

A Structural and Structuralist Analysis of A.A. Navis' *Robohnya Surau Kami* ("The Collapse of Our Little Mosque")

Indah Aini¹, Balazs Huszka², Alexander Stark³

¹Department of German Language, State University of Medan, Medan, Indonesia,

²Language Centre, University of Brunei Darussalam, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam,

³Faculty of Language Studies and Human Development, University Malaysia Kelantan, Kota Bharu, Malaysia.

Corresponding Author: Indah Aini

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a unified structural and structuralist analysis of A.A. Navis' *Robohnya Surau Kami*, illustrating how the short story's form and deep narrative logic convey a critique of cultural transformation and ideological disruption. Building on sociological, postcolonial, and orientalist scholarship, the paper advances the interpretation that the character Ajo Sidi symbolises Western secular rationality that undermines indigenous Minangkabau religious values. Through detailed structural examination—plot, narrative layers, character dynamics, and symbolic setting—and a structuralist reading of binary oppositions (tradition vs modernity, East vs West, faith vs pragmatism), the analysis reveals how the story encodes a deeper cultural tension. Although this reading extends beyond the short story's historical context, it is grounded in recurring themes identified by existing scholarship, including critiques of social apathy, the decline of communal values, and ideological hegemony. Ultimately, the paper argues that Navis' narrative, while local in setting, resonates with broader postcolonial concerns about cultural integrity in the face of hegemonic influence.

Keywords: A.A. Navis, Indonesian literature, *Robohnya Surau Kami*, structural and structuralist analysis

INTRODUCTION

A.A. Navis' short story *Robohnya Surau Kami* (1956) remains a seminal work in Indonesian literature [1], widely interpreted as a moral critique of pious detachment and societal neglect. Centred on the tragic demise of an elderly man (the *kakek*) who devotes his life to a village mosque (*surau*), the story confronts questions of faith, duty, and cultural change. Crucial to the narrative is Ajo Sidi, a younger villager whose allegorical tale shakes the old man's convictions and ultimately precipitates his death. While many scholars have understood the story as a critique of religious passivity or social indifference [2], this paper proposes a complementary reading: that Ajo Sidi can be interpreted as a symbolic figure of Western ideological influence—one that challenges, even dismantles, indigenous spiritual authority. Although this interpretation extends beyond Navis's original post-independence context, it draws strength from several key scholarly frameworks. Kasimbara [3] reads Ajo Sidi as embodying the West in contrast to the *kakek*'s Eastern religiosity, while Dauly and Arianto [4] argue that the story exposes

lingering colonial influence through ideological hegemony rather than direct control. These interpretations align with Edward Said's theory of orientalism [5] and broader postcolonial concerns about cultural erosion [6], [7]. A structuralist analysis further supports this view: the story is shaped by binary oppositions such as East/West, tradition/modernity, and worship/action, positioning Ajo Sidi and the *kakek* as opposing cultural codes.

This paper applies an integrated structural and structuralist approach to support this interpretation. Structurally, the story is analysed in terms of its narrative framework, character roles, setting, and symbolic devices. Structuralist analysis then probes the oppositional logic beneath the narrative—revealing how Ajo Sidi functions as more than a provocateur: he becomes a conduit for secular, Western values that destabilise the traditional worldview represented by the *kakek*. Through this approach, the story emerges not only as a local parable, but also as a cultural allegory for the postcolonial condition.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs an integrated approach combining structural and structuralist literary analysis. While these frameworks are distinct in emphasis, they are mutually reinforcing: structural analysis focuses on the organisation and formal mechanics of the narrative, while structuralist analysis interprets how underlying oppositions and symbolic systems generate meaning within that structure.

Structural analysis examines how *Robohnya Surau Kami* is constructed—its narrative layers, character relationships, plot development, setting, and symbolic elements. Thus, this analysis identifies how each component contributes to the reader's understanding of the story's themes. Key elements include the framing narrative, the embedded parable, the juxtaposition of voices (especially between the *kakek* and Ajo Sidi), and the symbolic function of the *surau*, the razor, and other motifs [8].

Previous scholarship, such as Hidayatullah [9], has noted the story's "layered narrative technique," consisting of multiple nested narrative levels that complicate perspective and heighten emotional impact. These formal features allow Navis to gradually expose moral conflict and ideological tension, which this paper interprets in light of broader cultural critiques.

Structuralist analysis, in contrast, probes the deep narrative logic beneath the surface, identifying binary oppositions [10], [11] and cultural codes embedded in the text. It treats the story as a system of interrelated signs and oppositions—such as tradition vs modernity, East vs West, and faith vs action—that reveal the ideological stakes of the narrative. Thus, structuralist approach focuses on how meaning emerges from the relationship between elements, not from individual elements in isolation. In this case, the *kakek* and Ajo Sidi are analysed not only as characters but as opposing signifiers within a broader symbolic structure.

This analysis is further informed by the postcolonial and orientalist readings of the story present in the reviewed literature. Kasimbara [3] interprets the *kakek* as a figure of Eastern religiosity and Ajo Sidi as representative of Western rationalism and ideological dominance. Similarly, Dauly and Arianto [4] argue that the story reflects the internalisation of colonial discourse, wherein Eastern identities are destabilised not by direct violence but by psychological and cultural pressure. Structuralist analysis enables these readings to be embedded within the form of the narrative itself: the binary tension between characters, ideologies, and outcomes can be seen as reproducing a postcolonial logic of cultural subversion.

In combining these approaches, this paper does not merely examine *what* the story says, but *how* it says it—and what structures of meaning underlie its moral and emotional force. Structural analysis identifies the narrative machinery; structuralist reading explains the cultural logic that gives that machinery symbolic resonance. This

methodological synthesis supports the central thesis: that *Robohnya Surau Kami*, while not overtly political, encodes a conflict between indigenous values and a secular, Westernising force, embodied in the figure of Ajo Sidi.

ANALYSIS

Narrative Structure and Framing Devices

The narrative architecture of *Robohnya Surau Kami* is built around a carefully layered structure that reinforces the story's thematic depth. At its most basic level, the story comprises three narrative layers: the frame narrative set in the present, the narrator's recollection of *kakek*'s emotional decline, and the embedded allegorical tale told by Ajo Sidi. This tripartite structure is not merely decorative—it is essential for delivering the moral and symbolic impact of the story.

The opening frame situates the reader in a space of cultural and spiritual deterioration. The narrator describes how the *surau*—once a place of sanctity—is now abandoned and vandalised: "*Jika Tuan datang sekarang, hanya akan menjumpai gambaran yang mengesankan suatu kesucian yang bakal roboh [12]*" ("If you came now, you would only find a picture of sanctity on the verge of collapse"). The phrase "*robohnya surau*" (the collapse of the *surau*) sets the tone for a story of both literal and symbolic collapse. The narrative voice is nostalgic and critical, functioning as a guide through a collective cultural loss.

The rising action is driven by the narrator's encounter with *kakek*, who is found sitting in despair, surrounded by his knife-sharpening tools but unable to hide his inner turmoil. His unusual silence and curses directed at Ajo Sidi suggest a rupture in his usually calm religious disposition. This sets up a narrative mystery: what could have so deeply unsettled such a devout man? The narrator's persistent questioning leads to the heart of the story—Ajo Sidi's parable of Haji Saleh.

The parable, occupying the central and longest part of the narrative, functions as the

internal climax. Told through *kakek*'s voice but attributed to Ajo Sidi, it recounts a judgement scene in the afterlife where devout Muslims—including Haji Saleh—are condemned to hell for neglecting their societal obligations. Though they prayed, fasted, and went on pilgrimages, they allowed their people to remain poor, exploited, and divided. When they confront God in protest, He replies: "*Aku beri kau negeri yang kaya raya, tapi kau malas. [...] Sedang Aku menyuruh engkau semuanya beramal kalau engkau miskin [12]*" ("I gave you a land full of riches, but you were lazy. [...] Yet I commanded you to work if you were poor"). The critique is blunt and sweeping, targeting religious complacency and framing it as morally inadequate.

This central narrative device—the story within a story—is a hallmark of structural complexity. As Hidayatullah [9] notes, Navis uses a "layered narrative technique" to explore inner conflict and moral ambiguity. The inner tale disrupts the expectations established by the outer frame, forcing both *kakek* and the reader to confront uncomfortable implications. The fact that this story is told through Ajo Sidi, a character known for his critical parables, further complicates the reader's trust and understanding.

The falling action and resolution are brief but devastating. The following morning, *kakek* is found dead, having committed suicide by slitting his throat with the same razor he had been sharpening. His death occurs within the abandoned *surau*, symbolically aligning the collapse of religious authority with the demise of its final custodian [13]. The narrator reacts with disbelief and blames Ajo Sidi: "*Astaga! Ajo Sidi punya gara-gara [12]*" ("Good heavens! This is all Ajo Sidi's doing").

The structure thus moves from narrative observation (the decaying *surau*), to emotional disturbance (*kakek*'s inner collapse), to moral confrontation (Ajo Sidi's parable), and finally to tragedy (the death of *kakek*). Each narrative layer builds upon the

previous one, culminating in a profound reversal: the man most faithful to God is undone not by sin, but by doubt, planted through an external ideology that redefines what constitutes righteousness.

This multilayered structure plays a critical role in positioning Ajo Sidi as more than a peripheral character. His story not only functions as the turning point of the narrative but as a tool of ideological intervention. Through structural analysis, we see how Navis deliberately stages the unraveling of *kakek's* faith through the narrative device itself—presenting modern critique as an embedded disruption to traditional belief. The elegance of this narrative framing strengthens the allegorical reading of Ajo Sidi as a symbolic force: not merely a man with an opinion, but a structural agent of cultural destabilisation.

Character Roles as Structural Foils

In *Robohnya Surau Kami*, the narrative tension hinges upon the stark contrast between its two central characters: *kakek* and Ajo Sidi. From a structural perspective, they operate as foils—each defined in part by opposition to the other. Their relationship serves not only to advance the plot but also to articulate the story's ideological conflict. Through their contrasting roles, Navis explores deeper tensions between tradition and critique, religiosity and pragmatism, submission and provocation.

Kakek is the embodiment of traditional Minangkabau Islamic piety. His life is defined by spiritual routine, social humility, and unwavering dedication to religious observance. He survives modestly from alms and receives only small compensation for his work sharpening knives. He recounts with conviction: "*Segala kehidupanku, lahir batin, kuserahkan kepada Allah Subhanahu wataala [12]*" ("All aspects of my life, outward and inward, I entrusted to Allah, the Most Glorious and Sublime"). Structurally, he is a static character—his personality does not develop or change—but this lack of development is deliberate.

His immobility reflects the stability (and, ultimately, the vulnerability) of inherited religious identity when confronted by ideological rupture.

Ajo Sidi, by contrast, is dynamic, ironic, and confrontational. He is known for his clever, often subversive, storytelling. The narrator describes him as a *pembual*—a spinner of tales—whose stories often expose the vices or contradictions of the villagers. His most powerful story is the embedded allegory about Haji Saleh, which causes *kakek's* breakdown. Structurally, Ajo Sidi does not evolve, but he acts as the catalyst for change—disrupting *kakek's* worldview and, by extension, dismantling the symbolic authority of religious orthodoxy [14].

Their interactions unfold almost entirely through indirect narrative, with the narrator as an intermediary. This narrative distance intensifies their symbolic functions. *Kakek* stands for a generation whose understanding of salvation is inward, spiritual, and static; Ajo Sidi, for a generation that is worldly, critical, and mobile. Hidayatullah [9] captures this difference through the lens of masculinity, describing *kakek* as representing a passive, conservative form of manhood, while Ajo Sidi embodies a more hegemonic, active masculinity. In structural terms, these traits map onto a larger binary of conservatism versus disruption, which the story develops through dialogue and consequence.

Ajo Sidi's allegory directly undermines *kakek's* spiritual self-conception. In the tale, the devout Haji Saleh is condemned to hell not for his sins, but for his failure to address social injustice: "*Kesalahan engkau, karena engkau terlalu mementingkan dirimu sendiri [12]*" ("Your error was that you cared only for yourself"). For *kakek*, who has committed his life to personal religious devotion, this story strikes at the core of his identity. He is not just being challenged intellectually; he is being redefined morally. From a structuralist standpoint, Ajo Sidi and *kakek* embody opposing signifiers in a cultural code. Their roles evoke classic binary oppositions: action versus

contemplation, engagement versus withdrawal, modernity versus tradition. Kasimbara [3] explicitly links Ajo Sidi to Western influence and *kakek* to Eastern spirituality. Their narrative function thus goes beyond personal conflict; they dramatise a civilisational confrontation.

A crucial feature of their structural relationship is the asymmetry of consequence. Ajo Sidi tells a story and leaves. He is unaffected, even detached, from the outcome. When the narrator tries to confront him after *kakek*'s death, he learns from Ajo Sidi's wife that he has already left for work. She adds that he instructed her to buy a burial shroud for *kakek*: "*Dan ia meninggalkan pesan agar dibelikan kain kafan buat Kakek tujuh lapis [12]*" ("And he left a message to buy seven layers of burial shroud for *kakek*"). This final gesture is ambiguous—mockery, penance, or mere duty? Regardless, Ajo Sidi's distance from the consequences of his provocation reinforces his symbolic role as a disruptive external force, not part of the traditional world he unsettles [15].

In sum, the structural opposition between Ajo Sidi and *kakek* provides the engine of the story's conflict. Their roles are archetypal and allegorical, representing not simply two individuals but two worldviews. Through their dynamic, Navis structures the narrative around ideological rupture, preparing the ground for deeper cultural analysis. Their interplay, while brief in dialogue, spans the story's moral universe—illustrating how one character's critique can unravel another's entire existential framework.

Setting and the Symbolism of Place

In *Robohnya Surau Kami*, the physical and social setting is more than a backdrop—it is a symbolic landscape that mirrors the story's thematic concerns. The narrative unfolds in a small Minangkabau village, once governed by religious cohesion and communal values, now marked by neglect, alienation, and quiet decay. This transformation is anchored in the symbolic

decline of the *surau*, the traditional prayer house (mosque) at the heart of village life, which serves as a powerful metaphor for the erosion of spiritual and cultural authority.

From the outset, the narrator laments the *surau*'s condition: "*Jika Tuan datang sekarang, hanya akan menjumpai gambaran yang mengesankan suatu kesucian yang bakal roboh [12]*" ("If you came now, you would only find an image evoking a sanctity that is bound to collapse"). This image of physical decay speaks to a broader spiritual and cultural disintegration. The *surau*, once a place of worship, learning, and communal gathering, is now uninhabited and structurally unsound. The dereliction is not only material but symbolic: it reflects the diminishing influence of religious values in a changing socio-political landscape.

Children use the *surau* as a playground and the villagers dismantle it for firewood. The narrator comments bitterly: "*Hingga anak-anak menggunakannya sebagai tempat bermain, memainkan segala apa yang disukai mereka. Perempuan yang kehabisan kayu bakar, sering suka mencopoti papan dinding atau lantai di malam hari [12]*" ("To the point that children use it as a playground, playing with whatever they like. Women who run out of firewood often pull-out planks from the walls or floor at night"). This imagery underscores a generational and moral rupture. What was once sacred is now ordinary, utilitarian, and even profaned. Sulistyaningrum and Nugraha [2] view this desecration as a sign of "the erosion of communal respect for inherited spiritual institutions." The disuse of the *surau* mirrors society's detachment from its ethical roots.

The village itself, as depicted through the narrator's commentary, has grown indifferent and self-absorbed. When the narrator reflects on the cause of *kakek*'s death, he says, "*Dan yang terutama ialah sifat masa bodoh manusia sekarang [12]*" ("And above all, it is the indifference of people nowadays"). This suggests that Ajo Sidi is not the sole agent of destruction; rather, he exploits a cultural void already

present. The social environment is complicit in the moral collapse that unfolds. From a structural standpoint, the setting serves as a mirror to character: the internal ruin of *kakek* parallels the physical ruin of the *surau* and the cultural apathy of the villagers.

Moreover, the embedded parable told by Ajo Sidi expands the symbolic reach of the setting. When Haji Saleh is confronted by God, he protests that his homeland—Indonesia—was deeply flawed. God replies, "*Aku beri engkau negeri yang kaya raya, tapi kau malas [12]*" ("I gave you a land rich in resources, but you were lazy"). Here, the reference to Indonesia transforms the story's rural setting into a national allegory. The local village becomes a microcosm of postcolonial Indonesia—a land blessed with potential, yet cursed by moral complacency and lack of collective responsibility. As Daulay and Arianto [4] argue, this transformation of place into symbol reflects "an implicit critique of the failure to decolonise not only politically, but spiritually and socially."

Kasimbara [3] takes this further by arguing that the *surau* represents "a lost centre of cultural balance," a place where the East's spiritual foundation is eroded under the pressure of Western secular rationalism, embodied by characters like Ajo Sidi. The physical space of the story, then, becomes a battleground between cultural paradigms. The collapse of the *surau* is not merely an architectural failure; it signifies the breakdown of a value system under the weight of ideological incursion.

Structurally, setting functions here not only as a passive environment but as an active symbolic participant. The deterioration of place reflects the trajectory of the characters and the moral universe they inhabit. It reinforces the structuralist reading of the story as a system of oppositions: sacred/profane, old/new, East/West. These oppositions are not only enacted through character and plot, but also inscribed in the physical landscape itself.

In sum, the story's setting—particularly the *surau*—serves as a narrative mechanism for encoding cultural loss, ideological conflict, and the consequences of moral neglect. It helps to externalise the internal conflict of *kakek*, the moral ambiguity of Ajo Sidi, and the broader societal crisis at the heart of the narrative.

Binary Oppositions and Cultural Conflict

Viewed through a structuralist lens, *Robohnya Surau Kami* derives much of its meaning from the system of binary oppositions that underpins its narrative logic. These oppositions are not limited to isolated contrasts between characters or values; rather, they operate as cultural codes that organise the text and guide the reader's interpretation. The most salient of these oppositions—tradition versus modernity, East versus West, faith versus action, and individual versus community—constitute the deep structure of the story. They frame the ideological conflict between *kakek* and Ajo Sidi and give symbolic weight to the events that unfold.

The first and most immediate opposition is between tradition and modernity. *Kakek* represents a worldview rooted in inherited religious norms and passive devotion, while Ajo Sidi functions as the voice of critique, pragmatism, and secular intervention. The contrast is not subtle. *Kakek* spends his life in quiet worship, dependent on the goodwill of others, while Ajo Sidi travels, observes society, and actively comments on its contradictions. The story enacts this opposition structurally: *kakek's* inertia is gradually destabilised by the momentum of Ajo Sidi's tale. As Sulistyaningrum and Nugraha [2] note, the story questions the adequacy of piety "when isolated from moral responsibility to the social collective."

This thematic tension connects to the broader cultural binary of East versus West. While the story never names Western ideology directly, Ajo Sidi's parable echoes Enlightenment values: moral judgement based on social engagement, critique of

religious fatalism, and prioritisation of practical ethics over ritual observance. Kasimbara [3] explicitly interprets Ajo Sidi as a symbolic embodiment of the West—challenging the Eastern spiritualism represented by *kakek*. This interpretation gains strength from the story's allegorical mode. In the embedded tale, God rebukes the believers not for a lack of worship, but for choosing devotion as a way to avoid the demands of real labour and social responsibility: "*Kau lebih suka beribadat saja, karena beribadat tidak mengeluarkan peluh, tidak membanting tulang [12]*" ("You preferred only to worship, because worship does not make you sweat, does not break your back"). The critique is structural as much as moral: Ajo Sidi introduces an external logic into a closed cultural system, disrupting it from within.

The opposition between faith and action is similarly central. Ajo Sidi's tale hinges on the failure of religious people to enact social change. Haji Saleh, who has performed all religious duties, is nonetheless condemned for being inward-looking. God tells him: "*Kesalahan engkau, karena engkau terlalu mementingkan dirimu sendiri [12]*" ("Your fault is that you were too focused on yourself"). *Kakek*, who lives by a similar creed, finds himself morally implicated by the story's logic. His suicide becomes the literal enactment of a spiritual collapse—the moment when faith, unaccompanied by action, is revealed as ethically insufficient. Daulay and Arianto [4] argue that this reversal reflects "the story's deeper concern with ideological transformation, not personal failure."

Finally, the story develops an implicit tension between individual and community. *Kakek's* spirituality is self-contained, largely detached from the communal needs of the village. He neither protests injustice nor mobilises others for good. His moral universe is defined by personal submission rather than collective welfare. Ajo Sidi's parable challenges this orientation, suggesting that salvation is contingent on social responsibility. This ideological shift

reframes the communal collapse around the *surau* as not merely accidental, but systemic—a result of a worldview that privileges individual piety over communal justice.

These oppositions are not presented as abstract moral dilemmas; they are materially encoded in the structure and setting of the story. The decaying *surau* represents the collapse of tradition; the absent or passive villagers reflect communal apathy; Ajo Sidi's ironic departure signals the triumph of critical modernity over spiritual absolutism. Together, these elements form a network of contrasts that echo structuralist conceptions of meaning as emerging from relational difference.

Moreover, the story's ultimate reversal—where the devout are damned and the critic remains unaffected—exemplifies the structuralist technique of inversion. Surface morality is upended by deeper ideological codes. As with other structuralist readings (e.g., Barthes' decoding of myth or Lévi-Strauss's analysis of mythic structures), Navis' story hinges on a hidden logic: that the very foundations of inherited moral understanding are unstable under the pressures of modern critique.

In this sense, *Robohnya Surau Kami* is not merely a story of one man's despair, but a dramatization of a cultural transformation. The binaries at play are not resolved but left in tension, prompting reflection rather than closure. Structuralist analysis enables us to trace how these oppositions are embedded in narrative form, symbolic setting, and character function—revealing the story's deeper ideological architecture.

Structural and Structuralist Convergence

Having examined the narrative structure, character roles, setting, and underlying binary oppositions in *Robohnya Surau Kami*, we now turn to the convergence of structural and structuralist insights—two complementary lenses that, when united, offer a fuller understanding of the story's ideological architecture. While structural analysis focuses on how the text is built, and

structuralist analysis explores what meanings arise from that structure, both approaches help to illuminate the central argument of this paper: that Ajo Sidi functions as a symbolic figure of ideological disruption—aligned with Western secular rationality—which ultimately destabilises traditional religious authority.

The structural features of the story—layered narrative, framed parable, character contrast, and symbolic setting—are not arbitrary. They work in tandem to stage the progressive unraveling of *kakek's* moral world. The use of a nested narrative, for instance, delays the moral rupture until the middle of the story, giving Ajo Sidi's tale maximum narrative and ideological impact. His parable acts as a "text within the text," serving as the hinge upon which the larger narrative turns. From a structural point of view, this framing device reorients the reader's understanding of both *kakek* and the surrounding world.

The narrative structure supports and amplifies the binary oppositions at the heart of the story. *Kakek* and Ajo Sidi are not simply characters in opposition; they function as cultural signifiers. The formal construction of the story ensures that their opposing values—piety versus critique, passivity versus activism, submission versus autonomy—are not just expressed through dialogue, but enacted through plot development and symbolic outcomes. The resolution—*kakek's* suicide—completes the structural arc while also confirming the structuralist reading: inherited spiritual frameworks, when left unexamined, may not withstand the pressures of ideological confrontation.

Structuralist theory emphasises that meaning is not inherent in individual elements, but in the relations among them. In Navis's story, the relationships between characters, events, and settings produce meaning by operating through cultural codes and symbolic oppositions. The *surau* does not merely "fall" as a physical structure—it falls as a moral and communal centre. The razor is not merely a tool of

suicide—it is a weapon turned inward, signifying the collapse of a value system unable to defend itself. Each of these narrative components contributes to a network of oppositional signs that define the story's ideological core.

It is in this convergence that Ajo Sidi's function becomes most evident. As argued by Kasimbara [3], Ajo Sidi represents a secularising, rationalist influence—a cultural logic that contrasts sharply with the Eastern, religious devotion embodied by *kakek*. Though his background is the same as other villagers, his role in the story is externalising: he brings in a discourse that does not belong to the traditional setting. His critique, framed in theological language but operating according to a logic of utility and consequence, reflects a shift from metaphysical faith to ethical rationalism. In postcolonial terms, this can be read as an allegory of ideological hegemony: the West no longer needs to colonise by force; it does so through values and discourse.

Daulay and Arianto [4] reinforce this reading by situating the story within Indonesia's broader ideological transformation—where religious identity, once the cornerstone of communal life, becomes vulnerable to critique from within. Ajo Sidi's character is thus doubly potent: structurally, he is the inciting force of the narrative; symbolically, he is the conduit for a foreign worldview. The fact that he leaves the village unaffected while *kakek* dies in anguish further supports this asymmetry of power. Structural analysis reveals the architecture of this tension; structuralist analysis decodes its meaning.

Together, these approaches demonstrate how Navis's story encodes cultural anxiety about ideological displacement. By integrating narrative structure with symbolic logic, we see that *Robohnya Surau Kami* does more than depict a generational conflict—it stages a profound cultural and moral reckoning. The story's enduring power lies in this very convergence: its ability to translate abstract ideological

tensions into a formally elegant and emotionally resonant narrative.

CONCLUSION

A.A. Navis' *Robohnya Surau Kami* is often read as a moral allegory, criticising religious passivity and the failure to address social injustice. While such interpretations remain valid, this paper has proposed a deeper symbolic reading by synthesising structural and structuralist approaches to argue that the story also encodes a cultural confrontation—between an indigenous spiritual worldview and a disruptive, secular rationality. This reading positions Ajo Sidi not merely as a narrative provocateur, but as a symbolic force of Western ideology, challenging and ultimately destabilising the traditional Minangkabau religious paradigm represented by *kakek*.

Structural analysis revealed how the story's formal elements—its layered narrative, character contrasts, and symbolic settings—work cohesively to support its thematic complexity. The multi-level narration, with its carefully timed climax in the form of Ajo Sidi's parable, guides the reader from a place of nostalgic loss to moral unease. The framing device and character functions create a narrative logic that links the *surau*'s decay to the psychological collapse of its caretaker. Each component of the structure contributes not only to plot progression but to symbolic meaning, anchoring the narrative's emotional and ideological impact.

Structuralist analysis complemented this by identifying the binary oppositions—tradition versus modernity, East versus West, faith versus action—that form the deep narrative code of the story. These oppositions generate meaning through contrast, establishing the cultural logic by which the story critiques inherited religious assumptions. Ajo Sidi and *kakek* are not just individuals with differing beliefs; they are signifiers within a broader symbolic system, one that reflects Indonesia's postcolonial condition and its ideological uncertainties.

By merging these analytical approaches, this paper has argued that *Robohnya Surau Kami* can be understood not only as a critique of internal religious apathy but also as an allegory for external ideological encroachment. Ajo Sidi's story functions as an ideological intervention, using narrative to unsettle a worldview that equates spiritual purity with moral adequacy. That *kakek* is unable to respond to this challenge—and ultimately succumbs to despair—signals the story's concern with cultural vulnerability in the face of modern critique. His death is not simply a personal tragedy; it is the symbolic collapse of a way of life.

While this interpretation stretches beyond the immediate historical context of Navis' writing, it is supported by postcolonial readings [3], [4] that situate the story within larger concerns about ideological hegemony. It also aligns with structuralist theory's insistence that narratives, like cultures, are governed by codes, oppositions, and hidden logics. In this framework, the story becomes not only a national parable but a structural allegory of cultural displacement.

In this light, *Robohnya Surau Kami* is more than a moral cautionary tale. It is a formally complex, symbolically rich critique of the ideological transformations that accompany modernity and postcoloniality. By reading it through a combined structural and structuralist lens, we recover not only its emotional force but also its intellectual rigour—its capacity to dramatise the invisible, yet powerful, forces that shape cultural survival and moral reckoning.

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