

Kris as a Symbol of Statehood in Indonesia

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Abstract—In Indonesia, the tradition on creating and using the kris has occurred since the kingdom era and it has been inherited to the family until now. The purpose of this article is to report the result of the study on the meaning of the kris as symbol of statehood in Indonesia. This qualitative study uses analytical descriptive method. The data are collected through the observation technique, interview, and documentation study. This study finds the concept of the kris making in which it has odd curves which are 3, 5, 7, and 9. The curve 3 means that the safety and prosperity of the country are the king's responsibilities. This kris is used by the king. The kris with curve 5 signifies the maintenance of the forest and animal in the water. This kris is used by deputy king or patih.

Keywords—kris; symbol; statehood

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a rich natural resources whose area includes highlands, lowlands, and beaches. The highlands with the mountains drain clear water for bathing and drinking. The rivers contain various kinds of fishes. The lush forests produce various kinds of food such as vegetables, crops, and fruits. The medicinal plants flourish without anyone planting. The trees function to absorb water and hold the soil for landslide prevention. Meanwhile, the animals on land and in the water also can be the food materials. All have already been prepared by Allah to fulfil the needs of human. This is in line with the explanation by El-fandi who states that Allah creates various plants as human's fortune [1].

God creates a perfect nature with all its security. The fruits are to eat. The root of the tree is to strengthen the soil. Its foliage functions as medicine and the water is the life source. The nature has so many benefits for life, thus it made the people in the past mutually cooperate to maintain the nature with gratitude. Therefore, a sense of wonder on the greatness and beauty of nature is manifested to the shape of kris in which its blade has an ups-and-down mountain shape. The meaning of this shape is to remind the people in the future that the natural and phenomenon of mountain giving a lot of benefits for life should be preserved in order to be continuously useful.

In the reality, the values of kris rooted in society's life is no longer used as a companion in fostering personality. People nowadays trigger a damage as they often disobey the rules without feeling guilty such as forest burning that makes the life in the forest is attacked, animal hunting sadistically, dismantling and leveling mountains for business purposes, narrowing and polluting the river, and taking the sea out that

affects the rising flood and endangers the area. Moreover, the destruction is permitted by people who have strong authority in the country.

The ethical code shown in the kris depicts that a leader should be a role model for the society [2]. Therefore, this was the reason why a royal prince was inherited the kris when he was crowned as a king because through a kris, the king in the past delegated the duties to the successor of his throne symbolizing the safety and prosperity of the country as the king's responsibilities. By handing over the kris, this signifies the royal prince as the next king. It means that a kris is a symbol of statehood, and according to Fong, it is a symbol of heroism because someone inherited a kris will devote himself to carrying out state duties [3]. In line with that, Dillistone emphasizes that a symbol is communication tool. In this case, a kris is a reminder symbol for the kris owner [4].

The responsibility of a leader and citizen as the stakeholder in a country is contained on each curve of the kris. But now the values of Indonesian kris are no longer recognized, both among academics and among the community. This is due to several factors, including the absence of research on Indonesian kris. In addition, the scope of previous research on understanding the kris values in general only focuses on some areas, including the research conducted by Rahman in Karawang [2], Pande Wayan and Basuki in Bali [5], Ahmad Ubbe and Zulfikar in Sulawesi [6], Haryoguritno in Jawa [7], and Supriaswoto in Yogyakarta [8], so the depiction on the values of Indonesian kris is still less accurate.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the previous research still does not show any literature on the values of kris as a symbol of statehood in Indonesia. With that reason, the writers want to have a research on kris as a symbol of statehood in Indonesia, thus the values of kris are known by the academic community and society. Therefore, we will know the duties and responsibilities as the stakeholders of a state. The focus of this study is "How are the symbol and meaning of Indonesian kris?"

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in some museums in Indonesia such as museum Prabu Geusan Ulun in Sumedang, museum R.A.A Adwijaya in Garut, museum Galuh Imbanagara in Ciamis, museum Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal in Kuningan, Situs Makam Panjang in Karawang, and museum Pangeran Cakrabuana and Cirebon. Besides, this study was conducted in

Ahmad's house, a public figure in Karawang, from 02 February to 20 July 2018.

This qualitative method employed descriptive analytic method. The data were collected through observation, interview, and documentation study. The observation was conducted by collecting primary and secondary data such as book and article as well as literature document related to the meaning of kris. The interview with the interviewees and informants as well as the recorded document of interview and kris photos in Indonesia were analyzed and recognized by the expert of art and kris.

III. RESULT OF THE STUDIES AND DISCUSSION

A. Who did the Kris Belong to?

According to the interview with Ahmad, (20 September 2017), during the kingdom era, kris belonged to the king, *patih*, *mahapati*, *arya*, and *elang*, as well as the kingdom family that had important roles in the state. This is in line with the explanation by Haryoguritno who says that the kris is an attribute symbol of a king and noble. For example, the king from Yogyakarta Sultanate uses a kris like the figures below [7]:



Fig. 1. Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX. Some times after the coronation [9].



Fig. 2. Sultan Hamengku Buwono VIII. Gusti Raden Mas Sudjadi [9].

B. Why did the King use the Kris?

The tradition on the use of the kris by the kingdom family functions as an attribute or a symbol of someone's position. The use of kris is by tucking it in the waist. Therefore, a king or a state official's position can be identified as the kris represents the social status of the wearer. It means that if someone uses a kris with curve 3, the wearer is a king. However, along with the development of the era, the kris was used as a weapon for war. This idea is the same as Ja'afar stating that in the past a kris functioned as self-defense, but as time goes by, it is used for an ornament [10].

C. What is a Kris?

Kris is an object that has a curved-blade shape, is made of the wrought iron, steel and nickel [11]. During the kingdom era in Indonesia, a kris was created by the ancestors as a symbol of statehood for a king, *patih*, *mahapatih*, *arya*, and *elang*. Each curve contains a message reminding the king to remember his duties and responsibilities as a leader. Through the shapes of kris luk 3, 5, 7, and 9, the king taught the statehood duties. To make it clear, below are the meaning description of kris luk 3 and kris luk 5 as follows:

D. The Meaning of Kris in Indonesia

1) *Kris Luk 3*: According to Rahman [2], the kris luk 3 is called SRI RAJA. This kris is created by the kingdom

ancestors for the king as a reminder symbol that he is the highest leader in the kingdom in which he should be able to achieve *sri, lungguh, dunya*. According to the interview with Ahmad (01 March 2018), *Sri* means that the king should be responsible for the crops and all animals in the country. Both land animals and marine animals should be maintained to fulfil current and future needs. Moreover, a king also should be responsible for the citizen's security either in the palace or in the village.

The second curve in the kris luk 3 is called *lungguh*. **LUNGGUH** means that the king should be responsible for the prosperity of the kingdom staffs starting from *patih, mahapatih, senopati, tumenggung, arya, elang*, to the society. A king should create peace in the state where there is no dispute and commotion and everyone is united to build the country together in order to have a fertile, prosperous, blessings, and safe country".

Also, Ahmad during the interview (01 March 2018) stated that the third curve in the kris luk 3 is called *dunya*. **DUNYA** signifies that the king and all kingdom's staffs must carry out their duties well. All people are prohibited to destroy the trees, water, and forests. All things in the country must not be destroyed. If people live greedily and destroy the nature, there will be havoc and destruction. Not only kris luk 3, in Indonesia there is also kris luk 5.

2) *Kris Luk 5*: The kris luk 5 was created by the king for *patih*. According to Ahmad (interview, 20 March 2018), the first curve in the kris luk 5 means **FERTILITY**. The fertility means *patih* is responsible for the fertility in the country, giving socialization to the society about how to manage the trees for food, medicine, and water absorption. The trees are expected not to be extinct and damaged in the future.

The second curve in the kris luk means **TAKING CARE**. It means *patih* is responsible for the preservation of poultry animals, giving socialization to the society about how to take care of poultry animals for economic development, and persuading the society to preserve poultry animals together, so children in the future can enjoy the taste of poultry.

The third curve in the kris luk 5 is called **WATER**. It means that *patih* is responsible for the animal life in the water like goldfish, carp, and others that should be maintained and preserved. The wild animals in the water also cannot be killed since they live in their habitat. People are also prohibited to

pollute the water by using poison because it will create extinction [2].

The fourth curve in the kris luk 5 means **FOREST**. It means that *patih* is responsible for the fertility and preservation of the forest including the trees for food, medicinal trees, trees for water absorption, as well as the animals on the land and in the water. Meanwhile, the fifth curve in the kris luk 5 is thank. It means that the kingdom ancestors thank all the state's stakeholders that already carry out the statehood duties.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study and discussion, it can be concluded that the kris in Indonesia has an odd concept which are the kris luk 3, 5, 7, and 9. This concept gives the depiction of state duties.

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