

INTERVIEW WITH A GEMBLAKAN

in Sumoroto, about 10 kilometers outside Ponorogo city.

He is now 21 years old, and is a gemblakan for a sinoman in Sumorote. He has been a gemblakan since age 15.

He is very feminine, has longer hair in a more androgynous style, wears makeup and eyeliner, and has two silver teeth (this may have been done for cosmetic reasons rather than for problems with the tooth.)

BECOMING A GEMBLAKAN

I was born and raised in Sumoroto, but when I was 17 years old my parents moved to another kampong near Ponorogo. I considered myself no different from any other boy, and I did not have an identity as being different from the others in any way.

When I was 15 years old, I was working on the street, employed by the government in building roads. One day a man came up to me when I was working, and told me I was very good-looking. He told me that a group of men had hired him to look for a gemblakan for them, and he asked me if I would like to become a gemblakan. I told him to ask my parents, which was my way of telling him that if my parents consented it was all right with me. I liked the fact that he chose me, because I was handsome.

PARENTS OF GEMBLAKAN

When he asked my parents, they permitted me to become a gemblakan. They liked the idea, because everyone likes and respects a gemblakan. A gemblakan is treated better by people, because he is considered more refined and polite.

I was a gemblakan on two times, the first time to a sinoman. They paid my parents Rp. 80.000 [ie: about \$130 US dollars in 1981; today the cost has increased somewhat, reflecting the higher values of cows today] for a six month term. If they had taken me for the standard two-year term, they would have given my parents a cow, but they did not have that much money.

GEMBLAKAN RELATIONSHIP WITH SINOMAN MEMBERS

There were 45 young men in my sinoman, ages 17 to 28. I would stay two nights at each one's parents' house, sleeping with the member. Sinoman members would never have sex with each other, they were like brothers. I would never make love with more than one of them at once. I liked them all equally, so I did not mind moving around. I enjoyed being the gemblakan for them, and so they gave my parents a cow to rehire me for a full two-year term. They treated me very nicely, and would sometimes give me gifts: necklaces and rings, nice clothes.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

In all the years of my being a gemblakan, I have never gotten tired of the sex with the sinoman members. I like to get fucked, but I do not fuck the men. That is not permitted. I never suck their cocks, but some of the men like to suck mine.

After that two year term was finished, I went back to live with my parents, but I continued to make love with men. I is called

maeril, "a boy who is a lover of a man." The men would take me to stay with them for 2 or 3 days, but this time they would pay me instead of my parents. Later, another sinoman asked me to be their gemblakan, and I like them so I have been their gemblakan up to the present. I will probably stay as their gemblakan for another year or so.

#### SEX WITH WOMEN

I have never had sex with a woman, and have no desire to do so. But when I get older I will get married, and then I will stop having sex with men and only have sex with my wife. I do not consider myself different from other men, and do not think that my years as a gemblakan will influence my later life as a married man.

[WW asked if he wants a gemblakan himself, later on. He answered:]

I do not want a gemblakan, because I do not like to do the fucking; I only like to get fucked.

[WW asked if this would mean he would not like to fuck his wife, and he said that is different, that he was sure he would like fucking his wife.]

#### GEMBLAKANS AND LUDRUK THEATER

One month ago a man came to me and asked me if I would like to join a ludruk group. They always use gemblakans or former gemblakans, because we are good looking and have a good profile. The gemblakans play the female roles in the ludruk performances. I enjoy dressing as a woman and playing the female roles in ludruk, but at other times I dress as a male, though I will wear fancy embroidered shirts that people recognize as being worn by a gemblakan. I will stop playing ludruk after I get married. Then I will settle down and become a farmer, just like the other men.