

HISTORICAL TRACE OF THE SPICE ROAD AS AN ECONOMIC CENTER INDONESIAN TRADE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the history of the Indonesian spice route as part of Indonesia's maritime cultural heritage and Indonesia's role in the spice trade route. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative approach with literature studies, utilizing various sources from books, journals and articles as well as ethnography and oral interviews. The results of the research show that the trade network connecting the eastern and western hemispheres of the world is known as the spice route and its impact towards the development of local cultural identity of Indonesian society. The spice route not only refers to the trade and shipping route for spice products, but also as a cultural heritage whose traces can still be found, such as in culinary, art, medicine, clothing, traditions and even art. At that time, merchandise such as cinnamon, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, sandalwood, rice, cotton and others were traded. This route is a symbol that connects the maritime civilization of the archipelago which is Indonesia's national pride so that it can provide a new contribution to understanding the complexity of the interaction between economic factors and cultural heritage in shaping the historical landscape of the archipelago.

Keywords: *Spice Route, Economy, Cultural Heritage*

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INTRODUCTION

The Spice Route is a term that refers to the maritime trade network that connects the archipelago with various parts of the world, especially Asia, Europe and the Middle East (Hamid, 2022). This route became very important because the archipelago was rich in spices which were highly sought after in the Western world at that time. Spices such as pepper, cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon are not only used as cooking spices, but also as medicines, food preservatives, and even perfume ingredients (Wulung et al., 2022). The Indonesian spice route has a long and dynamic history that focuses not only on trade, but also on meetings between civilizations and the formation of international relations that had a major influence on world history. The following is a historical series of Indonesian spice routes:

1. Pre-Colonial Era (Before the 15th Century)

Since thousands of years ago, the archipelago has been known as an abundant producer of spices. The spice trade route has developed through meetings between local traders and traders from India, Arabia and China. In major ports such as Malacca, Makassar and Gresik, spices have been a traded commodity since the early centuries AD. Through this route, spices began to be known in various parts of the world, including the Middle East and India (Baiquni, 2023).

2. European Exploration (15th to 17th Centuries)

In the 15th century, the discovery of new sea routes by Europeans changed the map of world trade. Portugal and Spain were the first countries to access the Indonesian spice route. In 1512, Portuguese ships reached Maluku, known as the "Spice Islands." Maluku, especially Ternate and Tidore, became the main center for the production of spices such as cloves and nutmeg, which were in great demand by Europe.

Meanwhile, in the 17th century, the Dutch began to dominate the spice trade in Indonesia through the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) or Dutch East India Company. They controlled the spice trade routes by establishing trading posts throughout the archipelago, including in Maluku, Sumatra and Java. The Dutch then introduced a monopoly system to control the spice trade, which led to conflicts with local traders and other European nations, such as the British and Portuguese (Sulistiono & Muchsin, 2022).

3. Influence of Colonialism

The existence of the spice route was the main reason for the entry of European colonization into Indonesia (Hamid, 2022). Colonial countries, especially the Netherlands, established governments aimed at controlling Indonesia's natural resources. The colonial economic system implemented, such as forced cultivation (*cultuurstelsel*), forced Indonesian farmers to grow certain spices which were then exported to Europe. During this period, the spice trade became the main source of income for colonial countries, while Indonesia experienced significant social and economic changes.

4. Spice Route as Cultural Heritage

Apart from being an economic route, the spice route also introduced Indonesian culture to the world. Through this route, not only spices were traded, but also culture, art and traditions. The influence of Indonesian culture can be seen in cuisine, art, textiles, and

even in traditional medicine that was introduced to the outside world. Even today, traces of spices can be seen in Indonesia's very diverse culinary heritage, which has influences from various nations that have visited or traded in Indonesia, such as India, Arabia, Europe and China (Sutandio & Arifin, 2022).

5. The Role of the Spice Route in Globalization

The spice route not only played a big role in Indonesian history, but also in the development of globalization of trade and international relations. The discovery of the spice route opened up opportunities for world integration, which ultimately led to a trade revolution, the discovery of new worlds, and more advanced maritime developments. This spice route connects the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe via sea routes that unite various civilizations. The demand for spices in the European market is growing rapidly, making Europe one of the factors influencing the country's entry into the trade network with the archipelago. As a result, trade operations in the archipelago were impacted; also, the population became more diverse and bustling. Trade routes in the archipelago are just starting to open as a result of active trade in the archipelago. This open trade area influenced the emergence of the spice route (Kumoratih, 2022)

Thus, the history of the Indonesian spice route is not only about trade in goods, but also about how spices had a major influence on culture, politics and the global economy. The Indonesian spice route is a symbol of the meeting of civilizations that has lasted for more than a thousand years and still makes an impression today, both in the form of cultural heritage and in international relations that continue to develop. Spices are silent witnesses of interactions between civilizations and play an important role in the formation of Indonesia's identity and history as a country with extraordinary natural wealth.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research on the historical traces of the spice route as the center of Indonesia's trade economy and cultural heritage requires a comprehensive and analytical approach. Therefore, the research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach with literature study. This approach was chosen to explore and describe in depth the history of the Indonesian spice route from an economic and cultural perspective. This research aims to understand how the spice route plays a role in shaping international trade relations, as well as how this route influences the development of Indonesian and global culture. With this approach, researchers will be able to describe the historical processes that occurred without needing to rely on numerical or statistical data, but rather based on the interpretation of existing historical texts, documents and narratives.

Literature study is the main method for collecting data in this research. Researchers will examine various relevant sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the history of the spice route, including: history books that discuss the spice route and international trade in the past, academic journals that discuss the study of spices, maritime trade, and their impact on culture and economy (Hofstad, 2023). Then there are articles and reports related to the history of colonialism, the influence of the spice trade on Indonesia and the world as well as historical documents such as travel notes, colonial archives, and writings from foreign traders or explorers that describe spice trade routes in the past. Through this

analysis process, the researcher then draws conclusions regarding the boundaries of the problem to be discussed (Kumoratih et al., 2021).

Apart from that, it also uses ethnographic methods to conduct field research by observing and interacting directly with communities that are still connected to the Spice Route, such as coastal communities that have maritime traditions and conducting in-depth interviews with key informants to dig up information about local knowledge, myths and folklore related to the Spice Route.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of research on the historical traces of the Indonesian spice route show that the spice route not only functions as a trade route connecting various parts of the world, but also as a route for the spread of culture and civilization which has had a major impact on Indonesia and the world. Based on literature studies and analysis of various historical sources, the following are the main results found in this research:

1. The Spice Route as an International Trade Center

a. Trade Routes Connecting the World

The Indonesian spice route, which stretches from the Maluku Islands to Europe, is a maritime trade network that connects East and West. In the 15th to 17th centuries, this route became the main link between Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Indonesian spices, such as cloves, pepper, nutmeg and cinnamon, became the main commodities traded and were in great demand by European nations, especially the Dutch, Portuguese and British (Yamin et al., 2022).

b. Dutch domination through the VOC

In the 17th century, the Dutch, through the VOC company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), succeeded in controlling the Indonesian spice trade route. The Dutch implemented a monopoly system to control the spice trade, which allowed them to make huge profits from spice exports to Europe. Port cities such as Batavia (now Jakarta), Ambon and Makassar became the main trade centers connecting Indonesia with global markets (Putra, 2022).

2. The Spice Route as a Driver of the Local and Global Economy

a. Indonesian Economy in Spice Trade

During its heyday, the spice trade had a significant economic impact on kingdoms in the archipelago, such as the Maluku Sultanate, Makassar and Mataram. Spices became the main source of income which increased the wealth of spice producing regions. Even though Indonesia experienced economic oppression during the colonial period, the spice route still played a vital role in the local economy, even though much of this wealth was controlled by the colonial powers (Hamid, 2022).

b. Role in Globalization of Trade

The Indonesian spice trade opened a pathway for globalization of trade involving various countries. In this case, the spice route plays an important role in introducing Indonesia to the global market and supporting world economic growth through trade in high-value goods (Setiawan & Widiputera, 2020). The economic development of the spice route encouraged economic growth in the archipelago. Port cities such as Malacca, Aceh and Banten became busy trade centers. Local people benefited from the spice trade, whether as farmers, traders or port workers (Suroyo et al., 2021).

3. Influence of the Spice Route on Indonesian and World Culture

a. Spread of Culture and Traditions

The spice route was not only an economic route, but also a channel for cultural exchange. Traders from various nations, including Arabs, Indians, and Europeans, brought their cultural influences to Indonesia, which can be seen in the art along the Spice Route, the architecture of historic buildings such as forts, spice warehouses, and mosques which are the physical heritage of the Spice Route (Mufrodi, 2022). as well as culinary delights, and belief systems. Several traditions and arts that developed in Indonesia, such as carving, music and clothing, were heavily influenced by foreign cultures that entered through the spice route.

b. Indonesian Culinary Heritage

One of the most visible cultural heritages is Indonesian culinary delights. Spices, which are the basic ingredients for various traditional Indonesian dishes, have spread to the world through this trade route. This influence can also be seen in European and Asian cuisine which uses typical Indonesian spices, such as nutmeg, cloves and pepper (Kumoratih, 2022).

4. Historical Traces of the Spice Route in Daily Life

a. Traces Visible Until Now

Traces of the spice route are still visible in the daily lives of Indonesian people today. Many regions in Indonesia still maintain spice production as an important commodity, such as in Maluku, Bali and Sumatra. In addition, the cultural heritage brought by the spice route, such as performing arts, handicrafts and cultural festivals, is still an integral part of Indonesian identity (Kumoratih et al., 2021).

b. Influence on Arts and Traditions

Apart from culinary delights, Indonesian traditions and arts are also influenced by the spice route. For example, the use of spices in traditional medicine (jamu), as well as the influence of colonial architecture that is still visible in historic buildings in large Indonesian cities, is part of the cultural heritage associated with the spice route (Hofstad, 2023).

5. The Spice Route as a Symbol of National Pride

a. Indonesian National Identity

The spice route is now considered a symbol of Indonesia's national pride, because it shows how this country has played an important role in the history of world trade and global culture (Mufrodi, 2022). Indonesia's success in managing spice wealth has introduced this country to the international world, which has become the basis for the formation of a strong Indonesian national identity in the context of world history.

Opportunities regarding the Spice Route have broad implications, including(Wulung et al., 2022):

1. **Tourism Development:** The Spice Route has great potential to be developed as a historical and cultural tourism destination.
2. **Cultural Preservation:** The results of the research can be used as a basis for developing cultural heritage preservation programs related to the Spice Route. This diversity results from the mixing of various cultures along the Spice Route.
3. **Education:** This research can be used as teaching material to increase people's understanding of Indonesian history and culture.

Challenges of Preserving the Spice Route:

1. **Damage to Historical Sites:** Many historical sites associated with the Spice Route have suffered damage due to development, natural disasters, or lack of attention.
2. **Loss of Local Knowledge:** Traditional knowledge about the Spice Route is increasingly being eroded due to modernization and urbanization.
3. **Industrial development:** The industrial revolution in Europe caused the demand for spices to decline.
4. **Growth of spice production in other regions:** Other countries are starting to develop spice production, thereby reducing the dominance of the archipelago.
5. **Discovery of new shipping routes:** The discovery of new shipping routes to Asia via the Cape of Good Hope reduced Europe's dependence on the Spice Route.
6. **Conflict and Colonization:** Competition for control of the Spice Route sparked conflict between various European nations. This has an impact on the people of the archipelago who are often victims of war and colonialism.

CONCLUSION

The historical traces of the spice route have a very important role in shaping Indonesia's economic and cultural identity. Since ancient times, Indonesia has been known as a center for the production of abundant spices, such as cloves, pepper, nutmeg and cinnamon which are highly sought after by European nations, India, the Middle East and even China. This spice is not only a highly sought after commodity, but also a link between various civilizations in the world. The spice trade route, stretching from the Japanese Archipelago in the east to Europe in the west, has been at the heart of international trade relations for centuries. This spice trade not only functions as an economic route, but also as a cultural dissemination route that introduces Indonesia's culinary heritage, arts and traditions throughout the world. Apart from that, the spice route also played a role in influencing the development of global civilization with Indonesia as one of the main centers on the world trade map and Indonesia's cultural identity.

As part of cultural heritage, the spice route reminds us of the long journey of the Indonesian people in connecting various nations through maritime trade. The existence of this spice route has shaped Indonesia into an important world economic and cultural center. Therefore, studying the historical traces of the spice route not only provides insight into the past, but is also important for understanding Indonesia's strategic role in the global arena, both in the context of trade and the cultural heritage that continues to live today.

This research shows that the Indonesian spice route not only functions as an important trade route in global history, but also as a channel for the spread of culture that connects Indonesia with the outside world. This route contributed greatly to the development of Indonesia's economy and culture, and influenced the world through the spread of Indonesian spices, traditions and culture which continue to live on today. The Indonesian spice route remains a significant legacy, both from a historical, economic and cultural perspective.

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