



Semantic Analysis of Toponym on the Western Coast of Makassar in the Context of the Spice Route

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Abstract. Place names (toponyms) serve as linguistic markers and cultural archives, preserving collective memory and historical identity. This study analyzes the semantic categories of toponyms along the western coast of Makassar to reveal how language reflects socio-historical dynamics associated with the spice trade route. Using a descriptive–qualitative onomastic approach that integrates cultural linguistics, the research draws data from historical archives, colonial maps, *lontara* manuscripts, field observations, and semi-structured interviews with local informants. A total of eight key toponyms were examined to identify semantic categories and their cultural significance. The findings reveal that toponyms encode four major semantic dimensions—ecological-topographical, historical-political, economic-trade, and cultural-expressive—enabling an understanding of the interplay between language, space, and maritime identity. The study demonstrates that place names such as *Paotere*, *Tallo*, *Ujungpandang*, and *Kampung Melayu* reflect collective memory and trace Makassar's strategic role in the spice-trade network. These results contribute to cultural linguistics by providing empirical evidence of how maritime trade shaped the semantic evolution of place names in Eastern Indonesia, offering insights for heritage documentation and culture-based education.

Keywords: collective memory, historical identity, toponym, semantics, spice routes.

1 Introduction

As a product of culture and social interaction, a toponym is not solely a geographical marker but also a linguistic archive that preserves ecological, historical, and symbolic information about the people who named it. Scholars such as [1], [2], and [3] argue that

toponyms encode collective memory, social structures, and cultural values that are transmitted intergenerationally, serving as reflections of both local identity and historical transformation. In maritime societies, place names often reflect the complex relationship between humans and the sea, encompassing economic, spiritual, and symbolic domains [4]. The semantic study of toponym, therefore, becomes essential to uncover the multi-layered meanings—lexical, cultural, and ideological—embedded within naming practices [5], [6]. Within the context of the spice routes, these linguistic traces take on added significance. The Makassar coast served as a pivotal point connecting the Indonesian archipelago to global trade networks that spanned Asia, the Middle East, and Europe [7], [8], [9]. Toponyms that emerged along this maritime corridor not only indicate geographic and ecological realities [8] However, it also records centuries of trade encounters, migration, and cultural exchange that shaped the linguistic landscape. As [11] notes, globalization, and interethnic mobility create multilingual communication spaces that generate new forms of naming, reflecting layered histories of contact and adaptation. Consequently, the study of coastal toponym along the spice routes provides a unique linguistic window into how economic activity, belief systems, and cross-cultural interactions became permanently inscribed in the geography and memory of maritime societies such as those in Makassar.

Although the study of toponym in Indonesia has discussed many aspects of etymology and linguistic forms [12], [13], the relationship between the semantic meaning of toponyms and the historical context of maritime trade has not been widely explored. In fact, from the perspective of cultural linguistics [6], [14], language is viewed as a reflection of collective experiences formed through the social and economic interactions of society. This gap underscores the need for an interdisciplinary approach that integrates cultural linguistics, maritime history, and ecolinguistic theories to comprehend how language preserves a record of trade interactions and local identities on the Makassar coast.

Starting from this background, this study aims to (1) identify the semantic categories that form the toponymic system on the west coast of Makassar and (2) interpret its relationship with the influence of spice routes in the sociohistorical context of coastal communities. Practically, the results of this research are expected to support the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, enrich linguistic documentation, and contribute to the sustainable development of cultural tourism and maritime history in South Sulawesi. Thus, this study confirms that language, space, and history are intertwined to form the collective memory of coastal communities and are key in reconstructing the spice line civilization in the archipelago.

2 Literature Review

The study of toponym in linguistics focuses on how the structure of language and the meaning attached to place names reflect the relationship between society and its environment. Several previous studies have demonstrated that place names frequently convey lexical, ecological, and socio-economic information about a specific region [5],

[15]. Cruse highlights that lexical semantics helps to understand the relationship between the form of language and the reality it refers to, while [16] emphasizes the need for a sociolinguistic approach in the study of toponymy to look at the influence of inter-ethnic contacts, language variation, and changes in spatial function on the naming process. Thus, the study of toponym is no longer seen as merely a study of the form and meaning of words, but also as a reflection of the ever-evolving social and cultural dynamics.

In the historical dimension, toponym functions as a linguistic archive that records the journey of a community, whether in the form of events, migrations, or the influence of power. [3] show that toponym analysis can reveal traces of colonization and cultural contact through name changes and adaptations. Meanwhile, [4] highlight the political aspect of space naming, where place names serve as a medium for memory and the legitimacy of power. This perspective is relevant to the context of Makassar's west coast. This region has historically been a crossroads of various cultural influences and power in the spice trail, so that each place name reflects a complex layer of history and social identity [17].

From a cultural perspective, the naming of places represents the symbolic values and perspectives of people on their environment. According to [6], language serves as a forum for cultural conceptualization that is passed down from one generation to the next. In line with that, [18] see the practice of naming public spaces as a form of collective expression that affirms community identity and strengthens social memory. In the context of Makassar, toponymies such as *Paotere*, *Tallo*, or *Kampung Melayu* not only mark geographical locations but also reflect the ecological, economic, and spiritual values that have grown in the local maritime culture [19]. Thus, the names can be understood as cultural texts that hold both symbolic and historical significance simultaneously.

In addition to linguistic and cultural factors, the theory of *language contact* [20] and the sociolinguistics of globalization [21] explain that trade interactions and interethnic mobility create multilingual communication *spaces*, *giving rise* to new forms of naming. The Spice Route, as a meeting arena for Buginese, Makassarese, Malay, Arab, and Chinese traders, yields a toponym that is hybrid and multicultural. This naming pattern not only describes geographical conditions but also reflects the process of acculturation and cultural negotiation that took place in the coastal area of Makassar over the centuries.

Although the study of toponymy in Indonesia has been carried out from the aspects of etymology and geographical description [12], [13], the relationship between semantic meaning and the historical context of maritime trade has not been comprehensively studied. In fact, in the context of spice paths, toponyms can serve as a window into understanding past social interactions [22], cultural identities, and economic networks. Therefore, this study aims to fill these gaps by employing an interdisciplinary approach that combines lexical semantics, cultural linguistics, and maritime history [23], [24]. Through this approach, the meaning of toponym on the west coast of Makassar can be interpreted as a cultural heritage that combines ecological, historical, economic, and symbolic aspects in shaping the collective identity of coastal communities.

Recent studies in cultural linguistics and toponym also demonstrate that naming places serves as a repository of social memory, constantly updated to meet the needs of society. [2] and [14] assert that changes in the meaning or form of names are often triggered by economic and political shifts, as well as the community's desire to assert its identity in public spaces. In the context of the West Coast of Makassar, the change or adaptation of place names not only reflects the physical transformation of the port area but also the shift in people's values and orientation towards the sea as the center of economic life and cultural symbols. Therefore, toponyms in this region can be understood as a form of *cultural resilience*, that is, the ability of people to maintain their collective memories through language amid dynamic social change.

3 Method

3.1 Design Research

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on semantic analysis enriched by the perspective of cultural linguistics. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning of toponym in depth and understand its relationship with the social, historical, and cultural realities of the West Coast community of Makassar, which has a close connection to past spice trading activities. The descriptive method is used to describe naming patterns and categorize meanings. In contrast, the interpretive approach is used to reveal the dimensions of values, symbols, and ideologies stored behind each place name. Through this strategy, the research not only seeks to explain the linguistic structure but also to interpret how language plays a role in preserving the historical traces and collective identity of the Makassar maritime community.

3.2 Data Sources

This study utilizes data in the form of place names along the west coast of Makassar that have a connection to shipping activities and past trade routes. The primary sources of data were obtained from four categories, namely: (1) historical documents and colonial maps that record ports, settlements, and old coastal areas; (2) manuscripts (Lontara) in Makassar and Bugis languages; (3) the results of direct observation of the use of toponyms in daily life; and (4) semi-structured interviews with community leaders and cultural experts who understand the historical and social background of the names. In addition, this study also uses secondary literature in the form of academic sources that discuss maritime history, onomastic studies, and previous research relevant to toponymic topics and spice routes in South Sulawesi.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection process is carried out in three main stages. First, the study of documents and archives is used to trace the appearance and evolution of place names over time. Second, field observations are conducted to verify the presence of toponyms in actual locations, record their ecological conditions, and document the use of names in

community social practices. Third, in-depth interviews were conducted with seven primary informants to gather information about folk etymology, symbolic meanings, and historical narratives from individuals living in coastal communities.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study employs a lexical-semantic theory approach, drawing on the ideas of [5] and [15]. The analysis process begins with the identification of the linguistic form of each toponym to explore the relationship between language elements and their references in the social and cultural context of the coastal communities of Makassar. The next stage is a linguistic and etymological analysis, including lexical and morphological studies to trace the origin, structure, and stability of the meaning of each place name. The data validation process is carried out through comparison with the Lontara script and confirmation with local linguists to ensure accuracy of interpretation. The results of the semantic analysis were then interpreted in consideration of the historical and cultural context, particularly in relation to the role of the west coast of Makassar as part of the archipelago's spice trade route. Through this approach, a toponym is understood not only as a geographical marker but also as a cultural expression that reflects the dynamics of trade, interethnic exchange, and the formation of the maritime identity of the Makassar people along the spice route.

4 Result

Based on the analysis of ancient maps, colonial documents, and field observations, several toponymies on the west coast of Makassar were identified that are closely related to past shipping activities and spice trade routes. These toponymies show how language records human relationships with space, history, and maritime economic activity in coastal areas.

Table 1. Table captions should be placed above the tables.

No	Toponyms	Master Toponyms	Subdistrict	District	City	East Longi- tude	South Lati- tude	Code	Status Top- onyms
1	Ujungpan- dang	Tallo	Bulogading	Ujungpan- dang	Makassar	119° 24' 20.062" E	5° 8' 2.382" S	A. Makas- sar 01	Ancient toponyms
2	Pelabuhan Ujungpan- dang	Tallo	Melayu Baru	Wajo	Makassar	119° 24' 31.049" E	5° 7' 27.075" S	A. Makas- sar 01 A	Sub Topo- nyms
3	Bontoala	Tallo	Bontoala Tua	Bontoala	Makassar	119° 25' 16.62" E	5° 7' 42.41" S	A. Makas- sar 02	Ancient toponyms
4	Kampung Melayu	Tallo	Melayu Baru	Wajo	Makassar	119° 24' 34.067" E	5° 7' 31.742" S	A. Makas- sar 03	Ancient toponyms
5	Ujungtanah	Tallo	Kalukubo- doa	Tallo	Makassar	119° 26' 13.31" E	5° 6' 59.12" S	A. Makas- sar 04	Ancient toponyms
6	Pelabuhan Paotere	Tallo	Gusung	Ujungtanah	Makassar	119° 25' 16.462" E	5° 6' 43.095" S	A. Makas- sar 05	Ancient toponyms

7	Kalukubodoa	Tallo	Tallo	Tallo	Makassar	119° 26' 50.926" E	5° 6' 12.322" S	A. Makassar 06	Ancient toponyms
8	Tallo	Tallo	Tallo	Tallo	Makassar	119° 26' 44.432" E	5° 6' 10.183" S	A. Makassar 07	Ancient toponyms

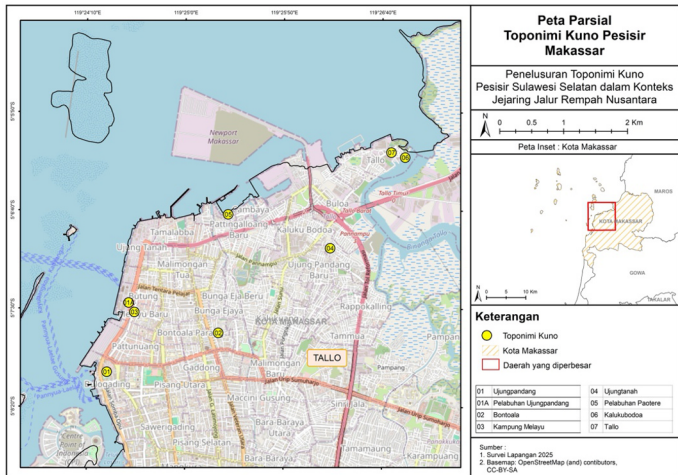


Fig. 1. Ancient Toponymic Map of the West Coast of South Sulawesi [25].

The following is a toponyms table of the west coast of Makassar, reflecting the meanings based on four semantic categories.

Table 2. Categories of Semantics and Toponymic Meanings.

No	Toponyms	Semantic Category	Semantic Meanings
1	Ujungpandang	Ecological and historical	The word <i>ujung</i> 'edge' refers to the farthest point facing the sea, while <i>pandang</i> 'to look' denotes a place for observation. Together, they describe coastal observation points and fall within the ecological-topographic semantic category.
2	Ujungtanah	Ecological	The word <i>ujung</i> 'edge' marks a boundary or the farthest point, while <i>tanah</i> 'land' refers to a piece of land. Together, they mean land jutting out into the sea and belong to the ecological-topographic semantic category.

3	Paotere	Ecological; Economic; Cultural	The toponym <i>Paotere</i> derives from <i>pa-</i> and <i>otere</i> ('rope'), symbolizing hard work, solidarity, and the maritime ethos of the Bugis-Makassar community.
4	Kalukubodoa	Cultural; Ecological	The toponym originates from " <i>kaluku</i> " ('coco-nut') and " <i>bodoa</i> " ('short'), reflecting the coastal fertility and the value of simplicity in Bugis-Makassar culture.
5	Pelabuhan Ujungpandang	Ecological; Economic; Cultural	<i>Pelabuhan Ujungpandang</i> , a sub-toponym of <i>Ujungpandang</i> , derives from <i>ujung</i> ('edge') and <i>pandang</i> ('to look'), referring to a point projecting into the sea that functions as a vantage point. The toponym reflects cultural acculturation and the economic role of Malay traders in the spice trade, while <i>Kampung Melayu</i> denotes an ethnically and economically defined space.
6	Kampung Melayu	Economics; cultural	The toponym <i>Bontoala</i> originates from the words " <i>bonto</i> " (hill) and " <i>ala</i> " (forest or trees), referring to the forested area that was once the center of government and trade for the Gowa-Tallo region.
7	Bontoala	Ecological; historical	The name <i>Tallo</i> is derived from the word <i>takloang</i> , which refers to the spatial openness and extensive territorial breadth characteristic of the Kingdom of Tallo.
8	Tallo	Historical; cultural	

Semantic analysis reveals that the toponym of the west coast of Makassar is predominantly comprised of ecological (5 toponyms) and cultural (5 toponyms) categories, with economic (3 toponyms) and historical (3 toponyms) categories also represented. Semantic analysis shows that ecological, historical, economic, and cultural categories intersect in the context of trade and maritime identity, reflecting the integration between economic activities and cultural values of Makassar's coastal communities. This pattern shows that the naming system of places in coastal areas not only serves as a geographical description but also records the social and economic structure of coastal communities that grow from the activities of the archipelago's spice routes. These findings confirm that the toponym of the western coastal region of Makassar is a symbolic marker of the relationship between language, space, and trade history. Names such as *Paotere* and *Kampung Melayu* reveal a direct connection to commercial activities and cross-ethnic cultural encounters. At the same time, toponymies like *Ujungtanah* and *Kalukubodoa* confirm the ecological orientation of the people towards the sea.

4.1 Toponymies in the Context of the Spice Route: Sociohistorical Context

Ujungpandang. The toponym of *Ujungpandang* encompasses a complex array of meanings, including ecological, topographical, symbolic, cultural, and historical-political dimensions. From a semantic point of view, the word "edge" refers to the most edge

point facing the sea, while "look" means a location to investigate the distance. This combination of words denotes "observation points at the end of the sea", falling into the ecological-topographic category because it conveys the physical character of the coast and the spatial orientation of the coastal community in Makassar. In addition, this name also holds symbolic and cultural significance, representing the relationship between humans and the sea as a living space, a means of navigation, and an identity marker for maritime communities [23], [24].

From a historical and political perspective, *Ujungpandang* marks the continuity of the city of Makassar from the 15th century to the colonial period, when the Sultanate of Gowa and later the VOC made this port a strategic node for the archipelago's spice trade routes [7], [9]. This name is also included in the historical-political category because it reflects both the administrative legitimacy and the strategic position of the port. Commodities that pass through the port include spices such as nutmeg, cloves, and pepper from Maluku, as well as onions, salt, and nuts from Bima, confirming its role as a key connecting point for inter-regional and cross-island trade.

From the symbolic-cultural perspective, *Ujungpandang* affirms the identity of coastal communities as active participants in cross-ethnic trade interactions. The name of the port not only marks the geographical location but also holds social and economic significance related to status, trade networks, and human-environmental relations. This analysis aligns with [10] theory of social meaning construction, which emphasizes that place names are not merely descriptive labels but a medium that records historical, cultural, and social meanings, thereby becoming the collective memory of the Makassar people.

Ujungtanah. The toponym *Ujungtanah* contains layered meanings, reflecting the interaction of coastal communities with their environment. Linguistically, the word "edge" marks the boundary or the most distant point, while "land" indicates a piece of land. The combination of these two words results in the meaning of "land jutting out into the sea", falling into the ecological-topographic semantic category, as it marks the strategic position of coastal areas and the relationship of communities with the coastal landscape. This semantic analysis reveals that the naming of places is not only descriptive but also reflects the collective knowledge of the community about the living space and its surrounding environment [24].

In addition, the toponym of *Ujungtanah* holds symbolic and cultural significance, as this coastal area serves as a hub for community activities, including fishing, local trade, and social interaction. The name of this place confirms the identity of maritime communities that depend on the sea as both a source of livelihood and a medium of social interaction, highlighting the interconnectedness of ecological and cultural meanings in shaping people's perceptions of their environment [10].

From a historical and economic perspective, *Ujungtanah* plays a significant role in the archipelago's spice trade route. This coastal area serves as a port or transit point for important commodities such as nutmeg, cloves, pepper, onions, and salt from Maluku and Bima, which are then distributed to Makassar and other eastern regions [7], [9]. Semantically, this toponym falls into the historical-economic category, as it records the region's strategic function in the inter-regional and cross-island trade network, as well as the relationship between human and economic activities that occur sustainably.

Overall, *Ujungtanah* shows that place names hold interrelated ecological, symbolic, and historical meanings. This toponym reflects the collective experience of coastal communities, their attachment to the sea as a living space, and the region's role in the archipelago's spice trade network. This semantic analysis is supported by the theory of social meaning construction, which emphasizes that place names are not only geographical labels, but also a medium of identity, collective memory, and markers of human-environment interaction and historical economic activity [10].

Paotere. Semantically, *Paotere* originates from the affixations *pa-* (markers of tools or places) and *otere* ('rope'), which means 'rope', reflecting the hard work, solidarity of sailors, and the maritime ethos of the Bugis-Makassar community. From an ecological and topographic perspective, the port is situated on the coast of Makassar, providing access to the sea and underscoring its strategic importance as a significant trade route. In terms of economic functionality, *Paotere* acts as a distribution center for goods and spices, connecting Makassar with various regions of the archipelago and facilitating the trade of commodities such as onions, salt, nuts, rice, and spices from Bima to Surabaya. Historically, this port has maintained a continuous trade record from the 15th century, when the Gowa Sultanate utilized it as a strategic node, to the colonial period, when the VOC controlled the spice routes of the archipelago [7].

From a cultural-symbolic perspective, *Paotere* affirms the identity of coastal communities as a maritime community that actively interacts with local and foreign traders, as well as a symbol of shipping traditions and cross-ethnic trade. The name of the port not only refers to the physical location, but also holds meanings related to social status, economic networks, and human relations with the sea as a living and trade space. Thus, *Paotere* serves as both a modern distribution center and a historical and semantic marker of the dynamics of the spice trade and socio-economic structure in eastern Indonesia.

Kalukubodaa. Semantically, *Kalukubodaa* conveys a clear ecological and topographic meaning. The lexem "kaluku" means coconut, while "bodaa" means short, forming a unity of meaning that describes a lush coastal landscape with low-stemmed coconuts. This naming serves as a geographical marker known to sailors and spice traders, as well as confirming the relationship between the Bugis-Makassar community and its environment. The diction "kaluku" also contains a symbol of fertility, while "bodaa" signifies modesty and humility, reflecting the ethical values that are at the core of the local maritime culture [19].

From a cultural-expressive perspective, *Kalukubodaa* emphasizes the balance of life and harmony between humans and nature. The combination of the meanings 'coconut' and 'short' not only describes the physical environment but also conveys a symbolic value that reflects the social norms and outlook on life of coastal communities. This name serves as a means of cultural representation, linking daily activities, beliefs, and maritime ethics within the structure of language, thereby forming the collective identity of the community.

Historically, *Kalukubodaa* records the collective experience of coastal communities at a time when Makassar was a crucial point in the archipelago's spice trade route. Commodities such as nutmeg, cloves, pepper, onions, and salt are transported through local ports, demonstrating the close link between ecological semantics and maritime

economic activity. Thus, this toponym is not just a geographical label, but a polysemic lexical unit that combines ecological, symbolic, and historical meanings, serving also as a marker of local identity and collective memory in the context of the trade and socio-cultural life of the Bugis-Makassar people.

Pelabuhan Ujungpandang. The toponym *Pelabuhan Ujungpandang* is a sub-toponym of *Ujungpandang*, formed from two lexical elements: *ujung* ('edge'), referring to the point that extends furthest into the sea, and *pandang* ('to look' or 'gaze'), denoting a vantage point oriented toward the open sea. Semantically, *ujung* falls into the ecological-topographic category, as it emphasizes a strategic geographical position on the coast. In contrast, *pandang* is classified as cultural-expressive and symbolic, reflecting the relationship of the Makassar people with the sea as a living space, a trading arena, and a socio-economic orientation. This naming demonstrates that a toponym is not just a physical identity, but also a record of cultural and ecological values that are integral to a community's identity [12], [13].

Since the pre-colonial period, *Ujungpandang* has served as a strategic port, playing a central role in the archipelago's spice trade route. This port is the meeting point for the flow of commodities such as nutmeg, cloves, pepper, onions, and salt from the eastern and western regions of the archipelago. This function confirms that a toponym can serve as a historical and economic marker, recording the continuity of trade spice route activities and social interactions across regions and nations [22].

From a cultural perspective, the name *Ujungpandang* reinforces the identity of coastal communities as maritime communities skilled in utilizing the sea as a source of livelihood and trade routes. The symbolic meaning of "to look or gaze" emphasizes the ability of people to supervise, regulate, and utilize the sea for the smooth trade and mobility of goods. This concept aligns with functional and cultural semantic theory, which posits that a toponym not only designates a physical location but also conveys expressive and symbolic meanings that contribute to the social identity of the community [17].

Thus, *Ujungpandang* unites ecological, topographic, cultural, expressive, and symbolic meanings while recording its historical role in the spice trade. This name emphasizes the continuity of the port's function as a commodity distribution center and a symbol of the collective experience of the Makassar community, according to the theory that the naming of places contains ecological, historical, and cultural information that is integral in building collective memory and community identity [12], [13].

Kampung Melayu. The toponym of *Kampung Melayu* reflects the historical traces of merchant settlements from the Malay and Arab, which were established on the coast of Makassar between the 17th and 18th centuries. This name semantically contains the meaning of cultural acculturation, reflecting the diversity and harmony between the Malay community and the local people of Makassar. The region plays a crucial role in the spice, coffee, and food trade network, as well as serving as a hub for multiethnic interactions that strengthen the socio-economic identity of the community. Culturally, this area is also the center of the spread of Islam, marked by the establishment of the Makmur Mosque and the Mubarak Mosque, as well as da'wah activities by important figures such as Dato' Ri Bandang [7], [13].

Semantically, the name *Kampung Melayu* suggests a close connection between ethnic identity, economic activity, and the spice trade routes of the archipelago. The area that is now reclaimed land used to be a coast close to the port, making it easier to exchange commodities between regions. This toponym is not only a geographical location but also holds historical and economic significance, confirming the role of the Malay community in forming cross-island trade networks and fostering multiethnic interactions in Makassar from the 17th century to the colonial period.

Additionally, this toponym documents the migration and integration journey of the Malay community along the coast of Makassar. The presence of traders from Sumatra and Johor reinforces the semantic meaning as a symbol of trade nodes and cultural exchanges. The name *Kampung Melayu* also reflects the accumulation of ecological and social knowledge, where coastal settlements were chosen for their proximity to ports and spice routes. Thus, this toponym becomes a semantic unit that blends ethnic identity, trade history, and socio-cultural dynamics into a single meaningful linguistic representation [7], [13].

Bontoala. The toponym of *Bontoala* originates from the Makassar language, which is a combination of two lexemes: *bonto*, meaning "hill" or "small mountains," and *ala*, meaning "forest" or "trees" that grow around the hill. Etymologically, this name reflects the geographical conditions of the hilly and overgrown vegetation area, so the local people named it *Bontoala* as a marker of the natural environment around their residence. Over time, this name was collectively agreed upon and officially adopted to designate the administrative area of Bontoala Village in Makassar City.

Semantically, *Bontoala* belongs to the polysemy category because it retains layers of meaning that include ecological, historical, social, and economic dimensions. From an ecological and topographic perspective, this toponym marks the physical condition of a prominent and strategic area in the western coastal region of Makassar. The ecological semantic approach emphasizes that language serves as a representation of human experience of its environment; in this case, *Bontoala* records the character of the landscape that is important for the spatial orientation and identity of coastal communities [19].

From a social and historical perspective, *Bontoala* holds greater significance because, since ancient times, this area has been the center of noble settlements and the seat of government for the Gowa-Tallo Kingdom. This makes *Bontoala* not only a geographical marker but also a symbol of social status, legitimacy of power, and the coordination center of traditional government. In the context of cultural semantics, this toponym reflects identity values, social structures, and symbols of prestige, as explained by [1], [2], [3], who argue that the naming of places is often a vehicle for representing power and the collective memory of a community.

Meanwhile, from an economic-functional perspective, Bontoala has a close relationship with the spice trade network during the Gowa-Tallo maritime heyday. Commodities such as nutmeg, cloves, pepper, and cinnamon are transported from the port of Makassar and distributed to various regions of the archipelago, as well as to foreign traders docked on the west coast of South Sulawesi. Thus, Bontoala not only exhibits a strategic geographical position but also plays a role in cross-regional trade activities and multicultural interactions that develop through the spice routes [7], [13].

Overall, *Bontoala* is a toponym that combines ecological, social, political, and economic meanings in one rich linguistic unity. This name reflects the close relationship between humans, nature, and Makassar's maritime history. It functions as a linguistic archive that stores the collective memory of the community, marks local identity, and becomes a symbol of the integration between the ecological space and the dynamics of trade that grow along the archipelago's spice route

Tallo. The toponym *Tallo* is traced to *takloang* in the Makassar language, which is derived from the root *loang*, denoting 'vast' or 'empty,' combined with the prefix *tak-*, which can be interpreted as emphasizing spatial openness and extensive territorial breadth. This etymology corresponds to the vast expanse, which is the historical spatial character of Tallo as a broad territorial zone encompassing much of what is now northern Makassar. Beyond its geographical reference, Tallo also functioned as a strategic maritime polity situated at the mouth of the Tallo River and formed an integral part of the Gowa–Tallo Sultanate, a major actor within South Sulawesi's coastal trade networks. Semantically, the name Tallo carries additional connotations of courage and fighting spirit, extending its meaning from a placename to a marker of social and political identity. From a lexical semantic perspective, this polysemy reflects the interrelation between linguistic form, culturally embedded meanings, and historical context, positioning Tallo as a symbol of legitimacy, nobility, and collective heroism within Makassar society. [15].

Historically, Tallo was one of the twin kingdoms along with Gowa, which had a strategic role in the political structure of South Sulawesi and the spread of Islam. This toponym records the continuity of political legitimacy and the management of trade routes, including the archipelago spice trade that connects Sulawesi with various other regions. The name *Tallo* reflects the social status and political power of the kingdom, as well as being a symbol of courage internalized by coastal communities.

From a cultural perspective, Tallo represents the genealogical identity of the nobility and traditional traditions that are passed down from generation to generation. This toponym also reflects the collective spirit of the community in maintaining security and managing the spice trade routes, which language and cultural metaphors shape the way people understand their world. This heroic and solidarity meaning is closely tied to maritime economic activities, where Tallo serves as the center of coordination for trade in commodities such as cloves, nutmeg, and pepper.

Thus, the name *Tallo* brings together multiple semantic dimensions at once: historical-political, cultural-symbolic, and economic-maritime. This toponym serves as a sign of identity, political legitimacy, and community participation in the archipelago's spice route. Semantic analysis reveals that Tallo is not merely a geographical label, but a nuanced representation of the heroic values, traditions, and strategic roles in cross-island trade that have shaped the socio-economic dynamics of South Sulawesi since the 17th century.

5 Discussion

The study results of a few toponymies on the west coast of Makassar show that the place naming system describes the connection between environmental conditions, social structure, and maritime trade history of its people. The four main semantic categories—ecological, historical, economic, and cultural—do not operate separately but rather complement each other and form a unity of intersecting meaning. This pattern is evident in names such as *Ujungpandang*, *Ujungtanah*, and *Kalukubodoa*, which highlight the community's ecological relationship with the sea as a living space and trade route. Meanwhile, *Paotere* and *Kampung Melayu* reflect economic and cultural significance closely related to commercial activities and the meeting of various ethnic groups on the spice route. *Tallo* and *Bontoala* show historical layers related to power, social legitimacy, and local political identity.

From this pattern, toponyms do not solely mark geographical location but also serve as a store of social and historical meaning that reflects the ecological knowledge and value systems of coastal communities. These findings reinforce the notion that language plays a significant role in shaping representations of space and collective experiences [3], [16]. In the context of the spice routes, toponyms can be viewed as a linguistic trace of mobility, cultural exchange, and mixing processes that have occurred in the coastal area of Makassar for centuries.

This finding aligns with the concept that linguistic meaning is a manifestation of cultural concepts internalized within the language community, as presented in [6]. In the context of this research, the coastal toponym of Makassar reflects the people's views on the sea, space, and trade through a cultural conceptual system that has been passed down across generations. Lexical elements such as "*ujung*," "*pandang*," and "*tanah*" indicate a spatial orientation that is open to the sea. At the same time, forms like "*Paotere*" and "*Kalukubodoa*" reflect local cultural values, including work ethic, fertility, and life balance, which form the moral basis of the Bugis-Makassar maritime community.

The application of lexical semantic theory [5], [15] also demonstrates that toponymic meanings are formed through the relationship between language forms and social contexts. Some toponymies have shifted from denotative meaning to symbolic meaning—for example, *Tallo* not only designates a kingdom, but also becomes a symbol of courage and political power. This process of shift illustrates how language transforms into an instrument of social identity, while also maintaining the collective memory of society.

More broadly, the results of this study support the view of [4] that the naming of public spaces always involves political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Toponyms, such as *Kampung Melayu*, serve not only as markers of ethnicity but also as historical evidence of migration, commodity exchange, and cross-cultural trade relations along the archipelago's spice route. Thus, the practice of naming places can be understood as a symbolic mechanism that shapes social space while perpetuating the economic, political, and cultural values that are intertwined in it.

Conceptually, this study emphasizes that a toponym is an interdisciplinary linguistic vehicle that bridges the study of language, history, and culture. A semantic approach

combined with the perspective of cultural conceptualizations allows language to be read as a social archive that records collective knowledge about trade, migration, and the adaptation of coastal communities. The patterns of meaning found reinforce the position of a toponym as an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage, representing the dynamic relationship between language, space, and history along the archipelago's spice route.

6 Conclusion

This study confirms that toponyms on the west coast of Makassar serve as a linguistic archive, recording the history, cultural identity, and dynamics of maritime trade within the context of the spice routes. Semantic analysis uncovered four main categories of meaning—ecological-topographic, historical-political, economic-trade, and cultural-expressive—that reveal the inextricable interconnectedness between language, space, and maritime community identity. Names such as *Ujungpandang*, *Paotere*, *Tallo*, and *Kampung Melayu* not only serve as geographical markers but also contain a collective memory that reflects socio-economic interactions as well as local cultural developments. However, this study has limitations, particularly in its scope, which only covers the west coast of Makassar, as well as its reliance on colonial archival sources and oral data, which have the potential to introduce interpretive bias. For further research, it is recommended to conduct a comparative analysis of coastal areas in South Sulawesi using a digital onomastic approach based on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map the dynamics of toponymic changes spatially and temporally. Further studies can also be directed towards exploring the symbolic value and toponymic potential in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism, so that the results can contribute to the preservation of local identity and enrich our understanding of the relationship between language, space, and history along the archipelago's spice route.

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