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Abstract

This chapter, drawing on our own interviews and observations, as well as those of other researchers, describes differing leadership styles in the Lore Lindu region and their consequences for resource use, and therefore the sustainability of the conservation efforts of the Lore Lindu National Park Authority. We argue that some of the ideals of older leaders fit well with the new democratic environment and with ideals of participatory democracy promoted worldwide, while others contradict them. On the positive side, old and modern ideals both emphasise mutual respect and listening in the local context, expressed through musyawarah mufakat. On the negative side, local myths sometimes accorded ruling families a quasisupernatural origin, fostering autocratic attitudes. Dutch colonial government as well as the Suharto regime both relied on and further enhanced the autocratic aspects of local rule. Which side of tradition present local leaders follow, affects the success of reconciling local development needs and conservation efforts: it is difficult to muster local support for voluntary conservation agreements when imposing leaders give an example of resource misuse. Both autocratic leaders and democratically minded opposing groups may refer to tradition to justify their course of action. Examples on both sides show that the tradition of listening and respect, which conforms to ideals in other areas of the world and the discourse of participatory development, is more likely to produce sustainable solutions.

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