Houses and House-Building in Donggo

Throughout the islands of Indonesia a house is more than a home. Traditionally, each of the scores of Indonesian ethnic groups had a distinctive architectural standard for every degree of rank and status of that group, which constituted an active expression of that group's ethnic identity. The design of a house often had deep symbolic resonance for its inhabitants. For the Telois of the Celebes, for example, the traditional house, with its high, boat-shaped roof, is a concrete representation of the boats in which their ancestors came to their current territory. It is also a representation of the authority of the noble founding families that occupied those boats and to whose descendants alone is reserved the right to build such houses (Tanghillintin 1961). Elsewhere in Indonesia, the house and the division of the space inside it may reflect the rules of social organization and represent the order of the physical and spiritual universe (see Cunningham 1964, on the houses of the Atori of Timor, and Kasa 1960, on the houses of the Savuans). For the Doronggo of Sumbawa, "a good house" is one of the four most desirable things a man can have, the other three being "a good wife, a good horse, and a good iron weapon.

In Indonesia such houses are called rumah adat, a term that translates as 'traditional house' but also connotes an emotional tie with the whole complex of customs, social organization, laws, religion, myths, and cosmology of the group's past. In many parts of Indonesia these houses are no longer being built, and the skills for doing so are being lost. More and more often, traditional houses are being replaced by houses on the modern Japanese model, built of brick and cement with galvanized iron roofs. Often this is simply because modern houses are more comfortable, cheaper to build, and require less maintenance than traditional houses. In other cases modern houses are built by wealthy or important figures in the community as a conscious denial of the traditional ethnic past and as a means of identifying with the Javanese-dominated national culture of the present. This article will take a brief look at the houses of the Doronggo of Sumbawa, how they have changed in the past few decades, and how they are built.

The Lesser Sundas, that long arc of islands to the east of Java and Bali (Fig. 2a), have long been objects of anthropological investigation. But the island of Sumbawa (Fig. 2b), lying at a transitional point between Indianized cultures of the west and the traditional pagan cultures of the east, has received relatively scant attention. The western half of the island is occupied by the Sumbawanes; the eastern half by speakers of Bimanese and a small group that is linguistically separate, the Doronggo. Politically, the eastern half is divided into the regencies of Bima and Donggo, reflecting the historical boundaries of two sultanates that shared a common language and culture. Since 1975 Bimanese agriculture has been investigated by J. D. Brewster (1979), and M. J. Hitchcock (1983) has recently produced a Ph.D. thesis on Bimanese material culture, to which this article owes a great deal. Brewster's and Hitchcock's researches were devoted primarily to the majority Muslim Bimanese who inhabit the valleys and lowland plains of Bima.

My own fieldwork was done in the regency of Bima with the highland group known as the Doronggo (literally, 'Mountain People') who have adopted Islam or Christianity only in the past few decades and with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Living in the massif to the west of Bima Bay and numbering about 20,000, they speak a somewhat archaic form of Bimanese and share many cultural traits with the lowlanders, but they have long and jealously preserved a distinctive ethnic identity, social organization, ethnic costume, and traditional architecture. Never conquered by the Sultan of Bima, they became part of his realm by a treaty that gave them a special, semi-autonomous status within the sultanate until Bima was absorbed into the modern Republic of Indonesia and lost its sovereignty. Bimanese also refer to the Doronggo as the Doronggo Ele', or Eastern Mountain People.

Uma Leme: The Traditional House

When educated Bimanese describe the Doronggo to foreigners, two things are bound to be mentioned: their black clothing (about which an article is soon to appear in these pages) and their traditional houses. These are the concrete ethnic boundary markers in terms of which the Bimanese still distinguish the Doronggo. In fact, both the clothing and the houses are to be found in everyday use only in the village of Mhsawa, where my wife and I lived for almost two years. When we arrived in November 1981 there were four such houses in Mhsawa, which has a population of almost 3,000, by the time we left in September 1983 only three remained standing, and only one of these was occupied. According to Hitchcock (1983:329-341), the uma leme (Fig. 1), as these traditional houses are called in Donggo, may once have been in general use throughout Bima and are also found in a slightly different form among the Doronggo.

In Mhsawa, one of the two remaining unoccupied uma lemes was the former residence of the nekti, the high priest for the village under the old religion. The members of the community have kept it in good repair, even after the necti moved next door to his daughter's house when his wife died; he himself died in 1963. It has largely been preserved because the pagan spiritual leaders of the community still feel that fujio, the most important annual cycle of rituals performed on
"These houses are built entirely without the use of nails or bolts."

Onya Nifli standing in front of his uma pete.

Water buffalo and drying pandanus mats in front of an uma nalo, the house in the rear is an uma na'e.

Entrance to an uma leme.

Construction of an uma leme.

heft of the whole community, can only be properly performed in an uma leme.

As with all Don Donggo houses, the uma leme is built up on stilts resting on heavy foundation stones. Access to the single door is by a hardwood ladder which is pulled up at night or when the household is away (Fig. 3).

The four thick houseposts made of teak are about 2.5 m. high and are held together near the base with stout tie-beams and topped with round capitals supporting the frame of the house. The house is roughly square, about 3.5 m. by 4.5 m. and has no walls, but is covered by a high A-frame roof, suspended from a ridge pole about 3 m. above the main floor (Fig. 6). These houses are built entirely without the use of nails or bolts. The frame is of mortise-and-tenon construction; the floors are made of bamboo splits lashed to studs with vine cordage; and the roofing is constructed of grass thatching tied to bamboo bats and lashed to the house frame.
The interior of an uma lene is divided into a main floor and an attic. The main floor is separated into two parts by a teak panel wall pierced by a small door. A living and cooking area takes up about two-thirds of the space; a storage area for grains, mats, and other possessions takes up the remaining space. Along most of one long wall in the living area there is a 1 m. square earthen hearth, or aru, set in a wooden frame with three or four right stones forming a tripod on which pots may be rested (Fig. 7). A hardwood bench a few centimeters high and about 2 m. long sits in front of the hearth. A large covered pot that can hold up to 25 litres of drinking water is kept next to the hearth. A deep rack made of a wooden frame and bamboo splits hangs over the hearth and pot cover and serves as a place to keep cooking implements, drying firewood and sheaves of rice, other tools, and sandals. Shelves or pegs for hanging clothes and tools may be set at shoulder height on the wall separating the living area from the storage room. Another shelf is often built catty-corner onto the roof strut opposite the hearth. The top dress, (shell of the gods), is reserved for offerings to the household's ancestral spirits.

Additional sleeping and storage space is provided by an attic about 5 m. above the main floor. Often a platform of bamboo splits is also laid to the tie-beams that hold the main houseposts together. Called a sarrong, this platform is used as an area for working, visiting, sitting, or napping, and if frequently used is sometimes augmented by a windscreen on three sides made of thatching or bamboo (Fig. 6).

Architectural detail is not highly developed. One invariable feature of Don Douggo uma lene, however, is a wooden 'threshold' carved in the shape of a parrot and set at the single door, against which the ladder rests during the dry season (Fig. 1). The capitals of the houseposts and the interior beams that hold up the attic floor are usually decorated with incised geometric patterns.

Once built, an uma lene requires little more maintenance than occasional repairs to its thatching and flooring, though a householder able to muster the labor and materials might retatch the house twice in a decade. Although an uma lene has no windows and only a single door about 1.5 m. square, the breeze blowing in is in a surprising amount of light. And because firewood is dried for a day or two in a special holder attached to the underside of the roof over the hearth, cooking fires are almost smokeless; what little smoke is produced has no troublesome finding its way out the thatching. A well-constructed uma lene is snug yet airy and comfortable.

However, there is a common affliction, and Don Douggo make every effort to keep their houses as clean as possible. Those wearing sandals invariably take them off before ascending the ladder into any house. Water is always provided for washing one's feet; if many guests are expected a special pot with a dipper or a special pot with a spout resting in a forked branch will be set out in front of the entrance. In the dry season the bamboo slats of the roof are left uncovered, allowing the water to evaporate away to the ground under the house, an area that is swept several times a day. When guests are present, or at night for sleeping, the Door is covered with paudamus mats, of which the Don Douggo produce very fine examples.

Permits individual use of the latrine, which is kept tucked away out of sight, partly out of a sense of tidiness and partly because visitors are inclined to ask for anything they see and it is awkward, if not impossible, to refuse.

Uma Pete and Uma Mblo: A More Modern Form

World War II marked the beginning of a period of rapid social change in Douggo, which has continued to the present. The first Don Douggo converts to Islam were registered in 1940, an increase in women's increasing inter-marriage across Bima Bay. During the war the Japanese stationed an entire division in Bima, outnumbering the population. For the Bimane, the Japanese occupation meant suffering, hunger, and hardship, but it also seems to have promoted travel within the sub-tropical and a greater localism cultural influence on Douggo. However, one of the most obvious areas of cultural change.

But the new housing style that began to appear in Douggo in the 1940s was not that of the typical Bimane house, but of the typical Bimane rice barn, called a jump by the Don Douggo (see Fig. 8). In size and the basic construction of its frame, the Bimane rice barn closely resembles an old Chinese rice barn also Hitchcock (1852:249) but tends to be built on lower stilts and lacks the curved struts typical of the uma lene. The barn is composed by four walls, over which is set a simple thatch roof in the shape of an inverted V closed at the ends with thatch gables. In its earliest form such houses were called uma pete, literally, a "tied house." The walls were made of bamboo split frames which were filled with thatch and the dried leaves of the area palm. These frames were then lashed with vines to wall posts made of forked hardwood branches, hence the name "tied house." Later these branches were replaced with teak posts. There were no windows, but a door set in a hardboard frame now replaced the thatch flap of the uma lene.

There is a common remaining uma pete in Misawa (Fig. 3), and I am under the impression that few were ever built. In relatively short order they were superseded by the uma mbole, or 'meeting house' (Fig. 4).

In an uma mbole the tied wall frames are replaced by teak wall panels inserted into slotted studs. A window is set in the wall opposite the hearth. The most significant difference, however, is technical one. The technology required for building the basic structure of the barn is familiar to all Don Douggo who had ever built an uma lene, and the walls of an uma pete are the same as the walls of the semi-permanent field sheds used by Don Douggo while they are building their jump. An uma pete is essentially a Bimane rice barn built with Don Douggo technology. The wooden walls of an uma mbole, however, require techniques and tools that, although commonplace in the lowlands, had never before been used in Douggo. An uma mbole, then, is a slightly enlarged Bimane rice barn built with the addition of a window built with Bimane technology. I will have more to say about the technology of house-building later.

Uma mbole is still quite common in the younger hamlets of Misawa; in the oldest part of the oldest hamlet they constitute 45% of all houses. The interior arrangement and furnishings of uma pete and uma mbole are the same as in an uma lene, though the attic is sometimes omitted. In recent years a few owners of uma mbole have replaced their thatched roofs with ungalzed terracotta tiles (curved roofing tiles), painstakingly carried by hand or by horse to a kiln at a local market town nearby. The cost of replacing a thatch roof with pantiles ran to about 800 in 1983. This is a serious expense in what is for the most part a poor subsistence economy, but has the great advantages of providing a more weatherproof housing and sparing the owner the effort of periodic re-thatching.
and a room for cooking, eating, and sleeping in the back. Later, an attic may be added, an elevated cooking deck tacked on to the back of the house, a verandah added to the front, and the area under the house fenced in. If the household is doing well economically, they may replace the original thatch roof with tile; a few of the wealthiest families in Mbaru have recently re-roofed their houses with galvanized steel sheeting. My wife and I lived in one of these for two years on the understanding that we would buy the nails and sheeting for a new galvanized roof. This we did, at a cost of about $100, and on the appointed day the owner, Salama Amu, arrived with a party of about a dozen relatives and friends to do the work. He then promptly carted off the tiles to replace the thatching on his own house in a distant hamlet, and it was a struggle to keep enough tiles for our galley. We found that the new roof with its extra-wide eaves kept the house much drier, a more than adequate compensation for the absolutely deafening "gitter-patter of rain on a tin roof" we had to endure during the storms of the tropical rainy season.

The area under the house, called the umbo, is often enclosed with a bamboo split stockade and used as a storage area, chicken coop, or transitory goat pen. My wife and I kept our horses stalled under the house. We also fenced in a portion of our umbo for a chicken coop and were satisfied with the results until a civet cat broke in while we were away and made off with what had promised to become several tasty chicken dinners. An uma mu'ar usually has front and back doors, set off-center in each of the two short walls. Many doors are made with high sills to keep infants and toddlers from wandering about too freely. Both interior and exterior walls are made of unfinished teak panels, constructed in the same fashion as the walls of an uma mu'ar. Two windows are placed in each of the long walls. Windows have both shutters and a wooden grill to keep toddlers in and thieves out. In some houses these grills include decorative pierced flashings, carved with geometric designs (Fig. 9).

The interiors of most uma mu'ar are divided by a 2-meter-high panel partition and doorway running across the short axis of the house about two-thirds of the way down the long axis. The larger front room is mostly used for receiving guests and for bedding down the younger members of the household at night. The back room serves as the householder's bedroom and as the kitchen, if no separate cooking shed has been added. The floors are made of bamboo splits or, whenever possible, of hardwood planks, except for the area around the hearth, which is always of bamboo splits so spilled or discarded liquids can fall to the ground. In some houses an attic is added to provide additional storage or work space and to keep the house cooler during the day and warmer at night.

At their most elaborate, furnishings include a few beds with useless mosquito netting, a few glass-fronted wooden wardrobes and buffets, and either hand-made or store-bought chairs and coffee tables. The tables and chairs are used only for entertaining important guests; members of the household and casual visitors prefer to work or chat on pandanus mats laid on the floor. Kitchen furnishings and arrangements are the same as in other Don Donggo houses.

When a man is out clearing the swidden and needs only a sheltered place to rest during the day or to spend an occasional night, he will build a senteco (Fig. 10), a simple platform of unsplit boughs lashed together and supported by four forked branches set into the ground. A few battens of grass or leaf thatch will be raised in a lean-to roof to complete the structure. Later, a senteco can be used as a convenient place from which to guard the fields from pests. When the time comes to move the whole family out to the fields, a man will erect a more elaborate shelter, the ngguru (Fig. 11). It, too, consists basically of a platform lashed to forked branches set in the ground, but is much larger, has walls, and a peaked and gabled thatch roof.

The walls of an ngguru and the thatching for its roof are often assembled in advance at the village and carried out to the field site. Otherwise, locally available materials are used. In a good ngguru, the walls are made of plaited bamboo splits or of a frame filled with areca palm leaves (as in an uma pete). A hearth and its rack will be made on the spot. A large ngguru will have a roofed porch in the front, sometimes with bars to keep small children from falling out, to provide a place to sit and watch the fields or visit while others are working or cooking inside. Although considerably less comfortable than a house in the village, Don Donggo enjoy the freedom of living in an ngguru and find conditions we would consider cramped and lacking in privacy merely cozy. A few elderly couples who have retired from active farming live by preference in nggurus located in small gardens a few kilometers from the village— the Don Donggo version of a "retirement community?" When nggurus are vacated after harvest they are disassembled and everything but the hearth is carried back to the village to be used or broken up for firewood. Don Donggo are not given to waste.

Sentavo and Ngguru: Field Houses

Don Donggo economy is based on the cultivation of swidden rice for subsistence and, more recently, the cultivation of soybeans as a cash crop. The planting, weeding, and harvesting of swidden rice requires a great deal of cooperative labor, and in the last six weeks or so before harvesting, the fields must be guarded constantly from the depredations of deer, wild pigs, and monkeys. More often than not, the swidden is not far from the village, and it is more practical for all or most of the household to live out in the fields for long periods of time.
After the houseposts and beams have been assembled, laid out, and measured (12), mortise-and-tenon joints are put in with chisel and bore. As parts of the frame are assembled, they are erected and checked for squareness and fit (13, 14). Once the parts of the frame supporting the floor have been assembled, the upper frame is attached (15–17). The roof frame is first assembled on the ground (18), taken apart, and reassembled atop the frame (19). The finished frame is then left to weather before walls, doors, and roofing are added (20).

"I have never heard of anyone paying to have a house built."
In Donggo, however, every man is at least a journeyman carpenter. While a few men, called ponggito, are recognized as the foremen of house-building work parties, they are more in demand for their command of ritual knowledge than for any particular woodworking expertise. When a man wishes to build a new house (usually in preparation for the wedding of his son as part of the agreed brideprice), he will call on the services of as many of his relatives, friends, and neighbors as are needed for the particular stage of construction. Close kin can be called upon to give money and material resources as well as labor. The degree of their obligation depends on both genealogical proximity and personal affection; the paternal uncles and the brothers of the prospective groom are expected to make the greatest contributions. Only rarely are materials other than roofing tiles, hinges, and nails paid for. Labor is never directly paid for, but workers must be given food, tobacco, and hewed makings as long as they are on the job, and in a marginal subsistence economy that can be something of a burden. People are naturally expected to return labor in kind for labor given. I know of only one or two instances in which an already standing house in Mbaawa was actually bought and paid for; I have never heard of anyone paying to have a house built. In the dry season after hand harvest, hardly a week goes by without at least one house-existing workbee, and hardly a day goes by without smaller groups of men working on subsidiary house-building tasks.

Although the final assembly of a house can be dramatically accomplished in two or three days, the house-building process from beginning to end usually takes several years. Some work is only done in the two- or three-month respite between harvesting and planting (see Figs. 12–19). The process begins with the search for the wood needed to make the houseposts, main frame, rafters, and studs. A group of men will take off for the deep hardwood forests on an expedition that may last two or three days. Task and a fragment hardwood related to sandalwood are by and large considered the only suitable woods for house timbers, floorboards, and wall panels. Once an appropriate tree has been found it will be fell and roughed out into timbers as long as 6.5 m, which are carried back to the village for further processing. The tools used for felling trees and roughing out timbers are store-bought hatchets and any one of three kinds of locally-made bush knives. Other forest products collected for house-building include imperata grass for thatching, and a variety of vines used for making twine and corcling. Bamboo, the only other major natural material used in house-building, is grown in clumps around the village; most households in Mbaawa own at least some bamboo. Houseposts are the heaviest beams used in the rough timber with a big timbersaw, operated by two people. Timbersaws have only been available in Donggo for the past few decades; there are only two or three in Mbaawa, but they are freely borrowed. Wall panels and studs are cut in a similar fashion.

When the materials for assembling the frame of a house have been gathered and roughed out, the person building the house will call on his relatives and friends to begin the assembly of the frame; as many as thirty people may participate. The services of at least one ponggito will also be requested. In part the ponggito’s job is to oversee and coordinate the work, but his services are most valued for his command of the esoteric knowledge concerning the proper proportions of the house, the correct placement of doors, and the rituals that must be performed to insure the propitious building of a house. Although sticks are marked and used as measuring rods, carpenters’ measures are based on parts of the body (e.g., a hand-span, an arm-span, etc.; see Fig. 22), and I am told that a ponggito will take the measurements that are to be standard for a given house from the body of the person for whom the house is being built, so that a house is in proportion to its owner.

There are a number of taboos that attach to various house-building tasks. Once while helping to build a house, I was merely pounding a peg into its hole until the ponggito pointed out to me that this was a job for men whose wives had passed their childbearing years (Fig. 23) and that if I insisted on continuing my wife was sure to have difficulty in childbirth. I stopped at once.
With the timbers of the frame laid out and marked by the panggiti, mortise and tenon are cut into the ends using cila golo, chisels, and mallets. In more recent times, storebought handplanes are also in use. Mortise-and-tenon joints are tied in place with tapered hardwood pegs pounded into holes that have been drilled through the timbers with a T-shaped bore (Fig. 24). The frame of the house is assembled and checked for squareness and fit. The foundation stones on which the houseposts rest are set in place, with eight or ten men lifting a whole side of the house as the stones are adjusted for leveling (Fig. 25). The frame, or parts of it, may then be taken down for finishing and adjustments. In the process of assembly a house may be put up and taken down several times until the builders are satisfied. When the frame has been completed the panggiti will perform a ritual, blessing the houseposts by offering prayers to the spirits and by pouring a special mixture of water and leaves on the posts (Fig. 26).

Normally, the assembly of the frame finishes the work for that year. The roof will be given a rough covering of thatch to keep it dry and the owner will go about gathering the materials for the studs, wall panels, floor, and roof. This may take several years, but in the meantime the frame has the chance to season as a completed unit, which adds to its durability.

When the time comes for completing the house, the owner will once again assemble a work party of relatives and friends. The walls of the house are made up of a frame of studs into which teak panels are fitted. The studs are hung from the house frame proper and project slightly out over the frame by about 30 cm. A special kind of plane is used to cut grooves in the wall studs; the panels are fashioned with a cila golo and finished with a plane. A temporary floor of bamboo slats may be laid in place, when possible a wooden floor of planks is preferred. Fixing the floorboards is the only part of the house-building in which nails are used; the hinges of doors and windows complete the use of hardware. A curved wooden ladder with broad, flat risers, running from the ground to the front door, completes the house (Fig. 27).

Once built, Dou Donggo houses require relatively little maintenance, and properly cared for will last for many decades. Because they are elevated and because the area around all houses is kept clear of grass and is swept daily, it is easy to keep termites from attacking the house. Shallow ditches and low dikes keep the area under the house dry, so as long as the roof is kept in good repair there is little danger from rot. The mortise-and-tenon construction of Dou Donggo houses provides enough 'give' to make them virtually impervious to the earthquakes that are a constant threat. High winds can do a fair amount of damage to roofs, but fire is by far the greatest danger, especially considering that about half of the roofs in Mhawa are made of thatch. At least three times in this century, large parts of Mhawa were destroyed by fire, prompting some members of the community to found satellite hamlets. Dou Donggo are extremely indulgent with children, but even a very young child who is careless with fire will be sternly disciplined. One case of arson (by a psychotic) is remembered; the perpetrator was immediately stoned to death by the entire community.

The Social Organization of Housing

With Indonesian independence the Sultanate of Bima willingly gave up the internal sovereignty it had enjoyed under Dutch rule, and, as mentioned earlier, shortly thereafter lost its semi-autonomous status within the Indonesian state. The Sultan was replaced by a regent appointed by the national government who, more often than not, has been Javanese rather than Bimanese. Lesser positions in the
local government, once filled by members of the upper nobility, have been taken over by members of the lesser nobility and commoners who have tended to be more devoutly orthodox Muslims than their predecessors. The new rulers had little regard for the special status the Dou Donggo enjoyed under the Sultan’s rule, and found offensive their continuing adherence to the pagan beliefs of their ancestors. Thus Donggo continually found itself on the short end of the stick with regard to roads, schools, health care, and political power. Access to these things has been bought at the price of conversion to Islam or, in a few rare cases, Catholicism (which operates its own educational and health-care services).

The result of all of this has been a degree of Lang Donggo acculturation to Bimaese Muslim ways. These changes have not been restricted to religion alone, but are reflected in changing patterns of language, inheritance, marriage, and social organization. And perhaps it is no coincidence that the changes in house architecture described above began to happen at the same time. The newer houses are certainly larger and more spacious, but the Dou Donggo could have begun constructing them long ago; that they chose to begin replacing their traditional houses with Bimaese houses at the same time they began replacing their traditional ways with Bimaese ways seems hardly accidental. To the Donggo the uma leme represents the ways of their ancestors, and their abandonment of the uma leme is largely symbolic of their movement into the ‘New Order’ of the independent Indonesian state. Those who were first to adopt Islam were also those who first began to build uma na’e, and those who have remained culturally most conservative have tended to stay in uma nhodo.

An uma leme was inhabited in a very different way than an uma na’e. The household was often an extended family composed of parents, their unmarried children, and one or two married daughters with their husbands and children who had not finished paying the bridewealth and had not yet built their own houses. Unmarried girls would sleep in the attic, young men would sleep in the arronje under the house (see Fig. 7), and a young son-in-law would sit up, standing guard through most of the night, at the entrance to the main floor. Life in such cramped quarters was intensely communal and revolved around the hearth that took up a quarter of the single living room.

About the time people started building uma pate and uma nhodo there was a tendency for newlyweds to have their houses built before marriage, rather than to live for a period in the bride’s parents’ house. But the social organization of space within the house remained the same. The change to the uma
na’e also reflected a change whereby Dou Donggo made building a house part of the brideprice paid by the groom, if at all possible before the marriage took place. In former times, according to Dou Donggo traditional law, the bride’s parents and patrilineal kin were allowed to keep the brideprice for themselves. By Bimanese standards, this is contrary to Islamic canon law, and among Dou Donggo the brideprice is now used at least in theory to build and furnish a house for the newlyweds. Built for newlyweds and mostly occupied by nuclear rather than extended families, the uma na’e both creates and symbolically represents a weakening of inter-generational bonds and greater independence for younger couples.

The social organization of houses in Donggo has also changed with respect to the internal space of the house. In uma leme, uma pete, and uma mbolo there was no division of the living space. In the uma na’e, however, the wall dividing the front and back rooms also divides the sexes. At social and ritual gatherings in an uma na’e the men meet in the front room, while the women sit in the back room by the hearth preparing food, as is done in Bima. Although the Dou Donggo have always observed extraordinarily egalitarian relations between the sexes, changes in inheritance to conform to Muslim canon law have tended to put women at a disadvantage. It seems to me that the physical segregation of the sexes evident in the internal partition of the uma na’e reflects a movement away from that egalitarian stance.

Uma leme, uma pete, and uma mbolo are things of the past; they are simply no longer being built. As time goes on and they are abandoned, or cannibalized to make uma na’e, or converted into rice barns, their scarcity will attest to what seems to be the inexorable absorption of Donggo by Bima. Still, it is instructive to recall that at least in Mbawa people have begun to feel a need to preserve the remaining uma leme, not out of nostalgia, but out of a genuine desire to retain their unique traditions and identity.

GLOSSARY

auna—hearth; also used as a general term referring to a kitchen
clila golo—a heavy bush knife with a rounded blade used in carpentry
jompa—rice barn; built on 4 posts like an uma mbolo but without windows or internal divisions
nauhi—priest of the traditional religion
ngawu—semi-permanent field house
panggota—foreman of a housebuilding party and ritual expert
rajuh—annual pre-planting ritual
ratii—housepost
rumah adat—traditional house; in Donggo the uma leme
saronge—platform attached to the tie-beams below a house
sentec—temporary field shelter
taja dewa—“shelf of the gods”, a shelf for placing offerings to ancestral spirits
uma leme—the traditional Donggo A-frame house
uma mbolo—“meeting house”; house on 4 posts with wooden walls, modeled on the Bimanese rice barn
uma na'e—“big house”; the most modern Donggo house, with wooden walls and built on from 6 to 16 posts
uma pete—“tied house”; house on 4 posts with wall of areca stems tied on
wombo—area under a house; often fenced in for storage or livestock

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