

# Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia

---

Volume 20  
Number 2 *Indonesian heritage and library  
collections II*

Article 4

---

4-30-2019

## Creating heritage in Ubud, Bali

Adrian Vickers  
*University of Sydney*, [adrian.vickers@sydney.edu.au](mailto:adrian.vickers@sydney.edu.au)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/wacana>



Part of the [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Vickers, Adrian (2019) "Creating heritage in Ubud, Bali," *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*: Vol. 20: No. 2, Article 4.  
DOI: 10.17510/wacana.v20i2.747  
Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/wacana/vol20/iss2/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty of Humanities at UI Scholars Hub. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* by an authorized editor of UI Scholars Hub.

# Creating heritage in Ubud, Bali

ADRIAN VICKERS

## ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

In Bali, heritage is more-or-less synonymous with tradition. The popular view of what constitutes Bali's heritage tends to focus on the village and wider district of Ubud. Through examining at the strategies employed by the lords of Ubud during the middle part of the twentieth century, we can better understand how the image of heritage sites is created. In the case of Ubud, the construction of centre of tradition was carried out through alliances with local artists and with expatriates, notably Rudolf Bonnet. The latter were able to mobilize publicity and networks to attract resources and elevate the district's reputation.

## KEYWORDS

Bali; Ubud; arts; painting; heritage.

For tourists coming to Bali, Ubud is synonymous with traditional Balinese culture, upon which an extra layer of spiritual tourism and digital networking has been added in the last decade. Google "Ubud, Bali, tradition" and promotional websites, travel articles and advertisements for tours all advance the idea that Ubud is the place to encounter Balinese tradition.<sup>2</sup> For tourists

<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper appeared as Adrian Vickers, "Ubud; Becoming Bali's centre of the arts 1920-1970" in: Bembi Dwi Indiro M. and Soemantri Widagdo (eds), *Ubud; A short history of an art and cultural center in Bali*, pp. 35-58 (Ubud: Museum Puri Lukisan, 2011). My analysis discussion draws very heavily on the research of Graeme MacRae, including his chapter in the same book (2011), but especially MacRae 1997.

<sup>2</sup> For example, Joris Hermans, "Photo essay; A traditional Balinese cremation in Ubud", <https://www.theworldaheadofus.com/blog/photo-essay-traditional-balinese-cremation;>

---

ADRIAN VICKERS holds a personal chair at the University of Sydney, and researches and publishes on the cultural history of Southeast Asia. He has held a series of Australian Research Council grants, the most recent looking at Indonesian art, the Cold War, and labour and industry in Southeast Asia. As part of a linkage grant on the history of Balinese painting, he has created *The Virtual Museum of Balinese Painting* <[balipaintings.org](http://balipaintings.org)>, continuing previous pioneering work in eResearch and teaching. His books include the highly popular *Bali; A paradise created* (new edition 2012), *A history of modern Indonesia* (new edition 2013), *Balinese art; Paintings and drawings of Bali, 1800-2010* (2012), and co-authored with Julia Martínez *The pearl frontier; Labor mobility across the Australian-Indonesian maritime zone, 1870-1970* (2015), which won two book awards. Adrian Vickers is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. He can be reached at: [adrian.vickers@sydney.edu.au](mailto:adrian.vickers@sydney.edu.au).

as well as Ubud insiders, this image of tradition is synonymous with the idea of the region's heritage.

It was not always so. Up until the early 1970s, Bali had many cultural centres, and heritage was widely spread. The story of Ubud's rise as a centre of tradition demonstrates the importance of local agency in crafting heritage; including turning a form of modernism into something that is regarded as the long-term legacy of Ubud. In this article, I will look particularly at the role of the visual arts in this transformation, and the creation of the myth of Pita Maha, the artists' association usually associated with Ubud's heritage in the arts. That local agency, however, also required the presence of outsiders who could mediate information and images for wider audiences. Local leaders and cultural intermediaries were therefore important heritage brokers.

Turning Ubud into the centre of the arts on Bali was the remarkable achievement of its charming and astute prince, Cokorda Agung Sukawati; although it was very much a joint work involving collaboration between members of the Ubud royal family, the talented artists of the greater Ubud area, and a group of expatriates.<sup>3</sup> The 1930s was the crucial period in laying the groundwork for Ubud's ascendancy, since this was the period when all those groups came together, partly under official patronage of the Dutch colonial government. The full fruits of this period were not realized until much later, however.

Before the 1930s there were many great centres of the arts in Bali. Probably the most important of these was Klungkung, the home of classical painting, literature, and performance. Each of the former kingdoms of Bali had their own dynamic schools of art, dance and drama, such as those in Tabanan and Karangasem. The initial impact of Dutch colonial rule was felt in North Bali, conquered in the middle of the nineteenth century. Colonialism here gave rise to elaborated temple sculpture, the extraordinary art of a group of puppeteers who turned to painting, notably I Ketut Gede, and a musical revolution. This revolution came in the form of *gong kebyar*, the transformation of Balinese music into a much faster and livelier new way of playing (Seebass 1996). All these changes came more from the work of village-based creators than the old forms of royal patronage. The royal houses defeated in battle by the Dutch, those of Badung and Tabanan in 1906, and Klungkung in 1908, lost their wealth and had to undergo periods of exile. This loosened the ties between these houses and artistic production. Those kingdoms that surrendered, Karangasem, Bangli, and Gianyar, kept their royal patronage intact.<sup>4</sup>

The Dutch take-over of South Bali saw more attention, and more foreign presence, in the Badung and Gianyar regions in particular. Denpasar grew as a centre of trade, and of tourism, and by the 1920s the *gong* or *gamelan* of Belaluan, near the Bali Hotel, was the most prominent musical ensemble

---

accessed on 25-1-2019.

<sup>3</sup> Note that many members of the Ubud ruling family prefer the hybrid Dutch spelling "Tjokorde", although since this is a title, I am following the standardized Balinese spelling.

<sup>4</sup> For more details, see Vickers 1989/2013.

on the island. New performances were developed, notably the creation of the *kecak*, the so-called Monkey Dance, in Bedulu. Dozens of artists in other villages, especially Batuan and Sanur, got involved in modern art. Remarkably, however such is the current reputation of Ubud, that this pre-eminence of other regions and villages has been completely forgotten, and neighbouring artistic centres such as the carving village of Mas and the music centre of Peliatan have been refashioned into part of the story of Ubud, denying their separate histories.

#### UBUD'S POLITICAL RISE

Ubud's rise was very much a product of its relationship to the royal house of Gianyar. This was a matter of politics as well as culture. Pre-colonial Bali had consisted a very fluid set of mini-states. Boundaries were constantly changing, and polities rising and falling. Just before the Dutch take-over of South Bali, one kingdom, Mengwi, had been defeated and subsumed by others, after a rising political entity, Negara (near Batuan), had revolted against Gianyar's overlordship and attempted unsuccessfully to replace Gianyar as the main kingdom of central Bali. Ubud's rise was a product of its ruler's military and tactical prowess in putting down the insurgent house of Negara in the 1884, demonstrating that Gianyar was dependent on Ubud. At the same time, the ruler of Ubud's military role meant that he gained significant land and wealth from both Negara and the later conquest of Mengwi, making him the richest man in Bali (MacRae 1997). This political weakness undoubtedly played a part in Gianyar's surrender to the Dutch, a move that ensured that Gianyar would survive as the centre of the mini-state of the same name. If this had not happened, it is likely that Ubud would have eventually subsumed Gianyar and emerged as the paramount kingdom in the region.

Frustrated by the way the Dutch froze the status-quo of the kingdoms of Bali, the ruler of Ubud deployed the next tactic of Balinese kingship after warfare to secure his district's primacy: marriage. Successful marriage of his daughter to the king of Gianyar brought into play the status issue that had dogged Gianyar's history: its royal house was lower in the status hierarchy than Ubud's. This hierarchy was governed by relationship to the Gelgel-Klungkung dynasty. By agreeing to what was technically a "downward" marriage, the Ubud ruler placed the new Gianyar king under his influence. Although subsequent relations between the houses were not always smooth, the ties were confirmed in 1940 when the new king of Gianyar, Anak Agung Gede Agung, married Vera, the daughter of his cousin, Cokorda Raka Sukawati of Ubud.

Cokorda Raka Sukawati led Ubud's external political rise in the first half of the twentieth century, while his brother Cokorda Agung attended to internal affairs, and played the crucial role in the arts. Cokorda Raka was Bali's first national politician, in that he became the only Balinese representative on the Dutch-run *Volksraad* or People's Council in Batavia (now Jakarta), a body with little power, but which at least gave recognition to the idea that the future

people of Indonesia should have some say in government. He married a French woman, something that was frowned-upon by the white colonists of the time, and travelled extensively. Through his trips to Java, Cokorda Raka forged relationships with members of other royal houses outside Bali, and met with a range of foreigners, including a court musician and painter in Yogyakarta, the German/Polish/Russian, Walter Spies, whom Cokorda Raka invited to come and live in Ubud in 1927.

Through his role in Batavia, Cokorda Raka was able to give Ubud-Gianyar performers a key role in the major presentation of Bali to the outside world, the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris (Bloembergen 2006).

The Dutch seem to have appreciated Cokorda Raka's role as an intermediary, and so ensured that he kept his seat in Batavia against a radical nationalist politician. In 1934 various Indonesian groups were proposing the North Balinese intellectual, I Nengah Metra, for the People's Council, but the Dutch government blocked this and kept Cokorda Raka's seat, since he represented the more conservative voice of the Balinese kings (Vickers 2000). When the Dutch returned in 1945, after the Japanese occupation, they returned to Cokorda Raka as a reliable political figure, appointing him as President of the puppet *Negara Indonesia Timur*, or State of Eastern Indonesia, with his son-in-law, Anak Agung Gede Agung, as Prime Minister. Anak Agung Gede Agung was the most active of the two. Despite criticisms of his role in opposing Republicans in Bali, he played a significant role in forcing the Dutch to hand over sovereignty to Indonesia when he brought the *Negara Indonesia Timur* government down in protest at Dutch military actions against the Indonesian Republic in 1948. A.A. Gede Agung's move is often seen as an essential step in establishing the Republic of Indonesia. After independence Cokorda Raka Sukawati retired from politics. His son-in-law remained an important player in national politics, even though he was an opponent of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno.

#### FOUNDATIONS OF UBUD'S ARTISTIC TRADITIONS

Gianyar had a lively range of arts practices at the beginning of the twentieth century. Traditional painters could be found in a number of areas, of which the best documented in Rangkan, near what had once been the port of the kingdom of Sukawati (Vickers 2012). Leading performers of dance-drama came from both Gianyar town and the village of Saba, as well as Blahbatuh, Batuan, Singapadu, and Peliatan.

Oral histories recorded largely in the second part of the twentieth century attribute many major innovations in dance, drama and music, including the creation of the famous *legong* dance, to the former kingdom of Gianyar. Some of these may be retrospective views, products of Ubud's later pre-eminence, but there is no doubt that a number of Bali's most important performers came from Gianyar. These included the late-nineteenth century classical *gambuh* teachers, Wayan Batubulan, Sabda, and Goya, and their students and successors who were active from the 1920s until the 1970s, including

Dalang Ktut Rinda of Blahbatuh, and Ida Bagus Boda and I Nyoman Kakul, both of Batuan village. Although primarily associated with their places of origin, these and other performers travelled and taught extensively over the whole of the Island of Bali, sometimes at the invitation of royal families, sometimes through family connections. Many of these famous performers visited Ubud for various periods of time and provided an initial impetus for other developments in that area.

The first stage of Ubud's development as a centre for the arts came in when the present palace, along with many of the great temples of the area, was built by I Gusti Nyoman Lempad (?1863 or ?1875-1978). Lempad is probably best known at present for his drawings and paintings, but he did not begin that aspect of his career until at least 1931, and was primarily what Balinese call an *undagi*, an architect, engineer, and sculptor. The term *undagi* in fact has connotations of mastery of all kinds of practical knowledge, including of magical/mystical power.

Lempad's genius for building was matched by his fluid hand, his eye for unusual proportions, and his knowledge of Balinese mythology and folk narrative. As well as creative a distinctive architectural style later imitated by others to become the Gianyar style, and then to take over the whole of Bali, Lempad was a leader in creating the artistic style that came to dominate Ubud painting and sculpture. His most famous sculptures included the Sutasoma tuff-stone reliefs in Puri Ubud itself (although the final carvings were not by his hand), but he worked in a variety of different materials, including wood for pole bases still found in his family house (Ensink 1967; Carpenter et al. 2014; Darling 2016).

Lempad had come to Ubud as a political refugee from the district of Bedulu, and the old king had immediately recognized the importance of the artist. His connections with the Ubud royal family were still governed by feudal relations of hierarchy and deference. There are different accounts of a very messy ownership dispute between Lempad's family and his lords, the details of which are shrouded in gossip and the passing of time.<sup>5</sup> This dispute came about in the 1930s, when new western legal systems met with Balinese practices and customs.

During this period of Ubud's ascendancy, there were many competitors for paramountcy in Bali's art scene. The centre of traditional - now known as "classical" - painting had been the village of Kamasan in Klungkung, and the whole of that kingdom had a large number of performers, carvers, and practitioners of other arts. The king of Klungkung was also the highest status ruler of Bali, the Dewa Agung. The heir to that title had been exiled for a period after his family's final deadly fight, *puputan*, against the Dutch in 1906. That hiatus helped other regions take over some of Klungkung's mantle, but its image of tradition also meant that it was not viewed as a dynamic centre, in the same way as Ubud came to be. The other prime competitor was the eastern kingdom of Karangasem, whose ruler, Gusti Bagus Jlantik,

<sup>5</sup> Carpenter et al. 2014; Margaret Mead Archives, Library of Congress.

or Anglurah Ketut Agung, had skilfully negotiated the threat of a Dutch take-over after his Lombok relatives' defeat. Jlantik was a great patron of the arts, particularly architecture and literature, and well-connected with Dutch intellectuals, who made him the host of Rabindranath Tagore when he visited Bali (Girindrawardani, Vickers, and Holt 2014). What he did not have were resident expatriate advocates.

#### THE WESTERNERS IN UBUD

Colonialism had facilitated new ways of relating to the outside world, not least through the presence of Westerners in the greater Ubud area. At the same time, Dutch rule redefined the system of government, turning the lord of Ubud into a civil servant. As already mentioned, the first of these foreigners to come was Walter Spies in 1927. Bringing him to Ubud was a great coup for the young ruler. Spies' mixture of charisma and intelligence attracted others to visit the area and share in the deep understanding of Balinese culture that Spies was acquiring. His views began to stamp the way others talked and wrote about Bali, and these views were backed up by his research into Balinese language, music, performance, and ritual.

Of the first to come under Spies' spell was a young Dutch artist, Rudolf Bonnet, who came to Bali in 1929. At first, he stayed in other parts of Gianyar, including Peliatan, before moving in with Spies in the water palace, just across the main crossroads from the main palace. Later Spies moved to Campuhan, on the other side of the river confluence from the main palace, and the residence near the palace became Bonnet's. Other Westerners came to live in the area, although some further away. These included the composer and ethnomusicologist, Colin McPhee and his anthropologist wife, Jane Belo, who built a house on an ill-omened piece of land on the ridge at Sayan, in the area bordering the former kingdom of Mengwi. Their neighbour was an Australian widow, Muriel Pattinson.

In the decade that followed, all the major foreign intellectuals who were to write on Bali came to see Spies: the gifted Mexican cartoonist, Miguel Covarrubias, compiling his great compendium of knowledge on Bali, *Island of Bali*; the husband-and-wife team of anthropologists who were to profoundly change the ways that people thought about culture and society, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead; Charlie Chaplin and Noel Coward; and a host of lesser artists, beachcombers and members of international high society. All of these came to Ubud to have their understanding of Bali filtered through the Spies experience.

Spies reinforced his position as explainer of Bali through working on films and books on Bali. Famously, retrospective accounts link Spies to the creation of the *kecak*, or monkey dance. According to these accounts, in making the *Island of the Demons* with Baron Von Plessen, an expressionist film-maker, Spies helped locals from Bedulu stage the trance-chant from the *Sanghyang* dance into a new type of à capella performance soon to be known as *kecak*. However, the adaptation of *kecak* into its modern form was the work of Bedulu's I Wayan

Limbak, and the *kecak* was not actually used in the film.<sup>6</sup>

The foreign visitors would have seen Spies' role as confirmation of the superiority of Westerners, as the attribution of authorship of the *kecak* to Spies shows. From the Cokordas' point of view, Spies and Bonnet played quite a different role. Those who are granted privileges for their service to the palace are called *parekan* in Bali, and while the term is usually translated as 'servants', it includes those who are more like courtiers. This was not the first time that Balinese princes had made use of the services of foreigners: Chinese and Buginese had played trade and mercenary roles for many Balinese kings, and the ruler of Kesiman in Badung had granted Mads Lange, a Danish trader, the role of harbour-master during the first part of the nineteenth century.

Most Balinese, certainly the upland villagers of Ubud, were not at that time in a position to explain their culture and society directly to foreigners. These new cultural intermediaries were vital elements in creating a new, cosmopolitan, identity for Ubud.

#### THE PITA MAHA MYTH

Gianyar had its own group of traditional artists before the coming of the Westerners. Ida Telaga or Ida Bagus Cedeg came from Rangkan, although may ultimately have learned his art in Sanur, in the former Badung kingdom. He is remembered by one of Bali's foremost painters, A.A. Gede Sobrat, as coming up to Ubud to paint works for the palace ceremonial areas.<sup>7</sup> He also came in contact with traditional artists in Peliatan, and helped to spur on the efforts of Cokorda Oka Gambir and his brother Cokorda Ngurah, who taught painting to others in the Pengosekan area – part of Peliatan – such as the leading post-War artist, Gusti Ketut Kobot (Hill 2006). The village of Batuan, on the borders of Ubud's area of control, had a number of members of the *Brahmana* caste who were artists, as well as a painter called Dewa Mura (Geertz 1994; Vickers 2012).

Spies and Bonnet, as artists, travelled extensively and were interested in finding others who shared their practice of painting. In 1929 Bonnet visited Tampaksiring, where he found a family, again from the *Brahmana* caste, who had begun to convert their expertise in traditional painting into newer styles of painting. Two sons of a high priest or *pedanda*, Ida Bagus Mukuh and Ida Bagus Gerebuak, were producing dramatic depictions of ceremonies and of aspects of Balinese life. This was the first inkling the Bonnet had of a modernization of Balinese painting going on. In later accounts, including Bonnet's, Bonnet and Spies are presented as the creators of modern Balinese painting, but innovations had been going on since at least the late nineteenth century, when I Ketut Gede, a commoner from Buleleng, North Bali, was commissioned to do a series of works on Balinese culture by the eccentric Eurasian linguist H.N.

<sup>6</sup> See Steputat 2012 for a revision of the myth of the *kecak*.

<sup>7</sup> Interview by Carol Warren with A.A. Sobrat, 16 February 1982 and 16 June 1982 included in Bali Oral History Archive <https://www.murdoch.edu.au/library/resources-collections/special-collections/bali-oral-history-archive>.



van der Tuuk. Ketut Gede later interacted with the Dutch Art Nouveau print-maker and painter, W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp; so Western-Balinese collaborations were already underway when Spies and Bonnet began to cultivate Balinese painters (Carpenter 1997).

Soon after his fortuitous encounter with the Tampaksiring family, word got out to Balinese that the Spies compound at Ubud was somewhere they could go to sell artworks, as well as to have the exotic experience of meeting Westerners. Poverty and curiosity brought a number of talented young Balinese to Ubud, including members of a puppeteer family from Padangtegal, the foundational settlement of Ubud, Anak Agung (Dewa) Gede Sobrat (?1912 or ?1917-1992) and his cousins Anak Agung Gede Mregeg (1902-2001) and A.A. Gede Raka Turas (1917-1992). From Batuan came I Nyoman Ngendon (1903 or 1914-?1947 or ?1948) and Ida Bagus Made Togog (Vickers 2012). As the latter tells it, he originally came with the idea of selling carvings to the Westerners, but Spies, called "Tuan Tepis" by the Balinese, suggested that he might like to try painting (Geertz and Togog 2005). Spies was later to make a similar suggestion to Dewa Ketut Ding, who had previously worked in the North Bali cultural institution, Gedong Kirtya, illustrating traditional palm-leaf literature.

Sculptors were also beginning to experiment with new styles and forms in the 1930s. The carving traditions of Bali go back thousands of years, and remarkable ancient stone carvings can be found at Bedulu, Tampaksiring and other areas in Central Bali. New modern styles of wood-carving developed in tandem with the early fostering of tourism in Bali, and by the 1930s Mas, a village to the south of Peliatan, had become one of the leading centres of wood sculpture, led by Ida Bagus Ketut Gelodog (1912-1978), and then by his relative, Ida Bagus Nyana (1912-1985) and Nyana's son, Ida Bagus Tilem. Tilem later became well known for selling artworks in the 1950s (Vickers 2011a). In the mountains of Gianyar, at Jati, an almost-gothic variation on the modern style was being created then by the remarkable I Nyoman Cokot.

Bonnet and Spies actively sought out artists and found one remarkable family who were related to the Tampaksiring painters Bonnet had met in 1929. The father of the family, Ida Bagus Made Kembeng (?1897-1954), worked with great genius to bridge the traditional, wayang-puppet-theatre-based style with new innovations in art, and gave birth to what has been called the "transitional" art of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Ida Bagus Kembeng's sons, Ida Bagus Putu Wiri (?1911 or ?1912-1976) and Ida Bagus Belawa (1917-2000), continued their father's work, but it was their step-brother, Ida Bagus Kembeng's second son, who was to be the most famous member of the family. This son, Ida Bagus Made "Poleng" (1915-1999), moved from traditional wayang-based art to a more modern style under the influence of Spies and Bonnet, and became the second leader, after his competitor Anak Agung Sobrat, in the creation of a modern style of distinctly Balinese art, a modern art centred on Ubud.

In the house of Spies all the leading artists met, saw each others' work,

and asked advice from the two Westerners about technique and what would sell to foreign audiences. Ida Bagus Made Togog from Batuan was one of the artists who brought works to Spies and Bonnet for sale and were given advice on how to improve their art, or how they might find more interesting models. Ida Bagus Togog's first painting for Spies was inspired by seeing something that Ida Bagus Made had done (Geertz and Togog 2005: 190).<sup>8</sup>

Many of the Balinese came to regard one or the other of the Westerners as their teachers, even though neither ran formal classes, and saw themselves more as advisors than teachers. For most of the Balinese who came there, the majority of who did not share in Spies' and Bonnet's gay scene, the bohemian lifestyle was a source of great fascination and a glimpse of alternatives to the strict confines of their own society. Even those who did not necessarily get on with the two Westerners, notably I Nyoman Ngendon of Batuan, who had introduced Togog to Spies, learned from their examples, either in specific technical matters, or in their general attitude towards art, or, most importantly, in the lessons of how to market painting.

Bonnet in particular was concerned about the future of Balinese art. He was active in documenting developments in the arts (Bonnet 1936). He worked with others with influence in the colonial system to find mechanisms to ensure that Balinese painting did not become debased by chasing new money from the still-developing tourist industry. He persuaded Spies to work with him in the new Bali Museum (now the Museum Bali) being established in Denpasar in 1927. Together they set of a mechanism both to ensure that good work was kept for posterity, and also to provide a way for Balinese to sell to the tourist market that would have what Bonnet regarded as essential quality control. Bonnet took this a step further by working with the *Kunstkring* or Arts Circles that existed in major colonial cities, and through them he sent regular sale exhibitions of Balinese art to Batavia, Surabaya, Bandung, and other important cities. The works were priced so that artists would receive a good return for their work, and thus Bonnet cut out the potential for exploitation by intermediaries. Bonnet's quality control was exercised through the strict criteria he applied to exhibition of works, and artists learned from this selection process. At that time a number of Western art dealers were emerging onto the scene. Some, such as the Neuhaus brothers, Hans and Rolf, at Sanur, worked with the blessing of Spies, who had given them the idea to set up an aquarium and shop. Others, notably the journalist Houbolt, who lived in Denpasar and Tabanan, were regarded with suspicion by the Ubud-based expatriates (De Roever Bonnet 1993).

The final step in fostering Balinese art was the creation of an artists' association. In January 1936 a meeting of artists set up the cooperative *Pita Maha* or Great Ancestor, referring to the divine source of artist inspiration. It is not clear who took initiative with this organization, certainly *Cokorda Agung*

<sup>8</sup> Ida Bagus Togog's reminiscences contain a number of inconsistencies as to dating, but amusing anecdotes, such as how *Pita Maha* was originally intended to be housed in a museum in Mas but was the subject of shifty land dealings by a local.

played the major role as patron, with Ida Bagus Putu Taman as chairman, Gusti Nyoman Lempad, along with Spies and Bonnet, joined the Cokorda in forming the board. The first secretary was Cokorda Gede Rai, brother of Cokorda Agung and Punggawa or district head of Peliatan (Sukawati 1979: 15), who was succeeded in 1936 by Rolf Neuhaus, the German art dealer from Sanur. In 1938 Neuhaus was succeeded by Marianne van Wessem, a wealthy friend of Spies and Bonnet (Anon 1940).

Gusti Lempad, A.A. Sobrat, I.B. Made Poleng, and their families formed part of a core Ubud membership. Amongst the exciting new painters from Ubud was Wayan Tohjiwa (1916-2001). The organization covered all the visual arts, and its membership included modern and traditional artists from Klungkung, such as Pan Seken, innovators from Denpasar such as Gusti Made Deblog, the talented I Pungkur from Sibang, many of the new artists that were emerging in Sanur, along with the many painters now emerging in Batuan, and others from different villages with connections to them. Batuan had the greatest number of painters of any area. While some of the dozens of Batuan artists only produced a few works, the really outstanding painters with significant output included Ngendon, Ida Bagus Made Togog, Ida Bagus Made Jaturasura (1914-1948), I Nyoman Reneh (1910-1976), I Ketut Tombelos (1917-2010), A.A. Gede Cukit, Ida Bagus Bala (1923-1942), Ida Bagus Ketut Diding (1915-1990), Ida Bagus Wija, and Dewa Kompiang Kandel Ruka (1916-1975). From the village of Bedulu came a family of Gustis, especially Gusti Dokar (1911-1936) and his relatives Gusti Motor and Gusti Nyoman Gede, all of whom may have had family ties to Lempad. Also from Bedulu was Ida Bagus Made Nadera (1915-1998), who moved closer to Ubud.

Despite the diversity of Pita Maha membership, the Ubud artists were the ones whose style became identified with both the period and the organization. Nowadays it is common to refer to the art of the period as "Pita Maha art", although the great majority of artists were actually working in quite different styles. From the perspective of Ubud, Pita Maha's great success was in making a minority art represent the international face of Balinese painting.

A.A. Gede Sobrat was the most important exponent of this new style. Sobrat, like many others growing up in a family of traditional puppeteers and craftsmen, had absorbed the principles of Balinese art from an early age. He began painting in collaboration with his grandfather, a court artist. The young Sobrat showed talent in his well rounded and nuanced renderings of traditional images, notably magical drawings, *tumbal* or *rerajahan*. He already had a connection to the palace through his grandfather, but his closest friendship was with Cokorda Mayun, who encouraged his experimentation with different styles.<sup>9</sup> Like most artists prior to the advocacy of Bonnet, Sobrat was not considered to have a full-time career as a painter, so Bonnet and Spies had to persuade him and his employer, Cokorda Agung Sukawati, that he should give up his duties as a clerical worker for the prince, in order to focus on his true vocation.

<sup>9</sup> Interview by Carol Warren with A.A. Sobrat, 16 February 1982 and 16 June 1982.

Sobrat, Mregeg, and one or two others, including Ida Bagus Made, Sobrat's main competitor, pursued two lines of interest. They continued to paint traditional Balinese narratives, both from the grand Indian epics and the more distinctly Balinese folktales, but they were also interested in trying some of the stylistic tricks they had learned from the two Europeans. Thus they, as well as Ngendon in Batuan, followed Bonnet's lessons in the rendering of anatomy using shading. From Spies they took the layered construction of landscapes, which meshed with the "bird's-eye-view" perspective that has been a feature of Javanese and Balinese art for over 1,000 years. The result was a unique synthesis of Western and Balinese art. This was an art still focussed on the linear strengths of Balinese drawing, strengthened by Lempad's commanding influence on those who worked around him. But it was also an art that turned the Balinese landscape into an almost-surreal world of layered encounters between mundane life and the spiritual forces Balinese believe permeate their world.

Accounts of the formative years of Balinese modern painting remain vague, especially on the period between 1929 and 1936 when the new styles were coming into being. Thus, it is unclear where the major new element of elaborated foliage came from. It may have been one of the lasting influences of Spies' painting on his Balinese contemporaries, or it may have been built on the sparser use of foliage in pre-colonial paintings, especially those from the village of Kamasan. Sobrat, Ida Bagus Made and his father, and the leaders of the Batuan style, especially Ngendon and Ida Bagus Togog, probably developed this hall-mark of 1930s modernism together. Nevertheless, the Batuan role in the development of modernism has been totally overshadowed by its identification with Ubud. Only in recent years has scholarship rescued the role of Ngendon from semi-obscurity.

Pita Maha's elevation was the work of Bonnet. One initial step was to organize a series of exhibitions throughout the Netherlands East Indies, via the network of *Kunstkring* or Art Circles. Some of the exhibitions organized by Bonnet pre-dated Pita Maha, but the largest number of exhibitions was held in Batavia (Jakarta), where the curator of the *Kunstkring* was Jeannie de Loos-Haaxman. These exhibitions were successful in selling works and gaining attention from newspapers and magazine. They led to further exhibitions in Europe, one in London at the Calmann Gallery, and the others in the Netherlands, at the *Vereeniging van Vrienden van Aziatische Kunst* (Society for Friends of Asian Art) in Amsterdam, the *Pulchri Studio* in The Hague, a major exhibition space for contemporary art, and at the *Kunstzaal* or premises of the important art dealer Van Lier in Amsterdam (Anon 1940). Van Lier was well-known in art circles, and so was able to introduce Balinese art to Dutch critics such as Kasper Niehaus, who then incorporated discussion of Balinese art in newspaper articles and in a book on the art of the Netherlands (Niehaus 1941). Through the sponsorship of the Department of Economics, works were sent to the International Exhibition at Nagoya in 1937, and the New York World's Fair, a pair of twenty-metre long paintings were sent to

the San Francisco Golden Gate Exhibition, and a collection given to the Royal Colonial Institute's collection in Amsterdam (now the Tropenmuseum, part of the World Museum). Other works were made for the Nirom Building in Batavia, and purchased by the United States' consulate in Surabaya (Anon 1940).

Despite the successes, Bonnet's own resources, and that of the organization, were stretched thin by 1940. The changing political climate in Europe was not conducive to the market for art, and Pita Maha was wound up in 1940. There were 159 members in that year (Anon 1940).

#### WAR AND REVOLUTION

The Second World War dramatically interrupted the development of Balinese art, just as it profoundly changed the whole of the region and paved the way for Indonesia's struggle for independence. Although Ubud did not receive too much direct attention from the occupying Japanese, the prelude to the Japanese invasion saw Walter Spies interred as an enemy alien by the Dutch and died when his ship was sunk on its way to Colombo. Spies by this stage was already in disgrace, having been imprisoned by the Dutch authorities for pederasty – although the male age of consent at the time was twenty-one, and fifteen for girls.

Bonnet was interred by the Japanese and spent periods during the war and the subsequent Indonesian Revolution in Makassar. When he was able to come back to Ubud, he was met with competing demands. The Dutch were attempted to re-colonize Indonesia, and being in a Dutch zone of control, Bonnet was obliged to assist with the setting up of new tourist marketing. A Dutch civil servant, Koopman, had set up a new tourist shop in Sanur, and Bonnet returned to trying to keep quality control for Koopman, as well as helping his Balinese artist friends return to their painting careers (Vickers 2011b). Bonnet then curated a major painting exhibition which served as a vehicle for Dutch propaganda during their attempts to reclaim their colony against Indonesian resistance. The exhibition saw the first major commissions of works in the 1940s and must have been a huge boost to the local art scene. It was organized by the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, where most of the works now reside, and then toured New York, Boston, and Chicago in late 1948 and early 1949 (*Tentoonstelling 1948*; *Indonesian art 1949*). As well as being intended to show how the Dutch looked after Balinese culture, this exhibition marked the triumph of the Pita Maha style of A.A. Sobrat and Ida Bagus Made, as most of the artists fell into line with the now-dominant Ubud way of working.

The Ubud style was consolidated with the establishment of a new society of artists in 1951. The ground-work for this society was established in the late 1940s when Bonnet encouraged Sobrat, Gusti Kobot, and I Jata of Batuan to become teachers for their villages (Vickers 2012). The new society did not have the pan-Balinese reach of Pita Maha.

Bonnet's personal feelings about his enterprises under the Dutch have

not been recorded, but he remained a very close friend of Cokorda Agung, a strong supporter of the Indonesian Republic. Along with leading members of the Peliatan royal family and other local freedom-fighters, the Cokorda was jailed and tortured by followers of the Gianyar royal family for his anti-Dutch activities. When Indonesia finally wrested sovereignty from the Dutch, the Cokorda's role was remembered by the new president of the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno. This was probably the point at which the power-balance in Central Bali shifted away from the Gianyar royal house, whose head was an enemy of Sukarno, towards Ubud.

It seems to be Sukarno's relationship with Cokorda Agung that tipped the balance of cultural patronage more generally in Bali. The members of former royal houses who had been significant figures in Bali's cultural scene, such as the ruler of Karangasem, Gusti Ngurah Jlantik, were viewed by the Balinese population as too pro-Dutch, whereas Cokorda Agung had been an active member of the Republican cause.

Sukarno's frequently visited Bali, which he treated as a show-case for visiting heads of state and dignitaries, and Ubud was high on Sukarno's visitors' itinerary (Sukawati 1979). Krushchev, Ho Chi Minh, and on the opposite side of politics, Robert Kennedy, were all guests of Cokorda Agung. Sukarno was keenly interested in fostering Indonesian national culture, and so he became a patron of Balinese painting, particularly Ubud painting. Following Sukarno's lead, other nationalist collectors started acquiring works by Sobrat and the others, although Ida Bagus Made was very reluctant to sell to people whom he felt would not appreciate his art.

Bonnet's vision of Bali became the one that Sukarno most sympathized with, and he collected a number of Bonnet's works, which demonstrated that Bonnet's Dutch origins were no barrier to acceptance in the new Republic. By the 1940s Ubud had acquired more expatriate artists, and Sukarno also collected their works. However, when Sukarno played his anti-Dutch card to bolster nationalism in 1958, Bonnet was forced to return to the Netherlands, and would only visit Bali again for what were for him brief visits before his death in 1978 (De Roever-Bonnet 1993).

The most important of these brief visits was the crowning achievement of the Pita Maha style, the enshrinement of what Bonnet and Cokorda Agung had worked for in the Museum Puri Lukisan at Ubud. Cokorda Agung and Bonnet had begun work on this project in the early 1950s and set up the Ratna Wartha Foundation for this purpose in 1953. The foreigners' connections also helped to get crucial support from funding bodies in the United States, while the official support of Sukarno was vital for the Museum's initial establishment in 1956. Everything depended on the Ubud lords being able to mobilize political networks, which they did through Sukarno's Minister for Tourism and Education, Prijono, who brought prestigious visitors such as the French photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson (Sukawati 1979: 87).

Bonnet had the major role in designing the Museum, and worked closely with the local artists and builders, including Gusti Nyoman Lempad, to realize

his ideal, but Bonnet himself had to leave during the period of Sukarno's anti-Dutch political actions. In 1959 Cokorda Agung's initiative was sufficiently advanced for him to secure funding from the Ford Foundation (Sukawati 1979: 81-92; De Roever-Bonnet 1993). Part of that funding allowed Bonnet to fly back to Bali to oversee the final form of the Museum, although the charming bridge entrance was not completed until 1967, with further funding from President Sukarno. Bonnet donated many works from his own collection, as did his friend Marianne van Wessem (Couteau 1999; Spanjaard 2007). Most of his remaining art collection was acquired by Leiden University, and eventually became part of the Leiden Ethnographic Museum (now part of the World Museum) collection. Bonnet's subsequent visits in 1972, 1973, and 1976 were all to see further consolidation of the Museum's collection, before his death in 1978, a few months before that of Cokorda Agung Sukawati. Fittingly, they and Gusti Nyoman Lempad were cremated together at the beginning of 1979. The Ubud that saw them off into the next world was on the verge of a major explosion of tourism, one that would have made it unrecognisable to these pioneers of its development.

The creators of Ubud as Bali's centre of the arts, as thus a heritage centre, were many. Each played a critical role: Cokorda Raka Sukawati as political patron; Cokorda Agung Sukawati as the presence that made everything else happen; Walter Spies as charismatic point of reference for foreigners coming to Bali; Rudolf Bonnet as the tireless promoter of Balinese art; Gusti Nyoman Lempad and A.A. Sobrat as definers of the style. The art that was called "modern" in the 1930s is now, confusingly, referred to as "traditional" art in popular Balinese usage, a tribute to the way that Ubud's heritage was created, redefined and given concrete meaning in this period and afterwards. Through the process of heritage formation, what was new became old and embedded in the district's image. The heritage created served the ends of Ubud as a whole, rather than the narrow interests of the ruling family, demonstrating the far-sightedness particularly of Cokorda Agung Sukawati.

#### REFERENCES

- Anon (Rudolf Bonnet?). 1940. "Uit de cultuurbeweging; Pitamaha 1936-9 Januari 1940", *Mededeelingen van de Kirtya Liefcrinck-van der Tuuk* 11: 18-21.
- Bloembergen, Marieke. 2006. *Colonial spectacles; The Netherlands and the Netherlands-Indies at the world exhibitions, 1880-1931*, Singapore: NUS Press.
- Bonnet, Rudolf. 1936. "Beeldende kunst in Gianjar", *Djåwå* 16: 59-72.
- Carpenter, Bruce. 1997. *W.O.J.Nieuwenkamp; First European artist in Bali*. Hong Kong: Periplus.
- Carpenter, Bruce, John Darling, H.I.R. Hinzler, Kaja McGowan, Adrian Vickers, and Soemantri Widagdo. 2014. *Lempad of Bali; The illuminating line*. Singapore: Editions Didier Millet.
- Couteau, Jean. 1999. *Museum Puri Lukisan*. Ubud: Ratna Wartha Foundation.
- Darling, John. 2016. "Lempad of Bali", Taman Sari Productions.  
 [Retrieved from <http://www.lempad.net/book/>; accessed on 27-1-2019.]

- Ensink, J. 1967. *On the Old-Javanese Cantakaparwa and its tale of Sutasoma*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. [Verhandelingen KITLV 54.]
- Geertz, Hildred. 1994. *Images of power; Balinese paintings made for Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Geertz, Hildred and Ida Bagus Madé Togog. 2005. *Tales from a charmed life; A Balinese painter reminisces*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Girindrawardani, A.A.A. Dewi, Adrian Vickers, and Rodney Holt. 2014. *The Last rajah of Karangasem*. Denpasar: Sariktaksu.
- Hill, Christopher. 2006. *Survival and change; Three generations of Balinese painters*. Canberra: Pandanus.
- Indonesian art. 1949. *Indonesian art; A loan exhibition from the Royal Indies Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands*. [31 October-31 December 1949, New York: Asia Institute; 16 February-31 March 1949, Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago; 24 April-29 May 1949, Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art.]
- MacRae, Graeme S. 1997. *Economy, ritual, and history in a Balinese town*. PhD thesis, University of Auckland. [Available at: <<https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/2249>>.]
- MacRae, Graeme S. 2011. "Ubud since 1970; Revival and prosperity, tourism and culture", in: Bembi Dwi Indiro M. and Soemantri Widagdo (eds), *Ubud; A short history of an art and cultural center in Bali*, pp. 71-90. Ubud: Museum Puri Lukisan.
- Kasper Niehaus. 1941. *Levende Nederlandsche Kunst*. Amsterdam: Bigot and Van Rossum.
- Roever-Bonnet, H. de. 1993. *Rudolf Bonnet; Een zondagskind*. Wijk: Pictures Publishers.
- Seebass, Tilman. 1996. "Change in Balinese musical life; Kebiar in the 1920s and 1930s," in: A. Vickers (ed.), *Being modern in Bali; Image and change*, pp. 71-91. New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies.
- Spanjaard, Helena. 2007. *Pioneers of Balinese painting; The Rudolf Bonnet collection*. Amsterdam: KIT.
- Stepputat, Kendra. 2012. "Performing kecak; A Balinese dance tradition between daily routine and creative art", *Yearbook for Traditional Music* Vol. 44: 49-70.
- Sukawati, Cokorda Gde Agung. 1979. *Reminiscences of a Balinese prince* (as dictated to Rosemary Hilbery). Honolulu: Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hawaii. [Southeast Asia Paper No. 14.]
- Tentoonstelling. 1948. *Tentoonstelling van Oost-Indonesische kunst; Schilderijen, beeldhouwwerk, weefsels en zilverwerk der gelegenheid van het gouden regeringsjubileum van H.M. Koningin Wilhelmina*. Amsterdam: Indische Instituut. [25 August-1 October 1948.]
- Vickers, Adrian. 1989. *Bali; A paradise created*. Rowville, Vic.: Penguin. [Revised version, Vermont: Tuttle, 2013.]
- Vickers, Adrian. 2000. "I Nengah Metra 1902-1946; Thoughts on the biography of a modern Balinese", in: A. Vickers, Nyoman Darma Putra, and Michele Ford (eds), *To change Bali*, pp. 89-112. Denpasar: Bali Post.



- Vickers, Adrian. 2011a. "Bali rebuilds its tourist industry", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 167/4: 459-481.
- Vickers, Adrian. 2011b. "Ubud; Becoming Bali's centre of the arts 1920-1970", in: Bembu Dwi Indiro M. and Soemantri Widagdo (eds), *Ubud; A short history of an art and cultural center in Bali*, pp. 35-58. Ubud: Museum Puri Lukisan.
- Vickers, Adrian. 2012. *Balinese art; Paintings and drawings of Bali 1800-2010*. Singapore: Tuttle.