

**COLLECTIVE CONFLICT AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN INDONESIAN
FOLKLORE: A SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE PERSPECTIVE ON *DARA DI
KEDANG IPIL***

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Received : March 6, 2026

Revised : June 1, 2026

Accepted : June 15, 2026

Published : June 30, 2026

How to Cite (in APA Style):

Hafiz, R., Putri, N. Q. H., Rokhmansyah, A., & Putri, N. N. (2026). Collective conflict and social structure in Indonesian folklore: A sociology of literature perspective on *Dara di Kedang Ipil*. *Pioneer: Journal of Language and Literature*, 18(1), 116-127.

<https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v18i1.8047>

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Abstract: This study examines the types and dynamics of social conflict in folklore as a representation of social reality using a sociology of literature framework. Previous studies on Indonesian folklore have primarily focused on moral values and cultural preservation, leaving the dynamics of social conflict underexplored. This study addresses this gap by analyzing how conflict evolves within oral literature. The novelty lies in its focus on the transformation of individual conflict into communal conflict and its interpretation of folklore as a social document reflecting structural tensions. This research employs a qualitative content analysis method, focusing on narrative segments that represent conflicts and social relations in the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil*. The findings reveal that conflicts develop from personal rivalry into communal disputes that disrupt social order, reflecting structural tensions, weak social control mechanisms, and collective responses. Furthermore, folklore functions as a medium of cultural transmission and social documentation across generations.

Keywords: *kota bangun community, social conflict, sociology of literature*

INTRODUCTION

Literature functions not only as an aesthetic product but also as a medium that reflects the social realities in which it is produced. Within the framework of the sociology of literature, literary works are understood as representations of social structures, relationships, and dynamics (Ahmadi, 2021; Wellek & Warren, 2016). Consequently, literary texts can be interpreted as social documents that reveal patterns of interaction, tensions, and conflicts within a community (Asmawati et al, 2023; Wilujeng et al, 2025). One literary form that strongly embodies these social dimensions is folklore, which, as part of oral tradition, preserves collective memory and transmits cultural values across generations. One example of such folklore is *Dara di Kedang Ipil*, originating from Kedang Ipil Village, Kota Bangun District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan. The story centers on Puan Dara, whose exceptional beauty triggers rivalry among young men from different villages, eventually escalating into communal conflict and social unrest (Hayati & Nurhayati, 2025). In this context, social conflict is viewed as an inherent aspect of human interaction arising from differences in interests, values, and power relations (Olang et al., 2021; Rozaki & Izudin, 2025; Nala et al., 2024). This perspective is consistent with previous research emphasizing that oral literature functions as a social document reflecting the dynamics of community life (Affan et al., 2025). However, despite the richness of folklore as a source of social representation, existing studies tend to focus primarily on moral values and cultural preservation, while the dynamics of social conflict remain insufficiently explored. This indicates a research gap in understanding how conflicts in folklore develop, transform, and function within social structures. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the forms and dynamics of social conflict in the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil*, with particular emphasis on the transformation of individual conflict into communal conflict and its role as a representation of social reality.

Research on folklore in Indonesia has generally focused on cultural values, moral teachings, and character education (Sipatuhar et al, 2021; Youpika et al, 2024). However, studies that examine folklore through the lens of social conflict using a sociology of literature approach remain limited. This limitation creates a gap in understanding how oral literature reflects social tensions and conflict dynamics within traditional communities. In fact, social conflict plays a significant role in revealing the structure of social relations, power dynamics, and collective behavior embedded in folklore.

Therefore, examining social conflict in the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil* is essential, not only to expand the scope of literary sociology in oral traditions but also to position folklore as a social document that records the collective dynamics of conflict in society.

This study aims to analyze social conflict in folklore not merely as a narrative element but as a representation of social tensions embedded in society. Specifically, it examines how conflict is constructed, how it develops from individual rivalry into communal conflict, and how it reflects the social structure of the community in the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil*. By applying a sociology of literature approach, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of oral literature as a social document that records and represents the dynamics of conflict within local communities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several previous studies have examined folklore within the framework of literary sociology, particularly focusing on cultural values, moral values, and character education. Previous research by Muhidar et al. (2025) emphasizes that folklore contains elements of social criticism that reflect power relations and social anxiety in traditional communities. This view is supported Lawer (2025) who states that oral literature represents underlying power structures and collective concerns within society. In addition, Apiriliyani et al. (2025) explain that conflict in literary works functions not only as a narrative element but also as a mechanism for developing plot and conveying moral messages. However, although these studies highlight important aspects of folklore, most of them tend to emphasize moral and cultural dimensions rather than examining social conflict as a central analytical focus. Research that specifically analyzes social conflict in folklore using a sociology of literature approach, particularly in the context of East Kalimantan, remains limited. One study by Azizah and Al Anshory (2022) has explored social conflict in folklore. However, it has not comprehensively examined how conflict reflects broader social structures and communal dynamics.

The main object of this study is the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil*, which originates from Kedang Ipil Village, Kota Bangun District, Kutai Kartanegara Regency. The formal object of this research is social conflict as represented in the storyline, character relationships, and interactions between social groups (Wellek & Warren, 2016). This perspective is reinforced by previous studies (Febriani & Efendi, 2022; Wahana & Johan,

2022) which emphasize that literary analysis cannot be separated from its social context. Furthermore, social conflict in folklore is closely related to the social structure and social relations of the community that produces and preserves it (Olang et al, 2021; Putri et al, 2025). Wellek and Warren (2016) argue that literary works often reflect latent conflicts within society, including conflicts of interest, power relations, and group solidarity. In line with this perspective, social conflict in the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil* can be understood as a representation of social tension arising from the dominance of certain group interests and the weakness of social control mechanisms (Wellek & Warren, 2016). Therefore, this study applies the sociology of literature approach to analyze how social conflict is constructed, developed, and represented within the narrative as a reflection of the community's social dynamics (Arzaqi & Al-Furqaan, 2025; Hamdani et al, 2024).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using a content analysis method to examine social conflict in literary texts. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it aims to explore meanings, interpretations, and representations of social conflict in depth rather than to measure phenomena quantitatively. Content analysis is used to systematically identify, classify, and interpret textual data based on the theoretical framework of the sociology of literature (Váña, 2025; Zougris, 2025). The primary data source of this research is the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil*, which has been documented by Tungga (2024). This literary work was selected because it contains rich representations of social conflict, including conflicts of interest, social tensions, and communal disputes within traditional society. In this study, the literary text is treated as a social document that reflects the structure, relationships, and dynamics of the Kedang Ipil community.

The theoretical framework applied in this research is the sociology of literature perspective, which views literary works as representations of social reality. This framework is used to analyze how social conflict is constructed within the narrative, how it develops through interactions between characters, and how it reflects broader social structures and power relations. The data analysis process follows the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014) which consists of three main stages that is data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher identifies and selects relevant textual units, such as dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character

actions that represent forms of social conflict, including conflicts of interest, social tensions, and their impacts on collective life. In the data display stage, the selected data are organized and presented in the form of descriptive explanations supported by textual quotations as empirical evidence. The data are then categorized based on the forms, patterns, and development of social conflict within the narrative. The final stage is conclusion drawing and verification, in which the data are interpreted by linking the identified social conflicts to the social structure, social relations, and dynamics of the Kedang Ipil community. This interpretation is conducted using the perspective of literary sociology to ensure that the analysis remains grounded in the theoretical framework and reflects the broader social meaning of the literary work.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Analysis of the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil* reveals that social conflict is not merely presented as isolated events but is structured as a dynamic process that reflects broader social tensions within the community. Four major patterns of conflict representation were identified, demonstrating how conflict evolves, operates, and is preserved within oral literature.

Social conflict as a representation of collective tension

Social conflict is constructed as a representation of collective tension that transcends individual actors and affects the stability of entire communities. This first section of the narrative illustrates how persistent clashes instill fear, disrupt social activities, and create conditions of instability, as reflected in the recurring violence within the village. This condition can be observed in the following excerpt:

“Setiap hari, suara teriakan dan bentrokan senjata memecah kesunyian desa, membuat Puan Dara dan kedua orang tuanya merasa takut untuk keluar dari rumah” [Every day, the sounds of shouting and weapon clashes shatter the village’s silence, causing Puan Dara and her parents to fear leaving the house.] (Tungga 2024, Page 9).

Transformation of individual conflict into communal conflict

The study finds a clear transformation pattern in which individual conflict evolves into communal conflict. Initially rooted in personal rivalry among young men competing for Puan Dara, the conflict gradually expands into intergroup confrontation involving

multiple villages. This escalation demonstrates that individual interests, when left unresolved, can trigger broader social tensions. This transformation is reflected in the following excerpt:

“Mereka (para pemuda-pemuda dari desa lain) datang berduyun-duyun, berlomba-lomba mendapatkan hati puan dara”. [They (the young men from other villages) came in large numbers, competing with one another to win Puan Dara’s heart.] (Tungga 2024, Page 9).

Social conflict and social control mechanisms

Narrative reveals the presence of social control mechanisms that emerge in response to conflict. These mechanisms are represented through authoritative intervention aimed at stopping violence and restoring order. The call to cease fighting illustrates how traditional authority functions to regulate social behavior and maintain stability. This mechanism is illustrated in the following excerpt:

“Wahai para perjaka, apa yang kalian perbuat? (serunya dengan suara lantang), cukuplah sudah kalian berkelahi seperti ini, yang hanya menyebabkan pertumpahan darah dan menghentikan aktivitas desa”. [O young men, what are you doing? she exclaimed loudly. Enough of this fighting. It only causes bloodshed and disrupts the activities of the village.] (Tungga 2024, Page 9).

Conflict as a social document in oral literature

Studies show that conflict in folklore functions as a social document that preserves collective memory and social experiences. The story is transmitted across generations as a medium for conveying values, lessons, and reflections on social life, reinforcing the role of folklore as a repository of communal knowledge. The representation of conflict as a social document in oral literature can be observed in the following excerpt:

“Di desa Kedang Ipil, setiap generasi tumbuh dengan mengenal legenda Puan Dara. Orang tua mengisahkannya kepada anak-anak mereka sebagai dongeng sebelum tidur, menanamkan nilai-nilai kebajikan dalam hati mereka”. [In Kedang Ipil Village, each generation grows up familiar with the legend of Puan Dara. Parents pass the story down to their children as a bedtime tale, instilling the values of virtue in their hearts.] (Tungga 2024, Page 11).

Discussion

Findings of this study demonstrate that social conflict in the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil* operates as a complex and dynamic social phenomenon that reflects broader structural tensions within the community. The transformation of individual rivalry into communal conflict indicates that conflict is not static but evolves through social

interactions shaped by differences in interests, status, and power relations. This supports Lestari and Sa'adah (2021) that define social conflict as a clash of values and goals influenced by social structures. Similarly, Nurgiansah et al. (2022) emphasize that conflict emerges when opposing groups attempt to dominate or weaken one another. Prayogi (2023) further highlights that inequality in power and resource distribution becomes a major trigger of conflict.

Escalation of conflict into collective violence aligns with research highlighting that perceived inequality and competition over limited resources can intensify social tensions and lead to group-based conflict. This finding aligns with Siregar and Zulkarnain (2022), who emphasizes that individual conflict can develop into communal conflict as a result of limited human resources, differences in social status, and perceived injustice within a social system. Based on this perspective, previous research that supports the view that individual conflict can develop into communal conflict is also emphasized by Yunusa and Owoyemi (2025) who argues that individual conflict can escalate into group conflict due to differences in social status and perceived injustice. Also describe social conflict as a struggle over status and limited resources, Olumba et al. (2022) emphasize that such conflicts may evolve into collective violence when groups perceive systematic inequality. In this context, the folklore illustrates how unresolved individual disputes can expand into communal instability, reinforcing the structural nature of social conflict.

The presence of social control mechanisms in the narrative also reflects the role of traditional systems in maintaining social order. This finding is consistent with studies suggesting that oral literature often represents customary practices used to regulate social behavior and restore balance within communities. In the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil*, social conflict is responded to through a customary mechanism in the form of a competition (*sayembara*). The study shows that social conflict is addressed through mechanisms of social control aimed at maintaining social order. This finding is consistent with Youpika et al. (2023) who note that oral literature often reflects customary systems used to regulate social behavior. Arzaqi and Al-Furqaan (2025) further explain that social systems maintain stability through institutional and normative control. In addition, Hamdani et al. (2024) highlight that social control mechanisms emerge as responses to inequality and conflict within social structures.

The function of folklore as a social document supports the argument that literary works serve as archives of social experience and collective memory. These findings also reveal that folktales function as social documents that preserve collective memory and social experiences. This supports Damayanti et al. (2024) who argue that literary works serve as archives of social life. Putri (2016) similarly emphasizes that literature reflects social reality and can critique inequality. Putri's perspective is similarly reinforced by Affan et al. (2025) and Asmawati et al. (2023) who state that literary texts represent social relations, tensions, and conflicts within society. The integration of these findings suggests that folklore is not only a cultural artifact but also a medium through which societies record, interpret, and transmit social conflicts across generations.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The study concludes that the folklore *Dara di Kedang Ipil* represents social conflict as a structured and collective phenomenon rooted in the social dynamics of the community. The conflicts depicted in the narrative evolve from individual rivalry into communal tension, reflecting structural imbalances and the fragility of social control mechanisms. These findings confirm that literary works are closely connected to the social context in which they are produced and function as representations of social reality. The study contributes to the field of literary sociology by demonstrating that folklore serves as a significant social document that preserves patterns of conflict, intergroup relations, and collective responses within traditional societies. By emphasizing the dynamic nature of conflict and its role in shaping social interactions, this research highlights the importance of analyzing oral literature as a source of insight into social structures and community life.

Suggestions

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by examining a wider range of folklore from different regions in order to enable comparative studies of conflict patterns, power relations, and social control mechanisms. Additionally, further studies may incorporate alternative theoretical perspectives or interdisciplinary approaches to enrich the analysis of social conflict in literary works. Such efforts are

expected to strengthen the contribution of literary sociology in understanding the complexity of social life as reflected in oral traditions.

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