

Narrating Trauma and Rebuilding the Self: A Literary Exploration of *Kubah*

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Article History:

Submission
April 5th, 2026

Accepted
July 13th, 2026

Published
July 30th, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines Ahmad Tohari's novel Kubah as a narrative of trauma healing by highlighting the role of memory, narrative, and temporality in the process of post-traumatic self-reconstruction. Unlike previous studies that generally position Kubah as a representation of history, religious values, or ideological conflicts, this study places trauma as the main analytical framework. The method used is qualitative through close reading, combining Sigmund Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia, Cathy Caruth's theory of latent trauma, and Dominick LaCapra's concept of working through historical trauma. The analysis focuses on the psychological journey of the character Karman as a former political prisoner who experienced social alienation, ideological disconnection, and an identity crisis after the political events of 1965. The results of the study show that the process of healing trauma in the Kubah takes place through three interrelated dimensions, namely memory activation through narrative, social reintegration in the community, and spiritual reorientation rooted in local cultural wisdom. The novelty of this research lies in the interpretation of Kubah not only as a representation of historical trauma, but also as a model of trauma healing that is narratively, socially, and spiritually integrated within the context of Indonesian culture. This research affirms the contribution of Indonesian literature to the study of trauma and opens up space for interdisciplinary dialogue between the fields of literature, history, and mental health. Thus, this study contributes to literary and trauma studies, aligning with SDG 3 on mental health and SDG 16 on post-conflict reconciliation.

Keywords: Ahmad Tohari; identity reconstruction; narrative memory; post-1965 trauma; trauma healing

INTRODUCTION

Psychological trauma has become an increasingly urgent issue in contemporary society, particularly in contexts shaped by political violence, social exclusion, and ideological conflict. In recent years, concerns over mental health in Indonesia have grown alongside growing public concern over mental health, psychological distress, and the long-term effects of social violence, indicating that trauma should not be understood merely as an individual clinical condition, but also as a social, cultural, and historical problem (Wirawan, 2024); Muhamad, 2023; (Indonesia, 2022) Rizaty, 2023; Litha, 2023; (Alexander, 2023). In this regard, trauma cannot be addressed solely through medical and psychological interventions. It also requires approaches that are able to capture how suffering is remembered, narrated, and negotiated within everyday life and collective experience. Literature becomes important in this context because it not only records the emotional consequences of violence and loss, but also provides a symbolic space through

which traumatic experiences may be articulated, interpreted, and gradually transformed into forms of reflection and recovery.

Within Indonesian literature, narratives emerging from the aftermath of the 1965 political violence constitute an important archive of trauma, memory, and social rupture. These works do not merely recount historical events; they also preserve the emotional traces of fear, loss, stigma, and ideological fracture experienced by individuals and communities. Yet, literary works dealing with this period have more often been approached as representations of political history, moral conflict, or religious values, rather than as narratives that illuminate how trauma is lived, remembered, and negotiated. As a result, the potential of Indonesian literary narratives to offer insight into the process of trauma healing has not been fully explored. This limitation is significant, because literature does not only bear witness to suffering, but can also reveal how memory, social relations, and cultural values participate in the difficult work of recovery after violence.

Among Indonesian novels that engage with the aftermath of political violence, Ahmad Tohari's *Kubah* occupies a particularly important place. The novel has attracted sustained scholarly attention and has been approached from a range of perspectives, including structural analysis, new historicism, religious studies, feminism, and linguistic politeness. Studies have examined its narrative structure and temporal sequence (Asi, 2013), its representation of the 1965 tragedy through a new historicist lens (Sahliyah, 2017), its Islamic moral vision and inclusivist values (Mugijatna, 2014; Srikandi, 2017), the symbolism of the dome as a marker of religious ecstasy (Yahya, 2013), the position of female characters such as Marni (Mulyaningsih & Rostiyati, 2018), and the use of politeness strategies in character interaction (Sasongko, 2018). These studies have enriched the understanding of *Kubah* as a text shaped by historical, ideological, and religious tensions. At the same time, they tend to focus on separate thematic aspects, so that the narrative continuity of Karman's psychological experience, especially the relation between memory, social alienation, and spiritual return, has not been fully brought into view. Taken together, these studies show that *Kubah* has been read primarily through historical, religious, and thematic concerns, while the novel's articulation of trauma as a process of recovery remains less fully examined.

Despite these valuable contributions, previous studies have largely treated *Kubah* as a representation of historical conflict, Islamic morality, ideology, or social criticism, rather than examining how the novel narratively works through trauma. As a consequence, the process by which Karman's suffering is remembered, negotiated, and gradually transformed into a form of recovery has remained insufficiently explored.

What is still missing in the existing scholarship is a reading of *Kubah* that places trauma healing at the center of analysis and considers the interrelation between memory, social reintegration, and spiritual reorientation as a coherent process of self-reconstruction. This study addresses that gap by approaching *Kubah* not simply as a post-1965 historical novel, but as a literary narrative that constructs a culturally grounded model of trauma healing. Through Karman's journey, the novel reveals that recovery does not unfold solely at the level of individual psychology, but also through the restoration of social belonging and the return of spiritual meaning.

To examine that process, this study draws on three complementary perspectives in trauma studies. Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia helps explain trauma as a form of loss that unsettles the subject's relation to the self and to the world (Akhtar & O'Neil, 2011; Erwin, 2002; Heller, 2005). Cathy Caruth's work is important for understanding trauma as an experience that often returns belatedly through memory, repetition, and the difficulty of narration, while also linking personal suffering to broader historical violence (Wandansari & Suryaningtyas, 2022)(Caruth, 1996). Dominick LaCapra, meanwhile, provides a framework for thinking about trauma in relation to memory, history, and identity, particularly

through his distinction between acting out and working through, which is useful for tracing how subjects negotiate painful pasts rather than simply remain trapped within them (LaCapra, 1987a; Lacapra, 1999a, 2016a) Bringing these perspectives together, this study focuses on Karman's psychological and spiritual journey in *Kubah* in order to show how literary narrative can articulate trauma not only as a wound of history, but also as a process of recovery shaped by memory, communal acceptance, and the reorientation of meaning.

In this sense, Karman's journey can be understood as a gradual movement from ideological dislocation and social estrangement toward a fragile form of reconciliation with himself, his community, and his spiritual past. Rather than treating trauma simply as the background of the narrative, the analysis attends to the ways in which traumatic experience is reorganized through memory, interpersonal encounter, and symbolic return. In *Kubah*, healing does not appear as a sudden resolution, but as a slow and uneven process shaped by recollection, acceptance, and the recovery of meaning within a familiar cultural horizon. By focusing on this process, the study seeks to show that Indonesian literary narratives are not only capable of recording the wounds of political history, but can also imagine forms of survival and recovery that emerge from within local social and spiritual worlds.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literary text analysis method through close reading (Faruk, 2012; Flick, 2007; Flick et al., 2004; Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 2005). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the representation of traumatic experiences and the process of trauma healing constructed in literary narratives (Falah et al., 2026). The research data consists of the text of the novel *Kubah* by Ahmad Tohari, specifically the narrative parts that represent traumatic experiences, past memories, social relations, and the spiritual transformation of the main character, Karman.

The data collection process was carried out through intensive and repeated reading of the novel to identify relevant data units, in the form of narratives, dialogues, inner monologues, and narrative symbols related to traumatic experiences and the healing process. The data was then classified into several categories of analysis, including: (1) forms of the character's psychological trauma experiences, (2) the role of memory and narrative temporality, (3) the dynamics of social relations and the reintegration process, and (4) the spiritual dimension in post-traumatic identity reconstruction.

Data analysis was conducted by integrating psychoanalytic trauma theory frameworks, namely Sigmund Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia, Cathy Caruth's theory of latent trauma (belatedness), and Dominick LaCapra's concept of working through historical trauma. These three theoretical frameworks were used dialogically to interpret how traumatic experiences are not only represented, but also processed and negotiated through the narrative structure of the novel. The results of the analysis were then synthesized to show that *Kubah* constructs an integrative model of trauma healing, involving psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions in the context of Indonesian culture.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The results of this study show three major patterns, namely: *first*, inner journey and conflict. This first pattern is divided into several patterns as shown in the following table.

TABLE 1 Journey and inner conflict

First pattern	Second pattern	Third pattern	Fourth pattern
The formation and destruction of identity	The peak of exile trauma	Symptoms of psychological trauma	Internal conflict & recovery efforts
Childhood faith through the poem <i>Sangkan-paraning dumadi</i> is destroyed by Marxist indoctrination from Margo, rejecting metaphysics in favor of dialectical materialism.	Post-1965 detention caused social dislocation, loss of party community, and stigma as former PKI political prisoners, which damaged their dignity.	Freudian melancholia with loss of will to live, flashbacks of religious memories, and cognitive dissonance between Marxist dogma and spiritual longing.	The reactivation of bodily memories while witnessing the Kasta prostrating triggered an existential crisis and a search for a safe space through interaction with nature.

Second, recovery and self-healing, which can be seen in the following table.

TABLE 2. Recovery and self-healing

First pattern	Second pattern	Third pattern	Fourth pattern	Fifth pattern
Turning point of recovery	Javanese philosophy & spirituality	Symbols of healing	Karman's psychological process	Key moments of healing
A philosophical dialogue about <i>nrimo ing pandum</i> (accepting destiny). The feeling of being "pierced" when Kastagethek mentions "entrusting his wife to God."	<i>Nrimo ing pandum</i> : accepting destiny with sincerity vs. Karman's ideological anxiety. <i>Sangkan-paraning dumadi</i> : an existential reflection on the origin and purpose of life. <i>Innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un</i> : the islamic concept of surrender to God.	Metaphors of self-reconciliation and community reconciliation. Transformation from "political victim" to "social contributor."	Shift from materialism to spirituality. The mosque dome (<i>Kubah</i>) as an act of catharsis and redemption.	The awakening of a longing for spirituality. The <i>sangkan-paraning dumadi</i> as a link between childhood memories and cultural identity. The gift of a rice field to Tini as restoration of dignity and social reconciliation. The completion of the dome as the community of Pegaten's acknowledgment of Karman's transformation.

Third, the construction of trauma healing can be seen in the following table.

TABLE 3. The construction of trauma

First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
identification of trauma	social support	personal reflection	identity reconstruction	identity reconstruction

DISCUSSION

JOURNEY AND INNER CONFLICT

Ahmad Tohari's novel *Kubah* presents the psychological journey of an individual traumatized by political and ideological events he has experienced. Through the character of Karman, the novel illustrates how trauma is not merely a personal experience but is also closely linked to the collective memory of society and the surrounding environment. In the Freudian context,

Karman experiences “melancholia,” in which he loses the value orientation he once adhered to, both as a communist and as an individual searching for meaning in life. This is evident in his inner turmoil when he witnesses Kasta prostrating before God:

“Yet, amid his restlessness, Karman was deeply moved as he secretly observed Kasta prostrating before God. A human being, alone in the vast, silent night, bowing before the Almighty. Somehow, the impression was profoundly deep.” (Tohari, 2005).

At this stage, Karman struggles between the beliefs he once held as a communist and his childhood memories filled with religious values. His trauma is not only caused by the ideological defeat he suffers but also by the social alienation he faces after returning from exile. According to Cathy Caruth, trauma is often not immediately understood or articulated by those who experience it but manifests in recurring experiences or haunting memories. This aligns with Karman’s inner journey as he gradually confronts past experiences that have shaped his trauma:

“Yes. As a child, Karman fully believed in the teachings that everything that exists comes from God and will return to God. But after becoming a party member, such faith was discarded under the influence of Margo and his comrades. For Margo, whom Karman later followed, everything that exists its presence must exist, and there is no need to question where it came from or where it will go. ‘Everything comes into being and ceases to exist due to historical dialectics,’ Margo once said. But tonight, Karman’s heart and soul soared back to the past, when he and his peers chanted that verse in Haji Bakir’s mosque. Even as a child, Karman felt peace and certainty every time he recited that short verse. Yes, those were beautiful and memorable times a peaceful world full of faith, which he had long abandoned, and now it seemed too late to return.” (Tohari, 2005).

Seen from this perspective, Karman’s conflict in *Kubah* is not merely a moral or ideological dilemma, but a traumatic rupture that fractures his sense of self. His return from political exile is marked by disorientation, guilt, and estrangement, suggesting that trauma in the novel is inseparable from the loss of social belonging and spiritual certainty. In this respect, *Kubah* extends beyond its frequent reading as a historical or religious novel. Earlier studies have emphasized its representation of the 1965 tragedy, Islamic values, and ideological tensions (Sahliyah, 2017), yet Karman’s experience also reveals a deeper psychological process in which political violence leaves lasting wounds on memory, identity, and self-recognition (Mugijatna, 2014; Srikandi, 2017). Through this perspective, the novel may be read not only as a testimony to historical conflict, but also as a narrative of trauma in which ideological collapse becomes a crisis of subjectivity.

From an ideological perspective, the conflict between religious belief and dialectical materialism becomes the core of Karman’s inner turmoil. Margo’s statement: “*Everything comes into being and ceases to exist due to historical dialectics*,” reflects the Marxist historical materialist view, which rejects metaphysical concepts and emphasizes that everything happens due to the laws of material dialectics.

However, in his personal crisis, Karman begins to doubt this principle. The memory of the religious verse *Sangkan-paraning dumadi* rekindles his spiritual awareness, which he had long buried. This indicates that even when someone adopts a new ideology, fundamental values ingrained since childhood can remain in the subconscious and resurface in certain situations. This dilemma can also be seen in the context of post-traumatic growth (PTG), where individuals who experience political trauma (exile, social stigma) eventually seek new meaning in their lives. In Karman’s case, that meaning is rooted in the spirituality he once abandoned.

Furthermore, Karman experiences strong cognitive dissonance, where his former values reemerge in his consciousness. In this sense, *Kubah* portrays how trauma is closely related to the loss of identity and shifts in ideological and spiritual beliefs. This moment illustrates how old memories of spirituality resurface in his mind. The final statement, “*it seemed too late to*

return,” suggests that Karman feels alienated not only from society but also from himself. Such a condition occurs when an individual loses the social values that once guided their life. Karman was uprooted from his community during exile, and upon his return, he realizes that the values he once abandoned actually hold profound meaning. However, he fears that he can no longer be accepted back into his social environment.

In the context of Indonesian literature and history, this reflects the experiences of many former political prisoners after 1965, who struggled to reintegrate into society. *Kubah*, as a post-New Order novel, illustrates how political trauma affects individuals not only physically (through exile) but also psychologically and spiritually. Karman’s inner conflict in this passage not only reflects his personal struggle between faith and ideology but also represents a broader social trauma. Through his psychological journey, the novel highlights how ideology can shape and disrupt one’s identity, yet ultimately, the spiritual roots planted since childhood retain their pull, especially in times of crisis.

Thus, Karman also experiences collective trauma stemming from the political events he endured. The novel indirectly reflects the political trauma following the 1948 and 1965 PKI incidents in Indonesia, where individuals deemed oppositional to the government faced exile, social stigma, and a loss of identity within society. As Jeffrey C. Alexander explains in his concept of “cultural trauma,” the experiences of oppressed individuals in major historical events can shape a collective trauma that is socially inherited (Falah et al., 2026). This trauma not only affects those who directly experience it but also influences society’s perception of the group that suffered it.

In *Kubah*, Karman represents individuals who bear the stigma of political events beyond their control. Upon returning to his village after exile, he faces numerous challenges in reintegrating into society:

“For three months, the village of Pegaten had welcomed back a resident who had spent twelve years in exile. Pegaten, naive and unresentful, opened its doors wide for Karman to restore his dignity among his fellow villagers.” (Tohari, 2005).

This episode marks an important turning point in Karman’s recovery. His return to Pegaten does not simply signal the end of exile, but the beginning of a fragile process of social reintegration. The village’s willingness to receive him again interrupts the prolonged isolation, guilt, and symbolic exclusion that have shaped his life after political banishment. In this sense, *Kubah* suggests that trauma cannot be understood solely as an inward psychological wound. It also concerns the loss of social recognition and the difficulty of returning to a community that once defined one’s sense of belonging. Karman’s acceptance by Pegaten therefore carries a significance that is larger than narrative closure: it becomes the social condition that makes self-reconstruction possible, allowing him to recover dignity, relational trust, and a place within the moral world from which he had long been estranged.

Dominick LaCapra, in historiography and trauma studies, differentiates between “acting out” and “working through” in responding to trauma. “Acting out” refers to the condition where individuals or societies repeatedly relive trauma without fully comprehending or overcoming it. Meanwhile, “working through” is the process by which individuals or societies begin to confront, understand, and ultimately find ways to come to terms with their trauma. At first, Karman experiences “acting out,” as his trauma from exile and the loss of his political identity leaves him feeling alienated and struggling to find his place in society. However, over time, he begins to enter the phase of “working through” when he is given the opportunity to build the mosque’s dome (*kubah*).

Karman’s involvement in the construction of the mosque dome marks a further stage in this process of recovery. The dome is not merely a religious symbol or a decorative element

within the narrative, but a meaningful site through which memory, social participation, and spiritual reorientation begin to converge. By taking part in its construction, Karman is no longer positioned only as a former exile burdened by guilt and ideological defeat; he gradually re-enters a shared moral world in which his presence acquires purpose again. What emerges here is a form of healing that does not rely on a single moment of conversion or confession, but on a slow reconstruction of selfhood through work, communal trust, and the return of spiritual meaning. In this respect, *Kubah* offers more than a representation of post-1965 suffering. It presents trauma healing as a culturally grounded process in which recovery becomes possible through the interrelation of memory, social belonging, and spirituality.

RECOVERY AND SELF-HEALING

Karman's encounter with Kastagethek marks a turning point in his psychological healing, following his spiritual insights from Captain Somad while in prison. The figure of Kasta, or Kastagethek in full, serves as the antithesis of Karman's previous ideological beliefs during his time in the party. This encounter intensifies Karman's inner struggle. This dynamic is illustrated in the following excerpt:

"Kang, when you go out rafting like this, who stays with your wife at home? Is she alone?"
"Ah, of course not, sir. If my wife were alone at home, how could I leave for days with peace of mind?"
"But I heard you don't have children, is that right?"
"Yes, that's true."
"Then?"
"At home, my wife is never alone."
"With whom?"
"With God," Kasta answered with a smile. "I entrust her to God so that I can go out to earn a living with a calm heart."
Karman remained silent and swallowed hard. His heart felt pierced.
"Yes, yes. But what if your wife feels lonely?"
Kastagethek laughed. Karman also laughed, but his voice was empty.
"Well, what do you think, Kang?"
"Ah, I often feel lonely myself. But I don't act out. I accept my life as it is. If I'm meant to be a raft builder, then I accept it. *Nrimo ing pandum*. That way, I always feel at peace..." (Tohari, 2005).

This dialogue serves as a moment of reflection for Karman, highlighting the contrast between his tumultuous worldview and Kastagethek's serene acceptance of life. Kastagethek expresses his philosophy of life, aligning with the Javanese wisdom of *nrimo ing pandum*, which means accepting one's fate with sincerity. This stands in stark contrast to Karman's experiences, as his life has been filled with inner conflict due to ideological and social status changes. Unlike Karman, Kastagethek does not seek to alter circumstances but instead embraces his fate with peace. This perspective aligns the novel with traditional values that emphasize harmony and inner tranquillity.

When Kastagethek states that he entrusts his wife to God, Karman feels "pierced"—a sign that he is undergoing an internal conflict. As someone who once abandoned religious beliefs due to revolutionary ideology, Karman begins to realize his spiritual emptiness. His act of swallowing hard suggests shock and inner turmoil, as though he is starting to question whether the beliefs he has held are truly fulfilling. Furthermore, his hollow laughter emphasizes his growing doubts about his convictions.

Kastagethek and Karman come from different backgrounds but face similar struggles—loneliness and alienation. The key difference lies in their response to these struggles: while Kastagethek accepts and embraces life with peace, Karman is consumed by unease and an endless search for meaning. This represents the conflict between traditional values, which emphasize acceptance, and modern values, which often encourage ambition and resistance. Karman embodies the individual caught in the tide of social and political change, losing his

spiritual grounding and sense of identity. Meanwhile, Kastagethek symbolizes the resilience of local culture, firmly rooted in traditional wisdom.

The novel also subtly critiques modernity and revolution, which often distance individuals from inner peace. This section illustrates how Ahmad Tohari contrasts two approaches to life: Karman, who is searching for his identity after ideological turmoil, and Kastagethek, who has found peace through acceptance and spiritual faith. This moment marks a pivotal step in Karman's spiritual and social journey, signifying his process of reconstructing his identity and beliefs. This transformation is further depicted in the following excerpt:

Kastagethek stood up and lit the fire. He placed a pot over the flames, preparing to boil water before cooking rice. The fire on the raft flickered to life, and from his hiding place, Karman lifted his head upon hearing Kastagethek sing the hymn Sangkan-paraning dumadi a reflection on the origins and destinations of all existence.

*Once I was nothing,
Now I have become something,
One day I will be nothing again,
Returning to divine grace.*

It was merely a hymn that children often sang while waiting for prayer time. Almost every child in Pegaten knew the song. As a child, Karman had also sung it with others at dusk. According to Haji Bakir, the song was adapted from the phrase innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un "indeed, we belong to God, and to Him, we shall return." (Tohari, 2005).

The excerpt above illustrates the continuity between human existence and the cycle of life. This concept emphasizes that life is temporary and that humans will ultimately return to their Creator. In the context of the novel, this song is not merely a children's rhyme but also an existential reflection for Karman, who has just returned from exile. After years of alienation, Karman is now faced with fundamental questions: Who is he now? Is he still the same Karman, or have political experiences and exile shaped him into a different individual? More broadly, *Sangkan-paraning dumadi* also represents Indonesia's journey after 1965. Political events have forced many individuals to question their identity, both as individuals and as members of a larger society.

Individuals experiencing alienation often undergo an identity crisis. The song sung by Kastagethek evokes childhood memories for Karman, reminding him of the time when he was part of a harmonious community in Pegaten. This excerpt is significant: "*Almost all the children in Pegaten could sing it. When he was young, Karman, too, would chant this song together with others at dusk.*" This memory creates an emotional conflict within Karman. On one hand, he is reminded of his innocent childhood and sense of belonging. On the other hand, his past as a political prisoner makes him a different person in the eyes of society. Through this song, collective memory plays a role in reconnecting Karman with his cultural roots. Collective memory is a social recollection that shapes an individual's identity within their community. By remembering this song, Karman is unconsciously trying to reintegrate himself into Pegaten, both socially and spiritually.

In this section, we see how religious values become part of Karman's healing process. The song *Sangkan-paraning dumadi* is linked to the Islamic adage *Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji'un* (Indeed, we belong to Allah, and to Him, we shall return). This demonstrates that in Pegaten society, religion is not just a ritualistic practice but also a mechanism for understanding life and death. For Karman, who was previously influenced by leftist ideology and later experienced exile, this experience opens up new avenues for reflection. He begins to question the meaning of his life, not only in social and political contexts but also in a spiritual dimension.

In trauma psychology, religion often serves as a coping mechanism for individuals who have experienced traumatic events. Those who suffer frequently find meaning and solace through religious beliefs. In this case, the song sung by Kastagethek symbolizes Karman's spiritual journey toward recovery. Besides Kastagethek, the novel *Kubah* also presents a contrast between modernity and revolution with traditional values, particularly Islamic

spirituality, during Karman's daughter's wedding. There is a moment when Haji Bakir gifts a plot of land that once belonged to Karman's parents:

... "The fact that Karman's parents once owned one and a half hectares of rice fields, now controlled by Haji Bakir, must be used wisely. This is the main weapon. What happens next is up to you, just remember that this job requires patience (Tohari, 2005)!

... "Do you remember, Karman! A religious figure like Haji Bakir greedily seized the rice fields that belonged to your parents! That is the reality. Haji Bakir, through his cunning ways, now controls your parents' land. What else can this be called if not a blatant crime? (Tohari, 2005)."

However, the rice field is later returned to Karman's family as a wedding gift for his daughter:

After all the guests had left, Karman did not immediately go to bed. He sat alone, feeling restless. Karman felt happy because his daughter was about to marry a young man from a good family. But he also felt uneasy. He recalled the time, many years ago, when he and his party's ideology saw Haji Bakir as a ruthless oppressor, the enemy of progressive revolutionaries. And now, that old man was about to become his in-law. More than that, Karman could no longer see anything in Haji Bakir that warranted hatred. In fact, Karman felt small and humbled when, after the wedding, Haji Bakir gave Tini a gift.

"Tini, for your future with Jabir, I give you the rice field located north of Kali Mundu. It is one and a half hectares wide. Take good care of this gift. Perhaps you do not know that this land once belonged to your grandmother" (Tohari, 2005).

Haji Bakir's act of returning the land to Tini is not just a gesture of kindness but carries deep symbolic meaning. The rice field is not merely an economic asset but also a historical link connecting Karman's generation to his family's past. In rural Indonesian society, land is not just a source of livelihood but also a marker of social status and familial roots. The return of the land can be interpreted in several ways. First, it signifies the economic restoration of Karman's family. As a former political prisoner, Karman may have faced financial difficulties after returning from exile. With this gift, his family has the opportunity to regain economic stability. Second, it represents social acceptance. In Javanese culture, land ownership is a symbol of honor, and the return of the rice field to Karman's family signifies symbolic social reintegration, indicating that society is willing to restore his status as a community member.

The land inherited by Tini can also be seen as an effort toward intergenerational reconciliation. While Karman and Haji Bakir were once on opposing ideological sides, the next generation no longer needs to inherit that conflict. Tini and Jabir, children from families with different ideological backgrounds, symbolize how past political divisions can be reconciled through marriage and familial ties. This reflects the hope that future generations can build a more harmonious society without being burdened by past conflicts.

This reconciliation reaches its peak when Karman is asked to build the mosque dome in Pegaten, which gives the novel its title. This is evident in the following excerpt:

Yet Karman regarded the task of constructing the dome as a special opportunity. He did not expect any payment. He simply wanted to contribute. No matter what, upon returning from exile, he felt something missing within himself. He wanted to regain that missing part. If he could provide a beautiful dome for the people of Pegaten, he hoped to reclaim what was lost. Or at the very least, Karman wanted to prove that even a former political prisoner like him could still be relied upon!

Thus, Karman worked with great care. He combined technical precision, aesthetic beauty, and diligence. The result was a perfect crown for the mosque. No creases, every joint perfectly welded. The neck of the dome was adorned with calligraphy on a lattice. The last four verses of *Surah Al-Fajr* were inscribed: *O soul who is at peace, who has reached ultimate truth. Return to your Lord. Then enter among My servants. And enter My Paradise* (Tohari, 2005).

... Karman heard the praises. He felt unworthy of such accolades. But the smiling faces of the people of Pegaten, their increasingly warm demeanor, made Karman feel deeply happy. He saw a path back to belonging and equality in a society that had once shunned him. Oh, that simple dome! In its silence, the mosque's crown seemed to continually proclaim a promise to restore dignity to every human being who embraces their humanity. And Karman felt no exception (Tohari, 2005).

The dome in this novel is not merely a physical object but carries a profound meaning related to the process of healing from trauma. Karman, who previously experienced spiritual alienation, rediscovers his purpose through his involvement in constructing the dome. The dome symbolizes his rekindled relationship with God. Having once lost his identity, Karman uses the construction of the dome as a means to reaffirm his existence within the community. Through this act, he transforms himself from an outcast into a respected and beloved member of society.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF TRAUMA HEALING

The process of trauma healing is not solely determined by the individual but also by their social environment. In the novel, the village of Pegaten serves as a social space that determines whether Karman can return to a normal life or remain trapped in his past. An environment that accepts and provides opportunities for an individual to redeem their past is crucial in the trauma healing process. The concept of social reintegration in trauma studies suggests that individuals who receive social support are more likely to recover compared to those who continue to be marginalized.

In the novel, two interesting social dynamics emerge: first, the village as a space of acceptance. Pegaten, although not directly judging Karman, still maintains an emotional distance that Karman must bridge to be fully accepted again. Second, Karman as an agent of change. Despite experiencing alienation, Karman eventually finds a way to adapt to his new environment, demonstrating that recovery from trauma also depends on how the individual responds to their surroundings. Through his interactions with the villagers, Karman gradually begins to rediscover the meaning of his life. This illustrates that while trauma can leave deep wounds, the process of reconciliation remains possible if both the individual and their community are open to change.

Overall, the trauma healing process as a construct can be divided into several stages.

First, identification of trauma. The initial stage of healing is the acknowledgment of the trauma experienced by the individual. In Karman's case, his trauma includes alienation from his community, loss of faith, and an internal struggle between his old ideology and the values he is beginning to embrace again. This acknowledgment emerges through Karman's internal reflection, such as when he becomes intrigued by Kasta's religious rituals, which awaken memories of his childhood.

Second, social support. The Pegaten community plays a crucial role in Karman's healing process. Although he was once regarded as an outcast, acceptance from several community figures, such as Haji Bakir, helps him rebuild social connections. This support is vital in trauma recovery as it enables individuals to reintegrate into social life. Third, personal reflection. Karman's reflection on his past is an essential aspect of his trauma healing. In the novel, personal reflection is evident in his internal monologues, particularly when he compares his past life with the spiritual path he is beginning to reconnect with.

Fourth, identity reconstruction. The construction of the mosque's dome becomes a symbol of Karman's identity reconstruction. Previously, he experienced an identity crisis due to his traumatic experiences. However, by contributing to the mosque's construction, Karman not only regains his dignity but also reestablishes his role within the community. Fifth, social integration. After undergoing reflection and identity reconstruction, Karman gradually becomes accepted again by the Pegaten community. The construction of the mosque's dome serves as a turning point for his reintegration. This demonstrates that trauma healing is not solely an individual process but also depends on how the social environment accepts individuals who have experienced trauma.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Ahmad Tohari's *Kubah* does not merely portray the historical trauma surrounding the political violence of 1965, but also constructs a narrative of trauma healing through the character of Karman. His journey reflects the psychological wounds produced by ideological rupture, social alienation, and political exile, while also revealing that recovery is neither immediate nor purely personal. Rather, the novel presents trauma healing as a gradual process shaped by three interrelated dimensions: the reactivation of memory, the restoration of social belonging, and the reorientation of spiritual meaning. Through Karman's return to childhood memories, his renewed relationship with the people of Pegaten, and his involvement in the construction of the mosque dome, *Kubah* imagines recovery as a process of rebuilding dignity, identity, and purpose within a familiar moral and cultural world.

Seen from this perspective, *Kubah* offers more than a representation of post-1965 suffering. It provides a culturally grounded model of healing in which memory, communal acceptance, and spirituality work together to transform trauma into a process of self-reconstruction. This finding expands the contribution of Indonesian literature to trauma studies by showing that literary narratives can function not only as archives of violence and loss, but also as spaces for negotiating historical wounds and imagining forms of post-traumatic recovery. In this respect, the novel demonstrates how local cultural values and religious sensibilities may play an important role in restoring the fractured subject after political violence and prolonged social stigma.

This study is limited by its focus on a single literary text and by its reliance on close textual interpretation, which means that the findings cannot be generalized to all representations of trauma in Indonesian literature. Future research may therefore compare *Kubah* with other post-1965 literary works or examine how trauma healing is narrated across different genres and historical contexts. At a practical level, the findings suggest that literary works such as *Kubah* can be used as reflective material in trauma-informed literary education, cultural reconciliation programs, and discussions on post-conflict healing, particularly in contexts where historical violence continues to shape social memory and collective identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by the Institute for Research and Community Service, Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia in 2025.

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