VOLUME 2
Issue 1, May 2025

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND COMMUNAL STIGMA IN AHMAD TOHARI'S *RUMAH YANG TERANG*

Fadila
Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, Indonesia

Article || Published: 30/05/2024
https://doi.org/10.58989/appling.v2i1.39
fadila.bsa.habsyi@gmail.com

How to cite || Fadila (2025). Social Stratification and Communal Stigma in Ahmad Tohari's *Rumah yang Terang*. Applied Linguistics: Innovative Approaches and Emerging Trends, 2(1), 56–70. https://doi.org/10.58989/appling.v2i1.39

Text || © Author – License: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International

YNIMGM
YAYASAN NURUL IMAN | MUARA GADING MAS
e-ISSN: 3047-549X

Abstract || This study aims to analyze the story construction and social structure in Ahmad Tohari's short story *Rumah Yang Terang*. This research employs a qualitative method, utilizing a structuralist approach to dissect intrinsic elements and the sociology of literature to understand the represented social realities. Data collection was conducted through close reading and note-taking, followed by content analysis encompassing unitizing, coding, and inferring procedures. The findings indicate that the story's construction serves not only as a narrative framework but also as a medium to represent the tension between tradition and modernity. Sociologically, the short story captures complex social structural dynamics, where patriarchal authority within the family clashes with the hegemonic social control of the rural community. These findings confirm that individual acceptance of modernity is often hindered by communal stigma and established social stratification. This study concludes that Ahmad Tohari successfully codifies rural cultural friction into a concise narrative, reaffirming literature's position as a reflective social document.

Keywords || Ahmad Tohari; *Rumah Yang Terang*; social sociology; social structure; story construction.

Abstrak || Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konstruksi cerita dan struktur sosial dalam cerpen *Rumah Yang Terang* karya Ahmad Tohari. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan strukturalisme untuk membedah unsur intrinsik dan sosiologi sastra untuk memahami realitas sosial yang direpresentasikan. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui *close reading* dan teknik catat, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan prosedur analisis isi yang mencakup pemisahan unit, pengkodean, serta penarikan inferensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konstruksi cerita dalam cerpen ini tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai kerangka naratif, tetapi juga sebagai medium untuk merepresentasikan ketegangan antara tradisi dan modernitas. Secara sosiologis, cerpen ini memotret dinamika struktur sosial yang kompleks, di mana otoritas patriarkal dalam keluarga berbenturan dengan hegemoni kontrol sosial masyarakat desa. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa penerimaan individu terhadap modernitas sering kali terhambat oleh stigma komunal dan stratifikasi sosial yang mapan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Ahmad Tohari berhasil mengodifikasi gesekan budaya pedesaan ke dalam narasi yang padat, sekaligus menegaskan posisi karya sastra sebagai dokumen sosial yang reflektif.

Katakunci || Ahmad Tohari; konstruksi cerita; *Rumah Yang Terang*; sosiologi sastra; struktur sosial.

Introduction

Literature is a form of creative expression that reflects various aspects of human life through beautiful and meaningful language. As a cultural product, literature does not merely mirror life but also serves as a medium to critique, contemplate, and understand the social, political, and cultural phenomena present in society. A literary work is a complex structure built upon intrinsic elements such as theme, plot, setting, character, and language style that synergize to create meaning and aesthetic experiences for the reader.

Among the various forms of literature, the short story (cerpen) holds a unique power to convey profound meanings and dense messages within a limited space. According to Nurgiyantoro (2022), a short story can typically be read in a single sitting, ranging from half an hour to two hours. This brevity dictates a limitation in the development of its elements (Tarigan, 2021), demanding a narrative that is concise, focused, and free of unnecessary details, yet capable of leaving a unified, profound impression on the reader (Sedgwick, 2021; Priyanti, 2020).

One short story that has garnered significant recognition in Indonesian literature is *Rumah Yang Terang* by Ahmad Tohari. Known for his simple yet deeply meaningful narratives, Tohari frequently presents stories that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also rich in social critique. *Rumah Yang Terang* stands out through its flowing plot, deep characterization, and thematic focus on spiritual, social, and moral enlightenment, making it a vital subject for academic inquiry.

To fully grasp the depth of a literary work, one must examine both its internal framework and its external connections to reality. This research is grounded in two primary theoretical approaches which are structural analysis and sociology of literature. Structural analysis is narrative's foundation relies on its story construction. According to Teeuw (2018) and Nurgiyantoro (2018), structural analysis emphasizes the meticulous examination of intrinsic elements to uncover how they interconnect to create comprehensive meaning. Without a clear construction, the moral or social message intended by the author becomes obscure.

However, Wellek (2022) asserts that literary works are social documents reflecting the society of their time. The sociological approach is highly relevant for analyzing how literature relates to social realities, norms, and dynamics (Wellek, 2022,). Based on the framework by Wellek and Warren (in Putri, 2019) and Damono (2019), this study

focuses on the *sociology of the literary work*, examining how social elements, stratifications, and interactions are represented within the text.

Despite the apparent conciseness of the short story format, *Rumah Yang Terang* encapsulates highly complex social dynamics that demand thorough investigation. The core problem identified in this research revolves around how the narrative intricately constructs a reflection of real-world social structures, particularly the tension arising from shifting societal values. This tension is prominently depicted through the intergroup friction between those who embrace modernity symbolized by the introduction of electricity and those who remain deeply tethered to traditional ways of life (Wellek, 2022). Furthermore, the narrative highlights divergent social behaviors, ranging from adaptive optimism to resistant dissatisfaction, which underscore how individuals navigate and react to broader societal transformations (Supardi, 2015). These behavioral differences are further complicated by a clear social stratification based on economic status, educational background, and culture, revealing a stark contrast between an educated middle class open to progress and a lower class fiercely guarding its traditional roots (Aminuddin, 2018).

Addressing these complex social dimensions requires an analytical framework that transcends conventional literary criticism, establishing the unique novelty of this study. While Ahmad Tohari's extensive literary repertoire has been widely examined by scholars, this research offers a fresh, dual-lens perspective by harmoniously integrating structural analysis with a robust sociological approach. The distinctive contribution of this study lies in its specific mapping of the intrinsic narrative construction directly onto the transitional friction between traditional and modern societal groups within *Rumah Yang Terang*. By investigating how structural elements are actively utilized to build these social representations, this research uncovers previously unexplored cultural potentials and provides a novel understanding of how rural social conflicts and class stratifications are aesthetically codified in contemporary Indonesian literature.

This study sets forth clear objectives to systematically dissect these intertwined literary and social elements. Building upon this structural analysis, the study simultaneously seeks to thoroughly understand and map the underlying social structures woven into the text. Ultimately, the objective is to elucidate the intricate intergroup relations, dynamic social behaviors, and definitive social categories that are vividly reflected within the short story, thereby offering a profound

and comprehensive contribution to the broader field of Indonesian literary studies.

The Role of Reflection and Self-Analysis in Developing Presentation Skills

Reflection and self-analysis play a pivotal role in the development of students' presentation skills within the higher education environment. Reflection enables students to consciously evaluate and critique their presentations upon completion, scrutinizing both the process and outcomes with a critical eye (Grez et al., 2012). This entails assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their presentations, as well as gaining profound insights into avenues for enhancing quality in the future (Tsang, 2020). Self-analysis involves deeper reflection on specific aspects of presentations, such as speaking style, presentation structure, or body language. It empowers students to identify areas of excellence and areas needing improvement, and to devise concrete steps for skill enhancement (Babaii et al., 2016). Thus, reflection and self-analysis afford students the opportunity to learn from their own experiences, take responsibility for their personal development, and proactively enhance their presentation skills (Léger, 2009).

Moreover, reflection and self-analysis facilitate effective reflective learning. Students can correlate their presentation experiences with relevant learning theories, identify patterns or trends in their performance, and comprehend factors influencing their presentation skills (Ritchie, 2016). Consequently, they not only learn from their mistakes but also from their successes, developing a more comprehensive understanding of presentation skills. The role of reflection and self-analysis in developing presentation skills is critical. They enable students to become active learners, take control of their own development, and progressively enhance the quality of their presentations. Therefore, integrating reflection and self-analysis into presentation teaching programs at universities can be an effective strategy in supporting holistic and sustainable student learning.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis to specifically investigate the representation of social structures within Ahmad Tohari's short story *Rumah yang Terang*. To achieve this primary aim, the research integrates a structural approach, which examines the text's

intrinsic story construction (Teeuw, 2018), with a sociological perspective to map how these narrative elements reflect real-world social dynamics (Sugiyono in Wakarmamu, 2022). The primary qualitative data consists of verbal texts—such as dialogues, narrations, and behavioral descriptions—extracted directly from the short story (Muhadjir, 2020), which is comprehensively supported by relevant secondary academic literature.

Data collection is executed through systematic close reading and note-taking techniques. Close reading is conducted iteratively to attain a profound understanding of the text's underlying social nuances (Tarigan, 2020), followed by meticulous note-taking to document textual evidence of intergroup relations, social behaviors, and stratifications (Sugiyono, 2021; Sugiyono in Purnamanda, 2024). The gathered data is subsequently analyzed using the qualitative content analysis framework proposed by Krippendorff (2004) and Mudjia (2020). This analytical procedure encompasses unitizing the text into specific socio-narrative components, sampling significant textual fragments, and conducting a three-tiered coding process (open, axial, and selective) to directly correlate the intrinsic story construction with its embedded social structures. Finally, the data undergoes reduction and inferring to establish meaningful correlations, culminating in a coherent academic narrative that elucidates how the short story aesthetically codifies societal realities.

Results

Based on the research findings, the social structure in this short story does not merely serve as a passive setting but acts as a highly dominant driving force of conflict. Ahmad Tohari meticulously captures how a rural community operates through social surveillance, communal expectations, and patriarchal power relations. The primary tension arises from the clash between individual (or family) autonomy and societal hegemony.

To summarize these sociological findings, below is an analytical tabulation of the social structure elements operating within the story:

Table 1. Elements of Social Structure

Element of Social Structure	Thematic Focus	Analytical Representation & Form of Conflict
Family (Social Unit & Generation)	Loyalty vs. Progressiveness	The family becomes the primary arena of conflict between the older (conservative) and younger (progressive) generations. There is an ambivalence in emotional bonds: the family is a source of affection yet also a trigger for pain due to differing principles.
Societal Pressure	Alienation & Stigma	Society acts as a social judge that monitors and demands conformity. Non-compliance with modernity (electricity) results in sanctions in the form of social alienation for the narrator.
Power Structure	Patriarchy vs. Communal Hegemony	A clash of two authorities: the absolute authority of the father inside the home (patriarchy) confronts the collective power of the community outside (the threat of reporting to the village head and public opinion pressure).
Community Dynamics	Surveillance (Social Panopticon)	The rural community is depicted as highly skeptical of anything different. Gossip and insinuations function as social control tools to force individuals to submit to the expectations of the majority.

Within the social structure of this story, the family is the smallest unit absorbing the direct impact of macro-level societal changes. The relationship between the narrator and the father represents the intergenerational gap. The father stands as the last bastion of tradition and conservative principles, while the narrator represents a younger generation yearning to adapt to modern times. This dynamic spark a sharp internal conflict. As demonstrated in the findings, the narrator realizes that *"Family is my heart, though it often beats with pain."* This affirms that although the narrator feels hindered by their father's rigidity, their affectionate bond remains intact. The family is not portrayed as a shattered institution, but rather one being deeply tested by the transition to modernity. Ahmad Tohari illustrates with striking clarity how a

communal society operates through psychological pressure. The neighborhood environment affords no room for individual choice or autonomy. The father's refusal to install electricity is perceived as a threat that could make the entire village appear "backward." Consequently, the community applies a strict social surveillance system, where the narrator feels *"followed by the glare of sharp, judging eyes."* In sociological terms, the rural community here acts like a panopticon, where every conversation turns into gossip and an instrument of punishment. This condition effectively strips away individual freedom, creating a profound sense of alienation for the narrator, who is trapped in the middle of societal expectations they cannot fulfill.

Power Relations and Layered Control The power structure in "Rumah yang Terang" operates in overlapping and colliding layers. In the domestic sphere, the father holds absolute patriarchal power; his decision to reject electricity is final and cannot be contested by the narrator. However, in the public sphere, power rests in the collective hands of a society that *"does not hesitate to complain to the village head (lurah)."* This demonstrates that power is not always structural or governmental; it often manifests through cultural hegemony and communal pressure. Ultimately, the narrator becomes a victim of these two opposing power structures: they are powerless against their father's authority inside the home, while simultaneously unable to silence *"their voices, which are louder than the voice of my heart"* outside the home.

Mapping Social Relations

To summarize the dynamics of the social relations previously described, below is a data tabulation illustrating how interactions among characters and the community build the structural tension within the narrative.

Table 2. Social Relations in the Short Story "*Rumah Yang Terang*"

No	Category of Social Relation	Representative Quote	Sociological Interpretation
1	The Family as a Social Unit	"Father does not understand how important electricity is to our lives."	The family functions as the primary arena where the conflict between the preservation of tradition and the demands of modern progress emerges.
2	Societal Pressure	"Every step I took felt as if it were	Society exercises a social control function

No	Category of Social Relation	Representative Quote	Sociological Interpretation
		followed by the glare of sharp, judging eyes."	(panopticon) that forces individuals to obey majority norms, triggering cultural alienation.
3	Intergenerational Differences	"They always question why I do not follow my father's ways."	There is an ideological friction between the older and younger generations that tests the stability of moral values within the family.
4	Power Structure	"They do not hesitate to complain to the village head."	Patriarchal authority in the domestic sphere directly collides with the hegemony of public authority and village institutions.
5	Social Dynamics in the Community	"The community is always skeptical of what they do not understand."	Communal norms act as an instrument of conformity that judges and stigmatizes any form of differing principles.

Economic conditions and social stratification in this short story do not merely serve as a peripheral background but act as primary determinants that construct the characters' life choices. Haji Bakir's refusal to install electricity reveals a complex intersection between financial capacity, habits, and life principles. The social class in this story functions as a lens to observe how modernity is interpreted differently by each layer of society. For the modern middle class, electricity is an essential symbol of progress and an improved quality of life. However, for the traditional class holding firmly to its principles, the push for modernity is often viewed as a moral and spiritual burden. This story sharply captures how class hierarchies and economic conditions manifest in the form of prejudices, social demands, and gaps in understanding among the villagers.

Table 3. Representation of Social Class in the Short Story "*Rumah Yang Terang*"

Character	Social Class Category	Representative Quote	Analytical Description
Father (Haji Bakir)	Traditional Middle Class	"He has a belief that living with electricity will invite a waste of light."	Rejects modernity not due to financial constraints, but because of ideological demarcation and strong spiritual beliefs.
Son (Narrator)	Modern Middle Class	"My salary as a propagandist... allows me to own a radio, a tape player, and also a TV."	Possesses economic privilege and technological access but is alienated by the conflict of family loyalty versus public demands.
Neighbors 1 & 2	Opportunistic Middle Class	"Haji Bakir should change his name to Haji Bakhil (Miser)."	Motivated by pragmatism; utilizing superstitious stigma (tuyul) to pressure those hindering their access to electricity.
The Community	Traditional Lower Class	"My village, which has a penchant for gossiping, seemed to have found a way to speak carelessly about my father."	Acts as an easily provoked mass, using gossip as compensation for their low literacy and social powerlessness.

The data above presents a complex portrait of the social class structure in a rural environment experiencing culture shock due to the influx of modernity, specifically electrical infrastructure. Sociologically, Ahmad Tohari divides the community into four class categories shaped by the intersection of economic capacity, educational level, and spiritual depth. Haji Bakir represents the traditional middle class. Materially, he has the

means to follow the tide of progress, yet his life principles and eschatological beliefs compel him to reject the installation of electricity. For Haji Bakir, electricity is not merely a lighting tool but a symbol of extravagance that potentially diminishes the essential "light" he will need later in the afterlife. This steadfastness reflects a spiritual independence that the surrounding, pragmatically oriented social structure fails to comprehend.

On the other hand, the narrator stands as a representation of the modern middle class. His profession as a propagandist and ownership of electronic goods like a television and radio demonstrate the upward vertical mobility he has successfully achieved. Despite having full access to modernity, the narrator is in a vulnerable psychological position, trapped in a dilemma between respecting his father's ascetic principles and submitting to the current of modern lifestyles. Meanwhile, the neighbors reflect the middle class economically but exhibit intellectual and spiritual poverty. They represent an opportunistic group driven by envy and self-interest, going so far as to fabricate irrational accusations like "keeping a *tuyul*" (a mythical spirit used to steal wealth) simply because their access to electricity depends on Haji Bakir's house.

The lowest layer of this structure is occupied by the general village community, depicted as representing the traditional lower class. This society is marginalized not only economically but also intellectually. This is reflected in their communal habit of gossiping and producing mockery without critical reasoning. They mirror a mass entity easily swayed by dominant opinions as a defense mechanism. Overall, this social class mapping solidifies Ahmad Tohari's critique that material or technological advancement unmatched by social literacy, critical thinking, and spiritual empathy will only result in horizontal friction. This story provides an analytical assertion that life choices rooted in spiritual values cannot and should not be judged solely through the economic lens of the working class or the hegemony of the times.

Discussion

The findings of this study robustly confirm the theoretical premise that literature operates simultaneously as an autonomous aesthetic structure and a profound social document. By examining Ahmad Tohari's short story *Rumah yang Terang* through a dual analytical framework, this research demonstrates that intrinsic narrative construction and extrinsic sociological realities are inextricably linked.

From a structuralist perspective, Teeuw (2018) posits that a literary work is built upon interconnected intrinsic elements that synergize to produce unified meaning. The findings align perfectly with this theory, revealing that Tohari does not merely use plot and characterization for narrative progression, but strategically deploys them as personifications of broader societal shifts. The protagonist (the narrator) and the antagonist (the father) are not just individuals engaged in a domestic dispute; they serve as structural vessels representing the ideological clash between progressivism and conservatism. The narrative arc moving from expositional tension to a climactic emotional rupture, and finally culminating in a symbolic resolution (the installation of a 20-watt neon lamp during a traditional 100th-day memorial) validates the structuralist theory that an author resolves complex ideological conflicts through deliberate aesthetic arrangements. The story's construction effectively mirrors the painful yet inevitable transition of a rural society adapting to modernity.

Sociologically, the findings provide substantial empirical support for Wellek's (2022) assertion that literature reflects the social structures, norms, and dynamics of its time. The short story vividly illustrates the sociological concept of communal hegemony and social control. In rural sociological theory, communities often maintain stability through collective consciousness and strict adherence to shared norms. The findings highlight how the village community acts as an invisible panopticon, utilizing gossip, mockery, and the threat of reporting to formal authorities (the village head) as mechanisms of social punishment. The narrator's profound sense of alienation validates the sociological understanding that deviance from communal expectations even in the pursuit of technological progress yields severe psychological and social sanctions. The text proves that in traditional structures, individual autonomy is frequently subordinated to the collective will of the majority.

Furthermore, the analysis of social class in *Rumah yang Terang* enriches existing theories of social stratification. The findings map a complex hierarchy that cannot be defined solely by Marxist economic determinants, but must also incorporate cultural and spiritual capital. Haji Bakir represents the traditional middle class; his refusal of electricity is not driven by economic poverty, but by a conscious ideological demarcation to protect his spiritual integrity from perceived modern decadence. This contrasts sharply with the narrator, who embodies the modern middle class, wielding technological access (radio, TV) as cultural capital.

Most tellingly, the depiction of the neighbors and the general community validates sociological theories regarding the behavior of marginalized classes facing rapid socio-technical change. Lacking both the spiritual depth of Haji Bakir and the modern education of the narrator, the opportunistic neighbors resort to irrationality and superstition accusing the father of keeping a mythical wealth-stealing spirit (*tuyul*). This finding aligns with sociological frameworks suggesting that communities lacking intellectual and economic agency often utilize stigma and superstition as defense mechanisms to rationalize their disadvantages and attack those who disrupt the status quo.

Ultimately, this study confirms that *Rumah yang Terang* transcends its concise format to offer a meticulous dissection of rural socio-cultural transformation. The aesthetic codification of the story proves that literature is an essential sociological tool. The integration of structural and sociological theories in this analysis demonstrates that Tohari successfully utilizes the microcosm of a single, unlit household to illuminate the macrocosmic struggles of a society grappling with the friction between the preservation of sacred traditions and the inescapable current of modernization.

Conclusion

This research successfully demonstrates how the intrinsic story construction in Ahmad Tohari's *Rumah yang Terang* serves as a profound aesthetic reflection of complex social structures. By analyzing the ideological conflict between the traditionalist father and the progressive narrator, the study reveals a layered power dynamic where domestic patriarchal authority collides with communal hegemonic control. It ultimately proves that the community's acceptance or rejection of modernity is dictated by spiritual principles, educational levels, and social stigma rather than mere economic capacity. While these findings offer significant insights, the study is inherently limited by its singular focus on one short story and its exclusive reliance on textual content analysis, which omits the author's broader historical context and empirical reader reception. To build upon this foundation, future research should conduct comparative analyses across multiple works by Tohari to identify broader sociological patterns in his depiction of rural transitions. Additionally, applying alternative frameworks such as reader-response theory, psychological analysis, or ecocriticism would further expand the academic understanding of how contemporary

Indonesian literature codifies the ongoing friction between sacred traditions and social evolution.

References

Journals

Maulana, D., & Fadlillah, F. M. (2022). Analisis cerpen Ahmad Tohari dalam judul "Rumah yang terang". *Ta'rim: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Anak Usia Dini*, *3*(3), 80-85.

Nurhasanah, H., Septiani, V. N., Damara, I., & Putra, A. W. (2024). Analisis strukturalisme naskah darma berjudul RT nol RW nol. *Jurnal Media Akademik (JMA)*, *2*(5).

Puaparita, I., & Bambang, S. (2020). Tindak tutur direktif dan fungsinya dalam kumpulan cerpen pilihan kompas 2017 "Kelas Bercerita". *Diskursus: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia*, *3*(01), 35-43.

Sulistyo, H. (2018). Cerpen 'Rumah Yang Terang': Refleksi hilangnya pesona masyarakat desa dalam kumpulan cerpen Senyum Karyamin karya Ahmad Tohari. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, *19*(1), 73-83.

Books

Aminuddin. (2018). *Pengantar apresiasi karya sastra*. Sinar Baru Algensindo.

Damono, S. D. (2019). *Sosiologi sastra: Pengantar dan penerapan*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Hana, S. (2024). *Pendekatan struktural dalam sastra*. Pustaka Akademika.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Mudjia, R. (2020). *Studi teks dalam penelitian kualitatif*. UM Press.

Muhadjir, N. (2020). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. Rake Sarasin.

Nurgiyantoro, B. (2018). *Teori pengkajian fiksi*. Gadjah Mada University Press.

Priyanti, I. (2020). *Pembelajaran sastra modern*. Rajawali Pers.

Purnamanda, A. (2023). *Analisis isi dan dokumen dalam sastra*. Pustaka Utama.

Putri, S. (2019). *Sosiologi sastra*. Media Press.

Rohman, S. (2020). *Pembelajaran cerpen*. Bumi Aksara.

Sedgwick, E. (2021). *The short story: A critical introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Supardi, D. (2015). *Interaksi sosial dalam karya sastra*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Tarigan, H. G. (2020). *Membaca sebagai suatu keterampilan berbahasa*. Angkasa.

Teeuw, A. (2018). *Sastra dan ilmu sastra: Pengantar teori sastra*. Pustaka Jaya.

Tohari, A. (1995). *Senyum karyamin*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Wakarmamu, T. (2022). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Media Pustaka.

Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (2022). *Theory of literature*. Harcourt, Brace & World.