

# The Term al-Kāfūr in Hadith Texts: Analysis of its Distribution Based on Classical Arabic Maritime Works and Biogeographical Data

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## ABSTRACTS

Al-kāfūr is a botanical term mentioned in Arabic literature, particularly in Jahiliyyah poetry, the Qur'an, and hadith. Studies related to the term have been conducted extensively, involving various Islamic literary sources, but they do not refer to Arab-Islamic maritime and trade records. However, Arab merchants and sailors were the group that directly witnessed the distribution of the plant and recorded it clearly in their records as early as the 3rd century Hijri. Therefore, this study will analyse the hadiths related to al-kāfūr in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim by examining its distribution based on Arab maritime and trade works to identify the distribution of this plant. Data from these sources is compared with historical facts to verify its authenticity. This study is a fully qualitative analysis using library methods to collect data and applying content analysis methods to analyse the collected data. The results of the study found that there are five names of regions associated with al-kāfūr by traders, namely Bālūs, Faṣṣūr, al-Rāmī, al-Ramnī, Lamūrī, Lambrī, and Tiyūmah, which are the original regions of al-kāfūr according to the Arabs, located in the Malay Archipelago

**Keywords:** al-kāfūr; hadith; classical Arab maritime and trade works; location of scattering

## INTRODUCTION

Plants have special value to humans as medicine, food, fragrance and decoration. Most plants are a source of food for humans, while others have been used since ancient times as ingredients in medicine, cosmetics and fragrances. Aromatic elements are also an important factor for certain plants, to the extent that history records that some of them were commodities whose value exceeded that of gold in the past, particularly camphor, known as al-kāfūr by the Arabs. It is a fragrance that is widely used in Arab society, as it is mentioned in various classical Arabic literature, namely the Qur'an, Hadith, poetry, Arabic dictionaries, including Arab voyage records. In the Qur'an, this word is only mentioned once, as follows:

Meaning: 'Verily, those who are devout (in obedience and virtue) will drink from a cup: a kind of drink mixed with camphor' (76:5).

Al-kāfūr refers to a type of solid resin known to Malaysians as camphor, which was one of the most expensive commodities in the world traded by Arab merchants in the past (S. Wani, 2021). This plant is stated by the majority of Islamic scholars in most Arabic literature to originate from al-Hind (Rusni & Thuraya, 2021). Therefore, it is not surprising that it is known. Al-kāfūr refers to a type of solid resin known to Malaysians as camphor, which was one of the most expensive commodities in the world traded by Arab merchants in the past (S. Wani, 2021). This plant is stated by the majority of Islamic scholars in most Arabic literature to originate from al-Hind (Rusni & Thuraya, 2021). It is therefore not surprising that this information was later quoted by contemporary researchers, who introduced camphor, mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith, as a plant originating from India (Saipolbarin, 2018 & Siti Norwanis, 2020). This indirectly highlights the uniqueness of al-Hind based on classical Arabic literature as a greatness achieved by Indian civilisation. Meanwhile, the meaning of al-Hind in Arabic texts does not only refer to India and its sub-regions but also refers to the Malay world (Rusni & Thuraya, 2021). Thus, the main factor causing misinterpretation of the origin of plants is referring to explanations of al-kāfūr based on Arabic literature without careful and extensive research into the meaning of

the associated term al-Hind. Research on terms in Arabic literature should not be limited to secondary sources alone. With the development of science and technology, explanations of the meaning of a species also need to refer to contemporary sources. This matter has been applied by Islamic scholars such as Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, who referred to Greek and Greek medical books such as the works of Galen, a Greek doctor and pharmacist who lived in the 2nd century AD. -2 AD, when explaining the hadiths of the Prophet SAW related to aspects of human biology (Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, 1379H). The openness of hadith scholars when explaining matters outside their expertise, especially those involving medicine and science, demonstrates their integrity in the intellectual field.

Research related to plants inevitably requires reference to plant biogeographical information in order to identify the origin of a plant species, even though there are hundreds of genera for a single species and have been used for hundreds of years. This is because plant biogeography is a branch of geography that studies the distribution of living organisms on Earth, as well as the factors that influence this distribution and the patterns that exist based on space and time (Kenneth, 2016). Interestingly, research based on this science can accurately determine the scientific or binomial name of a plant species, which is the starting point for research on a plant genus, even if it has hundreds of species worldwide (Marc et al., 2020). Thus, combining historical information with contemporary data can further strengthen research findings and reinforce each other. This also guides careful research in linking past information with current information, especially in relation to branches of science.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the author's observations, studies on the term al-kāfūr have attracted the attention of contemporary researchers. For example, Widus Sempo (2019) in his article entitled 'Local Wisdom Regarding Camphor (Cinnamomum Camphora) According to the Islamic Perspective and the Culture of the Malay Community in the 19th Century AD', examines the term based on the Qur'an and hadith, and then studies the use of this plant in traditional Malay medicine since. Similarly, Saipolbahri (2018), in his article entitled "Lexicography and Semantic Analysis of the Word al-Kafur in the Qur'an", examines the term based on Arabic poetry, the Qur'an and hadith texts, data from botanical works, pharmaceutical works and language dictionaries. It should be noted that neither of these studies involved classical Arabic voyage records to introduce the location of its origin according to the Arabs themselves in the early days of Islam. Meanwhile, the study by Istiqamah Ayu Syahputri (2023) entitled "The Meaning of Kafur and Zanjabil in Surah al-Insan Verses 5 and 17 (Analysis of the Interpretations of al-Qurtubi and al-Misbah)". This study examines the meaning of these two words based on the verses of the Qur'an by referring to two books of interpretation and then making comparisons. The study does not refer to hadith books or records of Arab voyages and trade, nor does it examine the locations where these plants are found, as it focuses on the meaning of the words. Meanwhile, there are also studies that identify the types of kapur referred to in the Qur'an and hadith based on biological and biogeographical studies of plants, as well as historical data, particularly information about the kapur trade around the world. Muhammad Herman Abdullah et al., in their study entitled "Kafur and Champor in Islam, Malay and Chinese History", compared data from the Qur'an, hadith, interviews, botanists and cultural activists in the city of Barus to determine the type of camphor referred to as al-kāfūr in Islam using its correct binomial name. The conclusions of the previous studies described show that explanations of al-kāfūr based on classical Arabic texts, particularly Arab voyage and trade records, have not been carried out to determine the type of camphor referred to in the Qur'an and Hadith, in addition to corroborating information from plant biogeographical data.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to identify the distribution of al-kāfūr based on Arab maritime works. For the purpose of collecting data on this topic, the researcher used a qualitative approach with a fully literature-based research method, referring to documents such as books, theses, articles and authoritative websites. Therefore, this study applies deductive or istifadah data analysis, which is data analysis based on general facts to arrive at specific facts applied in the process of determining the location of al-kāfūr distribution. This study presents a sample of related locations for a clearer picture for the general public and researchers in particular. The two main works referenced in the analysis are al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik (Roads and Kingdoms) by Ibn Khudadhbih (1889) and al-Rihlat al-Sīrāfī (The Journey of al-Sīrāfī) by al-Sīrāfī (1998). The term al-kāfūr was extracted from

these works from the entire content and presented in the form of original quotations translated into Malay without any processing by the researcher. Based on the researcher's study of Arabic voyage works, these two works are among the most complete historical works on voyage narratives with the names of areas where al-kāfūr is found.

## STUDY FINDINGS

### Al-Kāfūr in the Early Days of Islam

The Qur'an is the source of Islamic law, which also tells of the lives of nations before the advent of Islam, including the culture of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Al-kāfūr is mentioned only once in the Qur'an 29:5, which means 'Verily, those who are devout (in obedience and virtue) will drink from a cup: a kind of drink mixed with Kafur. Of course, Allah SWT compares something beautiful in heaven with something so special in Arab society to show the difference between the pleasures of heaven, which are more beautiful than the pleasures of the world. Hamka (1984) states that the kāfūr used as an ingredient in the drink of those who do good deeds in heaven will certainly have a similar name to the kāfūr found in this world, but it is kāfūr from the hereafter or kāfūr from heaven, which is many times more fragrant and aromatic and is used as an ingredient in drinks. Therefore, it can be understood that al-kāfūr mentioned in the Qur'an is a type of fragrance known to the people of the author's homeland, namely the archipelago, as kapur barus. Referring to the sources of the hadith, there are many terms for al-kāfūr, but all accounts relate to its single function, namely as a fragrance with various uses. The discussion on this matter is as follows:

#### Fragrance to perfume the deceased:

From Ummu 'Atiyyah al-Anṣāriyyah R.HA, she said that the Prophet SAW came to us when her daughter died, then said: 'Bathe her three times, or five times, or more if you deem it necessary, with water mixed with three bidara leaves and add camphor or something similar to the last bath...' (al-Bukhārī, 1253).

#### Incense for burning:

From Nāfi', he said: When Ibn Umar wanted to burn incense, he would use agarwood without mixing it with anything else, or he would use camphor mixed with agarwood...' (Muslim, 2254).

Referring to the explanations of hadith scholars and Arabic lexicographers, the meaning of the word al-kāfūr in the hadith can be classified into three definitions. First, Ibn al-Athīr (1985) stated that al-kāfūr is a type of fragrance that is mixed into the water used to bathe the deceased. Second, it refers to al-ḥanūt or al-ḥināt, which is a type of fragrance that has been mixed with various other types of fragrances, including jerangau, kasturi, ambergris, camphor and sandalwood, which is used specifically to perfume the body of the deceased and also the shroud. However, according to al-Azharī (2001), there is al-ḥanūt which only uses camphor, considering that "Aṭā", a tabiīn, mentioned that al-ḥināt, which he really liked, was al-kāfūr, namely camphor. Thirdly, al-Harbi (1960) explains that al-kāfūr is generally a type of fragrance similar to other fragrances such as al-misk and aḥḍām, which are commonly used to fumigate rooms among Arab communities. The first hadith presented, Ibn Ḥajar (1960) explains that outwardly, the hadith describes how to bathe the deceased using al-kāfūr, which is mixed with water during the final rinsing, and this is the opinion of the majority of scholars, while al-Nakhā'ī and the scholars of Kufah hold the opposite opinion, namely that camphor is mixed into al-ḥanūt, which is used after the body has been washed and dried. However, some hadith scholars such as al-Khaṭṭābī (1932) explain that the sunnah described in the hadith is to use water mixed with camphor during the final washing, and it is also sunnah to use sidr mixed with water or something similar if there is dirt. If we examine the opinions of other hadith scholars such as al-Zahabī (1990), camphor water is used during the final rinsing when bathing the corpse because camphor has the ability to eliminate foul odours, similar to the magnetic properties that attract iron filings, making it suitable for use in the final rinsing of the corpse. In addition, lime water can also prevent flies from landing on the body and make the body last longer and not easily decompose. According to the author, the opinions of Ibn Ḥajar and al-Dhahabī and hadith scholars who agree with them are more accurate when referring to the properties of lime, which acts as an agent to remove foul odours, including the smell of corpses.

Besides that, refer to the second hadith, the essence of the hadith explains the method of fumigation using agarwood mixed with camphor. al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ (1998) states that this method can produce a more fragrant and unique aroma compared to using agarwood alone. Although al-kāfur is specifically mentioned in both accounts, al-Qārī (2002) explains that Arabs also commonly mix various other fragrances such as musk and ambergris when smoking incense, but the Prophet SAW only mentioned al-kāfur.

## ANALYSIS OF AL-KĀFŪR IN CLASSICAL ARABIC VOYAGE RECORDS

Ibn Khurdadhbīh mentions al-kāfur four times in his work as follows:

'The voyage to China, making Srindīb located on the left, rather than Srindīb continuing the voyage to Lankabālūs which took fifteen days, the inhabitants did not wear slippers and ate bananas, fish, coconuts, and they obtained iron by selling it, from the island continuing the voyage to Kalah Island which took six days, it is an area under the rule of Jābah al-Hindiy (Sriwijaya) where there is aloi (al-raṣāṣ al-qala'iy), there are bamboo trees, to the left is the city of Bālūs, which takes two days to sail to, the inhabitants eat humans, there is high-quality limestone (kāfur), bananas, coconuts, sugar cane and rice from that island to the islands of Jābah (Palembang) and Shalāhiṭ, Harlaj, which is a large country and its king wears a gold-embroidered robe as well as a necklace...'

'...From Māyīt, located on the left side of the journey to Tiyyūmah Island, there is agarwood and camphor trees (al-kāfur). From there, it takes five days to travel to Qamar, where there is al-'ūd al-qamāriy. From Qamār, it takes three days to travel to al-Ṣanf via the coastal area.

'After Srindīb, head to an area called al-rāmiy... then in the mountainous area of al-Zābāj, there are the bones of snakes that have swallowed humans and buffaloes. There is a large kapur tree (al-kāfur) that can shade approximately one hundred people. To obtain kapur, the top of the tree is carved and a lot of kapur water comes out, enough to fill several jars. After the water is collected, the middle part of the trunk is carved to obtain pieces of camphor, which is a resin from inside the tree itself. Then the tree is destroyed and the camphor dries up. There are countless wonders in that country.

Al-Sīrāfi also mentions al-kāfur during his voyage to China when passing through the Harkand Sea as follows:

'And when sailing to Sīlān (Ceylon), in this sea, when heading to Sirindīb, there are not many islands to be found, but there is a large country known as al-ramniy, there are several kings, its area reaches 800 to 900 square kilometres, there are many gold mines and a place called fanṣūr, high-quality camphor (al-kāfur) comes from that area.'

Based on this information, there are several important areas associated with al-kāfur or camphor, namely the islands of al-Rāmiy, al-Ramnī, Bālūs, Tiyyūmah, al-Zābāj and Fanṣūr. Some of these names are similar to locations that are still recognised today, while others have undergone tahrif or changes in pronunciation, such as Bālūs, which is very close to the name of a port area called Barus, which is well known to the people of the Malay world. Therefore, in researching the location of these areas, researchers refer to classical and contemporary Arabic geographical works to identify geographical features and nearby areas that can be used as a starting point for identifying the areas in question.

## Analysis of the Al-Kāfur Scattered Areas Based on Arab Navigation Records

### al-Rāmī

Upon examination, the islands of al-Rāmiy and al-Ramnī refer to an area located after the island of Srindīb (Sri Lanka) but referred to by various names by Arab sailors, including al-Ramnī, Lamūrī and Lambarī. This region has many camphor trees, while there are two countries in the region that are famous for being areas of high-quality camphor and well-known among Arab sailors, namely Bālūs and Fanṣūr. Certainly, this region is located in the sea after Sri Lanka and is passed when sailing to China. According to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1995), rāmī or al-ramāt is an island located in the Shalāhiṭ Sea, which is located below India. Al-Idrisī (1988) also mentions that it is a city located in India, south of the island of al-Baynamān (Andaman Island). Thus, it can



be confirmed that the area located after Sri Lanka and south of Andaman Island is the island of Sumatra, and the area with abundant camphor trees called al-Rāmī is Aceh, which is what al-Ḥamawī meant when he said that the area is located in the southern part of India. Clearly, the India referred to by him does not refer to the Indian subcontinent but to the regions in the Malay Archipelago, including Indonesia.

### Fanṣūr and Bālūs

Regarding fanṣūr, al-Qazwinī (n.d.) states that it is located in India and is famous for its high-quality chalk called fanṣūriy, and that chalk production increased in years when there were earthquakes and thunderstorms. Ibn al-Faḳīh (1996) also mentions that commodities such as camphor were imported into Arabia from Fanṣūr, which is located near China. Based on research on geographical works originating from the Persian language, Fanṣūr is a large city that is a hub for traders and has a lot of limestone. Sayyid Yūsūf (2003) also mentions that it was a city located on the coast, ruled by a king and free from colonial rule. Therefore, it can be ascertained that fanṣūr was an area located near the sea because it was a hub for traders. Bālūs or Barus is a similar area that has high-quality camphor. If we look closely, these characteristics refer to the same area, which is also located in the al-rāmiy region, so we can be sure that it refers to only one area, namely Barus, which is the only producer of camphor that was formerly known as Lobu Tua (Y. Subbarayalu, 2014), polii or bolū (Roderich Ptak, 2014) in the Chinese voyage records, “Duan Chengshi” around 803 AD, which Wolters later concluded that polu was Barus but not located in the current Barus area but on the north coast of Sumatra, namely in the Ramni or Lamni (Aceh) area.

Referring to Ibn Khurdadhbīh's records, the distance between the locations mentioned was measured based on travel distance. From Srindīb (Sri Lanka), the voyage continued to the island of Lankabālūs, which took fifteen days, indicating the great distance involved. From that island, it took six days to reach the land of Kalah, which had a mineral resource known as aloī, famous in the Arab world at that time as al-raṣāṣ al-qala‘ī, and was under the rule of Jābah al-Hindī, namely Srivijaya.

Sayyid Yūsūf (2002) states that from Kalah, the city of Bālūs or Barus is located in the southern part of the island, where there is a king known as Jābah Hindūsī. The journey between Bālūs and Kalah takes two days. In this area, there are tin mines (al-raṣāṣ). Al-Bīrūnī (1995) also states that it is an area located halfway between Oman and China. Meanwhile, Abu Dulaf (Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, 1995) mentions Kalah during his journey to China and his stopover there after returning from China, which was the earliest Indian territory encountered from the direction of China. This place was a port for ships to anchor, with a large fort and iron ore mines called al-raṣāṣ al-qala‘ī, which at that time did not exist anywhere else in the world. Iḥsan (1980), when researching the work of al-Ḥimyarī, mentioned that “Kalah”, as mentioned by most Arab geographers, had various interpretations regarding its location, but it can be ascertained that the country was Keda or Kra, located on the Malay Peninsula and also a peninsula opposite Sumatra.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that the Kalah referred to by Ibn Khudadhbīh is Kedah Tua, now known as Lembah Bujang. According to Nasha (2008), the area is located between Sg. Muda in the south and Sg. Sala in the north. This area has existed since at least the beginning of the 2nd century AD. This can be proven based on Indian writings and literature from the second century, which state that Old Kedah had begun to function as an important trading port at that time. Thus, it can be confirmed that Kalah was the Old Kedah Kingdom located west of the Malay Peninsula, and that the journey from that area to Barus only took two days. Therefore, it can be confirmed that there were only a few islands before reaching Old Kedah, namely Nicobar Island and Andaman Island, but Andaman Island was usually called Baydamān Island by Arab traders, so it can be confirmed that Langkabālūs refers to Nicobar Island, located east of the Indian Ocean. However, Balus is refer to a country in Sumatera, Indonesia that’s famous among Arab traders because of the its agricultural products, which are highly valued commodities in the international trade market, namely kapur barus or camphor.

### Jazīrat Tiḡmah

Ibn Khudradhbīh mentions a journey to China. Starting from māyīt, located on the left, he then travelled to Tiḡmah, which has limestone trees. The island was encountered on the journey to Qamār and then to al-Ṣanf. In researching the location of this area, Ibn al-Faḳīh (1996) mentions that al-Ṣanf was the last region

encountered before arriving in China, while according to al-Ḥimyariy (1980) al -Sanf is one of the islands in India that is the origin of a type of agarwood known as al-'ūd al-Sanf, which is the best and highest quality agarwood compared to al-'ūd al-Qamari. After Baḥr al-Ṣanf is Baḥr al-Ṣīn (the China Sea), but there is a hill separating the two regions. 'Alī bin Mūsā al-Maghribī (1980) mentions that al-Ṣanf is located in the southern part of al-Ṣīn (China). The length of the country from west to east is approximately 200 stones. In the west lies the region of Qamār, which is named after a type of agarwood known to the Arabs as al-'ūd al-qamārī. According to al-Ḥamawī, Qamār or Qimār are two terms that are familiar to the general Arab public, while the educated class refers to it as Qāmīrūn. It is famous as a location that produces high-quality agarwood. Regarding its location, Ibn Khurdādhbih described the voyage from Tioman Island to the Khmer kingdom as taking 5 days, while from Khmer to Champa via the coast took 3 days.

This information refers to two Malay kingdoms, namely Champa (now Vietnam) and Khmer (now Cambodia). Jazīrat Tiyyūmah refers to Tioman Island because on the journey to both countries by sea, there is only one island after passing Sumatra, namely Tioman Island.

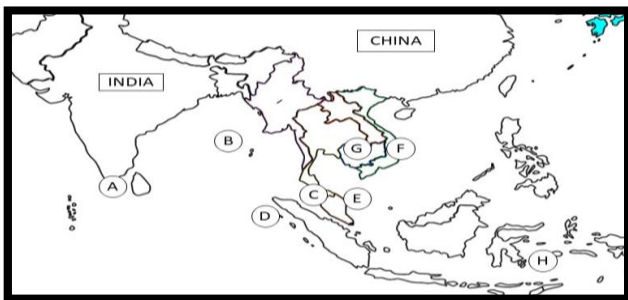
### al-Zābāj

Ibn Khurdādhbih mentions al-Zābāj with its topographical features of hills and mountains, where there are many limestone trees, so many pots are used to collect limestone water. Yaqūt al-Ḥamawī (1995) also mentions that it is an island located in the lower part of India, bordering China. From this information, it can be confirmed that the area is located towards China in the lower part, referring to the Maluku Islands.

### Analysis of Arab Sailors' Stopover Locations Based on Arab Navigation and Trade Records

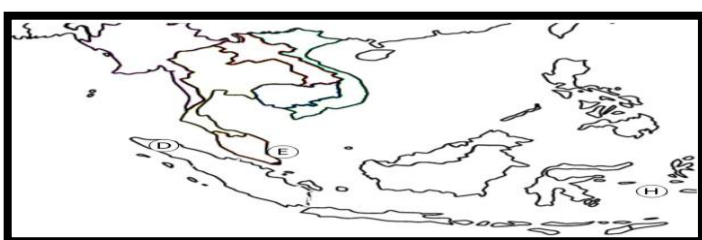
Based on the information presented above, the locations passed by Ibn Khurdādhbih and al-Sīrāfī are shown in Map 1.

**Map 1:** A: Srindīb Island (Sri Lanka), B: Andaman Island and Andaman Island C: Kedah D: Aceh, Fanṣūr and Barus E: Tioman Island F: al-Ṣanf (Champa), G: Qamār (Cambodia) H: Maluku Islands (Source: Adapted from Google Maps and processed by the author).



The following are the locations of al-kāfūr scattered throughout the archipelago as mentioned by both Arab navigators and traders.

**Map 2:** Locations of al-kāfūr distribution based on statements by Arab sailors and traders. D: Aceh, Barus including Fanṣūr, E: Tioman Island and H: Maluku Islands, covering the Malay Archipelago (Source: Adapted from Google Maps and author's own work).



## **Biogeographical, Historical and Archaeological information about the areas of origin of the camphor distribution.**

Al-Kafūr corresponds to a type of fragrance known by Malays as kapur barus, which comes from the species *Dryobalanops aromatica*. This type of camphor is also known as Malayan camphor, a species that yields large quantities of high-quality camphor. It originates from Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, Borneo (Sarawak, Brunei, Sabah, and East Kalimantan. (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, 2025). However, scientific studies have proven that there are three genera that produce of camphor and are involved in the trade: *Dryobalanops*, *Blumea*, and *Cinnamomum* (Donkin, 1994). According to botanical data, the species *Dryobalanops aromatica*-or *Dryobalanops sumatrensis*, its synonyms was changed to *Dryobalanops aromatica* as its species name in 1998 (Barstow, 2022). The latter name comes from Latin, meaning something like a spice, referring to the fragrant aroma of the camphor tree's resin (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, 2025). In addition, *Dryobalanops aromatica* is also known as Borneo camphorwood, Sumatra camphor, and camphor tree in English, kapur barus among Malays, and karpuram by the Indian community (Quattrocchi, 2012).

In his geographical work, Ptolemy recorded five Baroussai Islands among the lands of the Far East. This name is usually considered to be related to the name Barus. Meanwhile, Chinese sources from around the 6th Century are more convincing because they mention a place name in various phonetic transcriptions that seem to correspond to the name Barus. Moreover, this name is referred to as the place of origin of camphor (). In the West, the first record of camphor appears in the works of Actius of Amida (502-578 AD), a Greek doctor who lived in Mesopotamia. This record was quoted by Imr al-Qays (530 AD), a poet during the Sassanid Empire. Finally, it is reported that in 638, when Arab forces captured the palace of Chosroes II in Medan, on the banks of the Tigris River, a number of jars full of camphor were found, which were initially thought to be salt (Nouha, 1998).

Besides that, based on the iconic Batak kingdom, where there was a residential area in 'Aek Busuk Lama' before Lobu Tua was established, this cannot be denied because the area was uninhabited for a long time. This shows that, based on Chinese, Western, and Arabic records, this city was ruled by the Pansur Kingdom, which was the first kingdom established in the area. Meanwhile, the name Pansur itself is recorded in many written sources around the 9th century AD. (Guillot, 2003). If we pay attention, the name Pansur is mentioned in Arabic texts as Fansur that refer to Barus, which refers to the same area which is the only source for the camphor before being trade to other country in this world. In addition, in a collection of texts from the 12th century AD concerning churches and monasteries in Egypt and several neighboring countries, titled and possibly written by Sheikh Abu Salih al-Armani, there is a chapter on India. After a note on Quilon in the Kerala region in that chapter, there is a brief note on Fansur as follows:

Fahsur. There, there are several churches and all the Christians are Nestorians and that is the condition of things here. It is form this place that camphor comes and this commodity oozes from the trees. In this town there is one church named after 'Our lady the pure virgin Mary'

According to Malay history, there was a famous poet named Hamzah Fansuri. Fansuri refers to his birthplace, Fansur in North Sumatra. He was a 16th-century Sumatran Sufi writer, and the first writer known to write mystical panentheistic ideas in the Malay language. He wrote poetry as well as prose. He has been called the "first Malay poet" and the first known poet to have written in the Malay poetic form syair. He was born at the end of 16 Century at Barus or Panchor, Sumatera Utara. He was the first writer to write about Sufi doctrines poetically in the Malay language, or indeed any other languages of the Malay archipelago (Naquib al-Attas, 1970).

## **The Malay World and al-Hind**

Zaharah (2016) states that the Malay World encompasses the Malay Peninsula along with Singapore, Borneo, Java, Sumatra and Brunei. It also encompasses the regions of Champa, Cambodia and Siam before the arrival of the Chinese Hans Tai and Dai Viet from mainland China, who later conquered Champa, Siam and Cambodia. According to her, the four main ancient Malay empires in the Malay World were the Malay empires of Funan, Champa, Srivijaya, Langkasuka and Old Kedah. Based on the confirmed list of regions,

apart from Sri Lanka, all other regions are located in the Malay World. It can therefore be understood that India for the ancient Arab community did not necessarily refer to the Indian subcontinent but referred to the Malay Archipelago.

### Identification of the Al-Kāfūr Species Based on Hadith Texts

Based on the results of an analysis of the location where al-kāfūr is scattered, it can be confirmed that it is of the *Dryobalanop Aromatica* species. Arab navigators and geographers were very familiar with the types of camphor used by the Arab community, and they even knew precisely where the camphor originated before it was brought to Arabia. They did not mention other areas where camphor was also distributed as producing the best quality camphor. The highest quality camphor came from Sumatra, specifically from an area called Barus, and was known as Fanṣūrī, named after its region of origin. This does not deny that other regions also have the same type of tree, but at the beginning of trade relations between the Malay Archipelago and the Middle East, it was camphor from Barus that was famous among the Arabs, so that the location and type of camphor were well known to them. Thuraya (2019) quotes that Western botanists in the 20th century revealed their research findings on the distribution of the *Dryobalanops aromatica* species, which is mostly found in Sumatra and the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, particularly in Terengganu, Pahang, the east coast of Johor, including Tioman Island. Kewscience: Plants of The World Online (2020) and Barstow (2018), PROSEA (2025) state that the distribution areas of *Dryobalanops aromatica* are Sumatra and Kalimantan, the Malay Peninsula, Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak) and Brunei.

It turns out that the kapur mentioned in the hadith does not refer to kapur barus with the scientific name *Cinnamomum champora*, even though most studies in the field of religion mainly involve the study of the term al-kāfūr in Arabic texts, including the Qur'an, hadith, poetry, and dictionaries, which refer to the binomial nomenclature. This is due to a lack of research on the biogeography of plants and analysis of their distribution areas based on classical Arabic texts in particular. This matter is clearer when considering the records from the Royal Botanic Kew Gardens (2025) that the species *Cinnamomum champora* (L.) J.Presl originates from East Asia, namely China, Japan, Taiwan and Korea (Jeju). It is therefore not surprising that McCulloch (1844), a British colonial economist in the nineteenth century, described camphor from the Malay region as being more valuable than that from China. He found that Malay camphor was sold at ten dollars per kati, while the equivalent from China was sold at the same price for a pikul (equivalent to 100 kati).

Today, the Union for Conservation of Nature (2025) has designated the camphor tree species, *Dryobalanops Aromatica*, as a plant that is vulnerable to danger, meaning that it is a plant in the high-risk category for extinction with a declining population trend. High demand, especially in the perfume and medicine industries, and excessive use from one generation to the next, coupled with a lack of maintenance and restoration of the species, have caused it to be classified as a plant at risk of extinction.

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