



Journal Homepage: [-www.journalijar.com](http://www.journalijar.com)

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/23674
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/23674>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ADVOCACY FOR THE SPICE ROUTE PROGRAM: STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVATION, CULTURAL DIPLOMACY, AND UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

Badruzzaman, Muhamad Murtadlo, Karnadi, Husen Hasan Basri, Edi Junaedi, Priyono, Trida Chairu and Hafizhuddin

1. Deputi Kebijakan Pembangunan, Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 12 April 2026
Final Accepted: 14 May 2026
Published: June 2026

Key words:-

Spice Route Heritage; UNESCO
Nomination Strategy; Heritage
Diplomacy; Cultural Heritage Advocacy;
Dual-track Heritage Strategy

Abstract

This paper presents a policy-oriented analysis of Indonesia's initiative to nominate the Spice Route for UNESCO recognition by situating it at the intersection of heritage preservation, cultural diplomacy, and soft power strategy. Moving beyond descriptive historical reconstruction, the study proposes an integrated analytical framework that links archaeological and documentary evidence, institutional governance, and international diplomacy through a dual-track UNESCO approach encompassing both World Heritage and Memory of the World mechanisms. Employing a qualitative-descriptive methodology, the research draws on policy documents, historical sources, and expert consultations to assess strategic directions, institutional challenges, and Indonesia's readiness for the nomination process. The study reframes the Spice Route not merely as a legacy of historical trade, but as a contemporary strategic cultural asset that reasserts Nusantara's central role in early global maritime networks and intercivilizational exchanges. The findings demonstrate that successful nomination requires coherent policy alignment, effective cross-ministerial coordination, and sustained international collaboration, particularly in addressing transnational narratives and shared heritage claims. By outlining practical advocacy pathways for policymakers, cultural institutions, and diplomatic actors, this paper contributes to the advancement of heritage diplomacy and offers a replicable model for other transboundary cultural routes within contemporary international relations.

"© 2026 by the Author(s). Published by IJAR under CC BY 4.0. Unrestricted use allowed with credit to the author."

Introduction:-

The strategic position of the Nusantara, located between two continents and two oceans, has historically made this region a crucial node in interactions between the Eastern and Western worlds (Tri Achmadi et al., 2022). From a maritime geopolitical perspective, the Spice Route played a fundamental role in shaping the early global economic system long before the emergence of modern capitalism, while also serving as a medium for the exchange of commodities, knowledge, technology, values, and belief systems across civilizations. This route functioned not only

Corresponding Author:- Badruzzaman

Address:- Deputi Kebijakan Pembangunan, Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional.

as a trade corridor but also as a space of cultural interaction that shaped the mosaic of contemporary Indonesian identity through processes of acculturation involving Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and European influences (Kumoratih, 2017a)(Kumoratih, 2017b). Awareness of this historical and strategic significance prompted the Government of Indonesia to launch the Spice Route Program(Pengelola Web Kemendikbud, 2021) as an effort to revitalize the narrative of Nusantara's maritime civilization and to strengthen national identity in a global context, while positioning it as a strategic cultural asset for international diplomacy and sustainable development (Nurwahyuni et al., 2020).

In this context, policy advocacy becomes a key element in ensuring the sustainability of the Spice Route Program, particularly in efforts to obtain international recognition through UNESCO mechanisms, both World Heritage (Tim Ditjen Kebudayaan, 2023)and Memory of the World (Edmondson, 2020). This research is grounded in the need for a systematic, cross-sectorally coordinated, and evidence-based advocacy framework to address challenges related to governance, shared heritage claims, and the management of transnational narratives. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of heritage diplomacy scholarship by offering an integrated analytical approach that links historical and archaeological evidence, institutional governance, and cultural diplomacy strategies. This approach broadens the understanding of cultural routes not merely as relics of the past, but as strategic instruments in contemporary international relations.

Technically and practically, the findings of this study provide an operational reference for policymakers, cultural institutions, and diplomatic actors in designing UNESCO nomination advocacy strategies that are effective, inclusive, and sustainable. By emphasizing the importance of alignment with national policies, strengthening inter-ministerial coordination, and fostering sustained international collaboration, this study offers an advocacy model that can be replicated for other transnational cultural routes. Accordingly, this research not only contributes to strengthening the academic literature on cultural diplomacy and heritage preservation, but also provides a relevant policy foundation for managing cultural heritage as a strategic resource for Indonesia's culturally sovereign and globally competitive future.

The strategic location of Nusantara—situated between two continents and two oceans—has historically rendered the region a crucial nexus between the Eastern and Westernworld's(Tri Achmadi et al., 2022). From the perspective of maritime geopolitics, the Spice Route significantly contributed to the formation of the early global economic system, preceding the advent of modern capitalism. Within the broader framework of world history, Nusantara contributions to global dynamics—manifested through commodities, cultural exchange, and the dissemination of knowledge—are inextricably linked to the historical existence and function of the Spice Route.

The Spice Route in Nusantara functioned not merely as a trade corridor, but also as a conduit between Eastern and Western civilizations, leaving behind an extraordinary historical legacy that endures to this day. Along this route, there occurred not only the exchange of goods, but also the flow of ideas, values, and belief systems. The teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam (Kumoratih, 2017a), as well as European influences, took root in the archipelago through this channel. Likewise, knowledge, navigational technology, architectural arts, and literature flourished as a result of sustained contact with foreign cultures (Kumoratih, 2017b). This process gave rise to local cultures that are both adaptive and rich in intercultural elements, illustrating how the Spice Route played a formative role in shaping the cultural mosaic of contemporary Indonesian identity.

Through the historical reconstruction of the Spice Route, we are reminded that Indonesia possesses a civilizational heritage of not only national significance but also global relevance. The Spice Route is not merely a narrative of the past; it stands as tangible evidence of the active engagement of the Indonesian ancestors in the broader currents of world history. Recognizing the importance of the Spice Route as a fundamental part of the nation's historical and cultural identity, the Government of Indonesia—through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology—launched the Spice Route Program(Pengelola Web Kemendikbud, 2021). This initiative represents a strategic effort to revitalize the grand narrative of the Spice Route as a world cultural heritage rooted in Nusantara, while also fostering a collective national consciousness of Indonesia's pivotal role in global civilization. Adopting a multidisciplinary approach and engaging a wide range of stakeholders, the Program reintroduces the story of the Spice Route to the public through cultural voyages, research expeditions, spice festivals, and the strengthening of public content. In doing so, it establishes an inclusive and sustainable cultural preservation movement.

The preservation of the Spice Route forms part of a sustainable national development strategy that positions culture as a strategic resource to support the creative economy, cultural tourism, and international diplomacy (Nurwahyuni et al., 2020). This program revitalizes the historical narrative of the Spice Route as a symbol of courage and

diversity, while also serving as an effort to redress the dominance of colonial narratives in shaping historical perceptions of Nusantara. Through an inclusive approach and international outreach, the Spice Route Program has become a cultural diplomacy instrument that reinforces Indonesia's identity as a maritime nation and contributes to building a culturally sovereign and globally empowered future.

Revitalizing the Spice Route, therefore, requires robust advocacy, cross-sectoral collaboration, and effective communication strategies to ensure the preservation of its cultural heritage as both a national cultural symbol and a globally resonant strategic narrative. In this context, advocacy functions as a vital instrument for securing international recognition of the program—particularly in the nomination of the Spice Route as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site (World Heritage)(Tim Ditjen Kebudayaan, 2023) and for inclusion in the Memory of the World(Edmondson, 2020)register. Through such efforts, the Spice Route is not merely remembered as a relic of the past but is reimagined as a living cultural force that illuminates Indonesia's pathway towards a culturally sovereign future. Advocacy in this regard is expected to strengthen Indonesia's position on the global stage by highlighting the nation's rich maritime history and cultural heritage.

This article examines a strategically designed and systematically implemented advocacy framework to support the sustainability of the Spice Route Program as a preservation effort for national cultural heritage of historical and strategic significance within a global context. Advocacy strategies serve as a crucial instrument in raising public awareness, strengthening policy legitimacy, and fostering cross-sectoral engagement involving government agencies, academics, cultural communities, creative economy actors, and international networks.

Beyond functioning as a mere communication tool, advocacy constitutes the foundation for long-term cultural policy aimed at supporting the nomination of the Spice Route to UNESCO's World Heritage List (Tim Ditjen Kebudayaan, 2023) or the Memory of the World Register. It also reinforces Indonesia's role in the sphere of international cultural diplomacy. The success of such nominations would not only strengthen national identity and stimulate cultural tourism and research but also create new opportunities for culture-based economic development. In turn, this would contribute to sustainable national development while affirming Indonesia's standing as a nation that values its history, culture, and diversity on the global stage.

The criteria for selecting research objects for the Spice Route are based on interconnected academic, historical, and policy considerations. Objects are selected for their direct and well-documented links to the networks of spice production, distribution, and exchange within the maritime context of Nusantara, as evidenced by archaeological data, written sources, historical maps, and living oral traditions. In addition, the selected objects represent the continuity of spatial functions from the past to the present, whether as cultural landscapes, ports, production centers, or nodes of interregional and inter-civilizational interaction. Further criteria include the level of integrity and authenticity of the cultural remains, their potential Outstanding Universal Value, and their relevance to the Spice Route narrative as a shared, transnational heritage. The selection process also takes into account institutional readiness, stakeholder support, and data availability as prerequisites for sustainable management and the strengthening of policy-based arguments, particularly in the context of international heritage advocacy.

Methods:-

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach to examine Indonesia's initiative to secure UNESCO recognition for the Spice Route. Data collection involves analysis of policy documents, historical sources, and consultations with experts related to the nomination and preservation of the Spice Route. This approach aims to identify strategic directions and institutional frameworks critical for supporting the comprehensive nomination process. The research utilizes various historical and policy documents, including local and international archives, ancient manuscripts, and academic studies. A systematic analysis is conducted to interpret and reconstruct the historical narrative of the Spice Route, highlighting its significant role in trade and cultural exchange between Nusantara and the wider world. Collaboration with historians, anthropologists, and cultural experts ensures the validity and robust support of the cultural narrative for nomination purposes. The study integrates a cross-sectoral approach, incorporating input from government agencies, local cultural communities, academia, and creative economy actors. This synergy expands the research focus beyond historical and cultural aspects to include advocacy strategies, cultural diplomacy, and policy development aimed at sustainable preservation of the Spice Route. Such an approach strengthens both the academic and societal relevance of the preservation initiative.

The research begins with the identification of key issues and the policy context concerning the advocacy of the Spice Route as a UNESCO World Heritage nomination within the framework of cultural diplomacy. It then

develops a conceptual framework integrating heritage preservation, cultural diplomacy, and UNESCO mechanisms. Qualitative data are collected through the review of policy documents, historical sources, and expert consultations, and analyzed to assess evidentiary strength, institutional readiness, and policy gaps. The final stage formulates the findings, implications, and policy recommendations, as well as an advocacy model applicable to the Spice Route and other transnational cultural routes. Ethical standards are strictly observed, with no involvement of human participants or sensitive personal data, thereby obviating the need for ethical approval. All sources are properly acknowledged in accordance with citation and intellectual property norms. The research maintains integrity by avoiding data fabrication or plagiarism and aligns with UNESCO's principles fostering responsible heritage advocacy and international cooperation.

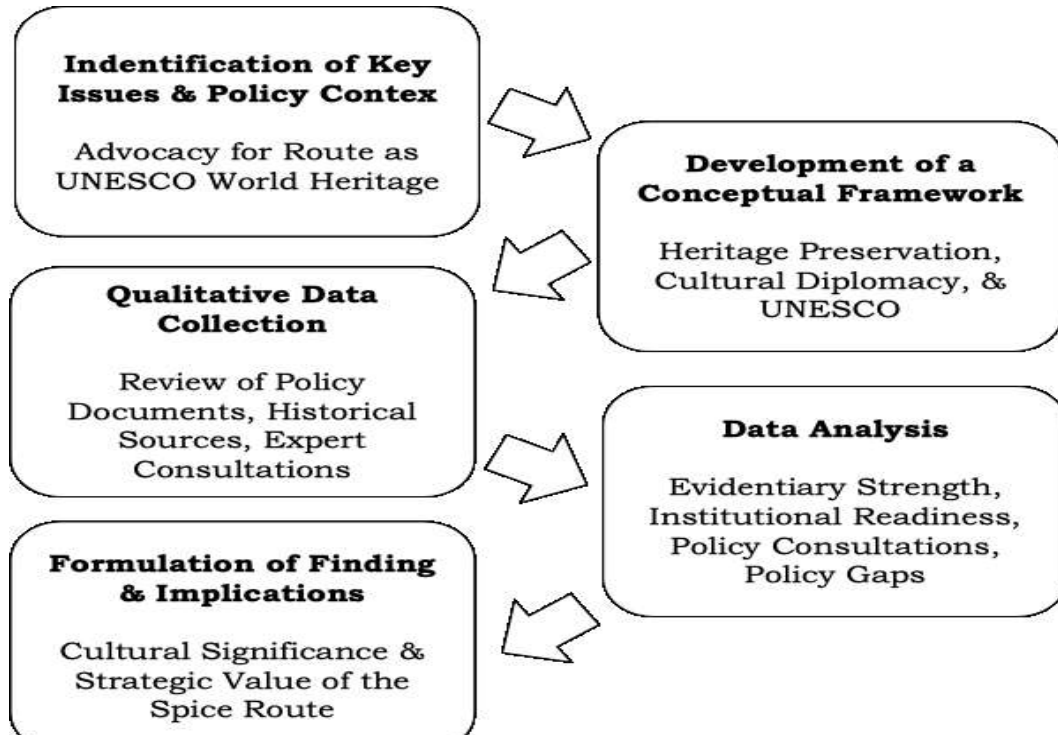


FIGURE. 1 Research Process for the Spice Route UNESCO Nomination

Results:-

The historical and cultural values of the spice route:-

The spice trade was one of the earliest global trade networks, linking Asia (Averbuch, 2022), East Africa (Simson R, 2003), and Europe (Sutherland, 2024) since the third millennium BCE, with high-value spices such as cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, ginger, and turmeric widely exchanged across the Eastern world. Initially conducted overland, the trade expanded through maritime routes pioneered by Austronesian seafarers from Southeast Asia, including Nusantara, who by 1500 BCE had established connections to Sri Lanka, India, East Africa (Averbuch, 2022), and even Madagascar, (Ann Kumar, 2011). Owing to its abundant production of cloves, nutmeg, pepper, and cinnamon (Ladiqi et al., 2019), Nusantara became a central hub within the Spice Route—a maritime network that shaped global trade from the 5th to the 17th century (Andaya, 1993). From the early first millennium CE, traders from China, India, and later the Arab world engaged with local kingdoms such as Tarumanegara (Lombard-Salmon, 2002) and Sriwijaya, (Wessing, 2011), while maritime powers including Sriwijaya, Majapahit, Ternate, and Tidore managed sea routes and production centres. Key ports such as Barus, Aceh, Banten, and Gresik functioned as vital nodes within this corridor (Sulaiman et al., 2018), underscoring Nusantara's active role in shaping early global trade dynamics.

The arrival of European powers—Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and British—in Nusantara reflects the strategic importance of its spices within global political and economic competition (Sutherland, 2024), particularly during the 15th–17th centuries when Europeans sought direct control over spice production and distribution (Ladiqi et al., 2019). The Maluku Islands, known as the “Spice Islands,” became the primary source of highly valued cloves and

nutmeg (Andaya, 1993), transforming Nusantara into a focal point for traders, explorers, and colonial powers (Sulaiman et al., 2018). While high-value spices positioned Nusantara as a long-standing hub of global(Averbuch, 2022)trade connecting Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe(Nugraha, 2022), colonial domination also brought exploitation through forced cultivation, VOC monopolies, and curvelabor) (Fasseur, 1986),triggering major resistance movements such as the Java War [21]and the Aceh War (Rahmawati & Suswandari, 2022). At the same time, colonial rule introduced infrastructure, administrative systems, and Western education(Tichelman, 1980), which contributed to the rise of a native intelligentsia and nationalist movement (Suratminto, 2013). These processes left enduring legacies of social inequality(Wertheim, 1955), export dependency(Fahmi, 2020), and bureaucratic structures (Nordholt, 2011)that continue to shape modern Indonesia.

The Spice Route in Nusantara functioned not only as a trade corridor but also as a major conduit of cultural exchange between Eastern and Western civilizations, profoundly shaping the region’s historical legacy. Through peaceful interactions between traders and local communities, major world religions spread across the archipelago: Hinduism and Buddhism entered between the 1st and 5th centuries CE via contact with India (Calo, 2014), producing monumental legacies such as Borobudur (Ray, 2019) and Prambanan(Irvine-Fortescue, 1978), while Islam expanded from the 13th century through maritime networks involving merchants from Gujarat, Persia, and the Arab world (Ricklefs, 1981), giving rise to early Islamic kingdoms such as Samudra Pasai(Lambourn, 2004) and Demak(Hasyim, 2021). Cultural exchange also enriched the arts and traditions of Nusantara, evident in temple architecture influenced by Indian aesthetics (Kowal, 2019), batik motifs shaped by Indian, Chinese, Arab, and European interactions [35], and traditional music and oral literature reflecting Middle Eastern (Capwell, 1995)and South Asian influences (Jha, 2022). In addition, the Spice Route facilitated the diffusion of knowledge and technology in navigation(Meilink-Roelofs, 1962),, agriculture(Jordan, 2015), medicine (Cho, 2022), and architecture, while local communities developed indigenous innovations such as the jong ship and the subak irrigation system(A. Gany, 2001). These long-standing interactions fostered shared values of tolerance and cooperation, exemplified by the inclusive Sultanate of Malacca (Mamat, 2018)and local traditions of gotong royong and musyawarah, which later underpinned the national ideal of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika and continue to shape Indonesia’s pluralistic identity.

TABLE 1. Dimensions of Cultural Exchange Along the Spice Route and Their Impact on Indonesian Civilization

Field	Brief Description
Religion	The spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam through peaceful trade routes, shaping local religious expressions and the spiritual landscape of Indonesia.
Arts and Traditions	Acculturation in architecture (temples), batik, music, and oral literature as a result of cultural encounters between local traditions and Indian, Chinese, Arab, and Persian influences
Knowledge	Exchange of knowledge in navigation, astronomy, medicine, agriculture, and maritime expertise, which developed into advanced local technological systems.
Technology and Architecture	Development of building techniques such as temples, irrigation systems, and large ships (jong); adaptation of foreign technologies combined with local innovations.
Social and Political Structure	Integration of religion into state systems (e.g., Samudra Pasai, Gowa-Tallo), as well as transformation of social structures and identities through intercultural interactions.

Continuous cross-cultural interactions along the Spice Route fostered a strong awareness of cultural diversity and shared values in Nusantara, encouraging tolerance, cooperation, and intensive social engagement that shaped a collective pluralistic consciousness. Local traditions such as gotong royong and musyawarah, rooted in early kingdoms and reinforced through trade-based interactions, played a crucial role in maintaining social harmony amid ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. After independence, these values continued to underpin national unity and the development of a democratic and modern state, demonstrating that Nusantara’s collective identity—characterized by openness, adaptability, and tolerance—is both a historical legacy and a strategic asset. As a major arena of global trade and inter-civilizational exchange, the Spice Route profoundly influenced Indonesia’s cultural transformation through the exchange of religion, art, knowledge, and social values, contributing to the formation of national character and offering important insights into the role of cultural history in shaping national identity.

The spice route program: an initiative of the Indonesian government:-

Growing recognition of the historical and cultural importance of the Spice Route has led the Indonesian Government, through the Ministry of Culture, to develop the Spice Route Program as an initiative to rediscover, preserve, and revitalize its strategic values while strengthening maritime culture and cultural diplomacy (Syahroni et al., 2023). The Program integrates heritage preservation, education, and diplomacy to reinforce national identity and expand Indonesia's international cultural influence, while also supporting the nomination of the Spice Route as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site (Kumoratih, 2022). To advance this goal, Kemendikbudristek has implemented research-based activities and strengthened historical narratives through Programs such as Susur Kultur and Kembara Rempah Nusantara (ItjenKemendikbudristek, 2024), alongside the Muhibah Budaya Jalur Rempah maritime expedition using KRI Dewaruci, which retraces key historical routes to foster youth engagement and maritime awareness (Tempo, 2024). At the regional level, Cultural Heritage Preservation Centers (BPCB) have formulated the 2021–2025 Action Plan as a shared framework for stakeholders, demonstrating a coordinated and sustainable approach to safeguarding and utilizing Spice Route cultural heritage.

Discussion:-

Advocacy for the Spice Route Program is essential to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness in preserving cultural heritage and strengthening Indonesia's cultural diplomacy, while also increasing public awareness and participation in recognizing and safeguarding the historical and cultural values of the Spice Route.

Enhancing public awareness through education, media outreach, and youth participation:-

Public awareness raising (Kairišs, 2022) and broad community engagement (Bhatta et al., 2023) are central to advocating the Spice Route Program, aimed at strengthening understanding of its global significance and its role in Indonesia's cultural identity. Targeting academics, policymakers, and the wider public through continuous education and participatory approaches, the Program promotes historical literacy and cultural literacy. Integration into formal and non-formal education, supported by trainings, seminars, public discussions and the strategic use of conventional and digital media for inclusive dissemination, enhances outreach—particularly to younger audiences. Youth engagement through competitions, cultural expeditions, and the Muhibah Jalur Rempah voyage ensures generational continuity and reinforces public support, positioning advocacy as a foundation for UNESCO World Heritage or Memory of the World nomination.

Towards an integrated strategy for a sustainable spice route heritage ecosystem:-

Towards sustainability, advocacy requires cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination (Phuong, 2022), led by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in synergy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and Bappenas, alongside local governments and grassroots stakeholders. Strong institutional collaboration, supported by research institutions, universities, museums, and cultural communities, underpins effective governance and cultural legitimacy. Internationally, advocacy strengthens Indonesia's cultural diplomacy by advancing the nomination of the Spice Route under UNESCO frameworks (Springer, 2020), supported by rigorous documentation and multidisciplinary research (Zanella et al., 2024). Integrating policy, institutional, and diplomatic approaches, this strategy builds a resilient heritage ecosystem that reinforces national recognition while advancing global acknowledgement and protection.

Collaborative engagement among government, scholars, local communities, and creative industry stakeholders:-

Multi-stakeholder collaboration ('Cross-Cultural Communication and SDG 17', 2025) is a central pillar of the Spice Route Program, reflecting its cross-regional and cross-sectoral character. The government led by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provides strategic direction, regulatory support, and inter-agency coordination. Academia contributes through research and educational collaboration for cultural heritage sustainability strengthening the scientific legitimacy of the Spice Route narrative as a civilizational corridor. Local cultural communities (Ćwik, 2020; Rosyidiyani et al., 2025) play a vital role in safeguarding living knowledge and traditions through participatory, locally grounded initiatives, while creative economy actors revitalize the narrative via product innovation and cultural storytelling across culinary, design, performing arts, and digital media. Together, the synergy between government, academia, communities, and creative industries transforms the Spice Route advocacy into an inclusive cultural movement that reinforces national identity, cultural diplomacy, and global recognition.

Policy integration within national frameworks: medium-term development plan (RPJMN), cultural strategy, and international cultural diplomacy:-

The Spice Route Program aligns with the 2025–2029 National Development Agenda, particularly the eighth agenda on Social, Cultural, and Ecological Resilience, by strengthening national identity and cultural resilience through the reconstruction of inter-civilizational interactions (Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, 2023). Within the National Cultural Strategy following the 2018 Indonesian Cultural Congress (Yosephine, 2018), the Program functions as an instrument for revitalizing collective memory and advancing cultural diplomacy, with potential integration into cultural planning, education, and preservation incentives. At the international level, advocacy positions the Program within Indonesia's foreign policy through cultural diplomacy, including participation in UNESCO and regional forums, while cross-ministerial synchronization ensures alignment of sectoral policies in education, tourism, and the creative economy. Strengthening legal and institutional foundations through new or revised regulations would further anchor the Spice Route Program as a strategic cultural and maritime civilizational initiative.

Evidence-based support through research: historical records, textual manuscripts, archival sources, and material artefacts:-

An effective advocacy strategy for the Spice Route Program depends on strong data and scientific research (Holoborodko et al., 2024), supported by systematic documentation from primary and secondary sources that validate Nusantara's central role in global trade between the 5th and 17th centuries, thereby strengthening UNESCO nomination claims. Research on ancient manuscripts and colonial archives from the Netherlands, as well as Portugal, Britain, and Spain is essential for reconstructing accurate, transnational narratives of trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. Archaeological evidence from ancient ports and trade sites further reinforces this narrative through material remains integrated into museums and digital exhibitions. Overall, data-driven research and documentation form the core of advocacy, requiring collaboration among government, academia, and research communities to support UNESCO recognition and sustainable heritage preservation.

Registering the spice route with UNESCO: strategic directions for advocacy:-

The following section outlines strategic directions for advocating the nomination of the Spice Routes to UNESCO through a structured approach that integrates evidence, argumentation, and diplomacy.

- a. **Key Considerations in the Nomination Process.** The nomination of the Spice Routes as a World Heritage site (World Heritage Convention, UNECCO, 2025) and within the Memory of the World Register (Springer, 2020) requires strong, evidence-based advocacy demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value rooted in Nusantara's role in global maritime trade. The routes may be proposed as a cultural route [86], or a serial nomination (Barbieri et al., 2023), supported by archaeological sites and documentary heritage, with public engagement and a unifying narrative strengthening cultural diplomacy.
- b. **Indonesia's Evidence and Readiness.** Indonesia's readiness is supported by archaeological (He, 2024) and archival evidence demonstrating universal value (Orlov, 2025), government commitment through the Spice Routes Program, and international scholarly networks. Contributions from research institutions and universities further strengthen the alignment of evidence, policy, and global cooperation for UNESCO submission.
- c. **Challenges and Opportunities: Cross-National Cultural Diplomacy.** Key challenges lie in aligning shared historical narratives among connected countries (Schmidtke, 2023; Scott, 2020) and balancing national and universal values. At the same time, these challenges offer opportunities to enhance Indonesia's cultural standing through diplomacy, education, exhibitions, and international partnerships.
- d. **Regional and International Synergy as Soft Diplomacy.** The nomination functions as a platform for regional and international synergy through culture-based soft diplomacy (Terzioğlu, 2022). Cooperation with neighboring regions and UNESCO supports site preservation, management, and broader opportunities in tourism, the creative economy, and research collaboration.
- e. **Alternative Advocacy: A Dual Strategy for World Heritage and Memory of the World.** A dual strategy combining World Heritage (World Heritage Convention, UNECCO, 2025) and Memory of the World (Edmondson, 2020) pathways integrates physical heritage of universal value (Munjeri, 2004) with documentary records (Chanan, 2004). This approach mobilizes diverse stakeholders and positions the Spice Routes as a shared heritage of humanity and a model for inclusive, sustainable heritage management.

Theoretical and practical implications of the research findings:-

The findings of this study have significant theoretical and practical implications for the advancement of cultural heritage preservation and cultural diplomacy scholarship. Theoretically, the study enriches the framework of heritage diplomacy by proposing an integrated analytical approach that connects archaeological and documentary

evidence, institutional governance, and international diplomatic strategies within the context of transnational heritage nomination. This approach broadens the understanding of cultural routes not merely as historical legacies, but as contemporary strategic assets that actively shape global narratives and inter-civilizational relations. Practically, the findings provide an operational reference for policymakers, cultural institutions, and diplomatic actors in designing UNESCO nomination advocacy strategies that are evidence-based, cross-sectoral coordinated, and responsive to the dynamics of shared heritage claims. These implications underscore the importance of national policy alignment, strengthened cross-ministerial coordination, and sustained international collaboration as essential prerequisites for the successful management and global recognition of the Spice Route as a World Heritage property.

Conclusion:-

The Spice Route Program is not merely a reconstruction of historical trade pathways, but a revival of the maritime civilizational heritage of Nusantara as a sustainable cultural force. This route served as a vital nexus for the exchange of commodities, values, technologies, and knowledge between the peoples of the archipelago and various nations across the globe. Through a cross-sectoral approach, the Program underscores the importance of engaging local communities, fostering institutional synergy, and promoting cultural diplomacy—ensuring that heritage preservation goes beyond artefacts and remains alive through practice, education, and national narratives. The Government of Indonesia has also actively advanced international recognition of the Spice Route’s strategic value by nominating it to UNESCO, both under the World Heritage List and the Memory of the World Program, as a means of securing global protection and acknowledgement of Indonesia’s maritime cultural history.

Furthermore, the integration of the Spice Route Program into the national development framework—particularly within the 2025–2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN)—demonstrates its strategic relevance to the agendas of social, cultural, and ecological resilience. As a history- and community-based initiative, the Spice Route holds significant potential to strengthen national identity, promote inter-cultural and interfaith tolerance, and foster a just, prosperous society in harmony with nature. The submission to UNESCO reinforces the government’s commitment to positioning the Spice Route as a world cultural heritage, not only preserved for the present generation but also bequeathed to future ones. This Program thus constitutes not merely an act of historical preservation, but a cultural strategy for shaping an inclusive and globally competitive future for Indonesia.

This study makes an academic contribution by advancing heritage diplomacy scholarship through an integrated analytical framework that links policy analysis, cultural routes, and UNESCO mechanisms, offering empirically grounded insights into how transboundary heritage can function as a strategic cultural asset in contemporary international relations.

Looking forward, future research may explore comparative analyses with other transnational cultural routes, assess the long-term socio-economic impacts of heritage-based diplomacy on local communities, and examine digital heritage strategies for expanding global engagement. Academically, this study advances heritage diplomacy scholarship by offering an integrated analytical framework that demonstrates how transboundary cultural heritage can be mobilized as a strategic asset in contemporary international relations.

Acknowledgements :-

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to AnugerahWidiyanto, Chairman of the Deputy for Development Policy, and Rudi Arifyanto, Director of Human Development, Population, and Cultural Policy at the National Research and Innovation Agency (Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional), for their valuable support, constructive insights, and institutional encouragement throughout the completion of this work. Their strategic perspectives and commitment to advancing evidence-based development policy have greatly contributed to the refinement and contextual relevance of this study. The author also acknowledges the broader support of the National Research and Innovation Agency for fostering an enabling research environment that promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and policy innovation.

Referencess:-

1. A. Gany, A. H. (2001). Subak Irrigation System in Bali: An Ancient Heritage of Participatory Irrigation Management in Modern Indonesia. The Research Institute of Water Resources, Research and Development Agency, Ministry of Settlement and Regional Infrastructures. https://www.icid.org/Subak_Irrigation_System.pdf
2. Andaya, L. Y. (1993). The world of Maluku: Eastern Indonesia in the early modern period. Univ. of Hawaii Press. <https://scispace.com/pdf/the-world-of-maluku-eastern-indonesia-in-the-early-modern-8kjae84u2x.pdf>
3. Ann Kumar. (2011). "The Single Most Astonishing Fact of Human Geography": Indonesia's Far West Colony. *Indonesia*, (92), 59. <https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.92.0059>
4. Averbuch, B. (2022). The Spice Trade in Southeast Asia. In B. Averbuch, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.547>
5. Ban, Z., Chen, F., Ban, T., & Ban, C. (2016). Cultural Routes : Theoretic System And Its Enlightenment To China Heritage Practice. Proceedings of the 2016 International Forum on Management, Education and Information Technology Application. 2016 International Forum on Management, Education and Information Technology Application. <https://doi.org/10.2991/ifmeita-16.2016.175>
6. Barbieri, S., Bottero, M., Caprioli, C., & Mondini, G. (2023). Supporting the Management Plan of a World Heritage Site Nomination Through a Multi-step Evaluation Approach. In O. Gervasi, B. Murgante, A. M. A. C. Rocha, C. Garau, F. Scorza, Y. Karaca, & C. M. Torre (Eds), *Computational Science and Its Applications – ICCSA 2023 Workshops* (Vol. 14108, pp. 498–511). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-37117-2_34
7. Bhatta, K. D., Joshi, B. R., & Paudyal, S. S. (2023). Integrated Heritage Conservation: Exploring the Role of Community Participation in the Conservation of Thimi. *Journal of UTEC Engineering Management*, 1(01), 51–63. <https://doi.org/10.36344/utecem.2023.v01i01.006>
8. Calo, A. (2014). Ancient trade between India and Indonesia. *Science*, 345(6202), 1255–1255. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.345.6202.1255>
9. Capwell, C. (1995). Contemporary Manifestations of Yemeni-Derived Song and Dance in Indonesia. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 27, 76. <https://doi.org/10.2307/768104>
10. Chanan, M. (2004). Documentary, History, Social Memory. *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 1(1), 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.3366/JBCTV.2004.1.1.61>
11. Cho, W. (2022). The Herbal Medicines in the Yuan and its Use as the Imperial Gift — Focused on the southern sea produced Herbal Medicines —. *JOURNAL OF ASIAN HISTORICAL STUDIES*, 159, 151–180. <https://doi.org/10.17856/jahs.2022.6.159.151>
12. Cross-Cultural Communication and SDG 17: Strengthening Global Partnerships for Development Communication competencies in multi-stakeholder collaborations. (2025). *Journal of Carcinogenesis*. <https://doi.org/10.64149/J.Carcinog.24.5s.983-991>
13. Ćwik, A. (2020). The need for local communities' involvement in the future of real cultural heritage. *Kultura-Społeczeństwo-Edukacja*, 18(2). <https://doi.org/10.14746/kse.2020.18.13.2>
14. De Ascaniis, S., & Elgin-Nijhuis, K. (2022). Connect: Digital media can connect residents, visitors and heritage. In S. De Ascaniis & L. Cantoni (Eds), *Handbook on Heritage, Sustainable Tourism and Digital Media*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788970082.00025>
15. Edmondson, R. (2020). Memory of the World: An Introduction. In R. Edmondson, L. Jordan, & A. C. Prodan (Eds), *The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme* (pp. 19–29). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18441-4_2
16. Fahmi, C. (2020). The Dutch Colonial Economic's Policy on Natives Land Property of Indonesia. *PETITA: JURNAL KAJIAN ILMU HUKUM DAN SYARIAH*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v5i2.99>
17. Fasseur, C. (1986). The Cultivation System and its Impact on the Dutch Colonial Economy and the Indigenous Society in Nineteenth-Century Java. In C. A. Bayly & D. H. A. Kolff (Eds), *Two Colonial Empires* (pp. 137–154). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-4366-7_7
18. Hasyim, A. W. (2021). Demak Sultanate: The Fortress of Islamic Greatness in the Middle Ages Java Island. *Buletin Al-Turas*, 27(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v27i1.16400>
19. He, Y. (2024). Constructing the Image of a New Leading State: Leveraging Chinese Underwater Archaeological Heritage Development and Protection for Heritage Diplomacy. *Lecture Notes in Education Psychology and Public Media*, 55(1), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7048/55/20240075>
20. Holoborodko, O., Gerasymova, E., & Shevchenko, N. (2024). Effectiveness of cultural diplomacy in promoting common EU values. *Revista Amazonia Investiga*, 13(79), 141–154. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2024.79.07.11>

21. Irvine-Fortescue, J. (1978). Notes on temples in the vicinity of the Prambanan complex. *Asian Affairs*, 9(1), 77–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068377808729881>
22. Itjen Kemendikbudristek. (2024, January 10). Dorong Jalur Rempah jadi Warisan Budaya Dunia, Kemendikbudristek Gelar Susur Kultur. Inpektorat Jenderal Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset Dan Teknologi. <https://itjen.dikdasmen.go.id/web/dorong-jalur-rempah-jadi-warisan-budaya-dunia-kemendikbudristek-gelar-susur-kultur/>
23. Jha, G. K. (2022). Indic Elements in Indonesian Arts and Literature: Shared Heritage Between India and Indonesia. *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, 11(1), 40–61. <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v11i1.632>
24. Jordan, A. (2015). Spice Island Stew: Creolization of Foodways on Colonial Era Nutmeg Plantations, Maluku Province, Indonesia. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Archaeology*, 37, 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.7152/jipa.v37i0.14746>
25. Kairišs, A. (2022). Awareness Raising and Protection of Archaeological Heritage. *Culture Crossroads*, 11, 20–41. <https://doi.org/10.55877/cc.vol11.129>
26. Kowal, K. (2019). The Borobudur temple: The Buddhist architecture in Indonesia. *Budownictwo i Architektura*, 18(2), 005–019. <https://doi.org/10.35784/bud-arch.550>
27. Kumoratih, D. (2017a). “Spice Route” Authority And Legitimacy In The Process Of Reconstructing National History Through Cultural-Historical Narrative.
28. Kumoratih, D. (2017b). “Spice Route” Authority And Legitimacy In The Process Of Reconstructing National History Through Cultural-Historical Narrative.
29. Kumoratih, D. (2022). Reconstructing Identity through Spice Route Narrative: An Urgency for Nation Branding? *Journal of Visual Art and Design*, 14(1), 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.5614/j.vad.2022.14.1.5>
30. Ladiqi, S., Salleh, M., Wardhani, B., Dugis, V., & Wekke, I. (2019). Identity & The Globalization of Nusantara. Proceedings of the International Conference on Environmental Awareness for Sustainable Development in Conjunction with International Conference on Challenge and Opportunities Sustainable Environmental Development, ICEASD & ICCOSED 2019, 1-2 April 2019, Kendari, Indonesia. International Conference on Environmental Awareness for Sustainable Development in conjunction with International Conference on Challenge and Opportunities Sustainable Environmental Development, ICEASD & ICCOSED 2019, 1-2 April 2019, Kendari, Indonesia, Indonesia. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.1-4-2019.2287291>
31. Lambourn, E. (2004). The formation of the batu Aceh tradition in fifteenth-century Samudera-Pasai. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 32(93), 211–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1363981042000320143>
32. Lennox, R. (2013). Political Advocacy for the Historic Environment: A Public Policy Review of England’s National Planning Policy Framework. *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice*, 4(1), 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1756750513Z.00000000021>
33. Lombard-Salmon, C. (2002). Srivijaya, la Chine et les marchands chinois (Xe-XIIIe s.). Quelques réflexions sur la société de l’empire sumatranais. *Archipel*, 63(1), 57–78. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.2002.3697>
34. Lulus Sugeng Triandika. (2023). The Uniqueness of Culture: Acculturation between Religion and Local Culture on Indonesian Sumenep Batik Motifs. *Fikri : Jurnal Kajian Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya*, 8(1), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v8i1.3180>
35. Mamat, I. (2018). The Impact of Islam on The Concept of Government of The Sultanate of Malacca During The 15th Century. *UMRAN - International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies*, 5(3), 41–51. <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2018.5n3.244>
36. Meilink-Roelofs, M. A. P. (1962). Trade and Traffic in the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula Prior to the 15th Century. In *Asian Trade and European Influence* (pp. 13–26). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-8850-0_2
37. Munjeri, D. (2004). Tangible and Intangible Heritage: From difference to convergence. *Museum International*, 56(1–2), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1350-0775.2004.00453.x>
38. Nordholt, H. S. (2011). Modernity and cultural citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: An illustrated hypothesis. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 42(3), 435–457. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246341100035X>
39. Nugraha, W. (2022). Maritime New Century: The Re-Rise of the Spice Route and the Re-establishment of the Straits of Malacca in Regional Trade in Indonesia. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Social-Humanities in Maritime and Border Area, SHIMBA 2022, 18-20 September 2022, Tanjung Pinang, Kep. Riau Province, Indonesia. Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Social-Humanities in Maritime and Border Area, SHIMBA 2022, 18-20 September 2022, Tanjung Pinang, Kep. Riau Province, Indonesia, Tanjung Pinang, Indonesia. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.18-9-2022.2326036>
40. Nurwahyuni, E., Prasodjo, T., Basuki, I. S. S., Maarif, S., Sukasih, E., Purwana, B. H. S., Theresia Ani Larasari, Priyatmoko, H., & Hendrik, H. (2020). Jalur Rempah: Pertukaran Budaya untuk Kreasi dan Inovasi. Direktorat Pengembangan dan Pemanfaatan Kebudayaan bekerja sama dengan Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Provinsi

- Daerah Istimewah Yogyakarta.
<https://repository.usd.ac.id/42792/1/Naskah%20Menyelisik%20Industri%20Kuliner%20Berbahan%20Rempah%20di%20Kota%20Gudeg.pdf>
41. Orlov, S. (2025). Heritage Diplomacy of UNESCO in Post-Conflict Zones: The Case of Iraq. *Історико-Політичні Проблеми Сучасного Світу*, (51), 124–136. <https://doi.org/10.31861/mhpi2025.51.124-136>
 42. Pengelola Web Kemendikbud. (2021, January 11). Jalur Rempah Jadi Program Prioritas Kebudayaan Tahun 2021. Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan. <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2021/01/jalur-rempah-jadi-program-prioritas-kebudayaan-tahun-2021>
 43. Phuong, P. T. T. (2022). Solutions to develop the cultural market in the context of integration. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 164–169. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.74.25>
 44. Rahmawati, M., & Suswandari, S. (2022). Peran Hikayat dalam Perang Kolonial di Aceh 1873-1912: Studi Analisis Wacana Kritis Terhadap Hikayat Perang Sabil. *Fajar Historia: Jurnal Ilmu Sejarah Dan Pendidikan*, 6(2), 259–275. <https://doi.org/10.29408/fhs.v6i2.5827>
 45. Ray, H. P. (2019). Buddhist Monuments Across the Bay of Bengal: Cultural Routes and Maritime Networks. *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 7(2), 159–180. <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2018.17>
 46. Ricklefs, M. C. (1981). The Coming of Islam. In M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (pp. 3–13). Macmillan Education UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-16645-9_1
 47. Rosyidi, T. S., Lubis, D., Pramono, F., & Kinseng, R. (2025). Reframing cultural diplomacy through communication for development: A systematic review of participatory practices. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 9(5), 2026255. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2026255>
 48. Schmidtke, O. (2023). Competing Historical Narratives: Memory Politics, Identity, and Democracy in Germany and Poland. *Social Sciences*, 12(7), 391. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12070391>
 49. Scott, C. (2020). *Cultural Diplomacy and the Heritage of Empire*. Routledge.
 50. Simson R, N. (2003). *Egypt, trunk of the tree*. New York : Algora Pub. <https://archive.org/details/egypttrunkoftree0001najo/mode/2up>
 51. Springer, J. (2020). Memory of the World: Key Principles and Philosophy. In R. Edmondson, L. Jordan, & A. C. Prodan (Eds), *The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme* (pp. 31–40). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18441-4_3
 52. Suciati, N., Pratomo, W. A., & Purwitasari, D. (2014). Batik Motif Classification Using Color-Texture-Based Feature Extraction and Backpropagation Neural Network. 2014 IIAI 3rd International Conference on Advanced Applied Informatics, 517–521. <https://doi.org/10.1109/iaai-aa.2014.108>
 53. Sudardi, B., & Istadiyantha, I. (2019). The Prince of Diponegoro: The Knight of the Javanese War, His Profile of the Spirit and Struggle against the Invaders. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 6(5), 486. <https://doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v6i5.1102>
 54. Sulaiman, A. A., Subagyono, K., Pakpahan, A., Soetopo, D., Bermawie, N., Hoerudin, Prastowo, B., & Syafaat, N. (2018). *Membangkitkan Kejayaan Rempah Nusantara (Edisi I)*. IAARD Press. <https://repository.pertanian.go.id/server/api/core/bitstreams/532c463e-1af8-4956-8449-127543bdce51/content>
 55. Suratminto, L. (2013). Educational Policy in The Colonial Era. *Historia: Jurnal Pendidik Dan Peneliti Sejarah*, 14(1), 77. <https://doi.org/10.17509/historia.v14i1.1923>
 56. Sutherland, B. (2024). Spice Trade in Europe. In B. Sutherland, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Food Studies*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780197762530.013.37>
 57. Syahroni, F., Pribadi, U., & Suranto, S. (2023). Implementation of The Spice Route Program in Aceh Province: Opportunities and Challenges as a World Cultural Heritage. *Journal of Governance and Public Policy*, 10(1), PRESS. <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgpp.v10i1.16371>
 58. Tempo. (2024, June 11). 5 Fakta Muhibah Budaya Jalur Rempah. Tempo. <https://www.tempo.co/hiburan/5-fakta-muhibah-budaya-jalur-rempah-50393>
 59. Terzioğlu, E. (2022). Soft or Hard Power in Diplomacy: In T. Elitaş (Ed.), *Advances in Public Policy and Administration* (pp. 51–64). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-5822-8.ch005>
 60. Tichelman, F. (1980). Colonial Policy in the 19th and 20th Centuries. In F. Tichelman, *The Social Evolution of Indonesia* (pp. 113–127). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-8896-5_9
 61. Tim Ditjen Kebudayaan. (2023). Susur Kultur: Upaya Kemendikbudristek Mendorong Jalur Rempah Menjadi Warisan Budaya Dunia oleh UNESCO. Kementerian Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan. <https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2023/12/susur-kulturupaya-kemendikbudristek-mendorong-jalur-rempah-menjadi-warisan-budaya-dunia-oleh-unesco>
 62. Todorović, M. (2022). Heritage in and as diplomacy: A practice based study. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 28(7), 849–864. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2022.2091637>

63. Tri Achmadi, Nugroho, R., Habil, N. I., Ardiyanto, F., Abritia, R. N., Umaroh, A. K., Filemon, Gumelar, F., Putra, I. M. W. S., Ahmad, A., Mochammad Imron, Norega, A., & Putri, S. D. (2022). Indonesia's Maritime Policy Macro and Micro – Case of Maritime Highway and Pelindo Merger. ITS Press. https://www.its.ac.id/seatrans/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/10/2023-11-15-Kebijakan-Kemaritiman_A5_full_Final-Version.pdf
64. Van Der Kroef, J. M. (1949). Prince Diponegoro: Progenitor of Indonesian Nationalism. *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 8(4), 424. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2049542>
65. Wertheim, W. F. (1955). Changes in Indonesia's Social Stratification. *Pacific Affairs*, 28(1), 41. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2753710>
66. Wessing, R. (2011). Tarumanagara: What's in a name? *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 42(2), 325–337. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022463411000075>
67. World Heritage Convention, UNECCO. (2025). The Criteria for Selection. World Heritage Convention, UNECCO. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>
68. Yosephine, L. (2018, November 27). Government gears up to hold Indonesian Cultural Congress. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2018/11/26/government-gears-up-to-hold-indonesian-cultural-congress.html>
69. Zabbini, Enza; University Of Bologna. (2012). Cultural Routes and Intangible Heritage Cultural Routes and Intangible Heritage [Application/pdf]. *Almatourism - Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*; Vol 3, No 5 (2012); 5980. <https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.2036-5195/3188>
70. Zanella, C. K., Neves Junior, E. J., & Silva, L. R. D. (2024). Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power: Critical analysis and methodological application. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 67(1), e012. <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329202400112>