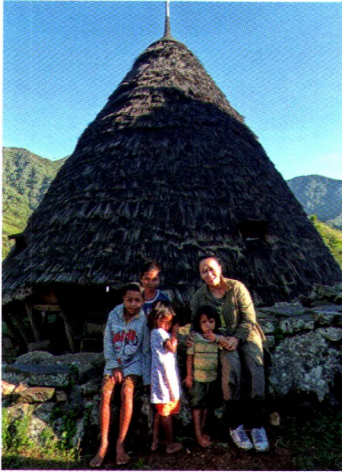




SPECIAL EDITION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

Indonesia's Hidden Heritage

Cultural Journeys of Discovery



INTRODUCTION

Across the world's greatest archipelago lie lands of outstanding beauty, seas of such clarity that can hardly be believed, raging rivers that weave tortuous routes through deep green forests, and an astonishing range of deeply-rooted local cultures. It is a place of unique beauty and interest, and one which deserves to be captured by great photography and brought to life by creative description.

But more than that, nestled in valleys, perched on hilltops, straddling streams and paddling in lakes, are to be found the Indonesian people of such cultural diversity that they too need to be carefully recorded on camera and depicted faithfully in words.

Even now into the second decade of the 21st century, there are still voyages of discovery to be done, still hidden heritages to be revealed, and the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with the team of David Metcalf and Stephanie Brookes set out to discover them, travelling the roads much less travelled by most visitors.

I myself have had the privilege of visiting some of these "Hidden Heritages" of Indonesia, among which perhaps the most memorable was the traditional village of Wae Rebo in Flores, NTT. Reaching it meant an arduous five-hour trek up along muddy paths zigzagging up mountain and forest roads to discover this magnificent example of Indonesia's remarkable local cultural heritage nestled high atop the misty mountains.

These stories have now been compiled into this beautiful book, full of the lives and cultures that are deservedly being brought to the world's attention with this publication. I hope every page brings you pleasure, and encourages you to appreciate the extraordinarily rich culture of Indonesia, and encourage its preservation for all time.

Prof. Wiendu Nuryanti, Ph.D

Vice-Minister of Education for Cultural Affairs,
Ministry of Education and Culture



Bambang Sunaryo was the Special Advisor for this book. Bambang Sunaryo is a lecturer at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta who has long worked in the fields of culture, tourism, and development. He has travelled extensively throughout Indonesia, usually working on projects that focus on the interaction among these three key sectors.

Mr. Sunaryo specializes in developing appropriate policies for the public and private sectors to ensure local communities in Indonesia benefit to the maximum extent from tourism development while minimizing any negative cultural, social or environmental impacts on their communities.

Bambang Sunaryo



David Metcalf has had a fascination with indigenous cultures ever since he started travelling through the American West visiting Hopi, Navajo and Sioux Indian reservations over 30 years ago.

His love of Indonesia and the many tribal groups spread throughout the archipelago has motivated him to capture in photographs and words the stories and history behind the many faces presented in this book.

He hopes that this book may inspire readers to embark on their own journeys of discovery to the many places of mystery and magic in this extraordinary country.

David offers photography tours in Bali and Indonesia and information can be found on his website.

David Metcalf

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Stephanie Brookes is a freelance writer who lives in Bali. She left New Zealand at 18 and has been wandering the globe ever since, always fascinated with the variety of indigenous cultures that she experiences along the way.

From boarding a traditional Indonesian houseboat to meet the orangutans in the wild rivers of Kalimantan, to swimming with stingless jellyfish in a perched lake high above the sea on Derawan Island, nothing stops this travel writer from finding a story, connecting with the locals and getting an understanding of the hidden heritage that can be found throughout the islands of Indonesia.

Stephanie Brookes

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1	Isen Mulang	
Special Advisor	2	Dancing, Dragons and Dayak	62
Map of Indonesia	4	Pencak Silat Festival, Kejawen	
Smiling Selayar		Java's Cultural Heritage	72
The Cultural Journey Begins	6	Tengger	
Ngaju Dayak		The Mountain Folk of Bromo	82
People of the River	12	Sumbawa	
Sumba		Tales, Myths and Legends	92
Pasola and Ancient Rituals	22	Wetu Telu	
Kawah Ijen Volcano		Culture of North Lombok	102
East Java Extremes	32	Dayak Kenyah	
Bali's Buffalo Magic		Guardians of the Forest	112
The Wild West – Jembrana	42		
Wae Rebo			
A Lost Village in Flores	52		



Cambodia

Vietnam

Thailand

p.62

Isen Mulang
Dancing, Dragons and
Dayak

p.12

Ngaju Dayak
People of the River

Aceh

Medan

North
Sumatra

Singapore

Riau

Padang

Jambi

Palembang

Bengkulu

South
Sumatra

Lampung

Jakarta

Banten

Bandung

Surabaya

Yogyakarta

Tengger

Kawah Ijen

Banyuwangi

Jember

Brana

Lombok

Sumbawa

West Nusa
Tenggara

Poto Tano

Mantar

Java Sea

Indonesia

Makassa

Riau Islands

Malaysia

Brunei
Darussalam

Setulang

East
Kalimantan

West
Kalimantan

Central
Kalimantan

Kahayan

Palangkaraya

Bukit Rawi

South Kalimantan

Bangka Belitung
Islands

p.72

Pencak Silat Festival,
Kejawen
Java's Cultural Heritage

p.82

Tengger
The Mountain Folk of
Bromo

p.32

Kawah Ijen
Volcano
East Java Extremes

Christmas
Island

p.42

Bali's Buffalo Magic
The Wild West – Jembrana

p.102

Wetu Telu Culture
of North Lombok

p.92

Sumbawa
Tales, Myths and
Legends

Cocos (Keeling)
Islands

Contents

• p.112
Dayak Kenyah
Guardians of the Forest

• p.6
Smiling Selayar
The Cultural Journey
Begins

• p.22
Sumba
Pasola and Ancient
Rituals

• p.52
Wae Rebo
A Lost Village in Flores

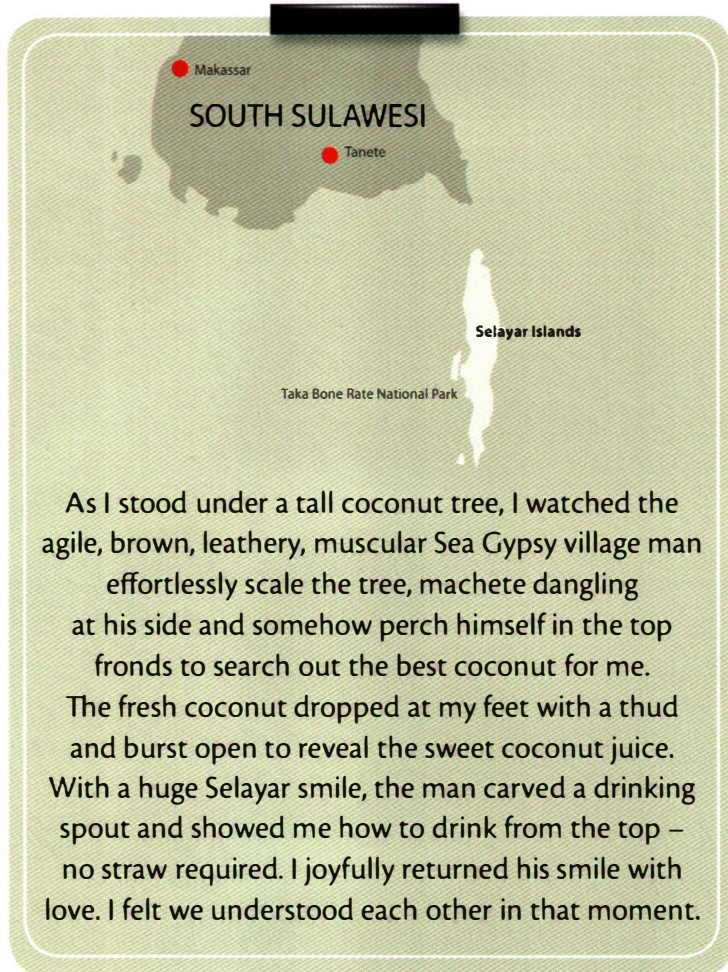


A dramatic sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with vibrant orange and red clouds, with a bright glow on the horizon. The water below reflects the colors of the sky. The overall scene is serene and beautiful.

Hidden Heritage
Cultural Journeys of Discovery

Smiling Selayar







I was visiting an interesting bamboo village on Selayar Island, home to the Bajau people. They only live in the village for five months of the year and then head out to sea on their small, colourful, traditional wooden fishing boats roaming the seas as they have done for centuries.

My destination was a remote outpost; the Selayar Dive Resort, run by a jovial, German character by the name of Jochen. The resort is only accessible by boat. The journey had taken me fourteen arduous hours, from Makassar in South Sulawesi to the idyllic Selayar Dive Resort; a beautiful, charming eight-bungalow dive operation made even more appealing by the fact it is so difficult to access. As Jochen says, "Anyone can jump on a plane and stay at a hotel near an airport. Guests who come to my resort are interesting. They find out about my place and they come, even though it is quite difficult to get here."

I had tried to fly to Selayar Island from Makassar, which is the most direct route, but the air service had been suspended (due to some paperwork not being signed). It became a long travel day involving a private car, a local ferry, a pick up (by a local policeman) and finally, a transfer by local fishing boat, via the Sea Gypsy village to get to the dive resort. The effort was well worth it.

What I discovered on Selayar Island was a combination of spectacular diving, a dramatic 70-metre deep reef wall, beautiful richly coloured coral, sleepy turtles, a unique marine environment, and a rich, traditional culture on an unspoilt, non-touristy island.

What really stole my heart though, were the people. The smiles of Selayar and the warm-hearted welcome you receive everywhere you go, a rare find in this fast-paced technical world we now live in. The culture is steeped in history with the ethnic boat building Bajau people, the Sea Gypsy ocean dwellers, a unique hill tribe village, and extremely friendly local townsfolk.

What is particularly appealing about Selayar Island for divers is its accessibility to the Takabonerate National Sea Park, which is the third largest coral atoll in the world, next to the Marshall Islands and the Maldives. With this major drawcard, you would expect to find developed tourism, several dive resorts and four and five-star hotels, but this is not the case. Selayar is a secret find and you really feel like time has stood still here.

Accommodation is mostly homestay with a couple of very average three-star hotels and only two dive resorts.

Selayar Dive Resort is extremely well run and the other is barely functioning. There is also a very remote National Park managed dive facility six hours off the mainland with homestay attached.

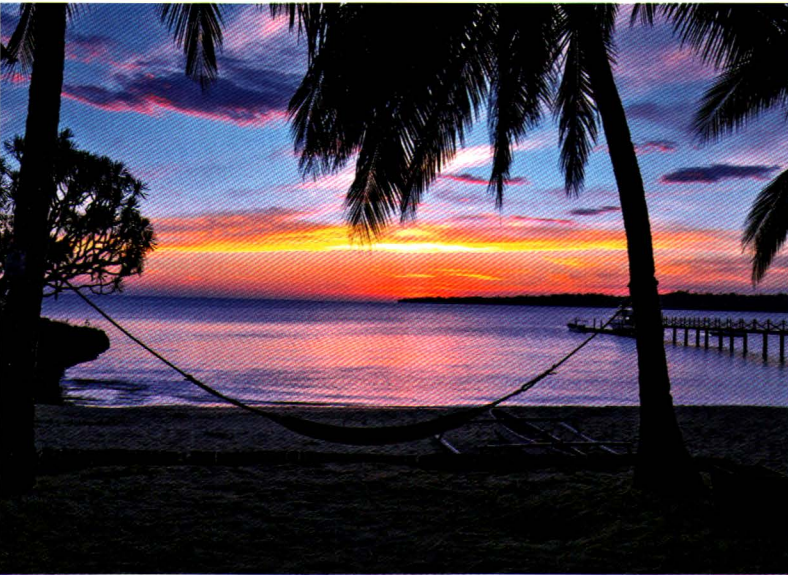
For a hill tribe experience, take the long and windy road twenty minutes out of Benteng (the main town) and you will discover the Bitombang Old Village. This unique village is perched high in the hills where the houses are precariously positioned between huge boulders on suspended tall poles. The main street is more like a village lane; hardly wide enough for one car, which is shared with goats, chickens and some very sleepy dogs.

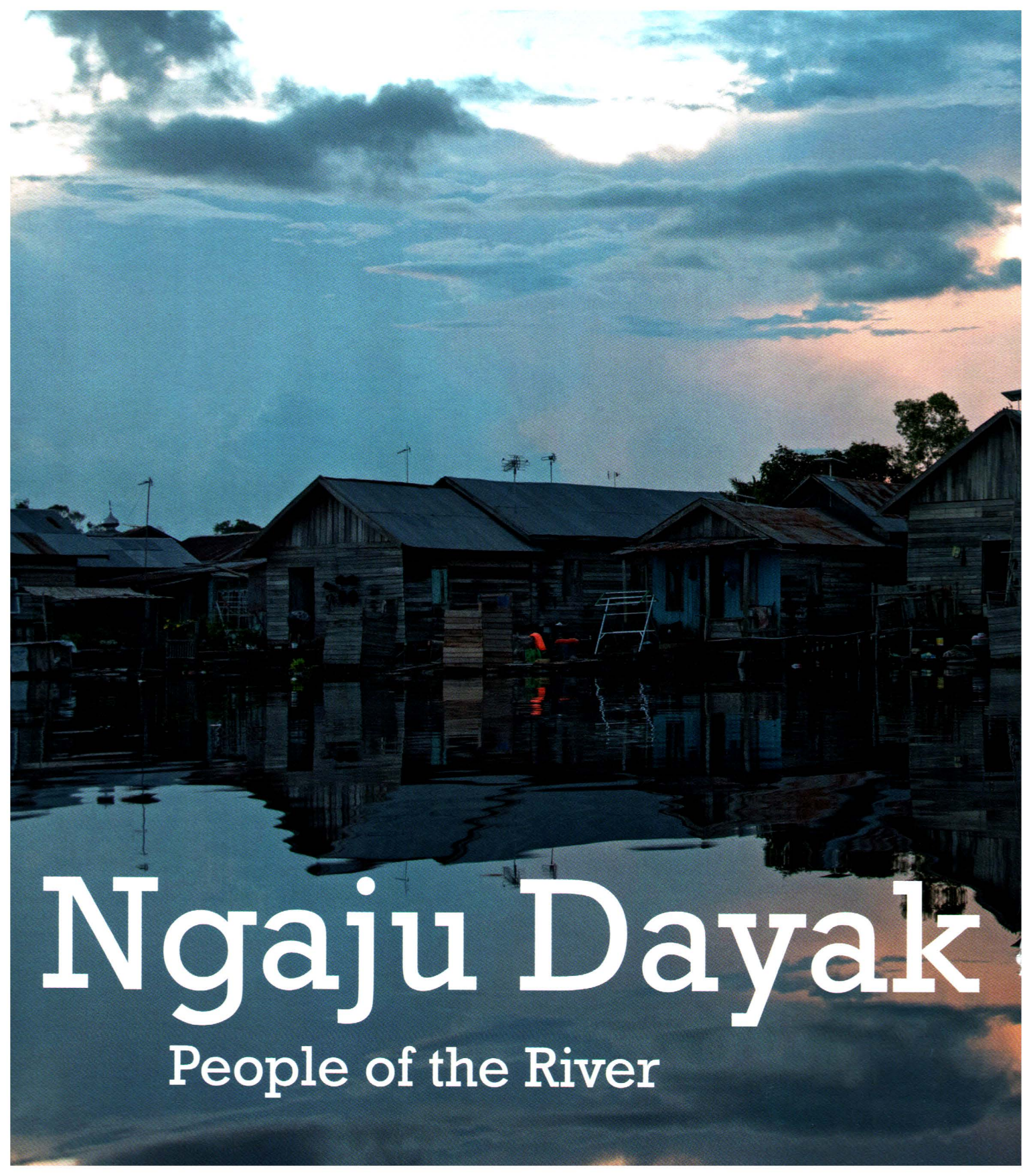
The average age of the village inhabitants is said to be ninety years old and indeed, I did meet a lot of very old people. In true Selayar fashion, the locals are extremely friendly and very happy to talk to you and tell you about their interesting village. It is said, in folklore, that the houses are built up high to raise life expectancy; however, a chatty fellow told me he built his house on tall poles to protect himself from thieves, which I found very amusing, because Selayar is a very safe place. A local policeman told me Selayar has one of the lowest crimes rates in Indonesia. I learnt all sorts of facts and statistics when I toured the (very friendly) local prison, but that's another story.

If beautiful long, white sandy beaches are your calling then Selayar has three lovely beaches. It is well worth taking the trip to the seven-level waterfall and the walk to the cave is wonderful. While tripping around the island you will find yourself crossing the main river at several points. The local folklore stories tell of seven-metre crocodiles that lurk in the estuarine waters. The most unusual story I heard was of a girl who went missing. Her sister went looking for her along the beach and came across a crocodile. It is said in mythology that it is possible for a crocodile to actually be a human. The girl thought her sister had turned into a crocodile, so she took the small crocodile home and it became her pet. The crocodile slept with her, on a pillow in her bed, however it grew bigger and bigger. A reporter went to the location to validate the story and indeed, it was true. He offered to buy the crocodile (with the intention of releasing it back into the wild) but the family would only rent the crocodile, saying they wanted it back because of course, it was their daughter.

Such are the experiences that await you on this unspoilt, charming island in the Flores Sea. The genuine warmth and hospitality of the Selayar people is infectious, and for anyone wanting a unique travel experience to remember for a lifetime, smiling Selayar is the place.

Story by **Stephanie Brookes**

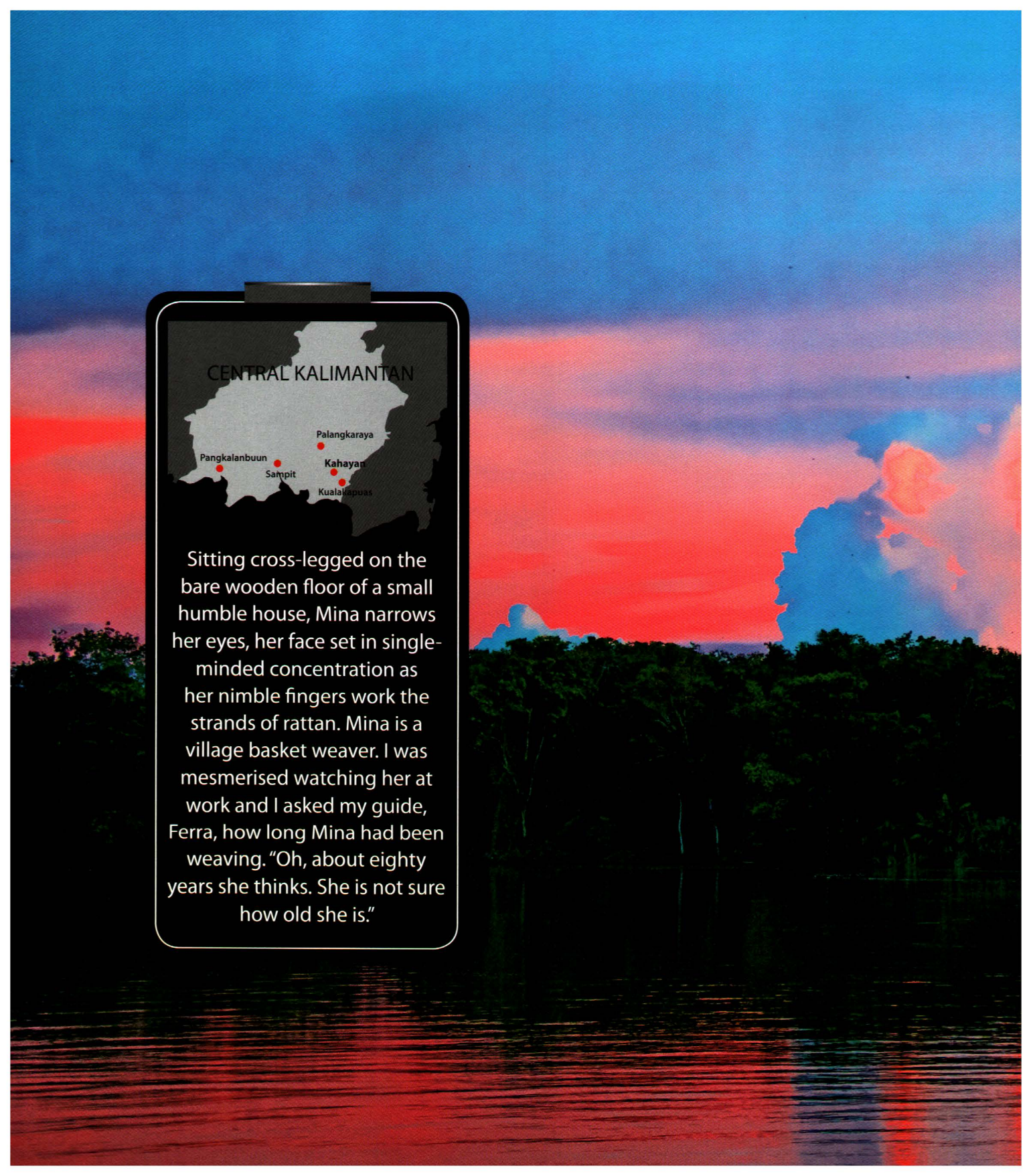




Ngaju Dayak

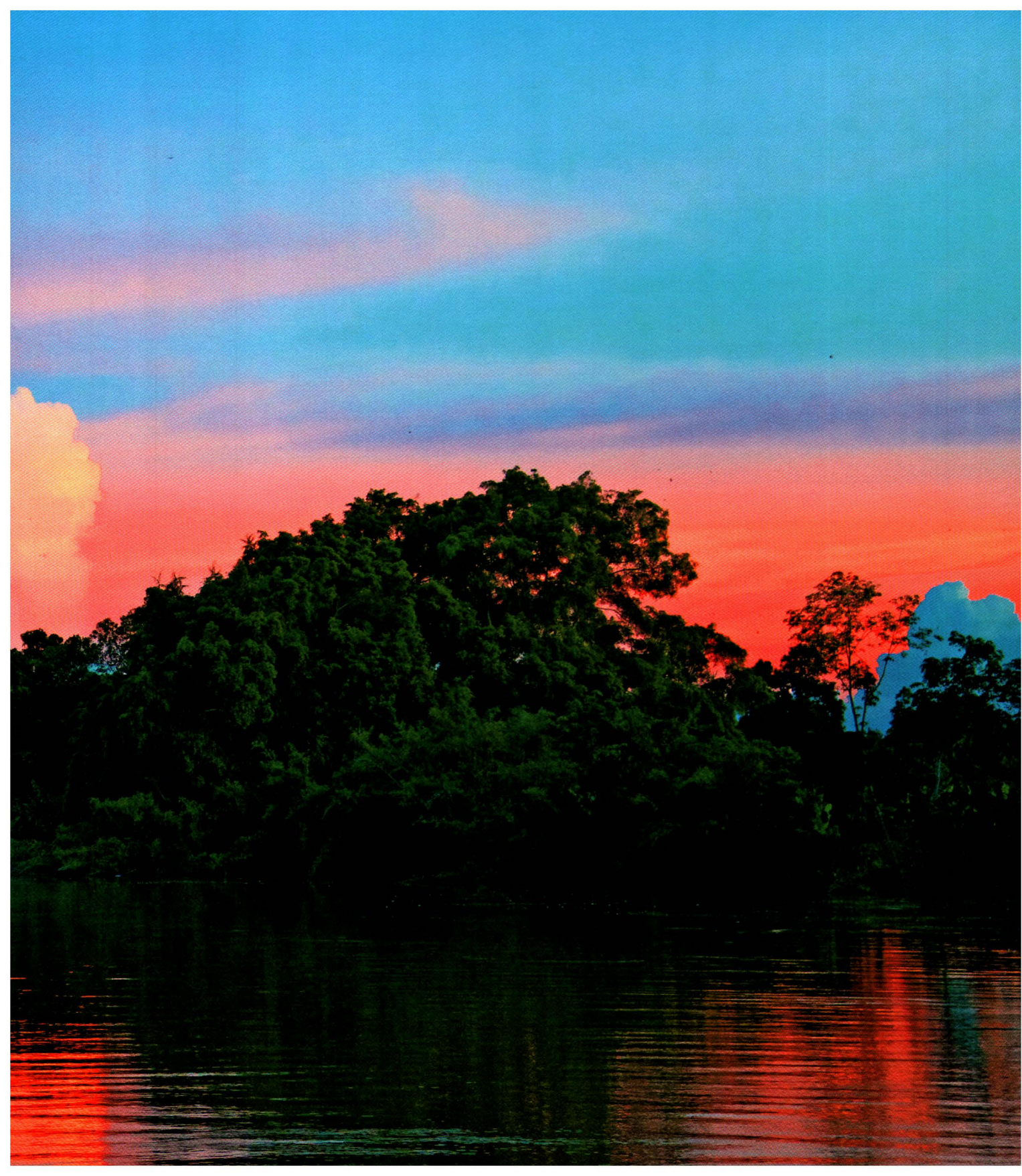
People of the River





CENTRAL KALIMANTAN

Sitting cross-legged on the bare wooden floor of a small humble house, Mina narrows her eyes, her face set in single-minded concentration as her nimble fingers work the strands of rattan. Mina is a village basket weaver. I was mesmerised watching her at work and I asked my guide, Ferra, how long Mina had been weaving. "Oh, about eighty years she thinks. She is not sure how old she is."



It was late afternoon when we arrived at Bukit Rawi Village on the Kahayan River, Central Kalimantan. Our small group of intrepid travelers was met at the dock by five young village dancers who had been waiting patiently to greet us. Dressed in colourful, traditional Dayak clothing, the young girls were beaming with pride and nervously giggling with pre-dance jitters. The dance started with a slow beat and the girls moved with rhythmic grace and poise in perfect time to the ancient sounds of the small orchestra of equally young enthusiastic boys who sat cross-legged on the ground, connected to their songlines.

Visiting these traditional villages in the jungles of Kalimantan, one gets the sense that progress has passed by many of these small villages. Not much has changed in hundreds of years. A few modern houses are interspersed with older structures, and as we wandered through the village there was a strong sense of unity and community pride. Like the pied piper, the sound of children's laughter surrounded us as we gathered a band of followers.

There are more than two hundred different Dayak tribes in Kalimantan. The main tribes of Central Kalimantan are the Ngajus and Ma'anyans. Dayak tribes migrated to Indonesia from other parts of Asia about three thousand years ago. Once known for their fierce headhunting antics, this practice no longer exists. The men still hunt with blowpipes and fish the rivers with cast nets, however, loincloths are no longer fashionable and most now wear western serviceable clothing.

We were on a mission to find out a little more about the village *tiwah* ceremony. This involves an elaborate funeral ritual for the recently departed, which is essential for the soul if he or she wishes to reach the highest place in heaven.

In Dayak tradition, after passing away, the body is buried in the primary ritual. If the family can afford the high cost of the *tiwah*, or

secondary ritual, this will take place after the bones of the deceased are dug up, cleaned, washed, and perfumed. Large structures called *sandung* or bone houses are built to house the bones. These rites are very elaborate and involve animal sacrifice (water buffalo, cows, pigs, and chickens) and enormous cost (anywhere from USD\$6,000 to \$180,000), and may last from three to forty days, depending on how many people are being sent off to the afterlife. Grand scale *tiwahs* can send up to two hundred souls off at a time. When the word gets out that a *tiwah* is underway, keen entrepreneurs begin to set up their food stalls and open-air market shops. A little away from the crowds, gambling boards commence their activities.

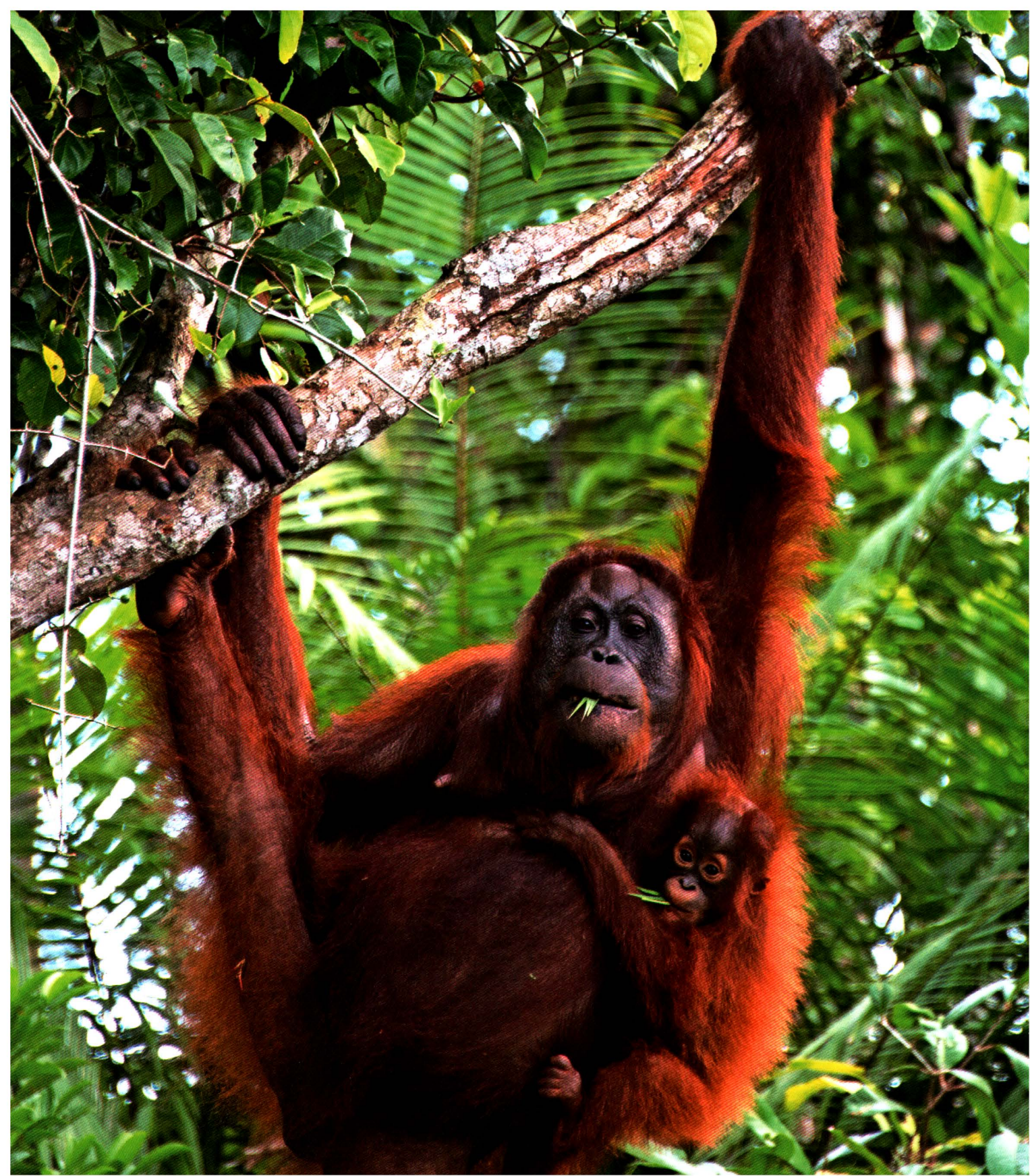
The *sandung* is usually on four high columns and painted brightly with pointed roofs, windows, doors, and miniature stairs. This assures the specific kin, that the dead will form another household in the afterlife. In the bone house, they join their other family (bone) members, united once again.

The primary funeral is performed right after death and involves either burial or cremation. Dancers adorned with colourful masks perform to keep bad spirits away from the body and priests chant to ancient drumming which serves the purpose of sending the soul to heaven, to a level where helpful spirits reside. It is the *tiwah*, the secondary ceremony that is essential for the soul's journey to reach the highest level in heaven. Sometimes families wait years for the *tiwah* send off and it is usual for many families to join together to sponsor a collective *tiwah*.

We did eventually find the *tiwah* spot, which was rather bare, as a *tiwah* had not been held in this village since the 1960s. *Tiwahs* are quite regular in Palangkaraya and other main towns and are very much part of Dayak culture today. In fact, there is one in 2013 scheduled sometime between May and September. I was assured visitors are most welcome to attend.







We headed back to our river-cruise boat to bask in the late afternoon rays of light and stretch out on the deck and take in the majesty of the river. Village life can either float by, as many of the villages are literally floating villages, or life can be stilted and you pass by houses and buildings built on stilts. The river twists and turns providing a never-ending delight of Dayak life and river activity.

Central Kalimantan is mostly blanketed in jungle and tropical rainforest. If it's not jungle you are experiencing, it's a myriad of waterways, as 12% of the landmass is comprised of rivers. Eleven major rivers flow from the northern reaches of the Schwaner Mountains and flow out to the Java Sea. This provides an ideal environment for a profusion of wildlife, including orangutans, several varieties of monkey, clouded leopards, sun bears, and tarsiers. As the river provides a break in the rainforest, you have the chance to see stunning exotic birdlife including several varieties of hornbills, kingfishers, and ibises. A native to Kalimantan, the proboscis monkey, a most unusual species of monkey, is easily seen from the river. The male sports a large six-inch nose (to attract the opposite sex) and depending on the size and its droop, creates a unique vocal range, which can lower and deepen accordingly. This makes for wonderful jungle sounds as you take in the beauty of the river.

Our next adventure involved transferring to a small dugout canoe and visiting the mighty man of the forest – the orangutan. The orangutans live on three islands in the middle of the river under the care of the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation and are part of a rehabilitation program. My guide described these islands as forest schools - elementary, high school, and university. The orangutans have to pass each learning level with competence before they are considered ready to be set free back into the wild. Their ultimate



goal is to be transferred and released into the wilds of a conservation reserve in the Northern part of Central Kalimantan. The dense primary forests in the Schwaner and Muller Mountain ranges provide a perfect environment for the new graduates. The mountains offer excellent canopy, a large space (orangutans need ten square kilometres each) safety from poachers (the forest is virtually impenetrable) and a natural food supply. These four elements are essential if the orangutan is to survive and multiply in the wild. The conservation area is also protected from logging and other interests. On the (pre-release) islands, the orangutans learn to climb trees, select natural food, play, and learn to make nests in the trees.

We approached Bapalas Island in the afternoon in a small dugout canoe. The orangutans outnumbered us! There were eleven of them—we were but six. We sat spellbound in our canoe observing these majestic creatures. We could easily have watched their antics all day. What was amazing was the familiarity of their gentle behaviour, gestures, and demeanour. I was reminded of our close genetic connection, which makes their need for their survival all the more critical. In these moments, I felt more alive and connected to life and the power of these extraordinary and gentle huge primates. A truly unique experience.

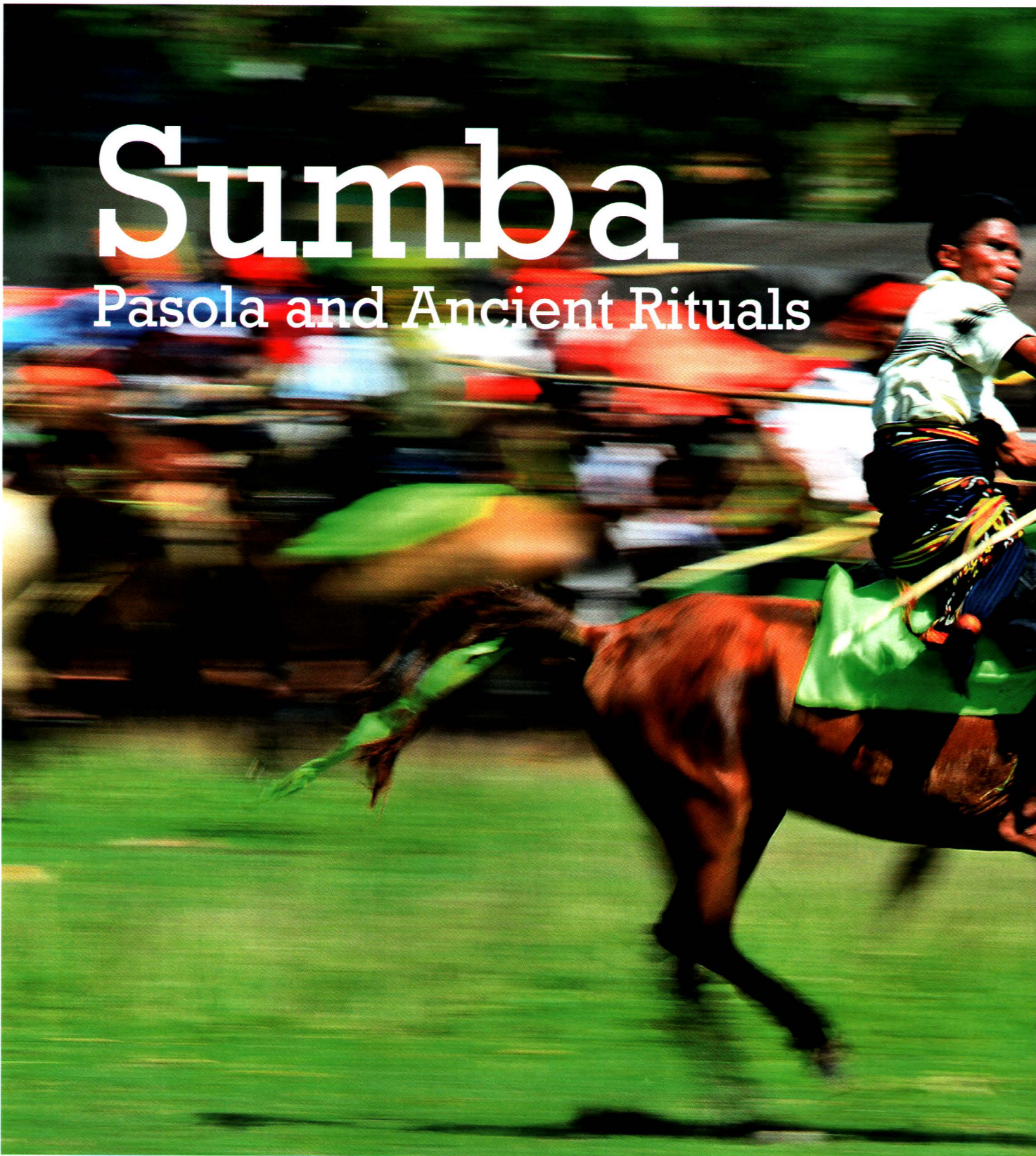
A journey into Central Kalimantan is a mystic river experience. Meeting the Dayak people and visiting their villages, connecting with orangutans, enjoying the tranquillity of the river in an exotic jungle setting, opens a pathway to learning and understanding this unique Indonesian culture – one that is sure to capture your heart and your imagination.

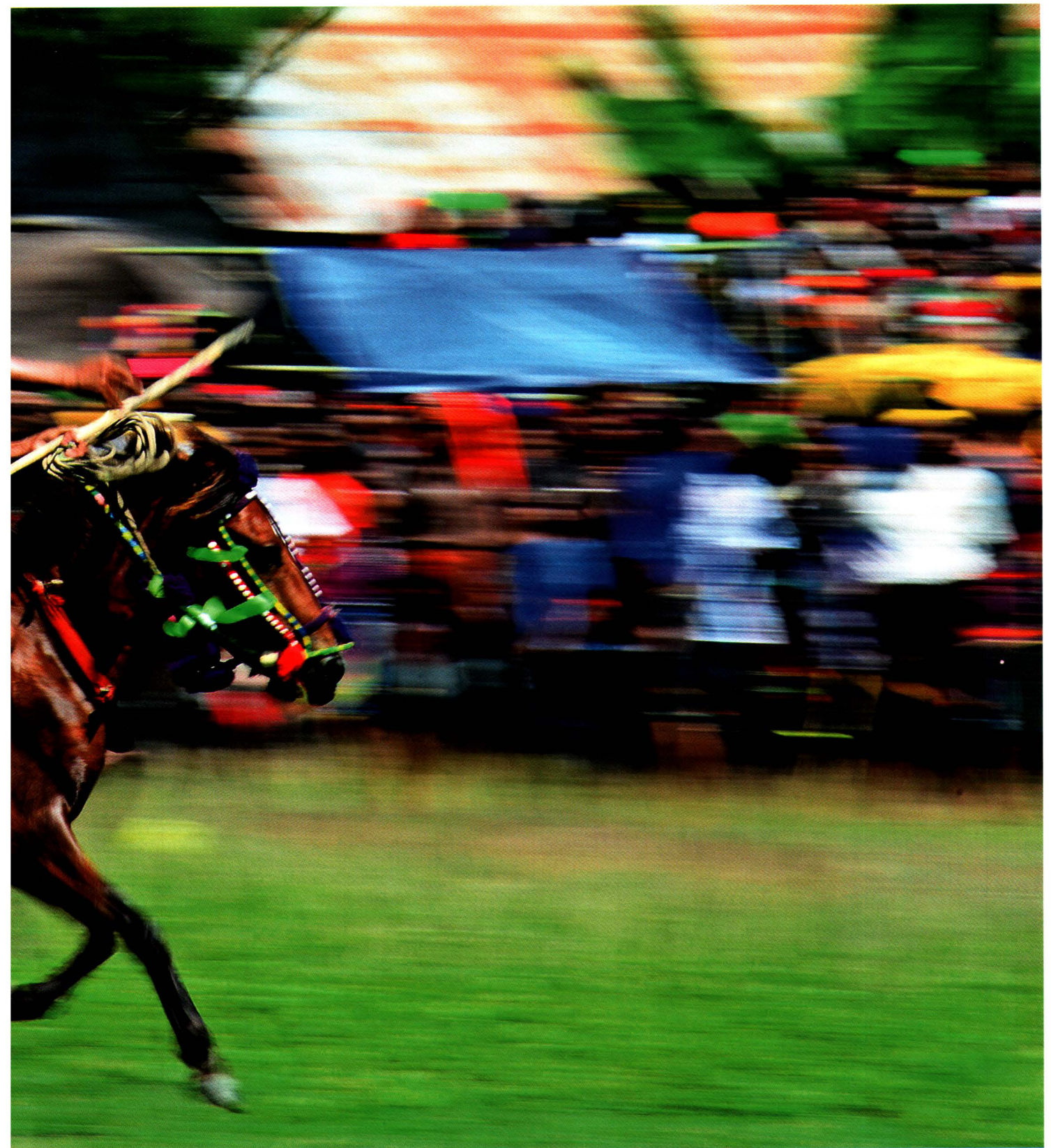
Story by **Stephanie Brookes**

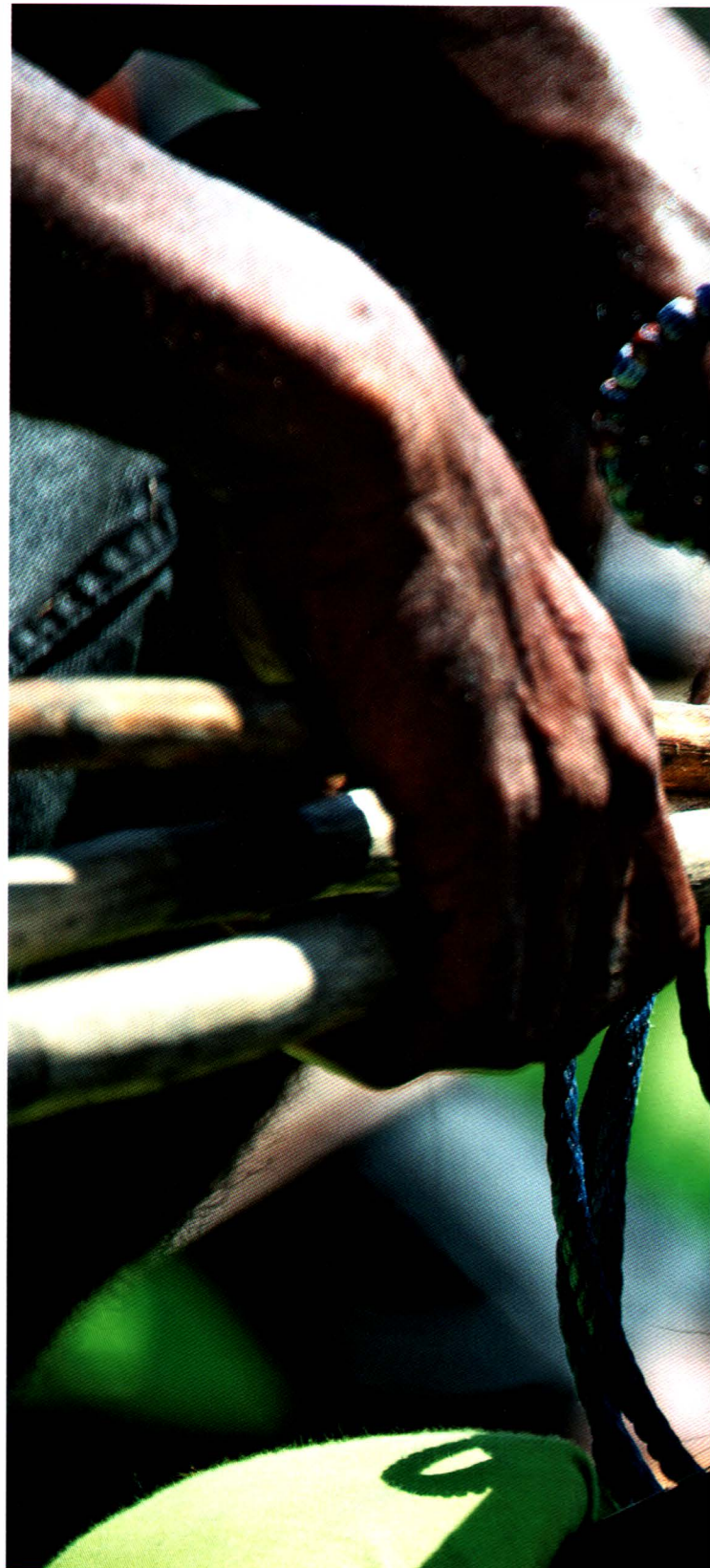
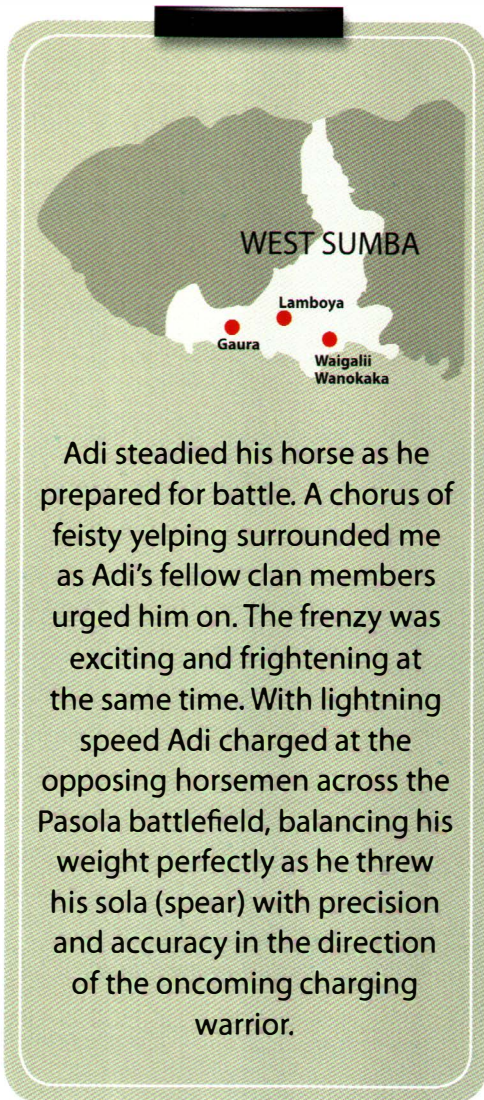


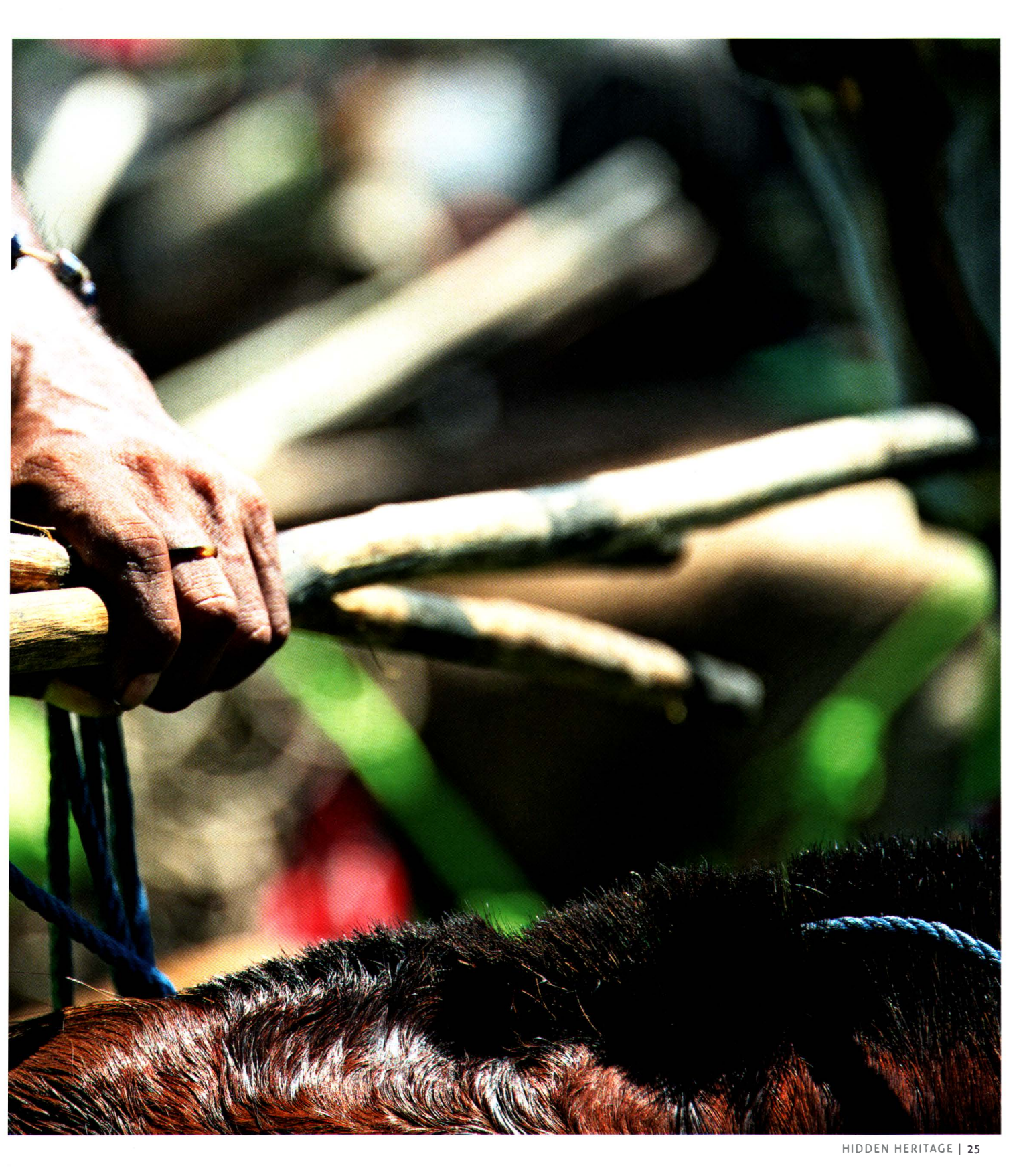
Sumba

Pasola and Ancient Rituals









For the next five hours, with the intense heat of the sun beating down on him, Adi kept up his assaults on the opposition, determined to score as many hits as possible which would raise his esteem in the village and hopefully draw blood, which the soil was eager to receive. The more blood spilt, the better the harvest, according to the beliefs of this ancient culture of West Sumba. If insufficient blood is spilt during the Pasola event, it is often finished off with hand-to-hand fighting by the opposing clans.

These days steel-tipped spears are banned, however, deaths do occur as evidenced in recent Pasolas. I spoke to a fellow ex-pat in fact, who has been following the pasola for a number of years, and he had witnessed two deaths including a rider getting a spear in his eye.

The Pasola is performed in four different areas of West Sumba in February and March each year. In February, the event is held in the Lamboya and Kodi area, and in March, it takes place in Wanokaka and Gaura district. The actual date and time of the event is only revealed a few days before, depending when the *nale* (worms) decide to emerge from the depths of the ocean.

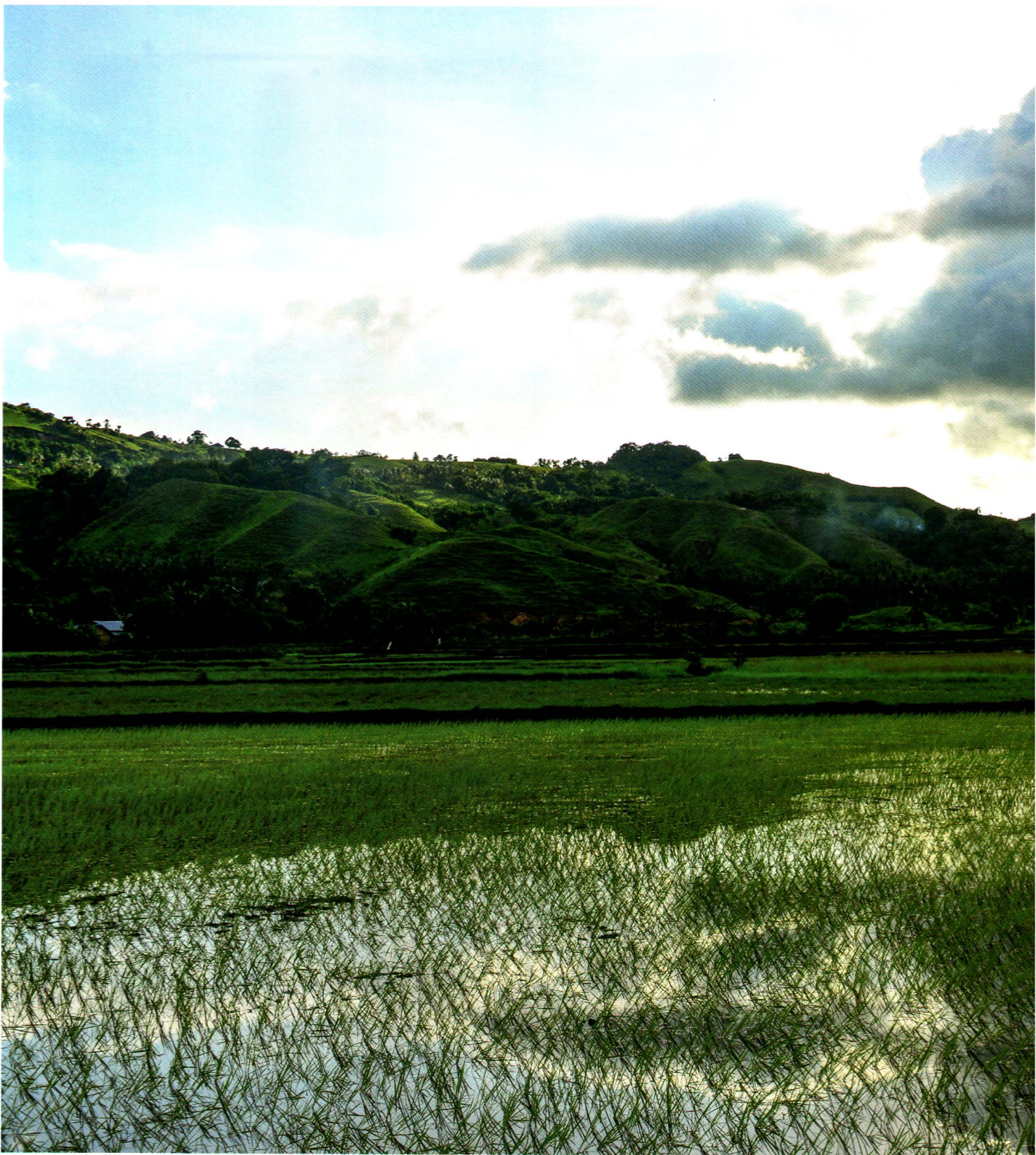
High priests called *Ratos* position themselves at strategic locations along the coastline during the full moon until the worms are washed up on shore on an auspicious incoming tide. The *nale* determines the success of the ensuing rice harvest. The other important factor for a bountiful harvest is the blood flow from the Pasola battlefield. The more blood that drenches the soil, the better. The *Ratos* play a critical part in this process as they make offerings to the spirits of the ocean and Marapu, who represent their ancestral spirits and is the bridge between mankind and the Gods.

February and March is the transition time between the wet and dry seasons and this is when the new rice seedlings are planted. It is an important time for the people of Sumba and in fact, malnutrition does occur in some of the poorer areas. A bountiful harvest is crucial to their livelihood, wellbeing, prosperity, and in some cases, their survival.

This year the Pasola was in February in Lamboya, however, it did not bode well for this year's harvest as the worms did not appear from the sea. This was mostly due to a drier than usual wet season as climate change impacts even age-old rituals such as this. There is hope that the next major Pasola event will bring better luck or it is believed it could be a very difficult year for the people of this magical island.









Medicine Man – Waigalli Village

It is always a privilege and honor to explore some of the lesser-known islands of Indonesia and meeting Danga Dukka was indeed a pleasure. After the horse ritual and bloodletting, I journeyed to a remote village and met Dukka, aged in his late eighties, a respected elder of Waigalli Village. Dukka drew back on his cigarette and took his time, between cigarette puffs, telling tales of early times and expounding on the finer point of medicine rituals. He told me how his village was built on a hilltop for strategic defense against the slave traders who would come searching for human slaves to export to Bali and the Middle East. This practice only came to an end in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Sitting on the verandah outside his simple dwelling, Dukka and the other elders from the village recalled the days when slaves were sacrificed and buried with their masters so they could accompany them to the spirit world. My guide carefully translated these tales and I was told (on the quiet) this practice still continues today but is not widely known, for obvious reasons.

While I was there, an old woman from the village who had been ill for some time visited Dukka. Despite many attempts to try to cure her with modern and traditional medicine, she was

very sick and not responding to the medicine. The next attempt at treatment came via a pig, which had to be slaughtered for its liver. This pig's liver was brought to Dukka for observation and by carefully reading the pig's liver, Dukka was able to determine the reason for the woman's ailment. He explained to me there are five signals to look for in the pig's liver, which will determine what will happen with that person's future and in fact, the future of the entire village. It is believed that even the pig's lobes can indicate if there will be floods or natural disasters, or if serious sins can be seen occurring into the future. The indications were not looking good for this lady and she left with a look of deep concern on her face.

To sit with a medicine man and observe daily life in a village, high in the hills of Sumba, is to catch a glimpse into a rich culture, which is still very much alive today. From the blood of the warriors on the Pasola battlefield to the blood of a pig in an ancient village in the highlands of Sumba, age old rituals in the form of elaborate funeral ceremonies, hand-crafted *ikat* (loom-woven textiles), unique religious practices and traditional houses found only on this island, make for an extraordinary culture very much alive today and well worth exploring.

Story by **David Metcalf**



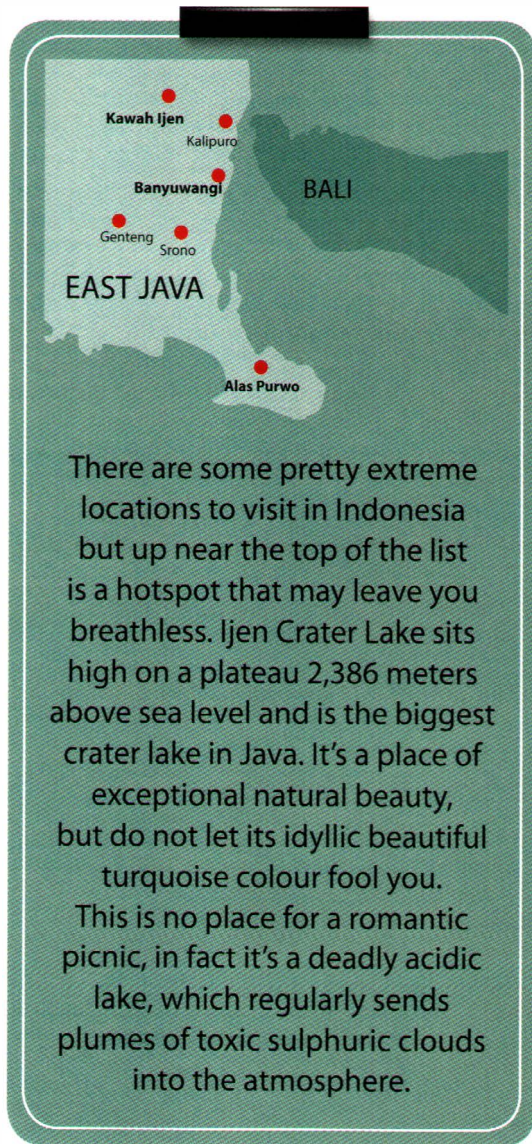




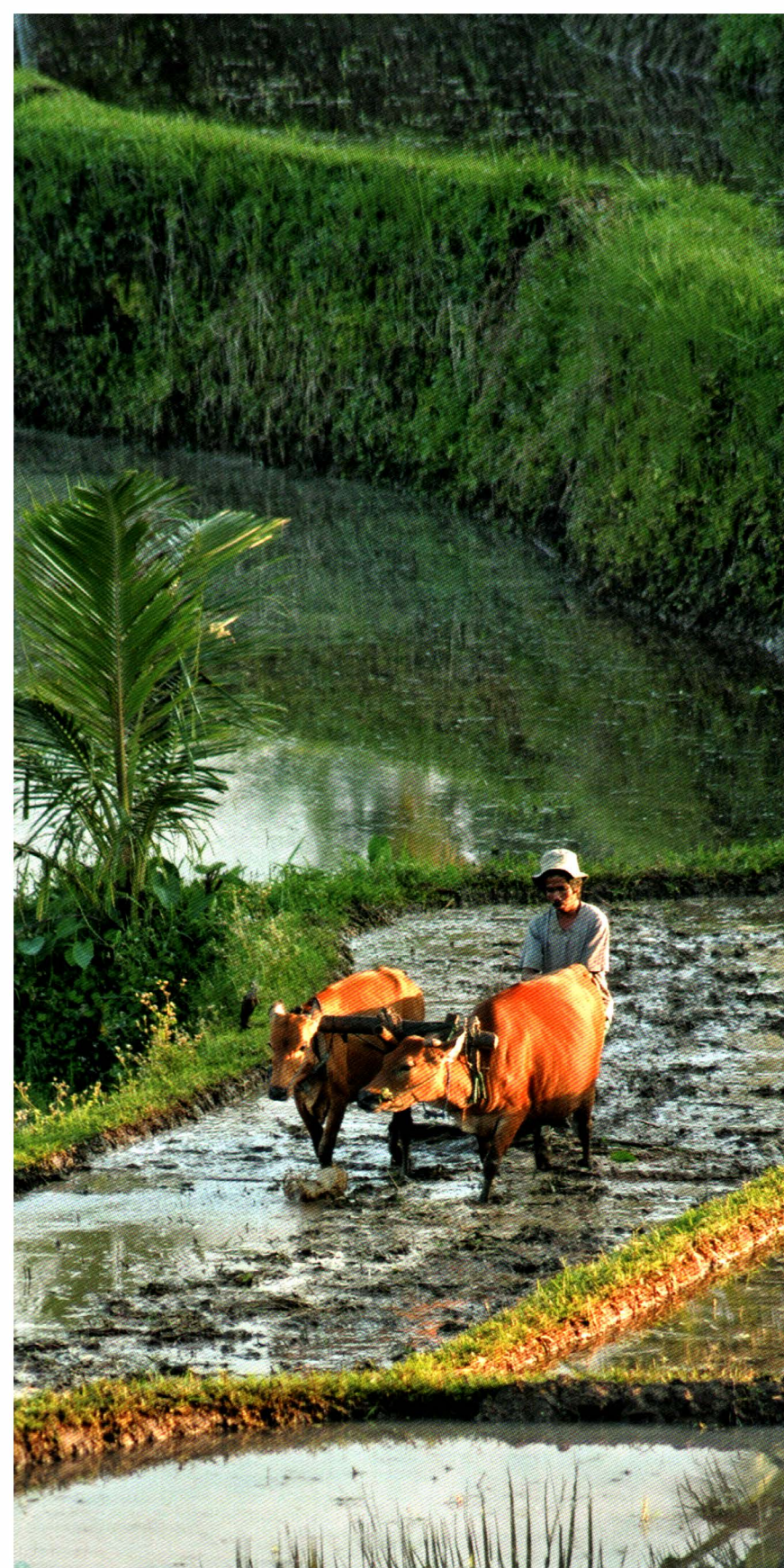
Kawah Ijen Volcano

East Java Extremes









Quite different to the fabled Elton John's "Yellow Brick Road", the walking trail that leads to the Ijen Crater Lake is a 'Yellow Sulphur Road'. The yellow sulphur stained trail carries the toils of hundreds of trips taken up and down the well-etched path by the Ijen sulphur miners every day, who ascend the three-kilometre trail with empty baskets and trudge back with sulphuric loads of up to 100kg. These men are paid by weight and sell their bright yellow lumps of sulphur to a factory near Banyuwangi.

It's a steep climb to the crater rim and takes about two and a half hours of steady slog, even though it is only three kilometers. I started to smell wafts of sulphur about halfway up the trail and as I carefully made my way up the incline, dodging rocks and hazards with my sensible walking shoes, barefooted sulphur miners sped past me, with empty baskets and big smiles.

Along with bamboo baskets, these strong and agile miners have just one other item with them – a thin handkerchief to cover their mouths from the toxic fumes, which can pump out of the active steaming crater at any point in time. I talked to Hutano, who was barefoot, about his life as a miner. He was pretty happy and seemed content to earn thirteen dollars a day for his hard work. He was grateful for the work. Once his baskets are full and loaded, he makes the trip to the factory, which involves seventeen kilometres by foot. Most days he makes two trips.

The sulphur miners work in incredibly harsh and dangerous conditions. Toxic gases belch out of the crater constantly and sudden waves of heat make for a very unforgiving work environment. No machinery is used and the extraction of sulphur is by repetitively chipping at the large blocks of sulphur using hand tools only.

I found it very humbling to share the walking trail with these hard-working sulphur miners who seem very happy to share a joke and a bit of a conversation on the way up. Do not get them to pose for a photo or chat to them on the way down though. Once loaded, they are on a mission and it's not uncommon for miners to carry more than their body weight. You do not want to break their concentration.

The volcanic ash that spills out from Ijen crater creates a rich and fertile soil base on the slopes of the volcano, which causes coffee and cocoa crops to grow in proliferation. These slopes lead to the main town of Banyuwangi, which is a good base for exploring two nearby nature reserves, South Banyuwangi and Meru Betiri.

Banyuwangi has a fascinating history and was once the capital of the Blambangan Hindu Kingdom, the last Hindu kingdom of Java in the 16th century. This kingdom fell in the 18th century in a three-way battle between Madurese pirates, Balinese rajas, and VOC (Dutch East India Company) merchants ensued.



Today the remaining descendants of this ancient Hindu kingdom are known as "Osing." They live in Banyuwangi alongside the other ethnic groups, which include Javanese, Madurese, and Balinese. Added to this melting pot of culture and language, there are also Chinese, Buginese, and Arabs.

The native people of Banyuwangi are called Banyuwanginese and they have their own dialect blending the languages of Javanese and Balinese. It is a fascinating mix of culture and diversity and makes for a very unique blend of rituals, customs, art, and tradition.

Within many cultures, dance is at the very heart of expression and The Gandrung Dance is no exception to this. *Gandrung* means hopelessly in love in Javanese and this dance honours the love and gratitude owed to Dewi Sri, the goddess of rice. It is unique to Banyuwangi and locals affectionately call their city by the name of their own dance; Gandrung.

The Gandrung is a welcome dance, performed for honoured guests with unique musical accompaniment. If you get the opportunity to see the dance, you better be prepared to stay awake a long time as it goes from evening to the early hours of dawn. Check with the local tourist office for performance times.









Festivals and events honour many important cycles that revolve around the land and the sea and if you are in town at the right time you can catch the annual custom known as 'the sea offering' or 'metik,' which is a celebration and ritual performed before rice and coffee harvesting.

Wildlife abounds in Blambangan Nature Reserve (Alas Purwo) an ancient forest, South of Banyuwangi. This is Java's largest reserve with its unique wandering peacocks, wild hens, deer, wild boars, as well as the rare Javanese tiger and leopard, if you can spot them amongst the enormous *sawo kecil* trees, which have a huge round diameter base of 1.5 meters.

On the way to the nature reserve, you pass the lively, action-packed fish auction, which is a buzz of hagglers and auction callers wearing gumboots, with very fishy smells hanging in the air and plenty of fish-guts. A line of Madurese fishing *perahus* stand proudly at the port; an impressive spectacle of colour, showing off the magnificent traditional boat building genius of the Madurese people.

If you are into surf, then the big drawcard in this Southern area of East Java is the famous surf break at Plengkung Beach (also known as G-Land), which has perfectly hollow tubes which move at a rapid rate for half a kilometre, plus wave peaks rising six- and eight-meters high.

From surf to sulphur, a trip to the edge of Java takes you to a land of exquisite rugged beauty, where a unique blend of cultures live side by side and allows for a travel experience quite out of the ordinary.

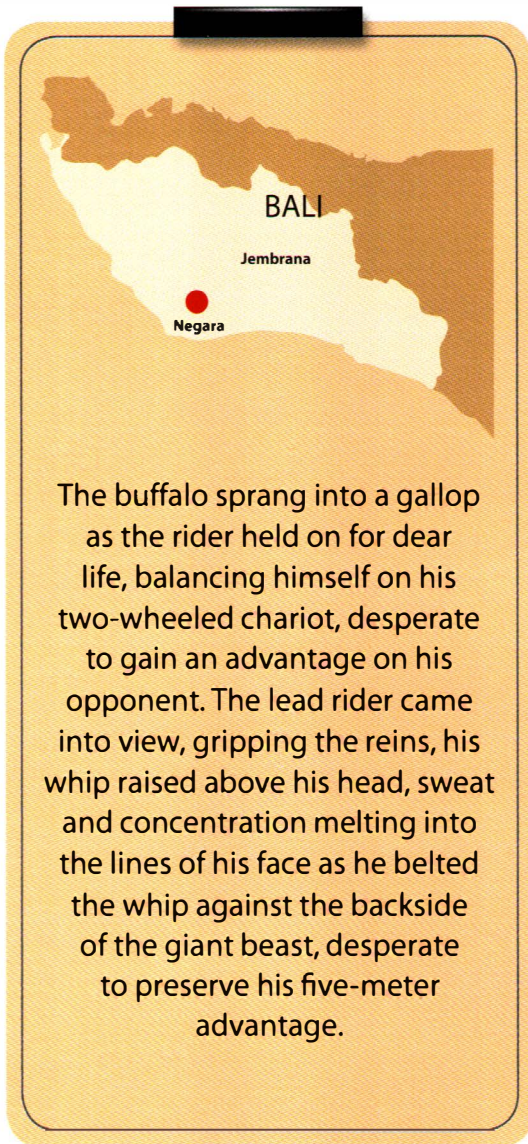
Story by **Stephanie Brookes**



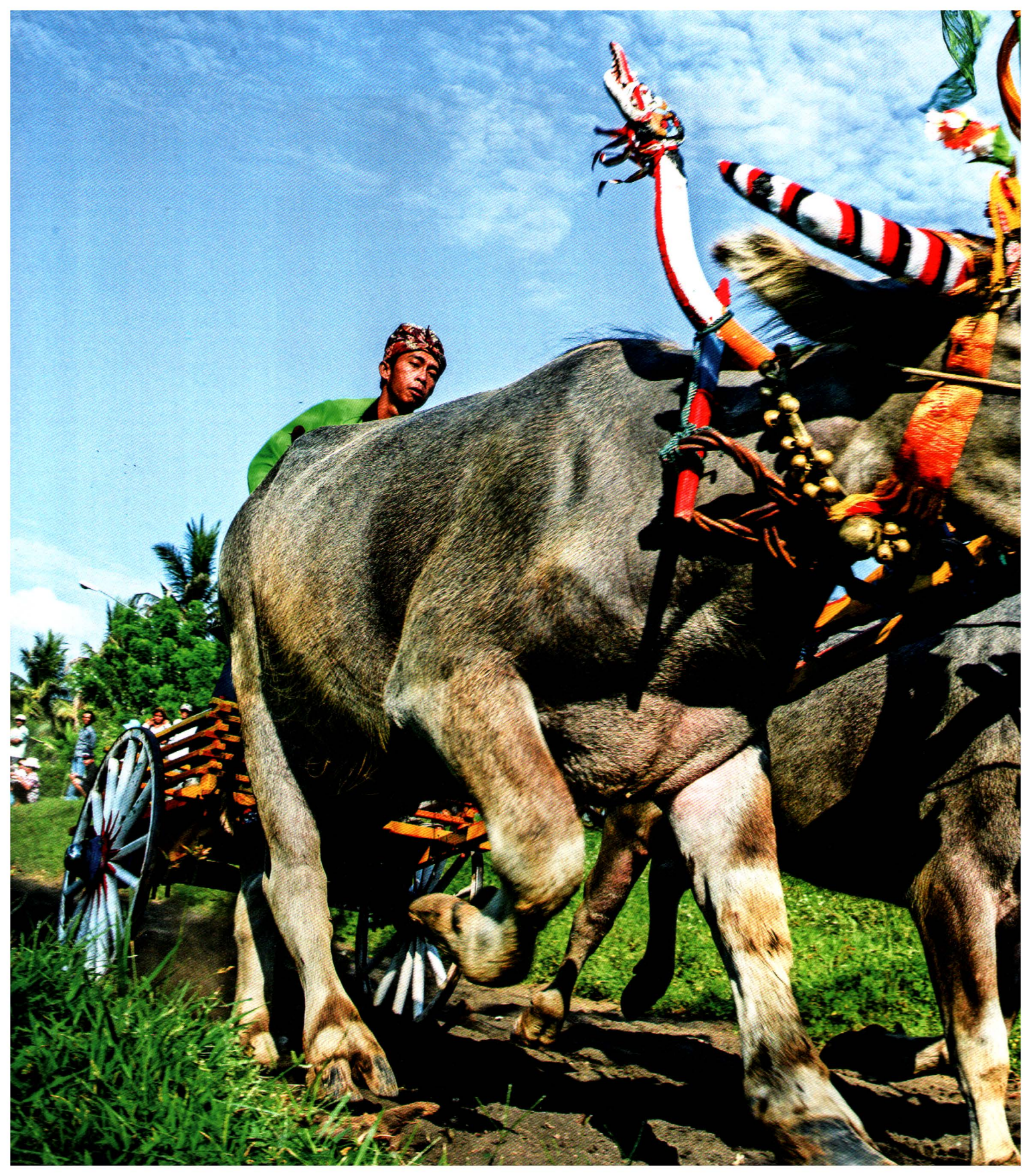


Bali's Buffalo Magic

The Wild West – Jembrana









The crowd erupted into a loud roar as one of the chariots slid off the track trying to round the corner, taking a risk with balance and speed to gain valuable ground. It is common for accidents to occur on these corners, so if you position yourself at these sharp bends, you almost become part of the race, feeling the thrill, intensity, and excitement as the race bursts into life around you.

The start position of each buffalo is crucial to claiming victory in a buffalo race. Each animal is spaced at a five-meter distance around the circular four-kilometer track. If the lead buffalo can finish five meters or more in front of the finish line, he will claim the rich bounty awaiting him. The riders need skill, speed, and control, and an armour of bravery, to compete and ride in these great events. The mastery these fine riders have over their buffalo is simply magnificent to behold.

The buffaloes themselves are very well cared for and are paraded in a unique fashion show before the start of the race. Adorned in bright, colorful ribbons and sashes, each animal represents the different villages of the Jembrana regency.

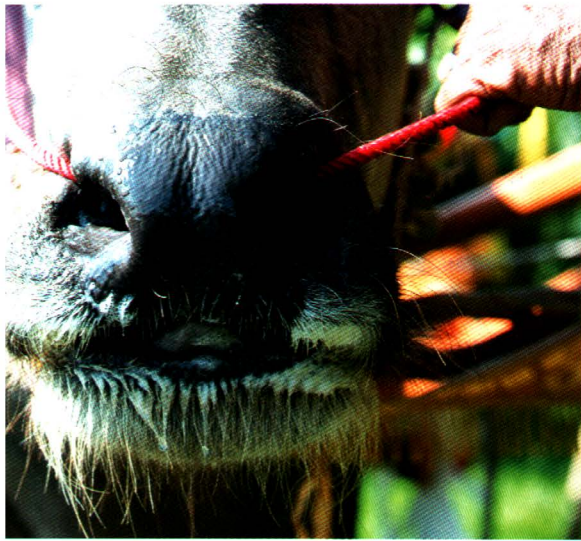
When you plan a trip to West Bali in November, you can witness the major buffalo racing event - The Jembrana Cup (known as The Governor's Cup) held in Negara. The other major event, well worth seeing is the Regents Cup, also held in Negara. This is generally held in August. These two events are timed to coincide with rice harvesting.

Buffalo racing is known locally as *Mekeprung* and is taken very seriously in this region and is an integral part of the local culture. The racing buffaloes are called *kerbau pepadu* in Balinese language. In the weeks leading up to a major event, there is a buzz in the air and a feeling of excitement in the town, as every Sunday the buffalo riders practise at one of the seven circuits in the area, honing their skills in preparation for the big day.

So, what is the big incentive for these riders? The lure of the first prize is one, motivation - a healthy buffalo (worth thousands of dollars) plus several lesser (but very valuable) prizes up for grabs, but this is not the main driving force for the competitors. It is the opportunity to bring honour to their village, displaying their strength and masculinity upon returning home as victors.









Negara

The main town of Negara is based in a beautiful location, nestled between the mountainous Bali Barat National Park in the north and the Indian Ocean to the South. Visiting Negara is very much like a journey into the Bali of thirty years ago.

Historically, Jembrana attracted the seafaring Bugis people who settled in the area back in the 1600s, coming from Java, Madura, and Sulawesi. They have remained Muslim, and in fact there is one mosque to every five Hindu temples in Jembrana. Prancak is well worth a visit and you can witness the Bugis boats returning at sunrise with the previous night's catch. The sight of hundreds of these brightly coloured, ten-meter long boats emerging out of the foggy morning resembling Viking ships is another wonder of this area. From the shore you can hear the Bugis fisherman singing and laughing, happy with the previous night's bounty and content that the gods of the sea have treated them kindly.

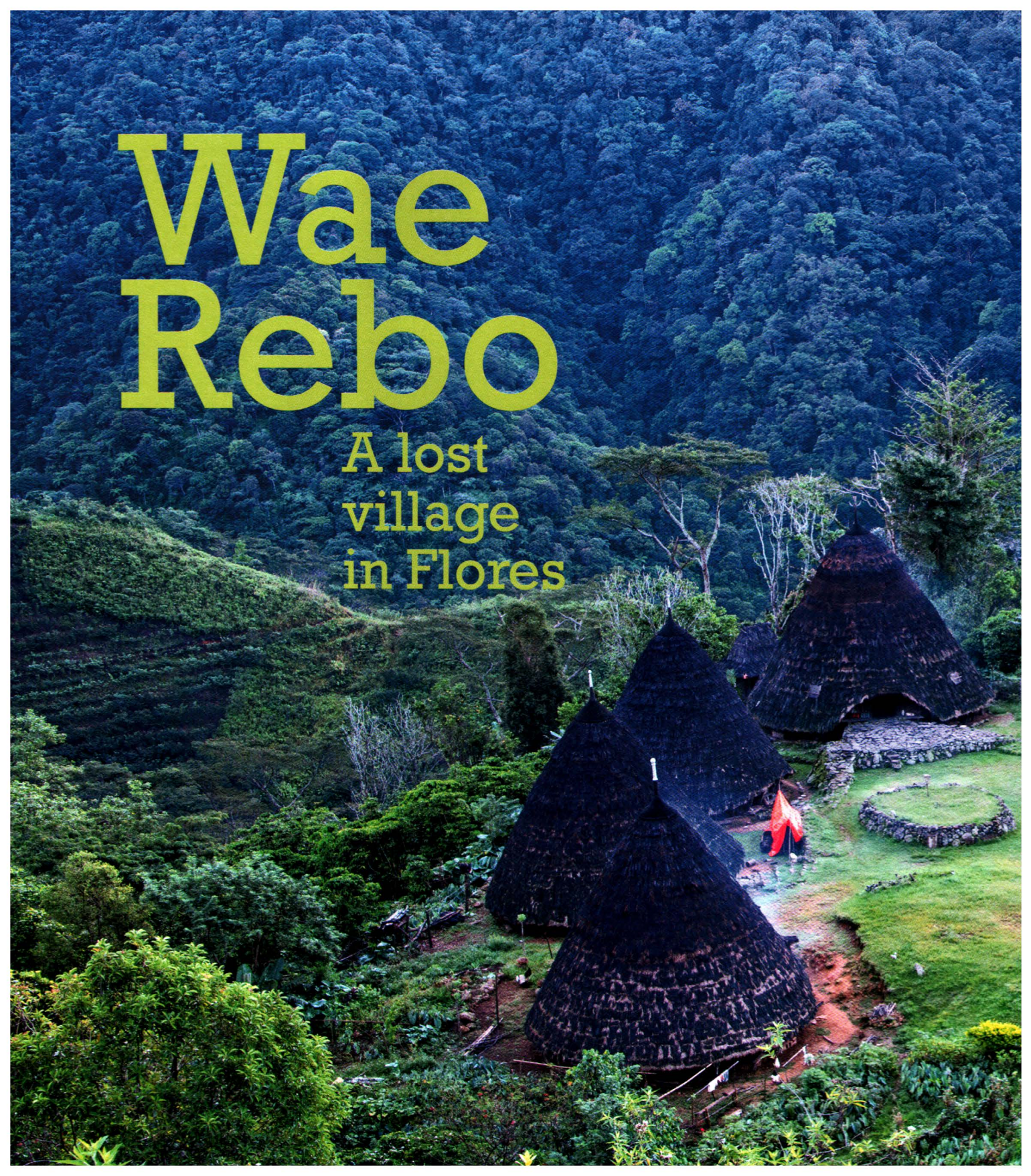
Culturally, this area is one of the most interesting in Bali, with various art forms found nowhere else on the island. The most famous of which is the Gamelan Jegog. These bamboo instruments produce a very deep base sound that seems to rattle your bones as the players strike the keys with heavy mallets, in perfect unison accompanied by the delicate sound of a flute. When combined with the Jegog Dance, (not performed anywhere else in Bali) watching the beautiful woman dressed in bright yellow silk, moving in perfect unison to the deep ancient traditional sounds, you will soon realize why a visit to this part of Bali is well worth the effort.

The buffalo races of Jembrana, colorfully clad Bugis schooners lining the shore, the warmth and friendliness of the people, and the unique dance and music of West Bali makes this a cultural journey that will enthrall, intrigue, and delight you.

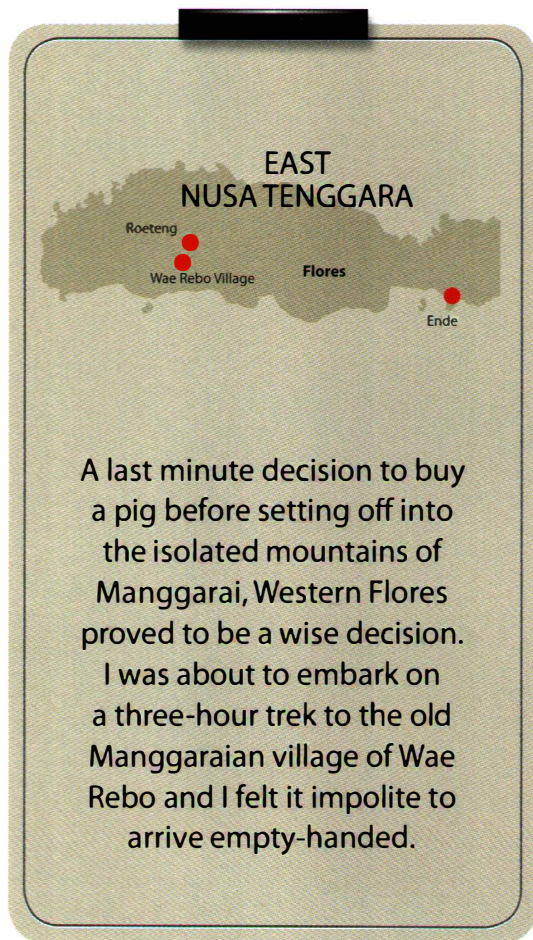
Story by David Metcalf

Wae Rebo

A lost
village
in Flores

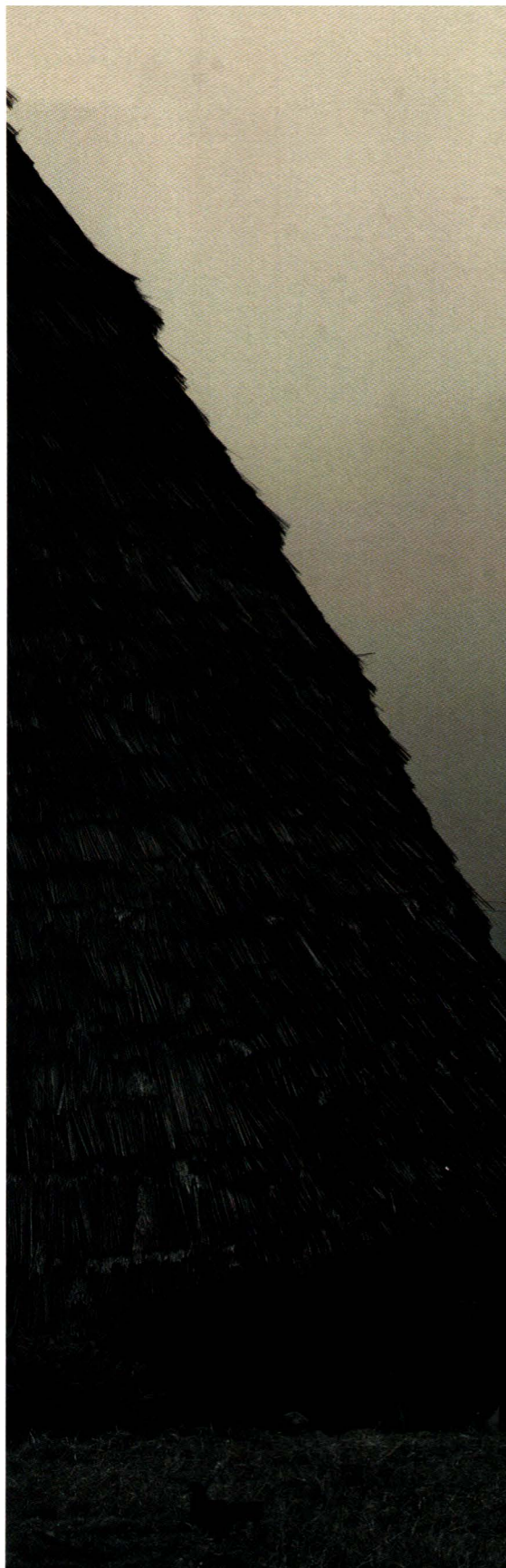


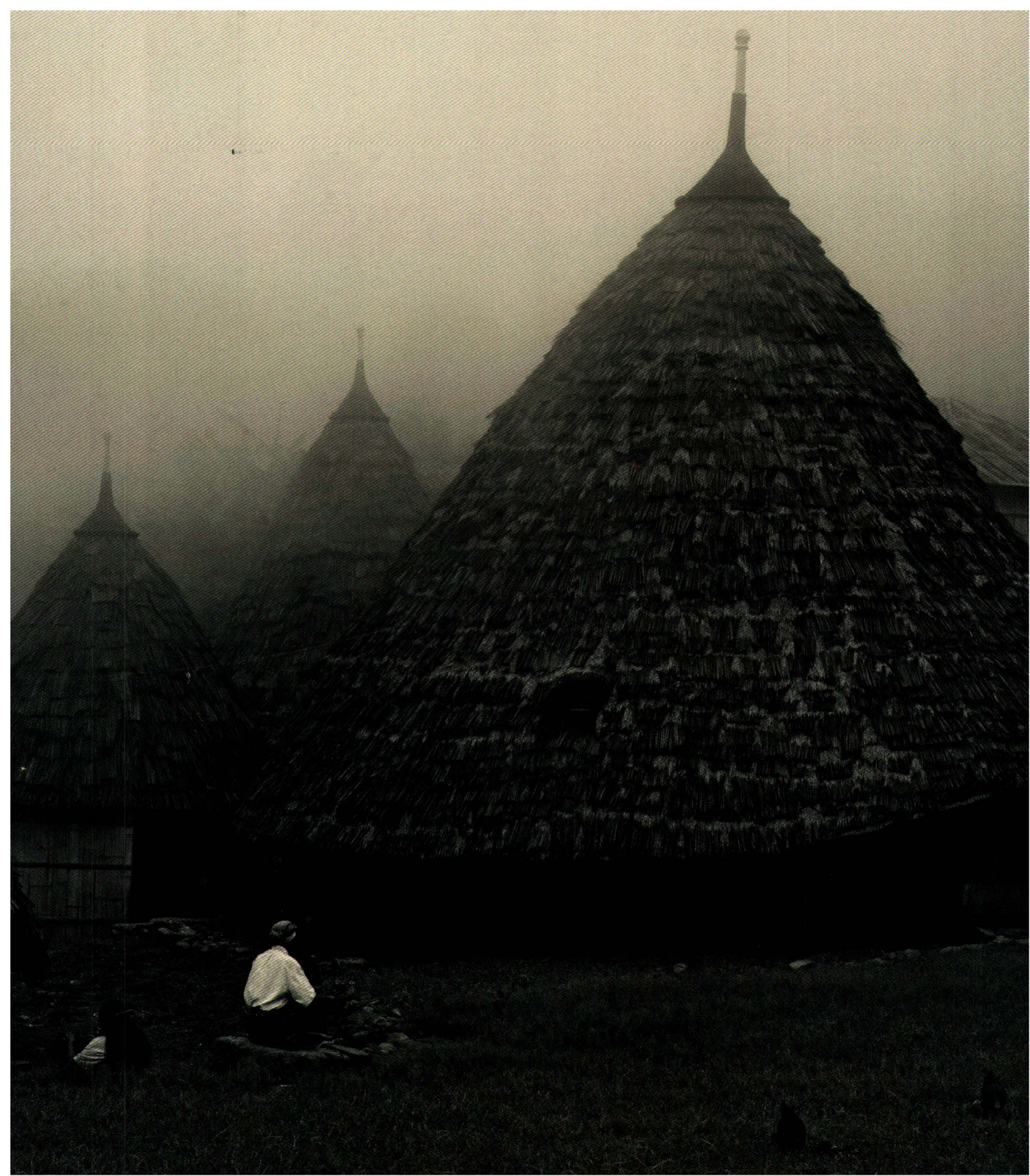




A last minute decision to buy a pig before setting off into the isolated mountains of Manggarai, Western Flores proved to be a wise decision.

I was about to embark on a three-hour trek to the old Manggaraian village of Wae Rebo and I felt it impolite to arrive empty-handed.







My local guide advised me that a female pig would be a sustainable gift as it would be used for breeding, and would last longer than a sack of rice. The pig (which I named Lucy) was delivered the morning of the trek, squealing, and not at all happy. The gentleman who delivered the pig immediately set to work weaving a little basket from a large green palm frond, complete with a plaited carry handle. Lucy was handed over akin to groceries in a shopping bag.

Once Lucy had calmed down, I set off for Wae Rebo Village, high in the mountains shrouded in early morning cloud. The trail started at Denge, a small village just out of Dintor, on the south coast of Flores. The track winds its way through dense rain forest ever upward and as you climb to 1200 metres, the foliage thins and affords magnificent views out towards the Savu Sea. Lucky for me, I had clear weather, which afforded stunning views of Mules Island rising majestically from the azure blue waters in the distance.

As I trekked on ever higher, mountain orchids appeared among the ferns. The birdsong from the high canopy of the forest added calmness to the journey and I couldn't help but wonder at the ease with which the porters carried my supplies (in bare feet) including Lucy who by this time had fallen asleep!

As I rounded the last switchback, there was Wae Rebo - hovering in the mist that cascaded down the mountains with several huge cone-shaped dwellings forming a perfect circle. The tall, traditional *mbaru niang* or 'drum houses' rose up to greet the sky creating a mystic image. I felt an alluring pull which seemed to entice me to slip back in time to another world one thought only existed in myths and legends.

On arrival at the village, one of the elders greeted me and my guide versed me on the protocol of gift giving. I handed Lucy (who by this time was awake and curious) to the elder first, who in turn,



passed her to the person in the village most in need of this welcome gift. The recipient had proclaimed the previous week that, “a pig will come” and in preparation for this vision he had built a sty for the impending arrival. Now, here I was handing Lucy over to her new owner!

With this ritual complete, I was invited to cross the threshold and, stooping low, I entered the drum house, where I was instructed to take my place, facing towards the central point of the structure. The light inside this conical structure was very dim but once my eyes had grown accustomed to the semi-darkness I could see that the elder, Rofinus, had taken his seat at the foot of a huge wooden pole that soared to the apex of the house. The official welcoming party fanned out to his left and right.

Sacred drums along with elaborate hand-made musical instruments and gongs cast in bronze hundreds of years old, hung

suspended from the ceiling beams. Clever use of space within a conical-shaped ceiling means that household supplies join the instruments on various storage levels. I wondered how they reached their supplies tucked thirty to forty feet off the ground.

With a beaming, soft smile Rofinus greeted me. “Welcome to our home. Join with us,” he entreated. “Share our simple food, and while you are here, live our simple ways. We thank you for coming.” Comfortable on a pandanus leaf mat, I shared coffee and conversation as blackened pots bubbled away on the central hearth. Rofinus invited me to sleep either in the main house, together with the eight families, who are all descendants of their common ancestor, or I could choose to bed down for the night in the official *mbaru niang* guesthouse.

The history of Wae Rebo dates back thousands of years to the time of Maro, the first ancestor from Minangkabau, West Sumatra.

These beginnings are represented in the intricate songket cloth and weaving patterns produced in the village. For centuries the clans were nomadic, moving from place to place in search of food and shelter as the seasons changed. The oral history tells us that one of the elders experienced a dream where the Great Spirit came to him. He was instructed to “find the place in the forest and build your village on the flat land. Do not move from here anymore.” The people of Wae Rebo have remained in this remote paradise ever since.

The life of the Manggaraian people is steeped in tradition, ancient music, and a lilting unique language that can be appreciated during the Sunday ritualistic prayers. Coffee is the primary crop that supports the village. Introduced by the Dutch, the Wae Rebo people have continued the tradition of coffee planting and harvesting. The work is communal and the community participates in the process of bringing the coffee-crop to fruition. The same applies to the gardens where communal toil provides the staples for the entire village.

As I was pounding coffee beans with one of the women from the village, my curiosity about this remote lifestyle led me to ask of health and education. “I have nine children,” the woman told me. “They were all born here in the village. Some of the women walk to the town of Dintor. There is a medical clinic there, but no hospital. Some give birth there, but many do not reach the clinic in time and have their babies on the trail on the way. There is no nurse or midwife here. That is the way here.”

There is also no school in Wae Rebo and the eighteen kilometre return walk to Denge is impractical. “It is a very big pain in my heart,” the mother explained. “We have to send our children away to live in the town when they are seven years old. They live with another family and attend school. It is very sad for us and we miss our children greatly.”

Change however, is on its way. A school building project is under construction and will be completed soon. A schoolteacher has been recruited from the village and all going well, the new schoolhouse will be operational at the end of 2013.

The spirit of Wae Rebo is reflected in the unique style of housing, which is central to the culture. A few years ago the main house was in such a state of disrepair that it was in danger of collapsing. In 1999, using traditional methods dating back centuries, a new house was constructed. The complicated building technique has been passed from generation to generation via the spoken word. No plans or architectural drawings exist.

It takes about a month to cut the trees from high in the forest and transport the cut wood to the village. It then takes approximately three months to bring a traditional drum house to completion.

A few years ago, a group of architects from Jakarta took an interest in the design of the drum houses and together with some Government funding, and financial assistance from corporate sponsors in Jakarta, funds were raised to continue the building of five new drum houses. Thanks to the outside help the current guesthouse was completed in June 2011. This community-led rebuilding project led to the winning of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2012.

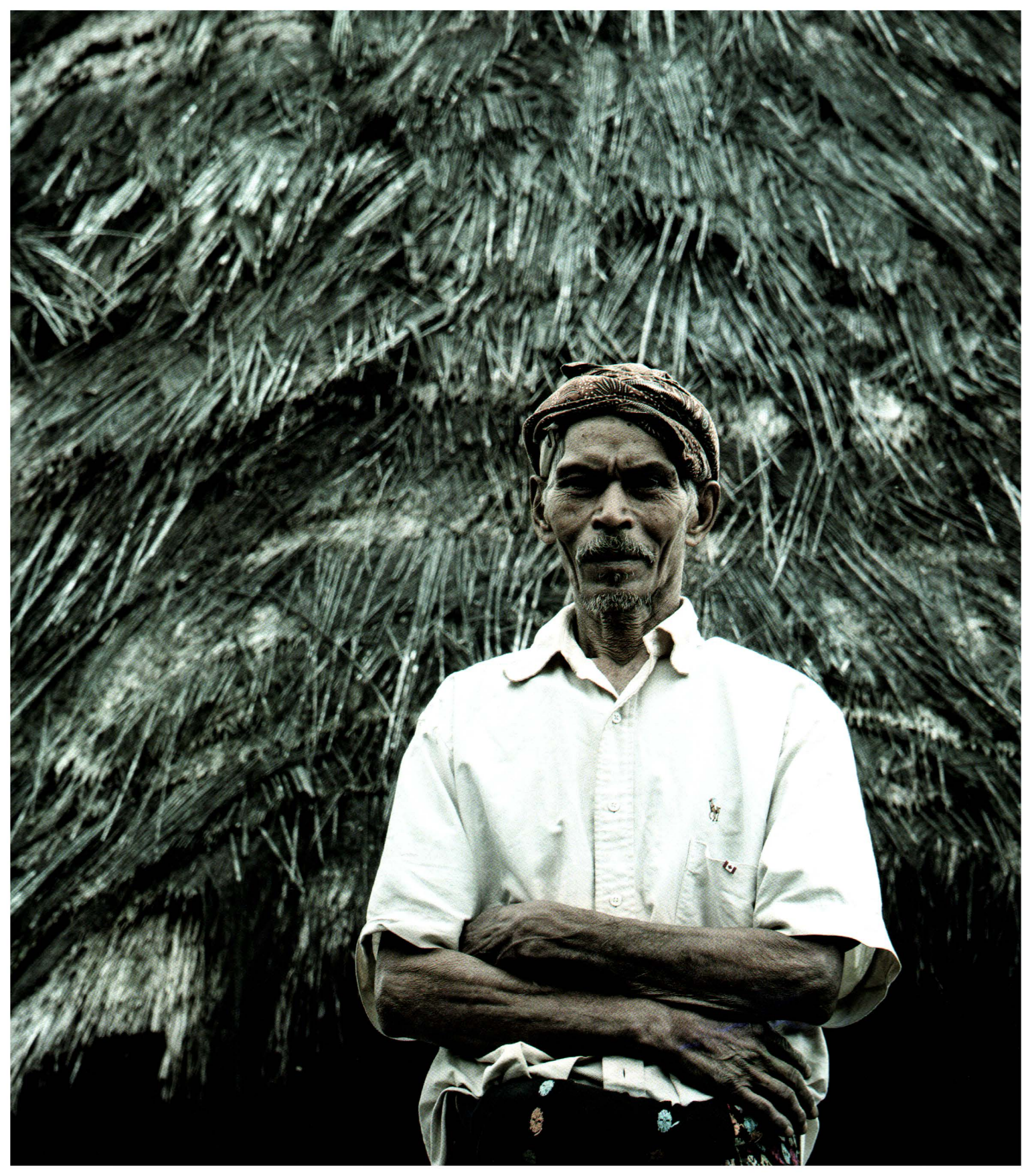
Wae Rebo’s timeless cultural practices blend seamlessly into the harmony of the village perhaps helped by the fact that a conscious decision was made by the elders to allow no TV or radio to disrupt village life.

And so, life here continues, as it has done for centuries, nestled in the remote mountains of Western Flores preserving a sense of pride and tribal spirit fuelled by a recipe of simplicity and tradition.

Story by Stephanie Brookes









Drum and Gong Traditional Songs

The Manggaraian language is preserved in their beautiful songs. I listened to four songs. The first song was about the *mbaru niang* houses, which reflect the essence of the Wae Rebo culture. "We all live in big houses. In our village we must learn to live in harmony. In our village we always stop and say hello to someone. If someone is sad, say you are sorry and talk to them."

The next song was a song for the children. Its soothing chants, rhymes, and rhythms have a mesmerising and soothing effect. This song serves to pacify the children if they are upset.

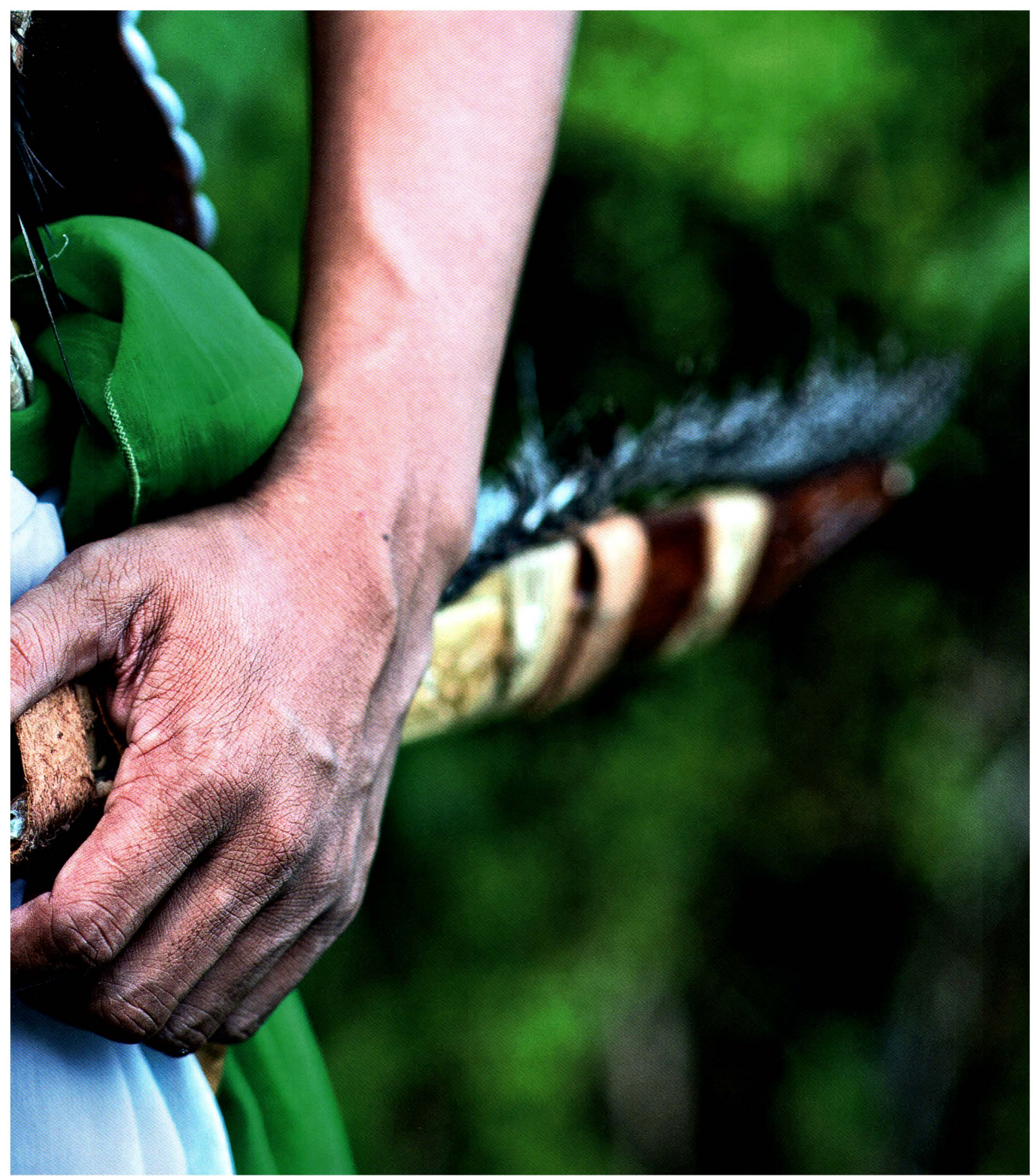
The third song conveyed the message of holding strong to tradition. "Do not forget the drum and the gong. They are from your ancestors. Do not lose this song."

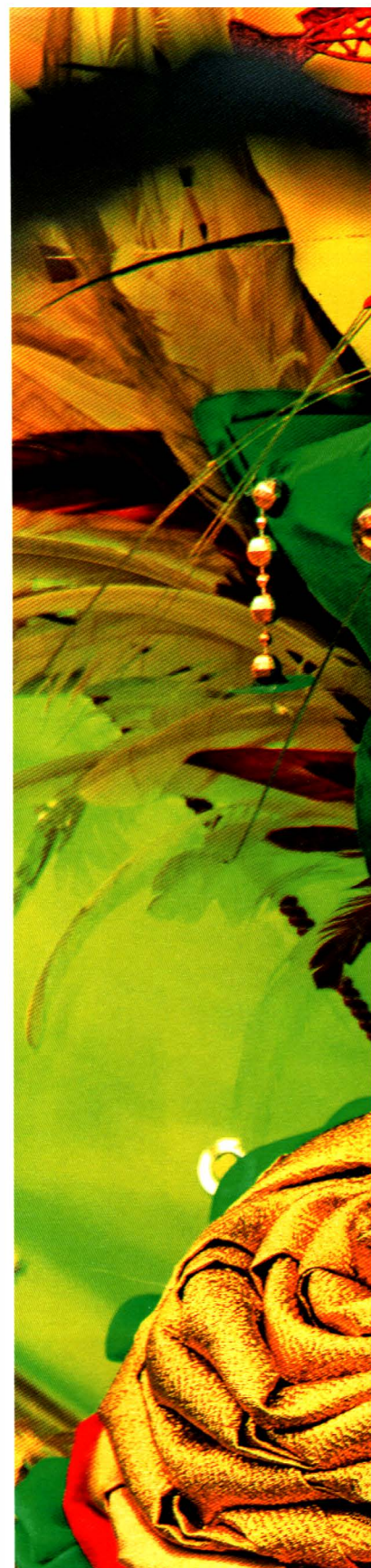
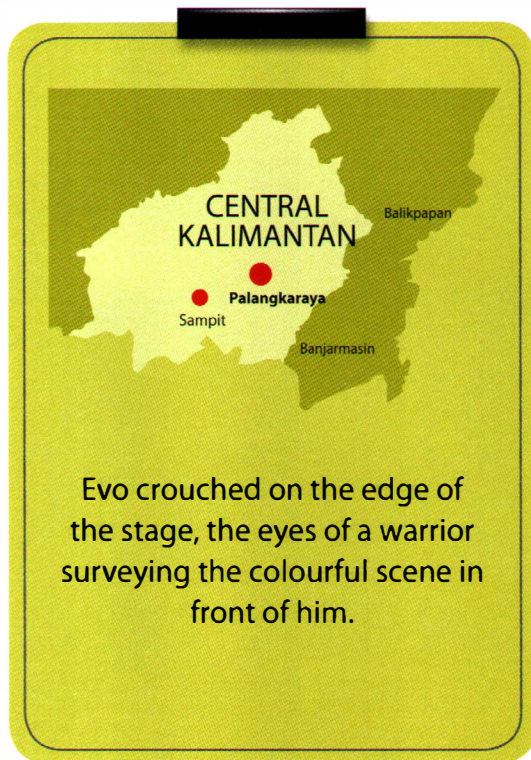
The fourth song was a plantation song. A ceremonial song that is sung to commemorate the opening of a new garden. The words "Do not forget the harvest ceremony" are repeated over and over.



I sen Mulang

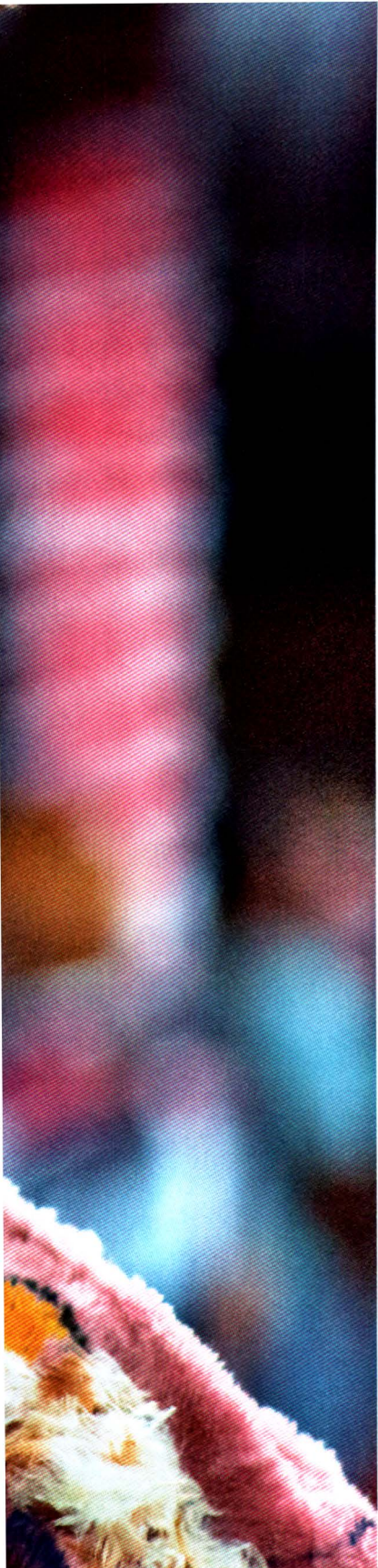
Dancing, Dragons,
and Dayaks











As the music echoing from the traditional instruments began to reach a crescendo, he leapt into the middle of the stage; painted shield in one hand and *Mandau* (traditional Dayak weapon) in the other, displaying a form of power and majesty passed on through the generations. In earlier times, this would have resulted in a severed head of the enemy being held aloft in the triumph of battle.

His headdress made from hornbill feathers, head, teeth, and claws along with beads and huge earrings, bristled in the evening breeze as he pranced around the stage, expressing himself in much the same way as his ancestors had in preparation for battle.

Siti, the beautiful dancer, moved with fluidity and grace, her movements evoking the gracefulness of the hornbill, the spiritual essence of Dayak culture. As she moved onto centre stage, the crowd was mesmerized by her grace and beauty. As the shimmering evening light caught the rich colours of her *beludru* cloth dress (from the nyamu tree) this young Dayak woman danced with spirit and passion, passed on from her ancestors. Her beauty was captivating, and it is said that the light-skinned Dayak women are the most beautiful in all of Indonesia.

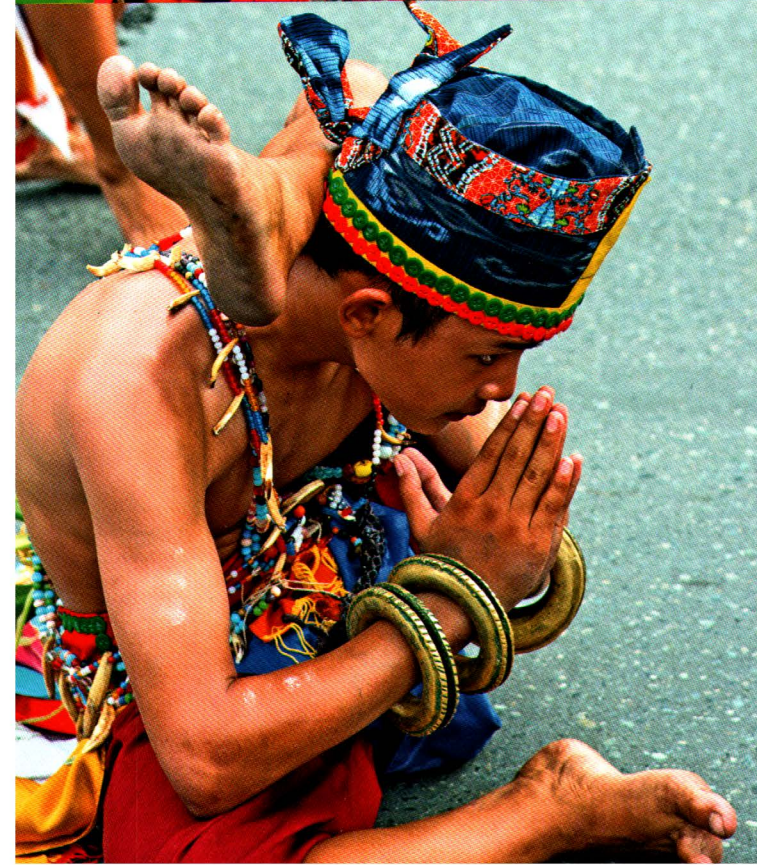
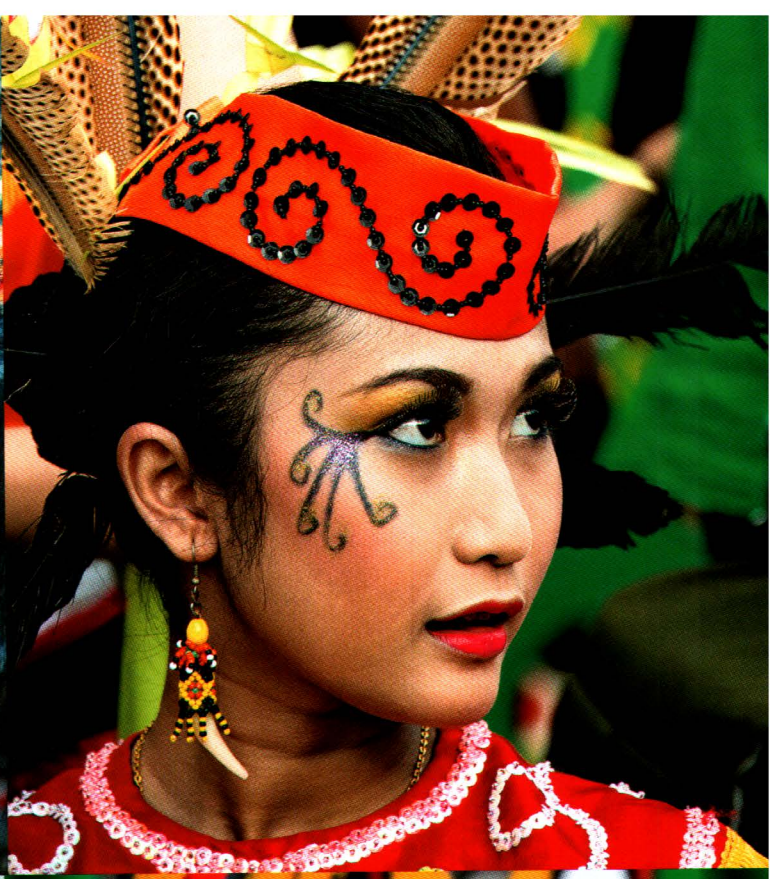
Palangkaraya, in Central Kalimantan holds the Isen Mulang festival every May where you have the opportunity to see dancing, music, sport, fashion, food, traditional costumes, fine-looking woman, handsome warriors, ritual displays, and colourful dragon boat racing. Representatives from the different Dayak tribes from this huge regency (153,000 square kilometers), make their way to the town of Palangkaraya to display their dancing skills and cultural heritage.

The main purpose of the Isen Mulang festival is to promote culture and tourism in Central Kalimantan and provide an opportunity for creative performance. The Dayak tribes represented at the event include the Ngaju, Lawangan, Ma'anyan, Ot Danum, Barito, Murung, Sieng, and Benuaq.

Isen Mulang, which means "never give up and strive to achieve," is in its seventh year and is one of the few opportunities in Kalimantan to watch a gathering of so many Dayak tribes together. The event begins in spectacular fashion with the parading of over seventy floats through the main street of the city. The floats represented not only the many Dayak groups from central Kalimantan but also include many ethnic groups representing their original heritage such as Bali, Papua, Toraja, Maluku Islands, South Sumatra, and the Eastern Islands of Indonesia. These people moved to Palangkaraya during the transmigration programs of the seventies, so many of the people represented in the parade were born in Kalimantan.

The sight of these various cultures dressed in their native costumes, dancing and performing as they make their way down the main street through the late afternoon is a sight that is simply unforgettable.









Of the many highlights, the Dragon Boat racing is a vibrant spectacle. Ten dragon boats decorated in Dayak motifs parade down the river. The boat with the most colour, design, and best dancing is declared the winner. On the boats, the Dayak women perform ritualistic dance while the young men in full ceremonial costume display their warrior-like skills, challenging each other as other boats pass by.

As the evening progresses a bit of action ramps up on the football field and *Sepal sawut* or fireball football gets started. This event is taken very seriously. Two teams compete using a coconut set on fire as a football! The players rub toothpaste on their legs to prevent their skin from burning, which seems to work except for the goalie who dives on the fireball when necessary and sometimes catches the on-fire football in his arms.

The crowd loves it and plenty of shouting and hoopla explodes if a misdirected burning coconut flies off into the crowd. During the day many other sports including woodcutting, fishing with bare hands, blowpipe shooting, and canoe racing take place.

Another highlight of the Isen Mulang festival is the Prince and Princesses Tourism Competition. During this event, which takes place over three evenings, there are twenty-four contestants each performing in pairs representing their regency. There is a lot at stake for this event as the winners get to represent Kalteng in Jakarta at the National Tourism Competition later in the year.

The three judges at each event vote on eight categories including dress, appearance, confidence, cultural expression, English speaking ability, dancing, creativity, and the unique ability shown by the contestant to effectively promote tourism for their regency. The contestants are aged between seventeen and twenty-three years and are adorned in beautiful, native costumes making for a spectacular sight as they dance, sing, and perform to impress the judges. Natural beauty can influence the judges so these contestants are some of the finest looking Dayaks you will see.

If you are interested in witnessing the spectacle of an ancient culture expressing itself in the form of dance, colourful parades, traditional sports, ceremonial costumes and music, in the spirit of celebration and fun, in one of the friendliest cities in Indonesia, then plan to take a trip in May and you will not be disappointed.

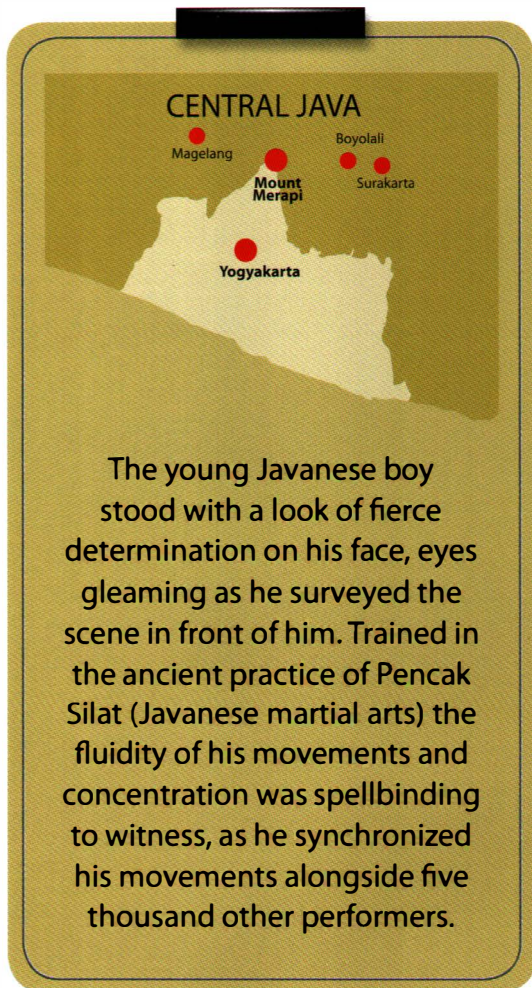
Story by David Metcalf

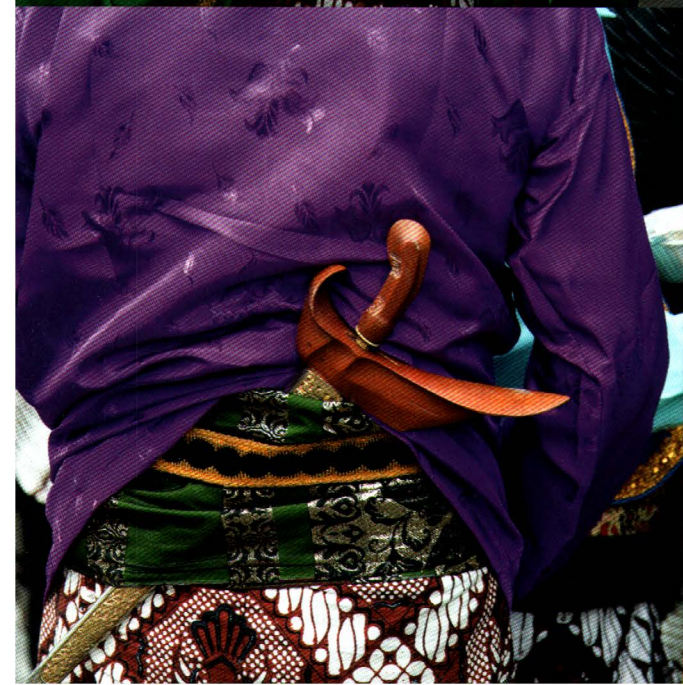
Pencak Silat Festival, Kejawen

Java's Cultural Heritage









This year's Pencak Malioboro Festival was held in Yogyakarta with twenty-five countries joining Indonesians from the many islands in the archipelago in a spirit of honor and respect in Java's cultural heartland.

This was the second Pencak Silat Festival and judging by the increase in participants, up from twenty-five hundred last year, it is becoming a very popular pastime particularly amongst young Indonesians.

Jake Richter from the United States, a passionate twenty-year veteran of martial arts described it this way, "Silat is a lifestyle. It is more than just a martial art. Silat is holistic with healing, meditation, spiritual, and martial. It is in everything we do; painting, dance and music. If you pay attention, you can see silat influence in everything. Because Indonesia is in the center of the trade routes you can see influence from all over the world shown in the arts. In Java, as well as around the world, it is unfortunate that the youth of the nations have forgotten where they have come from. Like in the United States, youth have become distracted with iPhones, video games, and money. The traditions and heritage that are in the roots of the old ways (Silat) are exactly what we need around the world. Values such as respect, honour, and love; these things are practiced in Silat. It is hard to find those values in our modern world. We hope to remind the people of this great art that has been developed and practiced for thousands of years that we are all human, one people, from the same ancestors, and together we can make a positive difference in this world. I think that one reason why silat is getting more attention is because it does fill a void that you cannot find anywhere else. People are searching for the answers, only after we begin to search inside ourselves, can we see we have had the answers all along. Silat helps us find ourselves."

It is very appropriate that this cultural tradition takes place in Central Java, the centre of Javanese culture. Kejawen is a spiritual belief and shared among the majority of Javanese living in this area that stretches from Banyumas in the west to Blitar in the east.





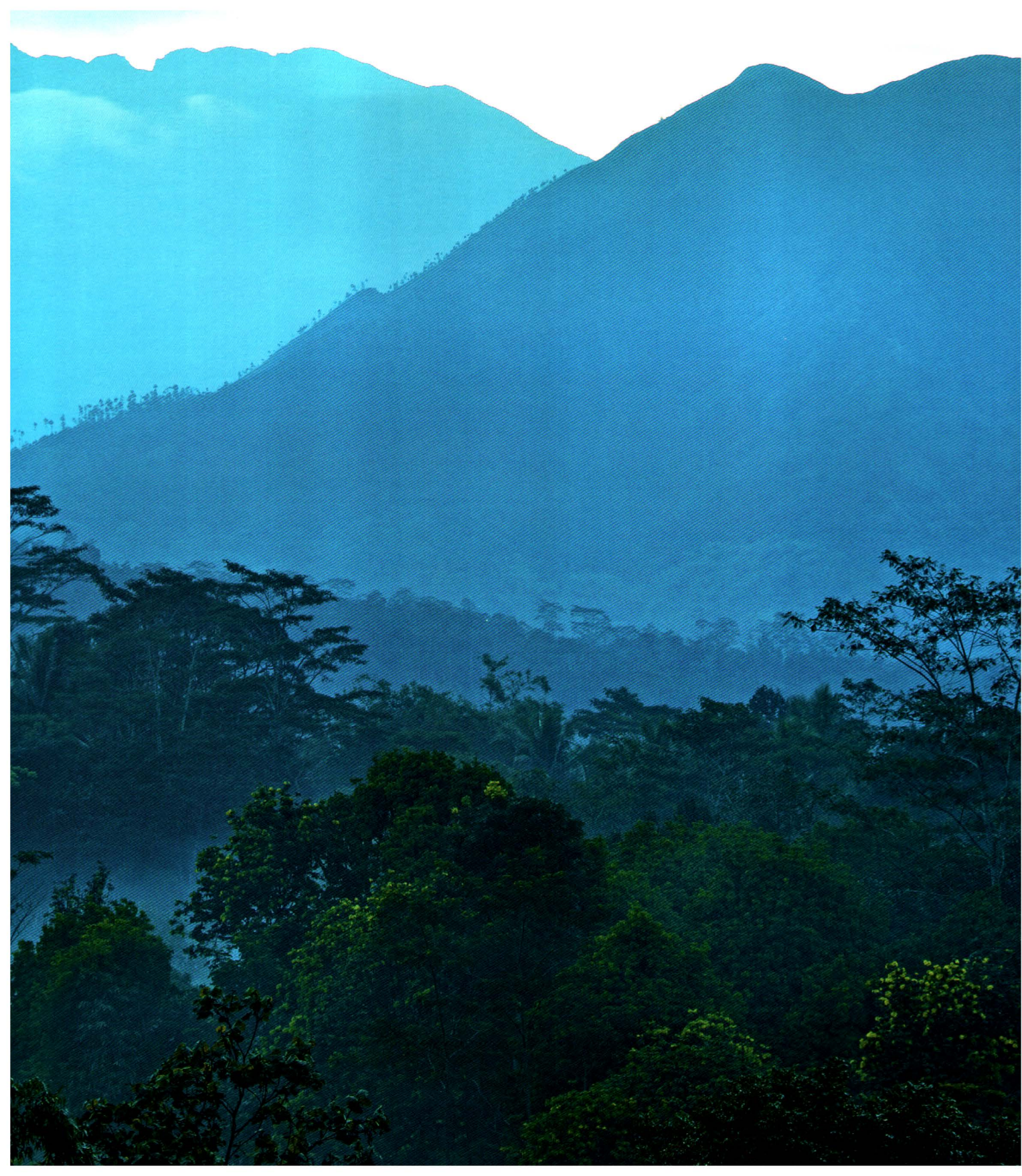
Despite its huge population (135 million people based on the 2012 census) Java has just two ethnic groups native to the island, the Javanese and the Sundanese. The Javanese is by far the more dominant in terms of population. In fact, many of Indonesia's political leaders, generals, and businessmen have and continue to come from Javanese speaking areas.

The region is a treasure trove of cultural delights and is probably the most diverse in Indonesia in terms of art, language, music, dance, literature, clothing, and textiles. History has left in its wake extraordinary monuments such as Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world, Prambanan, the ninth century Hindu complex, and hundreds of ancient stone monuments that have survived earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Archeologists are drawn to this area and discoveries of more of these ancient temples are being made every year.

This vast area of incredible beauty holds court to a number of different cultures including the Pasisir area, which dominates the northern coastal plain with a mixture of Javanese, Malay, Chinese, and Arab people.

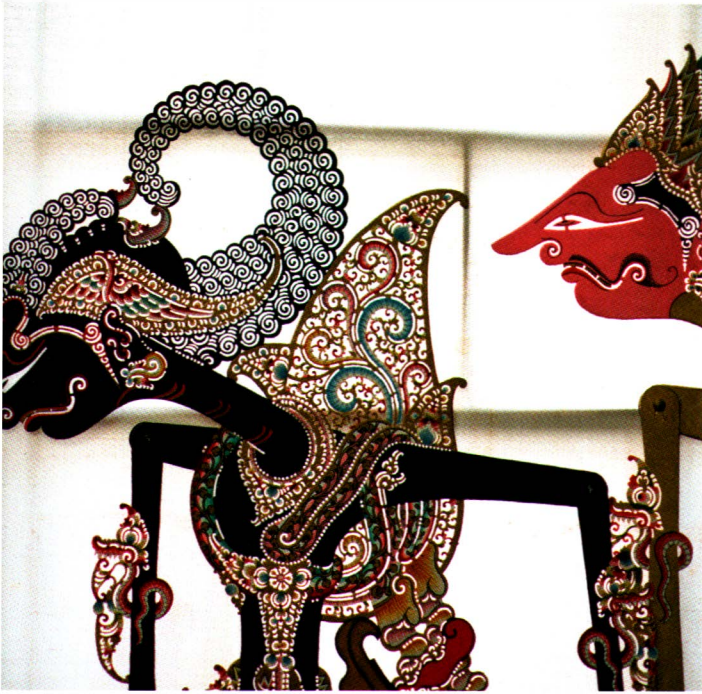
One of the most interesting aspects of Central Java is the variety of religious practices. Whilst predominantly Muslim, there are in fact two distinctly different forms of Islam. Santri, which is the more orthodox and similar to what is practiced in Jakarta and Abangan, which includes animistic and Hindu- Indian concepts. The Javanese who follow this aspect of Islam believe in Batin or purity of the inner. It is very similar to the Balinese and this is often achieved by meditating upside down!

However, perhaps Central Java's greatest asset is the warmth and friendliness of its people reflected in the smiles and easy going attitude. The Javanese ideals combine human wisdom (wicaksana), psyche (waskita), and perfection (sempurna) and accordingly follow this belief by controlling his or her passions and emotions so that he or she will reach enlightened harmony and union with the spirit of the universe.









Soaring volcanoes rising up steeply from the valley floor dominate this ancient land. Mount Merapi is its spiritual heart and the most active volcano on the planet towering over the landscape. In contrast to this the softness lives in the gentle, green, lush fertile rice fields, ancient temples, and monuments. Spending time with these friendly, respectful, beautifully balanced Javanese people is a pleasure. One can understand why the great Alfred Wallace, explorer of the 1860s said, "Taking it as a whole, and surveying it from every point of view, Java is probably the very finest and most interesting tropical island in the world."

Javanese culture and the gaining momentum to the Pencak Silat movement, through festivals like the annual Pencak Malioboro Festival, will help ensure that the rich central Javanese culture that exists today stays strong and continues to flourish into the future.

Story by David Metcalf

A scenic view of the Tengger Mountains in Bromo, Indonesia. The image shows several volcanoes, including Mount Bromo in the foreground with its characteristic conical shape and a smaller volcano to its left emitting a plume of white smoke. The landscape is filled with a sea of clouds, and the sky is a clear, vibrant blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is majestic and serene.

Tengger

The Mountain Folk of Bromo





EAST JAVA

Sutiah is a survivor. I met this Tengger woman in front of her simple dwelling high up in the mountains of East Java and found her spirit quite captivating as she told me about her life. Sutiah believes she is around seventy years old but isn't certain. She was born in the same house where she now lives with her husband and has two children who live in a very similar but typical Tengger house nearby. Like her, they cultivate the land for a living. Incredibly, in her seventy-odd years of living, she has never been to a doctor and lives on a diet of potatoes, cabbages, onions, corn, rice, tempeh (soybean), fish, and on occasion, chicken. The Tengger rarely eat meat except during special ceremonies when pigs and cows are sacrificed.





Sutiah grew up living in the forest and never went to school, moving into village life around the time the Tengger started to settle into villages in this area.

"I am very happy with my life," Sutiah told me. "I love to work in the fields all day and be near my children. I follow my Hindu beliefs," she said with a softness in her voice.

I had the feeling this woman would probably live a very long life, and despite the hardships of surviving day-to-day, she had a gentle, peaceful energy which was characterised by her lovely smile.

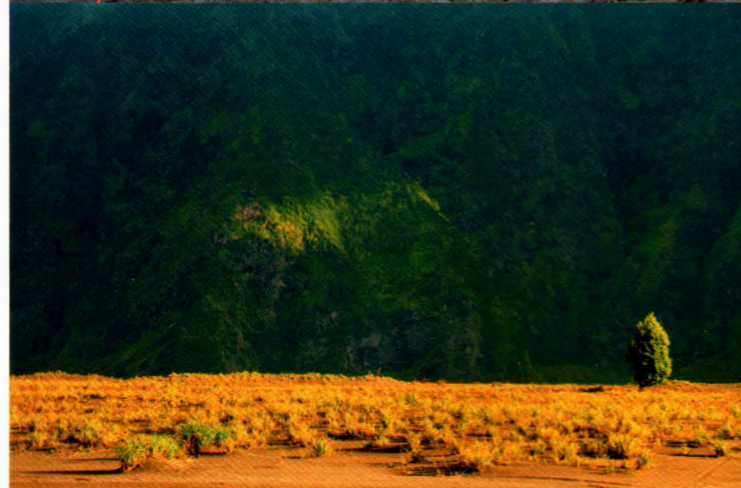
Sutiah is not unlike many Tengger people in this regard and I was quite captivated by the strong and tender spirit of the Hindu Tengger people.

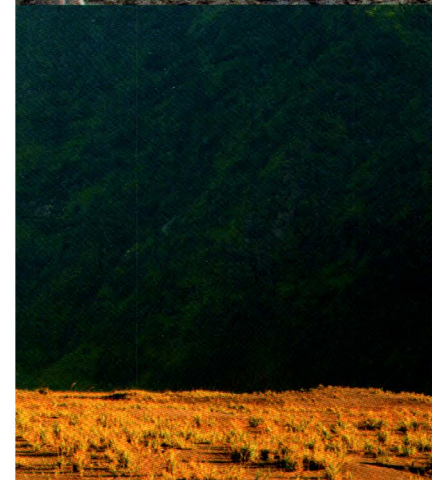
They live in a stunning environment, on the edges of the Tengger Massif, a spectacular landscape of six volcanoes including Mount Bromo, the spiritual heart of the area, Mount Batok, covered in Casuarina trees, Mount Kursi, Mount Watangan, Mount Widodaren, and further to the south, the mighty Mount Semeru at 3676 metres, the highest Mountain in Java.

In 1982, the area came under the protection of the National Park Service. The Bromo Tengger Semeru National park covers 5250 hectares and includes four lakes and fifty rivers. The massive, foreboding Tengger crater measures 10 km in diameter and this sea-of-sand creates the most extraordinary and ever-changing light across this lunar-type landscape.

To witness the Tengger horseman riding their finely bred horses across the pancake flat caldera, with the steep walls of the surrounding volcanoes, and an ancient Hindu temple in the background, is possibly the most impressive sight in all of Indonesia and for any photography enthusiast, it is a must-see, must-do.

The village of Cemoro Lawang sits right on the lip of the Tengger crater with some of the most stunning views of the area and this is where many of the Tengger people live. There are approximately six hundred thousand Tenggerese living in thirty villages in the area, most of these higher up on the slopes nearer to the National Park.





One of the many interesting features of the Tengger people is their ability to maintain their religion, as they are the only sizable Hindu religion in Java, which has an eighty-five percent Muslim-strong population. Whilst there have been some conversions among the Tengger people in the low lying areas, the people dwelling higher up in the mountains have sought help from the Balinese Hindus and maintain and preserve their religious beliefs and culture.

The Tenggerese are descendants of the Majapahit Empire, which collapsed five centuries ago. Some fled to Blambangan, on the East coast of Java, and some to Bali, and the rest sought refuge in the Tengger Highlands.

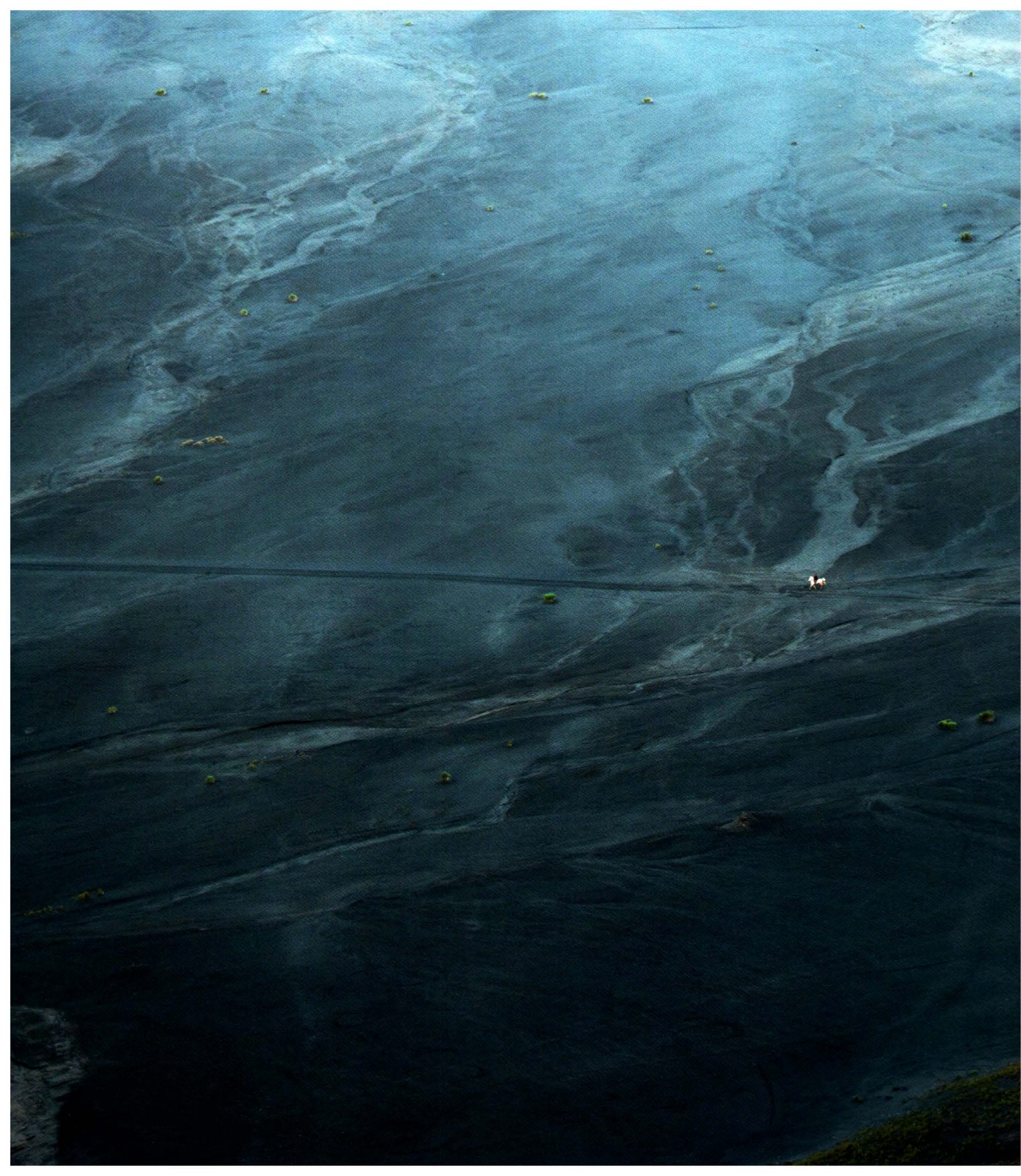
The Tengger are very spiritual in their beliefs and twice a year hold two main ceremonies; the Karo Festival and the larger, the Yadnya Kasada Festival, which is held on the fifteenth day of the last month of the Tengger calendar, normally in July.

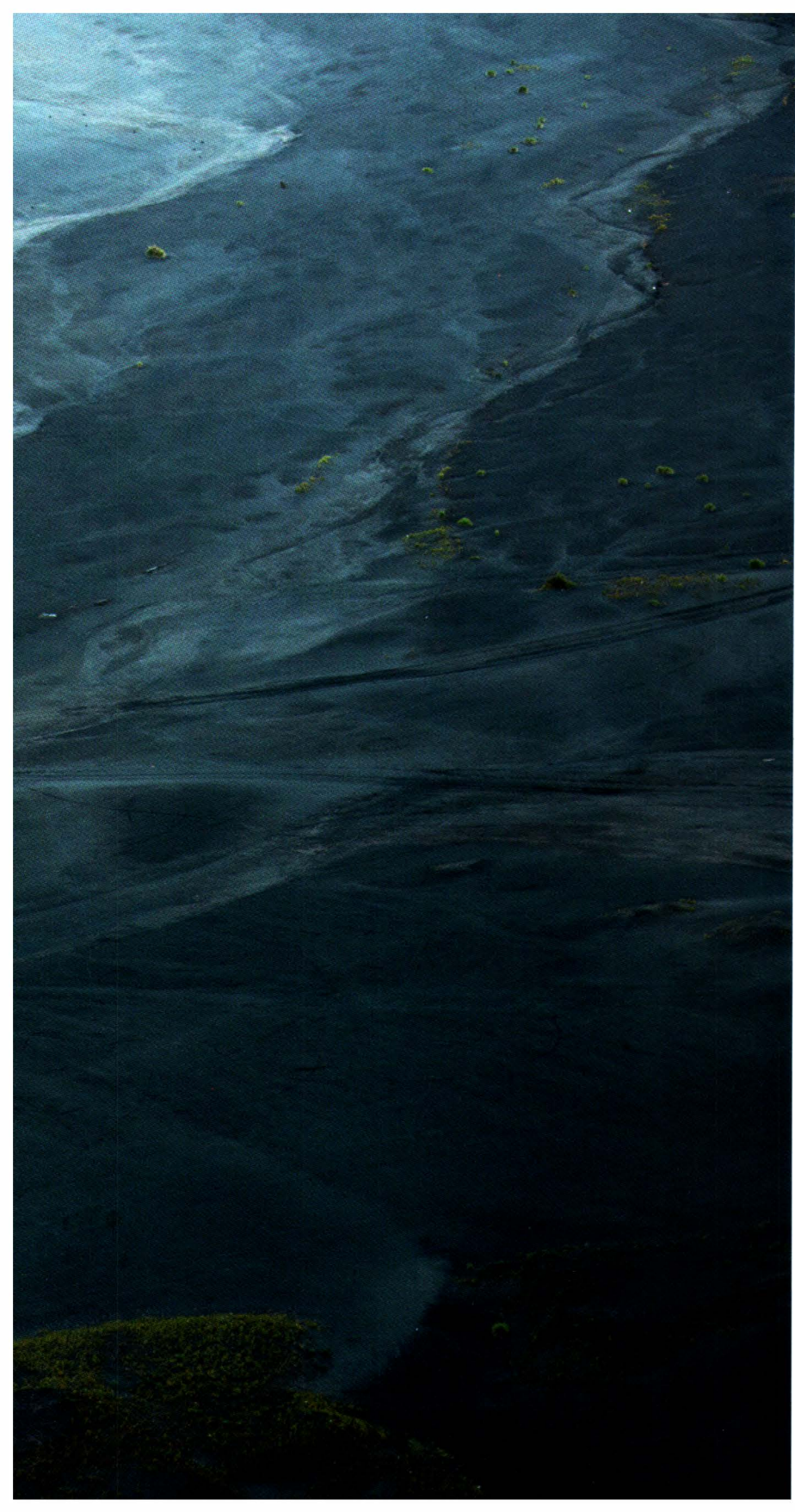
During Yadnya, Kasada priests called *dukuns* represent each village. The *dukuns* are believed to possess special spiritual knowledge, which they guard from the general populace, and during the festival a medicine man is chosen to be the spiritual leader. This special event, which is held at the Poten, the sacred ground in front of Mount Bromo, plays a strong significance during Kasada. Thousands of Tenggerese dressed in their colourful, traditional costumes pay homage to their ancestors by making offerings of vegetables, rice, fruit, money, flowers, and sometimes-animal flesh, believing that this will ensure the ancestors will bestow good luck and blessings for the coming year.

Sometimes good luck does not ensue and Mount Bromo, which is the most active volcano in the area, does erupt on occasions. Eruptions occurred as recently as late 2010 and early 2011; however, the eruption in 2004 claimed the life of two people who died tragically by falling molten rocks, giving credence to the locals belief that when Mount Bromo erupts, it is a sign the Gods are angry and more offerings are necessary.







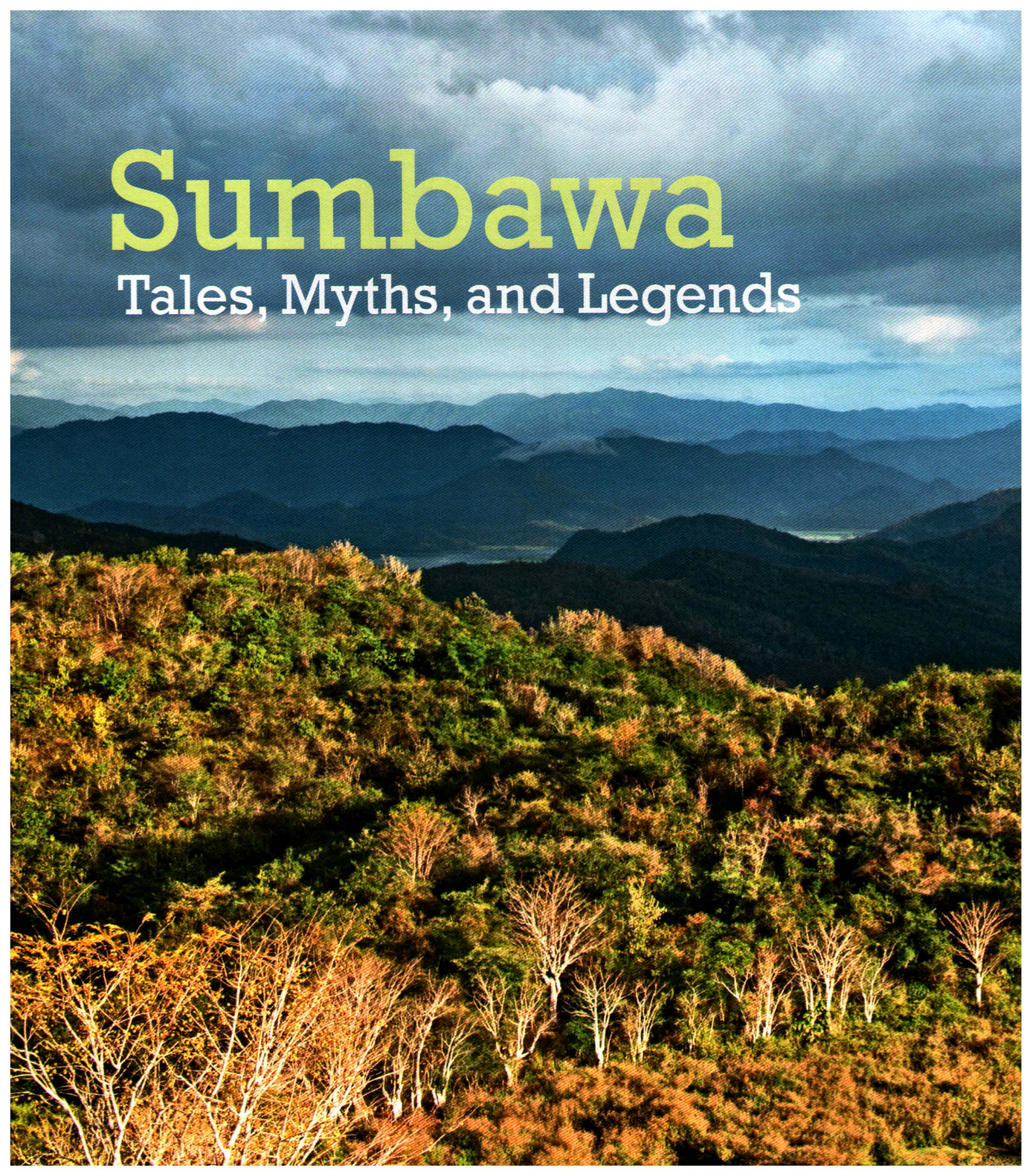


As I bid my farewell to Sutiah, I felt a strong sense of respect for these hardy but kind mountain-folk who have survived the challenges of the past and, who continue to practise their age-old beliefs and hold strong to their religion. They face many challenges, with perhaps the greatest threat being continuing erosion and depletion of the soil on the steep slopes on which they depend for their survival. Tourism is bringing some economic benefits to the area but one gets the impression these resourceful people would not care either way as they continue on their ancient highway.

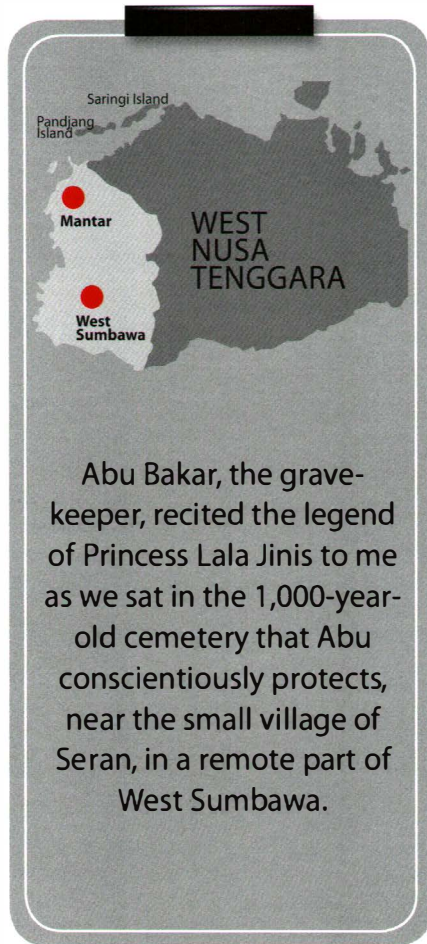
Story by David Metcalf

Sumbawa

Tales, Myths, and Legends







Abu Bakar, the grave-keeper, recited the legend of Princess Lala Jinis to me as we sat in the 1,000-year-old cemetery that Abu conscientiously protects, near the small village of Seran, in a remote part of West Sumbawa.



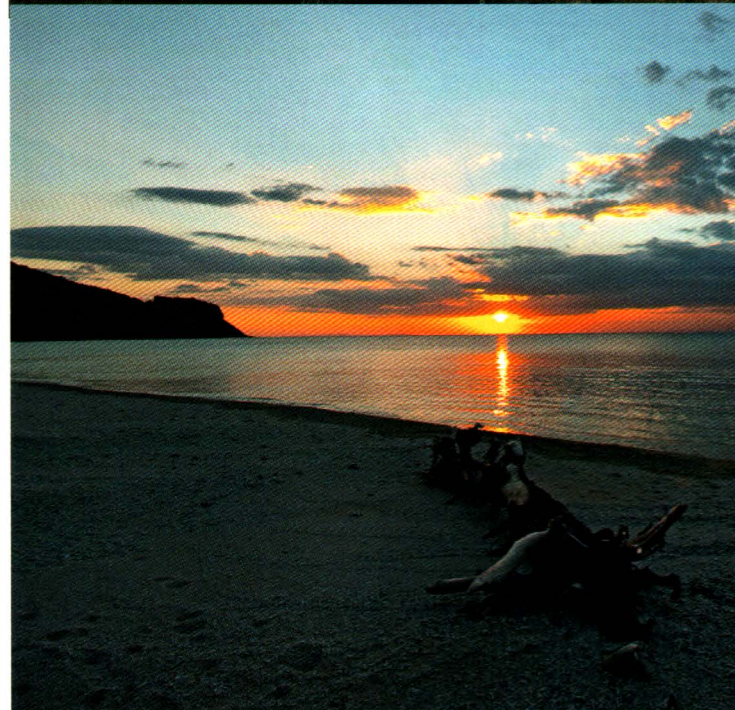


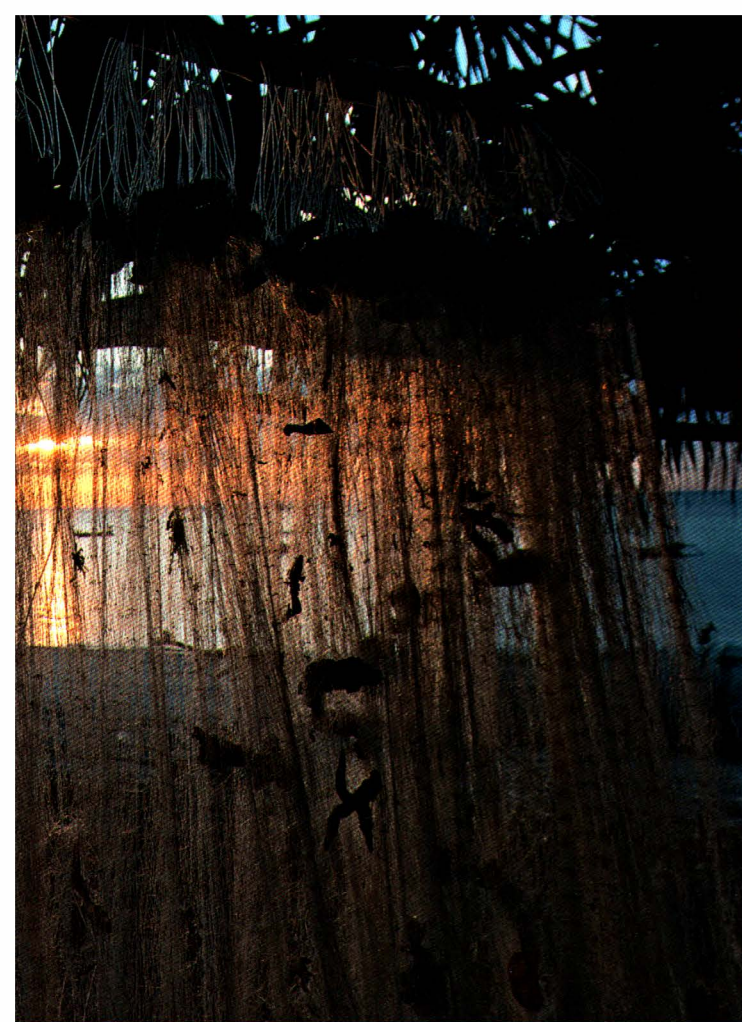
Princess Lala Jinis, the only daughter of the King of Seran, was a beautiful princess who at the age of sixteen, fell in love with Prince Lala Dia, a boy from another kingdom. Her parents did not approve of the relationship and her father forbade the princess to see the prince despite the very intense feelings they had for each other. Hopelessly in love, the couple eloped and ran away to the mountains and the beautiful princess was never to be seen again. It is said that the waterfall, twenty-five minutes walk from the gravesite holds a clue to the mystery. Princess Lala Jinis used to bathe in the crystal clear waters of the waterfall, and it is said by local people, this is where she escaped with her lover and died.

The grave of the King of Seran is contained in a small covered house, kept under lock and key in the middle of the tiny cemetery. To this day the special Lala Jinis Dance is performed in this part of West Sumbawa in honour of the tragic legend of the princess.

Not only does West Sumbawa have magical legends of princesses and kings, but also it has a pristine, stunning coastline, dotted with famous surf spots like Scar Reef, Super Suck, and Yoyos Beach. A treasure of Indonesia, Sumbawa is like two islands, divided by geography and language: Sumbawa in the West (Samawa ethnic group) and Bima (Mbojo ethnic group) to the East.

The island has historical links with the Makassarese people of South Sulawesi and the Chinese who traded in these waters for hundreds of years. Around eighty-five percent of Sumbawa's terrain is mountainous, making the rich volcanic river valleys the only areas for agriculture and farming. The plains yield prosperous crops and excellent returns to farmers who have enjoyed the benefits of the fertile volcanic soil, enriched from the dramatic explosion of Mt. Tambora in 1815, which is recorded by *The Guinness Book of World Records* as the greatest single eruption ever recorded. The top third of the mountain was blown off in the eruption and over one-hundred-and-fifty cubic kilometres of rock and ash was showered across the valley.





My quest for more tales and legends took me to the traditional village of Mantar, high up in the mountains, above the Southern coastline. It was a hot, dusty, bone-shaking four wheel drive journey, however the effort was well-rewarded with stunning views over Lombok and the mighty Mount Rinjani, the second highest mountain in Indonesia, which rises to height of 3,726 metres.

I had been told that this village had an interesting history but what I was about to discover was an extraordinary tale about albinos and a sacred ancient Chinese pottery vessel.

The curious farmers and residents of Mantar, whose last visit from a foreigner (according to the official village visitors book) was eighteen months ago, greeted me warmly. Abdul Salam, the Kepala Desa (village head) spoke of the history of the strange albino phenomena of the village.

“Since a long time ago,” Abdul said, “there has been seven albinos in this village. There will only ever be seven, no more and no less. It has been this way since time began in this village. No one knows why. When one dies, another will be born, but there will never be more than seven.”

The youngest Albino in Mantar is twelve years old and the oldest is fifty years old. There are three hundred families living in the village and a total of one thousand four hundred and eighty-one people. The albino connection stems from 1570, when the village was first settled when visitors came by ship from China. The ship was wrecked on the coast and amongst the Chinese and German passengers were seven albinos. Abdul explained to me the original seven albinos continued on to the next generation, but not necessarily born into the same family. The mystery remains to this day that when one albino dies, another will be born, with the magic number of seven staying consistent.

Adnan, a village elder and historian told the next story of intrigue to me. It is a magical and mystical tale about a very old Chinese ceramic pot, which dates back to 1570. The Chinese pot holds mystical powers and is said to have healed many people. People come for miles to drink the water from the pot and make a wish. The power of the pot cannot be explained.

Adnan told me a while back there was a house fire and the villagers rushed to the pot and took the special water, which is spring fed and flows over the pot, to put the house fire out. Using a few buckets only, and much to everyone's amazement, the fire was extinguished very quickly. "No one can explain it," Aden told me. "The water from the pot is magical. Many people come to Mantar for healing. They come to make a wish, often twice, and some people, with unexplained illnesses, have been cured. Everyone believes in the power of the pot," he explained to me.

The original pot sits in front of the mosque and is kept under lock and key in a little wooden house. The caretaker of the mosque is also the keymaster and he is very happy to open the little house any time. The pot is housed under two ancient gongs. One represents the male, the other, female. I opened one of the gongs and peered in, but could only see water which sits on top of the pot and is fed by an underground spring. The old man bent down and removed the little plug, releasing water from the pot for me. He then became very emotional when he discovered I had journeyed from far to pay my respects to this pot that he had spent a lifetime guarding. He then started crying. He couldn't stop crying, so I left, but I got the feeling he was not crying out of sadness, but joy and pride that I had come from another land, so far away, to see the special pot.

Last year, on Independence Day as a testament to the power of the pot, poison was added to the water and some fish were thrown in. In normal circumstances the fish should have died, almost instantly, however they survived and continued swimming.

Abdul went on to tell me that some time ago, Chinese people came to Mantar and tried to buy the sacred pot, "They offered one billion rupiah," he told me, "but it is not for sale and it will never be for sale. It belongs here, in Mantar."

From monolithic ancient gravestones to princess tales and powerful healing pots, the culture of West Sumbawa is very much alive today. Traditional village life continues on through dance and legends, as it has done for centuries, high in the rugged mountains. Along the scenic coastline Bugis and Bajo fishermen share the wealth of the sea with the dry farmers sharing the riches of the volcanic soil in the magical island of Sumbawa.

Story by Stephanie Brookes









Pira's Story **The 10 year old girl with no legs**

I met this brave little girl in Poto Tano, West Sumbawa. Here is her story:

When Pira was two, the bus she was on blew a tyre and rolled over. 19 people were badly injured in the accident, one person died and Pira had her legs severed.


Pira's knees have had to substitute for her feet and with her bone protruding, surgery will be required. Pira's also endured a huge stomach intestinal injury which has since healed. She walks on her knees but this is starting to cause terrible problems and it is now very apparent that Pira needs new legs. She is the top student in her school and is determined to be a Doctor when she grows up.

If you wish to help Pira's surgery costs for her new limbs visit the website below.

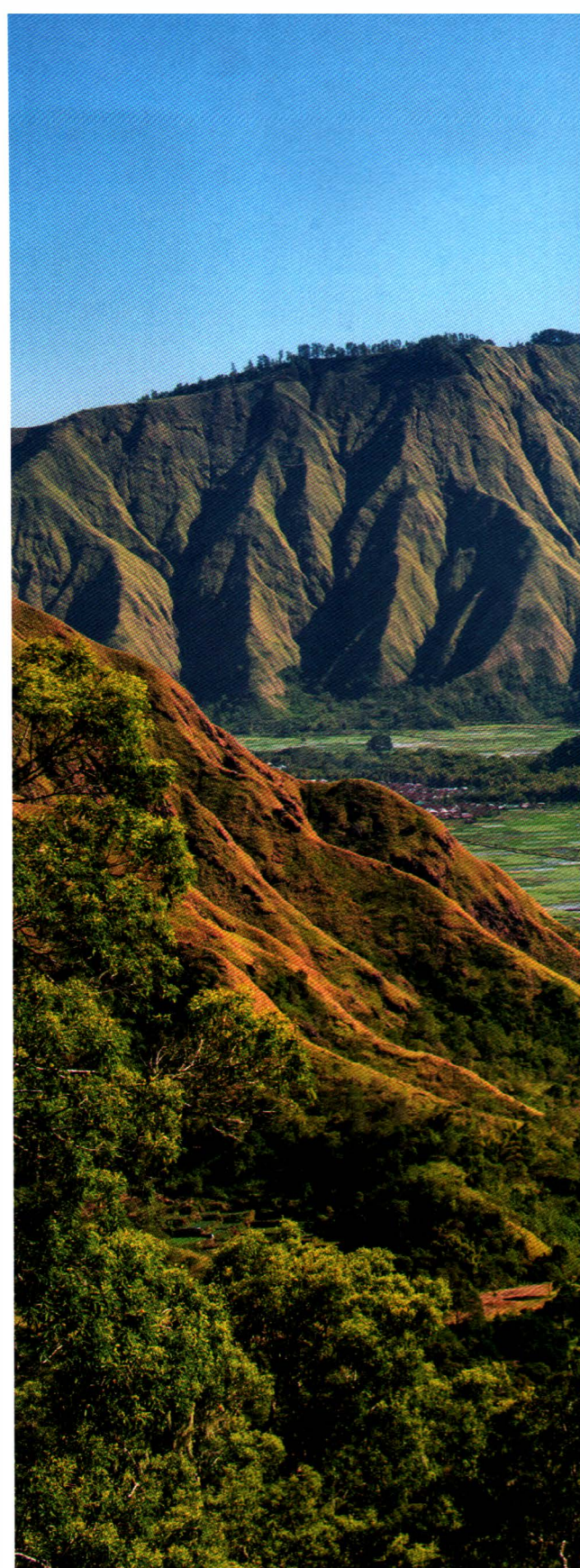
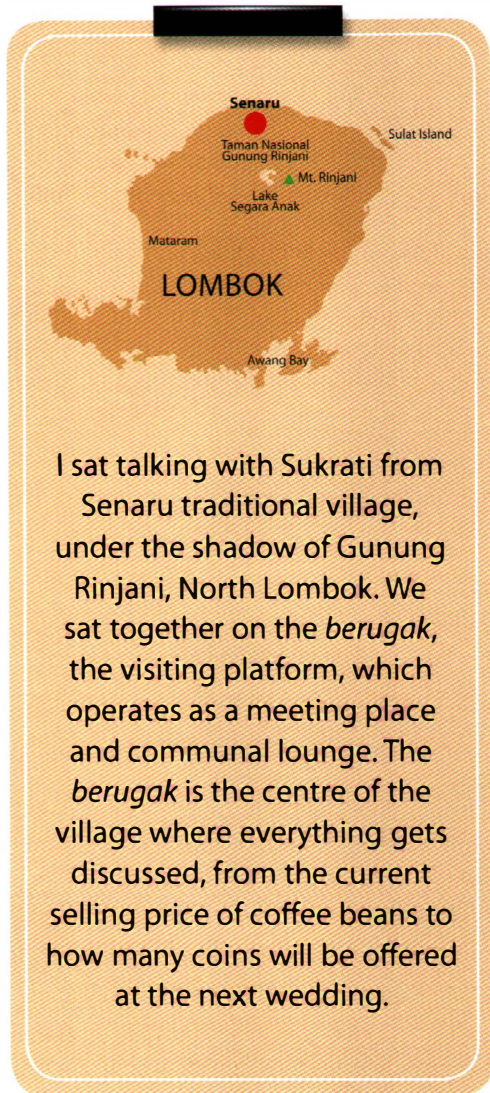
<http://www.gofundme.com/42wxu0>

Please visit this website on Pira for more information and photos:
<http://nposumbawa.weebly.com/>





Wetu Telu
Culture
of North Lombok









"In Sasak culture, when we have a wedding, the family of the bride announces how many coins a boy has to find in order to marry a girl," Sukrati told me. "These are ancient coins dating back to the Majapahit era (an ancient Hindu kingdom based in east Java from 1293 to 1520). It is quite a challenge to find the genuine ones. There are fake ones around, but these are very obvious and not acceptable. The boy must search around and go to other villages and return with the declared number. The boy's family helps with the search and the finances. The going rate is around Rp 4,000 per coin, which seems a reasonable price, however sometimes a family may demand up to five hundred coins. The coin dialogue between the two families involves quite a lengthy discussion and it is equally as lengthy to find the required amount, but that is the way it is, and always will be with our people," Sukrati explained.

To get to Senaru traditional village you take the coast road north of Senggigi, which is a sealed road that winds and twists around the far north coast of Lombok. It is very scenic with a dramatic coastline cradled by the Bali Sea to your left and the Gunung Rinjani Reserve to your right. The mighty Mount Rinjani rises to 3,726 metres, dominating the landscape. It's a small rough road out to Senaru and Segenter Village, home to the Sasak people who are Muslim and keep their traditional ways very strong. Their unique culture is known as Wetu Telu, a mix of elements of Islam with ancestor worship and to a lesser extent animism. The followers of Wetu Telu like to do things in threes. They pray three times a day (instead of five times a day), they honour the concept of the Holy Trinity; the sun, the moon, and the stars which they see as a representation of heaven, earth, and water and their religion has elements and similarities of Hindu, Buddhist, and Islam beliefs. Even when it comes to wedding protocol, the bridal couple stay in the wedding suite for three days.

Senaru has a total village population of seventy-nine and this is comprised of twenty families living together. They grow grains, tobacco, rice, and coffee. Their neat, clean houses are in straight rows with well-swept dirt lanes in between. The cooking is done over an open fire. When it comes to ceremonies like circumcision, a buffalo must be slaughtered. Sukrati told me, "If a buffalo is not available, the animal must have four legs. The meat is divided up amongst the guests and a big feast is had by all."

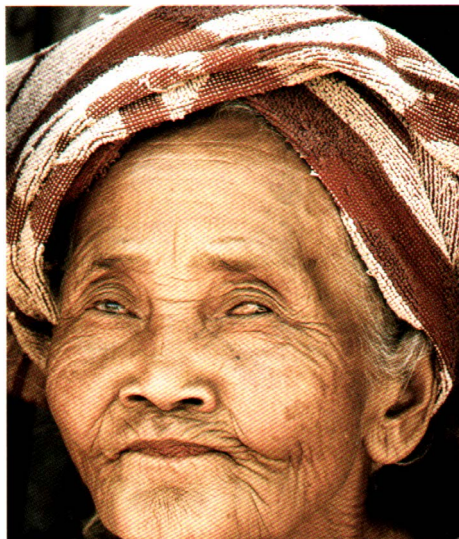




The Wetu Telu people observe the Sasak calendar and have many special days throughout the year. Sukrati explained to me that a long time ago their religion used to incorporate animist practices, but not so much anymore. They engage in age-old traditions like stick fighting, using shields made from buffalo skin and rattan. They fight with the intent to draw blood and when the blood spills on the soil, a good harvest is ensured. In battle, a stick fight comprises of three rounds of fighting, which is controlled by a ringmaster. Sukrati assured me, "Stick fighting is not violent. If there is any anger shown, the fight is stopped."

The village has a long history dating back to the 14th century and in 1997 a major reconstruction was initiated and many of the old houses were rebuilt. I was told only four sacks of cement were donated from the government and the village had to raise the money themselves for the re-building. Today, this village stands very proud and is a wonderful example of a preserved ancient culture that has held tight to its beliefs and practices. People from many corners of the world have spent time at this little village and three years ago a twenty-six-year-old Canadian girl, Jennifer, visited and stayed in the village for several months studying the Wetu Telu ways and taught English to a selected group of people. The purpose of this programme was to help with employment opportunities in the tourism industry. English-speaking skills are the key to most tourism jobs. It was very successful. The women were trained as guides and now take English-speaking tourists out on panoramic walks while the men in the programme were trained as trekking guides and now gainfully employed.

The other traditional village I had the opportunity to visit was Segenter Village. I was fortunate to meet one of the village elders, a seventy-five-year-old man, Nengsanom, who invited me to sit with him at the *berugak* communal pavilion.



"All social visits take place here," he explained. "The platform is open, so we can keep an eye on things. We supervise and keep an eye on the boys and the girls when they meet. It is very good because we can see what they do," he said with a beguiling smile. He continued, "We eat together here and everything is spoken about together. It is very social." Nengsanom showed me around the village houses. As I entered one of the low-lying houses, stepping over the raised entrance and ducking down, Nengsanom explained this was intentional, "It means you must lower your head as you enter, so you pay your respects and bow."

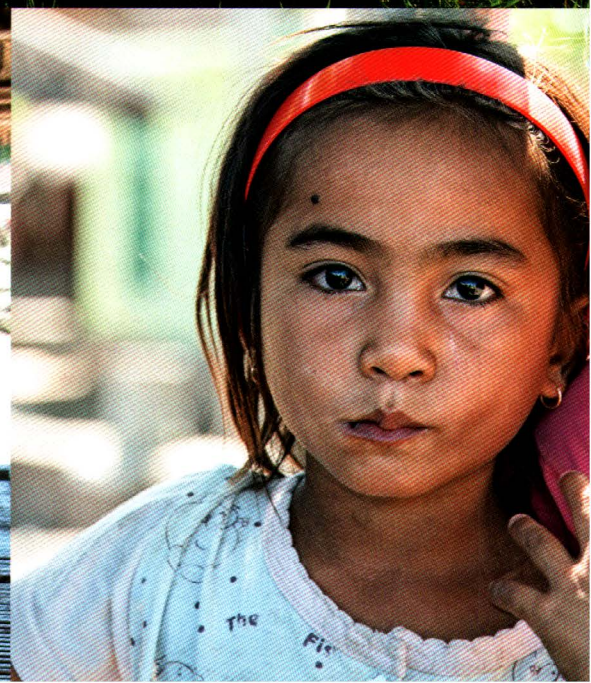
Segenter Village is the larger of the two villages with four hundred and twenty-nine people living together and one hundred and seventeen families. The village is supported by a hearty agricultural economy and they grow crops including tapioca, corn, spinach, peanuts, soybeans, and harvest rice once a year.

As I passed sleepy goats lying under the houses and I wandered through the neatly laid out rows of tidy, clean houses, all of which face each other, it wasn't hard to find the *berugak* spot. You simply follow the din of chatter, the clanging of pots, and the odd peels of laughter accompanied by the sounds of children. On top of the houses, *bungus* crosses are displayed, which serve the purpose of guarding against evil spirits and any bad tidings which may be seeking a way into the village.

Life in these villages combines with nature and traditional practices and a peaceful, harmonious rhythm prevails. In keeping with the Wetu Telu belief of doing things in threes, they honour one's parents, their community leaders, and God.

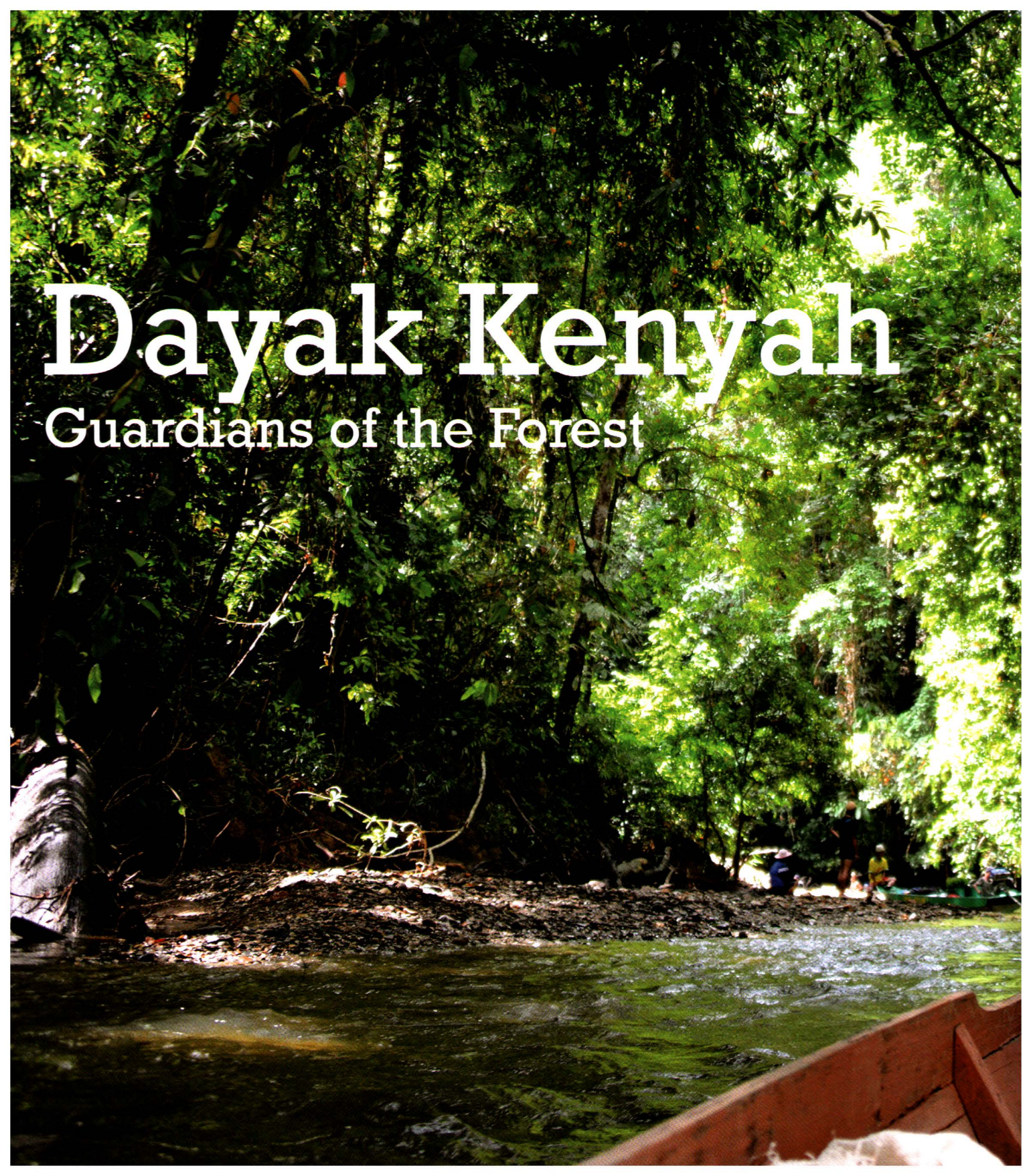
A hidden heritage lies under the shadow of Mt. Rinjani in North Lombok waiting to be experienced by those with a curiosity for the diversity of culture offered east of Bali.

Story by Stephanie Brookes




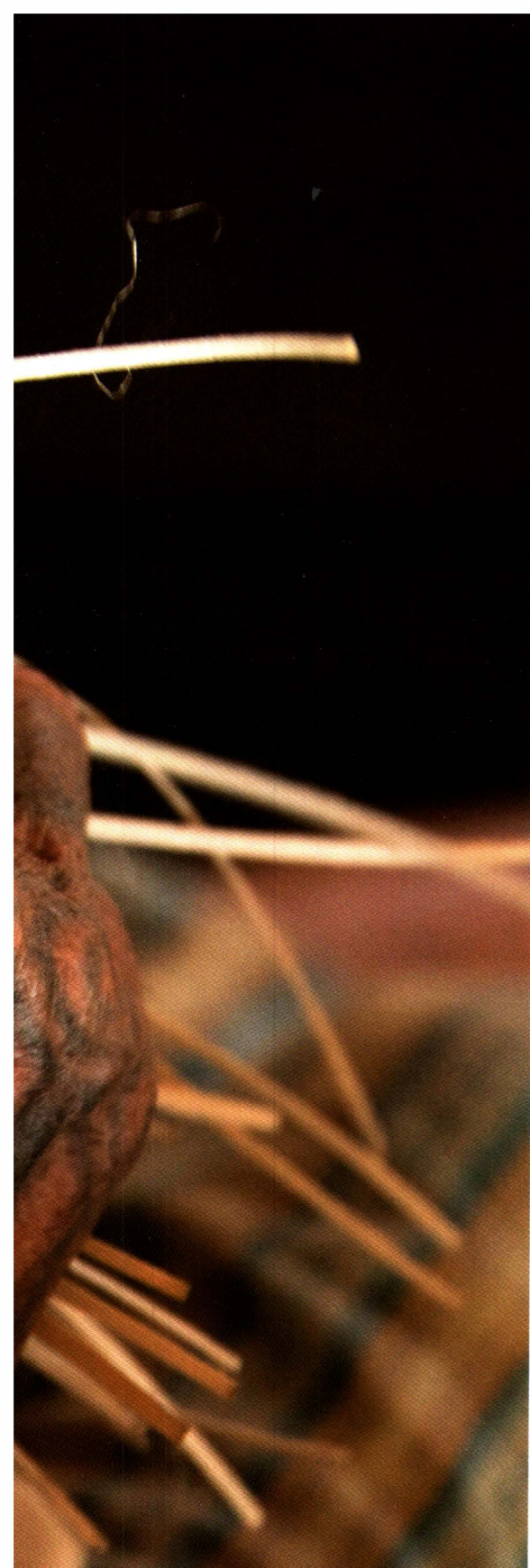
Dayak Kenyah

Guardians of the Forest









Imagine arriving in a small village, surrounded by primary virgin rainforest, in a remote area of Kalimantan, Asia's Amazon. It is late afternoon and streams of filtered light cast a lovely soft glow upon the village. Everyone is smiling and happy. People come out of their simple dwellings to greet you in a spirit of friendship and curiosity.

They welcome you as family and feel honoured that you have taken the journey to visit their home in the jungle. They are also a little shy, especially the children, who look away when you try to take their photograph in that innocent way that suggests they seldom see foreigners. Eventually, they get their confidence up and beam the most beautiful, natural smiles; the smiles of Setulang.

This place does exist and this very ancient Dayak culture, which has survived for centuries, stands very proud with a determination that their customs and traditions will continue to survive. This is the story of the Kenyah Dayaks.

The Dayak culture is very interesting and similar in many ways to the Native American Indians of the United States of America. However, there is one profound difference, as they were never colonized as such. The Dutch who ruled Indonesia for over three hundred years were reluctant to venture into the forests of Borneo (Kalimantan) afraid of the Dayaks and their feisty reputation as headhunters. The Dayaks of Kalimantan were believed to have special supernatural powers, possessed tails, and could fly between the trees.

In the past fifty years though, the missionaries have made their way up the rivers and converted many of the traditional Dayaks (like the ones from Setulang Village) to Christianity and their ancient beliefs and practices have melded into a Christian-based way of life and belief system.

The word Dayak means inland or upriver people, however Dayak is an umbrella term for members of culturally diverse tribes, each with their own language, customs, and traditional practices.

There are many groups within the overall Dayak culture with the largest ones being the Punan, Kenyah, Iban (although mostly in coastal Borneo), Kayan, Barito, and Ngaju of Central Kalimantan.

The Punan still live in the forest and move around nomadically in the jungle, in the northeastern part of the island. The Kenyah who live in Setulang live in the eastern part of Kalimantan and mostly live in traditional villages in the highland areas, although

many can be found in the larger towns of Malinau, Balikpapan, Samarinda, and Tarakan.

The Dayak tribes not only have their own language, but other unique practices including their different styles of music, dance, and very colourful clothing. Recorded history is oral and very little of their history has been recorded in writing. The traditions and beliefs are passed down through the generations, through their own unique languages and ways of communication. The world has yet to discover many aspects of the Dayak way of life, and the modern Indonesian sees them as primitive and has little understanding of their culture and who they are.

On my most recent visit, I reconnected with my good friend and elder of the village, Pilius. Pilius is very passionate about his culture and in particular the connection between the Dayak ways and the environment. The village of Setulang is on the edge of a vast area of pristine rainforest about one hundred kilometers from the Malaysian border.

"We call this place Tanah Olan," Pilius explained to me. "In Kenyah Dayak language this means forbidden forest, forbidden to log or destroy. We are spiritually connected with this place and we love the forest as much as we love our children. We enjoy taking our children up the river to hunt and fish and teach them the old ways," he explained. This includes dressing in traditional costumes for ceremonial dancing and singing sessions long into the night. "When we dance and sing, we believe this is a way to connect with our ancestors and we can feel their presence." Pilius continued, "Everything has a meaning and we have many words for rocks, water, waterfalls, plants, and the many insects and animals that have survived for thousands of years."

This is indeed a very special place with many species of plants that are native to the area. In fact, many botanists have visited this part of Kalimantan and believe there are species of plants living in the forests here that have yet to be identified and discovered. Many of these plants hold very important health benefits.









Pilius and the other elders in the village are concerned that the younger generation is losing touch with the forest, and their culture, as they drift into the cities and spend less time with their families. As Pilius explained to me, "We have no high school in our village, so the children must go to Malinau or further away to attend high school. There is very little for them to do back here after they leave, so they have little choice but to live in the cities, as that is where there is work. We want more tourists to come and visit, so we can take them to Tana Olen and we are in hope of some tourism job opportunities that will open for our young people."

To reach the forest you need to take a very exciting but safe two-hour boat ride up the rapids in a small dugout from Setulang Village, deep into the jungle. The men from the village have built a *Jungle Camp*, in the hope that more people will come. They are very excited to share their knowledge of the forest and give visitors a special experience in the wilds of the jungle.

Raymon was our guide on a recent visit. His knowledge of the forest and the ways of the Kenyah Dayaks made this trip an educational one, as well as an adventure trip. I was in awe of this agile Dayak man, who seemed to glide through the forest and when it came to our river crossings, he literally skipped from rock to rock with ease and grace. In comparison, being a

foreigner, from the city, I stumbled and slipped my way across the wet rocks, with a bit of nervousness and absolutely no grace. I am yet to meet a Dayak with shoes! Raymon escorted us through the undergrowth and rugged jungle tracks completely in bare feet. He ventures into the tropical, dense, heavy rain forest for days at a time, connecting with the spirits of the forest, always aware and acknowledging the dangers; guided by the hornbills, the native birds of Kalimantan.

The future of the Kenyah Dayak, and many other Dayak tribes is an uncertain one as Kalimantan comes under increasing pressure from mining, palm oil operations, and forestry companies, whose motivation is only commercial profits. Recently the Indonesian government gave approval for two mega-dams to be built in East Kalimantan, which will have a huge impact on the indigenous communities of the area.

Travelling sometimes takes us on journeys beyond ourselves, our world, and our perception of life. To spend some time in the jungle and connect with these strong-willed and proud native Dayak people is to journey into a deeper place of discovery and an opportunity to learn from this ancient culture that has lived harmoniously with their natural environment for centuries.

Story by David Metcalf

Indonesia's vast archipelago has more natural and cultural resources than can be described in any book, more cultural and natural beauty that can be captured in any film, and more flora and fauna than can be collected in any museum.

But it is the people of Indonesia who live in these beautiful islands that give the country – and fortunate visitors – the immense cultural richness and diversity that reinforce the national motto, "Unity in Diversity".

This publication traces the lives of twelve different group of Indonesians who live in twelve different regions of the archipelago, each of incomparable beauty, interest and charm.