
Ideological Fantasy of Social Harmony (Rukun) in Rural Java, Indonesia, in Ahmad Tohari's *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*

Muhammad Ulul Uluwwi*, Harjito, Ika Septiana

Postgraduate Program, Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia
Jl. Dokter Cipto No. 24, Karangtempel, Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia, 50232

*Corresponding Author: uluwwi94@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Ahmad Tohari presents the narrative of a village community under a corrupt village head in the novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* (2022). One of the villagers initiates an effort to improve the village's economic state amid hesitation to confront the corrupt village head. This article qualitatively examined the ideological fantasy of social harmony (*rukun*) in rural Java, Indonesia, as depicted in Ahmad Tohari's *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*. The sociology of literature approach correlated the story's facts with the social realities in Java. Data were collected through documentation techniques. Meanwhile, the analysis was conducted using Slavoj Žižek's theory of ideological fantasy and the concept of social harmony. The findings revealed that the lower-class villagers in rural Java had a symbolic mandate to 'surrender' to maintain social harmony, even though the subject aimed to defy the corrupt village head. The Javanese villagers preferred to avoid open conflict, which led the subject to leave its idealism rather than confront the corrupt leader despite their disgust of the corruption and their aspiration to improve the village. As the representation of reality, it is critical as the ideological fantasy of social harmony causes the lower-class villagers to postpone resisting the corrupt village head to maintain peace, providing chances for any kind of violences thrive in real life.

Keywords: Ahmad Tohari; *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*; ideological fantasy; social harmony; symbolic mandate

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, especially in Java, social harmony or *rukun* is the state of a unified and peaceful society devoid of disputes. Geertz (1961: 146) translates *rukun* as the term for *harmonious social appearances*, while Jay (1969: 66) calls it *social harmony*. For this article, we used the term *social harmony*. To achieve social harmony, Javanese society idealizes giving in to avoid open conflict, as encapsulated through the proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane*, which implies that giving in means nobility (Endraswara, 2012: 33; Magnis-Suseno, 2001: 39–40; Mulder, 2013: 96). By giving in, social harmony can be preserved, and peace can be felt.

However, *wani ngalah luhur wekasane*, or

the discourse of social harmony, has the potential to be used to serve the interests of certain groups, particularly those in positions of power. Through the lofty goal of social harmony, these groups can label those who oppose them as disruptive to society's peace and social harmony. Any resistance to the representation of the superior groups is considered an act contrary to the social harmony that Javanese society aspires to. In this article, *Javanese* means a group of people who occupy the provinces of Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta in Indonesia and have Javanese as their first language.

Concerning the topic, Tohari (2022: 93) includes the proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane*

as a valuable lesson from elders in Tanggir Village, Kalijambe Subdistrict, a fictional location in Java, in his novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*. Tohari is an Indonesian author born into a farming family in Banyumas, Central Java, Indonesia. Tohari has been recognized with numerous awards for his literary work, including the Southeast Asia-wide award in 1995 (Sugono, 2003: 15). Throughout his fictional work, Tohari demonstrates compassion for those in lower social classes, particularly in rural areas (Yudiono, 2003: 14, 150).

In Ahmad Tohari's novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* (2022), an elderly peasant father living in rural Java communicates the wise proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane* (willingness to give in will lead to an honorable outcome) to his son, Pambudi. Despite his father's desire for a peaceful life in his old age, Pambudi finds himself at odds with the Head of Tanggir Village due to the corruption committed by the village head and is urged to leave Tanggir by his father and compromise for the sake of peace and social harmony.

Achieving peace in society requires social harmony, which can be achieved through Pambudi's surrender by giving in to the Village Head. Despite giving in, Pambudi still desires to defy the Village Head because he knows that the corruption committed by the Village Head is wrong. The contradiction between Pambudi's action and knowledge is influenced by ideological fantasy, which Žižek (2008b: 30) conceptualizes as an illusion that drives the subject to desire the sublime object of ideology, a lofty goal representing the embodiment of ideology.

Based on these problems, this article explores the subject's ideological fantasy of social harmony (*rukun*) in rural Java, as depicted in Ahmad Tohari's novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak*. To provide a comprehensive analysis, the concept of social harmony from other research findings are also incorporated, as literary works often reflect society's reality, as argued by Swingewood (1972: 12–13) and Damono (2022: 32). Additionally, the relationship between social harmony and the proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane* as the symbolic mandate of the subject are examined. The analysis of the novel is based on the concept of ideological fantasy formulated by Slavoj Žižek.

Research that is relevant to ideological fantasy and uses Ahmad Tohari's *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* as the material object is research by Musa et al. (2022) on

the hegemony of power and the subject's resistance to the hegemony of power. Rusliawati & Sari (2023) have peculiar perspectives on this novel, they focus on the practice of hegemony and ideological negotiation. In addition, research on the novel as a material object includes research on poverty (Ratnaningsih, 2018), hyper-reality (Harijanti, Rustono, Nuryatin, & Doyin, 2020), a reflection on prophetic ethics (Krismonita, 2021), the author's worldview (Azzahra, Widayati, & Ratnaningsih, 2022), the value of character education (Mursalin, Asropah, & Arifin, 2022), ethnic Chinese and harmony of life (Prakoso, Rusyana, & Khasanah, 2024), and harmony of nature (Khasanah, Anoeagrajekti, & Setiadi, 2024). While previous researches have examined various themes in the novel, none has specifically addressed the ideological fantasy of social harmony. This article offers a fresh perspective by analyzing the ideological fantasy of social harmony depicted in the novel.

This research article is the result of qualitative research on the ideological fantasy of social harmony in rural Java in the novel *Di Kaki Bukit Cibalak* by Ahmad Tohari (hereinafter: DKBC), which was republished in 2022 by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The sociology of literature approach and Slavoj Žižek's ideological fantasy theory are used to describe the ideological fantasy of harmony in DKBC. First, data were collected using documentation techniques. The facts of the story, such as story settings, subjects, subject identities, subject knowledge, and subject actions, were collected from narratives and dialogues in DKBC. Second, those data were condensed. Third, the data were tabulated. After the data is collected, the data is analyzed using Žižek's theory of the subject's ideological fantasy and correlates with the social reality of the real world.

Žižek (1991: 6, 2008b: 132) states that fantasy is an illusion that organizes the subject's desire. The concept of fantasy is related to the concept of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. The Real is a reality that is something beyond language and symbolic representation, and it is inconceivable. The Symbolic is the realm of language or a network of signifiers that form meaning and regulate the subject's desires, which are constructed by the Other. The Imaginary is the realm of the subject in which identification and ego formation occur, based on the illusion of fullness due to the subject's failure to reach the Real (Rousselle, 2014: 213–216).

With this fundamental lack of subject and the Symbolic, the subject desires *objet petit a*, a leftover of the Real after the subject entered the Symbolic, so it is also called “object-cause of desire”, meaning any object that sets desire in motion (Evans, 1996: 129; Lacan, 2014: 101; Žižek, 2008b: 25). In this way, the fantasy establishes an impossible relation between the subject and this remainder of the Real, presenting a scenario in which the *objet petit a*, the object-cause of desire, is as if finally attained (Žižek, 1991: 6–8). The small “a” of *objet petit a* represented *autre* or “the other” (with a small “o”) and was formerly introduced by Lacan as part of the Imaginary. However, Lacan then placed the *objet petit a* at the center of the Borromean knot, so it intersects all three orders: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (Evans, 1996: 128–129).

In this article, the term “the Other” (with a capital “O”) is used to refer to the term “the big Other”, which is the symbolic order (as part of the Symbolic), such as language, laws/regulations, customs, norms, and so forth; or the representation of the symbolic order, such as police, judges, laws, teachers, schools, and so forth. (Evans, 1996: 136; Myers, 2003: 49; Robet, 2010: 76–77). The term “the Other” differs from “the other” (with a small “o”) in that the latter refers to the subject’s ego, which is in the realm of the Imaginary (Evans, 1996: 135).

When the Other desires an object, and the discourse reaches the subject through language, the subject also desires a similar object. Lacan (2006: 662) asserts that the subject’s desire is originally from the Other’s desire or that the subject desires what the Other desires. This desire is internalized in the subject through language communication (Suryajaya, 2014: 139) and the interaction between subjects (Myers, 2003: 96). However, the desire for the object cannot be understood in a fixed meaning, by the subject and the Other, because the object is *objet petit a*, the object-cause of desire. It is an unobtainable object. The object desired is the object of representation of the Real, as the leftover or remainder of the Real, not the Real object. The subject’s desire will be slippage from one object to the next object, and so on (Fink, 1995: 91).

According to Žižek (2008b: 123–126), the subject is always situated within a social order through the “pinning” of specific signifiers, which become the subject’s identity. Identity is the cultural description of persons with which one identifies and which concerns

sameness and difference, the personal and the social (Barker, 2004: 93). Through the pinning of the signifier, the subject acquires a role that represents its identity, which is known as a symbolic mandate.

Subjects identified as Javanese noble women who work as strippers will be considered dishonorable because nobility is associated with honor in Javanese culture, especially in Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (Zamzuri, 2018: 5). Subjects identified as Indonesian women will be regarded as bad women if they lose their virginity before marriage because virginity is associated with honor in Indonesian culture in general (Wibowo, Fajrin R., & Hardiningtyas, 2021: 17). Subjects identified as Japanese women, in the 19th century, were prohibited from engaging in the production of sake, including the brewing and sale of the beverage (Asri, Utami, & Ningtyas, 2019: 237). These are symbolic mandates of the subject as part of the symbolic order, but it is more about the specific signifier that becomes the subject’s identity.

However, the subject consistently senses a lack of fulfillment and does not know what the Other really wants. The subject never attains the complete significance of the signifier to which it is pinned because it is part of the Symbolic. Therefore, the subject always questions the true role of the subject, which is called the “*Che vuoi?*”, a term that refers to a situation when the subject does not know what it is supposed to do to satisfy the Other’s desire. Then, the fantasy provides answers for the subject as if the subject obtains the object or reaches the Real (Žižek, 2008b: 25).

In the social context, the concept of fantasy is referred to as ideological fantasy by Žižek (2008a: 9; 2008b: 30), that the subject desires the *objet petit a* that is communicated by the Other as a representation of an ideology so that the subject will act according to the desire for the object of ideological representation, even though the subject knows the action is not ideal or not worth doing. Based on Žižek’s concept, ideological fantasy leads the subject to cynical consciousness. The subject knows the manipulation of ideology, that an ideological discourse is not ideal to be applied, but the subject still does it (Sloterdijk, 2001: 5; Žižek, 2008b: 25). There is a contradiction between the subject’s knowledge and action towards the symbolic mandate from the Other, including the symbolic mandate to realize social harmony.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the cultural context of Tanggir village, individuals belonging to the lower class are expected (1) not to ask critical questions, (2) to believe in the village head's infallibility as chosen by a supreme supernatural being, and (3) to give in to avoid conflict to preserve social harmony. These three symbolic mandates serve to enable corruption of the Tanggir Village Head. Given that most Tanggir villagers belong to the lower class, they tend to refrain from challenging and questioning the village head's policies, tolerate the village head's fraudulent activities, and give in to the village head's wishes even when detrimental to the Tanggir villagers' wellbeing. Tohari narrates these symbolic mandates in DKBC through Pambudi's experience, but the symbolic mandate of giving in has the most significant impact on Pambudi.

Identity and Symbolic Mandate of Lower Class of Tanggir Villagers

As explained earlier, identity can be understood as both self-description and the social construction of the subject. In the novel, the subject is represented by a character, and the term "subject" is used to denote the character. Subjects possess various characteristics, such as gender, age, residence, race, occupation, clothing, and interests. These characteristics form the subject's identity, enabling the individual to identify with a specific designation, distinguish themselves from other groups, and become part of a group with shared commonalities (Weeks, 1990: 88).

In DKBC, many Tanggir villagers work as farmers and small traders (Tohari, 2022: 10). They possess what is known as a *kawula* mentality and make up most of Tanggir's population. The *kawula* represent the lower-class hierarchy in Javanese culture, often referred to as *wong cilik*, ordinary people or people in general who are not part of the aristocracy and rulers (Anggarini & Novianto, 2019: 5; Krissandi, Andayani, & Anindyarini, 2023: 10, 26; Wasino, Hartatik, & Shintasiwi, 2021: 39). Magnis-Suseno (2001: 12) narrows the definition of *wong cilik* to specifically refer to individuals engaged primarily in agricultural activities within rural settings or those employed as low-wage laborers in urban environments. Tohari (2022: 10–11) describes *kawula* in Tanggir Village as Tanggir villagers who accept the decisions of the superior or those with higher social status without

doubting the story's truth, thinking critically, or asking critical questions.

"Betapa pentingnya peran Mbok Sum di desa kecil itu, kalau roman mukanya saja sering dijadikan pertanda baik atau buruk. Mbok Sum memperkuat dongengnya dengan sumpah. Sebenarnya ia tidak usah berbuat demikian karena tak seorang pun dari para petani gula kelapa itu yang akan minta bukti kebenaran kisah di Tanjakan Sengkala."

(Tohari, 2022: 11).

"Such was the importance of Mbok Sum's role in that small village, that even the expression on her face was often taken as a sign of good or bad fortune. ... Mbok Sum reinforced her story with an oath, though it was hardly necessary, as none of the coconut sugar farmers would ask for proof of the truth behind the tale from Tanjakan Sengkala."

According to the data, coconut sugar farmers in Tanggir Village rely heavily on intermediaries' facial expressions to determine the value of their produce. A positive expression may indicate higher pricing, while a negative expression could suggest lower pricing. Unfortunately, when an intermediary communicates that their goods will be sold for a reduced price, these farmers accept the information without questioning its validity. These farmers are classified as part of the lower class of Tanggir villagers and perceived as less critical.

Thus, subjects identified as Tanggir villagers and belonging to the lower-class group are asked or expected by the Other not to ask critical questions. This identification makes the identity of the lower class seem coherent with its uncritical nature, even though this identification is a social construction. Initially, the signifiers of *lower class* and *uncritical* are floating-signifier and unconnected. However, the Other constructs a signifier network between the *lower class* and the *uncritical* so that the two signifiers are connected or coherent. The Other interpellates the subject through the subject's identity as a lower-class villager, and then the subject recognizes his mandate according to his identity, namely not asking critical questions. Based on Žižek (2008b: 126), the mandate is referred to as a symbolic mandate.

As a result of this uncritical attitude, the

Tanggir Village Head was free to commit corruption. The village head is the person who officially carries out government duties at the village level. One of the corruptions the Tanggir Village Head committed was increasing the shrinkage rate of cooperative rice and cooperating with rice intermediaries by determining the selling price of cooperative rice for personal gain (Tohari, 2022: 18). In contrast, the existence of village agricultural cooperatives is expected to be able to market farm produce at prices that benefit farmers (Koib & Simamora, 2022: 62) and help farmers avoid intermediaries who set prices that are often detrimental to farmers (Wiranto, 2023). In addition, the village head also uses cooperative funds to finance his interests and use them as capital to earn profits for himself (Tohari, 2022: 25).

In addition to being uncritical, Tanggir villagers believe in a supernatural entity that plays a role in selecting the village head candidate when the village head election is held. This belief is common in Javanese society because the existence of supernatural powers and events is widely described in Indonesian literature set in Java (Harjito, 2017: 66, 2018: 4–6). The entity that chooses the village head candidate in Tanggir and Java is known as *wahyu cakraningrat* (Tohari, 2022: 14, 95), but some call it *wahyu*, without *cakraningrat*. The entity forms a blue light that floats (*pulung*) and then falls on the house of the village head candidate (Luthfy, 2016). Because a godly entity chooses him, it is believed that the village head will not do anything wrong, even if it harms the villagers (Lubis, 2016: 25).

“Orang-orang di sini percaya bahwa seseorang tidak mungkin menjadi lurah kalau ia tidak dijatuhi wahyu cakraningrat. Jadi dengan keyakinan semacam itu para penduduk akan tetap menjunjung tinggi lurahnya, meskipun lurahnya itu selalu bertindak menurut kemauannya sendiri dan merugikan penduduk.”

(Tohari, 2022: 94)

“The people here believe that someone cannot become the village head unless given by the *wahyu of cakraningrat*. So, with such beliefs, the villagers will continue to uphold their village head, even though the village head always acts according to his own will and harms the villagers.”

In Javanese, the relationship between the lexicons *wahyu* and *pulung* is synonymous, and both collocate with *shooting stars*, *divinity*, *destiny*, and *high position* (Robson & Wibisono, 2002: 603, 796). A shooting star signifies something in a higher position than humans, and that something represents God or a supreme entity. Thus, all the collocated signifiers form a network of signifiers that the elected village head candidate is destined to lead the village and will not make mistakes. Unfortunately, the lower-class Tanggir villagers perceive the meaning of the signifier network as reality and truth. They do not know this reality is illusory and still act according to this manipulative belief.

In addition to believing in the supernatural, the lower-class Tanggir villagers also believe in a symbolic mandate to give in so that the worst effects of the open conflict at Tanggir can be avoided. This mandate is expressed through the proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane* (Tohari, 2022: 93), meaning that someone who gives in on conflict will gain honor. In general, Javanese society has made social harmony one of its lofty goals by avoiding open conflict, and this lofty goal is often articulated in this proverb. Through social harmony (*rukun*), peace can be felt by the Tanggir villagers and the Javanese society.

“Ayah sudah tua. Apa yang paling kuharapkan sekarang adalah ketenteraman lahir dan batin. Bahkan karena aku adalah ayahmu, Lurah juga menjadi benci padaku. Turutilah tutur kata para orang tua: Wani ngalah, luhur wekasane. Berani mengalah, menjadikan kita luhur pada akhirnya.”

(Tohari, 2022: 93)

“I am old, my son. What I wish for most now is inner and outer peace. Even because I am your father, ... The village head has also come to hate me. Obey the words of the elders: *Wani ngalah, luhur wekasane*. Daring to give in makes us noble in the end.”

In the data, the mandate to give in is delivered through the proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane* by Pambudi's father to Pambudi when Pambudi was still in dispute with the Tanggir village head. This proverb was transmitted from generation to generation by Pambudi's father's ancestors. The meaning of the proverb is that people who are willing to give in will

Table 1. Symbolic Mandates of Tanggir Villagers, Java, Indonesia

Representative	Class	Knowledge or Action	Symbolic Mandate
Coconut sugar farmers	Lower	Not doubting the middleman's story	Not asking critical questions
Pambudi's father	Lower	The supreme supernatural form chose the village head	Believe the village head will not make mistakes
Pambudi's father	Lower	Give in for an honorable end	Maintain social harmony by giving in

be honored in the future. The proverb serves as a guideline for Javanese people to avoid disputes by giving in and being accommodating. The party that gives in is considered nobler than the party that insists on continuing the dispute (Ismawati, 2019: 136; Widyastuti & Hartanto, 2023: 14). This perspective is shaped by Javanese idealism, which ascribes primacy to the concept of peace, and regards conflict as contrary to the ideal of peace (Endraswara, 2012: 33).

With this proverb, Pambudi's father asked Pambudi to give in and maintain social harmony so that Pambudi's father could feel peace and not be ostracized by society. Pambudi's father and Pambudi are lower-class Tanggir villagers identified by their poverty, and they do not have essential positions in the village. Pambudi worked in the village cooperative barn and then raised chickens after resigning from the cooperative. His father became an ordinary farmer and helped care for Pambudi's chickens. They both represent the lower class of Tanggir villagers.

Social Harmony as Sublime Object of Ideology and Object-Cause of Desire

For Žižek (1994: 10), ideology is the idea of a truth indoctrinated into society, even though it is intended to serve a particular power. Dijk (1998: 8) also conceptualizes something similar, that ideology allows members of a society to know something is good or bad and right or wrong and act on that basis. Although Dijk does not mention the use of clause *servicing power*, the judgment of good, bad, right, and wrong should also indicate the existence of power that determines the justification.

Based on this concept, ideology is the idea of good or bad and right or wrong that a society believes in. Thus, the symbolic mandate of the lower-class Tanggir villagers is an ideology because it relates to

actions that should be carried out or not, based on good/bad and right/wrong, mainly since the mandate only occurs in the lower class. If the three symbolic mandates are connected to the power of the village head, the potential that can happen is that the village head is free to commit fraudulent acts, including corruption.

In DKBC, the Tanggir village head, specifically Dirga, committed four forms of corruption. First, the village head increased the cooperative's rice shrinkage rate. Second, he cooperated with rice intermediaries to determine the selling price of the cooperative's paddy (Tohari, 2022: 18). Third, he used the village cooperative's emergency fund to finance his inauguration as village head (Tohari, 2022: 24–25, 59). Fourth, he compensated the owner of a coconut tree that was cut down, amounting to 50% of the allocated funds (Tohari, 2022: 25). With these actions, the village head obtained personal benefits using community-owned resources.

Under these conditions, only Pambudi opposed the village head. Pambudi's resistance was not done from the beginning when he knew the Tanggir Village Head corruption but was driven by a spontaneous unconsciousness. At first, Pambudi did not dare to ask questions about the village head's fraudulent actions in managing the village cooperative. Pambudi lusts after an object that makes him comfortable as an escape from the traumatic feelings caused by his inability to stand up to the village head. When the village head election was held, the object of desire shifted to supporting the candidate who acted kindly and was not corrupt.

"Ia menginginkan Pak Badi yang terpilih sebab Pambudi menyenangi wataknya. Ia ingin membuat badan sosial itu sungguh-sungguh merupakan sebuah koperasi, yang akan banyak faedahnya bagi segenap penduduk Tanggir.

.... Pak Lurah sering melanggar ketentuan-ketentuan perkoperasian yang selalu ia pidatokan sendiri.”

(Tohari, 2022: 17)

“He wanted Pak Badi to be elected because Pambudi admired his character. ... He aimed to turn the social organization into a genuine cooperative, which would greatly benefit all the residents of Tanggir. ... The village head often violated the very cooperative regulations he frequently preached about.”

According to the data, the pronoun “Ia” refers to Pambudi, while Pak Badi is the candidate for village head in the Tanggir village election after Pambudi worked at the Tanggir cooperative for two years. Despite wanting improvement and change, Pambudi did not criticize or defy the Tanggir Village Head during these two years and instead relied on Pak Badi, who is considered to have good character compared to other candidates. The contradiction between desire and action is driven by his symbolic mandate as a lower-class Tanggir villager, which is not to ask critical questions. Based on the indicators presented by Lestari et al. (2013: 28), Pambudi’s silence and avoidance of open conflict with the village head, despite knowing that the head is corrupt, is an attempt to maintain social harmony. Tohari depicts the people of Tanggir living in social harmony despite the corruption of their village head during this period.

In addition, Tohari also says that the Tanggir villagers are not bothered by the plastic waste piles up in their *pawuan*, a garbage disposal hole in the ground (Tohari, 2022: 7). They are also not bothered by someone who comes to multiple homes to show

off expensive products, and they seem to show admiration on those products (Tohari, 2022: 7–8). They do not object to a few people who cause trouble during the election of village heads and officials (Tohari, 2022: 14). Furthermore, they do not question the village head’s policies that adversely affect the cooperative (Tohari, 2022: 17–18). However, when Pambudi defied the village head and was accused of embezzling the cooperative’s money, the people of Tanggir considered him a disturber of social harmony (Tohari, 2022: 115).

According to Table 2, it can be observed that during the period when Pambudi did not defy the village head until Pambudi asked critical questions, the village head, Tanggir Village, was a peaceful community where villagers lived in social harmony despite potential disruptions to their peace. The only exception to this was the conflict initiated by Pambudi. This is further supported by Pambudi’s father’s desire for peace following his son’s disagreement with the village head. Pambudi’s actions caused a loss of peace for his father, resulting in their ostracization by the village head and the majority of Tanggir villagers.

“Tidak disenangi oleh seorang lurah memang bukan berarti malapetaka yang mematikan, tetapi sangat mengganggu ketenteraman hati seorang petani sederhana seperti ayah Pambudi. Orang tua itu merasa, Lurah membencinya. Bahkan ayah Pambudi pun tahu ia sedang dikucilkan dari sesama warga Tanggir.”

(Tohari, 2022: 92–93)

“Being disliked by a village head was not a deadly catastrophe, but it greatly disturbed the peace of mind of a simple farmer like Pambudi’s

Table 2. Potential Disturbing Conditions/Events to Tanggir Villagers

Conditions/Events	Responses of Villagers	Time
Plastic waste piles up	Undisturbed	Before Pambudi defied
A person visits houses to show off an expensive product	Undisturbed and admired the product	Before Pambudi defied
There are troublemakers in the village head and staff election	Did not reject them	Before Pambudi defied
Pambudi was accused of embezzling the cooperative money	Ostracized Pambudi and his family	After Pambudi defied the village head

father. The old man felt that the village head hated him. ...Even Pambudi's father knew his fellow Tanggir villagers were ostracizing him."

Based on the data, peace for Pambudi's father is the feeling of being accepted as part of the Tanggir community and treated as a community member who shares the same feelings. For him, feeling accepted by the community is more important than being at odds with the village head. With this desire, the village head committing corruption is not a problem as long as the Tanggir community accepts Pambudi's father. However, Pambudi's father was unaware of the corruption. This condition is a form of social harmony for Pambudi's father, who represents the lower class of Tanggir villagers. They have a false consciousness of three manipulative symbolic mandates.

Thus, social harmony in Tanggir is described as the absence of conflict that disturbs the tranquility of Tanggir villagers, like the general Javanese society described by Geertz (1985: 153). Therefore, after Pambudi opposes the village head over his corruption plan, the village head plans to make Pambudi the *klilip* of the village, which can be figuratively interpreted as something that disturbs the social harmony of the village (Robson & Wibisono, 2002: 383). Many Tanggir villagers also consider Pambudi to be such. Subjects who resist the village head are labeled as disturbers of social harmony, while the corrupt village head is glorified or at least not considered a disturber of social harmony.

Social harmony is a sublime object of ideology because it is the ideal of Javanese society (Endraswara, 2012: 33), including the Tanggir villagers. By living in social harmony, subjects can feel peaceful or serene. When the superior considers a subject like Pambudi to be against it, the superior can say that the subject should act according to Javanese characteristics. The signifier of *harmony* and *Javanese* are connected by the superior as two coherent signifiers and become one unity, then conveyed to the public to create the illusion that Javanese should not act against it because it will cause conflicts that disrupt community harmony.

As a sublime object of ideology, social harmony is an *objet petit a* because it does not refer to an established material object and is an object-cause of desire. Instead of the subject achieving harmony *an sich*, the subject can only reach the object of representation of social harmony. In DKBC, Pambudi's father considers that he will be at peace if he is accepted by society and that peace can be achieved through social harmony. The object of social harmony for Pambudi's father at that moment is the desire to feel peace, and this desire can be fulfilled by asking Pambudi to give in and leave Tanggir village.

Peace and social harmony are object-cause of desire (*objet petit a*) that can only be reached through objects of representation because they are part of the Real that the subject cannot reach. Efforts to achieve peace and social harmony will only reach the objects of representation that are part of the Symbolic. Due to the limitations of the subject, the Symbolic mediates

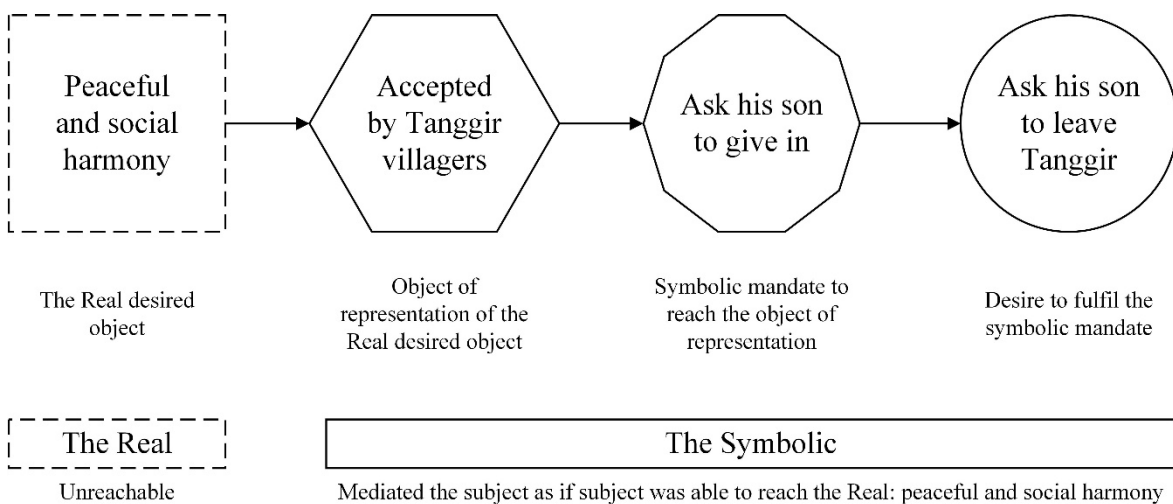


Figure 1. Social Harmony as Object-Cause of Desire

the subject as if it can feel peace and social harmony so that the desire to achieve peace and social harmony is shifted to fulfilling the desires of the objects of representation, such as being accepted as part of a community or society. The desire for the object of representation also shifts to the fulfillment of desires for other objects of representation, namely, asking others to relent and leave the village. However, after the desire is fulfilled, the subject will desire other objects representing peace and social harmony.

Ideological Fantasy of Social Harmony

In DKBC, one way to restore or regain social harmony after the conflict at Tanggir was to give up the dispute. This action was realized by leaving Tanggir to reside outside Tanggir indefinitely. This way was chosen because the subject who defied the village head and was accused of running away with the village cooperative money was a lower-class Tanggir villager. The unequal power relations between Pambudi and the Tanggir village head made Pambudi's father ask Pambudi to give in so that Pambudi's father's life would be peaceful again.

For Pambudi, Pambudi's father represents the Other who confirms Pambudi's symbolic mandate as a lower-class Tanggir villager, even though Pambudi feels the need to keep defying the Tanggir Village Head. However, for Pambudi's father, the exchange must be made to gain peace through social harmony. Pambudi's father still considers *wani ngalah luhur wekasane* the ideal Javanese way of life. He takes it for granted because being peaceful is the Javanese culture and this condition is achieved through social harmony (Endraswara, 2012: 38), so one of the conflicting parties must give in (Ismawati, 2019: 136; Widyastuti & Hartanto, 2023: 14).

Marx called this false or naive consciousness (Žižek, 2008b: 24). However, Pambudi considers it necessary to defy the village head and doubts the

elder's proverb *wani ngalah luhur wekasane*, although he eventually gives in and leaves Tanggir. For Žižek (2008b: 25), Pambudi is a cynical subject. Despite knowing that *wani ngalah luhur wekasane* (giving in) in the context of his conflict is manipulative, Pambudi still gives in.

In addition to Pambudi's father, the representation of the Other for Pambudi is Topo, Pambudi's friend who is a college student and lives in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Topo thinks that Pambudi lacks enough capital to defy the Tanggir Village Head. Topo likens Pambudi to the Little One and the Tanggir Village Head to the Big One. For Pambudi to have enough capital to defy the village head's policies, Topo advises Pambudi to go to college. Topo thinks Pambudi must first give in to prepare himself to defy the village head further by studying (Tohari, 2022: 99–101).

Both Pambudi's father and Topo urged him to concede. They symbolically mandated Pambudi to yield, as he lacked the resources to mount an effective resistance. Pambudi's father believed that poor farmers could not oppose the village head and that peace could only be achieved if Pambudi left Tanggir. Similarly, Topo argued that Pambudi lacked the symbolic capital necessary to challenge the village head and that he should first focus on his education. As a result, Pambudi accepted their symbolic mandate by choosing not to confront the village head directly, thereby restoring and maintaining harmony in Tanggir (Tohari, 2022: 116).

Pambudi and Topo's father represent Javanese society in general. This can be seen from the research of Magnis-Suseno (2001: 40, 149), Lestari et al. (2013: 27–28), Wuryantoro & Budiwibowo (2018: 457), and Widyastuti & Hartanto (2023: 14). Based on their findings, it is known that Javanese people identify conditions of social harmony through several actions, some of which are (1) preventing open conflict, (2)

Table 3. Response to the Symbolic Mandate of Give-In

Subject	Relation to Pambudi	Job at the Time	Response to the Symbolic Mandate	
			Knowledge	Action
Pambudi	-	Raising chickens	Deny	Give in
Pambudi's father	Father	Peasant	Accept	Asking Pambudi to leave away Tanggir
Topo	Friend	College student	Accept	Suggest Pambudi to become a student in college

conforming to community values, interacting politely, (3) not opposing if they disagree with others, (4) avoiding differences of opinion, (5) not interfering in other people's affairs, (6) not hurting other people's feelings, and (7) accepting defeat. These actions are the goals aspired to through the symbolic mandate of giving in to achieve social harmony.

By doing so, Javanese people hope to be united and safe with others (Hasyim et al., 2023: 30). To feel united and safe, Javanese people are also willing to help their neighbors who are getting married, including financial assistance (Septiana et al., 2023: 76). This feeling of safety is one of the objects of representation that Pambudi's father desires for social harmony and peace. To realize his father's desire, Pambudi gives in, even though Pambudi is determined not to give in to the corrupt village head. In this condition of giving in, Topo advises Pambudi to give in so that he can focus on his college studies. This suggestion keeps Pambudi busy with his studies and leaves the village head in the *status quo*. When the desire to defy the village head resurfaces, his father's and Topo's voices come to mind, persuading Pambudi to stay put.

"Demi kepentinganku sendiri untuk kembali ke sekolah, aku harus diam. Masih ada mahkamah yang lebih tinggi, Tuhan pribadi yang akan menjadi hakim. Mudah-mudahan saja tidak semua orang Tanggir menganggap diriku sebusuk itu."

(Tohari, 2022: 116)

"For the sake of my own future and returning to school, I must remain silent. There was still a higher court, a God who would be the judge. Hopefully, not everyone in Tanggir sees me as despicable as that."

Based on the excerpt, Pambudi is willing to let a corrupt village head lead Tanggir Village and prefers to study in peace, a condition also desired by his father, which can be obtained through the condition of social harmony. The Other influences the subject (Pambudi) to live in harmony by not opposing the village head, even though the condition of harmony cannot be achieved steadily. Moreover, the condition of harmony in the context of the subject is manipulative because it allows the corrupt village head to remain in power in Tanggir and remain in the *status quo*. To achieve this manipulative social harmony, the subject gave up his

aspiration to improve the condition of Tanggir Village.

CONCLUSION

Based on what has been said in the discussion, Javanese rural communities recognize social harmony as a condition where the community is united and there is no open conflict. If open conflict is expected to arise or has already occurred, they will ask one of the parties to give in to preserve social harmony. This is a symbolic mandate for the Javanese people. However, it was found that the party asked to give in was a lower-class subject, even though the subject defied the village head corruption. Because the Other asked the subject to give in, the subject finally let himself give in and let the corrupt village head remain in the *status quo* and continue to lead Tanggir Village, even though the subject wanted to advance Tanggir. The subject of villagers in Java thinks that the Real social harmony can be obtained, so the subject does not wish to fight back and remains silent. In rural Java, villagers prefer giving in to maintain social harmony rather than fighting the corrupt village head.

COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

The author(s) herewith declare that this article is totally free from any conflict of interest regarding the data collection, analysis, editorial process, and the publication process in *Poetika: Jurnal Ilmu Sastra*. All authors in this article were not involved in any step of the editorial review and editors' decision at all costs.

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