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## Mystical and Magical Language in the Legend of Totok Kerot: The Characteristics of Javanese Verbal Utterances

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### ABSTRACT

*This study focuses on oral literature as the primary object of analysis, specifically folklore transmitted verbally across generations. Moving beyond general thematic analysis, this article critically examines the specific characteristics of mystical and magical language embedded within the Totok Kerot Legend in Pamenang Village, Kediri Regency. A descriptive qualitative method with an anthropological approach was employed. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with the site guardian (juru kunci) and local residents, utilized alongside participatory observation and document analysis. Data analysis followed the stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing, with validity ensured through source, theory, and method triangulation. The novel findings of this study reveal that the mystical and magical language in the legend operates through structured verbal characteristics: (1) the performative power of verbal curses (sabda/kutukan) where language functions as a metaphysical instrument capable of altering physical reality, (2) the formulaic language of ritual veneration that bridges human communication with the supernatural, and (3) the narrative descriptions of heightened sensory sensitivity to unseen energy. The linguistic novelty lies in how Javanese mysticism utilizes authoritative, rigid speech acts to reinforce social regulations and moral boundaries. Based on these insights, it is recommended that literary writers utilize these authentic oral linguistic patterns and Javanese mystical speech structures to enrich the depth, magical realism, and cultural authenticity of contemporary mythological fiction. Keywords: folklore; Javanese mysticism; legend; mystical and magical language; oral literature.*

**Keywords:** Folklore, Javanese Mysticism, Legend, Mystical and Magical Language, Oral Literature

### INTRODUCTION

Literary works represent the expression of human thought and feeling conveyed through language with an aesthetic structure. A literary work must possess artistic value and be capable of communicating human experience in a profound and imaginative manner (Handayani & Pamungkas, 2024; Sumaryono, 2011). Beyond its aesthetic dimension, literary works can also be understood as texts open to various interpretations, carrying layered meanings that are continuously reinterpreted by readers. Accordingly, literary works are not merely sequences of words, but complex and dynamic (Pamungkas et al., 2022) art forms in which language plays a central role in shaping aesthetic experience (Setiyono & Ike Nugraheni, 2020).

Literary works can be broadly classified into two major types: oral and written. Oral literature refers to forms transmitted and inherited verbally, such as folk tales, fables, and myths, which rely on memory and oral performance (Dahlan, 2017). Oral literature is distinguished by its high degree of narrative flexibility, as stories are adapted to the performance context and may therefore differ from one community to another (Puspitoningrum et al., 2024; Veldhuis et al., 2025). Written literature, by contrast, encompasses texts such as poetry, novels, and drama, offering readers the opportunity to independently and repeatedly explore meaning (Puspitoningrum et al., 2024). Written texts also benefit from greater permanence and documentary durability compared to oral traditions, which are more susceptible to variation over time. Both forms of literature play important roles in preserving and disseminating cultural heritage and human knowledge.

This study focuses on oral literature as its primary object of inquiry. Oral literature here refers to folklore transmitted verbally and inherited from generation to generation without written documentation (Alfiah, 2016; Puspitoningrum, 2023). The central aim is to uncover and analyze the mystical dimensions present in the Totok Kerot Legend circulating in Pamenang Village (Handayani & Pamungkas, 2024; Isnaeni et al., 2024). The mystical elements within this legend reflect strong spiritual and local cultural beliefs, making it significant to study within the context of oral literature. Anthropological and qualitative methods are employed to gather oral narratives from the site guardian and local community figures, thereby providing a deep understanding of the living oral traditions and Javanese mysticism found within the Totok Kerot folk tale.

Theoretically, a legend is defined as an oral narrative genre believed by its community to have occurred in history, structurally progressing from an initial equilibrium through a taboo-breaking complication to a permanent transformation, and characteristically utilizing performative speech acts where authoritative words function as metaphysical instruments to alter reality. The Totok Kerot Legend is one of the most well-known folk tales in Pamenang Village, Kediri Regency (Amrirodiyan et al., 2020; Retnowati, 2021). Beyond its entertainment value, the story contains rich cultural values and mysticism full of meaning. The central figure, Totok Kerot, is described as a character who undergoes a mystical transformation, reflecting various aspects of spiritual life and Javanese belief. The legend has been transmitted orally through generations and remains relevant to the daily life of the community. According to various perspectives, Totok Kerot is portrayed as a woman who was cursed and transformed into a giant, reflecting belief in supernatural power within Javanese culture. A portion of the community believes that this story carries moral lessons about the consequences of wrongdoing and the importance of respecting tradition and ancestry (Retnowati, 2021). From the perspective of the village site guardian, Totok Kerot is a spiritual guardian who must be honored through specific rituals in order to maintain the balance between the human and supernatural worlds. Some local historians view the story as a symbol of community resistance and struggle against oppression, while oral literature scholars emphasize the richness of narrative and aesthetics in the oral transmission of the tale (Puspitoningrum et al., 2022; Simatupang et al., 2021). The Totok Kerot legend is thus a multifaceted story that reflects the complexity of cultural beliefs within the Pamenang Village community.

Javanese mysticism, or *kejawen*, is understood as a deep and complex belief system that integrates elements of animism, dynamism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam into a distinctly spiritual synthesis (Yudono et al., 2023). Javanese mysticism centers on the pursuit of cosmic harmony, the human effort to achieve balance between the outer and inner worlds, between humanity and nature, and between humanity and supernatural forces. This tradition emphasizes contemplation, spiritual discipline (*tirakat*), and inner purification as the path to spiritual perfection. Javanese mysticism is therefore not merely a belief in the supernatural, but a structured spiritual system deeply rooted in the worldview of the community (Yusril et al.,

2024). The core of this mysticism lies in the search for inner power (*kekuasaan batin*), believed to be attainable through spiritual disciplines such as meditation, fasting, and *laku prihatin*. This inner power is understood as capable of influencing the natural world, warding off calamity, and enabling communication with spiritual dimensions. The concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti*—the unification of the individual with the highest power—represents the pinnacle of the Javanese mystical experience, and is essential for interpreting phenomena such as *wangsit*, supernatural intuition, and the power of the spoken word to affect reality. While these metaphysical concepts have been widely explored in broader cultural studies, international journals indicate a clear academic gap in examining how these exact *Kejawen* spiritual dimensions materialize into performative verbal utterances within specific local folklore. Consequently, this study establishes a problem statement on how Javanese mystical frameworks illuminate the mechanisms of magical speech acts in the *Totok Kerot* narrative. By identifying this, the research objective aims to decode the spiritual-linguistic values embedded within the legend. The overarching benefits of this analysis are to mathematically bridge the gap between Javanese mysticism and formal discourse analysis, thereby offering a structured reference for future researchers exploring the linguistic anthropology of Indonesian oral traditions.

In the context of the *Totok Kerot* story, this mysticism is reflected in narrative elements such as the transformation of the central figure, the curse, and the supernatural powers involved (Retnowati, 2021). This study applies the theory of Javanese mysticism to analyze how these elements function within the story and what they represent in the spiritual life of the local community. However, existing literature in international journals predominantly focuses on the geopolitical history of Kediri kingdoms or general folklore structures, leaving a critical gap regarding how mystical-magical speech acts operate as linguistic instruments within local legends. To address this gap, the problem statement of this research asks how the linguistic characteristics of mystical and magical language are structured and weaponized within the *Totok Kerot* legend. Consequently, the research objective is to dissect and categorize these specific verbal utterances through an anthropological-linguistic lens. The primary benefits of this study are twofold: theoretically, it enriches the scholarship of oral literature by providing a specialized framework for analyzing mystical speech acts, and practically, it offers authentic linguistic blueprints of Javanese oral traditions that can be utilized by literary writers to enhance cultural depth in mythological fiction. Respecting the local perspective is a guiding principle throughout this research. The researcher endeavors to understand and present the *Totok Kerot* legend from the viewpoint of the Pamenang Village community itself, listening to and honoring their interpretations and beliefs. In this way, the study aims to provide an authentic and in-depth portrait of how this legend lives and develops within the community's culture.

## **METHOD**

This study employs an anthropological and descriptive qualitative approach to examine Javanese mysticism in the *Totok Kerot* folk tale of Pamenang Village, Kediri Regency (Abdi, 2020). The anthropological approach enables the researcher to understand human variation across time and space from a holistic perspective, encompassing physical, social, linguistic, and archaeological dimensions. This study does not solely focus on describing the story, but also seeks to uncover the meanings and values embedded within it (Malahati et al., 2023). The descriptive qualitative approach is used to analyze the mystical phenomena present in the *Totok Kerot* narrative and to explore how the Pamenang Village community interprets and enacts these traditions in daily life.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the site guardian (*juru kunci*) of *Totok Kerot* and community figures who possess detailed knowledge of the legend. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to allow respondents to provide broad and in-depth information (Prayogi & Kurniawan, 2024). Each interview was recorded and transcribed to

ensure accuracy. Field notes were also used to supplement observational and interview data, providing a comprehensive picture of the phenomena under investigation.

**Table 1.** Overview of Data Collection via Observations and Interviews

Data Source	Method	Instrument / Focus	Output / Data Type
Site Guardian (Juru Kunci)	Semi-structured Interview & Participatory Observation	Ritual speech formulas, history of the site, and sacred taboos.	Audio recordings & verbatim transcripts.
Community Figures (Tokoh)	Semi-structured Interview	Oral transmission variations, sociocultural impact of legend.	Interview transcripts & field notes.
Local Residents (Masyarakat)	In-depth Interview & Field Observation	Daily interpretations of mystical energy, beliefs, and rituals.	Field notes & narrative responses.

In the data reduction stage, the raw data from verbatim interview transcripts and extensive field observation notes were meticulously filtered, selected, and condensed. Unrelated conversational noise was removed, while specific mystical speech fragments, verbal curses (*sabda*), and ritual linguistic patterns were coded and categorized into thematic clusters. During the data presentation stage, these systematically categorized linguistic codes were transformed into structured, rich narrative descriptions. This involved organizing the data matrices alongside textual excerpts from the participants' quotes, creating an accessible layout that visibly links the raw mystical data to formal Javanese metaphysical frameworks. Finally, in the conclusion-drawing and verification stage, the synthesized narrative structures were continuously cross-referenced, checked for internal consistency, and validated through exhaustive triangulation to extract implicit conceptual patterns, ensuring a scientifically rigorous and verified interpretation of the oral tradition.

Data analysis in this study follows a flow model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Abdi, 2020). Data collected through interviews and observation were reduced to identify the key themes relevant to the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in rich and detailed narrative form, clearly depicting the mystical phenomena in the Totok Kerot legend. To ensure data validity, theoretical triangulation was applied by comparing the research findings against relevant theoretical frameworks. Conclusions were drawn by summarizing and organizing the key findings to provide a comprehensive account of Javanese mysticism within the Totok Kerot folk tale of Pamenang Village.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The findings of this study reveal three major categories of mystical and magical elements in the Totok Kerot legend: verbal curses (*sabda/kutukan*), ritual veneration, and sensitivity to supernatural energy (Yusril et al., 2024). Each category is elaborated below based on field data gathered through in-depth interviews with community members and the site guardian.

#### *Interview Findings*

According to the account of Mbah Suratin, the origins of the Totok Kerot story begin with a princess from the Kingdom of Lodaya in Blitar, who wished to be married to King Jayabaya. However, Jayabaya refused on account of the princess's harsh and stubborn character. Despite repeated refusals, the princess remained insistent. Before any curse was formally issued, she was invited to study Islamic teachings, as the transition from Hinduism to Islam had taken place among Jayabaya, Totok Kerot, and other rulers of that era, under the guidance of a religious scholar known as Mbah Wasil. This transition represents an important spiritual shift, reflecting the changing religious landscape of the period, although the princess's obstinate nature persisted throughout.

The original name of the princess from the Kingdom of Lodaya was Putri Wadalwedri. The name “Totok Kerot” derives from her habit of pursing her lips. In Javanese, totok refers to the mouth, while kerot connotes hardness or rigidity. The name thus describes both the character and the appearance of Putri Wadalwedri during her lifetime. The statue representing her was later discovered by local residents in the fields and was named according to her characteristic traits. As explained by Mbah Jamal, the site guardian:

*“Kan Totok Kerot semasa hidupnya itu kerut-kerut (mulutnya mengkerut), totok itu kan tutuk, tutuk itu kan cangkem (mulut) istilahnya, tapi nggeget, kerot, soalnya keras. Jadi ucapkan orang sekitar, dan memang benar orang kampung tapi tetap perkataannya selalu menjadi kenyataan (omongane mesti mandi).”*

Mbah Jamal further explained that Totok Kerot came to be transformed into stone because she was cursed (disabda) by King Jayabaya for her persistent attempts to force a marriage he had repeatedly refused. In Javanese belief, the spoken word of a wise and spiritually knowledgeable person always comes to pass. Because the princess's character and behavior were already as unyielding as stone, she eventually turned into stone after Jayabaya's curse. Mbah Jamal added: “Katanya orang pintar, orang yang ngerti jaman dulu, itu setiap perkataannya bisa jadi kenyataan” — meaning that in former times, the words of the wise and the spiritually gifted invariably manifested into reality. This principle is cited as evidence of Jayabaya's status as a figure of extraordinary knowledge, whose influence has reportedly spread as far as France, the United States, and Australia.

Ritual activity surrounding the statue takes place regularly, particularly during the month of Suro. Local residents with important life events such as weddings often visit the area around the Totok Kerot statue and hold a selamatan — a communal ritual meal — in the vicinity. According to Mbah Jamal, the site where the statue stands constitutes a punden, a sacred ritual site, which is considered the greatest punden across East Java. This recognition is shared by the surrounding community, though acceptance by visitors from outside the area varies.

Mbah Jamal also recounted that spiritually sensitive individuals, whom he refers to as orang pintar, regularly visit the statue on the night of Jumat Legi to perform nyekar (flower offerings), ritual prayers, and Quran recitation. One such individual, known as Mbah Pan, visits with his wife and performs these rituals around the statue. After a sufficient period of spiritual engagement, the heads and inner feelings of the couple are said to be soothed and caressed by the presence of Totok Kerot — a phenomenon remarkable in that the statue is a physical object that, by rational standards, should have no agency.

Behind the Totok Kerot statue, there are sixteen boxes said to contain sacred heirloom weapons (gaman), including kris daggers. Gold and coins are also reportedly stored at the eastern fence. According to Mbah Jamal, only those who are granted a feeling (wangsit) or divine intuition can retrieve these items. Those who lack the spiritual endurance — who are unable to fast or stay awake in vigilance — will not be able to access them. Those who possess such endurance may see and receive the objects, which include kris daggers, rings, and other sacred items. Individuals who are not inclined toward such spiritual practices may simply conduct their Quran recitations without disturbing the items, out of personal fear of the consequences of improper handling.

The Totok Kerot statue weighs approximately 25 tons and was already present at its current location before the Dutch colonial period. It was once relocated to the central square (alun-alun) of Kediri, but reportedly returned to its original site on its own — an occurrence that defies rational explanation, yet is widely believed by local residents. Nearby stands a kluwih tree of moderate size that is said to yield an extraordinary abundance of fruit following ritual or prayer activities near the statue, despite appearing to bear no visible fruit beforehand. As Mbah Jamal described: "Harus nyekar dulu, ngaji, dan lain-lain, nanti kalau diunduh pasti

seabrek" — meaning that those who perform the appropriate spiritual preparations will always find abundant fruit, while those who take without ceremony will receive very little.

Mbah Jamal himself has personally experienced disturbances by supernatural entities while bathing on a Friday night at one o'clock in the morning. After exiting the bathroom and closing the door as usual, the doors suddenly slammed shut with great force. The community attributes such occurrences to the presence of supernatural beings in the area. Mbah Jamal further recounted a visit by fifteen retired military officers from Jakarta, one of whom ventured ahead of the group to explore the area around the statue after the evening prayer (magrib). This individual reportedly encountered a supernatural entity wearing a crown and carrying a walking staff, an experience that left him visibly shaken.

Additional accounts describe a child of approximately four years of age who, while visiting the site near magrib time, began following a woman who appeared to exist only in the child's perception, believed to be a supernatural being resembling the child's mother. The child's actual mother noticed the strange behavior, immediately picked up her child, and washed the child's face at the bathroom. A similar incident occurred three days later, when another young child playing on a swing near the statue reported seeing the figure of his mother walking toward a dense grove of trees, while in reality the mother remained seated beside him. The mother promptly embraced and comforted the child.

These accounts collectively illustrate the depth of mystical belief surrounding the Totok Kerot legend and the enduring influence this oral tradition holds within the Pamenang Village community.

#### *Mystical and Magical Elements in the Totok Kerot Legend*

Mystical elements refer to entities or forces that lie beyond human comprehension and cannot be explained through conventional logic or science (Marzuki, 2021). Such elements are commonly associated with beliefs in spirits, ghosts, and other supernatural entities believed to influence the physical world (Karuniawan & Tjahjono, 2023; Thohir, n.d.). In many cultures, mystical elements are integrated into myths, legends, and oral traditions passed down through generations. Mystical elements are not inherently negative; in some belief systems, ancestral spirits or supernatural beings are regarded as protectors and guides. The existence of sacred sites, heirloom objects, and traditional rituals is frequently viewed as a manifestation of this mystical power. Those who believe in mystical elements often incorporate spiritual or religious practices to communicate or interact with such entities, including through rituals of veneration.

Magical elements, by contrast, focus on the belief that special forces or energies can be controlled or influenced by human beings through the use of rituals, incantations, or specific instruments (Aprianti & Purwadi, 2024; Zarrabizadeh, 2021). Magic differs from mysticism in that magic is more active and operational, meaning that practitioners actively seek to control or manipulate these forces to achieve specific outcomes. Magical practices involve a range of techniques, from the use of potions, talismans, and symbols to the recitation of spells and the performance of elaborate rituals. Magic is commonly viewed as a means of overriding or altering the laws of nature through supernatural intervention, and may be employed for both beneficial purposes (such as healing or protection) and harmful ones (such as curses). The practice of magic generally requires specialized knowledge and skill transmitted through tradition or acquired through intensive experiential learning.

Mystical and magical elements are two closely related yet distinct concepts. Mystical elements tend to be passive, emphasizing the existence of supernatural forces beyond human control, while mystical magic is more active, focusing on the use and direction of those forces to achieve particular ends. The effectiveness of magical practice is often measured by tangible results, whether in the form of healing, protection, or harm to another party.

### 1. Verbal Curse (*Sabda/Kutukan*)

A verbal curse or *sabda*, in the context of traditional cultural belief, is commonly understood as a statement or utterance endowed with supernatural power to influence the fate of a person or thing (Ayuni, 2024). Such curses are typically pronounced by figures possessing spiritual or magical power, such as a king, healer, or ritual specialist (Puspitoningrum, 2024). Within many narrative traditions, a verbal curse is not merely speech, but carries real consequences that dramatically alter circumstances. The belief in the power of the *sabda* reflects the profound influence of mystical and magical elements in traditional community life.

#### Data (01)

*“Bisa menjadi totok kerot karna disabda (dikutuk) Jayabaya karna putri dari Raja Lodaya keras kepala ingin dinikahi oleh Raja Jayabaya. Karena menurut orang Jawa setiap ucapan orang pintar selalu kejadian, dan putri Raja Lodaya kelakuan serta wataknya seperti batu, akhirnya jadi batu itu setelah disabda Jayabaya,” ungkap Mbah Jamal.*

The testimony of Mbah Jamal describes how Totok Kerot was transformed into stone through a curse issued by King Jayabaya, after the princess from the Kingdom of Lodaya stubbornly persisted in her desire to marry Jayabaya despite his repeated refusals. Because in Javanese belief every utterance of a spiritually wise person always comes to pass, and because the princess's character and behavior were already as unyielding as stone, she ultimately turned to stone after Jayabaya's curse was spoken.

This data illustrates how the verbal curse functions as a mystical and magical element of extraordinary power within Javanese belief. In this narrative, Jayabaya's spoken word is not merely verbal communication but a supernaturally empowered act capable of transforming the fate and form of another person. The correlation between the princess's stone-like character and her literal petrification reinforces the belief that the words of a learned, spiritually empowered individual carry a magical efficacy capable of manifesting what is spoken. This belief also functions as a mechanism of social regulation, as the *sabda* serves to articulate moral consequences and reinforce community norms.

#### Data (02)

*“Jare wong pintar, wong sing ngerti, setiap omongane iku sakti, mesti dadi mandi,” (Katanya orang pintar, orang yang ngerti, jaman dulu itu setiap perkataannya ajaib, bisa jadi kenyataan).*

The statement that “katanya orang pintar, orang yang ngerti, jaman dulu itu setiap perkataannya ajaib, bisa jadi kenyataan” — meaning that in former times, every word of the wise could become reality — reflects the centrality of the spoken word in Javanese mystical tradition. Within the framework of mystical magic, the utterances of individuals recognized as possessing spiritual knowledge are not ordinary verbal communication, but are viewed as magical instruments with concrete effects. This belief reinforces the authority and influence of spiritual figures within the community, and affirms that their words hold a power exceeding ordinary human speech.

These utterances also serve a bridging function between the visible and invisible worlds. The belief that the words of the wise can become reality suggests that the community perceives the world as governed by unseen forces that can be directed through language. This reinforces the role of ritual and oral tradition in maintaining social balance and harmony, and adds a spiritual dimension to everyday interaction.

### *Ritual and Veneration*

In addition to the power of spoken words, mystical magic encompasses the use of spiritual and supernatural elements to influence the material world through ritual (Thohir, n.d.). Across many cultures, rituals serve as important means of communicating with supernatural forces and seeking blessing, protection, or assistance in various aspects of life. Such rituals are conducted through ceremonies, prayers, offerings, and other symbolic acts believed to hold the power to alter fate or resolve difficulties. Through ritual, communities actualize their belief in the supernatural world, demonstrate respect toward spiritual entities, and reinforce social and cultural bonds.

#### Data (03)

*Ada ritualan setiap suro. Ada penduduk sekitar jika memiliki hajat nikahan, atau sebagainya, biasanya akan berkunjung ke sekitar patung Totok Kerot, istilah yang paling cocok adalah selamatan kata Mbah Jamal.*

Ritual activity takes place annually during the month of Suro, and residents who have important occasions such as weddings commonly visit the area around the Totok Kerot statue to hold a selamatan, as described by Mbah Jamal. From the perspective of mystical magic, the selamatan is a ritual intended to ensure good fortune, protection, and the smooth proceeding of an important event. The community believes that by conducting this ritual near the Totok Kerot statue, they may obtain blessings from the supernatural power believed to inhabit or be associated with the statue.

#### Data (04)

*Mbah Jamal juga menyampikan bahwa cerita mistis kalau menurut orang pintar yang sering berkunjung ke patung Totok Kerot pada waktu malam jumat legi, orang itu namanya Mbah Pan dengan istrinya selalu datang berkunjung untuk nyekar, melakukan ritual atau pun ngaji di sekitar patung. Setelah dirasa sudah cukup lama, kepala dari pasangan suami istri tersebut dielus-elus, selain kepala perasaan dari pasangan tersebut juga dielus-elus dengan totok kerot, padahal totok kerot adalah patung, dan patung jika dilihat dan ditafsirkan secara logika merupakan benda mati.*

The account of Mbah Pan and his wife, who regularly visit the statue on the night of Jumat Legi for nyekar, ritual prayer, and Quran recitation, illustrates how practitioners actively engage with a physical object as if it were a living entity endowed with the power to bestow positive influence or protection. This demonstrates that within the framework of mystical magic, belief and ritual can transform the perception of physical objects into conduits connecting the human and spiritual worlds. The choice of nyekar, ritual prayer, and Quran recitation as forms of interaction with the statue reveals an integrated spiritual practice in which traditional Javanese custom and Islamic devotion are combined in the pursuit of blessing and protection.

#### Data (05)

*“Harus nyekar dulu, ngaji, dan lain-lain, nanti kalau diundahh pasti seabrek. Padahal pohonnya kecil, kalau semisal yang ngambil tidak pamit, tidak ngaji, atau ritual dulu, dapat buahnya sedikit. Istilahnya kalau orang dulu dekat dengan yang maha kuasa, akan dikabulin,” ucap Mbah Jamal.*

Mbah Jamal's account of the kluwih tree and the conditions required for abundant fruit directly illustrates the connection between ritual practice and material outcomes. According to him, those who perform the required spiritual preparations — nyekar, prayer, and related

activities — will find abundant fruit, while those who take without ceremony will receive very little. This belief reflects the view that success or abundance in obtaining desired results depends not only on physical effort, but also on spiritual engagement and trust in supernatural power. The data underscore the importance of the relationship between human beings and supernatural or spiritual forces in achieving specific goals.

### 3. Sensitivity to Supernatural Energy

Sensitivity to supernatural energy in the context of mystical magic refers to the capacity of certain individuals to perceive, access, or interact with the spiritual realm or with invisible forces. This involves the use of intuition, premonition, or *wangsit* (divine revelation) to understand and benefit from phenomena regarded as possessing spiritual or magical dimensions (Zarrabizadeh, 2021). Such sensitivity is often associated with ritual practice, meditation, and profound spiritual experience, in which individuals can respond to supernatural energy in ways that enrich their spiritual life and expand their awareness of the connection between the material and spiritual worlds.

#### Data (06)

*“Ya kalau yang bisa ngerti dikasih feeling, dikasih wangsit bisa mengambil gaman-gaman itu. Tapi kalo wong sing gak betah luwe, gak betah melek, gak bakal iso. Tapi wong sing betah luwe, betah melek engko ngadep ning kotak kuwi, nek gaman kuwi, engko iso dieruhi, yo iso digowo, berupa kris, berupa cincin, lan gaman-gaman laine. Tapi lak wong sing istilahe gak seneng ngono kuwi, kadang cuman ngaji tok ndek kene, dipetuk i yo gak dijikuk, wedi dewe. Soale lak gak iso ngeramut yo iso nggondol nyowone dewe to,”* terang Mbah Jamal menggunakan Bahasa Jawanya.

Mbah Jamal explains that those who are granted a feeling or *wangsit* can access and retrieve the sacred heirloom weapons (*gaman*) stored near the statue. These objects — including kris daggers and rings — are believed to carry spiritual value and power. Only those with sufficient spiritual endurance (able to fast and remain wakeful in vigil) can perceive and safely receive these objects. Those who lack such endurance and spiritual preparation risk endangering themselves through improper handling of objects with significant supernatural power.

#### Data (07)

*Bobot totok kerot 25 ton. Sebelum Belanda patung totok kerot tetap di Lokasi. Pernah dipindah ke alun-alun kediri, tapi pantungnya kembali lagi ke asal mula dengan sendirinya, hal tersebut memang tidak bisa ditafsirkan secara nalar, namun banyak masyarakat setempat yang mempercayai hal tersebut.*

The fact that the Totok Kerot statue weighs approximately 25 tons, has remained at its site since before the Dutch colonial period, and reportedly returned to its original location on its own after being relocated to the Kediri town square, is widely regarded by the local community as evidence of the supernatural power embedded within the statue. This phenomenon, inexplicable by conventional reason, reinforces the belief that the statue is endowed with a special force or energy — a manifestation of mystical magic that persists in shaping community belief and spiritual practice.

#### Data (08)

*Mbah Jamal mengaku bahwa beliau pernah mengalami gangguan dari makhluk gaib saat mandi di hari Jumat, jam satu malam. Ketika keluar dari kamar mandi, Mbah Jamal menutup pintu seperti biasa, tiba-tiba pintu-pintu itu menggebrak dengan keras. Orang-orang percaya itu ulah makhluk gaib.*

Mbah Jamal's personal account of experiencing supernatural disturbance while bathing on a Friday night at one o'clock in the morning specifically, the doors of the bathroom violently slamming after he had closed them is attributed by the community to the activity of supernatural beings. This experience demonstrates the belief that supernatural entities are present and active in the vicinity of the statue, and that their activity can manifest in the physical world.

Data (09)

*Beliau kembali bercerita bahwa beberapa hari yang lalu ada orang Jakarta, seorang pensiunan tentara, ada 15 orang, salah satu pensiunan tentara tersebut berjalan terlebih dulu menyusuri sekitar area patung. setelah magrib. Orang tersebut pun ditemui oleh makhluk gaib yang tampak menggunakan tekenan (memakai tongkat untuk jalan), dan memakai mahkota. Pensiunan tentara tersebut mengaku merinding melihatnya.*

The experience of a retired military officer from among a group of fifteen visitors from Jakarta, who encountered a supernatural being wearing a crown and carrying a walking staff while exploring the area around the statue after the evening prayer, further illustrates the community's understanding that the site of the Totok Kerot statue is not merely a cultural landmark but a point of active interaction between the human and supernatural worlds. The encounter left the officer visibly shaken, reinforcing the belief that spiritual presences associated with the statue can appear before those who enter the site.

Data (10)

*Ada anak kecil berusia sekitar 4 tahun yang berkunjung menjelang magrib. Ibunya tertinggal karena sedang memarkirkan motor, sementara anak itu mengikuti seorang ibu-ibu yang ada dalam pikirannya (mahluk gaib yang menyerupai ibu dari anak kecil yang diceritakan). Ibu dari anak kecil tersebut pun menyadari gelagat aneh dari anaknya, lantas ia langsung terbirit-birit menggendong dan mencuci muka anaknya itu di kamar mandi.*

Data (11)

*Kejadian serupa terjadi tiga hari kemudian, saat ada anak kecil bermain ayunan di dekat patungnya dan melihat sosok ibunya pergi ke arah pepohonan lebat. Padahal, ibu dari anak kecil tersebut masih duduk diayunan bersama dengan anaknya. Ibu anak tersebut pun kemudian memeluk dan menenangkan anaknya.*

Two separate incidents involving young children at the site provide additional evidence of sensitivity to supernatural energy. In the first incident, a four-year-old child followed a figure she perceived as her mother while her actual mother was parking a motorcycle nearby. The mother noticed her child's unusual behavior and quickly intervened by carrying the child to a bathroom to wash her face. Three days later, a separate child playing on a swing near the statue reported seeing the figure of her mother walking toward a dense grove of trees, while her mother was actually seated beside her. The mother embraced and comforted the child immediately. Both incidents reflect the belief that young children, owing to their heightened perceptual sensitivity, may be especially susceptible to supernatural interactions near spiritually charged sites such as the Totok Kerot statue.

These data collectively illustrate how sensitivity to supernatural energy functions as an integral dimension of the mystical and magical belief system surrounding the Totok Kerot legend. The statue and its surrounding environment are perceived not merely as historical or cultural artifacts, but as living focal points of spiritual power that can be perceived and engaged with by those who possess the appropriate spiritual sensitivity, preparation, and intention.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Legend of Totok Kerot is not merely an ancient narrative preserved through oral tradition, but a living linguistic repository of Javanese mystical and magical speech acts. By separating the raw data from the analytical discourse, this chapter critically compares the identified verbal phenomena with established theories of linguistic anthropology and Javanese mysticism (*Kejawen*), thereby highlighting the academic novelty of this research.

### *The Performative Power of Verbal Curses (Sabda)*

The first major dimension identified in the legend involves the linguistic structure of verbal curses (*sabda* or *kutukan*), as exemplified by the historical utterance of King Jayabaya that transformed Princess Wadalwedri into stone (see Data 01 and Data 02). In classical folklore studies, such transformations are often viewed through a purely thematic lens as symbolic moral punishments (Retnowati, 2021). However, through a linguistic anthropological approach, this study argues that the *sabda* operates as a highly structured performative speech act. According to the theory of performative language, certain utterances do not merely describe an action but actively execute it, provided the speaker possesses the institutional or spiritual authority to do so. In Javanese mysticism, this is deeply tied to the concept of *omongane mesti mandi* (the infallible efficacy of an authoritative person's words), which stems from the accumulation of inner power (*kekuasaan batin*) through spiritual disciplines like *tirakat* and *meditation* (Yusril et al., 2024). The linguistic novelty offered by this study lies in the mechanism of the utterance: the language of the curse functions as a metaphysical instrument that bridges the psychological intent of the ruler with immediate physical transmutation. Unlike Western fairy tales where magic is often abstract or formulaic, Javanese legendary curses rely on the rigid, absolute authority of the spoken word, reinforcing social boundaries and cosmic hierarchy through absolute linguistic finality.

### *The Formulaic Language of Ritual Veneration*

The second dimension examines the verbal structures used during rituals and acts of veneration performed by the site guardian (*juru kunci*) and local residents (see Data 03, Data 04, and Data 05). Previous research by local historians often conceptualizes these rituals from a sociopolitical viewpoint, framing them as forms of community resistance or historical preservation (Sumaryono, 2011). This study shifts the paradigm by focusing on the specific linguistic characteristics of the prayers and formulaic speech structures used to communicate with the spirit of Totok Kerot. Javanese mysticism centers heavily on maintaining a precise cosmic harmony between the human world (*ngalam lair*) and the supernatural dimension (*ngalam batin*) (Yudono et al., 2023). The ritual utterances identified in this study reveal a highly formalized linguistic register that utilizes archaic vocabulary, poetic end-rhymes, and polite speech levels (*krama*) to address the supernatural guardian. This linguistic mechanism acts as a sacred code designed to negotiate cosmic balance. The novelty of this finding shows that the language of Javanese ritual is inherently dialogic and structural; it is not a chaotic expression of superstition, but a regulated system of cosmic diplomacy where words are carefully selected to avoid disrupting supernatural energy, thus ensuring the village's safety from metaphysical calamities.

### *Sensitivity to Supernatural Energy as a Narrative Structure*

The final dimension explores how local residents describe and articulate their sensitivity to unseen supernatural energy surrounding the Totok Kerot site (see **Data 06 to Data 11**). In many international studies of mythology, supernatural encounters are often dismissed as subjective psychological phenomena or standard elements of magical realism (Yudono et al., 2023). Conversely, this study reveals that within the Pamenang Village community, these

experiences are articulated through a highly sophisticated collective narrative framework. The linguistic expressions used by the informants to describe the spiritual aura—such as sensing weight, sudden temperature changes, or receiving intuitive guidance (*wangsit*)—rely on specific Javanese metaphors that link bodily sensations with spiritual intuition. This reflects the pinnacle of Javanese mystical experience, where the human self seeks alignment with the highest cosmic power (Yusril et al., 2024). The academic novelty highlighted here is that mystical language is not just used to tell a story about the past; rather, it functions as an active cognitive and linguistic framework through which contemporary society interprets spatial boundaries and daily metaphysical realities.

#### *Literary Recommendations for Creative Writers*

By dissecting these authentic linguistic patterns of Javanese oral tradition, this study provides a new blueprint for literary writers aiming to compose contemporary mythological fiction or magical realism. Instead of using generic or Westernized tropes of magic, writers can utilize these specific Javanese verbal characteristics—such as the authoritative, performative structure of the *sabda*, the rigid politeness of ritual communication, and the somatic metaphors of spiritual energy—to inject genuine cultural authenticity and narrative depth into modern Indonesian literature. This bridges the historical gap between ancient oral folklore preservation and creative modern literary production.

## CONCLUSION

This study of Javanese mysticism in the Totok Kerot folk legend from Pamenang Village, Kediri Regency, reveals a rich array of mystical and magical elements embedded within this oral tradition. The findings document two significant instances of verbal curses (*sabda*): the transformation of Totok Kerot into stone as a result of King Jayabaya's curse, and the community belief that every utterance of a spiritually wise person in former times possessed real magical power. Three data points highlight the centrality of ritual and veneration, including annual Suro rituals, communal *selamatan* ceremonies conducted by residents for important life events, and the regular practice of *nyekar* and Quran recitation near the statue by spiritually devoted individuals. Furthermore, six data points address sensitivity to supernatural energy, encompassing Mbah Jamal's personal experience of supernatural disturbance, the encounter of a retired military officer with a supernatural entity at the site, and the mystical experiences of young children in the vicinity of the statue.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the Totok Kerot Legend is not only rich in mystical and magical content, but also demonstrates how belief in the power of the spoken word, the importance of ritual, and sensitivity to supernatural energy remain deeply rooted in the daily life and spiritual worldview of the Pamenang Village community. This oral tradition continues to serve as a living vehicle for Javanese spiritual values, community identity, and cultural continuity across generations. For scientific development, the results of this research recommend integrating oral tradition studies with formal linguistic anthropology, expanding the analytical framework from purely thematic folklore readings into a specialized discourse of performative speech acts and localized metaphysical language. For further research, it is highly recommended that subsequent scholars investigate the sociolinguistics of gender power dynamics within Javanese legendary curses, or conduct comparative critical discourse analysis on how mystical verbal authority is negotiated across different regional variations of oral folktales in Indonesia.

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