

COMMERCE, ISLAM, AND CULTURAL ORDER IN THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BANTEN SULTANATE: Reassessing the Bazaar Economy

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Abstract: This article examines the interplay between commerce, cultural practices, and Islamic values in the seventeenth-century Banten Sultanate. While previous studies emphasize Banten's position in global trade, insufficient attention has been given to the role of local socio-cultural norms in shaping its economic system. This study addresses that gap by exploring how indigenous traditions and Islamic teachings informed commercial behavior and contributed to Banten's economic identity. "Using historical methods, the research analyzes primary sources, including European travel accounts (Portuguese, Dutch, and British) and local manuscripts such as Hikayat Hasanuddin. An interdisciplinary framework combining political economy and historical anthropology is employed to interpret the relationship between global trade dynamics and local institutions. "The findings show that Banten functioned as a major regional trading hub for spices, textiles, and other commodities, supported by a bazaar-based system embedded in a hierarchical socio-economic order. Political elites and merchant groups played key roles in regulating trade. Cultural practices such as the Mulud festival and kaget markets demonstrate the integration of economic life with Islamic and Javanese values. Encounters with European traders generated both tensions and adaptive responses within the commercial sphere.

Keywords: Banten Sultanate, trade networks, Islamic economic ethics, bazaar system

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Introduction

The Sultanate of Banten in the seventeenth century occupied a strategic position at the western tip of Java, directly facing the Sunda Strait, one of the most important maritime corridors linking the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea. This geographical location placed Banten within a wider network of interregional and international trade connecting Southeast Asia with markets in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia. Historical records indicate that merchants from diverse regions including Europe, China, and Gujarat frequently visited the port of Banten, transforming it into one of the most active commercial centers in the region. In addition to its strategic maritime position, the hinterland of Banten produced valuable commodities, particularly pepper, which became a major export and contributed significantly to the sultanate's economic prosperity.¹

Politically, Banten demonstrated considerable diplomatic flexibility. The sultanate maneuvered between cooperation and resistance in responding to European expansion, particularly the Dutch and the British. Naval development, port governance, and alliance-building were not simply defensive strategies but calculated efforts to maintain sovereignty in an increasingly competitive maritime environment² This capacity to balance regional authority with global commercial pressures reflects an early example of maritime statecraft in Southeast Asia.

The history of trade in the Sultanate of Banten has been widely discussed in previous historiographical studies. Several scholars have examined the political and economic dynamics surrounding the pepper trade, particularly in relation to the conflict between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and Sultan Haji in the late seventeenth century. Research by Aziz and colleagues, for example, highlights how the VOC exploited internal political divisions to secure control over the pepper trade through the 1684 agreement with Sultan Haji. This agreement allowed the VOC to establish a monopoly over pepper production and trade, transforming a key economic resource of the sultanate into an instrument of colonial domination.³ Such studies demonstrate how the pepper trade was closely linked to political struggles, colonial intervention, and shifts in regional power relations.

Aziz's research employs historical methods and political economy theory to examine the pepper trade's role in Banten before and after VOC interference. Through stages of heuristics, verification, interpretation, and historiography, the study shows how pepper trade policies influenced Sultan Haji's succession and enabled the VOC monopoly, while also mapping the dynamics of power, economy, and policy within the sultanate.⁴ Abd Rahman Hamid highlights the pepper trade between Lampung and Banten from the 16th to 18th centuries. Strategically located on the Sunda Strait and gaining importance after the Portuguese seized Malacca in 1511, Lampung became a major pepper trading center supplying Banten. Its fertile land sustained local production while attracting Dutch and British interest, with ports such as Batavia and Bengkulu serving as gateways to Lampung pepper, turning the region into a site of intense trade rivalry.

Lampung's pepper production relied on an organized agrarian system managed by local farmers to meet rising demand. Before the late 17th century, its trade networks were tied to Banten and Palembang, but shifted after the Dutch secured Batavia and the British built Bengkulu as a hub. Under colonial influence, Lampung became integrated into a European-dominated global trade system, with both local and foreign actors using diplomacy and force to control its valuable pepper. Hamid's research, using historical methods, heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, shows that Lampung's history over the past two centuries was shaped by pepper as both an economic and political instrument. Drawing on local and colonial sources, Hamid highlights Lampung's four trade networks (Banten, Palembang, Batavia, and Bengkulu) as evidence of shifting maritime trade under colonial pressure, cementing Lampung's role as a key player in Southeast Asian trade history.⁵

In other words, the role of local coastal communities, market institutions, and cultural traditions in sustaining Banten's commercial vitality remains relatively underexplored in historical scholarship. Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on the socio-economic practices of coastal communities in seventeenth-century Banten and examines how local traditions influenced patterns of trade and market activities. By paying closer attention to everyday economic interactions particularly within the bazaar system this research highlights how commerce in Banten was embedded within social and cultural norms rooted in both Islamic values and indigenous traditions.

The uniqueness of this research lies in its focus on the 17th-century coastal communities of Banten, a subject often overlooked in favor of studies on inland groups such as the Baduy or the royal court's pepper trade. Rooted in both Islamic values and indigenous wisdom, these communities embodied a distinct fusion of trade and cultural customs, showing that Banten's prosperity was not solely shaped by the sultanate's diplomacy but also by the everyday practices of its coastal society, thus offering a fresh contribution to the theme of Banten's Bazaar: Commerce and Cultural Customs in the 17th-Century Sultanate.

Method

This study adopts a four-stage historical method consisting of source finding, source criticism, data analysis, and historical writing.⁶ The source finding stage gathered primary sources such as European travelers' reports (e.g., Cornelis de Houtman, Francis Drake), Banten Sultanate documents, and artifacts like Chinese ceramics and the Ki Amuk cannon. These were complemented with secondary sources from modern historians and archaeological research to provide broader context, despite challenges due to the scarcity of local written records.

The second stage, source criticism, emphasized verifying the reliability of collected data. For instance, de Houtman's reports, often shaped by his temperamental nature,

were critically reviewed for bias,⁷ while local evidence such as the Arabic inscription on the Ki Amuk cannon was tested for authenticity and relevance.⁸ Comparative readings with secondary sources helped balance colonial perspectives, ensuring a more inclusive representation of Bantenese society.

In the data analysis and historical writing stages, the pepper trade and cultural interactions were examined through evidence of British, Portuguese, and Chinese traders, artifacts like Vietnamese and Chinese ceramics, and foreign settlements around Banten. Economic practices such as guilds and *waqf* systems were analyzed for their role in sustaining the bazaar,⁹ while colonial interventions were noted as shaping local dynamics.¹⁰ The narrative was arranged chronologically, from Banten's rise under Sunan Gunung Jati, through the VOC conflict in 1601, to the siege of 1682, with illustrations of envoys in England and studies of spice routes underscoring the broader impact on trade and culture.¹¹

Results and Discussion

The Sultanate of Banten was established in 1526 by Maulana Hasanuddin, the son of Sunan Gunung Jati, following the region's incorporation into the Sunda Kingdom through the expansion of the Demak and Cirebon Sultanates in 1524-1525.¹² The construction of *Surosowan* fort, initiated by Maulana Hasanuddin in 1552, served as a pivotal strategic hub for the government and maritime commerce along the western coastline of Java Island, offering a vantage point over the Sunda Strait. During his reign (1552-1570), Banten underwent significant development as an international trading port, with pepper being its primary commodity, attracting traders from China, Persia, India, and Europe.¹³ The establishment of diplomatic relations with foreign seafarers commenced with the Portuguese, who made an appearance in the early 16th century. This was followed by the Dutch, led by Cornelis de Houtman, who arrived in June 1596. However, the Dutch exhibited an arrogant demeanor, which led to tensions with the local government. From a political perspective, the region of Banten experienced an expansion of its Islamic influence, as evidenced by the establishment of diplomatic relations with neighboring kingdoms, including Cirebon and Lampung.¹⁴

During the reign of Sultan Maulana Yusuf (1570-1580), the son of Maulana Hasanuddin, the Sultanate of Banten underwent significant territorial expansion into the Sundanese interior, marked by the conquest of Pakuan Pajajaran in 1579. This conquest firmly established the political hegemony of the sultanate over the western region of Java. The pepper trade experienced significant growth, with Banten maintaining a monopoly in Lampung, thereby establishing it as a prominent commercial hub within the broader context of Southeast Asia.¹⁵ The harbor of Karangantu received visitors from traders representing a variety of nations, including England, Denmark, and China. These visitors were engaged in the international exchange of goods, specifically items such as

silk, porcelain, and spices. Meanwhile, the region of Banten engaged in the export of goods including pepper, rice, and cloves. The cultivation of relationships with foreign sailors was facilitated by a tolerance of religious differences, as evidenced by the construction of a temple in the harbor in 1673.¹⁶ The expansion of shipping was further facilitated by the establishment of a sea fleet for the protection of trade routes, as evidenced by an expedition to Palembang in 1596 under the leadership of Maulana Muhammad. However, this endeavor ultimately proved unsuccessful due to the unfortunate demise of Maulana Muhammad in the course of the battle. Banten maintained its political independence, resisting the early pressures exerted by the Portuguese and Dutch (VOC).¹⁷

The period of greatest splendor for the Banten Sultanate coincided with the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (1651-1682), who is credited with significant advancements in politics, trade, and shipping.¹⁸ He constructed a contemporary naval force modeled after European examples and enlisted European sailors to bolster the armed forces. In 1661, he captured Sukadana (Tanjungpura Kingdom) to ensure secure shipping lanes.¹⁹ International trade experienced a period of significant growth and expansion, leading to the establishment of commercial relations with various regions and entities. These included the British Empire, the Ming Dynasty in China, and several Southeast Asian kingdoms, such as those in Persia, India, Siam, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan. The strategic use of political diplomacy was reinforced through the deployment of envoys to England in 1681, who sought armed support against the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) for its ongoing blockade of trade. Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's staunch opposition to the VOC, defense of Banten's sovereignty, and promotion of the welfare of the people through free trade resulted in the transformation of Banten into a prosperous multiethnic port city.

By the late 17th century, internal conflict and VOC intervention weakened Banten. A civil war between Sultan Ageng and his son Sultan Haji enabled the VOC to support Haji militarily.²⁰ Sultan Ageng withdrew to Tirtayasa after losing Surosowan palace (1682) and was imprisoned in 1683, marking Banten's political decline. The VOC imposed trade monopolies, reducing Banten's role in international commerce, while Dutch influence over sailors and ports grew increasingly dominant.²¹

The historical record indicates that, in the 16th and 17th centuries, Southeast Asian communities, particularly those in Banten, were significant contributors to global trade, particularly in spices such as pepper.²² Situated on the westernmost extremity of Java Island, Banten leveraged its advantageous location on the Sunda Strait to appeal to traders from Asia and Europe. Pepper from the island of Lampung, which was under the jurisdiction of the Banten Sultanate, emerged as a prominent export commodity bound for China, India, Persia, and subsequently, Europe, facilitated by the efforts of Portuguese, Dutch, and British sailors. Trade data indicates that during the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, the province of Banten experienced a significant increase in pepper exports,

reaching an annual volume of thousands of tons. This robust export activity placed Banten in direct competition with prominent ports such as Malacca and Aceh during the same period. The capacity of the Bantenese community to oversee plantations, distribution, and international trade led to the development of this market as a commercial hub, satisfying regional demands while exerting influence on global supply chains. This historical context underscores Southeast Asia's status as a significant contributor to the global economy.²³

The development of the market ecosystem in Banten was characterized by a collaborative process involving indigenous and foreign traders, with notable contributions from China, India, and Arabia, resulting in a trading environment that was both healthy and competitive. Indigenous traders, who exercised control over local supply chains for goods such as pepper and rice, collaborated closely with Chinese traders, who imported silk and porcelain, and with Indian and Arab traders, who supplied textiles and other spices.²⁴ Historical records indicate the presence of a notable Chinese community in Banten, as evidenced by the establishment of a temple in 1673, suggesting cultural and economic integration. Banten's market, particularly at Karangantu Harbor, emerged as a nexus for the exchange of goods and ideas, featuring a flexible system of barter and coinage trading.²⁵ This cooperation not only increased the volume of trade, but also ensured price stability and continuity of supply, making Banten an inclusive and dynamic multiethnic commercial center.²⁶

The success of the Banten market was also supported by the Sultan's policy of selecting *shahbandars*, port officials who had a high reputation among the merchant community. Notable figures such as *Syahbandar* Cakdrana and Kaytsu, who were appointed during the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, were particularly adept in their management of port activities and the cultivation of relationships with foreign traders.²⁷ The *Syahbandar* was responsible for the supervision of transactions, the establishment of trade taxes, and the resolution of disputes, thereby fostering confidence among traders in the Banten market. The reputation of the port of Banten among traders from China, India, and Europe served to reinforce its reputation as a fair and well-organized port. Dutch records from the VOC in the 1660s noted that Banten's *syahbandar* was capable of handling hundreds of ships each trading season, thereby demonstrating efficiency and professionalism in port administration. The selection of this competent *syahbandar* proved to be pivotal in maintaining the attractiveness of the Banten market for international traders.²⁸

The Sultan of Banten also allocated resources to the development of economic support infrastructure, including the construction of ports, warehouses, and an integrated security system, with the aim of promoting market activities. Karangantu Harbor was equipped with docks capable of accommodating large ships from Europe and Asia, while warehouses around the harbor were used to store pepper, rice, and imported goods such as porcelain.²⁹ Furthermore, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa implemented modernization efforts,

including the adoption of European models for the sea fleet, with the objective of safeguarding the region's shipping lanes against the threat of piracy and the blockades imposed by the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC). The market security system was reinforced by the strict supervision of sultanate troops, which prevented conflicts between traders and ensured the smooth progression of transactions. In the 1680s, English travelers' accounts extolled the virtues of Banten's well-ordered infrastructure and assured market security, a factor that enabled foreign traders to operate with a reasonable degree of confidence. These facilities transformed Banten's market into a nexus of trade and a paradigm of an advanced port city in Southeast Asia.³⁰

The tradition of trade in the Banten Sultanate in the 17th century was one of the primary factors that contributed to the region's economic prosperity. However, this subject has not been the focus of significant scholarly attention. As a strategic maritime trade hub situated along the Asia-Europe trade route, this tradition was reinforced by the actions of '*ulamâ*' and nobles who functioned as trade managers. These individuals played a pivotal role in shaping the norms of Islamic value-based trade ethics. This trading tradition also reflects cultural pluralism, where traders from various ethnic and religious backgrounds interact, creating a distinctive cosmopolitanism in Banten. However, this tradition was not immune to challenges, including internal conflicts and external pressures from colonialism, which ultimately affected the sustainability of the trading system towards the end of the 17th century.³¹

João de Barros, in *Décadas da Ásia*, sees that merits attention. He notes that the Banten region was originally part of the Sunda Kingdom before being ruled by Muslims under Sunan Gunung Jati. This observation is of particular interest because it suggests that the society in the region was open to interaction with foreign traders, including the Portuguese, who had been present before the conversion to Islam. Following the establishment of a sultanate, the Muslim community began to organize its life in accordance with Islamic legal principles, particularly with regard to trade, as evidenced by the emergence of practices such as the *ijâb-qabûl* tradition previously discussed. Despite its brevity, this explanation suggests that the pre-Islamic society in the region exhibited a distinctive cosmopolitan character, with the port serving as a nexus for multicultural interaction.³²

The interaction between Islamic teachings and preexisting local values, including Hindu-Buddhist influences, resulted in the development of deeply entrenched customs within the Islamic traditions and legal systems of the Banten Sultanate during the 17th century. The scholars, irrespective of their social class, disseminated a doctrine that underscored the tenets of a virtuous existence, encompassing principles such as justice, integrity, and collective responsibility. These tenets were in alignment with the tenets of sharia.³³

However, this teaching is not accepted uncritically; rather, it is integrated with local traditions, including traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, and cosmological

views that continue to reflect the Hindu-Buddhist heritage. One example of this syncretism is the practice of making pilgrimages to the tombs of guardians or ancestors, which are imbued with mystical nuances. This phenomenon demonstrates the intermingling of Islamic teachings and local animist beliefs. This process engenders an endemic comprehension of Islam, which is not only accepted as a religion but also regarded as a contextual guide to life, reflecting the distinctive cultural identity of Banten. The interplay between Islamic tradition and customs in Banten is further exemplified by the social and legal structures that govern daily life.³⁴

The trading tradition in the Banten Sultanate in the 17th century, rooted in Islamic law and mixed with local customs, reflects a unique syncretism between sharia teachings and pre-Islamic cultural values, such as Hindu-Buddhist heritage, especially in the practice of *ijâb-qabûl*. In the context of Islamic jurisprudence, *ijâb-qabûl* emerged as the prevailing tradition that governed trade transactions in prominent markets within the region, including the Banten Market and the Karangantu port. This process necessitates the presence of a clear trader (seller), buyer, and goods, as well as an agreement that is articulated verbally with witnesses, in accordance with sharia principles.³⁵

In practice, in Banten, local customs frequently influence the process. These customs include the use of language and symbolic gestures that reflect the negotiation traditions of coastal communities. Small rituals, such as prayers or offerings before transactions, also play a role. These rituals are influenced by animist and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs. Clerics and nobles, in their capacity as market supervisors, are responsible for ensuring the integrity of the *ijâb-qabûl* process. However, the flexibility inherent in the implementation of these rules permits the integration of local values, such as respect for social relations between traders and buyers, thereby strengthening community ties. This tradition underscores the religious dimension of trade and fosters the establishment of an inclusive economic system, thereby enabling traders from diverse cultural backgrounds to engage in trade.³⁶

Moreover, the *ijâb-qabûl* tradition in Bantenese trade exemplifies the adaptation of Islamic law to the evolving dynamics of the cosmopolitan maritime market, while concurrently preserving the endemic cultural identity of Banten. For instance, trade goods such as pepper, textiles, or ceramics, which are the primary commodities, are frequently exchanged using a barter system regulated through *ijâb-qabûl*. However, the process can encompass customary elements such as the bestowal of gifts or down payments as a form of trust, which originate from local traditions. Furthermore, the role of mosques as centers of trade and religious education serves to reinforce the understanding of Islamic trade ethics, including the prohibition of usury and fraud, as taught by '*ulamâ*'.³⁷

In practice, the people of Banten often combined these values with pre-Islamic traditions, such as the belief in auspicious days for trading or the use of amulets for good luck. This indicates a blend of Islam and pre-Islamic traditions. Conflicts between the adherence to Sharia law and the preservation of local customs were not uncommon,

particularly in instances when *'ulamâ'* endeavored to impose more orthodox trading regulations. Nevertheless, the flexibility inherent in this *ijâb-qabûl* tradition enabled Banten to maintain its status as a dynamic trading hub, where Islamic law and customs complemented each other, giving rise to a trading system that was distinct and embedded within the context of Bantenese society in the 17th century.³⁸

Local traditions, imbued with Islamic nuances, play an important role in strengthening social cohesion at various levels of society, from the palace to the villagers, including the pepper farming community in Banten.³⁹ The community of pepper planters cultivated a modest yet robust communal ethos, characterized by a shared agrarian outlook and Islamic principles. Religious traditions, including congregational prayers, the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, and mutual cooperation in agricultural activities, functioned as social glue, thereby strengthening solidarity among residents. The positive relationship between village heads and the Banten government resulted in the establishment of a robust patronage system, thereby ensuring social and political stability.⁴⁰ This patronage not only strengthened community loyalty to the government but also facilitated the flow of resources and protection from the center of power to the village, thereby fostering harmony among societal levels.

A salient traditional product among pepper farmers is the *selamatan* culture, which is deeply rooted in agrarian and religious life. *Selamatan*, which is often held before or after the planting and harvest seasons, involves ceremonies with prayers recited in Arabic, Javanese, or Sundanese, reflecting the syncretism of local and Islamic cultures.⁴¹ This ceremony is not merely a religious ritual; it is also a means to cultivate collective optimism that God will accept their offerings, thereby ensuring abundant agricultural yields. *Selamatan* functions as a catalyst for the strengthening of interpersonal relationships among residents, given its emphasis on collective participation in the planning and execution of the event. Accordingly, this tradition has been demonstrated to have a dual effect, serving to fortify both the spiritual dimension and the social bonds and collective identity of farmers.⁴²

The *selamatan* culture has been shown to positively impact the motivation of pepper farmers to improve the quality of their agriculture. The belief that *selamatan* ceremonies can bring blessings for the harvest encourages farmers to pay more attention to farming techniques, plant maintenance, and land management. A successful harvest is expected to not only meet local demand but also enhance the market position of Banten pepper as a competitive trading commodity. Consequently, local traditions imbued with Islamic nuances, such as *selamatan*, function not only as social cohesive forces but also as economic catalysts that underpin community welfare. The integration of Islamic values in this agrarian tradition engenders a positive cycle between spirituality, social cohesion, and economic productivity, thereby ultimately strengthening the social structure from the village to the palace.

The tradition of *selamatan* in the Banten market serves as a tangible illustration of the symbiotic relationship between Islamic values and local culture, fostering a profound

sense of social cohesion among traders and other economic actors. The *selamatan* ceremony in the market typically involves an Islamic teacher who leads a collective prayer, attended by traders and individuals who are directly or indirectly connected to market activities, such as transporters or intermediaries. The ritual culminates in a communal meal, a practice that fosters relational bonds among participants, engendering a sense of unity and collective identity. The primary objective of *selamatan* is to request divine blessings for the safety and prosperity of the traders' business endeavors, with the hope of averting potential losses or conflicts. In this context, *selamatan* functions not only as a spiritual expression but also as a means to cultivate collective optimism and fortify social networks in a dynamic market environment.⁴³

The practice of *selamatan* tradition in Banten market plays a significant role in maintaining solidarity among traders, particularly among indigenous traders such as Javanese and Sundanese. This tradition fosters healthy competition and prevents detrimental price wars, thereby contributing to the stability and prosperity of the market. This tradition fosters an environment conducive to the interaction among traders, the exchange of values, and the establishment of trust, thereby mitigating the likelihood of conflict arising from business competition. The practice of *selamatan*, characterized by collective prayers and shared meals, has been identified as a catalyst for strengthening emotional and social bonds, fostering mutual respect, and promoting cooperation, thereby contributing to the stability of the market economy. Furthermore, this tradition becomes a cultural identity that distinguishes indigenous traders, while strengthening their position in the Banten trade ecosystem. Consequently, *selamatan* not only fosters spiritual and economic dimensions, but also functions as a social cohesive force that sustains the harmony and viability of market activities.⁴⁴

The presence of the mosque in proximity to the Banten palace and the Karangantu port serves as a compelling symbol of the intersection between local traditions and Islamic teachings, thereby creating a space that is imbued with both sacredness and social and economic dynamism. The mosque serves as a focal point for diverse ethnic groups, including Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and foreign traders, who congregate in the bustling port area. In this context, the mosque functions as an inclusive Muslim ecosystem that fosters cross-cultural interaction, thereby strengthening social cohesion through Islamic values such as justice, togetherness, and mutual respect. Local traditions, such as mutual cooperation and deliberation, blend with Islamic teachings, creating a spirit of trade rooted in the local economic ethos. The mosque's strategic location serves as a symbol of the integration of spirituality and worldly activities, thereby encouraging the emergence of a trade network that is oriented not only towards profit but also towards Islamic moral values.⁴⁵

Table 1. Trade And Cultural Traditions of the 17th-Century Banten Sultanate

Period	Practice	Impact
1526-1580 Founding & Infrastructure	Surosowan Fort, early port, international traders	Trade hub, sovereignty control
1570-1580 Territorial Expansion	Pakuan Pajajaran conquest, Lampung pepper monopoly	Expanded trade routes, multicultural interaction
1651-1682 Golden Era (Sultan Ageng)	Modern navy, international trade, diplomatic missions	Secure trade, peak prosperity, regional influence
1680-1683 Internal Conflict & VOC	Civil war, VOC intervention, trade monopoly	Political decline, reduced autonomy
Traditions & Ethics	Ijab-Kabul, Selamatan, mosques, Syahbandars	Ethical trade, social cohesion, market stability

The mosque near Karangantu port functioned as a multifaceted institution, serving not only as a place of worship but also as a center for social and economic activities that connected traders from various backgrounds. Following the performance of their prayers, worshippers frequently utilized the mosque courtyard or the surrounding area for the purpose of sharing information, establishing business partnerships, and even executing trade transactions. This interaction engendered a competitive yet harmonious trade climate, where trust and solidarity among traders were fortified by the bonds of faith. The mosque also became a place to spread knowledge about sharia-compliant trade practices, such as the prohibition of usury and the importance of honesty, which were in line with local economic traditions that emphasized the sustainability of long-term relationships. Consequently, the mosque functioned as a unifying social and spiritual institution, thereby contributing to the development of Banten's maritime economy. This role is significant because it established the city as a commercial hub that integrated local customs and Islamic principles, fostering a harmonious balance between tradition and religion.⁴⁶

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the seventeenth-century pepper trade in the Sultanate of Banten embodied a structural paradox. Economically, pepper functioned as the principal engine of prosperity, integrating Banten into transregional commercial networks that connected Southeast Asia with the wider Indian Ocean and European markets. Politically, however, the same commodity rendered the sultanate vulnerable to external intervention. The succession conflict between Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and Sultan Haji created an opening for the VOC to instrumentalize the pepper trade through monopoly agreements, transforming a symbol of sovereignty into a mechanism of colonial subordination.

More fundamentally, this research reveals that Banten's commercial system cannot be understood solely in terms of commodity exchange or geopolitical rivalry. Trade was embedded in a moral and cultural framework shaped by Islamic jurisprudence and local tradition. Practices such as *ijâb-qabûl* institutionalized contractual ethics rooted in sharia, while communal rituals like *selamatan* reinforced social solidarity and collective responsibility within agrarian and market communities. The mosque functioned not only as a religious institution but also as a socio-economic node where commercial trust, knowledge transmission, and ethical norms were cultivated.

Therefore, the decline of Banten's political autonomy did not signify the disappearance of its cultural-economic identity. Instead, it highlights the tension between an indigenous Islamic moral economy and the expanding logic of monopolistic colonial capitalism. The ambivalence of the pepper trade thus reflects a broader historical dynamic: economic integration into global networks simultaneously generated wealth and exposed local sovereignty to structural vulnerability.

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