

Pepper Trade from Lampung to Banten and Its Influence on Social Titles in the 17th Century

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas tentang Perdagangan Lada Lampung ke Banten dan Pengaruhnya pada gelar sosial abad Ke-17, dalam penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian Sejarah yaitu, Heuristik, Kritik sumber, Interpretasi, dan Historiografi. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa masyarakat Lampung memperoleh gelar sosial setelah menjual Lada ke kesultanan Banten berdasarkan ketentuan berat tertentu. Pemberian gelar terjadi karena hubungan erat Lampung dengan Banten, yang didorong oleh pentingnya perdagangan lada saat itu. Sebagai komoditas utama, lada menjadi penghubung Lampung dengan jaringan perdagangan internasional melalui pelabuhan Banten. kesultanan Banten membangun hubungan baik dengan masyarakat Lampung untuk menjaga pasokan lada agar stabil, dan memenuhi kebutuhan global yang terus meningkat titik perdagangan ini tidak hanya berdampak pada ekonomi tetapi juga mempengaruhi struktur sosial di Lampung titik gelar sosial yang diberikan mencerminkan interaksi ekonomi yang erat sekaligus perubahan status sosial masyarakat Lampung.

Kata kunci: gelar sosial, lada, lampung.

Abstract

This research discusses the Lampung Pepper Trade to Banten and its influence on social status in the 17th century. This research uses historical research methods, namely, heuristics, source criticism, interpretation and historiography. This research found that the people of Lampung obtained social status after selling Lada to the Banten sultanate based on certain heavy provisions. The awarding of the title occurred because of Lampung's close relationship with Banten, which was driven by the importance of the pepper trade at that time. As the main commodity, pepper connects Lampung with the international trade network through the port of Banten. The Sultanate of Banten built good relations with the people of Lampung to maintain a stable supply of pepper and meet the ever-increasing global demand. This trade point not only had an impact on the economy but also influenced the social structure in Lampung. The social title given reflected close economic interactions as well as changes in status. Lampung social community.

Keywords: social title, pepper, lampung.

INTRODUCTION

Banten was a strategically significant region due to its location along the Sunda Strait, serving as a gateway to both Sumatra and Java. In 1551 CE, Banten began to attract the attention of the Portuguese after their conquest of Malacca (Olivia et al., 2019). However, in 1527 CE, the rulers of Demak seized the

area from the Sunda Padjajaran Kingdom and established the Sultanate of Banten. This ruler was Nurullah, also known as Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Djati, who initially began his career as a political advisor to Sultan Trenggana (Rifqiawati et al., 2023). In the 16th century, Banten developed into a global market, serving as a hub for local traders and foreign

merchants from China, Gujarat, Portugal, Arabia, Persia, and the Malay world (Wibowo, 2020). The establishment of Banten as a global trading center was marked by its key commodity, spices—particularly pepper, which was in high demand (Karma, 2017). Pepper exports from Banten steadily increased in response to global market demand, prompting the Sultanate to seek fertile lands for cultivation in regions such as Jambi, Bengkulu, Palembang, and especially Lampung (Sholehat, 2019).

The relationship between Banten and Lampung had, in fact, existed earlier, beginning with the marriage of Syarif Hidayatullah to a princess from the Keratuan Darah Putih, Princess Sinar Alam, according to oral tradition (Mulianti & Imron, n.d.). This relationship deepened during the reign of Sultan Abu Al-Mufakhir Mahmud Abdulkadir, also known as Sultan Abul Fath, who ruled from 1596-1647 CE. During his reign, Lampung was integrated into Banten's sphere of influence through both military expansion and diplomacy (Wibisono, 2013). Historical letters sent by the Sultan of Banten to European monarchs, particularly those of England, demonstrate Banten's political assertiveness, as the Sultan demanded cannons and other weaponry—including *bedil*, a term for firearms derived from Tamil (Burhanudin, 2020).

Banten then began to assert control over the pepper trade to meet

market demands, implementing taxation systems and managing pepper distribution from Lampung to Banten. This was accompanied by diplomatic relations that strengthened political ties with Lampung's local elites, often through the conferral of noble titles. The dominance of Banten over Lampung's pepper trade continued under Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (1651-1682 CE), during which Lampung's pepper trade was brought firmly under Banten's authority.

In the 17th century, pepper trade became a central element of the strategic relationship between Lampung and the Sultanate of Banten. As the primary producer of pepper, Lampung played a vital role in meeting global demand through Banten's port, which functioned as an international trading hub. The Sultanate of Banten maintained close ties with Lampung communities to ensure a steady supply of pepper. This trade was not merely an economic activity but also had a profound impact on Lampung's social structure. Honorary titles were conferred by the Sultanate of Banten upon prominent Lampung figures who contributed to the pepper trade. These titles served not only as expressions of gratitude but also as instruments of political influence and diplomacy, reinforcing the Sultanate's control over Lampung.

This study applies historical theory that views trade as a key driver of social

change. The theory emphasizes that economic dynamics, such as the pepper trade, have the capacity to shape social power relations, hierarchies, and cultural systems. Within this framework, pepper trade was not only an economic engine but also a political tool for consolidating interregional ties. A historical approach is employed to analyze the economic and social interactions between Lampung and the Sultanate of Banten, including the transformative effects of the pepper trade.

The central research questions of this study are: How did the pepper trade shape the relationship between Lampung and the Sultanate of Banten? What were the motives behind the granting of social titles? And what impact did these titles have on Lampung's society? By exploring these dynamics, this research highlights the role of the pepper trade as a catalyst for social and political transformation and underscores the significance of this commodity in shaping the cultural landscape of Lampung in the 17th century.

METHODS

This study applies the historical research method, consisting of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Hamid & Madjid, 2011). The heuristic stage involved collecting sources from archival documents, scholarly literature, museum records, and online databases such as Delpher. Source

criticism was then conducted to test the authenticity and validity of the collected data, selecting only those most relevant to the pepper trade between Lampung and Banten in the 17th century. The interpretation stage focused on analyzing and contextualizing the data to explain their historical meaning. Finally, the historiographical stage compiled the findings into a chronological and causal narrative, highlighting the dynamics of the pepper trade and its influence on social titles in Lampung society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Lampung-Banten Relations and the Pepper Trade

After the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511, foreign merchants shifted to new ports, among them Banten, which developed into a global marketplace. Strategically located at the western tip of Java near the Sunda Strait, Banten became a vital hub in Asian and world trade. Its proximity to Lampung renowned for high-quality pepper strengthened Banten's position as a pepper entrepôt.

The port's prosperity was largely driven by pepper, prompting Banten to build strong infrastructure and establish direct ties with Lampung through trade, Islamization, and political control. By the 1530s, Banten expanded its influence over Lampung, which was divided into several traditional *keratuan* (principalities). Historical accounts and oral traditions also

record intermarriage between Sunan Gunung Jati and a princess of Keratuan Pugung, linking Lampung closely with Banten's Islamization efforts. Archeological evidence, such as Banten-style tombstones in South Lampung and Tanggamus, further supports this cultural exchange.

Oral traditions like the *Seba* (pilgrimage) to Banten tell of Lampung elites such as Menak Paduka, Menak Kemala Bumi, and Ratu Dinata who acknowledged Banten's sovereignty, received noble titles, and embraced Islam. These exchanges symbolized Lampung's semi-autonomy under Banten, with pepper trade fully controlled by Banten. Lampung's fertile clay soils made it an ideal pepper producer, particularly for black pepper (*lada hitam*).

The relationship was formalized through charters such as the Dalung Kahuripan Inscription, recording a pact between Sultan Hasanuddin of Banten and Ratu Darah Putih of Lampung, affirming Banten as the elder partner. Other charters, including the Dalung Bojong, Sukau Charter (1694), and White Charter (1691), reinforced Banten's authority to regulate pepper cultivation, taxation, and trade. These documents mandated Lampung men to plant 500 pepper vines and required merchants to carry official seals when trading.

Together, these historical and material sources demonstrate the strong

Lampung-Banten relationship, in which Lampung provided pepper while Banten acted as both protector and regulator in the global trade network of the 17th century.

B. Motives for Granting Social Titles

The granting of titles by the Sultanate of Banten to the people of Lampung in the 17th century was not merely an act of honor, but rather carried multiple underlying motives economic, political, social, and cultural. The following explains these motives in detail:

1. Strengthening Economic Relations

The primary reason for granting titles to the Lampung elites was to reinforce economic ties between Lampung and Banten. Pepper, as the main commodity in Banten's global market, made Lampung a strategic region for the Sultanate. By granting honorary titles to Lampung's local elites, Banten could ensure a continuous supply of pepper while also maintaining sustainable economic relations between the two regions.

2. Political Control

Titles conferred upon local elites in Lampung also served as instruments to strengthen Banten's political influence over the region. Through this system, the Sultan of Banten acknowledged the authority of Lampung's local leaders, which

reduced the risk of resistance or rebellion. The conferral of titles thus created a relationship of recognition and loyalty that facilitated Banten's indirect rule over Lampung.

3. Legitimacy of Power

By granting titles to Lampung leaders, the Sultanate of Banten legitimized its sovereignty in the region while simultaneously elevating the social status of Lampung's elites. This arrangement was mutually beneficial: Lampung's leaders gained prestige and formal recognition, while Banten secured reliable agents to manage pepper agriculture and trade on its behalf.

4. Preservation of Social and Cultural Bonds

Honorary titles also functioned as cultural diplomacy, preserving social and cultural ties between Banten and Lampung. By acknowledging Lampung's hierarchical traditions, Banten demonstrated respect for local culture, which helped sustain a harmonious relationship between the two societies.

5. Diplomacy and Reward

The awarding of titles also represented a form of diplomacy and reward. It was a mark of appreciation for Lampung's

cooperation and loyalty in the pepper trade. At the same time, these titles acted as incentives, encouraging Lampung elites to maintain a steady supply of pepper to Banten. Thus, the practice served both as a political bonus and as a means of securing long-term economic collaboration.

6. A Strategy for Regional Stability

Lampung's strategic location at the southern tip of Sumatra, close to the Sunda Strait, made it a vital area for trade and territorial control. By granting titles to Lampung elites, Banten ensured regional stability and the security of pepper supplies, particularly in the face of growing competition from foreign powers such as the VOC. Titleholders were also entrusted with responsibilities to maintain order and security in their territories.

Overall, the granting of titles by the Sultanate of Banten was a sophisticated strategy that combined economic, political, social, cultural, and diplomatic objectives. Titles were not merely symbolic honors but practical instruments for strengthening alliances, ensuring pepper supplies, and maintaining regional stability. This practice reflects the Sultanate's pragmatic approach to governing strategic territories and fostering mutually beneficial relations.

During the period of pepper trade between Lampung and Banten, pepper was not only an economic commodity but also played an essential role in shaping the social and political system. The royal court of Banten developed a tradition of awarding honorary titles to distinguished individuals. However, these titles were not granted freely; they had to be redeemed with tributes in the form of pepper, with specific amounts depending on the title. Individuals seeking such honors were required to undertake *Seba* (tribute visits) to Banten.

The following were the major honorary titles:

1. Pangeran (Prince)

The highest honorary title conferred by the Sultan of Banten, awarded to individuals who were able to present 15 *pikul* of pepper as tribute (Hoëvell, 1862).

2. Kyai Arya

A prestigious title granted upon the payment of 10 *pikul* of pepper (Hamid, 2024).

3. Tumenggung

Another significant title, conferred upon those who delivered 9 *pikul* of pepper to the Sultanate.

4. Ngabehi

A respected title, bestowed on individuals who could provide 8 *pikul* of pepper (Fauzan, 2023).

(*Note: 1 *pikul* = approximately 62.5 kilograms of pepper) (Karsiwan et al., 2022).

This tribute system illustrates how pepper was not only a trade commodity but also a symbol of authority and social prestige. The practice reveals the close interconnection between economics, politics, and culture during the pepper trade between Lampung and Banten.

The process of pepper collection and trade in Lampung involved specific officials appointed by the Sultan of Banten. These positions ensured both efficiency and control over the pepper trade system:

1. Jenang

The *jenang* was a chief official assigned directly by the Sultan of Banten to oversee all matters related to pepper trade in Lampung. His primary responsibilities included receiving pepper from local farmers, ensuring its quality, and coordinating the process of accumulation for trade. Although the *jenang* played a crucial role in commerce, he was not authorized to interfere in Lampung's local governance, as his authority was restricted to trade matters (Masroh, 1942).

2. Djenjen

The *djenjen* was another key official appointed to manage the

distribution and transportation of pepper after it had been collected. His responsibilities focused on logistics ensuring safe, timely, and efficient delivery of pepper from Lampung to Banten. The *djenjen* thus acted as the direct link between the pepper-producing regions of Lampung and the trading center of Banten, making his role vital to the overall success of the pepper trade (Masroh, 1942).

This system demonstrates that pepper was far more than an agricultural product; it was a medium of power, diplomacy, and legitimacy. Through a well structured system of tribute, honorary titles, and trade administration, the Sultanate of Banten successfully integrated Lampung into its political and economic sphere of influence.

C. The Impact of Title Conferral on Lampung Society

The granting of titles by the Sultanate of Banten to the people of Lampung in the 17th century had profound effects on various aspects of life in Lampung. These titles were not merely honorary; they carried significant social, economic, political, and cultural consequences that shaped Lampung society in meaningful ways.

1. Elevation of Social Status

The titles conferred by the Sultanate of Banten elevated the

social status of their recipients within Lampung society. Local leaders who held titles such as *djenjen* or traditional chiefs were granted greater legitimacy and were more highly respected by their communities. Titles transformed them into symbols of authority and representatives of the Sultanate in Lampung, creating a new social hierarchy in which titled leaders held more influence than other figures (Djajadiningrat, 1983).

2. Patronage and the Strengthening of Local Politics

The conferral of titles established strong patron-client relationships between titleholders in Lampung and the Sultanate of Banten. These individuals played crucial roles in maintaining pepper supplies and ensuring the stability of Lampung as part of Banten's trade network. In return, the Sultanate provided political protection and formal recognition, thereby reinforcing the authority of titled leaders and reducing the likelihood of local conflicts (Masroh, 1942).

3. Impact on the Local Economy

Titleholders often controlled the management of pepper trade in Lampung, acting as intermediaries between local farmers and Banten's broader trading system.

This created a concentration of economic power in the hands of specific elites, which contributed to growing economic stratification. At the same time, the organized trade network facilitated by these leaders allowed local communities to access broader and more stable markets, which in turn improved overall prosperity.

4. Dissemination of Islamic Values

As an Islamic sultanate, Banten also used the title system to strengthen Islamic values in Lampung. Titles often carried cultural and religious influence from Banten, and titled leaders became role models in spreading Islamic teachings. Thus, the conferral of titles not only elevated social standing but also accelerated the Islamization of Lampung society, integrating the region more firmly into the wider Islamic community of the archipelago.

5. Local Competition and Rivalries

Because titles were awarded selectively, they often sparked competition among Lampung's local leaders. While this sometimes produced rivalries, it also motivated leaders to enhance their contributions, whether in maintaining regional stability or supporting pepper trade. This

dynamic fostered a more complex social environment, in which individuals and groups sought to demonstrate loyalty and competence to the Sultanate of Banten.

6. Cultural Integration and Regional Identity

The titles also carried cultural significance, as recipients frequently adopted attributes or symbols associated with the Sultanate of Banten. This process fostered cultural integration between the two regions, strengthening a shared regional identity that connected Lampung with Banten in terms of custom, religion, and social relations.

CONCLUSION

The pepper trade was the key element linking Lampung and the Sultanate of Banten in the 17th century, serving not only as an economic exchange but also as a foundation for political and social relations. Through this trade, Banten strengthened its influence by granting social titles to Lampung elites, both as recognition and as a means to secure loyalty and control.

These titles elevated recipients' status, legitimized their authority, and reinforced social stratification, while also introducing Banten's cultural and religious influence into Lampung society. Thus,

pepper trade and the conferral of titles played a decisive role in shaping Lampung's social order, power relations, and cultural identity.

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