and new motivation to develop non-academically.

One of the students wrote,

“At first, I just wanted to draw, but when the aroma of spices filled the air and I saw the patterns that formed, I felt like this was a reflection of my life—full of scars, but also with hidden beauty”

This statement describes the integrative process of body-mind-soul (Somatic-Expressive Integration), which, in the context of local culture and spirituality, enables profound psychological transformation (Pike, 2021). The spice scarf becomes an artifact that records the healing process and rediscovery of personal and collective meaning.

Integration of Findings with Psychosocial Literacy and Madrasah Education

The findings of this study show a strong correlation with the Deep Learning approach in education, which is rooted in three main pillars: Meaningful Learning, Mindful Learning, and Joyful Learning. In the context of eco-art counseling interventions based on spices, meaningful learning emerges when students not only view spices as aesthetic objects but also interpret them as symbols of emotional experiences, spirituality, and cultural values they embody. Meanwhile, mindful learning is actualized through brewing, inhaling, and absorbing the aroma of spices with full awareness a reflective process that strengthens attention to emotions and awakens self-awareness in a contemplative atmosphere. At the same time, joyful learning is reflected in the students' free expression, curiosity, and enthusiasm in creating scarves through the combination of spice colors and digital designs they create themselves.

Furthermore, this approach aligns with the direction of religious education policy transformation, particularly the Eco-Theology priority program in KMA Number 244 of 2025 (Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025). This approach emphasizes the importance of harmony between faith values, knowledge, and ecological awareness in madrasah education. This art-based intervention is not merely an alternative form of counseling. However, it serves as a spiritual-ecological educational platform that facilitates the reintegration of the relationship between humans, nature, and God. The aesthetic experience built through visual elements, aromas, and the symbolism of spices serves as a bridge for students to return to their human nature, which is connected to God's creation and the noble cultural values that may have been forgotten (Clayton & Karazsia, 2020; Pargament et al., 2013).

Revitalizing the Spice Route as Cultural Heritage in Counselling Practice

The use of spices such as red ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves in eco-art counseling sessions is not merely a matter of choosing natural media, but a conscious effort to revive a cultural heritage deeply rooted in the history of the Indonesian archipelago. The Spice Route, which once served as the lifeblood of civilization—connecting the Indonesian archipelago to global trade networks and cultural exchange—is reimagined in a contemporary context as the primary inspiration for this reflective and creative approach. In creating the spice scarf, students do not merely express personal emotions but also symbolically rebuild connections with historical narratives, ancestral spirituality, and ecological

interconnectedness that have been severed due to academic pressures and homogenizing modernization.

This process reflects the practice of cultural remembering (Colquhoun & Dockery, 2012). Traditional symbols revive collective memory and forgotten cultural identity (Koltz & Koltz, 2021; Newcomb, 2019). When students inhale the scent of cinnamon and recall it as their mother's cooking, or arrange lawang flower motifs as a form of visual prayer, they reconstruct narratives about origins, values, and meanings that shape their inner well-being. Interventions based on cultural symbols and natural elements can help young people restore their identity amid environmental crises and value fragmentation caused by globalization (Bourke et al., 2018).

In a broader context, this approach demonstrates how the Spice Route is not only important as a historical trace of trade, but also as a symbolic path that allows the current generation to reconnect with the land, traditions, and themselves. Thus, spice-based eco-art counseling practices serve as a creative bridge between nearly forgotten cultural heritage and the psychosocial needs of today's youth—a form of vibrant, transformative, and grounded cultural revitalization.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study concludes that the application of spice-based eco-art counseling in a madrasah group counseling setting positively impacts the recovery and strengthening of students' psychological well-being, particularly in terms of self-acceptance, emotional regulation, spiritual ecology, purpose in life, and personal growth. The creative process using spices' natural aromas and colors serves as a safe and symbolic expressive channel, enabling students to express their deepest emotions and reflect on their identity, spirituality, and connection to nature and ancestral culture.

Furthermore, these results show that madrasahs can be spaces for holistic recovery and learning, emphasizing academics, nurturing the soul, and rebuilding students' cultural identities. Eco-art counseling has proven itself as a transformative counseling approach that integrates art, nature, and local values into meaningful, mindful, and joyful learning experiences, in line with the principles of Deep Learning.

More than just a counseling technique, this approach also contributes to revitalizing the cultural heritage of the Spice Route by elevating spices as historical artifacts and a living medium to reconnect young people with their cultural roots, ecological spirituality, and the meaning of existence. Within the context of national policy, this approach also supports the direction of Eco-Theology as outlined in KMA No. 244 of 2025.

Thus, eco-art counseling is not only an innovation in counseling services, but also a representation of a down-to-earth cultural and spiritual education movement—building bridges between tradition and transformation, personal expression and collective narrative, and between students and their colorful history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially MAN 2 Bandung, for their support in implementing this intervention. Thanks also to LPDP RI for funding the doctoral studies that made this research possible. Appreciation is given to the

students, teachers, and colleagues who contributed to the research process and joint reflection.

REFERENCES

- Bourke, S., Wright, A., Guthrie, J., Russell, L., Dunbar, T., & Lovett, R. (2018). Evidence Review of Indigenous Culture for Health and Wellbeing. *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society*, 8(4), 11–27. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2156-8960/cgp/v08i04/11-27>.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Butcher. (2023). A participatory action research study to explore adolescents experiences of adverse childhood experiences through creative workshops: a protocol. *MedRxiv*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1101/2023.12.21.23300349>.
- Buzzell, L. & C. (2010). Ecotherapy: Healing with nature in mind. In *Sierra Club Books*. (Vol. 44, Issue 12).
- Chambert-Loir, H. (2014). Eric Tagliacozzo. The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca. *The American Historical Review*, 119(2), 490–491. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/119.2.490>.
- Cianconi, P., Betrò, S., & Janiri, L. (2020). The Impact of Climate Change on Mental Health: A Systematic Descriptive Review. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11(March), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.00074>.
- Classen, C. (2012). *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*. University of Illinois Press. <https://doi.org/10.5406/illinois/9780252034930.001.0001>.
- Clayton, S., & Karazsia, B. T. (2020). Development and validation of a measure of climate change anxiety. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 69, 101434. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101434>.
- Clayton S, M. C. K. K. & S. M. (2017). Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance. *American Psychological Association, and EcoAmerica*.
- Closing the global gap in adolescent mental health. (2024). *Nature Medicine*, 30(2), 309–310. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-024-02846-6>.
- Cohen S. (2004). Social relationships and health. *Am Psychol*, 59(8), 676–684. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.8.676>.
- Colquhoun, S., & Dockery, A. M. (2012). The link between Indigenous culture and wellbeing : Qualitative evidence for Australian Aboriginal peoples. *CLMR Discussion Paper Series*, 1–29.
- Da Costa, S., Páez, D., Sánchez, F., Garaigordobil, M., & Gondim, S. (2015). Personal factors of creativity: A second order meta-analysis. *Revista de Psicología Del Trabajo y de Las Organizaciones*, 31(3), 165–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rpto.2015.06.002>.

- Del Casino, V. J., & Thien, D. (2019). Symbolic Interactionism. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, Second Edition*, May, 177–181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10716-4>.
- Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. (2025). *Uji publik Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta (KBC)*. <https://pendis.kemenag.go.id/direktorat-kskk-madrasah/kemenag-uji-publik-kurikulum-berbasis-cinta-siap-diterapkan-tahun-ajaran-20252026>.
- Evans Keime, T. R. (2023). Evoking the Art of Nature. <https://scholar.dominican.edu/art-therapy-masters-theses/14/>.
- Geha. J. (2019). Nature as an Impermanent Canvas: An intergenerational nature based art community engagement project. Lesley.
- Hasanah, N., Dhaisani, S., Istiqomah, I., Dewantara, M., & Boulahnane, S. (2022). The Role of Islamic Education in Teaching Moral Values to Students. *MUDARRISA Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Islam*, 14, 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.18326/mdr.v14i1.33-47>.
- Jordan, M. (2015). Nature and therapy: Understanding counselling and psychotherapy in outdoor spaces. In *Nature and therapy: Understanding counselling and psychotherapy in outdoor spaces*.
- Kamitsis & Simmonds. (2017). Using resources of nature in the Counseling Room: Qualitative research into ecotherapy Practice. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, 39(3), 229–248.
- Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia. (2025). *Keputusan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 244 Tahun 2025 tentang Program Prioritas Menteri Agama Tahun 2025–2029*. <https://dki.kemenag.go.id/informasi/keputusan-menteri-agama-republik-indonesia-nomor-244-tahun-2025-tentang-program-prioritas-menteri-agama-tahun-2025-2029>
- Khodijah, A., Nani, I., & Rahmat, M. (2024). Religious Education as a Tool for Mental Health Improvement in Madrasah Aliyah. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 22(2), 311–323. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v22i2.1895>.
- Koltz, R. L., & Koltz, D. J. (2021). Eco-art Activities for Older Adults: Reducing Stress and Reframing Aging. *The Family Journal*, 30(3), 268–273. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807211063196>
- Kopytin. & Rugh, M. (2017). Environmental Expressive Therapies: Nature-assisted theory and practice. Taylor & Francis.
- Kulsum, S. (2022). *STUDI PENERAPAN ECO-ART THERAPY DALAM BIMBINGAN DAN KONSELING*. Universitas pendidikan Indonesia.
- Kulsum, S., & Khairi Siregar, I. (2022). Eco-art therapy: group guidance techniques for recognizing students' emotions. 2. <https://ejournal.radenintan.ac.id/index.php/konseli>.
- Lee. (2020). Journey to hope, self-expression and community engagement: Youth-led arts-based participatory action research. *Children and Youth Services Review*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHILDYOUTH.2019.104581>.

- Lockard, C. A. (2023). Southeast Asia in World History. *Southeast Asia in World History*, 1–259. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195160758.001.0001>.
- Malchiodi, C. (2014). *Creative Arts and Play Therapy for Attachment Problems*. Guilford Press.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (2012). *Handbook of art therapy* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Marczak, M., & Sorokowski, P. (2018). Emotional Connectedness to Nature Is Meaningfully Related to Modernization. *Evidence From the Meru of Kenya*. 9(September), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01789>.
- Moon, B. L. (2007). *the role of metaphor in art therapy: Theory, method, and experience*. Charles C Thomas Publisher.
- Nawiyanto, Sri Ana H, D. S. (2023). Spices in Indonesian History and Its Revival. *Glob J Arch & Anthropol*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.19080/GJAA.2023.13.555855>.
- Netzer, D., & Chang, M. (2015). Art-Based Organic Inquiry: Creative Expression with Natural Materials. *Art-Based Organic Inquiry: Creative Expression with Natural Materials*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/978144627305015602455>.
- Newcomb, J. (2019). Back to belonging: Nature connection and expressive artstherapy in the treatment of trauma and marginalization. *Lesley University*. https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/expressive_theses/219.
- Pang, H., & Zhang, K. (2024). Determining multidimensional influences of network heterogeneity on university students' psychological and academic well-being: The mediating role of social network exhaustion. *Heliyon*, 10(11), e32328. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32328>.
- Pargament, K. I., Falb, M. D., Ano, G. G., & Wachholtz, A. B. (2013). The religious dimension of coping: Advances in theory, research, and practice. In *Handbook of the psychology of religion and spirituality*, 2nd ed. (pp. 560–579). The Guilford Press.
- Patricia Leavy. (2020). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice* ((3rd ed.)). Guilford Press.
- Pike, A. (2013). The effect of art therapy on cognitive performance among ethnically diverse older adults. *Art Therapy.Org*, 30(4), 159–168.
- Pike, A. (2021). *Eco-Art Therapy in Practice* (First edit). Rotledge.
- Renger, A.-B., Stork, J., & Öhlmann, P. (2024). Religion and Ecology: Perspectives on Environment and Sustainability across Religious Traditions. *Religion and Development*, 2(3), 339–350. <https://doi.org/10.30965/27507955-20230030>.
- Rodriguez. (2024). A Scoping Review of Arts-Based Interventions with Community Based Participatory Research Approaches for Addressing Mental Health Amongst Adolescents in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Research*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558424129576>.
- Rosmalah, R. (2021). *Penerapan Pendidikan Karakter Berbasis Kearifan Lokal*. *JIKAP PGSD: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Kependidikan*, 5, 232. <https://doi.org/10.26858/jkp.v5i2.20225>.
- Ryff, C. (1989). Happiness is Everything, or is it? Exploration on the meaning of psychological Well-Being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

- Snyder, S. A. M. (2018). *Nature-Based Expressive Arts Therapy Integrating the Expressive Arts Therapy and Ecotherapy*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Sweeney, T. (2018). *Eco Art Therapy: Creative Activities That Let Earth Teach*.
- Ugur Yavuz, Secil, Bordegoni, Monica, & Carulli, Marina. (2016). A design practice on communicating emotions through sensory signals. *Concurrent Engineering*, 26(2), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063293X16678440>.
- Warson, E. (2012). Healing pathways: Art therapy for american indian cancer survivors. *Journal of Cancer Education*, 27(SUPPL. 1), 47–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13187-012-0324-5>.
- Wilson, D., Moloney, E., Parr, J. M., Aspinall, C., & Slark, J. (2021). Creating an Indigenous Māori-centred model of relational health: A literature review of Māori models of health. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 30(23–24), 3539–3555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15859>.

BEYOND SPICES: THE MARITIME TRANSFORMATION OF THE SPICE ROUTE THROUGH THE RICE TRADE

Abd Karim,^{a)} Taufik Ahmad^{b)}, Hutomo Putra^{c)}

¹*Research Center for Society and Culture, National Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia*

a)Corresponding author: abdk001@brin.go.id

b)tauf029@brin.go.id

c)huto002@brin.go.id

ABSTRACT

This article reinterprets the Spice Route not as a static historical relic of early modern spice circulation, but as a dynamic maritime network that has undergone functional transformation over time. Drawing on historical archival sources and qualitative field interviews, the study demonstrates that the decline of global spice demand did not dismantle the Spice Route. Instead, the network was reoriented toward the large-scale distribution of staple food commodities, particularly rice, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Focusing on South Sulawesi, this article demonstrates that ports such as Makassar and Parepare—originally central to the spice trade—have retained their strategic importance as rice distribution hubs for eastern Indonesia. This transformation was enabled by structural continuity in port infrastructure, traditional shipping systems (*pelayaran rakyat*), and socio-ecological arrangements governing rice production. Rice thus emerged as a strategic commodity embedded within inherited maritime networks rather than as a replacement that erased earlier trade structures. The article argues that the contemporary relevance of the Spice Route lies in its function as a living maritime heritage. Historical routes and ports continue to support food security, regional integration, and everyday economic practices. By conceptualizing the Spice Route as functional and re-signified heritage, this study contributes to maritime history and heritage studies by highlighting the adaptive capacity of long-standing maritime networks in Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Commodity, Intangible Heritage, Rice, Spice Route, South Sulawesi

INTRODUCTION

The Spice Route represents a historic maritime trade network that profoundly shaped the economic and cultural dynamics of the Indonesian archipelago. From the fifteenth century to the early period of the Dutch East Indies administration, this network played a decisive role in structuring regional and global economic landscapes through the circulation of high-value commodities, particularly spices. The movement of commodities along this route did not merely generate economic growth but also facilitated far-reaching cultural transformations, including patterns of urbanization, social interaction, and mobility across maritime Southeast Asia. Makassar provides a particularly illustrative case of these dynamics. Following restrictions imposed by the Dutch East Indies government on the spice trade in the Maluku

Islands in the early seventeenth century, Makassar emerged as the largest trading port in eastern Indonesia (Sutherland, 2015, p. 138). The port became a major meeting point for traders from diverse ethnic and national backgrounds, fostering the development of a cosmopolitan urban society. By the seventeenth century, Makassar was described as comparable in scale and significance to European capital cities (Reid, 2000, p. 436), underscoring the transformative impact of the spice trade on regional economic and cultural life.

Makassar's rise as an international entrepôt also reshaped the fortunes of surrounding port towns. Parepare, for example, benefited directly from Makassar's commercial expansion. In the sixteenth century, Parepare formed part of the Kingdom of Suppa, then known as Teluk Suppa, and historical accounts record Antonio Paiva's attempt to procure slaves and sandalwood in the kingdom (Reid, 2014a, p. 179). This evidence indicates that Parepare already functioned as a supporting node within the broader Nusantara spice trade network. By the nineteenth century, Parepare had become part of the Kingdom of Sidenreng, as formalized in the Bongaya Treaty of 1824 (Musyaqqat & Pradjoko, 2020, p. 118). Its strategic position—linked to agricultural hinterlands such as Sidenreng Rappang, Massenrempulu (Enrekang), and Toraja through the Sidenreng River—enabled Parepare to develop into a key collection and redistribution port supplying Makassar (Andaya, 1981, p. 20).

As maritime commerce evolved, trading vessels operating along the Spice Route increasingly carried commodities beyond spices, including rice, copra, timber, and other agricultural products. Shifts in consumption patterns, technological change, and domestic economic needs gradually transformed the Spice Route from a corridor dominated by luxury spice exports into a multi-commodity maritime network. By the twentieth century, rice had emerged as a vital staple food commodity and, in many respects, replaced spices as the principal cargo in inter-island trade. South Sulawesi developed into one of the archipelago's primary rice suppliers, with the ports of Makassar and Parepare serving as strategic distribution hubs. Notably, rice became a mandatory cargo for vessels departing from these ports, signaling the emergence of a new economic function embedded within the historical infrastructure of the Spice Route.

South Sulawesi's central role in this transformation was rooted in its long-standing agrarian base. For centuries, rice constituted the region's primary agricultural product, with paddy fields occupying approximately 20 percent of the land area of southwest South Sulawesi—three times the proportion found in other parts of Sulawesi (Pelras, 2006, pp. 11–12). Rice production was further supported by favorable geographical conditions and rainfall patterns, allowing cultivation to continue almost year-round without a complete seasonal halt (Pelras, 2006). Combined with improvements in shipping systems, these conditions elevated rice to one of the most sought-after commodities within Nusantara's maritime trading activities.

Despite the declining dominance of spices, the concept of the Spice Route has retained its cultural and symbolic relevance. In its evolved form, the Spice Route no longer refers exclusively to the circulation of spices, but encompasses the continued use of historical maritime pathways for the distribution of diverse commodities. This transformation is analytically significant because it demonstrates how maritime heritage adapts to changing economic priorities and social needs. The growth of cosmopolitan urban centers, religious institutions, and local cultural life generated sustained demand for staple commodities, even as spices lost their status as the undisputed prime goods in regional and global markets (Reid,

2014a, pp. 379–380). Existing scholarship has largely conceptualized the Spice Route as a phenomenon confined to the fifteenth–seventeenth-century spice trade, often treating its later history as a period of decline or marginal relevance. This article addresses that gap by reframing the Spice Route as a dynamic maritime heritage system characterized by functional continuity rather than rupture. Specifically, it examines how the infrastructures, routes, and socio-economic practices established during the spice trade were reconfigured to support the circulation of staple commodities—particularly rice—during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Accordingly, this article addresses three central research questions: how has the meaning of the Spice Route metamorphosed from a spice-centered trade network into a maritime heritage system supporting the circulation of staple commodities such as rice? How have ecological, political, and cultural dynamics shaped South Sulawesi’s role as a center of rice production and distribution within the Nusantara maritime economy? And how have local practices and traditional navigation systems contributed to the sustainability of rice distribution within port networks originally formed through the spice trade?

METHODS

This study employs historical research methods combining archival analysis and qualitative field interviews. Archival sources, including colonial reports, port records, trade statistics, and historical monographs, document maritime trade and agricultural production in South Sulawesi from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. These materials are analyzed to trace shifts in commodity flows, port functions, and shipping routes over time.

Field interviews were conducted with farmers, traders, and maritime actors in South Sulawesi to document rice production cycles, traditional agricultural practices, and their connections to maritime distribution systems. Archival and interview data are integrated through historical interpretation and thematic triangulation, allowing the study to link long-term structural continuity with contemporary practices.

Metamorphosis of the Spice Route

Spice exports from Southeast Asia began to decline during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as global demand shifted and alternative production zones emerged (Reid, 2014a, p. 379). Paradoxically, during this period, Makassar rose to prominence as one of Southeast Asia’s most important trading ports in the seventeenth century, even before falling under Dutch control in 1669. This rise was closely linked to the political and economic consolidation of the Gowa–Tallo Kingdom, which emerged as the dominant power in South Sulawesi during the sixteenth century under the reign of Karaeng Tunipallangga Ulaweng.

The expansion of Gowa–Tallo authority over the Mandar kingdoms in western Sulawesi and various Bugis polities transformed Makassar into both the political center and economic hub of South Sulawesi. From a political economy perspective, this expansion functioned as a strategy to centralize control over commodity-producing regions and to channel agricultural and maritime outputs into Makassar as the principal entrepôt. While spices remained important, the Gowa rulers appear to have anticipated longer-term transformations in trade patterns, recognizing the growing importance of non-spice commodities alongside luxury exports.

European observers quickly recognized Makassar's strategic economic role. In 1601, Augustijn Stalpaert van der Wiele described Makassar as a crucial port where ships bound for the Spice Islands sold textiles, replenished supplies, and procured high-quality rice (Mostert, 2018, p. 37). This observation is significant, as it indicates that rice had already assumed an important logistical function within maritime trade networks during the height of the spice trade. Although Gowa–Tallo stood among the great maritime kingdoms of Southeast Asia in the seventeenth century, its autonomy ended with defeat by the VOC and the signing of the Bungaya Treaty in 1669 (Hägerdal, 2021, p. 112).

Following the Makassar War, spice exports continued to decline, and despite its formal monopoly, the VOC struggled to exercise full control over inter-island trade. The bankruptcy and dissolution of the Dutch East India Company in 1799 marked a transition from corporate to state colonial governance. The Dutch colonial administration subsequently sought to consolidate authority over both Java and the so-called "Outer Islands" (Locher-Scholten, 1994, p. 94). In South Sulawesi, resistance from local kingdoms—particularly those integrated into major trade networks—persisted throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, by the early twentieth century, most kingdoms had been bound by treaties, and by 1906, all remaining polities, including the Mandar kingdoms along the western coast, had capitulated.

By the twentieth century, global and domestic trade dynamics had shifted decisively. Dutch colonial authority in South Sulawesi was institutionalized through mechanisms such as the *Korte Verklaring* (Short Declaration), which formally acknowledged Dutch sovereignty while allowing local rulers limited administrative authority under colonial supervision. Within this framework, economic policy increasingly prioritized stability, administrative efficiency, and the regulation of commodity flows.

Declining global demand for spices, changing domestic consumption patterns, and transformations in agricultural systems reshaped the maritime economy of the archipelago (Boomgaard, 2013, p. 18). Spices gradually lost their central role in inter-island commerce and were replaced by staple commodities—most notably rice—which became strategically important within a domestic distribution system oriented toward food security (Pelras, 2006). Rather than rendering the Spice Route obsolete, this transition redefined its function. The shipping lanes, port hierarchies, and logistical practices developed during the spice trade were repurposed to facilitate the large-scale circulation of rice.

This transformation illustrates a form of structural continuity within maritime networks. Although the primary cargo shifted from luxury goods to staple foods, the physical infrastructure and social relations underpinning the network remained intact. In South Sulawesi, the ports of Makassar and Parepare—formerly transit points for spices originating in Maluku—were reconfigured as major rice distribution hubs supplying eastern Indonesia. Rice even became an unofficial mandatory cargo for vessels departing these ports, underscoring its strategic importance within inter-island trade (Ricklefs, Nugraha, & Moh. Sidik, 2010).

Ecological conditions played a decisive role in enabling this shift. South Sulawesi's favorable agroclimate, combined with long-established irrigation practices later adapted by colonial and postcolonial administrations, ensured relatively stable rice production (Pelras, 2006). Its strategic position between western and eastern Indonesia further reinforced its dual function as both a production center and a distribution hub. The metamorphosis of the

Spice Route was therefore not merely symbolic, but an adaptive response to specific geographic and ecological conditions.

At the symbolic level, the transformed Spice Route can be understood as a form of maritime heritage—one that remains embedded in everyday economic practice rather than preserved solely as a historical memory. This perspective aligns with Tagliacozzo and Chang's argument that Southeast Asian maritime trade networks have historically been flexible and multi-commodity in nature (Tagliacozzo & Chang, 2011). A critical element of this continuity lies in the persistence of traditional shipping practices, commonly referred to as *pelayaran rakyat*. Despite the expansion of modern transport infrastructure, small wooden vessels and motorized sailing ships have continued to play a significant role in rice distribution, particularly to remote islands beyond the reach of large commercial vessels (Pelras, 2006).

These practices demonstrate the resilience of older trade networks. As Reid (2011) emphasizes, Southeast Asian maritime systems have long been characterized by adaptability, allowing rapid adjustments to changes in market demand and political circumstances. Even as spices lost their strategic value, the established port systems and maritime routes continued to transport other commodities, including essential foodstuffs.

From a political perspective, this transition coincided with the growing emphasis placed by both colonial and post-independence governments on food security as a foundation of social stability. Rice distribution became integral to national development strategies, serving not only economic objectives but also political legitimacy. The maritime distribution framework inherited from the spice trade thus functioned as a logistical backbone for state efforts to maintain archipelagic integration and ensure access to staple foods.

In heritage terms, this transformation highlights the concept of functional heritage: cultural legacies that retain value through continued use rather than static preservation. The contemporary Spice Route exemplifies this principle, operating as a vital circulation corridor even as its principal commodity has changed. Its continued relevance ensures that the Spice Route is remembered not only as a symbol of past commercial glory but also as part of an ongoing narrative of economic sustainability and regional connectivity.

This process can be understood as a form of heritage re-signification (Smith, 2006), whereby both tangible elements—such as ports and maritime routes—and intangible elements—such as navigational knowledge and trading relationships—are adapted to new socio-economic contexts. The routes and infrastructures established during the spice era were not abandoned; instead, they evolved into platforms for distributing strategically essential food commodities. The vitality of this maritime heritage is evident in the continued use of traditional vessels such as the *phinisi* and other local sailing ships, which transported rice inter-island well into the 1970s (Pelras, 2006). Navigation skills, seasonal wind knowledge, and merchant networks inherited from the spice trade constitute a form of social capital that enables food distribution to persist in regions with limited modern transport access.

Ultimately, the transformation of the Spice Route was driven by intersecting ecological, political, and cultural dynamics. Ecologically, South Sulawesi's suitability for wet-rice cultivation—supported by both traditional and modern irrigation systems—provided a stable production base (Acciaioli, 2013). Politically, colonial and post-independence governments framed rice distribution as central to national food security agendas (Booth, 2016). Culturally, the maritime rice trade reinforced inter-island social integration; in many coastal

communities of eastern Indonesia, the arrival of rice ships from South Sulawesi formed part of local social rhythms rather than mere economic exchange (Pelras, 2006).

Theoretically, this metamorphosis can be analyzed through the lens of path dependency, which emphasizes how historical infrastructures and institutional arrangements shape subsequent economic practices (North, 1990). Historiographically, it challenges interpretations that confine the Spice Route to the fifteenth–seventeenth-century spice trade, instead revealing it as a dynamic and adaptive maritime system whose relevance extends into the modern period (Tagliacozzo & Chang, 2011).

Contribution of Local Practice and Spice Route Heritage in the Rice Distribution

The port network of South Sulawesi has deep historical roots in the spice trade of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, when Makassar functioned as a major hub linking the Maluku Islands, Java, and wider Southeast Asia. When the spice trade declined in the nineteenth century, ports that had previously served as transit points for high-value spices were not abandoned; instead, they were functionally reoriented toward food distribution, particularly rice, which had become a strategic staple commodity within the region (Andaya, 2021; Pelras, 2006). This transition was shaped not only by global economic shifts but also by the persistence of local agricultural practices and traditional maritime systems that linked rice-producing hinterlands to coastal ports.

In South Sulawesi, the continuity of rice production and distribution was underpinned by a set of interrelated agricultural traditions—Mappalili, Maddoja Bine, and Mappadendang—which function as socio-ecological institutions rather than merely ritual performances. These practices regulate planting cycles, ensure yield quality, and coordinate communal labor, thereby sustaining rice surpluses suitable for inter-island trade. Within this framework, traditional maritime practices—particularly those employing pinisi and lambo vessels—played a critical role in connecting hinterland production areas such as Wajo, Soppeng, and Sidrap with major ports including Makassar, Parepare, and Bulukumba.

Mappalili marks the opening of the planting season among Bugis–Makassar communities and is led by ritual specialists such as the Bissu (Yulian Widya Saputra et al., 2023). Analytically, Mappalili functions as a mechanism of social synchronization: by initiating cultivation simultaneously, communities reduce pest risks, stabilize yields, and enhance collective productivity. This synchronized agricultural calendar directly supports maritime distribution by enabling predictable rice surpluses to be mobilized toward port cities. In the post-spice trade port system, such predictability was essential for aligning hinterland production with shipping schedules and market demand.

Following this stage, Maddoja Bine—an overnight ritual guarding rice seeds—serves both symbolic and practical purposes. While locally understood as protection against pests and misfortune, Maddoja Bine also operates as a collective monitoring mechanism through which communities assess seed quality and coordinate responses to potential production threats (Isuary & Khan, 2023). This contributes to maintaining rice quality destined for maritime distribution, reinforcing the regional reputation of South Sulawesi rice that had already been established during the spice trade era.

The agricultural cycle culminates in Mappadendang, a harvest celebration characterized by rhythmic rice pounding. Beyond its ceremonial dimension, Mappadendang functions as a logistical threshold in the rice economy. As Pelras (2006) notes, harvest periods were closely

linked to maritime shipment schedules, with traders and vessels often waiting at river mouths or small jetties. Mappadendang thus marked the transition from production to large-scale distribution, reinforcing inter-village and inter-regional trade relations similar to those sustained during the spice trade period.

The sustainability of rice distribution in South Sulawesi cannot be separated from the persistence of traditional maritime systems inherited from the spice trade. Shipping routes connecting hinterland production zones to major ports largely followed earlier spice routes, albeit adapted for staple food distribution (Ammarell, 2002). Ports such as Parepare—once supporting Makassar’s spice trade—were reconfigured in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as rice distribution hubs linking Sidrap and Pinrang with Kalimantan and the Lesser Sunda Islands. This illustrates structural continuity within maritime networks: while commodities changed, spatial configurations and logistical practices endured.

Local agricultural practices and traditional shipping systems operated in a mutually reinforcing relationship. Mappalili enabled logistical planning through synchronized planting, Maddoja Bine safeguarded quality, and Mappadendang coordinated the timing of mass shipment. Conversely, the availability of traditional shipping ensured that rice surpluses could be transported efficiently, even in regions lacking land-based infrastructure. This synergy produced a distribution system relatively resilient to market volatility and supply chain disruption (Sutherland, 2021).

DISCUSSION

The continued relevance of post-spice trade port networks reflects the flexibility of the Indonesian maritime economy. Port infrastructure, navigational knowledge, and shipping routes established during the spice trade were not rendered obsolete but inherited and modified to meet emerging needs (Boomgaard, 2013). Within this context, agricultural traditions such as Mappalili, Maddoja Bine, and Mappadendang should be understood as integral components of maritime heritage, actively enabling the transformation of spice routes into rice distribution corridors.

Thus, the sustainability of rice distribution in South Sulawesi was not solely the outcome of colonial policy or technological modernization. It was equally grounded in local traditions governing production cycles and collective decision-making. These practices function as economic foundations that allow former spice ports to retain relevance within modern food trade systems. The integration of customary agricultural institutions and traditional maritime shipping created an efficient and adaptive system deeply embedded in the long history of eastern Indonesian maritime trade.

This integration cannot be separated from the Bugis–Makassar maritime tradition, which predates European arrival and developed through long-term engagement with monsoon navigation and regional trade (Hall, 2011, p. 326). Rice trading already coexisted with the spice economy; Makassar was renowned for its abundant, high-quality, and affordable rice (Poelinggomang, 2016, pp. 29–30). Following the decline of spice exports, these same shipping routes were repurposed for staple commodities, particularly rice, which became strategically essential for eastern Indonesia.

Traditional Bugis–Makassar shipping systems conveyed not only commodities but also market information, price signals, and regional demand (Young & Horridge, 1983). Consequently, the relationship between agricultural rituals and maritime trade was

reciprocal: successful harvests stimulated shipping activity, while shipping created incentives for communities to maintain and refine agricultural practices. Rice emerged as a replacement commodity that preserved the functional relevance of spice-era port networks. Ports such as Makassar, Parepare, and Bira—once spice export hubs—became rice distribution nodes supplying Maluku, Nusa Tenggara, and Papua. Although the commodities shifted, distribution routes largely retained spice-era spatial patterns, demonstrating that sustainability depended on continuity in both social and physical infrastructure.

From a socio-theoretical perspective, local practices such as Mappalili, Maddoja Bine, and Mappadendang operate as internal regulatory mechanisms governing production and distribution. This resonates with Scott's concept of the moral economy, in which communities maintain systems that balance subsistence security with market participation (Scott, 1978). Traditional maritime shipping extends this moral economy spatially, enabling rice circulation beyond local boundaries while remaining embedded in communal values.

Empirical evidence from Soppeng Regency further illustrates this integration. Farmers continue to observe the Ase Taung (April–September) and Ase Elle (October–March) cycles as guides for planting and harvesting (Tawiruddin, interview, 11 July 2025). Ase Taung harvests coincide with the east monsoon, a period favorable for inter-island navigation. This temporal alignment demonstrates a direct relationship between agricultural cycles and maritime sailing seasons, reinforcing the integration of production and distribution. The abundance and quality of Ase Taung harvests are celebrated through Mappadendang, with all major agricultural rituals conducted exclusively during this period.

Historically, port networks formed through the spice trade functioned as multi-commodity distribution hubs rather than simple transit points. During the early colonial period, ports such as Makassar, Parepare, and smaller harbors in the Gulf of Bone served as spaces of economic exchange, social interaction, and cultural negotiation. Rice distribution during this period remained closely tied to agrarian calendars regulated by ritual practices, ensuring synchronized production and large-volume arrivals at ports (Mattulada, 1998). In the early stages of Dutch colonization, this system retained a collective and integrated character. Rice from South Sulawesi supported the clove and nutmeg economy in Maluku, while return trade brought textiles, metal goods, and salt. The sustainability of rice distribution was thus maintained through the integration of local practices and inherited maritime infrastructures.

Today, the strategic value of these local practices remains evident. Although transportation technologies have evolved, principles of social coordination, ecological attunement, and communal cooperation embedded in traditional practices continue to offer insights for strengthening contemporary food security systems. The port networks inherited from the spice trade provide the infrastructural framework that allows South Sulawesi rice to remain a strategic commodity. Long-term sustainability, however, depends on integrating modern logistical efficiency with the social cohesion and ecological wisdom embedded in local traditions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Spice Route in South Sulawesi should be understood not as a static historical phenomenon confined to the early modern spice trade, but as a dynamic maritime system characterized by functional continuity and adaptive reuse. While initially structured around the circulation of high-value spices, the same port networks, shipping

routes, and socio-economic institutions facilitated the large-scale movement of staple commodities—most notably rice—through hubs such as Makassar and Parepare. These ports functioned not only as logistical nodes but also as arenas of cultural interaction, where maritime exchange was closely synchronized with agrarian cycles regulated through local practices.

The transition from spice-dominated commerce to a multi-commodity maritime economy reflects broader shifts in global demand, colonial governance, and domestic consumption patterns. Crucially, this transformation did not entail the collapse of existing networks. Instead, rice emerged as a strategic replacement commodity that sustained the relevance of spice-era infrastructure. South Sulawesi's ecological suitability for wet-rice cultivation, combined with collective agricultural coordination embodied in practices such as Mappalili, Maddoja Bine, and Mappadandang, enabled the region to assume a central role in inter-island food distribution. These practices functioned as internal regulatory mechanisms, aligning production rhythms with maritime circulation and ensuring predictable, large-scale supply.

From an analytical perspective, the findings highlight how localized knowledge systems and ritualized agricultural coordination can underpin long-term economic resilience within maritime networks. Rather than operating in opposition to market dynamics, these traditions facilitated integration into wider trading systems by stabilizing production, safeguarding quality, and coordinating distribution. This challenges interpretations that portray indigenous practices as peripheral or merely symbolic, demonstrating instead their substantive role in sustaining regional economies across historical transitions.

In the contemporary period, rice distribution in eastern Indonesia continues to rely on the physical and social infrastructure inherited from the Spice Route, albeit adapted to modern technologies and regulatory frameworks. While efficiency, speed, and scale now dominate logistical considerations, the cultural principles embedded in traditional practices remain relevant for fostering social cohesion, ecological stewardship, and institutional trust. The endurance of these principles suggests that maritime heritage is most effective when understood as functional heritage—valued not only for its symbolic past but for its continued capacity to support essential economic and social processes.

By reframing the Spice Route as a living system shaped by ecological, political, and cultural adaptation, this article contributes to broader debates in maritime history, heritage studies, and political ecology. It underscores the importance of moving beyond commodity-centered narratives toward analyses that emphasize network continuity, local agency, and adaptive resilience. In doing so, the study demonstrates that the legacy of the Spice Route persists not merely in historical memory but in the ongoing circulation of staple commodities that sustain everyday life across the Indonesian archipelago.

REFERENCE

- Acciaioli, G. (2013). Kinship and Debt; The Social Organization of Bugis Migration and Fish Marketing at Lake Lindu, Central Sulawesi. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 156(3). <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003841>
- Akbar, A. (2019). Berre' Ri Sulawesi Maniang : Dari Produksi, Perdagangan, Pelayaran, Hingga Penyelundupan Beras (1946-1956). Pangadereng : Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.36869/.v5i1.6>

- Ammarell, G. (2002). Bugis migration and modes of adaptation to local situations. *Ethnology*, 41(1). <https://doi.org/10.2307/4153020>
- Andaya, L. Y. (1981). *The Heritage of Arung Palakka: A History of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the Seventeenth Century*. The Hague Martinus Nijhoff.
- Andaya, L. Y. (2021). Trade, Ethnicity, and Identity in Island Southeast Asia. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.549>
- Anthony J. Whitten, Muslimin Mustafa, & Gregory S. Henderson. (1987). *The Ecology of Sulawesi*. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Boomgaard, P. (2013). In a State of Flux: Water as a Deadly and a Life-giving Force in Southeast Asia. In *A World of Water*. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004254015_002
- Booth, A. (2016). Economic Change in Modern Indonesia: Colonial and Post-Colonial Comparisons. In *Economic Change in Modern Indonesia: Colonial and Post-colonial Comparisons*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316271438>
- Bulbeck, D., & Caldwell, I. (2000). *Land of iron. The Historical Archaeology of Luwu and the Cenrana Valley*.
- Eric Tagliacozzo, & Wen-Ching Chang. (2011). *Chinese Circulations: Capital, Commodities, and Networks in Southeast Asia*. Duke University Press.
- FAO. (2017). *The Future of Food and Agriculture: Trends and Challenges*. In the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
- Hägerdal, H. (2021). The Bugis-Makassar Seafarers: Pirates or Entrepreneurs? In *Piracy in World History*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048544950.005>
- Hall, K. R. (2011). *A history of early Southeast Asia Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 1000-1500*. Rowman & Littlefield. <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10502012>
- Henley, D. E. F. (2005). *Fertility, food and fever: Population, economy and environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*. Brill.
- Iswary, E., & Khan, A. (2023). Acculturation Of the Tradition of Maddoja Bine on The Bugis Community in The Village of Bakke, Lilirilau District of Soppeng. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, 3.
- Knaap, G. J., & Sutherland, Heather. (2004). Monsoon Traders: Ships, Skippers and Commodities in Eighteenth-Century Makassar. In *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde ; 224 (Vol. 224)*.
- Locher-Scholten, E. (1994). Dutch Expansion in the Indonesian Archipelago around 1900 and the Imperialism Debate. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 25(1), 91–111. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20071619>
- Mattulada. (1998). *Sejarah, Masyarakat, dan Kebudayaan Sulawesi Selatan*. Hasanuddin University Press.
- Mostert, T. (2018). Scramble for the spices: Makassar's role in European and Asian Competition in the Eastern Archipelago up to 1616. In T. Mostert & A. Clulow (Eds.), *The Dutch and English East India Companies* (pp. 25–54). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv9hvqf2.6>

- Musyaqqat, S. R., & Pradjoko, D. (2020). The Role of Parepare Port in Trading and Shipping of Rice Commodities in South Sulawesi, 1930–1942. *Journal of Maritime Studies and National Integration*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.14710/jmsni.v4i2.8211>
- North, D. C. (1990). Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance. In *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511808678>
- Opler, M. E., & Steward, J. H. (1956). Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution. *American Sociological Review*, 21(3). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2089302>
- Pelras, Christian. (2006). *Manusia Bugis*. Nalar: Forum Jakarta-Paris: Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient (EFEU).
- Poelinggomang, E. L. (2016). *Makassar abad XIX*. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Reid, A. (2000). Pluralism and progress in seventeenth-century Makassar. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 156(3), 433–449. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003834>
- Reid, A. (2011). Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga 1450-1680: Jaringan Perdagangan Global Asia Tenggara. In RZ Leirissa, P. Soemitro. Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Reid, A. (2014a). Asia Tenggara Dalam Kurun Niaga 1450-1680 (Jilid 2: Jaringan Perdagangan Global). In Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia: Vol. Jilid 1.
- Reid, A. (2014b). Asia Tenggara Dalam Kurun Niaga 1450-1680 Jilid I: Tanah di Bawah Angin. In Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia: Vol. Jilid 1.
- Ricklefs Nugraha, Moh. Sidik,, M. C. (2010). *Sejarah Indonesia modern, 1200-2008*.
- Scott, J. C. (1978). The Moral Economy of the Peasant. Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia. *Verfassung in Recht Und Übersee*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.5771/0506-7286-1978-2-246>
- Smith, L. (2006). Uses of Heritage. In *Uses of Heritage*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203602263>
- Sutherland, H. (2015). Pursuing the Invisible Makassar, City and Systems. In *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Vol. 300)*. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004288058_010
- Sutherland, H. (2021). Trade, court, and company Makassar in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In *Hof en handel*. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004454460_006
- Young, R. J., & Horridge, A. (1983). The Prah: Traditional Sailing Boat of Indonesia. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 103(4). <https://doi.org/10.2307/602291>
- Yulian Widya Saputra, Edwardus Iwantri Goma, Aisyah Trees Sandy, & Rahmadi. (2023). The Mappalili Tradition as a Form of Maintaining Agricultural Culture in South Sulawesi (Cultural Geography Perspective). *Santhet (Jurnal Sejarah Pendidikan Dan Humaniora)*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.36526/santhet.v7i2.2613>

WOMEN'S ROLE AND TOBACCO BASED ON THE ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Laillia Dhiah Indriani^{1, a)} and Arifah Rahmawati^{2, b)}

¹*Media and Cultural Studies Program, The Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Jl. Teknik Utara, Pogung Kidul, Sinduadi, Kec. Mlati, Kabupaten Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55284*

²*Media and Cultural Studies Program, The Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada, Jl. Teknik Utara, Pogung Kidul, Sinduadi, Kec. Mlati, Kabupaten Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55284*

a) Corresponding author: lailliadhiahindriani@mail.ugm.ac.id

b) arifahrahmawati@ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of women in the contestation between ecology, culture, ritual and spirituality of tobacco in Temanggung, Central Java, Indonesia. In Temanggung, Tobacco is not just about cigarettes or spices, but also about how the spiritual and cultural elements of the community contend with the earth and the universe. Women are at the centre of this contestation. Unfortunately, because of the dominance of masculinity through tobacco, the presence of women is no longer visible. Therefore, this paper will try to show how important the role of women is in the world of tobacco, especially in the ritual of the tobacco season. In addition, this paper also showed the cultural richness of the tobacco season in Temanggung. The method of data collection in this research was ethnography. As for data analysis, this paper used Vandana Shifa's theory of ecofeminism and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of masculine domination. The results of this research show several things. Firstly, the tobacco season ritual in Temanggung has several stages, and each stage is always accompanied by cultural and spiritual contestation. This spirituality is closely linked to the concept of the motherland'. Secondly, women play a very important role in every ritual, from preparation to presentation, from the beginning of planting to the harvest. This large role of women needs to be more widely known by the community so that there is no more marginalisation and women are more respected.

Keyword: Women, Ecology, Spiritual culture, agency, Tobacco.

INTRODUCTION

Tobacco is not an indigenous plant of Indonesia. Various historical sources believe that this broad-leaved plant arrived from the American continent through European traders who came to the archipelago around the 17th century AD (Brata, 2012: 4). The Portuguese are said to be the first nation to bring tobacco seeds to the archipelago, naming it *tobacco* or *tumbacco* (Wibisono & Yoandinas, 2014: 14). From other sources according to (Sunaryo, 2013:35) said that the method of consuming tobacco by smoking it was introduced by the Dutch around the year 1601 in Java, which is also confirmed in the ancient manuscript "*Jawa Babad Ing Sangkala*" that mentions the appearance of tobacco and the method of smoking it in 1601. Large-scale tobacco cultivation began in the late 19th century, coinciding with the rise in popularity of cigars in Europe and its colonies (Hamdani, 2011: 10). In Indonesia, tobacco

began to be designated as a mandatory crop for the indigenous population under the forced cultivation policy (*cultuurstelsel*) in 1830 (Wibisono & Yoandinas, 2014: 16).

In addition to the history as recorded in history books and relief inscriptions, there is also a mythological version of tobacco history that is believed by the community, especially the people of Temanggung, Central Java, Indonesia. There is no denial regarding the history version published by the media or what some people in Temanggung call the “schoolchildren’s version,” but for tobacco farmers in Temanggung, the history of tobacco is more than just an American plant brought to the archipelago by traders and colonizers.

Tobacco farmers in Temanggung believe that tobacco is not only a commodity that supports the livelihoods of almost the entire region in this district, but also a noble value and a culture rich in supernatural elements. Through oral histories passed down through generations, tobacco is believed to have been brought by Ki Ageng Makukuhan. No one can pinpoint exactly when this event occurred. His original name was Ma Koe Kwai/Ma Ko Kwan (Bagoes, 2023). Since then, tobacco has continued to be cultivated over time and has become the main commodity of the Temanggung community. In 1956, it was mentioned that the people of Temanggung collectively cleared grassland at an elevation of 1,100 meters above sea level to cultivate tobacco and meet the demand for *garangan* tobacco (tobacco blended with *klembak menyan* and smoked as cigarettes) (Alamsyah, 2011: 31). The high quality of the tobacco, coupled with its widespread cultivation by most farmers in Temanggung, has earned the region the nickname “Tobacco City.”

For the people of Temanggung, tobacco is a convergence of many elements: worldly and spiritual, physical and mental, social and economic, life and death (Brata, 2012: 106). The life cycle in Temanggung is inseparable from tobacco—birth (*lair*), marriage (*kawin*), sickness (*lara*), and death (*mati*)—all are associated with tobacco. The income from tobacco drives nearly every sector of Temanggung’s economy (Alamsyah, 2011: 38). During harvest season, when prices meet expectations, prosperity is felt not only in Temanggung but also in nearby cities like Magelang, Yogyakarta, and Solo. Farmers spend their earnings from seven months of labor in these cities (Brata, 2012:111–112). The price of tobacco affects almost every aspect of life—religious rituals, social status, economy, education—all are influenced (Alamsyah, 2011: 1).

Aware of the high global value of tobacco, tobacco farmers in Temanggung strive to increase the plant’s economic value. One of the ways is through traditional rituals and optimizing cultivation. These rituals express gratitude to nature for providing fertile land and seek permission from the spirits who guard the land. Such rituals have become a cultural practice that reflects harmony between the community, nature, and the spiritual elements they believe in.

Unfortunately, when we talk about tobacco, the first thing that comes to mind is masculinity. As a result of the discourse of masculinity surrounding tobacco, there has emerged the perception that everything related to tobacco and cigarettes is inherently associated with men and has no connection to women. This discourse ultimately leads to the masculine domination of tobacco. Such domination is evident in communities where the majority of people earn their living as tobacco farmers, such as in Temanggung, Central Java. When tobacco is discussed, it is men who take the lead—both in terms of production and sales. The dominance of men has positioned women as passive and accepting of such passivity (Bourdieu, 2001: 32).

The association of tobacco with masculinity and tobacco rituals has indirectly led to the domestication of women. On the one hand, women are given space to develop and are glorified through the symbolism of tobacco rituals. However, this also carries the doctrine that women should not be seen, should take care of household matters and should stay away from tobacco-related matters. In practice, though, women play a significant role in the success of tobacco rituals.

In light of this background, the questions in this study will be divided into two parts: first, how is the tobacco season ritual conducted in Temanggung? Second, how do women exist in the tobacco ritual in Temanggung and how does it relate to the culture, nature, and spirituality of tobacco? This study aims to examine the tobacco season rituals performed in Temanggung and their underlying meanings. Furthermore, it will reveal the significant role of women in ensuring the success of these rituals. Finally, the study will critique the ambivalence of these rituals; while they seek to honour women, they also have the potential to domesticate them through mystification.

There have been various studies conducted on tobacco in Temanggung. Among the studies that address the specific theme of tobacco ritual contestation in Temanggung are those conducted by Idamatussilmi and Hilal Mukti Putra (2023), Susi Ivaty and Pudentia (2018), and Theresiana Ani Larasati, Christiyati Ariyani, and Wahdjudi Pantja Sunjata (2018). Although many studies have discussed Temanggung tobacco, based on the previously mentioned studies, several similar patterns have emerged. These similarities lie in the presentation and focus of the research, which revolves around descriptive aspects and the selection of sources, all of which feature male samples. For example, research on tobacco rituals. Studies generally only describe the cultural practices involved and the materials (ubarampe) required for the rituals. In other words, the research merely informs readers about a particular phenomenon without reaching the level of criticism. The following is research that discusses tobacco and its rituals.

The first study discussing rituals was conducted by Idammatussilmi & Putra (2023) with the title 'Philosophical Value of the Bima Sakti Serving Ritual in Legoksari Temanggung Village'.

This study discusses the Bima Sakti ritual held in Legoksari Village, Temanggung. The Bima Sakti Offering Ritual is one of the major rituals held in Legoksari Village in relation to nature and tobacco. The focus of this research is to uncover the philosophy behind each element used in the Bima Sakti offering ritual. Based on the results of this research, the Bima Sakti offering ritual is performed with the aim of seeking God's blessing at the beginning of the dry season so that water is available and fertile land is obtained for planting tobacco. The Bima Sakti ritual is just one of many rituals that accompany the tobacco season.

To complement the research on the Bima Sakti ritual, Susi Ivaty and Pudentia (2018) conducted another study on tobacco rituals. This study is titled 'Tobacco Farming Ritual Among the Tebal in Temanggung: From Individual Ritual to Communal Performance as a Safeguarding Effort'. It discusses the Among Tebal ritual, performed by farmers in the Temanggung district of Indonesia in December and January, before they plant tobacco. It is one of a series of rituals performed by the community during the tobacco planting and harvesting seasons. The study reveals that the ritual, originally performed individually, has evolved into a communal event accompanied by traditional cultural performances. The location of the research is in Legoksari, Tlogomulyo Temanggung, specifically in Lamuk Gunung and Lamuk Legok, the same village as the previous research that discussed the Bima

Sakti ritual. This research shows that the Among Tebal ritual has several stages and that offerings must be prepared. The designated food is taken to the garden. Then, the village head or traditional leader will recite prayers for the tobacco to grow well and be highly valued. The ritual then continues with a wayang performance, followed by other art forms. The date of the Among Tebal ritual is decided by the village head or traditional leader and observed by the entire community. The date of the ritual, as well as the number of tobacco seeds planted, is adjusted according to the Javanese Islamic calendar, petung neptu, and market days (Ivvaty & Pudentia, 2018).

In addition to two studies discussing tobacco farming rituals in Temanggung, there is also a study summarising all traditional ceremonies and stages of tobacco cultivation in Temanggung, with a particular focus on Srinthil tobacco, a variety that is synonymous with Temanggung and the most expensive type of tobacco. Conducted by the Cultural Heritage Preservation Centre (BPNB) of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, this study was written by Theresiana Ani Larasati, Christiyati Ariyani and Wahdjudi Pantja Sunjana (2018). It was published in book form under the title *Traditional Ceremonies Among Srinthil Tobacco Farmers in Temanggung*. This study provides a comprehensive description of the stages of tobacco cultivation and processing, as well as the traditional ceremonies and offerings performed by Srinthil tobacco farmers in

Legoksari village, Temanggung, the village renowned for producing the finest Srinthil tobacco. It also reveals how the community still uses the Javanese aboge calendar and neptu calculations to perform various traditional rituals accompanying tobacco planting. Research methods employed include interviews with community leaders, tobacco traders and traditional figures (Larasati, Ariyani & Sunjata, 2018).

Through three studies discussing tobacco rituals in Temanggung, researchers chose the same research location, namely the village of Legoksari, Tlogomulyo Temanggung. There were also similarities in the informants interviewed during the research. These similarities in location and informants meant that the three studies tended to describe existing rituals rather than criticise them. Interestingly, all informants who spoke about tobacco rituals were male, meaning the perspective is solely from a male point of view. While some studies feature images of women, these are merely visual representations without any explanation of their roles. Based on this, although both studies discuss rituals, this research is different from previous studies that also discussed rituals.

While previous research merely described each ritual, this research will examine the role of women in each ritual and in tobacco cultivation in Temanggung. Therefore, rather than merely describing rituals as has been done before, this research will uncover the hidden discourse of women behind these rituals and investigate why their voices are not heard in tobacco rituals. This research will also be expanded to include three villages: Legoksari, Cepit Pagergunung and Tanggulangin. This research also explores the hidden meanings of each tobacco ritual that has the potential to play a role in domesticating women from the grand narrative of tobacco. This also demonstrates that tobacco rituals in Temanggung are not centred solely on Legoksari village, but also in other villages that produce high-quality tobacco. This avoids the narrow interpretation that discussing tobacco rituals means discussing Legoksari alone.

METHOD

The research was employ by Ruth Wodak's Critical Discourse Analysis method. Wodakian's critical discourse analysis, known as the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA), works by studying how language and other semiotic forms work and support the relationship between ideologies and social institutions (Haryatmoko, 2016: 147). DHA Wodak's has four key concepts, namely ideology, power, criticality, and history (Haryatmoko, 2016: 150). These four key concepts are then used to examine how the participation of objects, events, and phenomena is linguistically named, as well as to analyse from which perspective these arguments and phenomena are constructed (Wodak & Reisigl, 2009: 94).

To conduct the data, this research applies literature review and critical ethnographic. The ethnographic focusing on three areas known for producing the highest-quality tobacco in Temanggung: Cepit Pager Gunung, Legoksari Tlogomulyo, and Tanggulangin. All of these locations are villages situated on Mount Sumbing. This study does not include tobacco-producing villages on the slopes of Mount Sindoro because rituals there have largely been abandoned, whereas the focus of this research is specifically on the rituals.

The ethnographic process conducted from September 2023 to March 2024. The researcher not only observed from a distance but also participated directly in ritual preparations and tobacco cultivation. The process also involved interviewing several community figures who were considered to have significant roles in these practices. The following section presents the details:

Table 1. List of Resource Persons

No	Name (Initial)	Age	Work
1.	NR	48	Tobacco farmers and housewives
2.	IT	48	Tobacco seller
3.	TM	60	Traditional leader

Source: compile by the Author, (2024)

Once the interview data is collected, it will be sorted and analyzed using relevant theories. The primary theoretical frameworks applied in this research are Pierre Bourdieu's concept of masculine domination and ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva. However, it is possible that additional concepts will be incorporated throughout the research process to further support the elaboration of the data and findings. From this analysis, the author will draw the result and conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Tobacco Harvest Rituals in Temanggung

In Temanggung, tobacco is closely tied to rituals. The community believes these rituals are one way to optimize tobacco yields. These rituals have several core elements, including expressions of gratitude and efforts to preserve nature through supernatural elements. These rituals intertwine nature, spirituality, and culture to produce tobacco with high commercial value. One of the sources stated the following in response to this:

"We treat the universe with respect; we ask permission before using the earth. We urinate on it. We spit on it. We trample on it. Yet the Earth never gets angry. We throw tobacco seeds on the ground, and they grow, even though we just urinated on them. This earth that never gets angry—we should respect it. So, what does that mean? It's not just words; we show it through symbols. Symbols that can connect with it directly. There's something like this: "Sir, isn't that a waste?" There's grilled rice, rice cakes, and small tumpengs. Then it's baked with fish and all sorts of things. "Sir, isn't that a waste?" No, it's not a waste. In my opinion, it's not. Will it be wasted later? No. There are many animals on the farm. Many animals. By giving alms to animals, we follow in the footsteps of Prophet Solomon. Right? (TM, Interview, 30 September 2023)."

From the interview excerpt above, we can conclude that the rituals are not wasteful or pointless. Rather, they are a way to ask permission from nature and the God to use the land for earning a living. The rituals are also a symbol of respect for nature. For example, in the sentence, "*We treat the universe with respect; we ask permission before using the earth*," the interviewee states that it is advisable to ask permission before starting something. Nature is positioned as a living entity that provides humans with all their necessities. Therefore, humans are obligated to respect nature. This respect is expressed through rituals that use symbols, or *udarampe*, which can merge with nature itself. When humans perceive life as sacred and honor it in their daily lives, the Earth's life can be sustained. (Shiva, 1993: 17-18).



Figure 1. *Udarampe* in one of the tobacco rituals
Source: Personal documentation by Author, (2023)

In order to preserve life on earth and ensure the best tobacco harvest, there are several rituals performed by tobacco farmers in Temanggung, especially in the areas where the research is conducted. The implementation of each ritual is not always the same in every research area. However, there are at least seven rituals during the tobacco cultivation process in Temanggung. The following are the seven rituals during the tobacco season in Temanggung.

- *Among Tani*

Among tani is a ritual of praying for blessings, commonly known as *selamatan*. *Selamatan* Among Tani is usually performed at the beginning of the tobacco season. Before planting, farmers invite their neighbors and families to pray together at their homes. However, some farmers choose to prepare food, pray over it, and then distribute it to their neighbors. The timing of the ceremony is determined by each farmer individually, taking into account auspicious days and avoiding inauspicious days or days considered unlucky for their respective families. The essence of the *selamatan* is to pray to God for smooth sailing during the tobacco season.

- *Ngecel*

Shortly after the farmers perform the among tani ceremony, the *ngecel* ritual will be held the following day. *Ngecel* is a ritual to commemorate the first day of soil preparation for tobacco cultivation. The implementation of the *ngecel* ritual is determined individually by each farmer. During the ritual, farmers will bring the udarampe that has been blessed in the among tani ritual to their respective fields. They will pray while placing the udarampe on the ground where they will plant tobacco.

"Farmers will later enjoy the seeds that grow on the earth. So, farmers first ask permission from the earth. Because this is the main medium. Second, in the prayer, farmers ask that when they cultivate the land and care for the tobacco, if there are animals there, such as grasshoppers, ants, and other creatures, There are small animals, for example, if they are hit by a hoe or stepped on, and so on, we have already asked for forgiveness. That there is no intention to kill them." (TM, Interview, October 2, 2023)

Through the *ngecel* ritual, farmers realize that there are other animals living in the soil where they grow tobacco. Therefore, through this ritual, they ask for forgiveness and permission from God if, during cultivation, they accidentally harm or destroy the homes of these animals.

The offerings prepared by the farmers are food that can be eaten by the animals living in the soil, and their waste can decompose into the soil, will not pollute the earth, and make the soil more fertile.

- *Among Tebal*

The next ritual is the *Among Tebal*. It is performed to welcome the first planting of tobacco seeds. It is held to honor Ki Ageng Makukuhan, a man who, according to farmers in the Three Mountains region (Sumbing, Sindoro, and Prau), brought tobacco seeds to Temanggung (Brata, 2012: 3). Additionally, the ritual honors ancestors who are believed to protect farmland and the homes of tobacco farmers. The Among Tebal ritual plays a key role in determining the quality of the tobacco. Therefore, before planting the first seeds, a ceremony and collective prayer are held to seek divine approval for planting tobacco. The date of Among Tebal cannot be chosen arbitrarily. Calculations based on the lunar calendar and specific market days are used to determine it (Ivvaty & Pudentia, 2018). In fact, the village of Legoksari in Temanggung Regency holds a grand ceremony to welcome Among Tebal. During the ceremony, various udarampe offerings are made, each with its own meaning. The following offerings must be present at the ceremony: First, the teriyang pepes is topped with three salted cow eggs, sprinkled with salt but not mixed, to give it a spicy, savory, salty, sour, and bitter taste. This signifies that tobacco cultivation is inseparable from a variety of flavors.

Second, the eggs in this ceremony request Dewa Suryajenar's blessing. Dewa Suryajenar is considered the sun god and is also known as Sang Hyang Surya or Sang Hyang Nur Cahya. This request ensures that the sun will continue to shine. Third, the black tumpeng honors Ki Ageng Makukuhan, who is all black – his clothes, his chicken, etc. – and symbolizes that the best Srinthil tobacco is blueish-black or black like the tumpeng. This highly sought-after tobacco commands a high price because it is the best Srinthil tobacco. The mandatory offerings consist

of tumpeng, lanyahan, ingkung, bucu, and sega kapurata. The Among Tebal ceremony is held in the garden, and the village head of Legoksari or an elder from the landowner's family leads the prayer.

In addition to preparing the offerings, a special prayer is performed during the Among Tebal ceremony. A traditional leader appointed by the villagers leads the prayer. The text of the prayer is as follows:

"I intend to plant tobacco in this garden. May God grant His assistance and allow the tobacco to thrive, free from disturbances and threats. I seek blessings from the prophets and saints, as well as from Ki Ageng Makukuhan and Penembahan Tegil, so that the tobacco may sell at a high price. I will offer glutinous rice and salak at the market." (Laily, 2016: 172).

The essence of the prayer is to ask that the tobacco planted will have a high market value. After praying, the ritual usually continues with performances by local artists to enliven the event. The prayer is usually led by the traditional leader, who is a man.

- *Wiwitan*

After the *Tebal* ritual, the next one is the *Wiwitan* ritual. *Wiwitan* means "to start something" in English. For tobacco farmers, it is a ritual performed to mark the beginning of the harvest season. One village carries out the *wiwitan* tradition as a major event for the whole village. All the farmers organize a grand celebration involving cooking various *udarampe* dishes and holding a joint prayer in the fields. During the *Wiwitan* tradition, the community holds a ceremony to express gratitude to Dewi Sri, the guardian of the land, and to God Almighty for allowing the tobacco to grow abundantly and be ready for harvest. The mandatory *udarampe* for this ritual are *cambah pethek* (*iwak banyut landhes*), which are *pethek ikandan cambah* made from long beans (*landhes*). *Sega Bakar* is a small cone-shaped rice dish that is burned on top and topped with chili, red onion, and garlic. When burned, the outer layer of the rice becomes crispy and black, while the inside remains sweet and tender. This symbolizes a prayer that the tobacco plants will become resistant to pests yet remain in excellent condition. The climbing nature of the bean sprouts symbolizes the hope that prosperity will flourish. Meanwhile, the swimming fish symbolizes unlimited potential and abundance.

- *Tungguk*

The *tungguk* ritual is a ceremony performed before harvesting tobacco leaves. Also known as *dheseli*, the *tungguk* ritual is performed by tobacco farmers as an expression of gratitude to God Almighty. It is also held to honor Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility and agriculture. Farmers implement this ritual in different ways; some perform it every time they harvest tobacco, while others only do it once during the first harvest. This ritual is generally performed during the *katelu* season. At this time, the plants are ready for harvest and have the potential to become *srihil* tobacco.

- *Kepung Jenang*

The *Kepung Jenang* ritual is a blessing ceremony performed before the tobacco processing begins. Before processing begins, each farmer holds a blessing ceremony, distributing *jenang* to neighbors or inviting them to their homes. This ritual is performed to pray to God for a smooth processing of the tobacco and protection from misfortune.

- *Nyampar Bun*

Nyampar Bun is a community celebration held after the tobacco planting and processing is complete. It is a way for the villagers to express their gratitude to God Almighty for all the blessings He has bestowed upon them. Additionally, the ceremony honors the community leaders who organize the *Nyampar Bun*, including the *tumpeng gurih*, *pethek*, *sayur buncis*, and *srundeng*.

Women in the Circle of Tobacco Rituals

Women are not only mothers, consumers, and global producers (Mohanty, 2003: 248), but in both communal and personal tobacco rituals, they provide substantial contributions. Uncovering the role of women in tobacco reveals how the entire tobacco ritual process works. This is because women play an important role in all tobacco activities, including rituals. However, tobacco rituals are an arena of contestation where women and men are treated unequally. In these rituals, women are positioned as the main characters due to the significant responsibility they bear. However, patriarchal beliefs cloaked in religion ultimately favor men. In fact, women actively participate in tobacco rituals. When preparing for a ritual, women gather various offerings and other necessities. During major rituals, such as among *tebal* or *wiwitan*, women's workload increases significantly. Cooking alone can take two days. They manage all this while also tending to work in the farmer, doing all the household chores and taking care of their families.



Figure 2. Women's preparing the food for tobacco rituals

Source: Privat documentation by Author, (2023).

During major ritual celebrations, village women consider the burden of cooking and preparing *udarampe* to be greater than during *Eid al-Fitr*. In fact, there are so many things to prepare that they say it is very similar to preparing for a wedding. The only difference is that they prepare it themselves, because everyone else is busy preparing similar events in their own homes.

"The women prepare everything while the men offer prayers. After the Wiwitan ceremony, everyone eats together. In this community, the wiwitan is similar to a marriage proposal in the city. It is a big event. Cooking takes two days. It's similar to preparing for a wedding celebration. Cooking chicken soup (Ingkung) is complicated, and the seasoning takes a long time to prepare. Cooking just 5 kg of rice takes three tries." (NR, Interview, 17 September 2023)

Once everything is ready, the men carry all the offerings to the fields. They are the ones who will pray there. Men are responsible for the prayers and other public matters during the tobacco ritual. The close association between rituals and spiritual aspects reinforces the taboo surrounding women's involvement in such domains. Within the spiritual context, men are often deemed more appropriate to lead, a perception that is further reinforced by religious norms—particularly within Islam—that position men as *imam* (spiritual leaders). This dynamic has led to an unequal division of labor between men and women, where men are more frequently involved in public matters, while women are relegated to roles associated with service and care (Mohanty, 1991: 22). Women participate in the ritual, but they are not the main figures. After returning home from the ritual, the women's work is not yet finished. They are responsible for processing the leftover food and cleaning the house. While some men help with the cleaning, women generally do most of the work.

The variety of tobacco rituals in Temanggung reveals the interplay between nature, culture, and spirituality surrounding tobacco. Women are at the center of all these activities. In fact, it could be said that women are the driving force and the bridge that connects these aspects. For example, in nature, women participate in all aspects of tobacco planting and land cultivation. They nurture and respect the land as a mother nurtures her children. In culture, they are the behind-the-scenes figures who ensure

the continuity of culture and rituals. In the spirituality of tobacco, women are revered. Women's presence in these activities aligns with Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist principles. Vandana Shiva (1988), a leading thinker in ecofeminism, combines various aspects of ecofeminism and approaches her philosophy from the perspective of Third World women. She agrees with other feminist critiques of Western science, condemning dominant modes of perception, such as reductionism, dualism, and linearity. These modes originate from male-oriented Western science and society. Rejecting the epistemological position of Western science, Shiva calls for restoring feminine principles, as defined by Third World women's cosmology, as the key to transforming the destructive forces of Western patriarchy, science, and capitalism. According to Shiva, women and nature have a spiritual connection that can encourage better social relationships and reduce aggression. This means that the ecological crisis is a result of the crisis of women's rights. Furthermore, women in developing countries suffer the most from the destruction of nature (Suliantoro & Murdianto, 2019, p. 5). This is due to their strong dependence on natural resources. They are becoming increasingly impoverished due to the loss of income and livelihoods (Shiva, 2010). Consequently, women in developing countries have started acting on feminist principles to protect forests, land, and water and oppose Western ideals (Shiva, 1988: xv).

“Wiwit is for blessings, and to express gratitude to those who protect the land. The land usually has its own guardians, namely Dewi Sri as the guardian of the land. Usually, each piece of land is different depending on the location's request. Some ask for different things. The guardian of the land, Danyang, usually appears in dreams when something is requested. Some request coffee, for instance. It has become a belief. Once, when I performed a wiwit ritual for a sacred site, I forgot to bring coffee. Yet, coffee must be brought for that sacred site. Then, my grandfather couldn't speak for three days. Later, it was recalled that during the wiwit ritual, there was insufficient coffee. After it was brought, he could speak again.” (NR, Interview, 17 September 2023)

These local belief systems are intertwined with the spiritual context brought forth by Shiva. The spirituality introduced by Vandana Shiva is not to be equated with institutionalized religion – be it Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, or Islam. Instead, the notion of spirituality here aligns more closely with the concept of the “Goddess” (Shiva, 1993: 17). The choice of the term “Goddess” rather than “religion” stems from the critique that institutional religions are often antagonistic to both women and nature, and have legitimized patriarchal practices (Shiva, 1993: 17). The invocation of women through the figure of the Goddess appears through the names of Dewi-Dewi associated with tobacco. According to local belief, these Dewi-Dewi play a vital role in ensuring the cultivation of high-quality tobacco with strong market value. Much like *Ibu Bumi* (Mother Earth), whose physical form may not be visible but whose presence is deeply acknowledged, these tobacco Goddesses are similarly revered by tobacco farmers. Just as *Ibu Bumi* is believed to provide for all human needs, the *Dewi* are also seen as protectors of the land and guarantors of the resources necessary for tobacco cultivation.

Through these spiritual elements, tobacco farmers believe that human life coexists not only with fellow human beings but also with unseen and scientifically inexplicable forces. The concept of *danyang*, which often reveals itself through dreams, represents one manifestation of natural spirituality. Responding to the “requests” of these guardians of nature is viewed by local communities as a form of mutual respect between all beings who share and depend on the Earth. Since the Earth is used communally, it must also be cared for communally.

For farmers – especially women – the land and the community, the Earth and its inhabitants, are profoundly interconnected. They believe that cultural and religious identities originate from the land, which is not merely regarded as a means of production but as the spiritual soul of the community. The land encapsulates ecological and spiritual-cultural elements (Shiva, 1993: 102). It becomes a home and a contested spiritual space manifested through myths, rituals, and songs in everyday life (Shiva, 1993: 102). The land is a sacred space of the universe that provides meaning and life through its ecological resources (Shiva, 1993: 103). Emphasizing spirituality, therefore, leads to a rediscovery of the sacredness of life. Once life is seen as sacred and honored in everyday actions, the life of the Earth can be sustained (Shiva, 1993: 17–18). Respect for the Earth is typically expressed through celebrations, rituals, dances, and songs (Shiva, 1993: 18).

This is exactly what tobacco farmers in Temanggung practice. They perform various rituals that include prayers and, at times, hymns of praise to honor the Earth upon which they grow tobacco. These rituals also establish boundaries that must not be violated by farmers, including women. Such boundaries are observed not only to seek better harvests but also as expressions of gratitude to God and nature—the sources of their livelihoods. Women in the Global South perceive the Earth as a living entity capable of sustaining life. Therefore, they respect and uphold these boundaries as essential to survival and livelihood (Shiva, 1993: 19). In the case of tobacco farmers in Temanggung, the wives of farmers are responsible for preparing various *udarampe* and ensuring that no ritual detail is overlooked. Missing a single element is believed to result in poor-quality tobacco, reflecting a failure to respect nature and its divine creator. They believe that humans must not simply “desire food without sweat,” disregarding the sources and agents of that labor (Shiva, 1993: 20).

Vandana Shiva (1993) describes the feminine principle – though not exclusively embodied by women—as representing the dynamic and creative forces of nature. In the context of

tobacco farming in Temanggung, this feminine principle is reflected in women in both explicit and implicit forms. Explicitly, femininity is embodied in the roles of women who actively participate in environmental conservation and cultivation efforts. Implicitly, femininity is represented by the Dewi-Dewi tembakau, who are imagined as possessing nurturing qualities akin to those of women managing households and caring for children. The feminine principle challenges dominant paradigms by positioning both nature and women as vital sources of life and abundance, the active subjects who sustain and generate life processes (Shiva, 1988: 46).

Women and Rituals: Between Greatness and Mysticism

Bourdieu (2001: 136-137) mentions that rituals are one way to dominate and prohibit women from appearing in public. These rituals subtly force women to become preoccupied with their own world, which distances them from various public activities. Women are encouraged to enjoy themselves while still being subjected to masculine prejudice (Bourdieu, 2001: 67–68).

In the context of tobacco, this effort to entertain while oppressing women is achieved by positioning women as noble figures through the symbolization of tobacco Goddesses. Women play a significant role in the tobacco industry, especially in Temanggung. However, discussions about women's work cannot be limited to what is visible. This is because tobacco contributes to the mystification of women as goddesses in community beliefs. This mystification seems to illustrate how highly respected and sacred women are in the tobacco industry. They are praised and revered; their names are always mentioned in prayers during rituals. These Goddesses are symbols of women who embody feminine traits, the beauty of the female form, and the strength of women (Christ, 2019). The earth itself is depicted as the body of the Goddess, interconnected with the universe to form a unity that aims to create a harmonious world (Christ, 1997: xv). Goddesses are commonly found in rituals and culture. They manifest in symbols and myths that shape an ethos for human life (Christ, 1997: 165).

The Goddesses associated with the tobacco ritual in Temanggung are Dewi Sri Ijo, Dewi Sri Kuning, Dewi Sri Anjang Kencana, Dewi Sri Sadana, and Dewi Sri Lulut. Each Goddess is believed to play a specific role in protecting the earth. These Goddesses are not simply regarded as entities to be worshiped. Rather, they represent symbols likened to the universe itself. This symbolism was later adopted by tobacco farmers in Temanggung. When they say that one of the prayers in the tobacco ritual is directed toward the Goddesses, they are actually praying to God to bless the land where they grow tobacco. In this context, nature, women, culture, and spirituality coexist harmoniously. The community believes in one supreme God who governs the entire universe, including matters related to tobacco. However, they also believe that the universe created by God is not solely the domain of humans. There are visible and invisible elements within the universe. Therefore, they believe that mutual respect is the best way to live in abundance by utilizing the bounty of nature.

"Dewi Sri is symbolized as a woman, yes, the universe that loves us. A mother's love exceeds that of a father, a man. A mother is willing to breastfeed and do other things with patience. Even when a mother is eating and her child cries, she will put down her food to feed her child. This universe is symbolized as Dewi Sri" (TM, interview, September 30, 2023).

The above interview aligns with the eco-feminist concept of Mother Earth, as discussed by Vandana Shiva and others. In this concept, nature is likened to a woman who provides everything necessary for human survival. The abstraction of women through Goddesses who protect nature positions the Earth as feminine. According to Shiva (1988: 41), women and nature produce and reproduce not only biological aspects, but also social roles in terms of maintenance. However, the symbolization of women as Goddesses and the personification of Mother Earth should be viewed with suspicion, despite their reverence. Many such spiritual symbolizations are based on a male perspective (Christ, 2019). This perspective has the potential to discriminate against women and nature itself. The concept of the Goddess is one way men reinforce their dominance and domesticate women.

Although women are given space to be empowered, they are simultaneously rendered powerless. They are praised, but in a way that mystifies their role. While it's true that women are considered to have a role, this role is invisible and supernatural, and not everyone acknowledges its existence. In reality, this situation correlates with the discourse of women disappearing from the tobacco industry, which makes tobacco highly masculine. This mystification of women may also be a form of subjugation and marginalization logic (Suliantoro & Murdianto, 2019: 181). On the one hand, women's roles are acknowledged; on the other hand, their existence is mystified. This mystification of women to gain recognition occurs not only in the tobacco industry, but also in various other media. Through this mystification, women's work can be interpreted as invisible, like the work of Goddesses, which humans cannot see.

This mystification of women through Goddesses makes the tobacco world forget about women's work, a concept supported by the calculation methods in tobacco rituals. Consider the following interview excerpt:

"Then we start picking. The calculation for picking is different. Queen, chief, king, devil. Queen, chief, king, devil. We take the king, not the queen. The king is more powerful, whereas the queen is a woman. We choose the king. Because queens, being women, sometimes lack the power of decision-making that men have. So we take the king. The queen, sometimes women, tends to be more concerned with appearance. So if it's the queen, for example, I have tobacco. I'll choose it later with the queen, the calculation is with the queen, like that. For example, if I'm offered 100,000, even though that's already appropriate and fair for that price. Well, I compare it with others and feel it's insufficient. So this will be left behind, and it will be avoided by the collectors. It's different with the king. The king usually negotiates quickly and closes the deal immediately" (TM, interview, September 30, 2023).

In the above quote, the source explains the guidelines for calculating the initial tobacco harvest. Out of three calculation options, he chose *Raja* (King). The queen is considered more powerful, which is why he chose her. Additionally, the sentence *"Because the queen is a woman, she sometimes lacks the policy-making power of a man"* shows that women are considered weak and unable to make decisions. Such expressions reflect the patriarchy that permeates tobacco-farming families. In rural areas, farming families often adopt patriarchal systems that view women as incompetent, incapable of collaboration, and unable to effect change in their lives (Sachs, 2018: 6-7). Furthermore, the above quote from the interview

indirectly suggests that women are indecisive and feel inadequate. This leads to the assumption that tobacco will not be well managed by women.

By excluding women from the tobacco industry, this calculation seems to be the antithesis of positioning women as Goddesses of tobacco. Women seem to be deliberately given space to be elevated so that they feel valued. On the other hand, their position is eliminated and they are excluded from tobacco affairs. Such assumptions then extend to the absence of women from the tobacco economy. Because they are seen as overly complicated and never satisfied, women are not allowed to touch the tobacco economy. Their place is to be sacred Goddesses whose roles are not visible, not in the economic realm of buying, selling, and money.

CONCLUSION

Rituals in tobacco farming are among the many cultural practices that have contributed to the exclusion of women from the public sphere. This reality, albeit indirectly, strengthens the discourse of masculine dominance in the tobacco domain. Such masculine domination has contributed to the erasure of women's significant roles in the preparation of rituals.

This study has uncovered the vital roles and multifaceted agency exercised by women in the domain of tobacco rituals. Furthermore, it raises critical suspicion that the representation of women in the form of Dewi-Dewi tembakau (tobacco Goddesses) may not serve to glorify them, but rather to mystify and marginalize women from the public sphere, particularly from communal ritual practices.

Additionally, folktales about Dewi-Dewi tembakau must be reconsidered and reconstructed. Folktales hold immense influence over public perception, particularly in Temanggung, where such stories are deeply respected. Instead of idealizing women as exalted Goddesses, it would be more impactful if these stories depicted the struggles and contributions of real women in the tobacco world. Mohanty (2003: 7), citing Frantz Fanon, states that decoloniality is a movement that reshapes history. Since it concerns history, the process must begin with the creation of new narratives that will be consumed by future generations. Local cultural leaders, activists, and writers in Temanggung could begin collaborating to produce stories of tobacco rituals that promote gender equality. Gradually, as these stories are passed on to children, they will come to recognize the significant role of women in tobacco rituals—eventually fostering new knowledge in future generations.

This paper makes a significant contribution to the study of tobacco rituals. Unlike previous studies, which only describe the types of rituals from a cultural perspective, this study examines the role of gender, particularly that of women, in these rituals. This is an aspect rarely touched upon by researchers, the media and the public when discussing tobacco rituals. The study encourages readers to think critically about the meaning of rituals and to consider the impact of these rituals on the domestication and disappearance of women from the discourse on tobacco.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was funded by a research grant from the Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP).

REFERENCES

- Alamsyah, A. R. (2011). *Hitam Putih Tembakau*. Depok: UI Press
- Bagoes, R. (2023). *Tutur dari Tiga Gunung: Ki Ageng Makukuhan*. Temanggung: Publikasi Tim Riset Myths Weave Festival 2023.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine Domination*. Stanford-California: Stanford University Press.
- Brata, W. (2012). *Tembakau atau Mati: Kasaksian, Kegelisahan, dan Harapan Seorang Petani Tembakau*. Indonesia Berdikari: Jakarta.
- Christ, C. P. (2019). *Theology Matters*. *Feminist Theology* Vol. 28(1) DOI: 10.1177/0966735019857195., 20-34.
- Idammatusilm, & Putra, H. M. (2023). *Philosophy Value of The Bima Sakti Serving Ritual In Legoksari Temanggung Village*. *Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman* Vol.19 No.01 (2023): doi; 10.20414/jpk.v19i1.6832, 29-42
- Ivvaty, S., & Pudentia. (2018). *Tobacco Farming Ritual Among Tebal in Temanggung: From Individual Ritual to Communal Performance as Safeguarding Effort*. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, volume 280 International Seminar On Recent Language, Literature, And Local Culture Studies (BASA 2018), 121-130
- Haryatmoko. (2016). *Critical Discourse Analysis (Analisis Wacana Kritis): Landasan Teori, Metodologi, dan Penerapannya*. Depok: Rajawali Pers.
- Laily, E. (2016). *Srinthil: pusaka saujana Lereng Sumbing*. Sleman: Pustaka Indonesia.
- Larasati, Ariyani, & Sunjata. (2018). *Upacara Adat di Lingkungan Petani Tembakau Srinthil Temanggung*. Yogyakarta: Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya (BPNP) DI. Yogyakarta.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2006). *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*. In D. & Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies Keywords Revision Edition* (pp. 396-421). Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Runtiko, A. G., (2020). *Komunikasi Keluarga Petani Tembakau dalam Tradisi Usaha Tani Tembakau di Kabupaten Temanggung*. Dissertation, Program Studi Penyuluhan dan Komunikasi Pembangunan, Sekolah Pascasarjana, Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- Sachs, C. (2018). *Gendered Fields: Rular Women, Agriculture, and Environment*. New York: Routledge.
- Shiva, V. (1988). *STAYING ALIVE Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Suliantoro, B. W., & Murdianto, C. W. (2019). *Perjuangan Perempuan Mencari*

- Keadilan & Menyelamatkan Lingkungan: Telaah Kritis Etika Ekofeminisme Vandana Shiva. Yogyakarta: Cahaya Atma Pustaka.
- Sunaryo, T. (2013). Kretek Pusaka Nusantara. Serikat Kerakyatan Indonesia (SAKTI).
- Wibisono, N., & Yoandinas, M. (2014). Kretek: Kedaulatan dan Kemandirian Bangsa Indonesia. Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional: Katalog dalam Terbitan, Koalisi Nasional Penyelamat Kretek (KNPK).
- Wodak, R., & Reisigl, M. (2009). The Discourse-Historical Approach. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 87-121). London: Sage.

PANEL 4.
DECOLONIZING HERITAGE: POWER, IDENTITY, AND THE
GEOPOLITICS OF CULTURAL PRESERVATION

MAKASSAR CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN THE SPICE ROUTE NARRATIVE AND SYMBOLIC POWER

Arif Hukmi

*Universitas Islam Makassar, Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan Km 9 No. 29, Tamalanrea Indah, Tamalanrea,
Makassar, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia.*

Corresponding author: arifhukmi@uim-makassar.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Makassar, as one of the key points along the historic spice route, possesses a rich and diverse cultural heritage. However, historical narratives about Makassar's role are often shaped by dominant actors such as the state and international institutions, primarily to support cultural diplomacy and tourism. This study aims to explore how symbolic power is utilized to shape the narrative and cultural identity of Makassar within a global context. This research adopts a critical and postcolonial approach, focusing on discourse analysis related to the roles of media and public policy in shaping the historical representation of Makassar. It also examines the transformation of Bugis Makassar public spaces, from the community-based tradition of tudang sipulung to contemporary public arenas such as coffee shops, which now function as hubs for socio-political discussion. The findings are expected to reveal how narratives controlled by dominant actors tend to reduce the complexity of local cultures and construct a homogenized identity aligned with globalization and the commercialization of public spaces. The methodology involves discourse analysis of media texts and public policies related to Makassar, along with a literature review on La Galigo epic and the historical development of Makassar as a global port city in the 17th century. This study addresses two key questions: first, how does symbolic power shape the historical narrative of Makassar, and second, what is the impact of globalization on the representation of Makassar's local culture in public policy and media?

Keywords: Makassar, Spice Route, Symbolic Power, Cultural Diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Spice Route has been re-promoted as a strategic cultural heritage project linking Indonesia's maritime history with agendas of cultural diplomacy and global tourism, (Wibisono et al., 2018). This narrative generally emphasizes the glory of transoceanic trade and the cosmopolitan character of port cities across the Indonesian archipelago. However, critical scholarship has shown that state-led heritage projects are frequently framed through top-down perspectives, positioning history as a resource for contemporary political and economic legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1991). Within this context, the Spice Route risks undergoing a depoliticization of history, in which colonial conflicts, power relations, and the lived experiences of local communities are simplified or erased to produce cultural narratives that are safe, uniform, and easily marketable (Adams & Sandarupa, 2018; Deumert, 2018).

Historically, Makassar was one of the key nodes in the Southeast Asian spice trade network during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, functioning as an international port

connecting Maluku, Malacca, and global markets (Reid, 1990; Sutherland, 2001). Historical studies indicate that Makassar was not merely a center of commodity distribution, but also a space of cultural encounters, political negotiation, and resistance to the colonial domination of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) (Pelras, 2006; Hamid, 2022). Nevertheless, within contemporary Spice Route narratives, Makassar is often selectively represented as a symbol of pre-colonial maritime glory, while dimensions of conflict, inequality, and identity negotiation within port communities tend to be marginalized. Such representations shift history from a realm of social experience into a symbolic image that functions primarily as an asset for cultural branding.

Existing research on the Spice Route and Makassar has largely been dominated by descriptive-historical approaches and studies oriented toward tourism promotion and the reinforcement of regional cultural identity (Adams & Sandarupa, 2018; Hamid, 2022). By contrast, studies that critically examine how Spice Route narratives are produced through media language, policy documents, and cultural promotional materials remain relatively limited. Critical heritage studies have demonstrated that official narratives often privilege the interests of dominant actors, while the voices of local communities are reduced to symbolic ornaments (Wibisono et al., 2018; Demmallino et al., 2016). As a result, the role of symbolic power and the discursive mechanisms shaping representations of Makassar's culture have not yet been systematically explored.

Addressing this gap, this study examines representations of Makassar's culture within the Spice Route narrative through a postcolonial framework and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Drawing on the view that language and symbols constitute central arenas for the production of meaning and power (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2010), this article argues that the Spice Route functions as a site of discursive contestation between top-down representations controlled by the state and global institutions, and bottom-up narratives embedded in the social practices of local maritime communities. By analyzing media texts, policy documents, and cultural promotional materials, this study contributes to critical heritage studies by demonstrating how processes of cultural branding can simultaneously generate symbolic legitimacy and social marginalization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a postcolonial approach combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how Makassar is represented within contemporary Spice Route narratives. The postcolonial perspective is used to understand the persistence of historical power relations in the production of cultural discourse, particularly in the relationships among the state, global institutions, and local communities (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1994). Recent scholarship demonstrates that cultural heritage narratives are frequently rearticulated through frameworks of branding and cultural diplomacy, a process that may reduce the complexity of local histories and social experiences (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006; Winter, 2015). Within this framework, culture is understood not as a fixed entity, but as a set of social practices continuously negotiated through discourse, policy, and symbolic representation (Hall, 1997; Waterton & Smith, 2010). This approach is particularly relevant for interpreting the Spice Route as a cultural project that not only revives maritime history, but also produces hierarchies of meaning and authority in cultural representation.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as the primary analytical framework for examining the language and representational strategies that shape Makassar's position within the Spice

Route discourse. Following Fairclough (2010) and Wodak and Meyer (2016), language is treated as a form of social practice operating within specific power relations. CDA enables a systematic investigation of how cultural meanings are constructed through lexical choices, grammatical structures, and discursive strategies of inclusion and exclusion that position social actors in media texts and policy documents (van Leeuwen, 2008). Through this lens, the analysis focuses on how Makassar is framed, which historical elements are foregrounded or marginalized, and how agency is attributed to—or withdrawn from—local actors.

The research data consist of national and local online news articles, government press releases, public policy documents, digital tourism promotional content, and selected sources of local cultural knowledge. This diversity of data is intended to capture variations in how Makassar is framed across official discourse and locally grounded narratives. Data were purposively selected based on their relevance to the Spice Route program and their role in shaping public representations of Makassar. The categories of data, types of documents, and analytical focus are summarized in Table 1, which functions as an analytical roadmap for the study.

TABLE 1. Data Sources and Research Study Objects

Data Categories	Text/Document Type	Short Description	Focus of Analysis
Media Text	National and local media news articles	News related to spice routes, history of Makassar port, cultural promotion on Kompas, CNN Indonesia, Fajar	Narrative framing, symbolic diction, cultural image construction
	Government press release	Official release from the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Education and Culture, or the Makassar City Government	State discourse, policy symbolism, ideological direction
	Tourism digital content	Promotional videos, spice trail websites, social media uploads, digital campaigns	Cultural visualization, exoticism, consumption aesthetics
Public Policy Documents	Cultural strategy documents, Spice Trail Master Plan, cultural heritage regulations	Formal documents in efforts to preserve culture and promote the spice route	Policy ideology, symbol commodification, power relations
Local Cultural Literature	Epic <i>La Galigo</i>	A classic Bugis epic manuscript that preserves cosmological values and cultural identity	Counter-narratives, local semantics, foundations of collective identity

History of Makassar port	Archives and historiography of Makassar's role as a global port in the past	Reading history as a space for conflict and negotiation
Tudang Sipulung Tradition	Bugis-Makassar community deliberation forum in resolving social and political problems	Transformation of public space, cultural continuity, resistance to cultural homogenization

In addition to official texts, this study draws on local cultural sources as analytical points of comparison. The La Galigo epic is employed to examine Bugis–Makassar cosmology and collective values (Mattulada, 1995; Sirk, 2015), while historiographical works on Makassar’s port provide historical context regarding the city’s role within global maritime networks (Pelras, 2006; Reid, 2015). The practice of tudang sipulung is understood as a form of social deliberation that reflects the continuity of local values and modes of managing public space, and as a site for articulating knowledge beyond institutional representations (Li, 2014).

ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

The analysis applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) through a series of interrelated stages, as recommended in contemporary CDA scholarship (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The first stage involves purposive data selection, guided by thematic relevance, the positionality of sources within the production of discourse, and the intensity of symbolic references to Makassar and the Spice Route. The dataset covers the period from 2018 to 2024, corresponding with the renewed prominence of the Spice Route as a national cultural policy and tourism promotion agenda (Winter, 2015; Bendix et al., 2013).

The second stage concerns the identification of units of analysis. The analysis focuses on news headlines, lead paragraphs, and textual segments that explicitly frame Makassar within historical and cultural narratives. Particular attention is paid to lexical choices, strategies of social actor nomination, and patterns of agency attribution and suppression, especially in representations of the state, global institutions, and local communities (van Leeuwen, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012). In tourism promotional materials, visual and multimodal elements are analyzed as integral components of cultural representation operating through logics of aestheticization and consumption (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Analytical strategies follow Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of CDA, encompassing the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 2010). At the textual level, the analysis examines linguistic structures and diction; at the level of discursive practice, it investigates processes of text production, distribution, and circulation within media and policy contexts; and at the level of social practice, it interrogates the power relations that frame cultural discourse. The analytical findings are subsequently interpreted through postcolonial perspectives and theories of symbolic power to elucidate how narratives produced by dominant actors gain legitimacy and how the experiences of local communities are positioned in limited or marginal ways within the Spice Route narrative (Bourdieu, 1991; Ashcroft et al., 2013).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Representation of Makassar Culture in Media and Public Policy

The representation of Makassar's culture in mainstream media and public policy documents reveals a consistent discursive pattern in which the history of the Spice Route is reduced to a source of symbolic legitimacy for contemporary cultural and diplomatic agendas. This pattern does not operate at an abstract level, but can be systematically traced through lexical choices, sentence structures, and strategies of actor exclusion in media texts. In a Kompas article discussing the revitalization of the Spice Route, Makassar is positioned as part of a "maritime glory that has been revived through festivals and cultural programs" (Kompas, 2023). Linguistically, the use of the passive verb "has been revived" obscures the question of who is reactivating history and for whose interests. History thus appears as a neutral entity ready to be mobilized, rather than as a contested social arena shaped by colonial experiences and structural inequalities.

The argument that media reproduce top-down narratives is further reinforced by the consistency of framing in policy-related texts circulated through state news agencies. ANTARA, for example, states that the Spice Route aims to "strengthen Indonesia's position in global cultural diplomacy" (ANTARA, 2023). This phrase carries two important discursive implications. First, Makassar and other maritime sites are reduced to representational instruments of the state, rather than being recognized as autonomous cultural spaces. Second, local actors are entirely absent from the sentence structure, rendering power relations between the state and maritime communities invisible. Through this strategy of exclusion, policy discourse functions to normalize state dominance over the production of historical meaning.

Moreover, this framing strategy is also evident in the way media link historical narratives to the agenda of the cultural economy. Several reports published by CNN Indonesia and Fajar connect memories of Makassar's port prosperity with culinary promotion, cultural festivals, and spice-based tourism. In this context, terms such as "cultural potential," "tourist attraction," and "historical branding" recur frequently, while vocabulary referring to social conflict, colonial exploitation, or local resistance is almost entirely absent. This lexical pattern indicates that culture is primarily represented as a symbolic commodity rather than as a multilayered and lived social practice. In other words, media discourse functions to shift history from a political space into a space of consumption.

Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals that this dominant discourse is not entirely homogeneous. Certain media texts open limited spaces for counter-narratives, particularly in discussions of Paotere Port. In one ANTARA report, Paotere is described as a "living space for fishermen and small traders who sustain Makassar's maritime pulse" (ANTARA, 2024). In contrast to earlier texts, this sentence structure explicitly positions local communities as active subjects. The lexical choice "living space" reframes the port from a mere heritage site into an arena of ongoing social practice. However, it is important to note that such narratives appear sporadically and are not developed as a primary representational framework. The imbalance between dominant discourse and counter-narratives strengthens the argument that representations of Makassar's culture in media and public policy are largely shaped by top-down perspectives.

Maritime history and identity are thus produced through language that emphasizes harmony, continuity, and symbolic value, while dimensions of conflict, colonial trauma, and

local identity negotiation are reduced or erased. Consequently, the CDA of media and policy texts demonstrates that representations of Makassar's culture are not simply reflections of historical reality, but the outcomes of discursive practices that actively regulate what may be remembered, celebrated, and promoted within the framework of the Spice Route.

Transformation of Bugis-Makassar Public Space

The transformation of Bugis–Makassar public space identified in this study cannot be separated from the ways in which these spaces are represented and endowed with meaning within media and policy discourse. As summarized in Table 2, public space is no longer understood primarily as an arena of social interaction among citizens, but is increasingly positioned as a medium of cultural representation aligned with economic and diplomatic agendas. This shift is evident in recurring representational patterns across media coverage, government press releases, and policy documents.

In news articles discussing Somba Opu Port, for example, Makassar is represented as an “international trade hub” and a “seventeenth-century spice center” (Kumparan, 2022). The lexical emphasis on terms such as “hub,” “center,” and “international” foregrounds Makassar's strategic position and cosmopolitanism, while reducing the port's social space to a symbol of economic glory and royal power. In these texts, the port does not appear as a public space practiced by residents, but as a historical icon ready for revitalization. A similar pattern emerges in ANTARA reports (2021) that link the history of Gowa–Tallo to narratives of modernization and Spice Route connectivity. Here, history is mobilized to legitimize economic agendas and global recognition, while local social practices remain marginal.

Representations closer to everyday social life can be found in media coverage of Paotere Port (Detik, 2021), which is described as a “people's port” that maintains its social function amid changing times. However, textual analysis reveals a tendency toward the romanticization of history, in which the continuity of port functions is framed as a symbol of cultural resilience without adequately addressing the economic pressures and shifting labor relations faced by fishermen and small traders. Consequently, although Paotere offers a relatively alternative narrative, it remains within the safe boundaries of media representation that avoid confronting structural conflict.

These findings become more significant when considered alongside transformations in contemporary public space. The data indicate that traditional deliberative spaces such as *tudang sipulung* are almost entirely absent from media and policy discourse. This absence should not be understood merely as an empirical omission, but as a form of discursive exclusion. Government press releases and policy documents consistently prioritize cultural spaces that can be visually packaged and economically valorized, such as festivals, dance performances, and heritage sites. This shift contributes to the normalization of commercial public spaces—cafés, shopping centers, and lifestyle venues—as the primary arenas of social interaction and identity expression.

Digital tourism content further reinforces this tendency. Promotional videos depicting Bugis dances performed aboard pinisi ships present culture as a visual object detached from its social context. Minimal narration and selective imagery transform cultural practices into aesthetic elements rather than expressions embedded within systems of values and social relations. From a CDA perspective, this process reflects the decontextualization of public space, whereby cultural practices formerly tied to collective functions are reorganized to conform to the logic of consumption.

Analysis of policy documents and heritage regulations further confirms the direction of this transformation. The Spice Route Master Plan and UNESCO nomination regulations (Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 10/2022) consistently position the state as the primary authority in cultural management and interpretation. Terms such as “preservation,” “international recognition,” and “creative industry” dominate the discourse, while mechanisms for meaningful local community participation are scarcely addressed. As a result, public space is not only physically restructured but also epistemically reconfigured—through the regulation of who is entitled to speak and within what frameworks culture is to be interpreted.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the transformation of Bugis–Makassar public space is shaped by hegemonic representations produced through the Spice Route narrative. Public spaces—whether ports, festivals, or lifestyle venues—become sites where local memory intersects with global agendas. However, this intersection unfolds within unequal power relations, in which the histories and cultures of local communities are reduced to politically safe and economically productive symbols. Consequently, the observed changes in Bugis–Makassar public space are not merely reflections of social transformation, but direct outcomes of discursive practices that systematically frame, constrain, and direct cultural meaning in public space.

TABLE 2. Results of the Analysis of Makassar Cultural Representation in the Spice Route Narrative

Category	Direct Quotations (Headline / Lead / Key Sentence)	Findings	Postcolonial Interpretation / CDA
News Articles	“Pelabuhan Somba Opu pernah menjadi pusat perdagangan internasional dan jalur utama rempah Nusantara pada abad ke-17” (Kumparan, 2022)	Makassar framed as cosmopolitan trade hub	Lexical emphasis on <i>pusat</i> and <i>internasional</i> revives pre-colonial glory; colonial rupture backgrounded
	“Makassar menghubungkan jalur rempah masa lalu dengan ekspor dan produk herbal masa kini” (ANTARA, 2021)	Continuity narrative past–present	Verb <i>menghubungkan</i> constructs linear continuity; legitimizes economic and UNESCO agenda
	“Pelabuhan Paotere kini menjadi pelabuhan rakyat yang tetap bertahan di tengah modernisasi kota” (Detik, 2021)	Sustainability of maritime identity	Romanticization of resilience; structural inequalities muted

	“Makassar sebagai pusat maritim dan warisan budaya dunia” (Matamaros.com, 2022)	Local figures as global icons	Cultural diplomacy; symbolic resistance framed safely
Government Press Release	“Pemerintah berkomitmen menjadikan Makassar simpul strategis Jalur Rempah dunia” (Makassar City Government)	Official narrative of strategic role	State-centered framing; minimal community voice
	“Nominasi UNESCO membutuhkan kajian akademik yang terstandar” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023)	Top-down preservation ideology	State as curator of heritage and diplomacy
Tourism Digital Content	“Tarian Bugis di atas kapal pinisi menjadi daya tarik visual Jalur Rempah” (Tourism promotional video)	Culture as exotic visual	Decontextualization; tourism consumption
Public Policy Documents	“Pengembangan Jalur Rempah diarahkan untuk diplomasi budaya dan industri kreatif” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021)	Preservation + commodification	Narrative control by state and market
Cultural Heritage Regulation	“Penetapan Jalur Rempah sebagai warisan budaya dunia merupakan kewenangan negara” (Permendikbud No. 10/2022)	Legal recognition focus	Monopoly of cultural authorization

As demonstrated in Table 2, representations of Makassar in media discourse and public policy consistently privilege symbolic elements aligned with state interests, market logics, and cultural institutions. This pattern is evident not only in the themes emphasized, but also in the specific lexical and grammatical choices through which history and public space are framed. Media narratives of the Spice Route do more than recall the past; they actively reorganize public meaning by selecting which histories, spaces, and actors are rendered visible and legitimate.

In news coverage of Somba Opu Port, for instance, *Kumparan* describes the site as an “international trade center and a major spice route of the archipelago” (2022). The repeated use of nouns such as center and international foregrounds Makassar’s cosmopolitan status and economic significance, while the colonial rupture marked by the destruction of Somba Opu is

rendered marginal. Linguistically, this framing constructs history as a source of pride and continuity rather than as a field of conflict, dispossession, and colonial violence. A similar pattern appears in ANTARA's statement that "Makassar connects the historical Spice Route with contemporary exports and herbal products" (2021). The verb connects smooths historical discontinuities and produces a linear narrative that legitimizes present-day economic agendas, including cultural diplomacy and UNESCO nomination.

Alternative representations emerge in reporting on Paotere Port, which Detik describes as a "people's port that continues to endure" (2021). Here, community presence is articulated more explicitly, and the port is framed as a lived public space rather than a purely symbolic heritage site. However, the emphasis on endurance tends to romanticize resilience, while the structural pressures faced by fishermen and small traders—such as precarity, market dependency, and unequal access to resources—remain underexplored. Even when local voices enter the narrative, they do so within representational boundaries that avoid confronting deeper postcolonial inequalities.

The transformation of public space becomes more pronounced in tourism discourse. Promotional content frequently frames Bugis cultural practices as "visual attractions of the Spice Route," particularly through images of traditional dances performed aboard pinisi ships. In this context, culture is detached from its social and historical embeddedness and reconstituted as spectacle. This decontextualization aligns closely with policy documents that explicitly position the Spice Route as a vehicle for "cultural diplomacy and the creative industry" (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021). Together, these texts normalize a shift in public space—from arenas of collective deliberation and social negotiation toward sites of visual consumption and economic value.

A critical finding of this analysis lies in what is absent. Traditional deliberative spaces such as *tudang sipulung* are almost entirely excluded from media narratives and policy texts. This absence is not accidental, but discursive. As a space grounded in collective negotiation and civic deliberation, *tudang sipulung* does not fit easily within promotional, touristic, or diplomatic frameworks. Its exclusion reinforces a model of public space that privileges representation over participation, and visibility over deliberation.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the transformation of Bugis–Makassar public space is not merely a consequence of social change, but a product of discursive governance. Media narratives, policy documents, and tourism discourse operate in tandem to reframe cultural heritage and public space as symbolic and economic assets. In doing so, they privilege politically safe memories and visually accessible symbols, while marginalizing practices and histories that foreground contestation, inequality, and community agency. From a postcolonial CDA perspective, the Spice Route narrative thus functions as a hegemonic representational framework that reshapes how Makassar's culture, history, and public spaces are seen, valued, and governed.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the narrative of the Spice Trail involving Makassar is never free from the struggle for meaning. Refers to (Bourdieu, 1991), symbolic power exists through the ability of dominant actors—states, international institutions, and the tourism industry—to control symbols, language, and image, thus being able to define social reality according to their interests. In this landscape, Makassar's maritime history is processed into a uniform and neat narrative: highlighting the splendor of the past, but removing layers of history full of tension, conflict, and resistance.

This pattern is in line with the findings (Adams & Sandarupa, 2018) which shows how cultural festivals in Sulawesi are often constructed to attract tourists and sponsors. In the process, exotic images that are easy to sell on the global stage are prioritized over complex socio-historical contexts.

Similar things can be seen in (Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, 2022), where the icon like *Phinisi* or the figure of Karaeng Pattingalloang is presented to build the cosmopolitan image of Makassar. However, in this framing, there is no room to talk about contemporary issues of the maritime community—from the pressures of port modernization to rising timber prices for shipwrights.

(Wibisono et al., 2018) emphasized that regional cultural narratives are often shaped by local government policies and national programs oriented towards cultural diplomacy and tourism promotion. The findings are relevant to the case of Makassar, where cultural branding is directed to cater to political and economic interests, while narratives that are not in line – such as memories of resistance to the VOC or socio-economic changes after the Bogaya Agreement – are set aside.

Postcolonial perspective (Deumert, 2018) and (Liew, 2017) helps to read this phenomenon as a form *representation from above*, where the narrative is constructed from the outside and projected to the public as the sole truth.

Archaeological research in Maluku suggests that the spice routes in the region were not the result of colonial intervention or merely the effects of contact with Mainland Asia and Europe, but rather were formed much earlier. (Ririmasse, 2017) found that the trade and exchange network in Maluku had been going on since the prehistoric period, as evidenced by archaeological findings. The study emphasizes that the current dominant narrative—which positions the spice route as part of a post-contact international trade network with West Asia, China, and Europe—often ignores this important phase of the internal formation of the spice route. Thus, the subordination of the Spice Trail narrative under the Silk Road or colonial narrative not only obscures its strategic role in the early modern era, but also removes an older and authentic layer of history, which grew out of the local dynamics of the archipelago itself.

On the other hand, *narratives from below*—*narratives from below*—are still alive in spaces like Paotere Port. Here, the Spice Trail is not just a story of past glory, but a daily economic pulse that connects Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, fishermen, to sailors from small islands in South Sulawesi. Bartering activities, distribution of seafood, and social networks between islands are organic continuations of the port's historical function. There is no formal curation, but it is precisely where the community narrative maintains the complexity of maritime identity.

This tension between the storefront narrative and the grassroots narrative can also be seen through the transformation of public space. Sari and Yuliana (2021) found that community traditions in many cities have undergone "festivalization" and "commodification", where the function of public spaces shifts from the arena of social interaction to the stage of consumption. In Makassar, this shift is seen in the tradition of *tudang sipulung* which used to be an egalitarian forum to build social consensus, now shifting to cafes and coffee shops that are tied to urban aesthetics and commercial logic.

If the official narrative often frames the Makassar Spice Trail through beautiful and uniform symbols, then the *narratives from below* that grow in Paotere Port present a much more

complex face. Here, maritime memories are not frozen in cultural storefronts, but rather continue to pulse through fish barter, seafood loading and unloading, and warm chatter on wooden ships' decks. The social network that forms across the island—between Bugis, Makassar, Mandar, and sailors from small islands—is an organic continuation of the historical function of this port.

However, the pulse took place in the midst of an economic structure that was not neutral. Study (Demmallino et al., 2016) about *Pasompe' Community* in the land of Bugis-Makassar revealed that the economic backwardness of the maritime community is rooted in unequal power relations since the colonial period. The colonial legacy formed a distortion of Western capitalism that they referred to as *Uncultured Mentality*—a mindset that grows out of the dominance of capital owners (*Bourgeois*) on maritime labour (*proletariat*). Within this framework, the large capital demands and the low productivity of workers are not separate phenomena, but rather two sides of a mutually reinforcing cycle of dependence.

If you look closely, this pattern also overshadows life in Paotere. Port modernization, tourism campaigns, and festivalization of the Spice Trail often only touch the surface—beautifying the image without much altering the conditions of fishermen working under the pressure of capital and market prices. Meanwhile, spaces like Paotere continue to nurture narratives that don't always fit into national branding strategies: narratives about hard work, complicated patron-client relationships, and pride born of independence in the midst of limitations.

This is why a bottom-up narrative is important. He reminded that the preservation of the Spice Trail is not enough to be done by raising a symbol that is "safe" for diplomacy or the global market. True preservation requires recognition of the power relations that shape maritime life, and opening space for the voices of the communities that have been the custodians of that heritage. Without it, the Spice Trail would remain a beautiful image on the surface, yet fragile on the inside—a storefront without a real pulse of life (Demmallino et al., 2016). The comparison between Cultural Goodwill and daily life in Paotere makes clear the difference in narrative orientation. The former is state-controlled, with a focus on a safe, controlled, and marketable image in international forums. The second grows from the bottom, maintaining social relations, collective memory, and adaptation to real economic challenges.

The representation of Makassar culture in the narrative of the Spice Trail is the result of symbolic power negotiations, where the official framing controlled by dominant actors tends to favor the agenda of cultural diplomacy and global markets, while the community narrative remains an alternative voice that affirms the sustainability of maritime identity beyond the logic of commodification. By implication, the preservation of the Spice Trail requires a participatory approach that acknowledges the plurality of narratives, not only displaying symbols safe for the market, but also making room for the critical memory and real experiences of local communities.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that the representation of Makassar culture in the narrative of the Spice Path is formed mainly through a framework controlled by state actors and global markets. Cultural symbols such as pinisi, La Galigo, Karaeng Pattingalloang, and historical maritime sites are processed into marketable images, thus doubling as cultural diplomacy

assets and tourism commodities. This approach succeeds in building a narrative of collective pride, but at the same time simplifies history into a safe and accessible version of an international audience, ignoring the social complexities, historical conflicts, and experiences of local communities.

From a postcolonial perspective, this strategy represents a form of *representation from above*, where the official narrative determines the cultural face being displayed, while the grassroots narrative is often only a supporting backdrop. On the other hand, cases such as the port of Paotere show that the legacy of the Spice Trail at the local level is the result of ongoing social practices, colored by economic negotiations, community solidarity, and an open maritime identity. This difference shows that there is a terrain of narrative contestation—between the homogenization of identity by national discourse and the diversity of meanings that live at the community level.

Therefore, the preservation of the Spice Trail requires a strategy that combines the power of cultural diplomacy with the real involvement of local communities as subjects, rather than mere objects of representation. Only in this way can Makassar's maritime heritage be authentically inherited, not just a visual artifact for global consumption, but still rooted in the history, memory, and social practices of its people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expressed his gratitude to the Islamic University of Makassar and all parties who have provided support in this research process. Gratitude was also expressed to *the Negeri Rempah Foundation*, in collaboration with *the Research Center for Society and Culture, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)*, which has organized the *International Forum on Spice Route (IFSR) 2025*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, K. M., & Sandarupa, S. (2018). Heritage and the politics of culture in Indonesia. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 174(2–3), 217–245. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17402005>
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2013). *Postcolonial studies: The key concepts* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- ANTARA. (2021). Makassar menghubungkan jalur rempah masa lalu dengan ekspor dan produk herbal masa kini. *ANTARA News*.
- ANTARA. (2023). Jalur rempah untuk memperkuat diplomasi budaya global Indonesia. *ANTARA News*.
- ANTARA. (2024). Pelabuhan Paotere sebagai ruang hidup nelayan dan pedagang kecil Makassar.
- Bendix, R., Eggert, A., & Peselmann, A. (2013). *Heritage regimes and the state*. Göttingen University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- CNN Indonesia. (2022). Promosi jalur rempah dan festival budaya Makassar. *CNN Indonesia*.
- Deumert, A. (2018). Colonialism and the history of linguistics. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 4, 201–218. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011817-045432>

- Demmallino, E. B., Fisher, M. R., Suharto, I., & Yuliani, E. L. (2016).
- Devolution of forest management in Indonesia: Politics, power and social change. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 62, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2015.08.002>
- Detik. (2021). Pelabuhan Paotere kini menjadi pelabuhan rakyat yang tetap bertahan. Detik.com.
- Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan. (2022). Jalur rempah sebagai warisan budaya dan diplomasi Indonesia. Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi.
- Fairclough, N. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. SAGE.
- Hamid, A. R. (2022). Makassar dalam jaringan perdagangan dan politik maritim Asia Tenggara. *Jurnal Sejarah Indonesia*, 5(2), 145–162.
- Harrison, R. (2013). *Heritage: Critical approaches*. Routledge.
- Kompas. (2023). Revitalisasi jalur rempah melalui festival dan program budaya. Kompas.com.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Kumparan. (2022). Pelabuhan Somba Opu sebagai pusat perdagangan internasional abad ke-17. Kumparan.com.
- Li, T. M. (2014). *Land's end: Capitalist relations on an indigenous frontier*. Duke University Press.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis*. SAGE.
- Makassar City Government. (2022). *Sejarah Makassar dari kejayaan Gowa–Tallo hingga era modern*. Pemerintah Kota Makassar.
- Mattulada. (1995). *La Galigo: Epos besar sastra Bugis*. Hasanuddin University Press.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (2021). *Master plan jalur rempah Indonesia*. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Ministry of Education and Culture. (2023). *Nominasi UNESCO dan perlunya kajian akademik jalur rempah*. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Pelras, C. (2006). *Manusia Bugis*. Nalar & Forum Jakarta–Paris.
- Reid, A. (1990). *Southeast Asia in the age of commerce, 1450–1680: Volume 2*. Yale University Press.
- Reid, A. (2015). A history of Southeast Asia: Critical crossroads. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 46(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463414000568>
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Sirk, U. (2015). La Galigo: Oral tradition and written heritage. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 43(126), 121–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2015.1015324>
- Smith, L. (2006). *Uses of heritage*. Routledge.

- Spivak, G. C. (1994). Can the subaltern speak? In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (pp. 66–111). Columbia University Press.
- Sutherland, H. (2001). Trepang and wangkang: The China trade of eighteenth-century Makassar. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 157(3), 451–472.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Waterton, E., & Smith, L. (2010). The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 16(1–2), 4–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527250903441671>
- Wibisono, A., Priyanto, & Nugroho, I. (2018). Cultural heritage and regional identity in Indonesia. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 16(4), 375–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2017.1357141>
- Winter, T. (2015). Heritage diplomacy. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 21(10), 997–1015. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2015.1040360>
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2016). *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

BOTANICAL SOVEREIGNTY: HISTORICISING SPICES, HERITAGE, AND INNOVATION IN INDONESIA'S BEAUTY INDUSTRY

W. Haffata Yahfitu Zahra¹

Independent Researcher, Jakarta, Indonesia
yahfituzahra@gmail.com | wxz318@alumni.bham.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Despite possessing one of the world's richest spice biodiversity and deeply rooted herbal knowledge traditions, Indonesia remains marginal in the global high-value cosmetic industry, while facing increasing pressure to move beyond raw material exports toward value-added production. Addressing a gap in existing scholarship that rarely connects spice heritage, gendered knowledge, and contemporary beauty economies through a humanities-based applied lens, this study asks how Indonesia can reposition itself through heritage-grounded innovation to decolonize its spice legacy and reassert women's agency. The paper introduces Botanical Sovereignty as an alternative framework for reframing heritage governance and supporting sustainable beauty industry, advancing three strategic interventions: reclaiming women's historical roles in herbal knowledge systems, challenging internalized Eurocentric beauty standards through culturally rooted aesthetics, and strengthening stakeholder connectivity to link heritage with market development. This study employs a qualitative approach combining postcolonial feminist theory and political economy analysis, supported by discourse analysis of historical texts, advertising materials and media narratives to reinterpret the dynamics. This study contributes to a justice-oriented model of cultural-economic development grounded in local empowerment and decolonial knowledge.

Keywords: Heritage Innovation, Beauty Industry, Botanical Sovereignty, Spice Heritage.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, spices were not merely flavoring agents in the Indonesian archipelago, they were cultural assets embedded in systems of knowledge, labor, ritual, and global exchange. Long before industrial extraction and colonial trade monopolies, spices structured everyday life through beauty practices, healing traditions, gendered forms of care. While colonialism transformed these plants into commodified export goods, it did not erase the deeply rooted local knowledge that continues to shape how spices were cultivated, processed, and valued. Today, despite declining dominance in global spice production compared to countries such as India, Indonesia's vast land resources and inherited spice heritage remain underutilised.

Reframing spices through the beauty industry offers a strategic pathway to reactivating this potential. Unlike conventional commodity chains, beauty markets generate value not only from products, but from narratives, rituals, and cultural authenticity. Across Asia, countries such as Thailand, South Korea and Japan have successfully introduced local beauty traditions-whether through authentic spa culture or codified skincare routines-demonstrating that heritage-based beauty can function as both cultural diplomacy and economic strategy.

In this context, Indonesia's rich traditions of herbal skincare, *jamu* practices, and spice-based body rituals present untapped opportunities to reposition spices beyond raw-material exports.

Yet, despite strong domestic growth in Indonesia's beauty and personal care sector, local brands have struggled to gain meaningful traction in global markets (Statista, n.d.). While consumer loyalty toward local products remains high, Indonesia's cosmetic industry continues to rely heavily on imported formulations and fragmented branding strategies (Fajriyani, 2025). This paradox persists even as the country possesses over 30,000 medicinal and aromatic plants and a long history of botanical innovation. Simultaneously, Indonesia's spice exports remain dominated by low-value raw commodities, signaling a structural failure to translate heritage into added-value industries.

Existing scholarship has explored these issues separately. Historical studies have traced the rise and decline of Indonesia's spice trade within the global economic system (Rahman, 2019), while botanical and pharmaceutical research has emphasised the scientific and commercial potential of Indonesian spices (Dilasamola, 2023). Environmental historians such as Henley have further examined sustainability and resource governance through historical perspectives. However, these bodies of literature largely remain siloed, offering limited guidance for contemporary industrial transformation. What remains absent is an integrative framework that connects history, gendered knowledge, cultural value, and market innovation within a single applied approach.

In this paper, Botanical Sovereignty is proposed as both an analytical framework and a development-oriented lens. Botanical sovereignty is understood as the right and capacity of communities and the state to control, narrate, and benefit from botanical resources, encompassing both material commodities and intangible cultural heritage, drawing conceptually on the literature of national sovereignty over biodiversity, food sovereignty, seed sovereignty, and decolonizing botanical knowledge (Sustainability Directory, n.d.) Through a postcolonial feminist lens and qualitative methodology, this study examines how spice and beauty knowledge in Indonesia have historically been gendered, exploited, and reconfigured, and asks what these trajectories reveal about Indonesia's readiness to reclaim agency within the global beauty economy.

To prove a holistic perspective, this paper is structured in three main parts: First, a historical analysis of how spice, beauty, and gendered knowledge were shaped by colonial economies and values; followed by the second chapter, a political-economic critique of current spice trade and its value within the beauty industry. It followed with a conceptual proposal of Botanical Sovereignty, which repositions heritage as a resource for innovation, local empowerment, and sustainable global participation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a critical qualitative methodology to investigate the intersections of heritage, gender, and global capitalism within Indonesia's spice and beauty industries. The approach combines postcolonial feminist theory with political economy analysis to reveal how historical narratives and material economies have shaped, and continue to shape, women's agency in the botanical and cosmetic sectors. By foregrounding the role of gendered knowledge and the enduring legacies of colonialism, this methodology seeks to move beyond purely economic or botanical evaluations toward a more holistic, justice-oriented framework.

The research design integrates discourse analysis of multiple textual and visual sources, including colonial-era archives, indigenous knowledge records, historical travelogues, government trade policies, advertising materials, and contemporary media narratives. These sources provide insight into shifting perceptions of beauty, the commodification of spices, and the socio-political factors influencing the Indonesian cosmetic industry across pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The study also draws on public history as a supplementary tool, ensuring that heritage is interpreted in accessible and participatory ways that can inform community engagement and policy discourse.

By combining historical, cultural, and economic analysis within a decolonial feminist framework, this methodology aims to produce findings that are not only academically rigorous but also relevant for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and heritage practitioners seeking to revitalize Indonesia's position in the global cosmetic and botanical markets.

Historical Mapping: Beauty, Spice and Colonial Legacy

Mapping the relationship between beauty, spices, and colonial legacy allows us to understand how beauty and wellness culture in Indonesia was built and evolved over centuries. This chapter is essential as spices have intangible values like local knowledge system, social rituals, and everyday life, which then shaped a spice heritage concept. This chapter examines the spice's benefits and usage from pre-colonial to contemporary Indonesia, as well as analysing the concept of beauty.

Long before the colonial occupation of Nusantara (Indonesia), knowledge of local spices can be traced through records of international trade. These records reveal how Southeast Asian regions became crucial sources of valuable spices in the global market. During the 15th and 16th centuries, almost every country sought spices such as pepper, cloves, nutmeg, and camphor. For example, ancient Egypt regarded Indonesian cinnamon as essential for the embalming process (Rosengarten, 1969). Other traded commodities were directly connected to beauty and wellness practices, including aromatic woods for perfumes, gold, and pearls. The historical records of spice trade also highlight the intricate networks that local people built for sustainable exchange (Reid, 1980). Between 1000 and 1500, major ports like those in Java and Sumatra were hubs not only for foreign traders from China, the Middle East, and India but also for extensive intra-local trade connecting coastal and inland communities. Spices thus held significance beyond global commerce, they were integral to social, cultural, and ritual life (Hall, 2004).

Rituals frequently intersected with spices, serving as tangible expressions of local concern for ancestors and supernatural forces. Communities offered natural resources during ceremonies aimed at ensuring rain, protection from curses, or safeguarding against plagues. Even after the introduction and assimilation of new religions into local animism and dynamism belief systems, these rituals persisted, often acquiring commodified structures and frameworks (Forshee, 2006). In Javanese culture, for instance, *slametan* ceremonies accompany nearly all life stages—from birth and coming-of-age rituals to moving into a new house, traveling, and death. Meals prepared for these events, usually by women, are cooked with spices such as pepper, nutmeg, and turmeric, reinforcing the flavor, scent, and symbolic potency of these ingredients. Over generations, these practices have influenced Southeast

Asian cuisine, known today for its complex, robust flavors, and reveal how spices have long been intertwined with social life, beauty, and wellness (Jakl, 2019).

Apart from cuisine, spices were integral to beauty rituals, reflecting a deep connection between nature, health, and aesthetics in the pre-colonial period of Indonesia. Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), known locally as *Kunir*, was widely utilized for its anti-inflammatory and skin-brightening properties. It was applied in various forms, such as pastes or masks, to enhance skin complexion and treat skin ailments. Similarly, Sandalwood (*Santalum album*) was valued for its aromatic and therapeutic qualities, often used in perfumes and skin treatments. Clove (*Syzygium aromaticum*) and Camphor (*Cinnamomum camphora*) were also employed in beauty regimens for their antiseptic and soothing effects. These practices were not only prevalent in daily life but were also prominent in royal courts, where queens and princesses developed herbal beauty treatments that have influenced modern wellness practices. The use of these spices in beauty rituals underscores the sophisticated understanding of natural ingredients and their multifaceted roles in pre-colonial Indonesian society (Jakl, 2019 & Beers, 2001)

The colonial encounter did not dramatically shift spices' usage in the local context. In the colonial era, traditional Indonesian beauty practices continued to make extensive use of local spices, though European influence began to reshape them. Ingredients like turmeric, sandalwood, camphor, and clove remained central to skincare, haircare, and perfumes, reflecting enduring knowledge of their aesthetic and medicinal properties. At the same time, the presence of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and later Dutch colonial authorities introduced European beauty ideals, which emphasized lighter skin and other features associated with European standards. Rather than replacing local traditions, these ideals were often incorporated alongside indigenous methods, leading to hybrid practices that combined spice-based treatments with European-inspired techniques (Saraswati, 2013).

Colonial social structures also affected beauty practices, as adopting certain European standards could signal social status or prestige. Among urban elites and royal courts, traditional spice rituals were sometimes adapted to align with these new aesthetic expectations. Despite these adaptations, spices retained their symbolic roles, representing health, purity, and spiritual protection. The continued prominence of spices in beauty and wellness during the colonial period highlights how pre-colonial knowledge persisted, evolved, and interacted with foreign influences, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of Indonesia's cultural practices (Saraswati, 2013).

- Beauty Practices in Post-Colonial Indonesia

In the decades following independence, beauty in Indonesia became intertwined with broader ideas of modernity, social status, and national identity. Personal grooming, neat attire, and well-maintained hair and skin were not simply matters of aesthetics; they reflected a woman's discipline, social responsibility, and participation in the evolving norms of post-colonial society. For educated women, beauty and cleanliness were closely linked to household management and the upbringing of children, reinforcing social expectations that women embody both care and refinement. These ideals were deeply rooted in earlier practices but were now reinterpreted in the context of a newly independent nation seeking to define its modern identity (Wanita Magazine No. 19, 1950).



FIGURE 1. Pond's Advertisement on a women's magazine (Wanita Magazine No. 12, 1954)

Access to formal beauty education remained limited in the early 1950s. Books on beauty were scarce, often in foreign languages, and largely restricted to major urban centers such as Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, and Bandung. As a result, traditional practices retained central importance. Treatments like *boreh* using Mangir (*Ganophyllum falcatum*), herbal pastes made from local roots and leaves, continued to be widely used for cleansing, exfoliation, and skin care. These practices not only maintained aesthetic standards but also represented continuity with centuries of indigenous knowledge, highlighting the enduring significance of local resources and techniques in everyday life (Wanita Magazine No. 19, 1950).

At the same time, modern influences began to merge with local traditions. Prominent figures such as Madame IKI in Jakarta advocated for beauty methods that emphasized domestic ingredients over imported products. Drawing on ancestral practices, she used rice-washing water as a facial treatment, combining hygienic and cosmetic functions in ways that reflected both practicality and cultural continuity. The formation of the Indonesian Association of Beauty Experts in 1958 institutionalized beauty as a professional field, promoting standards and education while acknowledging local heritage (Wanita Magazine No. 17, 1958).

Print media, particularly women's magazines like *Wanita*, played a crucial role in shaping perceptions of beauty across the archipelago. Articles combined advice on modern cosmetic products with traditional remedies, promoting accessibility and practicality for women in both urban and rural areas. Natural ingredients such as coconut milk, charcoal, mangosteen peel, and henna leaves were recommended alongside Western creams, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between modernity and tradition. Importantly, these publications emphasized values beyond physical appearance: modesty, patience, gentleness, and cultivated manners were considered integral to feminine beauty. Unlike Western ideals that often prioritized skin whiteness, Indonesian beauty valued smoothness, vitality, and a harmonious balance between appearance, character, and cultural identity (Wanita magazine No. 13 & No. 7, 1960).



FIGURE 3. Foundation’s advertisement, provided insight into the criteria of beauty on a women’s magazine (Wanita Magazine No. 8, 1956)

By mid-century, Indonesian women were increasingly discerning in their selection of beauty products, favoring locally sourced ingredients that were safe, effective, and culturally resonant. Practices rooted in herbal medicine (*jamu*), natural scrubs, and home remedies were widely maintained as both practical solutions and expressions of cultural heritage. The post-colonial period thus represents a dynamic moment in which beauty practices were simultaneously preserved, adapted, and reinterpreted—demonstrating the resilience of local knowledge systems and the capacity of Indonesian women to negotiate modernity on their own cultural terms (Wanita Magazine No. 19, 1962).

● Indonesia’s Spice Trade: From Historical Trajectories to Present Realities

From the pre-colonial through the colonial eras, Indonesia’s natural wealth, particularly spices, was central to its dominance in world trade. The archipelago’s cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, and pepper were not only highly prized commodities but also catalysts for global exploration and imperial ambition. Today, however, as economic power shifts rapidly across regions, the question arises, can Indonesia still leverage its spice production to secure competitive advantage in the global market? Particularly in the beauty and wellness industries?

According to National Export Data for the Harmonized System (HS) category Coffee, Tea, and Spices, Indonesia recorded an export value of Rp 286.27 billion as of June 2025. While substantial, this figure pales in comparison to the country’s processed marine products sector like fish, crustaceans, and mollusks which earned nearly half of the spices revenue. Processed spice export figures are absent from the dataset (BPS, 2025). This gap could indicate limited survey coverage or that processed spices contribute less than the minimum threshold for

national income. As a comparative analysis, China dominates the spice export globally, with USD 787.23 million in revenue (Rp 12.82 trillion), while Thailand is the only Southeast Asian nation among the world's top ten exporters, holding 2.7% of global market share. By contrast, Indonesia, despite its rich biodiversity and historical association with spices, is not currently a leading global spice exporter (TradelmeX, 2024).

The global spice trade is not confined to the culinary sphere. Spices are also used in traditional medicine, as topical treatments for hypertension, aphrodisiacs, and sources of micronutrients beneficial for maternal and fetal health (Sherman & Flexman, 2001). Modern cosmetic science has amplified their value, with studies highlighting the efficacy of coconut oil, turmeric, green tea, garlic, clove, cinnamon, and ginger in skincare and beauty formulations (Jahan et al., 2019). This continuity, from ancient herbal remedies to cutting-edge cosmetic applications, underscores the enduring versatility of these 'gold-worthy' plants.



FIGURE 3. Several beauty products using spices (Turmeric). Credit: Brands/Matt Phare.
Source: <https://www.stylist.co.uk/beauty/turmeric-beauty-products-skincare-foundation-concealer-cleanser/222099>)

Growing consumer interest in natural and sustainable beauty has prompted major brands to invest in botanical innovation. L'Oréal group, for instance, has partnered with a biotech firm in China to develop environmentally friendly beauty solutions, while other companies, such as Shiseido Co., Ltd., Neon Hippy, Shroom Skincare, and Pacifica, have launched vegan products featuring unconventional botanicals such as mushrooms (Grand View Research, 2023). Morocco's argan oil industry offers a compelling case study, which was once threatened by ecological degradation and rural poverty. It was revitalized through community cooperatives, international partnerships, and sustainable cultivation practices. This achievement was remarkable considering the history of the argan oil industry in Morocco, closely linked to the complex poverty issues among the Amazigh community after the Berber Spring. Argan forests at that time also faced the challenge of destruction due to harmful farming processes. Zoubida Charrouf, a professor at Mohammed V. University in Morocco, then conducted research and proposed the solution to sustain argan forests and support the

local economy for the people. In the next generation, several agreements and projects were undertaken, some with overseas' institutions such as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) which utilized a model of cooperative production (Nataly Flores, 2023). Indonesia's spices, on the other hand, face the same challenges throughout time.

Despite Indonesia's geographic advantage and historical legacy, the prominence of spices began to wane in the 19th century. New commodities like tobacco, sugar, coffee, rubber, and palm oil, rose in economic importance, displacing spices from their former prestige (Nawiyanto et al., 2023). The Dutch colonial government treated spices purely as trade commodities, neglecting conservation and sustainable cultivation. Notably, Georg Everhard Rumpf, a German who joined the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in 1652 for the Ambon region, could at least serve as a guidebook for the Dutch in cultivating spices effectively. The book, entitled *Herbarium Amboinense*, documents 1,200 plant species of various species, 350 of which are illustrated, along with ideal locations for finding and cultivating them, cultivation methods, harvesting times, processing methods, and examples of processed forms. However, the book was largely ignored until long after extensive overexploitation had caused severe declines in production (Rahman, 2019). This is in line with other findings stating that the drastic decline in spice numbers was due to excessive open access to spices and the lack of regulations supporting their sustainability. Crucial evidence lies in how the Dutch took steps to burn the overflowing cloves, simply to maintain a stable price on the world market. This ultimately led to a shift in Indonesia's export focus during the 19th and 20th centuries, away from spice trading (Hanley, 2008).

After independence, spice production did not recover its former prominence. In the early years, the Indonesian government prioritized food security and foreign exchange earnings, favoring exports of plantation crops like sugar, coffee, tea, and fiber. One of the important reasons was the decline of textile production and inequality of access to rice (caused by the Japanese military government). During the first year, the government of Indonesia was focusing on overcoming this situation while at the same time facing active military threats by the Dutch and its allies. At the difficult time and situation, the most reasonable choice for the government under the lead of the Ministry of Prosperity was selling the raw materials of potential estate products to generate foreign exchange. These crops were not spices but plantation products like sugar, coffee, tea, pineapple, and fiber, some of them were Indonesia's previous main export commodity since the 19th century (John O. Sutter, 1959). The discovery and exploitation of oil further reduced attention to spice development during the Old Order regime, with oil and gas becoming the dominant contributors to GDP by the 1960s. which eventually made Indonesia an 'oil economy' (Tri Widodo, 2006).

The New Order era brought improved economic conditions to Indonesia, as president Soeharto's authoritarian government initiated a comprehensive economic development project supported by foreign institutions. Yet, spices once again fell to the margins, as oil revenues became the state's primary source of income. This strategic pivot was economically and politically reasonable in the context of the global 'oil shock,' when declining oil production drove up global prices (Rebeca Jiménez-Rodríguez, 2022). Despite the shift in national priorities, Indonesia remained competitive in the global spice trade, particularly in exports of pepper, ginger, cloves, mace, cinnamon, and cassia. Government data from 1966-1968 indicate that production volumes positioned Indonesia alongside major spice-producing countries such as India, Brazil, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Madagascar. Indonesia's nutmeg

exports reached key markets including the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Canada, Argentina, the Netherlands, and Spain, while cinnamon was shipped to the United States, Peru, West Germany, Spain, the UK, France, Italy, and the Netherlands.

During this period, other spice-producing nations also faced declining output. Indian pepper exports, once robust, fell by 25% in 1967, while Zanzibar's clove production similarly decreased. The causes varied, some countries prioritized domestic food security over export crops, while others struggled with natural factors and pest infestations, persistent challenges in many producing regions, including Indonesia (Inv. Archives of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture, n.d.). However, in 1997, the Indonesian Agricultural Research and Development Agency (BPRD) projected that globalization could yield significant benefits for the spice sector by expanding market access. However, the agency also cautioned that this opportunity came with heightened comparative risks and intensifying competition.

The intense competition Indonesia faced persisted into the 2000s, when Indonesian spice exports faced crucial challenges. These challenges can be divided into several areas:

- Supply-Side Constraints

Quality inconsistency remains a significant barrier to global competitiveness. At the production level, smallholder farmers contend with poor-quality seeds, pest infestations, and limited access to agronomic improvements, reducing their ability to produce premium-grade spices. Meeting the traceability and sustainability requirements of importing countries further compounds the problem. Moreover, Indonesia's limited value-added processing capacity constrains its ability to capture higher returns from the global market. Research and development, while showing promise through initiatives like those of the YayasanNegeriRempah, requires greater investment. Long-term sustainability is also at stake, particularly regarding generational renewal in the farming sector, given the complex demands of production and distribution.

- Market Side Challenges

Survey data from 2008 to 2017 reveal a decline in Indonesian spice exports, underscoring the country's inability to fully align with shifting global demand trends. Heavy reliance on raw material exports, as noted by Wahyu Adhi Saputro & Herdiana Anggrasari (2021), mirrors challenges faced by other producers, including India, though India continues to supply larger volumes to international markets. Weak branding capacity and underdeveloped marketing narratives further hinder Indonesia's competitiveness, factors increasingly vital in the contemporary global marketplace.

- Policy & Institutional Side

According to a survey by the Trade Support Facility (ARISE+ Indonesia), funded by the European Union, 92.9% of spice farmers reported the need for greater support and facilitation from the government or relevant agencies (Ariseplus-Indonesia, 2022). The sector suffers from fragmented stakeholder coordination, insufficient strategic direction, and inadequate protection of cultural and agricultural heritage.

Indonesia thus stands at a crossroads, while endowed with a rich spice heritage and considerable production capacity, it must address systemic supply, market, and policy gaps to secure a stronger foothold in the global spice economy.

Reclaiming Botanical Sovereignty: Towards a Just and Innovative Beauty Future

“In fragile and conflict-affected areas, promoting effective growth is impossible without a thorough understanding of local conflict dynamics. Without this, programs risk causing more harm” (Auriemo, 2022).

This insight, drawn from research on Morocco’s Argan oil trade, resonates deeply with Indonesia’s spice and herbal economy. In both contexts, natural resources, particularly those tied to women’s labour and cultural heritage, are vulnerable to exploitation when governance frameworks overlook local agency and control.

International law affirms that every nation holds sovereign rights over its natural resources (Correa, 1995). In this paper, botanical sovereignty is defined as the right, power, and jurisdiction of a nation or community to control, manage, and benefit from its botanical resources, including their tangible properties and intangible cultural values. This framework is rooted in Indonesia’s spice heritage, integrating cultural history, humanities perspectives, value-chain optimisation, and ethical trade practices. While Indonesia’s current national vision prioritises maritime wealth through the “World Maritime Axis” doctrine, botanical sovereignty offers a parallel pathway: a focused, measurable strategy to enhance spice-based exports while preserving heritage and ensuring equitable benefit distribution.

Achieving botanical sovereignty requires a holistic approach encompassing the entire value chain, from raw material production to processing, marketing, and distribution. This study proposes five interrelated pillars. First, the principle of equitable rights, ensuring both local communities and the state can access, cultivate, process, and trade botanical resources. Second, the recognition of intangible dimensions, including cultural ownership and historical narratives that embed certain plants within distinct traditions, safeguarded through indigenous knowledge. Third, tangible community benefits, achieved by maximising domestic value-added processing to expand economic opportunities for Indonesian producers and entrepreneurs. Fourth, ecological sustainability, maintaining soil health, preventing overharvesting, and preserving biodiversity. Fifth, fostering innovation by integrating scientific research with modern product development, while retaining local control and upholding ethical standards.

To translate these pillars into practice, a phased implementation is necessary. The first principle should be setting measurable, non-excessive goals, initially through pilot projects that identify challenges, assess risks, and adapt strategies before scaling up. Government leadership is crucial in ensuring implementation from upstream to downstream, recognising that this vision is a collective effort involving communities, institutions, and private actors across diverse backgrounds.

Production Aspect

A central requirement at the production level is improving farmers’ access, particularly in rural areas, to high-quality spice seeds. Given the limited domestic supply and the widening gap caused by rising prices, the government can expand the reach of existing research

institutions, such as the Indonesian Spice Laboratory Center in Semarang, while building partnerships with other research centres, NGOs, and universities to develop locally adapted, high-quality seed varieties. This is not a simple task; the government must establish clear pathways to ensure research findings are accessible to small-scale producers, especially those in remote areas. Drawing from successful models in countries such as Thailand and China, regional seed banks could be established, enabling farmers to borrow, cultivate, and return seeds for future planting.

Beyond seeds, spice farmers require comprehensive training in value-added processing, seed quality identification, regenerative farming techniques, ecological pest control, and soil and plant health management. The government cannot act alone; institutions such as the Indonesian Spice Council share this vision and could play a pivotal role in co-implementation.

In parallel, the government could collaborate with universities to accelerate research by leveraging external funding and encouraging student-led entrepreneurship through initiatives such as the Student Scientific Week (*Pekan Ilmiah Mahasiswa*, PIM) or business innovation competitions. Such programs can bridge the persistent gap between research outputs and their practical application, while also cultivating a generation of young entrepreneurs capable of creating new, spice-based industries.

Market-Side Aspect

The first critical step in market development is creating a healthy, competitive, and transparent national platform for local spice-based beauty products. In recent years, local brands have emerged with strong commitments to market growth, and consumer interest is steadily increasing. However, Indonesia's beauty image remains fragmented, shaped by a mixture of foreign cultural influences that often privilege non-local beauty standards. This underscores the need for a coherent national beauty narrative aligned with the values of natural, heritage-based products.

South Korea offers a valuable comparison, its beauty industry thrives not only on export but also on strong domestic loyalty, where consumers share a unified aesthetic ideal, such as glowing skin equating to health which drives consistent product innovation. Conversely, if Indonesia's concept of beauty remains inconsistent, spices will struggle to become a symbol of national pride in the beauty sector.

Indonesia, however, possesses a unique strength, the diversity of its skin tones, ranging from lighter to deeper complexions, which can symbolically represent a broad spectrum of global beauty ideals. This diversity aligns naturally with the global "clean beauty" movement, which celebrates authenticity and sustainability. By combining high-quality spice-based products with a compelling narrative grounded in cultural heritage, Indonesia could capture significant domestic and international market share.

Policy and Institutional Aspect

One of the most pressing challenges at the policy and institutional level lies in the technical barriers that disproportionately disadvantage communities and producers, particularly in remote regions. Lengthy bureaucratic procedures, inconsistent communication between agencies, and other procedural inefficiencies hinder the timely translation of laboratory research outputs into actionable regulatory frameworks and accessible registration processes. In a governance environment with a documented history of corruption, bribery, and gratuities, these barriers become more than administrative hurdles, they erode trust and

weaken the very institutions expected to lead the nation's pursuit of botanical sovereignty (Henley, 2008). Addressing these challenges requires not only streamlining bureaucratic systems but also cultivating institutional integrity and collective accountability.

Addressing policy and institutional frameworks is critical to ensuring that local beauty producers can compete fairly and sustainably. While Indonesia has a variety of trade and industry regulations, few specifically mandate transparent and equitable revenue-sharing between state-affiliated entities and independent local producers. This gap often results in unequal bargaining positions, with small-scale producers shouldering disproportionate production costs while receiving a limited share of profits.

A more balanced policy could take inspiration from cooperative-based models, where both government and producers share risks and benefits proportionally. For example, a joint venture framework could be established in which local producers retain a fixed minimum percentage of revenue, regardless of fluctuating market conditions. This arrangement would not only strengthen the economic resilience of these producers but also incentivise innovation and quality improvement.

In practice, this would require coordinated revisions to industry regulations, particularly those governing product certification, distribution, and export licensing, to include clauses that prevent monopolistic practices by larger market actors. By embedding such profit-sharing principles into national policy, Indonesia could foster a more competitive and inclusive beauty industry, one that reflects and supports the diversity of local skin tones, cultural practices, and sustainable production methods.

CONCLUSION

The paper highlights how the spice trade, deeply rooted in Indonesia's history, holds significant cultural and economic potential for modern development. By recognizing the historical legacies of exploitation and addressing current challenges such as sustainability and fair trade, Indonesia can reclaim botanical sovereignty. Through collaboration between local communities, policymakers, and industries, the spice economy can be revitalized not only as a source of income but also as a means of cultural empowerment and global influence.

The pursuit of botanical sovereignty offers Indonesia a transformative framework to reclaim control over its natural resources, while simultaneously honouring cultural heritage and fostering innovation. Rooted in the nation's spice legacy, this approach demands more than economic ambition; it calls for a deliberate balance between equitable access, cultural preservation, ecological sustainability, and market competitiveness. By recognising both the tangible and intangible dimensions of botanical resources, Indonesia can chart a development pathway that uplifts local communities while positioning itself as a leader in ethical, heritage-based industries.

Strengthening production systems, particularly through improved seed access, regenerative farming, and applied research, is essential to this vision. Equally critical is the cultivation of a unified national beauty identity that embraces Indonesia's diversity and aligns with global trends such as clean beauty. This identity, paired with high-quality spice-based products, can transform local commodities into symbols of national pride with significant domestic and international appeal.

However, realising botanical sovereignty requires dismantling entrenched bureaucratic inefficiencies, addressing inequitable market structures, and embedding transparent profit-sharing models into national policy. Without these reforms, small-scale producers will remain disadvantaged, and the full potential of the spice-based beauty sector will remain untapped. By fostering collaborative governance, incentivising innovation, and ensuring that benefits are shared fairly, Indonesia can not only protect its botanical heritage but also reimagine it as a driver of sustainable growth, social justice, and global influence.

REFERENCES

Archive & Primary Source

- (n.d.). Archives Inventory of the Indonesian ministry of agriculture, Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI).
- (October, 1950). *Wanita: untuk Ibu, Isteri, dan Wanita Indonesia dalam Rumah Tangga Magazine*. No.19.
- (June, 1954). *Wanita Magazine*. No. 12.
- (September 1958). *Wanita Magazine*. No. 17.
- (June 1960). *Wanita Magazine*. No. 13.
- (April 1960). *Wanita Magazine*. No. 7.
- (1956). *Magazine Magazine*. No. 8.
- (1962). *Wanita Magazine*. No. 19.

Book, Journal, Website

- Beauty & Personal Care—Indonesia (No. Statista). (n.d.). [Dataset]. <https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/beauty-personal-care/indonesia>
- Beauty and personal care products market report, 2030. (n.d.). Retrieved 16 August 2025, from <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/beauty-personal-care-products-market>
- Beers, S.-J. (2001). *Jamu: The ancient Indonesian art of herbal healing*. Tuttle Publishing.
- Challenges in Indonesia Spice Trade: Ensuring Traceability and Sustainability. (2025, January 30). TraceX Technologies. <https://tracextech.com/challenges-in-indonesia-spice-trade/>
- Correa, C. M. (1995). Sovereign and property rights over plant genetic resources. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 12(4), 58–79. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02218567>
- databoks.katadata.co.id. (n.d.). Survei: 54% konsumen kosmetik lebih pilih brand lokal | pusat data ekonomi dan bisnis indonesia | databoks. Retrieved 15 August 2025, from <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/produk-konsumen/statistik/be642822a2b29fd/survei-54-konsumen-kosmetik-lebih-pilih-brand-lokal>
- Dillasamola, D., & Sari, M. R. (2023). *Rempah-rempah Indonesia*. Penerbit Adab.
- Fajriyani, C. (2025, April 11). Why Indonesia's beauty market is growing faster than ever. Kantar. <https://www.kantar.com/inspiration/fmcg/why-indonesia-s-beauty-market-is-growing-faster-than-ever>
- Forshee, J. (2006). *Culture and customs of Indonesia*. Greenwood Press.

- Hall, K. R. (2004). Local and International Trade and Traders in the Straits of Melaka Region: 600-1500. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 47(No.2), 213–260. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25165035>
- Henley, D. (2008). Natural Resources Management: Historical Lessons from Indonesia. *Human Ecology*, 36(No.2). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27654280>.p.287
- Jakl, J. (2019). Cooking for demons, soldiers, and commoners: History of a ritual meal in java. In *Routledge Handbook of Food in Asia*. Routledge.
- Jiménez-Rodríguez, R. (2022). Oil shocks and global economy. *Energy Economics*, 115, 106373. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eneco.2022.106373>
- K-beauty: The rise of Korean make-up in the West. (2018, October 20). <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45820671>
- Nawiyanto, Handayani, S. A., & Dewi, S. (2023). Spices in Indonesian history and its revival. *Global Journal of Archeology and Anthropology*, Vol. 13(Issue 1). <https://doi.org/10.19080/GJAA.2023.13.555855>
- Opportunities, challenges and requirements of spices exports to the european union | arise+ indonesia. (n.d.). Retrieved 16 August 2025, from <https://ariseplus-indonesia.org/en/activities/opportunities-challenges-and-requirements-of-spices-exports-to-the-european-union.html>
- Rafani, I., Tahlim, S., & Effendi, A. (2021). Development of Indonesia's Spice Commodities: Historical Value and Future Perspective. *FFTC Agricultural Policy Platform (FFTC-AP)*. <https://ap.fftc.org.tw/article/2937>
- Rahman, F. (2019). "Negeri rempah-rempah" dari masa bersemi hingga gugurnya kejayaan rempah-rempah. *Patanjala : Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah Dan Budaya*, 11(3), 347. <https://doi.org/10.30959/patanjala.v11i3.527>
- Reid, A. (1980). The Structure of Cities in Southeast Asia, Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 11(2), 235–250. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20070357>
- Reid, A. (1984). The Pre-colonial Economy of Indonesia. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, Vol. XX(No. 2).
- Rosengarten, Jr. F. (1969). *The book of spices*. Jove Publishing.
- Russon, M.-A. (2018, October 21). K-beauty: The rise of Korean make-up in the West. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45820671>
- Saraswati, L. A. (2013). *Seeing beauty, sensing race in transnational Indonesia*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Sherman, P. W., & Flaxman, S. M. (2001). Protecting Ourselves from Food: Spices and morning sickness may shield us from toxins and microorganisms in the diet. *American Scientist*, 89((2)). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27857437>
- Shim, J., Woo, J., Yeo, H., Kang, S., Kwon, B., Jung Lee, E., Oh, J., Jeong, E., Lim, J., & Gyoo Park, S. (2024). The clean beauty trend among millennial and generation z consumers: Assessing the safety, ethicality, and sustainability attributes of cosmetic products. *Sage Open*, 14(2), 21582440241255430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241255430>

- Weaver, K., Pacchia, M., & Hudson, S. (2025). State of Beauty 2025: Solving a Shifting Growth Puzzle. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/state-of-beauty.#/>
- Weiner, Z. (2025, March 11). The demographic that spends the most on beauty may surprise you. Popsugar. <https://www.popsugar.com/beauty/beauty-spending-age-psychology-49426051>
- What is the demand for natural ingredients for cosmetics on the European market? (2025, February 11). CBI-Government of the Netherlands. <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/what-demand#main-content>
- Widodo, T. (2006). From Dutch Mercantilism to Liberalism: Indonesian Historical Perspective. *Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Indonesia*, Vol. 21(No. 4), 323–343.

PANEL 5.

**MARITIME SOCIETIES & GLOBAL ENCOUNTERS: SEAFARERS, TRADE
& MARINE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

CHALLENGING THE NEW ERA OF TRANSITION: HISTORICAL TRACES AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES OF NYAI AGENG MALOKA'S LEADERSHIP IN LASEM DURING THE AGE OF COMMERCE

Muhammad Nabil Fahmi^{1, a)}

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia

nabilmuhammad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Although the Spice Route declined from the eighteenth century onward, many port cities in the Indonesian archipelago maintained maritime significance by leveraging local political and socio-cultural strategies. This article contends that Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership (1479–1490 CE) was a decisive factor in preserving Lasem's maritime identity and social stability during the late fifteenth century's classical–Islamic transition—a role largely overlooked in current historiography, which often prioritizes trade networks, archaeology, or religious change over the agency of local, especially female, leaders. This study uses historical methods within a multidisciplinary framework, drawing on local historiographic texts (especially *Carita Lasem*), archaeological findings from the Caruban site, and oral histories from the Lasem community. The analysis shows Nyai Ageng Maloka acted as a strategic cultural broker, bridging political, maritime, and religious spheres. Moving the administrative center closer to Kaeringan Port strengthened Lasem as a maritime hub. Alliances with Prince Santipuspo, the harbor master, and Sunan Bonang built political legitimacy and religious authority. These strategies allowed Lasem to maintain its multicultural character and maritime activity during the shift from late Majapahit to the early Islamic era. This study shifts Spice Route scholarship from commodity-based trade to highlighting local leadership, specifically Nyai Ageng Maloka's contributions, to port-city resilience. It reveals the broader significance of female authority in Indonesian maritime history. By integrating local chronicles, oral traditions, and archaeological evidence, the study demonstrates how Maloka's leadership sustained maritime networks and why focusing on such marginalized actors redefines our understanding of regional resilience.

Keywords: Lasem; Nyai Ageng Maloka; Spice Route; Maritime Leadership; Classical–Islamic Transition Era

INTRODUCTION

For hundreds of years, the Spice Route helped shape the face of human civilization in the Indonesian Archipelago. Even hundreds of years after its decline in the 18th and 19th centuries AD, these centers of civilization, manifested in the form of ancient port cities, still bear traces of the glory of a multicultural civilization rich in history and culture, even today. One such center of civilization is Lasem, a vital port city dating back to the Majapahit era, which continued to exist for several centuries during the classical-Islamic transition period.

However, how has this city managed to maintain its relatively prestigious position as an international port amidst the dynamics of the times? Long before the era of commerce began,

Lasem and the Rembang area in general boasted a history of maritime civilization stretching back hundreds of years. The Punjulharjo boat site in Rembang is evidence of the existence of local maritime traditions dating back to the 7th century AD. The Punjulharjo ancient boat site is even claimed to be the most comprehensive ancient boat site in Southeast Asia. Although little socio-historical context has been excavated from this site and the artifacts found there, it is possible that this coastal area was once an important trading center for both local, inter-island, and international trade (Fauzi & Razif, 2017, p. 114)

A local chronicle, the *Carita Lasem*, supported by other local historiographical sources such as the *Pararaton* and *Kekawin Negara Kertagama*, narrates Lasem's strategic position as a key port city within the Majapahit empire's mandala system (Kamzah, 1985; Riyanto et al., 2020). This is inextricably linked to the need for a strategic port, given Majapahit's identity as a maritime kingdom engaged in regional and international trade (Tjandrasasmita, 2009, p. 43). Although not a major spice producer, Lasem was an intermediary port city (Reid, 2020, pp. 77–78), where sailors and merchants could dock at the port for transit, have their ships maintained at the Lasem shipyard, or trade various commodities brought in from outside Lasem and agricultural products from the southern hinterland (Fauzi & Razif, 2017, p. 133).

After the fall of Majapahit, Lasem remained a vital port and shipyard for the Demak Sultanate (Graaf & Pigeaud, 1989, p. 158; Meilink-Roelofs, 1962, p. 111). Despite the shift in the center of power in Java from Majapahit to Demak, Lasem managed to maintain its identity as a strategic maritime kingdom during the Islamic era. This was inseparable from the role of local figures, one of whom was Nyai Ageng Maloka.

Oral history and local chronicles chronicle the role of Nyai Ageng Maloka as queen of the Duchy of Lasem. Her intriguing background, stemming from a family of saints (*Sunan*), makes her reign during the classical-Islamic transitional era a compelling topic for further study. During her brief eleven-year reign, Nyai Ageng Maloka is widely recognized as a successful leader who brought progress to the port city of Lasem. This brief chronicle of Nyai Ageng Maloka's reign as ruler of the Duchy of Lasem, an autonomous maritime kingdom during the transitional era, provides a glimpse into the history of the local spice route civilization, humanistic and full of social dynamics, appropriate to the context of her time.

Although Lasem has been recognized as a key port city (*bandar*) on the spice route and a maritime encounter point, research has mainly emphasized archaeological, trade, and general socio-religious dimensions. However, the specific contributions of local actors – especially female figures – to maritime leadership during the classical-Islamic transition remain marginalized in historiography. While local chronicles often reference Nyai Ageng Maloka, focused analysis on her leadership in 15th-century maritime history, trade, and Islamization is lacking. This gap obscures our understanding of how local female leadership sustained maritime traditions and the port city's stability during a major socio-religious transformation.

Lasem, as a port city led by Nyai Ageng Maloka in the late 15th century, is not unfamiliar to the world of maritime research in Indonesia. Since the 2020s, the study of the Spice Route has become an academic topic raised by the government to be proposed as part of a Memory of the World project. In a draft depicting the distribution of civilizations along the Spice Route that spanned the Indonesian archipelago, Lasem is one of the important port cities mentioned. Beyond studies on the heritage of the Spice Route in the port city of Lasem, Lasem has long been the object of interdisciplinary research. As a sub-district with a long historical

and cultural heritage in Rembang Regency, numerous archaeological studies have been conducted repeatedly. Orsoy de Flines conducted initial research on ceramic finds in Lasem in 1940-1942. Post-independence, a team from the National Archaeological Research Center conducted archaeological research in Rembang from 1979 to the 1990s. The Caruban site, in this case, became one of the important archaeological sites studied (Rangkuti, 1997; Riyanto et al., 2020; Satari, 1985; Tim Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, 1988).

Numerous historical studies have also been conducted, providing valuable resources for exploring the historical roots of religious moderation in Lasem (Hadi, 2020; Nurhajarini et al., 2015; Simbolon, 2016). Cultural heritage, such as manuscripts and religious traditions, such as the purification procession of Sunan Bonang's gamelan, has enriched the interdisciplinary research conducted for decades in the port city of Lasem (Fahmi & Ratnasari, 2022; Rizkiananingrum, 2014; Triwahyono & Sukari, 2022; Wijaya, 2023). This study is a continuation of previous research on the history of the spice route and its relationship to Islamic civilization in Lasem (Fahmi, 2021, 2023; Fahmi et al., 2024). However, this time, the study will focus more on the leadership of Nyai Ageng Maloka in the late 15th century CE, when Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago was accelerating (Muthari et al., 2015, pp. 49–50).

Although previous studies have established Lasem as a key node in the maritime trade network of the Spice Route and a hub of multicultural and religious tolerance, they have generally overlooked Nyai Ageng Maloka's specific contributions. Archaeological and historical-philological research highlights the continuity of maritime traditions and the processes of Islamization and socio-cultural change. However, the unique leadership role of Nyai Ageng Maloka in managing Lasem's port and guiding the city through political and religious transitions at the end of the 15th century remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by centering its main argument on the impact of local female leadership, specifically Nyai Ageng Maloka, in shaping Lasem's maritime affairs and response to change.

This study aims to analyze the historical role of Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership in the port city of Lasem during the trading era. As a key figure during the transition from classical Islam to Islam, Nyai Ageng Maloka's historical presence as a local ruler can provide insight into how local maritime community leaders played a role in managing the maritime traditions of the northern coast of Java amidst the socio-religious changes that occurred during the 15th century AD. Using historical methods, source analysis will focus on the reign of Nyai Ageng Maloka from 1479 to 1490 AD. This historical research adopts a multidisciplinary approach by conducting a triangulation of data sources, including historical philology, archaeology, and oral history. Primary sources such as the Walisongo historiographic manuscripts, contemporary historical texts, ethno-historical reports, and published archaeological research findings are compared and put into dialogue with oral history passed down through generations. Oral history narratives related to Nyai Ageng Maloka's history were compiled through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with several informants involved in local history in Lasem.

This research also highlights explicitly the historical narrative contained in Carita Lasem. This local chronicle can bridge the oral history tradition of Lasem with the existence of its long-lost original text. This local chronicle text was composed in 1978 by Raden Panji Karsono, based on a copy of the original 18th-century manuscript. In the mid-1960s, a descendant of Panji Karsono named Mbah Guru initiated the copying of Babad Lasem, which was even ready for publication in print in 1978. However, the printed publication of Babad Lasem was only

realized in 1985 by the publisher Pembabar Pustaka Semarang (Wijaya, 2023, pp. 18–19). Although its validity as a historical source is relatively difficult to trace, the data contained therein can still be used through critical intertextual studies. Through a comparative content analysis of the various sources above, the history and existence of the role of Nyai Ageng Maloka in the context of Lasem's maritime history in the trading era can be reconstructed.

To analyze the historical role of Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership, this research employs a historical method with a multidisciplinary approach. First, the philological-historical analysis examines local historiographic texts, including the *Carita Lasem* and sources on the history of the Walisongo. This process reconstructs the narrative of Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership. Second, archaeological data help clarify the material context and maritime infrastructure of Lasem during Nyai Ageng Maloka's estimated reign. This information links political leadership dynamics to Lasem's maritime and economic conditions. Third, oral history is gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. These sources trace the collective memory of the Lasem community regarding Nyai Ageng Maloka. Triangulating these three types of sources enables a comprehensive analysis of how local leadership contributed to the sustainability of maritime traditions and the dynamics of Islamization in Lasem during 1479–1490 AD.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Genealogical Analysis of Nyai Ageng Maloka

In 1933, a group from Susuhunan Pakubuwono X of Surakarta made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Nyai Ageng Maloka, located in Rembang Regency, within the Rembang Residency. Colonial photographers then immortalized this historic moment as part of the Javanese Emperor's safari series across the four regencies within the Rembang Residency. Colonial newspapers recorded that this pilgrimage was not a sudden event, but rather a well-planned one. So, what was the allure that compelled the Javanese Emperor to make a pilgrimage to Nyai Ageng Maloka's tomb?

Nyai Ageng Maloka, as the people of Lasem widely know her, and Rembang Regency in general, is widely believed to be the eldest daughter of Nyai Ageng Maloka and the older sister of Sunan Bonang, one of the elders of the Wali Songo council in Java.

Numerous local historiographical sources record the existence of Nyai Ageng Maloka, with various spellings of her name. Not only are there differences in the pronunciation of her name, but the identities of Nyai Ageng Maloka's husbands also varied. However, among the many different names listed for Sunan Ampel's sons and daughters, three names frequently appear: Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajad, and Nyai Ageng Maloka herself.

Beyond Nyai Ageng Maloka's genealogical identity, local historiographic sources only mention her husband and her daughter's marriage to Raden Patah (the Sultan of Demak), as recounted in the Meinsma edition of the *Babad Tanah Jawa* (Kertapradja & Meinsma, 2014). The local chronicle, *Carita Lasem*, provides a more detailed historical narrative of Nyai Ageng Maloka (Kamzah, 1985, pp. 13–14). See table 1;

TABLE 1. The chronicle of Nyai Ageng Maloka in the text Carita Lasem (Babad Lasem)

No	Topic	Description
1	Marriage of Nyai Ageng Maloka with Prince Wiranagara	–
2	Death of Duke Wiranagara and the ascension of Nyai Ageng Maloka to the throne	In the year 1401 Saka (1479 CE), Nyai Ageng Maloka was 28 years old.
3	Death of Nyai Ageng Maloka's youngest son, and the marriage of her eldest daughter Solikhah to Raden Patah	–
4	Relocation of the palace and construction of a new royal residence in Cologawen	In the year 1402 Saka (1480 CE)
5	Relationship between Nyai Ageng Maloka and her younger brother, Sunan Bonang	–
6	Relationship between Nyai Ageng Maloka and her brother-in-law, Prince Santipuspo, head of the Port of Lasem	–
7	Death of Nyai Ageng Maloka	Passed away at the age of 39.

Several details of the year and age figures in the Carita Lasem text serve as valuable additional sources for determining the birth and death years of Nyai Ageng Maloka. If in 1479 CE, when the Lasem palace moved to Cologawen, Nyai Ageng Maloka was 28 years old, then Nyai Ageng Maloka was born in 1451 CE. If Sunan Ampel was born in 1423 CE and arrived in Java in 1443 CE (Sjamsudduha, 2004, p. 185), then Nyai Ageng Maloka's birth in 1451 CE is historically logically acceptable. Thus, if Carita Lasem died at the age of 39, then Nyai Ageng Maloka died in 1490 CE.

Regarding the editorial details of Nyai Ageng Maloka's name, the identity of her mother and her husband are narrated differently in various sources. The following is a list of differences in the naming and identity of Nyai Ageng Maloka's husband based on various sources. The following data comes from initial data collected by Sjamsudduha (2004), a team of writers from UIN Surabaya (Halim et al., 2021), with several additional sources such as the Lasem chronicle, as explained in the previous discussion of methods.

TABLE 2. Genealogical Variations of Nyai Ageng Maloka in Historical Sources

Text Number	Source	Name	Mother's Identity (Wife of Sunan Ampel)	Husband's Name
1	Babad Kraton, British Library Collection (Add MS 12320)	Nyai Gêdhe Maloko	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
2	Babad Jawi, British Library Collection (MSS Jav 29)	Nyai Ageng Maloko	Daughter of Arya Teja	Not mentioned

3	BTJ Olthof 1941	Nyai Maloka	Gede Manila (daughter of Tumenggung Wilatikta)	Not mentioned
4	BTJ Meisma 1874	Nyai Ageng Maloka	Ki Gêdhe Manila (daughter of Tumenggung Wilatikta)	Not mentioned
5	Serat Babad Gresik (PB A. 116), Sonobudoyo Museum Collection	Nyahi Ageng Malaka	Daughter of Arya Teja from Tuban	Ngusman Aji, son of King Pandhita; had two sons, the elder being Sunan Murya, and a daughter who married the Sultan of Demak
6	BTJ Manuscript Drajad	Siti Hafsah	Raden Ayu Candrawati (daughter of Arya Teja)	Sayyid Ahmad Yamani, residing in Kemlaka Village, without offspring
7	Babad Demak Pesisiran (Ministry of Education and Culture)	Siti Hapsah / Siti Hasyfah (possibly a transliteration error)	Raden Ayu Conderawati (daughter of Arya Teja)	Ki Sayyid Ahmad of Yemeni origin (residing in Kemelaka/Kamelaka, serving as a local wali)
8	Babad Cirebon	Nyai Gedeng Malaka / Nyai Taluki	Niece of Arya Teja	Haji Usman (son of Rajapandhita)
9	Kitab Tarikhul Auliya'	Siti Hafshah	Dewi Candrawati (daughter of Arya Teja)	Not mentioned
10	Kitab Ahla al-Musamarah fi Hikayat al-Auliya' al-'Asyrah	Sayyidah Hafsah / Nyai Ageng Meloka	?	Sayyid Ahmad (disciple of Sunan Ampel, later titled Sunan Kemlaka)
11	Carita Sejarah Lasem (Babad Lasem)	Princess Malokhah	Not mentioned	Prince Wiranagara of Lasem (disciple of Sunan Ampel); had a daughter named Solikhah and a son who died at a young age

The name Nyai Ageng Maloka is mentioned in 8 manuscript titles, two book titles, and one local chronicle, Carita Lasem. In general, there are two most frequently mentioned name redactions, namely Maloka/ Maloko and Hafshah. Interestingly, the name Hafshah is found in sources included in the Babad Demak manuscript corpus, namely texts number 6, 7, 9, and 10. The four texts share a common core, referring to an early text of Babad Demak, which was likely written in the late 16th century AD (Baso, 2025, pp. 259, 262–277). Interestingly, the relationship between the names Maloka and Hafshah is clearly stated in the text of Book number 10, which states that another name for Siti Hafshah is Nyai Ageng Maloka (As-Senori, 1961). Interestingly, semantically, the title "ageng," which means big or great, is a term more

commonly used in the panturan area and the Kasunanan Surakarta region. The title "gedhe," which has the same meaning, is relatively well-known in the Yogyakarta community and its surroundings, as evidenced by the Babad Kraton manuscript (text number 1), compiled by a priyayi from the Yogyakarta Palace in the 18th century (Ricklefs et al., 2014).

Based on the data collected, Nyai Ageng Maloka's mother was the first wife of Sunan Ampel, a native of Tuban. Regarding Nyai Ageng Maloka's husbands, three names are mentioned: Ngusman Haji, a relative of Sunan Ampel; Sayyid Ahmad, a student of Sunan Ampel, from Yemen; and Pangeran Wiranagara, a student of Sunan Ampel, from Lasem. While no further explanation is provided regarding Nyai Ageng Maloka's marriage to Ngusman Haji, her marriage to Sayyid Ahmad, who later assumed the title Sunan Kemlaka, provides a possible clue as to the origin of the name "Maloka." Whether maloka is a lexical variant of kemlaka resulting from a copying error, and its correlation, likely requires further research. What is clear is that the existing texts do not specify the exact location of Mount Kemlaka. The much more complete identity of Nyai Ageng Maloka's husband is narrated in the local chronicle Carita Lasem and, of course, in the oral history of the Lasem people.

From the various data above, a tentative reconstruction of Nyai Ageng Maloka's life story can be made as follows:

Siti Hafshah was born in Java (most likely in Ampel, Surabaya) in 1451 CE, eight years after her father, Raden Rahmat (Sunan Ampel), arrived in Java. Born to Susuhunan Ampel and his first wife, Putri Arya Teja from Tuban, Princess Maloka likely spent her childhood and education under her father's direct tutelage at the Ngampel Denta Islamic Boarding School. In the 1450s, her younger brother, Makhdum Ibrahim, was born.

In the 1460s, Siti Hafshah likely married one of her father's students, Sayyid Ahmad from Yemen. They lived with her husband on Mount Kemlaka, spreading Islam, until her husband earned the nickname Sunan Kemlaka (Kemloko). From this name, she likely earned the nickname Putri Maloka (Mloka?) and later, in her old age, Nyai Ageng Maloka. The couple was not blessed with any children until Sunan Kemlaka's death.

Nyai Ageng Maloka, who was probably in her twenties at the time, married for a second time in the 1470s to Prince Wiranagara of Lasem, also a student of Sunan Ampel. Princess Maloka then lived with her husband in Ndalem Bonang-Binangun Lasem until her husband ascended the throne as Duke in 1474 CE. The two had two children: an eldest daughter, Solikhah, who later married Raden Patah of Demak, and a youngest son, who married at a young age.

Duke Wiranagara's reign lasted only five years. In 1479 CE, Duke Wiranaga died, and Princess Maloka succeeded to the Lasem Duchy. A year later, in 1480 CE, Princess Maloka moved the seat of government to Cologawen, near the old capital of Lasem and the ancient port of Kaeringan. In Cologawen, Princess Maloka (Nyai Ageng Maloka) constructed a new duchy palace and a beautiful garden complex (*Taman Sitasremi*). Nyai Ageng Maloka also opened Islamic education classes at her residence, specifically for female students from aristocratic families, the families of the Sunans, and the general public.

To support and strengthen her reign, Nyai Ageng Maloka established collaborative relations in the maritime and political sphere with her brother-in-law, Prince Santipuspo, who at the time served as the Head of the Lasem Harbor. Through this relationship, Nyai Ageng Maloko gained the support (patronage) and socio-political advice needed for her government,

especially in the maritime sector. Nyai Ageng Maloka also established socio-religious relations with her younger brother, Makdum Ibrahim, who in 1484 AD was confirmed as the Wali for the Land of Lasem and Tuban. At Nyai Ageng Maloka's request, the former Bonang Binangun ndalem was handed over to her younger brother to support the goals of Islamic da'wah and education. Makdum Ibrahim was also entrusted with the care of the Tomb of Princess Cempo and the nearby Lasem duchy family cemetery. The Bonang area then quickly developed into the Mandala Islam complex. In this new spiritual center, Makhdum Ibrahim developed his da'wah network under the title Sunan Bonang, which refers to the location of his mandala in Bonang Village. During this period, the Kasunanan Bonang entity emerged as a religious center that became the spiritual patron of the Lasem Duchy in Cologawen. In 1490 AD, Nyai Ageng Maloka died at the age of 39. The succession to the Duchy of Lasem was then held by her brother-in-law, Prince Santipuspo, who ruled accompanied by his brother, Prince Santiyoga.

Caruban: A Living Archaeological and Pilgrimage Site

In the 1980s, the site surrounding the former Cologawen Palace complex, known as the Caruban site, received serious attention from the National Archaeological Center. A total of at least five phases of excavation research were conducted at the site until 1985. The resulting rich archaeological finds included fragments of pottery, ceramics, metal, and even organic and inorganic remains. The finds, dating from the 14th-15th centuries CE, confirmed the site's existence as a representative of the classical transition period to Islam (Satari, 1985). A total of 30,287 pottery fragments and 2,863 ceramic frames were recovered from the Caruban site.

The diversity of finds from different civilizations provides evidence of Lasem's identity as a system open to external influences. The findings come from diverse ethnic groups, including local, Chinese, Japanese, and European. Archaeological finds related to daily activities, such as wells and fishing nets, provide clues not only to the habituation activities, or the daily life activities of the community, such as livestock farming and fishing, but also to the cultural practices of the Caruban site. It is suspected that the Caruban site was once a permanent, multicultural settlement from the 13th to 17th centuries CE, and beyond (Tim Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, 1988, pp. 60–64).

Furthermore, the Caruban site is located adjacent to what is strongly suspected to be the port of Kaeringan. This suggests that during the growing influence of Islam, maritime trade was the primary activity. The image of a government center not integrated with the main port is also reflected in the relocation of the capital from old Lasem to Bonang-Binangun in 1391 Saka (1469 CE). The move was prompted by the significant growth of the Muslim community in Bonang-Bianangun following the arrival of merchant sailors from Tuban, Gresik, and Ampel Surabaya (Rangkuti, 1997, p. 46).

Although a series of archaeological studies at the Caruban site have yielded impressive findings in terms of both historical implications and quantity, there have been virtually no significant remains of the Cologawen duchy. Unfortunately, the discovery of several foundation stones on the west side of the Nyai Ageng Maloka tomb complex has not provided further insight into the spatial pattern of settlements at Cologawen (Tim Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, 1988). Changes in spatial planning over hundreds of years, as well as the massive development of modern settlements around the site, will likely complicate future archaeological research. Nevertheless, prevailing folklore suggests that the main complex of

Nyai Ageng Maloka's tomb, surrounded by a rectangular wall divided into two sections, is part of the remains of the Cologawen duchy during the Nyai Ageng Maloka era.

Unfortunately, several archaeological studies have not yielded any findings related to the remains of the Cologawen duchy due to limited data. However, prevailing folklore believes the surrounding wall surrounding the Nyai Ageng Maloka tomb complex to be the remains of the Cologawen palace. The gate, attached to the rectangular, white-plastered wall, is similar in design to the entrances to the Pasujudan complex and the entrances to the Sunan Bonang palace complex, or the former Bonang-Binangun palace.

The tomb of Nyai Ageng Maloka itself is enclosed within a walled enclosure, situated in the center of a joglo (a traditional Javanese palace) with two overlapping canopies. Atop the roof is a mustoko (a decorative pinnacle) similar to the original mustoko of the Lasem Grand Mosque. The tomb of Nyai Ageng Maloka itself has a tiered jirat with a Demak-Troloyo-style headstone, commonly used for important figures on the north coast of Java. It is estimated to date from the 15th century. The estimated age of the tomb, based on the style of the headstone, aligns with records in the earlier Babad Lasem chronicle. The numerous graves with ancient headstones inscribed with names bearing royal titles suggest the cemetery complex's original identity as a burial place for members of a prominent aristocratic family in the Lasem area of Rembang in the past (Ambary, 1991, pp. 13–14).

To this day, the Nyai Ageng Maloka tomb complex remains a well-preserved pilgrimage site. According to local legend, interest in the Nyai Ageng Maloka tomb complex revived in the late 20th century AD, following the efforts of Kiai Hambali, a local Islamic boarding school teacher, who polished it. However, the discovery of a water jar known as a "Jambangan," possibly dating from the 19th century AD or earlier, indicates that the complex has long existed as a pilgrimage site. This approximately 130 cm tall earthenware jar once served as a place for pilgrims to purify themselves before entering the tomb complex. The Jambangan artifact is now in the collection of the Ranggawarsita Museum in Semarang.

The existence of this tomb was also immortalized in the pilgrimage moment of Susuhunan Pakubuwono X's group in 1933. In the photo of the Rijksmuseum collection, Sunan with his wife and other entourage are seen sitting in the outer area of the main enclosure of Nyai Ageng Maloka's tomb. For the record, the visit was not a coincidence. As reported in the *De Locomotief* newspaper (2 June 1933 and 10 June 1933), Susuhunan would undertake a trip to Afdeling Rembang, Blora, Bodjonergoro, and Tuban, with the main transit in Cepu. Susuhunan was scheduled to visit Rembang and Lasem in the Rembang Residency on 17 June 1933. Among the visit's agenda, a pilgrimage to the Tomb of Nyai Ageng Maloko was listed as one of the destinations, as later immortalized in the photo archives ("De Reis van Z.V.H. Den Soenan. Het Volledig Programma Voor Tjepoe, Rembang En Toeban..," 1933; "VORSTENLANDEN Reis van Z. V. H. Den Socsoehoenan..," 1933). The pilgrimage agenda of Sunan Pakubuwono X above has become a strong precedent for the eminence of Nyai Ageng Maloka, especially in spiritual matters.

Boyong Kedhaton: Chronicle of the Move of the Capital from Lasem to Cologawen

The Caruban site is inextricably linked to the life of Nyai Ageng Maloka. As mentioned previously, Nyai Ageng Maloka was a key figure behind the relocation of the Lasem government from Bonang-Binangun to Cologawen. The story of the "boyong kedhaton," or

the relocation of the Lasem palace, is retold in the first part (sigeg) of the Carita Lasem (Kamzah, 1985, pp. 13–14). In brief, here is the history of the relocation of the duchy's palace to Cologawen:

After serving as the center of government of the Lasem Duchy for 11 years, during the reign of Duke Wijayabadra, during the reign of Princess Malokhah, the palace in Binangun (also known as Bonang-Binangun) was moved back to the old Lasem capital, specifically to the Cologawen area, in 1480 AD. At that time, Princess Malokhah had only served as the Duke of Lasem for one year, following the death of her husband in 1479 AD. This new palace was located near the palace of the Kriyan Principality, which Prince Santipuspa, the eldest son of Prince Santibadra, then occupied. At that time, Prince Santipuspa served as Dhang Puhawang (dampo awang), or harbormaster in Kaeringen.

With the relocation of the Kadipaten palace to Colegawan, not far from Prince Santipuspa's residence, it was hoped that the dhang puhawang (dampo awang) would serve as a protective fortress and advisor to the Dowager Duke of Lasem, who was then ruling Lasem (nyekel pusara praja Lasem). To console her (having lost her husband, her son, who died at an early age, and her daughter, Solikhah, who was married off to Raden Patah), Nyai Ageng Maloka built a multi-story building and gardens on the coast of Kaeringen, known as Taman Sitasremi. As for the Kadipaten shrine in Bonang, Princess Malokhah requested that her younger brother, Makdum Ibrahim, occupy the residence. At the age of 30 (1484 CE), he was inaugurated as the village guardian, who resided and established an educational center to spread Islam in the former Bonang palace complex.

The brief excerpt above provides a glimpse into the process and even the reasons for the second relocation of the seat of government to Lasem. In 1469 AD, Duke Wijayabadra relocated the palace to the Binangun (or Bonang-Binangun) area, situated near the coast and the ancient port of Regol. The alternating names Binangun and Bonang likely imply the size of the central area of this duchy, which encompassed the villages of Binangun and Bonang, which are now part of the Lasem District.

During the Majapahit era, the center of government of Lasem, known as Puri Kriyan, was located slightly southward in what is now the bustling center of the Lasem district capital in Rembang Regency. Despite being somewhat inland, Lasem retained its identity as a maritime kingdom through a network of canals and rivers directly connecting it to Kaeringen Port in the northwest of Lasem and Regol Port in the northeast.

Although not explained in detail, changes in the socio-religious landscape during the late Majapahit period likely played a role. The weakening of regional political stability, which led to the decline of Majapahit's maritime world, likely required special preventive measures. Consequently, the relocation of the center of government to the coastal area can be interpreted as an active effort by the Lasem rulers to maintain control and stability of maritime activity in Lasem. Furthermore, the Binangun area also houses Regol Harbor, which has existed since the Majapahit era. Although few, the numerous finds of foreign ceramics found at the Binangun site testify to the region's existence as a coastal port city during the classical-Islamic transition period.

The Lasem Chronicle notes that the move to Binangun coincided with an increase in the number of Muslim sailors and traders (both ethnically foreign and indigenous people who embraced Islam). This new wave of Muslim sailor-trader networks appears to have been the

driving force behind Adipati Wijayabadra's decision. So, why did the Binangun Palace last only 11 years?

It took Nyai Ageng Maloka only a year after taking office to decide to move the Lasem palace for the second time. Her motives, while seemingly personal, were quite strategic at the time. Before her husband, Adipati Wiranagara, passed away, Nyai Ageng Maloka had already lost her youngest son at a young age. Furthermore, her eldest daughter, Solikhah, had moved to Demak to marry Raden Patah, who would later become the first Sultan of Demak-Bintoro. The Lasem Chronicle vividly portrays Nyai Ageng Maloka's grief, which then also encouraged her to establish a garden within the new palace complex to console herself. However, a more strategic reason for this decision to move the palace was the need for socio-political patronage for Nyai Ageng Maloka's reign.

Although she no longer occupies the Kriyan palace, the Cologawen palace is located relatively close to the old town of Lasem. It is also now close to Kaeringan Harbor, which is as ancient as Regol Harbor. The Ndalem Cologawen complex is located not far from the Kriyan princely complex, which Prince Santipuspo then occupied. In the context of Javanese palace spatial planning, the princely complex (or *kasatriyan*) is the residence of the princes. Whether they held official positions or not, princes and the *priyayi* in general possessed relatively strong socio-political capital. This situation highlights Nyai Ageng Maloka's need for socio-political support for her new government.

Moreover, the key figure mentioned in this relocation process was Prince Santipuspo, who was respected and loved by the community, family, and officials of the Duchy. Furthermore, Prince Santipuspo was also a *Dampo Awang*, a position held by the head of the harbor (*bandar*) who was described as the king of the ocean. Therefore, the support of Prince Santipuspo and other members of the royal family provided valuable socio-political capital for the new government of Nyai Ageng Maloka, who was not a member of the Lasem Duchy clan. The Lasem Chronicle even describes Nyai Ageng Maloka's reign as proceeding smoothly, without any significant problems, for 11 years. Interestingly, this episode of the *Boyong Kedhaton* (the relocation of the kingdom) directly repositioned Lasem during the transition period and maintained its existence as a vital port city for the future.

A bridge between two realms in an era of transition

The success of Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership during her time in the port city of Lasem was inextricably linked to the social relationships she cultivated during her tenure. As an outsider, Nyai Ageng Maloka's position was relatively weak politically, even though she was formally the legitimate ruler. Consequently, the relocation of the seat of government back to near the old capital of Lasem marked a turning point for Nyai Ageng Maloka's future administration.

The new seat of government in Cologawen, located not far from the residences of the Lasem princes, demonstrates how Nyai Ageng Maloka's policies strategically strengthened her reign. As a new member of the Javanese *priyayi* community, Nyai Ageng Maloka needed traditional legitimacy in the form of support from the extended family of her late husband, Adipati Wiranagara. Prince Santipuspa, Nyai Ageng Maloka's brother-in-law, was explicitly mentioned as a key figure expected to serve as an advisor and socio-political patron for the new government in Cologawen. In traditional societies, traditional authority based on blood

relations passed down through generations is a crucial political legitimacy for Nyai Ageng Maloka (Weber, 1946). A symbolic model (Bourdieu, 1986) is utilised when Nyai Ageng Maloka actively opens herself to establishing strong relations with the Lasem Duchy family, which the community has respected since the Majapahit era. Furthermore, Prince Santipuspo possesses strategic socio-political capital in the maritime sector, given his position as ruler of the Lasem port.

On the other hand, Nyai Ageng Maloka, who, along with her husband, represented a new wave of socio-religious change on the north coast of Java, also strengthened her spiritual ties with the Bonang Sultanate, led by Sunan Bonang. Nyai Ageng Maloka, along with her late husband, provided moral and material support for the development of the Islamic Mandala, established by her brother in the highlands of Bonang village, not far from the coast. In this way, Nyai Ageng Maloka provided political patronage for the new spiritual centre in Bonang, while simultaneously providing a form of spiritual legitimacy for the Lasem Duchy, given Sunan Bonang's status as the village head or Imam Nagari Lasem (Fahmi et al., 2024). This relationship also reflects Nyai Ageng Maloka's role as a ruler responsible for championing not only the physical well-being but also the well-being of Lasem. In this sense, this support and relationship embodied Nyai Ageng Maloka's dharma as a ruler who protected all groups (Moertono, 2018).

Through these two established relationships, Nyai Ageng Maloka succeeded in building a strong, stable government and, in this case, strengthened Lasem's identity as a powerful maritime kingdom. The political crisis that occurred at the end of the Majapahit era had changed the political map of the island of Java. With the increasingly massive Islamization in society, Demak rose to become the centre of the new Mandala. Nyai Ageng Maloka and her late husband, Adipati Wiranagara, succeeded in positioning themselves as cultural brokers during this transitional period (Geertz, 1960). Through their collaboration with Prince Santipuspo, the maritime heritage of the port city of Lasem was maintained and continued to survive into the following periods. History records that Lasem's ports eventually also became important ports and shipyards for Demak, as they had been during the Majapahit era. This maritime tradition is also interestingly didactically preserved through the existence of the Sunan Bonang Islamic Mandala. Like the Hindu-Buddhist mandala tradition, Islamic Mandalas also teach maritime skills as a key competency that students must learn.

Moreover, the existence of the Islamic Mandala also reflects the strengthening social role of the wave of Muslim merchant-sailors (both native and immigrant) who at that time inhabited coastal port cities such as Bonang and Lasem. Strengthening relations with this Muslim group also meant strengthening Lasem's maritime role as a port city open to all ethnicities and religions. Like her husband, Nyai Ageng Maloka successfully played her role as a cultural broker, bridging the classical society with the Muslim community, without sacrificing the pluralistic life that had existed in society. Until then, Lasem seemed unable to be interpreted as an Islamic kingdom, even though a Muslim ruler led it. Nyai Ageng Maloka's wisdom and strategic decision to establish moderate relations with all elements of society in the Duchy of Lasem proved not only to maintain existing religious harmony, but also to maintain social stability through the strong existence of Lasem's identity as a port city with its maritime history and cultural heritage.

Academically, this study makes three major contributions. It underscores the significance of women as strategic actors in Indonesian maritime historiography, particularly in port cities during the classical Islamic transition. It redefines Spice Route studies by prioritizing local

leadership and socio-religious relations over mere trade in commodities, arguing that these are vital to port-city sustainability. By triangulating local chronicles, archaeology, and oral history, it proves that non-canonical sources are essential for reconstructing marginalized local maritime history within the national narrative.

Building on these academic contributions, this study also provides a historical basis for preserving Lasem's maritime cultural heritage. It helps in developing the Spice Route narrative as a world cultural heritage. Understanding Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership in maintaining social stability, pluralism, and a thriving maritime economy serves as a reference point. This can strengthen local identity, help develop community-based historical tourism, and encourage more inclusive, women-sensitive maritime history education.

CONCLUSION

The existence of the spice routes and port cities spread across the Indonesian archipelago is inseparable from the role of local figures. Small chronicles about people living in coastal areas with all their accompanying socio-cultural plurality testify to the humanistic nature of maritime activity during this era of commerce. Nyai Ageng Maloka and other figures during the reign of the Duchess of Lasem in the late 15th century provide a glimpse into how a major port city like Lasem was able to maintain its maritime heritage amidst the turmoil of the times. Drawing on philological-historical, archaeological, and oral history sources, we gain valuable insight into how the port city of Lasem became a meeting point for various ethnic and religious groups. During the transition from the classical era to the Islamic era, for eleven years, Nyai Ageng Maloka acted as a cultural broker, bridging the socio-historical realms that met during this transitional period. The relocation of the centre of government became a crucial turning point in Lasem's maritime history. Nyai Ageng Maloka's skill in building and strengthening relationships with diverse groups has proven to strengthen Lasem's multicultural maritime heritage and its pluralistic society. Her relationships with key figures such as Prince Santipuspo and Sunan Bonang symbolically strengthened the legitimacy of Nyai Ageng Maloka's traditional leadership. This synergistic partnership in the socio-political and religious spheres has proven to bring prosperity and peace to Lasem. It has maintained its strategic position as a vital port since the Majapahit era and beyond during the Islamic Sultanate.

Nevertheless, this study faces several limitations. The reconstruction of Nyai Ageng Maloka's history relies mainly on local historiographic sources and oral traditions. Both sources exhibit chronological discrepancies, editorial inconsistencies, and limited opportunities to corroborate against contemporary records. These constraints are typical in research on early Islamization in Indonesia. Archaeological evidence – especially concerning the Cologawen palace remains – is scarce. This scarcity prevents detailed mapping of the governmental center during Nyai Ageng Maloka's rule. This study does not compare Nyai Ageng Maloka's leadership with that of other female rulers in port settlements throughout the archipelago of the same era. Future research could broaden this study by comparing port cities on Java's north coast with those in other regions. Researchers could also conduct archaeological surveys at the Cologawen site and Kaeringan port. An interdisciplinary approach that combines maritime archaeology, gender history, and analysis of regional trade networks will clarify the roles of female local rulers in the Spice Route and the Islamization of Southeast Asia.

REFERENCES

- Ambary, H. (1991). *Aspek-Aspek Arkeologi Indonesia: No 12. Makam-Makam Kesultanan dan Para Wali Penyebar Islam di Pulau Jawa*. Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional-Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- As-Senori, A. F. (1961). *Ahla al-Musamarah fi Hikayat al-Auliya' al-'Asyrah*. Majlis Taklif wa al-Khuththat.
- Baso, A. (2025). *Studi Filologi-Historis Sumber-Sumber Primer Historiografi Wali Sanga (Buku 1)*. Pustaka Afid.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.
- De Reis van Z.V.H. den Soenan. Het volledig programma voor Tjepoe, Rembang en Toeban.. (1933). *De Locomotief* 10-06-1933. Retrieved from Delpher on 16-06-2025. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001743072:mpeg21:p00009%0A%0A>
- Fahmi, M. N. (2021). Jalur Rempah dan Perkembangan Pendidikan Islam di Pesisir Rembang Abad 15-19 M. *International Symposium "Cosmopolitanism of Islam Nusantara: Spiritual Traces and Intellectual Networks on the Spice Route."*
- Fahmi, M. N. (2023). *Memories of The Spice Route and Indonesia's Future: Efforts to Maintain Religious Harmony of The Lasem Coastal Communities*. *International Forum on Spice Route Volume 2*, 151–160.
- Fahmi, M. N., Anggarini, I. F., & Hoque, O. (2024). The History of Sunan Bonang Mandala in The Lasem Chronicle (Carita Lasem). *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, 9(1), 20–38. <https://doi.org/10.18784/analisa.v9i1.2219>
- Fahmi, M. N., & Ratnasari, D. (2022). Religious Dynamics and Attitude of Religious Moderation in The Carita Sejarah Lasem. *International Conference on Religion, Science & Education* 1, 823–830.
- Fauzi, M., & Razif. (2017). *Jalur Rempah dan Dinamika Masyarakat Abad X- XVI: Kepulauan Banda, Jambi, dan Pantau Utara Jawa (S. T. Sulistiyono (Ed.))*. Direktorat Sejarah, Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Geertz, C. (1960). The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2(2), 228–249.
- Graaf, H. J. De, & Pigeaud, T. G. T. (1989). *Kerajaan-Kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram*. Grafitipers.
- Hadi, S. (2020). Lasem: Harmoni dan Kontestasi Masyarakat Bineka. *Islam Nusantara*, 1(1), 163–208.
- Halim, A., Prihananto, Huda, S., Anshori, M., & Busthomi, A. A. (2021). *Mazhab Dakwah Wasatiyah Sunan Ampel*. Pustaka IIMaN.
- Kamzah, R. P. (1985). Carita (Sejarah) Lasem. In *Sabda Badra-Santi* (pp. 9–64). Pembabar Pustaka.
- Kertapradja, N., & Meinsma, J. J. (2014). *Babad Tanah Jawi (Edisi Prosa Bahasa Jawa)*. Garudhawaca.

- Meilink-Roelofs, M. A. P. (1962). *Asian Trade And European Influence In The Indonesian Archipelago Between 1500 And About 1630*. Martinus Nijhoff.
- Moertono, S. (2018). *Negara dan Kekuasaan di Jawa Abad XVI-XIX*. KPG.
- Muthari, A. H. W., Azra, A., Burhanudin, J., Hisyam, M., Sulaiman, S., & Abdullah, T. (2015). *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam Indonesia: Akar Historis dan Awal Pembentukan Islam Jilid 1* (T. Abdullah & E. Djaenuderadjat (Eds.)). Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Budaya, Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Nurhajarini, D. R., Purwaningsih, E., & Fibiona, I. (2015). *Akulturası Lintas Zaman di Lasem: Perspektif Sejarah dan Budaya (Kurun Niaga-Sekarang)*. Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya (BPNB) Yogyakarta.
- Rangkuti, N. (1997). *Kajian Arkeologi Situs Masa Sejarah di Lasem: Pergeseran Pusat Kegiatan*. Berkala, 17(1), 38–48. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30883/jba.v17i1.768>
- Reid, A. (2020). *Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga 1450-1680: Jilid 2 Jaringan Perdagangan Global*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Ricklefs, M. C., Voorhoeve, P., & Gallop, A. T. (2014). *Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain: a Catalogue of Manuscripts in Indonesian Languages in British Public Collections*. Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Riyanto, S., Mochtar, A. S., Priswanto, H., Alifah, & Taniardi, P. N. (2020). *Lasem dalam Rona Sejarah Nusantara: Sebuah Kajian Arkeologis* (N. Abbas (Ed.)). Balai Arkeologi Provinsi Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta.
- Rizkiananingrum, N. (2014). *Analisis Struktur dan Konteks Carita (Sejarah) Lasem*. Universitas Indonesia.
- Satari, S. S. (1985). *Caruban, Lasem: Suatu Situs Peralihan Klasik-Islam*. In *Pertemuan Ilmiah Arkeologi III Tahun 1983* (pp. 487–499). Departemen Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan.
- Simbolon, S. (2016). *Gus Zaim: Lasem Kota Multietnik Tanpa Sumbu Konflik*. CrCs.Ugm.Co.Id. <https://crCs.ugm.ac.id/gus-zaim-lasem-kota-multietnik-tanpa-sumbu-konflik/>
- Sjamsudduha. (2004). *Sejarah Sunan Ampel: Guru Para Wali di Jawa dan Perintis Pembangunan Kota Surabaya*. Jawa Pos Press.
- Tim Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional. (1988). *Berita Penelitian Arkeologi No. 38 Laporan Penelitian Ekskavasi Situ Caruban Lasem, Jawa Tengah*. Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Tjandrasasmita, U. (2009). *Arkeologi Islam Nusantara*. KPG.
- Triwahyono, T., & Sukari. (2022). *Tradisi Penjamasan Bende Becak Sunan Bonang*. Balai Pelestarian Nilai Budaya D.I. Yogyakarta.
- VORSTENLANDEN Reis van Z. V. H. den Socsoehoenan.. (1933). *De Locomotief 02-06-1933*. Retrieved from Delpher on 2025-06-16, 7. <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB23:001743059:mpeg21:p00007>
- Weber, M. (1946). *Politics As A Vocation* (H. H. G. A. C. W. Mills (Ed.)). Oxford University Press.

Wijaya, C. I. (2023). Peninggalan Arkeologi Masa Klasik di Lasem Berdasarkan Studi Filoarkeologi. Universitas Gadjah Mada.

Interviews and Discussions:

Hamid, Abdullah (Librarian of the Jami' Mosque Library of Lasem; local history researcher of Lasem). 2025. Interview. The Biography of Nyai Ageng Maloka According to Local History. Rembang, 14 May 2025.

Setyonugroho, Exsan Ali (Local history researcher of Lasem; member of the Dasun Tourism Village initiative). 2025. Focus Group Discussion. Lasem in the Era of Nyai Ageng Maloka. Rembang, 19 May 2025.

Tathoya (Local history researcher of Lasem). 2025. Interview. Oral History on the Existence of the Kadipaten Cologarn and the Kasunanan Bonang. Rembang, 19 May 2025.

EARLY AMERICAN ENCOUNTERS WITH BENGKULU PEOPLE, IN SUMATRA, UNDER THE SPICE ROUTE'S NETWORK FROM THE LATE 18th TO THE MID-19th CENTURY

Yuda B. Tangkilisan

*Department of History, Faculty of Humanities
University of Indonesia
E-mail: yebete@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

The United States of America is a country and nation that entered international trade relatively late, especially in the Spice trade networks and routes. The network and trade have been going on for a long time, when it was part of the Silk Road network and route. The background to the arrival of European nations, pioneered by the Portuguese and Spanish, was to look for commercial plants, when changes and political shifts in the sea area hampered their supply along the Silk Road and through Mediterranean shipping. For that reason, during the maritime transportation revolution, the Iberian nations sailed the oceans to search for sources of these commodities in Asia.

Soon after gaining independence in 1776, the United States became part of the trade network. The voyages and trade brought US ships and merchants to Bengkulu (Bencoolen), located on the west coast of southern Sumatra. At that time, Bengkulu was under the influence of the British East India Company (EIC). The EIC did not show any hostility towards the US shipping and trade in Bengkulu. Meanwhile, most parts of the Indonesian archipelago were under the influence and control of the Dutch trading company, the VOC. The issue concerns American interests in the area in relation to the Spice Route.

The presence of US trade in Bengkulu is recorded in the Dutch East Indies archives and tables in the work of de Bruyne Kops (1957/58). The following information is obtained from several secondary sources, such as Vlekke, Fichter, and others. The Economic and Business History approach opens up space to explain US trade interests amid competition with global companies at the time, such as the British EIC and VOC, in their spice trade networks at the end of the eighteenth century. The findings show that US shipping and trade in Bengkulu were part of the economic relationship with the west coast of Sumatra, generating abundant profits. Bengkulu and the west coast of Sumatra were areas with distinct historical developments from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago because they were subject to multilateral competition and trade networks, namely with the US, Britain, the Netherlands, local traders, and France. Meanwhile, other parts of Indonesia were more familiar with and under Dutch interests.

Keywords: United States, Bengkulu, Shipping, Trade, Spice Route

INTRODUCTION

The early relationship between the Indonesian archipelago and the United States of America (USA) took place immediately after its independence in 1776. Its interest in building a national economy as a newly independent nation and through a revolution against its colonialist, England, made the international economy relevant and significant, in addition to establishing diplomatic relations with other countries. Besides establishing relations with European nations, especially with supporters of its independence, the US's attention also turned to the eastern region of the world, namely Asia, which had centres of economic growth, trade networks, and production of commercial commodities. However, those had been under the influence, power and monopoly of European nations, such as Spain, England, France and the Netherlands.

Immediately after the independence, the US government and public, including its seafaring sailors and merchants, lacked adequate knowledge of Asia. They referred to the region as the Indies. The Indonesian archipelago, often referred to as the East Indies, was also known as the Indies. Such a circumstance, from a European perspective, was reminiscent of Christopher Columbus's goal and belief in sailing westward in the late 15th century, specifically to reach India. Gradually, their knowledge of Asia became more complete, allowing them to develop highly profitable shipping and trade within the Spice Trade network.

Americans had known and utilized spices, especially pepper, in their daily lives since the British colonial era. At that time, the spice trade was controlled by the British East India Company (EIC). Many colonists worked for the company and gained experience with shipping and trade along the Spice Route to East Asia, including the Indonesian islands. Therefore, after independence, American shipping and trade had a little difficulty in locating and tapping into the dynamics of the Spice Route.

The opportunity for US involvement in global economic dynamics, including in Asia, opened with the French Revolution. After seizing power, Napoleon Bonaparte expanded the revolutionary ideas and spirit of anti-monarchy beyond France, prompting a swift response and conflict with the British Empire and its allies. In this conflict, the US government adopted a neutral stance and policy, gaining an advantage in shipping and trade in parts of the world dominated by European powers such as Britain, France, the Netherlands, and others. In several incidents, US ships were not spared attacks by both sides of the conflict. Another nation that took a similar stance was Denmark.

One of the destinations for US shipping and trade was the island of Sumatra, where Bengkulu (Bencoolen) is situated. Bengkulu is located on the west coast of Sumatra, directly bordering the Indonesian and Indian Oceans. Currently, Bengkulu refers to a provincial-level region and its capital. The province shares land borders with four provinces: West Sumatra and Riau to the north, South Sumatra to the east, and Lampung to the south. This strategic location undoubtedly played a significant role in the region's development and change, including its networks and interactions since ancient times.

Historically, Bengkulu experienced development somewhat different from that of other Indonesian regions, which had more interaction with and were more under the influence of the Dutch. Meanwhile, Bengkulu had more experiences with the British, from the time of the East Indian Company (EIC) to British colonialism. The latter period in Indonesian

Historiography is also known as the British interregnum. Since 1824, Bengkulu has been under Dutch control (Netherlands Indies). However, Bengkulu interacted not only with these two nations but also with other nations, including the United States.

This discussion concerns Bengkulu's early relations and interactions with the US, which took place under the influence and network of the Spice Route, i.e. key commodities in inter-island (Indonesian islands), regional (Southeast Asia), and global (international) commercial networks. Cloves, nutmeg, and mace were the spices most widely produced in Eastern Indonesia, particularly the Maluku (Moluccan) islands. Pepper played a crucial role in the traffic and economic exchange networks of Western Indonesia, including the west coast of Sumatra, where Bengkulu is located. These early interactions began around 1795 and lasted until the 1850s, when the US spice trade began to decline amid global commercial changes in the 19th century.

The presentation and explanation of the background of the US arrival in Bengkulu, which found conditions and developments that had been open to international trade networks, such as with the Netherlands and England, and the ebb and flow of these early relationships and interactions are found in several secondary sources, including published dissertation works (Fichter 2010). This discussion is an initial research that cultivates, explores and elaborates on the problems surrounding these early relationships and interactions in the development and changes of the Spice Route and the dynamics of Bengkulu in the international network in the early modern period, leading to the transition to industrialization and industrial capitalism.

The explanatory framework begins with a perspective on maritime shipping and trade, which connects and relates various parts of the world, particularly Europe and Asia, and gives rise to the Industrial Revolution, leading to the development and advancement of modern capitalism and technology. Statistical sources are analyzed and explained using a quantitative approach that complements qualitative explanations, thus providing a sharper, more critical, and more comprehensive understanding of the issues under discussion.

Although Bengkulu has experienced significant developments and changes in the understanding and explanation of Indonesia's integrative and diverse history, the region has received relatively little attention. It is not visible in the Indonesian historiography. Two monumental series of works on Indonesia's past and development, namely *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* or SNI (National History of Indonesia) (2008) and *Indonesia dalam Arus Sejarah* or IDAS (Indonesia in the Flow of History) (2012), do not provide space for discussion of the region. In the works of Sartono Kartodirdjo (1989) and MC Ricklefs (2008), there is no explanation of the area, also known as Bencoolen and Benkulen. The work of Bernard HM Vlekke (1961/2008) provides little information about the region. Therefore, it is clear that research and writing on the history of Bengkulu in the critical, scientific and academic realms and scales are relevant and significant for obtaining a complete and comprehensive understanding of the National Historiography.

Understanding Bengkulu's development is not only relevant and significant within the context of the dynamics of the island of Sumatra, particularly its west coast, but also within the Spice Route network, which focuses more on and emphasises the western part of the Indonesian archipelago. Within this network, Bengkulu's dynamics became part of a broader globalization, one not solely linked to Europe. The United States was part of this route, leaving behind an influence and legacy later erased by Dutch East Indies policies and exploitation from the early 19th century onward.

Amerian Shipping to Sumatra

Early US voyages soon entered Indonesian waters through busy shipping lanes, reaching the island of Sumatra, particularly its west coast. A network of pepper trade flourished as part of the Spice Route in the archipelago, which had long been linked to the Silk Route. Traders from various places arrived and traded at ports that supplied the commodity, initiated by the Portuguese from the west and the Spanish from the east, from the perspective of the Indonesian archipelago (Reid 2012, Meilink Roelofs 2016). The Spanish arrived in the Maluku Islands via the Philippines, sailing from the American continent (Vlekke 2008).

In the Indonesian archipelago, US shipping and trade faced intense competition, particularly from the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, or VOC), founded in 1602, until the Dutch East Indies government emerged in 1800. This fear of competition is evident in the explanation of BHM Vlekke (2008) that "The competition that was feared did not only come from Britain. The first Dutch Minister (sic.) to the United States, Pieter van Berckel, soon after, in New York, reported that American shipowners were equipping ships for trade with the East Indies. It is true that this term encompassed all of South and East Asia, and that most American ships were destined for Bombay or Canton. Still, some scheduled their voyages in such a way that they could stop at the port of Batavia before continuing to China." J. De Hullu (1988) also describes a similar situation regarding this concern.

The early US shipping industry gained opportunities to develop in maritime trade traffic in Asia, including the Indonesian archipelago, not unrelated to the political turmoil and unrest in Europe during Napoleon Bonaparte's wars as part of the French Revolution, which had been ongoing since 1789. The US was neutral in the conflict between France and Britain and their allies, including the Netherlands. However, US ships also sometimes suffered losses as targets of attacks from both sides who suspected its neutrality. Another competitor was the British East India Trading Company, the EIC (*East Indian Company*).

After the last US war with Britain, often called the War of 1812, the country's economy entered a period of rapid development. An idea arose that national resilience depended on agricultural economics and a balanced manufacturing together with a strong military. Infrastructure transportation received significant attention because, when war constraints were the most significant problem and mobilising strength was the main challenge, the condition was inadequate. Then the idea of economic nationalism flourished, reflected in the establishment of a national bank, protective tariffs, and internal improvements (Tangkilian 2007: 102).

Simultaneously, the Movement Westward arose. The movement caused various changes, including in the economic field. It's important to note that the cultivation and exploration of natural resources drove economic change. The new settlement area expanded, as did the market opening. Although it reached its lowest point during the Panic of 1819, the American economy showed an overall upward trend. Throughout the 19th century, the US experienced widespread territorial expansion, the arrival of labourers, entrepreneurs, and capital, and the adoption of high technology, which became a strong foundation for its rapid economic growth, driven by European, African, and Asian immigrants.

In the middle of the development, overseas and international commerce still received attention. It took several forms. First, it happened in a direct relation, in the form of import.

The American domestic market demanded the commodity from incoming ships which came from various ports all over the world, including from the Indonesian islands.

Secondly, it dealt with a way of re-export. This network is almost similar to the former way. However, the goods that arrived were not absorbed by domestic demand; they were reshipped to other destinations, including Europe. The re-export was ongoing with foreign ships that came. Of course, the first and second patterns are often combined and executed simultaneously. The Salem Trading networks belonged to the state of Massachusetts, with Kuala Batu on the western part of Northern Sumatra Island, and Rhode Island, with Batavia, were showing the second pattern. A note from the British fortress, i.e. the Fort of Marlborough in Bengkulu, revealed "The calculated annual quantity of pepper exported from the district of Soosoo (*Suku*), which consists of several subordinate stations, amounts to the considerable supply of tons 5,000. Of this quantity, the large proportion is purchased by Americans for species and constitutes a particular export from America into several ports of the Mediterranean and Levant." (Bastin 1965: 132, 133). Susu was a pepper port located around Kuala Batu.

Bengkulu's Trade with the Americans

The American shipping arrival in Bengkulu is found in the following description: "... It might be Captain Jonathan Carnes who, while at the port of Bencoolen in 1793, heard that pepper grew wild on the northern coast of Sumatra. He whispered the word to the Salem owner, who sent him back in the schooner *Rajah* with only four guns and ten men. Eighteen months later, Jonathan Carnes returned to Salem with a cargo of pepper in bulk, the first direct importation, and cleared seven hundred per cent on the voyage." (Paine, nd)

That initial voyage paved the way for other voyages, namely: " When he made ready to go again, keeping his business strictly to himself, other owners tracked him clear to Bencoolen, but there he vanished in the *Rajah*, and his secret with him, until he reappeared with another precious cargo of pepper. When, at length, he shared this trade with other vessels, it meant that Salem controlled the pepper market of Sumatra and for many years supplied a large part of the world's demand." (Paine, n.d).

The description of the early relationship between the USA and Bengkulu originated from the long voyage of Jonathan Carnes from Boston, Massachusetts, specifically Salem. The description is as follows: "In the first decade of its existence as a nation, the United States was starting to make an impact on the global pepper trade. The country's involvement began in Salem, a small port north-west of Boston, Massachusetts. Here, an enterprising sea captain named Jonathan Carnes set out on a voyage to the East Indies in 1793, with no intent other than to explore possible areas of trade. While in Sumatra, Carnes learned of pepper. He was able to acquire a small amount of the spice but did not visit the ports where larger quantities were available. On his return home, his ship was wrecked off the coast of Bermuda, but he eventually reached Salem, all the while keeping his knowledge of the pepper ports secret. He secured financial backing and built a large ship." (Czarra 2009)

Two years later, he sailed again with a different ship, i.e., *Rajah*, as explained next: "In 1795, he set sail on the 130-ton *Rajah*, with four guns, a ten-man crew and a secret destination. The cargo consisted of two pipes (a pipe is equivalent to four barrels) of brandy, 58 cases of gin and 12 tons of iron, along with tobacco, salmon and other items. Eighteen

months later, the ship returned with a bulk of pepper, reaping a 700 per cent profit. Others in Salem were curious, but they were not able to determine where Carnes had gone.” (Czarra 2009).

However, like termites following the light and treasure hunters chasing the shadow of riches, other voyages followed, until they reached Bengkulu. The explanation is “ A few set out for Bencoolen (Bengkulu, the present-day capital of Indonesia's Bengkulu province), and it was not until 1801 and 1802 that the ship *America*, under the respective commands of Captain John Crowninshield and Captain Jeremiah Briggs, brought to Salem 815,792 pounds of pepper and the following year 760,000 pounds of the spice. The aggregate duty paid on these two cargoes was \$103,874.03. Salem was to be the pepper port of note, on both sides of the Atlantic, for the first half of the nineteenth century. (Czarra 2009)

Subsequently, Salem's relations with the west coast of Sumatra became increasingly lively and intensified. The following account illustrates these circumstances and developments: " For over three-quarters of a century after the onset of this trade, almost a thousand voyages were made between Salem and Sumatra in the East Indies. When these early eastward-bound expeditions set out from Salem to venture around the Cape of Good Hope, the geography skills of the seafarers were rough and untested. Early voyages in search of pepper could have been to India or farther east. Each Salem sea captain had to learn their own way. As it turned out, the eventual destination and focus of the pepper trade centred on Sumatra.” (Czarra 2009).

The US presence and involvement in the pepper spice trade in Bengkulu posed a competition and threat to the British trading company, the EIC (East Indian Company), which had previously established its power and trading network on the west coast of Sumatra, including Bengkulu. During the US War of Independence, which was fought against British colonialism and imperialism, a number of colonial rebels were exiled to Bengkulu and employed in pepper cultivation (Fichter 2010).

The circumstances and development were described in the next depiction: “Seeing the American pepper trade in action, Bencoolen officials increased their purchases of pepper from native Sumatrans. After a trial run in 1799, in 1801, the Bencoolen commissioner proposed to Henry Dundas expanding pepper purchases so as ‘to take the pepper trade out of the hands of the Americans, & to transport the foreign pepper to London.’ Bencoolen bought a stock of Sumatran pepper in 1804, sending it to London, invoiced at 9 pence a pound. This was supposed to ‘exclude’ Americans from Sumatran trade, thereby protecting ‘the interests of the Company and the nation.’ But continued American trade with Sumatra increased the Atlantic pepper supply, driving down prices. By 1806, U.S. traders were underselling the Company in Europe, with London pepper prices falling to less than what Bencoolen had invoiced” (Fichter 2010).

The pepper trade was a US compensation for the lack of a vibrant and profitable market for Chinese tea and Indian textiles. However, a trade war apparently ensued between the two parties. Britain purchased pepper in bulk from Bengkulu to stockpile in London, thus serving as a reserve commodity for supply to European markets, competing with US supplies. Conversely, the US also set off British competition in the tea and textile trade, though not yielding the expected benefits, in an effort to prevent British control of the east-west supply chain (Fichter 2010).

Further information about shipping and US trade with Bengkulu, mixed with West Sumatra. Shipping and trade were, of course, ongoing from time to time, too, regarding the decline in trading pepper in Kuala Batu and the surrounding areas. Salem traders monopolized the trading until 1846. Since the 1830s, West Sumatra and Bengkulu have been under the Netherlands Indies. Therefore, American commercial interests had to deal with Dutch colonial policies. Fluctuations marked American import and export because the Netherlands' ships had priority in the harbour and in trade. However, the US ships had no other options. Slowly but surely, since the 1840s, Salem's pepper trade with West Sumatra has tended to decline and ultimately disappeared.

In addition, the trading report in 1850 and 1857 (de Bruyne-Kops 1858) presents a description of trading US ships on the west coast of Sumatra Island, which in the Dutch East Indies reports was categorized as an area outside Java and Madura, or called *Buitenbezittingen* from 1846 to 1853. In Bengkulu and West Sumatra in 1846, 1847, 1848, 1850, 1851, 1852 and 1853, the arrival of US ships is listed in the table below:

TABLE 1. US Ship Arrival and Departure Table in Bengkulu and West Sumatra 1846-1853

Year	Arrival		Departure		Import Value (guilders)	Export Value (guilders)
	Number of ships	Load (tons)	Number of ships	Load (tons)		
1846	2	437	2	446	11,231	147,941
1847	--	--	--	--	--	--
1848	2	87	8	987,50	3.162	6.815
1850	3	641	3	535,50	2.478	70.407
1851	1	197,50	1	197,50	531	182.162
1852	2	387	2	387	706	227.000
1853	3	680	5	1.056	94.400	538.108

Source: de Bruyne-Kops 1858.

The table above shows that the number of ships did not significantly affect cargo volume. Furthermore, the cargo volume was not directly related to the value of imports and exports, as a large cargo volume indicates a disproportionate value. There was one year without a figure, for which the exact reason was unclear, whether due to obstacles preventing the arrival and departure of US ships. However, this gap could mean that no US ships arrived or departed that year without an apparent reason. There was also no information for 1849, with a similar possibility.

The difference between the number of incoming and outgoing ships related to the usage of the US flag appeared, for example, in 1853 when arriving ships amounted to three while those that departed were as many as five ships. Trading ships could use a certain country flag in accordance with circumstances, such as rented, bought or chartered, going to a certain destination. The Dutch East Indies Customs observed in detail and took notes on these conditions.

The lowest cargo was recorded in 1848 at 87 tons, and the highest in 1853 at 680 tons. The total number of arrivals during those 7 years was 13 ships, with the highest number being three ships each in 1850 and 1853, and the lowest being one ship in 1851, with the exception of the year's blank information. A surge in cargo was recorded in 1850 at 641 tons from 87 tons in 1848, an increase of 454 tons, excluding the unlisted year 1849. Then, in the following year, it decreased to 443.50 tons, which increased again in subsequent years, reaching 680 tons.

In the explanation of departures, it appeared that the total number of ships departing was 21, with the highest number occurring in 1848 with eight boats and the lowest in 1851 with only one ship departing, with the exception of 1847 and 1849, which were empty and without information. The highest load was 1853, amounting to 1,056 tons, and the lowest was 197.50 tons in 1851, except for 1847 and 1849, which were empty and had no information. The spike in the number of cargoes occurred from 1852 to 1853, amounting to 669 tons, followed by a sharp decrease of 338 tons from 1850 to 1851.

The highest import value was in 1853, and the lowest was in 1851. The highest spike occurred in 1853 from the previous year at 93,694 guilders, and a sharp decline occurred in 1850 from 1848 at 452 guilders, with the omission of 1849, which did not exist. The highest export value was in 1853 at 538,108 guilders, and the lowest was in 1848 at 6,816 guilders. A sharp increase occurred in 1853 from the previous year, at 311,108 guilders, equal to the rise in import value. Meanwhile, the largest decline in export value occurred in 1850 from the last two years because the year between them is not stated, namely, 141,126 guilders. The trade balance showed a surplus rather than a deficit. The highest surplus was 443,708 guilders in 1853, and the lowest surplus was 3,653 guilders in 1848, which indeed showed the lowest import and export values in a span of approximately 7 years.

Within the vibrant, fluctuating, and evolving spice trade network, the US influence and impact on Bengkulu did not appear to be profound. Throughout the 19th century, the United States experienced significant development and change across various fields, in line with its Westward Movement, which expanded its territory from a third of its current size at the time of independence to its current size. Furthermore, the US did not display imperialistic ambitions and foreign policies on the international stage until the late 19th century, when it took over the Philippines archipelago from Spanish rule. Therefore, US interactions with Bengkulu focused more on economic and trade interests, particularly within the Spice Route network. However, the abundant profits from this trade contributed to the development of the Westward Movement, which became the foundation for the country's agrarian, transportation, energy, and high-tech industrialization revolutions from the late 19th century, when the frontier closed, to the early 20th century.

Bengkulu experienced greater influence and impact from the presence and power of the British when Lieutenant Governor General Sir T.S. Raffles was in power and remained there for some time, until the Treaty of London 1824. Thereafter, Bengkulu was under the colonial rule of the Dutch East Indies, which had a more profound impact and influence, such as territorialization, bureaucratization, agrarian commercialization, taxation, monetization, militarization, sanitation, introduction of health, education, literacy and others in the context of modernization and westernization. Meanwhile, Bengkulu's relationship with the US was limited to a trade network that was sporadic. Nevertheless, the brief explanation above about Bengkulu's interaction with the US is a first step for further exploration and explanation based on the findings of more in-depth research.

British activity then shifted to Tumasik Island, where Raffles established and developed a settlement that evolved into a transit city. This city, Singapore, was located at the tip of the Malay Peninsula (now Malaysia) on the Strait of Malacca, a vital shipping and trade hub (emporium) in Southeast Asia. American shipping and trade were not immune to this commercial dynamic. Soon, the city became a key destination for American shipping and trade in the region. Thus, Bengkulu's role was replaced by this trading network.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The United States gained independence in 1776. As an independent nation, the US government needed to build relationships and networks of interests on the international stage. Therefore, the US immediately took part in global networks and dynamics, not only with Europe but also with Asia. US capitalists and business-people did not remain idle; they also participated in these efforts. Since then, US shipping and trade have expanded to various corners of the globe, including the Indonesian archipelago.

The United States is one of the nations that were late to enter the dynamics of the Spice Route, which was full of competition, conflict, and profit, especially after Western nations emerged and became involved, bringing networks and relationships of monopoly and imperialism. US shipping and trade entered the region and subsequently played an important role in that dynamic in western Indonesia, namely Sumatra, especially its west coast. Their presence, US sailors and traders, received a relatively good reception from the local community. The type of spice produced in that region, which attracted significant attention, was pepper. This commodity had strong demand and a robust market until the early 19th century, especially in Europe and America.

The first trading powers to establish themselves in the region included the Netherlands (VOC) and England (EIC). The US explored and exploited the economic resources of the pepper plant amidst competition with these two maritime powers. Through diplomacy and a friendly approach, the US entered the region's trade network, though not without obstacles and challenges.

The shipping route to this rich spice region passed through Bengkulu. The area was part of the British East India Company's shipping and trading network in the Strait of Malacca and the Indonesian archipelago. Bengkulu had a strategic stopover and coastal environment along the west coast of Sumatra, where pepper was a highly sought-after commodity, even by maritime traders willing to resort to any means to obtain it.

Bengkulu was a transit point for US shipping and trade on the west coast of Sumatra, particularly with the Kuala Batu area and its surroundings, the largest pepper-producing region. The US once dominated and monopolized the pepper exchange and trade in the region, generating significant profits that enabled the cities involved in this lucrative network to flourish within the increasingly dynamic economic differentiation. The dynamics of US commercial interaction with the west coast of Sumatra occurred during a crucial period in the country's history and development, known as the Westward Movement, which saw its territory and states multiply, from 13 states at the time of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 to 50 in the 19th century.

The profits from the spice trade with Sumatra flowed into the economic networks and wheels of several cities across several US states, such as Salem, Massachusetts. The city's development and prosperity were inextricably linked to the profits from the Spice Route. The

city's infrastructure and livelihoods were heavily dependent on the spice trade. Pepper's role in American society, both for consumption and commerce, which emerged and developed during the colonial period under the British Empire's colonial trade network through the activities of the East India Company (EIC), continued and expanded after independence, reaching far-flung production areas across the ocean, as far as Sumatra in the Indonesian archipelago.

REFERENCES

- Bastin, John, ed. (1965). *The British in West Sumatra (1685—1825): A Selection of Documents, mainly from the East India Company Records Preserved in the India Office Library, Commonwealth Relations Office*. University of Malaya Press.
- de Bruyn Kops(1957/ 1958). G.F. *Statistiek van den Handel en Scheepvaart op Java en Madura sedert 1825*. 2 jilid. Lange & Co.
- Czarra, Fred (2009). *Spices: A Global History*. Reaktion Books Ltd.
- Fichter, James R (2010). *So Great a Profit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-American Capitalism*. Cambridge. Harvard University Press.
- Financial Archives, Collection of the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia
- De Hullu, J. (1988). " On the Rise of the Indies Trade of the United States of America as Competitor of the East India Company in the Period 1786—1790," in: MAP Meilink Roeloofs et al. *Dutch Authors on Asian History*. Foris Publication.
- Meilink-Roelofs, MAP (2016). *Persaingan Eropa & Asia di Nusantara Sejarah Perniagaan. 1500—1630*. Kompas Gramedia.
- Paine, Ralph n.d. *The Old Merchant Marine. A Chronicle of American Ships and Sailors in: www.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg*. Accessed March 4, 2024). Thus, the valuable mark of pepper that the famous Yale University established on profit from trading commodities (www.frontiercoop.com/learn/sawy/pepper.html)
- Reid, Anthony (2011). *Asia Tenggara dalam Kurun Niaga 1450-1680 Volume 2: Global Trade Networks*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.
- Vlekke, Bernard HM (2008). *Nusantara Sejarah Indonesia*. Kepustakaan Modern Gramedia.

BAWEAN ISLAND: THE ROLE OF SMALL ISLANDS IN THE JAVA SEA'S SPICE ROUTE

Hery Priswanto^{1,a)}, Muhammad Fauzi Hendrawan^{2,b)}, Khairil Anawar^{3,c)} Ahmad Surya Ramadhan^{4,d)}, Muslim Dimas KD^{5,e)}, R. Nazriyah^{6,f)}, Abdul Halim^{7,g)}

¹⁻²*Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional;*

Jl. Gatot Subroto No 10 Jakarta Selatan 12710

³*Dinas Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif, Kebudayaan, Pemuda dan Olah Raga Kabupaten Gresik;*

Jl. Dr. Wahidin Sudiro Husodo No 127 Gresik Jawa Timur 61121

⁴⁻⁵*Sentra Selam Jogja,*

Jl. Padega Marta No.52 Yogyakarta 55281

⁶⁻⁷*Institut Agama Islam Hasan Jufri Bawean*

Kebonagung Lebak Sangkapura Bawean Gresik 61181

Corresponding author:

priswanto.balaryk@gmail.com

fauzi.hendrawan@gmail.com

ilingbeku73@gmail.com

madha.ramadhan@gmail.com

muslim.dimas03@gmail.com

ririndadria@gmail.com

tangguhpejuang479@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The archipelago is located in a strategic position between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, with strong maritime characteristics in cultural exchanges and economic activities. Since the beginning of the century AD, port cities have sprung up in the Indonesian archipelago, gaining political power over trade in the surrounding area and growing into regional and international maritime trade centres. These port cities became centres of maritime trade, emerging as important regional hubs for the collection and distribution of goods. These port cities are also the driving force of economic activity in the areas under their influence. Most of these port cities were located on maritime trade routes that had developed before the arrival of Europeans. They became a political force that regulated and shaped the development of trade networks in the surrounding seas and inland areas. Bawean Island is one of the islands located in the Java Sea, geographically strategically. It served as a transit point for sea transportation in the past, as well as a trade and shipping hub in the Java Sea, alongside major ports such as Semarang, Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya. The purpose of writing this article is to find out the location of Bawean Island and its role in the spice route in the archipelago in the past by comparing port cities on the North Coast of Java Island. Data collection was conducted through reference studies on Bawean Island and maritime activities in the archipelago. Based on archaeological research, various traces were found on the mainland of Bawean Island and in the surrounding waters. These archaeological traces are represented by artifact data, including scattered foreign ceramics in fragmentary or intact form, originating from China, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Monumental data on Bawean Island include a colonial administrative office and its port in Sangkapura, as well as two shipwreck sites that provide information on past shipping and maritime activities on Bawean Island.

Keywords: Bawean Island, maritime archaeology, ports, ceramics, Java Sea

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with a *heartsea*, a sea area comprising the Java Sea, Flores Sea, and Banda Sea. One of the seas that has played an important role in past trade is the Java Sea (Lapian, 1991). The Java Sea itself is a shallow sea covering about 310,000 km² and formed during the Ice Age, about 12,000 years before Christ. This region tends to have smaller, calmer waves and is influenced by the western and eastern monsoon winds, making it favourable for cruises in the past. Sailors from various countries, such as China, Arabia, India, and Europe, come to Southeast Asia, especially the archipelago region, to trade for commodities. The commodities they target are not only gold and other precious metals, but also forest products, such as spices like pepper, cloves, and cinnamon, which thrive in the eastern region of the archipelago. Sailors pass through the Strait of Malacca into the Java Sea to reach the eastern region of the archipelago. This route developed from the sixth century to the beginning of the seventeenth century because it was known in the market as a provider of spices for shipment to Europe by land or sea. (Reid, 2011). So the path is known as the Spice Route.

The Spice Route is known for the trade routes that connected spice producers with markets in various parts of the world. This line has existed for thousands of years before Christ and has become the main road in the trade of spices such as pepper, cloves, cinnamon, and others. The Spice Route, in addition to its important role in the history of world trade, also served as a conduit for the spread of culture, religion, and technology among the nations along it. The Spice Route helped expand relations between nations in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. (Marihandono et al., 2019) The Java Sea, which lies on the Spice Route, has several small islands that were strategically located along past shipping routes, such as the Karimun, Seribu, Bawean, Masalembu, Kangean, and Sapudi-Raas Islands. These small islands can be categorized as supporters for kingdoms that developed on large islands such as Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Bali. Shipping technology in the past relied entirely on wind gusts for propulsion, requiring transit places to increase supplies and provide clean water for the boat crew and passengers (Koestoro, 1995). As time goes by, the intensity of sailors who come is getting higher, causing a reciprocal relationship between local islanders and sailors. (Priswanto, 2020). The evidence of mutual is seen on one of the small islands, which has quite complex archaeological remains indicating the sailors' stopover. The island is Bawean Island, which is located north of the coastline of Java Island, and is included in the administrative area of Gresik Regency.

The research conducted by the Yogyakarta Archaeological Centre began in 1986 and resumed from 2015 to 2018. From the research, archaeological remains from the prehistoric period, such as fossil fragments of stegodon and stone tools, as well as the Hindu-Buddhist to colonial period, such as bronze Buddha statues, mahakala statues, mosque buildings, shipwrecks, colonial port areas, ceramics, and Chinese and European foreign currencies. From these findings across Bawean Island, archaeological data can serve as a guide to uncover the role of Bawean Island in the spice trade during the archipelago's classic period. Based on the above explanation, the focus of the interesting problems to be discussed in this article is:

1. What are the various archaeological data that remain on Bawean Island that can show its role in the Spice Trail in the Java Sea?
2. What is the role of Bawean Island in the activities of the Spice Route in the Java Sea?

METHODOLOGY

Using historical archaeological research methods, this article will collect data from historical sources supported by material cultural data (Archaeology). Data collection was conducted through archaeological surveys and searches of printed and online sources. Archaeological surveys were carried out on land and in the waters of Bawean Island. Archaeological surveys are carried out on land and also underwater. In-depth interviews assist land surveys with informants who are felt to have more information about the data. In-depth interviews are also conducted with cultural actors who are still on the island. Underwater surveys are carried out using underwater archaeological methods, with specialised auxiliary equipment and standard operational procedures established in underwater archaeology. So, in fulfilling these procedures, underwater surveys require skilled human resources and supporting tools. In the survey, recording was carried out as much in detail as possible, both manually and digitally.

The literature review focused on the role of small islands in the Java Sea in spice production. Digital online search for historical archives through pages that provide historical archives. The collected data is then classified to facilitate analysis. After analysis, conclusions can be drawn according to the existing formula. The results of this research are then published both popularly and scientifically for academics and interested stakeholders.

VARIETY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA ON BAWEAN ISLAND

Foreign Ceramics

Foreign ceramics are the most massive archaeological finds found almost evenly in settlements and several beaches of Bawean Island. These ceramics can be identified as originating from several countries, including China, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and Europe. Chinese ceramics are more commonly found in fragmentary form on beaches and in the middle of residential areas. Identify the shape of Chinese ceramics in the form of plates, large and small bowls, spoons, jars, and medicine bottles. The chronological analysis of the ceramic finds dates back to the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Based on the shape, technology, and style of ceramics, it can be seen that the ceramics found have many similarities with those from the Singhasari and Majapahit sites in Trowulan, with the popular colour of seladon green for monochrome and the Qingbai type (white-blue) for polychrome. Based on its shape, it is identified as dominated by types of household appliances.

The results of the analysis of the findings of ceramic fragments on Bawean Island were carried out by Setyawati as follows (Setyawati, 1996):

TABLE 1. Variety Of Foreign Ceramic Fragments In Bawean Island (Source: Setyawati,1996)

Area Sampling	Country of Origin							Total
	China			Thai 16-17	Vietnam 13-15	Europe 19-20	Japan 19-20	
	Yuan	Ming	Ching					
	12-13	13-15	16-20					
Sawah Mulya	13	130	93	3	11	39	22	311
Kota Kusuma	3	63	87	0	0	38	4	195
Sido Gedong	5	54	56	0	1	71	5	192
Batu	13	320	77	13	3	32	6	464

Teluk Dalam	39	363	404	10	21	209	22	1068
Kepuh Teluk	40	289	394	0	20	137	18	900
Diponggo								
Total	115	1219	1111	26	56	526	77	3130
%	3,67	38,94	35,50	0,83	1,78	16,60	2,46	100

Foreign ceramics found in their original form in Bawean are mostly crocks, found in almost all coastal villages and the middle part of the island, which are currently mostly not functional and are more often rolled in the yard. Based on the physical characteristics of the crocks found on Bawean Island, it can be identified as Chinese Martavani crocks and Thai Sawankhalok, which date from the period around the XIII-XV centuries. This art style is thought to have been influenced by the ceramic art developed in the Khmer region during the XII-XIII centuries AD and in Vietnam. It's just that Vietnamese ceramics were not traded commodities, so they were rarely found in Indonesia. (Miksic, 2013). Sawankhalok crock ceramics found on Bawean Island are made of stoneware, with a dominant dark brown to blackish glaze and ornamental scratch techniques in the form of irregular geometric lines around the shoulders or squiggly lines, a characteristic of crock ceramics from Khmer and Northern Thailand.



Figure 1. The Varieties Of Foreign Ceramics Found On Bawean Island (Source: Author, 2017)

Various Shapes of Tombstone

One form of archaeological evidence of the development of Islam on Bawean Island is grave tombstones. From the results of field observations of old tombstones, it can be known that the raw materials and basic shape of the tombstones used are andesite stones with flat shapes and maces, coral reefs that merge between jirat and tombstones, ironwood with a flat base shape, and granite stones with flat base shapes and maces. Tombstones made of andesite stone, which are generally flat and mace-shaped, have sub-variants in shape and decoration. Flat-shaped headstones generally do not have the crown element of the observed headstone. The footsteps of the tombstone, which is a planting field, are usually not followed

thoroughly. The waist of the tombstone is a horizontal line consisting of one or two parallel lines. The body of the headstone is made straight or has a side decoration. On the tombstone, there are tumpal, geometric, and floral decorations. While on the shoulders of the headstone, some have curves and some have a straight cut, which is impressive because they do not have a shoulder part.

The tombstone, made of andesite, has a mace shape with a cylindrical body and a square-planed leg. One or two horizontal lines form the waist of the tombstone. Some tombstones at the waist are equipped with antefixes at all four corners. The body of the tombstone has a cylindrical and octagonal plan, with a small base and a larger top. The top of the headstone has a cylindrical and octagonal plan, mirroring the body's shape, and angular arches that give the impression of flower petals. Meanwhile, the portion of the tombstone from the shoulders to the neck is elevated and sometimes decorated with an octagonal geometric motif. The crown of the tombstone, found in good condition, is tapered with half-inflated petals.

Headstones made of ironwood were found in a flat form. The footsteps of the tombstone, which is a planting field, are generally not observed thoroughly. The waist of the tombstone is a horizontal line consisting of one or two parallel lines. The tombstone body has a side decoration in the form of a leaf-tendril motif carving, which is thinner than the body of the tombstone. On the body of the tombstone, there are tumpal, geometric, and floral decorations, and Arabic inscriptions on a small part of the population data. Meanwhile, the shoulders of the headstone are made obliquely upwards on the middle side. The crown of the tombstone is in the form of a tendril leaf motif.

The granite tombstones found on Bawean Island have so far no inscription. The pattern of the formation of a flat granite tombstone is in the form of symmetrical curves on both sides, which at the same time become a marker of the legs, waist, body, shoulders, and crown of the tombstone. Meanwhile, the mace-type tombstone is cylindrical, with the marker of each part the same as the flat-shaped one. Granite tombstones, said to have been brought to Bawean Island, are Malay tombstones. Granite stone raw materials similar to tombstones are not found on the mainland of Bawean Island. Meanwhile, the same shape and material as this tombstone are widespread in the Malay Peninsula, which has abundant granite.

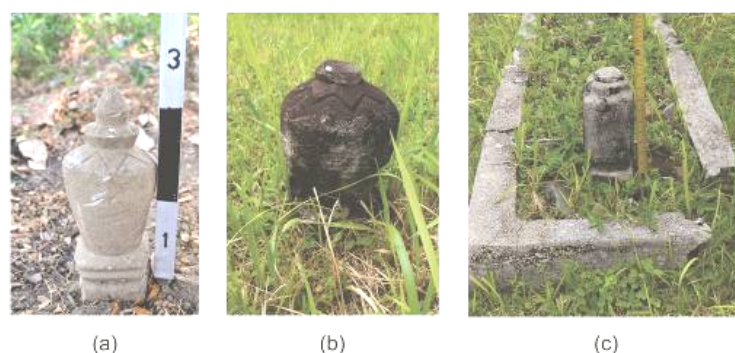


FIGURE 2. Ancient Tombstone on Bawean Island

Ancient Tombstone from Sawahmulya, Sangkapura; (b) and (c) Ancient Tombstone from Kepuh Teluk, Tambak (Source: Author, 2017)

Cannons

Ancient cannons are also found on Bawean Island. One of these ancient cannons is of the type "*lela/rentaka*" belonging to Ali Masyhar's family in Sawahmulya Sangkapura Village. The lela cannon is a slender, about 1-meter-long cannon with a barrel centerline of 5-10 cm, made of iron. Due to its small size and sleekness, the lela cannon can be rotated on its mount. In addition to the lela-type cannon on Bawean Island, a "canon" type cannon was also found, which is now in the offices of Koramil Sangkapura and Tambak. This cannon is larger than a lela cannon. It is shaped like a length of about 1.5 meters and a central line of about 20-30 cm. To facilitate its movement, this cannon is placed on a pair of wheels. When placed in a fortress, these cannons are placed in a firing hole in the upper wall of the bastion. When placed on a warship, this type of cannon is placed in the firing holes on the left and right hulls of the ship. The bullet is in the shape of an iron ball with a center line of about 10 cm.



Figure 3. The Variety Of Cannons From Bawean (Source: Author, 2017)

Coins

Archaeological data on ancient coins (*numismatic*) was obtained in Batu Sendi, Sidogedungbatu, with as many as 235 coins. The coins found, from 1858 to 1945, were made of silver, and the tone was made of bronze, with a centre line size of 1.6cm to 3.1cm. Looking at the two sides, the currency is a Dutch coin currency (*Nederlands-Indie*). There is also a Chinese kepeng currency with a square hole in the middle. Made of bronze material.



Figure 4. The Variety Of Coins From Bawean (Source: Author, 2027)

Shipwreck

Data on shipwrecks in the waters of Bawean Island were found in two places, namely shipwrecks on the coast of Gili Island in Sidogedungbatu (Sangkapura District) and shipwrecks sinking on the seabed in the waters of Nusa Island, Telukjatidawang village (Tambak District). The identification of the two shipwrecks was carried out after diving at both locations, resulting in a graphic reconstruction of the shipwrecks during underwater surveys. Two steamship wrecks that were found in the shallow sea on the west side (Karang Kakapal) and east of Bawean Island (Ghusong Gili) were successfully identified by Muhammad Taufik as the SS Bengal, belonging to Gellatly, Hankey, Sewell and Co, which was British-flagged and sank west of Bawean in 1885 (Taufik, 2020). Meanwhile, the one in Ghusong Gili was identified as the SS Baron Bentinck, a NISM ship that sank in 1881.

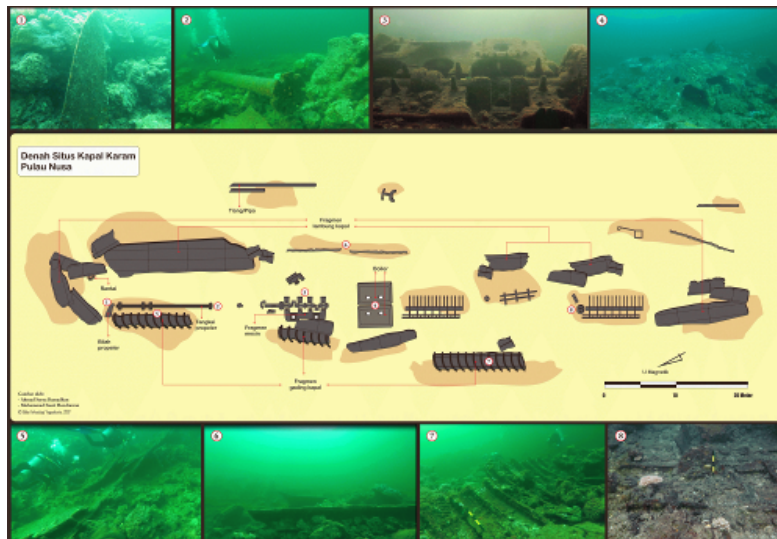


Figure 5. Wreckage of the SS Bengal Bawean (Source: Author, 2017)

Old Port Area

The old pier can still be found in front of the Sangkapura boarding house. The condition has been damaged, leaving a length of 420 meters. At the end of the pier, it has broken,

leaving iron structures and piles. To the south of the pier is an old breakwater structure that has also been damaged. The structure stretches for 400 meters with a southwest-northeast orientation. The adhesive used to make the breakwater is a mixture of limestone and beach sand.



Figure 6. Condition of the colonial-era port in Bawean (Source: Author, 2017)

Battery Type Fortress Structure

In general, forts are built to serve as shelters and to withstand enemy attacks. In its development, it also functions as a centre of activities, including offices, places of worship, hospitals, and residences, and is used to store commodities and other items as needed. In addition, the existence of forts such as those in Southeast Sulawesi, for example, the number of forts built shows that the existence of these forts not only shows the glory of the kingdom and sultanate at that time in terms of defence architecture, but it also shows the development and complexity of increasingly modern life in Southeast Sulawesi. (Tamiuddin, 2023, hal. 44).

Based on its shape and size (Mansyur, 2011, hal. 26), forts can be grouped into four types, namely: 1. *Pegger*: is a fort whose simple shape is only equipped with a perimeter wooden fence. 2. *Battery/beukery*: a small defensive building that stands alone to place several cannons or weapons, generally in the shape of a semicircle and a rectangle with a size of about 4 x 4 meters by a height of 4 meters. 3. *Redoute*: a fortress that serves as a defense is larger when compared to the *buttery* which is about 8 to 10 meters, square in shape to place the cannons. This type is generally developed into a complete fortress. 4. *Groote forten/Kasteelen*: defensive buildings are generally square or round. This type of fort is larger than a *Klein fort*, which is equipped with various facilities, such as offices, military barracks, churches, hospitals, and residences. This type is generally the embryo of a city, such as Font Rotterdam in Makassar and Nieuw Victoria in Ambon.

The construction of a fortress is a manifestation of the defence structure of a region. The fort of Daun village has a function as a defence system against enemies who will attack through the coastal route, as well as a monitoring/reconnaissance of the situation, especially if there is a foreign ship that comes to Bawean Island, which is now a historical site or heritage site that is a silent witness to the development of the Bawean civilization. On Bawean Island, there are several forts. In addition to the fort in Daun Village, there are Dutch-era forts in West Pudakit Village and Tambak District. Pesanggrahan, which is currently being converted

into an inn, was originally a fortress, then dismantled and replaced with a resident assistant's house. (Safitri, 2023, pg. 43).

Based on the survey results of the Daun Village fort, the remains of the structure, in the form of a stone arrangement built on a hill, were administratively located in the hamlet of East Alas, Daun Village, Sangkapura District, Bawean Island. Next to the fort, archaeological remains were found, namely two graves of a husband and wife from Sulawesi. Around the tomb, trees of enormous size are overgrown, especially teak trees deliberately planted by the community. From the observations made, it can be said that the fort is neither maintained nor touched by the government or the local community; it is now a historical site or heritage site, a silent witness to the development of the Bawean civilisation. It is a tentative suspicion that the fort is the remnant of coastal artillery that once existed on the eastern side of Bawean Island.



Figure 7. Stone Structure from Daun Village, Sangkapura, Bawean (Source: Author,2025)

Based on the image above, if you look at the shape of the Daun village fort, it can be grouped as a fortress with a type of Battery/beukery because architecturally this fortress is small and stands alone, semicircular, with a width of about 2 – 3 meters, with a height of 1.5 – 2 meters.

Bawean Island in the Archipelago Spice Route

From the above explanation, it is clear that the archaeological evidence indicates the presence of foreign residents on Bawean Island. Some of the statues and stupas found on Bawean Island, for example, depict the lives of Chinese merchants who not only transited but also settled for long periods and interacted with the local people for generations. This proves that, until now, there are still Chinese and Indian descendants on Bawean Island. In Bawean, there is a special village or settlement called Chinatown. It is likely a Chinese settlement. Chinatown refers to an area inhabited primarily by ethnic Chinese people outside China.

The same thing is also seen in traders from the archipelago (Sumatra and Sulawesi). This evidence can be seen from the existence of a special village/area of the Palembang people in Kotakusuma Village to the south of the Jami' Sangkapura mosque. Even the houses they built

have their characteristics by using the architecture of house buildings (which come from their hometowns) that are different from the house buildings in other villages on Bawean Island. Thus, the existence of Chinese, Indian, Sumatran, and Sulawesi descendants, as well as evidence of cultural influence and assimilation, indicates that these traders had long settled and built a life in Bawean, not just traded. The archaeological remains described above are also sufficient to demonstrate Bawean Island's involvement in the spice route.

The presence of Yuan Dynasty ceramics on Bawean Island can serve as early evidence of sea trade contacts between Chinese traders and Bawean. The trade increased during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. This phenomenon can be read as the influence of the ups and downs of royal politics on the island of Java, where Mataram in Central Java began to fade. Then, the Singhasari in East Java emerged as a new great kingdom. The ups and downs of the kingdom's politics certainly also affect the economy and the markets for both foreign and local products. Thus, Singhasari, which later continued as Majapahit in East Java, emerged as the main hub for trade. The emergence of Singhasari gave rise to a new tendency in Chinese merchant shipping routes, following the west coast of Kalimantan and then heading straight south to the Ports of Leran, Gresik, or Tuban, as described in Ying-lai Sheng-lan. On the shipping route, Bawean Island lies midway between Kalimantan and Tuban, and Leran Gresik was the main port at that time. The route continued to grow increasingly crowded during the Majapahit Kingdom, both at Tuban Port and at Gresik Port, as Leran and Tuban Ports declined. The emergence of the route can also be illustrated through ceramic data, both in its intact and fragmentary forms, found at sites in West Kalimantan, Bawean, and the Singhasari and Majapahit sites in East Java. Ida Bagus Putu Prajna Yogi's research found that every location of the former ancient settlement in Lamandau Regency and West Waringin City Regency contained ceramic artifacts in broken or fragmentary condition, with the oldest ceramics being Chinese ceramics from the Song Dynasty. The youngest ceramics were European products from the late 19th century AD. Based on data from ceramic artifacts and coins found at the two former settlement locations, a chronology was established. The period ranges from the 13th to the 14th centuries AD. (Yogi, 2016) Based on the ceramic findings from the Trowulan site presented by Kusmartono, as shown in the table below:

TABLE. 2. The Quantity and Chronology of Chinese Ceramics in the Nglinguk, Sentonorejo, and Pendopo Agung Sectors (Source: Kusmartono, 1995)

Dinasty	Sektor			Total
	Nglinguk	Sentonorejo	Pendopo Agung	
Song (10-13 M)	114	109	40	263
Yuan (13-14 M)	518	208	240	966
Ming (14-17 M)	147	148	166	461
Qing (17-19 M)	64	133	1	198
Total	843	598	447	1888

The Chinese ceramic finds on the table have similarities with those in West Kalimantan, where the oldest ceramics date to the Song Dynasty. However, the oldest ceramic finds in Bawean are from the Yuan Dynasty. The difference in the dynastic period can be seen in the

fact that Bawean became a port visited by Chinese ceramic traders only from the Yuan Dynasty. The illegal ceramic trade during the Yuan Dynasty was due to the deterioration of Majapahit-China relations during the reign of Raden Wijaya, Jayanegara, and Tribhuanattunggadewi. This condition gave rise to the interpretation of illegal trade carried out through smuggling (Kusmartono, 1995), which was seen as the impact of the government's policy to secure the export of royal ceramics by stopping private export trade (Hadimuljono, 1986). This prevents Chinese merchant ships from unloading ceramic cargoes freely in Majapahit ports such as Tuban, Gresik, and Surabaya, creating opportunities for Bawean's role in the trade. Illegal Chinese ceramic merchant ships may dock at Bawean Port to unload their ceramic cargo, which is then transported by Bawean ships and boats to Majapahit ports. Reinforcing this is the emergence of Yuan ceramics as the oldest finds in limited quantities on Bawean. The lack of Yuan ceramic finds in Bawean can also be read as indicating that Bawean was not the primary market for trade products in that period. Thus, Bawean's role has evolved from a transit port to an entreport.

According to Kusmartono (1995), whether Yuan ceramics were traded to Majapahit in the later period, where the relationship between Majapahit (Hayam Wuruk) and the Chinese Ming Dynasty had improved again, as expired products were purchased at a lower price according to the purchasing power of the Majapahit people, is lacking data support. (Kusmartono, 1995). The Chinese Records written by Wang Da-Yuan from the Yuan Dynasty mention that the type of ceramic popular in Java is the blue-and-white bowl. (Feng and Ming, 1981). The existence of these trade records proves that trade in Chinese ceramics to Java continues, even though political relations between Majapahit and China are strained. Meanwhile, the involvement of Bawean Island as a market in the ceramic trade during the Yuan Dynasty is strengthened by the same record. In the news, it is stated that the *people of Pu Ban* like seladon green ceramics, small ceramics, and jars. (Feng and Ming, 1981). *Pu Ban*, according to some experts such as Adhyatman, Mills, and Groeneveldt, is a Chinese term for Bawean, and in the Malay Peninsula, the Bawean people are called Boyan.

The attraction of Bawean as a market for Chinese ceramic products is also related to the mat products produced by the people of Bawean Island. In Ma Huan's Notes, "Ying-yae Sheng-lan," it is stated that the Majapahit Kingdom widely exported rice and Pandan mats. Meanwhile, Bawean Island is mentioned in the Sorodakan inscription, or the Waringin Pitu Inscription (1447 AD) (Anwar, 2008, pg. 508), as one of the Majapahit domains. So that merchant ships that come to Bawean with a cargo of ceramics will get pandan mat merchandise from Bawean to be traded to China. Bawean pandan mat products are a commodity that has continued to be traded throughout the era of European colonialism over Bawean, and to this day. Woven mats became one of the most traded export commodities in the colonial era. According to Wiseluser, in 1845, the export of mats reached 180,000 to 200,000 pieces, valued at f 60,000.

Furthermore, added that in 1904 and 1905, exports of pandan mats reached 221,680 and 229,856 pieces, respectively. The Dutch's close attention to Bawean pandan mat products is also evident in the establishment of annual production targets for each village and mat-size standards. From the description mentioned above, it can be concluded that mats as export products from Bawean Island are still considered important by the Dutch (Jasper, 2017, pg. 138)

The many finds of crocks, or what are also commonly called jars, as a form of product preferred by the Bawean people, can be interpreted as evidence of the Bawean people's inter-

island trade activities in the past. In the past, Bawean trading boats sailed to Malacca, Mandar in Sulawesi, and Bima in Sumbawa, carrying trade goods such as pandan mats. Meanwhile, martavan jars are more commonly used for storing oil, rice, fish, and other staple foods. (Restiyati, 2020). These large crocks are indeed very suitable for use as containers for supplies in shipping, both for liquids such as water and oil, and for rice, meat, and preserved fruits. The connection between Bawean and Sulawesi based on ceramic data has not yielded a clear picture. The results of Muhemainah's (2012) research on the findings of Chinese ceramics at several sites in South Sulawesi stated that ceramics from the early Sung dynasty around the 12th century AD were found in Luwu Regency (excavations in Tampung Java) and Selayar Regency (the site of the Buki Kingdom, and Bonto Sikuyu), and in the 13th-14th centuries AD. Fragments of the Sung dynasty are found in Luwu, Selayar, Suppa, and Bantaeng. Thai ceramics from the 14th-15th centuries AD are widely found in Suppa and Selayar. Fragments of the Ming dynasty are abundant, and variations, such as the blue-white, chronological Ming, are common in the homes of residents from wild excavations. The results of the research in the form of fragments that exist only come from the late Ming period, the 16th-17th centuries. From a younger period, in Takalar, Gowa, Barru, and Pangkep, large quantities of ceramics were found in the form of buli, ceper plates, water containers, large plates and bowls, approximately between 20-30 cm in size, consisting of fragments of legs, walls, or edges from China (Muhaeminah, 2012). The discovery is located on the East coast of South Sulawesi, which, according to experts' research, is the shipping route to the South to Sumbawa Island, then continued to the West through Lombok, Bali, Panarukan, Situbondo, and Gresik. Based on ceramic research in Sulawesi, there is still insufficient data to describe the shipping route connecting Bawean and Sulawesi.

Spices are among the important commodities that enable Indonesian people to interact with various cross-border nations through global trade. Still, it is not known precisely when these spices were traded to other parts of the world. However, based on evidence from several narratives, it shows that, since the Tang Dynasty (7th-9th centuries), the next was the Sung Dynasty (10th-11th centuries), followed by the Ming Dynasty (13th-14th centuries). At this time, spices had begun to be sought. The influence of spices was not evident in Indonesian history until the 16th century. A fundamental change occurred only when Europeans arrived and sought spices in Indonesia. In its development, the spice trade is not just a commodity trade; it also shapes colonialism and enables the exchange of values and cultural assimilation, ultimately contributing to the shaping of national identity. (Kanumayoso, Bondan; Marihandono, 2016, hal. 19).

Spices such as pepper are widely produced in western Indonesia because the region has a high level of interaction with India, where the plants originate. Meanwhile, cloves were only found in the Maluku Islands in Eastern Indonesia until the 17th century, when they eventually spread to various regions. Although Bawean Island is not the main producer of spices, because of its strategic location, it is very likely to serve as a transit point for merchant ships from various countries seeking shelter and supplies before continuing their journey to their destinations. The results of the study show that Bawean Island plays a significant role in the spice route as a stopover and maritime trade centre, where various commodities, including spices, are traded. The spread of Islam on Bawean Island is also realized through trade routes and the interaction of traders from different parts of the world and regions in the archipelago. In addition, if we follow the 15th-century spice trade route between Indonesian islands, it all boils down to Malacca. The route for cloves and nutmeg runs from the islands of Maluku and

Banda to Makassar on the North Coast of Java, and ends in Malacca. Meanwhile, the pepper trade route is from the Banten and Lampung areas to Malacca, as well as the west coast of Sumatra and Aceh to Malacca. Meanwhile, Bawean Island is one of the islands located on the north shore of Java Island and is very likely to have played a role in spice trade activities.

The headstone, found to bear an inscription, was identified as a tombstone of a particular circle, namely, the tomb of a descendant of a noble family, believed by the community to be the ruler of Bawean. Inscribed headstones were also found on the graves of the Kemas family, who are descendants of Palembang. The tombstone, in the form of ironwood, is made by Bawean, and the ironwood, as a raw material, is imported from Kalimantan. By paying attention to the morphology, the shape follows a basic pattern similar to a flat tombstone made of andesite, and the carved decorative pattern shows similarities to the carved shapes commonly found in traditional Bawean and Dhurung house buildings. So it is pretty convincing that this headstone was produced in Bawean, using raw materials imported from Kalimantan as a trade commodity.

Tombstones made of coral reef materials are structurally integrated with grave jars made from the same material. The coral reef of the sea is shaped like a square plank, arranged in a rectangular pattern, forming a boundary for the grave. The sides of the legs and head are given a raised semicircular arch that functions as a tombstone. Of the two coral reef graves found, only one has an inscription on the outside of the headstone, in Arabic Pegon letters, explaining the date of death of the buried figure. Headstones with coral reef raw materials can be confirmed as Bawean's local products. Coral reefs were also used as raw materials for port piers and breakwater dams during the colonial period. This coral reef raw material can be found throughout the shallow waters of Bawean Island. So it is quite convincing that this grave tombstone jirat has been produced on Bawean Island. The use of coral reefs as tombstones was also observed in the Mandar-type tomb at the Lombeng Susu Majene tomb complex, West Sulawesi. (Rosmawati, 2016). However, the shape of the jirat at the site is more complex than the form of the coral grave found in Bawean. Another difference is the use of several types of tombstones in the Mandar-type grave in Majene, whereas the tomb in Bawean does not use a tombstone. The difference in the shape and character of the grave, while using the same coral reef raw materials, can show an interaction between the people who support the cultures of Mandar Majene and Bawean. These interactions have transmitted knowledge about the source of coral reef raw materials for architectural needs, which, in the realization of cultural artifacts, develop their respective forms according to the concept of local knowledge.

According to Muhaeminah (2000), the trade relations that took place were at the height of South Sulawesi's cultural relations with foreign civilisations. (Tjandrasasmita, n.d.) Identifies that the mountains in the grave jirat found in Sulawesi have similarities in shape to the graves in Java and Madura dating from the 16th and 17th centuries AD.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research on Bawean Island: The Role of Small Islands in the Java Sea in the Spice Route, it can be concluded that the variety of archaeological data that remains on Bawean Island that can show its role in the spice route in the Java Sea is the discovery of artifacts in the form of ceramics, ancient tombstones, colonial port areas, ancient cannons, ancient tombstones that come from outside Bawean and the remains of *exposed wrecks* and *shipwrecks* which is around the waters of Bawean Island, a stone arrangement structure in

Daun Village which is suspected to be a reconnaissance fortress structure; part of the spice trade activity that connects spice producers with markets in other parts of the world. The Java Sea, on the spice route, has small islands with strategic locations. Bawean is one of the islands with quite complex archaeological remains as evidence of sailors' stopovers.

Thus, it can be said that Bawean is an integral part of trade activities on the spice route, playing a role not only as a transit point for traders but also in distributing goods, disseminating culture, and spreading religious ideas and technology. The inclusion of Bawean mats as a commodity, as a positive impact of trade, which was initially only a transit island, made the importance of Bawean even higher to stop by in shipping. The emergence of local products integrated into the market encourages Bawean to become an entity in the next phase.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the BRIN Language and Literature Archaeology Research Organization for funding the research activities of the Program House for the 2025 Fiscal Year.

REFERENCES

- Anwar, K. (2008). Dampak Politis Perdagangan Kuna Antar Pulau Terhadap Pulau Bawean. *Pertemuan Ilmiah Arkeologi IX*.
- Feng, B., & Ming, X. (1981). *Exports of Chinese Porcelains Up to the Yuan Dynasty*. 971.
- Hadimuljono. (1986). Keramik Asing Sawankhalok Yang Ditemukan di Sulawesi Selatan. *Pertemuan Ilmiah Arkeologi (PIA) III*.
- Jasper, J. E. M. P. (2017). *Seni Kerajinan Pribumi di Hindia Belanda. Jilid 1 Anyaman*. Gramedia.
- Kanumayoso, Bondan; Marihandono, J. (2016). *Rempah, jalur rempah, dan dinamika masyarakat Nusantara*. Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan - Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Koestoro, L. P. (1995). *Survei Arkeologi Islam di Pulau Bawean, Jawa Timur*.
- Kusmartono, V. P. . (1995). *MAYORITAS KERAMIK YUAN DI TROWULAN: Kontra Realita Hubungan Majapahit - Cina Pada Abad Ke 13 -15 Masehi*. 1368 M, 22–39.
- Mansyur, syahrudin. (2011). Jejak Tata Niaga Rempah-Rempah Dalam Jaringan Perdagangan Masa Kolonial Di Maluku. *Kapata Arkeologi, VII*(13).
- Marihandono, D., Anastasia Wiwik Swastiwi, & Sandy Nur Ikfal Raharjo. (2019). Sejarah Wilayah Perbatasan Kepulauan Natuna: Mutiara di Ujung Utara. In *Direktorat Sejarah*. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=-6ZSwmoAAAAJ&pagesize=100&citation_for_view=-6ZSwmoAAAAJ:fQNAKQ3IYiAC
- Miksic, J. N. (2013). *Singapore & The Silk Road of The Sea: 1300-1800*.
- Muhaeminah. (2000). Variasi Tipe Nisan Wajo Sulawesi Selatan. In *Jurnal Walennae* (Vol. 3, Nomor 2, hal. 29–40).
- Muhaeminah. (2012). *Temuan Keramik Asing Hasil Penelitian Arkeologi Di Sulawesi Selatan*. 32(1), 39–50.

- Priswanto, H. (2020). Pulau Bawean Pada Poros Maritim Nusantara. In B. B. Utomo (Ed.), *Kuasa Kala: Bawean Dalam Lintas Narasi* (hal. 39–58). Balai Arkeologi Yogyakarta.
- Reid, A. (2011). *Asia Tenggara Dalam Kurun Niaga 1450-1680: Jilid 2 - Jaringan Perdagangan Global*. Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Restiyati, D. W. (2020). Fungsi Ragam Hias Tempayan Martavan Pada Masyarakat Tionghoa Jakarta. *Kindai Etam : Jurnal Penelitian Arkeologi*, 6(2), 125–136. <https://doi.org/10.24832/ke.v6i2.68>
- Rosmawati, R. (2016). Arsitektur Khas Budaya Makam Tipe Mandar Di Situs Kompleks Makam Lombeng Susu Majene Sulawesi Barat. *Al-Qalam*, 22(2). <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v22i2.349>
- Safitri, L. E. (2023). *Kajian Penentuan Kawasan Cagar Budaya Sangkapura Di Kabupaten Gresik*. Gadjah Mada.
- Setyawati, W. H. (1996). *Pulau Bawean Dalam Sistem Perdagangan Keramik Awal Abad XIV-XV Masehi*. Universitas Udayana.
- Tamiuddin (2023). Identifikasi Benteng Bone-Bone Di Desa Bone-Bone Kecamatan Batukara Kabupaten Muna. *Jurnal Penelitian Arkeologi*, VII(1).
- Taufik, M. (2020). Tinggalan Kapal Uap di Perairan Bawean: Bentuk, Fungsi dan Perannya dalam Aktivitas Pelayaran Masa Lalu. In *Kuasa Kala: Bawean Dalam Lintas Narasi* (hal. 95–118).
- Tjandrasasmita, U. (n.d.). *Ragam Hias Beberapa Makam Islam Di Sulawesi Selatan*.
- Yogi, I. B. P. P. (2016). *Sebaran Permukiman Kuno Pada Das Lamandau Di Kawasan Kalimantan Bagian Barat Daya: Perspektif Arkeologi Keruangan*. 10(147), 1–23.

THE INTEGRATION OF HISTORICAL SPICE ROUTE MARITIME HERITAGE WITHIN MODERN INTERNATIONAL LAW FOR BLUE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

Ema Nurhayati^{1, a)} Rivaldi Ananda Dwi Putra² Chadziqatun Najilatil Mazda^{3, b)}

¹*Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang, Kota Semarang, 50235*

²*Universitas Pertahanan Republik Indonesia*

³*Universitas Nurtanio Bandung*

^{a)}ema-nurhayati@untagsmg.ac.id

^{b)}rivaldiananda1995@gmail.com

^{c)}mazdacha97@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The ancient maritime networks reveal sophisticated governance systems that effectively coordinated intercultural trade relationships, managed resource distribution, and maintained environmental conservation across expansive oceanic territories. These historical frameworks established diplomatic protocols, trade regulations, and sustainable practices, supported by structured administrative mechanisms, that enabled diverse civilisations to collaborate peacefully while preserving marine ecosystems for future generations. This research aims to analyze how historical maritime traditions and governance systems of the Spice Route era can serve as blueprints for future international law to drive sustainable blue economy development in response to the urgent need for culturally responsive and environmentally friendly methods for managing oceans in the present. The research is certain that ancient maritime communities possessed sophisticated systems of governance for sharing natural resources, settling disputes, and preserving the environment, which, when properly adapted, are effective in addressing contemporary challenges in ocean governance and sustainable maritime development. The argument highlights that these precedents offer proven solutions for governing intricate maritime relationships and maintaining ecological equilibrium, offering useful lessons for resolving contemporary problems in international maritime law and sustainable development. The research employs a qualitative approach and adds value to the emerging literature on incorporating traditional knowledge into international law. It also provides policy recommendations aimed at sustainable development of the blue economy through culturally sensitive legal frameworks. By addressing an urgent gap in present-day maritime law by showing how ancient wisdom can augment modern governance approaches, this research culminates in more effective and equitable international legal tools for ocean governance and sustainable maritime commerce.

Keywords: blue economy, heritage, historical, maritime, spice route

INTRODUCTION

The historical spice routes represent one of humanity's most significant maritime networks, connecting diverse civilizations across the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the Mediterranean for over two millennia. These ancient trade routes not only facilitated the exchange of precious spices, silk, and other commodities but also fostered cultural exchange,

technological innovation, and the development of sophisticated maritime legal frameworks governing international trade. The legacy of these routes extends far beyond their historical significance, as they established foundational principles of maritime commerce, navigation rights, and cross-cultural cooperation that continue to influence contemporary international relations.

In the modern era, the concept of the blue economy has emerged as a critical framework for sustainable ocean-based economic development, emphasizing the balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity in marine spaces (Ebarvia, 2016). The blue economy encompasses diverse sectors, including fisheries, tourism, renewable energy, shipping, and biotechnology, all of which require robust legal frameworks to ensure sustainable development and equitable resource distribution (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021). As nations increasingly recognize the ocean's potential for economic growth while facing challenges of climate change, overfishing, and maritime security, the integration of historical maritime wisdom with contemporary legal structures becomes increasingly relevant (Nur et al., 2023).

The intersection of historical spice route heritage and modern blue economy development presents a unique opportunity to enhance international maritime law through time-tested practices of cooperation, resource sharing, and conflict resolution. The spice routes demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability over centuries, developing informal yet effective governance mechanisms that enabled peaceful coexistence among diverse maritime stakeholders. These historical precedents offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary challenges in ocean governance, particularly in regions where multiple nations share maritime boundaries and resources (Lal, 2021).

Despite the substantial body of literature examining both historical maritime trade networks and contemporary blue economy development frameworks, a significant research gap persists in systematically integrating these domains within the context of modern international law. Current literature on the historical spice routes predominantly focuses on archaeological, economic, or cultural perspectives, with limited attention to the governance mechanisms and legal frameworks that sustained these networks for over two millennia. Conversely, blue economy research typically emphasizes contemporary technological solutions, economic models, and regulatory frameworks without adequately considering how historical maritime governance systems might inform modern approaches to sustainable ocean management. The existing literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of how specific traditional maritime governance practices, such as relay trade systems, customary arbitration mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder resource-sharing agreements that characterized the spice route era, can be systematically adapted and institutionalized within contemporary international legal structures (Ramenzoni, 2021).

Furthermore, while numerous studies examine individual aspects of maritime heritage preservation or the development of the blue economy, there is insufficient research exploring the synergistic potential of combining historical maritime wisdom with modern sustainability principles to create more effective and culturally responsive approaches to ocean governance. This research addresses these critical knowledge gaps by providing the first comprehensive framework for integrating historical spice route maritime heritage within modern international law for blue economy development, thereby contributing essential insights to both legal maritime and sustainable development policy formulation. The study fills this void by demonstrating how traditional governance mechanisms can be translated

into practical legal instruments that enhance contemporary blue economy initiatives while preserving cultural heritage and promoting equitable maritime economic development across diverse stakeholder communities.

This research introduces a pioneering approach to blue economy governance by systematically integrating historical maritime heritage with contemporary international legal frameworks, creating a unique interdisciplinary methodology that bridges historical analysis, legal literature, and economic development theory. The study's novelty lies in its comprehensive examination of how specific governance mechanisms from the spice route era, including informal arbitration systems, risk-sharing agreements, and multi-cultural cooperation protocols, can be adapted and incorporated into modern maritime law to enhance the blue economy initiative.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to understand the complexities of integrating historical maritime spice route heritage into modern international legal frameworks for blue economy development. The characteristics of the phenomena under investigation require a holistic understanding of the complex interactions between historical norms that have evolved over centuries and modern international legal instruments. Qualitative research methods are valuable in providing rich descriptions of complex phenomena (Carlier et al., 2003). The qualitative approach offers the flexibility to explore nuances that may not be captured through quantitative methods, particularly in understanding how traditional values and practices can be integrated with contemporary regulatory frameworks to support sustainable economic development in the maritime sector.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical Spice Route Maritime Heritage

For more than seventeen hundred years, the ancient maritime spice route served as the lifeline of world civilization, connecting the spice-rich Nusantara with markets across West Asia and the Mediterranean. Spanning from the 2nd century BCE to the 15th century CE, this trade route was not merely a medium for commodity exchange but also a vessel for cultural, technological, and civilizational exchange that shaped the ancient world (Narsimhan, 2009).

The marvel of the ancient spice route lay in the complexity of its trading system that involved various nations and civilizations. Arab traders with their navigational expertise, Persian merchants with extensive trade networks, Indian traders with strong financial capabilities, Chinese traders with advanced maritime technology, and, of course, Nusantara merchants as owners of the main commodities, all played roles in this harmonious trading orchestra. The relay trade system became the main characteristic of this era, in which goods changed hands from one trader to another and from one port to another, creating a long trading chain that benefited all parties.

Spices became extraordinarily valuable commodities for good reason (Dasgupta, 2025). Nutmeg and cloves grown only in the Maluku Islands, pepper from Sumatra and Java, and cinnamon from Ceylon held an incredibly high economic value in European and Middle Eastern markets. These spices functioned not only as cooking seasonings but also as food preservatives, traditional medicines, and even symbols of luxury among European nobility.

Their value was equivalent to gold, earning spices the nickname "green gold," which could change the fortunes of anyone who controlled their trade.

This trade route stretched from the Nusantara archipelago, particularly Maluku as the spice production center, toward West Asia through ports such as Malacca, Palembang, and Makassar, then continued to ports in India, Persia, and Arabia, before finally reaching markets in the Mediterranean. Each port along this route developed into bustling trade centers, with various supporting facilities such as storage warehouses, merchant lodgings, and local markets selling various sailing necessities (Siregar, 2024).

Navigation technology in the ancient era relied on traditional knowledge passed down through generations (Hanlon, 2008). Traditional compasses, star maps, and local knowledge about wind directions and ocean current patterns served as primary guides for sailors. The ships used were also diverse, ranging from large and sturdy Chinese junks, sleek and fast Arab dhows, to traditional Nusantara boats adapted to local water conditions. Despite their simple technology compared to modern standards, these ancient sailors managed long-distance voyages with remarkable accuracy.



Figure 1. Srivijaya Empire's Map

Political and economic power in the ancient spice route was controlled by Nusantara maritime kingdoms that fully understood the strategic value of their geographical position. Srivijaya, centered in Palembang, controlled the Malacca Strait as the main trade route, while Majapahit controlled the production and distribution of spices from Java and surrounding areas (Sulistiono & A. Muchsin, 2022). Kingdoms in Maluku, such as Ternate and Tidore, became direct rulers over the world's finest spice sources. The monetary system of that time still depended on barter, with gold and silver as the most respected medium of exchange, creating a flexible yet structured economy.

The prosperity generated by the ancient spice route not only benefited traders but also helped build the glorious Asian maritime civilization. Port cities developed into cosmopolitan centers where various cultures met and mingled. Malacca became one of the world's largest cities of its time, with a diverse population and continuous trade. Trade regulations were managed through customary law and agreements between kingdoms, creating a relatively stable and reliable system.

However, the glory of this ancient spice route began to decline in the 15th century, as several historical events fundamentally changed the world's trade landscape. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 was a major turning point. The city that had been the main gateway for Asian spices to Europe for centuries was now under the control of a new power imposing high tariffs and erecting trade barriers. This forced European nations, particularly Portugal and Spain, to seek alternative routes to spice sources.

This search for alternative routes eventually brought Europeans directly to Nusantara, changing the entire dynamics of the spice trade. The arrival of Vasco da Gama in India in 1498 and of Alfonso de Albuquerque, who conquered Malacca in 1511, marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the spice route. Europeans were no longer satisfied being passive consumers dependent on intermediaries; they wanted to control direct sources and manage the entire trade chain.

The peak of change occurred with the establishment of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in 1602. This Dutch trading company not only traded but also wielded military power and political authority, enabling it to monopolize the spice trade completely. The Hongi system implemented by the VOC was a naval patrol that prohibited anyone except the VOC from trading spices, effectively ending the centuries-old relay trade system.

The monopoly exercised by the VOC and other European colonial companies not only changed trade structures but also destroyed the economic foundations of the Nusantara maritime kingdoms. Wealth that had flowed to various parties for centuries was now concentrated in the hands of a few European companies. Trade routes that once involved thousands of traders from multiple nations were now tightly controlled and restricted to specific players.

Thus, the end of the ancient maritime spice route in the 15th to 16th centuries CE was not merely a change in trading systems, but a fundamental transformation in world economic and political relations. An era that once brought prosperity and civilizational progress to Southeast Asia ended, replaced by an extractive colonial system that disadvantaged spice-producing nations. The legacy of the ancient spice route remains alive in modern trade routes, but with very different characteristics and impacts from its bygone golden age.

Modern International Law for the Maritime Spice Route

The modern era of maritime spice routes, spanning from the 16th century to the present day, reflects a lengthy journey of global transformation that has not only changed how the world conducts trade but has also reshaped the structure of international economic and political power. This period, traversing more than five centuries, has witnessed dramatic evolution from trading systems once dominated by local and regional merchants to complex, integrated global networks, with advanced technology serving as their backbone.

The beginning of the modern era was marked by the dominance of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) and other European colonial powers that fundamentally altered the maritime trading landscape. The VOC, as the world's first multinational corporation, did not merely trade but also performed quasi-state functions, including military power, diplomacy, and administration, enabling it to control the spice trade from its sources in the Indonesian archipelago to end markets in Europe. The VOC's monopoly system, implemented through practices such as Hongi and exclusive contracts with local rulers,

created a trading structure vastly different from previous eras, in which profits distributed among many merchants were now concentrated in the hands of a few European corporations.

The colonial period, lasting from the 16th to the 18th centuries, transformed the trading system from relay trade involving many intermediaries to direct trade tightly controlled by colonial powers. Spices, which had once been the primary commodity, began to lose their dominance as trade diversified to include textiles, metals, and various manufactured products. Trading routes also developed into global networks connecting not only Asia with Europe but also America and Africa in complex triangular trade systems.

The technological revolution in navigation became one of the most fundamental changes in this modern era. Traditional compasses and star maps, used for centuries, were replaced by the Global Positioning System (GPS), satellite technology, and various digital navigation instruments, enabling unprecedented accuracy and efficiency. Junks, dhows, and traditional boats were replaced by giant container ships, tankers, and other modern cargo vessels capable of carrying thousands of times more cargo than ancient ships. This technology not only increased transport capacity but also reduced travel risks and significantly accelerated journey times.

Trading centers also experienced dramatic shifts alongside technological and power changes. Malacca, Palembang, and Makassar, which had once been major spice trading hubs, lost their positions to modern ports such as Singapore, Rotterdam, Dubai, and various other international ports equipped with advanced infrastructure and integrated logistics systems. These modern ports function not only as loading and unloading facilities, but also as distribution, warehousing, and processing centers that connect global producers with consumers in highly efficient supply chains. Currency and payment systems also underwent a total revolution with the development of digital banking systems and international currencies that replaced the barter systems and gold-silver trading of ancient eras. Transactions that once required lengthy negotiations and physical exchanges can now be completed in seconds through electronic payment systems integrated with global banking networks. This enables trade to occur at volumes and speeds unimaginable in previous eras.

Modern trade regulation is governed by complex international legal frameworks, including the World Trade Organization (WTO) and various bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, which replaced the customary law systems and royal agreements of ancient eras. This regulatory framework establishes global standards for trading practices, product quality, and environmental protection, enabling deeper, more comprehensive economic integration.

The journey toward the modern era reached a significant milestone with the Djuanda Declaration of 1957, which affirmed Indonesia's sovereignty over its maritime territory and created new legal foundations for managing maritime routes in Indonesian waters. This declaration was important not only for Indonesia but also changed global dynamics in managing international shipping lanes, as most of the world's trade routes pass through Indonesian waters.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 subsequently became the global legal framework governing the use of the seas and their resources, creating a more equitable and sustainable system than the exploitative colonial era. UNCLOS provides a framework for managing international shipping lanes, protecting marine environments, and balancing national and global interests in the exploitation of marine resources.



Figure 2. Belt and Road Initiative

The pinnacle of modern spice route evolution is evident in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013. This ambitious initiative revives the ancient Silk Road concept in a modern context, connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe through integrated land and sea infrastructure networks. BRI focuses not only on goods trade but also on technology transfer, infrastructure investment, and deeper economic integration among participating countries.

The modern era of maritime spice routes is also characterized by economic globalization and international trade, which creates interdependence among countries worldwide. Complex global supply chains enable products from one country to be manufactured using raw materials from dozens of other countries, creating economic networks far more intricate and integrated than the relay trade systems of ancient eras.

The economic impact of this transformation is highly significant, with global maritime trade volumes reaching trillions of dollars annually and involving billions of people worldwide. Modern shipping routes carry not only spices but also oil, gas, minerals, manufactured goods, and various other commodities that form the backbone of the global economy.

However, the modern era also brings new challenges, such as climate change, marine pollution, and global economic inequality, that require sustainable approaches to maritime route management. Green technology, sustainable trading practices, and stronger international cooperation have become keys to ensuring that modern spice routes continue to provide benefits to all parties without harming the environment or creating social injustice.

The evolution of spice routes from ancient to modern eras reflects humanity's civilizational journey from local and regional trading systems to an integrated global economy, with technology as the primary enabler and sustainability as the most significant challenge to be addressed in the future.

The Integration for Blue Economy Development

The integration of historical maritime heritage along the spice route into modern international law for blue economy development can be significantly enhanced by applying Alfred Thayer Mahan's Sea Power Theory (Sumida, 2001). Mahan's six fundamental elements of sea power provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how historical

patterns of maritime dominance can inform contemporary blue economy strategies and sustainable maritime development approaches.

- Geography and Strategic Position

The historical spice route demonstrates the critical importance of Mahan's first element - geography and strategic position - in maritime economic dominance. The Nusantara archipelago's strategic location between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, controlling vital maritime chokepoints such as the Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait, and various other critical passages, exemplifies how geographical advantages translate into economic power. Ancient kingdoms like Srivijaya leveraged their control over the Malacca Strait to dominate regional trade, while Majapahit utilized Java's central position to coordinate spice distribution networks. This geographical strategic advantage remains relevant for modern blue economy development, as Indonesia's position along major international shipping lanes provides natural leverage for creating sustainable maritime economic hubs. Contemporary blue economy initiatives must recognize that geographical positioning, combined with modern international law frameworks such as UNCLOS, can be used to develop strategic maritime economic zones that benefit both national development and global trade efficiency while maintaining environmental sustainability.

- Natural and Economic Resources

Mahan's emphasis on natural and economic resources finds perfect validation in the historical spice route's foundation upon the Nusantara's unique spice resources. The exclusive production of nutmeg and cloves in the Maluku Islands, pepper from Sumatra and Java, and various other spices created economic monopolies that generated wealth equivalent to gold mining operations. This resource-based maritime power demonstrates how unique marine and terrestrial resources can serve as the foundation for sustainable blue economy development. Modern applications of this principle involve leveraging Indonesia's vast marine biodiversity, fisheries resources, marine biotechnology potential, and renewable ocean energy sources as foundations for contemporary blue economy initiatives. The integration of traditional ecological knowledge on sustainable resource extraction with modern conservation technologies and international legal frameworks creates opportunities to develop resource-based blue economy sectors that maintain long-term sustainability while generating significant economic benefits for coastal communities and national development.

- Population Supporting Maritime Activities

The ancient spice route's success depended heavily on diverse populations skilled in maritime activities, validating Mahan's third element regarding population support for sea power. Arab navigators, Persian merchants, Indian financiers, Chinese maritime technologists, and Nusantara traders created a comprehensive maritime workforce that enabled complex international trade operations. This historical precedent emphasizes the importance of developing human capital for contemporary blue economy initiatives. Modern blue economy development requires populations skilled in sustainable fisheries management, marine biotechnology, maritime logistics, environmental conservation, and various other specialized maritime sectors. Educational initiatives, vocational training programs, and capacity-building efforts that integrate traditional maritime knowledge with modern technological skills are essential for building the human capital foundation needed for successful blue economy implementation. The historical emphasis on collaborative

maritime communities also informs contemporary approaches to stakeholder engagement and community participation in blue economy development projects.

- National Character of Trade and Navigation

Mahan's fourth element - national character in trade and navigation - is exemplified by the historical spice route's collaborative trading culture that emphasized mutual benefit, cultural exchange, and sustainable practices. The ancient relay trade system created trading relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and long-term partnerships rather than exploitative extraction. This historical trading character provides important lessons for contemporary blue economy development that must avoid replicating colonial-era exploitative relationships. Modern blue economy initiatives should cultivate national and regional characteristics that emphasize sustainability, equity, collaboration, and environmental stewardship. The integration of traditional maritime values with contemporary sustainability principles creates opportunities to develop blue economy approaches that reflect positive national and regional identities, committed to long-term environmental protection and equitable economic development rather than short-term resource exploitation.

- Government Policies Supporting Sea Power

The evolution from ancient customary maritime governance systems to modern international legal frameworks demonstrates the critical importance of Mahan's fifth element - government policies supporting sea power. Historical kingdoms developed sophisticated maritime policies through customary law, inter-kingdom agreements, and territorial control mechanisms, thereby creating stable trading environments. The transition to modern international legal frameworks, particularly UNCLOS and various multilateral agreements, shows how government policies can evolve to support contemporary maritime economic development. The Djuanda Declaration of 1957 exemplifies how national maritime policies can be integrated within international legal frameworks to support both sovereignty and cooperative development. Contemporary blue economy development requires comprehensive government policies that balance environmental protection, sustainable development, international cooperation, and economic growth. These policies must balance national interests with global sustainability requirements while creating regulatory frameworks that encourage private sector investment in sustainable maritime economic activities.

- Strategic Naval Bases and Maritime Infrastructure

Mahan's sixth element regarding strategic naval bases finds modern expression in the evolution of maritime infrastructure from ancient trading centres to contemporary blue-economy hubs. Historical ports such as Malacca, Palembang, and Makassar served as comprehensive maritime support systems, including storage facilities, merchant accommodations, repair services, and local markets. Modern blue economy development requires a similar comprehensive maritime infrastructure that supports sustainable economic activities while maintaining environmental protection standards. Contemporary strategic maritime infrastructure includes not only ports and logistics facilities but also marine research centers, conservation facilities, renewable energy installations, sustainable aquaculture operations, and various other blue economy support systems. The integration of historical maritime infrastructure concepts with modern sustainability technologies creates

opportunities for developing comprehensive blue economy hubs that serve both national development objectives and international cooperation requirements.

Based on the historical analysis of maritime spice route heritage and its integration within modern international law frameworks, several critical dimensions emerge regarding blue economy development.

The governance structure of the ancient spice route, spanning from the 2nd century BCE to the 15th century CE, established foundational principles that resonate with contemporary blue economy frameworks. The relay trade system that characterized this era created a harmonious trading orchestra involving Arab navigators, Persian merchants, Indian financiers, Chinese maritime technologists, and Nusantara commodity owners. This collaborative approach mirrors modern blue economy principles that emphasize multi-stakeholder partnerships and sustainable resource management. The ancient system's ability to benefit all parties through shared prosperity demonstrates how historical maritime governance can inform contemporary approaches to equitable blue-economy development, in which various nations and communities participate in sustainable maritime economic activities while preserving marine ecosystems.

The transformation of spice trade governance from ancient customary law systems to modern international legal frameworks reveals the evolution of maritime regulatory approaches that underpin the blue economy. Historical analysis shows that ancient kingdoms such as Srivijaya and Majapahit controlled strategic maritime positions through customary agreements and inter-kingdom treaties, thereby creating relatively stable trading environments. This historical precedent evolved into contemporary international legal frameworks, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982, which provides the foundational legal structure for modern blue economy initiatives. The transition from ancient customary maritime law to comprehensive international legal frameworks demonstrates how historical governance wisdom can be institutionalized within modern legal systems to support sustainable maritime economic development.

The technological evolution from traditional navigation methods to modern digital systems illustrates how historical maritime knowledge can be integrated with contemporary innovations to advance the blue economy. Ancient navigators relied on traditional compasses, star maps, and generational knowledge of wind patterns and ocean currents, developing a sophisticated understanding of marine environments that enabled sustainable long-distance voyages. This historical maritime wisdom, when combined with modern GPS technology, satellite systems, and digital navigation instruments, creates opportunities for more efficient and environmentally conscious maritime operations. The integration of traditional ecological knowledge with modern technology exemplifies how historical spice route heritage can enhance contemporary blue economy development by promoting both economic efficiency and environmental sustainability.

The shift from ancient trading centers to modern port infrastructure demonstrates how historical maritime hubs can evolve to support contemporary blue economy objectives. Ports like Malacca, Palembang, and Makassar, which once served as major spice trading centers, provided models for creating comprehensive maritime economic ecosystems that included storage facilities, merchant accommodations, and local markets. Modern ports such as Singapore and Rotterdam have expanded this concept by integrating advanced logistics systems, distribution networks, and processing centers that support global supply chains. This

evolution shows how historical trading center concepts can be adapted to create modern blue economy hubs that promote sustainable maritime economic activities while preserving cultural heritage and environmental integrity.

The transformation of payment and currency systems from ancient barter arrangements to modern digital financial networks reveals how historical economic practices can be modernized to support blue economy development. Ancient spice route commerce relied on flexible barter systems with gold and silver as trusted exchange mediums, creating economic structures that accommodated diverse trading partners and varying commodity values. Contemporary digital banking systems and international currencies have evolved from these historical foundations, enabling rapid global transactions that support modern maritime trade. This evolution demonstrates how historical economic wisdom regarding flexible, trust-based trading relationships can inform modern financial systems that support sustainable blue economy development through transparent, efficient, and inclusive economic mechanisms.

The impact of colonial monopolization on traditional maritime governance systems provides crucial lessons for ensuring equitable blue economy development in the contemporary era. Historical analysis reveals how the VOC's monopolistic practices and the Hongi system destroyed the centuries-old relay trade system that had distributed wealth among diverse trading communities. This historical experience demonstrates the importance of preventing economic concentration and ensuring that modern blue economy initiatives maintain inclusive, multi-stakeholder approaches that benefit coastal communities, developing nations, and various economic actors. The lessons from colonial disruption of traditional maritime governance inform contemporary efforts to create blue economy frameworks that promote equitable resource sharing and prevent the recreation of exploitative economic relationships.

The Djuanda Declaration of 1957 and subsequent international legal developments illustrate how historical maritime sovereignty concepts can be integrated within modern legal frameworks to support blue economy development (Nurhayati & Arief, 2024). This declaration, which affirmed Indonesia's sovereignty over its maritime territory, was built upon historical concepts of maritime territorial control exercised by ancient kingdoms while adapting them to contemporary international law requirements. The evolution from traditional territorial concepts to modern legal frameworks like UNCLOS demonstrates how historical maritime governance principles can be institutionalized within international law to create stable foundations for blue economy development that respect both national sovereignty and global cooperation requirements.

China's Belt and Road Initiative represents the contemporary manifestation of historical spice route concepts adapted for modern blue economy development (Pulami, 2020). This initiative revives ancient Silk Road principles through integrated land and sea infrastructure networks that promote technology transfer, infrastructure investment, and economic integration among participating countries. The BRI's approach mirrors the ancient spice route's emphasis on connectivity, cultural exchange, and mutual benefit while incorporating modern sustainability principles and blue economy objectives. This demonstrates how historical maritime route concepts can be scaled and modernized to create comprehensive frameworks for sustainable maritime economic development that benefit multiple nations and promote environmental stewardship.

The evolution from ancient relay trade systems to modern global supply chains reveals how historical trading practices can inform contemporary approaches to sustainable maritime economic development. Ancient spice routes created complex networks that distributed economic benefits among diverse communities while maintaining environmental sustainability through limited resource extraction and traditional ecological practices. Modern supply chains, while more technologically advanced, can learn from historical approaches to create more equitable and sustainable economic relationships. The integration of historical wisdom on collaborative trading relationships with modern sustainability principles and blue economy objectives creates opportunities to develop maritime economic systems that promote both prosperity and environmental protection.

The Belt and Road Initiative elicits heterogeneous and calculated responses from Southeast Asian nations, including Indonesia, characterized by neither wholesale endorsement nor categorical opposition, but rather by strategic ambivalence rooted in geopolitical and economic calculus. Regional governments generally perceive the BRI as a substantive mechanism for addressing critical infrastructure financing gaps and catalyzing economic development, particularly through capital-intensive projects encompassing port facilities, railway networks, transportation corridors, and energy infrastructure deemed essential for enhancing regional connectivity and sustaining long-term economic expansion.

Contemporary challenges such as climate change, marine pollution, and global economic inequality require solutions that integrate historical maritime governance wisdom with modern international law frameworks for effective blue economy development. Historical analysis reveals that ancient spice route civilizations developed sustainable maritime practices through traditional ecological knowledge, community-based resource management, and collaborative governance approaches. These historical practices, when integrated with modern international legal frameworks, environmental protection standards, and sustainability technologies, can inform comprehensive approaches to blue economy development that address contemporary challenges while preserving maritime heritage and promoting equitable economic development for coastal communities and maritime nations worldwide.

CONCLUSION

The ancient spice routes, spanning from the 2nd century BCE to the 15th century CE, established enduring principles of collaborative governance, equitable resource sharing, and sustainable maritime practices that remain profoundly relevant for addressing current challenges in ocean governance and maritime economic development. By applying Mahan's Sea Power Theory as an analytical framework, this research demonstrates that historical maritime dominance patterns, when properly integrated with modern international legal frameworks such as UNCLOS and contemporary sustainability principles, can inform more effective and culturally responsive approaches to blue economy implementation. The transformation from ancient relay trade systems to modern global supply chains, the evolution of customary maritime law to comprehensive international legal frameworks, and the development of traditional trading centers into contemporary blue economy hubs collectively illustrate how historical maritime governance wisdom can be institutionalized within modern regulatory systems to create sustainable economic opportunities while preserving marine ecosystems. The lessons drawn from the colonial disruption of traditional maritime governance systems underscore the critical importance of maintaining inclusive,

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

- 277

- Nur, M., Nurbayani, S. K., Mulyana, A., Darmawan, W., Sapriya, Supriadi, A., & Jumadi. (2023). Maritime History and Culture in Indonesia: Implementation in Social Studies Learning. *Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, 24, 230–253. <https://doi.org/10.24908/encounters.v24i0.16705>
- Nurhayati, E., & Arief, E. (2024). Peran Indonesia Dalam Hukum Laut Internasional Guna Memperkuat Pertahanan Dan Keamanan Wilayah Laut Indonesia. 6.
- Pulami, M. J. (2020). *Belt and Road Initiative In Chinese Strategic Thoughts' Perspectives* (Vol. 2).
- Ramenzoni, V. C. (2021). Co-governance, Transregional Maritime Conventions, and Indigenous Customary Practices Among Subsistence Fishermen in Ende, Indonesia. *Frontiers in Marine Science*, 8(July), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2021.668586>
- Siregar, A. A. (2024). Historical Trace of The Spice Road as an Economic Center Indonesian Trade and Cultural Heritage. *Journal Pamator : Jurnal Ilmiah Universitas Trunojoyo*, 17(4), 667–674. <https://doi.org/10.21107/pamator.v17i4.28632>
- Sulistiono, B., & A. Muchsin, M. (2022). THE TRACK OF ISLAM EMPOWERING THE DYNAMICS OF THE POTENTIAL OF MARITIME NUSANTARA: Perspectives of the Past of the Spice Route. *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 46(1), 139–161. <https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v46i1.899>
- Sumida, J. (2001). *The Case of Alfred Thayer Mahan*. *LIV*(3), 100–111.