



Rhymes and Reasons: Rendering Javanese Folksongs in the English Translation of Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*

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Abstract. Javanese folksongs, as an integral part of the rich oral tradition with cultural and philosophical significance, are frequently depicted in literary narratives to convey local wisdom and identity. Their poetic form, symbolic expressions, and culturally embedded meanings pose significant challenges for translation without fading their cultural resonance. This paper explores the translation ideologies and strategies used in rendering Javanese folksongs into English in two translated works of Ahmad Tohari—*The Dancer*, published by Lontar Foundation, and *The Red Bekisar*, published by Dalang Publishing. Drawing on Venuti's theory of translation ideology and Baker's framework of translation strategies, this research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, analyzing folksongs from *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah* as source texts and their English translations as target texts. The analysis examines the impact of translation strategies on meaning transfer, cultural preservation, and accessibility for international audiences. Furthermore, it compares the approaches of the two publishers—one based in Indonesia and the other in the United States—to reveal how institutional context shapes translation decisions. The finding shows that the two translated works differ markedly in translation ideology and strategies. *The Red Bekisar* presents only English translations—likely influenced by the Indonesian paraphrases included in the source text—while *The Dancer* retains the original Banyumasan lyrics alongside their English translations. These differing approaches result in varied strategy use: *The Dancer* employs a higher frequency of translation using loan words with explanation, whereas both translations frequently apply translation using cultural substitution, more neutral or less expressive wording, paraphrase using related or unrelated words, and superordinate terms. Despite these differences, both publishers ultimately share the same objective: to introduce Indonesian literature and culture to international audiences. The study concludes that while their methods diverge due to institutional context, audience orientation, and editorial priorities, both translations contribute meaningfully to the global visibility of Indonesian cultural heritage and reinforce the role of literary translation as a form of cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: Ahmad Tohari, Cultural Diplomacy, Folksongs, Translation Ideology, Translation Strategies.

1 Introduction

Folk songs have become an essential component of a community's cultural heritage as they reflect its collective memories, values, beliefs, and worldviews. As oral traditions, they transmit cultural identity across generations and sustain connections to ancestry, spirituality, and local wisdom. Their poetic language, symbolic imagery, and expressive emotionality reflect the lived experiences of a people and often articulate praise, gratitude, and devotion. Despite the pressures of globalization, folk songs continue to serve as important cultural markers, preserving community identity while fostering diversity and intercultural understanding.

When folk songs are incorporated into literary works, they introduce layers of cultural nuance that are not always easily translated to readers outside the source culture. Their meanings frequently depend on culturally bound expressions, metaphors, ritual references, and region-specific vocabulary, posing significant challenges for translators. Such elements often lack direct equivalents in the target language, requiring translators to balance cultural preservation with acceptability and readability. Consequently, translating folk songs demands sensitivity to linguistic, cultural, emotional, musical, and contextual dimensions of the original text. The choice of translation strategy plays a decisive role in determining whether the folk song's cultural resonance is maintained or diminished in the translation. This notion raises the need to analyze strategies for translating folk songs, which are essential for ensuring accurate translation, cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and achieving communication goals. As quoted from Catford [1], translation (or language) as communication should fulfill its core function: delivering the message successfully to the readers. Schaffner contends that in some cases, the refusal to adapt style confines the reader to a world of foreignness, and the source text message may not achieve an equivalent effect on the target recipient [2]. By carefully analyzing the most appropriate strategy, translators can ensure their translations are adequate and culturally relevant.

Therefore, this study investigates the translation ideology and strategies applied in rendering Banyumasan folk songs in Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* into English, i.e., *The Red Bekisar* and *The Dancer*. Ahmad Tohari's works are particularly suitable for such analysis because they are deeply rooted in Javanese cultural life—featuring culture-specific items, traditional prayers, idiomatic expressions, and folk songs that function as narrative and cultural anchors. Although the novels were written decades ago, their themes remain globally relevant, addressing issues such as spirituality, social marginalization, youth empowerment, and environmental awareness. However, scholarly attention to the translation of these culturally rich texts, especially their folk songs, remains limited.

Given that *The Red Bekisar* and *The Dancer* were produced by different publishers—one based in Indonesia and the other in the United States—and translated by individuals with distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds, their translations of folk songs offer valuable comparative insights. This study, therefore, examines how Venuti's concepts of foreignization and domestication, together with Baker's translation strategies [3], shape the rendering of culture-specific elements in these folk songs. By analyzing how each translator negotiates meaning, cultural resonance, and

reader accessibility, the study contributes to culturally sensitive translation practices. It supports the broader dissemination of Javanese cultural heritage through literature.

The study most closely related to the present research was conducted by Romala [4], who examined the translation of Banyumasan folk songs from *Bekisar Merah* into English, in *The Red Bekisar*, using Baker's taxonomy of translation strategies. Her analysis demonstrates that both the Indonesian adaptation and the English translation rely heavily on cultural substitution, paraphrase, generalization, and omission to render culturally specific expressions more communicative and accessible to their target audiences. She further highlights how musical, emotional, and cultural nuances—such as rhythm, imagery, and value-laden expressions—are reshaped to fit the linguistic and cultural expectations of Indonesian and English readers. However, Romala's study is limited in scope, focusing solely on *Bekisar Merah* and its English translation and not extending the analysis to other Tohari novels featuring folk songs, such as *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. In addition, her work does not consider how different institutional contexts—specifically, the distinct backgrounds, editorial orientations, and cultural positions of the publishers and translators—may influence ideological choices such as domestication and foreignization. This gap provides the present study with a broader comparative perspective by examining folk song translation across two of Tohari's works and by investigating how divergent publishing environments shape translation strategies and cultural representation.

A related discussion is also offered by Towairesh [5], who investigates the perspectives of translation trainees and the challenges they encounter when translating traditional folk poetry. Although his study focuses on poetry rather than narrative-embedded folk songs, the theoretical concerns are closely aligned. Both genres are deeply rooted in culturally specific imagery, symbolic associations, and implicit worldviews accessible primarily to native communities. Towairesh underscores that when translators fail to convey such culturally embedded meanings, the translated text risks becoming opaque, culturally flattened, or even meaningless to target readers [5]. He argues that translators must therefore be able to grasp and accurately reconstruct subtle cultural connotations and the figurative meanings embedded in folk songs to avoid producing culturally disconnected translations. Similarly, studies on the English translation of Enshi folk songs highlight that differences in linguistic style, cultural background, and narrative tradition require translators to balance both fidelity and adaptation. These studies stress that translation must “return to its philosophical origin,” meaning that translators should not only attend to the local cultural essence of the songs but also employ English as a communicative vehicle capable of expressing the cultural and semantic depth of Enshi folk traditions. As illustrated in the translation of *Laborers' Song* and *A Song for My Lover*, the process involves continuous negotiation between adoption (retaining source-culture elements) and adaptation (modifying expressions for target-culture readability), particularly when handling dialectal features, rhyme, mood particles, and metaphorical expressions. While such research provides important insight into the challenges of rendering traditional folk forms across linguistic and cultural boundaries, these studies remain focused on Chinese folk poetry and do not examine Javanese or Banyumasan folk songs within Indonesian literary works. Nor do they explore how different translators or publishers mediate cultural representation in

literary translations. These gaps reinforce the need for the present study, which extends these discussions to the translation of Banyumasan and Javanese folk songs across two of Ahmad Tohari's novels and considers how institutional context shapes translation ideology and strategy.

In line with the issues outlined above, this study seeks to identify and examine the translation ideologies and strategies employed in rendering Banyumasan folk songs in Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* into their English versions, *The Red Bekisar* and *The Dancer*. The objectives of this research are to examine how translators with different cultural backgrounds, working under distinct publishing contexts, approach the challenge of conveying culturally embedded folk songs to international readers. Specifically, the study aims to uncover the rationale behind the translators' choices—how Venuti's notions of foreignization and domestication, together with Baker's taxonomy of translation strategies, are applied to transfer meaning, maintain cultural resonance, or enhance accessibility. The findings are expected to shed light on the patterns of strategy use across the two translations and to illustrate how ideological orientations shape the final textual outcomes. Beyond contributing to the growing body of research on the translation of culturally specific literature, this study offers practical implications for translators and publishers, enabling them to evaluate how particular strategies influence shifts in form, style, semantics, and cultural representation [6] and how these choices ultimately affect the global reception of Javanese cultural heritage.

Venuti's translation ideology provides a foundational lens for understanding how translators negotiate cultural presence in a text through the dual orientations of domestication and foreignization. Domestication adapts the source text to target-language norms, creating a fluent and familiar reading experience but often reducing the original's cultural distinctiveness. Foreignization, by contrast, deliberately retains linguistic and cultural features of the source text, foregrounding its otherness and allowing target readers to encounter its cultural specificity directly. These ideological approaches are central to the translation of Banyumasan and Javanese folk songs, where cultural references, symbolic expressions, and oral-poetic features are integral to meaning. Analyzing domestication and foreignization helps the present study determine how Indonesian and English translations of folk songs preserve, reshape, or simplify cultural identity, and how different publishing contexts—Indonesian versus U.S.-based—shape these ideological choices.

Building on this ideological framework, Baker's translation strategies provide practical tools for analyzing how translators handle non-equivalence at the word or phrase level. Translation by a more general word (superordinate) involves using a broader term when no specific equivalent exists in the target language; Translation by a more neutral/less expressive word replaces emotionally marked or culturally loaded diction with more neutral wording; and Translation by cultural substitution renders a culturally specific item with another that carries a similar meaning or effect in the target culture. Translation using a loan word or a loan word plus explanation retains the original term and supplements it with clarification when necessary. Translation by paraphrase using a related word conveys meaning through a phrase that incorporates lexically related elements, whereas Translation by paraphrase using unrelated words

explains the meaning through terms not directly tied to the original lexicon. Translation by omission removes a term when it is untranslatable or when its presence does not significantly affect comprehension, and Translation by illustration uses visual or descriptive representation when a concept is difficult to explain through verbal translation alone. Together, these strategies equip the present study with a systematic method for identifying and comparing the linguistic decisions made in translating folk songs in *Bekisar Merah* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, enabling a clear distinction between strategy-level choices and broader ideological tendencies shaping the translations across different translators and publishers. Subsequent paragraphs, however, are indented.

2 Method

The primary data of this study consist of two of Ahmad Tohari's novels and their English translations. *Bekisar Merah* was first published in 1993 and republished in 2011 by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. Its English translation, *The Red Bekisar*, was produced by Nurhayat Indriyatno Mohamed and published by Dalang Publishing in 2014, based on the 2011 Indonesian edition. *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* originally appeared as a trilogy in 1982 and was later republished as a single-volume novel in 2003. Its English translation, *The Dancer*, translated by René T. A. Lysloff, was published by the Lontar Foundation in 2003 and reissued in 2012. In addition to these primary sources, the study also uses the Banyumasan editions of both works as secondary data—*Jeginggér: Bekisar Merah* Edisi Banyumasan (2010) and *Ronggeng Dhukuh Paruk Banyumasan* (2006), published by Yayasan Swarahati. These Banyumasan editions, rewritten by the author himself, serve to verify the accuracy of the original Banyumasan folk songs, especially in cases where typographical inconsistencies appear in the Indonesian editions.

The novels present complex narratives rich in Banyumas' cultural heritage, including depictions of local landscapes, community life, traditions, and artistic expressions. Among these cultural elements, folk songs feature significantly across multiple scenes, making them an essential object of study. This research, therefore, examines how these culture-specific lyrical forms are translated and how translators' decisions reflect distinct strategies and ideological orientations. By comparing Banyumasan folk songs with their Indonesian renderings and English translations, the study investigates the translation strategies and ideological tendencies employed by translators operating in different publishing contexts.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, focusing on the translation strategies used to render culture-specific items—particularly the folk songs embedded in the novels. The data consist of the stanzas and lines of folk songs in *Bekisar Merah* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, along with their Indonesian and English translations. Document analysis was used to collect the data, involving skimming for initial identification, detailed reading for comprehension, and interpretive analysis for classification. Both content analysis and thematic analysis were applied: content analysis to categorize translation strategies and cultural features according to the

study's focus [7], and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns within the translated folk songs quoted from Fereday & Muir-Cochrane in Bowen [7].

Following Leedy and Ormrod's explanation in Williams [8], content analysis in this study serves as a systematic method for identifying patterns and themes across textual materials. The novels were read repeatedly to locate culture-specific words, phrases, and expressions in the source versions and their translations. These elements were then classified according to cultural categories and examined using theories on translation ideology—particularly domestication and foreignization—and translation strategies. The qualitative approach, as defined by George [9], enables the findings to be presented in descriptive and interpretive form, supported by library research that situates the analysis within existing scholarship.

Data collection involved systematically highlighting relevant elements in the target texts and comparing them with their corresponding source-text forms. The Banyumasan, Indonesian, and English versions were arranged in comparative tables, allowing close examination of how translation strategies influence semantic, pragmatolinguistic, rhetorical, and stylistic aspects [10]. Although the novels contain various traditional lyrical genres—such as *suluk*, *singiran*, *puji-pujian*, and *tembang*—this study focuses exclusively on *tembang* or folk songs to maintain analytical precision. All folk songs were included without sampling, given their limited number and clear identification in the texts.

Lexical analysis was supported by authoritative dictionaries, including *Kamus Bahasa Jawa Banyumasan–Indonesia* [11], [12], *Kamus Besar Dialek Banyumas–Indonesia* [13], *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* [14], Merriam-Webster Dictionary [15], and Oxford Learner's Dictionaries [16]. These resources were used to compare meanings across versions, identify translation ideology and strategies, reveal semantic shifts during translation, and provide insight into how the cultural and linguistic features of Banyumasan folk songs are transformed in Indonesian and English.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The English Translation of Folk Songs in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah*

The English translations of the folk songs in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* and *Bekisar Merah* are presented in noticeably different ways. In *The Dancer*, the English version of *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*, René T.A. Lysloff preserves the original Banyumasan Javanese folk song lyrics. It even adds pronunciation markers that do not appear in the Indonesian edition of the novel. This demonstrates a clear effort to represent Banyumasan culture authentically in the translation of the folk songs.

3.2 Findings

Ideology and Strategies in the English Translation of Folk Songs in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk and Bekisar Merah*

The translation ideologies used in the English versions of the folk songs in *Bekisar Merah* and *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* differ significantly in their structural approaches. In *The Red Bekisar*, the folk songs are translated directly into English, and in the original Indonesian edition, the Banyumasan lyrics are accompanied by an Indonesian rendering. It is therefore possible that the English translation is based not solely on the Banyumasan source text but also on the Indonesian paraphrase provided by the author. In contrast, in *The Dancer*, the original Banyumasan folk song lyrics are retained in the English version alongside their translations, indicating a different translation ideology. Because the ideological orientation differs between the two works, the strategies employed by the translators also vary. *The Dancer* contains a higher frequency of translation using loan words or loan words plus explanation compared to *The Red Bekisar*. Meanwhile, other strategies—such as translation by cultural substitution, translation by a more neutral/less expressive word, translation by paraphrase using related and unrelated words, and translation by a more general word (superordinate)—are frequently used across both translations.

Translation Ideology and Strategies in the English Version of Folk Songs in *Bekisar Merah*

The translation of the folk songs in *The Red Bekisar* predominantly reflects a domesticating ideology, as the translator prioritizes clarity and readability for the target audience. Rather than attempting to create a singable or musically equivalent version of the folk songs, the translation focuses primarily on conveying meaning. Several translation strategies are employed to achieve this communicative effect. These include translation by cultural substitution, which replaces unfamiliar cultural items with culturally equivalent expressions in English; translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, which reduces emotional or stylistic intensity for clarity; and translation by paraphrase using related words, which restates the core meaning using semantically connected English terms. Overall, the English rendering in *The Red Bekisar* emphasizes semantic transfer rather than preserving the poetic form, rhythm, or performative qualities typical of folk songs.

Table 1. Translation ideology and strategies in the English translation of folk song 1 in *The Red Bekisar*

ST	Page	TT	Page	Translation Ideology	Translation Strategies
Dina Bakda uwis leren nggone pasa Padha ariaya seneng-seneng ati rag Nyandhang anyar sarta ngepung sega punar	167	On Lebaran we complete our fast We celebrate, happy in soul and body We wear new clothes and eat fluffy rice What a joy to eat until our stomachs are full (Tohari, 2014: 126)	126	Domestication	Translation by using loan words, translation by cultural substitution, translation by a more neutral/less expressive word, translation by

Bingar-bingar mangan anak nganti meklar	paraphrase using related words
Di hari Lebaran sudah kita purnakan puasa Kita berhari raya, bersenang jiwa dan raga Berbusana baru, menyantap nasi pulen Riang gembira santap anak hingga perut Kenyang benar (Tohari, 2011: 167)	

As evident in the table above, the English translation of this folk song shows the domestication ideology. The author translates the first line of the Banyumasan folk song into Indonesian by applying translation by cultural substitution, rendering “*dina Bakda*” as “*di hari Lebaran*”. In Banyumasan, *dina* means “day” [13, p.76], while *bakda/bada* refers to the Muslim holiday of *Lebaran* or *Eid al-Fitr* [11, p.25]. The Indonesian version adds the preposition *di* before *hari Lebaran*, a common term for major Islamic feast days. In contrast, the English translator retains “*Lebaran*” as a loan word, omitting “*hari*” since the term already implies the feast day, thereby preserving the cultural specificity of the source. The Banyumasan term “*uwis*” (often “*wis*” in Javanese), which marks a perfect aspect, appears with “*leren*” or to rest/stop [11, p.180]. This is translated into Indonesian as “*sudah kita purnakan*”, maintaining the perfective meaning through *sudah* and adding *kita* as the subject. Although *purnakan* does not directly correspond to *leren*, it conveys a similar sense of completion, making it an instance of paraphrase with related words. The word *nggone*, from *anggone* meaning “for/utility” [11, p.14], contributes little to the overall meaning in this line, where the key noun is *pasa/puasa* “fasting” [11, p.251]. The English version uses the noun phrase “our fast”, mirroring the structure in Indonesian.

Furthermore, the Banyumasan *padha*, which indicates plurality or collective action, is rendered as *kita* to emphasize inclusivity, reflecting the communal nature of the song, often sung by children. Likewise, *ariaya* becomes *berhari raya* “to celebrate the feast,” and *seneng-seneng ati rag* becomes *bersenang jiwa dan raga*. Here, *ati* “heart” shifts to the more idiomatic Indonesian *jiwa* “soul,” chosen for the collocation *jiwa dan raga*, which is then directly carried over into English. The phrase *kita berhari raya* is domesticated in English as “we celebrate,” a less expressive and more general verb that fits a wider range of festive contexts but remains clear within the song’s thematic setting. The translation of *nyandhang anyar* as *berbusana baru* “wearing new clothes”

is another example of cultural substitution, while *sarta* is omitted as unnecessary. The Banyumasan verb *ngepung*, meaning “to eat together enthusiastically” [11, p.153], is softened to the more neutral *menyantap*, losing its communal nuance. *Sega punar* is rendered as *nasi pulen*, an appropriate cultural equivalent describing soft, fluffy rice. The English translation follows the Indonesian structure, adding “we” and linking the verb phrases with “and”, while employing cultural substitution in “we wear new clothes and eat fluffy rice.” The adjective *bingar-bingar* “happy” [11, p.41] corresponds to the Indonesian *riang gembira*, a common collocation also reflected in English. “Mangan” becomes “santap” in Indonesian, while “enak” or “delicious” appears in both versions, though the Indonesian adds “benar” for emphasis. The English rendering uses a paraphrase with related words—“what a joy to eat”—which sounds more natural than a literal translation but omits “enak”. Even so, the translation preserves the idea of celebratory eating on the feast day, with stylistic adjustments aligned with the expectation that effective translations should read naturally in the target language [2].

Translation Ideology and Strategies in the English Version of Folk Songs in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*

In contrast to the translation of folk songs in *The Red Bekisar*, where the songs are presented only in English, *The Dancer* retains the original Banyumasan lyrics and provides English translations alongside them. Similar to *The Red Bekisar*, the English renderings in *The Dancer* prioritize meaning rather than musicality, resulting in translations that are unsingable. The presence of the original Banyumasan version may therefore serve as a form of compensation for the loss of rhythm, melody, and performability in the English translation. By including the original lyrics, the translator allows readers to access the authentic form of the folk songs, preserving their singability and cultural character, even though the English version focuses primarily on semantic clarity.

Table 2. Translation ideology and strategies in the English translation of folk song 1 in *The Dancer*

ST	Page	TT	Page	Translation Ideology	Translation Strategies
Yun ayun, ayun turu	145	Yun ayun, ayun turu	153	Foreignization, domestication	Translation by using loan words plus explanation, translation by paraphrase using related and unrelated words, and translation by cultural substitution
Turu lali neng ayunan		Turu lali neng ayunan			
Anakku si bocah landhung		Anakku si bocah landhung			
Mbesuk gede dadi rebutan		Mbèsok gedhé dadi rebutan			
Yun ayun, ayun turu					
Turua si bocah lanang		Yun ayun, ayun turu			
Cilike tak ayun-ayun		Turua si bocah lanang			
Gedhene ngeman biyung		Ciliké tak ayun-ayun			
(Tohari, 2015: 145)		Gedhèné ngéman biyung			
		Swaying, swaying, sway to sleep			

ST	Page	TT	Page	Translation Ideology	Translation Strategies
		Sleep in forgetfulness in the cradle My child, my boy of stamina Tomorrow, grown up, you'll be the object of feminine competition			
		Swaying, swaying, sway to sleep Sleep, my manly child When you're small, I'll rock you When you're big, you'll love your mother. (Tohari, 2011: 153)			

The table above compares the folk song as it appears in the original Indonesian novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* with its English translation in *The Dancer*. The song functions as a lullaby sung by Srintil to her child. Notably, in the English translation, the translator retains the original Banyumasan folk song lyrics and provides an English translation beneath them, even adding diacritics that are not present in the original. Only minor spelling differences appear, such as “mbesuk” in the original text becoming “mbésok” in the English version (stanza 1, line 4). Structurally, both versions consist of two stanzas, each containing four lines. This Banyumasan folk song appears in the scene where Srintil sings a lullaby to her child. As a traditional lullaby sung by a mother to soothe her child to sleep, it expresses a mother’s hopes and affection—recalling how the mother once swayed her son as a baby and wishing that, when he grows up, he will become a boy admired and competed for by many girls, while continuing to love his mother dearly.

In its English translation, the translator employs a combination of foreignization and domestication approaches. Foreignization is realized through the use of translation by using loan words plus explanation, in which the original Banyumasan lyrics are retained and then clarified in English. Thus, the translation presents both the original Banyumasan lines and their explanatory English counterparts. The translation is unsingable, as the translator prioritizes semantic transfer over recreating the rhythm, melody, or singability of the original folk song. This may be why the translator preserves the original lyrics—allowing readers to recognize still the source text’s rhythm, meter, and rhyme—while the English version functions essentially as a gloss or explanatory paraphrase.

Furthermore, the English translation frequently relies on paraphrasing using related words. For instance, the first lines of the first and second stanzas contain the repeated phrase “Yun ayun, ayun turu” (“sway, sway to sleep”), and this repetition is preserved

in the English version. This indicates that the translator attempts not only to convey meaning but also to retain the folk song’s stylistic features. The overall structure of the English translation is also parallel to the original. Additionally, the word *ayunan* is rendered using translation by cultural substitution as “cradle”, a term more familiar to the target audience. There are, however, several instances in which the translator employs paraphrase with unrelated words, resulting in shifts in meaning. One example is the translation of “anakku si bocah landhung” into “my child, my boy of stamina.” The phrase “bocah landhung” is paraphrased as “my boy of stamina”. According to Kamus Bahasa Banyumasan-Indonesia 2 [13, p.245], “landhung” means “to stretch out long,” referring to a tall child or one with a good physical build, as in “bocah landhung”. In the translation, the emphasis shifts from physical appearance in the ST to a non-physical quality in the TT. i.e., “my boy of stamina”. This demonstrates the use of translation by paraphrase by using unrelated words. Another example of this strategy is the translation of “dadi rebutan” into “object of the feminine competition” in line 4 of stanza 1. The phrase “object of the feminine competition” elaborates the contextual meaning of “rebutan” in the original lyrics, which implies that the boy will be one whom girls will compete over. This translation example incorporates connotative meaning to preserve the folk song’s poetic function. A further instance occurs in the translation of “bocah lanang” as “my manly child.” While “bocah lanang” means “a boy,” the translator elevates it to “my manly child”, likely to enhance the poetic quality and to reinforce the mother’s hope that her child will grow into a strong, admirable manly man. Another expression of the mother’s hope appears in “gedhèné ngéman biyung,” translated as “when you’re big you’ll love your mother.” The structure of the ST and TT is similar, and the meaning is equivalent. Ngéman biyung (“to love one’s mother”) is closely rendered as “love your mother”.

Therefore, although the translator focuses primarily on conveying the meaning of the Banyumasan folk song—employing translation by using loan words plus explanation, translation by paraphrase using related and unrelated words, translation by cultural substitution—there remains a clear effort to preserve elements of the song’s stylistic character. This is evident in the retention of structural parallels, repetition, and connotative expressions, which represent a negotiated approach between domestication and foreignization in the translation of the Banyumasan folk song.

Table 3. Translation ideology and strategies in the English translation of folk song 2 in *The Dancer*

ST	Page	TT	Page	Translation Ideology	Translation Strategies
Dhongkel gelang daning bung alang-alang	393–394	Dhongkèl gèlang daning bung alang-alang	439–440	Foreignization, domestication	Translation by using loan words plus explanation, translation by a more general word (superordinate).

ST	Page	TT	Page	Translation Ideology	Translation Strategies
Wis sakjege wong lanang gedhe gorohe		Wis sakjégé wong lanang gedhé gorohé			translation by cultural substitution, translation by paraphrase using related and unrelated words
Lisus lali kedhung jero banyu mili		Lisus kali kedhung jero banyu mili			
Meneng soten atine bolar-baleran		Meneng sotèn atiné bolar- balèran			
Wakul kayu cepone wadhah pengaron		Wakul kayu ceponé wadhah pengaron			
Kapanane, kapanane ketemu pada dhewekan		Kapanané, kapanané ketemu pada dhèwèkan.			
		Digging for weeds, finding grass sprouts			
		Men have always been the biggest liars			
		A deep whirlpool in a river stream			
		Absolutely silent with a racing heart			
		A wooden rice basket as a water jug			
		When on when will we meet, just the two of us.			

This folk song is also translated into English by retaining the original Banyumasan version alongside an English rendering of its meaning. As in the previous example, the Banyumasan lyrics in the English version of the novel are reproduced with diacritics. However, the structure of the English translation differs from that of the original folk song. These structural adjustments are intended to achieve naturalness in English, whose syntactic patterns differ significantly from those of Banyumasan Javanese. This can be observed in the transposition of several words within lines, allowing the English version to read more fluently and acceptably.

The English translation of the above folk song applies both foreignization and domestication. Domestication is primarily realized through Baker's translation

strategies of translation by a more general word (superordinate), translation by cultural substitution, and translation by paraphrase using related and unrelated words. Translation by cultural substitution is evident in the renderings of “bung alang-alang” as “grass sprouts”, “wakul kayu” as “a wooden rice basket”, and “wadhah pengaron” as “a water jug”. In the source language, “alang-alang” refers specifically to “rumput ilalan” or cogon grass, yet translating it simply as ‘grass’ results in a semantic generalization. Shifts in style and structure further illustrate the process of domestication. The line “dhongkèl gélang daning bung alang-alang, wis sakjégé wong lanang gedhé gorohé” is an idiomatic Banyumasan Javanese expression meaning “tumbang enau oleh rebung ilalang, bagi lelaki bohong adalah hal biasa” in Indonesian, or “a sugar palm tree is knocked down by a bamboo shoot; for men, lying is commonplace” [11, p.107]. However, this idiomatic richness is lost in the English translation “digging for weeds, finding grass sprouts,” which employs translation by paraphrase using unrelated words. Although the poetic line “men have always been the biggest liars” is stylistically natural in English, the idiomatic form of the original expression is not retained. Nevertheless, the core meaning is conveyed clearly and adjusted to English stylistic norms for readability. The third line, “lisus kali kedhung jero banyu mili,” is rendered using translation by paraphrase using related words, resulting in a domesticated structure: “A deep whirlpool in a river stream.” In the source text, “lisus” means ‘whirling winds, tornadoes’ [12, p.259], “kedhung” denotes the deep part of a river [11, p.208], and “banyu mili” refers to flowing water.

The translation reconstructs these elements with similar lexical choices but differs in stylistic arrangement and imagery. Similarly, “meneng sotèn atiné bolar-balèran,” meaning “even though silent, the heart was restless” [11, p.67], is translated through translation by paraphrase using related words as “absolutely silent with a racing heart,” which maintains the general sense but adopts a more natural English expression. Furthermore, the phrase “wakul kayu ceponé wadhah pengaron” is translated through cultural substitution. “Wakul kayu” refers to a wooden rice basket, emphasizing functional equivalence. Meanwhile, “wadhah pengaron”—a wooden or pottery cauldron-like container used for preparing half-cooked rice [11, p.331]—is translated as “a water jug”, resulting in a semantic shift that alters the cultural specificity of the original. Finally, the repetition in the last line of the source text is preserved in the target text as “when oh when will we meet,” maintaining the stylistic characteristics of folk songs, which commonly use repetition for rhythmic and rhetorical effect.

Table 4. Translation ideology and strategies in the English translation of folk song 3 in *The Dancer*

ST	Page	TT	Page	Translation Ideology	Translation Strategies
Klinthang-klinthung pasar kewan kidul gunung	394	Klinthang-klinthung pasar kewan kidul gunung	440–441	Foreignization, domestication	Translation by using loan words plus explanation, translation by cultural substitution, translation by a more general word (superordinate), translation by paraphrase using related words
Tipar lor Sugihan, Jatisalu Pasar Manis		Tipar lor Sugihan, Jatisalu Pasar Manis			
Terus ngetan anjog maring Pesanggrahan		Terus ngétan anjog maring Pesanggrahan			
Klinthang-klinthung ana mantri mikul calung		Klinthang-klinthung ana mantri mikul calung			
Mampir gubug randha, urut senthong dilongoki		Mampir gubug randha, urut senthong dilongoki			
Mbok menawa Nini Randha nggodhog wedang.		Mbok menawa Nini Randha nggodhog wédang.			
		Klinthang-klinthung, at the animal market south of the mountain			
		Just north of Sugihan, Jatisalu Pasar Manis			
		Then, east until Pesanggrahan			
		Klinthang-klinthung, there are musicians carrying calung xylophones			
		Stop by the widow's hut, look into the bedrooms			
		Most likely, Granma will put on a kettle of water			

The English translation of this Banyumasan folk song also reflects a blend of foreignization and domestication, with domestication dominating through Baker's

translation strategies of translation by using loan words plus explanation, translation by cultural substitution, translation by a more general word (superordinate), and translation by paraphrase using related words. The place names in the first stanza—Sugihan, Jatisalu Pasar Manis, and Pesanggrahan—are largely retained, reflecting Venuti's foreignization. However, the translator adds minimal clarification, such as "animal market" for "*pasar kewan*," a strategy that aids comprehension through cultural substitution. Structural shifts are evident as the original directional sequencing (*kidul, lor, ngétan*) is adapted into more natural English syntax, illustrating translation by paraphrase using related words. Cultural items such as "*calung*" are preserved but glossed as "xylophones," combining foreignization with the use of a more general word, while "*mantri*" is domesticated through translation by cultural substitution into "musicians," losing its original socio-cultural nuance.

The second stanza shows stronger domestication: "*gubug randha*" becomes "widow's hut", "*senthong*" is culturally substituted with "bedrooms", and "*Nini Randha*" is rendered as "Granma", which maintains familial warmth but removes the specifically Javanese social identity of a widow as in the words "*randha*". Similarly, "*nggodhog wédang*", which denotes boiling water, is generalized into "put on a kettle of water," simplifying its cultural meaning. Throughout the song, the repetition of "*klinthang-klinthung*" is preserved, maintaining the rhythmic and stylistic features of Banyumasan folk songs even as many cultural elements are adapted for readability in English. "*Klinthang-klinthung*" is an onomatopoeic expression that imitates the sound of a cowbell or other livestock bells. This is why it is preserved in the song's translation. Its use is also contextually relevant to the following line, which describes the setting "at the animal market." Such sounds are naturally found in animal markets, where many merchants bring and sell their livestock.

The phrase *pasar kewan kidul gunung* ("the animal market south of the mountain") is translated as "at the animal market south of the mountain." Here, the addition of the preposition at clarifies the location where the sound occurs. This line is translated using a loan word for the onomatopoeia and translation by paraphrase using related words for the descriptive elements. In the second stanza, the onomatopoeia "*klinthang-klinthung*" appears again. However, in this context, it no longer refers to the sound of livestock bells, but to the sound produced by the *calung*. *Calung*, or sometimes called *angklung* [12], is a traditional Banyumasan musical instrument made of bamboo slats of varying lengths that produce different tones. It is played by striking the bamboo pieces and is commonly used to accompany traditional dances such as *lengger*.

3.3 Discussion

The differences in translating Banyumasan Javanese folk songs into English in the English versions of Ronggeng Dukuh Aruk and *Bekisar Merah* show different preferences from the translators and publishers. The Lontar Foundation publisher, which published the English version of *The Dancer* through René T.A. Lysloff, prefers a hybrid of foreignization and domestication in presenting the English translation. Folk songs, which complement the story of a dancer's life, music, and songs, are an integral part of this story and its translation. Therefore, presenting the original songs is an

attempt to justify the novel's main theme. In addition, because the Lontar Foundation is based in Indonesia, the first readers who had the easiest access to this translated book were Indonesians. Since the initial consumers were Indonesians who were assumed to be closer to the culture and source text, foreignization was also considered possible. While this foreignization provides a picture of the novel's original atmosphere depicted in the novel, it also shows how the music is used and how the original songs fit in the culture of *ronggeng* performances. After that, to provide access to readers outside the Banyumas culture, the domestication of this Banyumasan folk song is presented to explain its meaning further. Although the translation of the song has a different structure from the original, at least the meaning is conveyed. This is because songs, beyond being music and part of performances and culture, also reflect the identity and character of the culture, as well as the major theme of this novel.

On the other hand, the translation of folk songs in the English translation of *Bekisar Merah* employs a straightforward, blunt ideology of domestication. Considering that the theme of this novel is not about songs or art, this ideology is understandable, and the function of songs in this novel is to complement the setting that builds the atmosphere and imagination in the village where the novel is set. This atmosphere can be built with the meaning contained in the folk songs. Therefore, domestication can be one way or an ideology to convey it. However, this does not mean that the translation disregards the cultural identity in the novel *Bekisar Merah*'s cultural identity. In several other parts of the text, the translator also uses foreignization and loan words to represent Banyumasan culture through retained culture-specific items and provides glossing, such as in the sentence "Yes. You have to accept the village elders' verdict, and besides, you must pick the fruit of your toil. It is said that *suweng ireng digadhekna, wis kadhung mateng dikapakna*. Do you understand? Darsa shook his head." In addition, given that the publisher is based in the US, this translation is the publisher's choice to introduce Banyumas and Indonesian culture to a global audience through a hub outside Indonesia, and possibly with initial readers who are non-Indonesian and completely unfamiliar with the culture.

4 Conclusion

Translating Indonesian literary works into English is one way to introduce Indonesia's name and culture to the world. Of course, we want to show that Indonesian literature is also worthy of consideration and is not inferior to literary works in other countries. With its high diversity and variety of themes raised in Indonesian literature, translating these diverse works is certainly very good for cultural diplomacy. Indonesia has Ahmad Tohari, whose works contain social criticism, one of which is about the bitter life of a *ronggeng* dancer amid the cheers of the audience and music and songs, and another about the reality of a society that accepts destiny and women being treated as commodities, as well as other themes related to the culture and society of Banyumas. Of course, these themes and stories can resonate with people outside Indonesia and be accepted by readers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

I believe that both Lontar Foundation and Dalang Publishing share the same goal of promoting Indonesian culture to a global audience by presenting and translating Ahmad Tohari's works into English. Although different, each publisher justifies the novel's cultural content and identity in its own way. Lontar Publishing uses a hybrid of foreignization and domestication in translating folk songs in *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk*. In contrast, Dalang Publishing uses domestication to introduce one of the arts and cultural aspects of Banyumas in folk songs in the English translation of *The Red Bekisar*. With the market, base, and main hub in their marketing, the translation strategy is certainly adjusted and may very well be different. However, in the end, it is only the method of delivery that differs; ultimately, the goal remains the same: to introduce Indonesian literature and culture to the world stage, which is the goal of the Lontar Foundation and Dalang Publishing in translating Ahmad Tohari's masterpiece.

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