



JAVANESE KERIS MYSTIFICATION DISCOURSE ON THE SURAKARTA KERIS MARKET

PANJI SUKMA¹, ANDRIK PURWASITO², WARTO³, TITIS SRIMUDA PITANA⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Cultural Studies Doctoral Program, Graduate School Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta
mr.panjii12@gmail.com

Abstract

Keris is a cultural heritage of Indonesia, especially Jawa, which has been recognize worldwide. In traditional Javanese mystical culture, keris has a special position as tosan aji or an object that is considered to have magical powers. In modern times, the mystification of the keris occurs in a way that is different from the patterns of discourse in traditional societies. In modern times, the mystification discourse is created entirely through a process that involves the keris community and the keris market. Through discourse that strengthen in new spaces in the modern era, mystification is created and forms a clear hyperreality of the keris as cultural object, both among the keris community and the wider public. This research aim to see how the mystification discourse develops and hyperreality is created. The results of this study found that mystification occurs through the market with indications that keris traders/exchangers use mystical narrative to increase the price of the keris they sell. The higher the mystical element in a keris, the higher the price. On the other hand, consumers are exposed to this mystical discourse, and perceive keris ownership as a part of identity that cannot be separated from everyday life. In this way, mystification produces hyperreality among the keris community.

Keyword: Keris, market, mystification, hyperreality

1. INTRODUCTION

Keris is an original weapon of Indonesian culture, especially Java. Even so, the distribution of the keris actually covers the entire archipelago. The scope of its spread is to the East to Nusa Tenggara and Ternate, while to the West to the Malay Peninsula and parts of mainland Southeast Asia. This weapon is one of the cultural-traditional treasures of Indonesia (Harsrinuksmo, 2004, p. 10).

On November 25, 2005, keris was declared a Masterpiece of the Oral Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. The existence of a keris as an authentic Indonesian cultural object is undeniably an honor as well as a big obligation, because this recognition leaves the obligation to preserve the keris. The phenomenon of the keris as a cultural heritage has caused the preservation of the keris to undergo changes in modern society. The changing society has also changed the meaning of the keris and the symbols attached to it. Everyone in modern times has the freedom to appreciate and interpret keris according to their own desires and interests. Because of this, an ambiguous and even paradoxical understanding occurs, which is due to the freedom of interpretation which creates a situation of multiple interpretations and can change at any time.

For traditional Javanese society and its mystical world, the keris occupies a special position, especially for men. In its tradition and philosophy, Javanese men have five properties that must be met in order to make them real men, namely *wisma* (house), *garwa* (woman or wife), *turangga* (mount or horse), *kukila* (birds as entertainment), and *curiga* (weapon in the form of a keris). Now this tradition is no longer considered important by most Javanese people, even the wider public often narrates the keris as an object attached to the world of mysticism and shamanism on the basis of modernism and religious morality. When keris used to be entrenched because keris ownership was a form of preserving Javanese identity and cultural heritage, now it seems to have turned into an object that must be 'sacred' which then creates a negative connotation for its owner. In addition to the problem of religious morality, modernity is currently developing rapidly and seems to force people to struggle with technology, adding to the long list of reasons why keris no longer exist in everyday life.



Even so, there are members of the public who take advantage of the emergence of the phenomenon of the meaning of keris today for certain purposes, for example financial. This problem is related to the Javanese keris which is considered as a lifestyle expression of traditional philosophical concepts but an entirely new argument is added, namely how a Javanese wants to describe his identity by owning a keris and there are groups who benefit from this phenomenon.

From this, it can be surmised that the mystification of keris in this era is very likely to occur, in new spaces that may become the home for mystification. This traces the understanding of the keris which is capable of directly or indirectly having a metaphysical impact on its owner, or at least being a symbol of its owner, bearing in mind that the Javanese mystical world is very attached to the world of symbols.

Mystification discourse in the modern era should be suspected of taking place in a space that is completely different from the mystification of the keris which occurs in its traditional space. In its tradition, the keris is very close to the royal government system or the Javanese palace environment. Keris in this paradigm functions as a tool of political legitimacy as well as being part of the spiritual life of the kingdom and its people. Since the arrival of modernism and the loss of the legitimacy of the palace as a political ruler, it has also released the palace's control over the mystification of the keris (Aribowo, 2018, p. 2-3). The loss of the element of political authority as a defining factor in the mystification of the keris has made it shift to new spaces of mystification.

This research will examine the mystical construction of keris which is produced, distributed, and widely consumed by keris community in ex-Karesidenan Surakarta. In this case, the research will focus more on the keris market/exchange which is the most dynamic space for the birth of mystification.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Mystification is referred to as false consciousness. This false awareness is formed from the hegemony of the social order that controls ideological sectors such as culture, religion, education and the mass media. There are groups that can manipulate awareness to approve and disseminate a discourse and the accompanying concepts by determining the standards that serve as accepted ideas. (Weismann, 2005, p. 1).

The term mystical is often encountered and associated with rituals and transcendent characteristics and behavior beyond reason. Philosophically based, mystical, mystery, and misification are closely related. In other words, the substance of mystification is a concept born from the intersection between mystery and clarity that is unacceptable to various points of view. Meanwhile, according to the sociological view, mystification is defined as a process of closing or obscuring reality.

This study considers that the intermediate process that stimulates the birth of the mystification of the keris occurs through the flow of exchange of discourse. Discourse is widely understood as explaining, defining, and thinking about people, knowledge, abstract thought systems. Discourse cannot be separated from the postmodern thinker Michel Foucault who uses it in the use of the concepts of continuity, threshold, cracks, boundaries, transformations, and series in dealing with historical analysis which is not only based on procedural issues that must be followed by someone, but also used as a reference to solve the problems of the complexity of the theoretical problems encountered. Discourse is an expression of thoughts formally and regularly. A discourse can be formed by the thoughts of individuals who can become a unit. The term 'discourse' actually does not refer to language or social interaction but to relatively limited areas of social knowledge. If earlier the conception of discourse focused on linguistics or sociology, it is now completely rethinking of the idea. The idea of Foucauldian discourse will work in several ways, namely discourse creates the world, discourse creates knowledge and "truth", discourse explains something related to the people or subjects who utter it, and discourse disciplines (Foucault, 2012, p. 106).

The meaning of discourse in Foucault's idea is the authority to describe something, which is propagated by an institution and serves to separate the world in a certain way (Sanusi, 2010, p. 991). For example, the word "clock" that we agree to define a timepiece is a term determined by a



discourse. This agreement can be said to be the discourse that forces clocks to be called clock. The object referred to as a clock never declared itself a clock. It is the discourse that is made together that has violated the essence of the object we call "clock".

This research wants to see how the discourse on the keris produces certain structural patterns that give birth to simulations. Simulation in turn creates consumers who consume symbols, resulting in what Baudrillard calls hyperreality.

Hyperreality is a condition in which something goes beyond the reality of the results of a simulation process. Simulation is a process of representing an object through a certain discourse or discourse which is realized through symbolization, but instead the discourse replaces the object itself. (Haryatmoko, 2016, p. 80). This discourse emphasizes certain styles, patterns or living standards through symbolization offered to consumers so that consumers consume certain commodities, not on the basis of needs but because of 'prestige' or lifestyle. For Baudrillard, the pattern of consumption in postmodern society is marked by a shift in consumption orientation which was originally intended for the necessities of life, to a lifestyle. Baudrillard explains that current consumption behavior is not only influenced by factors that are purely economic and based on rational choices, but there are cultural systems and social meaning systems that are able to direct individual choices of a commodity. (Baudrillard, 2011, p. 74).

Consumption of symbols creates the birth of a 'spectacle society', people who watch each other's symbols while exchanging symbols. So that the judgment appears that the owner of the goods which is considered to have a certain symbol becomes a person with a higher social class or higher culture. In terms of keris ownership, the symbols attached to the keris can construct an understanding that the owner of a particular keris is considered to have more power, depending on the symbols attached to the keris. For example, a keris that is considered once owned by a royal family, then forms a symbol that the current owner has the same social level as the owner in the past. There are past glories that are trying to be brought back by symbols or meanings on certain kerises.

In the end, what happens is that representation becomes more important than the object it is trying to represent, a condition of hyperreality. Hyperreality is formed because of the existence of simulations, and these simulations in the end no longer represent reality. What then emerges is a virtual reality where facts and fiction merge within blurred boundaries and are believed by people who consume symbols or signs.

That whole process is what this research calls the process of mystification in postmodern society and is used to examine the mystification that occurs in keris. In this case, the mystification allegedly occurred in the process of buying and selling keris in the keris market/exchange, and the discourse extends to the keris community.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative research. This type of research that uses qualitative methods and approaches has the characteristics that humans are tools, there is a scientific basis or basic theory, qualitative methods, inductive data analysis, descriptive, using limits of focus, there are special criteria in the validity of data (Arikunto, 2013).

Cultural studies research has the characteristic that in using qualitative methods it focuses more on disclosing various interests such as dismantling power relations in culture, high and low cultural dichotomies, depoliticization or politicization of cultural concepts. Therefore, researchers will hold tight to this focus in doing research (Barker, 2004, p. 36).

In particular, this study will use the ethnographic method. Ethnography is part of the cultural science level which describes a group of people in order to study, observe the social level of the local community, both in terms of religion and in terms of character. Spradley argues that Ethnography is the work of describing a culture (Spradley, 2006, p. 3). The main goal is to understand a way of life from the point of view of the natives. Culture can be described and published by anthropologists as a cultural study with the aim of understanding the nature of social life in rural areas that have unique characteristics. In Koentjaraningrat's view, it is stated that the



content of ethnography concerns a description of the ethnic culture of an ethnic group holistically. (Koentjaraningrat, 1984, p. 12).

The research was conducted at the keris market/exchange in the former Surakarta residency. The keris market which is closely related to the keris community means that it will directly intersect with that community. The research data was obtained through interviews, and observation. Interview or interview is a form of verbal communication that aims to obtain information about something that is known by someone who is a source of data in oral form (Nasution, 1987, p. 149). Observation is a way of collecting data by using one of the five senses, namely the sense of sight as the main tool for direct observation, besides the five senses the author usually uses other tools according to field conditions (Sukardi, 2003, p. 78).

The analytical model used in this research is an interactive analysis model, namely the data analysis components interact with each other during the research process. The interactive analysis model used is based on qualitative data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman, activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out in an interactive way and continuously at each stage of the researcher until complete, so that the data is saturated (Sugiyono, 2017, p. 337).

4. RESULTS

a. Keris Market

The keris market or exchange is the most important aspect in which the keris changes hands from the old owner to the new owner. The keris market in the context of a place is usually a market that is not only specifically a place for buying and selling kerises, but is still integrated with the art market, and is permanent. While keris exchanges are more often remanent, the place is adjusted and is usually held together with other events, such as seminars, exhibitions or keris commemorations such as world keris day or events held by associations.

There are three functions of the market that we know: the means of distribution, the means of price formation, and the means of promotion. This is no exception in the keris market and exchange. The meeting of keris sellers and buyers naturally gave birth to many things that influenced the process of moving keris from one party to another. The question is, do all keris sellers understand the keris they are selling or give the right information about the keris to prospective buyers? Now the keris market is no longer settling in one place because rapid technological developments make it easier for people to create their own keris market on various online pages. People who do not have good knowledge about keris are able to become policy makers in the online market that they create. For example sorting anyone and any information before it is published in the market. In this case, it is important to divide the keris market based on its type, the permanent market and the remanent market (certain events/online).

In the market, of course, there are sellers. It is actually difficult to distinguish keris sellers based on the type of market, whether permanent or remanent, because usually a permanent keris seller will also sell his keris remanently. But with the advent of the online mode of selling keris, a seller who doesn't have a permanent place can also offer his keris. It is also important to realize that some keris collectors also consider keris as an investment that can be traded at any time (interview with Irwan Santoso, 3 Januari 2023).

In the former Surakarta residency, there are at least two permanent keris markets. The first market and the center of the permanent keris market is located in the eastern part of the North Alun-alun of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace. Apart from kerises, actually they also sell other antiques, but the main attraction of this market is the kerises. Not all of the kerises sold here are old kerises that have a long or auspicious historical side, there are also new, inexpensive kerises for souvenirs for travelers visiting the city of Solo (<https://www.solopos.com/berburu-barang-antik-di-sekitar-alut-keraton-solo-ada-apa-saja-ya-1277748>, accessed on 13 January 2023). The second keris center is in Triwindu Market which is known as a center for selling art, antiques and ancient goods, located south of Mangkunegaran Palace. In this market, the main products are actually not keris, but antique objects, but keris also being traded (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022; see



also <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2019/01/11/13520341/pasar-triwindu-solo-pusatnya-barang-antik-dan-kuno-khas-mangkunegaran?page=all>, accessed on 13 January 2023).

The remanent keris market generally takes place on various occasions such as cultural events or exhibitions. Remanent market is not fixed, conditional and sometimes accidental. However, the remanent market in the former Surakarta residency area is held quite frequently. Almost every month, remanent keris can be found on various market opportunities. In addition, this market is greatly helped by the presence of online media so that keris traders who do not have a fixed place or collectors who want to sell their collections can still offer their keris anytime and from anywhere (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022; Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023).

Keris that are traded have certain levels based on several categories which also determine the price. In terms of history or the age of the keris, there are generally two types which are still divided into various eras, namely the *sepuh* and the *kamardikan* keris. Keris *sepuh* means keris made since before Indonesian independence, extending its period from the kingdoms to colonial times, while keris *kamardikan* are kerises made in the period after Indonesian independence or kerises that tend to be new in age. The older the keris, the more expensive it is. For example, a keris made during the Majapahit era would be more expensive than a keris produced during the Demak or Islamic Mataram periods, so in this case it is also important to know the era a keris was made. The historical aspect is the main element that determines the price of a keris because it has its own prestige built from its historical value (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

If the era of making the keris is clear, then the next category is *empu*, the master of the keris maker. Each era has an *empu* who is famous, and a keris made by a famous *empu* of course has a higher price when compared to a keris whose origins are unclear, even though it comes from the same era. Each era has its own famous *empus*'s name, each palace must have a master who is devoted to making keris for the palace. For example, during the Majapahit era, the name of *empu* Supo was famous (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

Likewise with the *kamardikan* keris, if it is clear who is the *empu*, the price can be more expensive than other keris of that era. The influence of the great name of *empu* on the keris he makes is very large in the market because its origins are clear and consumers value it more when they know who made a keris. *Kamardikan* kerises generally have a certificate from the maker (wawancara Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

The next category relates to the *ricikan* or structure, shape and build of a keris. This really depends on the tastes of consumers, but generally a keris made by a *empu* whose origins are clear, meaning that his expertise has been tested, and the materials used are of high quality, will be valued at a higher price. Whereas in terms of blade aesthetics, the type of *pamor*, the number of *luk*, *warangka*, and so on is the domain of consumers, according to taste or what kind of keris are they looking for (wawancara Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

One element of the community as well as the keris market that is important but not widely known to the public is *pengempit* keris. The term *pengempit* keris is attached to people in the keris world who often bring keris from other parties to offer to consumers. The rules of the game are very fluid, in other words, *pengempit* may say that the keris he is carrying belongs to another party, and he may also admit that the keris he is carrying is his. At first glance, it may be similar to the role of a broker, but what is clear is that the term *pengempit* is commonly used in the keris world. *Pengempit* himself is usually a person who struggles with keris on a daily basis. Because of that, a lot of information that goes back and forth in the world of keris is from *pengempit*. It is not certain that the validity of the information that is available can be justified, but the fact that the amount of information brought by *pengempit* cannot be denied because their mobility is rated the highest in the keris world. *Pengempit* usually also has many and varied relationships, from collectors, markets, associations, *empu* and others. This is also the reason why *pengempit* cannot be removed when discussing the keris community.

Within the community as well as the keris market in the former Surakarta residency, *pengempit* exists as a differentiator from the keris market in other areas. This does not mean that other regions do not have people with more or less similar occupations, but rather that the existence of



pengempit is known to exist in the area of the former Surakarta residency. The role of *pengempit keris* is not limited to the keris market, they are usually also asked when someone needs information about kerises. However, they play a very large role in the keris market. In the area of the keris market, usually *pengempit* will be entrusted with a keris to be sold. There are many reasons why a keris can be entrusted to a *pengempit* for sale.

One of the reasons, for example, is if someone who already has a name in the community and the world of keris, such as a large collector who will become the talk of the keris community if he sells his collection of kerises. For economic reasons, they often need to sell their collections, but at the same time want to maintain their name in the keris society, then *pengempit* is exist as a way out. They entrusted the keris to be sold to *pengempit* to be sold later. This is because the keris trade through *pengempit* does not meet the owner and the buyer of the keris, so the name of the original owner is preserved.

Another case that also requires the role of *pengempit* is in the case of promotion or safekeeping of *keris* from traders or even other *pengempit*. In this case, for example, a trader who does not or does not yet have a wide market, so he entrusts his keris to *pengempit* to be promoted through a relatively wider network, so that the market develops.

A *pengempit* can also entrust his keris to another *pengempit*. Usually a *pengempit* will indeed have extensive knowledge of keris, but of course that knowledge is more specifically limited or focused on particular things, or in circumstances where the *pengempit* does not really master the quality of the keris. For example, a *pengempit* who usually sells middle to low quality keris when he finds or wants to sell a keris with medium to high quality. First of all, his knowledge of keris is limited so that it is more suitable to be offered by a *pengempit* who knows the specifics of kerises from the same class. On the other hand, *pengempit* who sell high-end keris also have a network of buyers who are more compatible with the understanding and quality of the keris. This can also happen in the opposite case.

Of course the emergence of *pengempit* phenomenon does not mean that they do not have their own keris or that they do not have the money to buy their own keris. There are also many *pengempit* who are keris collectors or traders. The phenomenon of *pengempit* in the keris market of the former Surakarta residency most likely arose from the dynamic exchange of information and discourse among the keris community, as well as the high prestige within the keris community itself for someone who was considered to have a name for a large collection of kerises. Even though it is difficult to determine exactly when this phenomenon appeared, the keris community certainly already know and understand what *pengempit keris* is.

Therefore, the role of *pengempit* is very important in the development of the keris market/ in addition to permanent or remanent places, as well as traders and keris. In this case, *pengempit* can be compared not only as a broker, but also as a medium for conveying discourse in the keris market. In addition to their extensive knowledge of kerises, they also traded kerises, both their own and those of others.

b. Capitalism, the Myth Catalyst

In offering their keris, a trader must present an interesting narrative and visuals, and the case is different in the permanent and remanent markets. In a permanent market where buyers come directly to the seller's stall, the kerises are first displayed in front of the stall or in a large window. However, usually the keris that is displayed is not the best quality keris that the seller sells, the best kerises are placed at the back, if a buyer understands or even doesn't understand at all (depending on the seller's intention) the best quality keris is then taken out.

Quality kerises are certainly not kept carelessly. Traders who understand the value and quality of the keris will maintain or add ways to store the keris to make it more attractive. This is where aspects of the myth begin to be exploited. For example, there is a keris whose sheath cannot be opened on a message from the *empu*, or stored by adding certain ornaments such as straps, or white cloth such as a shroud to bury the dead (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2023).

With the addition of certain visual ornaments, as well as the narrative that is developed from them, the keris becomes more mystical in nuance, regardless of whether a keris certainly has *aji* or



charms, especially if the keris in question is an *sepuh* keris, made by *empu* who known for being reliable, and the shape and build are also attractive and good. Visuals and mystical stories that are added then further increase the price of a keris.

In the remanent and online markets, keris appears increasingly abstract, the lines between reality and myth are increasingly blurred, especially in online keris exchanges. In this case, a seller creates a publicly readable narrative about the keris being sold, that narrative can of course be in the form of factual reality about the keris, meaning a description of the type and shape, but can also contain exaggerated or falsified narratives. Besides that, generally when someone trades in the online realm, they will upload photos along with the narrative that is being built. This photo can be taken at a certain place, or from a certain point of view and perspective. Apart from making it eye-catching for the buyer's eyes aesthetically, meaning marketing tricks to attract buyers, placing the keris in front of the background or in a certain position also adds mystical discourse to a keris. For example, a keris is photographed in front of a sacred place such as a place of worship or a tomb, or placed in a standing position (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

Of course, every detail of a keris can also be mystified. The number of indentations in the *luk* can have its own meaning, as well as *pamor* motifs, *wilah* materials, *ganja* carvings, types of *warangka*, every detail of a keris can be given its own meaning, whether that meaning is factual or falsified. The problem in this case is that there is no standard in terms of the meaning of each part of the keris, so that it is very susceptible (and is indeed often used) to falsify meaning or add hyperbolic mystical-esoteric aspects to a keris.

Falsification in the sense of adding or distorting the narration of a keris occurs more intensively through *pengempit* when compared to the narration of an ordinary keris seller or collector. This is because a *pengempit* must earn a profit that is greater than the price of the keris set by the owner, so that he also benefits from selling a keris. (interview with Ari Wuryanto, 7 December 2022). The need for profit, meaning the interests of a *pengempit* to increase capital, causes him to exaggerate a narrative about keris to increase selling prices.

As discussed above, when meeting a prospective buyer, *pengempit* does not directly bring the buyer directly to the owner of the keris, or even the owner does not want his identity to be known. So the validity of the information provided by a *pengempit* becomes more obscure, and more prone to falsification. In this case, it is possible that a *pengempit* conveys information that the owner does not actually say, or adds and distorts the narration based on his own knowledge (interview with Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023; Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022). In essence, the space where *pengempit* meets a keris buyer is a space that is very free of narration, has no boundaries, and cannot be verified.

It is also important to remember that the network and association of *pengempit* is very broad within the keris community itself and even outside the community. By word of mouth, information given by a *pengempit* about the keris he is selling can spread to collectors, keris experts, or even other *pengempit* who also share information which of course is growing wildly without being able to be controled.

Then the market becomes the most effective and dynamic space for mystification. A person's interest in fulfilling his economic motives makes the narrative about the keris experience massive mystification in which most of the information, apart from not having a certain standard, also cannot be verified. This situation, with the easier dissemination of narratives, has contributed to spreading mystical narratives about the keris to the wider community outside the keris community.

c. Myth Consumer

Theoretically, consumption of keris is included in what is known as irrational consumer behavior. Consumer behavior can be divided into rational and irrational based on the scale of their needs and the consumer's motives for consuming a product. Rational behavior seen from the goods consumed can provide optimal use for consumers, really needed, the quality is guaranteed, and the price is in accordance with the capabilities of consumers. Meanwhile, irrational behavior can be measured from consumer interest in advertising or promotions, discounts, and involves prestige, in other words tertiary needs and some secondary needs.



As a commodity, keris offers prestige and Javanese identity, especially among the keris community. There is no rational reason if a keris is judged by its optimal use, it is no longer used as a weapon, it is no longer used as a form of appreciation from a king, practically it is no longer a measure of Javanese identity except in the keris society. Keris is completely a necessity for the lifestyle and identity of the buyer or owner. This means that the keris as a commodity actually reflects the type of secondary-tertiary consumption and irrational consumer behavior.

Above we have learned what is actually sold in a keris through the market. It is important to mention again that the mystical-esoteric aspects of the keris play a big role in making the keris a high-value commodity, coupled with the fact that there is a further mystification that is produced through hyperbolic or falsified discourse. This discourse, both consciously and unconsciously, more or less influences consumer behavior in buying keris.

In the world of market and consumption of kerises there is a very real shift, where previously people were interested in kerises as stabbing weapons or for traditional needs such as in rituals, shifting to the desire to have the symbols on a keris. Moreover, the keris is very rich in symbols, and that makes so many symbols that can be consumed by the public. Keris in Javanese society is not only a literal denotative dimension, but also contains a connotative symbolic dimension both from a mystical and socio-political perspective.

An interesting example, the symbolic details of the keris include the prestige, namely the pattern of motifs formed from a mixture of iron and nickel elements (previously using meteor materials). One of the famous prestige-forming ingredients is the Prambanan Pamor. The material for this type of pamor came from a meteor that fell in the Prambanan area around 1784 during the reign of Susuhunan Paku Buwana III in Surakarta. Today, apart from the high price of the Prambanan pamor, this prestige keris is at the same time liable to be mystified in such a way in the keris market (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022). Thus, what is actually consumed by keris consumers are the symbols attached to a keris.

Keris consumers certainly have different backgrounds and motives, both in terms of education, economy, employment, social status, and so on in consuming keris. Generally, the main motive recognized by keris consumers is collecting art objects (interview with Ari Wuryanto, 7 December 2022; Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022). There are also those who buy or collect keris because of the combination of elements between the keris as an art object as well as its mystical elements (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022; Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023). Generally, these two reasons are acknowledged by keris buyers as reasons for consuming a keris. However, from data collection that has been carried out through in-depth interviews, in fact every keris consumer believes in mystical elements to a certain extent.

The motives of individual consumers certainly cannot be equated. First of all, it is necessary to understand that mythical discourses in the keris market/exchange are not always trusted by buyers, and this of course also depends heavily on a consumer's understanding and experience of the keris. That is, even though all keris consumers generally believe in mystical elements in a keris, those who are experienced will not immediately believe in the discourse of traders or *pengempit*. (interview with Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022; Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023).

Experienced consumers will first ask about the age of the keris, whether it is *sepuh* or not, who is the *empu* that made it. After that it goes on to the shape and build of a keris, what it looks like, the character of the iron and its prestige, the number of *luk*, then if it fits then it starts with the question of price and then its mystical aspects (wawancara Dwi Prakoso, 11 Desember 2022; Irwan Santoso, 3 Januari 2023). Whereas consumers who tend to have less experience in society and the keris market are usually not very detailed in every part, they also tend to prioritize aesthetics or what the eye catches. (interview with Ari Wuryanto, 7 December 2022). This means that buyers like this are careful in sorting and choosing a keris, they don't want to get stuck in mystical discourse because they don't have such in-depth knowledge. Whereas for those who have absolutely no experience in keris matters, they will immediately jump to questions about mystical-esoteric aspects. (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022).



Irwan Santoso, a respondent in this study, has a very interesting background. By profession he is a doctor, and currently pursuing specialist education, he is also a collector of dozens of keris, so he is well known to the keris community in the former Surakarta Residency. First of all, his background as a doctor certainly contrasts with his reasons for collecting keris. A doctor is scientifically an individual who puts forward empiricism and rationalism in his work, he is also educated in this way. On the other hand, he also collects kerises, and believes in the "energy" in a keris that is instilled by the *empu*. He believed that kerises were made through *tirakat* practices and certain prayer requests when a keris was forged (interview with Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023). This of course gives rise to palpable ambivalence.

Irwan admits that he has no major problems in understanding both sides of his life. For him, his education and profession as a doctor still do not negate the fact that he was born and developed in the niche of Javanese culture. His professional work is not a reason to negate his identity as a Javanese. Therefore, according to him, collecting keris is an effort to strengthen his identity as a Javanese. According to him as well, his collection of kerises can actually help in doing work, for example he believes when he is tired at work or when he has bad experiences and feelings, he interacts with his collection of kerises so that he has extra energy or improves his feelings so he can return to his activities. Irwan believes that at least his keris collection has these properties (interview with Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023).

Irwan admits that he does not have a keris that has *aji* because it is very expensive, but he believes that the keris in his collection has uses and certain properties that can actually help him in doing work and activities. Irwan's position is clearly interesting, he is clearly the most factual example of the ambivalence of the modern world within the sphere of modern keris society where what is rational is mixed with what is irrational. As a doctor, Irwan can of course rationalize the state of his own body, that he may be experiencing saturation or his body is experiencing fatigue due to work, but instead of resting or taking medication to increase stamina, he relies on irrational things to solve the problem.

Such a position also influences his behavior as a keris consumer. On the one hand, he still tries to be objective-rational in assessing a keris for sale, meaning that he looks at the keris from its age, form and shape, but on the other hand he also considers that mystical aspects cannot be separated from the discussion of a keris. Thus he can actually assess a keris more thoroughly and critically. For example, does the discourse that is brought by traders and *pengempit* about the mystique of a keris make sense when compared to the age, craftsmanship and design of the keris? Irwan is an experienced consumer who can judge a keris by sorting out data and discourse.

Another consumer, Dwi Prakoso, has a different background. He is a draftsman and designer besides having hundreds of keris collections. In general he appreciates the keris as a work of art on the basis of his artistic background, but he realizes that as a work of art, keris (like other works of art) are also very closely related to their makers, the *empu*. Therefore, he still tries to understand the history, origins of manufacture, materials, and mystical elements of a keris, although in general he does not really believe in it. (interview with Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022).

Dwi's experience is different from Irwan's in mystical matters of a keris. He doesn't feel much about the function of a keris metaphysically and tends not to pay attention to such aspects. Even though Dwi believes he doesn't really need a keris that has "mythical content" in it. So when buying a keris, he doesn't really care about the mystical discourses of merchants or *pengempit*. However, he admits that the keris is a marker and a supporter of his existence as a Javanese, especially within the keris society (interview with Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022).

In addition, Dwi feels that much of the mystical discourse brought about by traders and *pengempit* is inaccurate or exaggerated, especially in online media. Because of that he doesn't worry too much about mystical issues when buying a keris, apart from visual problems and its origins he considers mystical things as just a "bonus" when buying a keris (wawancara Dwi Prakoso, 11 Desember 2022).

Other consumers are not very qualified people in the kerisan community. Ari Wuryanto, a young artist, doesn't really understand the ins and outs of a keris. As an artist he views keris from an aesthetic perspective, not a myth. But he still pays attention to or has a sense of curiosity about



the historical or mystical story of a keris even though he claims to be critical, not direct or based on belief. Even so, in general he also considers keris ownership as a form of affirming his identity as a Javanese (interview with Ari Wuryanto, 7 December 2022).

Ari's behavior as a consumer then also became different. He who considers the full use of a keris as an object of art sees a keris sold for its aesthetics. Sometimes he doesn't even consider the *empu* of keris making or historical and mystical tales. However, his personal motive for owning a keris is also because it is a Javanese relic that is important to preserve (interview with Ari Wuryanto, 7 December 2022).

Apart from people who already have knowledge about kerises, or who are members of the keris community as collectors, traders or *pengempit*, people outside of that area also consume kerises. Consumers of this type also have various interest motives in buying a keris. The most common motives are for ceremonial or temporary matters such as holding a wedding, or requiring a keris as a complement to clothing. In this case, the keris being offered is the *kamardikan*, which is indeed mass-produced for this purpose (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

In other cases with less intensity, someone comes to buy a keris because of a certain interest that is directly related to mystical issues. For example, a politician is looking for a magic keris so that he is elected, or a businessman is looking for a lucky keris that can smooth things over. It is in cases like this that consumers actually get exposure to very strong myths from traders or *pengempit*. The keris offered in this case is usually a keris that has good quality, clear origins and historical stories, however mystical discourse is exaggerated and prone to falsification. In this case also the discourse of identity appears as nothing more than an outer shell, merely to sell a keris (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022).

5. DISCUSSION

The presence of the keris community as a minor community in Javanese society has become a new space for maintaining, preserving, and developing a discourse on keris. The discourse that is present in the kerisan community regarding kerises is basically centered on issues of identity, in this case the keris is a measure of one's Javanese identity.

The keris community has different methods, roles and results in creating the mystification of the keris. The main differentiator from traditional mystification is in the market space which is growing rapidly and diversifying with the loss of power hegemony around keris and technological developments such as online media. In this space there are also no definite controls and standards. So the narrative of a keris being sold can run wild without having a clear basis for verification. In this way, mystification occurs through a market system where the discourse of identity that is woven with mystification spreads both among the keris community and the wider public through the consumption of keris as a commodity.

The commodification of keris is done in a certain way which makes a keris more expensive. Keris promotions run like advertisements on television that promise something that cannot be proven true. Like shampoo advertisements that promise straight hair as a beauty standard to users, traders and *pengempit* keris often sell a keris, for example by bringing a discourse of identity as a Javanese that is incomplete if they don't have a keris, or even promising something to consumers based on mythical elements in a keris. This discourse is often hyperbolic or even falsified with the sole aim of increasing the selling price of a keris. The capitalistic interests of keris traders or *pengempit* in order to get more profit gave birth to a discourse of mystification of keris.

This discourse is often taken as it is by consumers, especially those who do not know or have a good understanding of keris. Even those who have knowledge about kerises are clearly consumed by the same discourse to a certain extent, as evidenced by the level of consumption of kerises which is even higher within the keris community itself (interview with Yanuar, 25 November 2022). Indeed, there are differences in the consumption of discourse between those who understand and do not understand keris. Those who do not understand clearly consume the keris discourse as a mystical object in a larger portion than those who do understand. Whereas those who understand are more



exposed to discourses of identity, history, culture, and of course prestige and lifestyle. However, basically these two types of consumers are both consumed by the discourse of keris mystification.

Outside the market context, keris consumers as individuals in the keris community are certainly actively involved in the discourse of the keris. They exchange information, knowledge, exhibit and discuss collections, hold discussions, and so on. All of these interactions create a discourse on lifestyle and identity in the keris community, that the keris is a sign of existence and reinforces one's Javanese-ness. Showing off a keris, for example, fosters a sense of narcissism in oneself and considers oneself to have authority in front of other collectors (interview with Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022). Jealousy can also arise when someone shows off their collection, which, for example, is larger, older, or has more *aji*, then this creates jealousy for other collectors (interview with Dwi Prakoso, 11 December 2022; Irwan Santoso, 3 January 2023). All of these interactions can cause anxiety to members of the keris community who, for example, don't follow the latest keris trends, or have keris that are less *sepuh*, or only have a small collection of kerises, and so on. That way they feel inferior while superiority is obtained through keris ownership.

This whole process is the main reason why mystification occurs which at the same time indicates the emergence of hyperreality of the keris. The construction that is built regarding the keris in the whole process above, builds the reality of the keris today. This process, when viewed in more detail, is also a cycle that continues to rotate dynamically and criss-cross. If all of these constructions are analyzed through Baudrillard's ideas, there is a simulation in which the keris is represented as an object that determines identity or has a mystical charge. This representation then replaces the keris as an object, meaning that the representation or discourse behind a keris becomes more important than the keris itself. Through the symbolization of meaning, form and mysticism, the keris is transformed into an object full of discourse, and the discourse actually replaces the keris as an object.

The symbolization of the keris, as we have seen, was created in such a way as to lead the public to certain consumption patterns. The process of interpreting the keris symbol is of course manipulated, either by way of hyperbolicism or falsification or a combination of both, to present a new reality in society where the keris is an object that can provide satisfaction or a way out of various problems, be it practical, sociological or conceptual. Then the symbol gave birth to mystification and mystification in turn gave birth to simulacra which is offered to keris consumers.

Consumers then consume the simulacra to present hyperreality. As we have seen in the discussion, it is not that keris consumers are not aware that what they consume is merely an illusion, but because they are exposed to information in the form of a simulation which has replaced the real signs in a keris with new symbolism which is placed more important than the keris itself as an object. In addition, they also receive exposure to discourse from the people around them, for example from the keris community, meaning that there is a desire to consume kerises for social recognition, because other people want kerises, or to fulfill socio-cultural expectations, a venue for satisfaction and self-evident, not out of necessity. In this way, keris consumers, even if they are aware, will no longer be able to tell which ones are real and which are fictitious. It is in this condition that reality becomes blurred because the simulation has reconstructed the facts so that they appear in a different way.

In turn, consumers will again spread the discourse to the keris community. The keris community will set trends or new forms of simulation. Then the market responds with the same discourse and the consumer is again exposed to the simulacra. This process becomes a specific system-cycle that is subsistent and independent, and will continue to develop discourse, mystification, simulation, and hyperreality of the keris.

6. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, this study can conclude that the mystification of keris occurs in the keris community through the keris market. Keris that are sold are often accompanied by hyperbolic discourse and even falsification in terms of identity and mystique in order to increase the price. This simulation, on the other hand, is consumed by consumers by paying more attention to the

discourse rather than the keris as an object. This means that consumers consume the simulacra offered by the seller. Such conditions present hyperreality where the boundaries between fact and fiction become blurred, and are no longer a consideration for consumers. This whole process has resulted in the mystification of today's keris.

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