

**SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION IN STEINBEK'S THE PEARL**



**A THESIS**

*Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Science of Hasanuddin University in  
Partial Fulfillment of requirement to Obtain Sarjana Degree in English  
Department*

**BY:**

**Andi Ratu Namanda**

**F041171532**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**FACULTY OF CULTURAL SCIENCE**

**HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY**

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**LEGITIMATION**

**THESIS**

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**BY**

**ANDI RATU NAMANDA**

Student ID Number: F041171532

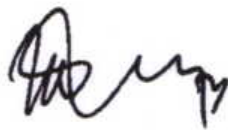
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Dr. Muhammad Syafri Badaruddin, M.Hum.  
NIP. 195311061983011001



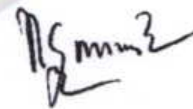
Dr. Abidin Pammu, M.A., Dipl.TESOL.  
NIP. 196012311986011071

Dean of Faculty of Cultural Sciences  
of Hasanudin University

Head of English Literature Study Program



Prof. Dr. Akin Duli, M.A.  
NIP. 196407161991031010



Prof. Dra. Nasmilah, M.Hum, Ph.D  
NIP. 196311031988112001



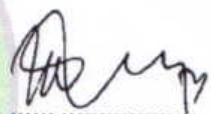


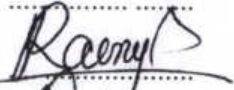
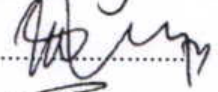

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**AGREEMENT**

On Maret 20, 2024, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by Annisaa Andi Ratu Namanda (F041171532) entitled *Social Discrimination in Steinbek's The Pearl* submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements to obtain Sarjana Degree in English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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1. Dra. Herawaty, M.Hum., M.A., Ph.D. First Examiner

1. 

2. Sitti Sahraeny, S.S., M.AppLing. Second Examiner

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With reference to the letter of the dean of Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University No. 433/UN4.9.1/KEP/2021 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the undergraduate thesis draft by Andi Ratu Namanda (F041171532) to be examined at the English Literature Study Program of Faculty of Cultural Sciences.

Makassar, 22 November, 2023

Approved by

First Supervisor

Second Supervisor




**Dr. Muhammad Syafri Badaruddin, M.Hum.**  
NIP. 195311061983011001

**Dr. Abidin Pammu, M.A., Dipl.TESOL.**  
NIP. 196012311986011071

Approved by the Execution of Thesis Examination by  
The Thesis Organizing Committees

On Behalf of Dean  
Head of English Literature Study Program



**Prof. Dra. Nasmah, M.Hum, Ph.D**  
NIP. 196311031988112001



## STATEMENT LETTER

The undersigned,

Name : Andi Ratu Namanda

ID : F041171532

Title of Thesis : Social Discrimination in Steinbek's The Pearl

Department/Faculty : English Literature Study Program/ Cultural Sciences

Hereby, the writer declares that this thesis is written by himself. This thesis does not contain any materials which have been published by other people, and it does not cite other people's ideas except quotations and references.

Makassar. Maret 20<sup>th</sup> 2024



Andi Ratu Namanda





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## ABSTRACT

**Andi Ratu Namanda.** 2024. *Social Discrimination in Steinbek's The Pearl* (Supervised by **Muhammad Syafri Badaruddin** and **Abidin Pammu**)

This research aims to determine whether *Social Discrimination in Steinbek's The Pearl*. The primary subject of this study is Lucy Maud Montgomery's life story and how it relates.

This descriptive qualitative research uses a biographical approach. The Biographical Approach sees literary works as a reflection of the author's life and times. Some literary works are inspired by the realities of social life faced by their authors. The biographical approach is one of the approaches to analyzing literary works through their authors. The writer needs to identify the theme before drawing any conclusions about the relationship between the author's personal life and the work. The literary work and the author's biography provided the research's data sources.

The analysis's findings led the writer to conclude that there was a significant correlation between the author's life story and her writing. The novel *Anne of Green Gables* explores a number of themes, notably imagination, coming of age, and social expectations. Through Montgomery's biography, we can find a connection between the story in the book and the author's background.

**Key Word:** *Social Discrimination in Steinbek's*, Biographical Approach.



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

For thousands of years, humankind in this world has built a variety of great civilizations that are always followed by oppression. The great civilization of the Pharaoh in Egypt that lasted around three thousand years has been investigated by historians and archeologists to oppress the Nation of Israel. The Egyptians treated the racists of the Israelites by carrying out murders, slavery, torture, and deprivation until they were released by the Prophet Moses about 3000 years BC. Al-Hafiz (2012: 265), in his research, described that Egyptian rulers with the title of Pharaoh or Ramses ordered the killing of Israeli children and threw them into the Nile. This action took place as a racist attitude that discriminates against a particular nation in building civilization.

Racist acts were also carried out by a number of other great civilizations that grew since BC, including Babylon, Mesopotamia, Sumerian, Hindustan, Rome, and others. Persecution and racism continue to be carried out by some major civilizations in the post-Christian era such as Mongolia, namely the ferocity of the Tartars who invaded, seized, killed, and destroyed the cultures of other nations ranging from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Racists were also shown by Europeans when the Spanish, Portuguese, English, Italian, French, Dutch and German empires expanded, colonized and exploited some nations and cities in the Americas, Asia and Africa in the Middle Ages to the outbreaks of





World Wars I and II.

The expedition of some kingdoms in Europe against America began when Christopher Columbus who carried the mission of Queen Isabella in Spain, landed in the Caribbean. Then the expedition followed by Juan Ponce de Leon of Portugal who arrived in Florida in 1513. He subsequently and successively arrived in America. Amerigo Vespucci from Italy arrived on the American Atlantic coast in 1529. Jacques Cartier from France arrived at the Lawrence River in 1534, Humphrey Gilbert and Walter Raleigh founded the first British Colony in North Carolina in 1585, Henry Hudson of the Netherlands built a settlement in New York City in 1609. A century later, there were also Germans, Norwegians, Danes, Swedes, and Russians. This European relationship with Native Americans, namely Indians, initially took place well in the form of trade and commodity exchange. However, this relationship then deteriorated and became a conflict when European settlers wanted to control the assets and commodities of the people Indian.

The good relations between the Europeans and the Indians eventually turned into hostile actions and became racist sentiments for hundreds of years. Indians who discriminated against began to make a move against the colonization of the land and trying to protect their culture. According to Cineotta (2004: 22-24), the Indians made their first resistance in Virginia in 1622 and 1637 when they prevented the formation of English settlements in Virginia and Connecticut. The Indians were increasingly forced to leave their territories and fled inland, many of whom were eventually made slaves by immigrants from Europe.

The racist problem in America has been a humanitarian issue since the



Indians built a collective awareness to obtain justice for their rights and equality in social interaction. Various forms of resistance are carried out by Indians and writers who sympathize with their conditions. One of the authors who perpetuated the fate of the Indians until the twentieth century was John Steinbeck in his novel called *The Pearl*. This novel tells the story of an Indian family named Kino who was treated discriminatively by Europeans in La Paz, California. Racist sentiment towards them remained a severe problem in the social life of Americans until after World War II.

The central part of the discussion of the article as well as the purpose of this research can be seen from two aspects; first, literature as a social document, and secondly, the science of literature can be used in tracing fictional genetics. The first aspect is intended to uncover discriminatory, racist acts and oppression of Indians as an American social fact reflected in the novel *The Pearl*. Then the second aspect is to strengthen the scientific theory of literature that literary works are not just fiction. However, they have sociological elements related to reality in aspects of human life. The article is expected to be useful for literary reviewers and literary readers that literary works are imaginative works that have a universal element that records events that have existed in certain people's lives. Based on the aims and benefits intended in this study, the writer formulated the title of this article, namely *Racist Facts against American Indians in John Steinbeck's The Pearl*.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Based on the title and the background of the study, the researcher takes



the problem statement is: How is the Social Discrimination reflected at *John Steinbeck's The Pearl*?

### **1.1 Limitation of the Study**

In this study, the researcher will focus in analyzing Social Discrimination reflected at *John Steinbeck's The Pearl* using marxist approach.





## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Description of the Novel *The Pearl*

Novel *The Pearl* tells of the racist treatment which befell Native Americans by descendants of European immigrants in America. Discrimination occurs because of differences in race and skin color between white Celtic French people and Indians from the brown Mongoloid race. White people live in luxury, domiciled, educated, powerful, and have other social access, whereas brown people live in poverty, have no access to education and other social aspects even though they are indigenous people. This fiction takes place around the 1940s in the western South American region in the city of La Paz, the city of Loreto, Santa Rosalina, Cape California, and several other physical settings.

The Indians, including Kino and his wife named Juana and their baby named Coyotito, live in the coastal area of Cape California near the city of La Paz. They live as fishermen looking for fish, shellfish, and pearls. The descendants of European immigrants living in the city of La Paz viewed the Indians as low class and treated them unfairly and even carried out discriminatory acts as the doctor said, "*Have I nothing better to do than cure insect bites for 'little Indian'? I am a doctor, not veterinary*" (Steinbeck, 1962: 14).

One day Kino and Juana took Coyotito, who was stung by a scorpion, to a French doctor in the city of La Paz. The doctor refused to treat Coyotito because this baby came from



ly. The doctor arrogantly did not want to see Kino with various sentimental

reasons, including Kino was an Indian, poor man, he did not deserve treatment and came from a slum. The doctor then told his servant to close the door and expel Kino. Getting hurt, Kino and his wife could only stand in front of the fence feeling angry and angry, he punched the fence, *“For a long time Kino stood in front of the gate with Juana beside him. Slowly he put his suppliant hat on his head. Then, without warning, he struck the gate a crushing blow with his fist. He looked down in wonder at his split knuckles and at the blood that flowed down between his fingers”* (Steinbeck, 1962: 16).

Kino and Juana brought their baby back home with disappointment, upset, hurt, and angry. This event led to a realization that education and economics were guarantees that the Indians would be free from discriminatory treatment. Kino was determined to work hard so that he could later send Coyotito to school. His son became the foundation of hope in changing the state of his life for the better in the future. He thought that future generations of Indians had to go to school to be smart. Therefore they would no longer be treated unfairly by white people. Indian children became the foundation of hope that freed the Indians from oppression, *“My son will read and open the books, and my son will write and will know writing... and these will make us free...”* (Steinbeck, 1962: 33).

Kino finally found a large pearl that he believed was expensive. Since Kino found the pearl, white people from the city including the doctor came to see him and pretended to be kind to him with various offers of kindness. They wanted to buy cheap pearls, but Kino did not want to sell to those who were cunning and swindlers. He persisted in his belief that pearls were expensive. He has a dream of wanting to send his son to school from the sale of his pearls. He was determined to go far to reach large cities to find buyers who could buy pearls at

white people in the city of La Paz conspired that the pearl were cheap, but Kino



still refused their evil plans. He finally took Juana and Coyotito away to sell their pearls at high prices in other cities.

White people hired robbers to snatch Kino's pearl so he would not go anywhere else to sell his pearl. Along the way, Kino was intercepted by several armed robbers. At the end of the story, Kino managed to kill the robbers, but he also lost his pearl and baby. Coyotito died because he was not treated by the scorpion sting poisoning. He then threw away his pearl and returned to his hometown, but he found his house had been burned by robbers. Kino was tired, he failed to change the fate of the Indians.

## **2.2 The Social Background of John Steinbeck**

In this section, the writer explores the background of John Steinbeck's life about racist discrimination that befell the Indians. John Steinbeck was born in the City of Salinas, Cape California on February 27, 1902. His mother named Olive Hamilton came from Northern Ireland and his father's family came from Germany. The family of his mother and father arrived in America around the 1850s. Steinbeck's life is lived in many parts of southern America such as Salinas, California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Racist sentiment remained strong in this region until the twentieth century, although the equality of all Americans is the same without racial differences and skin color set in the American Constitution Amendment XV of 1869. He witnessed many racist events that befell the native Indians and people black Negroes.







**Picture 1. John Steinbeck met Elaine Scott in 1949 at a restaurant in Carmel, California and married in December 1950. (Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Steinbeck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Steinbeck) accessed on May 21, 2023 at 09.32)**

From elementary school through college at Stanford University, John Steinbeck disliked memorization and was more interested in writing essays. He did not finish his studies in the university and then went to livestock, then worked in a chemical factory, then became a laborer at the Spreckles Sugar Factory, then worked on a farm in the Salinas Valley. He also worked as a construction worker and a mining worker. During this various types of work, he witnessed the suffering of the Indians who became laborers such as hunger, poverty, misery, and ignorance which documented in his first novel entitled *A Cup of Gold* in 1929.

Steinbeck was well aware of the social conditions of Indians and Negroes who were still considered racist by whites. He was saddened to see the fate of the Indians whose land was being seized by European immigrants. They opened up agricultural land and agriculture also mining, then they abandoned the Indians as the indigenous people. Pearson (1994: 306) described Steinbeck's testimony to the Indians that their lands were diminishing and displaced out of



town so they lived in slums, now they were starving even though they had never been hungry. The Indians tried to pacify the hearts while surviving and witnessed the immigrants live in wealth and luxury. Steinbeck continued to build his critical spirit on social reality in several literary works until he died in Salinas on December 30, 1968.

### 2.3 American Racism

Those who were treated racist by white people in America were native Indians who were brown and black Negro slaves. The writer only explains the Indian social facts related to racism because Negroes are more dominated by the issue of slavery. Indians as natives in America began to clash with Europeans as immigrants in 1622 in Virginia, then continued on the Connecticut River in 1637, then the conflict spread to New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, and others. When Britain united 13 of its colonies of America in a region called New England in 1685, indigenous people from 5 tribes also formed a government called Ho- De-No-Sau-Nee or the Iroquois League. Conflict can be temporarily mitigated by limiting the area of British and European settlers on the east coast of America, while the western regions in the Rocky Mountains, Appalachian, Black Hills, etc., become a customary and cultural conservation area of the Indians.

After the American Revolution was completed in 1789, the white population increased so that they expanded residential areas and arable land into Indian conservation areas which resulted in a war in 1812. Large-scale migration into Indian's territory took place which according to Olson (1992:



73-74), the white people annexed the territory covering an area of 7.8 million square kilometers. Through the Indian Removal Act passed by Congress, the American Government expels Indians so they are forced to walk to the southern and western tip of America. They left the land of their ancestors that they have inhabited for thousands of years. During the journey of hundreds to thousands of kilometers, they experienced great suffering in the form of fatigue, hunger, and illness that caused many of them to die. This tragic Indian trail is perpetuated as a very sad event termed the Trail of Tears in American history.

The main reason white people are competing to break into the Mississippi, Nevada, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Dakota, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, California, and others is because this area is a good pasture to be used as a livestock area and agriculture, also found gold, silver, iron, coal mines there. They explore and exploit these conservation areas. The Indians were increasingly eliminated from their homeland with very poor social conditions. They are treated inhumanely, racist, slaughtered, expelled, and relocated to slums. The last resistance of the Indians occurred in 1890. The American government through the Dawes Act of 1887 again divided the indigenous land of the Indians to white families such as each family obtained an area of 65 hectares.







**Picture 2.** The burial of Indians killed in the massacre of the Wounded Knee in the late 1880s. (Source:

<https://www.matamatapolitik.com/historical-genosida-suku-indian-pembantaian-penduduk-asli-amerika-atas-nama-peradaban/> )

The alarming oppression of Indians has drawn criticism from reformers such as Helen Hunt Jackson. He wants them to be assimilated and protected by their communal rights as was done in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The American government according to Cineotta (2004: 215-217) was forced to reform Indians through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. The law protected Indian tribal organizations and preserved traditional Indian culture. Assimilation of the Indians is a complicated problem for the American Government because they find the Indians difficult to adapt to heterogeneous and individualistic advanced civilizations. Even though they are protected by w, there are still white people who are racist in their minds to them.





## 2.4 The Reality of American Indian Racism in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*

In this section, the writer explored the reflection of social reality or the mirror of the situation of American society against the fictional story of *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck as a documentation of universal values in literary works. Social conflict is part of the history of the American people towards national stability as is enjoyed today. One of the biggest conflicts that occur is the problem of racism that is commonly experienced by brown Indians and black Negroes, but in this article focused more on the issue of racism against Indians as a genetic reality in this fiction. Since the early arrival of Europeans in America, white people have been in conflict with Indians as happened in Virginia in 1622, Connecticut in 1637, and elsewhere. According to Larasati (2019), the conflict was triggered by the many differences between European immigrants and Indians, including language, culture, beliefs, rituals, perspectives, and skin color. The Indians kidnapped a girl named Mary Campbell in Pennsylvania in 1753 and were considered barbaric by white people.

The conflict continued in the form of war as it did in 1812 until the last war occurred in 1890. During this time, the Indians fought to protect their communities, homeland, and culture from the genocide of American militias and military. Conflicts and massacres carried out by American militias and military on several occasions, including the murder in Delaware in 1782, the dispute in Indiana in 1811, the Muskogee Creek war 1813-1814, forced



evictions in 1830- 1840, executions in Dakota in 1862, massacres of the year 1864 and 1868, and anti-Indian provocation from 1880-1890, resulted in the emergence of a deep animosity in the hearts of the Indians. They are treated discriminatively as racist acts documented in the story of the novel *The Pearl*.

Kino and Juana and their baby, Coyotito in the novel *The Pearl* are Indian families who experienced racist discriminatory acts from white people. They were treated differently from white people as a doctor did not want to treat a Coyotito who was stung by a scorpion because he was a baby from an Indian family. They are seen as poor people who are uneducated, not dignified, and not respected in society. The poverty and suffering of the Indians were witnessed firsthand by John Steinbeck as the author of this novel. He said that at this time, the Indians were in a state of poverty and hunger where they had previously had much food, but their lands were seized and their hunted animals, such as bison were slaughtered by armed hunters. The Indians can only reminisce in the past, staring at the lands that have stood on top of the arrogant rich people's settlements where they had previously settled there peacefully with their children and families.

Since white people in the 1800s raced into western and southern American regions such as Mississippi, Nevada, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Dakota, Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, California, others, Indians increasingly displaced to the periphery and lived in slums. White people are attracted to occupy Indian lands because their area is fertile for agriculture and cotton plantations. This fact also happened to the condition of the house Kino and



other Indian families described in the novel are outside the city of La Paz. Their house is a hut that is not worthy of being said to house human habitation as the conditions described in the novel, "*Behind Juana's fire leaped into flame and throw spears of light through the chinks of the brush-house wall and threw a wavering square of light out the door*" (Steinbeck, 1962: 3).

The American government took 7.8 million square kilometers of Indian land after the Indian Acts Removal passed in 1812, which was further strengthened by the Dewes Act of 1887. The American government gave the rights to manage 65 hectares of land to each family of white immigrants over the Indian region. *The Trail of Tears* event is an event in American history that caused many Indians to die because they were forced to leave their hometown hundreds or even thousands of kilometers while walking. As many as 60,000 Indians from the Choctaw, Creek, Cherokee, and others were forced to move by American troops to the western region of Mississippi. Thousands of Indians have died from fatigue, hunger and illness on this tearful journey.

The massive expulsion of the Indians occurred because of the discovery of many valuable minerals, such as silver, gold, iron, and copper in the western regions of the Rocky Mountains, Appalachian, Black Hills, and others. The Indians were increasingly displaced from their homeland with deplorable social conditions even though the area has been inhabited for many years. This event also happened in the novel, since Kino found a large pearl, white people arranged an evil plan to have the pearl. He felt uneasy because of the terror and intimidation carried out by white people who wanted to rob his pearls.







**Picture 3.** The Indians were forced to leave their settlements where they had to walk thousands of kilometers known as *The Trail of Tears* in 1831-1877.(Source: <https://www.history.com>)

Mining exploitation made white people wealthy by occupying large and stately homes and luxurious furniture. They built an urban elite that was different from the lives of poor Indians in slums far outside the city. This striking gap resulted in Indians being treated discriminatory and racist moreover they were not given access to education. Kino, in the novel, imagined that if the Indians had an education, then they could not be deceived and he was sure living well. He aspires that his son will be able to attend school so he can change the situation of the Indians for the better. However, Kino's ideals were not achieved because his son, Coyotito finally died and his pearl was also





thrown to the sea floor. The failure of the Indians to realize their ideals was also witnessed by John Steinbeck. He had worked as a laborer with the Indians and witnessed their suffering in a number of mines in a state of hunger, poverty, misery, and neglect. In another fact, immigrants live in wealth and luxury in cities.

The discriminatory actions of European immigrants against Native Indians in America became a racist problem in American history. The universal value that can be obtained from these events is that discriminatory actions and racist thinking must end in building the stability of the American nation and ensuring social justice for all citizens. According to Helen Hunt Jackson (Cineotta, 2004: 216-217) in her book *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881 requires cultural assimilation between Indians and immigrants as a form of social conflict resolution. However, the idea of assimilation is difficult to realize because of the many differences between Indians and white people, so they find the Indians difficult to fuse. The United States Government in 1924 made another attempt by granting Indian citizenship a statute.

The worldview or *vision du monde* in the novel *The Pearl* witnessed directly by John Steinbeck as the author is poverty and loss of rights experienced by the Indians is a fact of humanity that needs to be handled properly and fairly. They also have ideals in advancing their ethnicity, but these ideals are always thwarted by the government's discriminatory policies. The Indians united in the organization of the American Indian Movement in 1968, a movement that demanded the indigenous rights of displaced Indians.

