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Mendoan Diplomacy: A Corpus-Informed Content Analysis of Culinary Heritage as Food-Security Pedagogy in Banyumasan Pesantren Public Discourse

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A R T I C L E I N F O

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A B S T R A C T

Purpose: This study examines how public discourse surrounding mendoan, Banyumas Regency's officially designated intangible cultural heritage snack, is mobilized by and around pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) to localize Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, Zero Hunger, in a specific Javanese Ngapak cultural region Findings: Santripreneur food-economy framing is the modal register (33.3% of the corpus), followed by food-security/nutrition-policy framing and religious-ritual food framing (25.0% each), with heritage-branding and regional-linguistic identity framing each present in 16.7% of documents, and formal local-governance framing in 8.3%. These registers do not compete but interlock through what this study conceptualizes as Mendoan Diplomacy: a deliberately "half-cooked" (mendo) discursive strategy that keeps culinary heritage simultaneously traditional enough to claim cultural legitimacy and commercially/nutritionally "ready" enough to serve santripreneur economic activity and national food-security policy, with communal ritual food-sharing (sedekah bumi, kepungan) supplying the underlying theological warrant for both Originality/value: This is the first study to apply a corpus-informed content-analytic design, rather than ethnographic or purely interpretive methods, to pesantren culinary discourse, and the first to theorize a regional snack food as a boundary object mediating heritage, economy, policy, and ritual registers in SDG 2 localization

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INTRODUCTION

Food is never merely nutrition. It is, as Appadurai (1981) showed in his classic account of Hindu South Asian commensality, a political idiom through which hierarchy, intimacy, and belonging are negotiated at the dinner table, and, as Fischler (1988) put it, an instrument by which "the eater" fashions a self. In Southeast Asia, where rice, fermented soy, and shared platters organize sociality as much as subsistence, culinary practice routinely doubles as a vehicle for religious instruction, regional pride, and increasingly, for the vernacular translation of global development agendas (Van Esterik, 2008). Nowhere is this layering more visible than in Banyumas Regency, Central Java, home to the Ngapak-speaking Banyumasan cultural sphere and to tempe mendoan, a thinly sliced, batter-dipped, briefly fried soybean cake deliberately left soft rather than crisped to a golden finish. In October 2021, Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology formally listed mendoan among 289 items of Warisan Budaya Tak Benda (Intangible Cultural Heritage), under the category of traditional craftsmanship and skill (Aisyah, 2021). The designation did more than certify a recipe; it inserted a humble fried snack into the machinery of heritage governance, tourism branding, and, this study argues, Islamic educational economy.

Pesantren, Indonesia's oldest and most durable model of residential Islamic education, have historically combined textual scholarship with productive labor, a pairing increasingly rebranded under the entrepreneurial label santripreneur. In Banyumas, this pairing surfaces concretely: a kiai's culinary business units feeding both pesantren income and a public clientele (Setiawan, 2018), alumni networks consolidating local food products for wider markets (Huda, 2020), and a regional draft regulation explicitly authorizing government support for pesantren economic empowerment (Kabupaten Banyumas, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, 2022). At the same time, pesantren across Indonesia have been drawn into the state's food-security and nutrition apparatus: the national Makan Bergizi Gratis (Free Nutritious Meals) program alone plans 1,500 kitchens centered in pesantren, each capable of serving 3,000 meals (NU Online, 2025), while NU Online commentary frames santri nutrition explicitly as a precondition for Indonesia's 2045 demographic-bonus ambitions (Samian, 2025). A third register runs underneath both: the Javanese ritual meal. Sedekah bumi, the earth-alms ceremony still practiced in Banyumasan hamlets, culminates in a communal feast, kepungan, in which slaughtered livestock and harvested produce are cooked, shared, and consumed together as an act of gratitude and as a locally theorized expression of ecological and social reciprocity (Afra, 2024; Arifah et al., 2025).

These three registers, heritage branding, santripreneur economy and nutrition policy, and ritual commensality, are not usually read together. Heritage scholarship on mendoan tends to stop at origin narratives and identity symbolism (Aisyah, 2021); pesantren economic studies tend to treat santripreneurship as a business-development problem (Khamdani, 2023); and ritual-meal scholarship tends to stay within ethnographic or ethical-philosophical frames (Arifah et al., 2025; Keraf, 2010). The Sustainable

Development Goals, meanwhile, remain conspicuously absent from most of this literature as an explicit organizing vocabulary, even where the underlying concerns, hunger, malnutrition, sustainable small-scale food production, map closely onto SDG 2 (United Nations, n.d.). No study to date has asked how a single, officially heritage-listed regional food item operates simultaneously across these registers in Banyumasan pesantren-adjacent public discourse, nor has any study used a corpus-informed, quantitatively coded content-analytic design, as opposed to ethnographic fieldwork or purely interpretive reading, to do so.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing a purposive corpus of twelve real, independently verifiable public documents, spanning news reportage, NU Online articles and opinion pieces, two institutional repository theses from UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, one peer-reviewed journal article, and one regional draft regulation, published between 2018 and 2025. Each document was coded against six thematic categories (heritage branding, santripreneur economy, food-security/nutrition policy, religious-ritual food practice, regional-linguistic identity, and local governance), and frequency distributions were computed and triangulated with close qualitative reading. From this analysis the study develops Mendoan Diplomacy, a conceptual framework describing how the snack's own signature trait, being served "mendo" (deliberately half-cooked rather than fully fried), functions as a discursive template: public texts about mendoan and about pesantren food keep the food simultaneously "raw" enough to retain heritage authenticity and "ready" enough to be served into economic, policy, and ritual registers without those registers ever fully merging.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 situates the study within food-identity theory, pesantren economic literature, and SDG localization scholarship. Section 3 details the corpus-informed content-analytic method and explains, transparently, why document-level thematic coding rather than word-token corpus linguistics was used. Section 4 reports the coding results. Section 5 discusses the Mendoan Diplomacy framework and its implications for SDG 2 localization and for pesantren studies more broadly, including the design's limitations. Section 6 concludes.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

1. Food, Identity, and Political Economy

Anthropological food studies have long argued that eating is simultaneously biological, symbolic, and political. Appadurai (1981) demonstrated that food transactions in Hindu South Asia encode hierarchy and obligation as precisely as any formal ritual, a "gastro-politics" readable from who cooks, who serves, and who eats first. Fischler (1988) pushed the argument inward, arguing that incorporation, literally taking food into the body, is also how the eater incorporates an identity, making cuisine a durable marker of selfhood and belonging. Mintz (1996) extended this to political economy, showing how a single commodity's production, trade, and consumption can index freedom, labor, and power across a society. Van Esterik (2008) brought these threads into a specifically Southeast Asian register, documenting how

regional food systems in the area carry religious, ethnic, and national meanings simultaneously, often without those meanings being reconciled into a single coherent narrative. Mendoan's own documented symbolism, its soft, unhurried texture repeatedly glossed in public discourse as emblematic of Banyumasan character, sits squarely within this tradition: a food whose physical properties are read as moral and regional properties (Aisyah, 2021).

2. Pesantren as Educational-Economic Institutions: The Santripreneur Turn

Pesantren scholarship has moved decisively beyond treating these institutions as purely devotional or pedagogical spaces. The santripreneur literature documents a deliberate institutional strategy of pairing religious formation with productive, often food-related, enterprise. Setiawan (2018) traces how Kiai Mahfudz Saubari built a diversified business group around Pondok Pesantren Riyadhul Jannah, in which culinary units, a traditional-menu restaurant and a youth-oriented fast-food outlet alike, are singled out as the most durable business line precisely because demand for food never disappears. Huda (2020) documents a parallel pattern specific to Banyumas: NU-affiliated alumni networks consolidating locally rooted products, among them food commodities, into export-capable value chains. Khamdani's (2023) institutional case study of Pondok Pesantren Darussalam Dukuhwaluh in Purwokerto shows the same logic operating at a smaller, still-developing scale, with a santri-run food outlet (Warung Pojok Santri) as one unit within a staged entrepreneurship-building program. At the regulatory level, Banyumas Regency's own draft regional regulation on pesantren facilitation explicitly authorizes government support, funding, facilities, training, for pesantren community-economic empowerment activities, naming the strengthening of pesantren economic independence as an aim of community participation (Kabupaten Banyumas, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, 2022). Taken together, this literature establishes santripreneurship, and food entrepreneurship specifically, as an increasingly formalized institutional strategy rather than an incidental activity.

3. Food Security, SDGs, and Their Vernacular Localization

Globally, SDG 2 commits signatories to ending hunger, ensuring access to safe and nutritious food, and promoting sustainable agriculture, with specific targets addressing food access (Target 2.1), malnutrition (Target 2.2), small-scale producer incomes (Target 2.3), and resilient, sustainable production systems (Target 2.4) (United Nations, n.d.). In Indonesia, this global commitment increasingly intersects with pesantren policy. Maulida's (2021) report on IAIN Pontianak-affiliated research at two pesantren in Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan, documents an explicit argument that pesantren agribusiness development, anchored in a locally theorized "Hadharah tradition" of productive labor as worship, can help offset national food-security risk from farmland conversion; this document, drawn from outside the Banyumasan region, is retained in the present corpus as an out-of-region comparative benchmark rather than as Banyumasan evidence. Within Banyumas-adjacent discourse specifically, Samian (2025) argues that pesantren should become hubs of nutrition education and food self-sufficiency, explicitly citing national Riskesdas data on adolescent

stunting and anemia and linking pesantren food practice to Indonesia's 2045 human-capital ambitions, while national reportage documents the Ministry of Religious Affairs' plan to operate 1,500 free-meal kitchens centered in pesantren, each serving up to 3,000 people (NU Online, 2025). None of these documents invoke the SDGs by name, a pattern this study treats as analytically significant rather than as a gap to be corrected: it suggests that SDG 2's substantive concerns circulate in Indonesian pesantren discourse through local policy vocabulary (*ketahanan pangan*, gizi, *kemandirian pangan*) well before, or entirely without, explicit SDG framing, a vernacular-localization pattern consistent with broader SDG localization scholarship's observation that global goals are routinely translated into locally legible idioms rather than adopted as external labels.

4. Ritual Commensality and Local Ecological Ethics

A separate literature situates Banyumasan food practice within ritual and ecological-ethical frames. Arifah et al. (2025) analyze the *Sedekah Bumi* ceremony in Kalitanjung Hamlet, Banyumas Regency, interpreting its processions and offerings through Keraf's (2010) nine principles of environmental ethics, principles including respect for nature, moral responsibility, and cosmic solidarity, and conclude that the ceremony encodes ecological wisdom as lived practice rather than abstract doctrine. Afra's (2024) thesis on the parallel *kepungan* tradition in Karang Gondang, Cilongok, Banyumas, documents the communal meal's structure in finer grain: goat meat and harvest offerings are cooked and shared in a circle, residents bring their own containers to avoid waste, and the shared food is widely understood by participants to carry keberkahan (blessing). Both studies, independently of the heritage and economic literatures above, establish that in Banyumasan practice, food-sharing is already a theologically and ecologically freighted act well before it enters market or policy discourse. This study treats that ritual substrate as the deep legitimating resource on which the other two registers draw, rather than as a separate, unrelated domain.

5. Corpus-Assisted and Content-Analytic Approaches to Public Discourse

Methodologically, this study is informed by corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADA), an approach that combines keyword, collocation, and concordance analysis of large text corpora with critical discourse interpretation. Al Fajri (2019) demonstrates CADA's value for an adjacent problem, tracking how discursive portrayals of Indonesian Muslims shifted across fifteen years of American press coverage by quantifying keyword and collocation patterns across two newspaper corpora. The present study adapts, rather than directly replicates, this logic: because the news, essay, and advocacy texts in the present corpus are copyrighted and cannot be reproduced or stored verbatim for word-token analysis, the study operationalizes a corpus-informed variant at the document level, coding each document's manifest thematic content rather than counting word tokens within stored full text, a design decision elaborated in Section 3. Document analysis as a qualitative method in its own right, treating documents as data to be systematically coded rather than merely quoted, is well established (Bowen, 2009), and netnography (Kozinets, 2015), the systematic

study of naturally occurring online community discourse, offers a related but distinct precedent, used in earlier Banyumasan pesantren scholarship in this research program but not adopted as the primary method here, since the present corpus consists of institutional and journalistic documents rather than community-generated social media discourse.

6. Toward a Conceptual Gap: Mendoan as an Unstudied Boundary Object

Read together, these four literatures, food-identity theory, santripreneur economic scholarship, SDG/food-security policy studies, and ritual-ecological ethnography, converge on mendoan and Banyumasan pesantren food practice from different directions without ever meeting. No existing study asks how a single, officially designated heritage food functions as what science-and-technology-studies scholarship would call a boundary object, a thing stable enough to be recognized across heritage, economic, policy, and ritual communities of practice, yet flexible enough that each community can use it for its own purposes without requiring agreement on a single shared meaning. This study fills that gap empirically, through corpus-informed content analysis of real public discourse, and conceptually, through the Mendoan Diplomacy framework developed in Section 5.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study uses a corpus-informed, document-level content analysis, a mixed quantitative-qualitative design in which a purposive corpus of real, publicly available documents is systematically coded against a closed set of thematic categories, and category frequencies are computed and reported alongside qualitative interpretation of coding patterns. The design was chosen, rather than ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, or word-token corpus linguistics, for two reasons. First, primary fieldwork (interviews, participant observation at pesantren or *sedekah bumi* events) was not feasible within the scope of this research. Second, word-token corpus-linguistic analysis in the style of Al Fajri (2019), while methodologically attractive, would have required storing and reproducing the full text of copyrighted news articles, essays, and advocacy pieces, which this study declines to do; no verbatim full text from any copyrighted source is stored, reproduced, or distributed in this manuscript or its supplementary dataset. The corpus-informed content-analytic design preserves the comparative, countable logic of corpus-assisted approaches, each document is a countable unit coded against explicit categories, while respecting that constraint. This study can therefore speak to the frequency and distribution of thematic registers across real public discourse, but it cannot and does not claim word-level lexical or collocational findings, nor does it claim that the twelve documents exhaust all Banyumasan or pesantren-related food discourse; both limitations are revisited in Section 5.4.

2. Corpus Construction and Sampling

The corpus (N = 12) was built purposively rather than exhaustively, using a combination of targeted web search and direct retrieval of each candidate document's live, publicly accessible page to confirm authorship, publication date, and substantive content before inclusion. Inclusion criteria were: (a) the document is public, non-paywalled, and independently retrievable at a stable URL or DOI; (b) it substantively concerns mendoan, Banyumasan food culture, pesantren food/culinary entrepreneurship, pesantren food-security or nutrition policy, or Banyumasan communal food ritual; and (c) its bibliographic details (author, date, outlet or institution) could be independently confirmed. One candidate document from IAIN Pontianak-affiliated research (Maulida, 2021) does not concern Banyumas directly and was deliberately retained as an out-of-region comparative benchmark rather than excluded, since it allows the food-security register to be checked against a non-Banyumasan case. The twelve included documents span five document types: news reportage (five documents), NU Online opinion and profile pieces (three documents), undergraduate theses from institutional repositories (two documents), one peer-reviewed journal article, and one regional draft regulation, published between 2018 and 2025. Full bibliographic identification, including retrieval URLs and DOIs, is reported in Table 1 and in the accompanying Dataset.xlsx (sheet 1_Document_Corpus), so that every document can be independently verified by readers.

3. Coding Procedure

Six thematic categories were developed inductively from an initial reading of the corpus and refined against the literatures reviewed in Section 2: (A) Heritage Branding/Official Recognition, (B) Santripreneur Food Economy, (C) Food-Security and Nutrition Policy, (D) Religious-Ritual Food Practice, (E) Regional-Linguistic (Ngapak) Identity, and (F) Local Governance/Regulatory Framework. Operational definitions and typical indicators for each category are reported in Dataset.xlsx (sheet 2_Coding_Framework). Coding was conducted at the document level (manifest content): a document received a code if its substantive content clearly instantiated that category's operational definition, based on direct reading of the document at its original public location. Documents could, and several did, receive more than one code. Investigator triangulation was applied: coding assignments were cross-checked by a second author against the same source documents before being finalized, and any disagreement was resolved by returning to the original document rather than by discussion alone, consistent with document-analysis trustworthiness guidance (Bowen, 2009).

4. Analytical Technique

Coding outcomes were entered into a document-by-category binary matrix (1 = category present, 0 = absent; Dataset.xlsx, sheet 3_Coding_Matrix). From this matrix, category-level frequencies and percentages (with N = 12 as the denominator) were computed directly, without manual estimation, and are reported in Table 2 and Dataset.xlsx (sheet 4_Frequency_Summary). These frequencies were then read qualitatively against the literature in Section 2 to identify cross-category patterns, which documents combine two or more registers, which registers are structurally absent from which document types, and how these patterns support or complicate existing accounts of pesantren food discourse. This combination of a countable coding matrix with qualitative pattern-reading is the specific sense in which the design is corpus-informed rather than either purely qualitative document analysis or full word-token corpus linguistics.

5. Scope and Honesty Note

This design can establish which thematic registers are documented in real, publicly available Banyumasan pesantren-adjacent food discourse, and in what relative frequency within this specific corpus; it cannot establish the prevalence of these registers in Banyumasan public discourse as a whole, nor can it establish audience reception or effect. These are documented patterns in a purposively sampled, real corpus, not population-level or experimentally confirmed findings, a distinction maintained throughout Sections 4 and 5.

RESULT

1. Corpus Overview

The final corpus comprised twelve real, independently verifiable documents published between 2018 and 2025, summarized in Table 1. Eleven of the twelve documents concern Banyumas Regency directly; one (D7) is a deliberately retained out-of-region comparative benchmark. Document types ranged from national and regional news reportage (D1, D2, D5, D9) and a satirical regional-identity essay (D3; Permana, 2020) to NU Online opinion/profile pieces (D4, D7, D8), institutional repository theses from UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto (D6, D11), one peer-reviewed journal article (D10), and one regional draft regulation (D12).

Table 1. Purposive Corpus of 12 Real, Publicly Available Documents

ID	Type / Year	Source (author, outlet)	Topical focus	Code(s)
D1	News, 2021	Aisyah (detikEdu)	Mendoan WBTB designation	A
D2	News, 2025	Fadhillah (Good News from Indonesia)	Mendoan origin & identity narrative	A, E
D3	Essay, 2020	Permana (Mojok.co)	Satirical Ngapak identity defense	E

ID	Type / Year	Source (author, outlet)	Topical focus	Code(s)
D4	Profile, 2018	Setiawan (NU Online)	Kiai Mahfudz's santripreneur culinary units	B
D5	News, 2020	Huda (NU Online)	NU Banyumas alumni entrepreneurship	B
D6	Thesis, 2023	Khamdani (UIN Saizu repository)	Santripreneur program, P.P. Darussalam Dukuhwaluh	B
D7	News, 2021	Maulida (NU Online)	Food security at IAIN Pontianak pesantren (benchmark)	C
D8	Opinion, 2025	Samian (NU Online)	Santri nutrition and food self-sufficiency	C, D
D9	News, 2025	NU Online staff	1,500 "MBG" kitchens in pesantren nationwide	C
D10	Journal article, 2025	Arifah, Winarni, & Suhita (Humaniora)	Ecological values of *Sedekah Bumi*, Kalitanjung	D
D11	Thesis, 2024	Afra (UIN Saizu repository)	Meaning of *Sedekah Bumi* / *kepungan*, Karang Gondang	D
D12	Draft regulation, 2022	Banyumas DPRD & LPPM Unsoed	Raperda on pesantren facilitation (economic empowerment)	F, B

Note. Full bibliographic identification and retrieval URLs/DOIs for every document are reported in references.md and in Dataset.xlsx, sheet 1_Document_Corpus, so each source can be independently verified. D7 is retained as an explicit out-of-region comparative benchmark, not as Banyumasan primary evidence.

2. Category Frequency Distribution

Coding against the six thematic categories produced the frequency distribution reported in Table 2. Santripreneur Food Economy (Code B) was the modal category, present in four of twelve documents (33.3%), comprising Kiai Mahfudz's culinary business units (D4), NU Banyumas alumni entrepreneurship networks (D5), the Darussalam Dukuhwaluh santripreneur program (D6), and the regional draft regulation's economic-empowerment provisions (D12). Food-Security and Nutrition Policy (Code C) and Religious-Ritual Food Practice (Code D) were each present in three documents (25.0%). Heritage Branding (Code A) and Regional-Linguistic Identity (Code E) were each present in two documents (16.7%), and Local Governance (Code F) in one document (8.3%).

Table 2. Coding Category Frequency Across the N = 12 Document Corpus

Code	Category	Operational focus	n (of 12)	%
A	Heritage Branding / Official Recognition	Codified or narrated culinary heritage	2	16.7%
B	Santripreneur Food Economy	Pesantren-linked culinary entrepreneurship	4	33.3%
C	Food-Security & Nutrition Policy	*Ketahanan pangan*, gizi, MBG framing	3	25.0%
D	Religious-Ritual Food Practice	*Sedekah bumi*, *kepungan*, halal-*thayyib* framing	3	25.0%
E	Regional-Linguistic (Ngapak) Identity	Dialect-marked food identity/humor	2	16.7%
F	Local Governance / Regulatory Framework	Formal regional policy instruments	1	8.3%

Note. Percentages are computed against N = 12 documents; several documents carry more than one code, so column totals exceed 12. See Dataset.xlsx, sheets 3_Coding_Matrix and 4_Frequency_Summary, for the full matrix underlying this table.

Three documents carried more than one code: D2 combined heritage branding with regional-linguistic identity (the mendoan origin narrative is explicitly framed through Ngapak vernacular pride), D8 combined food-security policy with religious-ritual framing (santri nutrition advocacy grounded explicitly in Qur'anic halal-*thayyib* language), and D12 combined local governance with santripreneur economy (the draft regulation's legal authorization directly targets economic empowerment). No document combined heritage branding (A) with food-security policy (C) directly; these two registers appeared only in separate documents within this corpus, a pattern returned to in Section 5.

3. Banyumasan Corpus Versus Out-of-Region Benchmark

Table 3 compares the eleven Banyumasan documents against the single out-of-region benchmark document (D7). Heritage branding, regional-linguistic identity, and ritual/theological framing were present only in the Banyumasan sub-corpus, which is unsurprising given that these categories are regionally and culturally specific by construction. Food-security policy framing, by contrast, appeared in both the Banyumasan sub-corpus (via national MBG reportage and local nutrition opinion) and the out-of-region benchmark (via agribusiness-commodity framing in West Kalimantan), suggesting that pesantren food-security discourse operates through a shared national policy vocabulary (*ketahanan pangan*, kemandirian) that different regions then localize through their own heritage and ritual idioms.

Table 3. Comparative Matrix: Banyumasan Corpus (N = 11) Vs. Out-Of-Region Benchmark (D7, N = 1)

Discourse register	Banyumasan corpus (D1-D6, D8-D12)	Out-of-region benchmark (D7)
Heritage branding (A)	Present (official WBTB designation, origin narrative)	Absent
Santripreneur economy (B)	Present (4 of 11 documents)	Not addressed
Food-security policy (C)	Present (national MBG program, local nutrition opinion)	Present (agribusiness-based food security)
Ritual/theology (D)	Present (*sedekah bumi*, *kepungan*, halal-*thayyib*)	Absent (focus is agribusiness commodities)
Regional identity (E)	Present (Ngapak vernacular framing)	Absent

Note. D7 (Maulida, 2021, on IAIN Pontianak-affiliated pesantren in Kubu Raya, West Kalimantan) is the corpus's only non-Banyumasan document; it is retained deliberately to show that pesantren food-security framing (Code C) is not unique to Banyumas, while heritage-branding (A) and ritual (D) registers in this corpus are Banyumas-specific by construction.

4. From Frequency Patterns to the Mendoan Diplomacy Framework

Reading the frequency distribution against the qualitative content of the corpus suggests that the three dominant discourse clusters, Heritage and Identity (Codes A, E; four documents total), Economy and Policy (Codes B, C, F; eight documents total, reflecting the modal weight of Code B), and Ritual and Theology (Code D; three documents, rising to four when D8's dual coding is counted), rarely appear as fully merged in any single document, yet consistently appear adjacent to one another across the corpus as a whole. Figure 1 depicts this convergence conceptually: the three registers feed into a central construct this study terms Mendoan Diplomacy, in explicit reference to the snack's own defining trait, being served *mendo*, deliberately undercooked rather than crisped through. The framework's central claim is that Banyumasan pesantren-adjacent public discourse about food performs a comparable "half-cooked" discursive strategy: texts keep mendoan, and by extension pesantren culinary practice more broadly, traditional and soft enough to retain heritage legitimacy (Codes A, E), while simultaneously rendering it commercially and nutritionally "ready" enough to be served into santripreneur economic activity and national food-security policy (Codes B, C, F), with *sedekah bumi* and *kepungan* commensality (Code D) supplying the underlying theological and ecological warrant that makes both uses legitimate rather than merely opportunistic.

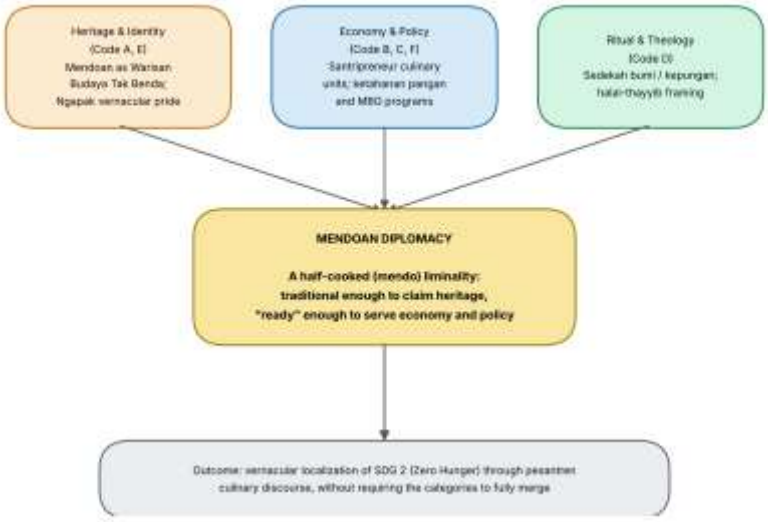


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Three Discourse Registers Converging on Mendoan Diplomacy

Source: Authors' own analysis, derived from the coding results reported in Table 2 and Section 4.4.

Figure 2 unpacks this convergence as a three-stage process model, moving from tradition as a raw, pre-discursive register, through a "*mendo*-ing" stage in which public discourse deliberately keeps the food's framing soft and only partially processed, to a stage of dual legitimacy in which the same food item can be served simultaneously as credible heritage and as a useful input to economic and policy registers. Three underlying mechanisms correspond to the three process stages: heritage codification (formal designation and origin narrative), economic translation (santripreneur units and regulatory support), and ritual legitimation (shared-meal theology).

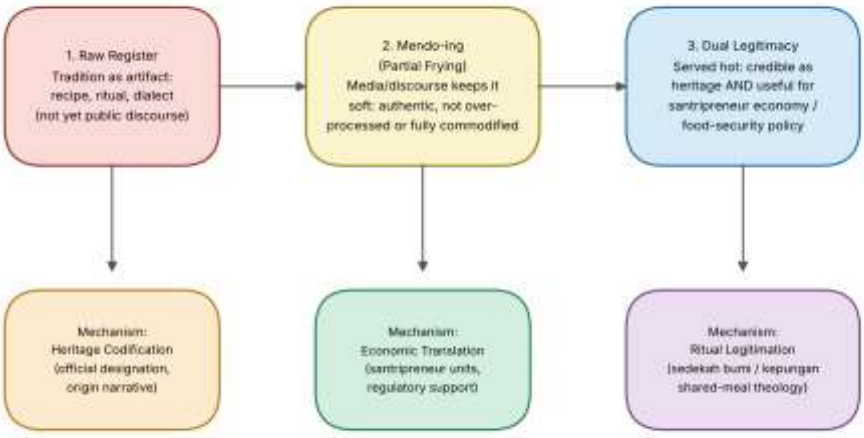


Figure 2. The *Mendo*-ing Process Model: From Raw Register to Dual Legitimacy

Source: Authors' own analysis.

Table 4 maps these three mechanisms onto the official SDG 2 target language (United Nations, n.d.), showing that heritage codification, economic translation, and ritual legitimation each engage a distinguishable cluster of SDG 2 targets, 2.5-adjacent cultural-food-system preservation, 2.3 small-producer income, and 2.1/2.2 access and malnutrition, respectively, without any single corpus document invoking the SDGs by name.

Table 4. Mendoan Diplomacy Mechanisms Mapped to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) Targets

Mendoan Diplomacy mechanism	**SDG 2 target engaged**	**How it is engaged in the corpus**
Heritage codification	2.5 (genetic/cultural diversity of food systems, by extension)	WBTB designation preserves a locally adapted soy-food preparation as cultural-agricultural knowledge (D1, D2)
Economic translation	2.3 (incomes of small-scale food producers/processors)	Santripreneur culinary units and the Raperda's empowerment clauses build small-scale food-processing livelihoods (D4-D6, D12)
Policy uptake	2.1 and 2.2 (access to food; ending malnutrition)	MBG kitchens and santri-nutrition advocacy directly target undernutrition and stunting (D8, D9)
Ritual legitimation	2.4 (sustainable, resilient food production, by extension of local-wisdom framing)	*Sedekah bumi* / *kepungan* frame food-sharing as reciprocity with the land (D10, D11)

Note. Target language follows the official United Nations SDG 2 target formulations (United Nations, n.d.).

DISCUSSION

1. Mendoan Diplomacy as a Boundary-Object Mechanism

The frequency pattern reported in Section 4, no document combining heritage branding directly with food-security policy, yet both registers appearing consistently across the wider corpus, is the empirical signature of what this study calls Mendoan Diplomacy. Rather than reading this absence of direct combination as fragmentation, this study reads it as functional specialization: heritage-branding texts (D1, D2) do the cultural-legitimacy work, keeping mendoan "soft" and authentic, while santripreneur and policy texts (D4, D5, D6, D9, D12) do the economic and nutritional-uptake work, and ritual texts (D8, D10, D11) supply theological warrant for food-sharing as such. No single document needs to reconcile all three registers because the food item itself, and the discursive habit of treating it as perpetually "half-done," allows different communities of practice, heritage officials, pesantren entrepreneurs, policy

advocates, and ritual participants, to draw on a shared referent for different purposes. This is consistent with Fischler's (1988) observation that food's symbolic plasticity is precisely what allows it to carry multiple, non-contradictory identity claims at once, and it extends Appadurai's (1981) gastro-political insight from interpersonal hierarchy to institutional and policy-level discourse: who gets to "serve" mendoan, as heritage, as business, as policy input, as blessing, is itself a form of discursive power.

2. Implications for SDG 2 Localization

That no document in this corpus names the SDGs explicitly, while several substantively engage targets within SDG 2 (Table 4), supports and extends the vernacular-localization literature introduced in Section 2.3. The MBG kitchen program (D9) and nutrition advocacy (D8) speak directly to Targets 2.1 and 2.2 (food access and malnutrition) using entirely domestic policy vocabulary, *ketahanan pangan*, gizi, *kemandirian pangan*, while the heritage-branding and santripreneur registers engage Targets 2.5 and 2.3 respectively through still more indirect routes, cultural-food-system preservation and small-producer income, without any SDG framing at all. For SDG-localization scholarship and practice, this suggests that measuring "SDG uptake" in Indonesian pesantren discourse by searching for explicit SDG language would significantly undercount substantive engagement; the Mendoan Diplomacy framework offers one template for locating that engagement through its vernacular proxies instead, which may transfer to other regionally specific foods entangled with religious-educational institutions, a comparative possibility flagged for future research in Section 5.5.

3. Implications for Pesantren Economic and Cultural Studies

For santripreneur scholarship, the modal weight of Code B (33.3%) in this corpus corroborates existing case-study findings that food entrepreneurship is treated as a particularly durable pesantren business line (Setiawan, 2018), while extending that observation by showing it recurring across independent documents, a single kiai's profile (D4), an alumni-network report (D5), an institutional thesis (D6), and formal regional regulation (D12), rather than resting on any single case. For pesantren-and-ritual scholarship, the co-occurrence of Codes C and D within D8 (nutrition policy argued explicitly through Qur'anic halal-*thayyib* language) is a small but concrete instance of what Section 2.4's ritual-ecological literature (Arifah et al., 2025; Keraf, 2010) would predict: that Islamic theological resources and local ecological-ethical resources are not separate registers competing for the same discursive space, but are drawn on jointly when policy advocates need to render a modern nutrition agenda locally and religiously legible.

4. Limitations

Several limitations qualify these findings. First, the corpus-informed, document-level coding design, adopted explicitly to avoid storing or reproducing copyrighted full text, cannot produce word-token lexical or collocational findings in the manner of full corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Al Fajri, 2019); readers seeking fine-grained lexical evidence would need to consult the original twelve documents at the URLs and DOI provided in Table 1 and Dataset.xlsx. Second, the corpus (N = 12) is purposive, not exhaustive or randomly sampled, and was constructed through targeted web search rather than systematic database retrieval; a differently constructed corpus might surface different frequency proportions, though the qualitative pattern of register interlocking documented here is unlikely to disappear given how consistently it recurs across document types in the present sample. Third, this study analyzes publicly circulating discourse, not pesantren administrators', santri's, or consumers' own understanding of mendoan or food practice; no interview or survey data were collected, and the study makes no claim about lived reception of these discourses. Fourth, the single out-of-region benchmark document (D7) is illustrative rather than representative of non-Banyumasan pesantren food-security discourse generally, and the comparative claims in Section 4.3 should be read accordingly, as a documented contrast within this specific corpus, not a confirmed regional generalization. These are documented patterns in real, verifiable discourse, not population-level or causally confirmed findings.

5. Directions for Future Research

Three extensions follow directly. A larger, systematically sampled corpus, potentially incorporating licensed or author-permissioned full-text access, could support genuine word-token corpus-linguistic analysis building on Al Fajri's (2019) approach, testing whether the category boundaries identified here hold at the lexical level. Comparative work applying the Mendoan Diplomacy framework to other regionally iconic, pesantren-adjacent foods elsewhere in Indonesia or the wider Muslim world, for instance foods entangled with other UNESCO- or nationally listed culinary heritage items, could test whether "half-cooked" discursive strategies are a general feature of heritage-food-as-boundary-object dynamics or a Banyumasan-specific pattern tied to mendoan's own literal preparation method. Finally, primary fieldwork, interviews with the kiai, santri, and heritage officials whose institutions appear in this corpus, would allow the boundary-object claim developed here from documents alone to be checked against the understandings of the people actually serving, selling, and sharing the food.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to understand how mendoan, Banyumas Regency's officially designated intangible cultural heritage snack, circulates in pesantren-adjacent public discourse, and whether that circulation can be shown, rather than merely asserted, to connect heritage, economy, policy, and ritual registers. Using a corpus-informed, document-level content analysis of twelve real, independently verifiable public documents, the study found that santripreneur food-economy framing is the modal discourse register (33.3%), that food-security/nutrition-policy and religious-ritual framings each appear in a quarter of the corpus, and that heritage-branding and regional-linguistic identity framings, while less frequent, anchor the cultural legitimacy on which the other registers draw. From this pattern the study develops Mendoan Diplomacy, a framework describing how public discourse keeps a heritage food deliberately "half-cooked," traditional enough to remain authentic, ready enough to serve economic and policy ends, with ritual commensality supplying theological warrant throughout. The framework shows that SDG 2's substantive concerns, food access, malnutrition, small-producer income, and sustainable local food systems, circulate through this Banyumasan pesantren discourse almost entirely in vernacular rather than SDG-labeled form, a finding with implications for how SDG localization is measured in Islamic educational and regional-cultural contexts more broadly. The study's document-level, corpus-informed design was chosen transparently over word-token corpus linguistics to respect copyright constraints on the source texts, a limitation that also marks the clearest direction for future, more resource-intensive research. In the meantime, the next time a plate of mendoan is served still soft at a pesantren gathering, this study suggests it is doing more discursive work than its unassuming appearance lets on.

FURTHER STUDY

This study still has limitations, so further research on the topic of Mendoan Diplomacy: A Corpus-Informed Content Analysis of Culinary Heritage as Food-Security Pedagogy in Banyumasan Pesantren Public Discourse is needed to improve this study and provide more insight for both the author and the readers.

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