ANTHROPOS

106.2011: 379–396

New Village Temple in Witihama, Adonara, Indonesia

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Abstract. – This article considers several instances of the reconstruction of village temples in the Lamaholot speaking region of eastern Indonesia from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first, but it especially relates the building for the first time in over a century of the temple of Witihama, Adonara in 2000. The circumstances of its rebuilding are discussed in light of the current political fashion in Indonesia for the revival of tradition, but the article also surveys evidence for a long-term pattern in the region for allowing temples to deteriorate and lapse for extended periods before rebuilding. *[Indonesia, Adonara, village temple, revival of tradition]*

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In Indonesia in recent years there has been a revitalized interest in local traditions and ritual practices. Activities which once were frowned on by the government or even prohibited have been resumed piecemeal in many communities. Bubandt (2004: 16) has coined the phrase "new politics of tradition" for such developments, and I (Barnes 2005b) have spoken of "ritual resurgence" in respect of a reinvigorated village harvest ceremony in Kédang, Lembata, eastern Indonesia. The new politics of *adat*, which is another phrase that might be used, has begun to attract further scholarly attention. Recently, for example, Davidson and Henley (2007) have published an edited volume of articles on the topic called "The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics."[1] In this article, I would like to look at another very similar case on a nearby island. On August 30, 2000, the day after I arrived to begin a period of long term research in Witihama, Adonara, the opening ceremonies for the construction of a new village temple, *koke,* began.[2] The temple, I was assured,

1 There is a very considerable Indonesian language literature on *adat*, usually with a regional focus. There is also some discussion of the revival of adat or tradition. See, for example, Muhammad (2005: 100 f.), who speaks of a movement for the revitalization of traditions within the culture of *adat* starting in 1998, following the fall of Suharto. It is notable that the introduction to this book was written by Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

2 Strictly speaking the phrase "village temple" is a misnomer. The temple was intended to serve the whole of Witihama. Officially Witihama consists of 13 *desa* or government recognized villages. At the beginning of my visit, it was a subdistrict (*wakil kecamatan)*, but in 2001 it became a full fledged district (*kecamatan*). Its population in 2000 was 12,636. Its makeup in fact is semiurban and it contains a few small shops. Nevertheless, it has a history as a community and the pace of life is very much that of a rural, but not isolated, village. When I use village in this article, I am doing so in this not strictly accurate sense. There is, however, a historical continuity from the time when Witihama was a village in the conventional sense. The events described here actually took place in the modern *desa* of Oring Bele, which occupies the historical site of Witihama. Thus the "village clearing", *nama tukan*, is situated in the center of Oring Bele.

One sometimes hears, especially in local Malay, the form *korke*. Pampus (1999: 27) remarks that *korke* cannot be a genuine Lamaholot word because the *rk* combination does not otherwise occur in that language. In East Flores the word is pronounced *kokĕ*.

Members of Witihama speak a dialect of Lamaholot. Speakers of this language live in East Flores and also on the islands of Solor, Adonara, and most of Lembata. In 1990 the population of the East Flores Regency which included all

was being rebuilt for the first time in over a century. The occasion for rebuilding it was that the clan which regarded itself as responsible for building the temple had suffered too many deaths, a sign that the ancestors were dissatisfied. However, the motivation for constructing it can hardly be explained by these rather contingent circumstances alone.

Preliminary Considerations

Government attitudes toward local practices have been shifting and complex since the achievement of independence in 1949. Anything that smacked of "feudalism" was offense to the nationalist politicians of the young republic, who quickly took steps to remove hereditary rulers where they could. Later the development ideology of the Suharto regime emphasized national unity and discounted local particularisms (Schefold 1998: 276). From the foundations of the Republic, Sukarno's *pancasila* doctrine required belief in one God. In his discussion of "public religion," Intan (2006: 19) observes that, "The *Pancasila*-based state thus is a 'religious state' though it is not theocratic, or linked to a particular belief." To the surprise of some Muslim nationalist leaders, the explicit requirement of belief in one God caused no trouble for Christians, Hindus, or Buddhists. However, ritual practices derived from what might be called "traditional religion" were viewed by many as subservient to polytheism.

Another dimension of concern is the relation of religion, *agama*, to custom, *adat*. The Arabic word *adat* is ubiquitous in Indonesia for the local arrangements which define proper communal relationships and identity. What is demanded by *adat* and permitted by religion is often a matter of controversy and contention. Similarly what qualifies as *adat* and what changes in *adat* may be adopted may also occasion debate. Ritual practices handed down from the past are definitely regarded as *adat* and are commonly about communicating with the ancestors, but also with God. The ancestors are intermediate between living men and gods. The line between religion and custom is therefore ambiguous and shifting. It was once remarked to me that *adat* is first and religion second in Witihama. This person continued by observing that there is a lot of *adat* on Adonara, and *adat* is strong there. Religion and *adat*, he continued, are not the same. Religion without *adat* is not enough. *Adat* without religion is also not enough. I think that almost all Indonesians would agree with at least the last of these observations.

Having once observed to my host that blood sacrifice was not practiced in Lamalera, Lembata where it had been suppressed by the resident missionaries and where he and I shared experience as he was stationed there during a period of my own research, he replied that yes, *adat* is weak in Lamalera. The missionary H. van der Hulst tried to suppress sacrifice in Witihama too, but people refused to go along. I might remark in passing that my host is a (lay) pillar of the local Catholic Church and once studied to become a priest; yet he too commissioned a sacrifice during my stay.[3] Finally during a conversation in Jakarta between people derived from Adonara on one side and others from Kédang the point was made that *adat* is stronger than *agama*, because the sanctions for infractions are immediate. There was great pressure from the mission in the 1960s and later, so it was said, to get rid of *adat*, but there is now a resurgence.

These comments should not be understood to mean, on the other hand, that formal religion is undergoing a decline. Services in the church and mosque are well attended. In fact, attendance is regarded by most as an obligation. In addition there are numerous individual masses, retreats, and prayer sessions throughout the year. The conclusion may be justified that for the moment religion and *adat* have adjusted to each other. As far as Catholicism is concerned this reconciliation might be attributed in part to the fact that many priests now derive from local communities. To some extent also the movement within Catholicism toward what has been called "inculturation," the incorporation of aspects (such as dress occasionally) of local culture into religious activities, has had an influence.[4]

Comparative Context

It should be said that rebuilding the temple in Witihama does not represent a sudden innovation within the region. Lèuwayang, Kedang, built its long lapsed temple again in 1998. The village temple of Lĕwotala, Flores, was intact in the 1970s (see Fig. 1 and 2). It was subsequently burned down under mysterious circumstances, but eventually built again. In 2006 it was again renovated and attendant ceremonies celebrated. In 1970, the temple was adjacent

speakers of the Lamaholot and Kedang languages numbered only 266,405.

3 During my field research in Lamalera he was running the local polyclinic. By 2000 he had returned to his own village and was in charge of the polyclinic in nearby Honi Hama.

4 Luzbetak (1989); Shorter (1988); Barnes (1992).

Fig. 1: Village temple of Lewotala, Flores in 1970.

the dancing area, in the middle of which was located a pile of sacred stones, *nuba nara*. Surrounding the field was a stone wall, constituting seats for the elders. The ridge pole of the building represented a dragon, *naga*, or crocodile, *kobu wajaq*, with a head and open mouth at one end. From the side of the roof corresponding with the tail of this creature emerged a series of wooden spears along the edges of the slanting roof (see Fig. 3). A very large, head-high bamboo platform was situated inside the structure. The wooden beams were richly carved; above them there were six carved figures of falcons and humans.

In 1970, nearby Wailolong, Flores, no longer had a village temple, although there were clan temples. The village head, Petrus Pati Ritan, then told me that the "heathens" intended to rebuild the village temple soon, but that the Catholics were not permitted to help. Indeed the Dutch missionary Pater Jan Krol did tell us how hard he worked then to eliminate village temples. The village head explained that his clan owned an ancient sword. If they rebuilt the temple, as was their responsibility, the sword would cause them to go out to war every day. According to him the village of Kawa Liwu, Flores, farther to the north, had recently rebuilt its temple. Most villagers

Fig. 2: Nuba Nara and stone seats in the dancing area before the village temple, Lewotala, Flores, 1970.

Fig. 3: Wooden spears in the roof of the Lewotala Temple.

there had not converted by 1970, and its *adat* was strong. The Wailolong Temple was reported as having had no carving, but to have had spears emerging at both ends of the roof rather than only one as in Lewotala. Wailolong was not in its original site in 1970. However, a small building serving as a substitute for the village temple was to be found at the old site, located next to the old and overgrown dancing area. Also located there was a pile of *nuba nara.* A square of flat stones could be seen at this spot. Other flat stones were erected among them forming the back rests of seats for the elders. The seats were assigned the constituent clans, as indeed were the six posts of the temple. Wailolong, Flores, was moved again by 1982 following flash floods in 1979 which caused great damage in Wailolong and Leloba (see Fig. 4). In that year, the village constructed a new village temple, which today is still in good order.

Fig. 4: Temple of Wailolong, Flores in 1995.

In 1995, the village temple of Riang Kěmie, Flores, was being rebuilt when my wife and I visited in August. We were told that the temple should have its palm leaf roof replaced annually, but that they were then engaged in the early stages of a fundamental rebuilding. While they were building it, people had to stay up guarding it all night long every night and it was not permitted for anyone to hunt. For two days and nights previous to our visit two men had had to stay in the forest without food and water. That morning they had been greeted and brought into the village in a state of advanced thirst and hunger, before being allowed to go home and recover. The inner core of the structure was up, consisting in eight posts and various beams (see Fig. 5). All the posts but one had been painted with traditional patterns (see Fig. 6). When eventually completed, the building contained even more house posts, but the central eight are those that are important. The wood for the temple has been cut on either side of the village, except for that for one house post which was brought from Watowiti, Flores. On that occasion the whole village turned out. That post was carried back to Riang Kěmie on bamboo poles by eight men, while people danced.

The neglect and potential rebuilding of village temples thus is not a new phenomena, and no doubt has much to do with village politics. In 1928, the temple in Leloba, Flores, was no longer maintained and lacked a dancing area before it. Festivities were no longer held there (Vatter 1932: 93). The village temple in Balawelin, Solor, was then in good shape (Vatter 1932: photo 35/2, facing page 192), while

Fig. 5: Riang Kěmie Temple under construction 1995.

that in Lobetobi, Flores, had been abandoned (Vatter 1932: photo 26/2, facing page 145, page 153; see Fig. 7). The temple in Wailolong was then in better repair than that in neighboring Leloba, while that in Riang Kěmie together with its associated dancing area and stone seats was in good shape (see Vatter 1932: 97, photo 15/1, facing page 128; see Fig. 8).

From the above it may be seen that the place of the temple in village life varied from village to village and from period to period even from the earliest dates in which we have information about such structures. Nevertheless, typical features can be described. Most villages had a communal temple which occupied a dominant place in communal ritual life. Ideally it stood in the center of the village, often opposite the clan temple of the clan which claimed the status of lord of the land. The lord of the land was also lord of the temple, taking a leading role in its affairs (Vatter 1932: 93). Arndt (1951: 79) correctly states that if the temple is located outside the village, then it marks the former village site. Arndt (1951: 98) reported that in East Flores the village temple is male in relation to the female clan temple. The village temple was dedicated to Lera Wulan (Sun Moon), the male sky god or aspect of god, while the clan temple was dedicated to Tana Ekan, the female earth divinity which in Lamaholot usage complements Lera Wulan to form a whole. These associations may not be made in other parts of the Lamaholot language area.

The temple commonly had no walls, but was covered by a steep high roof resting on six or sometimes eight posts, united at the top by heavy cross-

Fig. 6: Decorations in Riang Kěmie Temple 1995.

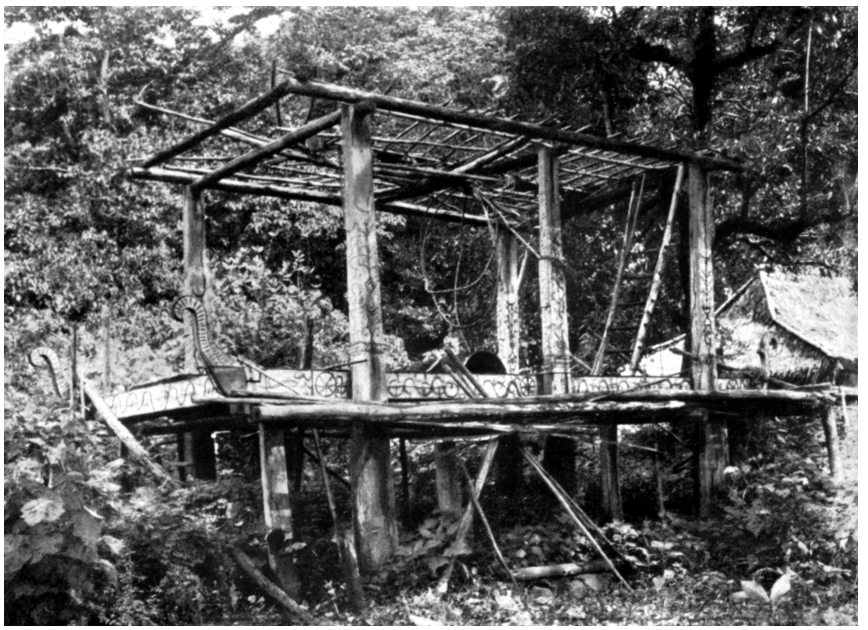

Fig. 7: Dilapidated Lobetobi Temple in 1928 (Vatter 1932: facing p. 145).

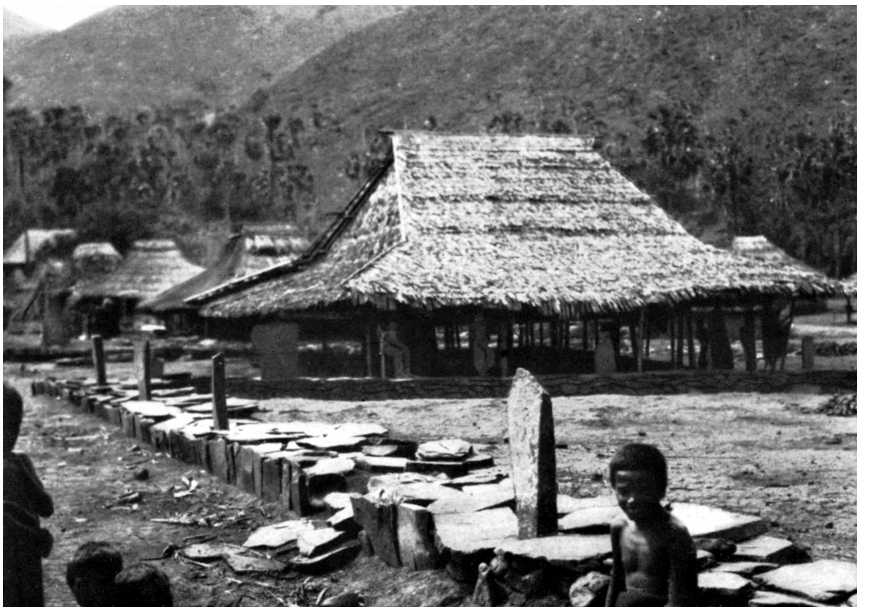

Fig. 8: Riang Kěmie Temple 1928 (Vatter 1932: facing p. 128).

beams. The roofing was often of grass, but in East Flores it was commonly palm leaves carefully threaded in strips on to bamboo slats.[5] Generally a broad bamboo platform lay within the temple. Carvings on the beams were commonplace.

Before the temple there is usually established a square (or occasionally round) dancing area, *nama*, often surrounded by a low stonewall of stacked, irregular flat stones held in place by a row of similar slabs set perpendicularly into the ground. In the midst of these stones might be erected upright monoliths about a meter high, placed in the wall by the clans which claimed to be indigenous. Additionally before the temple might be found a pile of stones or *nuba nara*, of religious importance. Arndt (1951: 94) was told in Lewotala that the *nuba nara* live and are men, women, and children and sometimes appear in human form. They had to be treated with respect, and they intermediated with Lera Wulan for whom they received sacrifices.

According to Vatter (1932: 93), when a village temple was repaired or newly built, the work had to

5 Heynen (1876: 88); ten Kate (1894: 241); Vatter (1932: 92).

be brought to completion by an extended festival. Without the festival and associated rites, the effort expended would be nothing more than patchwork and would not serve its purpose. The festivities accompanying a bit of mending might last a few days or up to a little over a week, but when the temple was newly built, four weeks would be taken up in dancing and various ceremonies. The dancing lasted from a little before sundown until a little after dawn each night of the four weeks. If a night were skipped, the village would suffer severe calamities. All neighboring villages were invited to take part, and every evening a different village danced.

The building of the temple was the affair of the whole village. According to Arndt (1951: 76), when the head of the village decided that the project was to begin, he called together the heads of the clans and made known to them that it was to be built and that the posts had to be felled. Arndt presents a good deal of detail concerning the offerings made to the spirits dwelling in the wood and the ceremonial treatment of the posts themselves. In East Flores during the actual building of the temple the village had to maintain complete silence. Once the building was roofed, the festival began, and a great deal of noise had to be made. The morning of the first day began with sacrifices of pigs and a goat. If the head failed to be struck off with the first blow, or if another mistake was committed, the whole village was terrified, and everyone again became rigorously silent (Arndt 1951: 76–93).

In Lekung, Flores, Arndt was told that a new temple requires a human death, normally that of someone captured from an enemy village. Only the head was returned to the village to be placed under the main post of the temple (Arndt 1951: 79). In Kawa Liwu, Arndt heard that if a dowel does not fit into its hole during the construction of the temple, then they would take a head from the enemy Paji people (in this case those living in the villages of the northern portion of Flores Cape).[6] They would then bring the head back to the village and rub its blood on the offending dowel, which would then fit (Arndt 1938: 22). On 20 October 1879 villagers from Lewotala, Flores, killed two people from the Paji region in Tanjung Bunga as a sin-offering for the angry spirits because of faulty preparation of a beam for their temple, which they were rebuilding (Barnes 2009: 46 f.). In 1890 the Catholic Raja of Larantuka, Flores, Don Lorenzo Usi Diaz Vieira Godinho managed to deflect the criticism of the Resident of Timor and Dependencies, W. C. Hoogkamer, who was investigating why he neglected to rebuild the temple of the realm of Larantuka, by telling him that were he to permit the building of the temple he would have to order people to go headhunting in a different region and to take two or three heads to be brought back and placed before him in the *nama*. Only after the Raja had stepped on the heads could the temple be put up (Diaz Vieira n. d., Heslinga 1891: 83). The Jesuit priests then active on Flores often called these temples "devil's houses" (*rumah seitan*), which is not the indigenous interpretation (Steenbrink 2003: 122). Although unfortunately people are very occasionally decapitated in the region, the taking of heads no longer has any part, so far as I know, in temple affairs. Naturally these practices have long since been declared illegal.

Building the Witihama Temple

The opening festivities in 2000 for the Witihama Temple were well attended. There was even a television film crew present from Kupang, Timor. By noon there were over three thousand men sitting under multicolored plastic awnings and as many women again around and about. Among the dignitaries present was the District Head (*camat*) and his assistant. Earlier in the day, a small ceremony, which I missed, had been held to offer palm wine to the ancestors to inform them that the temple was to be built. Eventually the festive meal was served. This meal could only consist of rice and fish, that is no meat, which could be consumed only after the two days when the first animals would be sacrificed, permitting further sacrifices to take place. I had to return to the capital of the Regency, Larantuka, Flores, to clear my papers, and during my brief absence the construction of the temple was completed (see Fig. 9).

Building Witihama's new temple mobilized a large contingent of people and resources from eastern Adonara and beyond. A ritual expert from the clan Suku Doleng of the Muslim village Lamahala on the south coast of Adonara came to strike the first blow permitting construction to begin. This service was his responsibility because an ancestor named Nara Kakan had performed the ceremony when the very first such temple was built. Once the first blow had been struck, work began on preparing the six house posts soon to be erected.

6 Anyone who writes about the ethnography of those people who speak Lamaholot will have to confront the division between the Demon and Paji, but he is unlikely to have any substantial new information to offer to supplement that recorded long ago by Arndt (1938) and Vatter (1932) and some of the other early writers. The division, although still well known, no longer figures much in daily affairs. A few remarks on the subject may be found in Barnes (2005a: 5 f.).

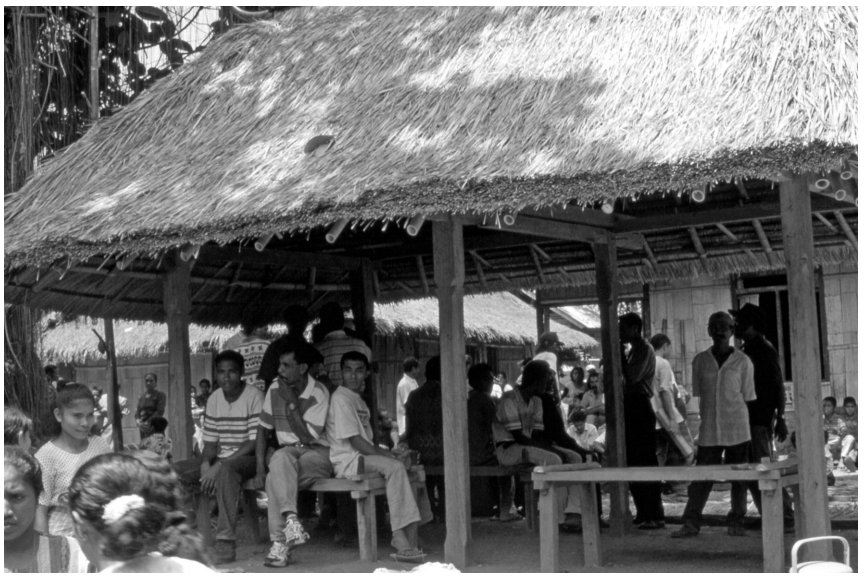

Fig. 9: Witihama *koke* showing platforms (2000).

On September 2nd, the first sacrifices were performed. I was told that they would consist of a goat and a pig, even though those who were taking the leading role in organizing the building of the temple were Muslims. *Adat* (customary law) required them to do so. In fact the person who was in charge of arranging and distributing the meat (including pig meat) is a Muslim, but, as I was told, he does not mind. It was anticipated that if the goat's head was severed with one blow, people would be happy and that there would be dancing until daylight.

It was expected that the Regent (*bupati*) of Flores Timur would attend this phase of the ceremonies, but news came through eventually that a war had broken out between the villages of Lĕwo Keda and Lĕwo Kelen on the south side of the Boleng volcano, thus on the opposite side of the mountain from Witihama, and the Regent's attentions were diverted to that matter. Following a noon meal, in the mid-afternoon the formalities finally began. After some announcements, a pig and a white goat were brought into the clearing in front of the mosque. Eventually the men who were to perform the sacrifices arrived with their swords.[7] These were the first sacrifices, *bĕrekã*,[8] which would allow later sacrifices to take place. The man who was to sacrifice the goat struck first. The sacrificer of the pig struck almost at the same time. The sword bounced off the goat's horn, just causing some pain.

The pig's head was cut almost all the way through, being held on only by some neck fat, which they quickly cut through. The principals quickly withdrew to deliberate. Something was wrong. The crowd was obviously disappointed and very subdued. A native priest brought some pellets of cotton and rubbed them on the neck hair of the goat. One pellet he dropped to the ground, another stayed on the goat's neck as it was led away. Then they brought in a larger black goat. This goat was successfully sacrificed, immediately giving rise to a wild, spontaneous joyful riot, which raised a great cloud of dust. When this excitement settled down, the animal heads were taken down and hung on a bamboo pole between the temple and an adjacent banyan. Then war dances, *hamang,* with shields and swords and other implements began. Among those who led off in the dancing were the District Head, various clerks, a Balinese policeman, school teachers, the principal organizer Haji Muktar Lĕbu Raya Kein, also known as Haji Muktar Kelake Kei, and the locally resident Catholic priest, Romo Zakarias Beni, who derives from the neighboring Lewotolok region of Lembata. All were dressed in traditional local clothing, carried swords which they waved about, and all looked very fierce. Eventually they retired and others, including women, joined in. The participants, including the dignitaries, were appropriately dressed for the war dance and performed in a most convincing manner. After that the circle dancing began, which did indeed go on all night.

The feast took place the next day following a small ceremony at the *nuba nara* near the temple (see Fig. 10). People began assembling in the village clearing, *nama tukã,* in the early afternoon. Six

7 Suban Bura of the Baleq Papan section of Lama Tokan clan sacrificed the goat, while Suku Bahon, of a section which my source could not specify, sacrificed the pig.

8 Neither Arndt (1937) nor Pampus (1999) have this word, and those I spoke to about it were uncertain of its root.

Fig. 10: Offering to ancestors before the *koke* (Haji Muktar Lĕbu Raya Kein in dark blue cap) (2000).

Fig. 11: Preparing cooked meat for distribution (2000).

horses, five goats, and nine pigs had been slaughtered for the feast and the meat cut up and cooked by this time. The meat was then laid out on woven leaf mats in the middle of the clearing (see Fig. 11). The horses and goats were slaughtered, cooked and the meat distributed strictly apart from the pigs. The very large crowd in attendance consisted almost entirely of Muslims and Catholics, with the single exception of the Hindu Balinese policeman. Following local practice, the Muslims sat separately from the Catholics. This convention is entirely due to Muslim dietary restrictions and would not have been observed in a context in which no pig meat was present. In all other respects Muslims and Catholics socialize without restriction at such festivities, as indeed they did on this occasion before they had to take their seats for the meal. The men again were seated under large awnings, and the women served (see Fig. 12). Once seated the men waited while each plate was filled with three pieces of meat or, in the case of pig, fat, which took a long time because even though only men were served, there were thousands of plates. There was anxiety that they would run out of meat before all plates were filled, since they may not kill and cook another animal, as was explained to me by a Muslim school teacher who stopped off to talk to us before going to sit with the *kaki panjang* (long legged) group, that is, those who were to eat horse and goat meat. In fact, many plates were put out where no one sat, and these too were filled. In addition to meat, every plate was accompanied by a bowl of broth and a mug of water. On this occasion I sat with the *kaki pendek* (short legged) group, that is the Catholics who were to eat

Fig. 12: Men awaiting the meal to be served under awnings (2000).

Fig. 13: Plates containing pig fat (2000).

pig meat. Eventually for our group a piece of real meat was added to every plate to go with the thick pieces of pig fat (see Fig. 13).

Once the meat was distributed the women brought on plates of rice and saucers of sambal. When finally everyone was served, the signal was given to start eating. The men tucked in with enthusiasm. I noticed that they ate the rice and meat, but that most left the fat alone. As we were eating our rice, the women refilled our plates several times (red and white rice), so that when we finished, everyone had more rice on his plate than when he started. The women then quickly gathered up the plates, meat and rice, and before long we were ordered to get up so they could clear the tables. Then dancing started.

The women took the uneaten food home for consumption in the family, each family having in any case, as is usual, contributed the rice put in the plates of their own relatives. The pig meat and fat reappeared on our supper table that evening finely rendered down and fried with a tamarind sauce. I later commented to an acquaintance that I could not have contemplated eating the pig fat at the feast, and he replied that it was already rancid, and that in any event people took it home and cooked it again before eating it.

Following the feast, I left with a member of Lamablawa clan and joined a group from this clan who were sitting in a front yard drinking palm wine and arak. The Catholic priest Romo Zakarias was among them, and he and the others were indulging in great hilarity over the war dances the day before in which the priest and so many other dignitaries participated. The incongruity seemed to be the basis of their laughter. The conversation was carried on in Lamaholot as spoken in Witihama and beyond my capacity to follow.

A few days later Haji Muktar gave me his explanation of the failure to sacrifice the white goat. The person in charge of organizing the performance of the rituals concerning the construction of the temple was Alias Tupen Bahi. He was then the village head of Weranggere, a constituent of Witihama. He is a close associate of Haji Muktar and an expert in ritual connected to warfare and killing, *ata mua mea*.[9] He is also one of the busiest men in Witihama. I never had an opportunity to speak to him, simply because he never had any free time. Alias Tupen dreamed on three different nights before the sacrifice that he tried to sacrifice a red goat, which would

9 *Ata mua* translates in Indonesian as *dukun*. *Mua* is etymologically obscure in this meaning. Neither Pampus (1999) nor Arndt (1937) have it. In English *ata mua* might be translated as "medicine man, witch doctor, shaman, priest, ritual practitioner, adept," meanings which are normally associated with *ata molan*. The attempts to distinguish the meanings of *ata mua* and *ata molan* made by those I spoke to about it were unsuccessful and mutually contradictory. They insisted, however, that the two terms are distinct.

not stand still, and that he would need to sacrifice a black goat to be successful. The elders, including Haji Muktar, held a meeting to consider these dreams. Haji Muktar, as he told me, did not want to substitute a black goat because he had already bought the white goat (which in our conversation he persisted in calling red) and because the ancestors had already entered it. On the other nights other experts also dreamed that a black goat was required. Not only Alias Tupen, but many other experts said that it must be a black goat, but Haji Muktar insisted on using the white goat. In the event, the attempt to sacrifice the white (red) goat failed. I have this event on film, and it is clear that the goat moved its head just as the blow was to fall; so that I do not think the sacrificer intentionally pulled his blow. He seems to have hit a horn, although at least according to some opinion he struck the neck and not a horn. The goat was *kebal*, i.e., immune. The sacrifice of the black goat was, of course, successful. Haji Muktar and his son said that there was one good thing about the course of events. If the head of the first goat had been severed, people would have grabbed it and run all around the village with it, and then something (unpleasant) would inevitably have happened.

I asked the Haji what was the occasion for rebuilding the *korke*, and when had it last been built. He said that he had rebuilt the *korke* because there had been too many deaths in Witihama, the same reason others offered in subsequent conversations. He was not sure how long it has been since the *koke* has been rebuilt, nor did his father know. He and his father had watched it gradually disintegrate. However, he was sure that it had been more than 100 years. By the year 2000 all that remained of the previous building was a single house post, which they eventually stored in the new temple next to the "right house post," *rie hikun lima wana*, the post which in local culture is where ceremonies are conducted.

The clans Riang Hepat, Tukan Lapa, and Bahé provided the building materials for the new temple. The Kole section of Lamablawa clan provided the cords to tie the roofing and the bamboo for the roofing. Haji Muktar gave the sedge grass to Lamablawa Kole so that Alias Tupen, who was overseeing the construction, could tie it first, and then leave the bulk of the work to the members of this section and others.

Haji Muktar subsequently explained the iconography of the *koke*. At the top of the roof is a (bamboo) crocodile, *kobu*, with its head toward the Boleng mountain. Underneath it at each end emerges an elephant tusk (in fact made of wood). Piercing the roof from side to side are seven pieces of wood. Four of these represent spears. Alternating with them are three sacrificial knives, with ends in the shape of rifles (see Fig. 14). All of these are of general reference, and none is associated with particular groups. The old house post is now stored at the *rie hikun lima wana*, right house post, which is near the banyan adjacent the temple, on the right side as you face the banyan from within the *koke*. The temple is located between the banyan and, at a great distance, the mountain. At the four corners are four decorated pieces of abstract design called *sarpuji* representing *naga*, dragons (see Figs. 15 and 16). Haji Lĕbu did not know the meaning of the word *sarpuji*.

On the roof ridge is a boat which represents the vessel called "Budi Baeq," or in Indonesian "Budi Baik," a phrase with rather broad implications which might be translated "good intentions" or "good behavior." Budi Baeq was the *kora kora* or war ship

Fig. 14: *Koke* roof ridge with boat, spears, and field knives (2000).

Fig. 15: *Koke* roof detail showing *sarpuji*. Adjacent the temple stands the bamboo with seven branches (2000).

Fig. 16: *Koke* roof detail showing elephant tusk emerging and *sarpuji* (2000).

which brought the ancestors of Haji Lĕbu's clan, Lama Tokan Seran Goran, to Adonara from the Moluccas. Three upright pieces of bamboo are mounted on this boat and represent three related groups. The one in the center is his group (Goran Tokan). The one on the left (north) represents Goran Tokan Lali Baleq Papan, that on the right Lama Tokan Kowa Bala. Underneath the *koke* are four small bamboo platforms, the frames of three of which are made of wood, the other of bamboo. The bamboo platform is just for sitting on. The other three are for the ancestral spirits of the three allied groups. The one on the right side facing the mountain and nearest the mountain is for Lama Tokan Goran Tokan. The other one on that side is for Lama Tokan Kowa Bala. The third, on the left side and near the banyan (and the *rie hikun lima wana*) is for Goran Tokan Baleq Papan. On the right corner, if facing the mountain (that is to the south) on the mountain side of the platform for Goran Tokan, they must burn resin torches every night. They had left several remnant torches standing in the dirt near that post. The structure contains six house posts. Also on that platform were several small lontar leaf plates for feeding the ancestors.

There are three important features of village ritual structure: *koke baleq* (*oring*), *nuba nara*, and *nobo rorok* (seat). *Koke* and *baleq* are tightly paired, but *koke* is the temple, which has been described. *Baleq* is a similar structure, intended primarily as a meeting house. They are *oring*, huts, located at *oring belĕq*, the great building, also the name of this official village. They are adjacent to the *nama tukan*, or village clearing and dancing

Fig. 17: Haji Muktar Lĕbu Raya Kein and others conducting ceremony to inform the ancestors at the banyan near the *koke*, showing *nuba nara.*

area. As in East Flores, *nuba nara* are sacred stones, such as those kept in a pile at the base of the banyan adjacent to the *koke* (see Fig. 17). *Nobo rorok* are stones on which elders sit during their deliberations.

The expenses of constructing the new temple were met by contributions of more than Rp 9,000,000, or over US$ 1,000 at the exchange rate current then, contributed by members of the Seran Goran descent group resident in Witihama, Waiwerang, Larantuka, Kupang, Sabah, Jakarta, Jambi, and even Malaysia. Two months later Rp 3,400,000 or about US$ 400 remained, which was invested in a new *balai pertemuan*, village meeting house, near the mosque, a large modern brick building. According to Haji Muktar this structure serves the needs of the whole of Witihama, although some members of other clans who had been asked to contribute to help cover its costs were doubtful whether is was just for Seran Goran's use. In any case it served a principal purpose of the traditional *baleq*. However, apparently it was not deemed suitable for the ritual functions of that building. By August, 2002, when I visited again, a new *baleq* had been erected directly opposite the mosque and thus reasonably close to the *koke*. It is a small building, with similar decorations.

The new *baleq* serves as the ritual completion of the *koke*. Like the *koke* it is a grass roofed bamboo building, but is smaller. Emerging from the grass roof on either end toward the bottom are two decorated curved pieces of wood or *sarpuji*, which in the temple in 2001 Haji Lĕbu had described as dragons. In 2002 he said that they are symbols of greatness (*lambang kebesaran*). The roof ridge of bamboo is completed on the side of the Ile Boleng mountain with a carved mouth symbolizing that of a crocodile. Above that is another bamboo pole into either end of which are inserted tapering bits of carved wood. These again are symbols of elephant tusks. Sticking through the top bamboo, as in the *koke*, are red painted pieces of wood representing rifles and spears. In the middle, on top of the top bamboo, is a carved boat, again as on the *koke*, representing Budi Baeq, the ship that brought his ancestors from Goran. The three masts represent, in this order from the Boleng side (see Figs. 18, 19, and 20):

1. Goran Tokan Baleq Papan
2. Goran Tokan (Haji Lĕbu's section)
3. Lama Tokan Ile Lodo Hau.

It should be noted that although the *koke* and *baleq* face opposite directions, the roof ridge in both buildings points toward Boleng volcano.

Unlike the *koke,* the *baleq* is enclosed. It consists in only two rooms of equal size. The first on the Boleng side is the *madaq* and is only for men. Against the back wall is a small platform for ceremonies. It is in the same position relative to the building and mountain as the same platform in the *koke*. The second room is the *lewo hérin* exclusively for women. *Herin* (the same as Kedang *hering*), means "put down" or "serve," thus the function of women in most, but not all, types of ceremony. The translation someone offered as "kitchen" is only generally accurate. What is meant obviously is that this is the place where the women prepare the food for serving. Originally (and elsewhere still) food was prepared in the *baleq*. This tiny building could never serve the original function (retained in other villages) as the place for public gatherings and feasting, which has now been hived off to the new *balai pertemuan*. Each of the rooms has a sliding door on the

Fig. 18: New *baleq* Witihama, Adonara (2002).

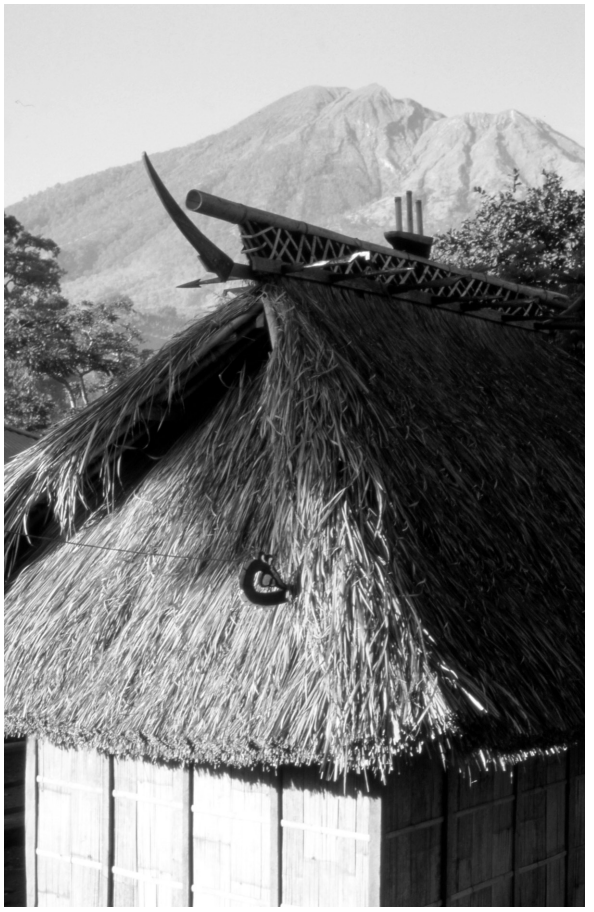

Fig.19: New *baleq* Witihama, Adonara (2002).

side facing the door. Haji Lĕbu said that the ceremony for the *baleq* was even more well attended than that for the *koke*.

Also erected in my absence was a very small, grass roofed structure on bamboo posts in the nearby village of Lamablawa adjacent to the seven *nobo* or stone seats of Lama Tokan Seran Goran (see Fig. 21). These irregularly placed stones were where members of this descent group sat in the past when they considered such matters as warfare. This little structure Haji Lĕbu called an *ĕpu* (normally a hut in the fields associated with palm tapping), although others spoke of it as an *oring tĕnibang*, that is to say a "field hut for weighing" possible courses of action. In the past war plans were made here. If they decided to go to war, Haji Lĕbu said, they went from here to his own house and then to the *koke*.

These three buildings were put up to the glory of Haji Lĕbu's Goran Tokan group, but he insisted that they were for all thirteen *desa* of Witihama. In fact, the erection of the new temple was not at all free from contention, not about the relative role of custom and religion in Witihama life, but about the standing of two descent groups, both of whom shared the common designation Lama Tokan. Goran Tokan is locked in competition with Lama Tokan Kowa Bala, also known as Lama Tokan Ile Lodo Hau. Already in the 1930s, the missionary Paul Arndt (1940: 149) encountered this dispute. He remarked that the descent group which claims to have originated in Seran and Goran had adopted the name of the second, and earlier established, descent group and had managed to acquire approximately the same rights. "They still fight with each

Fig. 20: Haji Muktar Lĕbu Raya Kein explaining the iconography of the *baleq* to the author (2002).

other about who actually has higher status." Whereas Kowa Bala claims to be truly autochthonous descendants of a brother and sister who emerged from the top of the Boleng volcano, members of other descent groups, while acknowledging their claim to being the first inhabitants, insist that they descend from an ancestor who arrived from outside (Barnes 2004b: 37 f.; 2004a: 35; 2007: 16).

The Seran Goran account of the founding of Witihama runs as follows. An ancestor named Jou Boli was invited to settle at Tana Oloq in the nearby village of Hinga by the ancestors of Kowa Bala. His grandson Arakiã Belolo later served as war leader in a war at the nearby village of Lewopulo, but died in battle. Arakiã Belolo was immune to iron weapons, but Galaq, an enemy soldier from Lamakera, Solor, stabbed him with a bamboo spear. Arakiã Belolo's younger brother Ola Bebe later moved to the present site of Oring Bele, which was then called Kapĕk One (In the Cotton). He and his group brought their *nuba nara* with them from Hinga and planted them at the present site. For this purpose they called *ata mua* from Suku Doleng, Lamahala. An *ata mua* named Nara Kakan came to perform the ceremony of placing the *nuba nara*. When they were looking for a proper location, Ata Mua Baraq Suba Raya pointed out a place and said "*di wite di hama*," as is the usage in Lamahala, or in Witihama dialect, "*di sini di sama"* (here is just as good), from which the corrupted form Witihama comes. Thus the name Witihama has nothing to do with a goat, as it might appear and as people from Adonara sometimes think. Otherwise *witi* means "goat" and *witi hama* might be translated erroneously as "same goat." Ola Bebe moved to Witihama, but his descent group previously had been given power in Tana Oloq. Thus Kowa Bala has no powers here and has already given up their power in Tana Oloq. They have no proper claim to be lords of the land, *tuan tanah*, and their claims to have originated in Witihama are false. Seran Goran regards itself as the rightful lords of the land. The priest Baraq Suba Raya of Lamahala married Deran Duli, the sister of Ola Bebe's grandson Lebu Raya. Lebu Raya was Haji Muktar's great-grandfather and namesake.

Kowa Bala does not agree at all with this account of their relative positions and their disagreement figured in the events around the erection of the temple. They refused to take part in any way, although they were certainly invited to do so. One observer, belonging to neither descent group, commented that had the attempt to sacrifice the first goat been successful Kowa Bala would have disappeared. A member of Kowa Bala once let himself out at some length while we were with a group harvesting rice. He felt that Haji Muktar had infringed on the responsibilities of Kowa Bala. He should have first gone to the home of the responsible person in Kowa Bala to initiate discussions and then after reaching an agreement returned to report the plans to the community. Since he did not do so, Kowa Bala was unwilling to take part. A friend later commented to me that these views implied that the relevant member of Kowa Bala had in fact at first agreed to participate, but that younger members of the descent group opposed doing so because they were afraid that Seran Goran would take over their rights. He therefore began to procrastinate, demanding that

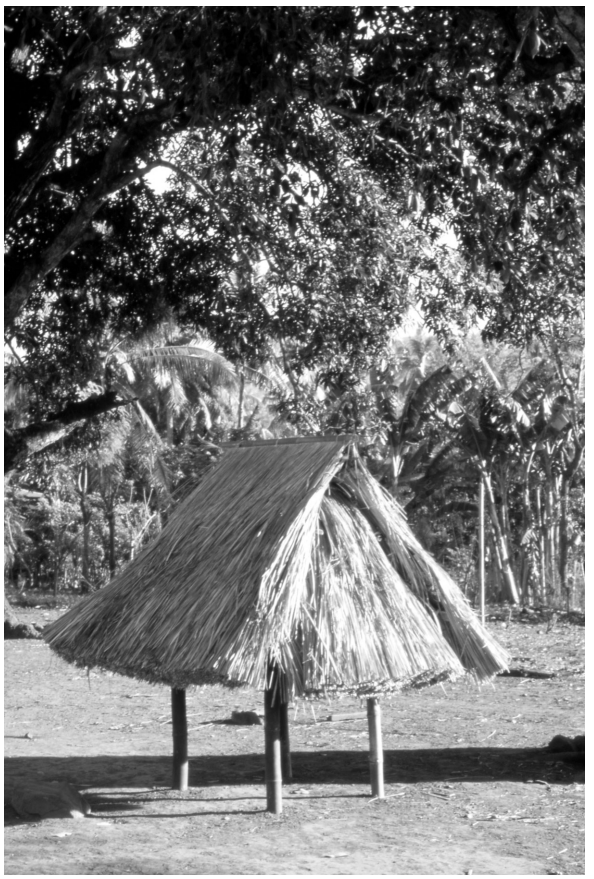

Fig. 21: New *ĕpu* or *oring tĕnibang* (2002).

they wait until Kowa Bala had made its preparations, which in fact Kowa Bala did not bother to do. Nevertheless the person from Kowa Bala I was speaking to insisted that only one goat could be sacrificed, never two. The reason, in his opinion, that the first attempt failed was because of this violation of custom. The observer mentioned above holds the view that the second goat, which was successfully sacrificed, had been brought in merely to make everyone feel good, but that two goats may not be used.[10] I suppose that most of the principals, as is usual, were prepared to wait and see if the consequences would be adverse.

Some Key Concepts

Anyone who acquires familiarity with the culture of the population speaking Lamaholot will be impressed with its variety. Nevertheless, as evident already in the publications of Vatter and Arndt, there is a range of common themes which provide some coherence to this variety. In respect of the village temple, I will mention speech or history, *koda*, the bamboo ladder to heaven *ekē*, the right house post, *rié hikun lima wana*, and the stone, *nuba nara*.

Apart from simply meaning "speech" or "conversation" *koda kirī* can also mean "advice" or "incantation." *Koda* is also something that ritual experts possess and display. Above all, *koda* may mean "history." The eccentric Catholic priest Stevanus Kopong Keda Lamahoda (n. d.) writes that *koda* is the source of the mystic power *ikeq kewaqat*.[11] The *koke* and *baleq* through their connection to *nuba nara* are a source of *ikeq kewaqat*. *Ekē* are in general bamboo ladders, such as those used in East Flores to climb palm trees, but on Adonara they are usually not functional in that sense. They are found for ceremonial purposes in a variety of places, including palm taping huts. These are essentially spirit ladders. They are always cut so that seven branches extend to the sides, at least when they are used for specifically ceremonial purposes. From the branches palm wine containers and the jaw bones of sacrificial animals may be suspended. The expression for the seven branches is *ekē matã pito*, which was glossed for me as implying an extremely great height. It represents the path to the sky and is opposed to *wato periq gerĕ*, the stone placed below the *ekē*. Near *ekē*, *nobo*, or seats for communicating with the ancestors, may be located.

As in East Flores, in Witihama *nuba nara* are piles of fairly small stones. The principal meaning of "holy stone" is primarily borne by *nuba*. Speakers of Lamaholot generally interpret *nara* in this phrase as meaning "people." *Nara* by itself often mean "help troops." Haji Muktar said of the *nuba nara* near the temple that they were "children here." *Nuba nara* require attention and should be cleaned on the first night of the new moon. Clans without *nuba nara* are mere passengers and must seek the protection of an important person. When clans

10 Haji Muktar can hardly be disguised, and his views are generally well known. Given the friction, I would prefer not to name the others, although their names are in fact known to me.

11 Father Stevanus Kopong Keda Lamahoda is one of several people I never met and whose funeral (on February 27, 2001) I attended in Witihama, not so much out of anthropological interest, but as a social obligation. A former member of the Divine Word Society, he was keenly interested in accommodating the Gospels to local culture. One reflective observer commented to me that he was too radical, too much ahead of his time. He thought all of the thoughts about inculturation long before Vatican II. The same observer also thought that some of his suggestions were impractical. I should like to thank Frans X. Siola Kebauwolo for making the writing of this interesting person available to me.

move, they generally take their *nuba nara* with them. They may not be given permission to place them on the ground in their new place of residence, however, and must then hang them up. On occasions clans may be invited in and given permission to rest their stones on the ground. It sometime happens that an incoming clan will move only some of their *nuba nara*, leaving others at their former place of habitation. Ceremonies may *pau nuba*, that is through sacrifice give food to the ancestors. Lamahoda (n. d.) associates *nuba nara* primarily with the mountain, regarded as the source of life, and with the worship of Lera Wulan and Tana Ekan, i.e., God. He says that all clans that have *koda*, i.e., history, strive to erect *nuba*.

The peak of the mountain symbolizes the power of life, so that clans tried to maintain or create a history of origin from the peak of the mountain, and those who could not maintain a history of this kind because history proved too clearly their arrival later, maintained their position with an act of entering into a clan from the top of the mountain or through clans which derived from the mountain surrendering power.

Incidents of this kind are not uncommon, but as we have seen controversy may arise as to whether any such process has taken place.

Further Considerations

Rouffaer found that on Adonara the village temples were not kept up, but allowed to become dilapidated. Once they had disintegrated, there might be a great feast and the rebuilding of a new temple. The *balé* was given better care. The long neglect of a temple before its eventual rebuilding may be an established pattern, independent of political fashions and holding over centuries (Rouffaer 1909–1911: 55 f.; Barnes 2009: 39). It is remarkable that in every case known to me where the temple has recently been rebuilt, there has been no doubt about how to do it and no difficulty in making it an expression of local culture. Nevertheless, today such activities are taking place in a larger political context. Indonesians are actively reversing the trends of the early Suharto years and are being encouraged to do so by politicians. What in the 1970s was devalued is being revalued at present, and this process is taking place across the nation.

Following independence, the primary concern of politicians was the establishment of a unified nation. The diversity and cultural particularities of the many different language groups were generally regarded as obstacles to modernization, development, and national unity – something rather to be ashamed of than valued. Anything that struck the nationalists as remnants of feudalism was to be done away with. That there is now a widespread interest in restoring much of local tradition may be taken as a sign of confidence that nation building has been a success and that what is taken to be traditional can exist in harmony with the modern.

The information concerning Witihama in this article derives from research conducted between August 2000 and September 2001. That research was supported by grants from the British Academy, the Committee for South East Asian Studies of the British Academy, and the Oppenheimer Fund. The research was carried out under the auspices of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences.

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