

INTERVIEW WITH A PONOROGO MAN WHO WAS FORMALLY A WAROK

I took my car (with Kedah driving) to Wonogiri, with a group of Nichiron Shoshu Buddhists whom I met through my religious activities as a Buddhist. Wonogiri is near the border of central and east Java, and is a headquarters for Nichiron Shoshu Buddhism in central Java. There were three men there at the meeting from Ponorogo, so on the advice of the Buddhists I went there to interview them.

One of them is a 67 year old man, who for many years fulfilled a warok role in Ponorogo. With him was a 62 year old man, whose son was formally a gemblakan when he was young. The third man was 30 years old, unmarried, but he is part of a sinoman which keeps a gemblakan now. They seemed ideal interviewees for different perspectives on gemblakan-keeping, so I was quite interested in talking with them. After talking with them for a long time, the ex-warok invited me to come stay at his house as a guest, and he would introduce me to other waroks. I asked them how they planned to return to Ponorogo, and he said by bus. I volunteered to drive them back there, and they gladly accepted. There were four men from Ponorogo, plus Kedah driving and me, packed into my car for the 3 hour trip through the mountains to Ponorogo. It was quite scenic on the way, with beautiful mountain vistas and lush rice terraces, so I did not mind the trip. They were pleasant and enjoyable to travel with.

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Kedah did the translating from Javanese. I learned in this interviewing that my American style of directness is too blunt for Javanese sensibilities, so Kedah did valuable service in couching my questions in polite language. It took a lot longer this way, but I am convinced that it is better. Even if I mastered the difficult Javanese language, I could easily offend people because I do not know all their cultural rules of politeness. So, later, even if I can learn to understand the language, I think it is a better process in interviews for me to use a native interpreter. So I can ask the question in English, and he can translate into a polite form of Javanese. It would be nice, however, if I could understand all the intricacies of their answers, since I feel that I am missing out on a good bit in the translation of their answer into English. That is just the limitation of trying to do cross-cultural research about several different societies. There are certainly advantages to the ethnographic approach of long-time intensive fieldwork in one village, but I think one can easily miss out on cross-cultural comparisons that way. I feel that my real strengths are in interviewing, so perhaps it is my most valuable role to pioneer in initial investigations of the cross-cultural study of sexual variance, using the knowledge I have gained from several different cultures, and then let other specialized ethnographers add to or revise my comparative findings.

WAROK

The ex-warok told me that a young man who wants to become a prospective warok follows the advice of his parents, to be spiritually powerful, wise, to learn to predict things in the future, and "to be perfect power." After the decline of the Modjopahit Kingdom in central-east Java in the 1500s, there arose a powerful man in the Ponorogo area who was "powerful, wise and had perfect powers." He was the first warok, and he handed down

this knowledge and tradition to the next generation, and it has been continued as a tradition in Ponorogo until today. There are waroks today, but they do not want to be called waroks, because of their modesty.

He said that waroks are good men. I asked in what ways were they good, and he answered:

Waroks did not permit people to go against what the ancestors said. Waroks were good men, and when the Dutch colonialists came the waroks led the fighting against the Dutch.

Waroks are good, because they follow the old teachings of respect for the ancestors' ways.

WAROK ASSISTANCE TO THE PEOPLE

The warok is not permitted to force the people. He should be kind to others. Waroks should give a good example to the people, and give good deeds to people. Waroks provide safety for the community, to protect people from thieves and other threats. If there is a quarrel between people in a village, they will come to the warok to settle the dispute. They will follow his advice, because he is so respected.

When I asked what would happen if a person did not follow the warok's advice, he replied that such a thing would not happen. When I said what if it did happen, he said the warok would kill the non-cooperative person, either with his kris (sword) or with his magical powers. So, all the people are afraid of the warok's power, but they also respect him for his magic and his good deeds.

WAROKS AND MARRIAGE

Some waroks are married, and others are not married, because being with a woman decreases his magical power. They get married because of the influence of Islam religion, and also the environment which promotes people generally to get married.

WAROKS AND GEMBLAKANS

Waroks generally did not like to have sex with girls; they loved gemblakan boys. If a man has a gemblakan, all the waroks can be one - they can be allied and united by sharing a gemblakan. If a boy from a village is kept as a gemblakan by a warok, that provides a great advantage for that village because the warok will then protect that village.

The warok also teaches his gemblakan topo (aesthetic meditation) and to do good deeds to help the people.

Up to 40 waroks will share one gemblakan. The gemblakan will stay with each man for several days, usually about a week, but it may vary a few days. The group agrees how much time each of them will get to keep the gemblakan at their house. If a warok wants to keep the gemblakan a few days over his time, then he must ask permission from the leader of the waroks. Actually, each member can spend more time with the gemblakan, because the group of waroks will often spend their free time together, so the gemblakan is always around them.

There is a maximum of three years to take a boy for a term as a gemblakan. A group of waroks or a sinoman buys a cow, which costs about 750.000 rupiehs [\$450 US] for a good cow. They also provide everything that the boy needs, good clothes, gold

necklaces, and make sure that he goes to school. Gemblakans start about age 13 [the youngest one he had ever seen was 12 years old], and they will usually go until about age 20. The oldest gemblakan he had ever heard of is age 25.

BENEFITS TO THE GEMBLAKAN'S PARENTS

The waroks who keep the boy will provide many benefits for the gemblakan's parents. The parents never have to work after that, because the waroks or sinoman members do everything for them, plowing their fields, planting, and harvesting. That is why there are so many waroks, so the work is evenly divided among them and not so burdensome for a few.

THIS WAROK'S PERSONAL LIFE HISTORY: GOOD VS. BAD WAROKS

"In 1933 I was sent to jail for thirteen years, for killing another warok whose magic was not so powerful. I did not know from where, but a voice came to me telling me I should kill this warok, because he was not a good warok and exploited his powers for evil. That warok would take things from people who had worked hard to accumulate possessions, and he would threaten to kill them if they did not give him anything he wanted. Everybody who had any money, that bad warok would take it, and he would also rape the wives of other men. He would get drunk, smoking marijuana cigarettes. He would smoke that poison, but he would not die, even though others who smoked it would die.

I cannot be killed by a knife. I have my magic to protect me, so I am not afraid. I have magical powers and know the science of magic. It is pusaka, a part of our heritage.

WAROKS SINCE 1960s

When there was fighting near Madiun in the 1960s, over the communists, many people were shot. But I did not get harmed by the army's bullets because my magic protected me.

In recent years, the government has taken a new attitude, and now unites waroks to follow Golkar [the current political party in power]. Now, the government uses me for security to protect people in my kampong. If the police have a problem, they will come to the warok for help. For example, if they want to catch a thief, they may ask the waroks for help. But sometimes if even the waroks cannot catch the thief, the government officials get angry with waroks, saying "You are not real waroks, only warokan" [ie: those who pretend to be warok, but who do not really have the power].

There is one warok who lives outside Ponorogo, who is the most powerful over all the other waroks today. He is 65 years old, but still very powerful.