

## **Speech given by Dr Keith Foulcher at the opening of the Pendopo, 30 April 1990.**

Madam Chancellor, Honoured guests and friends from both on and off campus,

On behalf of Asian Studies at Flinders let me welcome you and thank you for joining us for an occasion which we have long looked forward to and which we will remember as a highlight of the development of Indonesian Studies on this campus.

This lovely building which we have gathered to celebrate is an adaptation of a traditional Javanese design, built from plans first drawn up in Indonesia, then redrawn to meet South Australian conditions by local architects Greg and Sue Rogers. It has been financed by a generous gift to the university by Mulia Pty Ltd, a South Australia-based company, along with a contribution from the government of Indonesia. To both these donors let me express the enormous gratitude of Asian Studies and the wider Flinders University community.

In Java, the pendopo is a pavilion or audience hall traditionally found in the courtyards of palaces and the dwellings of aristocratic families. Those of you who have visited Indonesia will be familiar with the beautiful examples of the form to be found in the compounds of the royal palaces in the court cities of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. You'll know also how the pendopo's popularity has spread in recent times to the grounds of military and government offices, hotels and even airports. It is traditionally an open-sided pavilion, whose roof structure is supported by the four central pillars and the smaller supports on the outer edges of the wide overhanging roof. Our building adapts this essential pavilion-like characteristic of the pendopo with its glass doors on all sides which can be opened to replicate the Javanese model. In Java the building would have no ceiling, and we would look up into the peak of the roof, where small birds would probably be nesting and twittering as we sit here. The roofline – by the way – is one of Java's gifts to the world. If you are bothered by its resemblance to a Pizza Hut, the only answer is that the Javanese had it first.

Pendopos in Java were and still are used principally for audiences and formal meetings, together with displays of the performing arts- such as we will initiate here tonight with a concert of Javanese music, dance and shadow puppet theatre. Chairs may be provided for dignitaries, as we have done today, but after this morning we will follow normal Javanese practice in doing away with the chairs, sitting instead on mats brought from Indonesian for this purpose. Those of you who know the royal palaces of Java will remember the elaborate marble floors of the pendopos there – our quarry tiles and their relation to the colours of the splendid woodwork of the Pendopo represent an elegant Australian adaptation of this feature of the Javanese original. We do have a beautiful reminder of the Javanese royal palaces in the lovely centrally-placed antique Dutch lamp, which recalls the great nineteenth century chandeliers found in the royal pendopos of Java.

Outside, looking in from the Australian bush, you will have noticed some other visitors from Java - the four mythological figures made from volcanic rock and shipped here so far from home. Since in Java nothing ever happens by chance, but always as the result of some

hidden plan, I have found myself wondering why it is these four, and not some others, that have made their way to Flinders. It's not hard to know why Ganesha, the large statue of the elephant-headed god belonging to the Hindu pantheon, is here. In ancient Java, as in India where he originates, Ganesha had a special relationship to educational and literary activities, so it's not surprising that he has come as a Javanese envoy to an Australian university campus. Neither is it hard to see why the Garuda, the mythological eagle and mount of the god Vishnu is here. As we know the Garuda has been adopted as a symbol of the modern nation state of Indonesia, so obviously he has come as a symbol of our connection not just to traditional Java, but to all of modern Indonesia as well. Also in this little contingent from Java we find Sugriwo, the monkey general whose armies helped win the struggle against the evil Rahwana in the Ramayana epic. I wondered about him for a while, but I think he must have come to offer us his help, just as he did the Prince Rama, against the powers of ignorance, brute force and darkness. As educators and students in modern-day Australia we all know how much we need assistance in our experience of this mythological struggle. Finally, there is the figure of Semar, the laughing pot-bellied clown who despite his appearance is a god possessed of mighty spiritual power. He is a purely Javanese figure, much beloved and revered by Javanese people for his bumbling comical behaviour and his inner spiritual wisdom. I like to think he is here as both a symbol and a patron for Asian Studies at Flinders, which just like him is a bit bumbling, sometimes a comedy show, but underneath it all, I like to think, is also possessed of reserves of inner power, with a saving eye on the realm of the spirit. May he guide us through our difficult times and deflate our pretensions when necessary, just as he does those of the warrior knights of the Javanese shadow theatre!

Before I conclude I would like to tell you a little about how this first and only South Australian pendopo came into existence. Back in the early 1980s, following the loan of some gamelan instruments from Sturt College, Flinders acquired its own gamelan orchestra, which was stored and played in the small multi-purpose music room in the Flinders drama centre. In Java, gamelan orchestras come complete with souls and personalities, and I hate to think of the restless and unhappy spirit that must have lurked for so many years around the Flinders music room as the gamelan instruments were packed and unpacked in and out of a tiny storage room each time a class or practice or performance was held. In those days, the problems of the gamelan was one of the things which Anton Lucas and I – at the time the full time staff in the Flinders Indonesian programme- used to talk about by the Flinders lake, eating our lunch between classes. I think it was at one of these lunches that I once said to Anton I was thinking how lovely it would be to have a pendopo to put the gamelan orchestra in. I imagined at the time a pendopo rising on the open concrete plaza on top of North Theatre 3, much to the consternation, as we later discovered, of the geographers, who imagined the constant cacophony of beginning students of gamelan right under their windows. If it had been anyone but Anton I had spoken to that day, the idea would no doubt have gone the way of many dreams aired by the Flinders Lake. But because it was Anton, the idea stayed alive. It was he who took it up as a realistic proposition and not a fantasy, he who personally found the necessary finance, got the university architect and everyone else on side, had the plans drawn, settled on this site, and saw the whole project through, right down to bringing Semar and his friends from Java. This is very much his pendopo, a symbol of the contribution which his presence has made to Asian Studies at Flinders and the many lives he has touched here, in his own unique way, over the past 10 years. The building as it

stands now, nestled among the eucalypts, wonderfully combines two of Anton's great loves – Java and the Australian bush. It will remain as a tangible symbol of the meeting between Australian and Indonesian cultures – Anton's own cause – and the goal which the Indonesian Studies programme at Flinders is dedicated to nurturing and promoting in the South Australian community.

Thank you all again for coming, and thank you to everyone, from Anton to the architects, builders and grounds people, who have brought this project to such a wonderful conclusion.