

## 2. THE MEANINGS OF *KRETEK*

In this chapter, I will explore the varying meanings of *kretek*. Drawing upon Stuart Hall's representation theory, I will explore how the characters ascribe meaning to *kretek*, influenced by their distinctive social status and cultural backgrounds. Central to Stuart Hall's (1973) representation theory is the understanding that meaning is not inherent in objects or events but is actively constructed through social practices, cultural backgrounds, and individual experiences. I will examine how the characters ascribe meaning to *kretek*, recognizing that these meanings are not inherent but are shaped and constructed by their distinctive social practices, cultural backgrounds, and individual experiences.

The novel positions *kretek* as a commodity and a complex cultural signifier. Each character's livelihood is intertwined with *kretek*, yet their experiences and struggles surrounding it differ significantly. The characters' different experiences with and understandings of *kretek* align with Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding model, which explains how people interpret meaning differently. In this chapter, I will explore further the social and cultural factors that make each character interpret *kretek* differently. I will break down this analysis into three parts: *kretek* as social mobility, *kretek* as legacy, and *kretek* as a tool of rivalry.

### 2.1 *Kretek* as a Tool for Social Mobility

*Kretek* serves as a tool of social mobility for Idroes Moeria and Soeraja. Pitirim A. Sorokin (1959), in his book entitled "Social and Cultural Mobility", describes social mobility as "the transition of an individual or social object or value—anything that has been created or modified by human activity—from one social position to another" (p. 133). Therefore, in simple terms, social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or cultural elements, like ideas or objects, between different social ranks within a society. Sorokin (1959) also explains that social mobility is divided into horizontal and vertical principles. Horizontal social mobility means moving between social groups at the same level. Vertical social mobility, on the other hand, refers to someone moving up or down the social ladder within a society. Vertical social mobility can be further categorized based on the direction of movement within the social hierarchy. Upward mobility, or social climbing, signifies an individual rising to a higher social stratum. Conversely, downward mobility, sometimes called social sinking, signifies a descent to a lower social stratum (Sorokin, 1959).

I found that two characters, Idroes Moeria and Soeraja, see *kretek* as a tool for social mobility. They pursue upward social mobility from comparable underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds by using *kretek*. While Idroes Moeria's pursuit is fueled by his love for Roemaisa and the desire to prove his worth as a provider, Soeraja's drive comes from a deep-seated pride and a need to overcome his marginalized position within the *kretek* industry. In this subchapter, I will explore how Idroes Moeria and Soeraja see *kretek* as their social mobility.

### **2.1.1 *Kretek* as Idroes Moeria's Social Mobility**

Idroes Moeria sees *kretek* as a tool to ascend his social standing because of his socioeconomic background. Due to poverty and lack of education, he experiences inferiority, mainly because of his love interest in Roemaisa. Idroes Moeria comes from a low social status as he is an illiterate *klobot* laborer who only knows how to roll tobacco into *klobot*. Roemaisa, on the other hand, comes from a higher social class as she is the daughter of the Clerk who is literate and well-educated. The class difference between Roemaisa and Idroes makes him feel inferior. Idroes' inferiority can be found in the quotation below.

*Ia tak yakin, seorang buruh giling yang kerjanya cuma melinting dan tak bisa baca tulis macam dia akan diterima oleh Roemaisa, gadis cantik anak Juru Tulis...Sebagai anak Juru Tulis, tentu saja kehidupan Roemaisa lumayan sejahtera, jauh dari kehidupan seorang seorang buruh. Maka, jika Idroes Moeria hendak menikahinya, ia harus punya visi dan misi untuk menjamin bahwa Roemaisa akan hidup senang jika bersamanya (Kumala, 2012, p. 50-52).*

The quotation above describes Idroes' condition: he is a *kretek* laborer who is illiterate and poor. He states that Roemaisa will not accept him as a husband since they both have distinctive lives. Having lived in such a condition, Idroes doubts that he deserves to propose and marry Roemaisa, the daughter of a well-known Clerk who lives in comfort. Idroes' comparison of his life condition shows his inferiority. Therefore, ascending his social standing is crucial to get Roemaisa.

Two key factors mainly drive Idroes Moeria's ambition to ascend his social mobility. First, as mentioned above, his love for Roemaisa motivates him to leverage his social standings. Second, since his father passed away, his responsibility as the family's

head influences him to raise their living conditions. The quotation below shows Idroes' life condition as the head of his family.

*Pemuda itu tahu, bakal menjadi tulang punggung keluarga setelah bapaknya meninggal dunia saat ia berusia tiga belas tahun, meski ibu ibunya juga bekerja sebagai babu di rumah tetangga mereka yang jauh lebih mapan. . . Idroes Moeria ingin menaikkan derajatnya, dari sekadar buruh menjadi pemilik usaha kecil. Meskipun ibunya senantiasa berkata, "jangan mimpi ketinggian, Le!" (Kumala, 2012, p. 49).*

The quotation above shows that Idroes is an orphan responsible for taking care of his mother. He understands that he is the head of his family right after his father's death. Besides that, the quotation also highlights Idroes' low-income family condition, which is related to his job as a *klobot* labourer and his mother's job as a housemaid. Therefore, from these two key factors, Idroes Moeria's feelings of inferiority towards Roemaisa and her family are influenced by his socioeconomic status, his mother's criticism, and his dream of becoming wealthy and successful.

He uses *kretek* to elevate his social standing. There are two reasons why Idroes chooses *kretek* as his tool to leverage his social status. First, he has been working as a *kretek* labourer since he was young; therefore, he deeply understands how the *kretek* business works. His familiarity with the industry provides him with practical knowledge. The quotation below shows evidence of Idroes' early career as a mere *kretek* labourer.

*Awalnya, Idroes Moeria ikut Pak Trisno sebagai pelinting klobot, dan kini ia dipercaya untuk mengepak, kadang Pak Trisno menyuruhnya untuk mengantarkan pesanan klobot ke pasar atau ke toko obat (Kumala, 2012, p. 49).*

The quotation shows that Idroes Moeria works as a *kretek* laborer for Mr Trisno's *kretek* company. Idroes goes beyond the role of a mere *kretek* laborer by becoming Mr Trisno's confidant. From this quotation, it can be seen that Idroes Moeria demonstrates a keen interest in the company's operational efficiency. Idroes Moeria, who works in the cigarette industry, has gained a new perspective on the business context. He started as a poor person and became his boss' confidant. His new perspective of *kretek* leads him to see *kretek* as a means to achieve financial success and social recognition.

Second, Idroes Moeria chooses kretek to raise his social standing because of Mr. Trisno's achievements. The quotation below shows how Idroes Moeria pays attention to his boss' work ethic.

*Sejak ikut Pak Trisno, Idroes Moeria diam-diam mempelajari sikap Pak Trisno. Idroes Moeria melihat bahwa kehidupan Pak Trisno lumayan mapan hanya dengan berjualan klobot. Lebih dari itu, dia melihat merek-merek dagang sigaret yang sudah lebih dahulu populer, diproduksi di kota-kota lain, terutama dari Kota Kudus yang beredar di kota kecamatan M, tempatnya tinggal (Kumala, 2012, p. 50).*

The quotation where Idroes Moeria carefully observes Mr. Trisno's comfortable life from selling *klobot* highlights the strong desire to start businesses that grew during Dutch colonization when the *kretek* industry was expanding rapidly. As Arnez (2009) explains, the business of making and selling *kretek/klobot* was promising, giving people chances to make more money and improve their social position. Idroes, knowing this is possible, sees *kretek* as a tool to lead him to a secure financial life and even respect within the community. Additionally, seeing popular cigarette brands from Kudus in his own town shows Idroes that there is a high demand for *kretek*. This makes him want to join the industry and become very successful in it. Therefore, this part of the story shows Idroes' strong desire to be an entrepreneur, inspired by the growing *kretek* industry and his hope to improve his social standing.

Two ways highlight how Idroes uses *Kretek* to solidify his new social status. First, he seizes the opportunity to establish his *kretek* brand. As he has gained knowledge about the *kretek* business, Idroes takes advantage of Pak Trisno's *kretek* business bankruptcy due to the Japanese occupation.

*Ia mengeluarkan simpanan uangnya yang dikumpulkan sedikit demi sedikit dari upah melinting. Malamnya, dia kembali ke rumah Pak Trisno, dan mengungkapkan niatnya untuk membeli tembakau yang tersisa. Ia mengeluarkan semua uang simpanannya, "aku hanya mampu membayar segini," (Kumala, 2012, p. 58).*

The quotation shows that Idroes Moeria, determined to buy all of Mr. Trisno's remaining tobacco, uses all his savings to make the purchase. This highlights the transition of Idroes Moeria's social standing. At first, he was Mr. Trisno's laborer, but since he can purchase the remaining tobacco, Idroes Moeria is no longer a laborer. Instead, his position is

transitioning from a mere laborer to a business person who does tobacco transactions with Mr. Trisno. Moreover, his social standing changes when he becomes the boss of his *Kretek* brand, '*Kretek Djojobojo*'.

*Idroes Moeria telah mempersiapkan nama dagang untuk klobot produksinya, dia juga ingin memberi selubung kemasan tertentu agar orang mengenal klobot produksinya...ia telah mempersiapkan satu nama yang paling cocok untuk klobot produksinya: Klobot Djojobojo... Idroes Moeria diam-diam merasa bangga dengan dirinya, ia telah menjadi juragan bagi dirinya sendiri. Tak lagi dia bekerja untuk orang lain (Kumala, 2012, p. 51 & 62).*

The quotation above highlights Idroes Moeria's efforts to develop his *kretek* brand. He named his brand *Klobot Djojobojo*. Idroes took the name *Djojobojo* himself because he believed that the name symbolized freedom and independence (Kumala, 2012, p. 49). Therefore, he sees *kretek* not only as a commodity bought and sold here but also as a representation of financial freedom and independence.

Second, he develops his brand reputation to get social recognition. To further strengthen his new social position as a boss, Idroes Moeria has to market his *kretek* to a broader target audience. *Kretek* not only allows him to develop his *kretek* brand but also allows him to get a decent education, which is literacy skills. Upon Mr. Trisno's business closure, Idroes Moeria takes advantage by purchasing the remaining tobacco and asks Mr. Trisno to teach him literacy skills (Kumala, 2012, p. 59). Idroes Moeria can inscribe his *kretek* casings with the brand name through literacy skills, further solidifying its recognition. The quotation below shows evidence of Idroes' *kretek* brand expansion.

*Idroes Moeria memutuskan untuk melakukan tes pasar. Dia melinting beberapa klobot klembak menyan dan memberinya bungkus dengan warna yang berbeda, yaitu warna merah. Ia juga menuliskan Klembak Menjan Djojobojo di bungkus tersebut. Sedang bungkus kertas payung putih, berarti klobot kretek biasa. Kesemuanya, tentu saja, ditulis sendiri dengan tangan (Kumala, 2012, p. 62 & 64).*

The quotation, where Idroes Moeria finally inscribes his new *kretek* brand, *Klembak Menjan Djojobojo*, reflects his strategic approach to achieving social mobility through the *kretek* industry. By creating *klembak menyan*, a variation of *klobot* known for its aromatic and medicinal properties, Idroes actively interprets market signals and cultural beliefs

surrounding *kretek*'s medicinal qualities. This move is a response to the high demand for clove cigarettes as remedies and a calculated business decision. He leverages the growing popularity of *kretek* production outside Kudus, particularly in the 1900s, to tap into a market eager for new and diverse *kretek* products.

Idroes' success in developing his *kretek* brands has led him to his ultimate goal. His profound *klobot* business makes him no longer feel inferior in front of Roemaisa. Moreover, his success in the *klobot* business also leads him to succeed in marrying Roemaisa. His confidence is shown by the quotation below.

*"Dulu saya memang buruh linting di Pak Trisno, Pak. Tapi sekarang saya bukan buruh lagi, saya jualan klobot yang saya buat sendiri." Juru tulis terlihat terkejut dengan jawaban Idroes Moeria. "Saya membeli sisa mbako milik Pak Trisno yang tidak diambil Jepang, dan saya bikin klobot sendiri yang saya jual di pasar dan toko obat." Lalu, Idroes Moeria merogoh kantong celananya, "Ini... klobot saya." Ditunjukkannya Klobot Djojobojo yang masih utuh. Ia memang sengaja mempersiapkan satu bundel klobot bikinannya, ingin menunjukkan bahwa ia akan mampu memberi makan dan membahagiakan Roemaisa (Kumala, 2012, p.73).*

The quotation highlights that Idroes' pride comes from his newfound social standing. Idroes shows his business to Roemaisa's father, the Clerk. Through his *klobot* business, Idroes feels worthy of proposing to Roemaisa because he is a man who has an independent income. His social standing has risen from a lowly *klobot* laborer to a respected *klobot* businessperson. Besides, the gift of *klobot* to Roemaisa's father does not only serve as a mere business gesture. It signifies Idroes' readiness to assume the role of a responsible husband and head of the household. By presenting *klobot*, Idroes interprets his commitment to provide for his future family, aligning with the traditional expectations for a husband in the Javanese context.

In conclusion, Idroes Moeria's personal understanding of *kretek* is driven by his ambition for a better social standing. He gives new meaning to *kretek* using his business. By creating the *Klembak Menjan Djojobojo* and carefully building its image, he connects *kretek* with his own desire to improve his social position. He changes from just someone who enjoys *kretek* to someone who shapes what *kretek* means, and this helps him achieve his goals of marriage, financial stability, and respect.

### 2.1.2 *Kretek* as Soeraja's Social Mobility

Similar to Idroes Moeria, Soeraja views *kretek* as a tool for elevating social mobility, allowing him to rise to a higher social status. Soeraja's background shapes his interpretation of *kretek*. His nomadic lifestyle leads him to lack specific skills, which causes him to be socially marginalized within the *kretek* industry. The quotation below shows Soeraja's inferiority.

*Soeraja merasa malu, sebab suatu hari mendengar omongan dua orang buruh giling dan buruh bathil. Keduanya tidak membicarakan Soeraja dengan penuh pujian meski ia bekerja keras dengan baik, melainkan dengan nada ngenyek dan meremehkan* (Kumala, 2012, p. 201 - 202).

The quotation above illustrates Soeraja's shame and marginalization as he overhears other workers belittling him despite his hard work. This mockery underscores his position at the bottom of the social ladder within the *kretek* factory, fueling his desire to prove his worth and achieve upward mobility. Despite his prominent position as Idroes Moeria's confidant in supervising the *kretek* workers, his nomadic background and lack of specialized skills have left him vulnerable to the judgment and scorn of Idroes' *kretek* workers.

*"Mas Raja bisa berlagak kayak gitu karena beruntung. Dia itu kan kere, tak punya apa-apa. Lihat saja, tidur di pabrik. Makan minta Bu Roem. Pak Idroes baik sekali mau menampungnya di sini"* (Kumala, 2012, p. 202).

The quotation shows that Idroes Moeria's workers do not see Soeraja as equal to Idroes Moeria because of his dependency on Idroes Moeria's generosity. This quotation further reveals the social inequality within the factory. Idroes Moeria's workers perceive Soeraja as inferior due to his dependency on Idroes's generosity and lack of material possessions. Soeraja's poverty and reliance on others reinforce his lower social status, fueling his ambition to break free from this dependence.

Besides his experience of ridicule, Soeraja's deep longing for higher social mobility Idroes Moeis also deeply intertwined with his love for Jeng Yah, ria's daughter. The quotation below shows his frustration in front of Jeng Yah.

*"Ya itu, dengan kata lain aku ndak punya apa-apa. Aku ini kere. Nol besar, Jeng! Aku ingin punya usaha kretek sendiri, Jeng" .... "Aku cuma pengen diajeni sebagai wong lanang*

*seutuhnya. Bukan sebagai benalu yang numpang hidup dan bisa petantang-petenteng karena dikasih kuasa sama calon mertua”* (Kumala, 2012, p. 206 - 207).

Soeraja's passionate outburst to Jeng Yah reveals a profound sense of inadequacy coming from his lack of financial independence. His desire to be respected as a "real man" (*wong lanang seutuhnya*) underscores how his pursuit of social status is deeply intertwined with his desire for masculine validation and autonomy. In Javanese culture, where men are traditionally expected to be providers and leaders (Myrlinda, 2020), Soeraja's inability to fulfill these roles due to his financial dependence on Idroes Moeria leaves him feeling emasculated and incomplete. Consequently, he seeks to regain a sense of masculinity and autonomy by using *kretek* as a means to achieve financial independence and social recognition. These two reasons, the desire to escape ridicule and the desire for respect and love, motivate Soeraja to establish his own *kretek* business. This ambition is not solely an economic pursuit but also a means to gain the respect and approval he wants from his peers and, most importantly, Jeng Yah. Soeraja recognizes the opportunity to gain success through *kretek*, as it aligns with the colonial-era perception of *kretek* as a symbol of masculinity and big business. His mindset also mirrors the belief that a man's worth is often measured by his financial success and ability to provide.

From the reasons above, we can see that even though Soeraja also sees *kretek* as a key to a more respected position, his motivation differs from that of Idroes Moeria. As I previously analyzed, Idroes Moeria's ambition to ascend his social position using *kretek* is fueled by an intrinsic desire for personal growth. On the other hand, Soeraja's motivation is primarily extrinsic. He seeks to escape future ridicule and establish a more secure and respected position within society, as evidenced by his comparison to Jeng Yah's family and Idroes's success.

Soeraja recognizes the opportunity to gain success through *kretek*. For Soeraja, *kretek* is a strategic tool for achieving his social mobility and recognition aspirations. His initial approach to the *kretek* industry reflects this strategic mindset, as he seeks to leverage *kretek*'s cultural and social power to elevate his position. Initially, he sought to leverage this power through political affiliation, partnering with the Communist Party to launch *Kretek Cap Arit Merah*. The quotation below shows Soeraja's opportunity to develop a *kretek* brand.



*“Karena, semua orang sekarang ngerokok kretek. Bayangkan, kalau semua ngerokok kretek buatan partai ini. Semua yang beli pasti akan langsung mengenal partai ini...Namanya sudah ada. Namanya sesuai permintaan mereka: Kretek Cap Arit Merah”* (Kumala, 2012, p. 219).

Soeraja’s act demonstrates the potential of *kretek* for political affiliation to gain social recognition. As Arnez (2009) mentioned above, the *kretek* serves as a symbol of connection and masculinity. By launching *Kretek Cap Arit Merah* under the Communist Party’s supervision, Soeraja seizes the opportunity to build broader connections and his own business to make him more prominent in front of the members of the Communist Party. In his own words, “Everyone smokes *kretek* now. Imagine if everyone smoked *kretek* made by this political party” (Kumala, 2012, p. 219). This demonstrates Soeraja’s recognition of *kretek*’s potential as a tool for building connections and gaining social recognition. However, a risky incident makes him prioritize personal safety and autonomy, prompting him to disassociate from the brand. The quotation is as follows:

*Dia memilih membenamkan diri ke dalam gundukan tanah basah sawah, lalu menyelina pergi di antara lumpur yang memenuhi dirinya...Beruntunglah ia, mengikuti kata hatinya untuk segera lari. Jika tidak, pasti ia sudah menjadi salah satu manusia yang mengambang mengambang di Kali Pepe* (Kumala, 2012, p. 224 - 225).

This passage illustrates Soeraja’s decision to distance himself from the brand, symbolizing a break from his dependence on both Idroes Moeria and the Communist Party. After a risky incident, his subsequent disassociation from the brand reveals a pragmatic shift, prioritizing personal safety and autonomy over political alliances. This decision underscores *kretek*’s significance as a means for Soeraja to establish his own independent identity, free from the control of others.

Next, Soeraja’s eventual success with *Kretek Djagad Raja*, a brand name signifying his aspiration for the *kretek* industry dominance, further reinforces the link between *kretek* and social status. His decision is summarized in the excerpt below.

*Soeraja berhasil membuat kesepakatan sebagai mitra kerja sejajar dengan Pak Djagad, sehingga nama Kretek Djagad bermutasi menjadi Kretek Djagad bermutasi menjadi Kretek Djagad Raja* (Kumala, 2012, p. 238).

This collaboration with Soedjagad, resulting in the creation of *Kretek Djagad Raja*, solidifies Soeraja’s dedication to his success and ambition for dominance in the *kretek*

industry. This brand name has a message – “*Djagad Raja*” translates to “King of the World,” which signifies Soeraja’s ultimate aspiration for dominance within the *kretek* industry. This success fuels his self-confidence and reinforces his sense of authority. This achievement is a business triumph and a symbolic representation of Soeraja’s ascent up the social ladder. The following quotation shows Soeraja’s authority as the owner of *Kretek Cap Djagad Raja*.

*Tetapi setelah Kretek Djagad Raja berkembang makin pesat, Romo mulai membeli rumah-rumah di kanan-kiri khusus untuk melinting. Kini pabrik Kretek Djagad Raja berkembang demikian pesat. Ada mess buruh pabrik yang disediakan jika memang ada buruh yang dari luar kota. Ada pula klinik yang disediakan untuk fasilitas kesehatan gratis...Buruh kretek tidak cuma datang dari Kudus, tak sedikit yang datang dari Kudus, tak sedikit yang datang dari Demak atau Rembang dan mencari hidup dari batangan kretek (Kumala, 2012, p. 165).*

This quotation above highlights the success of *Kretek Djagad Raja* under Soeraja’s ownership, demonstrating his significant upward social mobility. Soeraja’s expansion through property acquisition reflects growing consumer demand and his entrepreneurial vision. The brand’s expansion, including acquiring properties and creating jobs for people from outside the city, reflects Soeraja’s entrepreneurial vision and his newfound power and influence within the community.

In conclusion, Soeraja perceives *kretek* as a tool for social mobility. His perception of *kretek* is fueled by a desire to overcome his marginalized past and achieve recognition as a respected man. His strategic decisions and actions show his understanding of *kretek* as a powerful tool for social mobility. Initially, he seeks to leverage the cultural and social capital associated with *kretek* through political affiliation, partnering with the Communist Party to launch *Kretek Cap Arit Merah*. However, a risky incident forces him to reevaluate his priorities, leading to a pragmatic shift towards prioritizing personal autonomy and independence. Soeraja’s eventual success with *Kretek Djagad Raja* symbolizes his ascent up the social ladder, demonstrating how *kretek* can provide financial security and serve as a tool for achieving power, influence, and, ultimately, the respect he wants.

## 2.2 *Kretek* as a Tool for Preserving the Family Legacy

*Kretek* is seen as a tool for preserving the family legacy by Tegar, Soeraja's son, and Jeng Yah, Idroes Moeria's daughter. Legacy (Meriam-Webster, n.d.) is defined as "something transmitted by or received from an ancestor, predecessor, or the past. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) also defined predecessor as "a person who has previously occupied a position or office to which another has succeeded." In this subchapter, I will explore how Tegar and Jeng Yah, the heir to the renowned *kretek* company, view *kretek* as a matter of legacy. The predecessor refers to Soeraja, Tegar's father, and Idroes Moeria, Jeng Yah's father. "Something transmitted" refers to the *Kretek Cap Djagad Raja*, Tegar's business, and *Kretek Gadis*, Jeng Yah's business. I found that both Tegar and Jeng Yah experience business transmission from their fathers. This business transmission makes Tegar and Jeng Yah see *kretek* as more than just a mere commodity; they see it as a legacy. As a legacy, Tegar sees *kretek* as a responsibility he has to carry forward, a burden from his parents, and a tool for his personal growth as the successor of *Kretek Djagad Raja*. On the other hand, Jeng Yah sees *kretek* as a platform for experiments and empowerment. In this chapter, I will explain how Tegar and Jeng Yah see *kretek* as a legacy. I break down my analysis into two parts: the factors that make them think that *kretek* is a legacy and the process of how Tegar and Jeng Yah view *kretek* as a legacy.

### 2.2.1 *Kretek* as Tegar's Tool for Preserving His Family Legacy

Tegar's interpretation of *kretek* is firmly established as his legacy. Tegar, Soeraja's son, carries on the family tradition, where his life and goals are centred around *Kretek Cap Djagad Raja*. For Tegar, *Kretek Cap Djagad Raja* is not just a mere business but a symbol of entrepreneurial heritage. Therefore, Tegar interprets *kretek* as a responsibility he has to fulfil.

The main factor that makes Tegar see *kretek* as the legacy he has to carry forward is his involvement in the *kretek* industry ever since he was young. Soeraja plays a very significant role in instilling this idea as Kumala (2012) stated, "'This is Tegar, my eldest son. He is the one who will take over my business.' Romo said without hesitation" (p. 40). Ever since he was young, Tegar has been involved in his family's *kretek* business. He learns the ins and outs of the business, from the *kretek*-rolling process to understanding the business' financial aspects.

*Sejak kecil, Tegar sudah diajak Romo ke pabrik, diajarkan melinting, diajarkan cara mengawasi para pekerja, bahkan diajarkan merokok...Ketika itu, Tegar lulus SMP. Romo*

*memberinya sebatang rokok kretek cap Djagad Raja yang sengaja dilintingnya sendiri, lalu mengajarkan cara merokok (Kumala, 2012, p. 33).*

The quotation shows that Soeraja brings young Tegar to the factory, teaches him to make *kretek*, and even shares a *Djagad Raja kretek* with him, which is a crucial moment in shaping how Tegar sees *kretek* as part of his family's heritage. This early involvement in the business helps Tegar feel connected to his family and their history. The act of smoking *kretek* with his father is not just a casual thing; it is a unique way of showing him the family trade. The act of smoking serves as passing down special knowledge and skills, which teach Tegar that he will continue this work. Not only smoking, but Tegar is also involved in business managerial things such as working as a *kretek* worker, understanding finance management, and selecting the best raw materials (cloves and tobacco) for his products.

*Selama libur satu bulan sebelum tahun ajaran baru dimulai, Romo menyuruh Tegar kerja jadi buruh giling di pabrik...Kali ini, Romo menyuruh Tegar mengikuti jam kerja pegawainya. Ia pun diupah seperti pegawai lainnya. Tak ada kata liburan untuk remaja tanggung itu, keluar pabrik hanya ketika Tegar mendaftar untuk masuk SMA, lain itu tidak...Dia mengundang bendahara pabrik yang membawa setumpuk buku pembukuan, lalu dibukanya di hadapan Tegar, dan dijelaskan satu per satu biaya-biaya yang harus dikeluarkan setiap bulan. Serta berapa penghasilan yang didapatkan (Kumala, 2012, p. 37 & 39).*

The quotation above shows that Soeraja has Tegar work as a regular employee in the factory during his school break. It further emphasizes the deliberate process of passing down the family's *kretek* legacy. By having Tegar experience an everyday routine on the factory floor and earn the same wages as other workers, Soeraja is not merely providing him with a summer job. Instead, he is instilling in Tegar a deep understanding of the business from the ground up. This hands-on experience teaches Tegar the value of hard work, the importance of every role within the factory, and the intricate details of *kretek* production.

Although Tegar's involvement in the *kretek* industry is apparent, he views this *kretek* legacy as a burden. Tegar's childhood is marked by sacrifice and pressure to live up to his father's expectations. The quotation is as follows:

*“Aku waktu itu kan masih anak sekolah, Rim. Mana ada anak kecil yang suka diajak ngurus kerjaan. Mana itu pas libur sekolah. Puncaknya ya pas kalian libur ke rumah Mbah Djagad, sementara aku ngurus mbako di Temanggung”* (Kumala, 2012, p. 198).

The quotation above highlights how Tegar sacrificed his childhood holiday to learn about his family’s *kretek* business. He then elaborates that such a situation is putting him under pressure. From the quotation above, we can see Tegar’s burden in handling the weight of his family’s legacy. His declaration, “Mana ada anak kecil yang suka diajak ngurus kerjaan?” (What child enjoys being asked to work?) underscores his resentment towards missing out on leisure time while his peers enjoyed their holidays. This feeling of being burdened by responsibility at such a young age highlights the challenges inherent in inheriting a family business. It suggests that while Tegar recognises the value and importance of his *kretek* legacy, he also struggles with the personal sacrifices it demands. This inner struggle makes Tegar’s feelings about *kretek* more complicated. *Kretek Djagad Raja* does not serve as a good thing for him; it also portrays a heavy responsibility he has to carry.

Yet, as Tegar matures, his understanding of *kretek* evolves. He begins to see it not only as a burden but also as an opportunity for personal growth and innovation. As he understands his responsibility as the successor of *Kretek Cap Djagad Raja*, he greatly desires to make *Kretek Djagad Raja* the first leading *kretek* brand. The quotation is as follows:

*Tegar bertekad, suatu hari nanti akan memasang iklan Djagad Raja yang besar di koran dan majalah. Akan dibuatnya iklan yang berbeda dari iklan rokok lainnya. Tak hanya itu, orang juga akan mengenal Djagad Raja sebagai penopang acara-acara seni yang mutakhir. Orang akan tahu Djagad Raja adalah kretek nomor satu* (Kumala, 2012, p. 44 – 45).

The quotation shows that Tegar’s determination to elevate *Kretek Djagad Raja* to the top through innovative advertising and arts sponsorship demonstrates a significant shift in his perception of the family legacy. As he understands that *kretek* is his legacy and responsibility, Tegar’s understanding of *kretek* evolves when he gets older. Instead of solely viewing it as a burden, he now sees it as a platform for personal growth and innovation. This ambition to make *Kretek Djagad Raja* the “number one *kretek*” reflects a newfound sense of agency and a desire to leave his mark on the industry. It suggests that Tegar is not

content with simply maintaining the legacy; he wants to push the boundaries and elevate the brand to the next level. This shift in perspective indicates a growing sense of ownership and pride in his *kretek* legacy. Tegar is no longer just fulfilling a duty. Instead, he actively seeks ways to enhance and expand his *kretek* brand, showcasing his entrepreneurial traits and commitment to making *Kretek Djagad Raja* a leader in the industry. This demonstrates a maturation in Tegar's understanding of *kretek*, transforming it from a burden into a source of personal ambition and a platform for creative expression.

Last, since *kretek* is his legacy, Tegar expands his *kretek* business from selling *kretek* to a sponsorship platform. He understands that as a legacy, he has to maintain the sustainability of his *kretek* business. In the novel *Gadis Kretek*, Kumala (2012) mentions that "Kretek Djagad Raja often sponsors major art events, such as theatre and concerts" (p. 8). The quotation reveals a strategic and innovative approach to promoting *Kretek Djagad Raja*. This goes beyond traditional marketing strategies; it demonstrates Tegar's understanding of the power of cultural engagement and its potential to elevate the brand's image and reach new audiences. His willingness to invest in the arts showcases a broader vision for the company's role in society, one that extends beyond mere profit-making and embraces a commitment to cultural enrichment. Other than that, Tegar also states, "As the person who knows this business best, and especially as your brother, I also have the right to advise that your assets should not be liquidated" (Kumala, 2012, p. 12), which signifies Tegar's cautious approach to business partnerships. His action reflects a mature understanding of the financial risks and responsibilities of running a successful enterprise. Moreover, his careful evaluation of potential collaborations demonstrates a balance between ambition and wisdom, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the family legacy. For Tegar, *kretek* represents his family's history, identity, and aspirations for the future. While initially seen as a burden, it gradually becomes a source of pride, purpose, and creative expression.

In Tegar's case, *kretek* serves as a tool that reflects his evolving relationship with his family, his entrepreneurial traits, and his aspirations for the future of *Kretek Djagad Raja*. As the successor, Tegar does not merely replicate Soeraja's success. Instead, he actively utilizes *kretek* as a personal growth and innovation platform. His strategic decisions, such as expanding the business's sponsorship activities and carefully evaluating potential partnerships, reflect his ability to decode market trends and encode strategies

that align with his ambitions. Tegar's identity is successfully portrayed by *kretek*. To him, *kretek* is more than merely a source of income; it is a connection to his goals, history, and family. Although he accepts the responsibility for the legacy, he also seizes the opportunity to influence how his *kretek* business develops. *Kretek* comes to represent his dedication to his family, his entrepreneurship, and his future goals.

### **2.2.2 *Kretek* as Jeng Yah's Tool for Preserving Her Family Legacy**

Similar to Tegar, Jeng Yah also views *kretek* as a legacy. *Kretek*, traditionally, has been associated with masculinity, modernity, and social advancement. This association positioned *kretek* production as a domain dominated by the male sphere. However, Jeng Yah, introduced initially as Dasiyah, shatters these expectations and sees *kretek* as a legacy that redefines her empowerment towards her surroundings. Moreover, Jeng Yah becomes the only woman in this novel who runs the *kretek* business from scratch. Not only does she practice the act of smoking, but she also actively participates in the *kretek* production. Jeng Yah's active participation in *kretek* production breaks the traditional idea of *kretek* as a "man's world." She actively participates in creating *Kretek Gadis'* secret sauce formula and takes on leadership roles, overseeing production and company operations. Her actions challenge the societal assumption that women lack the capability or authority to excel in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Jeng Yah's involvement in the *kretek* industry begins early in life, as she learns the art of rolling *kretek* alongside Idroes Moeria's laborers. The quotation is as follows:

*Ketika Dasiyah berusia 10 tahun, gadis mungil itu sudah mahir melinting kretek. Dia biasa bergaul dengan para pelinting sejak kecil. Sejak ia bisa jalan dan membuat para pelinting khawatir anak kecil itu terjatuh karena belum seimbang. Kini, Dasiyah menjadi gadis yang lincah, sebagaimana Rukayah, adiknya. Kedua gadis cilik itu kerap menyambangi para pelinting, dan bermain dengan cengkih dan tembakau. Mereka mengambil alat pelinting dan Dasiyah mulai melinting, sementara Rukayah menjadi penggunting yang meratakan tembakau yang bercerabut* (Kumala, 2012, p. 127).

The quotation above emphasizes how Jeng Yah has been involved in the *kretek* rolling process since she was a child. She is not only good at *kretek* rolling, but she also actively interacts with people within the *kretek* industry. Jeng Yah's early involvement in the *kretek*

industry, starting with learning to roll *kretek* alongside the workers, shows her defying traditional expectations for girls at the time. By becoming skilled at this work typically done by men, she proves her ability in a field where women were not usually seen. Unlike Tegar, whose understanding of *kretek* as a legacy was influenced by his father and the expectation that he would inherit the family business, Jeng Yah's perspective on *kretek* is rooted in her passion. For her, *kretek* is integral to her family's life and identity. This early experience making *kretek* also helps her feel a sense of pride and connection to her family's business, preparing her for a later leadership role. She also plays an integral part in creating the special sauce for *Kretek Gadis*, which is a significant step in her journey towards empowerment. Her comment about other *kretek* sauces being "far below the taste of Kretek Merdeka!" (Kumala, 2012, p. 149) shows she understands taste and wants to make her father's product even better. It showcases her confidence and determination to make a tangible contribution to the family business. By taking on this job usually done by men, she challenges the idea that women are incapable in this area. She also shows her deep knowledge and love for *kretek*, making her an essential person in the family business.

As she knows that *kretek* is her legacy, she extends her role by performing leadership roles to strengthen the *Kretek Gadis* company's sustainability. She takes control of the finances, ensuring the business stays successful, and manages how things are made, showing she is capable and good at business. The quotation is as follows:

*Dasiyah akhirnya membuat pembukuan Merdeka!. Dia jugalah yang memisahkan antara uang yang harus diputar untuk memproduksi Merdeka! Ini adalah uang yang tak bisa diganggu gugat dan uang keuntungan yang diperbolehkan Dasiyah untuk ayahnya bereksperimen dengan kretek-kretek baru dengan campuran saus baru pula. Dasiyah praktis menjadi kepercayaan Idroes Moeria. Gadis itu mendapat kecerdasan dari ibunya dan keuletan kerja dari ayahnya. Selain itu, karena sikap Idroes Moeria yang cenderung memberi kebebasan bagi putrinya, telah menjadikannya gadis yang mandiri, berani berpendapat. Sebuah kombinasi yang unik untuk perempuan di zaman itu (Kumala, 2012, p. 140).*

The quotations show her ability to navigate the traditionally male-dominated world of finance and management challenges. By taking charge of the company's finances



(*pembukuan Merdeka!*) and production, she actively challenges the idea that women are incapable of leading in business. Her ability to handle these traditionally male-dominated areas shows her skill and intelligence. The quote highlights how she becomes her father's trusted advisor, proving that women can be successful in the *kretek* industry. This challenges the common belief of the time that women were not suited for such roles. This active role in the business is not merely a demonstration of her capabilities but also evidence of her commitment to carrying on and enhancing her father's legacy. The quote where Jeng Yah takes control of *Kretek Gadis'* finances and production is about her empowerment and how she embraces and reshapes her family's legacy. By proving her competence in these traditionally male-dominated areas, she not only challenges gender norms but also demonstrates her commitment to continuing and improving her father's business. Her actions show that she is not just inheriting the *kretek* legacy but actively shaping it to reflect her abilities and vision.

Furthermore, Jeng Yah's legacy goes beyond Idroes Moeria's influence. She actively seeks to empower other women by employing them as *kretek* workers and paying them fair wages. The quotation is as follows:

*Dasiyah punya ide, daripada mempekerjakan penjaga laki-laki, ia mempekerjakan para gadis teman-teman Rukayah. Dasiyah memberi mereka upah layaknya penjaga laki-laki untuk menawarkan Kretek Gadis (Kumala, 2012, p. 153).*

Jeng Yah's acts go beyond her personal achievements. Using *kretek*, she hires women as *kretek* workers and ensures they receive equal pay as men. This bold move directly challenges the traditional gender roles and power dynamics within the *kretek* industry. Here, she actively challenges the traditional gender roles and power dynamics within the *kretek* industry. This action provides economic opportunities for women and creates a more inclusive work environment. Jeng Yah's legacy is one of female empowerment in the *kretek* industry. By treating women fairly and recognizing their abilities, she has paved the way for future generations to succeed in this field.

For Jeng Yah, *kretek* is not simply something passed down from her father but a deep part of who she is, a legacy she has shaped with her hard work and passion. Her

strong connection to *kretek* is evident in her reaction when Soeraja steals and uses the *Kretek Gadis* recipe for *Kretek Djagad Raja*. The quotation is as follows:

*Aku membuka Kretek Djagad Raja, menawarinya sebatang. Aku tahu betul merokok bisa sedikit menenangkan. Yu Yah mengambil sebatang, dan kunyalakan geretan, menyulut sebatang kretek itu, sambil kubilang tak apa jika memang ia ingin marah. Belum habis kretek itu diisapnya, tiba-tiba ia menghapus air matanya...Dia langsung menemui Mas Raja di Kudus, dan kembali membawa cerita mengejutkan yang diceritakannya dengan berapi-api: 'Aku sudah memukul jidat Soeraja dengan semprong petromaks di hari pernikahannya.' Lalu dia tertawa sejadi-jadinya, tetapi airmatanya terus keluar. Ia merasa menang, sekaligus malang (Kumala, 2012, p. 260).*

The quotation happens when Rukayah, Jeng Yah's little sister, explains what she does when she tastes *Kretek Djagad Raja*. When Jeng Yah discovers the stolen recipe, she gets furious and hits Soeraja with a kerosene lamp on his forehead on his wedding day. This shows how much *kretek* means to her. She is not just upset about losing a business secret; she feels like something that is a part of her has been taken. For Jeng Yah, *kretek* is not just a product; she created it with her skills and hard work to continue her father's dream. The stolen recipe is not just a list of ingredients. It is a part of her, her passion, and her effort. So when Soeraja steals the recipe, it is not just bad for business. It is like Soeraja is hurting Jeng Yah personally. Her strong reaction shows how much she cares about what she has created and will not let anyone take it away or make it seem less important. This event shows the vital link between Jeng Yah and *kretek* and how she has made this cultural object a symbol of her power and something she will protect fiercely.

However, despite Jeng Yah's innovation and determination, I found that the character Jeng Yah in this novel does not succeed in changing the position of *kretek* in the male sphere. Her business, *Kretek Gadis*, is eventually acquired by Tegar, who merges it into his company, *Kretek Djagad Raja*. The quotation is as follows:

*Jeng Yah membukanya, dan membaca, berisi surat permohonan maaf resmi dari Kretek Djagad Raja atas pencurian formula saus Kretek Gadis. Serta betapa kami, keturunannya, menyesal baru mengetahuinya sekarang. Lalu diakhiri dengan niat baik untuk membeli formula saus Kretek Gadis, serta membeli aset perusahaan Kretek Gadis untuk*

*dikembangkan menjadi nama dagang yang akan dikelola oleh PT Djagad Raja (Kumala, 2012, p. 273).*

The quotations explain that Jeng Yah receives a formal apology from *Kretek Djagad Raja* for stealing the *Kretek Gadis* sauce recipe, along with an offer to buy it and the company itself. This outcome reinforces the idea that *kretek* symbolizes male power and dominance. Although Jeng Yah initially appears to be a revolutionary figure, a woman with a vision for change in the *kretek* industry, the story ultimately suggests that her impact is limited. The story reinforces the idea that *kretek* is a man's world, and while Jeng Yah's efforts are noteworthy, they do not fundamentally alter this deeply rooted perception. It suggests that while individual women may progress, true transformation might require broader societal shifts and a more profound reevaluation of gender roles in the *kretek* industry.

Despite Jeng Yah's solid efforts and innovations, her impact on the *kretek* industry's deeply rooted patriarchal structure seems limited. While she successfully builds and runs her own *kretek* business, *Kretek Gadis*, it ultimately becomes acquired by Tegar's company, *Kretek Djagad Raja*. This outcome reinforces the idea that, in the novel *Gadis Kretek*, *kretek* remains a symbol of male power and control. Although Jeng Yah pushes boundaries for women in the *kretek* industry, the story suggests that actual change is not easy. It is as if her achievements are seen as an anomaly, not the rule. This highlights women's difficulty gaining equal balance in a world where *kretek*, and by extension, power, and influence, is often associated with men. This does not diminish Jeng Yah's accomplishments or the meaning she finds in *kretek*. However, it shows that individual success might not be enough to change how society sees things. It suggests that changing deeply ingrained ideas about gender roles in the *kretek* industry might need more significant societal changes.

In conclusion, for Jeng Yah, *kretek* represents a legacy empowering herself and other women. She embraces her father's passion for the craft but forges her path by challenging traditional gender roles in the industry. By actively participating in all aspects of the *kretek* industry and empowering other women, she redefines the meaning of *kretek*. She paves her path to success, proving that cultural objects can be used to break social barriers. In conclusion, Jeng Yah sees *kretek* as a complex blend of legacy and

empowerment that showcases the potential for women to challenge and reshape traditional norms within a male-dominated industry. Jeng Yah inherits her father's passion for *kretek*, but she does not just follow in his footsteps; she creates meaning for herself. She has been involved in *kretek* production from a young age, mastering skills typically reserved for men. She becomes a leader in her *kretek* business, makes important decisions about the business, and proves her competence. Jeng Yah's empowerment goes beyond her personal achievements as she actively works to uplift other women, providing them with opportunities and fair treatment in the *kretek* industry. However, despite her successes, the novel highlights women's persistent challenges in a society where power and influence are often associated with men. Despite this, Jeng Yah's legacy remains one of resilience, innovation, and a commitment to empowering women in the *kretek* industry.

### **2.3 *Kretek* as Soedjagad's Tool for Competition**

In this subchapter, I will examine how Soedjagad views *kretek* as a tool to fuel his intense rivalry with Idroes Moeria, his childhood friend-turned-competitor. Competition (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) means "a situation in which someone is trying to win something or be more successful than someone else." Soedjagad initially wants to prove his worth by doing a business competition. Soedjagad's competitive behavior towards Idroes Moeria is fueled by an act of revenge that comes from perceived betrayals and disappointments. Soedjagad's actions, such as imitating Idroes' *kretek* brands and marketing strategies, can be seen as an expression of this competition. These actions are also fueled by an urge to undermine Idroes' reputation and prove himself superior.

McKee (2008) describes vengeful people as focusing heavily on power values, such as maintaining one's reputation and social status. Soeraja's actions align with McKee's description of vengeful people who focus on power values and disregard for compassion and understanding. Soedjagad then sees and uses *kretek* to inflict harm and reclaim a sense of power. While a desire for revenge fuels Soedjagad's actions, this analysis will primarily focus on how he sees *kretek* as a competition with Idroes Moeria.

Soedjagad's characteristics of being a vengeful person are influenced by *kretek*. In Javanese culture, where *kretek* is deeply associated with ideas of masculinity and social standing (Arnez, 2009), Soedjagad's rivalry with Idroes is amplified by the cultural significance of the *kretek* industry. His hurt self-esteem as a man due to Idroes Moeria's union with Roemaisa, the woman he desired, and Idroes's purchase of tobacco from Mr. Trisno, a business deal Soedjagad

wanted, worsens his feelings of inadequacy and fuels his desire for revenge. Ratih Kumala (2012) states that “Soedjagad has proposed to Roemaisa” (p. 54), which emphasises that Soedjagad takes a step ahead to propose Roemaisa. However, his efforts are in vain when Idroes Moeria succeeds in marrying Roemaisa, as stated in this quotation: “Idroes Moeria’s suspicion was correct, that Soedjagad had proposed to the woman who is now his wife.” (p. 74). Apart from Roemaisa, Soedjagad’s anger also arises when Idroes Moeria precedes him in buying tobacco from Mr. Trisno. The quotation is as follows:

*“Kamu beli mbako buat siapa?”*

*“Bukan buat siapa-siapa. Buat aku sendiri.”*

*“Buat apa beli mbako sebanyak itu? Mau ngeses sampe klenger, kowe?” Idroes Moeria kembali hanya nyengir. Dia tak hendak menjelaskan rencananya. Dia ingin orang lain melihatnya saja. Soedjagad pulang dengan melihatnya saja. Soedjagad pulang dengan tampang kecewa. Tak jadi dapat persekot dia (Kumala, 2012, p. 60).*

The quote shows how Soedjagad looked down Idroes Moeria, who buys Mr. Trisno’s remaining tobacco. Soedjagad is angry with Idroes Moeria by highlighting the words “*Mau ngeses sampe klenger kowe?*” which translates into “Do you want to smoke until dying?” reveals the bitterness and resentment that drive his actions. Because of these two main reasons, Soedjagad makes some attempts to bring down Idroes Moeria by using *kretek*.

First, Soedjagad’s attempts to bring down Idroes Moeria’s *kretek* business involve imitating Idroes’ *kretek* products. Whenever Idroes releases a new product, Soedjagad will follow him by releasing a new product with a comparable brand name. This act of counterfeit is not just a business strategy; it serves as a symbolic attack on Idroes’s creativity and innovation, a way for Soedjagad to assert his dominance in the *kretek* market. The quotation below shows Soedjagad’s attempt:

*Garwo kulo berarti perempuanku/istriku, ada tulisan tambahan kecil di iklan itu: ‘Diproduksi oleh Kretek Djagad, Kota M’. Kretek itu bergambar seorang perempuan, memang bukan potret, melainkan seperti potret yang jejak garisnya digambar ulang sehingga wajahnya terlihat jelas...Dengan nama dagang demikian, jelas-jelas Soedjagad berniat merebut pasar Kretek Gadis (Kumala, 2012, p. 152).*

The quotation *above* highlights Soedjagad's attempt to harm *Kretek Gadis'*, Idroes' *kretek* brand, reputation by launching his latest *kretek* brand, *Kretek Garwo Kulo*. By purposely introducing *Kretek Garwo Kulo*, a brand translated as "My Wife," Soedjagad launches a direct assault on Idroes' highly successful *Kretek Gadis*, which translates to "Girl." This strategic move is not merely a coincidence but a calculated attempt to undermine Idroes' brand identity and capture *Kretek Gadis'* market share. Besides that, Soedjagad's timing in introducing *Kretek Garwo Kulo* is also noteworthy. The release of the brand coincides closely with Idroes' introduction of *Kretek Gadis*, suggesting that Soedjagad is deliberately seeking to capitalise on Idroes' success and popularity. Soedjagad wants to confuse customers and harm the brand equity that Idroes has carefully developed by entering the market with a competitor product that looks a lot like *Kretek Gadis*. The combined impact of the brand name, the woman's portrait, and the strategic timing solidify Soedjagad's intentions. By launching *Kretek Garwo Kulo*, Soedjagad is trying to cause emotional and monetary harm to Idroes, and he is not just competing in the *kretek* market but also fighting a personal rivalry against them.

Besides imitating Idroes' *kretek* brand, Soedjagad also tries to outperform Idroes' *kretek* reputation by imitating Idroes' way of marketing. When Idroes promotes his *kretek* in the newspaper, Soedjagad also follows him in putting his *kretek* brand in the newspaper. Moreover, he even puts more extensive advertisements aside from Idroes Moeria's. The quotation is as follows:

*Idroes Moeria masih berusaha menahan kekesalan hingga akhirnya di satu Minggu pagi dia membuka koran dan menemukan propaganda Kretek Proklamasi di halaman yang sama tempat Kretek Merdeka! dipropagandakan...Posisinya di atas segaris pandangan mata, sedangkan propaganda Kretek Merdeka! di bawah. Orang yang melihat propaganda Kretek Merdeka! harus menunduk ataupun melipat korannya* (Kumala, 2012, p. 125 - 126).

The quotation shows that Soedjagad copies Idroes' way of marketing by putting *Kretek Proklamasi*, Soedjagad's brand, advertisement on the top of *Kretek Merdeka!*, Idroes' brand advertisement. Soedjagad's decision to mirror Idroes' use of newspaper advertisements is very strategic. Newspapers were a primary source of information and entertainment in Indonesia during this era, making them a powerful tool for reaching a broad audience. By placing his *Kretek Proklamasi* advertisements in the same newspapers where Idroes' *Kretek Merdeka* advertisement appeared, Soedjagad ensures that consumers are directly confronted with a

comparison between the two brands. This strategy creates a sense of competition and forces consumers to reconsider their loyalties. Besides, Soedjagad's advertisement placement in the newspaper does not only imitate Idroes' brand. He takes it further by outdoing Idroes regarding advertisement size and placement. The quotation explicitly states that Soedjagad's advertisements were "more extensive" than Idroes', meaning he was willing to invest more resources to gain more consumers. This strategic move demonstrates Soedjagad's will to outperform Idroes' brand recognition and lead the industry. Soedjagad's imitation of Idroes' marketing strategies is not merely a business tactic but a calculated act of rivalry. This imitation directly challenges Idroes' expertise and undermines his business reputation. Soedjagad is not content with competing with Idroes; he wants to surpass and prove he is the superior *kretek* entrepreneur. Interestingly, I found that even though Soedjagad is motivated by dislike for Idroes, Soedjagad's constant efforts to beat Idroes help the *kretek* industry grow and improve. His desire to be better pushes him to create new products and ways to sell them, which could lead to higher quality and more exciting *kretek* overall. However, this positive effect does not change the fact that his reasons for doing so are harmful and selfish.

Last, Soedjagad's actions during Idroes' exile further underscore his manipulative use of *kretek* for personal rivalry. The quotation is as follows:

*Dengan yakin, Djagad mendekati Roemaisa terang-terangan. Ia bahkan bersedia memberi tambahan modal untuk mengembangkan Klobot Djojobojo, tapi selalu Roemaisa Roemaisa menolaknya. Hingga suatu hari, Soedjagad kembali datang menemui Juru Tulis dan menyatakan maksud terang-terangan ingin melamar Roemaisa...Tak lama, kabar burung pun beredar, bahwa tak lama lagi akan ada kongsi antara Klobot Djojobojo dan Klobot Djagad (Kumala, 2012, p. 83 - 84).*

The quotation shows that Soedjagad took advantage of the moment by proposing to Roemaisa and spreading rumors of the business merger. He offers sponsorship to *Kretek* Djojobojo to Roemaisa so she can live comfortably. Moreover, he even tells many people in the M Town that *Kretek* Djagad, Soedjagad's *kretek* brand, will be in union with *Kretek* Djojobojo. Soedjagad's actions while Idroes is away show how he uses *kretek* to hurt his rival. His offer of help to Roemaisa and the rumors he spreads about a business merger are not acts of kindness. He is trying to take advantage of the situation and upset Roemaisa, hoping to cause problems between her and Idroes. This suggests that Soedjagad's primary goal is not to help the *kretek* industry but

to get back at Idroes and gain more power for himself. For Soedjagad, *kretek* is not about business but about personal goals.

In conclusion, Soedjagad shows how *kretek*, a tool often linked to success and masculinity in Javanese culture, can also be used for personal rivalry. His actions go against the usual positive ideas about *kretek*, showing its potential for harm. His main goal is to hurt Idroes. Soedjagad's actions show that cultural symbols can have many meanings, and sometimes, those meanings can be used to hurt others.