

Notes

Chapter 1

Sengon tree: *Paraserianthes falcataria*, a soft wood with short harvesting age.

Jambe rowe: *Areca catechu*, also known as Indian nut, Pinang palm, and betel tree, its fruit is often chewed with betel leaves.

Nira: Coconut flower sap, used in the making of coconut sugar.

Pongkor: Small pail made of bamboo section with looped handle, used to collect sap from flowers at the top of coconut palms.

Surau: A privately owned place of worship for Muslims.

Azar prayer time: Muslim afternoon praying time.

Kebaya: Traditional combination blouse and dress worn by Indonesian women.

Pak: Respectful term of address for an older man, meaning "father."

Pandan: *Pandanus utilis*, also known as padanu, its young leaves used for handicrafts.

Mbok: Respectful term of address for an older woman, meaning "mother."

Snake-fruit tree: *Salacca zalacca*, sometimes known as salak; outer skin of the fruit is scaly with tiny spikes when fresh.

Tokay gecko: Colorful nocturnal tree-dwelling reptile.

Chapter 2

Gambang: Known also as *gambang kayu*, a wooden musical instrument of seventeen to twenty-one keys played with long slender mallets, similar to the xylophone.

Sinom: Also known as *srinata*, poetic verse form of eighteen-line stanzas.

Dhandhanggula: Poetic verse form of ten-line stanzas; each line has a predetermined number of syllables and ends in a vowel.

Puyengan: *Lantana camara*, also known as big sage in Malaysia, perennial plant with small tubular-shaped flowers.

Ibu: Respectful term of address for a woman, similar to *mbok*. Diminutive form, "bu," is more friendly and casual.

Chapter 3

Logondang: Local dialect for *Ficus benghalensis*, known as the banyan tree.

Sujud: Muslim position of prayer with forehead, nose, palms, knees, toes, but not arms, touching the floor or ground.

Wali: Arabic for "trusted one," the nine saints who introduced Islam to Indonesia.

"...*suweng ireng digadhekna, wis kadhung meteng dikapakna*": Literal translation is "When you've pawned your black earrings, what can you do when she's pregnant?"

Gouramis: *Osphronemus goramy*, freshwater fish capable of breathing air for short periods.

Serunai: Wind musical instrument with quadruple reed made from a rice stalk, played by using circular breathing.

Chapter 4

Bekisar: A fine crossbreed between junglefowl and domestic chicken that often adorns the houses of the wealthy.

Mas: Friendly term of address among males of the same age group, meaning "brother."

Chapter 5

Sayur bening: Clear spinach and corn soup with chilies

Sambal trassi: Chili paste.

"...certificate of domicile...": Document required by Indonesia's Directorate General of Taxation to show proof of residence.

Rendang Padang: Beef and coconut milk curry.

Ayam kalasan: Chicken boiled in shallots, garlic, palm sugar, and coconut milk, and fried.

Lebaran or *Idul Fitri*: The end of the Muslim fasting month Ramadhan

Oman: In local dialect, a stalk of rice.

Iman: Follower of the six articles of faith in the Islamic religion, Belief in God, Belief in the Angels, Belief in Divine Books, Belief in the Prophets, Belief in the Day of Judgment, and Belief in God's Predestination.

Slawatan: Arabic for "song of praise," a traditional Islamic hymn accompanied by percussion instruments.

Suluk sisiringan: Muslim verses of praise recited before saying the *subuh* (before sunrise), *maghrib* (sunset) and *isha* (night time) prayers.

Albizia trees: *Albizia julibrissin*, also known as silk trees.

Peci: Black brimless felt hat worn by Muslim men for celebrations and formal occasions.

Kalimantan: Indonesian part of Borneo, dominating seventy-three percent of the island.

Irian Jaya: Indonesian province covering the western peninsula of New Guinea Island, its name changed to Papua in 2007.

Soga: *Peltophorum pterocarpum*, also known as yellow flame tree.

Chapter 6

Wayang: Shadow play, originally from Java.

Chapter 7

Kejawen: Javanese religious tradition that combines the beliefs and practices of Islam, animism, Buddhism, and Sufism.

Sakmadya: Principle of Javanese philosophy that says people should want only what they need or can afford, and not have too high expectations.

Pasar Rumput: Traditional market in Jakarta.

"...candid *Batak* style...": *Batak* people live in north Sumatra and are known for being straightforward, unlike the Javanese who are known for being sly.

Sepasang Mata Bola: A well-known *keroncong* song, an old-fashioned slow, crooning music style; Indonesian for "A Pair of Eyes."

Wayang orang: Highly formalized theater style based on the *wayang*, or shadow play.

Chapter 8

Gado-gado: Blanched vegetable salad with sauce made of ground peanuts, palm sugar, dried prawn paste, and chilies.

Rujak: Fruit salad made with palm sugar, tamarind juice, and chilies.

Kerok: Indonesian cold remedy where Tiger Balm or eucalyptus oil is rubbed along the muscle lines on the back, neck, and chest, and a coin is used to scrape the skin along the lines.

Jambu tree: *Syzygium cumini*, also known as Java plum.

Laksa: Spicy prawn or chicken noodle-based dish made with chilies and coconut milk.

Teppanyaki: Meat or seafood cooked on an iron griddle using soybean oil.

Chapter 9

"...Rama after losing Sita...": Characters from the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*.

Khasbunallah wanikmal wakil: Allah (alone) is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs (for us). Qur'an 3:173.

Kris: Ceremonial Javanese dagger with a wavy blade.

Kang: Also known as *kangmas*, meaning "elder brother."

Fiction/Historical/Indonesia

Half-Japanese and half-Javanese Lasi flees from the constraints of her small village to find herself enmeshed in the political corruption of Jakarta.

The *bekisar* is a fine crossbreed between jungle fowl and domestic chicken that adorns the houses of the wealthy. Lasi, whose father was a Japanese soldier, fair skinned and beautiful, is such an acquisition for a rich man in Jakarta. She is born in a village where the main source of income is tapping coconut palms for their rich sap, or *nira*. Her life takes an unexpected turn when she is betrayed by her husband and flees to Jakarta. She meets Mrs. Lanting, procuress for men in high government and social circles, who sells her to the rich Handarbeni. Lasi enjoys the new splendor as a much-desired ornament, but is alarmed when she discovers the marriage is a sham. Kanjat, a childhood friend, is now grown into a man. Lasi and Kanjat rediscover their affection for each other. Their bond is the village, its people and traditions. They struggle to free Lasi from a net of power, corruption, and deceit.

Acclaimed Indonesian author Ahmad Tohari is the recipient of the South East Asian Writers Award and was awarded a fellowship to the International Writing Program of Iowa City, Iowa. Tohari is best known for his trilogy, *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* (A Dancing Girl of Paruk Village), published by Gramedia in 2011. The novels have been translated into Dutch, English, German, and Japanese, and adapted for the film, *The Dancer*, directed by Ifa Isfanyah.

The Red Bekisar tells a story of race, class, and gender in 1960s Indonesia. In linking the rural and urban, Tohari shows the corruption of wealthy elites allowed to pursue their lust for money. The translation flows elegantly while staying close to Tohari's lyrical prose about the slowly disappearing beauty of Javanese village life and the surrounding nature, as well as captures his sense of nostalgia and sadness.

— Laurie J. Sears, Professor of History, University of Washington

Exploiting the factor of chance, Ahmad Tohari builds a narrative about destiny that sums up the intricate relations of social function and class in the intersection between the village and the city.

— Sapardi Djoko Damono, Indonesian poet and literary critic

Tohari's vivid portrayal of Lasi shows her twisted conflicts and will touch readers' hearts as they follow her on an absurd journey. *The Red Bekisar* is a challenging novel to translate yet Nurhayat Indriyatno Mohamed has successfully transferred the feelings evoked by the Javanese landscape and human behavior into English.

— Kadek Sonia Piscayanti, English Education Department,
Ganesha University of Education, Bali, Indonesia

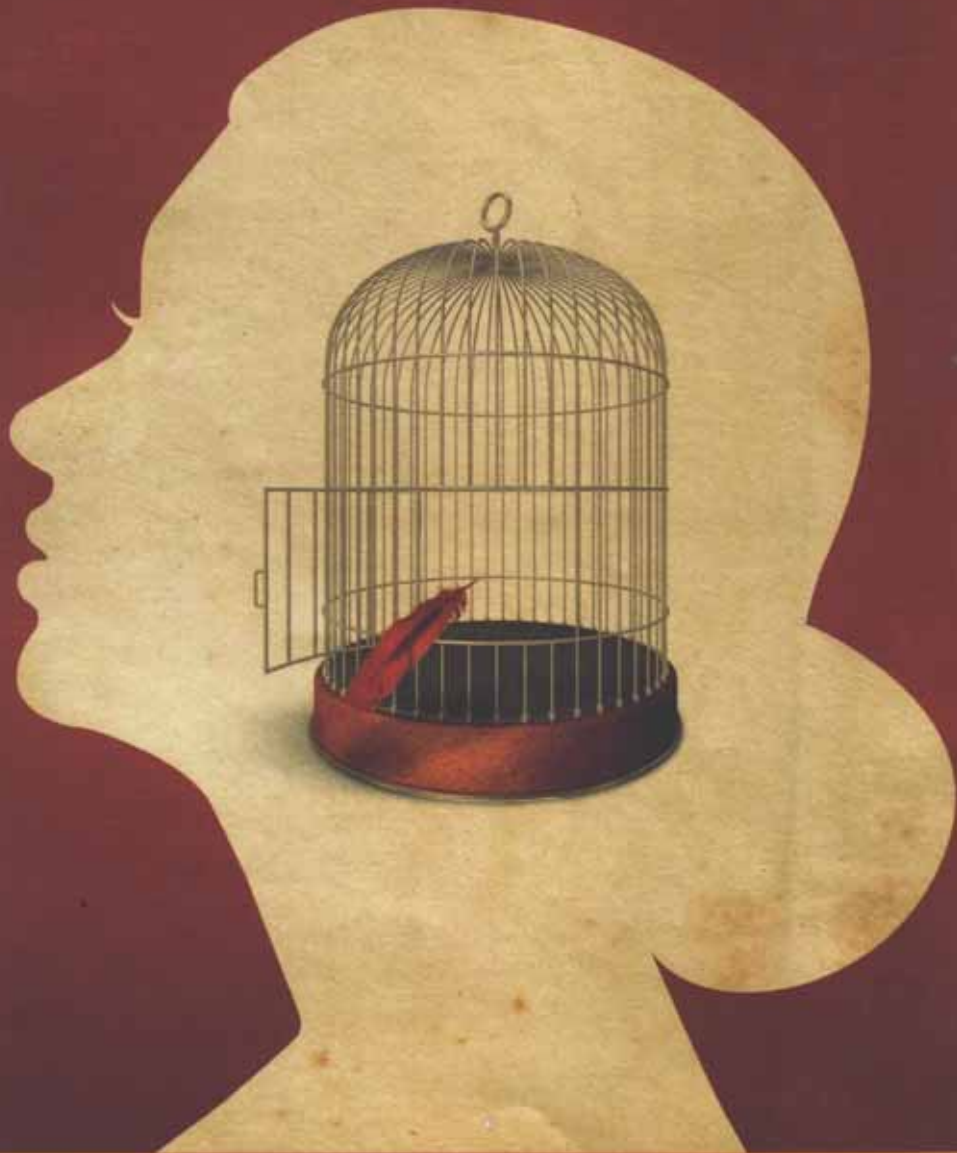


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AHMAD TOHARI

the red bekisar



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