

# Comparison of Community Life in the Legend of Puyang Perahu Kawah and the Short Story Dua Wajah Ibu by Guntur Alam: A Sociological Analysis of Literature

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## SUBJECT

Literature

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## Abstract

This study aims to compare the representation of life during the colonial and modern eras in literary works through a sociology of literature approach, focusing on the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah" and the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu." The legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah," set during the Dutch colonial era, depicts the struggle of indigenous people against colonial oppression and their social and cultural values. In contrast, the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" which depicts life in the city of Jakarta, highlights the challenges faced by rural migrants in adjusting to the urban environment. The research method used is qualitative descriptive, with reading and note-taking techniques to collect data from literary texts and related secondary sources. The results show that "Puyang Perahu Kawah" reflects social conflict and colonial oppression, while "Dua Wajah Ibu" reveals the social inequality and alienation experienced by migrants in big cities.

## 1. Introduction

A literary work is a fictional product created through imagination and processed creatively by the author. Through literary works, authors can express themselves freely, combining imagination and the reality of life. According to Haslinda (2020), literary works are the author's response to the world around him, so there are often similarities between literary works and real life.

One form of literary work that is often encountered is legend. Legends are folk tales that people believe to be true stories, even though they do not always have strong historical evidence. Legends often contain magical or supernatural elements and are usually related to the origins of a place, object, or tradition (Sitepu et al., 2019). Through legends, we can understand people's views on the world, the values they adhere to, and their hopes and fears.

Apart from legends, short stories (short stories) are also a popular form of literary work. Short stories are shorter fictional narratives than novels, with more straightforward plots and a focus on one or two main characters. Short stories allow authors to convey specific messages or themes concisely and clearly. In short stories, authors can explore various aspects of human life, such as love, conflict, struggle, and the search for the meaning of life. Through short stories, readers are invited to reflect and see the world differently (Nuryatin & Irawati, 2016).

In literary studies, legends and short stories are two works that often reflect society's social and cultural life in their time. Through narratives and characters, literary works can describe historical situations and social changes in the community environment. This study aims to compare the representation of life during the colonial period in the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah" from Banyuasin Regency with city life depicted in the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" by Guntur Alam, using a sociological literary approach. The "Puyang Perahu Kawah" legend is set during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, precisely in Banyuasin Regency, South Sumatra. This story tells of a ketib (Islamic religious figure) and his family living in the Benakat village. Ketib and his family experience pressure from a Dutch officer who wants to marry his daughter, Ayu. Ketib refused the proposal, which resulted in death threats against his family. Ketib used his supernatural powers to save himself. He took his family on a large iron crater as a boat, eventually settling in a remote forest known as Ngelebung.

This legend reflects how Indigenous peoples faced colonial oppression. Through the story of the courage and perseverance of its characters, this legend also highlights the social and cultural values adopted by society at that time. This legend is a cultural heritage rich in moral messages and depicts the social reality during the colonial period.

On the other hand, the short story Guntur Alam's "Two Faces of Mother", published in Kompas in 2012, depicts city life in the modern era. This short story tells of Mak Inang, an older woman from the interior of South Sumatra who visits her child in Jakarta. The harsh and challenging city life is depicted in detail through Mak Inang's experience. She felt alienated and had difficulty adapting to the city environment which was very different from her hometown. This short story shows the contrast between the quiet village life and the hustle and bustle of city life.

Through the character of Mak Inang, Guntur Alam describes the social reality of a complex urban society. The city of Jakarta in this short story is described as a place full of contradictions: modernity and poverty, progress and social injustice. This short story invites readers to reflect on the social changes due to urbanization and modernization, and their impact on individuals and society.

The sociological approach to literature is an appropriate theory for studying human problems, consisting of two words: sociology and literature. Literature expresses human mystical and aesthetic experiences through language as imaginative creativity (Purba, 2022). Meanwhile, sociology focuses on human social behaviour by observing social groups such as family, government, ethnicity, religion, business, and other social organizations. The sociology of literature examines the origins and growth of society in general, rationally, and empirically (Sukmawati, 2019). Research in the sociology of literature also involves the network of human relationships in society. Cultural elements in literary works related to social problems include value systems, social systems, ideas, and cultural tools. Sociological values such as kinship systems, responsibility, compassion, cooperation, conflict, religion, belief, health, and art are reflected in literary works.

## **2. Literature review**

Previous studies have widely conducted analysis using a sociological approach to literary works. For example, research by Qotrun Nanda Octavia, Kiara Mayang Dara, Windi Budi Lestari, and Anggi Aprillia Wijaya in 2024 used the novel "Matahari" by Tere Liye as the object of research, while this study uses the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah" and the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" by Guntur Alam as the object.

Another study using a similar approach was conducted by Irwan Soulisa and Imarnilde E. Fanggi in 2023, which analyzed the legend of "Batu Termanu". Meanwhile, this study will focus on the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah" and the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" by Guntur Alam.

In addition to research using a sociological approach to literature, research uses a different approach but with the same object. For example, research by Intan Ramadhani, Desi Ariyani, and Sugiarti in 2024 analyzed characterization in the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu". This study will analyze the life of the community in the short story and compare the life of the community in the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah". The analysis uses a sociological, literary approach to provide an in-depth view of the relationship between literature and society. This study will examine how the comparison of the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah", which is set during the colonial period, with the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" reflects the social life of the community, reveals relevant social issues and provides an understanding of the social and cultural conditions that underlie the story. This approach identifies the intrinsic elements of literary works and traces how the work interacts with social reality, offering criticism and reflection on the society in which the work emerged.

### **3. Research methods**

In this study, a descriptive qualitative research method was used. According to Irina (2017), qualitative research is a type of research that describes data as it is without changing it into symbols or numbers. The objects of qualitative research cover all areas of human life and everything humans influence. Meanwhile, according to Maryati and Suryawati (Azizah & Al Anshory, 2022), descriptive research defines the properties or characteristics of the phenomenon being studied to reveal the actual situation or problem. The primary data source in this study is the legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah", which was retold by Neny Tryana, S. Pd. (Teacher of SMA Plus Negeri 2 Banyuasin III) through the irwanpratubagswans website (Bangsawan, 2011) in 2011 and the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" by Guntur Alam, which was taken from a collection of several short stories published by Kompas in 2012. Secondary data sources include books, articles, journals, and others related to the research topic. The two data collection techniques used in this study are reading and note-taking. According to Mohajan (2018), reading techniques are used to obtain detailed information about characters, authors, storylines, or truths by reading. Meanwhile, note-taking techniques provide data by recording the information obtained (Nisa, 2018). After collecting the data, the researcher conducted qualitative data analysis using data reduction techniques, data presentation, and drawing conclusions based on the sociology of literature approach.

### **4. Result**

#### **The legend of "Puyang Perahu Kawah"**

From the perspective of the sociology of literature, the story "Puyang Perahu Kawah" can be seen as a reflection of the life of society during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia. This literary work can help us understand the conflict and tension between the colonizers and the indigenous people and how the people fought to survive and fight the colonizers. In addition, this story shows how social and cultural values became an essential part of society at that time. In the story "Puyang Perahu Kawah", several concepts of the sociology of literature can be analyzed systematically.

*By chance, the officer met Ayu. Seeing Ayu's beauty, the officer was immediately attracted. [...] With high confidence, he immediately stated the purpose of his visit, namely to propose to Ayu and to make her a concubine. (Bangsawan, 2011)*

This quote illustrates how the colonizers used their power to impose their will on the native population. With his power, the Dutch officer felt entitled to propose to Ayu, which shows a hierarchy of power where the Dutch were at the top while the natives were under their power. This power hierarchy reflects the colonial social structure that often placed the colonizers in a dominant and exclusive position. As Nur Fauziah (2019) explained, colonial power often created unequal relationships and strengthened the dominance of the ruling group over the colonized group. The colonial party caused the group to become superior.

*The officer did not know that the captain hated the Dutch. The police officer immediately rejected the officer's proposal. As a result, the Dutch officer became furious. He threatened to use his power. The content of the threat makes anyone who hears it sour. The officer gave the officer a time limit to consider his application. When the time limit was set, the officer still refused his proposal; the officer threatened to kill all of Ketib's family without exception. (Bangsawan, 2011)*

The conflict that began with rejecting a proposal shows the tension between colonial power and the indigenous population. The threat of the Dutch officer to kill the entire Ketib family if his proposal was rejected reflects how power can be used to oppress and manipulate others. It also reflects the discriminatory and oppressive attitudes often carried out by colonisers against indigenous people. Colonial power often strengthened injustice and oppression against colonised groups (Saputri, 2019).

The conflict between the indigenous people and the Dutch colonisers, as in the paragraph above, reflects the conflict during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia. This conflict can cover various things, such as politics, economics, and socio-culture, and often hurts indigenous people.

*After drifting for several days following the river current, they ended up stranded in a forest on the banks of the Musi River. Because it was considered safe, they settled in the forest. The forest was uninhabited. At that time, living in isolation as they did was called ngelebung. (Bangsawan, 2011)*

*Ngelebung* is a concept that reflects how people in the past isolated themselves to find a safer place. This concept describes how people at that time sought ways to protect themselves from threats or dangers they faced, such as colonisation or war.

In the context of the sentence above, *ngelebung* is the choice taken by the group to avoid threats and find a safer place in the forest on the banks of the Musi River. Thus, the concept of *ngelebung* can be understood as a form of passive resistance by the community against colonisation or threats from foreigners. In addition, the concept of *ngelebung* can also be interpreted as a way to maintain the community's cultural identity. By living in isolation, they can maintain their traditions and culture without being influenced by outside cultures that might threaten their existence.

*Ketib asked his four children to find work elsewhere, and only one of his children, Untung, remained in that place. (Bangsawan, 2011)*

At that time, migrating was an everyday livelihood for people who faced economic difficulties in their home areas. This phenomenon can be seen in the order that he asked his four children to look for work elsewhere, which reflects an effort to find a better life. However, although migrating can provide opportunities to increase income, it often also brings many challenges and risks, such as difficulty adapting to a new environment, limited social support, and the risk of exploitation.

Historically, the concept of migrating has also played a vital role in shaping social and cultural dynamics in Indonesia because it involves the movement of individuals or groups from one region to another different region within the country or abroad. Thus, migrating can also be seen as part of the history of migration and human mobility in Indonesia (Sholik et al., 2016).

*Over time, the population of Ngelebung increased and developed into a village which eventually became a hamlet called Lebung. (Bangsawan, 2011)*

The next concept in this story is the formation of villages and hamlets as a form of community development. The process of forming villages and hamlets shows the ability of the community to survive and develop even in difficult situations. This concept reflects solidarity and cooperation between community members when facing difficulties. According to Tomi Arianto (2024), the formation of new communities in crises often reflects the strength of social solidarity and cultural adaptation

To keep his family safe, Ketib left Benakat village before the deadline arrived. He used his supernatural powers to take his wife and child, Ayu, up an enormous crater made of iron, usually used to cook rice, as a boat.

The existence of the Puyang character, the crater boat, who has supernatural powers in making the crater into a boat as a vehicle, is a concept that is analysed using literary sociology. This concept reflects society's belief in supernatural powers and miracles at that time. This concept can also be seen as a form of solid spirituality of society at that time.

In addition to the concepts explained previously, this story contains several critical social themes. One of these themes is discrimination, which is reflected in the attitude of the Dutch officer who belittles the Ketib family simply because of differences in religion and culture. This discriminatory attitude shows how strong the influence of social factors such as religion and culture is in shaping a person's perception and attitude towards others.

Another theme in this story is power, reflected in the relationship between the Dutch officer and the Ketib family. This relationship reflects how power can be used to oppress and manipulate others. In addition, this story also presents the theme of alienation when the Ketib family chooses to live in the forest as a form of resistance against Dutch colonialism. This alienation shows the strength of the determination and spirit of struggle in fighting oppression and unfair power.

The story "Puyang Perahu Kawah" shows how power and discrimination occur between the Dutch colonial rulers and the indigenous people. In addition, this story also describes the social changes that occur in this society, where traditional and customary values begin to shift and are replaced by new values introduced by the colonisers. The social conflict in this story illustrates the social dynamics that occurred in the colonised society at that time.

In the analysis of literary sociology, we can also see how the characters in the story reflect the social situation that occurred at that time. Characters such as Puyang, a native figure who continues to fight to protect his family's interests, represent social resistance to colonisation. Meanwhile, other characters, such as the Dutch Officers, represent the power given to specific groups in the colonised society.

Overall, "Puyang Perahu Kawah" can be considered a literary work that successfully reflects the colonial society's social and historical situation at that time. Literary sociology analysis can help us understand how literary works can reflect the social and cultural life within them, as well as help us understand the values and social conflicts that occur in society.

### **Short Story "Dua Wajah Ibu"**

From the sociology of literature perspective, the story "*Dua Wajah Ibu*" is a profound reflection of the lives of rural communities who migrate to big cities like Jakarta. Through this story, we can understand the social, cultural, and economic dynamics migrants face from the village to the city. This literary work depicts the profound differences between life in the village and the city. It highlights the various challenges individuals face trying to adjust to a new, harsh environment that often does not meet their expectations. In the story "*Dua Wajah Ibu*," several concepts of the sociology of literature can be analysed systematically.

*It is a hot city. That was Mak Inang's first impression when her bleary eyes roamed the Kampung Rambutan bus terminal. (Alam, 2012)*

Mak Inang's first impression of Jakarta—a hot, smelly, and stinky city—symbolises the striking social inequality between her hometown and the capital city. Jakarta is depicted as a city full of discomfort and poor environmental conditions, reflecting the significant differences between life in the village and the big city. This inequality

highlights the great expectations and realities faced by migrants who come to the city with visions that often do not match the reality they encounter.

According to Rijal and Tahir (2022), migration from rural to urban areas is often driven by the hope of better economic opportunities. However, migrants often face poor working conditions and economic instability. Many migrants who arrive in big cities often face a reality that is very different from what they previously imagined, as experienced by Mak Inang.

*Her hands returned to struggling with the never-ending laundry. Her wrinkled hands stopped every few seconds; then she slapped her cheeks and legs. Mosquitoes in the concrete jungle turned out to be more vicious than mosquitoes in the jungle... (Alam, 2012)*

Mak Inang experienced exploitation in the form of heavy household work, and Mak Inang's description of exploitation through heavy household work and inadequate living conditions shows the social and economic injustice faced by migrant workers. The depiction of wrinkled hands constantly washing clothes and mosquito attacks highlights the harsh and tiring living conditions, depicting the inability of individuals to escape the cycle of poverty and injustice that often accompanies life in big cities. In the study of literary sociology, this phenomenon is often associated with theories about social injustice and economic disparities that occur in urban society (Setyami, 2021).

*In the village, at times like this, she has bent over and rushed to carry her feet to the prayer room, ahead of the muezzin who will soon be calling the call to prayer. (Alam, 2012)*

The difference between life in the village and the city illustrates how traditional and religious values have changed or even been eroded by the busy and stressful city life. In their study, Taufik et al. (2019) stated that urbanisation often causes changes in social and cultural values and community behaviour patterns. Mak Inang misses her routine in the village, which is related to worship and religious life, which now feels challenging to maintain in the busy city.

*Mak Inang feels like a servant. In the twilight of the evening, with fierce mosquitoes, she was still wallowing in the laundry. (Alam, 2012)*

The feeling of alienation and loss of identity experienced by Mak Inang when she felt like a "maid" in her child's house illustrates how migrants often feel alienated and lose their identity when they move to an environment that is very different from their origin. Muryanti (2019), in her study on migration and identity, stated that migrants often experience alienation and identity crises when they move to a new environment that is unfamiliar to them. This statement also reflects Mak Inang's inability to adapt to a new and foreign city environment.

*Mak Inang's hand pressed the pump lever again, and the murky water with a pungent rubber smell fell back into the plastic tub... The lights were bright. Simultaneously. As if they had shared before. (Alam, 2012)*

Mak Inang's alienation and loneliness in the big city are reflected in her monotonous and difficult daily activities. Despite being in the middle of the city crowd, he felt alienated and had no place in the unfamiliar urban society. This process illustrates a phenomenon often experienced by migrants in big cities, where they often feel lonely even in the middle of a crowd.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study reveals how the story "Puyang Perahu Kawah" and the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" reflect various social, cultural, and historical aspects through the perspective of literary sociology. In "Puyang Perahu Kawah," the conflict between the Ketib family and the Dutch officers depicts the tension and discrimination experienced by the indigenous people during colonialism. The concepts of ngelebung and merantau show the people's efforts to protect themselves and seek a better life amidst economic hardship. Kesaktian Puyang highlights the beliefs and culture of the people at that time, while the development of Lebung village illustrates the people's ability to survive and thrive despite facing oppression. Meanwhile, the short story "Dua Wajah Ibu" provides a robust picture of the challenges faced by migrants from villages to big cities. Through a literary sociology analysis, we can understand how various aspects of social and cultural life, such as social inequality, exploitation, changing values, and alienation, are manifested in their daily lives. These literary works not only reflect the realities of migrants' lives but also provide insight into how the process of urbanization and migration affects individual identity and well-being.

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