THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAM IN *NYAI DASIMA*'S G. FRANCIS AND S.M. ARDAN

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ABSTRACT

There are many versions of *Nyai Dasima:* two of them were written by G. Francis and S.M. Ardan. In these versions, there are numerous binaries that can be examined in greater depth, including identity, culture, and Islamic beliefs. These two versions describe the early days of Islam in Indonesia using distinct methods and levels. It is undeniable that the version of G. Francis, who is western-based, colonial, and liberal, is inaccurate or at the very least skewed in describing the Islamic teachings that are placed in a number of crucial situations in the *Nyai Dasima*'s plot. In G. Francis' version, there are inappropriate dictions, such as the use of the term *kafir* (infidel) and numerous flaws in the written story when describing Islamic teachings. On the other hand,

S.M. Ardan wrote *Nyai Dasima*'s version by illustrating the good and evil concepts of Islamic teachings according to the context of the time, such as the devout Muslims attending the *langgar* (musalla) for prayer, the thriving practice of polygamy, and the use of witchcraft for love affairs. Both versions of *Nyai Dasima* criticize the construction of Islam in distinct ways, so neither is superior. The *Nyai Dasima*'s version of S.M. Ardan complements the G. Francis interpretation. *Nyai Dasima* presents a distinct perspective on Islam in each version. Not to mention, these two versions also explain the differences in the way they present the plot, which more prominently depicts the various faces of Islam.

Keywords: Islam, *Nyai Dasima*, postcolonialism

Introduction

The structural development of societies was among the numerous legacies left behind by colonization, which occurred in numerous nations, including Indonesia. The colonization of Indonesia, particularly by the Dutch until the mid-20th century, profoundly impacted the development of its social order. According to Putri and Clayton (2020), one legacy of colonialism is the existence of a social order that attributes a sense of identity to particular groups, stratifying the colonized people into distinct social classes. For instance, Idrus' 1948 short story "Kota-Harmoni" provides a detailed account of Jakarta's social hierarchy based on race and class. Such distinctions persist today, despite the end of colonial rule.

Colonial social classes marginalized various groups based on ethnicity, race, gender, and religion. Tadros (2022) notes that the advancement of religious freedom in many regions was hindered by colonialism, which marginalized certain religions and their followers. Today, Islam is the predominant religion in Indonesia, but its journey has been fraught with challenges. During the Dutch colonial period, Islam was marginalized both in representation and function. The Dutch colonizers viewed the indigenous population and their Islamic faith with disdain, creating a social order that reinforced their dominance.

Literary works were one of the means by which colonialists asserted their identity, often portraying colonial society as inferior to the colonizers. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2013) distinguish between traditional literary works that depict colonial society from the colonizers' perspective and contemporary works that critique these portrayals. In response to colonial literature, new works emerged as forms of resistance, challenging the preconceived notions imposed by colonizers. Lapandja, Usman, and Muhsin (2016) assert that literary works can dismantle colonial legacies, including intangible heritage such as religious beliefs.

S.M. Ardan's revision of the _Nyai Dasima_ story critiques G. Francis' original version, serving as an example of literary resistance. Sungkowati (2011) explains that G. Francis' story, first published in 1896, became a popular narrative that underwent numerous rewrites. S.M. Ardan's version, initially serialized in Budaya Jaya Magazine in 1971 and later compiled into a book, reconstructs the story to challenge colonialist ideology. Azhari (2013) argues that reconstructing traditions established by colonialists is a straightforward method of decolonization.

Previous studies have explored the representation of Islam in postcolonial literature. For instance, Daulay and Arianto (2020) examine the construction of postcolonial discourse in _Robohnya Surau Kami_ by A. A. Navis, highlighting how colonial hegemony influences cultural and religious narratives. They discuss how orientalist discourse creates a system of ideas that marginalizes Eastern cultures and reinforces Western hegemony. Similarly, Susanto, Wati, and Arummi (2021) analyze the novel _Ratu yang Bersujud_ by Mahdavi, focusing on the representation of women and Islam in the context of colonial discourse. They argue that the novel serves as a counter-discourse to global representations of Islam and women, deconstructing colonial narratives while also exposing internal ambiguities within the portrayal of Islamic identity.

This research examines S.M. Ardan's efforts to rewrite narratives about Betawi and Islam, inspired by G. Francis' story. The significance of redefining Islam within the Indonesian context lies in its shifting authority and its impact on faith evolution (Formichi, 2015). This study aims to explore how Islam is constructed and reconstructed in the narrative of _Nyai Dasima_, focusing on characters and themes such as polygamy, parent-child relationships, and beliefs in witchcraft. By analyzing these two versions, this research elucidates the complex representations of Islam in postcolonial literature.

Methods

This study employs a content analysis approach to examine the construction of Islam in the G. Francis and S.M. Ardan versions of _Nyai Dasima_. Content analysis, as defined by Krippendorff (cited in Bengtsson, 2016), is an investigative method that draws meaningful conclusions from a text by considering the context of its creation, ensuring that the findings are both valid and replicable. The primary sources for this study are the two versions of _Nyai Dasima_ by G. Francis and S.M. Ardan. Specific segments from these texts were selected for their relevance in illustrating how each author constructs Islam through narrative and characterization.

Following the methodology outlined by Hunting (2021), the content analysis began with identifying the research questions and objectives. The primary research question focuses on how Islam is constructed in the two versions of _Nyai Dasima_. The objective is to compare the narrative techniques and character portrayals used by G. Francis and S.M. Ardan. Relevant segments from both versions were chosen based on their significance in depicting Islamic themes and characterizations. These segments were then categorized to facilitate detailed analysis, identifying key themes, narrative strategies, and character representations related to Islamic construction.

The extracted segments were analyzed within the broader context of postcolonial theory, incorporating pre-existing data to address the research questions comprehensively. The postcolonial framework utilized in this study is instrumental in examining the construction of Islam in both narrative versions. Postcolonialism endeavors to discern the enduring legacies of colonialism, particularly in cultural representations. According to Ratna (in Nimasari, 2018),

postcolonial analysis of literary works helps reflect on the persistent influence of colonialism on ideological constructs within Indonesian society.

The cultural dimensions examined through a postcolonial lens are evident in the intertwined narratives of the two versions of *Nyai Dasima*. Nurgiyantoro (in Mawaddah, 2021) posits that literary events can signify a transition from one era to another, enriching the narrative through historical context. This study deconstructs these narratives to explore the hybridization of pre-colonial and colonial cultures. Setiawan (in Handayani, Zuriyati, and Attas, 2020) describes hybridization as the interaction of multiple cultures within a shared space, resulting in blended cultural practices. This blending of cultures often involves political objectives that align local interests with those of the colonizers, creating a complex cultural landscape.

The formation of culture in postcolonial contexts cannot be separated from ongoing power relations. Faruk (in Nasution, Nasution, and Harahap, 2022) explains that postcolonial issues persist long after independence, influenced by the political and cultural impacts of colonialism. This study examines these power dynamics to understand the contemporary construction of Islam in Indonesian literature. An instance of hybridization inherent in postcolonialism is the manner in which various construction depictions are incorporated into religious doctrines, such as Islam. This circumstance undoubtedly requires consideration of the dimensions of space and time. According to Nurjuman, Restu, and Kususma (2018), a novel perspective emerged in the formation of Islam's social structure in Indonesia. In this instance, Islam is constructed not only as a set of substantial values and teachings, but also as an institutional system. The contemporary construction of Islam was additionally shaped by a consciousness of the identity of its followers, which manifested itself in a trend of symbol-laden religiosity. Islam's adherence to values, norms, teachings, and regulations has effectively established a collective identity that necessitates the use of symbols.

In conclusion, this research adopts a methodical content analysis approach, grounded in postcolonial theory, to investigate the construction of Islam in *Nyai Dasima*. By comparing the versions by G. Francis and S.M. Ardan, the study reveals the complex interplay of cultural narratives and colonial legacies in shaping Islamic representations.

Result

The Concept of Obedience to Parents in Islamic Construction

A fundamental principle embodied in *Nyai Dasima*'s narrative is *manut*, which signifies heeding the counsel of one's parents. With the exception of minor variations in illustration, this concept is present in every story by G. Francis and S.M. Ardan. Wak Lihun and Hadji Salihoen are additional characters utilized by G. Francis and S.M. Ardan to represent parents who impart Islamic teachings and whose children are expected to submit to them. As an illustration of parental obedience in Islam, S.M. Ardan cited Samiun's conversation with Wak Lihun regarding his intention to employ witchcraft on Nyai Dasima. "*Gue punye mau ye... kalu memang mau kawin lagi ambil aje perawan sini. Lagian jangan pake pelet-peletan, Un. Dose, tau?*" [I have a wish. If you genuinely want to marry again, come here and get a woman. Also, Un, avoid using witchcraft. Isn't it a sin?] (p. 31). Although Wak Lihun attempts to clarify that polygamy is not strictly forbidden in Islam, he insists that Samiun wed a woman from his village and refrain from using witchcraft to wed Dasima. One possible explanation is the transgression of employing witchcraft. Nevertheless, Samiun disobeys and desires only Dasima. In light of this, Samiun was verbally reprimanded by Wak Lihun. "*Un, kalu bukan gue, lu mau denger omongan siape lagi?*" [Un, who else would you rather listen to, if not me?] (p.31). This expression indicates that Samiun, whose paternal lineage has been severed, is being queried regarding the source of his thoughts. Wak Lihun treats Samiun as a legitimate parent due to the fact that he was a reliable individual during the lifetime of his deceased father; therefore, Samiun ought to heed his counsel. S.M. Ardan attempts to demonstrate that parental guidance in Islam should be duly considered and heeded. A prime example of a Muslim parent who demands that his words be followed is Wak Lihun.

Although in a different context, G. Francis also uses an example to illustrate the Islamic concept of parents who are expected to be obeyed by their children in his retelling of the story.

An instance that can be classified as a representation occurs when Samioen solicits the opinion of Hadji Salihoen concerning his intention to kill Nyai Dasima.

> *Hadji Salihoen memberi nasehat kepadanja, jang memboenoe orang jang soeda djadi Islam betoel ada satoe dosa jang terlalu amat besar, tetapi bole dikias dengen dirinja misti pegi ka Mekah djadi hadji, di sitoe misti minta ampoen dosa di Masdjid El Haram, serta misti banjak kloear oewang boeat dapet keampoenan dosa besar*
>
> "Hadji Salihoen counseled him that although murdering a person who has converted to Islam is a grave sin, it could be excused by his obligation to perform the Hajj in Mecca, where he must seek absolution at the Masjid al-Haram and continue to squander a substantial amount of money in order to be absolved of significant transgressions (p. 106)."

Based on the statement above, it can be inferred that Samioen regards Hadji Salihoen as a character whose viewpoints are esteemed in G. Francis' rendition of the story. Samiun deemed Hadji Salihoen's counsel to be correct, as he promptly consulted a teacher in Pekodjan to verify the information he obtained after seeking his opinion. This example demonstrates how, during that era, the opinions of Samioen's parents were highly valued. The S.M. Ardan adaptation of the story emphasizes the importance of heeding parental counsel in order to prevent Samiun from engaging in acts of sorcery. Meanwhile, G. Francis' retelling of the story illustrates how Samioen's composure regarding murder was influenced by his parents' remarks. While offering instances of two distinct behaviors, they both illustrate the Islamic doctrine of heeding parental counsel, which Wak Lihun and Hadji Salihoen in this particular instance did.

Witchcraft within the Islamic Construction

The story *Nyai Dasima*, which was written by S.M. Ardan and G. Francis, reveals an additional intriguing aspect concerning the portrayal of Islam in postcolonialism. In both iterations of *Nyai Dasima*, the significance of witchcraft is alluded to, in addition to parental obedience. Nevertheless, the portrayal of witchcraft in Islamic construction diverges between the two narrative versions. Witchcraft was the means by which Samioen attempted to win the affections of Nyai Dasima in Francis' version; Hadji Salihoen was successful in executing this vision. Conversely, the S.M. Ardan made reference to witchcraft, which Samiun desired to employ in order to acquire Dasima's affections; however, Wak Lihun declined this proposition on the grounds that it contradicted the principles of Islam.

Prior to examining the significance of witchcraft in the two iterations of *Nyai Dasima*, it is critical to establish a foundational understanding of the concept of hybridity within the framework of postcolonialism studies that underpin this investigation. Hybridity, as understood within the framework of postcolonialism, can be defined as the amalgamation of diverse cultures. This amalgamation may manifest as syncretism or multiculturalism (Sawant, 2011). By employing the notion of hybridity, we can deconstruct the manner in which G. Francis and S.M. Ardan constructed the relationship between witchcraft in both iterations of *Nyai Dasima*.

The piece, *Nyai Dasima*, written by G. Francis, may serve as an initial reference for scrutinizing the influence of witchcraft and firearms in the development of Islam. The narrative of *Nyai Dasima*, as recounted by G. Francis, exemplifies how Muslim indigenous peoples can leverage mysticism and witchcraft to achieve their objectives, in this case, securing a spouse. Hadji Salihoen is a shaman, according to G. Francis, who assists Samioen in carrying out his desire to wed Dasima. G. Francis selected the designation "Hadji,", which signifies the fulfillment of the pillars of Islam and represents a devout Muslim, to underscore the fact that shamanism persists among even religiously literate indigenous Muslims. The quote provides additional insight into Hadji Salihoen's role in G. Francis' rendition of Nyai Dasima. "*Akoe djoega harep maksoedmoe dikaboelken, maka itoe, lagi 4 hari angkoe boleh kirim orang ka roema akoe, boeat ambil obat boeboek boeat kasi kepada ma Boejoeng soepaja boleh dikasi makan kepada itoe Njai*" [Additionally, I fervently wish that your intention be accomplished; if so, you may dispatch a person to my house within four days to get powdered medication for delivering to Ma Boejoeng in order to feed Nyai] (p. 84). This line describes the role of Hadji Salihoen, who performs

shamanic rituals by performing witchcraft in order to induce Nyai Dasima to wed Samioen instead of Toean W. This demonstrates how Francis, in his capacity as a colonial writer, effectively established the role of witchcraft in the development of Islam by analyzing the role he played with the concept of hybridity. G. Francis eloquently and precisely cloaks witchcraft, which is forbidden in Islam because it involves attributing companions to God, in the garb of a culture that is revered by Indigenous people. This results in an argument that appears to legitimize the practice of witchcraft.

Conversely, the S.M. Ardan rendition of *Nyai Dasima* achieved success in constructing a novel structure concerning the function of witchcraft in Islamic construction. Similar to Francis' rendition, Ardan has also narrated the story, which encompasses deliberations pertaining to the Islamic construction of various concepts, such as witchcraft. The G. Francis edition redesignates the character Hadji Salihoen as Wak Lihun in the S.M. Ardan edition. There is an absence of substantial intimacy between the characters Samioen and Hadji Salihoen in Francis' rendition. This was modified in the version where S.M. Ardan is the one who facilitates Samiun and Wak Lihun's intimacy. Samiun views Wak Lihun as a father figure in the aftermath of his father's passing. This proximity is the reason why Wak Lihun imparts so much counsel to Samiun, whom he considers to be far from Islamic teachings. Within the S.M. Ardan rendition, Wak Lihun unequivocally declined Samiun's proposal to wed Nyai Dasima. This is evident from the quote: "*Tapi lu jangan nyuru gue melet. Haram, tau?*" [However, do not ask me to perform witchcraft. It's haram, you know?] (p. 21). By employing the word haram in this quote, S.M. Ardan effectively conveyed, via the character Wak Lihun, that the practice of witchcraft is categorically forbidden for Muslims, irrespective of its intent. The structure G. Francis, which has constructed, is reconstructed by S.M. Ardan and is equally as tidy. S.M. Ardan effectively implemented the notion of hybridity in an alternative fashion. Islamic construction prohibits the practice of witchcraft, even though that certain indigenous communities have a culture in which this is considered normal.

Construction of the Concept of Marriage and Polygamy

In accordance with the portrayal of Islam through the characters of Toean W and Samiun
Both versions exhibit a conspicuous construction of Islam. S.M. Ardan's rendition is more robust due to its proximity to the operational environment of local communities. In order to be considered a good Muslim like his father and to avoid being labeled an infidel, the character Samiun must frequently fight in battle, as previously described (in G. Francis' version, to avoid being perceived as an infidel). Furthermore, the study of witchcraft is haram, as it is considered to depart from religious doctrine. Standard and distinct from the contemporary world at the time the book was disseminated to readers and the general public, *Nyai Dasima*'s narrative constructed Islam. Gandhi (2019), discusses the presence of a dichotomy in the relationship of imbalance in the Islamic world as depicted in Orientalism. This dichotomy pertains to perspectives from the East and West, suggesting potential variations in thought processes, writings, and approaches concerning specific facets of Islam. *Nyai Dasima*'s narrative, on the other hand, represents a construction of Islam that, as argued by S.M. Ardan, possesses both positive and negative distinctions. The chapter serves as a benchmark for drawing such distinctions.

Moreover, the inclusion of unparalleled perspectives by diaspora writers contributes significantly to the growth of postcolonial literary works (Gandhi, 2019). Through his portrayal of Hayati (Samioen's wife), Francis, a diasporic writer, emphasizes his anti-Islamic inclination as a postcolonial work by establishing a relationship inversely proportional to the version of S.M. Ardan. Ardan's rendition effectively incorporates established indigenous cultural values. Hayati, the character of this rendition, is unconcerned about her spouse, Samioen, remarrying. Hayati is portrayed in a manner distinct from the version by S.M. Ardan. The structural interpretation of polygamy differs significantly from the colonial interpretation put forth by G. Francis, which revolves around Toean W, or the representation of Islam, which is organized along the Samioen axis.

Using consciousness as a rebellion instrument

"We can't fight for our rights and our history as well as our future until we are armed with weapons of criticism and dedicated consciousnesss," Said (2007, p. 233). *Nyai Dasima* as historical work, originally written by G. Francis, depicts the political stance of colonialists. G. Francis tarnished the entire Betawi culture by associating it with the colonists and objectifying the local women. Additionally, numerous writers of his era were influenced by this piece to explore the topic of concubinage, albeit from a colonial standpoint. Consequently, 64 years later, S.M. Ardan rewrote *Nyai Dasima* from his native perspective. As a result, the work is partitioned into two distinct iterations: colonial and colonized. Ardan's interpretation of *Nyai Dasima* validates what Said stated, namely that individuals can fight for their rights when they possess vital instruments in the form of serious awareness.

An intriguing facet pertaining to the discrepancies in the narrative of *Nyai Dasima* concerns Samiun's implementation of the push-and-draw method of polygamy. S.M. Ardan would refute the allegation that Miun utilized Dasima if G. Francis levied such an accusation. That the intention to execute witchcraft is, in fact, present. Nonetheless, Hadji Salihoen, an individual referred to by G. Francis as a shaman who assisted Samioen in acquiring Nyai Dasima for monetary gain, thwarted this scheme. Due to his domestic issues with Hayati, who ceased to be cooperative as a spouse, and an intense encounter with Nyai Dasima that sowed the seeds of their future romance, Samioen ultimately succeeded in gaining Nyai Dasima's affection and tying the knot with her. Furthermore, to bolster the argument, S.M. Ardan disclosed that Nyai Dasima's rebellion was precipitated by her status as a *nyai* (mistress) who felt estranged from her own people.

The narrative surrounding G. Francis' allegation of witchcraft against Samioen became contentious due to its tendency to marginalize Islam, thereby ensnaring Betawi as well. At that moment, the two entities operated as a unified entity. Furthermore, according to G. Francis, Samioen lured Nyai Dasima, who was Toean W's *nyai* at the time, into his embrace for the solitary reason of wealth. Literally, G. Francis employs literature to ridicule the Betawi people. It is accurate to say that S.M. Ardan did not alter any portion of the narrative, specifically the parts involving Puase and Hayati. Both are unfavorable representations of Betawi society.

The recognition of one's status as a colonized people and the yearning for liberation from the colonial powers' hegemony emerged as the primary impetuses for the development of postcolonial literary works like S.M. Ardan's reinterpretation of *Nyai Dasima*. Nyai Dasima's desire to escape *nyai*'s snare, even if it means material prosperity, exemplifies the consciousness of a colonized people who yearn to once more coexist with their own people, despite the fact that doing so would be a straightforward task. Consciousness, as Said put it, is the primary tool employed to combat colonial hegemony.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study underscores the distinct perspectives on the construction of Islam in the G. Francis and S.M. Ardan versions of *Nyai Dasima*. The comparative analysis reveals how each version portrays Islamic values, parental obedience, witchcraft, and polygamy, reflecting the broader socio-political and cultural dynamics of their respective eras. G. Francis' version, written from a colonial perspective, often depicts Islamic practices and cultural norms through a lens of Orientalist stereotypes, emphasizing themes of mysticism and moral ambiguity. This version highlights the influence of colonial narratives in shaping perceptions of indigenous cultures and religions.

Conversely, S.M. Ardan's version serves as a postcolonial rebuttal, aiming to correct the misrepresentations and provide a more nuanced and respectful portrayal of Islamic teachings and Betawi culture. By recontextualizing characters and events, S.M. Ardan emphasizes adherence to Islamic principles, the rejection of witchcraft as haram, and the importance of parental guidance. This version reflects the broader postcolonial effort to reclaim and redefine cultural and religious identities in the aftermath of colonial rule.

The enduring impact of colonial legacies is evident in the continued struggle to accurately represent and appreciate indigenous histories and cultures. The portrayal of Islam in these narratives illustrates the complex interplay between colonial power dynamics and the indigenous response to such portrayals. S.M. Ardan's narrative, in particular, highlights the role of postcolonial literature in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of one's cultural heritage, challenging the negative stereotypes imposed by colonial narratives.

This study highlights the significance of literary works in shaping and reflecting cultural identities and the ongoing influence of colonial histories on contemporary societies. By providing a more accurate and respectful depiction of Islamic values and cultural practices, postcolonial narratives like S.M. Ardan's *Nyai Dasima* play a crucial role in deconstructing colonial legacies and promoting cultural pride and understanding.

Future research should continue to explore the comparative analysis of postcolonial texts, examining how different narratives address and challenge colonial legacies. Such studies can provide valuable insights into the ongoing process of cultural reclamation and the role of literature in shaping postcolonial identities. Additionally, further investigation into other postcolonial narratives can help elucidate the broader patterns and themes that characterize the postcolonial literary landscape, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between literature, culture, and colonialism.

In summary, the distinction between the construction of Islam in the G. Francis and S.M. Ardan versions of *Nyai Dasima* highlights the broader socio-cultural and political dynamics at play. This study emphasizes the importance of literary works in deconstructing colonial narratives and promoting a deeper understanding of indigenous cultures and religions. Future research should continue to build on these findings, exploring the rich and diverse landscape of postcolonial literature to further illuminate the ongoing impact of colonial legacies on contemporary cultural identities.

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