

## The Nyai in Nyai Dasima, Nyai Ratna, and Njai Alimat: a reflection of Indonesia women' lives as concubines of Europeans in Indonesia's colonial period

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### Abstrak

"The focus of this thesis is the phenomenon of the nyai[ which was a dominant theme in novels produced before the founding of Balai Pustaka<sup>2</sup>, the Dutch colonial publishing house. The fictional treatment of this theme helps illuminate the social situation in Indonesia's colonial society in which penryaian or concubinage was regarded as social fact which was accepted as normal by Indonesian society at that time. In this respect, the discussion in this thesis is not I. only a literary analysis, but also a sociological analysis. This thesis is informed by a conviction that the validity of the official view of the genesis of Indonesian literature;, which has up untill now been regarded as a 'Literally, the term 'nyai' has two meanings: 1. term of reference and address for the concubine of a European or Chinese in Indonesia's colonial society, and 2. respectful term of address for older woman. The term 'nyai' in the second meaning is derived from Javanese culture, and has different meaning with the term 'nyai' which will be used in this thesis; so this meaning will not be used any longer. In the next discussion, a number of understandings of this term will be used, but actually those understandings have a basic meaning, that is, ""a concubine or a mistress of foreigner"". See John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily, Kamus Indonesia Inggris [An Indonesian-English Dictionary], Jakarta, PT Gramedia, 1989, p. 392. 201 the 57 Pre-Balai Pustaka novels there are more than 20 which narrate nyai stories. For Pre-Balai Pustaka novels, see Ibnu Wahyudi, Perkembangan Novel Indonesia sebelum Balai Pustaka [The Development of Indonesiannovels before the Balai Pustaka Period], Jakarta: Lembaga Penelitian Universitas Indonesia, 1988. The official view which is meant here is a basic belief that has been followed by most of the researchers or literary c cs both in Indonesia and elsewhere, or that has been taught as a formulaic matter in schools,t Indonesian literature begins from the foundation of Balai Pustaka in 1917, or from the first publication of that colonial publisher. For the opinions that regard the foundation of Balai Pustaka as a indication of the emergence of Indonesian literature, see Goenawan Mohamad, ""Sebuah Sketsa Setengah Abad: Kesusastraan Indonesia 1917--1967,"" Horison, 1968; and Anthony H. Johns, ""Genesis of a Modern Literature,"" Indonesia, edited by Ruth T. McVey, New Haven: Yale University, 1967, p. 413. While for the opinions that regard the first novel published by Balai Pustaka as the birth of Indonesian literature, see, for example, A. Toeuw, Modern Indonesian Literature, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967, p. 1; A."