

Cultural and Architectural Transitions of Southwestern Sumba Island, Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural, economic, political, and architectural change are clearly evident in southwestern Sumba, Indonesia. Time-honored patterns of life are challenged by new and imported beliefs, customs, building practices, and political dominance. Currently, traditional settlement architecture, some tourist facilities, shophouse towns, and governmental complexes coexist with little integration. The historic, vernacular¹ patterns of the architecture of the indigenous population are in a state of transition and erosion.

Dismissing the vernacular and with a focus on the megalopolis, all too often architects, educated in the constructs of advanced industrial societies, view a regional vernacular as style, and such works to be within the realm of the profane, infrequently considering the possibility that vernacular architecture may also be rich in spiritual meaning. Drawing from the customary and historic practices of its ancestors, the clan-house architecture of Wanukaka ("Settlements of the Cockatoo") in southwestern Sumba, contradicts Western expectations, for it is as much sacred as it is profane in its functions and meanings. Although it may appear principally a style using indigenous and prescribed building materials and techniques with predictable forms and an historically prescribed ordering system, the clan-house vernacular expression is rich in spiritual content, meaning, and function; and it is also a product of the physical environment – all inextricably interconnected. This traditional architecture does express a tight fit of its culture, the sacred as well as the profane. It does not support the notion that vernacular works are about style, appropriated image, nor fashion, or taste. It does, however, reinforce the position that a serious study uncovers a wide range of anthropological issues, especially of substance and meaning. Only then can it be addressed appropriately in architectural application. Within these contexts, the introduction of the imported shophouse, tourist resorts, governmental buildings, and the regional vernacular are useful to inform architectural discourse.

In southwestern Sumba, opportunities do exist to encourage traditional architecture while providing access to a cash economy, Western goods, and serves as a means to ease change from the time-honored patterns of life to the new and globalized. The introduced Southeast Asian shophouse and Indonesian governmental buildings express no intention to become a part of the local identity.

CONTEXTS

Until the twentieth century, Sumba had successfully resisted outside dominance; however southwestern Sumba continues to experience centuries old internecine warfare, as recently as October 1998. Wanukaka is located on the southwestern coast of Sumba, one of the numerous islands forming the Lesser Sundas of the Indonesian Archipelago. It consists of hilly terrain with one notable grand valley, a dependable flowing river, and a rocky coastline meeting the eastern waters of the Indian Ocean. The domain has fertile rice fields, coconut groves, grasslands, bamboo stands, and forests covering a mudstone and limestone foundation. With a population of 11,500 people, about sixty-eight percent is Christian² and thirty-two percent Marapu practitioners (1997), a notable change from the fifty-fifty mix in 1993.³

Waikabubak, the principal town of about 4,000 people in the Loli district (north of Wanukaka) is set in the highlands. Here, Chinese descent businessmen have established their shophouses near traditional settlements and Indonesian governmental offices. While ethnic Chinese and Islamic Indonesians, from nearby islands and Java, form a small minority of the population, the majority of the indigenous people of Sumba are Austronesian.

The equatorial and monsoonal climate is warm to hot throughout much of the year. While the valleys and flooded rice fields provide very high levels of humidity, the air is dry and generally comfortable atop the hillocks where the indigenous people of southwestern Sumba historically have established their ancestral clan-house settlements for defense and comfort.

FIELD RESEARCH METHODS

With the aid of a Wanukakan lord, the ancestral clan-house architecture and settlements in Wanukaka were opened, providing an opportunity to observe and document a vernacular pattern with its culture, beliefs, and lithic sepulchral monuments and altars relatively intact. The people who continue to connect to their clan-houses and practice their spiritual beliefs through the animistic and ancestral practices of Marapu, as well as those Christianized (since the mid-twentieth century) and living in road-side strip settlements in new Sumbanese-style houses within the domain, offered an opportunity to acquire information from the most primary of sources, the local population.

Having observed diverse architectural approaches while living and working in Selangor, Malaysia, and having travelled throughout much of Southeast Asia during the late 1980s, this researcher experienced not only a rich diversity of culturally informed vernacular architecture, but also the dynamic growth and impact of Westernization and globalization on local cultures and architectural traditions. Fieldwork began in 1992 with a survey of southwestern Sumbanese settlements, houses, and tombs while observing political and economic forces re-shaping the local cultures and architecture. Wanukaka presented a clear opportunity to record a megalithic, agarian, and water buffalo culture substantially intact while undergoing a conversion to Christianity. Field research continued for four to six week periods in Spring/Summer 1993 through 1995, and February through March 2000. Documentation included physical measurements, orientations, GPS data, thermal performance data, graphic and photographic work, and numerous, repetitive, and intensive interviews with *maelu uma* ("master builders"), *maramba* ("noble elders"), and *rato* ("priests" and "men of accomplishment"), each revealing the nature of the architecture, its organization, meanings and purposes, spiritual connections, gender designations, and social status as expressed through clan-house, tomb and settlement.

For the unwritten dialect of Wanukaka, the literation utilized is based on standard Bahasa Indonesia, which approximates customary Wanukakan pronunciations. The italicized words herein are based on Wanukakan pronunciations. These are similar to and vary from related Sumbanese dialects; some are identical; others vary notably; some are found in the national language.

Altogether, two traditional settlements in Loli and eighteen traditional and several roadside strip settlements in Wanukaka were, studied and documented, most repeatedly. Sumbanese-style houses and ancestral clan-houses served to illustrate pervasive and common characteristics of the contemporary and the traditional vernacular patterns. Field-work was further conducted in Anakalang, the domain northeast of Wanukaka and its *ina-ama* ("mother-father"; origins).

SPIRITS AND ANCESTORS

The built and natural environments of the people of Wanukaka (and Sumba in general) are filled with ancestral souls and spirits. Wanukakans generally classify the *marapu* ("spirits and souls") as: *marapu mapamoriku* (spirits of nature including the land, serpents, the sea, the sun, etc., and megaliths, principal house columns, settlement sentinels, and warfare); and *marapu mamati* (the settlement's "sleeping founders" and "family ancestors") whose remains are housed in stone tombs close to the ancestral clan-house, all in central areas of the settlement. The deceased are believed to enter into a state of sleep at the time of death; however, their spirits do awaken to continue as an active part of the community.⁴

Marapu are spirits and ancestors who are addressed, invoked, and consulted, especially during times of crises. Through ancestral clan-house and settlement *marapu*, and through their ancestors' ancestors, a believed creator-deity (whose name is not known) might be reached and addressed. Invocations are made directly to *marapu mapamoriku* and *marapu mamati* at designated sacred places within the settlement and ancestral clan-house, especially the *umabakul* ("big house") and the *uma rato* ("priest's house"). The Marapu practice and belief system in Wanukaka, Anakalang, and Loli can be best identified as ancestor consultation, animism, and dynamism, and it is not dissimilar to practices identified in Rindi,⁵ eastern Sumba and Kodi,⁶ western Sumba.

SETTLEMENT AS TEMPORAL AND ANCESTRAL DOMAINS

Historically in Wanukaka and Loli, settlements have been established atop hillocks with defense and comfort in mind. These settlements have several variations in arrangement, but the overall organization is not dissimilar to those observed in other domains in western Sumba, and some parallel those observed in eastern Sumba.⁷ With the constraints of the hilly topography in Wanukaka and Loli, overall settlement layout is a delightful juxtaposition of geometry and organicity, simultaneously expressing intellect and nature.

Customarily, houses have been organized along and around loosely east-west or north-south rectilinear *talora* ("plaza"), including the archaic and ceremonial *talora adung* ("skull trophy-tree plaza"), the *talora pidu* (lit. "bitter" *talora* with prohibitions), and the ordinary *talora* with few prohibitions. Usually the formal front verandahs of ancestral clan-houses face toward the various *talora*, the centers of settlement life, as do the eyes of the "sleeping" *mamati*, both Christian and Marapu, in their stone-house tombs in the *kangatar* (built-up "burial areas").

Stone-house tombs are extensions of and partners to the ancestral clan-house. *Kangatar* contain an array of ancestral tombs, burial stones, dolmenic altars, and occasionally a single or eight-headed serpent stela. High status clan-houses are clustered tightly on the highest ground, are in close proximity to their partner dolmens and tombs, and thus are in the most prestigious central areas. Ancestral clan-houses,

tomb areas, altars, plazas, and the entire settlement become spiritually-charged and intensely alive with activity during ceremonies, festivals, house-building, sepulchral monument erection, and funerals for both Marapu and Christian alike. At the time of one's funeral, with all of one's life's accomplishments noted, the time of temporal activity ceases, social status is elevated as water buffaloes are slaughtered, and spiritual power is established for all time.

Clan-houses in traditional settlements are considered the home and ancestral home of the indigenous people, including Christians, many of whom since the 1950s have chosen to reside away from the hilltop settlements.

TRADITIONAL ANCESTRAL HOUSE AND TOMB ARCHITECTURE

In the Settlements of the Cockatoo, traditional clan-houses are symmetrical in form, square in plan and are constructed according to historically based prescriptions in two configurations: the high towered *uma marapu* ("ancestral house") and the simple hip-roofed *uma kabalolu* ("house without a hat;" simple hip-roof house). These may be ancestral clan-houses, nearby extensions of ancestral houses of a family group, house servants' houses (*uma ana uma*), temporary dwellings, or houses of a rising or declining family or clan. Each has a house name and has designated community responsibilities. For example: an *uma bakul* is often the settlement temple; an *uma hara* is responsible for traditional law; an *uma kahi* ("house with horns") is responsible for intelligence gathering; and an *uma weikaringu* has the responsibility to cleanse sins. A clear hierarchy of house and family is expressed by house location, size, and number of lithic monuments. The tall tower of an *uma marapu* is the most impressive architectural feature of status of the roof profile. Central location within the settlement, adjacency to a significant *talora*, close proximity to the *kangatar*, and the number and size of nearby lithic monuments indicate that a high towered *uma marapu* is a high status *maramba* ("noble class") clan-house expressing its prestige, spiritual power, and wealth. *Uma marapu* and many *uma kabalolu marapu* have house spirits, often each its own; and several houses of a clan may share the same house (family-house) spirit. These houses have domestic and spiritual functions, and provide shelter for spirits as well as people.

Uma marapu and *uma kabalolu* are functionally and conceptually ordered: the front is formal, the back, informal; the most formal area is the front verandah. The verandah at the left is a women's informal and domestic activities area. The right portion of the house is considered male, spiritual, and is a setting for ritual. The left is considered female, temporal, and domestic.

The tower and the uppermost portions of the house are associated with the realm of spirits, and are used to store spiritually-charged ancestral heirlooms. The elevated main level is for the living with both temporal and spiritual functions. Animals are penned below the living level. The

interior of the living level of an *uma marapu* consists of a single large open space with a central hearth, four principal columns, formal front meeting areas and raised pallets, a men's ritual and sleeping area to the right, water and food preparation areas at the left of the hearth, a conjugal area at the left rear corner, and a women's visiting area at the left front. The four central columns, cut from prescribed hardwoods according to traditional law, provide support for the *uma daluk* (lit. "platform house"; high tower).⁸

The sequence of construction is prescribed according to a traditional *pingi-kapuka* ("source-to-flow") process, beginning with the most important of the four, principal house columns: the *kabaringu urat*, a prayer and offerings column with a rat-guard configured altar, located in the right, front interior in the men's spiritual and formal portion of the house. *Marapu* are invoked to come to this column and onto its round wooden *leli* (lit. "bracelet") altar. An ancestor's spirit may be summoned from its nearby tomb to a dolmen, then into the house through the men's door, then to the altar. These are the most important columns (or posts) since they provide support for the prescribed tower, provide altars for spiritual activity, and provide protection for the house and clan. Upon completion of the tower-frame, eight perimeter posts are planted to support four perimeter roof beams, which in turn support rafters and horizontal bamboo poles to which thatch is attached.⁹ Pairs, and pairs of pairs, of structural elements (columns, beams, rafters, etc.) are assembled to form the floor, palettes, verandahs, and roof. Virtually every architectural component and structural element is prescribed. With the source-to-flow process, the house is conceptually modelled and ordered like a serpent (a significant deity within the domain) according to local informants in the settlement of Ubu Bewi.

The *uma daluk* with its four supporting *kabaringu* parallels the *uma nanga na watu* ("stone-house tomb" of the *marapu mamati*) with its protecting dolmenic platform above supported by four stone pillars. The pillars, like the columns, are set in place in a prescribed *pingi-kapuka* disposition, in a counterclockwise procedure with their source ends down and flow ends upward, maintaining the natural order of their original upright or source-to-flow dispositions as removed from forest or quarry. An ancestral clan-house is not considered complete without its dolmenic stone-house partner and sepulchral structures. Pairs, and pairs of pairs, are required to provide completeness, strength, and spiritual power. The conceptual organization and structural components of the architecture reveal this: a men's door, a women's door; two men's columns, two women's columns; the men's domain, the women's domain; right, spiritual and left, domestic; formal front, informal back; the main floor area for the living, the tower for the spirits. The four principal house columns, as well as the pillars of the dolmen, are chamfered octagonally and hexadecagonally expressing a high degree of completion. The number of chamfers on a dolmen's pillars directly reflects the number observed on the four principal house columns.

The need for pairs, and pairs of pairs, of architectural elements and details, such as 2, 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 32 and 64, illustrates an importance of dualities in Wanukakan culture, and in Sumbanese concepts of order and completion.¹⁰

The traditional house as a whole is not gendered, although some of its components are. The hardwood *kabaringu* is male, the *leli*, female. Double chambered sarcophagi of the ancestors parallel the ancestral clan-house, with one chamber designated male, the other female. The two wooden house-horns located at the ends of the roof ridge-beam are designated right, male and left, female. These express not only strength and completion, but also communicate the high significance of water buffalo in Sumbanese culture and economy.¹¹

In Wanukaka, the nearby stone-house tombs are placed on the ground or atop built-up burial *kangatar* areas so that the “sleeping” *marapu mamati* (body placed on its right side with eyes directed toward a specific *talora*) reportedly can “see and hear” the ceremonial and daily activities of life. For the people of Wanukaka, Loli, and Anakalang, Marapu practitioner and Christian alike, the duality of the spiritual world and its temporal partner expresses balance and completion.

CONTEMPORARY RESPONSE OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION: THE SUMBANESE-STYLE HOUSE

High-towered Sumbanese-style houses forming roadside settlements are pervasive throughout the island. They are products of cultural and economic transitions. Indigenous resources as well as imported materials are used. The most evident physical characteristics include: a corrugated metal roof (promoted by industry in Java), lime-stone masonry walls, interior partitions, loosely-spaced wall and floor boards, no interior hearth, a wooden frame forming a thirty-six point grid, house posts and columns set upon random rubble masonry foundations, windows, and a perimeter verandah. The corrugated metal roof is a poor thermal performer; it is not air permeable; but it requires little seasonal repair; and it reduces house loss to fire. The elimination of the tower’s interior platform, in conjunction with higher interior spaces, generally compensates for the additional radiant heat load from the metal roof by increasing the rate of convection. Recently this has been improved through the introduction of roof vents. Although interior partitions usually do not reach to the roof, they do impede cross ventilation. The Sumbanese-style house is less effective as a thermal performer than the traditional, ancestral clan-house according to this researcher’s directed 1994-95 yearlong record of interior and exterior thermal measurements of Sumbanese-style houses and traditional clan-houses. As a vernacular expression of status and newly acquired wealth, the increasingly pervasive Sumbanese-style house is prized by the people of the roadside settlements and it has begun to replace traditional houses in several historic settlements.

However, this new vernacular is not an appropriate pattern for Marapu practitioners. Although it maintains a formal

front, informal back, and right male, left female designations, it ignores historic and prescribed building protocols (such as pairs of numbers of structural elements, sequence of construction, materials), and traditional activity designations. These houses lack the rich spiritual content of the ancestral clan-house. They are, however an authentic vernacular form which is informed by an evolving culture as it embraces a cash economy, manufactured materials, and Christianity.¹²

FOREIGN APPROPRIATION OF THE VERNACULAR: TOURIST RESORTS

A contemporary and foreign influence, drawing from the traditional house forms and the new Sumbanese-style house, is exemplified by recent tourist resorts. Designed by professional architects not native to Sumba, these imitate Sumbanese high-towered houses. Hybrid forms, combining features of the traditional house, the Sumbanese-style house, as well as Balinese traditional and non-traditional construction, are apparent in the resorts. Western entrepreneurs, as well as Indonesians from nearby islands, through their architects, seem to offer little more architecturally than superficial and imitative reflections of the rich Sumbanese spiritual and architectural heritage. These Disneyesque facilities do provide tourists expected comforts, but at the same time offer an ersatz connection to the indigenous people and their architecture. They apply the regional architectural image of the traditional and contemporary vernacular, and in fact have become a part of the evolving life and economy of the island. Should architects ignore the vernacular, or embrace it? Here, the principal issue is about the contemporary condition – change. One would expect the practice of architecture to be about this reality and express transition, from the traditional to the contemporary in Sumba.

The Ngihiwatu (“stone mortar”) resort at Rua, on the coast in western Wanukaka, attempts to contribute to the local economy, was constructed on open land not suited for agriculture, and as a hybrid development is minimally invasive. With a claim of respect for the local population and through an evolving philosophy of eco-tourism, a minimum of the land is disturbed, and an effort was applied avoid disruption of the local culture. Nearby conservative traditional settlements are accessible yet are resistant to change and outside influences. The Ngihiwatu resort attempts to integrate tourists’ expected comforts, traditional Sumbanese building proportions with their high-towered profiles, imported prefabricated-wooden structural frames, and roof-thatching techniques from Bali. Providing the indigenous population a seasonal economic base, both the landowning class and the working class gain a small benefit through this project. It attempts to visually blend with the image of the centuries-old, traditional settlements.

By contrast, the Mona Lisa resort, established in 1994, is sited at Waikabubak in the Loli district on purchased, prime-agricultural land. Sumbanese-style bungalows, arranged in a square forming a courtyard, are constructed of local lime-stone masonry with high-towered roofs of corrugated metal

painted Chinese roof-green. Immediate cultural interaction is limited to the servant class. Apparently the Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs attempted to maximize capital gains, and in practice illustrate an insensitivity to the local culture. In 2000, this resort is reported by local Sumbanese to be exploitive and closed economically to the local population.

TABULA RASA: WAIKABUBAK

Contemporary variations on the archetypical Southeast Asian shophouse¹³ stand in stark contrast to the island's historic architectural identity. Displacing the traditional settlements that once surrounded the classical village of Tarung, Indonesian shophouses form much of Waikabubak. Many of the indigenous noble, land-owning class, lured by cash and promises, sold their land-holdings to outside businessmen. The shophouse has become an architecture of displacement for the local population, many of whom literally have become beggars within their own lands. The shophouse is a large, rectangular, reinforced concrete, two-story structure. The lower level is for shops and business, and the upper for living. As a reflection of a business culture, this architectural form is without connection to the Sumbanese vernacular traditions. Its presence and prominence displace and separate the indigenous population. As an architectural expression of cultural arrogance and wealth exploiting the local people, it has become a significant source of resentment.

Indonesian governmental buildings, appropriating land throughout Waikabubak, further challenge the indigenous culture and population. Without any particularly noteworthy qualitative architectural features, this expression of outside political dominance attempts to disenfranchise. Replacing the Dutch colonial administration (1906-1949), the Indonesian government, with its pro-Islamic bias, is in direct contention with the Christian and Marapu people of the area. Through political, militaristic, religious, and cultural arrogance, their invasive architectural forms express the intention not to become part of the local identity, not culturally, politically, nor visually.

CONCLUSION

In southwestern Sumba, through the time-honored interconnectiveness of culture and its appropriate architecture for Marapu practitioners, both the living and the deified ancestors participate in family, spiritual, ceremonial, and everyday activities of life in their traditional environments of ancestral clan-house, tomb, and settlement. A tight fit of design and contexts has existed for centuries. Without the traditional, ritual settings with all their historic, cultural, and spiritual content, the ancestral spirits, in their stone-house tombs tightly associated with ancestral clan-houses, would become disenfranchised and the ancient connections to the ancestors would be lost. This architectural heritage and its vernacular expressions are rich and are clearly more about substance than style. Through examinations of such unfamil-

iar cultures and architectural traditions, architects might again view afresh and question the appropriation of familiar and unfamiliar vernacular, traditional forms and patterns applied as image and style.

An evolving vernacular expression, driven by changing cultural and economic forces, may increase or reduce historic meaning and content in architecture, as is evident in the new Sumbanese-style house. Time-honored intentions of a vernacular expression may become debased if ignored, for the vernacular language of an architectural tradition or evolving pattern applied out of context, all too often, is reduced to style: image, fashion, and taste, that is devoid of originally intended meaning, and thus may become a stylistic misappropriation, or an affectation, resulting in an architectural artifact implying itself to be something which it is not. This begs the question: is it appropriate for architects to completely avoid or ignore a region's vernacular traditions? While the reality is that in southwestern Sumba, the tourist resort cannot be a Sumbanese village, some informed applications of the vernacular could be appropriately appropriated if both form and meaning are acknowledged through design. In the resorts, this may be as simple as including, in the stylized housing, some traditional dualities: for example establish a formal front, and an informal back; designate the right half to be associated with the significant, and the left, the complementary, when addressing issues of activity areas and planning. Significant size and position could reflect and, in fact, express a hierarchy of status and prestige. The continued use of high-towered or steeply pitched hip-roofs of thatch would provide both the efficient shedding of rain and a rapid dissipation of radiant solar loads. Wooden, water buffalo horns, placed at the ends of roof ridge-beams, would continue to express the importance of water buffalo for the island's economy. A simultaneous incorporation of form and content reflective of the region's architecture could ease the transition from the time-honored to the contemporary realities.

The traditional architecture, the evolving Sumbanese-style house, the imported shophouse, the tourist resort, and the imposed Indonesian governmental entities all coexist – introducing both opportunities and tensions between the old and the new. These new architectural expressions illustrate changes informed by changes in contexts: spiritual, cultural, ethnic, economic, and political. An invasive architectural presence, expressing pre-eminence over a local tradition, may lead to hostility and resentment, disenfranchisement, and may continue to lead to bloodshed in southwestern Sumba.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 4. Rapoport describes vernacular in terms of process – how it is designed and built. Vernacular architecture should further include the pervasivemost techniques, materials, formal features, and use by a particular cultural group and region. Vernacular connotes language and therefore not only how something is expressed, but what is expressed – meaning.

- ² Kantor Statistik, *Sumba Barat Dalam Angka*, Kabupaten Sumba Barat, Propinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur (1997).
- ³ Kantor Statistik (1994).
- ⁴ Joanna Mross, "Settlements of the Cockatoo: From Substance to Style," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Working Paper Series* 58/3 (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 65-66
- ⁵ Gregory Forth, *Rindi: An Ethnographic Study of a Traditional Domain in Eastern Sumba* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 93-128.
- ⁶ Janet Hoskins, "So My Name Shall Live: Stone-Dragging and Grave-Building in Kodi, West Sumba," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 142/1 (1986), pp. 31-51.
- ⁷ Roxana Waterson, *The Living House, An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 98-99.
- ⁸ Joanna Mross, "Wanukakan: house (Sumba, SW)," *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, Paul Oliver, ed., Vol.2.II.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 1100-1101.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Forth, pp. 210-213.
- ¹¹ L. Onvlee, "The Significance of Livestock on Sumba," in J.J. Fox, ed., *The Flow of Life: Essays on Eastern Indonesia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 195-207.
- ¹² Mross, (1994), pp. 76-85.
- ¹³ Joseph Aranha, "Learning from Traditional Architecture in South-east Asia," occasional paper – Towards Better Buildings in the Tropics (University Teknologi Malaysia and Institut Sultan Iskandar, Kuala Lumpur, 1994), pp. 2-7.

PRINCIPAL INFORMANTS

- Rato* Jowa Bani, (recently deceased) traditional *Marapu* priest; born 1910! in Paraingu settlement.
- Rato* Dango Duka of the *Uma Hara*, traditional architect and master builder, *Marapu* priest of Weigalli settlement.
- Duu Gaji, a Wanukakan elder and *maramba* nobleman, born in Prai Kataga in 1940, once practiced the *Marapu* traditions, and as a member of the upper class became highly knowledgeable in Wanukakan traditions, beliefs, and practices. He converted to Christianity in 1975.
- Rato* Hiru Gaungu of the *Uma Kahikai* of Ubu Bewi, an historic settlement (with particularly sacred altars, tombs, ancient stones) and ceremonial/sacrificial center for the annual *Pahola* festival of Wanukaka.
- Rato* Reingu Kodi of the *Uma Bakul*, *Rato* Lodu Japi of the *Uma Kahi*, and headman Jewa Didu of the *Uma Bakul* of the conservative *Marapu* settlement Kabba.
- Rato* Heingu Lado of the *Uma Rato*, *maramba*, elder, and senior *Marapu* priest of Weiwuli settlement.
- Rato*
- Ibu Boba Mali, *maramba* and Christian, of one of the early Sumbanese-style houses (1956) in Wanukaka.
- Duu Metty, *maramba* and descendent of the *Uma Bakul* of Prai Goli settlement.

Rato Kura Morri, *maramba* of the *Uma Djaga* of Kadoku settlement.

Rato Kaledi Peku, *maramba*, and elder of the *Uma Ina-Ama* of Lahi Pangabang and *rato* of the *Pahola* festival of Wanukaka.

J.P. Potty, a *maramba*, Christian, and elder of Prai Kih; retired from the Kantor Statistik Kabupaten Sumba Barat.

Jack Weru, a Wanukakan "elder", *maramba*, and major landowner descended from the *Uma Malai Logi, Meti Mali* of the *Uma Hara* of Mamodu settlement. University educated, recently retired Head of the Foundation of Christian Schools in West Sumba.

Dato Charles Weru, University educated noblement, particularly interested in regional politics and his family's cultural heritage.

Richard Flax, eco-tourism developer in Wanukaka, based in Bali.

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