

INTERVIEW WITH A PONOROGO WAROK

Pak R. Harijoto (age 85 but still looks vigorous)
Jl. Dieng 11 Ponorogo, Jawa Timur

WAROK means "a very brave man." A warok will always deny that he is a warok, because a warok is modest.

To become a warok, a man stays in a remote area for several days. He can ask to get the power from Allah, and Allah might grant him the ability to get the power, if he is a good man. A bad man is not a real warok. A real warok gets his power from Allah. But a warokan (a man who tries to be like a warok, but is not good enough) has to get his powers from a teacher. Anyone can become a warok, but if a man becomes one then he must expect that other men will try his power to see if he is really a warok.

Waroks do not feel pain. If a person really believes that things will not hurt him, he will not feel pain. Fire will not hurt him.

To illustrate this point, Pak Harijoto put a lighted match in his mouth, then he lit a cigarette and rubbed it on his arm and on his tongue. It did not leave any mark, nor did he show pain in any way. [I was not impressed by this very much, until he lightly rubbed the cigarette against the arm of my assistant Kedah. Kedah jumped from the pain of the heat, and soon a red whelp appeared on his arm, even though the cigarette had not touched his skin as much as it did Pak Harijoto's arm.]

My magic power can be of benefit to people. For example, there was a big rock buried in the middle of the street. The people thought it was too big for them to move, so I performed magic on it, and then when I directed them to dig it up, it turned out that it was not such a big rock after all. So, we could move it, and make the street smooth.

On another occasion, when I went to Jakarta there was a group of soldiers trying unsuccessfully to build a bridge. The iron span was just too heavy for them to lift. I was confident that I could move it by my magical power, so when I asked them if I could try, I was able to move it easily, just by the use of a small lever. I really believe that my power comes from Allah. I also get my power from my ancestors, who were very powerful descendants from the Modjopahit Kingdom.

I am a direct descendent from the Radjah (king) of the ancient Modjopahit Kingdom, in the 13th century. Ponorogo people were close to the Radjah. They were often soldiers of the Radjah. The first warok, named Suromenggolo, was such a soldier. Men from Ponorogo have since that time been noted as very brave, because they have no fear. It was men from Ponorogo who led the resistance against the Dutch, and their bravery is famous throughout Indonesia. Ponorogo means "eupakno Ragam" in Javanese language.

REYOG is the art form of the waroks. Reyog originated from a vision of a warok, and it has been associated with waroks since then.

WAROK AND GEMBLAKAN

A warok should not touch a woman, because that will make him sick. A warok can only marry later in his life, and he will do so only because he wants to have children. But having sex with a woman will decrease his power. He is not so powerful after having sex with a woman. A man may become a warok as early as age 18, but it is rare for a warok to have much power after he reaches age 50, especially after he marries.

A gemblakan is for making happiness. The boy wants to be with a handsome man, and the man wants to kiss and hug his beautiful boy.

DECLINE OF WAROK TODAY

Nowadays, the power of men is not as strong as formerly. It is because men have sex with women when they are still too young. If you want to live longer and be strong, it is better not to have sex too much. It is like a plant seed that is planted too early. It will not make for a strong child. It is better for a man to wait, before he makes a woman pregnant, after he has mature seed [ie: sperm].

Today there is not much warok power, because men are not so brave today. The Indonesian government nowadays enforces the law, and the government does not need or want waroks to do this job.