



Beauty Company Labeled "Beautiful Like a Palace Princess" As Evidence of the Commodification of the Ngadi Sarira Putri Tradition of the Surakarta Palace

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the emergence of a beauty enterprise with the tagline "beautiful as a palace princess", particularly in Surakarta City, which is evidence of the commodification of the ngadi sarira putri Keraton Surakarta heritage. The study results indicate that the emergence of a beauty company labeled "beautiful in the style of a palace princess" amid modernization reveals that beauty in the style of a palace princess merely enhances the visualization of personal beauty without enhancing inner beauty. This does not adhere to the concept of the royal princess's beauty as described in the Surakarta Palace's ngadi sarira putri tradition. This study employs qualitative methods and interpretive data analysis approaches to define, comprehend, and determine the clarity of a beauty company with the tagline "beautiful as a palace princess" as evidence of the commercialization of the tradition of ngadi sarira putri Surakarta palace. Data were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation studies.

Keywords: *Beauty Company; Commodification; Tradition; Ngadi Sarira Putri Keraton*

Introduction

Daily education on preserving bodily hygiene and health, paying attention to appearance, and caring for Attractiveness is essential for women. In Javanese terminology, the art of caring for Beauty is known as *ngadi sarira*. *Ngadi sarira* means maintaining internal and external cleanliness and wellness (Soedibjo, 1984:10). Beauty is essential in supporting appearance. Ancient Javanese women learned how to take care of themselves using indigenous flora. It is claimed that traditional herb recipes will enhance one's appearance and keep the body healthy.

Their ancestors passed down habits that were carried out to beautify themselves for women and are still maintained today. *Ngadi sarira* is a tradition that grew in royal circles, including the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace. Carrying out beauty treatments according to the procedures of the princess of the palace is called *ngadi sarira princess* of the palace. The palace princesses get unique beauty treatments prepared by the maids according to the palace's secret beauty recipes. The essence of *ngadi sarira*, which developed in the palace environment, is caring for a woman's inner beauty to get a perfect life and shape her personality according to the customs of Javanese culture. The tradition of *ngadi sarira* is part of a "great tradition," which is different from the "little tradition" of people outside the walls of the palace (Redfiled, 1982:57).

The tradition of *ngadi sarira*, which was exclusive and previously only performed by the palace's daughters, today can be carried out by everyone outside the palace walls. Much of the palace culture revealed to the outside occurred due to the entry of modernization in Indonesia, which then touched the palace environment. In this modern era, various things can be made into commodities. Exclusive cultural heritage such as *ngadi sarira* is also not spared from commodification. In this era, capitalism can join in the process of cultural transformation, which turns use values into exchange values, including selling a tradition considered sacred for global economic interests.

The emergence of a princess palace-style beauty care business that is part of the *ngadi sarira* makes traditional values a commodification. The tradition of *ngadi sarira* which was exclusive among the palace princesses has now become a commodity that is commercialized outside the palace walls. Women who are tempted by advertisements marketed by the beauty industry will flock to salons and spas for treatments. With the guarantee of 'beautiful like a palace princess' which is obtained by doing treatments in modern salons and spas. In fact, the concept of *ngadi sarira*, which originally belonged to the palace, balances treatment from outside and from within a person. In contrast to the model of treatment in salons or spas that do not use prayers and rituals like those of the palace princesses. The phenomenon of royal princess-style beauty treatments in salons and spas is proof that there has been a commodification of the tradition of *ngadi sarira putri* of the Surakarta Palace.

Research Methods

This research employs qualitative approaches as well as interpretive data analysis tools. This research is focused on examining a beauty company labeled "beautiful like a palace princess" as evidence of the commercialization of the *ngadi sarira putri Keraton Surakarta* culture. Based on data gathered through audio recordings, documents belonging to the Surakarta Palace, scientific papers, and interviews with informants, this research aims to systematically define, comprehend, and explain data about the phenomenon under study.

This study employs commodification theory as the primary theory (grand theory) and Jean Baudrillard's simulation theory (simulacra) as a supporting theory (middle theory). Commodification is a capitalist economic process in which high-quality products and signs are transformed into commodities or items whose primary purpose is to be sold on the market (Barker, 2005:517). According to Piliang, commodification is changing something that was not previously a commodity into one (Piliang, 2011:23). A commodity is something that exists primarily to be sold in a market. Commodification refers to the concepts of Marx and Simmel, who agreed that the spirit of profit maximization in a money economy based on capitalism resulted in symptoms of commodification in numerous aspects of people's life (Turner, 1992:155-158). According to several experts, commodification is transforming an item or service into a commodity that may be commercialized.

According to Jean Baudrillard, commodification in consumer society occurs when a thing is purchased as a sign commodity rather than for its use-value consciousness. The advent of the commodification process has resulted in the creation of an artificial object (simulacrum) that, in the end, causes people to only consume these products as a sign commodity (Sutrisno and Putranto, 2005:34). Based on this argument, it is possible to conclude that commodification is a process of changing the value of an object that results in the production of replica products as a sign of the emergence of an 'as if the culture' in a consumer society. Consumer culture will be blindly imprisoned in a simulacra environment preoccupied with phantom demands. People shop or pay for services mainly provided to satisfy the urge to earn more status in their social surroundings rather than to survive.

Information regarding the *ngadi sarira princess palace* custom and a beauty company labeled "beautiful like a palace princess" was gathered through interviews. The outcomes of the discussions, in the form of informant replies, were then written down so that they could be retrieved and provided as supporting data in the study.

Results and Discussion

Ngadi Sarira Surakarta Palace Princess

Traditions related to the art of decoration in the life of palace women, namely *ngadi sarira*. In Javanese, *ngadi sarira* comes from the word 'adi'. *Adi* means good. *Ngadi* means to make good. *Sarira* is the body in the physical sense. *Ngadi sarira* is an effort to improve physical fitness (BRM Bambang Irawan, interview, 29/07/22). In general, *ngadi sarira* is treating beauty using traditional recipes. *Ngadi sarira* is an exclusive tradition because previously it was only done by the king's daughters in the palace. In particular, *ngadi sarira princess* Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta is a clean and healthy internal and external beauty treatment using traditional recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation from ancestors. The concept of the *ngadi sarira* ceremony performed by the palace's daughters is of course different from the *ngadi sarira* ceremony performed outside the palace walls. The Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta as the center of Javanese culture has an important position and role for the Javanese people, so it is not surprising that the habits and way of life of the Javanese people are heavily influenced by the culture of the palace.

The tradition of *ngadi sarira putri* of the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace is thought to have existed since the days of the Mataram kingdom or even long before that time. The Surakarta Kasunanan Palace is a continuation of the Mataram Palace. The last capital of the Islamic Mataram kingdom was located in Surakarta. Then only after that split into Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat and Surakarta Hadiningrat. So the tradition of *ngadi sarira* has been passed down from generation to generation since the Mataram era. The development of the tradition of *ngadi sarira* princess palace is not fully documented. However, this knowledge of the royal palace's *ngadi sarira* princess is scattered in several manuscript excerpts as contained in the Wulangreh manuscript by Paku Buwono IV and the Wulang Putri manuscript. Several teachings related to *ngadi sarira* Putri Keraton are also found in manuscript excerpts compiled by Pawiyatan Pambiwara Marcu Kundha Karaton Surakarta Hadiningrat, such as in the Sarat Sarana Tiyang Wawrat manuscript and the Kawruh Sanggama manuscript.

The palace princess takes care of her from within by consuming traditional herbs, paying attention to a balanced diet, doing gymnastics, and other efforts so that beauty can radiate from within the body. It also takes more effort to establish the inner beauty of a princess. In the tradition of *ngadi sarira*, a palace princess is often asked to be concerned (*dawuh prihatin*) to receive blessings from the almighty in living a much better life. According to traditional Javanese beliefs passed down from previous ancestors, a woman who is often concerned in her life will quickly get help (*pitulungan*) from God. The help she gets from God can be in any form, such as a match that fits her heart, being a strong human who is not easily shaken, and always getting blessings for every prayer, she said.

Several rituals are performed to strengthen the inner beauty of a princess and carry out the tradition of *ngadi sarira*, namely *ngudhup mlathi*, *mutih*, *adus bengi*, *туру sepiasan*, *bath at night*, *anyepan*, *patigeni*, *nyegah iwak*, and meditation. All these rituals are carried out to get closer to God Almighty to obtain the inner beauty of a princess. In each of these rituals, some prayers and mantras must be said. Thus, the beauty of a princess is not only beautiful from the outside appearance that is made up using makeup but also beautiful from within, which is emitted through an aura or charisma.

The History of a Beauty Company Labeled as Beautiful Like a Palace Princess

In terms of maintaining beauty and caring for the body with traditional ingredients, the lifestyle of the Surakarta palace princesses inspired entrepreneurs in Indonesia's beauty market to create economic opportunities. In the 1970s, cosmetic companies pioneered the beauty concept for Javanese women who use natural herbal ingredients as face and body cosmetics. Mustika Ratu is the founder of Indonesia's most prominent modern packaged traditional cosmetics business. This beauty company has a history of researching palace princesses' natural beauty to develop natural beauty formulas. Moorjati Soedibjo is the founder of PT Mustika Ratu Tbk, which he established in 1975 by conducting research at the Surakarta

Palace and reading old documents from the Sasono Pustoko Museum Radyo Pustoko Surakarta. As stated in the *Serat-serat Boreh Wulang Dalem* by Sri Susuhunan Paku Buwono IV, Sri Susuhunan Paku Buwono IX, and Sri Susuhunan Paku Buwono X (Soedibjo, 1984:14).

Establishing a cosmetics company in Indonesia that elevates the image of beauty in the style of a palace princess has influenced other industries to follow the same path. The cultural sector provides salons and spas with modern techniques for caring for ngadi sarira, such as a palace princess. The industry offers care products with labels akin to "beautiful as a palace princess," influencing its consumers to feel like they are palace princesses. The exclusive ngadi sarira ceremony, which was previously performed only by palace princesses, can now be experienced by modern Javanese women.

A Beauty Company Labeled "Beautiful Like a Palace Princess" as Evidence of the Commodification of the Ngadi Sarira Putri Tradition of the Surakarta Palace

Several beauty salons and spas in the city of Surakarta carry the theme of beauty like a palace princess, one of which is Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa. Spa place located on Jl. Parang Kesit No.12, Sondakan, Laweyan District, Surakarta City, offers a variety of products and beauty care packages, like a royal princess. Consumers can enjoy several packages, such as spa packages for brides and grooms, spa packages for pregnant women, special children's spa packages, and so on—complete treatment for all body parts. Consumers can choose treatments according to their needs, such as slimming the body, whitening the whole body, smoothing the skin, hair care, vaginal care, hair removal, flower bath, relaxation, and body massage.

From the data found by researchers, the owner of the Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa is not someone who has a kinship with the Surakarta Sasunanan Palace family. The results of interviews with the therapist said that "the owner of this spa comes from Klaten" (Gita, interview, 14/06/22), indicating that the owner is not originally from Surakarta. When viewed from the spa's name, it consists of two main vocabularies, Royal and Kedaton. Because the context of Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa is in English, it can be seen that the word Royal in English means royalty, which is a word used to indicate that someone is connected or has a relationship with the king, queen, or emperor. The term Royal also refers to a king, queen, emperor, or a member of their family (accessed via <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/royal> on 23/10/22). Then the word Kedaton in the Indonesian Dictionary means kingdom. It can also be interpreted as a castle or palace. So, it can be concluded that the name of this spa place has a meaning that is closely related to the palace or kingdom. Although the owner of the Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa is not someone who has a kinship with the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace, the owner uses the palace's name and the palace's princess for the brand of the business running. This proves that the palace's character is very exclusive and can be sold as part of the product name of capitalism, in line with what was said by the following sources.

"So, for example Mbok Sarun's Grilled Chicken, if I'm not mistaken it's owned by Chinese. Actually, we can't see that from the shop name. So, you have to know from the owner, because the palace's words are sexy. This means that it is still being sold everywhere. Because it is perceived that the princess of the palace is beautiful. Charismatic beauty. But now people see beauty, right from visualization. That means not seeing the aura that is displayed from that beauty. So, it's quite hard, I mean not everyone now has that kind of ability." (BRM Bambang Irawan, interview 29/07/22).

According to the source cited in the above quotation, a salon or spa with a palace theme cannot be identified by its brand name but by its proprietor. This means the owner only sells the name, even though they are not a palace person, using the palace name as a business brand. Due to the fact that the word 'palace' is still being marketed for sale, people continue to believe that the palace has a unique culture that cannot be found elsewhere. The public's perception that the personification of a princess from the palace is beautiful is connected to the label "like palace princess." Therefore, if you incorporate palace elements

into your business's marketing, you will attract more customers. Even though, in reality, the palace princess's natural beauty emanates not only physical beauty but also an inner glow. Because not everyone has the charisma of beauty like the princesses of the palace, who have been trained from birth to study the art of ngadi sarira, it can be deduced that consumer society only recognizes visual beauty from the outside.

Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa's tagline, "Discover the Luxury of Palace Princess Treatment," is intended to make customers feel like they are receiving royal princess-style beauty treatments. This label is an advertisement provided by the beauty company Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa to attract customers who desire royal princess-style beauty treatments. After completing the treatment, those interested in utilizing this spa's services will feel as lovely as a princess. In such a life, truth and falsehood, reality and fiction, appear distinct. As a consequence of the simulation, the resulting fact is an apparent state. This is consistent with Jean Baudrillard's assertion that pseudo-reality is a circumstance that traps humans within an authentic reality. Similar to consumers who receive cosmetic procedures and subsequently believe they are as lovely as palace princesses; these consumers are unknowingly stuck in virtual reality. Ordinary consumers are only familiar with the spa's techniques for treating princesses of the palace. Then, they are led to believe this is what it is like to receive royal princess treatment. Thus, according to Baudrillard, in the simulation language, humans inhabit a realm of reality in which the distinction between the real and the fictitious or the true and the false becomes exceptionally hazy. Humans inhabit the actual, imaginary place (Piliang, 2011:161). The purpose of Simulacra is to monitor society covertly by persuading and convincing individuals that the simulation is the objective reality. This resulted in humans not being aware of the presence of this simulation.

Suppose you desire flawless beauty like a palace princess. In this scenario, persistent maintenance efforts are required, not simply one or two body treatments like the princess of the palace, who has maintained a healthy body and regular beauty treatments since childhood. As expressed by Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Wandansari below.

"Yes, I can see that the quality is really maintained. Making a spa is really good. But if the people do it only sometimes according to the person's own needs or *ming sak gebyaran tok* (only once or twice), then it won't work. But if the treatment for ngadi sarira has been instilled in our environment since childhood, that's different. And even in my time my sisters probably did it unlike me. Incidentally, I am close to the royal courtiers who still make it. Then I need this treatment to take care of my skin. (GKR Wandansari, interview, 19/7/22).

According to the preceding statement, running ngadi sarira must be routine to achieve optimal effects. The word "*ming sak gebyaran tok*" suggests that performing beauty treatments only once will not make them effective or successful. Each princess in the palace conducts the ceremony differently. This related to beauty recipes and varied practices based on her ancestors' inherited traditions. Nonetheless, the objective of ngadi sarira remains the same: to achieve inner and physical beauty. The quotation above explains the princess of the palace's view that enterprises in the beauty industry could preserve quality. This implies that all women require beauty maintenance for their bodies. If, in the past, royal courtiers assisted princesses in mixing the ingredients for ancient sarira rituals, the advent of spas and beauty salons would make it easier for women to take care of their bodies and keep their beauty in the present day.

Regarding the materials used for treatments at Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa, they claim that they traditionally use natural ingredients, as seen in the following image.



Figure 1. Tools and materials for treatments at Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa
(Source: Roudhotul Munawaroh Documentation, 2022)

The picture above shows that the presentation of materials used for body care is presented in a traditional Javanese concept but packaged modernly. The bowls on a wooden tray contain powder from mashed bengkuang (such kind of yam) and milk used to scrub the body. Coconut shell filled with fragrant flowers. While the bowl made of clay beside it contains various types of natural spices for relaxation. The researcher confirmed the pictures of the treatment materials at Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa with royal courtiers who used to prepare treatment materials for princesses at the Surakarta Kasunanan Palace. The study results showed that the spa treatment materials were more modern than those previously presented by royal courtiers. It is not surprising that modernity, as stated by Anthony Giddens in a book entitled *The Consequences of Modernity*, with all its genius, has succeeded in tearing down the pillars of traditionalist civilization. As in the picture of beauty care tools and ingredients above, the intention is to carry a traditional theme but, in reality, are still touched by modern elements.

Spas may use different ingredients for cosmetic treatments than the palace. The ingredients used in the Sarira Putri Keraton are of the highest quality and wholly natural, with no added chemicals. However, it is suspected that the substances at the spa contain a combination of other fragrance-enhancing components. This is a logical consequence of the fact that materials manufactured in this manner will sell and sell better to consumers. Their quality will influence the value and appeal of commodity products. In keeping with Gusti Kanjeng Ratu Wandansari's assertion, "Although the components for the potions are pricey, the personal concoctions are numerous and not stingy. However, this is not the case for potions that are for sale, as the price will be changed based on the cost of production." (GKR Wandansari, interview, 19/7/22). Therefore, it is not surprising that a product from the Ngadi Sarira Putri Keraton, whose quality differs from that utilized by the Putri Keraton herself, has been discovered.

Researchers attempted to experience one of the beauty treatment packages Royal Kedaton Beauty & Spa offered, specifically the milk spa. This package includes a full-body massage, a milk-based body scrub, care for the intimate female organs (Ratus V), hair care (hair spa & cream bath), foot massage to rest the feet (Foot Relax Therapy), application of a moisturizing body cream (Body butter cream), and a body shower. This sequence of body treatments lasts for one hundred minutes. The objective of a milk spa is to brighten, moisturize, reduce wrinkles, and rejuvenate the client's skin. This entire treatment series concentrates solely on improving the body's external appearance. Researchers guarantee that no rituals or calls for chanting spells or prayers are present, just like in every activity performed by the princesses of the palace. This demonstrates that the ritual ceremony of *ngadi sarira Putri Keraton* is not executed flawlessly in a spa labeled "beautiful as a princess of the palace."

The establishment of a beauty company dubbed 'beautiful like the palace princess' amid modernization conceals the fact that the beauty of the palace princess serves merely to enhance the perception of personal beauty and is unaccompanied by inner beauty. After receiving treatment at a spa that promises the luxury of a royal princess treatment, consumers feel as if they are as lovely as a palace

princess. This is a theory fostered in customers by capitalist players to obtain commercial benefits from the palace's name. Because it was assumed from the start that the princesses of the palace were lovely, the general public or consumers would only sometimes have seen a palace princess in person. Typically, the perspective of a beautiful palace princess emerges after viewing a painting or photograph depicting a beautiful palace princess. However, someone may have never met and directly observed the appearance of a palace princess. They feel that a royal princess is lovely everywhere, even though beauty is subjective, depending on the opinion of each individual.

Conclusion

Those who employ royal princess beauty care services at spas labeled as beautiful, like a palace princess, will feel as beautiful as a palace princess. This type of commodification has presented an artificial object (simulacrum) that, in the end, causes people to consume these products only as a sign commodity, even though the beauty of a genuine palace princess is both external and internal, which has something to do with caring about God Almighty—not simply stunning after receiving beauty salon treatments. According to Jean Baudrillard, commodification in consumer society results in an object that is no longer acquired for its utility but as a sign commodity. Culture is not bound by commodification, which grows broader and more profound with a natural appearance.

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