

INTERVIEW WITH SINOMAN MEMBERS, in a village near Sumoroto, in the district of Ponorogo

I interviewed a warokan, a 38 year old married man (with 4 children), who is head of a sinoman, along with two unmarried sinoman members. One is a 30 year old bachelor who is a gentle man, and who could easily pass as gay in an American context. The other is a very handsome muscular and masculine 24 year old young man.

#### BORROWING A GEMBLAKAN

I interviewed their gemblakan yesterday, and I made arrangements with them to borrow him for a night. The proper offering I made to them was gifts of cartons of cigarettes, a meal for each of them, sarongs, and Rp. 20.000 [\$12 US dollars]. It seemed like an expensive encounter for me, but not out of line with the kind of expenses and labor requirements that they are required to do in order to keep a gemblakan.

The sinoman members not only have work to raise money to buy a cow for the parents of the boy, but they also must take responsibility to do labor for the parents (plowing their fields, and all kinds of farming duties) during the entire time they have the gemblakan. They all do this work together, which they feel increases their unity as a sinoman. So, gemblakan-keeping represents a large investment of their time and financial resources.

They feel that they get the benefits of the enjoyment of being with the gemblakan, plus the status they have as keepers (even the young men are addressed by the honored title "Pak", which literally means "father."). They also receive money and goods from other men who periodically borrow their gemblakan from them.

#### SEX WITH A GEMBLAKAN

The gemblakan slept with me in the house where I was staying, and the family that was my host did not seem at all disturbed by his presence sleeping with me. The woman of the house (mother of a sinoman member) carefully prepared a bed for us, and put up a little curtain to give us privacy (though I am sure they easily heard us when we were making love). The sinoman members seemed honored that I wanted their gemblakan. There was no indication of jealousy or resentment on their part, at giving him up for a night.

The gemblakan was very skillful in bed, and I followed his directions of what he wanted me to do, which was to lie on top of him facing each other and kiss him while I fucked him between his legs. He did not want to engage in oral or anal sex. He knew how to hold his legs just right, and arch his back, for maximizing my enjoyment. Nevertheless, he did not express the emotional closeness that I later saw him do with the sinoman members, whom he obviously was very fond of.

#### SEX WITH GEMBLAKAN

The two bachelors explained that they prefer sex with their gemblakan more than sex with a woman, though they have never had sex with a woman and will not do so until married. They like to fuck the gemblakan between his legs, and to suck his cock. They never exchange these roles, nor do they have sex with any other

male other than a gemblakan or a former gemblakan who is a ludruk performer. They explained that some ludruk actors will have sex with men, but others will not. They feel it is not proper to have sex with a boy, unless it has been cleared with his parents that he becomes a gemblakan. They never have sex with other members of their sinoman, and they never make love with their gemblakan except in privacy.

The sinoman members explained to me that the youngest age they know of a gemblakan is about 15 years old, and the oldest is 20. When I expressed surprise that their gemblakan is now 21, they explained that the "oldest age" means the age at which a boy can become a gemblakan, but if his group likes him a lot and he wants to continue, then they might keep him even up to the time he is 25 years old.

The head of the sinoman will keep the gemblakan with him at his house for 5 or 6 days at a time, and he sleeps with the gemblakan during that time rather than his wife. His wife does not mind at all that he has sex with the gmeblakan, but appreciates the status that gemblakan-keeping provides for her family. She and the gemblakan get along well, which would not be the case if her husband had sex with another woman.

#### FATHER OF A GEMBLAKAN

I asked this man if he would want his son to become a gemblakan. He said he would not, because he wants his son to go to school and get a good job. He would not want his son to be taken out of his village. But, he said, if a nearby neighbor whom he respects would ask him for his son as a gemblakan, and would promise to see that the boy goes to school, then he would feel that it would be all right. He had no objections to his son participating in sex with men. If his keeper would not make him work hard, but he could devote enough time to his education, then the father felt that the relationship would be good for the boy.

Later, I met another man, whose son was formerly a gemblakan when he was 12 to 14 years old. The son is now age 25, and happily married with one child. The father told me, "We were happy when our son became a gemblakan, because the men who kept him were respected friends in our same village. They were members of a sinoman, who gave us a cow and helped us do our farmwork. They gave our son nice clothes, and treated him well."

I asked him if, looking back on it, does he see any negative consequences of his son having been a gemblakan, and he said there was nothing bad at all that resulted from it.