



**Pilkades as A Political Representation of Village Society in the Novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak***

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**Abstract**

Literature and politics are an interesting combination. Not only as entertainment, but literature is also a means of critiquing societal issues. *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* is one of Sela Istighfari's novels that describes the process of community politics in the village and the conflicts that arise during its implementation. Therefore, this study aims to identify (1) the forms of political conflict during village elections, and (2) the factors causing political conflict during village elections in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*. This study employs a mimetic approach and utilizes Ian Watt's literary sociology theory as its theoretical framework. The data collected includes characters, plot, and setting sourced from the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* by Sela Istighfari. The analysis was conducted using hermeneutic techniques. The findings show that the village head election process in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* involves three forms of conflict: (1) conflict between individuals, between Pak Surya and Haidar; (2) conflict between groups, between traditional fishermen and industrial workers; and (3) conflict between the village government and the village community. In addition, the factors causing the conflicts are (1) competition, (2) differences in interests, (3) loss of public trust, and (4) natural disasters. In the implementation of the village head election, the conflicts that arise cause divisions within the community.

**Keywords:** political conflict representation; literary sociology; novel *desa sajeroning ombak*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Village head elections (pilkades) are part of Indonesia's democratic process at the village level. The community has the right to elect its village leaders directly. Before the elections, each pair of candidates must undergo a campaign process to convey their respective visions and missions. The village administration system is regulated by Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages. Article 34,

paragraph (2) states that "Village head elections shall be direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair." However, in practice, conflicts will arise if there are practices that violate the rules, such as money politics (Pamungkas & Zamzamy, 2023). Giving money to the community during campaigns has become a tradition to seek support and sympathy from the community (Astuti & Marlina, 2022).

Such deviant behavior should be condemned, and the community must adhere to the correct principles, or it will have a lasting impact in the future. In relation to this, political issues presented in novels become particularly interesting.

Not only as entertainment, but literary works also have other functions that are beneficial to society. Writers use novels as a tool to voice their opinions or criticisms of something that is considered to have violated the rules (Farida & Andalas, 2019; Nugroho, Prabaningrum, & Sumartini, 2023).

Generally, novels contain fictional stories that are the product of the author's imagination. However, the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* is a work of literature that presents political representations of societal issues, such as corruption, misuse of village budgets, and money politics. Modern Javanese literary works are closely identified with the lives of the people (Setyawan, in Sidiq, 2022). Literary works reflect the conflicts that occur in society (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017). Novels depict the lives of people and have a significant influence on the transmission of life values (Febrilian, Fathurohman, & Ahsin, 2022). Thus, in literary works, writers can translate their imagination into the conflicts that occur in social reality and create aesthetic elements in literary works (Latifah & Sugiarti, 2020). Literary works have intrinsic and extrinsic elements in their composition. In writing novels, writers aim to show readers how to see social reality through their writing (Mahsa, 2022).

The novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* is one of Sela Istighfari's works, with its first edition published in early 2025. This novel reflects society, as it is set against a backdrop of social issues. These are depicted through the implementation of village head elections in Sayung District, Demak Regency. Literary works as a reflection of society refer to the social conditions of society at the time the literary work was created (Nafisah, 2024). Therefore, literary works do not entirely reflect the current social conditions.

This novel tells the story of a young man named Haidar Lutfi and his struggle to bring progress to his hometown. The community is struggling to cope with tidal flooding. Many of the community's fish ponds have been lost over the years due to tidal flooding. Many people are complaining about the lack of solutions to the tidal flooding problem. On the other hand, the village head has used village funds that were initially intended for the construction of tidal embankments for his own personal interests in the city. As a result, the community, upon learning of this, lost trust and took action to remove him from office. With great hope, they sought a new leader who would be responsible and bring positive change to the village. After discovering the previous village chief's misconduct, Haidar decided to run for the position of village chief. Upon seeing the condition of the village, he was deeply concerned and determined to bring about change in his hometown. However, his opponent was Mr. Surya, a wealthy entrepreneur in the fish farming industry, well-known in the village.

Haidar felt pessimistic, but he remained determined to continue his candidacy for village head of Purwo Asri. When the voting reached its peak, the community became divided due to differences in views and interests. The community was split into two groups: traditional fish farmers and industrial workers. After the votes were counted, Haidar was declared the winner, and the community approved him as the new village head of Purwo Asri. The villagers hoped that Haidar would carry out his duties with full responsibility and integrity.

No research has been conducted on the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*; however, four studies relevant to this research on political representation in literary works have been conducted. First, a study by Rohmah & Sugiarti (2025), entitled "Critical Analysis of Politics in the Novel Bungkam Suara by J.S. Khairen". Their findings describe the political aspects, ranging from power, policy, and law, as well as their impact on instability, public manipulation, and development disparities. Second, research by Melati, Noviyanti, and Eriyanti (2022), entitled "Representation of Political Conflict in the Novel Lentera Batukaru by Putu Setia". Their findings describe political conflicts, including murder, violence, ideological differences, and competition. The factors include ideological differences, the spread of hoaxes, and unfair political practices. The impacts include sexual harassment and mental health issues. Third, research by Fatikasari & Sugiarti (2023), entitled "The

Political Struggle of the Main Character in the Novel Negeri Di Ujung Tanduk by Tere Liye. The findings describe the main character's goal of upholding the law and the factors of the main character's will, motivation, and desire. Fourth, research by Mufitasari & Setyarum (2024), entitled "Social Political Issues in the Novel 86 by Okky Madasari in Gillin and Gillin's Social Analysis". The findings reveal social and political issues, including corruption, collusion, and nepotism, as well as the factors that influence them, such as economic problems, customs, and morals. From this description, it can be concluded that all four present political issues in their literary works, but the issues examined differ.

Research related to socio-political issues is often conducted to enable the community to take responsibility for the decisions they make when electing leaders (Melati et al., 2022). Thus, this research can provide additional insight into the forms of conflict and factors that underlie the emergence of conflict in political practice. Based on this description, the research questions in this study are: (1) What are the forms of political conflict that occur during village head elections in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*? (2) What are the factors that cause political conflict during village head elections in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*? Therefore, this study aims to: (1) identify the forms of political conflict that occur during village head elections, (2) identify the factors that cause political conflict in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*.

## METHOD

This research is qualitative. Qualitative research in literature involves analyzing structured texts to understand the elements that underlie the formation of literary works (Wajiran, 2024). There are four types of literary approaches according to Abrams. First, the expressive approach focuses on the author. Second, the mimetic approach focuses on reflecting or imitating reality. Third, the pragmatic approach focuses on the role of the reader. Fourth, the objective approach focuses on the literary work (Efendi, 2020). The literary approach used in this study is Abrams' mimetic approach. This mimetic approach posits that literary works imitate real life; therefore, literary analysis involves connecting aspects of reality.

Outside of literature (Rahmawati et al., 2022). The theory employed is Ian Watt's literary sociology, which posits that literary works are considered imitations of the social conditions of a society at a particular time. Ian Watt (in Suraya, 2022) states that literary works reflect the social conditions of a society. This study focuses on the problems that occur during village head elections in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*. Data collection was conducted using text study and literature review techniques. The first step was to read the primary data source, namely the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* by Sela Istighfari. The second step was to classify the characters, plot, and setting, followed by a description of the characters and plot to determine the issues to be studied.

The next step was to search for literature sources related to the findings. Next, data analysis was conducted using hermeneutic techniques. Hermeneutics is a method used to interpret texts, making them more accessible and easier to understand (Supriyanto, 2021). The steps taken were to interpret the meaning and connect it to the social context.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this novel, the author presents conflicts that occur during the election period. Thus, the political conflicts in the novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* are identified as two types: those based on form and the factors that cause the conflict.

### Forms of Political Conflict in the Novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*

Examining the parties involved, three forms of political conflict are presented in Sela's novel, *Desa Sajeroning Ombak*. The following is an explanation:

#### Interpersonal Conflict

The conflict between individuals in this novel is a personal one, driven by jealousy and a desire to avoid being outdone. In this novel, the conflict arises between Pak Surya, a wealthy fish farm entrepreneur, and Haidar, a member of the lower class, during the village head election campaign. The conflict presented in the novel is the spread of hoaxes about the opposing candidate for village head, taken from the following excerpt:

*"Haidar iku mung lulusan pesantren. Apa sing ngerti dheweke babagan mimpin desa? Apa dheweke ngerti carane ngatur dana desa? Apa dheweke ngerti babagan proyek-proyek pembangunan?" ngendikane Pak Surya ing salah sawijining rapat kampanye. (Istighfari, 2025:28)*

Translation: "Haidar is just a graduate of an Islamic boarding school. What does he know about leading a village? Does he know how to manage village funds? Does he know anything about development projects?" said Pak Surya in one of the campaign meetings. (Istighfari, 2025:28)

The above quote shows that Mr. Surya did not like Haidar as his opponent in the village head election. Mr. Surya influenced public opinion during the campaign. Mr. Surya did this to defend himself.

*"Haidar iku mung pengin dadi kepala desa kanggo nyenengakekeluargane dhewe. Dheweke ora bakal nggawa perubahan kanggo desa iki." ujar salah sawijining pendukung Pak Surya ing pasar desa. (Istighfari, 2025:28-29)*

Translation: "Haidar wants to become village head to please his own family. He will not bring change to this village," said one of Mr. Surya's supporters at the village market. (Istighfari, 2025:28-29)

Mr. Surya described how influential figures used their wealth to discredit their opponents during elections by spreading false information or hoaxes. The spread of hoaxes often occurs during campaigns, from village head elections to regional head elections and national elections. In the 2019 general election, the spread of hoaxes was used to attack opponents and increase the electability of the candidates they supported (Suryadi et al., 2022).

### Intergroup Conflict

Conflict arose between Haidar's supporters, who were traditional farmers, and Pak Surya's supporters, who were industrial workers. The conflict between the two groups was caused by differences in interests, as quoted below:

*"Proyek tol punika mboten kangge kita, Haidar," ngendika Pak Slamet Haryono, salah satunggaling petambak tradisional ing desa Purwo Asri. "Tambak kulo lan tanggul ingkang kulo bangun kanthi tangan piyambak rusak kabeh. Nanging, gantos rugi ingkang kula tampi boten cukup kangge mbangun malih." Istighfari, 2025:16)*

Translation: "The toll road project is not for us, Haidar," said Pak Slamet Haryono, a traditional farmer in Purwo Asri village. "The ponds and embankments that I built with my own hands are all damaged. However, the compensation I received is not enough to rebuild the ponds." (Istighfari, 2025, p. 16)

Mr. Slamet, representing a group of traditional fish farmers, rejected the construction of a coastal toll road that would displace part of the fish ponds in Purwo Asri village. Mr. Slamet felt. Since the compensation money would not be enough to buy fish ponds in other areas, Mr. Slamet also does not want the ancestral ponds, which are already disappearing due to tidal flooding, to be further displaced by the construction of the toll road. Therefore, Mr. Slamet disagrees with the industrial labor group that supports the construction of the toll road.

*"Kita ora bisa terus-terusan gumantung marang tambak. Kawasan industrikinggawa pekerjaan kanggo kita. Yen kita ora ndhukung proyek iki, kita bakal ketinggalan," ujar Mas Agus Riyanto, sing saiki kerja minangka buruh ing salah sawijining pabrik ing kawasan industri. (Istighfari, 2025:43)*

Translation: "We cannot continue to depend on fish farming. This industrial area brings job opportunities for us. If we do not support this project, we will be left behind," said Mas Agus Riyanto, who now works as a laborer at one of the factories in the industrial area. (Istighfari, 2025:43)

On the other hand, Mas Agus Riyanto, representing industrial workers, strongly supports the construction of the coastal toll road in Sayung. According to him, the toll road project will provide numerous job opportunities for the community and increase local income. As a result, many companies will consider the area for industrial development. The strategic location, combined with advanced infrastructure, can support industrial activities and drive economic growth.

The emergence of groups that support and oppose each other often occurs when there are significant differences in their views. Village head elections should serve as an expression of the community's political rights. However, they can lead to polarization after the elections are held. It is not easy for communities to integrate support teams, so a unified community that supports further development is not formed (Mutiin, 2021).

### **Conflict between the Village Government and the Community**

The conflict between the village government and the community in the novel occurs when the village head misuses village funds.

The community is angry because the village government has made no effort to improve the village's deteriorating condition. Here is an excerpt:

*"Haidar, kula lan kathah warga sanesipun wis dangu mirsani tumindakipun Pak Darmo. Dana desa ingkang kedahipun kangge mbangun tanggul malah dipun anggo kangge bisnis pribadinipun. Padahal, tanggulpunika penting sanget kangge ngreksa tambak kita. " (Istighfari, 2025, p. 14).*

Translation: "Haidar, I and other residents have been observing Mr. Darmo's actions for a long time. Village funds that should have been used to build embankments were instead used for his personal business. In fact, these embankments are very important for protecting our fish ponds. " (Istighfari, 2025, p. 14)

*Bu Sulastru nerusake, "Pak Darmo ora tau manehi laporan transparan babagan panggunaan dana desa. Malah, nalika kita takon, dheweke mung ngendika bilih dana kasebut wis dipun ginakake kanggo proyek. Nanging, menapa proyekipun? Kita mboten nate mirsani wujudipun." (Istighfari, 2025:15)*

Translation: Mrs. Sulastru continued, "Mr. Darmo never provided transparent reports regarding village funds. In fact, when asked, Mr. Darmo only said that the funds had been used for projects. But what projects? We never saw any evidence of these projects." (Istighfari, 2025:15)

Misuse of funds or corruption often occurs, not only in government, but in any sphere where there is an opportunity to commit such acts.

This conflict can harm many parties and must be addressed firmly. Several cases are listed on the website of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia at <https://story.kejaksaan.go.id/>.

### **Factors Causing Political Conflict in the Novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak***

Conflicts that occur in society certainly have causes, and this is also true in this novel. The causes of conflict in the novel are competition, differences in opinion, loss of public trust, and natural disasters. Here is the explanation:

#### **Competition**

Competition arises from personal ego, as seen between Mr. Surya and Haidar in their campaign for village head. The two argue to defend their respective positions in order to gain support from the community. Here is an excerpt:

*"Manawa aku dadi kepala desa, aku bakal nggaweprojek tol iki nggawa manfaat kanggo kabeh warga. Aku bakal nggawe kesempatan kerja lan investasi anyar kanggo desa iki," ujare Pak Surya ing salah sawijining kampanye. (Istighfari, 2025:29)*

Translation: "If I become village head, I will ensure that this toll road project benefits all residents. I will create new job opportunities and investment for this village," said Pak Surya during one of his campaigns (Istighfari, 2025, p. 29)

Compared to Haidar, Pak Surya, who has a background as a wealthy fish farm entrepreneur, will undoubtedly make convincing promises. Through his business connections, he can easily bring about change in the community.

*"Kula boten badhe janji sing gedhe-gedhe, nanging kula badhe damel kanthi amanah lan tansah ngutamakake kepentingan masyarakat," ujare Haidar ing salah sawijining obrolan karo warga. (Istighfari, 2025:31)*

Translation: "I will not make big promises, but I will be trustworthy and always prioritize the interests of the community," said Haidar in one of his conversations with residents. (Istighfari, 2025:31)

On the other hand, Haidar, who came from a lower-class background, was determined and convinced that he would carry out his duties faithfully. Haidar was well aware that he was not as capable as Pak Surya. However, his determination drove him to become village head for the welfare of the entire community, not just for the benefit of officials.

Competition is closely tied to the concepts of winning and losing (Bahri et al., 2023). In elections, candidates typically campaign to gain support from the community. For example, during the campaign for village head in Bandungrejo Village, Mranggen, on October 2, 2023, hundreds of supporters of one of the candidates toured the village to introduce the candidate's vision and mission (Wijaya, 2023).

#### **Difference of Opinion**

Differences in interests in the village head election process often lead to divisions among community groups. There are generally two groups: those who support and those who oppose.

Indonesia is a diverse country, which can be a source of division among groups. Diversity conflicts encompass conflicts between ethnicities, religions, and tribes (Lestari, 2018).

In the novel, industrial workers tend to support Pak Surya for the village head position because he is considered to have extensive experience in the business world and has participated in implementing government projects. So they believe that Pak Surya can make the toll road project beneficial for the village. Here is the quote:

*"Pak Surya iku wong sing ngerti caranemlaku karo wong-wong sugih. Dheweke bisa ngobahake proyek tol iki kanggo nguntungake desa," ujar salah sawijining buruh liyane. (Istighfari, 2025:43-44)*

Translation: "Mr. Surya knows how to communicate with high-ranking officials. He can make this toll road project profitable for the village," said another worker. (Istighfari, 2025:43-44)

However, there are labor groups that reject the construction of toll roads that displace villages and fish ponds owned by rural communities. The toll road project is considered to benefit only certain parties, not the small community. Here is an excerpt:

*"Proyek iki mung nguntungake wong sugih. Wong cilik koyo kita mung dadi alat kanggo dheweke," ujar salah sawijining buruh singsaiki kudu pindah amarga omahe tergesur dening proyek. (Istighfari, 2025:44)*

Translation: "This project only benefits the rich. Ordinary people like us are just tools for them," said one of the workers who has now moved because his house was evicted for the project. (Istighfari, 2025:44)

### Loss of Public Confidence

Once lost, public trust is difficult to regain. Such is the case with the conflict in Purwo Asri village, where the community lost trust in the village administration due to a lack of transparency in reporting the use of village funds. Corruption is an act that harms many parties, can slow economic growth, reduce investment, increase poverty, and decrease the level of public happiness (Pahlevi, 2022). Here is the quote:

*Ing tengah kahanan punika, Pak Darmo, kepala desa sadurunge, malah nyalahgunakake dana desa ingkang kedahipun kangge mbangun tanggul-tanggul lan infrastruktur desa. Dana punika dipun arahaken kangge kepentingan pribadine, lan masyarakat sampun kesel lan ilang kepercayaanipun dhumateng pamarentah desa. (Istighfari, 2025:11)*

Translation: In the midst of this situation, Mr. Darmo, the previous village head, misused village funds that should have been used to build embankments and village infrastructure. The funds were used for his personal interests, and the community was tired and had lost trust in the village government. (Istighfari, 2025:11)

Mr. Darmo, the previous village head, used the embankment construction budget for his personal expenses. The community, which was aware of this, was very angry because the village government, which was trusted to manage the village, had instead taken actions that harmed the community and the village. This led to the community losing trust in the village government. The erosion of public trust in the government will likely lead to increased conflict in the future.



Conflict will arise when the next leader is elected, because the community has experienced trauma in the past.

### Natural Disaster

Tidal flooding is a natural disaster that has affected residents in the Sayung District, Demak. Tidal flooding also triggers conflict between the community and the village government in this novel. The following is an excerpt from the novel:

*Rob lan abrasi sampun dados "tetamu" ingkang boten nate nyuwun ijin. Saben taun, banyu segara mlebu nggenangi desa lan ngrusak tambak-tambak ingkang dados tulang punggung gesangipun warga. Sanadyan saperangan masyarakat nyoba mbangun tanggul-tanggul alit kanthi swadaya, nanging kekuwatan ombaklan banyu pasang langkung ageng tinimbang usaha mereka. (Istighfari, 2025:1)*

Translation: Erosion and abrasion have become unwelcome guests. Every year, seawater floods the village, damaging the fish ponds that are the primary source of livelihood for the residents. Although the community has tried to build small embankments on its own, the force of the waves and the tide is greater than its efforts. (Istighfari, 2025:1)

The excerpt above explains that tidal flooding occurs every year, damaging the local community's fish ponds. Although the community has tried to build small embankments on its own, the tide is always higher. This excerpt suggests that the government is not prioritizing the environment and its people. As a result, the community has lost sympathy for the government and has chosen to take action on its own.

Coastal flooding is a frequent complaint among coastal communities. Flooding can cause significant damage to local areas and economies if the government fails to address the issue effectively. The damage includes physical and environmental damage, such as damaged roads, flooded rice fields or fish ponds, flooded settlements, and blocked access roads when flooding is severe.

Additionally, it impacts the economy and the livelihoods of communities that depend on farmland or rice fields (Diana et al., 2024).

### CONCLUSION

The novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* is a reflection of society, as depicted in a manuscript that critiques ordinary people's views towards the government. In this novel, literary works are used as a tool to critique the government for its irresponsibility. The criticism is directed at the government for its alleged violations, including budget mismanagement, corruption, a lack of transparency in reporting the use of funds, and irresponsibility in carrying out its duties. Criticism of the government for its irresponsibility towards the environment and the social conditions of the community. The novel *Desa Sajeroning Ombak* by Sela Istighfari describes the conditions of the coastal community, which is frequently affected by tidal flooding. In addition, this novel also provides an overview of the political phenomena that occur in the village community during the village head elections.

This novel presents the process of village head elections, violations committed by the village government, and the practice of money politics during the campaign period. The implementation of village head elections is closely related to socio-political conflicts. The political conflicts described in the novel are grouped into three categories based on the parties involved.

First, conflicts between individuals arise from competition between village head candidates. Second, conflicts arise between groups due to differences in views between traditional farming communities and industrial labor groups. Third, conflicts arise between the government and the community as a result of violations committed by the village government. Conflicts arise due to opposition or divisions within the community. The causes of conflict include competition between candidates, the community's loss of trust in the village government, and natural disasters.

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