**THE DEPICTION OF FEMALE SLAVES IN 2023 INDONESIAN NOVELS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article describes the results of research on the depiction of female slaves in Indonesian novels published in 2023 and the assumptions on the basis of the existence of slavery in Indonesian novels in the 2023 era. Through novels, slavery can be remembered again and provide a lot of information. Books that tell stories about colonial events are not only books published several years after colonial events. The Indonesian novel published in 2023 also tells the story of slavery, and even clearly describes how and what female slaves experienced during the colonial period. The research was completed using library study methods and note-reading techniques. The results of data acquisition are described qualitatively. The results of the research found several depictions of female slaves during the colonial period in Indonesian novels published in 2023. Slavery and women is a record of historical events that depict the journey of an important period in Indonesia that should always be read throughout time, including until 2023.

**Keywords**: *female slaves, colonial, novel, 2023.*

**ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini mendeskripsikan hasil penelitian penggambaran budak perempuan dalam novel Indonesia terbitan tahun 2023 dan asumsi terhadap dasar masih munculnya perbudakan pada novel Indonesia era 2023. Melalui novel, perbudakan dapat kembali dikenang dan memberikan banyak informasi. Buku yang menceritakan peristiwa masa kolonial tidak hanya buku terbitan beberapa tahun setelah peristiwa kolonial. Novel Indonesia terbitan tahun 2023 juga menceritakan mengenai perbudakan, bahkan digambarkan jelas bagaimana dan apa saja yang dialami budak perempuan pada masa kolonial. Penelitian diselesaikan dengan metode studi pustaka dan teknik baca catat. Hasil perolehan data dideskripsikan secara kualitatif. Hasil dari penelitian menemukan beberapa penggambaran budak perempuan masa kolonial dalam novel Indonesia terbitan tahun 2023. Perbudakan dan perempuan adalah catatan peristiwa historis yang menggambarkan perjalanan sebuah masa penting di Indonesia untuk selalu terbaca sepanjang masa, termasuk hingga tahun 2023.

**Kata kunci:** *budak perempuan, kolonial, novel, tahun 2023.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Slavery in Indonesia led to the colonial period. Slavery in Indonesia existed between 1800-1942 (Ratih, 2022), especially slavery against women. at that time, women were not given freedom, they could only be housewives, domestic workers, or slaves for the Dutch  (Sulton, 2022). Whether in slavery or not, women were considered inferior to men. This can happen because patriarchal culture has become a culture for generations (Rodiah & Hasanuddin, 2023). Japanese colonial slavery was called *jugun ianfu*or comfort women. Female slaves are used as entertainers and treated inhumanely, besides that women are used as sexual vent by Japanese army (Wargiati et al., 2021).

Slavery of indigenous women led to violence against female slaves. The masters did not hesitate to torture their slaves if they did not obey the orders given. Even masters do not hesitate to slap, kick, and injure female slaves if they refuse the master's request (Wargiati et al., 2021). Slaves in Indonesia are described as being tortured by their masters, even exploited by their masters (Yuliyani et al., 2021). Slaves not only get physical violence, but also get psychological violence (Yasa, 2014).

The number of slavery practices in Indonesia caused literary works in Indonesia to be affected, so that slavery stories were objectified in literary works. This can be seen in novels published by Balai Pustaka, such as in research (I Gde Artawan, 2015) which examines mimicry and colonial stereotypes in literary works. In addition to slavery being used as objects for literary works, women are also used as objects of literary works. Women are considered to be objects of interest for literary works.

Literary works as one of the media to describe events and events in real life. Literary works can also be used as social documents that tell the situation and conditions at a certain time span, images and reflections of society at certain times, and as historical manifestations (Yulianeta, 2016:35). In addition, literary works can also be used as learning, because in literary works there are various messages that can be used in life. Thus, literary works that raise the topic of slavery can be said to be social documents that tell the events that occurred during the colonial period.

Some Indonesian literary works that raise slavery are the novels *Jalan Raya Pos*(2005)and*Jalan Deandles* (2005)by Pramoedya Ananta Toer which tell about slavery to natives and resistance carried out by natives to colonizers. Hanna Rambe's novel *Mirah dari Banda* (2010)also tells the story of the invaders who degraded women victims of war, besides that it depicted jugun ianfu, romusha, nyai, and laborers. Some of these novels show that slavery in Indonesia influenced Indonesian literature.

The influence of slavery, especially the enslavement of women, is still present today, this is reflected in the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu which will be published in 2023. Novels published in the year of independence still found the influence of female slavery during the colonial period. The finding of the influence of slavery in the 2023 novel is the focus of this study. The purpose of this study is to show how the depiction of slave girls in the colonial period in the 2023 novel. The depiction of slaves is seen from the aspects of the treatment received by slaves and the treatment carried out by slaves in the novel.

**METHODS**

This research uses qualitative methods, because the data in this study is in the form of text. The approach used is descriptive in accordance with qualitative methods. The descriptive approach will describe and explain the results of the data using qualitative methods. This study will explain the results of the study using detailed, complete, and in-depth sentences according to the situation in the data (Nugrahani, 2014). The source of data in this study is the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu published from Gramedia Popular Library on February 23, 2023. Data from this study is in the form of quotations, both in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs in the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu which refers to the depiction of female slaves.

The data collection techniques used are literature study techniques and reading and record reading techniques. Literature study techniques or document studies are carried out by collecting documents that support research (Umaya, 2017:69). The technique of reading notes is done by reading repeatedly. Read techniques used to obtain data by reading objects carefully and carefully (Ahmad, 2017). Next is the recording technique, the first step of the recording technique is to record the data from the analysis of discrimination of female characters in the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu, then continued by recording data quotes in the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu in the form of sentences or paragraph(Ahmad, 2017)**.**

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of research on the depiction of female slaves in the 2023 novel found two female slave characters in the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu. The depiction of female slaves in this study is seen from the aspect of self-portrayal of female slaves and the treatment obtained and carried out by female slaves. The following is a tabulation of the results of data depicting slave girls in novels in 2023.

**Table 1. Portrayal of Slave Girls**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Character** | **Self-Depiction** | **Treatment** |
|  | Mirah | 1. Old Fat Woman  2. Using kebaya | 1. Placed in the back room.  2. Do homework.  3. Obey and dare not refuse the master's orders. |
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|
|  | Rasina | 1. Using kebaya and songket cloth  2. Rasina the most beautiful among other slave girls. | 1. Preparing dishes.  2. Placed in the hut behind the house.  3. Snapped.  4. Flogged.  5. Wound using sharp objects.  6. Being considered stupid and fabricating stories.  7. Used as a means of satisfying the lust of his master.  8. Slashed.  9. Opium-infused.  10. His body was slashed and licked.  11. Made drunk and given lead and mercury.  12. Abducted and hidden.  13. Cannot be immediately independent.  14. Auctioned by the company. |

The data tabulation shows several depictions in terms of self-image and treatment of the two female slave characters in the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu. The following is an explanation of the tabulation.

**Portrayal of slave girls in novels**

1. Figure Mirah
2. Self-image of Mirah

Portrayal as an old woman of Mirah's character. The quote clearly illustrates that Mirah's character is depicted as an old woman. The depiction of the slave girl as an old woman is clearly depicted, referring to the slave girl using gender and adjective, i.e. old woman. The depiction of slaves as old women meant to inform that the slave girl was no longer attractive to men.

The next depiction of Mirah is having a fat body. The depiction of Mirah's body is not depicted as clearly as the depiction of an old woman. The depiction of the slave girl having a fat body can be seen when her clothes are used by other slaves who look very oversized and her body looks like it is shrinking. So, the depiction shows that Mirah has a fat body.

The last finding depicting Mirah as a slave is to use kebaya in his daily life. The depiction of using kebaya in his daily life is seen when the clothes lent to other slaves are in the form of kebayas. The kebaya used by a slave is also depicted in the data, which is blue and not white. Because the white kebaya in the colonial period was used by a Nyai, or slave who was made a wife by his master. While ordinary slaves, use kebayas that are colored other than white. This is in line with research (Fahmilda & Putri, 2021b) if the kebaya color can be used as an identity, and the white kebaya color is considered to be one level above other colors.

1. Treatment of Mirah characters

As a slave, Mirah's character is treated like a slave is treated. A slave was placed in the back room, doing homework, and always being obscene with his master's orders. The depiction of a slave placed in a back room is clearly mentioned in the novel. The master of the slave told his colleague he already had a slave to cook with and would live in a back room. The slave had also prepared a special room for himself in the back by his master.

In addition to being placed in the back room, is to do homework. A slave girl was in charge of preparing all the household needs of her master. In the novel, Mirah's character is referred to as a cooking slave by her master, who of course is in charge of preparing dishes for her master. Although he is called a cooking slave, he is not only in charge of cooking, but also cleaning the house and all the household needs of his master. The task of female slaves during the colonial period is in accordance with research (Irenewaty, Terry, 2016) if the task of female slaves is as a domestic servant who prepares all household needs, including being a cooking slave.

A slave never refuses his master's orders. Because a slave is aware that he has a social status far below that of his master. Thus, however and whatever the master's orders are, they must be carried out. Even if the slave did not like the orders given by his master, he had to carry out the orders. This can happen because slaves are in the lowest social class. Slaves are also not comparable to white people (Krismurti et al., 2023).

Another factor in a slave always carrying out his master's orders was that, in the colonial period, if a slave refused his master's orders, he would be punished with physical violence against him. This is in accordance with (Yasa, 2014) which says that an indigenous slave must still be civilized and adapted to the colonizers. Some of these statements show that a slave could not refuse his master's request and had to carry out every command given by his master.

1. Figure Rasina
2. Self-image of Rasina

The self-image of Rasina is not much different from Mirah's. That is, female slaves are depicted using kebayas and cloths for their daily lives. The depiction is seen when the slave is preparing food for guests. In this incident, slaves are depicted wearing blue kebayas that match other slaves and using songket cloth as their subordinates. The color of the kebaya worn by female slaves is in line with research (Fahmilda & Putri, 2021) if the color of the kebaya used for ordinary slaves is a kebaya that is colored other than white, the white kebaya is considered to have a higher level because it can only be used by a Nyai.

The next depiction of Rasina is that she is described as having a beautiful face. Beauty is depicted by explaining some parts of the slave's face shape, with details of how the slave girl's face shaped. Starting from curly hair, eyes that have firm lines with pointed tips, very deep eyeballs, small but bangir noses, thin red-brown lips, even described as similar to Iberian women. In addition to the face shape clearly depicted in the novel, the depiction of the slave's body shape is described as having a small, dense, and sturdy waist. The physical depictions of slave girls meant that there would be no ambiguity in interpreting how beauty was meant in the novel.

The character of Rasina is depicted as a beautiful female slave when compared to other female slaves. The slave girl is clearly depicted in the data if she has the most beautiful face or is considered more beautiful than other slave girls. This can be seen when the slaves are auctioned and the figure of Rasina is the most striking female slave because of her beauty. The beauty of a slave is only compared to fellow slave girls, not compared to women in general. This shows that female slaves are not equal to women in general, such as research (Krismurti et al., 2023) which says that female slaves are not comparable to white women.

1. Treatment of Rasina characters

The treatment of Rasina's character who describes herself as a slave was found to have more data than Mirah's character. There are similarities in the depiction of slaves in the character Mirah and the character of Rasina. That is in charge of the kitchen and placed in the back cottage. The depiction of the slave girl in charge of the kitchen is seen when the slave girl prepares and arranges food to be served to guests. In the novel, it is vividly depicted, while doing his job of arranging food for his employer's guests.

The next similarity is that they are both placed in the building at the back of the employer's house. The slave was placed in huts in the backyard that his master had prepared specifically for his slaves. In the novel, the depiction of a hut in the backyard of the house is surrounded and fenced with a high wall. This illustrates that slaves are placed behind houses with tight security so that slaves cannot escape. If the slaves were caught running away and resisting their masters, they would be sanctioned, that is, tortured by their masters. Torture to slaves was also given to slave girls. Like the character Rasina who gets a lot of torture from her employer.

The character of Rasina as a slave girl she received a lot of torture from her master. The slave was yelled at, whipped, slashed, injured with sharp objects, and even cut off his tongue. The amount of torture received by slaves resulted in permanent disability, and minor injuries. The total amount of violence the slave received was twelve major injuries resulting in permanent disability. Not to mention small incisions. The most savage is indeed the one inscribed around his pubic lips (Banu, 2023:543).

The female slave not only received physical violence from her master, the female slave was also used as a sexual slave by her master. Some of the physical abuse he received was mostly when he was made a slave to lust by his master. In addition to being tortured, the slave was also given opium so as not to feel pain when tortured and made into a sexual slave by his master. The slave is also described as being treated casually by his master. Female slaves are made sexual slaves not only by their male masters, but by their female masters as well. Slave girls were also given opium so that they could serve their masters until they felt satisfied. It was even given lead and mercury to prevent female slaves from becoming pregnant. As research (Aman, 2016) which says that female slaves in addition to preparing household needs, female slaves also become sexual slaves of their masters.

The discrimination received by female slaves was not only obtained by their masters, but also received discrimination from colonial government law. A slave cannot immediately become a free man, after his master is exposed to a legal case that causes the slave to be unowned. The slaves of the master were to be returned to the company. Thus, the fate of the masterless slaves was determined by the company, and most of the slaves were sold by the company. Similarly, the female slave in *Rasina's* novel was eventually sold at auction by the company.

This explanation shows that female slaves had to follow all the rules that applied in the law of the company government in the colonial period. A slave alone cannot disobey the orders of his master, let alone to violate the rule of law made by the colonial government. During the colonial period, slaves were traded by the VOC to protect resources, profits, and meet the demand for slaves in Batavia (Fahmilda & Putri, 2021).

**Slavery in 2023 Novels**

A novel is a literary work in the form of a picture of real life. The events and events in the novel are obtained from experience, knowledge, stories obtained, and even existing history. Literary works can be used as social documents that describe situations at certain times, images of society in certain times, and historical manifestations (Yulianeta, 2016:35). The year 2023 is far from the colonial period, but the novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu still tells the story of slavery that is identical to the colonial period.

The novel *Rasina*by Iksaka Banu depicts much of the life of a slave, especially the violence experienced by slave girls. In a very advanced year, Iksaka Banu actually wrote a novel about slaves. Of course, there is a reason behind the novel telling of slavery. Of course, there are lessons given to the novel. As argued (Yulianeta, 2016:35), *Rasina's*novel can be used as a historical manifestation that describes the situation, society, and historical manifestation of women's slavery.

*Rasina*novel by Iksaka Banu which is one of the Indonesian novels that provides knowledge about slavery during the colonial period. Through the novel, Iksaka Banu tries to give an idea if the natives in the colonial period were very oppressed by the colonizers. By giving pictures of the horrors of slavery in the colonial period, it aims to be somewhat slavery in 2023 and beyond, there will be no more slavery practices. Because, during the colonial period Indonesia was very oppressed by the colonizers, so do not let the independent period be recolonized by the nation itself. In addition, the incident of slavery is one of the important events in Indonesian history to always be remembered for all time. Through literary works, these important events will be read throughout the ages.

**CONCLUSION**

The conclusion obtained is that female slaves in the colonial period in the 2023 Indonesian novel build an image as a woman behind, both position and fact. The position at the back means that slaves are considered unimportant, and the fact means that if slaves and masters in one slave house are placed in the back room, even a hut is made at the back of the house that is far from feasible. Another image is visual in dress, where female slaves wear dark kebayas.

The next finding was that the slave girl service not only served the household needs of her master, but also served the master's sexuality. In addition to serving their master, the female slave was also the object of her master's violence that was considered legitimate if it was to the slave. However, the violence that female slaves received depended on their masters. If you get a good employer, then you will not be tortured, and will even be treated well by the employer. However, if you get an employer who is not good, you will always get violence and be treated inhumanely by your employer.

Iksaka Banu's *novel Rasina*is an Indonesian novel published in 2023 that seeks to give an overview of slavery during the colonial period. By describing the cruelty of slavery in the colonial period, it provides knowledge about the slavery of women in the colonial period. Another thing is assumed why the story of slavery still exists in Indonesian novels published in 2023. That is because of the messages that historically Indonesia has important events that must continue to be conveyed, one of which is through Indonesian literary works in 2023 which mark the present.

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